

# Maroun El Houkayem

## Curriculum Vitae

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## Education

- Ph.D. Graduate Program in Religion, Duke University, 2026
- M.A. Duke University, 2023  
*Religious Studies*
- M.A. University College London, 2020  
*Late Antique and Byzantine Studies with distinction*
- Licence Sorbonne University: Faculty of Arts and Humanities, 2019  
*History with High Honors (Mention Bien)*  
Erasmus + Exchange at University College London, 2018-2019

## Professional Appointments

2026-Present Devonshire Collections Research Fellow, Chatsworth House Trust & Art Fund

## Publications

### Refereed Journal Articles

- 2024 “Opening the Closet: Manuscripts, Archives, and the Smith Sisters,” *Bulletin for the Study of Religion* 53 (2): 50-54.
- 2023 “Orientalism, Disorientation, and the ‘Other Side of the World,’” *Studies in Late Antiquity* 7 (2): 171-183.

### Refereed Book Chapters

Forthcoming “Narratives and Collections: Retelling the Story of the Claudius Rich Manuscripts,” in *Towards a History of Syriac Studies in the UK: Scholars, Manuscripts, and Digital Humanities* Edited by Alberto Rigolio and Mara Nicosia (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

### Book Reviews

- 2025 Solicited review of Björn Forsén and Antti Lampinen (eds.), *Oriental Mirages. Stereotypes and Identity Creation in the Ancient World* (Oriens et Occidens 42) Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2024, *The Classical Review*, 75(2): 581-

583.

## Exhibits

2023 “Fragmented Qur’āns and Fragments of the Qur’ān,” *Manuscript Migration: The Multiple Lives of the Rubenstein Library’s Collections*, Duke University

## Digital

2021 “Qur’ān, Surah 1 and 112-114,” *Omeka Manuscript Migration Lab Sandbox*

## Grants, Awards, and Fellowships

2026-2027	Devonshire Research Fellowship, Art Fund & Chatsworth House	(£59,000)
2025-2026	Sixth Year Tuition Scholarship, Duke University	(\$10,430)
2025	Conference Travel Award, Duke University Graduate School	(\$1000)
2025	Visiting Fellow, The Future of the Past Lab: Exploring the Assumptions of Cultural History, University of Minnesota	(\$3000)
2024-2025	James B. Duke International Research Travel Fellowship, Duke University	(\$32,000)
2024	American Academy of Religion Travel Grant	(\$500)
2024	Conference Travel Award, Duke University Graduate School	(\$1000)
2022	Summer Research Fellowship, Duke University	(\$9000)
2022	Graduate Award for Research and Training, Duke University Center for International & Global Studies	(\$800)
2022	Gurney Harriss Kearns Grant Award, Duke University	(\$500)
2021	Zavarro Fellowship, Beth Mardutho: The Syriac Institute	(\$1000)
2021	Summer Research Fellowship, Duke University	(\$9000)
2018-2019	Erasmus + Grant, European Commission	(€2200)

## Invited Talks and Lectures

2026	“Hidden Journeys: Investigating Objects, Bodies, and Histories,” Chatsworth House Trust, May 1
2026	“What’s in a Name: The African Venus,” Chatsworth House Trust, May 1
2025	“Turning the Page: Forgotten Texts, Rescue Apologetics, and Manuscript Collections,” <i>The Future of the Past Lab: Exploring the Assumptions of Cultural History</i> , University of Minnesota, March 24
2023	“From Dirty to Unstable: The Middle East and Manuscripts,” <i>South West Asia</i>

and North Africa (S.W.A.N.A.) Forum for Social Justice, University College London, June 26

## Conference Activity

### Conference organization

- 2024 Co-organizer, *Performing the Sacred: Soundscapes and Senses in the Late Ancient and Medieval World*, Elizabeth A. Clark Center for Late Ancient Studies, Duke University, April 12
- 2022 Member of the External Planning Committee, *Dorushe Graduate Student Conference on Syriac Studies*, Fordham University, June 9-10

### Paper Presentations

- [2026] “Plantations, Ruins, and Syriac: The James Dawkins Manuscripts,” Book History and Biblical Literatures Unit, *Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting*, Denver, CO
- [2026] “Mining the Sacred: Monasteries, Manuscripts, and the Histories of Orientalist Collecting,” Orientalism and the Levant during the Second Half of the Second Millennium, 1500–2000 and Western Educational Missions in the Levant, 1300–1945, *Aram 58<sup>th</sup> International Conference*, Oxford, UK
- 2025 “From Sacred Spaces to Entitled Access: Monasteries, Manuscripts, and the Orientalist Imaginary,” Syriac Studies Unit, *Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting*, Boston, MA, November 22-25
- 2024 “‘Our Manuscripts Have Been in Great Danger in Recent Days’: The Bibliothèque Orientale, Beirut, and the Trials of World War I,” The Politics of Materiality and Middle Eastern Christianity, Middle Eastern Christianity Unit, *American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting*, San Diego, CA, November 22-26
- 2024 “Reassembling the Orient: Louis Cheikho and the Bibliothèque Orientale,” Material Culture in the Middle East Panel, *Middle East Studies Association Annual Meeting*, November 11-16
- 2024 “Retelling the Story: Claudius Rich’s Syriac Manuscripts,” *Syriac Studies in the UK: Past, Present, Future*, Durham University, Durham, U.K., March 21-23
- 2022 “Power and Appropriation: Manuscript Catalogues,” Religion, Colonialism, and Postcolonialism unit, *American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting*, Denver, CO, November 19-22
- 2022 “Langue et Pouvoir : Le Commentaire de Daniel de Salah sur le Psaume 83,” *XIII Symposium Syriacum et XIe Congrès d’études arabes chrétiennes*, Paris, France, July 4-9
- 2022 “Experiencing Language: Elias of Nisibis and Arabic,” Syriac and the Other,

*Dorushe Graduate Student Conference on Syriac Studies*, Fordham University, New York, June 9-10

- 2022 “‘Foreign to divine order and ecclesiastical rule’: the career of Melitius of Lycopolis,” *Heresy and Discipline*, *North American Patristics Society*, Chicago, IL, May 26-28
- 2022 “A Syriac Orthodox Community of Discourse: From Timothy Aelurus to Daniel of Salah,” *Syriac and Anti-Chalcedonian Authors*, *Inaugural Graduate Conference on Early Christian Studies*, Notre Dame University, May 23-25
- 2021 “Syriac OCR on escriptorium,” *Syriac Digital Humanities: Summer 2021 Mini-Symposium*, Beth Mardutho the Syriac Institute, August 9

### **Campus Talks**

- 2022 “Reassembling Otto Ege’s Qur’āns,” *Manuscript Migration Lab*, Duke University, April 7
- 2021 “From Cairo to Durham: P.Duk.Inv. 274 and Anton Fackelmann,” *Manuscript Migration Lab*, Duke University, April 5

### **Paper Discussions, Book Talks, and Workshops**

- 2025 “More Than Records: The Case for Archives as Cultural Heritage,” *Institute of Advanced Study Creative & Research Collaborative: Interrogating Archives Working Group*, University of Minnesota, March 28
- 2025 “Manuscripts in Conflict: The Bibliothèque Orientale During WWI,” Response by Dr. Süphan Kirmizialtin, *Histories of Textual Production and Circulation Panel*, *New Directions in The Study of the Arab World*, *Annual Graduate Student Research Workshop*, NYU Abu Dhabi, February 24
- 2024 Co-organizer, *A Landscape of War: Ecologies of Resistance and Survival in South Lebanon*, Dr. Munira Khayyat, Duke University Middle Eastern Studies Center, October 31
- 2023 “Desiring Manuscripts: From Biblical Truth to Preservation and Progress” *Digital Humanities 2.0*, *Authoritative Texts and Their Reception Research School Spring Seminar*, University of Oslo, Athens, Greece, March 19
- 2023 Respondent, “Ethical Expectations and Normative Countermovements in Platform Work: A Critical-theoretical Perspective,” Adriano Lotito, *Digital Humanities 2.0*, *Authoritative Texts and Their Reception Research School Spring Seminar*, University of Oslo, Athens, Greece, March 11
- 2023 Respondent, “The Daily Worship in the Syriac Setting: Melkite Liturgical Psalters Between Palestine and Central Asia,” Natalia Smelova, *Digital Humanities 2.0*, *Authoritative Texts and Their Reception Research School Spring Seminar*, University of Oslo, Athens, Greece, March 12

- 2022 Co-organizer, “Gender Studies in and on Afghanistan or *jender bazi*: The Neoliberal University, Knowledge Production and Labor under Military Occupation,” Dr. Paniz Musawi Natanzi, *Middle East Graduate Seminar*, Duke University, November 3
- 2022 Co-organizer, “‘Irrespective of Community or Creed’: Charity, Solidarity and the 1927 Jericho Earthquake,” Dr. Sarah Irving, *Middle East Graduate Seminar*, Duke University, March 23
- 2022 “Orientalism, Disorientation, and ‘the Other Side of the World,’” Response by Dr. Ellen McLarney, *Middle East Graduate Seminar*, Duke University, March 16
- 2021 Co-organizer, “North African, Middle Eastern, Arabic and Diasporic Science Fiction,” Dr. Sinéad Murphy, *Middle East Graduate Seminar*, Duke University, November 19
- 2021 Co-organizer, *Visions of Beirut: The Urban Life of Media Infrastructure*, Dr. Hatim El-Hibri, *Middle East Graduate Seminar*, Duke University, October 15
- 2021 Respondent and Co-organizer, “Heritage and Destruction in the Middle East,” Workshop with Dr. Lina Tahan, *Middle East Graduate Seminar*, Duke University, September 17

## **Popular Media**

- 2025 “Preserving the Past,” *Future of the Past Podcast* with Dr. Stephen Ahearne-Kroll, University of Minnesota

## **Academic Teaching Experience**

### **Duke University – Teaching Assistant**

#### *Department of Religious Studies*

- 2026 Religion and Film
- 2023 Religion and Film
- 2022 Religion and Science
- 2022 Introduction to Religious Studies

#### *Department of Art, Art History, and Visual Studies*

- 2021 Jerusalem

### **Guest Lecturer**

- 2025 Manuscripts and Colonialism, Injustices in the Study of Ancient Religion, University of Minnesota, March 26 (Postgraduate)

## **Academic Service**

### **Membership in projects**

- 2026 Research Associate, Religious Ruins: A Living Archive Project, Duke University
- 2024-2025 Editor, Claudius Rich Journals Transcription Project, The British Museum
- 2023-2024 Research Associate for the National Endowment for the Humanities-funded Sinai Manuscripts Data Portal Project, University of California Los Angeles Library
- 2022 Editor on the Bible Annotations Committee for the Syriac-English Antioch Bible, Gorgias Press

### **Additional Education and Appointments**

- 2025-2026 Research Assistant for Dr. Chloe Kattar, Oxford University, School of Global and Area Studies
- 2024 The Third Doha Workshop for Combating Illicit Traffic in Cultural Property, Qatar National Library, Doha, Qatar
- 2023 Social Media Manager, The Digital Orientalist
- 2023 Digital Humanities 2.0, Authoritative Texts and Their Reception Research School Spring Seminar, University of Oslo, Athens, Greece
- 2023 Workshop on Roman and Holy See Archives, Istituto Sangalli per la storia e le culture religiose, Rome, Italy
- 2023 Mentor, MA Mentorship Program, Department of Religious Studies, Duke University
- 2021-2023 Graduate Student Representative, Graduate Program in Religion, Duke University
- 2022 Arabic Language Examiner, Department of History, Duke University
- 2021-2023 Graduate Coordinator, Middle East Graduate Seminar, Duke University
- 2021 Introductory Course in Arabic Manuscript Studies, Hill Museum & Manuscript Library
- 2021 Syriac Digital Humanities Internship, Beth Mardutho: The Syriac Institute
- 2020-2023 Graduate Affiliate, Manuscript Migration Lab, Duke University
- 2020-2021 Research Assistant for Dr. Jennifer Knust, Duke University
- 2019-2020 Graduate Student Representative, MA Late Antique and Byzantine Studies, University College London
- 2018 Square Supervisor, Abila of the Decapolis Archeological Dig, John Brown University, Jordan

### **Relevant Non-Academic Experience**

- 2022 Organizer, "Beirut: The Aftermath," Documentary Screening, *Middle East Graduate Seminar*, Duke University, March 29

2019-2020 French Teacher with The Francophone Society, University College London  
2018-2020 Event Coordinator with The Lebanese Society, University College London  
2018-2020 Ambassador, Just Like Us: LGBT+ Charity for Young People, London

## Languages

### Ancient

Latin  
Greek  
Syriac  
Coptic

### Modern

Arabic (Native)  
French (Fluent)  
English (Fluent)  
Italian (Beginner)

## Professional Memberships

British Institute for the Study of Iraq, 2024-  
Arab Council for the Social Sciences, 2023-  
Istituto Sangalli per la storia e le culture religiose, 2023-  
American Academy of Religion, 2022-  
Authoritative Texts and Their Reception Research School, 2022-  
Byzantine Studies Association of North America, 2022-  
Middle Eastern Studies Association, 2022-  
North American Patristics Society, 2022-  
Society of Biblical Literature, 2022-  
Rotaract Byblos, 2015-2016  
Interact Byblos, 2014-2015

## Academic References

**Jennifer Knust**, Professor  
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