

# CVES

NEWS

THE CENTER FOR  
MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES  
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

2022-23

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# NEWS AND NOTES

## A CUP AS COMPLEX AS WORLD: Q&A WITH CEMAL KAFADAR

*This interview with CMES Director Cemal Kafadar by Harvard Staff Writer Jill Radsken originally appeared in slightly different form in the Harvard Gazette, November 17, 2022.*

The World Cup kicks off Sunday in a historic moment for Qatar, the first Arab country to host the quadrennial international soccer tournament. It will also mark the first time the event will not be held in the summer, due to the soaring seasonal heat in the Middle East. Ten years in the planning, these games have been filled with controversy, including allegations of bribery of FIFA officials in awarding Qatar the tournament, the deaths of thousands of migrant workers hired to build the soccer infrastructure, and the host nation's anti-gay laws. Cemal Kafadar, director of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies and Vehbi Koç Professor of Turkish Studies in the Department of History, shared his views on the complexities of this World Cup. This interview has been edited for clarity and length.

**GAZETTE:** What does it mean that Qatar is hosting the World Cup?

**KAFADAR:** It is a special case, of course, because I immediately think of the season. One might not necessarily start there, but this changes something that is like a holy day for millions of soccer fans around the world once every four years in the summer.

Religious calendars are full of these kinds of events. And for soccer fans it is their holy calendar. If the games are being played on another continent, you're supposed to wake up very early to watch; no religion without some asceticism.

Always being in the summer also tallies well with the futbol seasons of different countries. Leagues finish their seasons before the start of World Cup games. Players have time to rest. Fans also have time to catch their breath from engagement with their own national leagues, or continental champions' leagues, and then focus on the World Cup monster. This one doesn't provide that chance. National leagues are continuing—in fact, in Istanbul, my hometown, and elsewhere Derby games were played last weekend, and this week friends have been telling me this is scandalous. I have gotten messages from the UK, from Lebanon, from Turkey. So in Qatar, the calendar change—that this is happening for the first time in November/December—interrupts the “nationalized” rhythm of the soccer world.

**GAZETTE:** Is that kind of interruption a good thing, to change the way it's always been?

**KAFADAR:** I don't think so. Like many fans, I'm a purist. Maybe we don't want the calendar to be tinkered with. But it's also a matter of the heat, and nobody knows how

that's going to work out. I'm sure they've taken all kinds of technological and other types (architectural, etc.) of measures to make things comfortable. But that too makes one worried about energy, about climate change, in our day with heightened sensitivities around environmental issues. And of course there are the labor circumstances in Qatar. In the Gulf we have for years been worried about circumstances with foreign laborers, coming mostly from South Asia and Southeast Asia, and some poorer parts of the Middle East. It's a big network, a dense fabric of workers whose remittances go back to the homelands. Folks, mostly males, leave their families behind to work in the Middle East. Women also go—independent of the soccer cup—as nannies or to do other types of household work. It's very heavily, at least until recently, unprotected labor and some people have compared it to indentured slavery or serfdom. It's really become worse, obviously, when you had to do so many new constructions with such deadlines as Qatar did. And temperatures are likely to reach 90 degrees on some of the days. Eventually the game will probably win over, but since these circumstances of labor in particular loom large in our minds, many fans are ambivalent. One thing is certain: As academics, we will be studying and developing some new thinking on all this.

At the Center for Middle Eastern Studies, with this [Global Sports] Initiative

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of Stephen Ortega, we've organized an event around Lilian Thuram, a former French player who wrote a book, *White Thinking: Behind the Mask of Racial Identity*, who is coming ahead of the France/Tunisia match. We shall watch it together with him and our community before a larger public discussion of his book. We hope it will be engaging for the community, even if some are not into futbol.

I'm also trying to arrange for a representative from International Labor Organization-United Nations to speak to us before or soon after that event. As an academic institution, we need our community to be aware of the circumstances surrounding Qatar and what they might tell us about the future of these events. Frankly, if this were to continue, many of us might be turned off from the World Cup. At the same time, we should be wary of exceptionalizing Qatar to the degree that it makes us forget about earlier World Cups held in authoritarian countries with abysmal human rights records.

**GAZETTE:** Just last week a World Cup ambassador—and former Qatari player—called homosexuality “damage in the mind.” In the context of these games being played in a country with anti-gay laws, how should fans react?

**KAFADAR:** Yes, it's terrible, but I'm not surprised. Futbol players have been coming out or at least speaking out only in certain countries and even in those countries it can still be met with negative responses. Imagine yourself a player who faces this kind of rhetoric, and you're going to Doha

to play. Fortunately there are players like Lilian whose main thrust of activism is for racial justice, but he is also well aware of other kinds of discriminations and injustices. He also stands up for those other forms of discriminations. It is divided between voices of reason and what I would consider to be good moral values of human rights and equality versus deeply entrenched prejudices in soccer culture.

**GAZETTE:** So do you see it more as a wider soccer culture problem?

**KAFADAR:** Oh, I don't believe Qatar is particular in this. I mean, in certain parts of the world, homophobia is a bigger problem. In the Middle East, there is great diversity and variation in this regard, though the overall record is pretty bad. Let me give you an example from Turkey, which is the country I am from and I know best. Ten or 12 years ago Turkey was, for two three years in a row, a place where the Pride Day was celebrated with great participation and fanfare and very publicly in the largest square in Istanbul. Thereafter it got less and less safe. For the last two or three years, it's become banned. Some folks defy the ban, but it often leads to arrests and subjection to police violence.

**GAZETTE:** So what you're saying is that the progress for gay rights in Middle East isn't linear?

**KAFADAR:** Precisely. And lately, of course, the turn to authoritarianism is so common. So I don't want to just say typically in the Middle East, this is what happens,

but it is, of course, one of the parts of the world where it's more difficult for LGBTQ communities to be out in the open. That breaks my heart, but that's the way it is.

**GAZETTE:** Do you think that allowing Qatar to have this giant stage will ultimately be a step forward for this activism? That the country may move toward more openness?

**KAFADAR:** I, like many of my colleagues who will study this, am a firm believer in unintended consequences as playing a big role in history. After the cup, we can try to understand how and see the logic, but it's impossible to predict. There's so much that flows within a particular context that can be best described as unintended consequences, and whatever the intentions of Qatari authorities or international football associations, yes, it could generate discussion. There is already vibrant debate and sharp awareness of the issues, in conventional networks as well as social media. Some of these players are some of the most famous people in the world. Whatever they utter, even in a single sentence, can be extremely influential upon millions and millions of people. Brazil has always been a big soccer culture, and Neymar is one of the best Brazilian players. Just before the last election there, he announced support for President Jair Bolsonaro. Ultimately, he lost. But I'm sure his word was still significant for some people. And there may be other big players like Thuram who beg to differ.

**GAZETTE:** So will you watch this World Cup?



Photo: Kris Snibbe/Harvard Staff Photographer

**KAFADAR:** It's in the middle of the semester so I won't be able to watch as much and that's OK. Really, I am of two minds. When they move into the later stages, of course, it's too enticing to pass up, especially if you have, say, an African team go farther than expected. Then you begin rooting. But I think honestly, let us see. My prediction would be that fans will be a bit cold. I haven't heard of anyone totally negating and boycotting, but it will be a bit colder in that respect. But

once you have a game like Brazil–Germany, or a smaller soccer country deep into the later stages, I don't think a soccer fan will be able to resist, for better or worse. Some games, like France–Tunisia, have a different kind of historical resonance. It's not universally a big game for soccer fans; Tunisia has never been one of the top teams. But given the history between France and Tunisia, if you are interested in North Africa, Mediterranean cultures, and modern history of

Europe, then this game has great resonance. Or a US–Iran game (if Iran is able to participate) resonates way beyond soccer culture because it's happening in 2022 with a particular kind of history in its background.

The magic of it is in not knowing how it unfolds. It's full of surprises. We focus on particular players if they have said interesting, worthy things. You feel part of a larger international community paying attention to the same story, to the same character. ▣

# FALL RECEPTION 2022



Director Cemal Kafadar welcomes the CMES community



Sara Hnidi, Faisal Alghassab, and Hacı Osman Gündüz



Eylül Yalçınkaya and Meryem Demir



Rannd Muhanna, Rachel Nelson, Riccardo Di Molfetta, Ani Kalousdian, and Frederick Nelson



Sean Widlake and Sarah DeMott



Jesse Howell, Christopher Malley, and Jordan Cannon



Janan Iranbomy



Denis Sullivan, Nader Uthman, and guest



Amr Madi and Richard Cozzens



Selen Erdoğan, Lisa Gulesserian, and Mukadder Gezen Demir



Sultan Alamer and Cemal Kafadar

## NEWS AND NOTES

### FACULTY NEWS

CMES Associate **Don Babai** was named co-editor of the newly formed Middle East Political Economy Series of Oxford University Press, with fellow co-editor John Sfakianakis, a Harvard PhD graduate and former student of Roger Owen. Preceptor in Arabic **Richard Cozzens** was selected as the John R. Marquand Award for Excellence in Advising and Support recipient for the 2022–23 academic year. The Marquand Award is given to a staff or faculty member who contributes to the quality of undergraduate life and education, with a focus on each candidate's skills and generosity in advising, counseling, and helping students. **Gareth Doherty**, Associate Professor of Landscape Architecture, spent two months as a visiting faculty in the CMES Tunisia Office as part of his year-long sabbatical from the Graduate School of Design. Gareth also did fieldwork in Morocco, supported by the Alwaleed Islamic Studies Program, for his research on North African Landscapes. Through the GSD's Critical Landscapes Design Lab, which Gareth leads, he is PI on a sponsored research project, "Atlas for the Medina of Tunis,"

sponsored by Materia Inc. He is also currently completing a project, "Design with Darkness: Inhabiting the Kuwaiti Nighttime in the Era of Climate Change," supported by a grant from the Middle East Initiative at Harvard Kennedy School. Preceptor in Persian **Mojtaba Ebrahimian** contributed the chapter "One Thousand Years of Persian Travel Writing and Siyāhatnāmeḥ-ye Ebrāhīm Beyg (1895) as Safarnāmeḥ," in *Routledge Handbook of Post Classical and Contemporary Persian Literature*, ed. Kamran Talattof (Routledge, 2023). He published "The European Other, the Indo-Iranian Self and the Discourse of Wonder in the Earliest Persian Travelogues of Europe," *Studies in Travel Writing*, 2023. His article "Abd al-Rahim Talebof's Promotion of Nationality and National Sociopolitical Reforms in Kitab-i Ahmad (1890–1894)" is forthcoming in the *International Journal of Persian Literature* in August 2023. In December 2022, he gave the talk "The European Other and the Persianate Self in the Earliest Persian Travelogues of Europe" for the Persian and Persianate Studies Seminar at Harvard's Mahindra Humanities Center. **William Granara**, Research Professor of

the Practice of Arabic on the Gordon Gray Endowment, delivered a lecture entitled "Writing History in the Tunisian Arabic Novel" at Freie Universität Berlin in September 2022, and another entitled "Custom, Etiquette, and Law in Arabian Nights Love Stories" at INALCO's Maison de la Recherche in Paris in April 2023. **Lisa Gulesserian**, Preceptor on Armenian Language and Culture, and her collaborator at Columbia University have won a 14-month, \$30,000 grant—from a Mellon-funded program housed in Michigan State University's Less Commonly Taught and Indigenous Languages Partnership—to fund Միասին ("Together"), a Modern Western Armenian Open Educational Resource (OER). The project will address the difficulties of communicating in Western Armenian by creating an interactive, engaging, and modern open educational resource for Western Armenian organized by communicative competencies for elementary and intermediate class-based learners. Besides winning a grant this year, Lisa also had her article "Listen Up: Collective Armenian Genocide Postmemory in Micheline

Aharonian Marcom's *Three Apples Fell from Heaven*" published in the Spring 2023 issue of *C21 Literature: Journal of 21st-Century Writings*; she was also invited to present on less commonly taught languages at Harvard's Language Center and on an Armenian poetic form for Hamazkayin-Canada. At Harvard College, Lisa worked on securing approval for a new Language Citation in Armenian for AY 2023–24. CMES Associate **Lenore Martin** published "Turkey and the Middle East and North Africa under the AKP: A Three Level Analysis of Foreign Policy Change," with Meliha Altunışık, *Uluslararası İlişkiler/ International Relations*, April 18, 2023, and "The Plight of Turkey's Minorities: What Obstacles and Opportunities Exist for Equal Citizenship beyond the Republic's Centennial?" *Turkish Studies* 24.3-4, February 2023. **Derek Penslar**, William Lee Frost Professor of Jewish History, spent the fall semester of 2022 at Ludwig Maximilians University Munich, where he was the Brodt Foundation Visiting Professor of Jewish Studies. In spring 2023 he was a Plumer Fellow at St. Anne's College, Oxford. His book

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## CMES WELCOMES NEW LANGUAGE FACULTY

CMES welcomed three faculty members to Harvard's Middle Eastern studies community in fall 2022. Gregory Halaby, who last year joined NELC as Full-Time Teaching Assistant in Arabic, has been appointed Preceptor in Arabic. Halaby earned a PhD in Arabic language and literature from NELC in 2019. His research focuses on Arabic language politics, as well as Arabic literary, intellectual, and cultural history in the Middle East and beyond. Halaby has been a Visiting

Assistant Professor of Arabic at Macalester College and a Visiting Lecturer at Brown University. He has taught all levels of Arabic at Harvard as both a Teaching Fellow and a Teaching Assistant since 2010. Halaby will be teaching courses in elementary Arabic and upper-level classical Arabic.

Dana Malhas joined NELC as Preceptor in Arabic. She is an ACTFL certified tester and rater for Arabic Language. She teaches MSA, Classical Arabic, and Amiya, Jordanian colloquial, from elementary

to advanced level, and helps students master their Arabic language reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills. She received a BA in English literature from the Hashemite University, and taught Arabic to international students for ten years at Qasid Arabic Institute in Amman, Jordan. Malhas will be teaching courses in elementary Arabic.

Nader Uthman joins NELC as Senior Preceptor in Arabic and Director of the Modern Language Programs. Uthman was educated in New York,

both upstate and downstate, as well as in Atlanta and Cairo. He earned a PhD from Columbia in 2009. Uthman's training is in comparative literature and modern Arabic literature and culture. He researched how narratives of exile, displacement, and migration refract notions of multiple attachment, modernity, gender and sexuality, and identity. Uthman comes to Harvard after teaching Arabic language, literature, and culture at New York University for over a dozen years and will be teaching Advanced Modern Arabic.



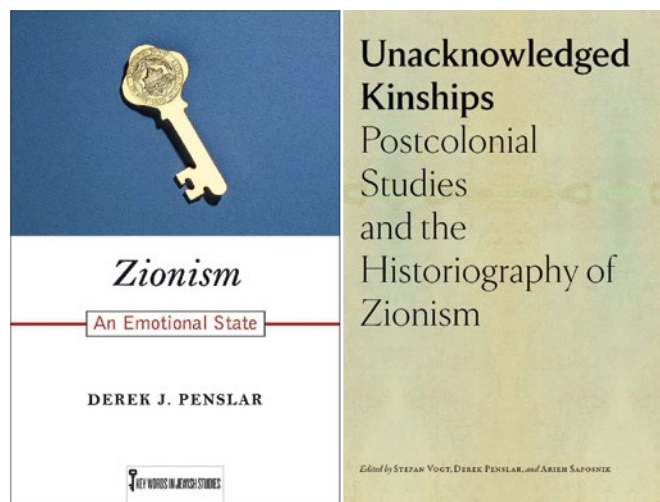
Greg Halaby



Dana Malhas



Nader Uthman



*Zionism: An Emotional State* was published by Rutgers University Press in June 2023, and his co-edited volume (with Stefan Vogt and Arieh Saposnik), *Unacknowledged Kinships: Post-Colonial Theory and the Historiography of Zionism*, was published by Brandeis University Press in July. Penslar gave talks on his book on Zionism and emotion at Oxford, the University of Chicago, the University of Leiden, the Technical University of Berlin, and Ludwig Maximilians University Munich. He spoke on the German edition of his 2020 biography of Theodor Herzl at the Berlin Jewish Museum, the Basel Jewish Museum, and the German–American Institute in

Heidelberg. Penslar also gave talks on his current research project, a global history of the 1948 Palestine war, at the University of Leiden, the Landeszentrale für politische Bildung in Berlin, the University of Haifa, Tel Aviv University, and the Ben-Gurion Research Center in Israel. **Intisar Rabb**, Professor of Law and Director of the Program in Islamic Law, HLS, published “E Unum Pluribus: Comparative Textualism and Constitutional Faiths,” *Balkinization*, August 2, 2022, prepared for the Roundtable on Wrestling with Religious Diversity, convened as part of LevinsonFest 2022—a year-long series gathering scholars from diverse disciplines and viewpoints to reflect

on Sandy Levinson’s influential work in constitutional law. She published “Crimen y Castigo en el Islam: Principios y Prácticas” [Crime and Punishment in Islam: Principles and Practices], 20 *Awraq Arabe*, 2022, and “Enforcement and Punishment in Medieval Islamic Law,” in *Cultural History of Crime and Punishment in the Medieval Age*, ed. Karl Shoemaker (Bloomsbury, forthcoming 2023). For the Islamic Law Blog at HLS, she convened with Umut Özsü in 2022 the History of Islamic International Law roundtable, and contributed the foreword and conclusion; and wrote “Resource Roundup: Controversy over Depictions of Prophet Muhammad—Religion and Free Speech,” and “Resource Roundup: Islamic Criminal Law,” both 2023. She gave the talk “Metacanons: Comparative Interpretation in the U.S. Supreme Court and in Islamic Law,” Irving Tragen Lecture on Comparative Law, UC Berkeley Law School, April 2022. This scholarship on comparative interpretation and legal canons in American and Islamic history was also presented as a part of a workshop at the Berkeley Workshop in Law, Philosophy, and Political Theory at Berkeley Law School, February 2023, and

as a panel contribution to the AALS Virtual Legislation Panel, hosted by Jesse Cross, with co-panelists Anita Krishnakumar, Aaron-Andrew Bruhl, Ethan Leib, James Brudney, December 2022. Katerina Linos of Berkeley Law School hosted a podcast session to discuss the project on her show, *Borderlines: Interpreting Metacanons*, August 2022. Rabb participated in the discussion “Reflections on Interpretation and Serving in the Judiciary,” with Justice Stephen G. Breyer, US Supreme Court (retired), and Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah, Supreme Court of Pakistan, HLS, September 2022. CMES Associate **Sara Roy** was awarded a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Palestine Book Awards in London, UK, November 2022. She also gave the invited lectures: Keynote, at the Palestine Book Awards, London, November 4, 2022; “Gaza: When Is Life Grievable—Some Personal Reflections on Decades of Research in Palestine,” Annual Gaza Lecture, Oxford Brookes University, Oxford, November 9, 2022; “Aspiring to the Ordinary: Reflections on a Generation of Struggle in Gaza,” Beyond Concrete: Everyday Space in Gaza workshop, Oxford

Brookes University, April 27, 2022 (online); and “Gaza: Reflections on a Generation of Isolation,” Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, March 24, 2022 (online). **Nader Uthman**, Director of the Modern Language Programs and Senior Preceptor in Arabic, NELC, contributed the introduction to *Sour Grapes*, a collection of short stories forthcoming in 2023 from Syracuse University Press. **Malika Zeghal**, Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Professor in Contemporary Islamic Thought and Life, Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, published “The Shaping of the 1857 Security Pact in the Regency of Tunis: A Reappraisal of the Nineteenth Century Constitutional Reforms,” *Studia Islamica* 117.2, 2022.

#### **STUDENT NEWS** **PHD STUDENTS**

**Majid Dohan** was awarded the Ismaili Community Fellowship from GSAS for 2022–23. He has received the fellowship since starting the PhD program in fall 2020. He was awarded a teaching certificate from GSAS for fall 2022. And he presented a paper at a *Tahqiq* (Islamic editing tradition) workshop at the Near Eastern Studies



Daria Kovaleva (fifth from left) and cohort at Leiden University Center for the Study of Islam and Society

Department at Princeton University with fellow PhD candidate **Omar Abdel Ghaffar**, who co-organized the workshop. Omar was also accepted into the JD program at Harvard Law School and started in September 2022. In summer and fall 2022, **Daria Kovaleva** was a PhD Fellow at Orient-Institut Istanbul (Turkey) working on her project “Oral Drama in Istanbul and the Production of Public Culture in the Second Ottoman Empire (1570s–1820s).” In

the 2022–23 academic year she won a Krupp Foundation Dissertation Research Fellowship from the Center for European Studies at Harvard, which so far has taken her to Leiden University Library, Vatican Apostolic Library, the Bibliothèque nationale de France, and Marciana Library for manuscript research. In summer 2022, with support from CMES, she attended the summer school “Philology and Manuscripts from the Muslim World,” organized

by the Leiden University Center for the Study of Islam and Society. As part of the program she presented a short research project on the history of compilation of Leiden Miscellany MS Or. 1068.

#### **AM STUDENTS**

New AM graduate **Ritika (Zara) Lal**, was awarded the CMES Thesis Prize for “The Cold War Makings of Saudi Surveillance: Labor and Dissent in the Lifetime of the Dhahran Airfield Agreement, 1945–1962.”

## ON THE GROUND AFTER THE EARTHQUAKES: Q&A WITH DEREN ERTAS

*Deren Ertas is a PhD candidate in history and Middle Eastern studies at Harvard. She was in Istanbul doing research when, beginning on February 6, 2023, a series of powerful earthquakes struck areas of southern and central Turkey and northern and western Syria. Following is a conversation with Ertas about her experiences in the aftermath of these devastating events.*

### **Where were you when you first heard that a series of earthquakes had struck Turkey and Syria?**

I was in Istanbul. It was an exceptionally cold Monday; a storm had hit the city the night before. I woke up to messages from friends in the United States who had been awake when the first earthquake hit. I immediately turned on the news. Having lived through the 1999 earthquake as a child, my second reaction was to turn everything off and tell myself I would have a typical day. I think this was a trauma response—if I don't look, it won't be so bad. However, I couldn't concentrate on the documents I had been dutifully reading for the last few months and kept checking the news and social media. The library where I went to work was exceptionally quiet. I kept getting out of my seat to go to the public areas where there was at least the

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**When I heard the news of the second earthquake, I realized I needed to be doing something else.**

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possibility to exchange sad and bewildered glances with strangers. I was there when I heard the news of the second earthquake, at which point I realized I needed to be doing something else.

### **How did you get involved in the relief effort? What organization are you working with?**

There is something so pitiful about not being part of an organized collective at such a time. There is so little that you can do as an individual. I felt this particularly strongly because I was home, where I had grown up until the age of eleven. But I hadn't lived in Turkey during my adolescence and adulthood, so I was a bit lost. I returned to social media, where a few of my trusted friends had posted about a call for volunteers from an anti-capitalist labor collective called Umut-Sen. I called them and then started walking to their offices.

My first volunteer task was translating safe zones and meeting places from Turkish to Arabic and Kurmanji. I stayed in the crowded office filled with young and old volunteers until about 10pm, translating and brainstorming about ways to get clothes, food, heating supplies, and water to the earthquake region. At some point that evening, people from the collective arrived in various affected districts in Malatya, Maraş, Hatay, Diyarbakir, Antep, and Adiyaman. The next day, the work shifted to coordinating search and rescue efforts. Initially, we would contact people who wrote what they needed on various social media outlets. For example, we would see

that a 60-ton capacity crane was required at a particular address, which then we would communicate to the volunteers on the ground, who would then try and find said crane and forward it to the address. Over time, people started contacting us directly. This work was highly stressful, especially in the first 72 hours after the earthquake. Once the search and rescue work ended, our priority shifted towards helping the survivors dealing with frigid temperatures and a lack of water, food, clothing, hygiene supplies, tents, blankets, and everything else they needed to stay alive. Getting the provisions to the villages, whose populations more than doubled as people abandoned the cities for the countryside, was particularly important.

In the course of that week, I worked hard to find a way to get myself to the earthquake zone. Finally, a friend reached out, saying he planned on going with another friend. I also called a friend, who decided to join us. There was so much doubt surrounding the decision to go—would we be actually useful or a burden, one more mouth to feed and house in a context of absolute scarcity and lack? We decided to go anyway, taking everything we could need over the week we planned to stay there. We arrived in Malatya on the evening of the sixth day following the earthquake.

### **What kind of conditions have you encountered? What types of work did you do in the earthquake zone?**

As it is now well known, the earthquake

affected a vast area, roughly 400 km, more than the distance between New York and Washington, DC. I cannot speak about everywhere affected by the earthquake since I remained in Malatya the whole time. Malatya, unlike Maraş and Hatay, was spared the worst. Nonetheless, there were more than 3,000 collapsed buildings, and the city's infrastructure received a huge hit. When I first arrived, there was no clean running water, all grocery stores and shops were closed down, garbage collection had been interrupted, and the only people on the streets after a particular hour were police, gendarme, and village guards. Search and rescue teams had left and machines were trying to clear the collapsed buildings. Government officials started arriving in the second week after the earthquake to assess damages to buildings that were still standing. I remember on my second or third day in Malatya, one of the buildings that the inspectors had claimed only to be "slightly damaged" (meaning that people who live there could enter it) collapsed following an aftershock. Understandably, this contributed to an already-existing atmosphere of distrust and insecurity. Due to the continuing aftershocks, many people left the city. At some point, around 70 percent of Malatya's population had left for villages within the province or the neighboring regions. In the case of Malatya, children and women were virtually absent, having relocated to relatives' homes across the country. And those who remained—refugees, workers, the poor—needed much support but weren't getting it. Their homes were unsafe, so they needed to stay in tents or



Volunteers and locals after unloading an aid truck

containers. However, these were not being provided except for in a few areas in the town center.

In responding to these needs, the Umut-Sen volunteers in Malatya worked together with the local branch of an Alevi organization called Pir Sultan Abdal Cultural Association. Together, we set up a soup kitchen and an area with tents for families to stay. We handed out second-hand clothing, blankets, heating stoves, diapers, feminine hygiene products, baby food, medicine. We also gave out hot food to around 150–200 people twice a day. Besides feeding the folks in the neighborhood, the soup kitchen provided a warm and welcoming environment where people could be together. We exchanged stories,

shared our traumas, and strategized for the future over soup and bread.

### **What problems persist, and what reconstructive work is being done in the earthquake region now?**

I left the earthquake zone towards the end of February, and a lot has changed. Speaking with my friends and fellow volunteers on mutual aid channels and following different kinds of organizations on social media, the reconstruction period will be long and difficult. Most urgently, people still do not have access to clean running water. Rebuilding the urban infrastructure, especially the water supply, must be a priority going forward. Secondly, construction debris, which



contains asbestos, among other harmful substances, is being brought en masse to the countryside across the earthquake region. This poses a severe hazard to the environment and human life since asbestos exposure is known to cause lung cancer. Thirdly, there are differences in how locals and state officials think about the reconstruction of the cities that have been destroyed. One of the most important tasks ahead is informing people of the government's plans for reconstruction and giving them a platform to organize collectively and share their perspectives. Besides these, many other lacks need to be addressed: psychological counseling for trauma victims, educational facilities for children and young adults, animal shelters,

infrastructure guaranteeing that votes can be securely cast in the upcoming elections, and so on. Many vocational organizations, civil society collectives, and NGOs are working towards providing these to earthquake survivors regularly.

**You're a historian of the region—does your understanding of the historical relationships among politics and populations in Turkey and Syria inform your ability to help with relief operations?**

My knowledge of Kurdish and Arabic has been helpful at different points. My familiarity with the region's history facilitated conversations and endeared me to locals with whom I was doing relief

work. This made it easier for us to trust each other and form lasting relationships, which I cherish today. But I think the most important thing to note here is that being part of the relief efforts influenced how I look at my work rather than the other way around. And in this case, by work, I mean not only my dissertation but also the more critical work and praxis of solidarity, which is an essential part of that reciprocal relationship we all want to establish with the communities whose pasts or presents we examine in our research.

**What is the best way that people in the CMES community and the larger Harvard community can help?**

One of the most important ways that CMES and Harvard can help is to collect donations and send them to various organizations working in the earthquake zones. Establishing a research project centered around earthquakes in the Middle East would also be helpful going forward, as this will certainly not be the last earthquake to hit the region. A part of this could be an interdisciplinary lab for thinking about how to reconstruct the cities in the earthquake zone in ways that take seriously local demands and the existing urban fabric while also prioritizing durability and sustainability. Harvard, and the surrounding educational community, have much expertise to offer in this field. Finally, I think that for fundraising or awareness-raising events going forward, it is important to continue highlighting the fact that Kurds, Turks, and Syrians were all victims of these earthquakes and deserve equal access to all relief efforts. □

## CONGRATULATIONS 2022–23 AM AND PHD GRADUATES!

### AM PROGRAM

#### ■ Shamma Faisal Al

**Bastaki**—*Thesis*: “Al-Majaz: A Crossing.” *Advisor*: Steve Caton. CMES Thesis Prize

#### ■ Faisal Alghassab

■ **Giulia Benvenuto**—*Thesis*: “Islam as a Source of Progress: The Project of the Progressive Islamists in Tunisia, 1977–Present.” *Advisor*: William Granara

■ **Aaron Boehm**—*Thesis*: “Negotiating Sovereignty in the Kingdom of Libya: 1950–1954.” *Advisor*: Emad Shahin

#### ■ Micah Budway

#### ■ Hongli Fu

#### ■ Michael Grouskay

#### ■ Josie Koury

■ **Ritika Lal**—*Thesis*: “The Cold War Makings of Saudi Surveillance: Labor and Dissent in the Lifetime of the Dhahran Airfield Agreement, 1945–1962.” *Advisors*: Sultan Alamer and Nora Doaiji. CMES Thesis Prize

#### ■ Zhixi Liu

■ **Nicole Plante**—*Thesis*: “The Old Will Die but the Young Will Never Forget: The Role

of Memory in Restoring Place, Presence, and Belonging for Palestinians.” *Advisor*: Sara Roy

#### ■ Matthew Utter

#### ■ Jesse Wilkes

■ **Lavinia Zhao**—*Thesis*: “Economic Diversification for Oil-Dependent Countries: Highlighting the Role of Institutional Quality.” *Advisor*: Kristin Fabbe

### JOINT PHD PROGRAMS

■ **Belle Cheves** (History and MES)—*Dissertation*:

“Untidy Households: Kinship, Service, and Affect in Nineteenth-Century Qajar Iran.” *Advisor*: Afsaneh Najmabadi. *Committee*:

Vincent Brown, Justine Landau, Kathryn Babayan

■ **Farhad Dokhani** (History and MES)—*Dissertation*: “Reason, Dissent, and Ecumenism in Nineteenth-Century Iran: The Life and Thought of ‘Shaykh’ Hadi Najmabadi.” *Advisor*: Khaled El-Rouayheb. *Committee*: Justine Landau, Roy Mottahedeh, Farzin Vajdani

■ **Marijana Mišević** (History and MES)—*Dissertation*: “Writing Slavic in the Arabic Script: Literacy and Multilingualism in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire.” *Advisor*: Cemal Kafadar. *Committee*: Ann Blair, Michael S. Flier, Molly Greene

■ **Eda Ozel** (History and MES)—*Dissertation*: “Morality of Plunder and Economy of Protection: Ottoman Corsairs in Mediterranean Trade Networks and Warfare, 1574–1685.” *Advisor*: Cemal Kafadar. *Committee*: David Armitage, William Granara, Gillian Weiss



William Granara and Jesse Howell with 2022–23 CMES AM and PhD graduates

# COMMENCEMENT RECEPTION 2023



Faisal Alghassab and Jesse Wilkes



Matthew Utter, Micah Budway, and guest



Josie Koury and guests



Yosra Amraoui and Michael Grouskay



AM graduates gathered on the front porch at 38 Kirkland Street



William Granara, Belle Cheves, and Jesse Howell



Jesse Howell and Giulia Benvenuto



Jesse Howell addresses graduates and guests



Jesse Howell, Eda Ozel, William Granara, and guest



Greg Halaby, Hongli Fu, and Mojtaba Ebrahimian



Jesse Howell, Lavinia Zhao, and William Granara

## NEWS AND NOTES

### VISITING RESEARCHER NEWS

In March 2023, Visiting Fellow **Mukadder Gezen Demir** successfully defended her PhD dissertation, “Arabic Elements in Turkish Verses of Ali Shir Nevai,” Turkish Language and Literature Department, Istanbul University. In June 2023, she contributed a chapter for a volume in honor of her master’s thesis supervisor, Kemal Yavuz. In 2023, Visiting Fellow **Adel Hamaizia** published, with S. Zinser and D. Li, “Chinese Soft Power and Cultural Diplomacy in the Middle East and North Africa,” in *Routledge Companion on China and the Middle East and North Africa*, ed. T. Zoubir (Routledge); with K. Fabbe, and T. Quinn, “Saudi Arabia: A Vision in Progress,” Harvard Business School Case Collection; and with W. Merouani and H. Messekher, “The Future of Social Safety Nets in Algeria: Design, Reform, Innovation,” Chatham House Research Paper. He was named a 2023–24 Predoctoral Research Fellow at the Middle East Initiative at Harvard Kennedy School’s Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, and he gave or moderated talks at Rome MED; Abu Dhabi Strategic Debate; Organization for Economic Co-

operation and Development; American University of Dubai; Chatham House; Middle East Institute, Washington; Middle East Institute Switzerland; Konrad Adenauer Stiftung; Arab Conference at Harvard; CMES, Harvard; UCLA; and United States Institute of Peace. Visiting Scholar **Erdem Sonmez** published two journal articles and three book reviews during the 2022–23 academic year. “Clio between Revolution and Collapse: The Making of the Historical Discipline in the Late Ottoman Empire” appeared in *Modern Intellectual History* in 2022. “Historical Writing in the Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Empire: Expansion, Islamization, and Nationalization (1839–1909)” was published in the *Turkish Historical Review* in 2022. Book reviews appeared in the *Journal of Cold War Studies*, *Die Welt des Islams: International Journal for the Study of Modern Islam*, and *European History Quarterly*. Sonmez also presented two papers at two academic conferences. The first paper, titled “History in the Service of an Empire: The Transformation and Politics of Late Ottoman Historical Writing,” was presented at the 10th Making of the Humanities Conference (online). This



Emre Toros in Bern, Switzerland

conference was organized by the Society for the History of the Humanities (SHOH) and took place November 2022. The second paper, titled “Ranké in the Middle East: The Emergence of Modern Historiography in the Late Ottoman Empire,” was presented at the annual meeting of the Middle East Studies Association of North America (MESA), held in Denver in December 2022. He took part as a discussant for the panel “The Unmaking of Empire and the Making of Nation” at the 27th Annual World Convention of the Association for the Study of Nationalities, held May 2023 at Columbia University. And he contributed to the Ottoman History Podcast with a talk titled “Hayrullah Efendi’den Türk-İslam Sentezine:

Türkiye’de Tarihyazımı ve Tarihçilik” [From Hayrullah Efendi to the Turkish-Islamic Synthesis: Historiography and Historical Writing in Turkey]. Visiting Scholar **Emre Toros** gave the talk “Elections, Electoral Integrity, and Democracy in Contemporary Turkey: Light at the End of the Tunnel?” for the CMES/WCFIA Middle East Seminar in March 2023. In May 2023 he participated in the session “Universal Suffrage Amid Universal Suffering—How Natural Disasters Distort Elections,” part of the parliamentary conference “Elections in Times of Crisis” in Bern, Switzerland, organized by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in co-operation with the Swiss Parliament.

## MY JOURNEY OF SELF-REFLECTION AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AT HARVARD

*In 2022–23, Yosra Amraoui, Associate Professor at the High Institute of Languages of Tunis, was the fourth recipient of the Hazem Ben-Gacem Postdoctoral Fellowship for Tunisian Scholars, part of the CMES Tunisia Office and related programming made possible by the support of Harvard College alumnus Hazem Ben-Gacem '92. The fellowship brings Tunisian scholars, especially those whose research includes Tunisia and North Africa, to Harvard for an academic year to pursue their research in their area of specialization. Following are her reflections on her year in Cambridge.*

I have always considered my life as one that is dedicated to serving others, either as a teacher, mother, wife, sister, daughter, or friend. And I have lived this life accordingly; until one day, I turned forty and thought: where do I fit in all this? And in one of these reflective “existential” moments, I came across CMES’s announcement for the Hazem Ben-Gacem Postdoctoral Fellowship for Tunisian Scholars (to which I did not think of applying before out of an irrational belief that this is far-fetched for me considering my busy life).

Even after receiving an e-note for a potential interview, and even after the interview itself, I still thought that getting accepted was far-fetched for me considering the amazing Tunisian scholars living abroad that might be competing for this same position. And there was the day on which I was informed that I was the one who was selected, a day on which I said

to myself, “There is no turning back, I am doing this for myself”

My arrival in Cambridge was smooth and lovely, everything was facilitated by a guardian angel and a really thoughtful mentor, Professor William Granara, and by the lovely staff at CMES and Harvard. My first time in the United States felt like landing in a wonderful natural environment surrounded by extremely helpful, professional, and smiling people. I enjoyed contemplating the beauty of nature, the hopping squirrels, and the changing seasons and colors of trees, and filled my phone gallery with heavenly pictures.

I also set the tone for a strict working environment, set my reading list and my research schedule in order to fulfill what I was in the United States for: writing my book about narratives of carcerality in the Maghreb region.

The resources available in various languages at Harvard libraries facilitated my mission, the time available for this endeavor was plentiful, and my

days were so long, compared to my hectic schedule and busy-bee life in Tunisia. The seminars and workshops I attended introduced me to an agreeable level of academic expertise and research skills that were, and I am quite proud of saying it, equivalent to the level that exists in my country. I loved my country even more, I felt thankful and grateful for the versatile academic training I received there and felt determined, more than ever, to honor all that by working harder. I made friends with



Fall colors outside CMES

## NEWS AND NOTES



Prison exhibit I attended with Sarah DeMott



February 2023 talk at CMES

the lovely community of visiting fellows and researchers at CMES, especially from Turkey. Eda, Eylül, Zeynep, Sema, Selen—we studied together, shared meals, and checked on each other as old-time friends do.

What amazed me in all this experience was the genuine support and academic referrals I got from every person I talked to about my research: Professor Granara recommending relevant book titles, my neighbor cutting newspaper articles about prisoners and leaving them in my mailbox for me to check, Sarah DeMott, Research Librarian at Harvard Library and Lamont Library, taking me to a prison exhibit and introducing me to Kaia Stern, Director of the Prison Studies Project at Harvard University, and to visiting researcher Gonzalo Albornoz, who in turn introduced me to Konstantin Mierau and Kiki Santing, both scholars working on prisoners and living in the Netherlands. Both dedicated time to Zoom with me and discuss the relevance of my research.

The busy bee that I am was not satisfied with an exclusive research pace and wanted more. So, I asked for permission to create a series of webinars touching on issues related to the Maghreb region, which I called the Maghrebean Encounters Series, aiming to connect Harvard's community of researchers and students to a community of scholars from the Maghreb region. I received all the support I needed from Professor Kafadar, Liz, Eric, and Jesse; and I organized, thanks to the constant tireless support of Liz and Eric, five webinars with high-profile academics who discussed issues relating to Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia.



Hagop Kevorkian Center at New York University



March 2023 talk at CMES

I was also invited to deliver a talk on the value of Arabic language in the world of interpreting and had the chance to present my research in another talk at CMES in March.

I was equally delighted and honored by an invite I received from the Hagop Kevorkian Center at New York University to discuss carcerality and the art of resistance on May 8 and joined the MEBB (Middle East Beyond Borders) community of researchers, in front of whom I presented my work and from whom I received excellent feedback, including from fellow Tunisian Malika Zeghal, Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Professor in Contemporary Islamic Thought and Life in Harvard's Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations.


As I am writing a summary of this journey, I am halfway through drafting my book and will work on its publication very soon. I am approaching my last month as a postdoctoral fellow at Harvard, looking

forward to going back to Tunisia, which I greatly miss, filled with knowledge and skills to share. I haven't travelled much in the United States as I dedicated most of my time to research; but I am grateful for the days I shared with decent people on this land, grateful for the food and water I was blessed to enjoy, happy to have walked in the snow and to have been part of a distinguished community of researchers. I am now taking pleasure savoring every last moment (outside the gym and the library), eating healthy food, meditating and practicing yoga, walking, eating cannoli, and tasting every single

recommended lobster roll in Boston!!

I am now more certain of the relevance of the role I have to play going forward but I will never forget the most important element in it all: myself.

Thank you Hazem Ben-Gazem, thank you CMES, thank you Bill.

—Yosra, *la tunisienne!* 



## Q&A WITH BECCA WADNESS

*Becca Wadness is a 2018 graduate of the CMES AM Program in Middle Eastern Studies. She currently works as Senior Tunisia Desk Officer in the Bureau for the Middle East at USAID.*

### **What is the mission of the USAID Bureau for the Middle East, in general and specifically with regard to Tunisia?**

USAID supports the development goals of countries across the Middle East and North Africa. In the region, we work on a variety of issues that tackle inclusive economic growth, good governance, climate change and water scarcity, food security, conflict mitigation, and so on. In Tunisia, USAID supports Tunisian civil society and small businesses, helping strengthen democratic resilience and mitigate the severe impact of rising unemployment, inflation, and commodity shortages.

### **What are your goals and responsibilities as Senior Tunisia Desk Officer?**

As a Desk Officer, I serve as a key liaison between our team in Tunis and Washington, DC. I help advance US government policy conversations on Tunisia through a development lens and represent USAID's efforts in Tunisia in front of high-level stakeholders like Congress, the National Security Council, and foreign government counterparts. I track and synthesize political and economic developments on the ground, address operational challenges, and advocate for our continued support to the Tunisian people. I also work closely

with our incredible team based in Tunis. I travel often to provide them additional support and deepen my familiarity with the communities in which we work. Working side by side with my Tunisian colleagues is the best part of my job.

### **Where did you work before coming to USAID? What did you do at these institutions, and how did these experiences prepare you for your current position?**

I first joined the federal government through the Presidential Management Fellows (PMF) Program, which I applied to in the final year of my AM. Prior to PMF, my career focused on managing international education and civil society programs across the Middle East and North Africa. My experience working for NGOs has been instrumental in my ability to represent USAID's work in Tunisia. While at CMES, I also interned at the US Embassy in Algiers, which increased my knowledge and interest in the relationship between diplomacy, development, and foreign policy.

### **How did you decide to come to Harvard and CMES rather than a Middle East studies program elsewhere, or some other kind of graduate program entirely?**

I loved the flexibility that CMES offered to chart my own course. I took advantage of courses across the University, including GSAS, the Kennedy School, the Law School, the School of Education, and the Divinity

School. I was able to build a program that excited me, while learning alongside really passionate peers who had completely different interests. I often think about how special our small cohort was and our success in fostering a really supportive environment.

### **Did you come to Harvard with a career path in mind? Did your time at CMES help clarify a career path for you?**

My goal for higher education was to cement my credentials in the region and to explore as much as possible what that could mean for the future. I'm grateful to CMES for introducing me to Tunisia. I first traveled there in 2017 on the Winter Study Excursion with Professor Granara, and still visit Sihem Lamine, the heart and soul of the CMES Tunisia Office, every time I'm in Tunis.

### **What advice would you give to CMES students interested in working for the US government, at USAID or another agency?**

I think the government would greatly benefit from attracting more students who are passionate and well educated about the Middle East and North Africa. I have the pleasure of working with a CMES alum, Cybill Sigler, who serves as one of my senior leaders in the Middle East Bureau at USAID. For those interested in a career in public service, the federal government offers a surprising amount of unique opportunities. From my experience, I have found that it's often really challenging to uncover the extent of opportunities until you have a foot in the door or are connected



with the right people. My advice is to talk to as many folks as possible and apply for any and everything that sounds interesting.

It's much easier to move between agencies and roles once you're "in." Additionally, there are so many different ways to build

your expertise. I'm grateful to have spent time both in and outside of government to diversify my perspective. ▣

## NEWS AND NOTES

### ALUMNI NEWS

#### AM ALUMNI

After graduating from CMES, **Mouhanad Al Rifay** ('21) took the time to turn his passion for real estate into a reality. Mouhanad passed the real estate licensing exams in Washington, DC, and Maryland, and joined Compass Real Estate. Perhaps more exciting is Mouhanad's full-time employment at his alma mater the University of Maryland, where he, along with a team of archivists, faculty, senior administrators, and historians, manages The 1856 Project, which is the University of Maryland chapter of Universities Studying Slavery, a consortium of over 90 universities, including Harvard, committed to uncovering and documenting their institutional histories with slavery. The 1856 Project is the University of Maryland's equivalent to Harvard and the Legacy of Slavery. **Hamdullah Baycar** ('17) is a final-year PhD candidate at the Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies at Exeter University, UK, examining UAE national identity and belonging. The Middle East Policy Council named Hamdullah to the "40 under 40" 2023 cohort for his Middle East-focused academic

and policy work. "Emirati Expats in Social Media: A New Area of Involvement and Participation?" and "Promoting Multiculturalism and Tolerance: Expanding the Meaning of 'Unity through Diversity' in the UAE" are his latest publications, from his PhD thesis, "Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power," and *Digest of Middle East Studies*, respectively. **Ayesha Daya** ('04) has launched a podcast called Muslim Footprints, which brings listeners scholarly knowledge about the rich diversity of Muslim civilizations through the ages. Each episode features interviews with leading academics and experts, taking listeners on a journey through the history of Islam. The podcast explores Islam's origins, key figures, and significant events; discovers how Muslim societies and individuals have actually lived and thought about and expressed their faith in their own ways as a pathway to the divine; and studies the revelation itself, the Qur'an. **Russell McGuirk** and **Sheila (Naghavi) McGuirk** (both '70) have been walking "La

Russell and Sheila McGuirk atop Castillo de Híero, Olvera, near Ronda



Ruta de los Almorávides y Almohades" in Andalucía with Spanish friends. Sheila is active in UK politics and in London's National Liberal Club, and the Gingko Library has recently published Russell's edited/annotated re-issue of *The Moulids of Egypt* by Bimbashi J. W. McPherson, which originally came out in Cairo at the height of the Second World War. They will be attending the Bristol University Conference of the Association for the Study of Travel in Egypt and the Near East (ASTENE) in July 2023. **Kevin Moss** ('16)

continues to serve as a US diplomat in the Middle East. He is currently a military attache at the Multinational Force and Observers in Sharm el Sheikh, Egypt, where he observes Egypt and Israel's adherence to the Camp David Accords pertaining to the militarization of the Sinai Peninsula and the countries' border regions. In August, he will continue to hone his Arabic language with the Foreign Service Institute in Jerusalem (via the University of Notre Dame at Tantur) before serving as a human rights officer at the Embassy Branch Office in

Tel Aviv. **Nicholas Norberg** ('19) left federal bureaucracy behind for greener pastures this year when he accepted a position as a Senior Threat Analyst at Reddit. He covers disinformation, terrorism, and hate speech. **Elsien van Pinxteren** ('15) published an article in an essay collection, "Les droits déclarés," regarding the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen and the end product of a course on European legal history at the University of Amsterdam. Her article, "Property, Women's Right, and Citizenship," explores a pamphlet by Olympe de Gouge that criticizes the male dominated perspective of the original Declaration. In December 2022 she co-founded and became a member of the board at the foundation Pollif Projects. This foundation supports artists in work that is inspired by ecological preservation and anthropological societal questions. It encourages cooperation between scientists and artists and seeks to be a network and home for artists, scientists, and anyone who wants to support a more protected earth, nature, and humanity. This summer the foundation will launch a project on maritime life protection,

specifically leatherback turtles, with artist and creator Mirthe Dokter. Several universities, including Wageningen and Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, are currently active participants in this project. **Aamir A. Rehman** ('99) is an adjunct faculty member at Columbia Business School. His MBA course, "The UAE: Economic Growth, Business Dynamism, and Global Relevance," included six weeks in the classroom and one week in the UAE. He also teaches "Foundations of Private Equity" to executive MBA students. **Sarah Yerkes** ('03) published *Geopolitics and Governance in North Africa: Local Challenges, Global Implications* (Edinburgh University Press, 2023). **John Zavage** ('13) retired from the US Army in 2021 after 27 years of active service and currently works as an instructor and curriculum director for the Security Cooperation Officer (SCO) course at the Defense Security Cooperation University (SCOs are DoD folks who work at embassies coordinating cooperative military activities like bilateral training, equipping, and partnership events). He authored a chapter in *Security Assistance in the Middle East: Challenges . . . and the Need for Change*, ed. Hicham Alaoui

and Robert Springborg (Lynne Rienner, 2023).

#### PHD ALUMNI

In March 2023, **Efe Murat Balıkcıoğlu** ('19) published his first academic book, *Verifying the Truth on Their Own Terms: Ottoman Philosophical Culture and the Court Debate Between Mollā Zeyrek (d. 903/1497–8?) and Hocazāde (d. 893/1488)*, in Ca' Foscari University's series Knowledge Hegemonies in the Early Modern World. The book deals with a previously unedited fifteenth-century court debate presented to the Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II by two prominent scholars of the time, a royal event that continued for a week. The study also includes the first annotated edition of this debate in classical Arabic along with its translation, analysis, and contextual significance in post-classical Islamic intellectual history, covering a wide range of perspectives on Arabic disputation etiquette, the method of scholarly verification (*tahqīq*), Mehmed II's imperial patronage and universalism, as well as Ottoman philosophical discussions on unicuity, existence, and necessity. **David W. Lesch** ('90, AM '86), Ewing Halsell Distinguished Professor of History at Trinity University, published *The*

*History of the Middle East Since the Rise of Islam* (Oxford University Press, 2022). It is his seventeenth authored or edited book. **Jessica M. Marglin's** ('06) book *The Shamama Case: Contesting Citizenship across the Modern Mediterranean* (Princeton University Press, 2022) was a finalist for the National Jewish Book Award in History, 2023, and winner of the Mediterranean Seminar Best Book Prize, 2023. In 2022, **Ian McGonigle** ('18) published "Again You Will Plant Vineyards': Prophecy, Jewish Settlement, and Temporal Dissonance in the Occupied West Bank," *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 12.3. It is based on ethnographic work with the Orthodox Jewish winemakers of the contested territories. **Martin Nguyen** ('09) worked with the Princeton Muslim Chaplain, Sohaib Sultan, to expand and edit his book *An American Muslim Guide to the Art and Life of Preaching* before his passing in 2021. The book was published in March 2023 by Fortress Press. **Daniel Pipes** ('78) published *Islamism vs. the West: 35 Years of Geopolitical Struggle* (Wicked Son, 2023). He is working on a second book, concerning the Palestinian–Israeli conflict, and hopes it will appear in 2024.

# EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

## SEPTEMBER 2022

**Hamas in Cyberspace: Social Media and New Forms of Political Expression.** A talk with Fulbright Scholar and CMES Visiting Researcher Mohammedwesam Amer, Dean, Faculty of Mass Communication and Languages, Gaza University, Palestine. Moderator: CMES Associate Sara Roy.

**Democratic Backsliding in Tunisia.** A talk with Sharan Grewal, Assistant Professor, Department of Government, College of William and Mary. Discussant: William Granara, Research Professor of the Practice of Arabic on the Gordon Gray Endowment, Harvard. Co-sponsored with the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs.

**Herbert C. Kelman Memorial Service.** A celebration of the incredible life of Herbert Kelman, 1927–2022, with remembrances from colleagues and former students. Co-sponsored with the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs and the Department of Psychology.

**Competitive Elections in a Hybrid Case.** A talk with Ersin Kalaycıoğlu, Professor Emeritus, Sabancı University, Istanbul. Discussant: Soli Ozel, Senior Lecturer, Kadir Has University, Istanbul. Co-sponsored with the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs.

## OCTOBER 2022

**The Gerays and Ottomans: Two Dynasties in Alliance and Rivalry.** A talk with Hakan Kırımlı, Associate Professor, Department of International Relations, Bilkent University, Ankara, Turkey. Co-sponsored with the Committee on Inner Asian and Altaic Studies.

**Viruses Remaking Borders? Unwanted Organisms in Palestine/Israel from Covid-19 to Climate Change.** A talk with Natalia Gutkowski, Postdoctoral Scholar, Society of Fellows, Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Moderator: Steven Caton, Khalid Bin Abdullah Bin Abdulrahman Al Saud Professor of Contemporary Arab Studies, Department of Anthropology, Harvard.



Sara Roy and Mohammedwesam Amer



Sharan Grewal



Natalia Gutkowski



Cemal Kafadar and Necati Çelik

**Saudi Arabia and the World: From the Cold War to MBS.**

A talk with Toby Matthiesen, Marie Skłodowska-Curie Global Fellow, Ca' Foscari University, and Visiting Fellow, Abbasi Program in Islamic Studies, Stanford University. Discussant: CMES Visiting Fellow Sultan Alamer. Co-sponsored with the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs.

**Oud Recital with Necati Çelik, Master of Ottoman-Turkish Classical Music.** A performance by Necati Çelik, master of the classical Turkish style of the oud.



Yousef Aljama, Asmaa AbuMezied, and Jihad Abusalim

**Everyday Life in the “Spectacular” City: Making Home in Dubai.** A book talk with Rana AlMutawa, Assistant Professor and Emerging Scholar of Social Research and Public Policy, NYU Abu-Dhabi.

**Light in Gaza: Writings Born of Fire.** A book talk with contributors Asmaa AbuMezied, “Lost Identity: The Tale of Peasantry and Nature,” and Yousef Aljama, “Travel Restrictions as a Manifestation of Nakba: Gaza, the Path Backward Is the Path Forward,” and co-editor Jihad Abusalim. Co-sponsored with the Religion, Conflict, and Peace

## EVENT HIGHLIGHTS



Aleksander Shopov



Zena Agha and guests

Initiative, Religion and Public Life, HDS.

### **Making Justice in a Venal Context: The Provincial Council and the Deconcentration of Power in 18th-Century Harput.**

A talk with Yavuz Aykan, Associate Professor of Early Modern History, Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne University, School of History.

### **NOVEMBER 2022**

### **The “Longue Durée” of Arabic Literature, a Conference in Celebration of William Granara.**

A conference bringing together those who have worked with Professor Granara on Arabic literature to showcase the depth and breadth of their scholarship, which covers the vast terrain of Arabic literature, in all its

continuities and disruption, spanning medieval and modern eras. Co-sponsored with the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations and the Department of Comparative Literature.

### **Planting Mallow for the End of Times: Agriculture and the Rebuilding of Konstantiniyye.**

A talk with Aleksander Shopov, Assistant Professor, Department of History, SUNY Binghamton.

### **A Politics of Radical Care: Writing Women into the History of the Egyptian Human Rights Movement.**

A talk with Lucia Sorbera, Senior Lecturer and Chair, Department of Arabic Language and Cultures, University of Sydney, Australia; Distinguished

Visiting Scholar, Advanced Research Collaborative, CUNY.

### **Colonial Cartography in Palestine-Israel and the Decolonising Potential of Counter-Maps.**

A talk with CMES Visiting Fellow Zena Agha, PhD candidate, Newcastle University.

### **Woman, Life, Freedom: Iran’s Women-Led Protests in Context.**

A Harvard Radcliffe Institute talk with artist and photographer Hannah Darabi and Naghmeb Sohrabi, Charles (Corky) Goodman Chair in Middle East History, Brandeis University.

**“Who built the seven gates of Thebes?” Circumstances of Construction and Labor in Qatar.** A talk with Marie-José

Tayah, Technical Specialist (Social Dialogue), ILO Project Office for the State of Qatar, and Niyama Rai, Technical Officer, ILO Project Office for the State of Qatar. Chair: Cemal Kafadar, Vehbi Koç Professor of Turkish Studies; Director, CMES.

### **Arabic Calligraphy Exhibit.**

An exhibit featuring works by students of Muhammad Habib, Preceptor in Arabic, Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations.

### **Beyond Nationality: Belonging and Empire in Ottoman North Africa.**

A talk with Youssef Ben Ismail, Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow, Columbia Society of Fellows.

**Women in Iran: An Evening of Films by Rakhshan**

**Banietemad.** A screening of two documentaries by Iranian filmmaker Rakhshan Banietemad: *Our Times* (2002) and *We Are Half of Iran's Population* (2009). With discussion from Naghmeh Sohrabi, Charles (Corky) Goodman Professor of Middle East History and the Director for Research at the Crown Center for Middle East Studies, Brandeis University, and Ramyar Rossoukh, Assistant Director for Research at the Crown Center for Middle East Studies.

**Tunisia vs France World Cup Match Watch Party.** A live viewing of the Tunisia vs France match in the 2022 FIFA World Cup Qatar, with French author and former professional footballer Lilian Thuram. Co-sponsored with the Weatherhead Initiative on Global History and the Department of Sociology.

**White Thinking: Behind the Mask of Racial Identity.** A book talk with Lilian Thuram, French author and former professional footballer. Co-sponsored with the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs, Weatherhead Initiative on Global History, and the Department of Sociology.



World Cup watch party with Lilian Thuram



Youssef Ben Ismail and Lilian Thuram

## EVENT HIGHLIGHTS



Cemal Kafadar and Ayşe Parla



Bill Fletcher Jr.



Afsaneh Najmabadi

### DECEMBER 2022

#### **The Responsibility to Protect and What It Means: The Case of Libya and Syria.**

A talk with Basileus Zeno, Sessional Assistant Professor, Department of Politics, York University. Discussant: Rami Khouri, Director of Global Engagement and Senior Public Policy Fellow, American University of Beirut; Nonresident Senior Fellow, Har-

vard Kennedy School. Co-sponsored with the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs.

### JANUARY 2023

#### **Hamlet after Genocide: Haunting, Justice, and Empirical Fabulation.**

A talk by Ayşe Parla, Associate Professor of Anthropology, Boston University. Co-sponsored with Friends of Hrant Dink.

#### **Is Western Sahara More than a Desert? The Struggle for Sahrawi Freedom and the Implications for US Foreign Policy.**

A talk with Bill Fletcher Jr., Principal, Common Forces LLC, former President and CEO, TRANSAFRICA Forum. Discussant: Ardi Imseis, Assistant Professor of Law, Queen's University and former Member of the UN

Commission of Inquiry on Yemen. Co-sponsored with the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs.

### FEBRUARY 2023

#### **Constructing the Past in a Fractured Present: A History of Late Ottoman Historical Writing, 1839–1922.**

A talk with CMES Visiting Scholar Erdem Sönmez, Assistant Professor,



Alda Benjamen, Eden Naby, and Christina Maranci



Iman Mersal and Luke Leafgren

Department of History, Social Sciences University of Ankara.

***Familial Undercurrents: Untold Stories of Love and Marriage in Modern Iran.***

A book talk with Afsaneh Najmabadi, Francis Lee Higginson Professor of History and of Studies of Women, Gender, and Sexuality, Harvard.

***Assyrians in Modern Iraq: Negotiating a Political and Cultural Space.***

A talk with Alda Benjamen, Assistant Professor in Middle East History, Department of History, University of Dayton. Co-sponsored with the Mishael and Lillie Naby Assyrian Lecture Fund, Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations.

**Arabic Language and the World of Interpreting: A Window of Opportunities.** A talk with CMES Hazem Ben-Gacem Postdoctoral Fellow Yosra Amraoui, Associate Professor at the High Institute of Languages of Tunis.

**Translating Iman Mersal’s “The Threshold.”** A talk with Iman Mersal, Associate Professor of Arabic Language and Literature in Modern Languages and Cultural Studies, University of Alberta. Co-sponsored with the Mahindra Center Rethinking Translation Seminar and the Department of Comparative Literature.

**MARCH 2023  
National Reconciliation in Algeria (1999–2020): De-radicalization and Strategies of Disengagement from Violent Extremism.**

A talk with Djallil Lounnas, Associate Professor of International Relations, Al Akhawayn University, Ifrane, Morocco.

**Elections, Electoral Integrity, and Democracy in Contemporary Turkey: Light at the End of the Tunnel?** A talk with CMES Visiting Scholar Emre Toros, Professor of Political Science, Dean, Faculty

of Communication, Hacettepe University, Ankara, Turkey. Discussant: Ali Çarkoğlu, Professor of Political Science at Koç University, Istanbul. Co-sponsored with the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs.

**The Challenges of Translating Religious Philosophical Discourse: A Translator’s Experience in Translating Abdelmajid Charfi’s “Al Islam wa al Hadatha” into English.** A talk with Mounir Triki, Full Professor, Faculty of Letters and Humanities, University of Sfax, Tunisia.

**Poetics of Carcerality: A Comparative Study of Maghrebean Prison Narratives.** A talk with CMES Hazem Ben-Gacem Postdoctoral Fellow Yosra Amraoui, Associate Professor at the High Institute of Languages of Tunis.

**American Public Views Towards the Middle East: The Political Psychology of Racialization.** A talk with Karam Dana, Alyson McGregor Distinguished Professor of Excellence and Transformative Research, University of Washington Bothell. Co-sponsored with the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs.

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Molly Hickey and Jillian Schwedler



Paul M. Cobb

**Protesting Jordan: Geographies of Power and Dissent.** A talk with Jillian Schwedler, Professor of Political Science, City University of New York's Hunter College and CUNY's Graduate Center; Nonresident Senior Fellow, Crown Center, Brandeis University. Discussant: Molly Hickey, PhD candidate, Department of Government, Harvard. Co-sponsored with the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs.

**Crusade, Captivity, and Wonder: Johannes Schiltberger's Traveler Tales.** The Annual Joint Lecture in Medieval Middle Eastern Studies, featuring Paul M. Cobb, Edmund J. and Louise W. Kahn Term Professor of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations,

University of Pennsylvania. Co-sponsored with the Committee on Medieval Studies.

**Desire, the Poetics of Divorce, and the Laws of Remarriage in Iraqi Kurdistan.** A talk with Andrew Bush, Visiting Assistant Professor of Anthropology, Bard College. Co-sponsored with the Department of Anthropology.

**Jerusalem: Examining Settler Colonialism and Undoing Colonial Knowledge Production.** A talk with Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian, Lawrence D Biele Chair in Law, Institute of Criminology-Faculty of Law, Hebrew University of Jerusalem; Chair in Global Law, Queen Mary University of London. Discussant: M. Brinton Lykes,

Professor of Community-Cultural Psychology and Co-Director of the Center for Human Rights and International Justice, Boston College. Co-sponsored with the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs.

**Paintings from the Private Houses of Abbasid Samarra: A Reassessment.** A talk with Harvard AKPIA Fellow Fatma Dahmani, Assistant Professor of Islamic Art and Architecture, University of Qayrawan, Tunisia. Co-sponsored with the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at Harvard.

**APRIL 2023**  
**Racial Transitions: Islam, Transitional Justice, and Morocco's (Re)Africanization.** A talk with Brahim El Guabli,

Assistant Professor of Arabic Studies and Comparative Literature, Williams College.

**The 'Ulamā's Tradition: Reconceptualizing and Editing Turāth in Modern Egypt.** A talk with Mary Elston, Alwaleed Bin Talal Postdoctoral Fellow, Harvard. Co-sponsored with the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations and the Alwaleed Islamic Studies Program.

**Exporting Hydrocarbons, Importing Human Capital: Foreign Scholarship Programs in Algeria and Saudi Arabia.** A talk with CMES Visiting Fellow Adel Hamaizia, PhD candidate, Oxford University, Associate Fellow, Chatham House.



Calligraphy workshop with Muhammad Habib

**Arabic Calligraphy Workshop.** A hands-on workshop with Muhammad Habib, Preceptor in Arabic, Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations.

***In the Shadow of the Prophet.*** A book talk with Roy P. Mottahedeh, Gurney Research Professor of History, in conversation with Khaled El-Rouayheb, James Richard Jewett Professor of Islamic Intellectual History, Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, and CMES Director Cemal Kafadar, Vehbi Koç Professor of Turkish Studies, Department of History.



Cemal Kafadar, Roy P. Mottahedeh, and Khaled El-Rouayheb

**Contentious Politics and Parliamentary Responsiveness in Autocracies: The Case of Jordan.** A talk with CMES Visiting Scholar Marwa Shalaby, Assistant Professor of Political Science and Gender and Women's Studies, University of Wisconsin-Madison.

**A Reappraisal of the Nineteenth-Century Constitutional Reforms in Tunisia: The Making of the 1857 Security Pact and Its Legacies.** A talk

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Sema Keleş Yıldız



Pinar Şenışık



Eylül Yalçınkaya and guest musicians

with Malika Zeghal, Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Professor in Contemporary Islamic Thought and Life, Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Harvard. Discussant: Kristen A. Stilt, Professor of Law, Faculty Director of the Animal Law and Policy Program, Director of the Program on Law and Society in the Muslim World, Harvard Law School.

**The Modern Assyrian Historical Record: An American Family Adventure.** A talk with independent scholar Eden Naby, in conjunction with the exhibit *Assyrians from Persia (Iran) to the United States, 1887–1923: Assyrian Education, American Missionaries and the Search for a Home*.

**Understanding Mehir through the Ottoman Realm.** A talk with CMES Visiting Scholar Sema Keleş Yıldız, faculty member, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan University, Turkey.

**Daily Lives of Istanbulite Sufis in the Early 20th Century: Reflections on Ahmed Avni Konuk and Kenan Rifai.** A talk with CMES Visiting Scholar Eylül Yalçınkaya, faculty member, Üsküdar University, Turkey,



Nadim Rouhana and Atalia Omer



Mira Xenia Schwerda

followed by a short musical presentation by Yalçinkaya and others.

**Remembering the Turco-Greek Population Exchange: Dispossession and Forced Migration from Crete in the Early Twentieth Century.**

A talk with CMES Visiting Scholar Pınar Şenışık, Associate Professor, Department of International Relations, Doğuş University, Turkey.

**Unveiling the Woman/Nation Paradigm in Ahlem Mustaghanimi’s *Memory in the Flesh*.**

A talk with Nejet Mchala, Professor Emeritus of English and Critical Theory, Institut Supérieur des Langues de Tunis, University of Carthage, Tunisia.

**Decolonizing Israel: The Potential Contribution of the Palestinian Citizens.**

A talk with Nadim Rouhana, Professor of International Negotiation and Conflict Studies, Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University. Discussant: Atalia Omer, Professor of Religion, Conflict, and Peace Studies, Keough School of Global Affairs, University of Notre Dame, and the T. J. Dermot Dunphy Visiting Professor of Religion, Violence, and Peacebuilding, Harvard Divinity School. Co-sponsored with the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs.

**MAY 2023**

**Conceptual Metaphors in Abulqâsem Echabî’s “The Will to Life”: A Cognitive**

**Semantics Approach.** A talk with Sondes Hamdi, English Associate Professor, Carthage University, Tunis.

**An Archive of Fragmented Memories: The Concept of Time in the ‘Ali Khan Vali Album.** A talk with Mira Xenia Schwerda, Getty/ACLS Postdoctoral Fellow in the History of Art, 2023–24; IASH Fellow, University of Edinburgh, 2022–23. Co-sponsored with the Assyrian Foundation of America and the Naby Frye Assyrian Fund for Culture.

**Arabic-Islamic Poetry in West Africa.** A student panel with presentations in English and textual analysis in Arabic. Co-sponsored with the Department of Near Eastern

Languages and Civilizations.

**Examining Iran’s Domestic and Foreign Relations: From Achievements and Limitations of the Protest Movement to the Saudi-Iranian Agreement.**

A talk with Trita Parsi, Executive Vice President, Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft, and Fatemeh Haghighatjoo, CEO, Nonviolent Initiative for Democracy and former member of the Iranian Parliament. Discussant: Stephen Kinzer, Senior Fellow, Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs, Brown University, and author of *All the Shah’s Men: An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror*. Co-sponsored with the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs.

# IN CELEBRATION OF PROFESSOR WILLIAM GRANARA

by *Hacı Osman Gündüz, PhD candidate in Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations*

The individuals we encounter throughout our educational journeys have a profound impact on both our professional lives and our personal development, shaping our perspectives and aspirations. Among these influential figures, teachers and mentors leave the most lasting impressions as we navigate various pursuits. The mentor-mentee relationship holds particular significance in graduate school, where graduate students heavily rely on their advisors. When this connection is harmonious and the stars align for both parties, the experience of graduate school becomes a cherished and celebrated one.

On November 3–4, 2022, a group of fourteen fortunate individuals, former and current students, gathered at a conference titled “The ‘Longue Durée’ of Arabic Literature” to honor and celebrate an exceptional teacher and mentor. The event, organized by the Center for Middle Eastern Studies (CMES) at Harvard University, commemorated the retirement of Professor William Granara, who dedicated decades of his life to educating multiple generations of students.

True to the nature of academic conferences, presenters delivered papers on various aspects of Arabic literature, spanning both classical and modern epochs. The broad temporal scope of the conference aptly matched Professor

Granara’s expertise and versatility in medieval and contemporary Arabic literature. During an interview conducted by the author of this essay and Johannes Makar in 2019, on the occasion of Professor Granara stepping down from his role as the Director of Modern Language Programs (DLP), he expressed his scholarly position earnestly. Professor Granara confessed, “but forty-some years later, I still have not decided whether I am a medievalist or a modernist: I work in the medieval world, and then I realize that I am out of touch with modernity, and when I deal with modernity, I realize that I need to return to the sanity of the medieval world.”

Beyond the scholarly tone of this conference, there was an emotional sentiment that enveloped the audience, eloquently expressed by the presenters. Each presenter shared how Professor Granara profoundly influenced their lives through his genuine care. They shared stories highlighting how he went out of his way to welcome students to the intimidating institution that is Harvard.

The presenters emphasized Professor Granara’s humanity, humor, and hospitality. Throughout their time at Harvard and beyond, Professor Granara continued to provide them with academic, professional, and personal advice. He instilled in them a love for literature in general and Arabic literature in particular. His linguistic acumen allowed him to engage in discussions about European and Middle Eastern literatures. As Sinan Antoon aptly

stated in his opening statement, Professor Granara is an exceptional *adīb*—a man of letters, possessing exquisite taste in various delights of the world—and a *nadīm*.

While “*nadīm*” is usually translated as “boon companion,” it truly refers to a friend and confidant whose company both guests and hosts seldom tire of. To these attributes, I would also like to add “*karīm*”—generous and magnanimous. Professor Granara’s home has always been open to his colleagues and students. He has brought people together and helped them integrate into new communities. Many guests have been treated to his home-cooked meals, and over these delicious dishes from various cuisines, he has shared fascinating anecdotes from his extensive journeys in the Arabic-speaking world and beyond.

Each presenter reflected on how Professor Granara was there for them when they needed help the most, highlighting the ways in which he cared for them—memories they hold dear. Professor Granara was the first to call one of the presenters following a tornado. He stood by his students’ academic endeavors when others dismissed them. He taught his students the importance of demonstrating independence to receive meaningful academic assistance. He demonstrated how the study of literature can be applied even when focusing solely on the study of political history. He inspired his students to delve into a wide array of subjects, including Arabic travel writing from



Back row, from left: Benjamin Smith, Daniel Behar, Eric Calderwood, Phoebe Carter, C. Ceyhun Arslan, Ali Asgar Alibhai, Jonathan Smolin, Hacı Osman Gündüz, David DiMeo, Sinan Antoon, Luke Leafgren. Front row, from left: Gregory Halaby, Allison Blecker, William Granara, Laila Parsons



Benjamin Smith, Roy P. Mottahedeh, Hacı Osman Gündüz, William Granara



David Damosch, Daniel Behar, William Granara, C. Ceyhun Arslan

## EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

various time periods, depictions of modern civil wars, and the utilization of literary theories to revisit different episodes of Arabic literature. He even helped one student submit a late assignment to Professor Wolfhart Heinrichs' (d. 2016) mailbox in the Semitic Museum on a Sunday evening by granting access to the building. He genuinely cared for his students as peers on the arduous and, at times, solitary journey to knowledge.

Fourteen individuals who had the privilege of working with Professor Granara presented at the conference. Twelve of these presenters are former students, and two are current advisees. The conference spanned two days and consisted of five panels chaired by Professors Roy Mottahedeh, Shady Nasser, Sandra Naddaf, Khaled El-Rouayheb, and Himmet Taşkömür, respectively. Professor Cemal Kafadar introduced Professor Granara at the beginning of the conference and also chaired the roundtable discussion at the end.

Ali Asgar Alibhai, Associate Professor of Art History at the University of Texas at Dallas, Daniel Behar, Assistant Professor of Arabic Language and Literature at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and the author of this essay presented papers during the first panel. In his paper, Professor Alibhai explored the significance of the Fatimid *Miẓalla* (Parasol) in Arabic literature and material culture, focusing on its ceremonial and ritual use. This paper marked the beginning of Professor Alibhai's collaboration with Professor Granara at Harvard and has since evolved. Professor Behar's talk examined the reconfiguration

of notions of time between pre-Islamic *qaṣīda* and modern Arabic poetry. He argued that the figures of time in pre-Islamic poetry are more captivating to the modern poetic imagination than religious ideas of the afterlife. In his analysis, Professor Behar drew on classical Arabic poems studied with Professor Granara. The author of this essay presented a paper analyzing a lengthy account in Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Mu'tī al-Iṣḥāqī's (d. circa 1650) work, *Laṭā'if akhbār al-uwal*, concerning the medical condition of *ubnah*, which caused a man to desire anal penetration. *Laṭā'if* combines historical narratives with literary and, at times, fantastic accounts, making it an exemplary *adab* work, and the author was inspired by Professor Granara's encouragement to study historians as *adibs*.

During the second panel, Laila Parsons, Professor of Modern Middle East History at McGill University, presented a paper reflecting on Ghassan Kanafani (1936–1972) as a historian, exploring Kanafani's use of history as a means of political and artistic expression. Kanafani, primarily known as a novelist, also worked as a journalist, editor, literary critic, and political theorist. The paper delved into Kanafani's multifaceted approach to history and its significance in his work. On the same panel, Phoebe Carter, a PhD candidate in the Department of Comparative Literature at Harvard University, presented a paper analyzing Ameen Rihani's (1876–1940) unpublished work, *In the Land of the Mayas*, as a failed *riḥlah* (travelogue) mourning the inability to replicate the experiences of itinerant Arab predecessors. Ms. Carter also discussed how Rihani, based on

contemporary European archaeological scholarship, reconstructed pre-Columbian Middle America and speculated about the Phoenician roots of Mayan culture. The last presenter on this panel, Benjamin Smith, Assistant Professor of Arabic at Swarthmore College, explored the emergence of a Mahjar chronotope in modern Arabic literature, with a specific focus on the North American Mahjar. Professor Smith analyzed recent novels and a theatrical hip-hop performance by Arab-American artists to investigate the significance and meaning of this development in modern Arabic literary and aesthetic production. His paper was inspired by Professor Granara's 2005 article titled "Nostalgia, Arab Nationalism, and the Andalusian Chronotope in the Evolution of the Modern Arabic Novel."

The third panel featured papers analyzing modern Arabic novels. David DiMeo, retired Associate Professor of Arabic at Western Kentucky University, discussed Idris Ali's (1940–2010) novels and their subversion of Egyptian identity. In his brief career as a novelist, Ali challenged the notion of identity central to Egyptian nationalism and blurred the lines between biography and fiction, narrator and subject, and chronological continuity. Professor DiMeo analyzed Ali's defamiliarization of the narrating process in his works, focusing on the novels *Below the Poverty Line* and *The Nubian*. Gregory Halaby, Preceptor in Arabic at Harvard University, presented a paper analyzing the "unmasking" of wounds caused by conflict in civil war fiction by Hoda Barakat (born 1952) and Etel Adnan (1925–2021). Dr. Halaby drew

attention to the growing academic interest in exploring gender in Lebanese civil war literature. His paper was inspired by a course he took with Professor Granara on the Lebanese Civil War. Allison Blecker, Philanthropy Advisor at Geneva Global, delivered a paper analyzing “ambiguous belonging” and “ecological otherness” in Sabri Musa’s (1932–2018) novel *Seeds of Corruption*. Dr. Blecker’s paper expanded on her dissertation, which focused on environmental writing in North African and Middle Eastern literatures.

On the fourth panel, Eric Calderwood, Associate Professor in the Program in Comparative and World Literature at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, paid tribute to Professor Granara’s work on al-Andalus and his efforts to bridge the gap between the medieval and modern periods. Professor Calderwood discussed the diverse uses and meanings of al-Andalus in modern Palestinian literature, examining its reflection on the political situation, resistance, and the envisioning of a future for Palestine. His paper drew on research from his recently published book, *On Earth or in Poems: The Many Lives of al-Andalus* (Harvard University Press, 2023). Luke Leafgren, Lecturer in Comparative Literature at Harvard University, presented a paper examining the challenges Arabic syntax poses to translators. Dr. Leafgren, who has translated several Arabic novels into English, analyzed the problems and solutions in translating literature. C. Ceyhun Arslan, Assistant Professor of Comparative Literature at Koç University, delivered a paper comparing the poem

“Nuwāḥ Dijla” by Ma’rūf al-Ruṣāfi (1875–1945) and a collection of writings titled “Fırak-ı Irak” by Süleyman Nazif (1870–1927), both of which responded to the Ottoman defeat and British victory in Iraq after World War I. Professor Arslan examined the different perspectives of these authors on the heritage of Arabic poetry and their views on the territories of the Ottoman Empire. The paper called for a literary history that transcends traditional categorizations.

The final panel featured Jonathan Smolin, Professor of Middle Eastern Studies at Dartmouth College, exploring the cultural response to the June 1967 defeat in Lebanon, with a focus on the sudden proliferation of erotic magazines and novels that staged the emasculation of Arabs as a means of processing the trauma of the *Naksa*. He further discussed the politics of gender and sexuality in the aftermath of the defeat. In the closing presentation, Sinan Antoon, Associate Professor at the Gallatin School of Individualized Study, New York University, discussed the influence of the revolutionary Iraqi poet Muẓaffar al-Nawwāb (1934–2022). Professor Antoon specifically focused on the poem “Muḍayif Hail” (Cardamon Guest Houses), written in 1959, which addresses the assassination of a peasant by a feudal leader. In 1984, the poem was adapted into a song by Iraqi musician Sāmī Kamāl and gained popularity during the 2019 uprising in Iraq, when peaceful protestors were killed by government forces. Professor Antoon explored why this poem, written in the past, resonated with a new generation and became a means to mourn fallen protestors

and express political demands.

At the end of the first day Professor Granara shared his academic journey with Arabic language and literature in a talk titled “My Arabic *Riḥlah*.” This journey began during his college years at Georgetown, where he initially enrolled in elementary Arabic. It was during this time that he watched a news broadcast with his friends, covering the death of Gamal Abdel Nasser (1918–1970), realizing how little he knew about the modern Arab world. This realization sparked his determination to educate himself through extensive reading. Further pursuing his passion, Granara obtained a PhD degree from the University of Pennsylvania, which led to a shift in his interest from modern Arabic to medieval Arabic. His fascination with the medieval Muslim Mediterranean began during his time in Libya. Throughout his academic journey, Granara developed a particular interest in the poetry of Ibn Ḥamdīs (d. 1133) and Mahmoud Darwish (1941–2008), both of whom experienced exile and conveyed melancholic descriptions of their respective homelands—Sicily and Palestine. In his talk, Professor Granara emphasized the need to approach Arabic literature as a global literature, highlighting its dynamic nature.

The conference truly embodied a “Granarafest,” as one of the presenters described it. It served as a testament to Professor Granara’s dedication to scholarship and the training of scholars, as well as his profound love for Arabic language and literature. We are all indebted to him. He is a true *adīb* and *nadīm* with endless *karam*. ▣

الفنون  
والتراث



Class visit to Houghton Library with Cemal Kafadar.



Jesse Howell, Yosra Amraoui, and Lilian Thuram



William Granara in Marseille

## AT A GLANCE

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