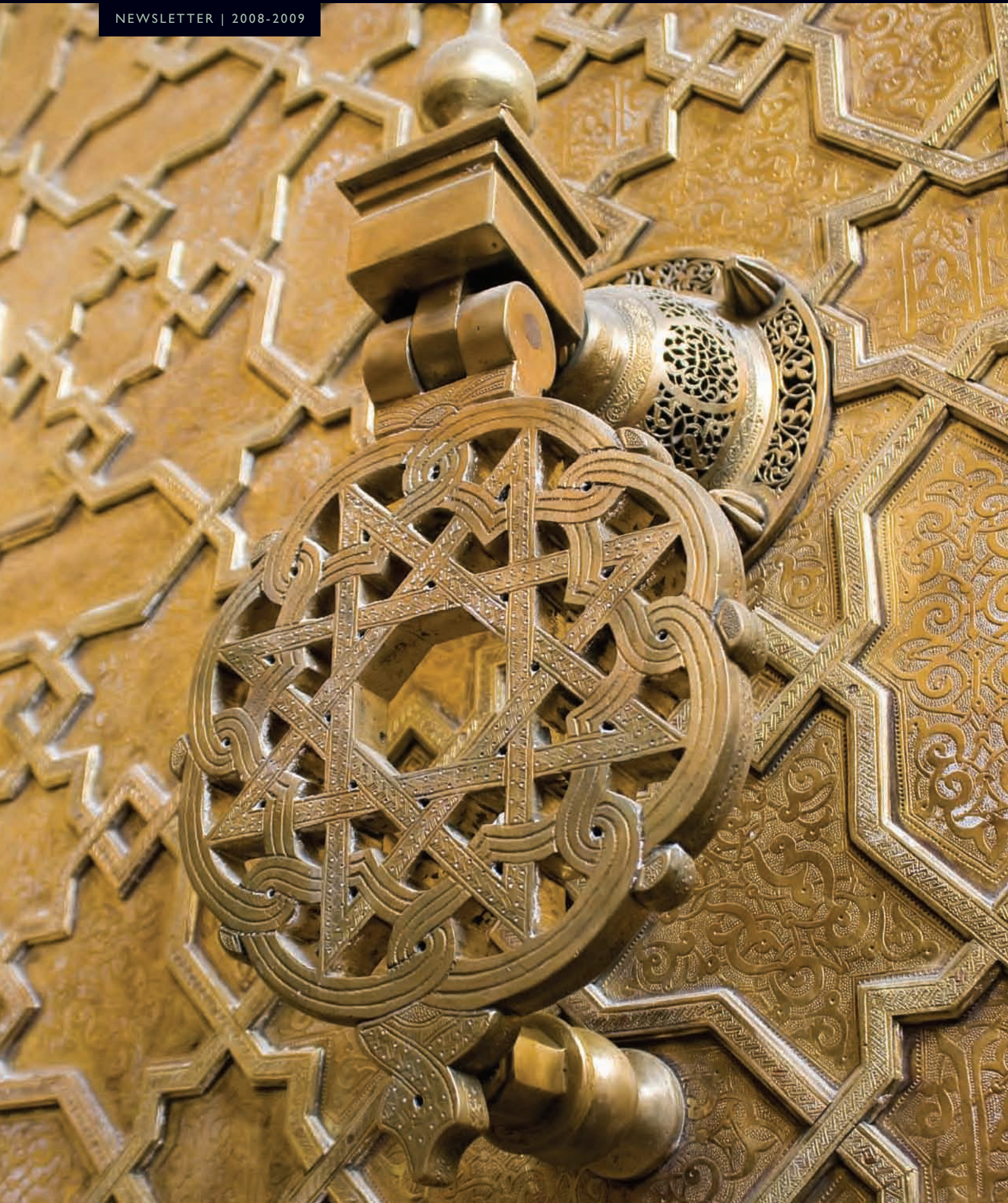


# MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

NEWSLETTER | 2008-2009





## LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR



It's an exciting time for the Middle Eastern Studies program. Looking back through archives, it seems as though every letter from the director that opens our newsletter begins with that statement, but this year that statement seems to have a particular poignancy.

The graduate program is undergoing substantive revisions that should lead to exciting changes in the years to come. Over the past few years, the program has become significantly more competitive. We now only admit students who have previously studied Middle Eastern languages, and most have studied language for three or four years. Even with this new requirement, we are able to admit only the best and brightest applicants. We have also added an extra year of language study to the degree plan.

In addition, new grant programs have allowed us to substantially increase the amount of funding for graduate students in our various graduate programs. For the first time, we are able to admit students with the promise of multi-year funding. For the past three years, MES graduate students have been encouraged to pursue the study of more than one Middle Eastern language as part of our new dual language track. This unique direction produces well-rounded professionals and has grown to include ten students. We have also initiated the process to implement a new dual degree program in Middle Eastern Studies and Global Policy Studies with the LBJ School of Public Affairs. We hope to admit the first applicants to that program in 2010.

Finally, the caliber of our program is reflected in the fact that twenty-three University of Texas graduate students will present papers at the 2008 conference of the

Middle East Studies Association of North America (MESA) in Washington, DC.

One of our primary goals over the past few years has been to diversify the sources of our funding. Although we continue to receive federal funding under the Title VI program, Congress has not substantially increased allocations for the program in many years. Fortunately, our efforts are beginning to bear fruit.

In addition to the large number of new grants that have been awarded to the broader UT Austin Middle Eastern Studies program, we have made a concerted effort to build relationships with the community and other organizations. We have cosponsored a number of conferences and public events with the Raindrop Foundation and the Turkish community. The Society of Iranian-American Women for Education in Houston has, for the past two years, cosponsored a series of lectures on Iranian studies and provided scholarships for students focusing on Iran. The Binah Yitzrit Foundation will donate \$10,000 over two years to establish a new publications series in Israel studies.

As we look to the future, MES is poised to become one of the best externally funded programs within the College of Liberal Arts (a rare feat for a unit focused on the humanities and social sciences). We continue to explore new partnerships and avenues for funding, all with the end goal that has served us well since our founding nearly fifty years ago: producing highly skilled professionals working in fields related to the Middle East, and top scholars who will serve as the next generation of experts on the modern Middle East. —*Kamran Scot Aghaie* 🌸

# Looking Ahead to Fifty Years

*“I find that here at Texas,  
if you scratch hard enough,  
you can do almost anything  
that makes sense.”*



2010 will mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at The University of Texas at Austin. As we approach our fiftieth year, we wish to celebrate the Center’s founders and their vision.

The Center for Middle Eastern Studies was founded in 1960 by a small group of faculty within the College of Arts and Sciences (the precursor to the College of Liberal Arts), who focused on Arabic and Hebrew language instruction, under the directorship of linguistics professor W.P. Lehmann. The Center’s academic focus was, from the beginning, the modern Middle East with an emphasis on advanced language learning—a focus that remains the core of the Center’s mission today.

The Center was awarded National Resource Center (NRC) status by the U.S. Department of Housing, Education, and Welfare (HEW) under the Title VI National Strategic and Area Studies Act of 1958 in the program’s first round of competitive applications. We have been continuously supported by Title VI ever since, except for a brief period in the 1970s when federal funding overall was cut.

Texas was the first university in the southern United States to be awarded NRC status for the Middle East, and remains the only such Center within a one-thousand-mile radius. The benefit of our unique status was summed up by then-Director Robert Fernea in an interview with *Alcalde* magazine in 1968: “One of my reasons for coming to Texas and my enthusiasm about it was my feeling here, with a young program, that there was a possibility for a new orientation. I sensed a flexibility and a willingness to experiment that could not be found at many more of the tradition-bound universities. And I haven’t been disappointed. I find that here at Texas, if you scratch hard enough, you can do almost anything that makes sense.”

Innovation has been a hallmark of the Middle East program at Texas since the early days. By establishing the Center, the University set up a place where scholars from different departments who might otherwise never have met could collaborate on projects. Robert Fernea explained in 1968, “Interdisciplinary seminars are born when two people from different departments find themselves reaching for books on the same shelf at the same time.”

Opposite page: Acting Director James A. Bill and Associate Director Ian Manners, 1979.

This page clockwise: M. R. Ghanoonparvar teaching Persian cooking, early 1990s. Victorine Abboud demonstrating the first Arabic Computer-Assisted Instruction (CAI) program in the world, 1979. Caroline Williams maintaining a slide collection drawn from thirty-four countries, 1979.



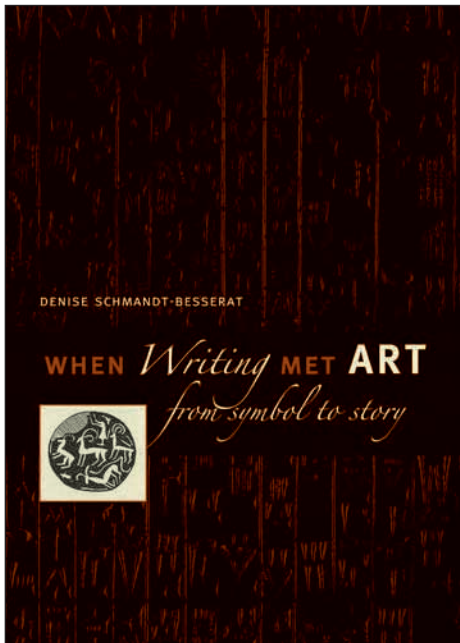
By the end of the 1960s, students could choose from nearly eighty courses on the Middle East each year, including study in four Middle Eastern languages—Arabic, Hebrew, Persian, and Turkish. Texas was the first institution to offer computer-aided instruction in the Arabic language, under the supervision of Dr. Victorine Abboud.

Today, the early tradition of innovation set by the founders of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies continues. Our Master of Arts degree program, established in the 1970s, is one of the top programs of its kind in the United States. Our language programs have expanded beyond instruction to incorporate topic courses in a variety of fine arts, humanities, social sciences, and professional disciplines. Our core faculty consists of seventy instructors housed in nearly every college at the University, and our mission remains bringing them together in ways that might otherwise never happen.

Do you have stories or memories of the Center you'd like to share? Send them to us! We'll feature them in the fiftieth anniversary edition of the newsletter. 🌸

DIRECTORS OF THE CENTER FOR MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES	
W. P. Lehmann	1960–1962
Walter Lehn	1962–1966
Robert Fernea	1966–1970
Carl Leiden ( <i>acting</i> )	1970–1971
Paul English*	1971–1979
James Bill ( <i>interim</i> )	1979–1980
M.A. Jazayeri	1980–1987
Ian Manners	1987–1991
Robert Holz	1991–1995
Abraham Marcus	1995–2002
Ian Manners	2002–2005
Kamran Scot Aghaie	2005–present

\* *acting* 1971–1972



Denise Schmandt-Besserat, Professor Emerita of Art & Art History and Middle Eastern Studies, is the First Prize winner of the 2008 Professor Robert W. Hamilton Book Author Award for her publication *When Writing Met Art: From Symbol to Story* (University of Texas Press, 2007). Schmandt-Besserat becomes the third UT faculty member affiliated with MES to receive the Hamilton Award's First Prize in the twelve years since the award was established.

Schmandt-Besserat began her lifelong work in the late 1960s as a research assistant at the Peabody Museum at Harvard University. Spurred on by an interest in pottery and clay, she was the first to recognize the

deeper significance of what had been dismissed as garbage by others: small clay containers that held tokens. Schmandt-Besserat put forth the theory that these were accounting tools, and from there began exploring the notion that these clay "envelopes" were the precursors to the first written languages.

Schmandt-Besserat came to the University of Texas in 1972, and has a long history of involvement with the Center for Middle Eastern Studies, where she served as Assistant Director from 1976–1979. She became Professor Emerita in 2004, but remains an active guest lecturer and writer.

Her book *How Writing Came About* (University of Texas Press, 1996) was included in *American Scientist* magazine's list of the 100 books that shaped science in the twentieth century. She has also published detailed catalogs of her archaeological finds, as well as a children's book, *The History of Counting* (Morrow Junior Books, 1999), which began as a project to share her work with her grandchildren.

Schmandt-Besserat's Hamilton Award-winning *When Writing Met Art* takes her thesis to the next stage by exploring the role of art in expanding the use of writing from a mere accounting tool to its eventual use to record speech. The book

documents "a key turning point in human history, when two of our most fundamental information media reciprocally multiplied their capacities to communicate." 🌸

#### PREVIOUS WINNERS AND RUNNERS-UP FROM THE MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES FACULTY

**2006:** L. Michael White (Classics), for *From Jesus to Christianity: How Four Generations of Visionaries and Storytellers Created the New Testament and Christian Faith* (First Prize)

**2002:** Mounira Maya Charrad (Sociology), for *States and Women's Rights* (First Prize)

Glenn Peers (Art History), for *Subtle Bodies* (runner-up)

Keith Walters (Linguistics) and John J. Ruskiewicz, for *Everything's an Argument* (runner-up)

**2000:** Wm. Roger Louis (History), for *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Twentieth Century* (runner-up)

**1998:** Denise Schmandt-Besserat (Art History), for *How Writing Came About* (runner-up)



*Faegheh Shirazi studies material culture and its influence on gender identity and discourse in Muslim societies.*

Faegheh Shirazi's passion for her research is certainly evident to anyone who has the good fortune to speak with her about it. Since delving into the study of popular religious practices in the Muslim world and gender discourse with her first book, *The Veil Unveiled: The Hijab in Modern Culture*, Shirazi, Associate Professor of Middle Eastern Studies, has continued

this thread with her two latest projects: *Muslim Women's Quiet Resistance to Islamic Fundamentalism*, forthcoming from the University Press of Florida in June 2009, and *Muslim Women in War and Crisis: From Reality to Representation*, an edited collection that has been accepted by the University of Texas Press.

*Muslim Women's Quiet Resistance to Islamic Fundamentalism* discovers the ways in which women have quietly developed their own agency with regard to fighting Islamic fundamentalism. In the arenas of sports, art, literature, and policymaking, women have forged places for themselves. For example, Shirazi traces the development of the Islamic bathing suit and the freedom it has allowed women. In *Muslim Women's Quiet Resistance to Islamic Fundamentalism* she also counters the notion that women must be highly educated in order to be emancipated. She illustrates this point with an example from rural India, where a village woman challenged the local patriarchy when they barred women from attending the village mosque; the women built their own mosque instead.

Shirazi's research for *Quiet Resistance* also encompasses discussions of sexuality in the Muslim world. In part, she is working to uncover the discourse on lesbianism, which

has been given little attention in the Middle East until recent years. This exploration of gender and sexuality led to the interesting discovery that Iran, despite being so closed to homosexuality, is the only Islamic nation that has issued a fatwa regarding gender reassignment—thirty years ago Ayatollah Khomeini expressed approval of gender reassignment surgery.

*Muslim Women in War and Crisis*, Shirazi's edited volume forthcoming with UT Press, examines how Muslim women are presented and represented in imagery in the traditional Middle East and beyond. The articles in this volume focus especially on how images of women are used during times of war and crisis. Shirazi recruited a broad range of scholars and writers from South Asia (India and Indonesia), North Africa, the Middle East, Bosnia, England, the United States, and Spain to address this issue, including two perspectives from both Iraq and Afghanistan.

With her two latest books not even off the presses yet, Shirazi is already at work on her next project: the commodification of Islam. Intrigued by companies who have designed and marketed Islamic versions of Barbie dolls, she's interested in the ways in which Islam is used as a marketing tool. We look forward to the results of this research. 🌸

# PUBLICATIONS

*The Modern Middle East*

*Literatures in Translation Series*

celebrates 3 new editions.

CMES continues to expand its publications program, adding three new titles to the Modern Middle East Literatures in Translation Series in 2008, all by authors whose works appear for the first time in English.

A generous grant from the Society of Iranian-American Women for Education supported the publication of M.R. Ghanoonparvar's translation of *Fortune Told in Blood*, by Davud Ghaffarzadegan. Set during the Iran-Iraq War, it tells the tale of two Iraqi soldiers who find themselves alone on an isolate mountain peak with orders to observe the enemy's troop movements. As they witness the destruction brought about by the intelligence they have gathered, they begin to question their loyalty to their country and each other.

Written by an Iranian author, *Fortune Told in Blood's* sympathetic treatment of Iraqi soldiers works to undo the damage caused by years of brutal warfare. This English translation allows the West further access to the body of literature on the Iran-Iraq War, a genre with which it has had only limited experience.

Ataol Behramoğlu's poetry collection, *I've Learned Some Things*, translated from the Turkish by Walter Andrews, made its debut this summer. Walter Andrews

worked closely with Ataol Behramoğlu to capture the simple beauty of the original poems in English, and we are very pleased with the results.

Published as a bilingual edition, *I've Learned Some Things* was supported by a grant from the Turkish Ministry of Culture and was featured at this year's Frankfurt Book Festival as part of the Festival's showcase of Turkish literature.

A Moroccan prison memoir authored by a woman—a rarity in the genre—rounds out our new publications for the year. *Talk*

*of Darkness*, by Fatna El Bouih, chronicles the author's experience as one of the "disappeared" during the heightened political tensions of the 1970s. Mustapha Kamal and Susan Slyomovics's poetic translation captures the author's struggle to secure political prisoners' rights and defend herself against an unjust imprisonment.

With 2008 quickly coming to a close, we are already at work on titles for next year. Keep an eye out at the end of next summer for a revised edition of Leila Abouzeid's popular *Year of the Elephant*. 🌸

To purchase our books, visit <http://www.utexas.edu/utpress/subjects/cmest.html>.

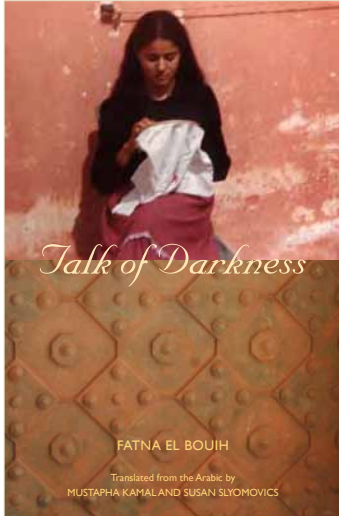
## ISRAEL STUDIES SERIES

*This fall we are excited to officially announce the Binah Yitzrit Foundation Series in Israel Studies. The Binah Yitzrit Foundation will contribute \$10,000 over two years to CMES's publications program to fund new books in Israel studies.*

## AWARD NOTICE

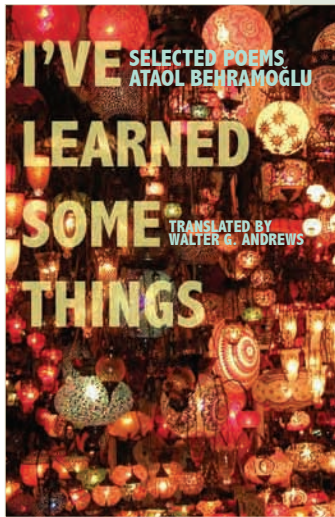
*We are pleased to announce that Shelagh Weir's A Tribal Order: Politics and Law in the Mountains of Yemen has won the British-Kuwait Friendship Society Prize in Middle Eastern Studies. Published in 2006 as part of the Center's Modern Middle East Series, A Tribal Order is based on the author's extensive fieldwork in Jabal Razih, a remote region in northern Yemen.*





The first day dragged by, leaving us no memories. A long silence ensued. Immobility and struggle at the same time.

During such an experience, time is a sharp sword. You want it to be short, you want it to understand, you ask it to help, but time has no mercy; it stretches out and pulls away. A fearsome struggle goes on inside the skull, all attempts at sleep fail. You summon up the forces within your body to adapt to the new situation, as with the first day of Ramadan fasting. Mealtimes pass, one by one. Time is the first enemy on the battlefield. As for hunger, sometimes it gnaws at you, at other times it lies in wait, then it attacks you without mercy. You turn away from time, not in the hope of food, but hoping it will pass. Time wins every round. The day brings the evening only after you cross a deadly desert; the night is miserly in surrendering you to sleep, which you chase like a mirage. I realized that I had an appointment with an experience that would undoubtedly have fearsome consequences; I also realized my life was at stake.



#### ISTANBUL

I'm drawing an Istanbul on my breast  
With my thumb, butterfly-styled  
Before the mirror as though I were a child  
Face and hair I caress.

Of Kadıköy I recall some sort of seas  
Of Shishli a solitary tram  
Of Samatya, of Sultanahmet I am  
Remembering the fig trees.

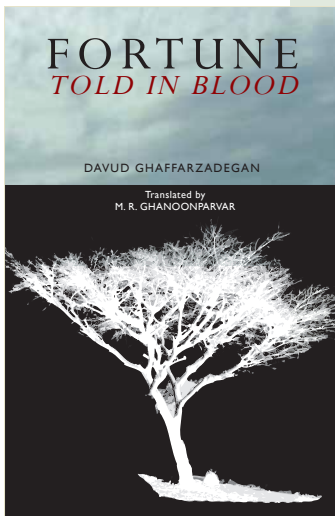
I'm drawing an Istanbul on my breast  
With my forefinger, butterfly-styled  
Look, I'm a little hopeless, a little tired  
I think I like my eyes the best.

#### İSTANBUL

Göğsüme bir İstanbul çiziyorum  
Başparmağımla, kelebek biçiminde  
Çocukmuşum gibi aynanın önünde  
Yüzümü saçlarımı okşuyorum

Kadıköy'den herhangi bir deniz  
Tenha bir tramvay Şişliden  
Samatya'dan belki Sultanahmet'ten  
İncir ağaçları anımsıyorum

Göğsüme bir İstanbul çiziyorum  
Başparmağımla, kelebek biçiminde  
Biraz umutsuzum, biraz yorgun işte  
En çok gözlerimi seviyorum



He moved forward a little and stood at the edge of the precipice. On this side, the mountain was like a straight wall; it seemed impossible for anyone to climb. He felt secure. The precipice faced the enemy forces, so there would be no danger from them. He held on to a rock and looked down. He felt dizzy. He closed his eyes for a moment and then opened them again. The canyon was deep and rocky, with sparse underbrush growing among the sharp rocks. No, no one could climb up from this direction. Unless he was a mountain goat or some sort of ghost. He looked ahead again. A stream encircled the mountain and was wider on this side. As far as the eye could see was an expanse of dark green grass studded with small and large trees, and farther on, it seemed that a black column was passing through the trees and advancing forward. A village could be seen behind the tall poplar trees. Silence pervaded the scene and there was no sign of military forces anywhere that could be seen with the naked eye. Except for that black column that continued to advance like ants and turned behind the hills. Perhaps they were villagers who were leaving their homes with all their possessions and animals.

# The Art of Translation



*M. R. Ghanoonparvar draws from culture when creating his works of translation.*

In the United States, translations make up only a small percentage of the books published each year, and very few of these are from the Middle East. But translators have been working steadily over the years to alter this picture. Among their ranks is Department of Middle Eastern Studies Professor M. R. Ghanoonparvar, translator of the recently published *Fortune Told in Blood*, by Davud Ghaffarzadegan. With over thirty years of experience, Ghanoonparvar is well qualified to discuss the hurdles that translators must overcome in order to bring works of literature from the Middle East to an English-speaking audience.

First of all, translators must carefully choose what to translate, and to do this they must “be very aware of the culture from which they translate.” In his experience, Ghanoonparvar has found that stories with universal themes are the best choice and he points out that “translation is also a promotion of culture so try to bring things into the target language that open a window to that culture...that enrich the target culture.” A translator doesn’t just translate words from one language into another, but also culture.

The actual process of translating is itself fraught with complicated decisions. “Theoretical questions regarding how a text should be translated vary. The proponents of one extreme argue that a translation should reflect the original language as literally

as possible, while those on the other extreme believe that a translation should read as though it had originally been written in the target language (in this case English) and need not be a literal translation.” Ghanoonparvar has found that striking a “happy medium” between these two schools of thought has served his translation projects well.

While translating a book from one language to another is no easy feat, finding a publisher, especially for a project from the Middle East, presents an even greater challenge. Translations have never been particularly popular with the U.S. market, and English-language audiences have tended to be “culture-centric,” preferring to read about the Middle East from the perspective of an American or British author. However, Ghanoonparvar feels the situation has improved in recent years. The continuing political focus on the Middle East has spurred an interest in literature from the area. And while big trade houses may still be hesitant to consider translations, academic publishers, who have been an outlet for works from the Middle East for years, have begun to step up production. Ghanoonparvar cites CMES’s publications program, which has actively published literature in translation from the Middle East for twenty years, as a key publisher in this recently expanding market, a trend which he hopes will continue. 🌸

# If a picture is worth a thousand words,

what is actually  
being there  
worth?



Greetings from Egypt! I have been privileged to participate in the Arabic Flagship Program both domestically at the University of Texas and now here in Alexandria, Egypt. This overseas component of the program sends students for a year to live, study, and immerse themselves in Egyptian culture.

Although I had spent a summer abroad in Syria, I was excited to have a full year to immerse myself in the language, culture, and customs of Egypt. I have always believed that immersion is incredibly important for language acquisition. This is especially true for Arabic, because to be fluent in the language, you have to have a working knowledge of Modern Standard Arabic (the language of mass media, most books, and university teaching) as well as the local dialect.

Upon our arrival in June, the program quickly introduced us to the Egyptian dialect through our program of study in both Modern Standard Arabic and Egyptian dialect. We also had language partners with whom we met for one-on-one sessions four times a week to help us familiarize ourselves with the Egyptian dialect outside of a class

setting. The fall program has continued the summer courses, but adapted the schedule, as we are also attending a regular course at the University of Alexandria with Egyptian students as well as participating in an internship. I am working on a project with the Library of Alexandria to document the influence of different ethnic and religious groups on Alexandrian cuisine. My job is to go to popular restaurants around Alexandria and interview the owners and chefs about what makes their food uniquely “Alexandrian.” It’s a rather tasty job! Although as a native Texan I was slightly disappointed to find that Tex-Mex has never made it into the Mediterranean fusion of Alexandrian cuisine.

As a self-confessed history nerd, I find Egypt fascinating. Much of Alexandria’s ancient history has disappeared through the ages, but the unique blend of Mediterranean, Egyptian, and Islamic influences that distinguishes Alexandria from the rest of Egypt remains strong. The program has also taken care to introduce us to the rest of Egypt in excursions that are both culturally relevant and breathtakingly beautiful. In addition to a trip to Cairo (where

the Pyramids of Giza earned their title as a Wonder of the World), we also ventured to the Sinai Peninsula to see Mount Sinai and the amazing coral reefs. The program plans to round out our adventures around the country by taking us to the desert oasis of Siwa, as well as a trip south to see Luxor, Aswan, and the Valley of the Kings. These trips, while certainly providing beautiful scenery, also allow a glimpse into the ancient history of which Egyptians are so proud. In fact, they are so proud of Egypt’s status as an ancient civilization that they have a nickname for Egypt, Umm ad-Dunya, or Mother of the World.

As I reflect on my time here and look forward to the second half here in Egypt, I am excited about the linguistic progress I have made, as well as the insights I have gained into Egyptian culture. After living in the university dorms for the summer, I moved in with an Egyptian family and am enjoying it immensely. I am incredibly grateful that I have had this experience and opportunity to live, study, and travel in Egypt, and I know that I will continue to benefit from this experience and treasure it for my entire life.—Adrienne Dunlap 🌸

## NEW FACULTY PROFILE: TAREK EL-ARISS



We are pleased to announce the arrival of Tarek El-Ariss, Assistant Professor of Middle Eastern Studies, who brings an expertise in contemporary Arabic literature and culture to the department. El-Ariss comes to us from New York University, where he taught in the Department of Liberal Arts.

Originally from Beirut, Lebanon, El-Ariss earned a BA in philosophy from the American University of Beirut in 1994. “Not having answered the important questions at twenty-one,” he decided to continue his education in the United States and completed an MA in French and film studies at the University of Rochester. There he discovered poststructuralism, postcolonial theory, and film and media studies, which inspired him to pursue a project that involved both French and Arabic literature. Ultimately he achieved this goal at Cornell University, writing a dissertation on French and Arabic travel narratives and exploring the intellectual exchange between Europe and the Middle East at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Hard at work on his manuscript, “Encountering the West: Postcolonial Fantasy in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Arabic Travel Literature,” El-Ariss just completed an article entitled, “Channeling the Dead: Postcolonial Haunting and Fragmentation in Tayeb Salih’s *Season of Migration to the North*,” which will appear in an anthology on travel literature.

El-Ariss is currently teaching a graduate seminar on loss in contemporary Arabic literature. In the spring, he will teach an undergraduate course entitled, “Conflict and Fantasy,” as well as a graduate course on new Arabic writings, and his proposal for a Signature Course on contemporary Arabic culture has just been approved for Fall 2009. 🌸

## NEW FACULTY PROFILE: NA’AMA PAT-EL



This fall we also welcomed Assistant Professor Na’ama Pat-El to the Department of Middle Eastern Studies, where she is teaching courses on ancient Semitic languages. Pat-El’s experience in this area is of immeasurable benefit to

our program as these ancient Semitic languages undergird the development of modern Middle Eastern languages.

Pat-El didn’t originally set out to study ancient Semitic languages. Germanic linguistics initially piqued her interest and she earned a BA in the subject from Hebrew University; but after taking some classes in Aramaic as an undergraduate and realizing “That’s what I want to do!” she decided to pursue that path in graduate school. Once she completed her MA in Semitic linguistics at Hebrew University, Pat-El went on to Harvard to study Near Eastern languages and civilizations, and she received her PhD in June 2008.

Pat-El’s research led to a dissertation on the development of Aramaic syntax over its three-thousand-year history—the language is still spoken today in parts of Iran, Iraq, Turkey, and in two villages in Syria—which has already been accepted for publication by Gorgias Press.

In addition to teaching “Hebrew for Academic Reading” this fall and “Introduction to Targumic Aramaic” and “Introduction to the Structure of Semitic Languages” in the spring, Pat-El is also working with professors from across the university to create a lecture series designed to promote the study of late antiquity. Look for the series to begin this spring. 🌸

The Department of Middle Eastern Studies continues to expand this fall with the appointment of five new visiting scholars and five new lecturers.

## VISITING SCHOLARS



SONGÜL ATA

VISITING FULBRIGHT  
SCHOLAR

Turkish Studies/  
Ethnomusicology



DINA HOSNI

RESEARCH FELLOW  
AND LECTURER

Arabic Studies



NAHLA EL-SENOUSY

VISITING SCHOLAR

Arabic Studies



AVIAD STOLLMAN

VISITING SCHOLAR  
AND LECTURER

Schusterman Center  
for Jewish Studies



ERAN ZAIDISE

SCHUSTERMAN  
POSTDOCTORAL  
FELLOW

## NEW LECTURERS



LAILA  
HASAN FAMILIAR

LECTURER IN ARABIC



ADI RAZ

LECTURER IN HEBREW



ELISHEVA  
ROSMAN-STOLLMAN

SCHUSTERMAN VISITING  
PROFESSOR IN ISRAEL  
STUDIES



MARTHA  
SCHULTE-NAFEH

SENIOR LECTURER  
IN ARABIC



ANOUSHA  
SHAHSVARI

LECTURER IN PERSIAN

# OUTREACH



## *Tracking Cultures: Making It All Relevant*

The CMES outreach program was established in the mid-1970s, and has frequently been called upon to help the community and educators respond to global crises—for example, while researching the history of the Center in preparation for the upcoming fiftieth anniversary, we discovered news clippings describing a teacher’s workshop held shortly after the Yom Kippur/Ramadan War in October 1973.

Providing resources to K–12 educators has historically been the main component of the CMES outreach program, and one of its main challenges is the segregated structure of history and geography education: students study Texas history independent of U.S. history, and U.S. history is taught independently of world history. The effect, as Assistant Director Christopher Rose observes, is that, “When I’m working with high school students and we’re talking about cotton production in Egypt and how it took off in the 1860s, they don’t connect it with the Union blockade of Confederate ports during the Civil War. You can see the light bulb go on as they say, ‘Wow, we had something to do with that!’”

As part of the never-ending search to find new ways to make Middle Eastern Studies seem relevant to K–12 students and educators, Rose and his counterpart Natalie Arsenault, Outreach Director at UT’s Teresa Lozano Long Institute of Latin American Studies, are taking inspiration from an existing student study abroad program and plan to create a parallel intensive summer study seminar and curriculum development project for K–12 educators.

The inspiration comes from the Tracking Cultures student study program, launched over a decade ago, that is coordinated by Cory Reed, Associate Professor in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese. The program takes a multidisciplinary approach to history by literally tracking the roots of Texas culture to Mexico, across the Atlantic to Spain, and then crossing the Strait of Gibraltar into Morocco.

While the student program runs over a three-semester cycle, the educator program would be condensed into a six-week summer program under the leadership of Rose, Arsenault, MES Professor Samer Ali, and History Professor Susan Deans-Smith. A small planning grant allowed the team to begin preliminary work in the spring and summer by meeting with potential hosts and partner organizations on site in Mexico, Spain, and Morocco.

“We’ve met some very exciting people,” Rose says. “We’ve made contacts with Mexican scholars who work on crypto-Jewish migration to the New World, Moroccans who are working on the impact of Islamic Spain on the New World, and a Spanish organization that’s working to document the heritage of Islamic Spain. Given the emphasis on Texas history in the educational standards, we really believe that this project could open a whole new avenue for students and educators to explore the world.”

The project will address the ways in which cultural pluralism shaped artistic and religious practices, social values, and political and economic systems in North Africa, Europe, and North America by tracing key aspects of familiar cultural practices through processes of convergence and divergence from their origins, points of contact, and moments of transformation.

By focusing on the confluence of cultures from the period of al-Andalus (Islamic Spain, 711–1492) to the Spanish colonization of the New World, Tracking Cultures would challenge assumptions about what is “American” and what is “other” by providing a deeper understanding of the global outcomes of invasion, colonization, and migration.

Fund-raising for the Tracking Cultures educator program is underway, along with a preliminary version of an educational curriculum that can be used as a blueprint for the work undertaken during the program. If all goes well, the Tracking Cultures educator program is slated to begin in June 2010. 🌸

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