Post-Occupation Iraqi Narrative: ISIS Lexicon and its Counterculture

Muhsin Al-Musawi, Colombia University

This talk explores ISIS lexicon, syntax, physique, and flown black robes as part of a deliberately drawn medieval Asian site of hordes, not only to dismantle the last remnants of Arab nation state, and its core in the fertile crescent, but also to image Islam in a conservative orientalist light. The talk situates this within a broader accommodating historical context of conflict, coercion, fracturing of identities and ideologies, and the pillaging of privatized religion. It locates the movement within a strategy to initiate a new Middle East as a playground for global politics. A growing Iraqi narrative shows how the sordid and the macabre transmute into a normative practice that opens the gate for invading hordes.

Muhsin al-Musawi is Professor of classical and modern Arabic and comparative studies at Columbia University. Described by Chronicle for Higher Education as “the leading Arab critic,” he is the author of twenty-eight books and over sixty articles. He has been the editor of The Journal of Arabic Literature since 2000. His books include: The Society of One Thousand and One Nights (2000); The Postcolonial Arabic Novel (2003); Arabic Poetry: Trajectories of Modernity and Tradition (2006); Reading Iraq: Culture and Power in Conflict (2006); Islam on the Street (2009). His forthcoming book from Notre Dame UP is Politics of the Medieval Islamic Republic of Letters. He’s currently working on a book entitled, Arab Struggle with the Past.

10:00 am Breakfast
10:30 am Opening Remarks, Assoc. Dean Richard Flores, COLA, UT Austin
10:45 am Panel: Moderated by Prof. Barbara Harlow, UT Austin

“Chronicle as Cascade: The Subaltern Sublime in Fadhil Al Azzawi’s The Last of the Angels”
Rachel Green, MES, UT Austin

“Anfal: Sherko Bekes and the Poetry of Genocide”
Seerwan Hariry, MES, UT Austin

11:45 am Break
12:00 pm Talk: Dr. Muhsin Al-Musawi
Moderated by Prof. Yoav Di-Capua, UT Austin