Greetings from the Director

After teaching spring semester as a guest professor at the Free University in Berlin (see story p. 4), I returned to UCSB in September. I am happy to report that everything here at CMES continues to go well despite the weak economy and budget cuts of a more or less drastic nature to a number of the main institutions that help support Middle East Studies in the United States.

The bad news is that the various American research centers in the Middle East, including AIMS, ARCE, ARIT and others, lost all of their federal funding, which is dealing a very harsh blow to these institutions that were already operating on minimal budgets. It is unclear if this loss of federal monies will be temporary or become permanent, and everything, of course, remains in doubt at this point as we approach the so-called “fiscal cliff.”

The good news at the federal level is that the Fulbright-Hays international dissertation research grants have been reinstated and, here in California, Proposition 30 (which raised taxes specifically to support public schools and universities) passed with a comfortable margin. Without that infusion of support, UC tuition was set to rise many thousands of dollars at a single bound.

As you will see in this latest issue of our E-newsletter, MES alumni and faculty members are off doing wonderful things – including producing books and babies! Meryle Gaston (ME Bibliographer) has just returned from a trip to the Kurdish region of northern Iraq, Eric Massie is studying in Doha on a Qatar Fellowship, and there are also updates from Nancy Gallagher (EAP director for Cairo, Jerusalem, Ankara, and Istanbul) and Marguerite Bouraad-Nash, along with a few notes about my own experiences in Berlin. Allegra O’Donoghue has returned from over a year in Egypt and gives a first-hand report on both the revolution in Egypt and her year on the CASA program.

Best wishes to all in the coming new year,

Dwight Reynolds, Director
Center for Middle East Studies
Mar- guerite Bouraad Nash, Vice Chair and Student advisor of the Global Peace and Security Program, served during 2012 as an expert witness in four Immigration and Naturalization Service Cases involving asylum and deportation proceedings before the United States Department of Justice Executive Office for Immigration Review Court. The cases were filed in Immigration Courts in Cleveland, Ohio, Los Angeles, California, and St. Louis, Missouri. All four cases involved individuals who feared torture and death if they were deported to their country of origin. They sought asylum under the United Nations “Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.” (The United States signed and ratified the Convention in 1988 and 1994 respectively.)

One case involved a young Turkish woman who converted to Christianity. She feared becoming a victim of “honor killing” carried out by a member of her own family. The other three cases involved an Egyptian Coptic family, a Lebanese Christian Maronite businessman, and a Syrian Armenian Christian mother and her two young children. The Turkish case reached a successful conclusion. The rest are still pending court hearings.

-Dr. Marguerite Bouraad Nash, Sr. Lecturer, Global and International Studies and Political Science Departments

“I am not sure how interesting my life is post-retirement. I will say that I feel as busy and calendar-bound as I ever did. I am not correcting mid-term exams, attending meetings, or responding to busy-work demands from the administration, but all that does not open up as much time as I had hoped.

I am still working with a cluster of able graduate students, still trying to clean up a bunch of long-standing publishing obligations (slow, slow, slow!), still writing letters, trying to be sure that everything is in good order when Prof. Sabra joins us next year. Nor have important family matters gone away. Life, in short, is normal.

I did attend a very interesting conference in Ottawa this past October on the eastern and southern frontier peoples of the late Roman Empire, but that issued yet another publishing commitment.

At my wife Gail’s instigation, we went to Washington DC for two weeks at the beginning of November. She worked on the Obama campaign in Virginia, I found refuge at Dumbarton Oaks, and together we saw a lot of friends and tore through a mess of plays and concerts in the evenings. Altogether a lovely time. So that at least felt like retirement.

I continue to work on my long-term project, the adaptation of Christian communities in Syria and the Jazira to Muslim rule during the first three (or maybe four) Islamic centuries. Beyond the fact that “they” are writing faster than I can possibly read, my research is moving ahead productively. It is very nice to know that no academic personnel committee needs to see a manuscript by next April. The book will be done when it is done.

That too is retirement.

-Research Professor Stephen Humphreys, Islamic and Middle Eastern History
Meryle Gaston, Middle Eastern Studies Librarian, Reporting from Iraq

In November, I made a 12-day trip to Northern Iraq (Kurdistan Autonomous Region) for a study tour and a conference. The tour and conference afforded me many opportunities to explore my personal interests within the field of Middle East Studies, the indigenous Christian communities. I was travelling with a group of seven other people. Our time was divided between the cities of Dohuk (just south of the Turkish border) and Erbil (the capital of the KRG). Excursions included a visit to Amadiyah where, while visiting an historic tomb complex, we met the librarian of the Amadiyah Municipal Library; she invited us in for a tour of her well-organized and well-stocked library. I was very impressed. In Kirkuk we met with Chaldean Archbishop Louis Sako. We visited the main pilgrimage site of the Yezidis at Lalish al-Qosh, which overlooks the plains of Ninevah, is home to the Monastery of Rabban Hormizd established in 637, as well as the synagogue and tomb of the prophet Nahum (one of three sites claiming to be his resting place).

A significant amount of time was spent visiting schools, which ranged from “kindergartens” and elementary and high schools (including the impressive Dohuk International School which was featured in a recent documentary on Iraqi Christians by the German ARD television network) to the University of Dohuk (founded in 1992) with its state-of-the art conference center/auditorium and Dohuk’s newly relocated Institute of Art which is sort of a “high school for the arts,” but culminating in something like an A.A. Of special interest to me were meetings with leaders of the Iraqi Protestant Church and the Chaldean Catholic Church (two bishops and an archbishop). While this was not a buying trip, I am always on a busman’s holiday. Consequently, I was constantly on the lookout for any publications from NGOs and educational and religious institutions. These kinds of publications are often hard to get as they almost never appear on the regular distribution market and are therefore missed by our vendors in the region. I was able to pick up publications from the Chaldean Cultural Center at al-Qosh, Chaldean Archbishop (of Kirkuk & Sulaimaniyah) Louis Sako, the University of Dohuk, the Kurdistan Reconstruction Organization, and the Yezidi Cultural Center in Dohuk. A few free hours in Erbil afforded me the opportunity to also purchase some books in Arabic and Kurdish on the city of Erbil and its “world heritage site” citadel.

-Meryle Gaston, Middle East Studies Librarian

Reporting from Doha: Massie in the Metropolis

Living in Doha these past three months has often felt like living in a cosmopolitan and prosperous city-state, which is of course not far off the mark. Nearly two-thirds of Qatar’s approximately 1.6 million people live within the city limits of Doha and most Qataris have little reason to leave the city except to go off-roading in the sand dunes.

For the aspiring Arabic-language student, this situation presents both benefits and challenges. On the one hand, it is possible to enjoy the cultural diversity of the wider Indian Ocean and Persian/Arabian-Gulf regions without ever leaving the city, but with a migrant-to-citizen ratio that is among the highest in the world, it is also more difficult to carry a conversation in Arabic on the street. One is just as likely to hear English, Hindi, Persian, or Filipino in response to a greeting as Arabic. For these reasons, Doha is unlike any other city in the Arab world and my time here has been undoubtedly rewarding. While I have a long ways to go, Arabic is no longer the grammatical Rubik’s Cube I had imagined it to be only a few short months ago, and I have made friends from all over the world. I am so grateful for the opportunity to study Arabic in such an important part of the world, and I’m looking forward to my next six months here.

-Eric Massie, PhD Student, Modern Middle Eastern History
AP students from 5 UC campuses enjoyed breakfast at the Cairo apartment of UCSB professor and Study Center Director Nancy Gallagher. The students were able to meet and chat with Khaled Fahmy, chair of the History Department at AUC and one of Egypt’s leading public intellectuals.

Fahmy, who participated in the events of the Egyptian Revolution, had just participated in a major event, “The New Arab Debate,” in which he spoke against the motion, “This house believes that democracy has had a disappointing start in Egypt.” The motion carried, but he managed to persuade a very substantial number in the audience to vote against it. In response to a question by Kenny Dotta, Fahmy explained his main arguments. In just 20 months, Egyptians managed to get rid of a long entrenched dictator who had been planning to transfer power to his son. Now, the dictator, both his sons, and his hated minister of the Interior were in prison. The military, long dominant in all walks of life, had retreated to the sidelines. Egyptians were far freer to express themselves and were collectively taking the opportunity to discuss politics and to generally take charge of their lives. About a thousand people were lamentably killed in the revolution, but compared to other revolutions, there was no bloodbath.

Fahmy concluded that the revolution began a process toward greater democracy. We may not see the end of it in our lifetimes, but its importance, in a large and complicated country like Egypt, should not be underestimated.

Back from Berlin: Professor Reynolds at Free University

I spent spring semester 2012 in Berlin teaching as a visiting professor in the Department of Semitic and Arabic Studies of the Free University on a DAAD (the German equivalent of Fulbright) fellowship. This particular fellowship promotes “the internationalization of the German higher education system” and allows German university departments to host professors from abroad who are expected to give students in Germany a taste of different teaching methods as well as new approaches to their topics. The DAAD, however, has many other categories of fellowship, most of which are for students.

This was very much a full-time position: during my stay I taught three courses, supervised a series of guest speakers, and organized a small conference on “Arabic Autobiography: Past and Present.” In my undergraduate “Arab Folklore” class, not only was the class conducted entirely in English, but the students wrote two research papers and took their final exams in English, as well. The students were mostly German, but there were also a number of Muslim students from Kosovo, and Bosnia/Herzegovina, which made for an interesting mix. My two other courses, “History of Arabic Literature” and “Medieval...
For a second, one January morning, sitting on the balcony of my houseboat, Cairo was elusively calm and sunny, and I experienced a fleeting sense of belonging. I was a part of the organism, one little cell bobbing up and down on the clogged artery that is the Nile, where the blood of Egypt struggles through the pollution of neglect and the dams of failed economic policies to reach its outermost extremities. I quickly realized that oneness only lasts as long as I’m alone. If I were invisible, I could really belong here.

I studied abroad in Egypt in 2006-2007 and returned for many memorable visits, before sitting on that houseboat in early January 2012, nearly a year since I had arrived in Cairo for what I thought was a vacation. I had just been hired to my first full-time job as a translator in Washington DC, and had snuck out to Egypt for one last little trip. Three days after arriving, however, I received word that my new employer had lost its contract, and I was jobless. I quickly found work in Cairo, and decided to stay for an indefinite amount of time, so I called my mother to tell her of my decision, and then she didn’t hear from me for days... because Mubarak had turned off the internet. I was glued to the T.V., flanked by my Egyptian friends, comparing media coverage, blogging, and cooking compulsively for lack of a better activity, as the neighborhood watch committees organized in the streets below, using the edan speaker system to make safety announcements. Mubarak fell, but SCAF held on, tightly.

Spring came, and CASA came through, despite doubts because of State Department travel restrictions. Then the challenge became two-fold. I spent many months struggling to find the balance of dedicating myself to my coursework, which seemed petty while fighting raged on Mohamed Mahmoud St., applying my language skills outside of the classroom, (not as easy task in a country that receives millions of English-speaking tourists every year), and satisfying my desire to participate in the revolution somehow, while xenophobia was on the rise.

It has never been more clear to me how intentionally states use xenophobia to divide people and retain their positions of power. Meanwhile the mega-multinationals have risen up above the states. As another CASA fellow put it, “Would you rather own Microsoft or be the president of Lebanon?” It’s amazing how we allow these gargantuan, frighteningly powerful entities to dance along borders of jurisdiction and wiggle under the limbo stick of liability. And yet, immigrants seeking honest work and a better life present a threat to the economy, and students and journalists, a threat to national security.

A few weeks after my musings on the balcony, I had a rare and pleasant exchange with a cab driver, who offered me no falsely enthusiastic, “Welcome to Egypt (as long as I can rip you off).” Nor did he marvel at my ‘fluency’ after hearing me utter two words of Arabic. He didn’t try to show off his language skills either, or ask me why I was here, if I was married, or why in the world I would study Arabic. He simply asked me if I was happy there, and wondered out loud, “You speak Arabic, like we do, and you’re here, you must love Egypt too...” Yes. He was one of the only Egyptians I met in passing who quickly made the connection.

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Lisa Hajjar, Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of California, Santa Barbara has published a new book entitled *Torture: A Sociology of Violence and Human Rights* (Routledge 2012). Lisa is currently a visiting professor at the Center for American Studies at the American University of Beirut for the academic year 2012-13.

Kevin Anderson, Professor of Sociology at the University of California, Santa Barbara, has recently published an article entitled “Year Two of the Arab Revolutions” in *Logos: A Journal of Modern Society and Culture.*

Dave Crawford, Professor and Chair of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Fairfield University, has published a new book (with co-editor Rachel Newcomb) entitled *Encountering Morocco: Fieldwork and Cultural Understanding* (Indiana University Press 2013).

Jacob Berman, Associate Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Louisiana State University, has published a new book entitled *American Arabesque: Arabs and Islam in the Nineteenth Century Imaginary* (New York University Press 2012).

Sophia Pandya, Associate Professor of Religious Studies at California State University, Long Beach, has published a new book entitled *Muslim Women and Islamic Resurgence: Religion, Education, and Identity Politics in Bahrain* (I.B. Tauris 2012). Dr. Pandya travelled to Ethiopia three times in 2011-12, as a fellow of the American Institute for Yemeni Studies, to carry out research on the Yemenis living in diaspora in Ethiopia. One forthcoming article she wrote on this topic focuses on hybridity and the muwallad community (those of both Yemeni and Ethiopian descent), and she is now working on a book on Sufis and Salafis in Ethiopia. Dr. Pandya received tenure and promotion to associate professor in Spring 2012 and has given talks on her research in a variety of domestic and international venues.

Heidi Morrison, Assistant Professor of History at the University of Wisconsin, La Crosse, recently lead a group of 10 undergraduate students on a 3-week, faculty-led tour of Egypt. Students conducted oral history research projects on the Egyptian Revolution.

Adam Morrison, graduate student at the University of California, Santa Barbara, and his wife Kate had a baby this summer. Waylon Foster Morrison was born on July 5, 2012 at 7:34pm.
Literary Readings,” were taught in a mixture of Arabic and English and attracted primarily graduate students. It is more common there than here for students to simply attend courses for their own benefit, and so the number of students continued to increase over the semester; it was a bit of surprise, therefore, to discover at the end of the term that only a small handful were actually enrolled for credit. The atmosphere in both classes was very good and (in good German tradition) each course ended with a celebratory final session in local beer garden.

The most impressive thing about being in Berlin was the sheer amount of Middle Eastern-related events taking place due to the many different institutes and departments that deal with the region. There is the Department of Semitic and Arabic Studies, the Department of Islamic Studies, the Graduate School of Muslim Cultures & Societies (an international graduate degree program taught in English that attracts students from around the world), the Center for the Modern Middle East (ZMO), the “Zukunftphilologie” (Future-philology) research group that brings together textual scholars of the Middle East and South Asia, the EUME (“Europe in the Middle East, the Middle East in Europe”) program that gives out some 10 graduate fellowships a year, the Wissenschaftkolleg, the German equivalent of an Institute for Advanced Study, that has a strong Middle Eastern presence, and of course a variety of other departments, such as Anthropology and Political Science, that also host occasional speakers on the M.E. The result is a truly dizzying array of lectures, workshops, and conferences.

Another remarkable thing about Berlin, at least this past year, was the number of UCSB professors who were there for long or short visits, eleven in all, including MES faculty members Paul Amar (Global Studies), who was there on a three-month fellowship, and Adrienne Edgar (History), who is a former Humboldt Fellow.

For me, personally, it was very rewarding to meet the young German scholars in the field, and equally to make personal contact with more senior German scholars, whose names I had known for years but had never met in person, such as Angelika Neuwirth, Renate Jacobi, Thomas Bauer, Sebastian Günther, Ulrich Marzolph, Verena Klemm, Susanne Enderwitz and others. Despite an absolutely wonderful five months in Berlin, however, I am happy to be wintering here in Santa Barbara!

-Professor Dwight Reynolds, Religious Studies

I can never become Egyptian, but I’d like to believe that there is a bigger ‘us’ that we’re all apart of. He asked me what I thought of what was happening in Egypt those days. I told him that it pained me to see the powers that be exploit the people, that it angered me that my natural inclination to stand with my compatriots of planet earth was delegitimized by those who thrive on division, and that I was accused of being a ‘sneaky foreign hand’ with an agenda. Or something to that effect.

“La, ba’ayty minnena!” No, you’re one of us now,” he insisted. “Not everyone thinks that way.”

“God keep you and the people who think like you,” I said as he tried to refuse my fare.

-Allegra O’Donoghue, UCSB Graduate & CASA Fellow

The students enjoyed pancakes and maple syrup, fruit salad, omelette, ful (beans), taamiyya (felafel), tomatoes, cucumbers, and white cheese, karkade (hibiscus) juice, tea, and coffee.

between the amount of exposure and effort it takes to learn Arabic and the consequent bond with, and understanding of, the place and its people.

“Khalas, ba’ayty minnena,” you’re one of us now.

-O’Donoghue

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