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Int. J. Middle East Stud. **49** (2017), 211–213
doi:10.1017/S0020743817000010

EDITORIAL FOREWORD

How do history and literature create a sense of ethnic or imperial community? And how do social and legal normative and disruptive narratives contribute to drawing the boundaries of such communities? To provide some answers, this issue brings together three articles on "Historicizing Fiction" and two on "Early Safavids and Ottomans." In the first section, David Selim Sayers's article, "Sociosexual Roles in Ottoman Pulp Fiction," analyzes "premodern sociosexual roles" in the Ottoman Empire through the Tıfli stories, a form of lowbrow literature that narrates the everyday lives of their protagonists in Ottoman Istanbul. This genre seems to have appeared initially in the 18th century, but it peaked in the early 19th century amidst the expansion of Ottoman commercial printing. As Sayers points out, the early 19th century was also a period that witnessed a major transformation of the sociosexual order of the Middle East, perhaps explaining why the authors of the Tıfli stories reflected on the prior order in their writing. Sayers argues that whereas most sources on this subject are prescriptive and transgressive, seeking to "outline, defend, or undermine sociosexual norms," the Tıfli stories "portray the conflict that ensues when these norms are compromised in suspenseful yet relatable ways." Through his analysis of these stories, Sayers blurs the lines between roles such as the boy-beloved, the female adolescent, and the adult male and female pursuer, which in other sources and analyses appear self-contained. Yet he also makes an effort "to advance beyond a definition of the roles towards an understanding of how they were negotiated by subjects of history."

Also focused on questions of modernity in the Ottoman Empire, M. Brett Wilson's "The Twilight of Ottoman Sufism: Antiquity, Immorality, and Nation in Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu's *Nur Baba*" reflects on other transformations—religious and social—that play out in the novel, itself an instrument of modernity. Published in 1922 and set during the reign of Sultan Abdulhamid II, *Nur Baba* tells the story of an elite woman's involvement with a Bektashi Sufi lodge and her seduction by its shaykh, Nur Baba. Wilson reinterprets the novel by reading it as a window onto the place of Sufism in late Ottoman society and onto intellectual concerns about class, gender, and sexuality during the Second Constitutional Period. He notes that the novel casts opprobrium on Sufism as an outmoded set of practices generative of moral corruption while paradoxically upholding it as a symbolic artifact of Turkish national culture and history. "It is this tension between critique and fascination," he writes, "that animated modernist-nationalist thinking on Sufism during the 1910s and 1920s." Wilson suggests that Karaosmanoğlu's book, which became a literary classic in Turkey and was made into a popular film, instrumentalized Sufism in the service of the national project, shaping how Sufi lodges would come to be imagined and governed in early republican Turkey.

In "Ghostly Labor: Ethnic Classism in the Levantine Prism of Jacqueline Kahanoff's *Jacob's Latter,*" Amr Kamal analyzes *Jacob's Ladder* (1951), a semiautobiographical novel by the Egyptian-born Israeli author Jacqueline Kahanoff, to explore the production

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https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020743817000010 Published online by Cambridge University Press

and reinforcement of Levantine culture. Kahanoff's novel tells the story of Rachel Gaon, a young Jewish girl in Egypt from a mercantile family with origins in Iraq and Tunisia. Growing up, Rachel does not identify as Egyptian, but neither does she identify as British or French, the two imperial cultures to which she was exposed in the household and at school. As the narrative plays out, her identity crisis comes to indicate "the complicated position of Egyptian Jews amid an intricate web of ethnic and class relations during the interwar period that are inherently linked to Egyptian nationalism and French and British colonialism." Out of this web emerges Levantine culture, and Kamal argues that Kahanoff's novel presents a rare glimpse of its formation. Kahanoff sought to reclaim Levantine cosmopolitanism in a context of discrimination against Arab Jews in Israel, and scholarship has tended to view it nostalgically. Taking a different tack, Kamal highlights the process of what he terms "ethnic classism" that, in his view, contributed to the production and perpetuation of Levantism. As he points out, Levantism's very possibility depended on the labor of elided other Levantines and their persistent presence in the backdrop as racialized "Orientals," which accentuated the cosmopolitanism of their employers.

Reaching back to earlier narratives of exclusion and inclusion, the second section of the issue opens with Thomas A. Carlson's "Safavids before Empire: Two 15th-Century Armenian Perspectives." Carlson observes that much of what we know about the rise of the Safaviyyih order, which emerged out of 14th-century Azerbaijan, and the early 16th-century conquests led by Ismaʿil that transformed it into an imperial power, is derived from Persian sources postdating these events. In his article, Carlson supplements such sources with a reading of two unknown or understudied contemporary Armenian sources that describe the militarization of the order and its conquests. He suggests that these sources, which he translates and interprets, shed new light on these events, as well as on how they affected the Armenians who would become subjects of Ismaʿil's realm. More generally, Carlson uses this case to convey the significance of non-Muslim sources for Islamic history, including during the late medieval period. As he points out, "While historians of early Islam have long recognized the value of non-Muslim sources, Islamicists of the later medieval period have typically overlooked sources in languages other than Arabic and Persian, including those discussed here."

Whereas Carlson analyzes Armenian witnesses of the Safaviyyih order, Abdurrahman Atçıl's article "The Safavid Threat and Juristic Authority in the Ottoman Empire during the 16th Century" examines Ottoman views of the imperial manifestation of this order and its supporters in the Ottoman realm. Atçıl focuses on the opinions of three senior jurists in the Ottoman court—Sarıgörez (d. 1522), Kemalpaşazade (d. 1534), and Ebussuud (d. 1574)—on legal matters concerning Safavid Shiʿi practices and measures to face the Safavid threat inside and just beyond Ottoman boundaries. Most scholars have viewed these opinions as part of a uniform polemical literature on the Safavids by a group of authors whose singular role it was to legitimate the Ottoman state's pronouncements and measures against its new rival. Yet Atçıl points to nuanced distinctions between these opinions that he attributes to shifting historical circumstances. He argues that these distinctions, and the expression of particular legal arguments that may have been incongruent with the preferences of Ottoman executive authorities, show that "jurists and the law held a high degree of autonomy in the Ottoman system during the 16th century."

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This issue's roundtable is on "Mediating Geography and Space." Our six authors, all geographers, explore why the discipline of geography and its most significant theoretical interventions have remained peripheral to Middle East studies. As Natalie Koch observes, "while it is clear from the pages of *IJMES* that regional studies scholars are taking space and geography seriously, this has not been accompanied by intensive engagement with academic geography." The aim of the roundtable is to show why and how such engagement is critical, especially given the implication of area studies generally in region making and in the discursive practices that sustain regional constructs and their administrative and political apparatuses.

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