Art of the Arabic Periodical
Exploring Questions of Materiality, Readership & Language in 19th Century Ottoman Journals

28-29 November, 2016
American University of Beirut

Hosted by the Center for the Arts and Humanities (CAH) & the Department of Fine Arts and Art History (FAAH), with the support of the Center for Arab and Middle Eastern Studies (CAMES)

Informed by scholarship in art history, comparative literature, print studies, and Ottoman history, this interdisciplinary workshop offers alternative analyses of Ottoman/Arab print culture and modernity by examining the historical significance of the art of periodicals (fann al-jara‘id). The presentations reconsider discussions of fann al-jara‘id through a broad lens that includes examinations of visual conventions, editing processes, marketing strategies, and translation practices. The workshop proposes alternative methodologies and readings of 19th century periodicals in an effort at exploring new historical interpretations of Ottoman/Arab knowledge production, readership, language, and cultural identity.

Organized by: Hala Auji, Assistant Professor (Art History) & CAH Faculty Fellow, 2016-17

For more information, contact: ha156@aub.edu.lb

Workshop Program
This event is free and open to the public

Monday, Nov 28 (Bld. 37)
11:00 am | Coffee + Introduction
11:30 am-1:00 pm | Journal Readers & Visuality
   Moderator: Sonja Mejcher-Atassi (English, AUB)
   Ahmet Ersoy (Boğaziçi) - Late Ottoman New Media: Journal Reading, Visuality & Historical Experience During the Hamidian Era (1876-1909)
   Adam Mestyan (Duke) - Ottoman Egyptian Aesthetics & the Wadi al-Nil Project, 1867-1872
2:30-4:00 pm | Library Discussion on Objects & Methods
   Discussant: Hala Auji (AUB)
   LIBRARY SESSION IS CLOSED--reached full registration capacity

Tuesday, Nov 29 (Bld. 37)
10:00 am | Coffee
10:30-12:00 pm | Journal Editors & Translators
   Moderator: Nadia Bou Ali (CVSP, AUB)
   Kathryn Schwartz (Harvard) - Journal Editors Hustling: Marketing & Commerce in Periodicals
   Rana Issa (UIO) - The Translation of the Arabic Bible in the Nahda: Between Practices of Naq’il & Tarjama
12:00-12:15 pm | Closing Remarks
About the Speakers

Ahmet Ersoy
Associate Professor of History, Boğaziçi University

Ersoy’s research involves the cultural history of the Late Ottoman Empire with a special focus on visuality and its links with rising discourses of locality and authenticity during a period of westernizing change. He is the author of Architecture and the Late Ottoman Historical Imaginary: Reconfiguring the Architectural Past in a Modernizing Empire (2015), and the co-editor, with Vangelis Kechriotis and Maciej Gorny, of Discourses of Collective Identity in Central and Southeastern Europe (1775-1945), vol. III (2010). His publications include “Ottomans and the Kodak Galaxy: Archiving Everyday Life and Historical Space in Ottoman Illustrated Journals,” in History of Photography (2016); and “Ottoman Gothic: Evocations of the Medieval Past in Late Ottoman Architecture,” in Patrick J. Geary and Gábor Klaniczay (eds), Manufacturing Middle Ages: Entangled History of Medievalism in Nineteenth-Century Europe (2013).

Adam Mestyan
Assistant Professor of History, Duke University


Kathryn Schwartz
Postdoctoral Fellow, Digital Library of the Eastern Mediterranean, Harvard University

Schwartz’s research examines the intersections between society and technology at the levels of ideas, emotion, and practice. She is an Arabist and historian of the modern Middle East, and has written about the intellectual history of Middle Eastern printing and the political economy of private printing in nineteenth-century Cairo in papers forthcoming in Book History and the International Journal of Middle East Studies. Currently, she is revising her dissertation into a book entitled Print and the People of Cairo, 19th c. Kathryn earned her Ph.D. in History and Middle Eastern Studies from Harvard University in 2015, and her B.A. in Arabic and Middle Eastern Studies from King’s College, the University of Cambridge in 2008.

Rana Issa
Postdoctoral Fellow, University of Oslo

Issa is a literary historian working on the continuities of the classical Arabic tradition in modern literature and language. She is finishing her postdoctoral work on Arabic literature and globalization with the research team: Synchronizing the World at the University of Oslo. She will soon join the post of Assistant Professor of Translation Studies at AUB.

Late Ottoman New Media: Journal Reading, Visuality & Historical Experience During the Hamidian Era (1876-1909) - Ahmet Ersoy

Late Ottoman history writing suffers from an overwhelmingly state-oriented bias. Accordingly, current scholarship concerning Ottoman engagements in the antique past maintains a close focus on state-based efforts to institutionalize the field archaeological research and display. This article proposes to shift the focus away from official, state-sponsored archival practices (such as the photographic albums of Abdülhamid II sent to the Library of Congress and the British Museum) and museology, and explores the role of local agency in the conception and visualization of the past during the time of Abdülhamid II (1876-1909). Its alternative source for tracing public renditions of local history (both in its dynastic/Islamic and ancient dimensions) is the illustrated journal, harbinger of a new mode of acquiring and organizing knowledge at the end of the nineteenth century. Calling attention to the role of amateur photographers, the news correspondents and readers who contributed regularly to the journals with images of ruins, monuments, and landscapes, this paper explores the ways in which photography informed collective visions of historical space in the Ottoman lands at the beginning of the Kodak age.

Ottoman Egyptian Aesthetics & the Wadi al-Nil Project, 1867-1872 - Adam Mestyan

The first printed Arabic magazine in late Ottoman Egypt was the journal Wadi al-Nil, edited by Abd Allah Abu-Su’ud (d. 1878) and his son Muhammad Unsi (d. 1885/86) between 1867 and 1872; possibly until 1874. The journal is often labelled as the mouthpiece of Khedive Ismail (r. 1863-1879) or as a semiprivate paper. The editors owned a press which functioned as a business enterprise, too. The presentation focuses on the aesthetics of the journal, the typography of its printing press, and the images used in it. Instead of the colonial effects of technology, I will enquire whether a specific Ottoman-Egyptian subjectivity can be discovered in the various efforts to translate earlier textual practices and invent new ones as traditions.

Journal Editors Hustling: Marketing & Commerce in Periodicals - Kathryn Schwartz

This paper considers how we can read periodicals and related sources for information about the practical concerns behind their production. In particular, I focus upon the figure of the journal editor. Journal editors played the roles of both content writers and business managers in the newly emerging industries of publishing and periodicals. Indeed, they frequently also owned the periodicals that they wrote for and managed. Yet only successful journals possessed their own printing presses, which meant that journal editors had to work closely with printers to produce their periodicals and be constantly on the lookout for more funding.

The stakes involved in producing periodicals were high enough that journal editors addressed these issues directly within their publications. Such passages are rife with emotions such as frustration, stress, and even hope and ambition. They are also noteworthy for highlighting the large egos of some of these figures, and for advertising the practical details concerning the production of a given periodical. I will use these considerations to highlight the intersections between the commodification of journals, their intellectual content, and their historical legacy.

The Translation of the Arabic Bible in the Nahda: Between Practices of Naql & Tarjama - Rana Issa

The translation of the Bible has elements of orality and residues of the scribal culture that the print-hegemony of the 19th century came to fully replace. My work argues that the concept of tarjama that evolved in the nineteenth century under the hegemony of print has obscured how the Arab translators of the Bible were governed by more continuities with the scribal tradition than the nahda narrative of modernity has contended. By contemplating the conceptual reduction of translation to the concept of tarjama, the continuities of this concept with its synonym naqṣ has been neglected. Naqṣ (Latin cópia) \(^1\) is an activity that was equally present in the translation of the Bible, but also it was an activity that was carried over from the earlier scribal career that all the Arab translators were trained in.

\(^1\) abundance, plenty, riches; store; provisions; ability; power; opportunity, means; access to a person; Copy into Latin: copy2, transcribo [3]; imitor [1]; follow (sequor)