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Ussama Makdisi. *Artillery of Heaven: American Missionaries and the Failed Conversion of the Middle East*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008. 280 pp. ISBN: 978-0-8014-4621-4 (\$35; cloth).

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Introduction by Christopher Endy

Reviewers: Nathan J. Citino, Mark LeVine, Michelle Mart, Melani McAlister

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Contents

Introduction by Christopher Endy, California State University, Los Angeles	2
Review by Nathan J. Citino, Colorado State University	6
Review by Mark LeVine, University of California, Irvine.....	10
Review by Michelle Mart, Pennsylvania State University, Berks Campus.....	14
Review by Melani McAlister, George Washington University.....	18
Author's Response by Ussama Makdisi, Rice University	22

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Introduction by Christopher Endy, California State University, Los Angeles

Ussama Makdisi and the four reviewers in this roundtable share an important conviction: that Samuel L. Huntington's notion of a "clash of civilizations" is simplistic and ahistorical. But if Huntington had it wrong, how do we make sense of cultural and religious conflict in the Middle East, especially when such conflict might on the surface seem to support Huntington's framework? This question matters to Makdisi. He sets out to provide an answer in *Artillery of Heaven*, which is a transnational and comparative history of American Protestant missionaries and the nineteenth-century Lebanese world they entered. The question of how to explain cultural conflict also energizes the roundtable discussants. In the process, the roundtable sheds light on other broader themes, particularly the challenge of writing transnational history, the limits of the Americanization paradigm, and the relative virtues of seeking a usable past.

1. All four H-Diplo reviewers are impressed by Makdisi's narrative and thesis. They praise his extensive archival research in the United States, Britain, Lebanon, and Turkey. As the reviewers note, Makdisi skillfully charts the evolution of U.S. Protestant missionary concerns across the nineteenth century, from hand-wringing over Indian removal in North America to a more confident embrace of racist imperialism later in the century. The core of the book lies with the most famous of the Americans' few converts, As'ad Shidyaq. As'ad belonged to the Christian community of Maronites living in what is today Lebanon. After adopting Protestantism around 1825, As'ad found himself imprisoned and tortured by Maronite authorities. With his death in 1830, he became a martyr for American missionaries. Moreover, As'ad's story inspired a later Protestant convert, Butrus al-Bustani, who wrote about As'ad's life to articulate what Makdisi describes as "an ecumenical humanism which the American mission had never intended" (211). Bustani's vision was a new intellectual creation, neither Ottoman, nor American. A skeptic might ask why all of this matters. Because American missionaries won so few converts in the region, neither As'ad nor Bustani stand as representative figures. But all four reviewers endorse Makdisi's sense that these unusual converts matter. First, Protestantism's repression by Maronite authorities reveals much about the importance of regulating sectarian communities in a diverse and modernizing section of the Ottoman Empire. Second, the converts matter for what they represent today: a recognition that cultural contact and conflict in the Middle East can produce not just violence but also original visions of what Makdisi calls "coexistence." In reviewer Michelle Mart's words, "even though *Artillery of Heaven* examines nineteenth-century events, it in part addresses the cultural stereotypes of early twenty-first century America." It is also a story with lessons for twenty-first century Lebanon.

2. Historians might expect a book on U.S. missions in the Middle East to offer a case study of Americanization. It does, but mainly as an example of failure. Makdisi himself avoids reference to scholarly debates over Americanization, and he explicitly rejects the concept of cultural imperialism. Nor is this a history of Americans imposing or spreading modernization to supposedly pre-modern peoples. What Makdisi provides instead is a

subtle account of how American missionaries entered a region that was already in the midst of its own modernizing currents, thanks to Ottoman Empire reformism. (For more discussion on the historiography of Ottoman-era modernization, see Nathan J. Citino's comments in this roundtable.) Rather than mimic American Protestantism, the converts Makdisi studies charted their own path, toward what Mark LeVine in his review labels a "non-colonial modernity." While *Artillery of Heaven* has important implications for those who study Americanization and cultural transfer, it is also a book that sits comfortably on the shelf next to books such as Akira Iriye's *Cultural Internationalism and World Order*.¹ Like Iriye, Makdisi is at root interested in telling the history of how people imagined alternative futures.

3. At the same time, the four reviews, and Makdisi's response, point to the challenges of writing transnational history. Simply put, it is very hard to please everyone when writing a history that attempts to do justice to ideas and contexts in multiple parts of the world. LeVine notes that Makdisi could have done more to investigate the influence of Ottoman political economy, especially taxation disputes. Melani McAlister points in the opposite direction and notes that Makdisi's research renders American missionaries "flatter and less complicated" than his Middle Eastern characters. McAlister goes further to warn against turning transnational history into "a fetish" by adopting "a rather severe definition of what is and what is not a fully 'transnational' story." By this, she means that scholars can do valuable transnational or international history while looking within just one nation. In his reply, Makdisi acknowledges McAlister's point on the value of one-nation transnational studies but also issues a call to take "more seriously the 'world' part of 'America in the world.'"

4. More explicitly than in his book, Makdisi's response to the H-Diplo reviews elicits a clear sense of the author's commitment to effecting change in current relations between Americans and Arabs. As Makdisi writes in this roundtable, the nineteenth-century past matters because of "history's ability to inspire imaginations overwhelmed by the immediacy of the present." Amidst the seemingly constant staccato of news reports of Middle Eastern violence, we can lose sight of visionaries with novel programs for cultural creation and coexistence. Mark LeVine echoes this point. In fact, Makdisi's recuperation of nineteenth-century cross-cultural thinkers finds a rough parallel in LeVine's own recent writing about Middle Eastern heavy metal music.² This is not to say that As'ad and Bustani would have enjoyed hearing Arab teenagers riffing off of Metallica, but they might have recognized at least some kindred spirit.

In his review, Nathan Citino writes that "critics might accuse Makdisi of wishful thinking, of finding a usable past to justify 'ecumenical humanism' in U.S.-Arab relations." None of the roundtable reviewers, however, pursue this criticism themselves. It is tempting to

¹ Akira Iriye, *Cultural Internationalism and World Order* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997).

² Mark LeVine, *Heavy Metal Islam: Rock, Resistance, and the Struggle for the Soul of Islam* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2008).

speculate what Samuel Huntington, who died in December 2008, would have said about this debate. He would probably have had trouble explaining the hybridized vision of coexistence espoused by Bustani. His likely response would be to stress how thinkers like Bustani remained on the margins of Lebanese society. Yet the fact remains that such innovative thinkers did blur boundaries between putative civilizations. Moreover, as Makdisi argues, the obstacles they faced in their native society did not come not from civilizational divides. They instead resulted from specific political, economic, and cultural histories. On this crucial point, Makdisi's book wins unanimous support from the four H-Diplo reviewers.

Participants:

Ussama Makdisi received a Ph.D. in History from Harvard University in 1997 and is the first holder of the Arab American Educational Foundation Chair of Arab Studies at Rice University. He is the author of *Memory and Violence in the Middle East and North Africa* (co-edited with Paul Silverstein (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006) and *The Culture of Sectarianism: Community, History, and Violence in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Lebanon* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000). His future studies include *American Tragedy: America and the Arab World 1820-2006* under contract with Public Affairs and *Understanding Sectarianism* under contract with University of California Press.

Nathan J. Citino is an associate professor of history at Colorado State University. He is the author of *From Arab Nationalism to OPEC: Eisenhower, King Sa'ud, and the Making of U.S.-Saudi Relations*. He recently published "The Ottoman Legacy in Cold War Modernization," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 40 (November 2008): 579-97.

Mark LeVine is professor of modern Middle Eastern history at UC Irvine and author or editor of half a dozen works, including *Heavy Metal Islam: Rock, Resistance, and the Struggle for the Soul of Islam* (Random House/Three Rivers Press), *An Impossible Peace: Oslo and the Burdens of History* (Zed Books, 2009), *Why They Don't Hate Us: Lifting the Veil on the Axis of Evil* (Oneworld, 2005), *Overthrowing Geography: Jaffa, Tel Aviv and the Struggle for Palestine, 1880-1948* (University of California Press, 2005), *Religion, Social Practices and Contested Hegemonies: Reconstructing the Public Sphere in Muslim Majority Societies*, co-editor with Armando Salvatore (Palgrave, 2005), and *Reapproaching Borders: New Perspectives on the Study of Israel-Palestine*, co-editor with Sandy Sufian (Rowman & Littlefield, 2007).

Michelle Mart is associate professor of History and Co-Coordinator of American Studies at Penn State, Berks campus. She earned her Ph.D. from New York University. She is the author of *Eye on Israel: How America Came to View Israel as an Ally (2006)*, and is currently working on a study of pesticides in post World War II America.

Melani McAlister is associate professor of American Studies, International Affairs, and Media and Public Affairs at George Washington University. She received her PhD in American Civilization from Brown University. Prof. McAlister is the author of *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East since 1945* (rev. ed. 2005,

orig. 2001). She is the co-editor, with R. Marie Griffith, of *Religion and Politics in the Contemporary United States* (Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 2008). She is currently working on a study of U.S. Christian evangelicals, popular culture, and international affairs.

Ussama Makdisi is the leading scholar among a group of historians who have reinterpreted the advent of modernity in the late Ottoman empire.¹ Their work is significant for its complex explanation of how internal initiative, as much as external compulsion, reshaped Ottoman institutions and identities. This more complicated picture has supplanted older accounts that associate modernizing reforms with westernization, either imposed by greater powers on the “Sick Man of Europe” or adopted defensively by imperial bureaucrats during the nineteenth-century *Tanzimat* era.²

One of Makdisi’s contributions has been to describe the Ottoman reform discourses through which imperial elites imagined integrating backward, peripheral peoples into a modern state.³ Orientalism, contrary to the definition developed by Makdisi’s uncle Edward Said, was not an exclusively European practice, though Ottoman officials applied their discourse of power internally. Makdisi and other scholars have therefore transcended the East/West and traditional/modern dichotomies that were themselves outgrowths of Europe’s encounter with other parts of the world. Lebanese sectarianism, for instance, far from being a primordial reaction against and obstacle to modernization, is in Makdisi’s account a modern identity politics synthesized from Ottoman reforms, European intervention on behalf of religious minorities, and competing attempts by Lebanese to define a new society.

In recent literature, modernity emerges as a dialogue among westerners and those non-western elites who tried to distinguish modern principles from imperialism so that they could partake in the former.⁴ Makdisi argues that we should pay close attention to the complexity and contingency inherent in the exchange, rather than resorting to what he calls “essentialist propositions.” As he explains in his latest book, the key distinction is between the historical and ahistorical, between “the irregular unfolding of history and the narratives of it that do indeed sweep smoothly across huge spans of time.” (216)

¹ See Ussama Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism: Community, History, and Violence in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Lebanon* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); Eugene Rogan, *Frontiers of State in the Late Ottoman Empire: Transjordan, 1850-1921* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Keith David Watenpaugh, *Being Modern in the Middle East: Revolution, Nationalism, Colonialism, and the Arab Middle Class* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876-1909* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 1998); and Mark LeVine, *Overthrowing Geography: Jaffa, Tel Aviv, and the Struggle for Palestine, 1880-1948* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

² The classic account is Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1961). See also Cem Emrence, “Three Waves of Late Ottoman Historiography,” *Middle East Studies Association Bulletin* 41 (Winter 2007): 137-51.

³ See Ussama Makdisi, “Ottoman Orientalism,” *American Historical Review* 107 (June 2002): 768-96.

⁴ See Cemil Aydin, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia: Visions of World Order in Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian Thought* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).

In *Artillery of Heaven: American Missionaries and the Failed Conversion of the Middle East*, Makdisi considers the American contribution to this dialogue. His treatment of American Protestant missionaries in Lebanon is significant on several levels. While U.S. foreign relations has undergone partial redefinition as “America in the World,” the release of twentieth-century U.S. government documents continues to drive publication in the field. Makdisi has realized the promise of internationalizing U.S. history by focusing on the neglected nineteenth century and on the effects, as much as the sources, of Americans’ first Middle Eastern mission. Second, this book adds to the growing number of works written by Middle East specialists who, prompted by recent events, have studied the United States as an imperial influence similar to and different from others that have helped to shape the region.⁵ Finally, Makdisi sets his story in the context of a comparison between the Ottoman *Tanzimat* and America’s Civil War. Each of these nineteenth-century campaigns of “national consolidation,” he explains, confronted an entrenched social hierarchy, “religious in the Ottoman case, racial in the American one.” (179)

The book revolves around the deceptively “simple missionary tale” of As’ad Shidyaq (1798-1830), the scion of an elite Maronite Christian family who became American Protestant missionaries’ most celebrated convert for achieving martyrdom while imprisoned by the Maronite patriarch. (1) Makdisi is less concerned with establishing the details of As’ad’s life and mysterious death than with analyzing the shifting meanings attached to his ordeal over the course of the nineteenth century. As in his previous work, Makdisi places primary sources at the center of his narrative, making them into something like protagonists. His text includes substantial excerpts from writings by the American missionary Jonas King, Maronite Patriarch Yusuf Hubaysh, and As’ad Shidyaq himself. The author’s formidable bibliography includes Vatican and Ottoman archives, the records of the Maronite Patriarchate, and papers of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions.

Makdisi is an expert at dissecting historical accounts to understand how different communities defined their identities. The book’s first two parts, “Prelude” and “Intersections,” reconstruct the mental worlds of American Protestants and Lebanon’s Maronites before describing their collision. He traces the missionaries’ genealogy from Cotton Mather’s *Magnalia Christi Americana* through the memoir of David Brainerd, eighteenth-century minister to the Indians, to the curriculum at Andover Theological Seminary. The American Congregationalists who arrived in Ottoman Syria in 1819 approached their mission with Brainerd’s urgent sense that the millennium was imminent: “Time appeared but an inch long, and eternity at hand.” (62) Foreign lands also seemed to offer a “precious opportunity” to redeem the “white depredations against Indians” that continued to besmirch North American missions. (57) American missionaries therefore launched a frontal assault that sought to save as many souls as possible and to rescue the Holy Land from what they considered nominally Christian eastern-rite churches and their Muslim captors.

⁵ See Timothy Mitchell, “McJihad: Islam in the U.S. Global Order,” *Social Text* 20 (Winter 2002): 1-18; Rashid Khalidi, *Resurrecting Empire: Western Footprints and America’s Perilous Path in the Middle East* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004); and Robert Vitalis, *America’s Kingdom: Mythmaking on the Saudi Oil Frontier* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007).

By contrast, Maronites inhabited an Ottoman world that combined religious diversity with Islamic primacy and whose local history had long been dominated by conflicts within a cross-sectarian social elite. In addition, Makdisi shows how the Maronite Church propagated the myth of its “eternal” obedience to the Vatican through an invented past that safely sequestered its embrace of the ancient monothelitic heresy, as well as more recent deviations. Makdisi parallels the Maronites’ historical consciousness with that of the American Protestants, portraying Istifan Duwayhi’s seventeenth-century chronicle *Ta’rikh al-Azmina* and the ‘Ayn Waraqa seminary as respective counterparts to Mather’s *Magnalia* and the Protestant academy at Andover. His aim is to depict these two worldviews as incommensurable: the Americans wanted immediate evangelization according to their singular Christian vision, while Maronites, conscious of their minority status, perpetuated the existing social order and myth of orthodoxy through a cycle of isolating transgressors and then reinstating the penitent. Indeed, the encounter between the missionaries and the Maronite hierarchy was initially uncomprehending and then hostile. Prodded by the Vatican, the Patriarch forbade his flock from contact with the “Biblemen” and from accepting their heretical Scriptures. At first incredulous that as well-bred a Maronite as As’ad would associate with Protestants, Hubaysh tried, using increasingly harsh methods, to coerce him back into obedience.

In the final part, “Reorientations,” Makdisi explores the meaning of the Arab-American encounter by examining the ways in which As’ad Shidyaq was both remembered and forgotten. The Americans exchanged their sense of hurtling toward Judgment Day for a modernizing mission that conceded the impossibility of evangelizing as diverse and complex a society as Ottoman Lebanon’s. Gone, however, was the tragic sense of having to atone for Indian removal at home. In Henry Jessup’s *Fifty-Three Years in Syria*, written by a member of the generation that established the Syrian Protestant College, later the American University of Beirut, As’ad’s martyrdom was emblematic of Oriental savagery. The nationalist, racist narratives of the later nineteenth century imagined “missionary work as transmission” to uniformly backward natives, whether Cherokees, Hawai’ians, or Arabs. (153) Violent sectarian clashes in Mount Lebanon reinforced this view, though for Makdisi, the Americans’ flawed civilizational comparison depended on forgetting the contemporary Indian wars and overlooking the incomparable bloodletting of the War between the States. Maronites engaged in another kind of forgetting. As’ad’s ordeal was a “willful omission” from the chronicle of Mount Lebanon’s elite families published by his own brother Tannus in 1859. (201) Unlike what Makdisi elsewhere calls *mada ma mada*, or Ottoman officials’ deliberate forgetting of transgressions as a way of restoring imperial authority, this account effaced the transgressor himself.

The most surprising and significant remembrance came in *Qissat As’ad al-Shidyaq*, published by Butrus al-Bustani in 1860. Another Maronite convert to Protestantism, Bustani reinterpreted As’ad’s story as a modern fable of individual conscience. The martyr’s death was the contingent result of choices made by himself and others, rather than the inevitable consequence of defying established authority. Bustani vindicated As’ad’s insistence that he could both be a member of the Maronite community and participate in the Americans’ evangelism. Such ecumenism was incompatible with the

Ottoman *millet* system, which was based on communal integrity subject to Islamic imperial supremacy. That the sultan had officially recognized Protestantism in 1850 was beside the point, though other imperial reforms in the generation since As'ad's death made Bustani's reinterpretation possible. Bustani appropriated the unfulfilled *Tanzimat* ideal of a universal, non-sectarian imperial citizenship in the interest of his own "vision of modern coexistence." (181) Indeed, it was on this basis that he re-imagined social solidarity in Ottoman Syria following the 1860 sectarian violence. At the same time, Bustani borrowed the American evangelicals' insistence on individual conscience, while rejecting the subordinate, passive role in which they cast all natives. For this reason, the National School he founded could not fulfill its intended purpose as a preparatory academy for the Syrian Protestant College, whose first president dismissed Bustani as a "a bad, bold man – a stumbling block." (211) Above all, Makdisi stresses that Bustani's call for cultural dialogue and intellectual freedom was an original synthesis: it had "no corollary in American missionary writings" nor in "imperial Ottoman edicts, Islamic juridical rulings, or traditional Christian chronicles of Mount Lebanon." (181) The "cultural clash" between American Protestants and the Maronites of Ottoman Lebanon "had, in a word, produced its antithesis." (212)

Those "who make history," concludes another historian of Americans in Ottoman lands, "are seldom the best people to write it."⁶ In *Artillery of Heaven*, as in his other work, Makdisi critically compares inherited narratives to understand modernity as a cross-cultural encounter. He demonstrates that the most rigorous use of a historical source requires mastering that source's internal logic without surrendering to it. For him, only a new, transnational narrative, one that acknowledges yet transcends both Islamic and American exceptionalism, can capture the significance of the "foundational" Arab-American contact. (1) Makdisi therefore refuses to portray the Americans merely as cultural imperialists, differentiating between Protestant missionary work in Lebanon and in North America, where it accompanied settler colonialism. He also expresses a genuine admiration for those Americans, such as Cornelius Van Dyck, who learned Arabic and took Christian fellowship seriously. Critics might accuse Makdisi of wishful thinking, of finding a usable past to justify "ecumenical humanism" in U.S.-Arab relations, just as his earlier book was the historical brief for a post-sectarian Lebanon. (211) Makdisi practices a twenty-first century empiricism, however, that finds unexpected truths not just in the documents but also in the historian's engagement with seemingly irreconcilable worlds.

⁶ A.L. Tibawi, *American Interests in Syria, 1800-1901: A Study of Educational, Literary and Religious Work* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), 302.

I have yet to decide whether Ussama Makdisi's beautifully written book is more relevant to students of religion, of American history, or of the Levant and late Ottoman history more broadly. It is undeniably a seminal account of the intersection of religion and modernity across the boundaries of culture and nationality, and one that has much to teach those of us who study the ramifications of modernity's birth pangs in the Middle East on the region's contemporary dynamics.

When American missionaries first arrived in Lebanon in the 1820s, they were the avatars of a new, Anglo-American modernity that was just beginning to expand its horizons overseas. The first institutional expression of this tendency was the Monroe Doctrine, issued at almost the same moment that the main action of *Artillery of Heaven* takes places.

Both the emerging "American" identity and that of the evangelical Christianity that was at its core were sure of their superiority vis-à-vis other races and lands and of the justice of their expansionist world view. But at that point neither was sure as to the trajectory on which their inevitable rise would take them. Evangelical missionaries had the added urgency of the "rapid passing of time," which could usher in apocalyptic eschatology for which their missionary work was a preparation (84).

While the dramatic setting for the story takes place largely in Beirut and the mountains of present-day Lebanon, Makdisi's numerous references to the earlier and ongoing missionary activities of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions among Native Americans reminds the reader that behind the evangelical impulse was a theological and physical violence that were inseparable. As Makdisi points out, the Christian "benevolence" that was to be demonstrated through the process of evangelization was the "other side of raw power" and of the "holy violence" that was inflicted on As'ad Shidyaaq by his Maronite tormentors, and more broadly, on the Levant, by European colonialism (26, 67). Indeed, the book's title refers to the belief in just how efficacious the various types of violence inherent to missionary activities could be, and how closely linked together they were, and remain.

Much has been made of the European violence inflicted on non-Western peoples, particularly those of the Muslim world, rightly so. Less understood is how local configurations of violence, and struggles for power and hegemony, and resistance to it, unfolded within societies such as those of the Levant. Works such as Michael Gilson's *Lords of the Marches* and Makdisi's first book, *Culture of Sectarianism*, have provided a powerful description of the role of political economy of violence and intercommunal as well as intracommunal conflict in shaping Lebanese history.

Yet here the violence is explored primarily as it relates to a religious-cultural conflict between what the author describes as "two different and fundamentally antithetical readings of the world. One reflected a determination to refashion that world on Evangelical

terms at a time of ascendant Anglo-American power; the other, a violent refusal to accept these terms” (5).

Makdisi is very careful to avoid essentializing either American Evangelicals or the Maronite, Muslim, and Druze communities to which they were attempting to evangelize. Yet I’m not sure if the “readings” of the world between the two protagonists were that different.

Certainly their respective goals were irreconcilable. But one could argue that both “read” the situation as part of a struggle that, beyond one man’s soul and eternal fate, had larger implications for each side, reflecting the need to press or fight off shifts in the balance of political, social, and economic power in the region, and in the Middle East more broadly. If one is not knowledgeable about the situation in the regions where the missionaries were operating is it very difficult to understand this larger context in which the contest over Shidyayq’s body and soul were taking place.

Indeed, it may well be that there were more than two readings; that As’ad Shidyayq represented a third, liminal reading of the political, social and religious economies in play—and in flux—during the first half of the 19th century. Shidyayq’s constant references to using “reason” and “evidence” (119) to determine his faith, his faith in the idea of progress and desire to open, at least for himself, a different path towards the future, can be read as reflecting more than merely the religious awakening of one man. More broadly, it reflects the first stirring of what would become, at least for a time, a non-colonial modernity in the Levant.

This modernity, that was based on varying understandings of cosmopolitan Ottoman identity (and eventually citizenship), and the emergence of a merchant-cum-industrial bourgeoisie that was variously and often simultaneously tied to the Ottoman state and European capital and/or governments, to urban and landed elites together. It would emerge in cities of the Eastern Mediterranean such as Istanbul, Jaffa, or Alexandria, and to varying degrees, within the interior of Greater Syria, Mehmet Ali’s Egypt, and the Ottoman metropole as the century matured.

The launching of the Tanzimat in 1839, which formalized a process of modernization that was already underway in the decades leading up to 1839, and which would proceed by fits and starts across the Levant, epitomized this process. The non-colonial modernity represented potentially by Shidyayq would have emerged in good measure with the help of a missionary impulse that was powerfully rooted, and impelled, by a nascent American imperial project. It would have embraced both the ethos of tolerance that was at the core of the Ottoman compact and of the Protestant “spirit of capitalism” that Evangelicals were harnessing to their quest for spiritual dominance.

Makdisi demonstrates how ambivalent the process of modernization could be for missionaries precisely because it could inspire—in their terms, “corrupt”—the indigenous peoples to demand equality with their Anglo-American/Western “brothers” (190-192). The evangelical “openness” and belief in a common humanity epitomized by Shidyayq and

even more so by Bustani would directly challenge the established hierarchies of Maronite society.

Yet it is hard to know where Shadyaq fit into this flux-filled dynamic; although his torture and death do suggest that the Maronite elite was still operating within what according to Foucault's seminal typology would be a premodern discourse of power. Yet at the same time I am not sure that one can simply characterize the views of the local Maronite elite as part of a larger "temporality of tolerance" and "Ottoman coexistence" (70).

To begin with, this coexistence was fragile, as the conflicts and sometimes intense bloodshed between Maronites, Druze, and Sunnis during the 1840-60 period revealed. Second, it was tolerance and coexistence only within the framework of a rigid hierarchy in which religious, economic and political power were enmeshed in complex and sometimes contradictory ways. Stability and the status quo were crucial when the Maronite leadership felt threatened by Protestant missionaries (and here, without a discussion of the class position and economic foundation for the ecclesiastical elite, it's hard to know what else besides a "foreign heresy" would have felt so threatening in their early encounter with American missionaries), but change would be welcome when it could improve their position through various forms of economic change and/or alliances with foreign powers such as Britain and France.

Makdisi explains that the Maronites represented the front line of an incongruous yet coherent Ottoman Arab order of things, in which the religious and social fracturing of Mount Lebanon allowed Maronites to thrive yet also exposed them and other Eastern Christian communities to the brunt of missionary assault. What is clear is that when the opportunity presented itself, Maronites did not hesitate to do forge such relations, helping to lay the groundwork for the separate, Maronite-dominated Lebanese state brought into being in the wake of World War One and the demise of the Ottoman Empire. Indeed, as Makdisi points out in his earlier work, *Culture of Sectarianism*, sectarian struggle, and not tolerance and stability, is in many ways "the modern story" vis-à-vis the region.

If modernity is a complex component of the Artillery of Heaven, there is little doubt that the immediate cause of As'ad Shidyaaq's death was his refusal to renounce what for the Maronite Patriarch were his "heretical" beliefs. But here again, without the larger political-economic environment in which the events unfolded, it's hard to get a feel for why this particular heresy was so threatening to the elite at that moment.

Why did the Maronite leadership feel so threatened by a small number of Protestant preachers? What transformations in the larger political economy of Lebanon and the surrounding area were underway at this time—and which would ultimately be expressed by the Tanzimat reforms—that might have made the populace open to the kind of narrative Shidyaaq offered? As Makdisi points out, much of the fighting in this period was part of a larger contest over who controlled lucrative tax districts rather than over theological disputes (74). A more detailed discussion of this contest would have made it easier to assess the particular conflicts upon which his narrative focuses.

What is perhaps most important about the story of As'ad Shidyaq is that the proper telling of his story allows us to understand how "what had been portrayed initially as a 'clash of cultures' wound up being an opportunity for expanded dialog within and across them." This potential could not be allowed to be realized by the Maronite leadership, at least until they could have more control over the conversation.

And thus Shidyaq had to be declared not merely to be corrupt but "insane" (115-117). His desire to proselytize publicly, to speak publicly and challenge entrenched interests, clearly constituted a threat that could not be tolerated. The concepts of heresy and insanity are pregnant with meaning; the sinews connecting reason, faith and power, whether raw or refined, require delicate mapping. A generation after Shidyaq's death, Butrus al-Bustani would similarly attempt to integrate American missionary and Ottoman "civilizing" impulses. He would both expose their stark hierarchies as each claimed to rescue allegedly ignorant natives from the other and help create the kind of institutional spaces, particularly in the National School and the American University of Beirut, in which the kind of modernity foretold by Shidyaq could be, if not forged, at least approximated.

Bustani understood that he was far more fortunate than his predecessor, "a privileged product of a transitional age, an age of progress claimed by all but owned by none," as Makdisi eloquently describes it. That liminal moment, when another modernity seemed possible, is long gone. But until this day Lebanon's various communities continue to struggle, sometimes violently, over who will own what share of the country's future. Makdisi's telling of the story of As'ad Shidyaq reminds us that the lives of seemingly minor characters who were lost in such transitions can teach us as much about the process of historical change as their more privileged counterparts.

Writing of a century in which one of the most indelible American images of the Middle East might have been that painted by Mark Twain in his 1869 *The Innocents Abroad*, Ussama Makdisi seeks to illuminate a more nuanced story of encounter in *Artillery of Heaven: American Missionaries and the Failed Conversion of the Middle East*. Makdisi's complex account of the clash between American missionary ambitions and Arab Christian conversions and resistance succeeds in painting a transnational portrait of an encounter between specific peoples in a particular time and place. The book carefully avoids the essentialist generalizations of many historical accounts of the Middle East, and it also reaches beyond the particular historical figures portrayed to shed light on enduring cultural values and ambitions.

Even though *Artillery of Heaven* examines nineteenth-century events, it in part addresses the cultural stereotypes of early twenty-first century America. Makdisi is participating in the historiographic conversation spurred by Samuel Huntington's clash of civilization thesis and, most importantly, the embrace of that thesis as a tautology by some scholars following 9/11. Makdisi convincingly argues that cultures, nations, and the clashes among them have to be understood historically and specifically, while acknowledging that there are "narratives of [history] that do indeed sweep smoothly across huge spans of time." This blend, however, is still a rejection of essentialism: "Cultures are not caricatures to be set in irreconcilable opposition to one another." (216)

Makdisi's understanding of the complexity of cultures is informed by the Orientalist framework described by Edward Said, but like the history discussed in Melani McAlister's *Epic Encounters*, Makdisi's approach is better understood as "post-Orientalist." This categorization is due to the complexities of cultural motivations Makdisi explores rather than the period of time he studies. Moreover, Orientalism has become "complicated" in the U.S. in part because of the overuse of the term for all Western images of the East; as McAlister concludes, "the definition has become too flexible for its own good."¹

One component of Makdisi's story of encounter is an exploration of the idealistic vision of American missionaries. Can the work of missionaries ever be benevolent? Makdisi reveals the difficulty of the question in his portrait of missionaries on the American continent and in the Middle East. He begins his story with a consideration of John Eliot, the ideal missionary in the eyes of 18th century Puritans, as described by Cotton Mather's end of the century *Magnalia Christi Americana*. In this account, the difficulty of proselytizing among peoples subject to violent settler colonialism and who thus had no free will to accept Puritan doctrines is a painful paradox for John Eliot.

The failure of this missionary experience provided the inspiration and justification that propelled early 19th century missionaries across the ocean to seek success in the Middle

¹ Melani McAlister, *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East, 1945-2000* (Berkeley, 2001), 11, 12. Also, Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York, 1978).

East. As Makdisi observes, this new mission “offered to vindicate the ideals of mission in an arena untainted, or so nineteenth century missionaries had to believe, by the realities of settler colonialism.” (31) If the members of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) imagined that their international proselytizing would have a purity lacking in the work of 17th century missionaries in North America, they found evidence for this confidence in their role as national representatives of American Protestantism and in their faith that reaching out to heathens had universal importance.

Yet, Makdisi points out the contradictions between religious ideals of universality and the pervasive idea that Americans were superior to those who were being proselytized: “The missionary ethos of the innate similarity of all people before God was systematically undercut by a far more trenchant ethos of civilizational inequality that separated the generic heathen from the benevolent missionary.” (57)

As Makdisi lays out the religious ideals of American missionaries from the 17th to the 19th centuries, he weaves the parallel story of Maronite society in Lebanon and the value placed upon religion. The Maronites and other inhabitants of the diverse Ottoman Empire would continue to live in a world of many religions all coexisting under the umbrella of benevolent Muslim rule. Using the 17th century history *Tarikh al-azimina – A History of the Ages* by then Maronite patriarch Istifan Duwayhi as a counterpoint to the 17th century Puritan narrative of conversion and salvation, Makdisi observes, “This Muslim world was defined most basically by a recognition that different faiths were bound to coexist and, crucially, by a knowledge that the interactions of these different faiths had varied greatly from dynasty to dynasty, city to city, and century to century.” (33) Nevertheless, there is a constant in the patriarch’s story of religious identity. The Maronites would exist and thrive within a Muslim empire: “Their perpetual orthodoxy amidst unbelievers, like a rose among thorns, thus became for Duwayhi perfectly compatible with Ottoman rule.” (45)

Following his careful introduction of religious world views, Makdisi develops his story of a cultural clash in the portraits of two Maronite converts and their interactions with American missionaries. Both men were born into relatively elite Maronite families in a world of religious coexistence and diversity. Both were conscious of their minority status within an Islamically-based empire. Both were dissatisfied with the religious dogma of their upbringing and attracted to the Protestant world view brought by the American missionaries. But the stories are not static, and the fates of As’ad Shidyayq in the early nineteenth century and Butrus al-Bustani in the late nineteenth century are vastly different.

In the early nineteenth century, the clash between the missionaries and the Maronites was partly a story of a conservative world view confronted by a progressive, idealistic one: “The notion of rushing forth to evangelize the world because of the rapid passage of time was alien to an Ottoman Arab culture that prided itself on its stability amidst heresy and infidelity, and its uninterrupted political and religious lineages.” (84) If the missionaries’ religious and world views were absolute, so, too, were those of the early 19th century Maronite patriarch Yusuf Hubaysh once he recognized the threat posed by the Americans. Even if the ideals of coexistence were part of the Maronite way of life, these ideals had to be

abandoned in the face of a challenger seeking to communicate a unitary truth. In this way, the missionaries and the patriarch had more in common than they realized: “Both insisted that they were committed to saving souls, and both claimed biblical knowledge, yet both could articulate their benevolence only through the total repudiation of the other.” (96)

As’ad Shidyaq found himself caught between the Protestant assertions of redemption and the Maronite charges that he had become a heretic. As’ad argued that his religious renewal was a renewal of his identity; he “insist[ed] that he was both an evangelical and an obedient Maronite.” (109-110)

The sincerity of As’ad’s conviction that there was no contradiction between his religious and cultural identities was demonstrated in his efforts to evangelize his fellow Maronites. However, Makdisi argues, the effort to make his individual convictions a communal affair and to challenge the unspoken but powerful tenets of religious coexistence turned out to be his greatest crime and his undoing, leading to his persecution, imprisonment by the patriarch’s forces, and eventual death in 1830.

In the years after the martyrdom of As’ad Shidyaq, American missionaries changed their goals, becoming more self-consciously nationalistic and more willing to embrace their own feelings of superiority vis-à-vis the Maronites and others in the Middle East. Makdisi argues that the strengthening of mid to late 19th century Manifest Destiny and Orientalism among the missionaries was spurred by events in both the United States and in Lebanon. The ACBFM’s failure to prevent the passage of the Indian Removal Act of 1830 closed a chapter of Protestant proselytizing among the eastern tribes and helped to demonstrate the inevitability of American expansion across the continent and beyond. Thirty years later, the brutal fighting between Druzes and Maronites, the culmination of twenty years of sectarian political and social struggle in Lebanon, provided another type of demonstration for the missionaries. The missionaries turned a blind eye to their own heritage of violence especially toward blacks and Indians, and condemned the Druze and Maronite fighting as symptoms of backward and uncivilized peoples.

The late 19th century missionary sensibility was best illustrated by Henry Jessup in his lengthy account from 1910, *Fifty-Three Years in Syria*. Makdisi writes that in his chronicle of missionary efforts to civilize the Middle East, “Jessup made missionary work synonymous with enlightenment, science, and an American modernity which, he believed, had made great inroads into, and would inevitably triumph over, the supposedly stagnant, sectarian, and segregated landscape of antagonistic religious communities in the Ottoman Empire.” (169) Jessup’s writings laid the groundwork for what would be reprised in the late 20th century by Samuel Huntington.

Makdisi brings his story of Maronite-missionary encounters full circle with the story of Butrus al-Bustani, a Maronite, Protestant convert. But while Bustani shared a religious path with As’ad, he represented a new synthesis of cultures and transnational influences, and held a basic assumption of not only the coexistence of different religions but in the equality of various cultures.

Bustani's emphasis on coexistence differs from that articulated by the Maronite patriarch Yusuf Hubaysh earlier in the century and makes it distinctly modern by privileging individual freedom over community; his "evangelical faith [in the sincerity of As'ad's conversion] was crucial to Bustani's liberal perspective and was tied not to specific Protestant principles but to a more general belief in the universal freedom of the individual to believe without compulsion, to search and to enquire after truth regardless of the physical obstacles and communal strictures." (204)

Makdisi cautions that his celebratory portrait of Bustani is not a hagiography of one man but an illustration of how complex, transnational histories shape people: "My point here is not so much that Bustani was an exceptional figure but rather that he was an exemplary liberal product of the commingling of American and Arab histories, and made possible new, and often contradictory, conceptions of the modern world." (215) Although Bustani and As'ad were exceptional in key ways (they were minorities in a Muslim-dominated empire, and were compelled to embrace a new faith when few of their co-religionists did), Makdisi's main point holds true that they were both actors in transnational histories reflecting particular moments in time. Their individual religious choices set them in conflict with their communities (and support Makdisi's assertion that his is not an account of cultural imperialism).

Artillery of Heaven is a rich history of cultural values and foreign relations. The most valuable aspects of the multilayered discussion are the questions posed about two conflicts: the conflict between the individual and his community, and that between universal ambitions and particular identities. Among both missionaries and Maronites were individuals who stood up to communal values, and while many were not successful only one ended as a martyr. The American missionaries defined their goals as universal, first as a fulfillment of religious truth and, later, as a fulfillment of cultural and racial destiny. But like many who have professed their universalism, they were blind to their own particular identities and the limitations they imposed. Meanwhile, the Maronite religious establishment clung so tenaciously to a particular religious identity and heritage that it was unwilling to allow individual challenge or liberal change.

Ussama Makdisi's *Artillery of Heaven* succeeds both by making a new contribution to the clash of civilizations debate and by providing a window on one set of building blocks in the relations between Americans and Arabs in the Middle East.

Ussama Makdisi's *Artillery of Heaven* is an impressively researched and elegantly written account of the encounter between 19th-century U.S. missionaries to the Ottoman empire and the people they attempted to evangelize. The center of the book is the story of As'ad Shidyaq, a Maronite Catholic who in 1825 was converted to evangelical Protestantism by American missionaries in Mount Lebanon. Five years later, As'ad died in a local monastery, where he had been imprisoned and tortured by the Maronite patriarch. The patriarch and other local officials saw As'ad—correctly, in some ways—as a threat to the settled, multi-layered community order of Mt. Lebanon, held intact by Ottoman hierarchies and its limited but functioning forms of tolerance.

Artillery of Heaven, which has been named an “outstanding new book” by *Foreign Affairs* and awarded the Albert Hourani book prize by the Middle East Studies Association, is an analysis of a deadly transnational cultural encounter between Americans and the Middle East. It is also a passionate argument against the ahistorical and tendentious notions of “cultural clash” that have so dominated popular discourse about U.S.-Middle East relations in the last ten years. Makdisi has previously written an important essay that tracks a history of both pro- and anti-American feeling in the Middle East.¹ This project, like his earlier scholarship, works “not by denying the violence of history, or the reality of cultural confrontation, but by studying them historically”(216).

The history of encounter Makdisi tells is not a pretty one, but it is fascinating. The book does a wonderful job of describing the situation of the Orthodox Maronites of Mt. Lebanon, who lived in a community deeply stratified by class and traditional hierarchies. They also existed under an Islamic Ottoman regime that allowed for tolerance and pluralism, but within an official doctrine of Christian subordination. In addition to maintaining their place in the local order, Maronites had complex transnational allegiances as well, which required that they constantly assure the leadership in Rome that they were proper Catholics. Speaking two languages of subservience, to the Ottomans and to Rome, the Maronites, Makdisi argues, “were able to engage with utter fluency in a third language of coexistence, with its own unwritten grammar of multireligious life, entirely alien...to the nineteenth-century Americans missionaries who would offer them ‘true’ Christianity” (46).

The American missionaries’ first, and for many years only, convert was the young man As'ad Shidyaq, who claimed that he had become convinced by the missionaries’ call for a biblically-based faith and the need for an unmediated relationship between the believer and God. As'ad’s mistake was to forget, or to refuse to acknowledge, the rules of the Ottoman community in which he lived. Mt. Lebanon was an area inhabited by Christians, Druze, and Shi’a Muslims who coexisted through rules—written and unwritten--of religious tolerance mediated through a hierarchical system of sheikhs and clans that crossed religious lines.

¹ Ussama Makdisi, “Anti-Americanism” in the Arab World: An Interpretation of a Brief History,” *The Journal of American History* 89: 2, “History and September 11: A Special Issue” (Sept., 2002): 538-557.

One of Makdisi's strengths is that he makes clear the intersecting local alliances in which the convert As'ad operated, and is able to highlight just what was at stake in As'ad's attempt to forge a position for himself as both Maronite and evangelical. The American missionaries saw the Maronite opposition to As'ad's conversion as an example of Papist heresy and Eastern fanaticism. They neither saw nor cared how the local Maronite community felt threatened, with a patriarch who could neither afford to lose the support of Rome or to allow any individual to make religion into a matter of preference rather than a foundation of Ottoman social order.

Makdisi's discussion of the missionaries is less nuanced, and in some ways simply less interesting, than his analysis of the situation in Mt. Lebanon. On the one hand, Makdisi makes an important and valuable argument for the limits of cultural or religious imperialism. The arrival of American evangelicals in the 1820s was not, he points out, an imperial event in any direct sense; unlike European missionaries in this period, the Americans did not have the backing of militaries or the imprimatur of scientific or government support, not even much in the ways of economic resources. This first, pioneer generation of missionaries was sent by the American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions, but they were essentially evangelical entrepreneurs. Millennialist, exclusionist, and utterly presumptuous, they showed up in Ottoman Syria with no knowledge of Arabic or the local culture, and little to offer but their own certainties.

Makdisi usefully situates the missionaries in the context of the failure of the Protestant mission to Native American Indians. Several generations of white American believers had first evangelized local Indian communities with enthusiasm, and then watched with varying degrees of dismay and horror as those communities were relentlessly exterminated. But Makdisi underplays the degree to which American missionaries were active opponents of the genocidal U.S. Indian policies, just as he fails to fully account for the ways in which Christian notions that every person was a child of God provided some grounds—if not nearly enough—for challenge to the feverish racism of much secular U.S. culture.² As the American Board of Commissions for Foreign Missions began to send a few missionaries, first to Palestine and Egypt, and then to the larger Middle East, Makdisi argues, the Holy Land became “a proving ground for American redemption,” where Americans “could glory in a language of benevolence that was rapidly running its course with the Indians at home” (11).

This is undoubtedly correct, but it is not entirely sufficient: These “benevolent” missionaries came to the Ottoman empire determined to rescue its lands from the dangers of both Islam and “Popery.” They arrived, as Makdisi so beautifully puts it, “in a land they recognized but did not know” (61). But as actors in this encounter, the missionaries come off as far flatter and less complicated than the people they attempt to convert. Because Makdisi focuses so carefully on the ideological and social encounter that led to As'ad's

² Peggy Pascoe, *Relations of Rescue: The Search for Female Moral Authority in the American West, 1874-1939* (Oxford, 1993).

death and then Bustani's modern recuperation, we actually learn relatively little of how the American missionaries themselves thought about, or were changed by, their Ottoman experiences. The missionaries are almost shadowy figures, whose thoughts and motivations are all but inaccessible, while both As'ad and the Maronite leaders who persecute him are vibrant, extraordinary human beings.

Similarly, the global contexts in which U.S. missionaries operated is relatively undeveloped, and their part of this "transnational" story seems to end when they depart the Middle East, although we know that the realities of missions to the Middle East had a profound impact on the evangelical community in America, which was also simultaneously evangelizing in China, Hawaii, Africa, and elsewhere.³ My call for a richer missionary story is not, of course, based upon a need to justify the obviously racist and anti-Muslim/anti-Catholic views of these U.S. figures. But as Timothy Marr's fine discussion of Holy Land missionaries in this period makes clear, these Americans came with their own complex ideologies about scripture, their own divisions over doctrine, and with real divisions among themselves.⁴ In the final section of the book, Makdisi does discuss briefly one American missionary who had a far more cosmopolitan approach to his encounters, Cornelius van Dyck, who, as Makdisi points out, was one of the few missionaries to stand against the general notion that "*natives...were as a whole not ready enough, not evangelical enough, and not yet civilized enough to be trusted with independence*" (192).

The last part of *Artilleries of Heaven* is about memory. It tells the story of Butrus al-Bustani, who published in 1860 an Arabic tribute to As'ad Shidyaaq. The American missionaries had already spent decades hailing As'ad as a martyr, but Bustani, himself a Protestant converted by those same missionaries, penned a defense that was also a call for ecumenical tolerance and individual conscience. Highlighting As'ad's right of conscience, Bustani's treatise was a marker of a new kind of anti-authoritarianism, one that challenged the inequalities of the Ottoman system, but which also believed in reconciliation between Protestant and Maronite. Bustani was a figure distinct from the other Christians around him; no longer Maronite, he was one of the few converts that Americans could claim in the more than 30 years since As'ad had died. And he eagerly embraced the opportunities for education, and the sense of intellectual and spiritual openings, that his encounters with missionaries provided. But in Bustani's modern peon to religious diversity was clear evidence that his conversion had taken "an unanticipated direction, which the missionaries could not control and refused to sanction" (197).

Artillery of Heaven has been rightfully hailed as an excellent model for transnational history. It is ambitious in its scope and impressive in its erudition, drawing on multiple archives, using both Arabic and English sources. At its heart, though, this an Ottoman and ultimately Lebanese story about the possibilities and dangers of transnational encounter in a world of expanding U.S. power. That in itself makes the book extraordinarily valuable. It

³ The literature on missionaries is vast. See in particular Dana Lee Roberts, ed. *Converting Colonialism: Vision and Realities in Mission History, 1706-1914* (W.B. Eardmans, 2008).

⁴ Timothy Marr, *The Cultural Roots of American Islamicism* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 2006), 82-133.

also speaks to the utter difficulty of doing a transnational history that provides equally nuanced attention to the several sides of a given encounter.

In truth, I have serious doubts anyway about what is fast becoming a fetish for transnationalism, often involving a rather severe definition of what is and what is not a fully “transnational” story. As we continue to take discussion of international affairs well beyond the boundaries of state policy, this does not mean that the only important work will be that which speaks equally to all aspects of the border-crossing realities that constitute our political, cultural, intellectual, and religious worlds.⁵ When people do give a full accounting, for example, of a missionary encounter as perceived by all sides, or the transnational 60s revolution, or the global development of human rights policies, they give us something extremely valuable.⁶ When they focus instead on the ways that Americans placed their expansionist ideologies into their own understandings of gender, or on how Germans responded to U.S. culture, or on the investments of African American radicals who traveled to Ghana and embraced African nationalist thought, they establish a different set of contexts, and what they offer in terms of international history is equally crucial.⁷

Within and beyond these debates about method, however, *Artillery of Heaven* is a work of profound relevance for our larger understandings of the possibilities and problematics of transnational encounters in a globalizing world. In the end, Makdisi’s argument is that Asad’s memorializer, Bustani, is an exemplary figure because he was neither “Western” nor “Lebanese,” but rather the product of co-mingled Arab and American histories. He was a figure created at the intersections, where a dream of coexistence was forged – one that challenged both the narrow orthodoxies of U.S. Protestantism and the sectarian rigidities of the Ottoman system. At its most basic, Makdisi’s book is a call for re-constructing that dream of an ecumenical, humanistic, global consciousness. After all, Makdisi argues, “we are, in the end, all implicated in one another’s histories” (220).

⁵ I discuss this in some detail in “What is your heart for? Affect and Internationalism in the Evangelical Public sphere,” *American Literary History*, December 2008.

⁶ See, for example, Jeremy Suri, *Power and Protest: Global Revolution and the Rise of Detente* (Harvard University Press, 2005); Inderpal Grewal, *Transnational America: Feminisms, Diasporas, Neoliberalisms* (Duke University Press, 2005); or the collection edited by Mark Bradley and Patrice Pedro, *Truth Claims: Representation and Human Rights* (Rutgers University Press, 2002).

⁷ Amy Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture* (Harvard University Press, 2004); Uta Poiger, *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels, Cold War Politics and American Culture in a Divided Germany* (University of California, 2000); Kevin Gaines, *American Africans in Ghana: Black Expatriates and the Civil Rights Era* (University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

Author's Response by Ussama Makdisi, Rice University

I truly appreciate this engagement with my book. As Michelle Mart notes, an explicit goal of *Artillery of Heaven* was to get beyond the spurious notion of a “clash of civilizations.” My idea was not to deny that there have been cultural clashes in the past (or in the present for that matter) but to historicize them. The question, of course, remains how to accomplish this task.

My approach was to take a single case that revolved around the struggle for the body and soul of the first Arab convert to American Protestantism As'ad Shidyaq to elucidate how one clash between one set of Americans (not “America”) and one set of Arabs (not “Islam” or the “Middle East”) actually unfolded historically. I thought that it was essential not only to delve into American and Arab archives, but equally important, to break out of the disciplinary injunctions that segregate the field of “Middle Eastern History” from “American History,” injunctions that compel historians of each area to conduct separate conversations even if the material they are covering should actually bring them together. My single greatest frustration with the historiography of America and the Middle East, or what is more broadly referred to as “America and the world” is that most of the work being done on the topic continues to privilege American archives and perspectives, to ignore non-American perspectives and sources, and in the process render them irrelevant to the story of encounter.

This has been particularly true of the study of American missionary work overseas. In my book, therefore, I tried to incorporate as fully as possible these neglected perspectives and sources. The book is part of a series *The United States in the World* at Cornell University Press that is, in fact, explicitly committed to a methodology of using foreign language sources to shed light on American history. The result has been, I believe, not simply to fill a gap in the literature, or to add native voice to an American story, but to reveal the extraordinary histories involving Americans and Arabs—and questions about the genealogies of liberalism, tolerance, and ecumenism in the modern world—that have simply not been told. These have not been told in part because of the defensiveness of Islamic and Arab nationalist historiography that has excoriated the “imperialism” of missions, but also because of the parochialism of traditional American diplomatic or missionary historiography. Although the field of U.S.-Middle Eastern diplomatic relations has been recently revitalized by the contributions of Nathan Citino, Robert Vitalis, and Salim Yaqub, most American diplomatic historians, for example, are not yet trained in sufficient numbers to study or take seriously foreign archives. As Citino points out this appears to be because the release of American government documents drives the field of diplomatic history. But what of missionary history?

I am well aware, of course, that not all history has to be “transnational” and as Melani McAlister says not all “transnational” history has to be the same. I am also very aware of the tremendous contribution to our understanding of American history that scholars such as McAlister, Mary Renda, and Timothy Marr among others who focus exclusively on American perspectives, have made by revealing the layers and the complexity of American

engagement with foreign cultures. McAlister's review, however, brings up the point that my book does not treat the American missionaries with as much nuance as I have treated the principal Arab characters in the book, namely the convert As'ad al-Shidyaq and the man who pioneered the idea of secularism in the Levant Butrus al-Bustani. Perhaps, although I structured the book and dealt with American and Arab characters and archives (Cotton Mather and Istifan Duwayhi, Jonas King and As'ad Shidyaq, Henry Jessup and Butrus al-Bustani) to indicate that I was grappling, however imperfectly, with *both* American and Arab history. I was trying to uncover an *interconnected* history that I really do believe neither existing American nor Arab historiography on its own national terms can convey. I was also writing with the knowledge that the vast majority of English-language histories of American missionaries (with the exception of the seminal work by A.L. Tibawi) have consistently privileged the Americans—their voices, their lives, their ideologies.

To be sure, McAlister acknowledges that any project that tries to provide an equally nuanced attention to several sides of the encounter is going to be difficult, if not impossible. The point, however, is to try. I would go one step further: it is to say that there is a point in the historiography where it should no longer be acceptable to write histories of American involvement overseas without taking into account, and expecting and training our graduate students to also take into account, foreign languages, sources, and perspectives when they are so obviously central to a story of encounter. For I understand the encounters that have unfolded between Americans and Arabs as mutually constitutive even if profoundly uneven. Just as Ottoman historians take a dim view of histories written about the Ottoman empire that do not avail themselves to using readily available Ottoman sources, what excuse is there for Americanists who delve into international arenas—"America and the world"—not to take up and consider the full spectrum of American history when the sources for this history are so readily available, even if they are in foreign archives and languages? Again, I do not plead for forgiveness of my book's shortcomings. But I do want to insist on a new awareness among many scholars (including Citino's work on U.S.-Saudi relations, Paul Kramer's work on the U.S. in the Philippines, Erez Manela's work on the Wilsonian moment, and Heather Sharkey's work on American evangelicals in Egypt) of the need for a new methodology that takes far more seriously the "world" part of "America and the world." It would be a real tragedy if a wonderful opening of American historiography to the idea of the "world" that has been ongoing for more than a decade suddenly retrenches in the face of the serious methodological and historiographical overhaul needed to fulfill its potential.

I concede that a book like mine, which straddles such different fields as American, Ottoman, Lebanese, missionary, political, cultural history, is bound to leave many questions unanswered, and many avenues unexplored. None of the reviewers here, for example, specialize on missionaries, although missionaries and converts are the book's main protagonists. I have been criticized elsewhere for not taking the faith of the missionaries seriously because I am a secular historian (true enough I think, which begs the question of how a historian ought to take faith seriously?) Those who are more centrally part of the world of Middle East studies, such as Mark LeVine, offer different criticisms from those, such as McAlister and Mart, who are not. I think LeVine is correct in elaborating a point about the long nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire that defies simple classification as a

colonial modernity. He refers to it as a “non-colonial modernity” although I would hesitate to use the term simply because I see the nineteenth century as a coming together, a crisis really, of a preexisting Ottoman imperialism under the impact of a variety of Western intrusions—some of which were very decidedly colonial. I also used the term “coexistence” in my book to signify not the idea of a liberal multiculturalism with which one often conflates the term but with a set of historical conditions, including the nature of Islamic discrimination, Ottoman state violence, and local power politics, that shaped a multireligious society and that rendered utterly alien the initial American Protestant missionary fantasy of converting the “heathen” of the world to their religion. Yet, as LeVine notes, because of this missionary intrusion (and much larger forces at work such as Ottoman reformation and European imperialism) sectarian struggle becomes one crucial “modern” story that I took up in my first book; but so too does its antithesis, a reworked (and ultimately romanticized) notion of coexistence, which I tried to emphasize in my book through the character of Bustani. We are still, in my view at least, in this phase of history.

Two final points about the idea of post-Orientalist historiography and about my own use of history to think about the present. McAlister situates this book as part of a post-Orientalist historiography. I find the point compelling, not least because of my own engagement with Edward Said’s work. Yet I am of two minds about the notion of post-Orientalist historiography. On the one hand, how can we develop a post-Orientalist historiography when so much of what occurs around us—especially concerning Muslims and Arabs—remains steeped in Orientalist idiom and when, even more importantly, the U.S. attitude toward the Middle East is resiliently imperialistic? On the other hand, like Edward Said himself, I do think that there is a role for scholarship to play in trying to shape an ecumenical humanism—or at the very least to resist discourses of discrimination, or less heroically, to remind ourselves and others of alternative ways of writing and thinking about America’s relationship to the Middle East. One effective way to do this is to criticize and analyze Western practices and discourses (that Said first undertook in *Orientalism* and that a great number of literary critics, art historians, and American studies scholars have subsequently pursued). An even more effective way, I believe, is to relate such practices and discourses to those of groups who constitute the other “side” of the encounter. In short, it is to capture the dynamic of interaction, and to try and give expression and agency, and therefore humanity, to Arabs (and not only Americans). It is to make this expression and agency *indispensable* to the telling of history involving them, even if the story we tell is ultimately tragic. This is how I understand Said’s exhortation in *Culture and Imperialism* for what he described as “contrapuntal” analysis, especially his call to “think through and interpret together experiences that are discrepant, each with its particular agenda and pace of development, its own internal formations, its internal coherence and system of external relationships, all of them existing and interacting with others.”¹

One final point which is brought up by Citino is that critics might accuse me of “wishful thinking” and of trying to find a “usable past to justify” (his words) a more equitable relationship between Americans and Arabs, just as my earlier work in *Culture of Sectarianism* constituted (again in Citino’s words) “the historical brief for a post-sectarian

¹ Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (Vintage: 1993), 32.

Lebanon.” We are clearly very far from both these ideals. The value of history, however, stems from the lessons we draw from it. It stems as well from history’s ability to inspire imaginations overwhelmed by the immediacy of the present. History writing does not change power politics; but it is a terrain of contestation like any other. Abolitionists were once called wishful thinkers; so too were advocates of women’s equality; so too are those who today struggle for peace and justice in Palestine. The lessons I draw from the history of American and Arab encounters is, at one level, deceptively simple: cultures change as do the historical conditions that shape them; nothing, in short, is inevitable, and thus we are not doomed as Arabs or as Americans to pursue a path of mutual incomprehension, let alone of mutual demonization. For precisely this reason I wrote *Artillery of Heaven*, not because I know things *will* change for the better, but because I know that they can.

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