



ACCENT!

NEWSLETTER OF THE DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGES, LITERATURES, AND CULTURES AT UNCG

Noor Ghazi: *Mosul, The Mother of Two Springs*

Mosul: The Mother of Two Springs, a documentary film written and produced by Noor Ghazi, was premiered on April 18, 2022 at UNC Chapel Hill, and on April 20, 2022 at UNCG. Noor Ghazi currently holds appointments as Lecturer of Arabic and Visiting Scholar in Peace and Conflict Studies at UNCG, Instructor of Arabic at Durham Technical Community College, and Professor of the Practice in the Peace, War, and Defense Curriculum at UNC Chapel Hill. She also works closely with Mosul University in Iraq, assisting in the development of the Peace Studies Program there. Noor kindly agreed to speak with me about her film. Our conversation has been edited for brevity.

Jocelyn Aksin: Could give me an overview of the film? What is it about?

Noor Ghazi: Sure, so the Mother of Two Springs is about the city of Mosul, located in Northern Iraq. In particular, it sheds light on social life under ISIS, how life changed under ISIS. So, we start by giving a little bit of background on where Mosul is, who lives there, what type of religions, and then we move toward the reasons of the fall of Mosul under ISIS and then social life under ISIS, how life has changed for men and for women, and how education also changed under ISIS. And then we move toward the time of liberation, how the city was liberated, how people are living in the rubble after the liberation.



JA: You shot the film in 2018, is that correct?

NG: I started in 2018, that was when I traveled myself to Mosul. Mosul was liberated in 2017 and during that time of liberation, that's when I was having nightmares, I could not sleep. I am myself from Iraq, I lived through several wars, but in a different time. So, during the time of liberation, I realized that Mosul was being liberated really randomly, you know, by showering the city with missiles. It was really heartbreaking because I am a mother; at that time, my daughter was three years old, and I was just wondering about the feelings of those parents. Later on, when I was talking to some of the people I interviewed, they were telling me that they used to give their children cough medicine to put them to sleep at night because they didn't want them to go through that feeling. They said, "We did not know if we're going to survive the next minute because we could just be hit with a missile any minute." And I just thought after the liberation, I will come one day [to Mosul], and I told my husband "I'm going to work on a documentary about Mosul." I had no background whatsoever in film. I picked up my camera and I left my daughter with my mom, and I went there [to Mosul].



JA: What were some challenges that you faced?

NG: So, my husband was supposed to come inside Mosul with me, but the night prior to going there, I was told that my husband couldn't come with me because he did not have an updated Iraqi ID. So in the morning, my dad's friend said he would take me inside because he was from Mosul. In the morning I picked up the camera and I asked my husband, "How do you turn this thing on?" And that's when I just thought, "I'm done," and I cried and I said, "What am I doing here? I mean, it doesn't make sense. I'm going into a city that was just liberated, dead bodies were still there on the streets. ISIS members were still in the city, I am considered to be American, it's not safe, I left my daughter at home. Why am I doing this?"

So, then my husband had this conversation with me, and I said, "What if I die?" and he

said, "What better way to die? I mean you're really

going to die for something you're passionate about, and that you want to do, so go." And I was just asking myself, "Why am I doing this? Like, what is the purpose?" and all the answers were coming back to that.

Because I wanted to listen, because I knew these people, they just want to be listened to, and believe it or not, when I went there, people were living in rubble, like their houses were rubble. Kids were playing around dead bodies and they did not ask me for money, they did not ask me for food or water, even though they did not have any.

All they asked me was, "Listen to my story. This is what happened to me." Especially when they would see the camera, they would just come around me, and they would say, "This is what happened to me. My daughter died during the liberation. She left four kids for me." Another lady was telling me that her husband died during the liberation and her daughter's husband also died, leaving them with like seven kids that she could not feed, so they just wanted me to listen, and I felt like that was the purpose for me going there, because when I was little during war time, nobody was listening, even my parents, you know, they had their own struggles and worries, so when we would cry, they would say, "There's no need to cry. Don't cry." We were not allowed to share our fear; we were not allowed to share our struggle, so I felt like people want to just be listened to.

JA: Whom do you envision as the audience for the film? An audience here in the United States, or is this a film that you want to show in Iraq, or both?

NG: Yeah, so, the interviews, most of them - like 90% - are conducted in Arabic, because they are from the people. Mostly it's their voices. However, the voice-over that is leading



the entire documentary, it's in English, it's my voice. Right now, for the Arabic portion, we do have English subtitles, so basically for an American audience, they can smoothly watch the entire thing. Now we're working currently on translating the English portion into Arabic subtitles because the first premiere [in Iraq] will be at Mosul University and the Grand Theatre, and the beauty of it is that the Grand Theatre was destroyed by ISIS. ISIS eliminated theater, art, and music, so they destroyed the Grand Theatre. It was reopened recently; it was rebuilt and reopened. It is a victory [for the documentary] to be premiered at that same Grand Theatre that was a taboo for the people of Mosul under ISIS.

JA: I wanted to ask about premieres in the United States. I know that you showed the film at UNCG, maybe you're looking for distributors? When will it be released, and will there be any kind of a streaming option, especially for students?

NG: Sure, so currently it was premiered on April 18 at UNC Chapel Hill and it was also premiered at UNCG [on April 20]. I already had some professors who asked me to premiere it for their students so, you know, I can have it available for professors who will need to premiere it for their students, especially for professors [working in] political science, or studying ISIS, or radicalization, terrorism, and things like that.

JA: The poster that you made for the film shows the image of what looks like a sculpture of an animal, but the head has been removed - could you speak a little bit about that? Just a bit about the history of Mosul for an American audience that might not know?

NG: Right, so Mosul is considered to be one of the earliest civilizations on earth, it's considered the House of the Assyrian Empire. On the poster, it shows you the winged bull,

and this is called Lamassu. Lamassu is the deity who protected the city in Assyrian times. And there are videos online where ISIS [members] were drilling Lamassu and destroying



it. When those images came out from that time when ISIS took over, the world was shocked by this act of brutality. How could you erase those thousands of years of history? But that was intentional - to erase the identity of Mosul itself. So the winged bull was a representation of the entire city. The head is [gone], because ISIS destroyed this civilization, however, you can see [the head] in the reflection. The head is there to represent that Mosul will rise again.

Another thing is the “Mother of Two Springs.” This is the name of Mosul; this is how Iraqis like to call it. I intentionally also wanted the [the name of] “Nineveh” to be there [on the poster] because a lot of the audience would be able to recognize that. We intentionally did not want the name of ISIS to appear anywhere. We did not want to give them this publicity; they had enough.

The heroes are not ISIS, and this movie is not about them. It's about the city itself, it's about the people themselves, it's their stories, it's this dark age that they lived under ISIS, but it is the story that is told by them.



Stay Connected! Call for Social Media Promo



Have a fun story you want to share on Instagram? Or an event you want to promote? LLC, Spanish, and German all have Instagram pages for just that. I'm **Keyla Marquez**, TA for the Spanish department and Social Media liaison. You can send your photos, blurbs, and flyers my way at k_marque@uncg.edu (jpgs preferred).



Japanese Speech Contests



Organized by Dr. **Yosei Sugawara** and sponsored by UNCG's Kohler Foundation, the J a p a n Foundation of Los Angeles, the Japan America Society of North Carolina, the Consulate-

General of Japan, and members of the business community, the Greensboro Japanese Speech Contest (GJSC) has been an annual spring event since 2016. The 6th Annual GJSC took place in an online format and again showcased the creative talents of students at UNCG, WFU, Guilford College and High Point Central HS. Presentations included original poetry and songs, stop action and split-screen skits, campus tours, a virtual visit to fashion hotspots in Japan (guided by an angel), philosophical musings (including one from a cloaked “tree man”), and tributes to lost loved ones. Visit [https://](https://gjsc.gator.site)

gjsc.gator.site to view students’ presentations.

The 35th Duke Japanese Speech Contest was held online in March 2022, and UNCG student **Benjamin Pettee** (*below*) won 1st place in the Level I category. His speech was entitled “Gomi no Boken (Garbage Adventure).” In his creative and inspiring speech, Benjamin shared his concern for the environment and emphasized the importance of recycling. He began studying Japanese at UNCG in Fall 2021.



Chinese Events

As a part of the 2021 Mid-Autumn Festival, almost one hundred students from the Chinese Studies Program sang a song together, “疫情过后 yì qíng guò hòu” (“When the Pandemic is Over”) to express their hope for the future and bring encouragement and strength to people around them.

In November 2021, the Chinese Studies Program celebrated Chinese Art Month with a hybrid online/in-person Art Gala and a workshop focusing on “The Art and Writing Skills of Chinese Characters.” The Gala featured students’



drawings, posters, and other works of art, and the writing workshop was conducted by students minoring in Chinese under the mentorship of Dr. **Meiqing Sun**.

The workshop introduced 65 students to the joys and challenges of writing Chinese calligraphy.

239 students, faculty, and staff participated in the Chinese Studies Program’s annual Spring Festival, which consisted of student art presentations, folk songs, learning about spring festival traditions, celebrations of the New Year (Year of the Tiger), as well as a virtual seminar on Language Diversity in China.



FOCUS ON STUDENT AND FACULTY ENGAGEMENT



The 2022 Summer Program in Spain took place in Cádiz, Spain from May 10 – June 15. Twenty-four students (*featured right*) participated in the program, which was led by Dr. **Carmen Sotomayor** and Jose Felipe Troncoso. Students lived with local families and got to learn their way around the city within a few days. They got to celebrate the Cádiz Carnival, which was rescheduled to June due to Covid-19, and enjoyed visits to several Southern cities, including Seville and Granada. Students also visited a Roman site, Baelo Claudia, and learned about the Roman presence in Spain. In addition to attending regular classes for five weeks, students experienced the rich cultural heritage of Spain.

The German Studies Program held its annual Campus Weeks events in Fall 2021. Programming included an interactive discussion with Fulbright USTA **Allison Gilmore** (German Program alum ’20), a film screening of *Trapped by Law* (2015) and discussion and lecture by Dr. **Emily Frazier-**

Rath (Davidson College), and a presentation on the controversial Nord Stream Pipeline by Dr. **Corey Johnson**, Professor in the Department of Geography, Environment, and Sustainability at UNCG. Funding for Campus Weeks was generously provided by the German Embassy in Washington, D.C.



A series of events to commemorate Hispanic Heritage Month took place between September 15 – October 15, 2021. Activities included a Trivia Night, opportunities to sample sweet treats from different Latin American countries, a poetry reading and conversation with Victor Ortiz, a chance to try Zumba, and the annual tradition of students from the Spanish Heritage Language Program who shared about their language, culture and identities through poetry readings and presentations about their "raíces" or roots. Many thanks to the dedication and efforts of **Sarah Carrig**, Dr. **Ana Hontanilla**, Dr. **Veronica Grossi**, Dr. **Brenda Ross**, **Liliana Lira-Rivera**, Dr. **Claudia Cabello Hutt**, Dr.

Kelly Pereira, and Dr. **Roberto Campo** for helping to make Hispanic Heritage Month a huge success.



STUDENT & ALUMNI EXCELLENCE



IGS major and Chinese minor **Raney Allen** won 2022 Provost Student Excellence Award. Raney started to learn Chinese at UNCG from the beginning level and graduated with honors. The SEA is the highest honor bestowed upon undergraduate students at UNCG for academic excellence.

Congratulations to German Studies student **Anne Badgett**, who was selected to serve as a Young Ambassador by the DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service). In her role as a YA, Anne participated in a virtual orientation session and helped to promote Study Abroad in German-speaking countries at UNCG during the 2021-2022 academic year.

The following French and Francophone Studies students were inducted into Pi Delta Phi, the French honor society (*featured below*): **Rodrigue Djigla**, **Hadeal Hassan**, **Michelle Ketterer**, **Bonnie Miller**, and **Wendy Morrow**. Félicitations!



FOCUS ON LLC FACULTY

Dr. **Xiao Rao** received a grant from the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) for his book project, *Tales of Wit and Enlightenment: Buddhism and Literati Humor in Song Dynasty China*.

Dr. **Claudia Cabello Hutt** has won the Sylvia Molloy Award for Best Essay in the Humanities (2021) from the Sexualities Section of LASA (Latin American Studies Association) for her article, "Undisciplined Objects: Queer Women's Archives," which appeared in vol. 74.1 of *Revista Hispánica Moderna*. This prestigious

international competition is named after one of the founders of the field of Latin American Gender and Sexualities studies, Dr. Sylvia Molloy.

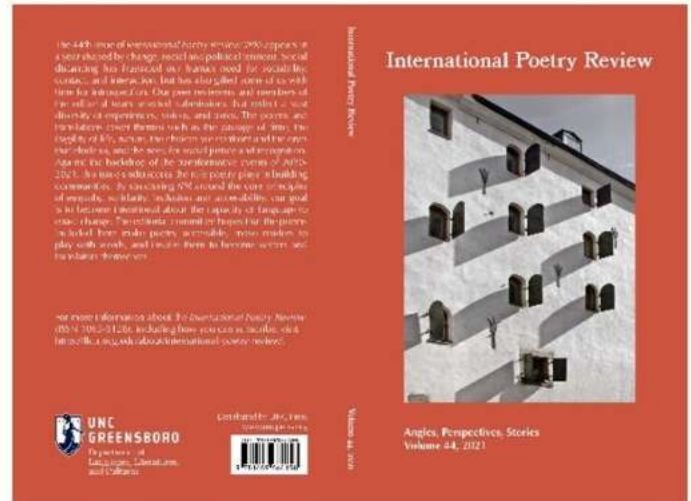
Dr. **Meiqing Sun**, together with colleagues, co-edited volumes 1 and 2 of the textbook, *Speak and Act: Beginning Chinese*, published by Phoenix Tree Publishing Inc. The textbook is designed for beginning students who have no prior experience learning Chinese, and blends the study of Chinese culture with practice in listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Dr. **Faye Stewart** was among the presenters invited from institutions in the UK, the US, Canada, and Germany to give presentations on East German Documentary Cinema at the University of St. Andrews in St. Andrews, Scotland. Dr. Stewart’s presentation, entitled “Is There a ‘Female Gaze?’” examines documentaries by female filmmakers of the 1970s and 1980s about working women and will be developed into a chapter-length study for inclusion in an edited volume.



Dr. **Cybelle H. McFadden**’s essay, “Des vagues de fiction: *L’autre côté de la mer* et *Corniche Kennedy* de Dominique Cabrera,” was published in the edited collection *Dominique Cabrera. L’intime et le politique*. Ed. Julie Savelli. St. Vincent-de-Mercuze: De l’Incidence Editeur (2021). This edited collection along with a retrospective of Cabrera’s work in Paris in 2021 recognizes her important contributions to French cinema.

Dr. **Ana Hontanilla** published the review essay, “Centering Latin American Lives Abroad,” in *Latin American Research Review*. In addition, Dr. Hontanilla published two short fiction pieces (“Un perro, dos lutos y yo” in *Edición Especial de Cuadernos ALDEEU*, and “El



gen dominante” in *Ámbitos feministas revista crítica multidisciplinaria anual de la coalición Feministas Unidas*) and edited vol. 44 of *International Poetry Review*, with a focus on Angles, Perspectives, and Stories.

The 2021-2022 Above and Beyond Awards were presented to Dr. **Jocelyn Aksin**, Dr. **Meiqing Sun**, and Dr. **Yosei Sugawara** for their contributions to the Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures. Congratulations, as well, to Dr. **Chiaki Takagi** and **Mercedes Freeman**, who celebrated their 20th and 15th years of service to UNCG!

In 2022, LLC received a gift of \$10,000 from the **Fred L. Emerson Foundation** (<https://www.emersonfoundation.com/>). Located in Auburn, NY, the Emerson Foundation is a private grantmaking foundation with a history of supporting community organizations and higher education. These funds will be used to support LLC majors and minors with concentrations in French and Francophone Studies or German Studies, as well as students in the concentration in Global Languages and Communities (GLC) whose first language of study is German or French. By supporting student success, the award will allow LLC to enhance global understanding and connections.

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