

ACANS Workshop
Intellectual and Artistic Contributions of Arab Canadians
Contemporary research and grant proposals

PROGRAM

Room SMD 129

8:30-9:00 Registration and Coffee

9:00-9:15 Welcoming Remarks

9:30- 11:00 KEYNOTE ADDRESS: Majdi Al-Omari (Canadian-Palestinian Filmmaker)

Discussant: Walid El-Khachab (York University)

11:00 am- 12:15 PANEL 1: Integration and the Religio-Cultural Discourse

Discussant: May Telmissany (University of Ottawa)

- Kyle Conway (University of Ottawa): Hospitality and Religious Diversity or When is Home not a Home?
- Joyce Akl (University of Ottawa): the Integration of Lebanese Immigrants (Muslims & Christians) into the Canadian Society through a Translational Perspective.
- Kamal Al-Solaylee (Ryerson University): *Arabs in North America: White No More?*

12:15- 13:00 pm Lunch Break

13:00- 14:15 WRITING GRAND WORKSHOPS

Room ART 215: English (Penny McCann – SAW VIDEO)

Room ART 246: French (Izabel Barsive – University of Ottawa)

14:15- 14:30 Coffee Break

Room SMD 125

14:30- 15:45 PANEL 2: Critical Eye on Arab Canadian Media and Art

Discussant: Andrea D. Fitzpatrick (University of Ottawa)

- Ahmed Al-Rawi (Concordia University): Mapping Arab Canadian Media: Historical and Critical Assessment.
- Tamer El-Sheikh (Concordia University): *Cockroach* in Calgary: Tracking Jonathan Garfinkel's Adaptation of Rawi Hage's Novel *Cockroach* for the Stage.
- Stephanie Tara Schwartz (Concordia University): *Sacre-Profane: Samy Elmaghribi- Exhibiting Sephardic Jews in Quebec.*

15:45- 16:00 Closing Remarks

Abstracts and Biographies

Kyle Conway (University of Ottawa): Hospitality and Religious Diversity, Or, When Is Home Not a Home?

Abstract: Recent debates about hospitality and religious diversity frequently hinge on unspoken notions of home. This is especially true in the Canadian province of Quebec, where citizens have worked to establish a secular state after a history of domination by the Catholic Church. In the last two decades, as religious minorities have grown, controversy has arisen about requests for accommodations made on religious grounds, especially by Muslims. Here I examine the responses to those requests and ask what notions of home underpin them. One is grounded in history: its adherents contend immigrants are guests and should conform to the norms of their new home. It expands the geography of home by linking secularism to collective identity. A second is grounded in political-legal thought: its adherents contend citizens are at home even if their views differ from the majority's. It recognizes that longtime residents and newcomers mutually influence each other, and over time, people's identities change.

Bio: Kyle Conway holds a PhD in communication arts from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and he joined the University of Ottawa in 2015. In his research, he examines different borders—linguistic, cultural, geographic, religious—and the tolls they exact when we cross them. Much of his work focuses on translation in the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. His first book, *Everyone Says No*, asks how the Corporation's French and English services translated Canadians for each other during the constitutional debates of the early 1990s. His current book project asks how the CBC's Little Mosque on the Prairie translated Muslims for non-Muslim viewers. His other area of focus is the Great Plains and the Prairies. He has edited a book about the paradoxes of the U.S.-Canada border, and he is currently editing a volume of essays about the social effects of the oil boom in western North Dakota.

Joyce Akl (University of Ottawa): the Integration of Lebanese Immigrants (Muslims & Christians) into the Canadian Society through a Translational Perspective.

Abstract: Research on translation has expanded progressively by embracing frames from other disciplines to promote new ways of looking at translation. However, Renn integrates the term "translation" into sociology (2006). He stresses on the usefulness of "translation" for describing social integration of all social acts which are clustered and "social behaviour, manifested in them, is evaluated based on the projection of previous instances onto later ones" (p.92). Social translation is when a situation or a certain form of action is deported to a new context, and based on that, one act is recognized as similar to another or as associated with the same type of social acts; or when the interpretation of one deed influences the interpretation of another one which is a kind of "Translation". Therefore, my project is in fact Translation Studies, but from an innovative perspective. The objective of my research is to demonstrate how the concept of translation applies in a sociological context.

Bio: Joyce Akl is a Ph.D candidate in Translation Studies & Canadian Studies at University of Ottawa. She is originally from Lebanon. She is deeply interested in immigration and intercultural studies. She has worked as an ESL instructor and translator for several years. She is currently interested in the Arab community and its integration into the Canadian society through a translational perspective. Her deep concern about immigration and immigrants comes from her personal memories about the civil war in Lebanon.

Kamal Al- Solaylee (Ryerson University): Arabs in North America: White No More?

Abstract: My new book (to be published in 2016 by HarperCollins Canada) examines the intersections between skin colour, race, and immigration by taking a comparative, global look at both migrant labour (in Qatar, Hong Kong, among other places) and post-colonial migrations of communities that were once imperial subjects (South Asians in Britain and North Africans in France). He argues that for groups that are identified as Muslim, their faith has been racialized as brown even when, as in the case of Arabs, census data in both Canada and the U.S. still classify them as white. Like Italians, Jews and Greeks, early waves of Arab immigrants “worked their way to whiteness” and a place within the mainstream in North America. Much of that changed after Sept. 11, leaving the white status of Arabs tenuous, to put it mildly. Arabs in Canada – regardless of their skin colour or religion – have been subsumed into a larger group of brown communities. While brown is beautiful and in some contexts – the Mexican immigrants and undocumented in border states in America, for example – empowering, it has emerged as code for lack of integration, cheap labour, crime, and, of course, alienation that sometimes leads to radicalization.

Bio: Kamal Al-Solaylee is Associate professor of journalism at Ryerson University, and was previously a theatre critic at Canada’s national newspaper *The Globe and Mail*. Al-Solaylee also worked at *Report on Business* magazine and has written features and reviews for the *Toronto Star*, *National Post*, *The Walrus*, *Toronto Life*, *Chatelaine*, *eye weekly*, the *Literary Review of Canada* and *Elle Canada*. Al Solaylee’s bestselling memoir *Intolerable: A Memoir of Extremes* was a finalist for the Hilary Weston Writers’ Trust Nonfiction Prize, the Lambda Literary Award, and Canada Reads, and won the Toronto Book Award in 2013. Al-Solaylee holds a PhD from the University of Nottingham and has taught at the University of Waterloo and York University.

Ahmed Al-Rawi (Concordia University): Mapping Arab Canadian Media: Historical and Critical Assessment

Abstract: Despite its relatively long history in Canada spanning over four decades, Arab Canadian media has not been systematically studied. This paper attempts to address this gap in literature by presenting a historical overview of Arab Canadian print media which is believed to have started in the mid 1970s (RCI, n.d). The second phase of this study is focused on conducting a content analysis of one of the oldest outlets that is called “Akhbar Al-Arab” (Arab News) (<http://arabnews.ca/>) (1976) by examining a random sample of over 10 issues to investigate the main topics covered by this newspaper. The study calls for a systematic and comprehensive digital archiving of Arab Canadian press in order to preserve one part of the Arab heritage and contribution in Canada. This effort will also assist other researchers in conducting future studies on an important and evolving ethnic media field in Canada.

Bio: Ahmed Al-Rawi is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Communication Studies of Concordia University and is a Research Fellow at Erasmus University in The Netherlands. He is specialized in Middle East popular culture and media as well as global communication. He is the author of *Media Practice in Iraq* (2012, Palgrave Macmillan). His papers appeared in a variety of journals like *Information, Communication & Society*, *Public Relations Review*, *International Communication Gazette*, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, *Journal of International Communication*, and *Global Media and Communication*.

Tamer El-Sheikh (Concordia University): *Cockroach* in Calgary: Tracking Jonathan Garfinkel's Adaptation of Rawi Hage's Novel *Cockroach* for the Stage

Abstract: Lebanese-Canadian Rawi Hage's novel titled *Cockroach* (2008) is currently being adapted for the stage by playwright Jonathan Garfinkel. It will debut at Alberta Theatre Projects on March 1st, 2016. *Cockroach* is a Kafkaesque story about fantasies of metamorphosis in the Arab-Canadian diaspora. Set in Montreal, the book follows a protagonist from an unnamed Middle Eastern country through a tragicomic process of integration in Quebec society. The story begins in a clinic, where the protagonist sorts through his dreams, memories and anxieties, after a botched suicide attempt, and with the help of a French-Canadian psychotherapist named Genevieve. His stories involve friends, rivals and lovers who gather at a fictional restaurant called "The Star of Iran". Through the narrator we are introduced to an Iranian muse named Shohreh, her gay best friend and dance partner Farhoud, an elusive musician named Reza, and an Algerian "pseudo-French intellectual" named Professor Youssef. Hage and Garfinkel are careful in their work to preserve the individuality of these characters. This is a group portrait drawn from the writer's experience within the Arab-Canadian diaspora. But he refuses to generalize about this community along ethnic, religious or political lines. The characters appear in psychological rather than ethnic, religious or political profile. Hage describes dis-identifications and conflicts between the characters, as well as their shared experience of racism and marginalization in the era of "reasonable accommodation". In this study I aim to track coinciding processes of cross-cultural and interdisciplinary adaptation in Garfinkel's rendering of Hage's book for the stage. What do these artists contribute to our notions of Arab-Canadian identity? I believe the complexity of Hage's characters is best understood by expanding the sense of the term 'adaptation'. First I will examine how Hage represents his characters' adjustment to life in Montreal. What kind of an adaptation is involved here – from the Middle East to Canada, and from fact to fiction? How do the stories of Hage's characters correspond with, and deviate from experiences within the Arab-Canadian diaspora as these are described in social science, in political discourse and in the mass media? Second, I will consider the collaborative decision making process behind Hage's and Garfinkel's novel-to-stage adaptation. How will the adaptation of a Lebanese-Canadian's novel by a "culturally" Jewish- Canadian playwright be received in Calgary? What are the implications of this kind of a collaboration for theatre-goers within and beyond the Arab-Canadian diaspora? Hage's book is about adaptation, but it is also about transformation and potential - about identities that put pressure on stereotypical representations of Arab-Canadians. I aim to examine how these various adaptations point to new possibilities for identity formation within the Arab-Canadian diaspora and beyond.

Bio: Tamer El-Sheikh received his PhD in the Department of Art History and Communications Studies at McGill University in Montreal. He received his BA (Philosophy, Art History) from the University of Toronto and his MA (Art History) from Concordia University. His dissertation is on the reception of Palestinian-American critic Edward Said within the discipline of art history since the 1970s. The dissertation evaluates Said's strategies of post-colonial critique through case studies of selected contemporary Egyptian art and curatorial practices. Dr. El-Sheikh's research for the dissertation was funded by the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) and conducted at Columbia University's Rare Books and Manuscripts Library where "Edward Said's Collected Papers" are housed, and in Alexandria and Cairo, Egypt. Dr. El-Sheikh's writing on contemporary art and cultural politics has been published in the Canadian periodicals *Parachute*, *CMagazine*, *Canadian Art* and *ETC*, and internationally in exhibition catalogues produced by the *Kunsthalle Wien*.

Stephanie Tara Schwartz (Concordia University): Sacre-Profane: Samy Elmaghribi- Exhibiting Sephardic Jews in Quebec.

Abstract: In the aftermath of Quebec’s charter of values debate, the exhibit *Sacré-Profane: Samy Elmaghribi* sought to challenge an ignorance/disdain promoted by the ruling government of/for the lived experiences of minority religious and cultural communities, especially those from Arab, Muslim and Jewish backgrounds. The life and career of the late Samy Elmaghribi (Salomon Amzallag), Moroccan Jewish star of Andalusian music and cantor of the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue in Montreal embodied the blurred lines between sacred and secular, Arab and Jew. As curator of this exhibit (presented in February 2015 at *Nuit Blanche à Montréal* by the Museum of Jewish Montreal in collaboration with *Fondation Samy Elmaghribi and Histoire, femmes, genre et migrations-UQÀM*) I will share some of the challenges and successes our team faced in communicating the life of this artist to young Quebec audiences. I argue that works of Moroccan Jewish artists and activists in Montreal offer unique entry points into the studies of Canadian and Quebec cultural histories and postcolonial diasporas.

Bio: Stephanie Tara Schwartz is a SSHRC postdoctoral fellow at the Centre for Ethnographic Research and Exhibition in the Aftermath of Violence (CEREV) in the Department of History at Concordia University, Research Director at the Museum of Jewish Montreal and co-editor of *Canadian Jewish Studies/Études juives canadiennes*. She curated the exhibit *Sacré/Profane: Samy Elmaghribi* in 2015 as part of her research project “Mapping Moroccan Jews in Montreal: A Social and Digital History.” She is co-editor with May Telmissany of the book *Counterpoints: The Legacy of Edward Said* (2010). Her articles on Arab Jews, Jewish cultural studies and diaspora have been published in *Borderlands e-journal*, *Canadian Jewish Studies*, *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East* and *Critical Inquiries: A Reader in Studies of Canada*.

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