

## Editor's Note

This publication marks the seventh issue of JLS. In 2009, as we were developing the idea of establishing a journal, we were feeling an urgent need to offer a fresh look at the region. Global changes and regional shifts in the balance of power, especially after the regional implications of the US invasion of Iraq, had become evident and gave support to this need to address the region with new tools and terminology. Indeed, by the time the first issue was published in 2011, the first wave of the Arab Spring left no doubt as to the intensity of the changes throughout the region. Four years later, this issue was prepared against the background of the growing turbulence that continues to shake the region. The initial enthusiasm that fueled the Arab Spring, inspired by public demonstrations of many who demanded to establish democracy and rid the people of their corrupt regimes, was replaced with a fear of escalation and the possession of power by violent, patriarchal forces. As we go to print, we witness the mounting strength of the ISIS forces in Iraq and Syria, the continuation of the bloodshed between Muslims and Christians in African countries, and once again the violent confrontation between Israelis and Palestinians. Not coincidentally, cross-border violence overlaps with internal conflicts experienced by societies torn by ethnic, religious, and economic differences. The need to address security concerns in an era dominated by non-state organizations and their defiance of nation-state borders further emphasizes the need to form new terminology to describe these changes.

It is not clear what came first, the collapse of the old regimes or the revision of the academic critical discourse that debunks the nation-state, seeing it as the consequence of colonial arrangements. In some cases they must have fed one another. The academic discourse on territorial sovereignty and its links to racial and

social categories echoed in the speeches and rhetoric of new political leaders, and even in security circles and the media, where it was often twisted and emptied of its original meaning. While critiques of the pillars of the political arrangement of the twentieth-century Middle East have always existed, they have remained in the margins of the discourse. High-school students once came across the Sykes-Picot maps only when forced to learn the history of the region. In today's debate the legitimacy and validity of these maps are the starting point of every discussion on the future and past of the region.

Radical political movements from the extreme right, extreme left, and national-religious factions now share a common denominator in supporting the call for a post-Westphalian conceptualization of sovereignty. Furthermore, social movements that can hardly be described as radical are currently calling for the decentralization of power in civil and nonpolitical arenas. An obvious platform for such a challenge to the state presents itself when economic logic meets ethics. Prohibitions regarding the time and place of selling certain goods, such as alcoholic beverages, are an obvious example of a battle between municipalities and the state. Global economic forces that address the needs of the growing young middle class in fast-growing urbanized areas, rather than ideology, have motivated this tension. However, the return of the city-state, as well as other political constructions, is no longer fictional.

The articles in this issue engage the predominant academic discussion centered on topics of sovereignty and class in Middle Eastern history, in particular the discourses that originated during the Mandate period in Palestine. In the first article, **Eran Eldar** reveals the attitude of David Ben-Gurion toward the first Hebrew city, Tel Aviv. The city, which had enjoyed power and status under the British Mandate, suffered from an open confrontation that broke out with the establishment of the central government, led by the Mapai Party, after the establishment of the State of Israel. “May Your Sons Settle [the Land]: David Ben-Gurion’s Attitude toward Tel Aviv as Reflected in the Press” presents this confrontation and the quest of the municipality, aligned with the General Zionists, for more sovereignty and power. Alongside this sovereignty struggle between the city and the state, this article also illuminates Ben-Gurion’s ambivalent attitude toward Israeli urbanization, which he saw as harmful to the Zionist rural dream. His animosity was frequently portrayed in the Israeli media.

In “The Making of Palestinian Christian Womanhood: Gender, Class, and Community in Mandate Palestine,” **Laura Robson** examines the ways in which Arab Christian women viewed, shaped, and managed their participation in the project of Palestinian national identity during the British Mandate. Robson demonstrates how

these women used mission schools and charitable organizations to promote their vision of Palestinian nationalism—a vision they defined as modern, nonsectarian, and politically progressive. Against the background of the Mandate period, elite Christian women initiated activities in their clubs, hoping to contribute to and play a role in the formation of a Palestinian national identity. With the fading of the Mandate, however, it became evident that these Christian women lost their central place, and the majority of Palestinians viewed their vision as linked to oppressive colonial practices.

Similar to Robson's, **Mustafa Badran's** article also focuses on the relationship between class and sovereignty during the British Mandate period in Palestine. In "The Palestinian Historiography of Family Leadership during the British Mandate," he analyzes the writings of Palestinian intellectuals and scholars of different generations. Looking at Palestinian historiography, he argues that the ways in which Palestinian intellectuals examined their leaders reflected the internal divisions within Palestinian society. Badran points out that Palestinian historians have attributed the problems of their leadership to two factors: the Mandate authorities, which had institutionalized and strengthened the elite families, and Palestinian society, which remained imprisoned in the traditional mechanism of leadership. The elite families rejected social change and blocked the development of new leadership.

The role of class is at the core of **Moran Benit's** article as well. In "Life under the Last Sky: History, Memory, and Trauma in Dudu Busi's *Noble Savage*," she addresses questions of responsibility and survival in a fictional, contemporary Israeli urban setting. In *Noble Savage* Mizrahi novelist Dudu Busi engages with the question of survival in a southern Tel Aviv slum that is imbued with violence. Life is a maze through which the hero must navigate by defending himself and avoiding the violence that predominates both outside, in the neighborhood, and inside, in the home. Applying theories of space, and addressing questions of trauma and testimony, Benit's article examines the relations that form between space, body, and subject. These relations portray the residents of the neighborhood as violent individuals who are trapped in a cycle of immoral behavior. Survival and life are also central in the way in which the novel—often described as a "threatening" or "dangerous" book—was received. As Benit suggests, Busi's stance does not absolve the residents of accountability for their violent acts, and like Badran he urges his own society to assume responsibility for these acts.

Responsibility and creativity, reality and fiction—all are central to the dominant discussion of the past and future of Turkish art. This issue includes a dossier on the question of originality and authenticity in Turkish literature. We translated three

essays from Turkish: Leyla Erbil's "On the Question of an Authentic and Original Turkish Literature" and Ataol Behramoğlu's "Organic Poetry," both translated by Arzu Eker Roditakis, and Şavkar Altınel's "Yahya Kemal, T. S. Eliot, and the Force of Tradition," translated by Deniz Erol. Professor **Sibel Erol** was entrusted with the task of responding to the question posed by Erbil and the other two writers.

In her essay "Does Turkish Literature Exist?" she asks that question and suggests that authenticity is not merely a cultural question but is mainly a sociopolitical one. She reminds us about the existence of culture wars and identity politics, and points out the need to respond to the demand of students from a variety of societal segments that their realities and experiences be part of the literary canon. This is one way in which a democratic society acknowledges their presence in the social mosaic.

This is the last issue for which I will serve as editor. I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to those who paved the road and directed the journal on the right path. I send my sincere thanks to the staff and colleagues of the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute, especially to its director, Professor Gabriel Motzkin. Many thanks go to the members of the journal's advisory board, particularly to Dr. Yochi Fisher, Prof. Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, and Dr. Tal Kohavi, the director of publications at the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute, for their constant support and wise guidance. Last, I would like to thank the journal's dedicated editors and staff: our linguistic editor, Deborah Schwartz; proofreader Esther Rosenfeld; the editors of the Reviews section, Dr. Yonatan Mendel and Dr. Wael Abu-'Uksa; and document editor, Dr. Zohar Kohavi, as well as Dr. Edo Litmanovich, scientific editor at the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute. When starting to work on the first issue of the journal, I was warned by my colleagues that this would be a near-impossible, bumpy road—and mainly a lonely one. Thanks to Nathalie Alyon, my right hand and very talented assistant editor, their prophecy has been proven wrong.

**Anat Lapidot-Firilla**

July 2014