

From the Editor

Scholarly understanding of the Middle East, one of the purposes of this journal, has never been a simple matter for outsiders—nor for insiders for that matter. In the four years since I became editor, the hope of the Arab “Spring” has devolved into a winter of extreme discontent, violence, massive homelessness, and other sorrows. Yet the scholars who have contributed to these pages in the past few years have also investigated notable responses to these conditions in the arts and politics, and, indeed, in the humor that have characterized the spirit of the Middle East in the past and, remarkably, in the present. This sweeping generalization is hardly unique to the Middle East and Islamic civilization, but it is as exceedingly difficult as it is necessary to carry on doing what we do as scholars in an era of growing Islamophobia and a widespread belief that the Middle East has been a hotbed of conflict and violence “for centuries.” That is an unexamined mainstay of public sentiment that ought not go unanswered or simply dismissed as ignorance.

The *Review of Middle East Studies* staff and editors have had our own more local challenges, disappointments, and losses recently. Nonetheless, we who have been entrusted with editing this journal have a sense that we have taken the necessary steps to adapt to the digital age on which the feet of our direct and indirect readers—by this I mean scholars of the Middle East who write for, dispute with, and learn from each other; but also their students and publics to whom their knowledge is extended in classrooms, writings, public lectures, and consultations—are firmly planted, and increasingly so.

Not long after the Denver MESA meeting in November 2015, Chris Calorusso, *RoME*'s managing editor, had to take an unanticipated sabbatical for personal reasons. Chris's professional experience as an academic journal editor with the American Psychological Association has been a major benefit to *RoMES* during the transition to digital publishing, and her absence has been keenly felt in the Virginia Tech office. Fortunately while Chris is taking the semester off from her doctoral studies and editorial duties, Amanda Wright Cron was available to rejoin the staff as interim managing editor. Thus, with Mandy's help we are carrying on and already working on the next issue as this issue goes to press.

Since the last issue came out in the fall of 2015, associate editor Mary Ann Tétreault has passed away. When I learned she had cancer I immediately offered to relieve her from her editorial duties covering “Economics, Politics,

Gulf,” but she would have none of it. To the end, she served as Associate Editor at *Large*, securing many reviews and herself reviewing several works. Mary Ann and her husband have been close family friends since she and I taught together at Iowa State University in the mid 1990s. She will be greatly missed. A warm remembrance of Mary Ann by her friend, Dr. Gwenn Okruhlik, appears in the In Memoriam section of this issue.

Although *RoMES* is now published for MESA as part of the Cambridge Journals Online, which means that our readership is growing, it is still rooted in the scholarly *community* of the Middle East Studies Association. As a member, it is your journal—an aspect of your participation in MESA. Therefore, I invite your ideas and thoughts about what *RoMES* should be publishing. What is going on in your special field that deserves an article, essay, or report? What are you working on that might be of interest to our colleagues and to the general public, which is always hungry for good information about the Middle East and Islamic studies?

I would like to hear from you. E-mail me at romes.vt@gmail.com. ✂

Richard C. Martin
Editor