Arabic film festivals in London
Film and film festivals in the Middle East and London
Creative approaches in films on Palestine
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The Middle East in London

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Films from and about the Middle East and North Africa have been making headlines in recent years as several from Iran, Palestine, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and Jordan have been nominated for international prizes, and an increasing number are being shown to international audiences at diverse film festivals in Europe, Asia and the US.

What is interesting about the emerging, complex and artful films from the region and its diasporas is their creativity in terms of genre and content. This is coupled with their ability to provide articulations of lives and experiences beyond restrictive formats imposed by the state, which has controlled cultural output in different parts of the region. Furthermore, many of these films have moved beyond the frames of incessant conflict, extremism and violence that dominate the news headlines. They engender more complex, intimate and humane accounts of ordinary lives that are not only politically relevant but also show that people in the region are not that different from others in their aspirations and hopes.

It is a cliché to say film offers a window of the world, particularly in a globalised digital age. But it is true to say that, as many of the contributions in this special issue show, this window is becoming wider and more accessible as film festivals from London to Singapore, from Bristol to San Francisco can testify. They offer the spaces for film created in or about the Middle East to travel; these films move across borders and enable encounters in different mediums and genres as well as in the creative imagination.

This issue of The Middle East in London endeavours to showcase the variety of film genres and productions in the MENA region, a region that is beset by forced displacement due to long-term conflict and repression as well as inter-communal violence, patriarchal systems, ideological struggles and external intervention. These contexts no doubt play a role in how film travels, as do other issues: the continuous war on culture waged by the state, institutional restraints, lack of funding and insufficient training for would-be film producers. However, as the articles in this issue show, culture remains a source for creativity, resistance, voice and visibility and film, as an essential element of culture, has increasingly been the space through which these issues are made visible and discussed.

This issue begins with an Insight piece by Sheyma Buali who delves into how films shown in London have changed in the last five years, a topic also taken up by Dan Gorman. Zeina Shanaah looks at creative trends in Palestinian cinema, and Yonatan Sagiv addresses Israeli horror films. Suzanne Gauch looks at the evolution of North African cinema post-independence. Saeed Zeydabadi-Nejad and Asal Bagheri envision an optimistic future following the death of the prominent Iranian film-maker Kiarostami, while Yasmin Fedda talks about the challenges some of the Syrian film-makers face in Aleppo in the wake of the raging civil war. Mizgin Mujde Arslan discusses the challenges for Kurdish cinema. Finally, Nazli Tarzi relays a brief history of Iraqi cinema and Ehab Jalal discusses Egyptian cinema after 2011.

In this issue we have also announced the winners of the 2016 photo competition. Congratulations!

Dina Matar, SOAS

Installation shot from the exhibition In Search of Lost Time shown at the Brunei Gallery, SOAS, 21 January – 19 March 2016. Work by artists from Gharem Studios, Saudi Arabia. Image Courtesy of the British Council
A common mission statement of an Arabic film festival abroad in the last decade would mostly touch on two things. First, an opportunity to share culture, offering audiences a travel portal to visit the region through the audio-visual stories witnessed on the screen. And second, the aim to deflate social and political misconceptions globally projected about the Arab world. In a climate of saturated news from the Middle East, simplified headlines and deductive news articles can be re-examined through films from within the region about the region with more complexity. For some, there is the belief that rather than a string of sound bites, cinema and long form documentary from the ground can offer a more intimate approach, engendering stories that can be universal and at the same time politically relevant.

Middle Eastern cinema of the last five years has focussed on major events, but having these include stories leading up to and outside of those events and deeply personal experiences has offered new depth. In parallel, film-makers have become more daring in narrative, style, creativity and practice. People who never made films before are shooting and editing documentary videos of the events that surround them. New hybrid forms are surfacing, thereby creating new, yet indefinable, genres reflecting new realities, mixing fact and fiction where at times the non-fiction seems more surreal. Moreover, the personal stories people tell are breaking normative conventions. The past five years have also seen a confluence between this increase in Arabic film screenings in the UK and headlines from the Middle East in British media. Cultural and film-workers are scrambling to see, show and discuss current issues in ways that are outside the news television's frame. ‘Political change in the region in the past few years has been vast and has had an impact on the desire to document and respond,’ explains Elhum Shakerifar, a documentary producer who also is Middle Eastern film programmer for the London Film Festival and for Shubbak.

In 2016, festivals in London that present films from the region are plenty: Safar, a bi-annual event that focusses on Arab cinema; Shubbak, a cultural event with a strong cinema strand; Nour, another Arab cultural festival that includes film; the London Film Festival, which has a team devoted to programming the best new cinema from the region among its international films and the BBC Arabic Festival, founded in 2014, which focusses...
on how current changes in the Arab world are being narrated by young film-makers and journalists. Its programme stands out because it is made up entirely of public submissions. Each year, prominent issues are defined by their repetition among the submissions. In the past, these have included issues surrounding youth and children in war environments, migration and the right to work. With that, the festival creates a dialogue between hard news and human stories.

Emerging film-makers and experimenting with film

The independent production of information stems from the idea that documenting and reporting an ongoing situation is a source of empowerment. A special feature at the BBC Arabic Festival is the encouragement of young and emerging film-makers. The belief is that on one hand, these young film-makers living the experiences we read about in the news will have a closer angle on the events. On the other hand, the eruption of citizen, or unofficial, journalists in the last five years will have a closer angle on the events. On Dr Qassem, a medical doctor who clandestinely treated wounded protesters in rural Homs in Syria, won her the 2014 BBC Arabic Young Journalist Award. Another profile that was screened at the same festival that year was *Um Amira*, a story about a woman who sells potatoes on different rooftops in Cairo to afford healthcare for her daughter. The film won the Short Documentary Award for emerging film-producer Naji Ismael.

Fiction film-makers have also risen to prominence. Leyla Bouzid's first feature film is the award-winning rock romance *As I Open My Eyes*, which screened at Safar 2016. The film takes place in a Tunis erupting in revolt. In the film Bouzid reflects on things she herself saw happening throughout the country, namely people's lack of voice and the culture of paranoia and surveillance. 'It was very important for me to go back,' she says in a *Guardian* article published last September, 'It's true there was this revolution, and the world went: "Wow!" But we didn't go deeply into things at all. People took to the streets, but the problems were much more profound.'

'The most radical experimentation is in non-fiction and non-narrative, often cross-fertilised from contemporary art practice,' commented Rasha Salti, in an interview conducted by myself for *Ibraaz*. She was speaking in regard to films made in post-2011, in particular those she chose to be part of the 2016 Safar programme, which she curated. The development of this genre has come in short and long formats with films such as the painfully personal and surreal documentary by Salim Murad, *This Little Father Obsession*. Similarly, the short film *The Great Safae* by Randa Maroufi takes audiences to the film-maker's memory of her family's maid. The film, non-linear and opaque, re-enacts Maroufi’s memory of Safae whose gender was ambiguous, and her family's passive attitude about it, telling us more about social gender norms than most other documents. The film was awarded Best Short Film at the BBC Arabic Festival, 2015.

During autumn, London hosts three major waves of Arabic film: Safar in September, the London Film Festival in October and finally Nour Festival in November. All these festivals bring fresh and original works to the big screen. Audiences have the opportunity to see films from the less represented areas of the Arab world – the Gulf and the Maghreb. Safar's 2016 programme, for example, uniquely featured Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia as well as a special programme of works by the Kuwaiti film-maker/artist, Monira Al Qadiri which look at visibility of domestic servants, folk music and corruption culture in the Gulf. The London Film Festival will be screening an accomplished comedy from Saudi Arabia, *Barakah Meets Barakah*, a love story that delves into issues of romance, social class and general visibility in the Kingdom.

The next five years will tell us more. But whatever the future holds, it is already apparent that cinema that challenges common views in new and refreshing ways that mix artistic licence offer great appeal. And these films, short, long, amateur or glossy, have found a place in London.

Sheyma Buali is currently Director of the BBC Arabic Festival. She is also Commissioning Editor for *Ibraaz* Channel and Creative Time Reports and Culture Correspondent for Asharq Al-Awsat

During autumn, London hosts three major waves of Arabic film, bringing fresh and original works to the big screen and giving audiences the opportunity to see films from the less represented areas of the Arab world.
Films and film festivals in the Middle East and London

Films and film festivals are undergoing a renaissance in the Middle East and North Africa, thanks in no small part to the synchronicity between the massive democratisation of the tools of production in film-making and the wave of pro-democracy and social justice movements across the region in the 21st century. These movements have resulted in a paradigmatic shift in cultural expression and creativity, the results of which we are only just beginning to witness.

The wealth of film-making in both traditional genres and more recent hybrid and dynamic genres is finding expression in the rapidly diversifying world of film festivals in the Middle East, in the emergence of new film festivals across the region and in international festivals of contemporary film from the Middle East, which grow in number by the month.

Alongside older festivals (such as the Dubai International Film Festival and the Carthage Film Festival), we have seen the emergence of new, smaller and more reactive film festivals. These include the Oran International Arab Film Festival and Les Rencontres cinématographiques de Bejaia in Algeria, multiple festivals in Lebanon including the Beirut Art Film Festival and many, many more. In addition, the Beirut-based Network of Arab Alternative Screens works with art house cinemas across the Middle East and North Africa to share information and skills and to contribute to artistic exchange and dialogue, as well as show films that do not have large, traditional distribution deals. With members stretching from Morocco to the UAE, this network provides an inspiration for those working to showcase contemporary Arab cinema around the world.

Despite these transformations in the film festival scene, in recent years there have also been significant challenges facing film producers and festivals across a number of countries in the Middle East, with increased repression of civil society and artists at the hands of state and non-state actors. As a result of these challenges new initiatives establishing decentralised and migratory film support agencies have emerged. One of these initiatives is Proaction Film, a Syrian documentary film production company which was responsible for a number of films including the multi-award winning Return to Homs (2013). Proaction Film began in 2002 as a partner organisation to DoxBox, the only independent documentary film festival in Syria prior to 2011. The company has now relocated to Berlin.

Responding to demand from both audiences and cinema venues in London, a number of film festivals showcasing Arab cinema have sprung up in the capital. These include the bi-annual Safar: A Celebration of Contemporary Arab Cinema, the annual BBC Arabic Film Festival, the (now defunct) Palestine Film Festival which ran for over 20 years, the London Kurdish Film Festival and Shubbak: A Window on Contemporary Arab Culture. In addition to these, more films from the region are being programmed for festivals including the annual London Film Festival, the East End Film Festival and the Green Caravan Film Festival. These films help bring nuanced representations of the Middle East to audiences in the UK.

London offers many opportunities as a film festival hub with its diverse global population (including a sizeable population from across the Middle East and North Africa), excellent venue provision and interested audiences. But, it also raises some challenges. These include the high costs involved in hosting artists in the capital and the ever-tightening visa restrictions, which seem to particularly hinder the attendance of artists from across the Arab world.

Yet consistent audience attendance at these events speaks for itself; it sends a vital message about the desire for continued engagement and cultural exchange. Through such activities festivals can lobby for more support, and audiences can engage with some of the most compelling and diverse voices from across the Arab world.

Daniel Gorman is an Arts Consultant, Researcher and Producer whose work focuses on increasing dialogue, communication and collaboration, while promoting social justice and equality through the arts. He holds an MSc in Middle East Politics from the University of London, is Executive Director of Shubbak and is a Co-founder of Highlight Arts.

Consistent audience attendance at Middle Eastern film festivals in London sends a vital message about the desire for continued engagement and cultural exchange

Daniel Gorman describes the changing scene of films and film festivals in the Middle East and North Africa and here in London, while calling attention to some of the challenges still to be overcome in the UK.
Although themes of displacement and injustice are prevalent in films on Palestine, the ways in which artistic and formal elements of a film are used to construct and convey such experiences are manifold. A cursory analysis of films on Palestine that have gained international recognition in the 21st century reveals a trend of using conventional narration and cinematic styles as seen in films such as *Amreeka* (2009) and *The Idol* (2015) among many others. Each of these films provides insight into the complex political and social Palestinian realities through personal stories. However, other films on Palestine, screened at film festivals and in art spaces, are notable for their artistic and creative approaches and reveal an impressive breadth of film styles and experimentation.

Zeina Shanaah explores science fiction as a thought-provoking mode for relaying Palestinian realities.

Creative approaches in films on Palestine

One example of these creative approaches is the use of science fiction (sci-fi), one of the oldest genres in the global film industry. By manipulating the rules of logic, time and space, sci-fi creates novel ways of seeing that enable the visualisation and construction of thought provoking realities. There are a few films on Palestine that employ sci-fi, such as *Friendship’s Death* (1987) by Peter Wollen. This tells the story of an extra-terrestrial woman with a human appearance who, by mistake, lands in Jordan at the height of the conflict between the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Jordanian Armed Forces in 1970. In Larissa Sansour’s short film *A Space Exodus* (2009), a Palestinian is depicted as an astronaut sent into space to mark her first steps on the moon. *Nation Estate* (2012) is another film by Sansour that employs sci-fi to depict a dystopian ‘State of Palestine’. The nine-minute film follows a Palestinian’s (the film-maker’s) journey to Palestine, which starts in an underground station and ends when she arrives at the lobby of a glistening skyscraper with a glass façade overlooking the segregation wall and Jerusalem behind it. The protagonist gets into an elevator, stops at the 13th floor where Jerusalem

*Sci-fi in Nation Estate facilitates the illustration of Palestinian geopolitical contemporary reality by presenting Palestinians living in an absurd ‘state’ with a façade of sovereignty*
Unusual evocative cinematic and narration styles could be well suited to expressing the complex reality of Palestine and Palestinians. (Opposite and right) Nation Estate photo series, 2012, Larissa Sansour. Images courtesy of the artist

is located and finally reaches her flat in Bethlehem on the 21st floor. The film seeks to emulate the socio and geo-political characteristics of a newly recognised ‘State of Palestine’ while raising critical questions around it. Through sci-fi, the film obliterates familiar notions of topography as bordered horizontal landscapes, placing Palestinian cities vertically on top of each other in a skyscraper – with each city occupying a floor. While imagined disruptive city landscapes are seen in Hollywood films, the concept is rarely seen in films on Palestine.

By presenting Palestinian cities and population constricted in a skyscraper to which there is only one underground access point, the film comments on the diminishing of Palestinian spaces and land, which in reality is taking place through the continued building and expansion of illegal settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem and the ensuing increase in the numbers of illegal Israeli settlers and the regular land confiscation, house evictions and demolitions. In the film, the irrationality of a state consisting of cities vertically stacked on top of each other reflects the irrationality of negotiations or pleas for a state of Palestine. The irrationality lies in the fact that these negotiations do not take the above Israeli measures into consideration, nor do they take into account the lack of freedom of movement Palestinians endure and the dismissal of the UN recognised right of return and compensation for Palestinians expelled and displaced in 1948. The impossibility of having an autonomous, viable and self-sustainable Palestinian state is symbolised through the irrational piling of Palestinian cities on top of each other in a sophisticated panopticon behind the wall.

The confinement and prison-like existence of many Palestinians in reality has been portrayed in films on Palestine, most of which depict captivity through claustrophobic or single-location settings and special lighting effects such as Degradé (2015) and 3000 Nights (2015). Checkpoints are a recurring trope of surveillance and confinement in films on Palestine that capture the degradation Palestinians endure daily. Some exceptionally creative depictions of checkpoints are seen in Divine Intervention (2002) by Elia Suleiman. Here a checkpoint collapses when an unarmed, attractive Palestinian woman struts through it. In Chic Point (2003) by Sharif Waked the checkpoint is transferred into a fashion runway with Palestinian ‘models’ wearing clothes revealing body areas routinely searched by Israelis through stylish cut-outs or zippers.

In this ‘imagined’ state for Palestinians, an illusion of freedom of movement is presented as advanced transport systems replace checkpoints. The use of elevators as points of entry and exit to cities within the occupied territories illustrates a discord from the usual checkpoints seen in Palestinian films. Whereas in most films the checkpoints symbolise confinement and subjugation, in Nation Estate, elevators, enclosed spaces and underground tunnels reflect the existence of pseudo-sovereignty; residents can travel smoothly yet they are still behind the wall trapped comfortably in the skyscraper. This reflects the crippling restrictions imposed by the Israeli military on the mobility of Palestinians in the occupied territories. In using a dynamic imaginative genre, sci-fi in Nation Estate facilitates the illustration of Palestinian geopolitical contemporary reality by presenting Palestinians living in an absurd ‘state’ with a façade of sovereignty.

Experimenting with film form in films on Palestine could be traced back to 1971, with the documentary by the Palestine Film Unit With Soul With Blood in which stylised sequences featuring caricatures of political parties and satirical cartoons were strategically constructed and assembled. Other examples of some of the creative approaches in films on Palestine include the palimpsest multi-narration approach in Mona Hatoun’s Measures of a Distance (1988); the use of the fantastic genre in some scenes in Elia Suleiman’s Divine Intervention (2002); the reuse and re-enactment of archival material in Kamal Al Jafari’s Recollection (2013); the creative montage in Elia Suleiman and Jayce Salloum’s Introduction to the End of an Argument (1990). These approaches and others have been the subject of studies by many scholars and film critics.

Unusual evocative cinematic and narration styles could be well suited to expressing the complex reality – comprised of interweaving layers of social, cultural and political issues – of Palestine and Palestinians. As Edward Said put it in his book After the Last Sky: ‘Since the main features of our [Palestinian] present existence are dispossession, dispersion, and yet also a kind of power incommensurate with our stateless exile… essentially unconventional, hybrid and fragmentary forms of expression should represent us [Palestinians]’ (1986).

Zeina Shanaah is a PhD candidate at the SOAS Centre of Media Studies. Her research focuses on subversive techniques in Palestinian films made in the 21st century.
Ninety-four years: that is the length of time it took the Israeli film industry to produce its first horror film since its modest beginnings in 1911 with the creation of the first Zionist documentary, simply titled *The First Film in Palestine* by British Zionist Murray Rosenberg. This somewhat surprising delay in film production can be explained by the fact that in the first few decades of its existence, Israeli cinema had avoided ‘lowbrow’ genres such as romantic comedies, thrillers and horror films, opting instead for ‘highbrow’ social dramas and war epics. Produced after the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, the Israeli films of the 1950s and 1960s tended to present the fledgling state as a humanist, socialist and Western society battling against an abstract Arab enemy for national independence and survival. It was only in the mid-1960s when Israeli cinema began to produce slapstick comedies, musicals and melodramas, known in Israel as the Bourekas genre. Responding to the Israeli victory in the 1967 war and to a euphoric, public feeling that the external threat against Israel had finally been lifted, these highly successful movies turned for the first time to address the internal ethnic tensions that divided Israeli society since the mass immigration of Mizrahi Jews from the Middle East and North Africa in the 1950s.

Similar to the emergence of this popular cinema, promoted and prompted by Israel’s intensified national and economic confidence in the late 1960s, the second wave of cinematic entertainment in Israel – especially the rise of the urban romantic comedy genre – was also triggered by the changing political landscape of the 1990s. Facilitated by the 1994 peace treaty with Jordan and the 1993 Oslo Accords with the PLO, romantic comedies such as *The
Song of the Siren (1994) and Yana’s Friends (1999) reflected the socio-cultural feeling that Israel was on the verge of what Shimon Peres, then Israel’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, coined as ‘the new Middle East’: a new era of political, cultural and economic cooperation in which violent national conflicts would be a thing of the past. This change in the Israeli national narrative was also earlier shaped by Israeli films of the previous decade – among them Behind the Walls (1984) and Fictitious Marriage (1987) – which began to represent Palestinian characters not only as enemies, but also as victims and even potential allies.

The evolution of comedies in Israel provides an explanation to the very recent proliferation of the horror genre in Israel with the production of such films as Frozen Days by Danny Lerner (2005), Rabies by Aharon Keshales and Navot Papushado (2010), Jeruzalem by Doron and Yoav Paz (2015), Freak Out by Boaz Armoni (2015) and others. Like Israeli-produced comedies reflecting disparate political contexts, the horror genre responds to and expresses the political context of the last two decades in Israel, marked by the collapse of the peace process between Israel and the Palestinian authority and the renewed violence of the national conflict. Thus, it is no coincidence that the first Israeli film to feature horror motifs is the psychological thriller Frozen Days which came out five years after the failure of the 2000 Camp David Summit. A climate of alienation and suspicion dominates Frozen Days which tells the story of a young female drug dealer named Meow who takes the identity of a casual lover who was severely wounded in a bomb explosion outside a club in Tel Aviv. As Meow’s identity shatters, she and the viewer eventually discover that the person who lies wounded under the mummy-like dressings in the hospital is not her lover but she herself. Subsequently, many later Israeli horror films also present the national territory as a literal and metaphorical source of violence. While the horror comedy Rabies, for example, follows a group of teens as they are terrorised by a serial killer in a secluded forest laced by mines from earlier wars, the concept of the horror lurking beneath our feet is manifested in Jeruzalem in which the holy city is being overtaken by zombies arriving from below in an apocalypse supposedly prophesised by Judaism, Islam and Christianity.

Although all these films portray the national territory as a location of past, current or impending violence, they employ different strategies when accounting for the relation of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict to the horror which they display. While Frozen Days highlights Palestinian acts of violence in Tel Aviv as a cause for the horror and deconstruction experienced by the (Jewish-Israeli) self, Jeruzalem both alludes to and evades the conflict as it frames its supernatural horror plot mostly in theological terms. In contrast to Jeruzalem, the horror comedy Freak Out locates its ‘terror’ within the political reality of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Centring around four Israeli soldiers who guard an army base surrounded by ‘Arab villages’, Freak Out initially presents the Palestinian villagers as threatening, faceless would-be-zombies through the point of view of its frightened protagonist Matan. However, as a killing spree erupts in the base, the actual horror lies within the character of the army-base commander, the orphaned Russian-Jewish immigrant Stas who killed a Palestinian boy trying to poison the base’s water reserves. Through juxtaposing Stas’s murder of a Palestinian child with Matan’s fear of Palestinian attacks, Freak Out constructs a political and cinematic play of reflections; a national allegory in which the Israeli state projects its own violence on the image of the Palestinians.

The new phenomenon of Israeli horror cinema in the 21st century certainly discloses a pessimistic and ambiguous image of Israel. Utilising the genre’s emphasis on emotional and physical violence, Israeli horror films present dread, pain and anxiety as an inherent part of Israeli-Jewish existence while ambivalently portraying Palestinians, either as the harbingers of such violence or alternatively as its ultimate victims.

Yonatan Sagiv is an Author and a Scholar of Israeli culture. His recent books include: Indebted: Capitalism and Religion in the Writings of S.Y Agnon and the novel Your Secret’s Safe with Me

(Opposite and left) Images from the movie Freak Out (2015). Courtesy of the director, Boaz Armoni
North African film-makers, their audiences and critics have agreed about one thing since the emergence of narrative film-making by Algerians, Moroccans and Tunisians: film functions as a reflection. Yet the substance of that reflection, as much as its purpose, has been and continues to the object of much dispute.

Today, in the wake of the rise of digital technologies, satellite television and the internet, audiences in the region sometimes known as the Maghreb are acutely conscious not just of stubborn persistence of nefarious stereotypes of Arabs and Africans in global media, but also of the absence of Algerian, Moroccan and Tunisian films on the broader regional and world stages. As a result, North African film is scrutinised through at least three perspectives: for evidence of pandering to neo-colonial interests or state propaganda; for its simultaneous socio-political relevance and entertainment value; and for its ability to hold its own among globally circulating films. From its very beginnings, however, Maghrebi film anticipated, and indeed, cultivated, critical audiences.

North African cinema emerged into popular and global consciousness soon after the region’s independence from France, and was thus immediately and closely intertwined with nation-building in Algeria (1962), Morocco (1956) and Tunisia (1956). In the two decades following independence, North African films explored, through a range of perspectives, such themes as the suffering and growing political consciousness of the colonised (Mohamed Lakhdar Hamina, The Wind of the Aures, 1966, Algeria), anti-colonial and revolutionary struggle (Ahmed Rachedi, The Damned, 1965, Algeria; Abdellatif Ben Ammar, Sejnane, 1973, Tunisia), the challenges of modernity in the new nation state (Latif Lahlou, Spring Sunshine, 1969, Morocco; Mohamed Bouamari, The Charcoal Burner, 1972, Algeria; Ridha Behi, Hyenas Sun, 2016, Tunisia), and the continuing struggle against neocolonialism (Mohamed Lakhdar Hamina, The Wind of the Aures, 1966, Algeria).

By reflecting previously suppressed histories and different facets of social life in the new nation, film was seen as fostering a collective, national consciousness in new citizen-viewers.
Films from the 1980s and 1990s examined the demise of post-independence ideals in pointed and nuanced ways

1977, Tunisia), or women’s social and political struggles (Sid Ali Mazif, Leila and the Others, 1978, Algeria; Moumen Smihi, El Chergui, 1975, Morocco; Omar Khilifi, Screams, 1972, Tunisia; Selma Baccar, Fatma 75, 1978, Tunisia). By reflecting previously suppressed histories and different facets of social life in the new nation, film was seen as fostering a collective, national consciousness in new citizen-viewers. Meanwhile, as films travelled internationally, they testified to the new nations’ cultural life, modernity and legitimacy.

In these first decades after independence, North African films had already encompassed a range of visions, genres, aesthetics, and film-making styles. They included comedies, melodramas, historical and adventure films; experimental, message and documentary films; and films intended to critique, inform, engage, mobilise and entertain. Co-productions among North African, African and European countries and beyond were not unusual, but only Algeria formally nationalised film production after independence. Film-makers themselves came from a range of backgrounds. Some had attended film school abroad or trained in television, and others were self-taught. Although their notions of what film should show and do differed, all were obliged to work within the constraints of overt and subtle forms of censorship and to negotiate the spectres of neo-colonial influence raised by French support of post-independence film-making.

From the 1980s onward, state support for film-making generally increased in Morocco, declined in Algeria and varied in Tunisia. At the same time, new sources of funding and logistical support continued to emerge in Europe and increasingly from film festivals. Audiences throughout the Maghreb, meanwhile, quickly grew wary of state-sponsored representations as the promises of independence remained unfulfilled, and the repression of political dissidents and activists increased. As Algeria sank into a protracted internal war in the 1990s, the circulation of images and information was sharply restricted and those images and material that emerged were viewed with intensified suspicion.

Films made in this challenging climate in the 1980s and 1990s nonetheless prefigured many recent trends. Some explored the confrontation of regional and globally circulating cultures, others examined the pressures fuelling migration and others still reflected on the history and practice of film-making. Most of all, however, films from these decades examined the demise of post-independence ideals in pointed and nuanced ways, and in a range of styles: Jilali Ferhati, Reed Dolls, 1981, and Mohammed Abderrahmane Tazi, The Big Trip, 1981, Morocco; Nouri Bouzid, Golden Horseshoes, 1989, and Bezness, 1992, Tunisia; Ferid Boughedir, Haljaouine, 1990, Tunisia; Mohamed Chouikh, The Citadel, 1988, Algeria; Hakim Noury, Stolen Childhood, 1993, Morocco; Moufida Tlatli, The Silences of the Palace, 1994, Tunisia; Merzak Allouache, Bab el Oued City, 1994, Algeria; Mohamed Zran, Essaida, 1996, Tunisia; Abderrahmane Bouguermouh, The Forgotten Hillside, 1996, Algeria; Nabil Ayouch, Mektoub, 1997, and Ali Zaoua, 1999, Morocco. Slowly but surely, the spaces that North African films reflected and which they influenced continued to expand, even as traditional movie-going audiences seemed to dwindle.

Over the past two decades, Algerian, Moroccan and Tunisian film-makers have increasingly explored the region’s twinned stereotyping and invisibility on a global level. Conscious of audience expectations at home and abroad, film-makers from the region grapple with the varied legacies of the moving image in nation-building, as a tool of social change and as a means of cultural bridge-building. Contemporary film-makers such as Nabil Ayouch, Faouzi Bensaidi, Nouri Bouzid, Moncef Dhouib, Nadia El Fani, Nacer Khemir, Djamila Sahraoui, Lyes Salem and Tariq Tegua make very different kinds of films. All, however, have expanded the range of reflections associated with North African cinema while reconsidering the work that film should do. Among other things, their films explore the politics of culture at home and abroad, reinvent globally popular tropes in regionally specific ways, expose the blind spots of projects of national cinema, reinvent film form and language in films that defy easy categorisation and challenge recent formulations of global cinema by questioning the perspectives on which they are built. A number of them have given rise to debate, sometimes heated, regarding their accessibility, representativity and political, cultural, social and national allegiances. Yet such debates only attest to the continued vitality of film in North Africa today. Alongside increasing accessibility of the tools of film-making, they prompt the emergence of new film-makers who continue to redefine what film reflects and how, in North Africa and beyond.

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2016 has been a tragic year for Iranian cinema. Iranian filmmaker, Abbas Kiarostami, one of the most prominent directors in contemporary ‘world cinema’, died on 4 July 2016. Within days, tributes poured in from world-renowned film-makers, including the American director Martin Scorsese. Kiarostami’s contribution to Iranian cinema has been immense over many decades, particularly in the post-revolutionary period. It was Kiarostami who first drew international attention to Iranian cinema with *Where is the Friend’s House?* made in 1989 and later by winning the Palme D’Or for *A Taste of Cherry* in 1997 in Cannes. Ironically, it was from France that his body was returned to Tehran, where a red carpet was rolled out at the airport to welcome his remains. The question to ask now is whether Kiarostami’s death will signal the beginning of the end for Iranian cinema.

To understand the void that Kiarostami’s demise has left, one should consider briefly his major contributions to Iranian and world cinema. Kiarostami brought a new minimalist style to film-making, balancing his films on a tightrope between the fictional and the real, using *mise-en-abyme*, or ‘film within a film’ as a significant element in his art and employing non-professional actors to great effect. Kiarostami’s innovative style had a major impact on film-making practices in Iran, influencing many younger film-makers, such as Bahman Ghobadi (*A Time for Drunken Horses*, 2000) and Samira Makhmalbaf (*The Apple*, 1998). Kiarostami’s impact in international festivals also opened the door to film

One wonders whether Iranian cinema will continue to pose questions on film with the same intensity or significance as Abbas Kiarostami’s films did.
circuits worldwide for other Iranian film-makers, to the degree that from the mid-1990s no reputable festival would be without at least one or two Iranian films.

Kiarostami’s significance, however, was beyond matters of style and festival recognition and should be located in his unique approach to philosophical dilemmas that pervaded every one of his feature films: for example, the protagonists in Taste of Cherry and The Wind Will Carry Us wondered about life and death through deceptively simple plot lines.

In the post-Kiarostami era, it is highly likely that Iranian cinema will remain prominent at diverse film festivals. However, apart from winning Western accolades, one wonders whether Iranian cinema will continue to pose questions on film with the same intensity or significance as Abbas Kiarostami’s films did.

In order to answer this question, we need to look beyond the circle of film-makers who have more or less emulated his style. One of the most prominent of these is Asghar Farhadi. Farhadi has had a distinctive trajectory: his first film Dancing in the Dust featured at Iran’s prominent Fajr International Film Festival in 2003. While the film received some good reviews, it did not win any of the festival’s main awards. However, what made it stand apart from the few quality films in competition was that it was clearly not Kiarostami-inspired in style or in plot. His subsequent films confirmed the arrival of an original auteur on the Iranian cinema scene. Ever since that beginning, in each of his own films as well as scripts written for others (he wrote the first film script for Low Heights, 2002, directed by Ibrahim Hatamikia), he has focussed on complex, intertwining moral dilemmas in the lives of urban characters in contemporary Iran.

Farhadi’s unique place in Iranian cinema was further emphasised by his film A Separation (2011) receiving an Oscar, a coveted award which had never been won by an Iranian film. While cineastes generally do not consider the Oscars anywhere near as important as the more ‘arthouse’ European awards such as Cannes, Venice or Berlin, no one can deny the appeal of Oscar-winning films at the box office. A Separation was indeed a box office ‘mini-hit’ in the West, which is the best that a non-English language film could hope for. Importantly, the same is true of audiences in Iran who flocked to see the film, making it the most popular film of the year. No film from Kiarostami has ever become nearly as popular with Iranian audiences. The interpretation of Iranian box office figures, however, is rather complex. In Iran, as in the West, a film’s distribution and release play a major role in whether or not it ever has a chance of box office ‘success’. For example, if the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance decides that a film will not appeal to the general public but art-house audiences, it will receive a small release in fewer cinemas limiting its potential at the box office (see Zeydabadi-Nejad’s The Politics of Iranian Cinema, 2010, for a more in depth discussion of the topic).

Another prominent film-maker, who has appealed to large audiences in Iran, is Rakhshan Bani-Etemad. Bani-Etempad’s films explore the lives of working-class female protagonists, exposing gender issues beyond simple binaries of male/female, traditional/modern, or rich/poor. One of the first women to enter the hitherto masculine milieu of Iranian cinema, she draws on her long experience as a documentary film-maker with distinct awareness of nuances in complex lives of women from poor suburbs of Tehran. She has highlighted women’s issues in contemporary Iran, breaking various cultural taboos in subtle ways. Her films have continually attracted interest across boundaries in appealing to both international and domestic festivals. Bani-Etemad received an honorary doctorate from SOAS in 2008 in recognition of her work.

On 10 July 2016, Kiarostami’s funeral brought together almost all major figures of Iranian cinema, including Asghar Farhadi and Rakhshan Bani-Etemad. Others such as Mohsen Makhmalbaf, another Iranian master film-maker, and Ramin Bahrani, an emerging Iranian-American auteur, sent their tributes from outside Iran. The funeral speeches and tributes were unanimous in exalting Abbas Kiarostami’s contribution to Iranian and indeed world cinema. One would hope that he rests in peace having known that Iranian cinema would continue to flourish in diverse ways after him.

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Asal Bagheri has a PhD in Semiology and Linguistics, with a specialisation in Iranian cinema. She’s the author of the thesis Men & women relationships in post-revolutionary Iranian Cinema: Directors’ strategies and semiotic analysis. She has been teaching linguistics, semiology and communication courses in universities such as Sorbonne Paris Descartes, Paris Est Creteil, Paris Est and Marne La Vallee and Rennes

Rakhshan Bani-Etemad has highlighted women’s issues in contemporary Iran, breaking various cultural taboos in subtle ways...
One of the most recent, heartbreaking images of the Syrian conflict was that from 17 August 2016 of the young boy Omar Daqneesh, sitting, shocked and silent in an ambulance, covered in blood and dust after being pulled from the rubble of a building which had been hit by an air strike. This image, along with the vast majority of images and films coming out from Aleppo, was taken by journalists working at the Aleppo Media Centre (AMC), which was set up in 2012 by a group of young Syrian activists and journalists after Aleppo’s split along pro and anti-regime lines with the aim of focusing on ordinary people’s struggles as they cope with incessant violence and trauma. The AMC is not, however, the only outfit working on making creative media (film, documentary, music, satire, poetry and performance) even in the context of extreme violence and repression. Some other notable film initiatives include Bidayat, Hakawati and Abu Naddara.

As a film-maker who produced films in Syria before the uprising began in 2011, I find these developments striking especially in a country where independent film-making and journalism had been curtailed by the state. Although there were difficulties associated with navigating the official and bureaucratic hurdles in place for film-makers at that time, those difficulties pale in comparison to those experienced by film-makers and journalists working in Syria today. Finding solutions to manoeuvre around these new difficulties is an everyday struggle. However, collectives such as the AMC and others manage to come up with ingenious ideas. For example, Bidayat (a Syrian film-making initiative which helps first and second-time film-makers produce films by providing training sessions) ran a series of online mentoring sessions with film-makers in the Yarmouk Palestinian camp in Damascus while it was under siege and where many inhabitants were suffering from starvation. The short films they made about a community garden and about young people sitting in the dark capture rare and moving moments of human tragedy and resilience. Other workshops have been held in nearby countries such as Turkey, including the workshop organised by the Syria Mobile Film Festival – which screens films made on mobile phones across Syria and abroad – which I took part in as a trainer in the summer of 2015, running a series of film-making workshops.

The festival is an initiative of Al-Sharee, a collective of artists and journalists in Syria, who, like ordinary people in the country, began to use accessible technology and cameras to witness, document and share with the world what was happening around them. Some of the material filmed was shot spontaneously, such as capturing a protest or an arrest, while others were

There are now thousands of clips, reports and films uploaded online, archiving different moments of the Syrian conflict.
‘Aleppo is one of the most dangerous places now, and the world might not hear what is happening here. It is important for us to cover these stories now’

more planned and developed into edited reports or films. There are now thousands of clips, reports and films uploaded online, archiving different moments of the Syrian conflict. During this workshop I met some of the AMC film-makers, among them Hasan who, in his film Clustered, decided to focus on the story of Hussein, a young boy disabled by a cluster bomb. Clustered manages to make visible a quiet struggle of a poor family finding ways to survive in Aleppo with the added pressure of their son having lost his hands to a bomb he thought was a toy. As Hasan recalls: ‘The cluster bombs are still being dropped on us every day, the story continues and these weapons will stay in the city for a long time’. Some time after the film was completed, Hussein and his mother tried to leave Syria. They set out for Turkey to try to get him a prosthetic limb. Both Hussein and his mother went missing en route; nothing has been heard of them since, despite numerous efforts by Hasan and the AMC to locate them.

During the Syria Mobile Film Festival workshop, Mujahid Abou Aljoud’s film The Architect was made. The Architect focusses on how a young boy sought to rebuild his destroyed city out of cardboard sculptures exhibited in a room in his house. As Mujahid explained: ‘Children have suffered a lot in this conflict, the regime has destroyed childhood.’

The AMC is not the only media centre operating out of Aleppo – there are several others such as the Halab News Network and Shahra Press, but what distinguishes it is the focus on turning real events into films despite the dangers posed to the journalists and film producers. As Mujahid said: ‘Aleppo is one of the most dangerous places now, and the world might not hear what is happening here. It is important for us to cover these stories now. Through films you can document history. This will help us to understand what is happening now and understand it in the future. Right now we are focussing on the bombing campaigns as that is the biggest threat to us at the moment.’ Mujahid himself told me of a very close call he had with a bomb; he described how he had no choice but to run, unable to help those who had been hit. Hasan had a similar experience while filming with a volunteer for the Syrian Civil Defence, or the White Helmets, for many months. Tragically, the person he was filming was killed.

At the time of writing, Aleppo, Syria’s largest city before the conflict began in March 2011, has been regularly bombarded for five years and has suffered sieges and military incursions. But those suffering inside the eastern part of the city have managed to speak to the outside world through the work of Syrian activists, journalists and film-makers in the city.

Hasan and Mujahid’s films made for the Syria Mobile Film Festival can be seen at http://syriamobilefilms.com/en/, while the work of the AMC can be followed on Facebook at https://www.facebook.com/AleppoAMCen/.

Yasmin Fedda is a Documentary Film-maker. Her past films have focussed on themes ranging from Edinburgh bakeries to Syrian monasteries, some of which have been made for broadcast while others have been screened at international film festivals. She has a PhD in Transdisciplinary Documentary Film, and is also a Co-founder and Programmer of Highlight Arts, an organisation that works with artists in times of conflict.
Nascent Kurdish cinema

After the first ‘definable’ Kurdish films at the end of the 1990s, Kurdish cinema officially launched at the beginning of 2000. Prior to that date, directors were hesitant to share their Kurdish identity for fear of oppression. It was only after 1999 – when Turkey sought to improve its record on democracy and human rights in a bid to gain entry to the EU – that some of these directors started to identify themselves as Kurdish and the Kurdish language was used in film.

Since then, several Kurdish films shown at international film festivals have been nominated for major awards, including Bahman Ghobadi’s Dema Hespên Serxweş (‘A Time for Drunken Horses’, 2000), which won the Caméra d’Or award at the Cannes Film Festival; and Hiner Saleem’s Vodka Lemon, which received the San Marco Prize at the 60th Venice International Film Festival in 2003. Another work that deserves mention is the short film Ax (‘Land’, 1999) created by the film-maker Kazim Oz. Ax helped raise awareness of the Kurdish quest for a homeland while also revealing the denial and suppression of Kurdish identity in Turkey, Iraq, Syria and Iran, an element common to these films.

But it is A Time for Drunken Horses that captures the essence of Kurdish cinema by telling a story of relatively obscure people living within the borders of several countries, a prevalent theme in the milieu. Other films – such as The Road (Yol, 1982) by Yilmaz Güney and Hisham Zaman’s Before Snowfall (2015) – deal also with questions of invisibility as well as the long journey to recognition. Themes of war, trauma, borders, death and agony abound, as do black humour and fairy tales in such films as those by Hiner Saleem. His well-known Vodka Lemon balances drama and humour excellently and is easily described as bittersweet. Moreover, in Vodka Lemon the impossible love story – between a Yazidi man forbidden to marry outside his community and an Armenian woman – is itself a fairy tale. Likewise, in Ghobadi’s Nivemang (‘Half Moon’, 2006) a man falls in love with a woman’s voice; in the same film a fairy woman appears on a bus and then disappears.

Since the beginning of 2000 and the steps taken towards Kurdish reconciliation in Turkey, many Kurdish films have received positive interest from festivals and film-lovers. In the last decade, after support from the Kurdish Regional Government grew (mainly in response to discovering the power film had on publicising the situation of Kurds in the Middle East), the number of Kurdish films has risen, but the quality and storytelling remain poor; most directors have not attended cinema schools and the Regional Government seems preoccupied with producing more, not better, films.

Dengbej (storytelling) is an old tradition among Kurdish people and stories are given life via many different art forms, including through music and oral literature and through Kurdish folk arts such as carpet weaving, embroidery and metal ornamentation. And though Kurdish films are essentially exercises in storytelling, it is difficult to say that there exists a Kurdish-speaking audience that follows and or even knows about Kurdish cinema. This is mainly because many of the towns and cities lack cinemas. Generally Kurdish films can only be seen at Kurdish film festivals, which unfortunately do not run regularly. In the past, some film festivals have been held irregularly in Duhok, Sulaymaniyah and Amed (Diyarbakir). In 2001 the London Kurdish Film Festival made its debut, but it has been held only nine times since then. Other such film festivals have taken place in Berlin and Paris and more recently an initiative was announced to hold the first Kurdish film festival in New Mexico in May 2017.

Although denial continues in those places with little to no demand from the audience, a fledgling Kurdish cinema persists even while the land and its people face renewed pressures from the Turkish government and death at the hands of the so-called Islamic State.

Mizgin Mujde Arslan worked as a Reporter for six years before transitioning to filmmaking. She has received various awards for her short and documentary films and is the author of Rejisor Atif Yilmaz, Kurdish Cinema: Statelessness, Boundary and Death, and Yeşim Ustaoglu
From unforgiving realist depictions to those lauding socialist values and from epic war films to something a bit more ‘indie’, Nazli Tarzi relays a brief history of Iraqi cinema

Changing trends in Iraqi cinema

At the height of culture in Iraq, cinema theatres in Baghdad absorbed as many as 10,000 spectators a day’ recalls Iraqi film-maker Fadhel Abbas. Though quantitatively limited, Iraq boasts a rich history of film production. Indeed, since film was introduced in the 1930s, cinematic currents have done more to publicise the traumas generations of Iraqis have suffered than to construct an idyllic past. These films offer visual scripts capable of lifting the curtain on the ways society and state have perceived themselves, and varying reactions to these perceptual worlds.

In tracing the beginnings of Iraq’s motion pictures, we land at the year 1908, when urbanites converged for a screening at Al-Shifa house, perched on the banks of the Tigris. Silent films dominated in the early years as cinema, some claim, came into being as the natural successor to Iraqi theatre. Spurred on by artistic accomplishments in Egypt and Lebanon, troupes founded by graduates from Baghdad’s Institute of Fine Arts toured urban cities teaching and performing plays. Their abilities were put to the test in the 1940s and 50s, as Iraqi and co-produced feature films burst onto local screens under the rubric of realist cinema, which addressed the realities ordinary masses encountered daily.

Most memorable in this trend is Kameran Hassani’s Sa’id Effendi (1957), recorded at a time when the fortunes of Iraq’s monarchy had turned. The plot centres on a petit bourgeois teacher and his relations with impoverished citizens. To circumvent accusations of subversive content Hassani cleverly conceals Mr Sa’id’s economic class and does not use set or ornate props, just a humble Baghdad home. Ja’afar Ali’s The Bus Conductor (1968) – another realist success – also commits itself to this trend with its unflinchingly realistic portrayal of the daily struggles of a bus conductor and his working class passengers. Other important productions include Andrea Chotan’s Aliya and Isam (1948), and Haydar Al-Omar’s Fitna and Hassan (1955), in which currents of realism, melodrama and romance merge. Another film that stands out is Yaha Fa’ik’s Wardah (1956) which, though little known, provides an implicit message of female empowerment – that women, too, can be agents of their own change.

As the monarchy crumbled in 1958, attitudes towards cinema markedly changed. In an attempt to modernise
Although punitive sanctions, cyclical wars and occupation brought Iraq’s nascent film industry to a grinding halt, a new, largely independent cinema has emerged since Saddam’s ouster.

...
Since the fall of the Mubarak regime in 2011, there has been a new trend in film production centred on the socio-political problems that characterised his 30-year rule. Addressing the regime’s inhumane treatment of Egyptian citizens, some films have succeeded in expressing popular sentiments, reproducing Egyptian cinema’s trend of criticising the political system, its use of violence, its corruption and absence of social justice. Rather than exploring the 2011 uprisings, these films address different societal problems while connecting these problems to distinct groups within Egyptian society; they tell the story of how the uprisings reflect the life and agency of Egyptians across social and political divides. The following three movies exemplify the main three paradigmatic critiques in these productions: the lack of political freedom, the devastating dominance of wasṭa (nepotism) and the enduring iniquity.

### Lack of political freedom

*El sheita elli fat* (*The Winter of Discontent*, 2012) is a drama that focusses on the lack of political freedom, the widespread use of torture and the impossibility of freely voicing political discontent under Mubarak. The movie has three main figures: Amro, an engineer and a political activist; his former girlfriend and opportunist Farah, who becomes a TV host endorsing the state discourse in order to pursue a personal career; and an intelligence agency boss who fed the regime ideas about how to subdue the people. Egyptian intelligence arrested Amro because he demonstrated against the Israeli attacks on Gaza in 2009. He went to prison and was ruthlessly tortured. After his imprisonment he joined the uprisings when they began in 2011. During the uprisings, Farah reported the state’s perspective loyally until the day she saw the police torturing demonstrators. Appalled, she left her job and joined the uprisings where she and Amro met again. When the regime fell, the intelligence boss left his position and went back to his family at the seaside.

While Amro personifies the activist, Farah represents the Egyptian who still has a sound awareness of justice, but who has...
temporarily succumbed to the temptation of personal success. The intelligence boss embodies the always-willing instrument of power who, despite losing his power, returns to his family unaffected. The reunification of Amro and Farah at Tahrir symbolises the reunification of the Egyptian people, and the movie ends with the success of the uprisings in the spirit of optimism and hope for change.

Devastating dominance of wasta

Febrair el-Isud (‘The Black February’, 2013) is a black humour comedy that criticises the Egyptian system of wasta or nepotism. It tells the story of two brothers, both university professors, and their families. The two brothers are depressed; they feel they are not being acknowledged for their professional accomplishments. And they worry because they do not have the right connections to, or protection from, the politicians, the court system or the business people who run the country. Unsuccessful in their attempts to immigrate, instead they scheme: they look for a suitable marriage partner for the older brother’s daughter in order to secure useful connections to the ruling power. So the daughter leaves her first love, a scholar, and gets engaged to a judge. She then leaves the judge, who was removed from his position, and gets engaged to an intelligence officer instead. Just as the two were due to wed, they heard the demonstrations in the streets. So her father calls off the wedding immediately. He argues that she should wait until they know which direction the uprisings will lead.

In the last scene of the movie, the three fiancés are sitting on a sofa waiting for the result of the uprisings. The two disillusioned professors personify the Egyptian middle class whose efforts were hindered by a corrupt system of nepotism. The critique is articulated through the absurd and tragicomic attempts of the professors to adapt to this system. The response to the uprisings is hesitation, waiting without active participation.

Enduring iniquity

Nawara (2015) is a movie about a poor young woman, Nawara, who lives in a deprived area and works as maid for an extremely rich family. The movie depicts her personal struggles during the three weeks of uprising. The uprisings become a background that Nawara follows on the television, on her way to work and through the rich family’s responses to the events. While Nawara’s family and neighbours live in an area deprived of water and electricity, her rich employers are preoccupied with rebuking the demonstrators as idiots and the willing tool of the country’s enemies. The rich family flees the country as soon as Mubarak is arrested, and Nawara is thrown in prison regardless of her innocence.

Thus, the movie tells the story of the poor Egyptians who paid the price for the uprisings. The iniquity that the poor faced before the uprisings did not get better afterwards, only worse. Seen through the eyes of Nawara, the uprisings do not offer any hope or optimism for change.

From optimism to disillusion to hopelessness

These three movies not only critique political repression, nepotism and iniquity, they also represent the voices of particular socio-political positions and agencies in Egypt during the time of the uprisings: the confined but mobilised activist, the politically dissatisfied but passive middle class and the poor who use all their energy to survive. Whereas the critique of the political system and corruption is similar to movies from before 2011, such as Hena Maysara (‘Waiting for Better Days’, 2007) and Heya Fawda (‘The Chaos’, 2007), the three mentioned above directly expose Mubarak’s lack of credibility. For example in The Black February, Mubarak is seen waiting in the airport to welcome home the national football team instead of doing anything to solve the problems his country is facing.

The three movies highlighted in this article were produced in 2012, 2013 and 2015 respectively. The decline of optimism over time across the three appears to reflect the general development of the Egyptian population’s mood since the uprisings: from optimism and hope to disillusion and ultimately hopelessness.

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For four years now we have hosted an annual photo competition, inviting our readers to submit their photographs of the Middle East. Each year we are awed anew by the quality of the images submitted: vibrant and evocative (or even sometimes provocative), they give us glimpses into the history, culture and humanity of the region.

This year it was Iman Nabavi’s image of the Emamzadeh Ebrahim in Kashan, Iran that won first place. Two additional photographs won commendations.

As always, we are grateful to all who took part in the competition. We intend to continue with this annual tradition, so check back during the summer months for the details of the 2017 competition.

Iman Nabavi is an Iranian photographer influenced by art and visual imagery. His love affair with photography began in 1995. For him, photographs offer a way to find common ground, to break through the insubstantial obstacles that keep people apart. ‘Why struggle to open a door between us when the whole wall is an illusion?’ he asks. Photography’s strength, then, lies in its ability to evoke a sense of shared humanity. This photograph depicts the Emamzadeh Ebrahim, a historical structure in Kashan, Iran well known for its turquoise dome, tiled minarets and iwan.
Samir Kassam has long had an interest in studying the Middle East, eventually leading him to post-graduate study at SOAS. During the course of his studies, he travelled to the region seeking to understand local perspectives. ‘Shooting for the Improbable’ came to life on one of his last days in the Old City of Jerusalem. Waiting for the Maghrib call to prayer, Samir found the passion of the kids’ play inspiring and their pleas to join them unrelenting. To him, it symbolised the warmth, hospitality and kindness he experienced throughout his travels, superseding the political contestation of the grounds they played on.

This photograph shows the Jameh Mosque of Qazvin, one of the oldest mosques in Qazvin province, Iran. Through his photography Iman Nabavi hopes to remind the peoples of the Middle East – and those elsewhere – of the beauty and importance of preserving heritage and culture so that it can be shared. ‘There is no fate but what we make!’ he says.
Jihadist narratives have evolved dramatically over the past five years, driven by momentous events in the Middle East and beyond; the death of bin Laden; the rise and ultimate failure of the Arab Spring; and most notably, the rise of the so-called Islamic State. For many years, al-Qaeda pointed to an aspirational future Caliphate as their utopian end goal – one which allowed them to justify their violent excesses in the here and now. Islamic State turned that aspiration into a dystopic reality, and in the process hijacked the jihadist narrative, breathing new life into the global Salafi-Jihadi movement. This collection of essays examines how jihadist narratives have changed globally, adapting to these turbulent circumstances. As these analyses demonstrate, the success of the ISIS narrative has been as much about resonance with local contexts, as it has been about the appeal of the global idea of a tangible and realised caliphate.

November 2016, Hurst, £30.00

The Making of a Salafi Muslim Woman: Paths to Conversion
By Anabel Inge

The spread of Salafism – often referred to as Wahhabism – in the West has intrigued and alarmed observers since the attacks of 9/11. Many see it as a fundamentalist interpretation of Islam that condones the subjugation of women and fuels Jihadist extremism. Yet in Britain, growing numbers of educated women – often converts or from less conservative Muslim backgrounds – are actively choosing to embrace Salafism's literalist beliefs and strict regulations, including heavy veiling, wifely obedience and seclusion from non-related men. This book draws on more than two years of ethnographic fieldwork in London. It examines why Salafism is attracting so many young Somalis, Afro-Caribbean converts and others, and how these women negotiate strict religious interpretations with everyday life in Britain.

November 2016, Oxford University Press, £22.99

Under the Shadow: Rage and Revolution in Modern Turkey
By Kaya Genç

Turkey stands at the crossroads of the Middle East – caught between the West and ISIS, Syria and Russia, and governed by an increasingly forceful leader. In Under the Shadow Kaya Genç meets activists from both sides of Turkey’s political divide: Gezi park protestors who fought tear gas and batons to transform their country's future, and supporters of Erdogan's conservative vision who are no less passionate in their activism. He talks to artists and authors. He interviews censored journalists and conservative writers. He meets Turkey's Wall Street types who take to the streets despite the enormity of what they can lose as well as the young Islamic entrepreneurs who drive Turkey's economy. He shows a divided society coming to terms with the 21st century, and in doing so, gets to the heart of the compelling conflicts between history and modernity in the Middle East.

September 2016, IB Tauris, £12.99
The Arab Spring heralded a profound shift in the Middle East, bringing to power Islamist movements which had previously been operating in the shadows. For a while, it looked as though the region was entering the dawn of a new Islamist age. But navigating their respective countries through difficult and painful transitions ultimately proved too challenging for these forces, and, just as suddenly, the Muslim Brotherhood was dramatically overthrown in Egypt and left severely weakened in Libya. In Tunisia, An-Nahda managed to pull itself through the crisis, but its failure to articulate and deliver the hopes and aspirations of a large section of Tunisian society damaged its credibility. In this book, Alison Pargeter charts the Islamists’ ascent and subsequent fall from power.

October 2016, Saqi Books, £16.99

Recent events such as ‘Iran’s Green Revolution’ and the ‘Arab Uprisings’ have exploded notions that human rights are irrelevant to Middle Eastern and North African politics. Increasingly seen as a global concern, human rights are at the fulcrum of the region’s on-the-ground politics, transnational intellectual debates and global political intersections. A multidisciplinary approach from scholars with a wide range of expertise allows this book to capture the complex dynamics by which human rights have had, or could have, an impact on Middle Eastern and North African politics.

November 2016, Routledge, £150.00

The Arab Spring heralded a profound shift in the Middle East, bringing to power Islamist movements which had previously been operating in the shadows. For a while, it looked as though the region was entering the dawn of a new Islamist age. But navigating their respective countries through difficult and painful transitions ultimately proved too challenging for these forces, and, just as suddenly, the Muslim Brotherhood was dramatically overthrown in Egypt and left severely weakened in Libya. In Tunisia, An-Nahda managed to pull itself through the crisis, but its failure to articulate and deliver the hopes and aspirations of a large section of Tunisian society damaged its credibility. In this book, Alison Pargeter charts the Islamists’ ascent and subsequent fall from power.

October 2016, Saqi Books, £16.99

Following the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, the landscape of Israel-Palestine was radically transformed. Breaking from conventional focus on explicit sites of violence and devastation, Noam Leshem turns critical attention to ‘ordinary’ spaces and places where the intricate and often intimate engagements between Jews and myriad Arab spaces takes place to this day. Leshem builds on interdisciplinary studies of space, memory, architecture and history and exposes a rich archive of ideology, culture, political projects of state-building and identity formation. The result is a fresh look at the conflicted history of Israel-Palestine: a spatial history in which the Arab past isn’t in fact separate, but inextricably linked to the Israeli present.

October 2016, Cambridge University Press, £64.99
The Price of a Vote in the Middle East: Clientelism and Communal Politics in Lebanon and Yemen

By Daniel Corstange

Clientelism and ethnic favouritism appear to go hand in hand in many diverse societies in the developing world. But, while some ethnic communities receive generous material rewards for their political support, others receive very modest payoffs. *The Price of a Vote in the Middle East* examines this key – and often overlooked – component of clientelism. The author draws on elite interviews and original survey data collected during his years of field research in Lebanon and Yemen; two Arab countries in which political constituencies follow sectarian, regional and tribal divisions. He demonstrates that voters in internally-competitive communal groups receive more, and better, payoffs for their political support than voters trapped in uncompetitive groups dominated by a single, hegemonic leader. Ultimately, politicians provide services when compelled by competitive pressures to do so, whereas leaders sheltered from competition can, and do, take their supporters for granted.

September 2016, Cambridge University Press, £64.99

The Poisoned Well: Empire and its Legacy in the Middle East

By Roger Hardy

Almost 50 years after Britain and France left the Middle East, the toxic legacies of their rule continue to fester. To make sense of today’s conflicts and crises, we need to grasp how Western imperialism shaped the region and its destiny in the half-century between 1917 and 1967. Roger Hardy unearths an imperial history stretching from North Africa to southern Arabia that sowed the seeds of future conflict and poisoned relations between the Middle East and the West. Drawing on a rich cast of eye-witnesses – ranging from nationalists and colonial administrators to soldiers, spies, and courtesans – *The Poisoned Well* brings to life the making of the modern Middle East, highlighting the great dramas of decolonisation such as the end of the Palestine mandate, the Suez crisis, the Algerian war of independence and the retreat from Aden.

August 2016, Hurst, £20.00

Inside the Muslim Brotherhood: Religion, Identity, and Politics

By Khalil al-Anani

*Inside the Muslim Brotherhood* provides a comprehensive analysis of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt since 1981. The book unpacks the principal factors that shape the Brotherhood’s identity, organisation and activism, investigating the processes of socialisation, indoctrination, recruitment, identification, networking and mobilisation utilised by the movement. Khalil al-Anani argues that the Brotherhood is not merely a political actor that seeks power but also an identity maker that aims to change societal values, norms and morals to line up with its ideology and worldview. As a socio-political movement, he finds, the Brotherhood is involved in an intensive process of meaning construction and symbolic production that shape individuals’ identity and gives sense to their lives.

December 2016, Oxford University Press, £47.99
Events in London

THE EVENTS and organisations listed below are not necessarily endorsed or supported by The Middle East in London. The accompanying texts and images are based primarily on information provided by the organisers and do not necessarily reflect the views of the compilers or publishers. While every possible effort is made to ascertain the accuracy of these listings, readers are advised to seek confirmation of all events using the contact details provided for each event.

Submitting entries and updates: please send all updates and submissions for entries related to future events via e-mail to mepub@soas.ac.uk

BM – British Museum, Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3DG
SOAS – SOAS, University of London, Thornhaugh Street, Russell Square, London WC1H 0XG
LSE – London School of Economics and Political Science, Houghton Street, London WC2 2AE

DECEMBER EVENTS

Thursday 1 December

4:00 pm | Lawrence and the Arab Revolt: Archaeology of a Desert Insurgency 1916-18 (Lecture) Nick Saunders (University of Bristol). Organised by: Palestine Exploration Fund (PEF) in association with the BM Department of the Middle East and ASTENE. Evans Memorial Lecture. Bristol University’s ‘Great Arab Revolt Project’ investigated the archaeology and anthropology of the Arab Revolt of 1916–1918 in southern Jordan. Saunders reveals the Ottoman army camps, railway ambushes, Rolls-Royce armoured car raiding camps, hilltop forts, machinegun strong-points, and a long-forgotten Royal Flying Corps landing strip that all emerged from the desert. Admission free. Pre-registration required. BP Lecture Theatre, Clore Education Centre, BM. T 020 7323 8181 W www.britishmuseum.org / www.pef.org.uk

7:00 pm | 1967 Bypassing 1948: A Critique of Occupation Studies in Israeli Critical Theory (Lecture) Amal Jamal (Tel Aviv University). Organised by: Centre for Palestine Studies, SOAS. Lecture by Jamal in which he will engage with critical Israeli studies of occupation and argue that deconstructing critical occupation studies reveals an array of assumptions that contradict its immediate intentions. Khalili Lecture Theatre, SOAS. T 020 7898 4330/4490 E vp6@soas.ac.uk W www.soas.ac.uk/lmei-cps/events/

Monday 5 December

5:15 pm | A Puzzle of Resilience: The Islamic Schools of Law between South Asia and the Middle East (Seminar) Simon Wolfgang Fuchs (Gonville and Caius College, University of Cambridge). Organised by: Department of History, SOAS Near and Middle East History Seminar. Convenor: Derek
TUESDAY LECTURE PROGRAMME ON THE CONTEMPORARY MIDDLE EAST SPRING 2017

10 January
Turkey's attempted coup d'état and its aftermath
William Hale (SOAS)

17 January
The Poisoned Well: Empire and Its Legacy in the Middle East
Roger Hardy (formerly BBC World Service)

24 January
The Invention of Palestinian Citizenship, 1918-1947
Lauren Banko (University of Manchester) in conversation with Nelida Fuccaro (SOAS)
Organised jointly with the Centre for Palestine Studies

31 January
Hezbollah: The Political Economy of Lebanon's Party of God
Joseph Daher (Lausanne University, Switzerland)

7 February
Inter-Ethnic Marriages in a Divided Society: Palestinian-Jewish Families in Israel
Maha Karkaby Sabah (Centre for Gender Studies, SOAS)

14 February
Reading Week

21 February
The Palestinian Novel: From 1948 to the Present
Bashir Abu-Manneh (University of Kent)
Organised jointly with the Centre for Palestine Studies

28 February
The Importance of Marmaduke Pickthall
Peter Clark (formerly British Council)

7 March
Prozak Diaries: Psychiatry and Generational Memory in Iran
Orkideh Behrouzan (King's College London)

25 April
Hadhramaut and its Diaspora: Yemeni Politics, Identity and Migration
Organised jointly with the Hadhramaut Research Centre

2 May
‘The Commander', a political biography of Fawzi al-Qawuqji
Laila Parsons, (McGill University)

TUESDAYS 5:45 PM
Wolfson Lecture Theatre, Paul Webley Wing (Senate House), SOAS

The Lectures are free and open to all.

For further information contact:
London Middle East Institute, SOAS University of London, MBI Al Jaber Building, 21 Russell Square, London WC1B 5EA. T: 020 7898 4330 E lmei@soas.ac.uk W: www.soas.ac.uk/lmei/
J Mancini-Lander (SOAS). Admission free. B104, Brunei Gallery, SOAS. E dm40@soas.ac.uk W www.soas.ac.uk/history/events/

6:00 pm | The Chilcot Inquiry: Lessons for Strategy? (Talk) Sir Roderic Lyne (member of the Iraq inquiry committee of 5 Privy counsellors, chaired by Sir John Chilcot) and Bronwen Maddox (Institute for Government). Organised by: Centre for International Studies and Diplomacy, SOAS. Chair: Leslie Vinjamuri (SOAS). Alumni Lecture Theatre, Paul Webley Wing (Senate House), SOAS. E cisd@soas.ac.uk W www.soas.ac.uk/cisd/events/

6:00 pm | "An Even More Unexpected Find" - The Synagogue at Dura-Europos and its Place in Local Society (Lecture) Ted Kaizer (University of Durham). Organised by: Anglo-Israel Archaeological Society (AIAS) and the Institute of Jewish Studies, UCL. Admission free. Harrie Massey Lecture Theatre (E8), 25 Gordon Street, London W1C 0AY. T 020 8349 5754 E sheilarford1@sky.com W http://aias.org.uk/


6:45 pm | Turkey: Internal Turmoil, International Concern (Talk) Aycə Çubukçu (Centre for the Study of Human Rights at LSE). Organised by: Friends of Le Monde Diplomatique. Doors open 6:30pm. Çubukçu gives a talk on the situation in Turkey after the failed military coup in July, and Erdogan’s response in the name of the ’national will’ have increased tensions within the country where a state of emergency has now been declared. Tickets: £3/£2 conc. The Gallery, Alan Baxter & Associates LLP, 70/77 Cowcross Street, Farringdon, London, EC1M 6EL. E enquiries@mondediplofriends.org.uk W www.monediplofriends.org.uk

7:00 pm | Screening: The White Helmets + Discussion (Documentary) Organised by: Frontline Club. Dir Orlando von Einsiedel, 40 mins. More than 50 bombs and mortars a day land on some neighbourhoods in Syria. In a place where public services no longer function unarmed volunteers, known as the White Helmets, risk their lives to help anyone in need – regardless of their religion or politics. Followed by a discussion with director Orlando von Einsiedel, producer Joanna Natasegara and others. Tickets: £10/£8 conc. Frontline Club, 13 Norfolk Place, London W2 1QJ. T 020 7479 8940 E events@frontlineclub.com W www.frontlineclub.com

7:30 pm | Exile Lit Cafe presents "Out of the Ashes" (Poetry Reading) Organised by: Exiled Writers Ink! Monthly Exile Lit Cafe. With poets: Wafaa Abed Al Razzaq, Peter Godismo, Hamdi Khalif, Gregory Spis and David Clark. Open Mic. Tickets: £5/£3 2016 Exiled Writers Ink members and asylum seekers. Betsy Trotwood, 56 Farrington Road, London EC1R 3BL. T 020 8458 1910 E jennifer@exiledwriters.fsnet.co.uk W www.exiledwriters.co.uk

5:45 pm | Iranian Cinema Uncensored: Contemporary Film-Makers Since the Islamic Revolution (Lecture) Shiva Rahbaran. Organised by: London Middle East Institute, SOAS (LMEI) and the Centre for Iranian Studies. Lecture by Shiva Rahbaran on her book Iranian Cinema Uncensored: Contemporary Film-Makers Since the Islamic Revolution (I.B.Tauris, 2016) in which she reveals that the seeds of the New Iranian Cinema were sown long before the revolution, and that Iranian film-makers gave rise to a cinema which became a global phenomenon despite censorship, sanctions and political isolation. Part of the LMEI’s Tuesday Evening Lecture Programme on the Contemporary Middle East. Admission free. Wolfson Lecture Theatre, Paul Webley Wing (Senate House), SOAS. T 020 7898 4330/4490 E vp6@soas.ac.uk W www.soas.ac.uk/lmei/events/

6:00 pm | In Search of the Umma: The Social Imaginary and its Discontents (Lecture) James Piscatori (Australian National University). Organised by: Department of Politics and International Studies, SOAS. SOAS Centenary Lecture. Piscatori examines how Muslims have dealt with the idea of solidarity, even unity, as seemingly

Mnemosyne (video still) by Inas Halabi (2016). Image courtesy of the artist. Pattern Recognition (see Exhibitions p. 37)
The Centre, established in 2010, draws upon the range of academic research and teaching across the disciplines of SOAS, including Languages and Literature, the Study of Religions, History, Economics, Politics, International Relations, Music, Art and Media and Film Studies. It aims to build close relations with likeminded institutions and to showcase and foster the best of contemporary Iranian talent in art and culture.

MA in Iranian Studies

In 2012/13 CIS members successfully launched an interdisciplinary MA in Iranian Studies, the first of its kind, which will be offered again in 2016/17.

Thanks to the generosity of the Fereydoun Djam Charitable Trust, a number of Kamran Djam scholarships are available for BA, MA and MPhil/PhD studies.

For further details, please contact:

Scholarships Officer
E: scholarships@soas.ac.uk
T: +44 (0)20 7074 5091/ 5094
W: www.soas.ac.uk/scholarships

Centre for Iranian Studies
Dr Arshin Adib-Moghaddam (Chair)
E: aa106@soas.ac.uk
T: +44 (0)20 7898 4747
W: www.soas.ac.uk/lmei-cis

MA in Iranian Studies
Dr Nima Mina (Department of the Languages and Culture of the Middle East)
E: nm46@soas.ac.uk
T: +44 (0)20 7898 4315
W: www.soas.ac.uk/nme/programmes/ma-in-iranian-studies

Student Recruitment
T: +44(0)20 7898 4034
E: study@soas.ac.uk
contradictory trends unfolded – as states became entrenched in the Muslim world and as broader networks have emerged. Chair: Salwa Ismail (SOAS). Admission free. Pre-registration required. Brunei Gallery Lecture Theatre, SOAS. E politics-dao@soas.ac.uk / ra47@soas.ac.uk W www.soas.ac.uk/politics/events/

6:00 pm | The MENA Youth Agenda – Transition, Frustration and Aspiration (Lecture) Charis Boutieri and David Know. Organised by: Department of Middle Eastern Studies (DMES), King's College London and the British Council. Admission free. S-2.18 (Lucas Lecture Theatre), Stand Campus, London WC2R 2LS. E mems@kcl.ac.uk W www.kcl.ac.uk/sspp/sga/mems/events/events.aspx

Wednesday 7 December
5:30 pm | From Aliyah to Immigration Country (Lecture) Yoav Peled. Israel. Organised by: Centre for Jewish Studies, SOAS. Admission free. Room B111, Brunei Gallery Lecture Theatre, SOAS. W www.soas.ac.uk/jewishstudies/events/

7:00 pm | In Conversation with Christina Lamb: Nujeen Mustafa’s Journey from War-Torn Syria (Talk) Organised by: Frontline Club. Born with cerebral palsy, sixteen-year-old Nujeen Mustafa fled war-torn Aleppo in 2015, completing a 3,500-mile journey with her sister Nisreen from Syria to Germany all in a wheelchair. Sharing her full story for the first time, she has co-authored a book, *Nujeen*, with the journalist Christina Lamb. With Christina Lamb and Nujeen Mustafa (via Skype). Tickets: £12.50/£10 conc. Frontline Club, 13 Norfolk Place, London W2 1QI. T 020 7479 8940 E events@frontlineclub.com W www.frontlineclub.com

7:00 pm | The Art of Collecting (Lecture) Organised by: Islamic Art Circle. SOAS Centenary Islamic Art Circle Lecture. Lecture by Nasser D Khalili, world-renowned scholar, collector and philanthropist, and leader in the pursuit of peace and inter-faith dialogue. Chair: Scott Redford (SOAS). Followed by a reception. Admission free. Pre-registration required W www.eventbrite.co.uk Brunei Lecture Theatre, SOAS. T 07714087480 E centenary@soas.ac.uk W www.soas.ac.uk/art/islac/

Friday 9 December
6:00 pm | Gender and Generation in the Aftermath of the Uprisings. Political Visions, Desires, Movements in the Middle East and North Africa Today (Two-Day Conference: Friday 9 - Saturday 10 December) Organised by: London Middle East Institute
and the Centre for Gender Studies, SOAS in partnership with the Istituto Affari Internazionali. Sponsored by: Power2Youth. Conference exploring the predicament of young women and men in and from the MENA region in contemporary times. It will bring together scholars and activists with the aim to analyse the visions, desires and projects emerging in the post-uprisings contexts among youth individuals, affective communities, social and political movements and social non-movements. Conveners: Ruba Salih (SOAS), Lynn Welchman (SOAS) and Elena Zambelli (Institute of Development Studies and SOAS). Admission Free. Pre-registration required. Brunei Gallery Lecture Theatre, SOAS. T 020 7898 4330/4490 E vp6@soas.ac.uk W www.soas.ac.uk/lmei/events/

Saturday 10 December

9:00 am | Gender and Generation in the Aftermath of the Uprisings. PoliticalVisions, Desires, Movements in the Middle East and North Africa Today (Two-Day Conference: Friday 9 - Saturday 10 December) See above event listing on Friday 9 December for more information, venue and contact details.

Monday 12 December

5:15 pm | The Obligation to Migrate and the Stimulus to Narrate: Forced Migration from the Caucasus to Ottoman Lands in the Soviet Literary Imagination (Seminar) Rebecca Gould (University of Bristol). Organised by: SOAS Modern Turkish Studies Programme (London Middle East Institute). Sponsored by: Nurol Bank. Admission free. London Middle East Institute, SOAS (LMEI), University of London, MBI Al Jaber Building, 21 Russell Square, London WC1B 5EA. E gd5@soas.ac.uk / gm29@soas.ac.uk W www.soas.ac.uk/lmei/events/

Tuesday 13 December


Wednesday 14 December

6:00 pm | Between Rome and Parthia: Palmyra and Dura-Europos (Lecture) Samuel N.C. Lieu (formerly Macquarie University, Australia). Organised by: Council for British Research in the Levant (CBRL). Lieu examines the two ancient Syrian sites of Palmyra and Dura Europos, both key strategic locations in their day and important centres of ancient trade, with their reach extending to Greece in the West and as far as China in the East. Admission free. Pre-registration recommended. British Academy, 10-11 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1Y 5AH. E assistant@cbrl.org.uk W http://cbrl.org.uk/

Thursday 15 December

6:00 pm | Tel Lachish and Khirbet Arai: Searching for the Early Phases of the Kingdom of Judah (Lecture) Yossi Garfinkel (Hebrew University of Jerusalem). Annual King’s Bible and Archaeology Lecture. Organised by: King’s College London in association with the Palestine Exploration Fund and the Anglo-Israel Archaeological Society. Admission free. Pre-registration required. K2.31 (Nash Lecture Theatre), King’s College London, Strand Campus, Strand, London WC2R 2LS. E joan.taylor@kcl.ac.uk W www.kcl.ac.uk / www.pef.org.uk / http://aias.org.uk/

Friday 16 December

1:15 pm | The Lore of Tripe: Qatari Matryoshka by Hana Al Saadi, painted wood (2016). Reconnecting: Contemporary Art from Qatar (see Exhibitions p. 37)
NEW MA PALESTINE STUDIES

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Dr Adam Hanieh
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JANUARY EVENTS

Tuesday 10 January
5:45 pm | Turkey’s Attempted Coup d’État and its Aftermath (Lecture) William Hale (SOAS). Organised by: London Middle East Institute, SOAS (LMEI). The attempted coup in Turkey of 16-17 July 2016 failed ignominiously, but the aftermath has had some important and worrying implications for the future of Turkish politics. Part of the LMEI’s Tuesday Evening Lecture Programme on the Contemporary Middle East. Admission free. Wolfson Lecture Theatre, Paul Webley Wing (Senate House), SOAS. T 020 7898 4330/4490 E vp6@soas.ac.uk W www.soas.ac.uk/lmei/events/

Friday 13 January
7:00 pm | The Rawza of ‘Ali at Mazar-i-Sharif: Centring a City (Lecture) Robert McChesney (New York University). Part of the Yarshater Lecture Series in Persian Art. Second of four lectures by Robert D. McChesney on Four Central Asian Shrines: Islamic Architecture in Society. See above event listing on Thursday 12 January for more information, venue and contact details.

Monday 16 January
7:00 pm | Tamerlane’s Tomb: Conjuring a Greater Glory (Lecture) Robert McChesney (New York University). Part of the Yarshater Lecture Series in Persian Art. Third of four lectures by Robert D. McChesney on Four Central Asian Shrines: Islamic Architecture in Society. See above event listing on Thursday 12 January for more information, venue and contact details.

Tuesday 17 January
4:30 pm | The Merchant Elite and Parliamentary Politics in Kuwait: The Dynamics of Business Political Participation in a Rentier State (Lecture) Anastasia Nosova (LSE). Organised by: LSE Kuwait Programme. Nosova looks at why some merchant families engage in parliamentary politics, while others do not, and why at times the merchant community allies with the opposition. Chair: COURTNEY FReER (LSE Kuwait Programme). Admission free. Pre-registration required. Room 9.04, 9th floor, Tower 2, Clement’s Inn, LSE. T 020 7955 6639 E i.sinclair@lse.ac.uk W www.lse.ac.uk/middleEastCentre/kuwait/home.aspx

5:45 pm | The Poisoned Well: Empire and Its Legacy in the Middle East (Lecture) Roger Hardy (formerly BBC World Service). Organised by: London Middle East Institute, SOAS (LMEI). Talk by Hardy on his latest book The Poisoned Well: Empire and Its Legacy in the Middle East (Hurst, 2016) in which he unearthed an imperial history stretching from North Africa to southern Arabia that sowed the seeds of future conflict. Part of the LMEI’s Tuesday Evening Lecture Programme on the Contemporary Middle East. Admission free. Wolfson Lecture Theatre, Paul Webley Wing (Senate House), SOAS. T 020 7898 4330/4490 E vp6@soas.ac.uk W www.soas.ac.uk/lmei/events/

Saturday 17 December
11:00 am | Exploring Egyptian Mummies (Digital Workshop) Organised by: BM. Sponsored by: Samsung. Use digital microscopes to explore materials used in embalming, and view the CT scans of Egyptian mummies to make your own museum discovery. Admission free. Great Court, BM. T 020 7323 8181 W www.britishmuseum.org

13:15 pm | Creation Myths of Ancient Egypt (Gallery Talk) George Hart (Independent Speaker). Organised by: BM. Room 4, BM. Admission free. T 020 7323 8181 W www.britishmuseum.org

EVENTS OUTSIDE LONDON

Thursday 8 December
9:00 am | Turkey- Regional & International Implications (Conference) Organised by: European Centre for the Study of Extremism. Topics will include understanding the relationship between the current Syrian refugee crisis and its possible implications on Turkey; Turkey’s evolving system of governance; the relationships between relevant factors and the rise in terrorist activity; the possible continued rise in jihadist insurgents; the policy towards Turkey’s minorities; and the foundations of Turkish-Russian rapprochement. Tickets: Various. University of Cambridge. E eurocse@gmail.com W www.eurocse.org

13:15 pm | Abu Nasr Parsa’s Tomb: Reconfiguring Sacred Legacies (Lecture) Robert D. McChesney (New York University). Organised by: SOAS, University of London and the London Middle East Institute. Sponsored by the Persian Heritage Foundation (New York). Part of the Yarshater Lecture Series in Persian Art. First of four lectures by Robert D. McChesney on Four Central Asian Shrines: Islamic Architecture in Society in which he will examine the architectural development of four major Central Asian shrines found today in Afghanistan and Uzbekistan and relate the development to their social and political contexts. Convened by: Scott Redford, SOAS. Admission free. Khalili Lecture Theatre, SOAS. T 020 7898 4330 E vp6@soas.ac.uk W www.soas.ac.uk/art/islac/

14:00 pm | The Rawza of ‘Ali at Mazar-i-Sharif: Centring a City (Lecture) Robert McChesney (New York University). Part of the Yarshater Lecture Series in Persian Art. Second of four lectures by Robert D. McChesney on Four Central Asian Shrines: Islamic Architecture in Society. See above event listing on Thursday 12 January for more information, venue and contact details.

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5:45 pm | The Poisoned Well: Empire and Its Legacy in the Middle East (Lecture) Roger Hardy (formerly BBC World Service). Organised by: London Middle East Institute, SOAS (LMEI). Talk by Hardy on his latest book The Poisoned Well: Empire and Its Legacy in the Middle East (Hurst, 2016) in which he unearthed an imperial history stretching from North Africa to southern Arabia that sowed the seeds of future conflict. Part of the LMEI’s Tuesday Evening Lecture Programme on the Contemporary Middle East. Admission free. Wolfson Lecture Theatre, Paul Webley Wing (Senate House), SOAS. T 020 7898 4330/4490 E vp6@soas.ac.uk W www.soas.ac.uk/lmei/events/

6:00 pm | The Genealogies of Intervention: Humanitarianism in Nineteenth-Century Lebanon (Lecture) Andrew Arsan (University of Cambridge). Organised by: Council for British Research in the Levant (CBRL). Arsan will seek to trace out a new genealogy for humanitarian intervention by examining the ways in which Britain and France responded to the outbreak of sectarian strife in Ottoman Mount Lebanon in 1860. Admission free. Pre-registration recommended. British Academy, 10-11 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1Y 5AH. E assistant@cbrl.org.uk W http://cbrl.org.uk/

7:00 pm | Kandahar’s Mantle of the Prophet: Sanctifying Fibre (Lecture) Robert McChesney (New York University). Part of the Yarshater Lecture Series in Persian Art. Last of four lectures by Robert D. McChesney on Four Central Asian Shrines: Islamic Architecture in Society. See above event listing on Thursday 12 January for more information, venue and contact details.

Wednesday 18 January
7:00 pm | Gillian Vogelsang-Eastwood on the Work and Collections of the Dutch Textile Research Centre in Leiden

Friday 20 January
5:30 pm | Sirkis/Bialas International Quartet (Performance) Collaboration between Israeli UK-resident and drummer/composer Asaf Sirkis and Polish vocalist/composer Sylwia Bialas, with London-based, Scottish bassist Kevin Glasgow, and Frank Harrison on piano and keyboards. Performance by the quartet that draws on influences including contemporary classical, Polish folk and Middle Eastern music. Admission free. Foyer Spaces, Southbank Centre, Belvedere Road, London SE1 8XX. T 020 7960 4200 W www.southbankcentre.co.uk

Monday 23 January
Time TBC | Tribal Landscapes in Palestinian, Jordanian & Syrian Women’s Embroidered Garments (Talk) HRH Princess Wijdan Al Hashemi. Part of Embroidered Tales and Woven Dreams (see Exhibitions p. 37). Admission free. Venue TBC. T 020 7898 4023/4026 E gallery@soas.ac.uk W www.soas.ac.uk/gallery/

Tuesday 24 January
5:45 pm | The Invention of Palestinian Citizenship, 1918-1947 (Lecture). Lauren Banko (University of Manchester) and Nelida Fuccaro (SOAS). Organised by: London Middle East Institute, SOAS (LMEI). Banko in conversation with Fuccaro on her book The Invention of Palestinian Citizenship, 1918-1947 (Banko, L. Edinburgh University Press, 2016) in which she situates the evolution of citizenship at the centre of state formation under the quasi-colonial mandate administration in Palestine. Chair: Dina Matar (SOAS). Part of the LMEI’s Tuesday Evening Lecture Programme on the Contemporary Middle East. Admission free. Wolfson Lecture Theatre, Paul Webley Wing (Senate House), SOAS. T 020 7898 4330/4490 E vp6@soas.ac.uk W www.soas.ac.uk/lmei/events/


Wednesday 25 January
6.30 pm | Building a Dam, Fixing a Nation: An Infrastructural Ethnography of Turkey (Lecture) Laurent Dissard (Institute of Advanced Studies, UCL). Organised by: LSE Chair for Contemporary Turkish Studies. Dissard examines how Turkey’s efforts to ‘modernise’ through infrastructural development have simultaneously redefined the future and the past of the nation. Part of the Anthropology of Turkey and Beyond lecture series. Chair: Esra Özyürek (LSE Chair for Contemporary Turkish Studies). Admission free. COW 1.11, LSE. T 020 7955 6067 E euroinst.Turkish.Studies@lse.ac.uk W www.lse.ac.uk/europeanInstitute/research/ContemporaryTurkishStudies/Home.aspx

Tuesday 31 January
5:45 pm | Hezbollah: The Political Economy of Lebanon’s Party of God (Lecture) Joseph Daher (Lausanne University, Switzerland). Organised by: London Middle East Institute, SOAS (LMEI). Talk by Daher to mark the publication of his book Hezbollah: The Political Economy of Lebanon’s Party of God (Pluto Press, 2016). Where previous books have focused on aspects of the party’s identity, the military question or its religious discourse, Daher presents an alternative perspective, built upon political economy. Part of the LMEI’s Tuesday Evening Lecture Programme on the Contemporary Middle East. Admission free. Wolfson Lecture Theatre, Paul Webley Wing (Senate House), SOAS. T 020 7898 4330/4490 E vp6@soas.ac.uk W www.soas.ac.uk/lmei/events/

EXHIBITIONS

Until 3 December | What Language Do You Speak

Crossing the Empty Quarter (see December Events, 7.00pm, Thursday 1 December, p. 28 and Exhibitions p. 37)
Stranger? First UK solo exhibition of French-Algerian artist Katia Kamel, featuring films and an installation, presents some of the artist’s central concerns with issues of dual identities, multiplicity, and the potential for residing in this ‘in-between’ space. Admission free. The Mosaic Rooms, A.M. Qattan Foundation, Tower House, 226 Cromwell Road, London SW5 0SW. T 020 7370 9990 E info@mosaicrooms.org W http://mosaicrooms.org/

Until Thursday 15 December | Crossing the Empty Quarter - Mark Evans Photographs, film, maps and memorabilia from the first expedition across the Rub al Khali by Bertram Thomas in 1930 and the second by Mark Evans in 2015 (see December Events, 7:00pm, Thursday 1 December, p. 28 for details of a lecture by Evans). Admission free. Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers), 1 Kensington Gore, London SW7 2AR. T 020 7591 3000 W www.rgs.org / www.crossingtheemptyquarter.com

Until 16 December | The Hidden Face of Iran An exhibition of images by French photographer, Bernard Russo, which capture the everyday life of ordinary people in Iran, images rarely seen in the West where Iran is typically presented as a land of culture, religion, and the centre of Sharia law. The Street Gallery, Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies, Stocker Road, University of Exeter, Exeter EX4 4ND. T 01392 72 4040 E jane.clark@exeter.ac.uk W http://socialsciences.exeter.ac.uk/iais/events/exhibitions/

Until 24th December | Reconnecting: Contemporary Art from Qatar Showcase of eighteen established and emerging Qatari artists and six filmmakers reflecting on the ways they connect with their identity, culture and surroundings in an era in which their country is constantly shifting. Taking its name from Sheikha Al Mayassa’s Ted Talk in 2012, the exhibition discusses the idea of Globalising the Local and Localising the Global. Admission free. P21 Gallery, 21 Chalton Street, London, NW1 1JD. T 020 7121 6190 E info@p21.org.uk W www.p21.gallery

Until 8 January | Barjeel Art Foundation: Mapping the Contemporary II The last in a series of four chronological displays highlighting works from the Barjeel Art Foundation’s collection. Artists from Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine and elsewhere in the region tell the story of Arab art from the modern to the contemporary period. Mapping the Contemporary II explores how a generation of multi-media artists has artistically engaged with the cities where they either live or work. Admission free. Gallery 7, Whitechapel Gallery, 77-82 Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX. T 020 7522 7888 E info@whitechapelgallery.org W www.whitechapelgallery.org

Until 25 January | Zarah Hussain: Numina Hussain’s sculptural installation takes the artform of Islamic geometry and adds a whole new dimension to it, Numina combines designs found in the art and architecture of the Islamic world with contemporary digital arts, bringing to life a usually static artform by mapping animated geometric patterns onto a sculpture composed of tessellating pyramids arranged on a hexagonal grid. Admission free. Foyers, Barbican Centre, Silk Street, London EC2Y 8DS. Admission free. T 020 7638 8891 W www.barbican.org.uk

Until 25 March | Pattern Recognition Young Artist of the Year Award 2016 (YAYA16). Newly commissioned work from the nine artists who are shortlisted for the 2016 edition of the Young Artist of the Year Award (YAYA 2016), open to Palestinian artists up to the age of 30, organised every two years by the A.M Qattan Foundation. Straddling the grey zones between fact and fiction, original and copy, ruin and repair, the works re-imagine the mechanics of representation in the context of Palestine. Admission free. The Mosaic Rooms, A.M. Qattan Foundation, Tower House, 226 Cromwell Road, London SW5 0SW. T 020 7370 9990 E info@mosaicrooms.org W http://mosaicrooms.org/

Thursday 19 January

Until 25 March | Embroidered Tales and Woven Dreams A colour-coded social history of the vast and geographically varied landscape, known as the ‘the Silk Road’, the exhibition examines the identity of the Central Asian, Middle Eastern and South Asian landscapes, through the heritage of their Embroidered Textiles and Costumes (see January Events on Monday 23 January, p. 36 for details of a talk on Tribal Landscapes in Palestinian, Jordanian & Syrian Women’s Embroidered Garments). Admission free. Brunei Gallery, SOAS. T 020 7898 4023/4026 E gallery@soas.ac.uk W www.soas.ac.uk/gallery/
An intensive five-week programme which includes a choice of two courses: a language one (Persian or Arabic, the latter at two levels) and another on the 'Government and Politics of the Middle East' or 'Culture and Society in the Middle East'.

Beginners Persian (Level 1)

This is an introductory course which aims to give the students a reasonable grounding in the basics of Persian grammar and syntax as well as to enable them to understand simple and frequently used expressions related to basic language use. They will be able to hold uncomplicated conversations on topics such as personal and family information, shopping, hobbies, employment as well as simple and direct exchanges of information related to familiar topics. By the end of the course they will also progress to read simple short texts.

Beginners Arabic (Level 1)

This is an introductory course in Modern Standard Arabic. It teaches students the Arabic script and provides basic grounding in Arabic grammar and syntax. On completing the course, students should be able to read, write, listen to and understand simple Arabic sentences and passages. This course is for complete beginners and does not require any prior knowledge or study of Arabic.

Beginners Arabic (Level 2)

This course is a continuation of Beginners Arabic Level 1. It completes the coverage of the grammar and syntax of Modern Standard Arabic and trains students in reading, comprehending and writing with the help of a dictionary more complex Arabic sentences and passages. This course is for complete beginners and does not require any prior knowledge or study of Arabic.

Government and Politics of the Middle East

This course provides an introduction to the politics of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. It gives on a country by country basis, an overview of the major political issues and developments in the region since the end of the First World War and addresses key themes in the study of contemporary Middle East politics, including: the role of the military, social and economic development, political Islam, and the recent uprisings (the ‘Arab Spring’).

Culture and Society in the Middle East

This course examines the major cultural patterns and institutions of the MENA region. It is taught through a study of some lively topics such as religious and ethnic diversity, impact of the West, stereotyping, the role of tradition, education (traditional and modern), family structure and value, gender politics, media, life in city, town and village, labour and labour migration, the Palestinian refugee problem and Arab exile communities, culinary cultures, music and media, etc.

Timetable

Courses are taught Mon-Thu each week. Language courses are taught in the morning (10am-1pm) and the Politics and Culture Courses are taught in two slots in the afternoon (2:00-3:20 and 3:40-5:00pm).

FEES

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Session (5 weeks)</th>
<th>Programme fee*</th>
<th>Accommodation fee**</th>
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<tr>
<td>19 June-20 July 2017 (two courses) (one course)</td>
<td>£2,700</td>
<td>from £300/week</td>
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<tr>
<td>19 June-20 July 2017</td>
<td>£1,400</td>
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* An early bird discount of 10% applies to course fees before 30 April 2017. A discount of 15% applies to SOAS alumni and 20% to SOAS students.

** Rooms can be booked at the Intercollegiate Halls which are located in the heart of Bloomsbury: www.halls.london.ac.uk.

For more information, please contact Louise Hosking on LH2@soas.ac.uk. Or check our website www.soas.ac.uk/lmei
Gender and Generation in the Aftermath of the Uprisings

Political Visions, Desires, Movements in the Middle East and North Africa Today

Friday 9 and Saturday 10 December 2016
Brunei Gallery Lecture Theatre, SOAS University of London
Admission Free - Pre-registration Required
T: 020 7898 4330 E lmei@soas.ac.uk W: www.soas.ac.uk/lmei/

Photos courtesy FRAME, top and bottom (Cairo) by Ibrahim Ezzat Hendy, middle (Beirut) by Zeinab Chour
The Yarshater Lectures in Persian Art

Four Central Asian Shrines: Islamic Architecture in Society

Four lectures by Robert D. McChesney, Emeritus Professor, Department of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies at New York University

7.00pm, Thursday 12th, Friday 13th, Monday 16th and Tuesday 17th January 2017

Khalili Lecture Theatre, SOAS University of London

Admission Free - All Welcome
T: 020 7898 4330 E lmei@soas.ac.uk W: www.soas.ac.uk/lmei/

Images: Sepia foundation, R. Frye, R. Schinasi, S. Mahendrarajah