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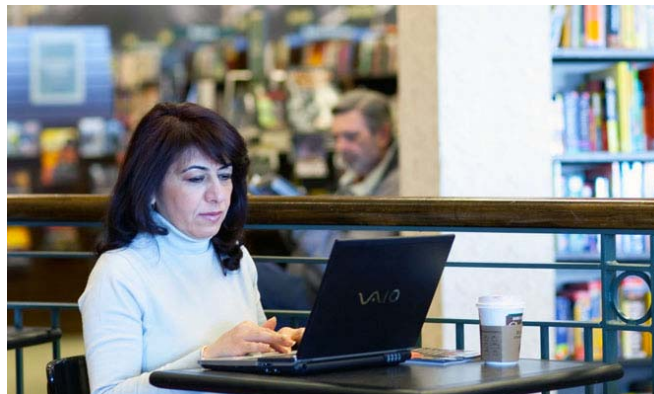
OU lecturer and poet Dunya Mikhail named Kresge Fellow

 By *Katie Land*, news editor

Writer, poet and linguist Dunya Mikhail has been awarded a prestigious 2013 Kresge Fellowship in Literary Arts. The Oakland University lecturer is the first Arab-American to receive the award.

Designed to reward creative vision and recognize Detroit-based talent, Kresge fellowships seek to support and advance the work of the literary and artistic community. This year, the foundation supported 18 fellowships in all, nine in the literary arts and nine in the performing arts.

"It's such a wonderful feeling to be awarded for what you are passionate about the most," Mikhail said.



"It's true that the essential happiness comes actually during the process of writing, but to be recognized is a great motivation. The panelists who selected my work are top writers, and that itself gives me great pride and excitement. The other surprise came from my fellow writers back home who, as they heard the news, celebrated and considered this recognition as a proud moment for the Iraqi poetry."

Mikhail's award recognizes poems from her collection, "The Iraqi Nights," which is scheduled for publication next year. The collection was originally written in Arabic, but Mikhail translated her work to English for submission. Exploring themes of war and violence, the poems are also about human vulnerabilities and survival.

While Mikhail's work brings a well of personal experience, one poem in particular has a painful significance.

Written in the style of a fable, "Diary of a Wave Outside the Sea," weaves an account of the kidnapping of Mikhail's 20-year-old niece from a market in Baghdad three years ago. Pulled from her mother's grasp, the girl was dragged to a waiting car. She has not been heard from since. The poem's title refers to the mythic Scheherazade's ability to save herself through stories in "The Arabian Nights."

This spring, Mikhail was featured on National Public Radio's Morning Edition. [Click here](#) to read the interview and listen to Mikhail read her work.

Considered subversive by Saddam Hussein's government, Mikhail left Iraq shortly after the first Gulf War, making her way eventually to the Detroit Area in the mid-nineties. She began teaching Arabic courses in Oakland's Department of Modern Languages and Literatures in 2012.

Despite her extraordinary path, Mikhail has made a home here, and looks back to her homeland through her poetry.

"I feel that I am a very lucky person: to be part of a collection of talented writers, and to be part of the community at Oakland University, to work in a genuinely supportive and stress-free environment, to have wonderful friends and a loving family. I really can't complain."

The Kresge Fellowship comes with unrestricted prize of \$25,000, rewarding creative vision and commitment to excellence within a wide range of artistic disciplines. Mikhail plans to use her award to "buy more time writing."

For more information about language programs and courses at OU, visit the department website at oakland.edu/languages.

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