

ISSUE 2 - JUNE 24

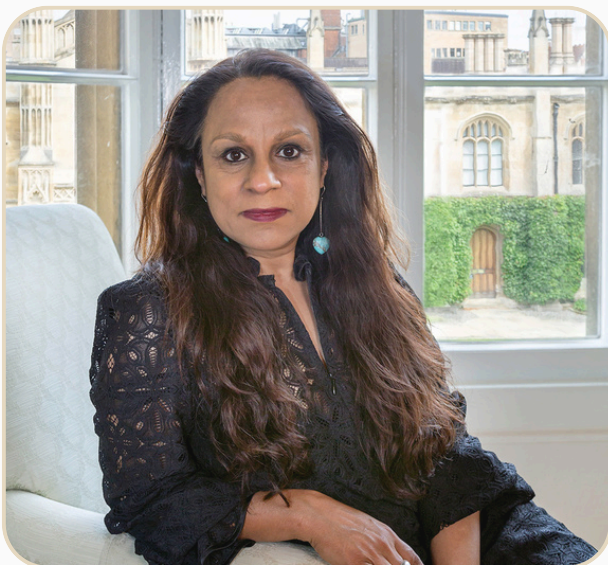
# GLOBAL HUMANITIES INITIATIVE

Official Newsletter of the Global Humanities Initiative

## Director's Welcome

BY PROF SHRUTI KAPILA

This has been a most exciting and active time for Global Humanities. Just a year ago the Network met for the first time in person and as I write this note the first Summer School is currently underway in Nanjing, China. It has had a tremendous response from students. A lot has been done in very little time! The mobility scheme is now truly well instituted with productive exchanges across the network and disciplines. The research and publications agenda are off to a flying start with a stellar list of authors who have committed to write for the flagship Elements series. The reading groups are forging new and collaborative research communities. Just as colleagues whether in Classics or in Art are making active links to create new and equal global research partnerships. There is much to celebrate!



**Shruti Kapila**

Professor of History and Politics  
Corpus Christi College

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# GHI - Trinity Lectures 2024

BY PROF HANS VAN DE VEN

“Homo Artifex Series” - with Mr Burhan Sonmez

Burhan Sonmez, the Turkish and Kurdish novelist and poet, delivered the inaugural Trinity – Global Humanities Lectures this May. Sonmez used the occasion to introduce a powerful idea: Home Artifex.

Surveying a wide range of writers, ranging from Jorge Luis Borges to the ancient Chinese philosopher Zhuangzi, he described how artists have shaped civilizations by pointing toward transcendental truths through their creations. At a time when the humanities are being marginalized and funding for the arts is drying up, this was an eloquent defence of Man the Artist.

Through his vivid PowerPoint illustrations and by sharing his own life experiences, including as a political prisoner in Turkey, Sonmez created an intimate, magical-realist atmosphere. His dialogue with the audience continued long after the allotted time. The post-lecture dinners at Trinity College provided an opportunity to continue the conversation for those students and academics fortunate enough to have been included. This new element in the expanding range of Global Humanities activities in Cambridge could not have gone off to a better start.

[Watch the full “HOMOARTIFEX SERIES” here](#)



**Mr Burhan Sonmez during his second lecture: “From Truth to Beauty”**

**"The future  
depends on  
what we do in  
the present."**

MAHATMA GANDHI



*Trinity Lecture Series  
Winstanley Hall May 2024*





## GHI - Elements Series

BY ALEX WRIGHT

Senior Executive Publisher & Head of Humanities at CUP

What are the humanities for? How can we try to resist the scepticism that in so many quarters now greets a liberal arts degree (1)? And how can we attempt to move beyond notions of humanistic scholarly enquiry that characterise the humanities exclusively in terms of historical value or legacy curation, crucially important as those things assuredly are? These are questions with which I'm obliged to wrestle almost daily. As I see it, they frame my entire role at CUP, and in all likelihood will determine whether or not I'm eventually judged to have been successful in it. That's why working on the Elements in Global Humanities project, with my colleagues and now friends at the Global Humanities Network, has been so exciting and inspiring. Because that process of collaboration has helped me to see fresh ways forward: inviting tracks that begin to move us beyond familiar tropes about the humanities and take us deep inside the mythago wood. Our Elements programme is at this point well advanced at the Press, and we already have many successful projects on the stocks. It enables the publication of micrographs of 20-30,000 words, organised by thematic series, to be published very rapidly (within 3 months of submission) both in print form and digitally – and, for the first few weeks, allowing our readers download access entirely gratis. That said, the Elements in Global Humanities will I believe offer us something quite fresh and singular. This new series (formally approved by the Press Syndicate on 22 March) is to be edited by the talented trio of Saul Dubow, Malvika Maheshwari and Frisbee Sheffield. It will draw on the expertise of all the partners involved in the GH Network, including a supporting editorial board. Focused on outreach, boldly situating the future of humanities scholarship against the intermeshed backdrop of a globalising world, it will still be rooted in the local, the regional, and the particular. (No bland 'one world' holism here!) Our sparkling new series will offer a much greater diversity of voices than is ordinarily found in projects of this sort. It will explore – pluralistically, optimistically and self-confidently – some of the most pressing issues facing humankind, in so doing interrogating what the humanities can bring to pertinent questions not just of the past and present but also of the future.

(1) <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2023/03/06/the-end-of-the-english-major>

## Elements Main Editors



**Saul Dubow**

Commonwealth History  
University of Cambridge



**Malvika Maheshwari**

Political Science  
Ashoka University  
Delhi, India



**Frisbee Sheffield**

Ancient Philosophy  
University of Cambridge



**Global  
Humanities  
Network**



# GHI - CLASSICS BEYOND BORDERS

BY DR FRISBEE SHEFFIELD

Faculty of Classics & Director of Studies at Downing College

Classics Beyond Borders is a collaboration between the Department of Philosophy and Classics at the University of Ghana and the [Faculty of Classics in Cambridge](#). Collaborating with universities across the world forms a crucial part of attempts to reclaim Classics from its colonial legacy and reinvigorate the discipline.

Building on shared interest in Plato, we began the collaboration with a hybrid seminar which read Plato's Republic. The first results of our collaborative work were showcased at the [Classical Association conference 2023](#). Michael Okyere Asante travelled to Cambridge to deliver an excellent lecture "[Decolonising Classics: Lessons from Africa](#)".

In September 2023 scholars from Cambridge travelled to Ghana for a workshop on Plato and community building. This September the University of Ghana will hold a conference supported by colleagues in Cambridge to relaunch the Classical Association of Ghana, bringing together scholars from across Africa with colleagues in Europe and the USA.

We have also been assisting the University of Ghana's teaching programme in Greek and Latin with an online course for postgraduate students. We plan to work together to produce translations of Greek and Latin texts into local African languages to foster a greater sense of agency and inclusion in the reading of Classical texts.

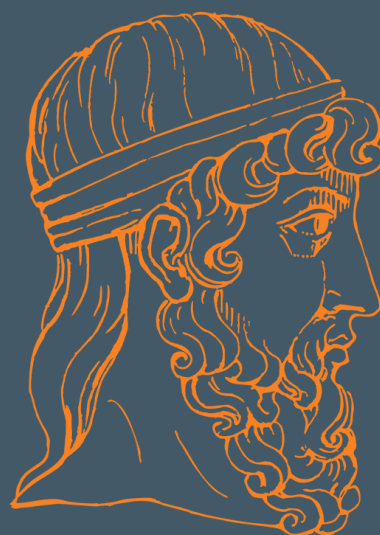
The project is now in its third year.



*"Stephen Oppong Peprah and Frisbee Sheffield discussing Plato"*



*Michael Okyere Asante  
Cambridge - Apr 2023*





## GHI - Mobility Scheme Awards 24/25

Would you like to establish research collaborations with international scholars in India, China, Chile, Turkey or South Africa? What about co-teaching at one of our partner universities for a few weeks? The mobility scheme is open to Cambridge academics in the School of Arts and Humanities, as well as the Faculty of History.” The next call will be issued early in the Michaelmas Term.

**Next Award Call ! → Monday 16 September 2024**



**Prof Bird (Philosophy - Cambridge) travelled to Fudan (China) 2024**



**Prof Hernandez (Architecture - Cambridge) travelled to UDP (Chile) 2024**

## Testimonials



**Prof Hernandez at UDP  
Chile - 2024**

*"We accomplished all the objectives and set the foundation for future projects. It was a very enlightening and productive visit. I am very pleased with outcomes and very excited about the possibility of future collaborations"*

**Dr Felipe Hernandez  
(Cambridge-UDP)  
Associate Professor of Architecture & Urban Studies**



**Prof Bird at Fudan University  
China 2024**

*"Visiting Fudan was a thoroughly rewarding experience, both intellectually and in the enjoyment of Shanghai."*

**Prof Alexander Bird  
(Cambridge-Fudan)  
Chair of the Faculty of Philosophy**





## MEET THE TEAM: GHI Steering Group Members

At Cambridge, the Global Humanities Initiative is embedded in the School of Arts and Humanities and is one of three priority themes set out by the School in its 2020-2030 Vision. The initiative is led and supported by four Directors: Hans van de Ven (FAMES), Shruti Kapila (History), Esra Özyürek (Divinity), and Chris Young (MMLL and Head of School); a coordinator: Greta Mijares; and a steering committee with representatives from departments and faculties within the school. Its role is to advise and support the directors in the consolidation and expansion of the initiative.



Dr Frisbee Sheffield  
(Classics)



Mr Alex Wright  
(University Press)



Prof. Joanna Page  
(CRASSH)



Mr. Neal Spencer  
(Fitzwilliam Museum)



Dr Carlos Fonseca  
(MMLL)



Prof Ioanna Sitaridou  
(MMLL)



Dr Alessandro Bianchi  
(University Library)



Dr Maja Wallberg  
(Strategic Partnerships)



Dr. Anna Cieslik  
(Research Office)



Prof Saul Dubow  
(History)



Dr Alisha Lola Jones  
(Music)



Prof Charles Forsdick  
(MMLL)



Dr Ángel Gurría-Quintana  
(VC Office)



Prof Amira Bennison  
(FAMES)



Prof. Christine van Ruymbeke  
(FAMES)



Prof. Catherine Pickstock  
(Divinity)