

# NELC NEWS

## LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

The academic year 2015-16 was an exciting and busy one in Yale NELC. Alongside the regular schedule of talks, seminars, and courses, we welcomed two Rosenthal lecturers to speak in the Department; congratulated alumni on their world-wide successes; and continued to sponsor successful exploratory expeditions in Egypt.

**Ayala Dvoretzky**, our dedicated and long-serving Senior Lecturer II in Hebrew, announced her retirement (p.6). A major gift of some 360 seals was featured in the *New York Times* (p.7). This fall sees Yale-wide celebrations of 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Edward



E. Salisbury's appointment to teach Arabic and Sanskrit (p.8). Finally, we are very sorry to report that **Etem Erol**, our much-loved Lecturer in Turkish and Ottoman, died suddenly over the winter break. A memorial service was held for family and friends in February (p.4).

## Activities 2015-2016

### Student news



NELC undergraduates wrap up their careers with distinction; students receive advanced degrees; three seniors are inducted into Phi Beta Kappa.



New positions, exhibitions, publications, and a baby: NELC alumni keep producing.

2, 5

### Faculty and research news



**Ozgen Felek** and **Orit Yeret** join the department as Lecturers in Turkish and Hebrew.



NELC welcomes post-doctoral fellow **Miriam Müller** to the Yale in Egypt team.

3-4, 6

## PROFESSOR SHAWKAT M. TOORAWA

We are thrilled to report that **Shawkat Toorawa**, a specialist in Arabic literature, began teaching at Yale in the fall of 2016.



After school in Paris, Hong Kong, and Singapore, Toorawa went to UPenn where he took a B.A. (Hons) in Arabic and Islamic Studies, an M.A. in modern Arabic literature, and a Ph.D. in classical Arabic literature. He has taught Arabic at Duke, medieval French literature and Indian Ocean studies at the University of Mauritius, and Arabic literature and Islamic Studies at Cornell.

His current research and teaching interests include the Qur'anic lexicon, in particular *hapax legomena* and rhyme-words; the literary and writerly culture of Abbasid Baghdad; the southwest Indian Ocean; the 18th century Indian author, Azad Bilgrami; the poetry of the modern Syro-Lebanese poet Adonis; and the Creole-language Mauritian author Dev Virahsawmy. A former Mellon Foundation New Directions Fellow, he is a Co-Executive Editor of the *Library of Arabic Literature*, for which he is preparing a critical edition of the *Shifa' al-'alil* by the belletrist Bilgrami. He is also a Director of the School of Abbasid Studies. As Professor of Arabic Literature, along with many other things Shawkat has brought his famous "Dr. T Project" to Yale.

## CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR STUDENTS!

**Moriah Rahamin** and **Megan Toon** graduated with distinction and departmental honors in May. Moriah, who is also an accomplished singer, presented an honors senior thesis on “Israel’s Rabbinical Courts: Gender Inequality in Personal Law and the Case of



Morian Rahamin



Megan Toon

Agunot.” Megan, a double major in Classics and a varsity runner, wrote her NELC senior thesis, “The Silent Voice of Ancient Egypt,” on funerary self-presentation in autobiographical

texts and iconography. **Mary Frazer** won the 2016 Horwitz Prize for her dissertation on “Akkadian Royal Letters in Later Tradition” and took her doctoral degree in the University ceremony in May. She is now a postdoctoral fellow on the Cuneiform



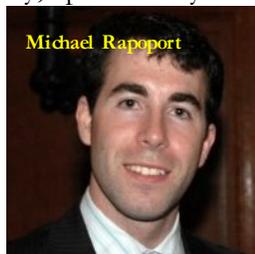
Mary Frazer

Commentaries Project. **Julia Goetz** (Graeco-Arabic) was awarded an M.Phil. after passing her comprehensive exams. In the Arabic and Islamic Studies track, **Michael Rapoport** had his prospectus approved in September; he received an M.Phil. in December. His research focuses on Arabic-Islamic intellectual history, particularly on



Julia Goetz

the history of philosophy and theology in the “post-Classical” period. Michael spent some time this summer in Cambridge, UK, researching Arabic manuscripts for his dissertation project. In 2016-17 as a Fellow



Michael Rapoport

in Yale’s McDougal Center for Teaching and Learning, he leads seminars on teaching. **Jonathan Beltz** joined the Assyriology program this fall; he has an M.A. from the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.



Jon Beltz

**Shiyanthi Thavapalan** was a Graduate Curatorial Intern at the Yale University Art Gallery in 2015-16, working on the Hellenistic and Roman glass from Dura Europos. In May she spoke on



Shiyanthi Thavapalan

“Stones that Melt and Wool that Shines: Akkadian Glass and Textile Terminology in Light of Recent Archaeological Evidence” in the Department of Ancient Near Eastern Art at the MMA. She spent

the summer in Berlin conducting research on colorful materials and technologies. **Matthew Glassman’s** prospectus was approved in fall 2015. He will produce the first comprehensive study of



Matthew Glassman

“The Mesopotamian Temple Tower,” or *ziggurat*.

Fellow Assyriologist **Nick Kraus** passed his exams and had his prospectus on “Cuneiform Education” approved in the spring. In April Nick spoke to the YIWSA workshop on “Signs of authority: Calligraphy and control in Sargonic Mesopotamia.”



Nick Kraus

**Shana Zaia** designed and taught her own course, “Reclaiming ancient heritage in the contemporary Middle East”; she also taught Akkadian to an eager group.



Shana Zaia and class in the Yale University Art Gallery

Finally—news that’s hot off the presses—three senior NELC majors **Sergio Tang**, **Caitlin Kropp**, and **Abby Elder** have just been inducted into Phi Beta Kappa. Many well deserved congratulations to all!

## FACULTY NEWS

**Sarab Al Ani** introduced the new class management system Canvas as part of a university-wide pilot study, and presented “The Uses of Canvas in a Language Class” in Yale’s Technological Summit for 2015. She organized, designed, and managed a



workshop at the FLAVA Conference, and was awarded a CLS Instructional Innovation Workshop “Community Based Language Teaching.” In Spring 2017 she will offer the new course, “Arabic Language in Cinema.” Perhaps her biggest news is that she and Mike welcomed twin boys, Danny and Janty. As well as working on the Cuneiform Commentaries Project, **Eckart Frahm** continued on the Steering Committee for YISAP, and again served NELC ably as DGS. In 2016-17 he and Irene Peirano Garrison (Classics) will co-direct the YISAP core seminar on “Fakes and Forgery.” Together with **Ben** and **Karen Foster**, **Mary Frazer**, **Agnete Wisti Lassen**, and **Enrique**



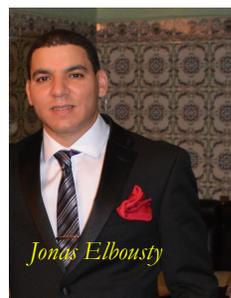
**Eckart Frahm and Enrique Jiménez together with Mario Monti, President of Bocconi University, Milan, and former Prime Minister of Italy**

**Jiménez**, Frahm participated in the University presidents’ tour of West Campus on April 13, on the occasion of the Global Colloquium on cultural preservation, showing and explaining items from the Babylonian Collection and related to the Cuneiform Commentaries Project. (More about the Collection on p. 7.) Yale Persian students, led by **Farkhondeh Shayesteh**, visited the Arts of Islam collection at the Yale Art Gallery (<http://artgallery.yale.edu/arts-islam>),

including manuscripts and miniatures from the Timurid and Safavid eras, ceramics from the Samanid and Seljuq dynasties, decorative doors and tiles from historic



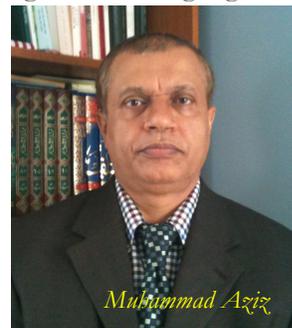
buildings, along with illustrated medieval manuscripts with calligraphy in *nasta’liq* script. Each student presented, in Persian, to the rest of the class about their chosen piece. **Jonas Elbousty** had a successful year teaching and continues as the Director of Yale’s Arabic Summer Abroad Program. In the fall he



**Jonas Elbousty**

became NELC’s Director of Undergraduate Studies. Last July, 2016, The Association of Yemeni literary history in Sanaa invited **Muhammad Ali Aziz** during his visit to Yemen to deliver a lecture about the status of the Arabic language in western countries. Dr. Aziz compared the status of teaching Arabic in the West with the status of teaching Arabic language in the Arab world, including Yemen. He also talked briefly about some aspects of the Sufi literature in Yemen, particularly the celebration of the Prophet Muhammad’s birthday. In addition, he spoke about his recent coauthored book with Jonas

Elbousty, entitled *Advanced Arabic Literary Reader*, as well as his forthcoming book, *The Islamic Sufi Aspects in the literary Thought of Najeeb Mahfouz*.



**Muhammad Aziz**



**Ozgen Felek**

**Ozgen Felek** joined NELC in January as Lector in Turkish. She holds Ph.D’s from Firat University and from Michigan. Before coming to Yale she was a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at CUNY and a Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow at Stanford.

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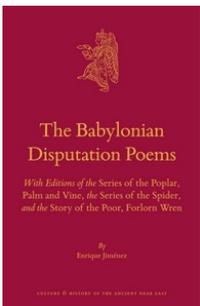
**Miriam Müller**, an archaeologist especially interested in the spatial organization of Egyptian domestic architecture in the pharaonic period and its social implications, came to NELC in the fall as a second Simpson postdoctoral fellow. She works alongside **Christina Geisen**, who has organized the Yale in Egypt Lecture series, last spring welcoming speakers Aidan Dodson, Katja Goebis, and Gregory Marouard. She presented her latest research results at the XI<sup>th</sup> International



Congress of Egyptologists in Florence and at the 41<sup>st</sup> Annual Symposium & Scholars' Colloquium of the Society for the Study of Egyptian Antiquities in Toronto. Beside active research and teaching, Christina this fall organized the conference "Ritual landscape and performance" (<http://egyptology.yale.edu/conferences>).



successful international conference "Ritual landscape and performance" forward to the publication by Brill of his book, *The Babylonian disputation poems*.



**Enrique Jiménez** looks forward to the publication by Brill of his book, *The Babylonian disputation poems*. **Alberto Urcia** continues his innovative work as our digital expert; in November he will present a paper on digitizing inscriptions in an international conference dedicated to "African rock art: Research, digital outputs, and heritage management," at the British Museum in London.



### Etem Erol Senior Lector of Turkish

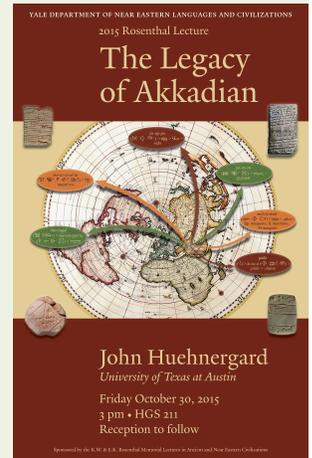
We are saddened to report that in January Etem passed away suddenly while traveling overseas. Services were held in Turkey where he was laid to rest in his birthplace as he had wished. His friends, family, and colleagues remembered him in a celebration in HGS on February 12. Tributes to Etem were published in the [Yale Herald](#) and [Yale Daily News](#).



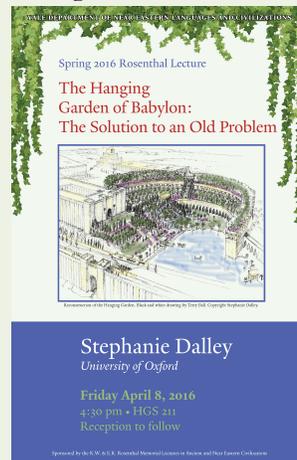
## ROSENTHAL LECTURES 2015-16

This past year NELC welcomed two speakers in the occasional series of K. W. and E. K. Rosenthal Memorial Lectures in Ancient and Near Eastern Civilizations, endowed in memory of his parents by Franz Rosenthal.

In October, in conjunction with the memorial events for **Bill Hallo** and co-sponsored by the Divinity School, a lively group heard John Heuhnergard, Professor in Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Texas, Austin, speak on "The Legacy of Akkadian."



In the spring, Stephanie Dalley, Emerita Professor at Oxford, Fellow of Wolfson College and of the Oriental Institute, Honorary Senior Research Fellow at Somerville College, spoke on "The Hanging Garden of Babylon: The Solution to an Old Problem." During her visit she also gave a graduate seminar to Yale's Assyriologists and their guests.



NELC will host a Rosenthal lecture in April as part of the Salisbury celebrations (p.8).

Find us on Facebook for more information: <https://www.facebook.com/nelc.yale.edu/>

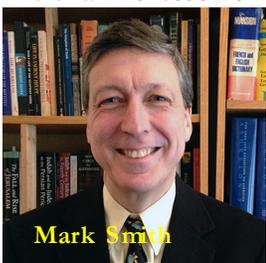
## ALUMNI NEWS

**Alicia Cunningham-Bryant** '12, Associate Director for Special Programs in the Intellectual Heritage Program at Temple, curated "Outside in: Violence and Expression in Afghan War Rugs." [There is extended coverage of the exhibit and a link to a video interview on the Temple site.](#)



Assistant Intellectual Heritage professor and the exhibit's curator, Alicia Cunningham-Bryant (left), discusses a rug on display.

**Mark S. Smith** '85 has left NYU to take up a chair at the Princeton Theological Seminary: he joins the Department of Biblical Studies as the Helena Professor of Old Testament Literature and Exegesis. Smith specializes in Israelite religion and the Hebrew Bible, as well as the literature and religion of the Late Bronze Age Ugarit.



Mark Smith

her work in remote sensing, using satellite imaging to identify potential archaeological sites in Egypt and elsewhere in the former Roman Empire. Parcak's groundbreaking work was covered generously in the newspapers, including the [New York Times](#).

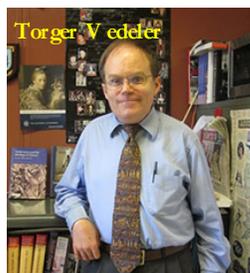


Sarah Parcak

**Sarah C. Melville** '94 (Clarkson University), has just published her newest book, *The Campaigns of Sargon II, King of Assyria 721-705 B.C.* with the University of Oklahoma Press.



Sarah Melville



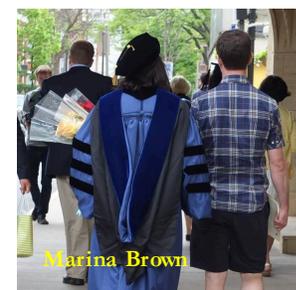
**Torger Vedeler** '06 has received tenure in the History Department at Central Connecticut State University, where he teaches comparative world religions, ancient Israel, and the ancient Near East.

**Mareike Koertner** '14 is now Assistant Professor in Religion at Trinity College, where she teaches and researches the religion of Islam, its history, civilizations, empires, and abiding social institutions. On July 3, she and her husband announced the birth of their son Ayan



Elyas Maghsoudi. **Niv Allon** '14 is an assistant curator at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Last year he curated "Romance along the Nile: ancient Egyptian love poetry," featuring translations of New

Kingdom poems and wall painting facsimiles by N. and N. de Garis Davies. Allon has also co-authored a book on ancient Egyptian scribes. Finally, we bid farewell to **Marina Wilding Brown** '15, who has finished her post-doctoral year; she will continue to conduct research on ancient Egyptian rock inscriptions. We wish her all good luck in her future.



Marina Brown

Our alumni would like to register here their sincere thanks for the continued generosity shown to the scholars of the Department by **William J. Horwitz**. His contributions have made possible an annual prize, awarded to the dissertation which has received the highest accolades from its external readers. Every May NELC awards this prize, whose presentation at the university ceremony is a highlight of our academic year.

## SPOTLIGHT ON THE HEBREW PROGRAM

A variety of cultural and educational activities inside and outside the classroom took place this year in the Hebrew program. The Hebrew and Arabic programs came together in the fall for a joint screening of “A Borrowed Identity” (2014) moderated by **Shiri Goren** and **Muhammad Aziz**. Its theme of a split Arab-Jewish identity continued in the spring with the semi-autobiographical theater performance, “In-Between” by Ibrahim Miari, which drew over 80 students. The next day Miari joined students for a conversation about the performance. Also in the fall, students of **Dina Roginsky** and Shiri Goren visited the Yale Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies. In February, Ruvik Rosenthal, a leading linguist, journalist and author, gave a public talk on “Israeli Hebrew: An Ongoing Language Revolution” and was a guest in the course “Biblical to Modern Hebrew.” In the spring we showed “Gett: The Trial of Vivian Amsalem” (2014), moderated by Roginsky and her student Moriah Rahamim



(p.2), and co-sponsored by the JCC of Greater New Haven. In April we collaborated with **Nanette Stahl**, curator of Yale Judaica Collection at SML, who spoke on historical Passover Haggadahs from around the world and showed items from the Yale Collection. Also in the spring, Dina introduced the course, “Biblical to Modern Hebrew,” which serves graduate students from YDS and Religious Studies. **Shiri Goren** was certified as an ACTFL OPI Tester of Hebrew. Her article “Remember Them All: Reimagining Collective Memory in Sayed Kashua’s Israeli Sitcom Arab Labor,” was accepted for publication in *As Seen on Israeli Television: Global Contexts, Local Vision*, edited by Miri Talmon (UTexas). She moderated the panel “The Language of Success – How to Pave the Road to a Thriving Academic Hebrew Program,” at The Association for Jewish Studies Annual Conference, as well as presenting new research on contemporary women novelists in Israel. Other elements from this project were presented at the National Association of Professors of Hebrew, Annual International Conference. There she organized the roundtable “Tried and True: Experiment

and Success in Hebrew Teaching.” In 2015 **Dina Roginsky** published the co-edited volume *Sara Levi-Tanai: A Life of Creation* which explores the multifaceted contribution of a Jewish-Yemenite woman artist who operated in pre-state Israel. She presented parts of this work at the Yale Performance Studies Working Group, and the International Conference of Arts and Science in Toronto. Dina’s research in progress includes expanding her work on students’ motivations and expectations to a broader analysis of Hebrew in US Higher Education, a project supported by a grant from the Yale Judaic Studies program. She has also been approved for ACTFL OPI Full Tester Certification! This fall the program will host a professional development seminar for professors and teachers of Hebrew, who will convene at Yale Oct. 28-30 to discuss “Assessment as a Means of Enhancing Hebrew Acquisition.”



We use this opportunity to send our warmest regards and to say goodbye to **Ayala Dvoretzky**, who retired at the end of the year. Ayala was an invaluable part of Yale for 31 years, in which she built and developed the Hebrew program and became a pillar of strength and wisdom for everyone in NELC. Her service to the Yale community was acknowledged at an event hosted by the CLS and also in the final meeting of the Faculty of Arts and Science, where Ayala was among the very first cohort of retiring non-ladder faculty who were officially acknowledged in front of the assembly. Our colleague **Ben Foster** wrote a tribute which we reprint in full on page 7. Ayala promises to continue advising the program, and will co-organize the fall Hebrew workshop. A farewell event took place on Saturday October 29 at 7:00 PM at Luce Hall. We add a special note from Ayala, who wishes to thank NELC faculty for being a warm and special family for 31 years and great appreciation for the most generous retirement gift.



**Shiri Goren** is the new Director of the Hebrew Program and we welcome as a new lector and colleague **Orit Yeret**, who joins us from Vanderbilt. She holds an M.A. in Hebrew and Comparative Literature from the University of Haifa, and has a Certificate in Teaching Hebrew as a Second Language, from the Hebrew College in Boston.

## Babylonian Collection News

In March 2016 the Babylonian Collection received a gift from a private collection of Near Eastern works of art, primarily from ancient Mesopotamia. The donation, made by Olga Draiggs and William David in memory of Nazim and Elias Solomon David, includes nearly 400 stamp and cylinder seals, as well as bronzes, terracotta plaques, cuneiform inscriptions, gems, Islamic astrolabes, and sculptures. The collection was obtained in the early 20th century by Elias Solomon David, an antiquities dealer based in Paris and New York, who worked closely with the YBC at that time. This gift reunites pieces from the collection of E. S. David and will add significantly to our knowledge of ancient art. The core of the donation is 360 cylinder seals that would have been used for legal and economic dealings as a signature. The cylinder seals, which span the fourth to the first millennium,



Chalcedony cylinder seal showing a divine hero wrestling two bulls. Neo-Babylonian period, late 8<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> century BCE.

are “miniature works of art representing thousands of years of art history,” says **Agnete Wisti Lassen**, associate curator of the YBC. “These intricately carved, tiny pieces with elaborate imagery are one of the most important art forms that we have from ancient Mesopotamia.” “Even beyond their intrinsic value and beauty, these objects are a superb teaching and learning tool for coming generations of students,” says **Benjamin R. Foster**, curator of the Collection and professor of Assyriology. “This is a rare opportunity for the collection to obtain ancient works in accordance with current legal and ethical policies regarding such acquisitions.”

The [YBC was also in the news in April of this year](#), when YBC 7289, “Old Babylonian Period Mathematical Text,” was scanned in 3D by the University’s IPCH team. Finally, Lassen has curated an exhibit which just opened on “The Art of Deception,” featuring fakes and forgeries from the collection: these unlikely treasures are on view now on the third floor of SML. Lassen plans an exhibition seminar to go along with the display.



## Ayala Dvoretzky: a tribute, on her retirement

Modern Hebrew in the Yale curriculum has burgeoned from a one-semester course in simple conversation to a rich sequence of offerings in literature, film, print and electronic media, socio-political, poetic, and scholarly discourse. Ayala Dvoretzky has nurtured and guided this program from its wobbly infancy to its now sturdy maturation. She has brought to her task the gentle hand of a mother, the firm grip of an IDF sergeant, and the unwavering dedication of the Zionist pioneers who developed the language itself, along with its dynamic, vibrant culture, from the traditions and storehouses of many kindreds and tongues. When Ayala began, classroom technology was largely chalk and eraser, maybe some scratchy cassettes captured late at night from Israeli radio broadcasts, and the last working mimeograph machine at Yale, but she was ever keen to acquire the best of what was new and to adapt it for Hebrew instruction. Day after day, for more than three decades, Ayala wrought her schoolroom magic to an often adoring, even fanatical student following, well earning her Yale College Teaching Prize. Each class, she worked, with patience, creativity, and unrelenting high expectations, to build and practice the structures, patterns, instincts, and sensibilities her devotees needed to achieve an authentic command of the language they sought to make their own. Ayala was the “urim vetumim,” as Israelis say, for the cohorts of students who sought her wisdom and compassion — their mentor, their academic and senior thesis advisor, or the listening, caring adult they felt they needed — so that when she left the classroom her day as a teacher had only begun.

Ayala was one of the first language lecturers to take an active role in departmental and university administration. Hers was a voice of reason, integrity, and common sense in departmental affairs and hers a watchful eye for the interests of her program and whatever small curricular grants were ripe to pluck for its support. It was Ayala who brought to Yale the best Hebrew-teaching faculty and initiated them into her ways and standards, at the same time encouraging them to grow and develop as individuals with their own teaching strategies and interests. She served on a United Nations of language review committees; she stepped forward as a leader in the diffusion of Israeli culture at Yale, be it films, poetry readings, seminars, or collaborative events.

Ezra Stiles once opined that knowledge of Hebrew would allow Yale students, when they went to heaven, to understand what the angels were singing. The goals of Yale’s Hebrew curriculum have considerably diversified since then, and we salute our long-time friend and colleague, Ayala Dvoretzky, for making this happen.

*Ben Foster, May 2016*

Please send us your news!! Email [miguel.perez-cabello@yale.edu](mailto:miguel.perez-cabello@yale.edu) or send to the address below

## YALE NELC

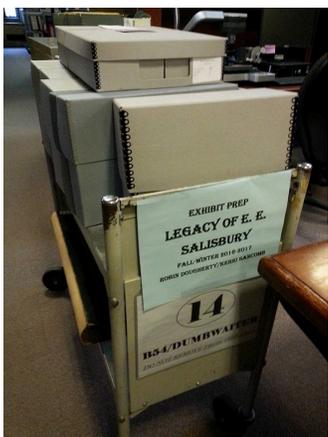
Yale University, P.O. Box 208236  
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## EDWARD ELBRIDGE SALISBURY CELEBRATIONS

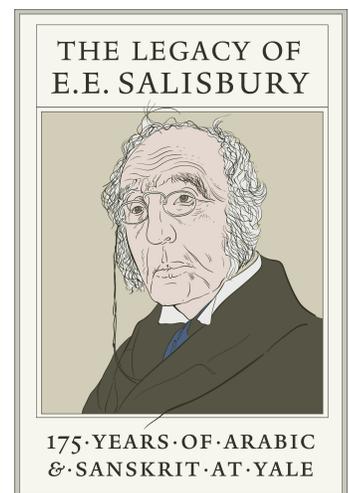
In 1841 Edward Elbridge Salisbury (1814-1901) was appointed to teach Arabic and Sanskrit at Yale. His research interests and teaching spanned all of what was then known as “Oriental languages” and more, including Persian, Arabic, Sanskrit, Egyptian art, textual criticism, manuscript studies, cultural studies, history—the list goes on and on. During the calendar year 2016-17, events all across the



University celebrate his legacy. Kicking things off is an exhibit in Sterling Memorial Library’s Memorabilia Room, curated by **Robin Dougherty**, Librarian for Middle East Studies, who accompanied

the exhibit opening with an informative and entertaining curator’s talk on September 21, 2016 in the Sterling Library’s Lecture Hall.

Look for the logo on talks, exhibits, and performances during the year, and follow the events on [Facebook](#). Participating groups from across Yale include the NELC Department, the Yale University Art Gallery, the Beinecke Library, the Yale Babylonian Collection, the Council on Middle East Studies, the Departments of Art History and Religious Studies, and Sterling Memorial Library. More on the website: <http://salisbury175.yale.edu/>



Thanks to Chris Kraus and especially to the indefatigable Arturo Perez-Cabello for writing and editing. This is the third installment of NELC News.