Message from the Chair

With this issue of the NMC Newsletter, I am pleased to announce the creation of the Turkish Canadian Community Scholarship (see announcement below), thanks to the generosity of the Turkish Canadian community, which has established an endowment to provide scholarship support for students in NMC’s Turkish Studies program. This issue of the newsletter also highlights the remarkable interdisciplinary diversity of the activities and research our faculty and students are engaged in, literally from A to Z, ranging from Archaeology and Coptic studies, to Egyptology, Ottoman History, and Zoroastrian studies. I wish to draw special attention to the NMCGSA Symposium, organized by our graduate students, and encourage all to attend. We wish to celebrate the activities, events and intellectual life of the NMC community, so please be sure to send us any news items, announcements, or the results of your research that we can share with everyone. We also invite your feedback and suggestions for ways that we might improve the newsletter. In the meantime, we hope you enjoy this issue.

18th Annual Graduate Student Symposium
... continued on Page 4

Turkish Canadian Community Scholarship

NMC is very pleased to announce the creation of the Turkish Canadian Community Scholarship, a new graduate student scholarship for students in the Turkish Studies program. The scholarship has been established thanks to the generosity of the Turkish Canadian community, which raised the funds as part of the Turkish Studies Initiative, launched at a gala reception in the fall. NMC has identified a set of interrelated priorities aimed at further strengthening and transforming our Turkish Studies program, including the creation of a Professorship in Turkish Civilization, a Lectureship in Turkish Language, and graduate student scholarships, which the University has incorporated as part of its Boundless Campaign. As the only program in Canada, and one of only a few in all of North America, NMC has the potential to become a major centre for the study of the culture and history of Turkey. Moreover, as home to a vibrant Turkish community, Toronto is ideally positioned to raise the profile of Turkish culture within Canadian society at large. We are thus thrilled that the Turkish Canadian community has embraced this initiative, and has now endowed this scholarship. The scholarship will be awarded annually on the basis of academic merit to an incoming graduate student who enrolls in a field of Turkish Studies.
New Faculty - Dr. Milena Methodieva

**Dr. Methodieva** is an assistant professor of Balkan and Ottoman History in the History Department at the UofT, with a cross-appointment in NMC. She received her PhD from the Near Eastern Studies Department at Princeton University in 2010. Dr. Methodieva has a background in Ottoman, Balkan, and modern Middle Eastern history, and the respective language skills. Her current research focuses on 19th-20th century Ottoman and Balkan history. She is particularly interested in late Ottoman politics and society, the transition from empires to nation-states in the Balkans and the Middle East, population movements, dissemination of ideas, and relations between minorities and majorities. Dr. Methodieva is currently working on a book exploring the transition from Ottoman imperial to national rule in Bulgaria, and the political mobilization and cultural reform movement among the local Muslim community in the period 1878-1908.

In the fall, Dr. Methodieva taught an undergraduate/graduate seminar on the Modern History of Turkey for NMC. Currently, she is teaching two courses on Late Ottoman History, Islam and Muslims in the Balkans for the History Department.

In addition to her research and teaching activities, Dr. Methodieva is co-organizing the Seminar in Ottoman and Turkish Studies together with Professor Victor Ostapchuk. The seminar is sponsored by the History and NMC departments. Its monthly meetings bring together scholars specializing in Ottoman and Turkish studies, as well as other scholars working in related fields.

**Spotlight on Postdoctoral Research**

**Dr. Geisen** joined NMC’s research and teaching community in 2005 as a PhD student in Egyptology. From 2008 to 2012 she was a research assistant for the “Divine Light in Egypt and Mesopotamia” project, directed by Prof. Katja Goebes. In the summer of 2011, Dr. Geisen also worked as an epigrapher for the University of Toronto Abydos Votive Zone Project, headed by Prof. Mary-Ann Pouls-Wegner. In January 2012 she completed her PhD with a dissertation on “The Ramesseum Dramatic Papyrus – a New Edition, Translation and Interpretation”. Since July 2012, Dr. Geisen has held a SSHRC Postdoctoral Fellowship in NMC. Dr. Geisen has also been teaching the full year course “Introductory Middle Egyptian” for the department since 2008.

Dr. Geisen’s postdoctoral research deals with an analysis of ancient Egyptian basiliophoric names, specifically their religious, ethical, social, and political meaning during the time span from 3000 – 1070 BCE. The aim of the project is to explore why the name of a ruling or deceased king was included in personal names. Was it a sign of self-presentation, was the choice based on important political or social achievements during the
Recent Events

The 39th Annual SSEA Scholar’s Colloquium and Symposium

The Annual SSEA (Society for the Study of Egyptian Antiquities) Scholar’s Colloquium and Symposium was held from January 10 to 12. Accepted speakers from Canada, the United States, Egypt, Great Britain, Russia, Italy, Mexico, and Uruguay, presenting their latest research in the field of Egyptology, are evidence for the international scale of the Colloquium. NMC was represented by Christina Geisen, who spoke on her post-doctoral project “Basilophoric personal names in ancient Egypt – a socio-cultural analysis”. The Colloquium also included a Poster Session with presentations on a wide variety of topics, such as “Animal Remains from the Mastaba Area and Kom el-Adhem at ancient Mendes” (Prof. Nancy C. Lovell, Department of Anthropology, University of Alberta), the “Digital Library of Inscriptions and Calligraphies” (Ahmed Mansour, Calligraphy Center – Bibliotheca Alexandrina), or “An Online Scholarly Database for Astronomical Artefacts from Ancient Egypt (Dr. Sarah Symons, Robert Cockcroft, and Jesse Bettencourt, McMaster University). NMC PhD students Amber Hutchinson and Meredith Brand introduced the Calverley Artefact Project, and Stanley Klassen, Darren Joblonkay, and Steven Edwards represented the CRANE project.

The theme of the Saturday Symposium was “Pyramids: The Mountains of Pharaoh”. Speakers presented on their research: Mark Lehner (Ancient Egypt Research Associates) illustrated his recent work at Giza and Stephen Harvey (Stoneybrook University) spoke on “Egypt’s Last Royal Pyramids: The Monuments of King Ahmose at Abydos”. Krzysztof Grzymski of the Royal Ontario Museum introduced the “Pyramids of Meroe”, and Sarah Symons (McMaster University) spoke on “Stars and Pyramids: The Imperishable Stars of the Northern Sky”. Vincent Tobin (Emeritus St. Mary’s University) illustrated the “Revolutionary Theology of the Pyramid Texts” and Christina Geisen read Gregory Marouard’s (Tell Edfu Project/Oriental Institute) paper on “A Provincial Pyramid: Recent investigations at the small Step Pyramid at El-Ghonemiya-Edfu”.

The very successful performance of the conference would not have been possible without the help of the following NMC undergraduate and graduate students: Irene Chirmanova, Aliza Fatima, Meira Gold, Amber Hutchinson, Janet Khuu, Aleksandra Ksiezak, Hanna Kurnitzki-West, and Tristan Samuels.

Photo: The SSEA trustees and symposium speakers:
Back row, left to right: Ihab Khalil, Dr. Krzysztof Grzymski, Rexine Hummel, Paul English, Dr. Christina Geisen, Arlette Londes, Dr. Brigitte Ouellet, Dr. Peter Sheldrick, Dr. Richard W. Redding, Mark Trumpour, Dr. Stephen Harvey; Front row, left to right: Prof. Sally Katary, Dr. Sarah Symons, Dr. Mark Lehner.
Upcoming Events

18th Annual Graduate Student Symposium

**Power, Patronage, and Politics: Taking Stock of Empires**

*Wednesday - Thursday  
February 26th-27th, 2014*

WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 26th AFTERNOON - “EMPIRES”

**Session A: “Building” an Empire**
- Ayse Bike Baykara (Department of Architecture, University of Illinois Urbana Champaign): “Politics of the Arena and How did Roman Pergamon Utilize Architecture to reflect a particular identity and ideology?”
- Candis Haak, (Anthropology Department, University of Toronto): “Royal Patrons of Pilgrimage: Space, Ritual, and Reference as Subject Makers of the Vijayanagara Empire.”
- Aimee Miles (Department of Archaeology and Art History, Koç University, Istanbul, Turkey): “Roman Civic Infrastructure as Pacification and Propaganda: Case Studies in Lycia and Pamphylia from the 1st century B.C. to the 1st century A.D.”
- Radovan Kabatiar (NMC, University of Toronto): “Life on the Periphery, Life at the Crossroads. Subsistence Strategies at Kinet Höyük (Turkey) in the Late Bronze and Early Iron Ages.”

**Session B: The Neo-Assyrian Empire**
- Jennifer Finn (Ludwig-Maximilians Universität, München, Germany): “Rethinking The Sin of Sargon within Assyro-Babylonian Imperial Discourse.”
- Yan Jia (Department of History of Art and Architecture, Harvard University): “Opening the Imperial Doors of Assyria: A Spatial Reading of the Neo-Assyrian Monumental Doors from Balawat.”
- Tracy L. Spurrier (NMC, University of Toronto): “’Alme, Akšud, Ašlula šallassunu!’ Searching for evidence of Neo Assyrian Kings sharing their glory.”

**DISCUSSION PANEL – DEFINING EMPIRE**

THURSDAY FEBRUARY 27th MORNING – “THOUGHT”

**Session C: Medieval Islamic thought**
- Yehia Amin (NMC, University of Toronto): “Between Peripatetic and Mystic: Studying Suhrawardi’s Early Thought.”

**Session D: Reflections on Modern Intellectual Thought**
- Dina Fergani (NMC, University of Toronto): “Abdallah al-Nadim and the 19th century Egyptian intellectual milieu: Modern, all too modern?”
• Sabrina M. Guerrieri (NMC, University of Toronto): “Shari’ati’s Third World Existentialism: reconciling ‘anti-materialism’ and ‘Islamic Marxism’.”
• Netanel Silverman (NMC, University of Toronto): “What Grows from New York Concrete: Haim Nahman Bialik’s Romantic Tidhar (Plane Tree) and Mahmoud Darwish’s Ironic Zanbak (Lily).”

THURSDAY FEBRUARY 27th AFTERNOON – “EGYPT”

Session E: Ancient Egypt
• Thomas H. Greiner (NMC, University of Toronto): “Byblos and its Egyptian Connections in the late 2nd Millennium BC.”
• Renata Schiavo (Archaeology Department, Pisa University): “Royal and non-royal ancestor worship in Ancient Egypt: a diachronic perspective.”

Session F: Egypt in the 19th and 20th Centuries
• Meira Gold (NMC, University of Toronto): “Victorian Egyptology in Context: The Egypt Exploration Fund’s Search for the Biblical Exodus Route.”
• Fadia Bahgat (Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University): “The Case of the Maltese Women Evaders.”
• Eric Schewe (History Department, University of Michigan): “No Photography in Military Areas: The Imperial Origins of Egyptian Spatial Security Techniques in World War II.”

Session G: Inside Syria Today
• Rasha Elendari (NMC, University of Toronto) and Joanna Kader (Gordon Kirke Q. C.): “Assad and Isis: Syrians on the Horns of a Dilemma.”

Please check our website for the most up to date information on the symposium: http://nmc.utoronto.ca/symposiums/ or send inquiries to nmcgsasymp@gmail.com. The symposium will be followed by a celebratory reception for all speakers, attendees, NMC graduate students, faculty, and staff on Thursday after the final session in the NMC Conference room (200B). We look forward to seeing you there!

Archeology Centre Research Day

Friday, February 28th, 2014
St. George Campus, Koffler House, Room 108, 10am to 4pm

The Research Day is a one day symposium that offers the wider UofT community and the public an excellent opportunity to learn about the most recent and ongoing archaeological projects in Canada and around the globe. The presenters include faculty, graduate students, and alumni from multiple departments across the university. The event seeks to highlight archaeological research at the UofT and to encourage students to participate in the wide-range of archaeology-related activities available on campus. For updates and a detailed schedule contact the Archaeology Centre at archaeology@utoronto.ca or visit the website at www.archaeology.utoronto.ca.
This year the theme of the Symposium is Coptic Heritage: 

Monasticism — Consistency and Change. Professor Emeritus Mark Sheridan will be the keynote speaker. Professor Sheridan’s paper is titled “Early Christian Monasticism: Ideals and Reality”. Originally from Washington DC, Mark Sheridan is a Benedictine monk at the Dormition Abbey in Jerusalem and Professor Emeritus in the Faculty of Theology of the Pontificio Ateneo S. Anselmo, Rome, where he served as Dean of the Faculty of Theology (1998-2005) and Rector Magnificus (2005-2009) of the Athenaeum. He continues his research in the areas of Coptology and ancient Christian literature.

Other speakers:

- **Prof. Pablo Argárate**, Director of the Institute for Ecumenical Theology, Eastern Orthodoxy and Patristics, Faculty of Theology, University of Graz, Austria: “The Reception of Egyptian Monasticism in the Latin World: John Cassian and Benedict”
- **Dr. Mark Malevez**, Researcher at Le Centre Interdisciplinaire d’Étude des Religions et de la Laïcité, l’Université Libre de Bruxelles: “The Spiritual Journey of the First Coptic Wandering Monks (250-451)”
- **Prof. Jitse Dijkstra**, Associate Professor and Head of Classics, Department of Classics and Religious Studies, University of Ottawa: “The Discourse of Idol Destruction in the Coptic Life of Aaron”
- **Prof. Amir Harrak**, Professor of Aramaic and Syriac languages, Department of Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations, University of Toronto, C: “The Influence of Egyptian Monasticism on Mesopotamia from the Beginning to the 6th Century”
- **Fr. Bigoul El Suriani**: Librarian of the Monastery of Deir el-Surian, Egypt, Secretary to his Holiness Pope Tawadros II, Coptic Patriarchate, Cairo, Egypt: “New Ventures of Egyptian Monks in Coptic Studies”
- **Sabrina C. Higgins**, PhD. Candidate, University of Ottawa: “Picturing the Virgin: A Thematic Study of Marian Wall Paintings in the Fifth to Ninth Centuries”
- **Mélanie Houle**, PhD. Candidate, University of Ottawa: “The Practice of Exorcism in Egyptian Monasticism: A Popular Panacea? On the Difficult Reconciliation of Hagiographical and Magical Texts”

Co-sponsored by the Canadian society for Coptic Studies and the Department of Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations. For more information and registration, please contact: cscs@utoronto.ca

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**Announcements**

Congratulations to **Shafique Virani**, who has won the **2014 Excellence Award in Teaching** from the American Academy of Religion for mentorship which provides opportunities for both undergraduate and graduate students to join him in cutting-edge research projects.

We are excited to announce the commencement of the “Textual Afterlives and Reception” reading group, co-sponsored by the Centre for Jewish Studies and the Institute of Islamic Studies. The reading group meets on Wednesdays from 12-2 pm in JHB 318 (February 12th, March 12th, March 26th). Lunch will be served. Please contact **Dr. Yosefa Raz** (yosefa.raz@utoronto.ca) for further details.

For the latest news, and a full list of lectures and events in NMC, please visit our website: [www.nmc.utoronto.ca](http://www.nmc.utoronto.ca)

In addition, this past fall Prof. Raffaelli participated in the concluding seminar of the research project "Eschatologies", organized by the French Agence Nationale de la Recherche. The seminar, entitled "Penser la fin du monde", was held in Paris last October. The papers presented covered different aspects of Christian, Jewish, Islamic and Zoroastrian eschatology. Prof. Raffaelli presented on "L'origine du genre "apocalypse" dans la littérature zoroastrienne". In his lecture, Prof. Raffaelli explored the question of the origin of a small group of Zoroastrian texts, dating from the 9th-10th c. CE, which belong to the Apocalypse genre. The texts focus on the final destiny of the souls after death or on the final destiny of the world.

Professor Emeritus Eleazar Birnbaum is publishing two new books and two articles this year. As a co-editor, he participated in producing the second edition of *Yiddish: A Survey and Grammar* by Solomon A. Birnbaum, which will be published by the University of Toronto Press. His second book, entitled *Ottoman Turkish and Cagatay Manuscripts in Canada: a Union Catalogue*, includes almost 200 Old Ottoman works in manuscripts, which Prof. Birnbaum acquired during his travels in the Middle East. Aside from the description of the manuscripts and accompanying color illustrations the *Catalogue* also contains descriptions of three other manuscript collections housed in the libraries of the University of Toronto, McGill University, and the Royal Ontario Museum.

Dr. Amar Baadj has just published an article on “Saladin and the Ayyubid Campaigns in the Maghrib” in *Al-Qantara*, a scholarly journal dedicated to the classical civilization of Islam. The article concerns the conquest of Libya and Tunisia by Saladin (Salah al-Din) and the Ayyubids in the 1170s and 1180s. It presents a reconstruction of the campaigns conducted by the Ayyubid *mamlûks* Sharaf al-Din Qarāqūsh and Ibn Qarātikīn in Libya and the conflict in Ifrīqiya (Tunisia) between the Almohads and the Ayyubids based on the relevant primary sources. The article also explores the extent to which Saladin was responsible for these military expeditions, and the motive behind them.

Dr. Baadj is a recent alumni of NMC. His doctoral dissertation (supervised by Prof. Linda Northrup), entitled “The Struggle for North Africa between Almohads, Ayyubids and the Banu Ghaniya (Late Twelfth to Early Thirteenth Centuries A. D.),” will be published soon.
The Middle East continues to dominate headlines and airwaves everywhere. Here are some rambling thoughts on where we, as academics, stand in this news saturated world.

The “24-hour news cycle” of cable and satellite TV operates in a complex, competitive market with the World Wide Web as an unrivalled source of news in diverse formats and languages; the pace of news production has never been so fast. And the internet has given rise to “citizen journalism,” “street journalism,” or “participatory journalism,” allowing non-experts to act in various roles such as reporters and analysts. While the lines dividing scholars and non-experts have collapsed, there is still considerable demand, in mainstream and alternative media, for academic expertise. We are expected to help audiences make sense of events that happen at a pace and frequency we ourselves find difficult to grasp. Once we respond to this demand, we have to act as “instant analysts.”

The mainstream media compete in all directions especially to be the first to “break news.” Sometimes, I am asked to be interviewed about an event I have not heard about. However, I can become part of this instantaneity if I decide to do so. I can say useful and up-to-the-minute things about, for instance, developments in the Kurdish situation in Iran, Iraq, Turkey and Syria - countries I have studied more extensively. However, this comes at a price. It can be done by calling, texting, emailing, and remaining in front of the small screen of laptops or other portables all the time. There is an explosion of Middle Eastern broadcast and print media in the languages of the region outnumbered only by web sources of all types and persuasions. Still, how can I say anything significant, in two minutes of airtime, about, say, the position of the Kurds of Syria in the ever-changing political landscape of the country where hundreds of big and small groups have formed in the last three years, and all the regional and international powers are actively involved in a destructive war? In this case, being in the field is indispensable, though even on the spot, a journalist or scholar needs access to the internet in order to find out what is happening beyond her/his immediate locale. This is the contradiction: dancing to the beat of news media turns us away from preoccupation with time-bound academic research and teaching, though knowledge of current events is indispensable for both.

While it is not easy to cope with instantaneity physically and mentally, the situation is not totally hopeless. For one thing, I have been cautious recently in acting as an “instant analyst.” Instead of commenting on what happened early this morning or two hours ago, or answering the five “w’s” of news reports (who, what, when, where, why it happened), I focus, when the medium allows, on the “larger” context of events, trends or patterns. I also historicize the events, trying to make sense of their regional/global and historical significance. Another approach is to write for and do interviews with the media in the Middle East. In recent years, I have written more in Kurdish and Persian. Yet another strategy is to engage with alternative media that are more tolerant of both detail and critical perspectives.

While the mainstream media tend to be more interested in working with retired diplomats and army generals than scholars, NMC has made many contributions to the understanding of the Middle East in these critical times, and not only in relation to the modern Middle East. The ancient, medieval and modern are all affected in war-torn conflicts. To give just two examples, Dr. Hanssen rushed to Baghdad in June 2003, soon after the ransacking of the Iraq museum and other cultural institutions, and drew attention to the ethnocidal consequences of the war. As the illegal digging and plunder of archaeological sites has proliferated, I was pleased, while in Istanbul in the summer of 2012, to read in Turkey’s newspapers about the remarkable findings by Dr. Harrison and his students working at Tell Tayinat, in southeastern Turkey.
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