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EDITORIAL FOREWORD

This issue of *Mashriq & Mahjar* focuses on two inter-related themes. The first is gender and its use in understanding the migratory experience in ways that are different and differently enlightening from other approaches to telling that story. The second theme is about migrants and refugees whose lives transgress cultural and physical boundaries even as they confront spaces and institutions that seek to confine them in set tropes.

The first three articles in this issue of *Mashriq & Mahjar* demonstrate how using gender as a category of analysis continues to push, in innovative and illuminating ways, against the boundaries of disciplinary paradigms in Middle East diaspora studies. Each of the author's work reveals how attention to gender and interdisciplinarity (and to a lesser extent intersectionality) captures the nuance in migratory experiences, the cross fertilization between communities on the move, and the unexpected ways that migrants engage with regimes of power, be they constituted by the state, the family, or by religion. Gender—as a primary way to signify relations of power and to identify the meaning given to sexual difference in society—destabilizes normative conceptions of space and time and is thus an obvious (although often overlooked) unit of analysis in Middle East diaspora studies.

We have chosen these three articles because they highlight salient themes at the cutting of research on questions of gender and migration. First, Devi Mays explores how migration pulls at idealized understandings of family. She analyzes in particular how gendered violence in the early twentieth century Sephardic diaspora activated transoceanic networks of communication and contestation over destabilized family relations. Anchored in an analysis of two intimate partner homicides, one in New York City and the other in Mexico City, Mays's article reveals how violence allowed Sephardic men to make appeals to honor and virility precisely at a moment in which state

exclusion projects cast Jewish men as degenerate and effeminate. At the same time, defendants' families appealed to state modernizing imperatives to contest these "antiquated" gendered tropes. For Mays, the Sephardic diaspora is a place where notions of masculinity and femininity are tested and reconfigured in both creative and destructive ways.

Second, Pauline Homsi Vinson's article demonstrates how migrant cultural production precariously reclaims, subverts, and reproduces dominant Orientalist paradigms. The article focuses on Arab American writer Alia Yunis's novel *The Night Counter* to address how an archetypical figure like Scheherazade is transformed from a storyteller (whose tales have fueled Orientalist imaginings of the Middle East) into a listener, attentive to the richness of Arab American history and its intersections with other cultures. Weaving between an analysis of Yunis's reflections on the inspiration for her novel and her coming of age experience as an Arab American teenager, and close reading of the novel's main characters, Homsi deftly engages the epistemology of the closet and of passing to argue that processes of Arab American coming out—as gay, as Arab, as marked in various marginal ways—could allow for productive reclaiming of the multiple ways of belonging as Arab in the United States.

Finally, Lea Frank Muller explores how gender is an important axis of mobilization in the politics of diaspora. Her article focuses on Egyptian transnational social media activism in France following the overthrow of President Mohammad Morsi. Using an innovative technique of "visualizing social media" Muller Frank charts how informal political activism allowed women to articulate and affirm new senses of collective belonging.

The second section in this issue deals with attempts by individual migrants (Najeeb Saleeby and Edward Said) and groups (Palestinian refugees in Lebanon) to negotiate and circumvent the constructed boundaries that surround their transnational lives. The subjects of each of the three papers work to destabilize the categories where they are forced to exist, and to build their own alternative and hybrid identities.

Laura Robson examines how Said deployed Western classical music as a discursive space on which he could inscribe and celebrate the political and cultural values of his mobile, cosmopolitan upbringing in interwar Cairo. Said's insistence on the universality and political applicability of Western musical forms thus came to represent

a mode of relocating a lost form of elite cosmopolitanism as a central aspect of Arab identity and rejecting what he saw as the intolerant, philistine parochialism of the post-war Arab political landscape. At the same time, his adoption of those forms—as a Palestinian Arab living in exile—deracinates the music from the idea of the "West," even as the performances destabilize the boundary of Israeli and Palestinian.

Timothy Marr assesses the career of Najeeb Saleeby (1870–1935): a Lebanese Protestant physician who became naturalized as a U.S. citizen while serving the American colonial occupation of the Philippines. Saleeby existed in a liminal space wherein he was "American" and "Asian" at the same time; an agent of American empire and a strong critic of its colonial mentality. As Marr writes, "Saleeby's story dramatizes the political advancement possible for an educated "Syrian" who aligned his mission with the American "duty" of teaching self-government to the Filipinos. However, his own background as a migrant from Asia and his sympathy for Moro history and culture raised unfair suspicions about his ultimate allegiance." On a journey that took him from Mount Lebanon to Beirut, the US and then the Philippines, Saleeby always sought to recognize and establish the common humanity (and hence rights) of people existing in systems of clear inequality.

Leonardo Schiocchet examines these boundaries through the relationship between Palestinian camps and surrounding Lebanese cities and towns. As transplanted people, Palestinian refugees are migrants who were never fully allowed to integrate into the larger society in Lebanon. While in the previous two papers the efforts of Saleeby and Said to cross boundaries were somewhat successful, the walls surrounding Palestinian camps have remained. In part, it is so because of the imposed legal, security and economic restrictions. But in no small part they are maintained by the need to perpetuate a Palestinian nationalist culture that safeguards the rights of the refugees to a stolen homeland.

Although gender is not explicitly addressed in the last three articles, they probe similar themes as the first three, particularly attempts to create hybrid cultures that transcend the artifice of boundaries. It is hoped that by placing these articles in one issue, the dynamic interplay between gender, migration and displacement can be fruitfully engaged.