

ISSUE 7 - OCTOBER 2025

GLOBAL HUMANITIES INITIATIVE

Official Newsletter of the Global Humanities Initiative

Director's Welcome

BY CHRIS YOUNG

It was at Shanghai airport, after an inspiring visit to the Universities of Nanjing and Fudan that the idea for a Global Humanities Initiative was born. That was in January 2020, just two months before the outbreak of the pandemic, from which the world has now thankfully moved on.

How gratifying, therefore, to read in this edition of the trip made by my medievalist colleagues, Miranda Griffin and Maire Ni Mhaonaigh, to the same universities, and the arrival of a number of colleagues travelling in the opposite direction. We are sure that these and other visits will bear multiple fruits, both individual and institutional. Elsewhere the issue reports on the continued success of our Elements series (which has ten volumes in the pipeline), showcases the exciting activities of the Francophone Programme (from Haiti to Senegal) under Charles Forsdick and Doyle Calhoun, and spotlights valued partners in India.

Global Humanities is a collective and expansive effort – and we welcome interest from anyone who would like to contribute.



Chris Young

Professor of Modern and Medieval German Studies
(Master, St Edmund's College)

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GHI - Mobility Scheme

This section highlights recent visits and academic exchanges supported by the GH Mobility Scheme Award, which is now open for a fifth round until November 10th. From keynote lectures to collaborative workshops, these engagements foster connections across institutions and disciplines, enriching research and cultural understanding through shared experiences and new partnerships.

Dr Chen Chang (English - Nanjing University) visiting Faculty of MMLL - June 2025

As part of the Global Humanities programme, Dr Chen Chang from the University of Nanjing visited Cambridge to deliver the keynote lecture at the [“Migrations and Environmental Transformations”](#) workshop, hosted by the [Centre for the Study of Global Human Movement](#) at Newnham College on 10 June. Her talk, “World Literature and the Ecological Chronotope,” explored how contemporary Chinese fiction engages with themes of environmental change and globalization. The event brought together scholars from diverse disciplines for panels, hands-on sessions led by [Resource 12](#), and postgraduate short talks. The workshop was praised as a successful venture and is expected to strengthen collaborative research between Cambridge and Nanjing with future initiatives.



Collaborative Workshop on “Material Migration” - Pavilion Room at Newnham College (June 2025)

Dr Jing Liao (CMES - Fudan University) visiting FAMES - July 2025

Dr Jing Liao, Associate Professor at Fudan University, joined the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies for a one-month fellowship supported by the Cambridge Global Humanities Network. Her research on Sino-Arab relations and Muslim immigrants in Europe led to collaborative plans with Cambridge scholars, including a proposed Fudan–Cambridge Summer School and symposium in 2026. She agreed to co-develop projects on Gulf geopolitics, China–Arab trade networks, and minority integration in Europe. Dr Liao also agreed to contribute to curriculum design through workshops on Arabic language and intercultural communication. Her visit fostered meaningful academic exchange and laid the groundwork for sustained inter-institutional collaboration.



Prof Bennison (CIS) & Dr Jing Liao



Prof van Ruymbeke (FAMES) & Dr Jing Liao



Dr Jing Liao at FAMES

“A good traveller has no fixed plans, and is not intent on arriving”
~ Lao Tzu ~



Visiting Scholars



Prof Wang Tao
(Fudan University - China)
Visiting FAMES in November



Dr Alejandro Martinez
(Diego Portales University - Chile)
Visiting MMLL in October

GHI - Mobility Scheme Call is now OPEN!

We are pleased to announce that the fifth round of the Global Humanities Mobility Scheme is now open for applications, with a deadline of 10 November. The initiative continues to support meaningful academic exchange and collaborative research across our network partners in China, Turkey, India, Ghana, Chile and Lebanon.

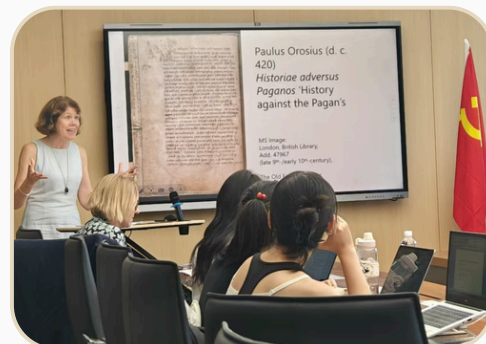
We especially encourage Cambridge academics to take inspiration from [Prof Miranda Griffin](#) and [Prof Máire Ní Mhaonaigh](#), who recently returned from a successful visit to our partner institutions in China.

Prof Griffin & Prof Ní Mhaonaigh - Visit to China (September 2025)

Prof Miranda Griffin, Department of Medieval and Modern Languages and Linguistics and Prof Máire Ní Mhaonaigh, Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic visited the two universities in China which form part of the Global Humanities Network, the [University of Fudan](#) in Shanghai and the [University of Nanjing](#) (Suzhou and Xianlin campuses) in September of this year.



Prof Griffin & Prof Ní Mhaonaigh at FUDAN UNIVERSITY



They delivered a series of talks on medieval manuscripts from the Cambridge collections and on medieval literature and the environment, both topics central to their research interests. They were delighted to make connections with colleagues and students in both institutions conducting research in parallel fields in both the pre-modern and contemporary periods.

The range of questions and comments they received afforded them many new and comparative perspectives on their work. Of particular value were the workshops organised by the host institutions showcasing the variety and richness of the scholarship in Fudan and Nanjing.



Prof Griffin & Prof Ní Mhaonaigh at NANJING UNIVERSITY



Profs Ní Mhaonaigh and Griffin also benefitted from presenting their work at Shanghai Jiao Tong University, a visit facilitated by the Network. This was the first time that scholarship of the pre-modern period formed part of the activities of the Global Humanities Network. Miranda and Máire look forward to building on the high level of engagement on the part of audiences, and the enthusiastic reception they receive to develop this collaboration on the pre-modern world.

FOLLOW ON lecture - Monday November 17th

'The Form and Content of the Manuscripts from Dunhuang' BY Prof HAO Chunwen



GHI - Elements Series

BY ALEX WRIGHT

I wrote in the last newsletter about the publication of our first Element, [Mandakini Dubey's Esoteric Orientalism](#), which brings all sorts of insightful new perspectives to the subject of theosophy and its relevance to theories and practices of colonialism. That booklet was published online to coincide the Global Humanities Network summer forum in Cambridge last June (and was available entirely gratis for the first fortnight after its release). I'm glad to report that the Element in question has already generated over 2500 PDF downloads and HTML full page views. Meanwhile, [Janice Pariat's](#) intriguingly titled Element *To Enter a Forest* – a rich and resonant exploration of Khasi identity through the actual and metaphorical prism of forestland interiors – is likely to be the next published booklet as it moves pleasingly towards near completion. Janice is an award-winning author and poet (her novel *Everything the Light Touches* secured the 2023 Sushila Devi Award for the Best Book of Fiction) who teaches art history and creative writing at Ashoka University. The inclusion of her work in the series is indicative of our desire with this project to reach audiences not just in but also beyond academe.

Elsewhere, we have ten further Elements either already under contract or contracting. Some of the latest subjects explored include Daoism and non-action in Europe; Mohandas Gandhi's 'playful protest' and the Salt Satyāgraha of 1930; kinship giving and human material and environmental legacies; and the challenge of decolonizing the classics in Ghana. The rich range of topics under review, as well as the calibre of those submitting proposals, suggest that our series is beginning to achieve real impetus. Our urgent task must now be to maintain the current throughput of commissioning while also bringing through further Elements quickly to the point of publication and release.

I met online with our three series editors on the last day of September to assess progress made to date and the latest submissions. This was the latest of the regular gatherings that the four of us have to keep in close touch and ensure that our series sustains acquisitions momentum. Frisbee, Saul, and I are based in Cambridge and Malvika teaches at Ashoka University in northern India. The Cambridge contingent were pleased to learn of Malvika's return to Cambridge for a visit in early December, when the four of us shall reconvene once again. One of the very pleasing aspects of this project for me personally has been the camaraderie that has emerged through collaborating with my editorial colleagues and observing a growing sense of shared vision and ownership.



Alex Wright

Senior Executive Publisher & Head of Humanities
(Cambridge University Press)



Elements Main Editors



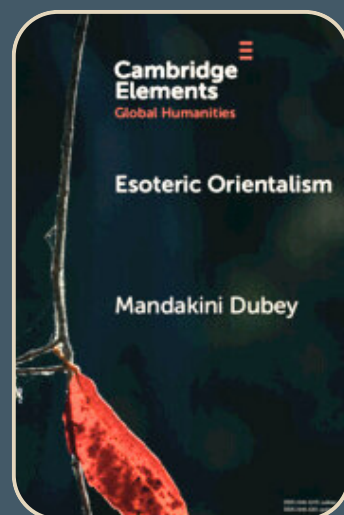
Frisbee Sheffield
Ancient Philosophy



Malvika Maheshwari
Political Science



Saul Dubow
Commonwealth History



'Esoteric Orientalism studies Victorian esotericism and academic Orientalism as the nineteenth century's most significant comparative frameworks for understanding global religions, languages, and cultures'

(Cambridge University Press)

[Click here to
access the series](#)



GHI - FRANCOPHONE PROGRAMME

FRANCOPHONE PROGRAMME - Focus on Haiti

The Francophone programme is entering its second year and we continue to develop a range of activities around the Caribbean and West Africa. 2025/26 will see a cluster of activities around Haiti, including two residencies in the French section of MMLL: Dr [Stéphane Martelly](#) (October 2025) and [Jean d'Amérique](#) (February 2026), both of whom will offer programmes of academic, student-facing and public-facing events.



STÉPHANE MARTELLY

writer, painter and scholar

OCTOBER 2025



JEAN D'AMÉRIQUE

poet, playwright, rapper, and novelist

FEBRUARY 2026

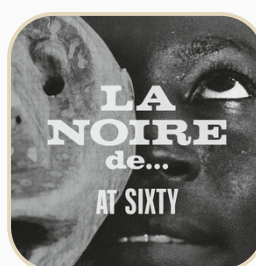


Leverhulme Visiting [Professor Herns Marcelin](#) will return to Cambridge in April 2026 to continue his work on post-emancipation heritage practices and the anthropology of violence. We are planning a workshop on May/June on 'Mapping the Legacies of Slavery in Post-Plantation Societies: Violence, Heritage, and Preservation Conundrums in Haiti', involving a number of internal and external partners (including the Haitian Embassy in London, All-Party Parliamentary Group for Haiti, International Slavery Museum in Liverpool and the French Fondation pour la mémoire de l'esclavage).

The workshop will also permit collaboration with GHI partner [Prof Wazi Apoh](#) (University of Ghana).

FRANCOPHONE PROGRAMME - Focus on Senegal

Dr Doyle Calhoun continues to develop an ambitious programme around Senegal, including this term a visiting fellowship at Peterhouse for the philosopher [Souleymane Bachir Diagne](#).



Diagne will also participate in [Calhoun's La Noire de.../Black Girl at 60](#), a film series and colloquium celebrating the 60th anniversary of Ousmane Sembène's groundbreaking film, featuring his son Alain Sembène and several important filmmakers.

Seminars & Talks - 2025/2026



Dr Mahadevan
(University of Liverpool)



Prof Forsdick and Dr Calhoun continue to invite a range of other scholars, writers and translators for seminars and talks, including in this term [Dr Sheela Mahadevan](#) (University of Liverpool; speaking about 'Writing between Languages: translating multilingual literatures, composing multilingual translations'); and [Professor A. James Arnold](#) (University of Virginia; speaking on 'The Dynamics of French Caribbean Identity').



Prof A. James Arnold
(University of Virginia)

MEET THE TEAM: Ashoka University (Delhi, India)

Ashoka University, founded in 2014, is a Liberal Arts and Sciences University located in Haryana, India. It offers a range of subjects in the Arts and Humanities, Social Sciences, and Mathematical and Natural Sciences from undergraduate to Master's and PhD programmes. Interdisciplinarity is at the heart of Ashoka's pedagogy and its signature Foundation Courses for undergraduate students are unique within the Indian Higher Education sector.

Ashoka is a research university, with faculty drawn from many countries of the world. Individual projects and collaborative research, both national and international, and research undertaken by specialized Centres and multidisciplinary Centres, have enabled a vibrant research-intensive atmosphere in the university.

Ashoka's participation in the Global Humanities Initiative is one of a number of prestigious international institutional collaborations.



In the Spotlight . . .



Prof Aparna Vaidik

Prof of History
(Ashoka University)



Kolkata (India)



Rest Enthusiast



"A Lovers' Discourse: Fragments"
(Roland Barthes)

• **What is your Alma Matter?**

PhD in History from Jawaharlal Nehru University and MA in History at Newnham College, Cambridge.

• **What is your main area of research?**

Histories of Social Violence, Revolutionism, Criminology

• **What do you enjoy most about being part of the Global Humanities Network?**

The best part is having the opportunity to meet and interact with very interesting scholars from across the world, and to be exposed to fresh ideas and perspectives.



Prof Gil Harris

Prof of English
(Ashoka University)



Isfahan (Iran), Bukhara
(Uzbekistan) and Busan
(South Korea)



Running (Marathons
and Ultramarathons)



"In an Antique Land: History in the
Guise of a Traveller's Tale"
(Amitav Ghosh)

• **What is your Alma Matter?**

University of Auckland, New Zealand (BA, MA) and Sussex University, United Kingdom (DPhil)

• **What is your main area of research?**

Shakespeare, histories of travel, globalisation and migration to India, the cultures and literatures of the Silk Roads

• **What do you enjoy most about being part of the Global Humanities Network?**

The new colleagues and fresh perspectives that a truly global, decentred approach to humanities makes possible

