**Kurdish Literature Research Event**

**14th April 2017, 4-7pm**

**School of Modern Languages, University of St Andrews**

**Abstracts and Bios for Kurdish Literature Afternoon**

**Farangis Qaderi (PhD, the University of Exeter)**

**Modern Kurdish Poetry: the Poetics of Nation-Building**

In this paper I examine the advent of modernity in Kurdish poetry and explore the process of the poetic transformation in the twentieth century. I argue that the poetic change was politically motivated as poetry began to be seen as the best medium for inculcating nationalism and modern “progressive” ideas among the Kurdish people. Incorporating new social and political discourses in poetry resulted in a series of gradual transformations without entirely breaking the old poetic system. The Kurdish poets introduced non-literary words into poetry, politicized a set of vocabulary already in use in classical poetry such as “welat” (homeland), and devoted classical forms of ghazals and qasidas for entirely new political purposes which resulted in the creation of political ghazal and patriotic qasida. Romanticizing the Kurdish people, glorifying the Kurdish language and history, and advocating modern education were the new main themes of Kurdish poetry. I illustrate that noticeable changes in the form of the poetry took place only in the later stages of the modernization process under the influence of modern Turkish poetry and the revival of interest in Kurdish folklore and classical Kurdish-Gurani poetry.

**Farangis Ghaderi** has recently completed her PhD in Kurdish Studies at the University of Exeter. Her dissertation examines the development of modern Kurdish poetry from the late nineteenth century to the 1940s. She has taught Kurdish and Persian languages at the Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies, University of Exeter. She received her BA and MA in English literature from Kurdistan University and Shahid Beheshti University, respectively. Her research interests are Kurdish classical and modern poetry, nationalism and modern Kurdish history.

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**Kaveh Qobadi (PhD, the University of Exeter)**

**The Experimental Kurdish Novel: in Search of New Identities**

The realist mode of writing had dominated Kurdish novel until the early 1990s. However, socio-political changes in Iraqi and Iranian Kurdistan together with the influence of neighbouring and Western literature, triggered a significant shift from literary realism to literary modernism and postmodernism. The present paper examines this shift and seeks to explore its generating context through close reading of two Kurdish novels, Ata Nahaee’s *The Birds Soaring on the Wind*, from Iranian Kurdistan, and Sherzad Hassan’s *Fence and my Father’s dogs*, from Iraqi Kurdistan. I study these novels against the socio-political circumstances in Iraqi and Iranian Kurdistan in the late 1990s and early twenty-first century which necessitated experimenting with new narrative techniques to reflect a new subjectivity in rapidly changing Kurdish societies. I shall also examine the intertextuality between the novels and their neighbouring and Western counterparts. Furthermore, I seek to provide an answer as to whether the Kurdish novelists’ experimentation with (post)modernist techniques was confined to merely formal innovation or, rather, whether they used such innovative forms to create novel ways to engage in politics.

**Kaveh Ghobadi** received his PhD in Kurdish Studies in 2015 from University of Exeter. His PhD thesis examines subjectivity in contemporary Kurdish novels. He earned his BA and MA from Shahid Beheshti University (Tehran) in English Literature and Psychology, respectively. His research interests are identity, gender, and literature.

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Marouf Cabi (PhD candidate, University of St Andrews)

**Sherko Bekas and the promotion of social consciousness**

The promotion of national consciousness became the task of Kurdish literature, represented mainly by poetry, upon its contact with modernity. Subsequently, modern ideas of *nation* and nationalism, modern education and progress transformed poetry into a social discourse. In modern nation-sates, Kurdish poetry, but also other literary forms such as historiography, became significant sources of resistance against the nationalisation of identity by modern nation-states which created a core ethno-cultural community and consequently marginalised others such as the Kurds. However, the emergence of a Kurdish government in Northern Iraq in the 1990s and its existence ever since, created new challenges for the literature which has attempted to respond to the process of social and political transformation in the Kurdish society under the Kurdish Regional Government. The new task, therefore, has been the promotion of social consciousness of the Kurds. This is exemplified in Sherko Bekas who vigorously pursued this aim in his poetry. In this paper I will discuss this process by analysing one of his latest works, A *Girl is Now My Homeland*.

**Marouf Cabi** is a Ph.D. student in the School of History at the University of St Andrews, where he studies the concept and consequences of ‘modernisation’ in Kurdish-Iranian society. He holds a BA in History from Birkbeck College, London, an MA in Middle Eastern Studies from SOAS, and an M.Litt. in Iranian Studies from the University of St Andrews. His project is supervised by Professor Ali M. Ansari and Dr. Saeed Talajooy. His project is a critical analysis of the concept of modernisation and its consequences for Kurdish society in Iran. This includes Kurdish societies’ contact with modern European ideas in the end of the nineteenth century, as a result of which a process of redefining and refashioning of *self* began; and social transformation of Kurdish society in Iran under modernisation programmes in the modern nation-state.

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