Int. J. Middle East Stud. **36** (2004), 535–536. *Printed in the United States of America*
DOI: 10.1017.S0020743804364019

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FROM THE EDITOR

This is the last issue of the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* under my editorship. I want to express my thanks to the Middle East Studies Association for having entrusted me with its flagship for these past five years. It has been a great pleasure to work with the editorial board and book review editors, with authors and referees, to pursue the best academic writing on the region. I am especially grateful to editorial assistant Alissa Surges and to the graduate students who helped over the years with the journal in Ann Arbor—Josh Greenbaum, Najeeb Jan, Rob Haug, and Wesley Williams, among others. The International Institute, the Center for Middle Eastern and North African Studies, and other departments and institutions at the University of Michigan supported the enterprise.

The Middle East has, of course, become a much more central preoccupation of the North American public and of the United States government over the course of this half-decade. In that time, *IJMES* has stood as a voice of dispassionate, solidly based analysis at a time when public discourse about the region has very frequently been characterized by neither attribute. The journal is not, of course, concerned primarily with current events, and its production schedule would not allow it to be. It is, rather, devoted to a broader and deeper understanding of the region of the sort that can only be gained through mastery of its languages, culture, and history.

At a time when there is much turmoil in the region, and violence among a host of parties, it has struck me that *IJMES* is a rare example of transnational cooperation. Because we practice double-blind refereeing, authors and referees are unknown to each other while the submission is under consideration. As a result, scholars who might be prevented by the politics of their governments from interacting have an opportunity to react to and improve each other's scholarship. Arabs help Israelis and vice versa, and Turks and Armenians are in a strange sort of anonymous dialogue. I have been struck at how infrequently responses are politicized or ideological and how often such invidious responses quickly move to the margins of the multiple-referee interventions.

The warm generosity of many referees in submitting searching responses to first drafts has also humbled me. They contributed to the journal, and to the field, on a pro bono basis, sharing their extensive expertise in a collegial manner. It reminded me of the 18th-century European notion of the Republic of Letters, a transnational convocation of thinkers who value reason and tolerance.

The *IJMES* readership and authors are today's Republic of Letters, a republic that is now global in scope. You have all made me proud of my citizenship in it, and of my co-citizens. I leave you with my wish, and my hope, that the virtues of reason,

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https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020743804364019 Published online by Cambridge University Press

tolerance, devotion to the truth, and dedication to understanding, so apparent in this Republic, will eventually prevail in other realms of our shrinking, inter-connected global society.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020743804364019 Published online by Cambridge University Press