

Editor's Note

Rebecca Kook

Hagar was established five years ago by members of the Humphrey Seminar at Ben Gurion University. The journal is a reflection and product of the exciting intellectual discourse generated by this seminar. Its founding editor, Oren Yiftachel, created a unique journal in the academic landscape of the region, with an emphasis on critical multi-disciplinary research. As *Hagar* enters its sixth year, I have been awarded the privilege of serving as its new editor, and I am joined by two excellent colleagues, Relli Schechter and Niza Yanay, as my editorial associates.

As we all know, the world of academic journals has expanded immeasurably over the past decade. Dozens of new journals appear every year, and they are increasingly specialized, as most academic and intellectual pursuits are nowadays. In many ways, the concept of "academic niche" has replaced that of "academic value". Yet, society, social relations and power continue to reflect realities that are far from specific and narrow: these realities are complex, multi-dimensional and inter-related. The advent of globalization has highlighted this situation, continually reminding us of the pathways that connect diverse regions, classes and societies. What was once thought of as periphery is now central; what was once perceived as marginal is now of the essence. Thus, with its focus on multi-disciplinary perspectives, with its gaze towards the boundary and the border region, and with its constant effort to revitalize the periphery through intellectual endeavors, the intellectual purview and commitment of *Hagar* remains central to any serious intellectual pursuit.

The current issue is true to this spirit. Its mainstay is a forum devoted to the topic of "Muslims in Europe". Muslims in Europe are at once a population, a concept and a political reality which, up until quite recently, were seen as both peripheral and marginal. Today, awakened by the challenges presented by this population to both European democracy and identity, the West has discovered the richness and subtlety of Muslim culture and identity. This forum is introduced by Nimrod Hurvitz, who initiated and organized the conference at Ben Gurion University upon which the forum is based.

The six articles in this debate are followed by a comment to Claus Offe's seminal essay, "Political liberalism, group rights, and the politics of fear and trust", which appeared in *Hagar* Vol. 3, No. 1. Authored by David Abraham and entitled "Solidarity and particularity: E pluribus unum?", it joins earlier comments (published alongside

Offe in that issue) in its interesting review and critique of Offe's argument. Abraham challenges the notion of group rights and argues for strengthening the political sphere. Much of his argument speaks directly to the forum on Muslims in Europe, in its deliberations on solidarity, pluralism and minorities within democratic societies.

The articles are followed by our Book Review section, which also includes reviews of Hebrew-language books. While *Hagar* is not focused exclusively on its own region of the Middle East, it constitutes a natural platform for the myriad of diverse voices of that region. The Middle East is intellectually vibrant and stimulating and has, over the past decades, generated a fascinating array of perspectives and imaginations. Unfortunately, the cultural and intellectual arenas of our region receive far less attention in the Western world than does our political arena. Through the review of original and translated works, we hope to offer a glimpse into this rich imagination to readers who otherwise would have little access to it.

Hagar has also undergone some exciting changes. First, we have changed the journal's sub-title from "Israel Social Science Review" to "Studies in Culture, Polity and Identities". We feel that this new sub-title better reflects the intellectual agenda of *Hagar*. In addition, we have changed our cover and have upgraded our web site (hsf.bgu.ac.il/hagar). We hope that you enjoy both.

We have a fascinating line-up for upcoming issues, including a special issue devoted to the topic of "Bodies and Borders", which will examine the intersection between the physical body and the geographical boundary, and an issue devoted to divided cities in a global era. We continue to accept non-solicited articles for occasional open issues and encourage you to write to us.

Finally, I would like to thank Ms. Helene Hogri for her expert editing, and to express my special thanks and appreciation to Ms. Hagit Nol, whose professional assistance and dedication have made this issue possible.