

The Banipal Book Club meets regularly to discuss Arab literature, mainly fiction. Meetings, which currently take place via Zoom, are informal and conducted in English. The books discussed are available in English translation.

For more information or to subscribe to our mailing list please email:

bookclub@banipal.co.uk

or follow us on Facebook

www.facebook.com/BanipalBookClub/

Next Meeting:

27th October, 6:30pm (UK)

The next Book Club meeting will take place via Zoom on 27th October. We will be discussing *The Critical Case of a Man Called K* by Saudi author Aziz Mohammad. Email bookclub@banipal.co.uk to register and receive the Zoom link.

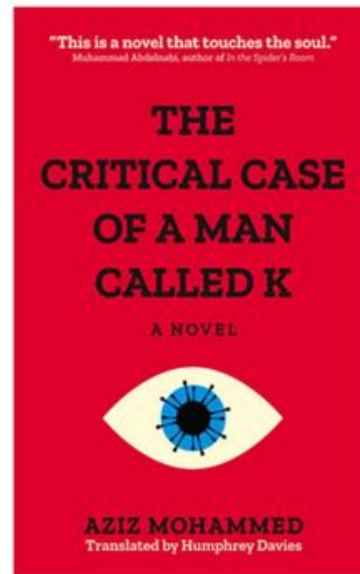
After reading Kafka, K decides to write his own diary, but he is constantly frustrated by his lack of experiences: he is worn down by the drudgery of his corporate job for a faceless corporation and by his incessant family obligations. When he receives the news that he has leukaemia, he finds himself torn between a sense of devastation and a revelation that he has finally found a way out of his writing predicament.

Saif Ghobash Banipal Prize for Arabic Literary Translation

The 2021 Prize is the 16th edition of the prize, dedicated to supporting literary translation of contemporary Arabic literature into English and honouring the work of the translators. There are 16 entries, comprising 11 novels, one open work, and 4 poetry collections. Details of the entries can be found here: <https://www.banipaltrust.org.uk/prize/award2021>. Several of our Book Club reads are 2021 entries, including *The Frightened Ones* by Dima Wannous, *The Slave Yards* by Najwa Bin Shatwan, *God 99* by Hassam Blasim, and our next read, *The Critical Case of a Man Called K* by Aziz Muhammad. The Short List will be announced in November 2021 and the winner will be announced in January 2022. This year's [judges](#) are arabist Roger Allen (chair of judges), publisher Rosemarie Hudson, professor of Arabic Ronak Husni and Caroline McCormick, founder of cultural sector consultancy, Achates.

NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 27 October, on Zoom



The book under discussion:

The Critical Case of a Man Called K by Aziz Mohammad, translated by Humphrey Davies. Published by [Hoopoe Fiction](#).

You can read more about the book here and read an extract:

<https://hoopoefiction.com/book/the-critical-case-of-a-man-called-k/>

The [2022 Prize](#) opens for entries on International Translation Day, 30 September 2021.

Saif Ghobash Banipal Prize Annual Lecture

JONATHAN WRIGHT on Change and Continuity in Contemporary Arabic Fiction



Wed 10 November 2021, 19:00 – 20:00 (London time)

Translator Jonathan Wright will give the 2021 Saif Ghobash Banipal Translation Prize Lecture. This is an online event, hosted by the British Library via Zoom. [Registration is via the British Library website](#)

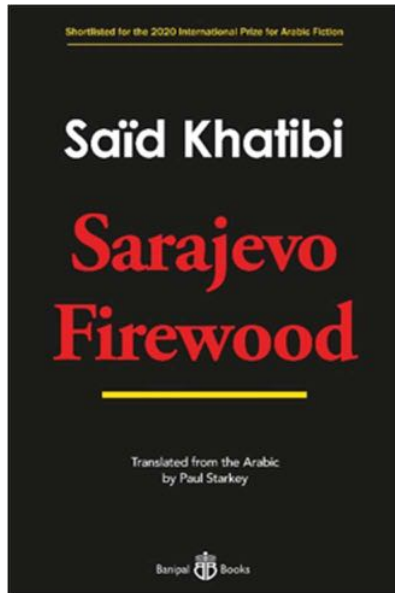
Jonathan Wright studied Arabic at Oxford and worked as a journalist for Reuters for many years, mostly in the Arab world. He turned to literary translation in 2008 and has since translated more than 20 novels and other books, as well as dozens of short stories. In his lecture, Jonathan Wright will draw on his own experience as a translator of contemporary Arabic fiction to examine and critique the assumptions that underpin a corpus of literature written in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), a language that no living person speaks as their mother tongue.

New Books from Banipal

Banipal has recently published four new books, all translated from the original Arabic. They are available now from bookshops, from online stores and the Banipal website. Read more about the books here: https://www.banipal.co.uk/banipal_books/



Sarajevo Firewood by Algerian author Saïd Khatibi, translated by Paul Starkey, will be the topic of the Banipal Book Club's November meeting, which will take place via Zoom at 6:30pm (London time) on 24th November 2021.



Sarajevo Firewood is a searing narrative by Algerian author Saïd Khatibi about two countries – Algeria and Bosnia and Herzegovina – both of which experienced traumatic and destructive civil wars in the 1990s. It is told through the voices of Salim, an Algerian journalist, and Ivana, a young Bosnian woman, both of whom have fled the destruction and hatred of their own countries to try to build new lives in Slovenia.

As Ivana pursues the goal of writing her 'dream play', and Salim discovers he is not his father's son, Khatibi's novel brings to life in a rich fictional form the memories and experiences of the countless ordinary people who survived the atrocities linking the two countries.

The other three new books are:

- **[The Madness of Despair by Ghalya F T Al Said](#)**, translated by Raphael Cohen
The Madness of Despair tells the story of Maliha, who is living in London with her husband Nafie after an arranged marriage in their distant Arab homeland. The couple become good friends with Doctor Nadim, a fellow exile, but in the twists and turns of the friendship, the men's nostalgia for their old lives – and old ways of living – come into conflict with Maliha's ambition to live and love freely and make something of her new life now she's settled in London.
- **[Fadhil Al-Azzawi's Beautiful Creatures by Fadhil al-Azzawi](#)**, translated by the author
This open work was written in defiance of the "sanctity of genre" and to raise the question of freedom of expression in writing. First published in Arabic in 1969 to great acclaim, and never out of print since, it has been variously called a novel or a prose poem, while the author calls it an epic in prose, divided as it is into cantos.
- **[Poems of Alexandria and New York by Ahmed Morsi](#)**, translated by Raphael Cohen
Ahmed Morsi is a renowned painter as well as a prolific art critic, journalist, translator, and, as this book reveals to a new audience, a consummate poet. *Poems of Alexandria and New York*, Ahmed Morsi's first volume in English translation, captures the modernity and empathy at the heart of all his works, his surrealistic humour, and his visions of the dramas of ordinary life.