

“developments analogous” to revisionist and postdeclensionist arguments for a “second Ottoman empire” presented variably by Baki Tezcan (2010) and Guy Burak (2015) (p. 217). Specifically, Atçıl’s chapters show that by 1570 three bureaucratic lines emerged that constituted distinct professional tracks with specialized training and legislated norms: that of military administration (*seyfiye*), judicial and scholarly careers (*ilmiye*), and scribal and financial services (*kalemiye*). He thus corrects a tendency in the field to collapse these tracks into each other. Further, he demonstrates that despite this increased specialization, the status of official privilege (*askeri*) was also a form of social mobility. The key shift, Atçıl indicates, occurs as the policing of privilege boundaries placed both sultan and bureaucrat within a set of institutional norms. These norms then became the basis for outcry against the few “outsiders” who climbed their way into the hierarchy without the grant of novitiate status. This outcry, by the likes of Mustafa Ali, marked not a decline but rather an affirmation of a well-heeled social order. And finally, while Atçıl does not investigate nonbureaucratic scholars, or attend in much detail to scholarly networks or judicial systems in Arab provincial contexts, he suggests “sultans, scholar-bureaucrats, and other representatives of the sultan . . . observed the legal landscape from the same perspective and shaped the legal system” (p. 220). He thereby moves beyond “complementarity” when assessing the relationship between sultanic legislative oversight (*kanun*) and the Islamic legal tradition (*shari‘a*). These concluding arguments will be of note to specialists in Ottoman imperial history. Comparativists in early modern court culture will also find in *Scholars and Sultans* a clear outline of how personal retainers of rulers became instead markers of institutional grandeur.

DIDEM HAVLIOĞLU, *Mihri Hatun: Performance, Gender Bending, and Subversion in Ottoman Intellectual History* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2017). Pp. 220. \$55.00 cloth. ISBN: 9780815635499

REVIEWED BY DROR ZEEVI, Department of Middle East Studies, Ben-Gurion University, Beer Sheva, Israel; e-mail: [zeevi@bgu.ac.il](mailto:zeevi@bgu.ac.il)  
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Take a look at these lines: “This my cruel beloved was my darling once upon a time, with his deceitful eyes, he was lovely and pleasing once upon a time.” Historians of the Islamicate world would recognize such couplets as the stock-in-trade of traditional poetry. A novice would have had to churn out dozens of such couplets before offering anything original—a new poetic idea, a new choice of words, or a slightly altered meter. But this trite verse acquires new meaning when you know it is written by a woman, a poetess who casts herself in the unmistakably masculine role of the lover. She ends it with another provoking couplet: “Now, as Mihri sees his beard upon his cheek, she says / This my cruel beloved was my darling once upon a time” (p. 182). My handsome peach-fuzzed beloved, she implies, has grown a beard and lost his boyish charm. In other poems she assumes the opposite role, that of the beloved which, though often also male, allows more leeway for gender ambiguity: “Oh Hâtemî, you lied [to] Mihri when you played the lover / By God, she loves you better than any boy” (p. 81).

While reading Havlioğlu’s book, I was often reminded of Borges’s short story “Averroes’ Search,” in which, while interpreting Aristo’s work, Ibn Rushd tries to

decipher what the terms “tragedy” and “comedy” mean. Having never witnessed a play on stage, he has no way of knowing, and all he manages are fleeting snaps of ideas that never take shape. What constantly brought this short story to my mind was Havlioğlu’s attempt to grapple with the elusive concept of Mihri as a woman poet in the pre-19th-century Ottoman state. Reading it, I had similar fleeting images of the protagonist, her place in the poets’ *meclis* (literary salon), and her attempts to carve a place for herself in the male-dominated world of the word.

This difficulty to pinpoint the character was definitely not the author’s fault. She found and put all extant sources to excellent use, and succeeded in contextualizing Mihri’s poetry and using its intertextual references to enrich our knowledge about her life, loves, and ideas. Although Ottoman poetry often uses known formulas—beloveds’ eyebrows are bows shooting arrows to the lover’s heart, their cheeks are rose gardens, and the *sāki* is always asked to pour more wine to dull the pain of love—it is still incredibly variegated, and difficult to read and interpret. And Mihri Hatun was a great and original poet. Even though Mihri’s poetry is used mainly as a source for her own biography, Havlioğlu uncovers deeper meanings, humorous winks, and allusions in the text, and succeeds in presenting the poems in all their nuanced detail.

She also paints a vivid picture of Mihri’s hometown. For a gifted artist in the late 15th century, Amasya was the place to be. Prince Bayezid, son of the Conqueror, was sent there with his mother as a seven-year-old boy, and remained as governor for twenty-seven years. During this period, he was famous for his patronage of the arts. Mihri, about ten years younger than Bayezid but a scion of a well-established local Sufi (Halveti) family, was a frequent visitor to his court, where she probably began to dabble in poetry. Soon she could hold her own against the greatest poets of the day, and entered the Ottoman hall-of-fame as one of a tiny minority of women in this men’s world.

Havlioğlu’s book offers several explanations for her achievement. One is, of course, Mihri’s mastery of the poetic arts. Observing strict rules of meter, language, metaphor, and trope, yet still demanding originality and innovation, poetry was a complex art-form, and Mihri was very good at it. Her male colleagues had no choice but to recognize her abilities and accept her to their circle. Another facet has to do with her connections to the court, which gave her a valid entry ticket. Finally, in an interesting bud of a thesis that should be developed further, Havlioğlu suggests that it was poetry’s built-in gender ambiguity that left the door ajar for women. Because Turkish and Persian are both ungendered languages, there is no “he” or “she.” All pronouns are gender neutral. Although the beloved was assumed to be a young man, the reader could also imagine that the poet is pining for a rosy-cheeked woman, or even that the anguished lover—the poet’s persona—is herself a woman.

What left me in that Borges-like state of bewilderment throughout the book is the sense that we are constantly missing something in the depiction of elite womanhood outside the palace in the early modern Ottoman world. Could this be the fault of our focus on gender as the foremost analytical tool of women’s histories? That women were—and to some extent still are—subjugated, marginalized, and discriminated against, is certainly true. But casting all social and cultural history in the shadow of that truism makes it difficult to see other sociocultural constructions that could be no-less powerful. After all, the fact that sultan’s concubines literally ruled the empire and commanded generals and viziers; that mothers of princes were sent with them to the provinces in the 15th century with the

tacit understanding that they, not their young sons, were the actual governors, must have meant something for the populace as well.

And, as Havlioglu makes clear, Mihri Hatun wasn't *just* a woman. She was the daughter of an important kadi and the granddaughter of a Sufi master. She had the benefit of private tutoring and was, for a while at least, the protégé of a crown prince, had an impressive network of friends and suitors in high-places and was financially well-off. In that sense the book could initiate a fresh debate about this specific social group: elite women who were not part of the royal household but found ways to bring their full powers to the fore in the male-dominated environment of the Ottoman center.

The book is not devoid of errors. It could have benefitted from better editing. In some cases, there are glaring mistakes and typos (On page 46, to give one example, the same poem by Zati and its allusion to Mihri is mentioned twice on the same page). I also found it awkward to have to assemble Mihri's life story piecemeal from several chapters rather than having it presented up-front. But these are minor annoyances. *Mihri Hatun* is a very good book about a fascinating protagonist. It adds to our knowledge of early modern Ottoman poetry, of the patronage system that underlay the literary production of the time, and of women in the classical period. It is well written, accessible even to those who are not experts on literary criticism, and could be a welcome addition to advanced courses on women and literature in the early modern Islamic world.

TOBIAS P. GRAF, *The Sultan's Renegades: Christian-European Converts to Islam and the Making of the Ottoman Elite, 1575–1610* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017). Pp. 283. \$99.00 cloth. ISBN: 9780198791430

REVIEWED BY ERIC R. DURSTELER, Department of History, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah; e-mail: [ericd@byu.edu](mailto:ericd@byu.edu)  
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Since the publication in 1989 of Bartolomé and Lucile Bennassar's pioneering work, *Les chrétiens d'Allah: L'histoire extraordinaire des renégats, XVIe-XVIIe siècles* (Paris: Perrin), a rich body of scholarship has developed on renegades—Christians who converted to Islam, voluntarily or not. The renegade phenomenon peaked in the period 1500 to 1650, when their numbers reached perhaps into the hundreds of thousands. In his fine new book, *The Sultan's Renegades*, Tobias P. Graf proposes an original and important contribution to this literature that provides new insights into both renegades and the early modern Ottoman Empire. As he notes, the scholarship on renegades has been largely produced from the perspective of Christian Europe and the place these figures occupied in the imagination, fears, and dreams of the societies they left behind. With some exceptions, much less attention has been devoted to their position and experience in the Ottoman world they embraced. Graf suggests that Ottomanists' relative silence, despite the renegades' central role during the empire's first several centuries, is partly due to contemporary Ottoman indifference to the backgrounds of the sultans' servants, and to the related paucity of treatments of them in the imperial documentary record. I disagree with Graf's assertion that origin mattered little to the Ottomans, which strikes me as an uncritical embrace of the hoary early modern myth perpetuated by generations of subsequent scholars, and which, I might add, his book in fact convincingly undercuts. He is