

## David Shulman to give Finzi-Contini Lectures

The Whitney Humanities Center is pleased to announce that David Shulman of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem will deliver two Finzi-Contini lectures on Wednesday, November 7, and Thursday, November 8, 2018. His talks, “Caught in the Cogs of Time (1): ‘The City of Copper’ from the *Thousand and One Nights*” and “Caught in the Cogs of Time (2): From Arabic to Tamil to *Mimosas* of Oliver Laxe,” will take place at 5 pm in the WHC Auditorium at 53 Wall Street. Wednesday’s talk will be preceded by a screening of Laxe’s film *Mimosas* at 3 pm in the Auditorium. All three events are free and open to the public.

Probably the spookiest story in the *Arabian Nights*, the “City of Copper” (*madīnat al-nuḥās*) tells of a caravan lost in the desert and its serendipitous discovery of a forgotten city of the dead. The story has a long, continuous history in Arabic, Persian, Armenian, and—crucial for these lectures—in Tamil: the Tamil version by Imām al-‘Arūs (c. 1850), first recorded in the Arabic script, may well be the first appearance of modern literary prose in that language. Shulman will explore the meanings of this story in its various tellings, including Laxe’s film. Buried in the City of Copper lie, so it seems, the secret codes and rhythms of time.

David Shulman was born in Iowa and studied at the Hebrew University, the School of Oriental and African Studies in London, and various sites in India. Professor Emeritus at the Hebrew University, he specializes in the languages and cultural history of southern India with special emphasis on Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, and Sanskrit. Among his publications are *More than Real: A History of the Imagination in South India* (2012) and *Tamil: A Biography* (2016). He is an activist in Ta‘ayush, one of the most persistent of the Israeli-Palestinian peace and human-rights groups, and the author of a new book on this subject: *Freedom and Despair: Notes from the South Hebron Hills* (2018). He is a passionate devotee of Carnatic and Hindustani music.

The Finzi-Contini Lectureship honors Bianca M. Finzi-Contini Calabresi, a scholar of European literature and a native of Ferrara who left fascist Italy to establish herself in the United States. The lectureship was founded by her sons, the Honorable Guido Calabresi, Judge, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, and Dr. Paul Calabresi. The distinguished list of past lecturers includes Umberto Eco, A. S. Byatt, Orhan Pamuk, W. S. Merwin, Azar Nafisi, Alberto Manguel, and Maxine Hong Kingston. The lectures are devoted to any aspect of European or comparative literature and culture.

For more information, please contact the Whitney Humanities Center at 203 432-0670 or email [whitneyhumanitiescenter@yale.edu](mailto:whitneyhumanitiescenter@yale.edu)