

IMES ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

Issue 6, Winter 2015



From the Head of IMES

By Anthony Gorman



Welcome again to the latest IMES Alumni Newsletter! As usual, this winter issue provides details of the IMES MSc and PhD graduations last November, always an emotional occasion for the department as well as for the graduating students themselves.

The last months have been busy in the department with many enjoyable academic and social occasions. The Watt event in October which marked the 50th anniversary of Montgomery Watt's inaugural lecture as Professor of Islamic Studies at Edinburgh stands out as a particularly memorable occasion marked by an impressive evening of lectures and a symposium the following day.

Other highlights were a short series of seminars on Shi'ism (part of the larger IMES Research seminar series) as well as the programme of the Alwaleed Centre.

As usual we feature a number of contributions from current and former students as well as coverage of the social activities of the postgraduate student body. One particularly impressive feature is the translation - into English and Slovene - of the poetry of Ashraf Fayadh by our PhD student Jona Fras. The History of IMES column is also dedicated to the student presence in the department.

Since I have recently stepped down as Head of IMES I will also be vacating the post of Editor of the Newsletter. My thanks to all that have contributed to its production over the last three years, especially to a series of fine Assistant Editors, Emese Lorencsics, Fayaz Alibhai, Farshed Kazemi and, for her very capable work on this issue, Hester Gartrell.

Once again, we look forward to hearing from you. If you wish to submit something for our next issue, want to be put on the mailing list, or just want to say hi, please drop us a line at imeasalumni@ed.ac.uk

Professor
Carole
Hillenbrand
speaking at
Watt event
in October
(above)



Houseboats on the Nile

© Anthony Gorman

Issue no. 6

Editor

Dr Anthony Gorman

Assistant Editor and Designer

Hester Gartrell



With thanks to all our contributors

The IMES Alumni Newsletter welcomes submissions, including news, comments, updates and articles. Submissions may be edited for space and clarity. Please email imesalumni@ed.ac.uk

The views expressed in the newsletter are the authors' own and do not necessarily reflect that of IMES.

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Congratulations!

Latest crop of IMES graduates

(With thanks to the Graduate Office)

The following were awarded their postgraduate degrees at the graduations in November 2015. Once again congratulations to all and we wish you all the very best for the future.

Advanced Arabic MSc Programme

Robin Benedict
Stefano Freyr Castiglione
Helena Isabel Schlapp Thomson

Arab World Studies MSc Programme

Mathew Barber
Claire Belilos
Rachael Borowy
Chih-Lan Lin ('Laura')
Gabriele Roth
Neil Russell

Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies MSc Programme

Muhammad Qasim Afzal
Thomas James Lea
Wanchun Li
Alejandro Salamanca Rodriguez

IMES PhD Programme

Faisal Alwazzan
'Politics, Economy and Religion in a Near Eastern Periphery: The Region of Bahrayn in East Arabia c. 1050 – c. 1400 CE'

Jehan Saleh
'The Making of a Resistance Identity: Communism and the Lebanese Shi'a 1943-1990'

Khaled Igbaria
'Layla Ba'albaki and Feminism throughout her Fiction' (grad. July 2015)



At the IMES Postgraduate graduation party. From left to right: Alessandro Salamanca Rodriguez, Mathew Barber, Ruarigh Thornton, Claire Belilos, Mr Jonathan Featherstone, Heather Sharp, Zuzana Brezinova, Sarah Hopkins, Rachel Borowy, Michelle Lonnquist, Stefano Castiglione, Dr Farah Aboubakr, Caitlin Greathouse, Dr Meryem Demir, Dr Andrew Marsham



Dr Meryem Demir (Atatürk Teaching Fellow) with Stefano Castiglione (MSc Advanced Arabic)



Student and Teacher: Zuzana Brezinova (MSc IRMEwA) with Senior Arabic Teaching Fellow, Jonathan Featherstone



Adding to the MSc IMES he was awarded in 2011 Faisal Alwazzan graduates with his PhD on Bahrain in the period 1050-1400CE.



Dr Jehan al-Azzawi (née Saleh) celebrating at her PhD graduation with her husband, Omar



Prof Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila, Incoming Iraq Chair

Comings and Goings

Professor Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila (Helsinki), the incoming Iraq Chair at the University of Edinburgh, visited the department in December last year and gave an erudite lecture on 'Imagined Empires: History of Persia in Arab-Islamic Sources'. He will be taking up his permanent appointment in June.

Ines Asceric-Todd, who has been teaching IMES courses for some time, has been appointed Temporary Teaching Fellow for the second semester to take up the duties of Songul Mecit who is away on compassionate leave. Taking a break from doctoral studies, **Jona Fras** has taken up the post of Temporary Arabic Teaching Fellow in the Postgraduate Arabic programme for the rest of the semester while **Farah Aboubakr** is on maternity leave.

Eleanor Birch, who served very capably as IMES Senior Administrator since early 2014, resigned from the University on the grounds of ill-health in December. We wish her the best for the future. **Vivian Macnish Porter**, who was temping for a time last year in IMES, now returns to take up the permanent post vacated by Eleanor.

Staff Publications

At a book presentation in Blackwells in Edinburgh on 1 December, **Sossie Kasbarian** (former CASAW Postdoctoral Fellow) and **Anthony Gorman** spoke about *Diasporas of the Modern Middle East* a volume they have co-edited with chapters from ten other contributors. The case studies in the book range from the Ossetian diaspora that departed the Caucasus to settle in Anatolia during the second half of the 19th century to the much more recent displacement of Iraqis to Cairo following the invasion of Iraq in 2003. Attended by about fifty people, **Dr Alex Murdoch** (History) capably chaired proceedings.

Sossie and Tony, along with a number of other contributors to the volume, will be doing another presentation of the book sponsored by the London Middle East Institute and the Armenian Association at SOAS, in London on Friday March 4 at 7pm in the Brunei Gallery. The genesis of the book was a CASAW Workshop held in 2011 at IMES.



Sossie Kasbarian (left) and Anthony Gorman (centre) at the presentation of their co-edited volume, *Diasporas of the Modern Middle East*, chaired by Dr Alex Murdoch (right). Geoff Hajcman (far right) looks on with interest.

History of IMES (part 6)

The Student Presence at IMES

By al-Mu'arrikh



The Class of 2001 -
250 Years of
teaching Arabic at
Edinburgh

Students have been an essential part of IMES life. The first Arabic students at Edinburgh began in 1751. Students of Persian came later in the nineteenth century when the demands of the Indian civil service required such language proficiency. By today's standards numbers were very small. Even at the end of the 1970s the number of IMES undergraduate students was very modest, with only two students graduating in 1979, 5 in 1980, and 3 in 1981. At this time single Honours Arabic was the most popular degree with an occasional Persian degree also featuring. However, through the 1990s numbers increased substantially with an average graduating year being about 15 students, increasingly with joint honours degrees, especially Arabic and Spanish, Arabic and Persian and in time Arabic with Politics, Economics or Social Anthropology. Ten years later numbers had increased to almost forty finalists in the bumper year of 2009.

The expansion of the postgraduate programme was not far behind. PhD students go back to the distant past (and deserve an article of their own) but the MSc Taught student is a much more recent phenomenon. The original MSc IMES degree was launched in the autumn of 2002. With the success of the Centre for the Advanced Study of the Arab World (CASAW) bid in 2007, Edinburgh began to develop an intensive postgraduate Arabic programme with the two year Arab World Studies MSc degree. That has since expanded to include co-directed with the School of Social and Political Science (MSc International Relations of the Middle East with Arabic), and an MSc Advanced Arabic degree. In addition other MSc degrees have been developed, an MSc Middle Eastern Diasporas (regrettably no longer running) and most recently MSc in Persian Civilisation. Currently IMES houses almost forty taught MSc students at any one time.

The student presence in IMES has expressed itself in different ways, intellectually, socially and politically. Among these constructive contributions have been in-house publications. In 1996 postgraduate students first published *Ilm* which served as a digest of news and information. In 2006 undergraduate students, with George Richards and Camilla Hall as founding editors, launched the *Edinburgh Middle East Report* (EMER) with contributions from students providing informed comment on Middle Eastern issues. More recently projects such as *Zaqaq* (<https://zaqaqtranslation.wordpress.com/>) a website dedicated to translation from the Arabic press and spearheaded by a number of undergraduates has extended the audience of IMES students well beyond the confines of the department.

Student Experience: MSc Persian Civilisation

By Marlene Dirven, MSc Persian Civilisation student



Marlene Dirven during a recent trip to Iran.

My name is Marlene Dirven, I am doing the MSc Persian Civilisation at the University of Edinburgh. It is the first year that this programme is running, and I feel privileged to be part of that experience. I chose the MSc in Persian Civilisation because the courses form a great continuation of my previous studies that I pursued in Leiden University. I wished to narrow down my field of research to the modern history of Iran, and whereas other similar postgraduate programmes that I found mostly contained overlap with the courses I had attended in Leiden, the MSc Persian Civilisation provides a very new concept, simple but rich in its content.

The core courses are what you would expect to learn when approaching a different culture. From the very beginning of Persia under Cyrus the Great and the Achaemenids; Zoroastrianism to the Islamisation of the country, to the Turkish nomads and their architecture, the bloody conquest of the Mongols, the palaces of the Safavids, photography in the Qajar dynasty, Iranian cinema in the 20th century, to modern day pop-culture in Iran. My personal research interest is politics and anthropology in the modern history of Iran, and I am free to write about what I wish to analyse further.

My first semester option course was Modern Persian Literature, as literature – and particularly poetry – is of major importance to Iranian people, and thus for an understanding of the culture. It is used as a means of expressing and spreading political and philosophical ideas. The course offered insight into the original way Iranian authors attempt to avoid censorship, the development of literary styles, and the literary emancipation of female Iranian writers. The ten authors we read and explored provided a great understanding of the existing currents in both literary thought and reflection, as well as the political expression that came with it, for which many writers ended in prison.

As the MSc Persian Civilisation is attended by three postgraduates this year, the small classes give the courses a very personal and informal touch. Our personal tutor Dr. Nacim Pak-Shiraz made sure we met over a lunch to get to know each other better, and discuss our particular research interests. There is a close connection among us, as we explore a great culture together, all from different points of view.

The Watt Event

By Anthony Gorman

Professor Carole Hillenbrand and Professor Fred Donner field questions from the audience after their presentations.



On Friday 23 October a crowd of upwards of 200 people gathered at the Playfair Library at the University of Edinburgh to mark the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the inaugural lecture of William Montgomery Watt the first Professor of Arabic and Islamic studies appointed in Scotland. The audience was made up of staff, students and other members of the university community, the general public and members of Professor Watt's family.

After some introductory words from Dr Anthony Gorman, as Head of IMES, and Prof. Charlie Jeffery, Senior Vice-Principal of the University of Edinburgh, the programme proper began with a fascinating talk by Prof Carole Hillenbrand, herself a distinguished scholar and longtime friend of Professor Watt. In drawing on her professional knowledge and long personal acquaintance with Watt, Professor Hillenbrand provided an illuminating reflection on the man and scholar sprinkled with anecdote and insight.

After a short break Professor Fred Donner, Professor of Near Eastern History in the University of Chicago, speaking on 'The Study of Islam's Origins since W. Montgomery Watt's Publications' offered a lucid discussion of the subsequent development of the scholarship on some of the themes Watt's work had addressed and provided an erudite survey of the current state of the literature.

The third speaker, Dr Richard Holloway FRSE, in a briefer talk titled 'Committed Openness: a Glance at William Montgomery Watt's Religious Life', spoke on Montgomery Watt's religious life and addressed his general contribution to wider religious questions in Scotland both in his life and publications. The evening was brought to a close with some words by Prof. Hugh Goddard, Director of the Alwaleed Centre.

On the following day, Saturday 24 October, the academic colloquium, 'Representations of Muhammad', brought together a distinguished group of scholars from both Edinburgh and abroad. Chaired by Dr Andrew Marsham (IMES), the programme consisted of the following: Dr Andreas Goerke (IMES) speaking on 'Muhammad and the Biblical Tradition, The case of Zaynab bint Jahsh'; Dr Christiane Gruber (Michigan) on 'Muhammad among the Great Men of the World: Enlightenment, Nationhood, and Early 20th-Century Iranian Carpets'; Prof. Wilferd Madelung (Institute of Ismaili Studies) on 'Muhammad, Khadija and 'Umar', Dr Nacim Pak-Shiraz (IMES), Representing Muhammad on Screen; Dr Nicolai Sinai (Oxford) on 'Muhammad and the Prophetology of the Medinan Qur'an', and Dr John Tolan (University of Nantes) on 'The Ecumenical Turn: Massignon, Watt, and 20th-century European scholarship on Muhammad'. Each paper presented original insights on a subject of enduring interest and continuing significance. The day's activities ended with a roundtable discussion in which all participants, including Professors Hillenbrand and Donner, took part in a lively discussion prompted by questions from the audience.

The two days were a fitting occasion to recall the contribution of an outstanding scholar of Islam and the continuing reputation of the University of Edinburgh as a centre of excellence for Islamic Studies. More than this the audience were treated to a series of impressive research papers and learned insights from an array of international scholars. There are plans to publish the papers presented and to establish an annual lecture as a feature of the IMES calendar.

For a video of the Friday night programme see <http://www.ed.ac.uk/literatures-languages-cultures/islamic-middle-eastern/news-events/watt-anniversary>



Final
Deliberations: The
roundtable of
Representations
of Muhammad
(left to right):
Andrew Marsham,
Carole
Hillenbrand, Fred
Donner, Nicolai
Sinai, John Tolan,
Christiane Gruber,
Andreas Goerke,
Wilferd Madelung

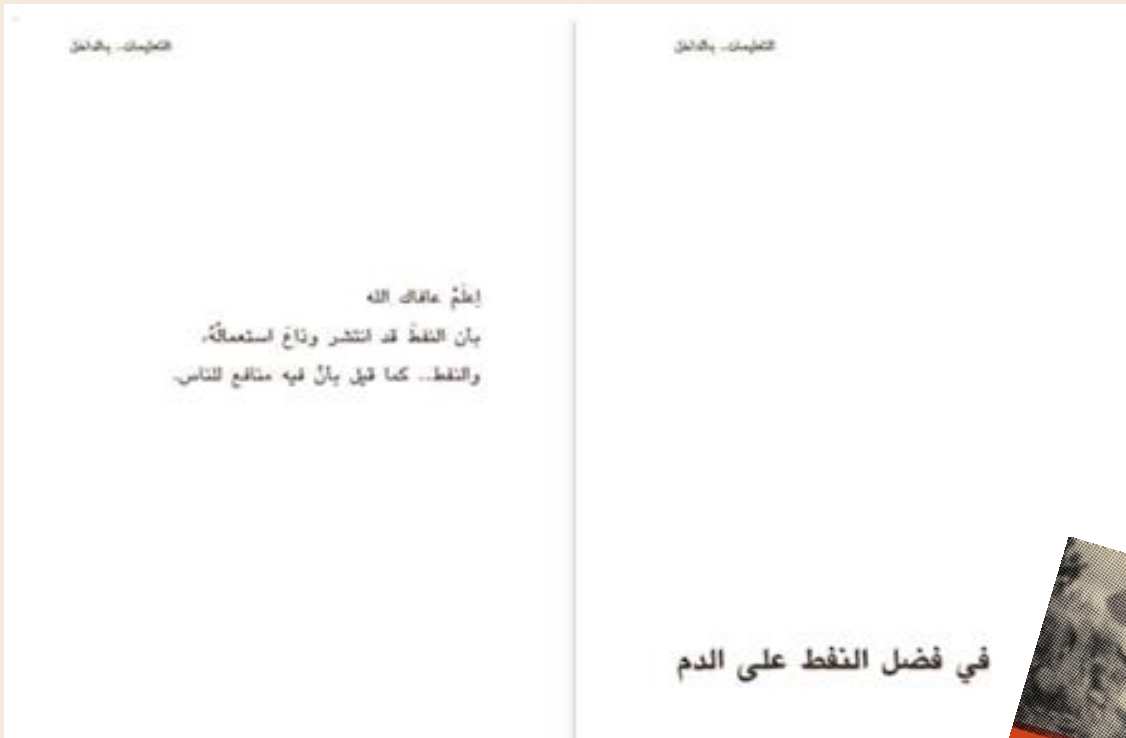
The Poetry of Ashraf Fayadh

By Sarah Irving, PhD student

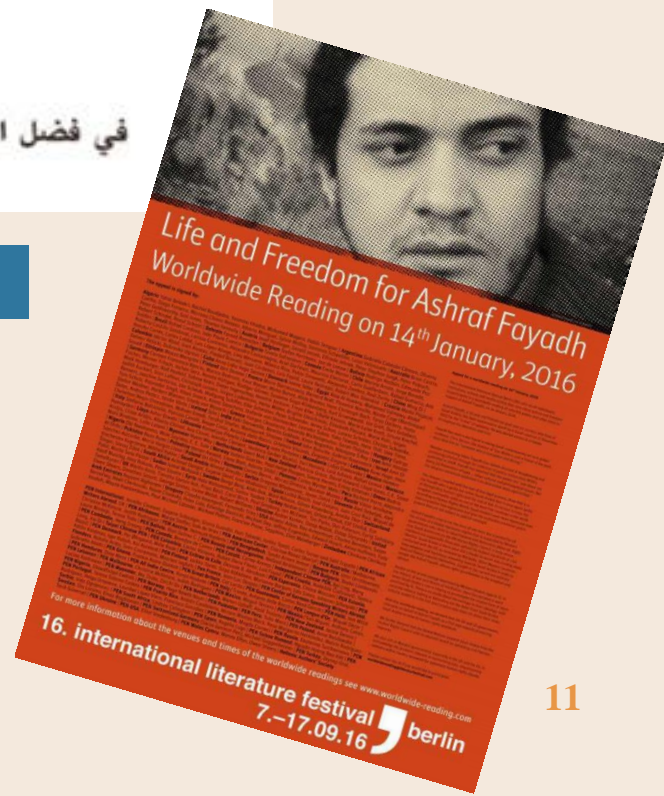
Ashraf Fayadh is an artist, curator and poet of Palestinian family, whose family are originally from Khan Younis in Gaza. In 2014 he was sentenced to death by a Saudi Arabian court on charges of apostasy and promoting atheism in his 2008 collection of poetry, *Instructions Within*. Campaigners against Fayadh's death penalty have pointed out that the background to his sentence includes a personal argument with the man who reported him to the religious police, and the possibility that his is being punished by the Saudi authorities for sharing a video online showing a public lashing. In February 2016, under international pressure, the Saudi authorities commuted Fayadh's sentence to eight years imprisonment and 800 lashes.

Fundamentally, Ashraf Fayadh's case is one of freedom of speech and belief, and whether someone should be punished for their religious opinions, regardless of the actual sentence.

In November 2015 the Berlin International Literature Festival called for worldwide readings to take place on January 14th 2016 in support of Fayadh. Around a hundred events took place around the globe, with IMES staff and students involved in two, one at the University of Edinburgh itself and one at the Scottish Poetry Library. The IMES event included readings in the original Arabic, plus English, French, German, Italian, Sard and Slovene, with readers including Ebtihal Mahadeen, Peter Cherry, Sarah Arens and Saverio Leopardi. The Sard and Slovene translations done especially for this date were by Alessandro Columbu and Jona Fras.



© Ashraf Fayadh



WHY WE CARE MORE ABOUT OIL THAN BLOOD

Ashraf Fayadh

(trans. by Jona Fräs)

Know this – and God give you strength –
that oil is everywhere and useful for
everything
and that it is, as they say, good for the
people.

To those who have wandered
lost between the great cities of the world
for all to see
and came to ruin there
all paths to redeem the spirit cut off
from the void in your heart:

Your blood will not speak
as long as you take pride in death
and proclaim that you have hidden your
spirit with one who doesn't understand
it.

And the loss of this spirit will not
equal the terror in your eyes when you
see what flows from oil.

So spoke a man of the people:
If you have oil, you also need what can be
made from it
You need it –
a blessing from those whose eyes blaze
with fire –
so that your heart can turn divine.

You don't own enough
to rid yourself of the troubles of our age.
You have no blood on tap
so you could spray it over your false
values
or avoid, bit by bit,
a tenth of the spirit this age runs without,
or even a single day of your strangeness.

You tremble, now.
Draw, then, as much blood as you can
to fill the bellies of strangeness
to inject it into the oil of those
charged with betraying your spirit.
To ask forgiveness from the river
and apologise – publicly! – for the blood
you spilled inside it.

With oil, you resist!
You open the depths of brassieres
suck on the cherries and all that's around
them
moisten and soften what's between the legs
and the sweet blessings that surround you.

So what
if the apostates hung an axe at your
shoulder?
They say that you're one of those that have
gambled with blood – still bound by longing
–
and lost yourself in staking out nightclubs,
sick with happiness –
so you could have a sip for free.

For free.
Abortive words –
and a tin of used tobacco
and a box where your mother hid your
screams –
so the sea would spit you out on a coast
filled with unknown terrors
where the thunder promised you
communion with the clouds –
to give birth to rain that will not wash away
your shame of fearing the river
which sleeps in the arms of
disappointment.

Black drops of oil
travel between the cells of your body
and repair what's left
from the sickness that struck you during
your redemption.

And what is it that's bad or harmful in oil
apart from air polluted with poverty?

*(Fī faḍl al-naft 'alā al-dam, p. 23-35 in
Ta'limāt bi-l-daql (Instructions Within),
Beirut: Dar al-Farabi, 2008; translation by
Jona Fräs, 2016)*

ZAKAJ NAM JE BOLJ MAR ZA NAFTO KOT KRI

Ašraf Fajad

prevedel Jona Fras

Vedi – in Bog te obvaruj –
da je nafta povsod, da jo vse potrebuje,
in da je, kakor pravijo, dobra za ljudstvo.

Vam, ki ste tavalili,
tavalili po velikih mestih, vsem na očeh
in izgubili vse –
poti odrešenja odrezane
od praznine, ki polni vaše prsi:

Tvoja kri bo ostala nema,
dokler boš ponosen na smrt,
dokler boš kričal, da si svoj duh prepustil
nekomu, ki ga ne razume.
Morda boš dolgo brez duha –
a ta groza ne bo enaka tisti v tvojih očeh, ko boš
videl, kaj lahko naredi nafta.

In gospodar ljudstva je rekel:
Kdor ima nafto, potrebuje njene derivate;
potrebuje jih –
blagoslov od tistih s plameni v očeh –
da postane njegovo srce božansko.

Nimaš dovolj,
da bi se rešil tegob naše dobe.
Nimaš cevi, iz katere bi tekla kri,
ki bi z njo poškopil zlagane vrednote,
ali da se malo po malo izmuzneš
desetini duha, ki se mu je ta doba ognila,
ali vsaj enemu dnevu odtujenosti.

Trepetaš.
Daj torej krvi, kolikor moreš,
da napojiš odtujenost,
da jo vbrizgaš v nafto tistih,
ki so dolžni izdati tvoj duh.
Da prosiš odpuščanje od reke
in se javno opravičiš za kri, ki si jo spustil vanjo.

Z nafto se upreš!
In odpreš temnice modrcev,
srkaš iz češenj in okoli njih,
zmehčaš in navlažiš, kar je med nogami –
in blagoslovljeno sladkobo okrog sebe.

In kaj potem,
če so ti izdajalci obesili sekuro na ramo?
Pravijo, da si se igral s krvjo – še vedno
hrepeneč –
in se izgubljal v zasedah na beznice, bolan od
veselja –
da si lahko spil požirek zastonj.

Zastonj.
Smrtonosne besede –
in pločevinka rabljenega tobaka,
in škatla, v katero ti je mati vrgla krike –
da te morje izpljune na obalo nevidenih grozot,
kjer ti je grom obljubil, da boš oplodil oblake –
in spočel dež, ki te ne bo opral sramu strahu
pred reko,
spečo v objemu razočaranja.

Črne kapljice nafte
potujejo med celicami tvojega telesa
in popravljajo, kar te je ostalo
po napadu boleznih odrešitve.

In kaj je v nafti slabega ali škodljivega
drugega kot onesnažen zrak in revščina?

Dan sramu za tiste, ki so odkrili še en vrelec,
in pihali v tvoje srce, da si predal dušo nafti –
v javnem interesu.
To nafta obljubi – in svoje obljube drži...

(Fī faḍl al-naft 'alā al-dam; str. 23-35 v Ta'limāt bi-l-daql (Navodila vključena), Beirut: Dar al-Farabi, 2008; prevod Jona Fras, 2016)

Autumn Research Seminar Series

The IMES Research Seminar series again provided a diverse offering of fascinating topics across the full spectrum of IMES interests during the autumn of 2015. The topics addressed ranged from Arabic literature, dialectology, Hadith studies, Ottoman history and contemporary politics, in addition to the small series of talks on Shi'ism organised by Dr Andrew Newman (see p. 17).

Freshly returned from research leave, Thomas Pierret explored another aspect of the current conflict in Syria on which he has become an international authority, namely the Ahrar al-Sham Islamic movement. Professor Janet Watson (Leeds) presented a fascinating examination of the disappearing dialects of South Arabia. Dr Ahmed Khaleel (York) brought us into the world of contemporary literature with his exploration of the work of the elusive Iraqi poet Ahmad Matar while Helen Pfeifer (Cambridge) took us to the Ottoman salons of the 16th century and examined them as a space for intellectual discourse and elite social interaction. Returning for the first time since the completion of his PhD at IMES in 2009, Stephen Burge (Institute of Ismaili Studies) offered a fresh conceptual view of Hadith literature.

As always, the programme included a number of presentations from senior IMES PhD students. Sarah Irving and Jona Frasn took us to different sides of the Jordan: Sarah by exploring the work of interwar Palestinian scholar Elias Haddad and Jona with his analysis of contemporary Jordanian media and social media. Su I-Wen's discussion of Al-Tabari's depiction of al-Walid b. 'Uqba was paired with Raphael Cormack's provocative take on 'Ali Ahmad Bakathir's play *Oedipus* that situated it in the context of 1950s Egypt. The series ended with two PhD presentations on Syrian literature: Alessandro Columbu discussed the work of contemporary short story writer, Zakariyya Tamir, while Lovisa Berg provided us with a magisterial survey of Syrian female novelists and their representation of masculinity over the last half a century and more.



Postgraduate students (L to r) Clare Littlejohn, Hester Gartrell, Marlene Dirven, Barbara Jung, Ahmet Borazan and Peter Cherry, with Dr Helen Pfeifer from Cambridge (second from right), at the reception following her talk.

Showcasing New Research

IMES Spring Seminar Series 2016

Civil Wars in the Arab World

11 January	<i>PhD Session:</i> Ching-An Chang Saverio Leopardi	1) From revolution to expatriation: the decision-making of relocation and resettlement. 2) The PFLP and the Palestinian civil wars. History of a decline.
18 January	Thomas Pierret <i>University of Edinburgh</i>	Jihad in Syria as self-accomplishment: Diaries of a female member of the Islamic State
25 January	Yaniv Voller <i>University of Edinburgh</i>	The different stages of the Kurdish liberation struggle in Iraq
1 February	Cécile Boëx <i>EHESS Paris</i>	Investigating civil war in Syria from YouTube
8 February	Benjamin Thomas White <i>University of Glasgow</i>	Refugees, war and state-making in the Middle East; the Ba'quba refugee camp, 1919-1921
22 February	Leila Vignal <i>Oxford University – University of Rennes 2</i>	Mapping the response to the Syrian refugee crisis
29 February	Virginie Colombier <i>European University Institute, Florence</i>	Libya from revolution to chaos, from chaos to dialogue
7 March	Andrew Marsham <i>University of Edinburgh</i>	Revolt, rebellion and civil war in the Umayyad period
14 March	Laurent Bonnefoy <i>CNRS-CERI Paris</i>	Yemen at war: a political and strategic assessment
21 March	<i>PhD Session:</i> Ula Zeir	1) A City of the Ismailis in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Ottoman Syria (1839-1918) Second speaker TBC
28 March	<i>PhD Session:</i> Harriet Fildes Aurangzeb Haneef	1) Islamic NGOs and Turkey's 'new' diplomacy - Expansion and engagement in Turkey's regional relations. 2) Sufyan al-Thawri and the development of early Islamic intellectual tradition.

Recovering “Lost Voices” The Role and Depiction of Iranian/Persianate Subalterns from the 13th century to the Modern Period’

by Andrew Newman



L to R: (back)
Dr Miklos
Sarkozy, (front
L-R) Dr
Christine van
Ruymbeke, Ms
Michelle Quay,
and Dr Alexey
Khismatulin

The first of three workshops in ‘Recovering “Lost Voices”: The Role and Depiction of Iranian/Persianate Subalterns from the 13th century to the Modern Period’ series took place in Edinburgh over the weekend of 7-8 November 2015. The series is funded by the British Institute of Persian Studies (BIPS).

This multi-year project involves organising three workshops, in consecutive years, to explore and capture glimpses of subalterns in the Persianate world over the time period in question. BIPS is funded by the British Academy, and the attraction of BIPS’ support represents an important new and internationally recognised funding stream for IMES and the School of Literatures, Languages and Cultures.

The first workshop comprised 11 papers which offered evidence for the presence of subaltern voices in the Persianate world in the years leading up to the establishment of the Safavid realm in Iran, usually dated from the capture of Tabriz by Safavid military forces in 1501.

A further grant from the University’s Edinburgh Research and Innovation’s ‘Knowledge Exchange and Impact’ fund provided resources for the live-streaming and archiving of the first workshop’s presentations, and a postgraduate assistant for workshop administration and running Q&A via Twitter. Full details on the first workshop and the entire multi-year project are available on my ‘Shii News and Resources’ site (<http://www.shii-news.imes.ed.ac.uk/the-subalterns-project/>) where the individual archived presentations are now available.

The 11 papers covered such topics as Timurid painting, women, black and slave Sufis, dervishes in Mongol Anatolia, subalterns in the Saljuq state administration, Mongol-Nizārī Ismā`īli contacts, local history as subaltern history in Mongol Yazd, *futuwwa* ritual gatherings as a worship and social organizer, the female subaltern class in Kashefi's version of the Kalila-Dimna, the genesis of Zoroastrian Persian literature, and poetry as political critique: Khāqānī's Christian qaṣīda. Presenters, including established scholars and a PhD student, came to Edinburgh from elsewhere in the UK (Glasgow, St Andrews, Cambridge, Bristol, the Institute for Ismaili Studies (London), the Courtauld Institute of Art (London) and the School of Oriental and African Studies) as well as The Institute of Oriental Manuscripts (St Petersburg) of the Russian Academy of Sciences, the Department of History, TOBB University of Economics and Technology, Ankara and the Leiden University Centre for the Study of Religion.

The aim of the overall project is to involve a diversity of scholars from a wide range of disciplines in the commencement of an organised effort to utilise an extensive range of sources to recover evidence of the 'voices' of Iranian 'subalterns' across the pre-modern and modern terrains of both rural and urban societies.

The engagement of scholars from a great diversity of academic disciplines in this effort is intended to insure that the sources to be explored for direct and indirect access to these voices will be wide-ranging in nature. These could include elite Iranian and non-Iranian diplomatic and political-economic (court-level) sources but also sources drawn from such a broad range of 'cultural' spheres as, for example, art and architecture (including cinema, for the modern period), prose, poetry and other media and religious materials (Sunni, Shii and Sufi) of all genres in all the relevant languages. The project will seek also to explore attitudes toward the subaltern by the 'authors' of these sources. Finally, the project will seek to identify problems in accessing and using the sources and questions/avenues and sources for further research across Iranian history and, in the process, to establish an on-going network to chart pathways for further associated research projects and support for these.

The remaining two workshops in the BIPS-funded series will address subalterns in the Safavid period and in the Zand/Qajar periods.

It is envisioned that the CNRS (Centre national de la recherche scientifique)-funded Groupement de Recherche International (GDRI) grant for the project 'New Horizons for the Social and Intellectual History of Shi'ism in Modern Times' will support a fourth workshop, on the Pahlavi/IRI periods.



Where is our Taste of Arabic?

If you've been missing your Arabic fix, don't panic! Jonathan Featherstone, IMES Senior Arabic Teaching Fellow, will be back in the next issue with his 'Taste of Arabic' feature.



Dr Andrew Newman (left) introducing Prof. Wilferd Madelung (right)

Shi'i-Sunni Conflict in Islam: Past, Present and Future

By Andrew Newman

In the autumn semester, a series of four seminars on 'Shi'i-Sunni Conflict in Islam: Past, Present and Future', sponsored by the Edinburgh's Centre for the Advanced Study of the Arab World (CASAW) in collaboration with IMES and chaired by Dr Andrew Newman, was held as part of IMES Monday evening Research Seminar Series.

Professor **Wilferd Madelung**, Emeritus Laudian Professor of Arabic, University of Oxford, delivered the first seminar, 'The Origins of the Conflict between Sunni and Shi'i Islam', on 26 October, to an audience of over 300, a record attendance for IMES' seminar series. Professor Madelung argued that according to Qur'anic law Fatima as Muhammad's only surviving daughter was entitled to his succession, inheriting the bulk of his possessions, property rights and obligations, and thus effectively ruled the Muslim community as a queen. This was prevented by 'Umar b. al-Khattab out of personal ambition and strong opposition to the rule of women.

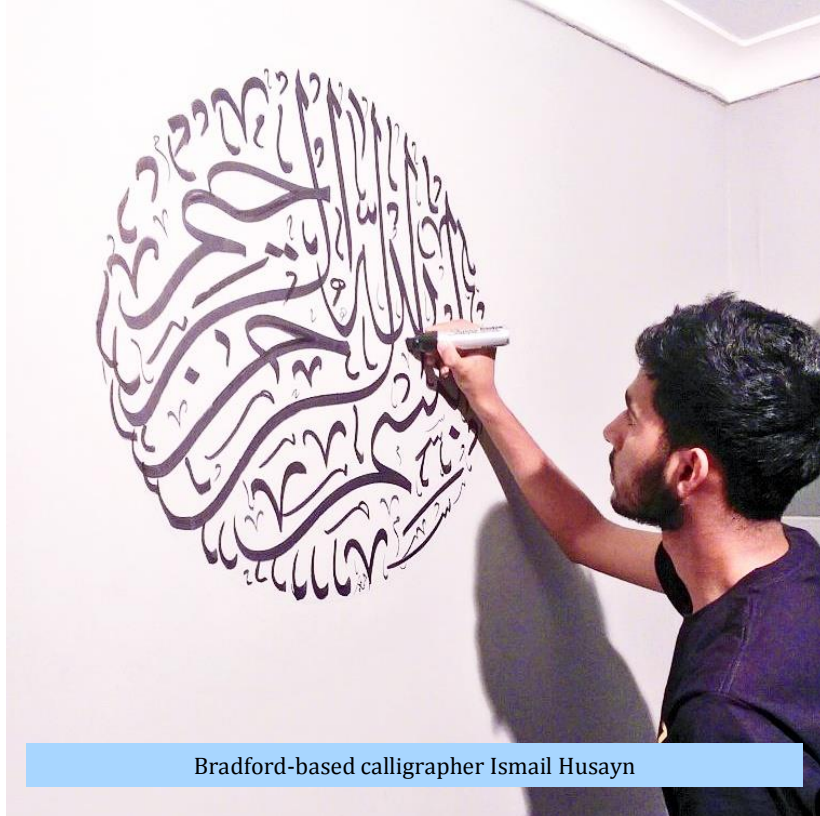
Dr **Simon Wolfgang Fuchs**, Research Fellow in Islamic Studies at Gonville and Caius College, University of Cambridge, gave the second seminar in the series, 'Transnational Shi'ism and the Endangered Promise of Pakistan: Rethinking Sunni-Shi'i Sectarianism in South Asia', on 2 November. Dr Fuchs' paper investigates the transformation of sectarian discourses in Pakistan since the 1970s. He argued that anti-Shi'i religious scholars, since the Iranian Revolution, are increasingly framing Shi'ism as a political problem, blocking Pakistan from being moulded into its true form, namely a Sunni state with aspirations to global leadership.

The third seminar, 'Afghanistan's Shia minorities. Politics and sectarian tensions during the second Afghan war (1878-1881)', was delivered by Ms **Francesca Fuoli**, a PhD student at School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, on 16 November. Ms Fuoli's paper analysed British co-optation of Afghanistan's Hazaras – a Shia group mainly found in central Afghanistan – during the second Anglo-Afghan war (1878-1881). It was suggested that a connection can be drawn between colonial policies during the occupation of Kabul and Kandahar and the post-war marginalization and subordination of the Hazaras by the government of Kabul.

Dr **Toby Matthiesen**, Senior Research Fellow in the International Relations of the Middle East, at the Middle East Centre, St Antony's College St. Antony's College, University of Oxford, gave the final paper in the seminar series, 'Sectarianism in International Relations: The Saudi-Iranian Rivalry since 1979', on 30 November. Dr Matthiesen's paper addressed the Saudi-Iranian rivalry that has dominated the regional politics of the Middle East since 1979. It explored the extent to which ideational factors, in this case the sectarian division within Islam between Sunni and Shia Muslims, plays a role in international relations, arguing that sectarianism has increasingly been used as a foreign policy tool by these and other regional international actors, and as a basis for alliance formation.

Alwaleed Centre Events News and Updates

By Tom Lea (MSc IMES 2015)



Bradford-based calligrapher Ismail Husayn

The Alwaleed Centre has always tried to engage with Edinburgh's vibrant festival scene which reaches its zenith in August, and 2015 was no exception. After a considerable amount of planning, we were delighted to finally welcome Chinese-Muslim calligrapher Haji Noor Deen to Edinburgh for a series of events at the Edinburgh International Book Festival, the Edinburgh Just Festival and the Edinburgh Islamic festival. One of the world's greatest living calligraphy masters, Noor Deen fuses Chinese and Arabic styles to create unique works of art which are collected the world over, including at the National Museum of Scotland (head to the second floor if you would like to see a particularly fine example!) Large audiences were mesmerised by Noor Deen's performance-calligraphy as well as his enthusiastic and energetic stage presence. We owe a great debt of gratitude to our IMES colleague Mourad Diouri who provided expert translation from Arabic to English for two of our events. Mourad showed that translation itself is an art form by somehow managing to capture perfectly Noor Deen's energy and passion for his art.

We were also very pleased to host a further Book Festival event in August featuring writer and commentator Ziauddin Sardar who discussed his newest book *Mecca: The Sacred City*. Ziauddin spoke of Mecca's early history and significance, as well as the conflict between heritage and modernity which has been playing-out in recent times.

Although very critical of the way in which Mecca's history has been eroded by the irresistible need to

modernise, Ziauddin also emphasised the continued influence and power Mecca has over the hearts and minds of Muslims all over the world.

As we moved into September, we were delighted to welcome back from maternity leave our Postdoctoral Fellow on Muslims in Britain, Dr Khadijah Elshayyal. Khadijah hit the ground running by teaching a 'Muslims in Britain' course for honours and masters students. The course attracted a very good numbers of students from a variety of different departments and feedback has been excellent. Alongside her teaching, Khadijah has also been focusing on research, with a project analysing Muslim demographics in Scotland following the 2011 census a particular priority. Although the Muslim Council of Britain published an extensive report entitled 'British Muslims in Numbers' back in 2014, this report, like so many of its kind, focused almost exclusively on England and Wales. The Alwaleed Centre has always tried to make sure Scotland is part of the conversation so this project is very timely indeed.

In November 2015, we were very pleased to organise a double book launch for our previous Muslims in Britain Postdoctoral Fellow, Timothy Peace, who is now based at the University of Stirling. It was particularly rewarding for the centre to celebrate the launch of Tim's edited volume *Muslims and Political Participation in Britain* (Routledge) as this book was the result of a conference organised by the Alwaleed Centre back in 2012.

The Alwaleed Centre has, for the last five years or so, prioritised outreach work across Scotland. However, following a steer from its Advisory Board, the centre has now begun to shift the focus more onto research. The centre's Director, Professor Hugh Goddard, is currently on sabbatical working on a new book exploring the history of Middle Eastern Theologies. For the next six months, therefore, our IMES colleague Dr Thomas Pierret will be overseeing centre activities as Acting Director and we are very grateful to Thomas for taking on the role. We are also looking forward to welcoming a new colleague at Postdoctoral level who, alongside their own research, will be working to cultivate interdisciplinary research links with other parts of the university. The recruitment process for this role is now well underway and we hope to welcome our new colleague within the next few months.

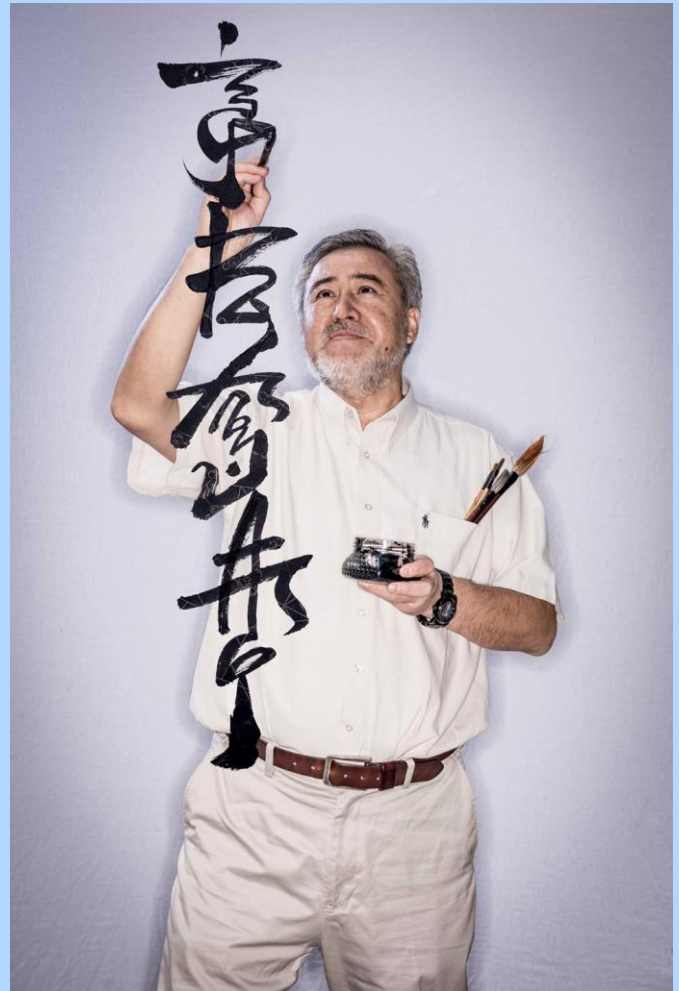
Although research is now a priority, the centres outreach programme continues but with a more strategic emphasis on education, policy-making and the media. Over the last six months we have delivered a number of events for schools including a particularly memorable study for 150 pupils at Sanquhar Academy, Dumfries and Galloway. The Centre's Outreach Projects Manager also worked closely with Education Scotland and the Muslim Council of Scotland to produce Continuing Professional Development resources about Islam for teachers of Religious and Moral Education across Scotland.

The Centre is always keen to respond to current affairs whenever possible, and it played a key role in organising an important event a week after the devastating November attacks in Paris. Chaired by Alwaleed Centre Director, Professor Hugh Goddard, this panel discussion brought together colleagues from across the College of Humanities and Social Sciences and gave a very large audience a chance to reflect on the implications of this attack as well those in Beirut, Egypt, Ankara and elsewhere. A video recording of this discussion can be viewed here: <https://vimeo.com/147087873>.

Looking ahead, the centre is currently working on a special food event funded by BEMIS (Black and Ethnic Minority Infrastructure in Scotland) which will celebrate the diversity of Islam in Scotland through showcasing a variety of cuisines from many Muslim-majority countries. We are also looking forward to welcoming an up-and-coming star of Arabic calligraphy, Islamail Husayn, who will be leading a calligraphy workshop here in Edinburgh on Saturday 27th February. Our next really big event will then be the annual conference of the British Association for Islamic Studies (www.brais.ac.uk). As the Centre is the administrative hub for the Association, this

is a major part of our yearly work-load. The conference will be taking place at Senate House, University of London, on Monday 11 and Tuesday 12 April. We received well over 300 paper submissions for the conference so we are looking forward to a very stimulating two days.

For more information about this and our many other events and initiatives, please visit our new-look website: www.alwaleed.ed.ac.uk.



Chinese-Muslim calligrapher Haji Noor Deen

Still from 'A Minor Leap Down'



The 2016 Edinburgh Iranian Film Festival

By Dr Nacim Pak-Shiraz

Following on from the success of its 2015 edition, the Edinburgh Iranian Festival presents a set of five new feature films, centering on the themes of masculinity, alienation and the family. A focus on Iran often comes with much commentary on the nation's women, and there's a tendency to imagine men as a homogenous group striving to protect and enforce the patriarchal system. Cinema, however, is the ideal lens through which to examine these constructions of masculinity – hence the theme of the season curated by Dr Nacim Pak-Shiraz. And, with four UK premieres and one Scottish premiere, Edinburgh cinephiles will have a real treat in store. The season opens with the screening of Majid Barzegar's *A Very Ordinary Citizen*, co-written with the internationally acclaimed filmmaker Jafar Panahi. The screening will be followed by a Q&A with Barzegar, who will also speak following *A Minor Leap Down*, which he produced. There will also be post-screening discussions following *For a Rainy Day* and *Atomic Heart*, and all screenings will be preceded by an introduction by the season's curator, Dr Nacim Pak-Shiraz, or another member of the Edinburgh Iranian Festival team.

A Very Ordinary Citizen - Yek shahrvand-e kamelan maamouli

Fri 19 Feb at 5.50pm

Majid Barzegar • Iran/Czech Republic/Netherlands 2015 • 1h40m

• Digital • Farsi with English subtitles • 12A

Cast: Souren Mnatsakanian, Shadi Karamroudi, Nahid Hadadi.

Following last year's warm reception of Majid Barzegar's *Parviz*, his newest film - co-written by internationally acclaimed filmmaker Jafar Panahi (*The White Balloon*, *Taxi Tehran*) - has been chosen to open this year's Iranian film season. In it, Barzegar once again turns his camera to the understudied isolation of men living in a patriarchal society. Facing the onset of Alzheimer's, Mr Safari, a pensioner in his eighties, decides to visit his son abroad. A young travel agent, Sara, is tasked with organising Mr Safari's travel arrangements. However, the nature of their relationship is understood very differently by Sara and Mr Safari.

Followed by a discussion with director Majid Barzegar and Dr Nacim Pak-Shiraz

Today - Emrouz

Sat 20 Feb at 3.50pm

Reza Mirkarimi • Iran 2014 • 1h28m • Digital • Farsi with English subtitles • 12A

Cast: Parviz Parastui, Soheila Golestani, Shabnam Moghadami.

Director Reza Mirkarimi's flair for simple yet profound stories once again displays itself in *Today*, his third feature to be selected as Iran's official Oscar submission. In it, ageing taxi driver Younes takes a young woman to hospital at the end of his working day, not knowing what awaits him there. Like Mirkarimi's earlier films, *A Cube of Sugar* and *As Simple as That*, the narrative of *Today* unfolds in a single 24-hour period. And yet, it surpasses the limits of these few hours, telling stories of times gone by, some of which are of mythic proportions.

A Minor Leap Down - Paridan az ertefa kam

Sat 20 Feb at 6.00pm

Hamed Rajabi • Iran/France 2015 • 1h28m • Digital • Farsi with English subtitles • 12A

Cast: Negar Javaherian, Rambod Javan, Mehri Aleagha, Shafagh

Shokri, Mahmoud Behrouzian, Sadaf Ahmadi.

Nahal is four months into her pregnancy when she is given the news that her foetus has died and that she has two days to undergo an abortion. This revelation plunges her into a revolt against family and friends. Director Hamed Rajabi describes his film as one depicting conditions in which meaningful social action has become extremely limited, and where the action takes place within the private and semi-public interactions of everyday life. But, when everyday life is itself both limited and limiting, these actions may risk alienating both our loved ones and the institutions that sustain our livelihood.

Followed by a discussion with producer Majid Barzegar and Dr Nacim Pak-Shiraz.

For a Rainy Day Rouz-e mabada

Sun 21 Feb at 3.20pm

Faezeh Azizkhani • Iran 2015 • 1h30m • Digital • Farsi with English subtitles • 12A

Cast: Shirin Agharezakashi, Valli Azizkhani, Vahid Azizkhani, Hedieh Tehrani.

A student filmmaker discovers that her mother has been having recurring dreams about her own imminent death. Believing these omens, her mother sets out to both fulfil her outstanding religious duties and make her children's dreams come true. And, knowing that her daughter's foremost ambition is to make a feature film, she sets about hiring a superstar....

An impressive work by an up-and-coming filmmaker, *For a Rainy Day* experiments with the boundaries between fiction and reality. Following in the footsteps of the masters of Iranian cinema (including Abbas Kiarostami, who served as directorial consultant), Faezeh Azizkhani explores the possibilities for telling the truth in cinema.

Followed by a discussion with producer Negar Eskandarfar and Dr Nacim Pak-Shiraz.

Atomic Heart Madar-e ghalb atomi

Sun 21 Feb at 5.50pm

Ali Ahmadzadeh • Iran 2015 • 1h37m • Digital • Farsi with English subtitles • 12A

Cast: Taraneh Alidoosti, Pegah Ahangarani, Mehrdad Sedighiyan, Mohammad Reza Golzar.

On their way home from a wild party, Arineh and Nobahar get into a car accident. A mysterious stranger by the name of Toofan offers to cover the costs and refuses to be reimbursed, instead asking the two girls to follow him into the unknown. As the trio travel through a Tehran night full of mysteries and surprises, Arineh and Nobahar discover a parallel world of the unexpected, the existence of which they had never imagined. *Atomic Heart*, which had its world premiere at Berlinale, is director Ali Ahmadzadeh's follow-up to *Kami's Party*, which screened as part of last year's Iranian film season.

To be followed by a discussion with Farshid Kazemi (PhD student, IMES) and Dr Nacim Pak-Shiraz.

Cultures of Diversity CASAW Network

University of Edinburgh, 3-4 Dec 2015

The Cultures of Diversity CASAW research network met in Edinburgh on 3-4 December bringing together a talented group of scholars dealing with different aspects of culture in the Arab world during the colonial period. Over two days and through a series of fascinating papers, the members of the workshop explored the diversity of the sources of modern Arab culture by examining in different ways the interplay between different local traditions and non-indigenous elements during this formative period. More events are planned, such as a guest lecture from Prof. Rami Daher on 'Place Understanding and Narration and the Processes and Practices of *Patrimonialization: Forgotten and Unofficial Narratives from Jordan*' on 16 March (details tbc)



(back row, left to right)
Ismail al-Bahar, Elena Chiti,
Sarah Awad, Idriss Jebari,
Cafer Sarikaya, Hussam
Eldin Ahmed, Ami Ayalon,
Rebecca Wolfe (CASAW
Intern), Tony Gorman.

(front row) Yasmine Taan,
Sarah Irving, Alia Mosallam,
Joy Garnett, Raphael
Cormack

Born in Cairo in 1911, **Giorgis Dimou** was an Egyptian Greek artist and intellectual of the left whose work exemplifies some of the themes in the Cultures of Diversity research network. An exhibitor at the International Exhibition in Cairo in 1928 Dimou went on to produce a series of social realist woodcuts during the 1930s including a scene of Egyptian workers unloading timber on the Nile and a nationalist demonstration. After spending the war years in Greece he returned to Cairo in the late 1940s where he painted a series of watercolours depicting everyday scenes, one of which is featured here [with kind permission of Anna Avaraki]



IMES Postgraduate Developments

A New Name and a New Degree

The name of the MSc Arab World Studies which has now been running for eight years has recently been changed to MSc Middle Eastern Studies with Arabic (MESwA). This now makes very clear the two important elements that make up the degree, namely training in Middle Eastern Studies along with an intensive Arabic programme.

IMES is also planning to launch a new degree in September 2016 called MSc Middle Eastern Studies with Advanced Arabic (MESwAA). This brings together the second year of the existing MESwA and the MSc Advanced Arabic (relaunched this year) to make up a two year degree and will appeal to those who already have a significant level of Arabic but who wish to do a two year degree that includes a summer of language study abroad and a dissertation or media project.

Think about it!

MSc Studentships

IMES is again offering a fees only MSc Taught degree studentship for any of its MSc programmes (Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies, Middle Eastern Studies with Arabic, Middle Eastern Studies with Advanced Arabic, Advanced Arabic, and Persian Civilisation). This will cover tuition fees at the Home/EU rate (£8,500 p.a. for 2016-2017). Applications for both the Scholarship and the MSc must be made by 15th March 2016. For more information, see

<http://www.ed.ac.uk/literatures-languages-cultures/graduate-school/fees-and-funding/funding/masters-students/imes-msct-scholarship>

The School of Literatures, Languages & Cultures will also be offering a number MSc scholarships for students starting in September 2016

For further details on these schemes, please visit: <http://www.ed.ac.uk/literatures-languages-cultures/graduate-school/fees-and-funding/funding/masters-students>.

For general PG admissions enquiries please contact: llc.pgadmissions@ed.ac.uk.



Djrbahood,
Jerba,
Tunisia.

© Anthony
Gorman

The Postgraduate Scene

Anthony Gorman (left) mixing it with PhD students Jona Fras and Raphael Cormack (L-R)



Current MSc students Marlene Dirven, Abbie McLean and Barbara Yung (L-R) catch up at the Postgraduate Social.



Staff-Student Liaison: Postgraduates Sarah Myers and Henriette Skinnes catch up with Farah Aboubakr (r).





PhD students, Alessandro Columbu (as often in the limelight) and Lovisa Berg, at the presentation of their works in progress during the IMES seminar series.



PhD student Ching An-Chang preparing to deliver his Monday evening presentation, part of the rites of passage of second year PhD students at IMES.

Spotlight: Ashleigh Humphries and Chelsea Milsom

Ashleigh Humphries and Chelsea Milsom studied Arabic together at the University of Edinburgh and graduated in 2013. During their undergraduate degree they lived together in Jordan on their year abroad and are now flatmates again in London. Here they tell us about life after IMES and how they have put their Arabic to use.



Ashleigh

During my law degree I worked as a case worker in an immigration firm where I was able to use my Arabic and consolidated my interest in international law. I am currently training to be lawyer at a law firm, Latham & Watkins, in London. In the future, I hope to specialise in international environmental law and hopefully have some more interesting stories to share.

Chelsea

I studied Arabic at IMES and graduated in 2013. After graduation I completed a CASAW funded internship working on Arabic short stories in translation at Comma Press, an independent, not-for-profit publisher of short stories. I worked on *The Book of Gaza*, an anthology of Palestinian short stories by Gazan writers. I was given considerable responsibility advertising the call for submissions across Palestine and assessing and summarising the submissions, really putting my IMES taught language skills to the test!

I left Comma Press, where my role was filled by two subsequent IMES graduates: Lauren Pyott and Christine Gilmore, and joined a cultural charity in London: The Arab British Centre. I worked as Projects Manager organising a wide range of arts events including exhibitions, book launches and a week-long film festival at the Institute of Contemporary Arts.

In November 2014 I joined the Middle East Centre at the London School of Economics where I currently work. I am responsible for the annual Masters and PhD scholarships awarded by the Centre and also the Academic Collaboration with Arab Universities Programme. Through the programme we award funding to four projects annually that take place collaboratively between universities in Arab League countries and LSE. My role involves travelling to the region frequently for workshops and conferences at our partner institutions. It is great to be involved with Middle East focused academia again, and I often draw on knowledge gained during my time at IMES.

Ashleigh Humphries (MA Hons Arabic and Spanish) and Chelsea Milsom (MA Hons Arabic) graduated in 2013.

Laurene in Lebanon

By Laurene Veale

As an Arabic student at Edinburgh you get used to raised eyebrows and incredulous questions when you tell someone what you're studying. The small classes and obscure course names ("Elements of Islam" was one of them) contribute to building this illusion that your degree is somehow special.



You start believing that your decision to study Arabic shields you from being "mainstream" – a word only heard in the IMES department with a hint of disgust. After graduating I decided to move to Lebanon and because a lot of people found that a "peculiar" or "original" choice, I started to think I was the only one in the world to have come up with that idea. Obviously, I was very wrong.

Since my arrival in Lebanon, I've been working in NGOs assisting refugees, first in the field of Shelter, and then in Child Protection. If I wanted to avoid the "mainstream", it was bad timing. Refugees had become the buzzword of the year, and westerners were swarming to Lebanon, ecstatic about the fact that they could have "field experience" on the front line of a humanitarian crisis and still have good beer in the evenings and bacon & eggs for brunch. I became a reluctant member of the huge and rather obnoxious community of foreign NGO workers in Beirut. These underpaid idealists can be found in the cheap and busy bars of Mar Mikhael and the hipster cafes of Gemmayze, complaining about the high cost of living (over an \$8 glass of wine) and the electricity cuts, momentarily forgetting that the NGO they work with assists thousands of people who wouldn't spend \$8 on a meal for their whole family let alone on a beverage, and have to make do without electricity for sometimes over 12 hours a day.

I soon realised that these aid-workers were hard to avoid. They always ended up going to the same place as me, from UNHCR meetings to that obscure feminist theatre play, a conference on "sexuality in times of conflict" or that shabby second-hand market in Tripoli that I thought only I knew about. When I swallowed my pride and started talking to some of them, I found out that they, like me, have ended up in Lebanon because Syria, their first choice, had inconveniently entered a civil war before they got round to finishing their studies.

And while I am sensitive to the diversity within this community of foreign aid-workers, this may not be the case for the unenthusiastic border guards at Beirut airport who, day after day, have to listen to nearly indistinguishable Westerners promising them that they're not entering the country to work and are only repeatedly renewing their three-months tourist visa because they 'love the country', are 'learning Arabic' or have 'a Lebanese boyfriend'. A tedious routine for both parties, particularly since the tolerance of Lebanon's General Security towards illegal workers has significantly declined since 2012 and the arrival en masse of INGOs (that tend to overlook the required work permits for their staff). Evictions or entry-refusals are becoming quite common. Following several stressful experiences at the airport (and a forced ten-day stay in Istanbul after being denied entry), I managed to convince my employer to apply for a work permit for me.

This took nine months to obtain, during which I paid drinks to friends of friends (wasta) with connections to the nebulous net of Lebanese authorities, spent many mornings running from office to office in the Labour Ministry, had my application refused twice, appealed twice, and was even called in for a personal meeting with the Labour Minister, who wanted to know why my name had been so often mentioned to him by different people (thank you, wastas).

In hindsight, my whole experience in Lebanon would have been much more in line with my expectations had the media reported the situation more accurately. The mass arrival of western aid-workers (or those aspiring to be) has shaken the country, its hipster scene and its visa renewal office. I was caught by surprise by this, and was even more surprised to discover that I was part of that migration flow. This wouldn't have been the case if newspapers had headlines such as: "Wave of western migrants hits Lebanon"; "Lebanese bars struggling to handle mass entry of aid-workers" or "western migrants stranded at Beirut airport call embassy as Lebanon tightens borders". With that kind of reporting, I would have known what to expect.

Laurene Veale graduated with an MA Honours Arabic and Politics in 2014, and was winner of both the Irene Crawford and the Carole Hillenbrand Prizes, awarded for the best performance by a 4th year student and the best dissertation respectively.

Alumni News

Samy Ayoub (MSc IMES 2008) (see Newsletter no. 2 Winter 2013) recently shared the Malcolm Kerr Award for the best dissertation awarded at the MESA conference in Colorado late last year titled, 'We're Not in Kufa Anymore: the Construction of Late Hanafism in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire, 16th-19th Centuries'. Since September last year Samy has been a Lecturer in Islamic Studies at the University of Austin Texas.

After leaving IMES, **Antonia House** (MA Arabic and Geography 2008) obtained a Masters in Near Eastern Studies at New York University and graduated from law school in summer 2015. She was working last year as an immigration fellow at a community-based organization in New York and is on her way to becoming an immigration lawyer.

Henry Bailey (MA Arabic and Persian 2009) now lives in Kenya and works in the safari industry. While he admits he is not using his Arabic much the vocabulary he learned while at IMES has certainly helped his Swahili.

Vladimir Hamed-Troyansky (MSc IMES 2012) reports he is making good progress with his doctoral studies at Stanford. His dissertation explores the resettlement of North Caucasus refugees in the Ottoman Empire between 1860 and 1914 and particularly focuses on the political economy of their resettlement and the construction of refugee networks within and across imperial lines. We look forward to the results (next year?).