

The University of Virginia Middle Eastern and South Asian Languages and Cultures

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Cyrus and Jefferson:

Did they speak the same language?



Cyrus Cylinder

Even as the Middle East grapples with Jeffersonian ideals of freedom and democracy, Americans are learning that Thomas Jefferson may have been inspired by an ancient Middle East ruler, Cyrus “the Great” of Persia.

This intriguing possibility arises from brilliant cultural diplomacy. The British Museum has loaned one of its most iconic holdings, the Cylinder of Cyrus, for its first ever tour of the United States. During a similar tour of Iran in 2010, Iranians by the hundreds of thousands marveled at this 9 inch long clay artifact, crafted over 2,500 years ago.

Smaller than an American football, the Cyrus Cylinder stands to its admirers as the world’s first human rights proclamation. Having just conquered Babylon in 539 B.C., Cyrus, King of Persia, issued what amounts to a “press release” to appeal to his new subjects.

CYRUS AND JEFFERSON: DID THEY
SPEAK THE SAME LANGUAGE?

The Cylinder records Cyrus's policies to repatriate displaced peoples, to encourage the conquered to continue in their local cultures and religions. It testifies to Cyrus restoring temples and leaving people free to worship the god(s) of their own choice. Since, 1971, the United Nations has prominently displayed a replica of the Cylinder as the world's first human rights charter, and has translated its text into all official UN languages.

Yet the image of Cyrus as a tolerant, even benevolent ruler is not well known in America today. By contrast, America's founders were well acquainted with the ideas of Cyrus.

At the recent unveiling of the Cylinder at the Smithsonian's Sackler Gallery, Neil MacGregor, director of the British Museum, boldly proclaimed that "when the American founding fathers" were "trying to decide how you will run the United States, what role will religion play, this is the model" they followed, and "the United States Constitution is a reflection of these ideas."

"What appealed to the founding fathers about Cyrus," according to MacGregor, was "a model of a state that was equidistant from all religions, rather than either adopting a state religion, or else being anticlerical." Put differently, "the relic asks the question: can a state be equidistant from all religion?"

Invoking Cyrus as a model for Jefferson and the American founders will be

extraordinary news to most students of Jefferson, early America, and the classics. Yet the startling claim deserves careful exploration in a Jeffersonian spirit of free inquiry.

Such analysis can begin by acknowledging a common language. As is well known, religious toleration was vital to Mr. Jefferson. For his tombstone, Jefferson requested to be remembered as author of the American Declaration of Independence, founder of the University of Virginia, and author of the seminal Virginia Statute on Religious Freedom, which in turn inspired the American Constitution's first amendment on religious freedom.

Yet contrary to media reports, Cyrus was unknown to Jefferson via the Cyrus Cylinder because it was not unearthed until 1879, 53 years after Jefferson's death.

On the other hand, Jefferson and his contemporaries surely knew the favorable accounts of Cyrus in the Hebrew and Christian scriptures. Therein, Cyrus is the liberator of the Jews from Babylonian captivity, the generous enabler of their return to Jerusalem. Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, James Madison, and other founders also knew of Cyrus via their readings of the *Cyropaedia*, an idyllic account of Cyrus's life crafted by Xenophon, the Greek historian, philosopher, mercenary, and student of Socrates.

In antiquity, and again from the Renaissance into

Jefferson's lifetime, Xenophon's classical works were appreciated alongside Plato and Aristotle. *Cyropaedia*, "The Education of Cyrus," was Xenophon's masterpiece and was read widely by elite students in colonial America as a handbook of military success, social organization, and virtuous political leadership.

Xenophon's Cyrus sharply contrasts to Machiavelli's *The Prince*. Machiavelli famously intoned that it was "better to be feared than loved," while Xenophon's Cyrus explicitly preferred to be loved, not feared.

Jefferson owned at least three *Cyropaedia* copies during his life, in both Greek and Latin. In 1787, he even sought an Italian rendering.

Xenophon's idealized account of Cyrus opens by lamenting man as the most difficult living thing to rule over, regardless of government form. Xenophon marvels that the subjects of King Cyrus obey him willingly, and he seeks to explain why.

For Xenophon, Cyrus exemplifies a just, tolerant ruler, a munificent monarch who preferred persuasion over force, a ruler whose exhibited virtues included temperance, self-control, politeness, and mutual respect between peoples.

Jefferson also owned Andrew Ramsay's best-seller "A New *Cyropaedia*: the Travels of Cyrus." Ramsay, a Jacobite, casts Cyrus as a model of enlightened constitutional monarchy, fusing divine will and the laws of nature.

CYRUS AND JEFFERSON
continued from page 2

Yet documenting Jefferson's ownership of books about Cyrus is easier than demonstrating how and when accounts of Cyrus influenced his thinking.

In 1815, Jefferson's sale of his books to the Library of Congress included two copies of the *Cyropaedia*. Jefferson obtained both in 1806. One is currently on exhibit with the Cyrus Cylinder and shows substantial Jefferson markings.

The second copy was inherited from George Wythe, Jefferson's beloved law mentor. This volume likely was in Wythe's library while Jefferson was under his tutelage in the 1760s.

Family letters provide further hints of Jefferson's high regard for Xenophon and the *Cyropaedia*. In early 1803, Anne Cary Randolph wrote to "Dear Grand Papa" that her brother, Jefferson Randolph, was busy "translating the history of Cyrus by Xenophon." Seven years later, in a letter to another grandson, Francis Wayles Eppes, Jefferson advised him "to undertake a regular course of history and poetry in both languages. (Greek & Latin). In Greek, go first thro' the *Cyropaedia*, and then read Herodutus, Thucydides, Xenophon's Hellenus and Anabasis...."

The *Cyropaedia* became less favored in western education not long after Jefferson passed from life. Yet in recent decades, a Cyrus revival has been emerging in fresh *Cyropaedia* translations and new debates over his legacy, his place in the history of human rights.

Credit the British Museum for unleashing the Cyrus Cylinder as a "weapon of mass diplomacy," a catalyst to considering common principles between nations too often thought to embody "clashing civilizations."

While inquiry is just beginning into how much Cyrus influenced Jefferson, the parallels are fascinating to contemplate. Jefferson's ideals on religious toleration resonate with Cyrus; they spoke the same language.

WM. SCOTT HARROP

Project GO Grant to Support Critical Language Study

MESALC lecturer, Rich Cohen, is the principal investigator of a new grant funded by the Defense Language and National Security Education Office's Project GO program. The grant, worth \$350,000, supports three languages offered by MESALC: Arabic, Persian and Hindi/Urdu, as well as Chinese, Korean, Russian and Swahili. Approximately thirty ROTC cadets and midshipmen from UVA, as well as nationally, will receive scholarships to study in summer 2013, either at UVA, in one of UVA's summer abroad language programs, or at another university. Grace Erdman, a MESALC graduate student, will be assisting Dr. Cohen in processing the student scholarships.

RICH COHEN



Rich Cohen

NOTES FROM THE CHAIR

We, at MESALC, Take Great Pride in Our Students



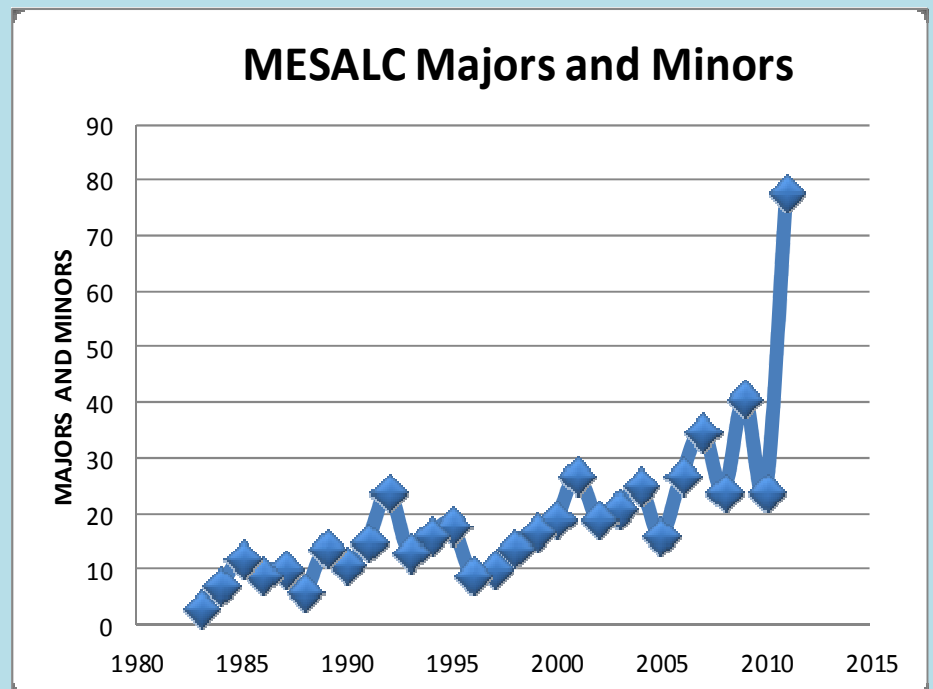
Farzaneh Milani

The Department of Middle Eastern and South Asian Languages and Cultures has a fascinating genealogy and a meteoric trajectory. Although some of our currently taught languages, such as Sanskrit, Hindi and Arabic were offered starting in 1964 and Hebrew was taught since the very founding days of the institution, it was only on January 3, 1979, that Oriental Languages, mainly a service unit, was established. The division was subsumed in and physically located in the French Department.

Our Department has indeed come a long way since then. Over and above teaching at least six different languages, it also has developed a plethora of new undergraduate and graduate content courses and has sustained its newly founded graduate

program for five years. It has attracted a new wave of students who represent an unprecedented surge of interest—and enrollment—in the languages, literatures, and cultures of the Middle East (Iraq, Iran, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, Yemen, and the United Arab Emirates), North Africa (Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Sudan, and Tunisia), and South Asia (Afghanistan, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka). This is an area that encompasses almost one third of current world population.

The chart below, remarkable though it might be, does not tell the whole story. The exponential growth of our majors, minors, and the total number of students we have served in the last few years is in fact matched by our increased visibility locally, nationally, and internationally. We also have witnessed the addition of a number of new courses with a transnational and trans-cultural approach. The Department of Middle Eastern and South Asian Languages and Cultures, however, is most distinguished by its globally engaged students.



Number of declared Majors and Minors students active in plan.

Our students speak out for global justice, question canonical knowledge, revise methods of inquiry, and challenge conventional academic structures and curricula. By choosing to become involved citizens of the global village, they contribute to advancing the priorities of the University and especially to globalizing it. The top three reasons why students decide to major in MESALC, according to a recent university-wide survey, are: intellectual curiosity; international opportunities, and interest in the region. The desire to study abroad and potentially pursue international jobs is much higher among our students than among undergraduates in other departments. We believe we attract some of the University of Virginia's most talented students, who regularly win various notable awards and grants. Our newsletter highlights, with great pride, some of the outstanding achievements of our graduate and undergraduate students.

For almost two hundred years, the University of Virginia has made the teaching of languages a consistently high priority. Shoulder to shoulder with its students, the Department of Middle Eastern and South Asian Languages and Cultures proudly reflects those ideals. During a short yet, we hope, transformative sojourn in our department, our students stretch their minds to new dimensions, deepen their capacities, and find a new surge of energy and independence.

With their unflinching dedication to the creation of a safe, non-violent world for all, they show impeccable reverence for life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness not only for a single country, but for all. Like Alice in Wonderland, they find life altering experiences in the fascinating, yet often unfamiliar regions they study. They see the world with new eyes. And what a gift is this global clear-sightedness! How wondrous this visual lucidity, this ability to see previously invisible things! How marvelous this opening of the eyes! How extraordinary the quest, and how much more astounding the discovery and the self-discovery!

FARZANEH MILANI

MESALC Graduate Student Wins Award to Study in Morocco



Juliet Blalack

Juliet Blalack, first-year MESALC graduate student, was awarded a Critical Language Scholarship to undertake intensive Arabic language studies this summer. The program funds two months of studying Modern Standard Arabic and the Moroccan dialect at the Amideast Institute in Rabat, Morocco.

Blalack, who previously lived in Egypt for a year, expressed her excitement at learning a new Arabic dialect and exploring a new part of Africa. She is particularly interested in the language and politics of the Western Sahara, a disputed territory bordering Morocco.

The Critical Language Scholarship is sponsored by the US State Department. It funds intensive summer programs for students serious about reaching a high level of proficiency in Arabic, Persian, Russian, Urdu, Turkish, Azerbaijani, Chinese, or several other less-commonly-taught languages.

We, at MESALC, extend our congratulations to Juliet, and look forward to hearing about her learning and adventures!

JULIET BLALACK

Graduate Reflections



Soulmaz Taghavi

Upon graduation from Virginia Commonwealth University in 2010, my arduous journey through the University of Virginia's Middle Eastern Studies Masters program did not go unrewarded. On the first day of Professor Korangy's Classical Persian Poetry class, I timidly confessed that I could speak conversational Persian fluently but could read and write only at a limiting first grade level. Professor Korangy confidently assured me, "You can handle this class, don't worry" as he motioned me to take my seat. Through laborious linguistic translation and complex mystic Sufi philosophical analysis, at the end of his course I was able to read legendary figures like Hafez, Saadi and Rumi with only slight hesitation and enormous appreciation.

Having heard of Professor Milani's lectures and being familiar with her work, I made sure to take a course with her each semester during my time at UVa. With each class I watched Professor Milani utilize literature, poetry and film as tools to delve into the realm of cultural and women's studies. Her lyrical lectures and captivating storytelling quickly convinced me of Middle Eastern women's need for freedom of movement. During one day's class discussion I inquired and commented about the US prison system, immigration as a human right and the laws that govern the two. Professor Milani smiled and said, "bravo," and proceeded to announce to the class that I had just been accepted to law school.

The students clapped as I blushed. I realized that Professor

Milani's courses will set the foundation for my professional goals and interests.

As a second year law student at North Carolina Central School of Law, I have received my persistence and analytical skills from Professor Korangy's and my polished articulation in immigration and international law from Professor Milani. Today, I serve on North Carolina Central Law Review where I am working on highlighting the lack of judiciary review and excessive discretionary review in immigration law.

With a certification in Social Justice in the Practice of Law, I have been an asset to Velasquez and Associates, a bilingual private law firm in Durham, NC which serves the indigent Hispanic community of Wake County. Moreover, I have interned in the Durham County's District Attorney's Office, overseeing cases in the area of domestic violence. It was my interest in legal ethics and governmental functionality that influenced my experience at UVA while today it is my understanding of Islam, Persian literature and poetry, Middle Eastern politics and gender studies that set me apart in my legal education.

SOULMAZ TAGHAVI

MESALC Welcomes Three New Faculty



Suad Mohamed

Teaching Arabic is indeed my life! I am a native of Yemen, who has been an avid teacher of Arabic for the past thirty years. When I was appointed at the United Nations in 1991 to be part of the Arabic language program, teaching Arabic as one of the six official UN languages, I felt that I had found my niche in the Big Apple, teaching Arabic to various populations and students from different walks of life. I have taught at Columbia University, City University of New York, the NYU School of Professional Studies and the New School. These experiences were as fulfilling and rewarding as my prior teaching of Arabic in the city of Aden in Yemen before arriving in New York thirty-three years ago.

History, Psychology and Middle Eastern Studies were my areas of expertise, during

my undergraduate and graduate studies, in Cairo University and the City University of New York.

Joining UVa and living in Charlottesville is a turning point in my life. It is exciting and promising, for I consider it as the crowning of my life experiences and career. Working at UVa will allow me to bring the best of my experiences to my students, and will provide me with fresh opportunities for learning and advancing. I have always believed in revolutionizing my methods in teaching and in learning from my colleagues and my students.

In addition to my passion and love for teaching, dancing tends to revive my soul. I believe strongly that dance embodies not only the specificity of culture and identity of particular groups but, more importantly, it embodies life. Thus, I plan to form a dance group with students and colleagues who share my enthusiasm about performing folkloric dances of the Middle East, including, though not limited to, Debka, Gulf dances, Yemeni and others. Please contact me if you have a similar interest and want to work together and create a Middle Eastern dance group.

SUAD MOHAMED



Mohammed Rabbaa

I am glad to finally be at the University of Virginia, where I have long wanted a position in the Arabic Program. My desire is to contribute to the field of teaching Arabic to non-natives.

I hold a Ph.D. degree in Arabic Linguistics from the Jordanian University, in Amman (1995). I was awarded a Ministry of Higher Education Fellowship for B.A. Studies (1984-1987) and a Yarmouk University Fellowship for my M.A. (1988-1990).

I was appointed Assistant Professor in the Department of Arabic Language at Najah National University, Palestine, in 1995 and elevated to Full Professor rank in 2006. I served as the Chair of the Arabic Department for one year (1997-1998), and as Chair of the Higher Education Department for Social Sciences on two occasions (1999-2000 and 2003-2004). In 2001, I was awarded

NEW FACULTY

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the Abdel-Hameed Shoman Prize for Young Arab Researchers. I have been a member of the Palestinian Arabic Academy since 2004.

I am interested in Standard Spoken Arabic, Arabic syntax, and sociolinguistics, and have published twenty two papers about these topics. I also have a special interest in the theory of language acquisition and its application.

Teaching Arabic for non-natives was my first job at the Jordanian University and at Bier-Zeit University. In 1998, I established a program of teaching Arabic for non-natives at An-Najah National University. After teaching Arabic to native speakers for 17 years, I am glad to get back to my first passion and to provide my experience and knowledge to non-native students of Arabic.

MOHAMMED RABBAA



Ashok Rajput

I am very pleased to be a member of the Department of Middle Eastern and South Asian Languages and Cultures. I am a cultural anthropologist as well as a Hindi-Urdu language teaching specialist. I have been teaching Hindi and Urdu languages, South Asian literature and culture, and anthropology courses since 1999.

My major area of research interest is South Asia. I am particularly interested in the interdisciplinary studies of culture, history and languages and literature of north India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. My research focuses on social structures, political movements, religious expressions, and cultural representations, as manifested through music, folk and religious narratives, visual culture, and contemporary Hindi and Urdu fiction writings.

I also am interested in making documentary films. Recently, I have made a film called, "The Sorrow and the Joy: Remembering Hussein's Martyrdom in Hyderabad, Pakistan." This documentary, filmed in the city of Hyderabad, Sindh, Pakistan in 2011, highlights several ceremonies and rituals performed during the month of Muharram by Shia and Sunni Muslims. The key aspects of these rituals and ceremonies are the musical and bodily performances that are linked with the constructed history, knowledge, and images of the past. The film will be released by the Center for South Asia, University of Wisconsin-Madison.

I also have co-edited an Urdu language textbook, *Beginning Urdu*. Currently, I am working on a book-length research project on "media in Pakistan," as well as a documentary film on the art of drumming in Pakistan. I am very excited that these two projects are proceeding smoothly, and I am getting lots of good feedback.

In terms of hobbies, I like listening to classical Indian and European music, and Jazz. I enjoy reading both fiction and non-fiction. For the fun part, I like hiking and roller-blading in the summer.

ASHOK RAJPUT

آش

“Soup” would do no justice

to its palette of greens and garlic,
More potent magic than Proust’s madeleine,
Express to yesteryears,
In a flash,

آش

melds

that place

where each green noodle eludes
a white too-easily broken spoon and
all leaves pirouetted round the fall trapped
outside a dull-walled room that held
“soup” cupped by a captive
blissful warmth-imbibing hand

with love that once upon a time was pungent,
delicately herbed and deftly ladled up with *kashk*.

The smell alone seats you cross-legged
on an always flowering, if faded, field of red.

Yes, you would *have* to call it stew.

ZJALEH HAJIBASHI

Phi Beta Kappa Inducts Six MESALC Students



Please join us in congratulating Anna Lewis, Christopher Haberland, Margaret Wood, Nusayba Hammad, Thomas Wilson, and John Vater, for being elected to the Virginia Beta Chapter of Phi Beta Kappa. They are all majors in our department. Many of the leading figures in American history and culture, including seventeen presidents of the United States, began their careers with election to Phi Beta Kappa, the oldest and most distinguished honor society in the country. Membership in this society is a remarkable accomplishment, both for our students who have achieved it and for our faculty and staff whose support and guidance have led to this milestone.

“With six students elected to Phi Beta Kappa this year, Middle Eastern and South Asian Languages and Cultures,” Matthew Burgess, Graduate Assistant to the Chapter stated, “achieved one of the highest numbers of invitees of any department within the university. The number is even more impressive when one considers the size of the department.”

If you have any questions about the society, or want to ask about the possibility of future membership, please contact Matthew Burgess (mjb5hd@virginia.edu) or Dean Karlin Luedtke (k15k@virginia.edu).

FARZANEH MILANI

Arabic Lecture Series



Arabic students gather for lecture in Newcomb Hall

Friday, Feb 22, 2013 kicked off the new Arabic Lecture Series, organized by MESALC graduate student Juliet Blalack. The series aims to present topics of interest to students of Arabic at different levels of language learning, and to make the activities accessible to the various levels. The first lecture – presented by Michelle Sawwan – offered students a look at Arabic-English translation. The first half was devoted to presenting information on translation techniques, while the second half gave students the opportunity to work on translations of their own. Texts were taken from authentic materials in Arabic poetry and autobiographical literature. The lecture was well attended – with over 30 students participating – and post-lecture survey results indicated a strong interest on the part of students to see MESALC continuing to develop and support such events. Suggestions for future topics included presentations on Arab culture, society, dialects, religions, and art.

MICHELLE SAWWAN



NEW COURSES 2013

SAST 2559
The World According to South Asia

Mehr Farooqi & Rich Cohen

This course approaches South Asia and its cultural diversity from the inside out, rather than from an “other” centered, Western viewpoint. Discussions about the “South Asian worldview” too often depend on an academic analysis largely informed by two centuries of Western fascination with the “exotic East,” dependent largely on a historiographical approach. However, this course is not about the history of South Asia. It is about understanding the contemporary cultural milieu—the world as seen reflexively and reflectively through a South Asian lens. We will be reading and discussing almost exclusively the opinions and perceptions of South Asians of what it is that constitutes the South Asian worldview. Then we will make up our own minds.

NEW COURSES

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SAST 3559**Business and Banking in South Asia:
The Cultures that Produced Gold, Cotton, Rice, Debt****Geeta Patel**

South Asia, the region which stretches from Afghanistan to Burma and down to Sri Lanka, has been the center of thousands of years of trade and finance. At the heart of networks that stretched from Europe through central Asia to the Americas, South Asians moved gold, textiles, agricultural products and credit. In this course, which is the first of a two-semester new course offering, we investigate the early history of this vast flow. We examine the highlights of the history of business and banking, trade and finance from about 1500 B.C to the early European merchant adventurers. We then look at the worlds and cultures that were implicated in that history. Finally we consider some of the theoretical questions that help us understand how business and banking worked.

We read secondary sources that include writing by Amiya Bagchi, Kalyan Sanyal, K.N. Chaudhuri, Ashin Das Gupta, Engseng Ho, Irfan Habib, Ranabir Chakravarty supplemented by some primary materials when appropriate such as letters, literary texts, travel narratives, government documents, archeological objects. Topics will encompass: Indian Ocean travelers; Roman trade with India; Marwari mercantile communities; religious constituencies at the center of networks, such as Buddhist merchants and groups associated with Hindu temples; Banjara carters; Armenian traders; Jewish families; Hadrami Muslim families, whose networks stretched from the Middle East into South East Asia; pirates; petty traders during the Mughal period; crafts; agriculture; coolies and shipping communities; labor; textile exchanges; spice trade, and the evolution of instruments such as hundis (promissory credit, debt and commodity notes) that permitted the movement of capital over long distances and times.

In this course we ask a series of questions.

Some of these help us come to grips with practices of business and banking, the technologies entailed in them (the who, what, where, when and why) and some of these are larger questions that enable us to understand how to envision these practices in their manifold formations.

What comes under business, what was business – selling, trading, exchange, barter, production, labor, equity collection, promissory notes, specie accumulation, debt acquisition? Who were the kinds of figures involved – peddlars, craftsmen, merchants, rulers, priests, pirates, money lenders, financiers, families, collectives who shared interests, networks, collectives who imagined themselves through stories from a single event or place, people who shared trust or distrust? Where did these practices take place, what sorts of places were involved – regions, markets, local entrepots, ports, towns, informal meeting places versus regularized stopping points, temples, oceans, routes, homes, ships, armies, compounds, street corners, fields, in pockets, nowhere? What was involved – objects, goods, equity, promises, trust/distrust, cash/kind, notes, formalized economies, informal agreements, legal notes, legislated transactions, debts, gifts, work, agricultural produce?

How do we grapple with the question of time in engagements that entail business and banking: do we think in terms of the duration of transactions, the relationship between past and future involved in single or multiple transactions? Do we think in terms of the timelines that help us see what these practices might be? How do national histories of earlier periods transform what we see of those periods, the timelines or places or figures that play into understanding business and banking? What theoretical vantage points or ideas are deployed by those who write about these issues?

Introducing:

NAOMI SHIHAB NYE



Naomi Shihab Nye

The last speaker at a two-day conference, “Common Ground: Dialogue Between Jewish and Islamic Worlds through Art,” the award-winning Palestinian-American poet, writer, anthologist, and educator, Naomi Shihab Nye, describes herself as a “wandering poet.” She has spent thirty-seven years traveling the country and the world to lead writing workshops and inspiring students of all ages. Nye was born to a Palestinian father and an American mother and grew up in St. Louis, Jerusalem, and San Antonio. Drawing on her Palestinian-American heritage, the cultural diversity of her home in Texas, and her experiences traveling in Asia, Europe, Canada, Mexico, Central and South America and the Middle East, Nye uses her writing to attest to our shared humanity.

She is the author and/or editor of more than thirty volumes of poetry, short stories, essays, and novels.

Her poetry is rich with vivid images that celebrate the mundane and invite us “to slow down to breathe in the world around us.” In the words of the poet, William Stafford, “her poems combine transcendent liveliness and sparkle along with warmth and human insight. She is a champion of the literature of encouragement and heart. Reading her work enhances life.”

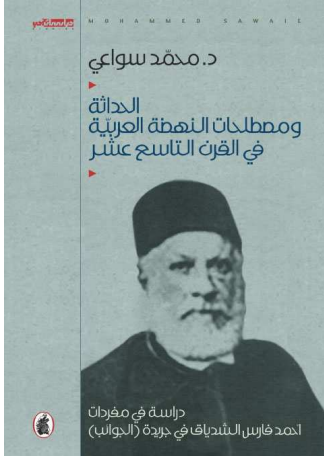
As a byproduct of two cultures, Nye’s poetry is forever seeking linkage to lost lands, forgotten histories, ancestral language, and contested spaces. She reminds us that the best writing often “comes out of your difficult places,” and to not fear our differences, for they draw attention to our parallel lives, to our common ground and humanity. Her poetry invites us to

think twice about the headlines, and about the people who are not fully represented, “who are not being quoted.” Through a unique focus on life’s contradictions, Nye asserts that “Before you know kindness as the deepest thing inside, / you must know sorrow as the other deepest thing,” that anger, though valid at times, is always connected to hope of coexistence, that “even if the poem is crying out, or expresses anguish, it is crying out of love.” Indeed, love prevails at the end of her novel, *Habibi* (Beloved). Certainly it is the shared memories of grandmothers, fig trees and olive groves, of common traumas and potential triumphs that the characters of her poem, “Gate A-4,” celebrate as they share cookies dusted with sugar powder, thereby replacing memories marred with gun powder and war. Affirming this vision of shared humanity and peaceful poetics, Nye writes,

And I looked around that gate of late and weary ones and I thought, this is the world I want to live in. The shared world. Not a single person in that gate--once the crying of confusion stopped--seemed apprehensive about any other person. They took the cookies. I wanted to hug all those other women, too. This can still happen anywhere. Not everything is lost.

HANADI AL-SAMMAN

New in the MESALC LIBRARY



Modernity & Lexicon of Nineteenth Century Arabic by **Mohammed Sawaie**

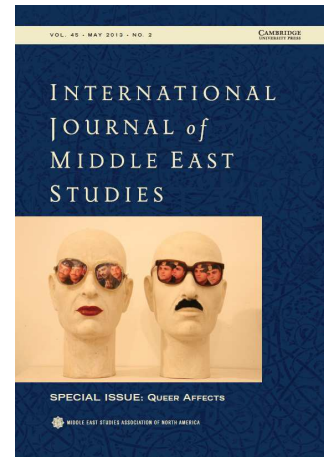
Al-Mu'asasah al-Albiyya, Spring 2013

This book explores the contribution of the leading Arab lexicographer, translator, journalist, and neologist, Ahmad Faris al-Shidyaq (1804?-1887), to the development of terms in Arabic for Western material objects, sciences, and political institutions. A compendium and study of his neologisms and the lexical strategies he employed in coining these terms comprise the work of this book.

“Queer Affects” by **Hanadi Al-Samman & Tarek El-Ariss, Eds.**

International Journal of Middle East Studies 45.2
Cambridge University Press, May 2013

This special issue explores affect theory as a new site of transformation for sexuality and queer Middle Eastern Studies. Its aim is to respond to the conceptual standstill that locks Middle Eastern queer studies into a premodern Eastern versus modern Western-oriented division. The question of affect as a productive analytical tool for exploring lust, shame, empathy, terror, madness, and disgust offers innovative approaches that bridge linguistic, temporal, and geographic divides prevalent in scholarly debates. In its focus on emotions experienced by subjectivities that are local and global, premodern and modern, East and West, *Queer Affects* invites scholars to think beyond and in between these binaries, and to conceive of queer identities as always in a state of "dialogic becoming."



Development of the Ghazal and Khaqani by **Alireza Korangy**

Harrassowitz Verlag, Fall 2013

This monograph has been written with the full consideration in mind that in order to understand the ghazal, the proto-ghazal must be identified and traced through the ages--thematically, rhetorically, and geo-politically. Keeping in mind the borrowings of Persians from their Arab predecessors and some of their Arab contemporaries, this soon-to-be-published monograph references the influences. It traces the beginning of ghazal-like poetry in the tenth century to the very important epoch of the 12th century, ending with the poetry of Afḍal al-Dīn Khāqānī Shirvānī (d. 1199), whose influence was immense in the development of the language of the ghazal and in canonizing it as a content-form.



Alireza Korangy

MESALC Student Wins Fulbright Scholarship



Johnny Vater

I applied for the Fulbright Scholarship as the result of my deep and abiding interest in India. During my sophomore year, I was majoring in Foreign Affairs—after I attended a J-Term study abroad program to India in 2011. However, I discovered that my interests more closely aligned with South Asian Studies. I’m a fourth year now and getting ready to graduate. Last semester the Fulbright seemed like the next best step for me: it would allow me to learn more about Indian society by conducting research, improve my Hindi and Urdu language skills, and direct myself toward a future vocation.

The Fulbright Scholarship Program was first established by Congress to improve bilateral relationships with foreign nations and to address issues of mutual interest. The Fulbright US Student Program, in particular, offers an exceptional array of opportunities for graduating seniors, graduate students and young professionals, including advanced research, university teaching, and public policy work.

My passion lies particularly in the realm of the Indian public sphere, and how different and unexpected types of media are utilized to shape public discourse. This led me to a study of the Dalit literature movement—a social movement propagated by India’s lower-castes—in which lower-caste writers employ autobiographies, short stories, poetry, and other forms of print media to mobilize the lower-caste into political consciousness while also informing broader society about caste inequalities and discrimination. I will be using my Fulbright to further examine the efficacy of this movement by exploring Dalit literature’s entrance into the “mainstream” literary market. I will analyze the political economy of Dalit literary publication, pedagogy in the university system, foreign scholarship, and domestic and international translation.

My research in India will begin at the end of this summer. I’m still waiting to learn more about logistics, but I expect I will be living in New Delhi up until the fall of 2014.

JOHNNY VATER



Iranian-American

THE “HERITAGE SPEAKER” PHENOMENON

There is a certain dialect that all families use, consciously or otherwise. This dialect—the sum of a family’s unique turn of phrase, the lilt of its accents, and the texture of its tone—becomes a linguistic coat of arms as distinct to the family as a fingerprint. But where a fingerprint is both static and a product of genetics, a family’s lexicon is dynamic and a product of its culture.

Our household dialects were no exception to this rule. Our vernacular was soaked to the core with the culture that surrounded us. This culture, ancient and cardamom scented, wafted from each Farsi word that left our parents’ lips. Thus far, we had lived by that spiraling, singsong language of our Iranian immigrant parents. We had been soothed, disciplined, and loved in Farsi. Yet as the lines and contours of our lives steadily pushed outward into the disorienting sphere of primary school, so did our families’ dialect. In a country we—the first-generation children of Iranian immigrants—were proud to call our birthplace and, perhaps more distinctly, our home, we made an unconscious decision to forge a new dialect within the household. By the beginning of elementary school, our generation spoke English in response to our parents’ Farsi. Farsi and English volleyed back and forth up and down the stairs in perfect ratio, bisecting the household in neat halves of past and present. For years, the roofs of our homes nestled a strange hybrid of two coexisting syntax. In short, we had created a dialect of simple compromise. Today, we aim to complicate this easy proportion, creating something greater than the sum of two halves.



Niki Afsar & Mina Tavakoli

The natural oscillation between languages and cultures marks the contemporary academic approach to learning language from the framework of a Persian heritage speaker. The healthy share of heritage-based speakers that eagerly sign up for Persian language classes at UVa represent a reconciliation of this split dialect, and by proxy, the divided, dialectical self. As a country under relentless socio-cultural siege, the state and quality of being Iranian—this abstract Iranian-ness—has been in a constant state of flux, adaptation and dynamism, not unlike the ever-changing dialect of the home. By methodically reaching into the depths of grammar, syntax, and vocabulary, we reach a part of ourselves that has always existed, left comfortably unexplored. As we return home with a newfound ability to transform our once-perfect ratios, we forge our own coat of arms as a generation of linguistic bridge-builders, discovering the true weight of what it means to be Iranian-American.

MINA TAVAKOLI & NIKI AFSAR

Calendar of Events

..... Spring 2013



March 3-4

Old Cabell Hall Auditorium, O-Hill Forum, Newcomb Gallery
 “Common Ground: Dialogue between the Jewish and Islamic
 Worlds through Art”

The University of Virginia’s Department of Middle Eastern and South Asian Languages and Cultures, the Jewish Studies Program, the McIntire Department of Music, and the McIntire Department of Art co-sponsored a two-day conference that brought Jewish and Muslim artists, musicians, scholars, and poets together for two spectacular days of dialogue and mutual respect.

March 18

112 Monroe Hall

6:30 PM

“Voices from El Sayed”

Movie Screening followed by

Director & Guest Speaker, Oded Adomi Lesham

In the picturesque Israeli Negev desert lays the Bedouin Village of El-Sayed that has the largest percentage of deaf people in the world. Through generations a unique sign language has evolved making it the most popular language in this rare society that accepts deafness as natural as life itself. The village's tranquility is interrupted by Salim's decision to change his deaf son's fate and make him a hearing person using the Cochlear Implant Operation.

Co-sponsored by the Brody Jewish Center, Jewish Education Initiative, Hoos For Israel, and The Jewish Studies Department

March 21

101 Nau Hall

7:00 PM

“Palastine Beyond Zionism – A New
 Paradigm for Peace”

Guest Speaker, Miko Peled

Israeli peace activist & author of “The General’s Son”

Co-sponsored by the Jewish Studies Program, MESALC, and the Charlottesville Center for Peace & Justice

March 18

Random Row Books

7:00 PM

“A Separation”

Movie Screening

"Set in contemporary Iran, *A Separation* is a compelling drama about the dissolution of a marriage. Simin wants to leave Iran with her husband Nader and daughter Termeh. Simin sues for divorce when Nader refuses to leave behind his Alzheimer-suffering father. Her request having failed, Simin returns to her parents' home, but Termeh decides to stay with Nader. When Nader hires a young woman to assist with his father in his wife's absence, he hopes that his life will return to a normal state. However, when he discovers that the new maid has been lying to him, he realizes that there is more on the line than just his marriage."

Sponsored by the Persian Culture Society at UVA

April 12

211 Gibson Hall

1:00 PM

“Western Colonialism and Arabic Neo-
 Classical Poetry: Canonization and
 Repudiation”

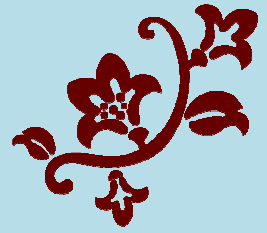
Guest Speaker, Suzanne Stetkevych

In congruence with the College’s initiative on forging global and interdisciplinary connections among departments and disciplines, the Department of Middle Eastern and South Asian Languages and Cultures has teamed up with the Institute of the Humanities and Global Cultures in inviting the world renowned classical Arabic literature scholar, Prof. Suzanne Stetkevych of Indiana University and Georgetown University to a “Desert Theory” talk entitled “Western Colonialism and Arabic Neo-Classical Poetry: Canonization and Repudiation.” Prof. Stetkevych will discuss Arabic literature’s engagement with Western literary theory as well as the latter’s influence on the process of canonization and translation in a post-modernist era.



“Unveiling the Self”

IN THE EYE OF THE STORM



Courtyard Marriott | October 29th & 30th, 2012



Morning Session

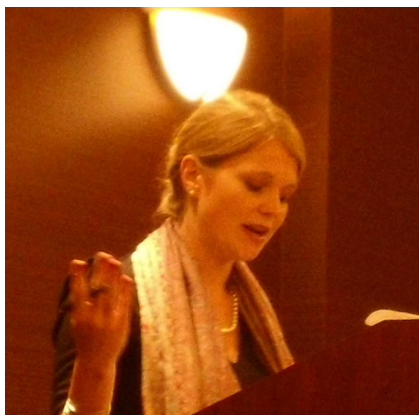
As Hurricane Sandy raged outside, a number of eloquent scholars from across the world were descending on Charlottesville, ducking in just under the radar to settle into the Marriott Courtyard on Main Street in time for the “Unveiling the Self” conference held by the Department of Middle Eastern and South Asian Languages and Cultures on October 29-30, 2012. UVa classes had been unexpectedly canceled just the night before, and the university building that was supposed to house the conference was shut down, but with some last-minute changes, the conference was able to proceed against all odds and with unequivocal success. The two days of perceptive presentations, lively question-and-answer sessions, and convivial conversation proved a unique transnational and transhistorical window onto the burgeoning field of women’s life narratives in the Middle East and South Asia.

After generous opening remarks were offered by Professor Alireza Korangy, the stormy mood on Monday morning was enlightened by our first co-presenters, Siobhan Lambert-Hurley and Anshu Malhotra, who presented a comprehensive introduction to their new co-edited volume, “Speaking of the Self: Gender, Performance, and Autobiography in South Asia.” Shifting the regional focus from South Asia to Iran, Jasmin Darznik gave an insightful and self-reflective talk about her own experience in writing the bestselling memoir *The Good Daughter: A Memoir of My Mother’s Hidden Life*, but even more so, addressed the centrality of authorship and the memoir genre in creating a cultural identity for Iranians living in diaspora. Exploring a different angle on Iranian women’s life narrative, my own paper focused on Marjane Satrapi’s graphic novel, *Persepolis*, and how the

UNVEILING THE SELF

continued from page 17

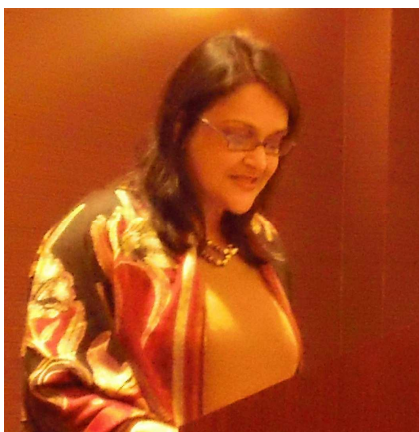
medium's balance between the textual and the visual both reveals a multifaceted origin story, from newspaper comics to Persian miniatures to political cartoons, and opens the story up to a diverse global readership.



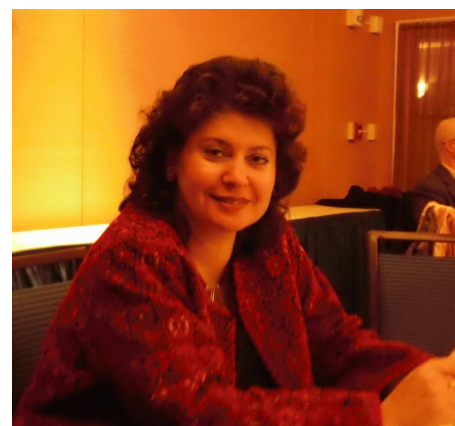
Marie Ostby

In the afternoon session, Rina Williams, an alumna of the department faculty whose return visit was welcomed with open arms, presented a new take on a rarely discussed topic: what role women played in nascent religious nationalist movements in late colonial India. Her examination of two case studies—Jankibai Joshi and Lakshmibai Kelkar—illustrated how the study of women's biographies can yield new insights about the complex political landscapes those women took part in shaping. Then, Professor Hanadi Al-Samman's talk on Arab women's diasporic fiction introduced the evocative term "mosaic autobiography," and many audience members commented on striking similarities and differences between women's auto-fiction in the Arab and Persian contexts. The Monday proceedings culminated in a fascinating human rights-inflected discussion by Nima Naghibi of the role of witnessing, testimony, and personal trauma in an important subset of the sprawling genre of diasporic Iranian women's life writing: that of the prison memoir.

On the second day of the conference, Professor Jahan Ramazani's moving introduction of his mother and her work set the tone for perhaps the most introspective panel of the conference: "Journeys Inward & Outward: The Art of Composing the Self." Nesta Ramazani discussed the long and eye-opening intercultural translation process she underwent before, during, and after the composition of her celebrated memoir, *The Dance of the Rose and the Nightingale*. Following her, the renowned journalist, Azadeh Moaveni, gave an illuminating presentation on a writer's constant inner struggle between her literary, political, and personal selves entitled "After the Fact: Hedging, Self-Censorship, and the Prospect of Return in Iranian Memoir." Azadeh's talk brought to light a key insight of the conference that resonated with many people in the crowd: that the process of writing an autobiography is not merely a documentation of one's past, but can also have enormous bearing on one's future.



Rina Williams



Hanadi Al-Samman

On Tuesday afternoon, three presenters delved into historical archives and addressed a wide range of time periods, art forms, and geographic locales. Professors Elizabeth Thompson, Michael Beard, and Marilyn Booth each brought a unique archaeological perspective to the process of unearthing and writing, or re-writing, of the lives of women who lived in times and places distant from our own.

A Monday night dinner at Maya gave the conference participants a chance to connect in a more relaxed atmosphere just down the street, and dinner on Tuesday night was catered by the exquisite Milan, with delicious lunches from L'Etoile on both days. While initially, the organizers and participants expected merely to make the best of a bad situation, many of them ended up remarking that this was the best conference they had ever attended. Thanks in large part to our tireless and resourceful Department chair, and the flexibility and hospitality of the Marriott Courtyard, the show could go on, and the conference quickly developed a uniquely committed and passionate mood.



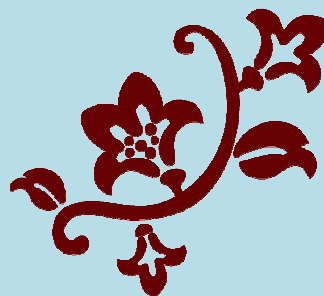
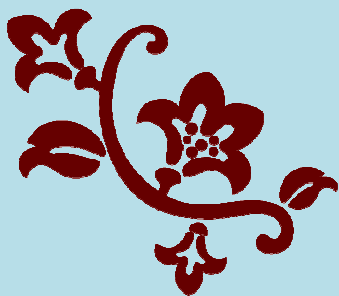
Afternoon Session

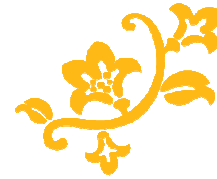
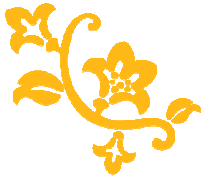
With the weather conspiring against us, there was a strong sense of unity as participants huddled together in the intimate conference room to discuss, debate, and ponder how women's life stories have been "veiled" and "unveiled" in different ways and different times across the Middle East and South Asia.

Formalities were quickly dispensed

with in favor of passionate intellectual dialogue, and we were delighted to have a number of MESALC students and faculty join in the debate at various points during the conference, braving the winds to walk over from Grounds and experience a thriving scholarly community in action despite the lockdown.

MARIE OSTBY





Department of Middle Eastern *and*
South Asian Languages *and* Cultures

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