

GLOBAL HUMANITIES INITIATIVE

Official Newsletter of the Global Humanities Initiative

Director's Welcome

BY PROF HANS VAN DE VEN

Welcome to the tenth issue of the **Global Humanities Initiative** newsletter—a milestone that reflects the network's continued vitality and growth.

Our latest venture, the **GH Summer School 2026** on "Global Plant Lives," concluded just a few weeks ago. Graduate students from across our partner universities gathered to explore how plants have shaped human history, environments, literature, and artistic expression. Superbly organized by Dr Emily Senior (Faculty of English) and our administrator Greta Mijares, the event was a resounding success. Students particularly valued the immersive, collaborative learning environment—spanning the seminar room, Cambridge's extraordinary collections, and the field.

In this issue, you will also find updates on the expanding **Global Humanities Elements** series, a **three-day workshop** organized by Prof Herns Marcelin on the legacies of slavery in post-plantation societies like Haiti, and a report on the **Global Humanities Annual Forum**, hosted this year by Prof Meltem Müftüler-Baç and her colleagues at Sabancı University.

Marking five years of the Global Humanities Initiative, we do wish to continue to evolve. This summer and autumn, we are taking time to reflect on our activities these five years and consult with colleagues on future directions. Among these is a new **artist-in-residence programme**, which will bring artists from our global network to Cambridge for a residency of a month. As always, we welcome your ideas and suggestions as we shape our next chapter.



GHN Students at the Botanical Gardens - "How to Read a Plant"

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GHN ANNUAL FORUM - Istanbul 2026



Discussions & Global Conversations

The Forum brought together scholars from across the **Global Humanities Network** to explore questions of public intellectual life, multilingualism, migration, cultural translation, and the future of the humanities. Across keynote lectures, panel sessions, and roundtable discussions, participants exchanged perspectives from diverse institutional and disciplinary contexts, creating a rich environment for intellectual engagement and collaborative thinking.



Building the Network

Bringing together colleagues from **University of Cambridge, Sabancı University, Ashoka University, Fudan University, Nanjing University, University of Ghana, American University of Beirut, and Universidad Diego Portales**, the Forum strengthened existing partnerships, share ideas, and develop future collaborations across the Network.



Discussions continued beyond the conference sessions as participants gathered along Istanbul's waterfront for an evening overlooking the Bosphorus.

“Knowledge grows
when it is shared.”

~ Hacı Bektaş Veli ~



Cultural Visits

Group visits to the **Sakıp Sabancı Museum** and **Yıldız Palace** offered participants the opportunity to engage with Istanbul's cultural heritage beyond the conference setting



Visit to Sakıp Sabancı Museum



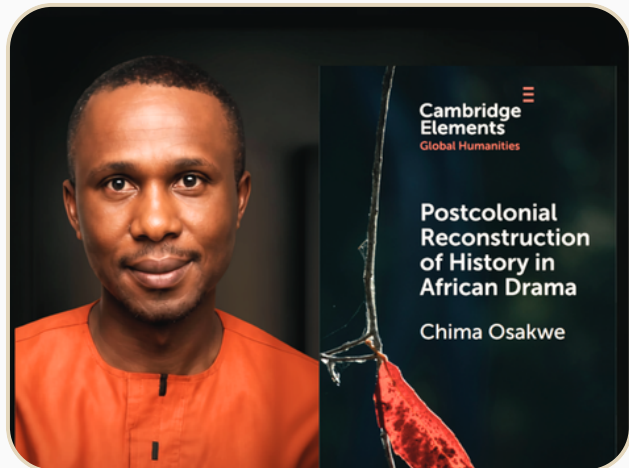
Visit to Yıldız Palace



GHI - Elements Series

BY ALEX WRIGHT

We are all delighted, in the editorial team, to announce the publication online of *Small Worlds* by Virpi Timonen and Chima Osakwe's *Postcolonial Reconstruction of History in African Drama* (both Elements summarised in our May newsletter).



Elements Pipeline

- ✓ 3 Published
- ✓ 4 Submitted
- ✓ 3 New Proposals

These latest Elements take their place alongside Mandakini Dubey's *Esoteric Orientalism*, which was published last summer, and they (= numbers 2 and 3) will shortly appear also in dual hardcover and paperback editions for maximum reach, impact and volume exposure. Meanwhile, Nicholas Dirks' *Worldly Knowledge*, Guanmian Xu's *Buffalo Regimes*, Vivek Yadav's *Gandhi's Playful Protest* and Eric Nelson's *Daoism and Non-Action in Europe* have all been submitted in manuscript and should move to press following the usual process of peer review. We are therefore looking at the prospect of several more Elements in Global Humanities publishing this calendar year, which underlines I think the good progress being made.

Coming Soon...

At the proposal stage, we have contracted or are contracting several intriguing new Elements. These include *Digestible Code: Food as the Last Human Language* by Yin-Hua Quan; *Spinoza's Democratic Realism* by Martin Lin; and Anton Wilhelm Amo on *Philosophy and Human Perfection* by Stephen Peprah. All three titles adopt the requisite expansive global perspective on their respective topics.

I was glad to meet in person with all three series editors, Frisbee, Malvika and Saul, on 9 July: a date which coincided with a visit by Malvika from Ashoka to Cambridge. This gave the team a valuable opportunity to assess progress to date, discuss individual Elements, and review series strategy.



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



Timonen V, Bäckman M, Previtali F, Yi-Neumann F, Shin Y-K.
Small Worlds: Theorising Human Material and Environmental Legacies.

Cambridge University Press; 2026

[Click here to
access the series](#)



GHN - Cambridge Summer School 2026

This July, the Global Humanities Network welcomed students and researchers from around the world to Cambridge for the inaugural Global Humanities Summer School. Over two weeks, participants explored the emerging field of **Global Plant Humanities**, examining the relationships between plants, people, cultures and environments through an interdisciplinary humanities lens.



"Participants of the Global Humanities Summer School 2026 gathered in Cambridge for two weeks of interdisciplinary learning and exchange."

Bringing together students, researchers and academics from a range of disciplines and institutions, the Summer School created a unique space for **interdisciplinary dialogue and collaborative learning**. Through lectures, seminars, workshops and visits to some of Cambridge's most renowned collections and cultural sites, participants were invited to consider plants not simply as biological entities but as subjects that shape, and are shaped by, history, culture, politics, literature and the environment.

From the outset, one of the programme's key aims was to encourage participants to think across disciplinary boundaries. By drawing on perspectives from **literature, history, philosophy, environmental humanities, art history and cultural studies**, the Summer School demonstrated the richness and relevance of humanities approaches to contemporary environmental challenges.



Alex, Dominic and Debadrita - Pitt Building



Kerem Bayraktar's art workshop - St Catharine's College

Learning Beyond the Classroom

Over the two weeks, participants explored a variety of University spaces, including the **Fitzwilliam Museum**, **Cambridge University Library**, the **Herbarium** and the **University Botanic Garden**. These visits offered opportunities to examine botanical illustrations, historical collections, archival materials and living specimens while reflecting on how plants have been represented, categorised and understood across different cultures and periods.



For many participants, one of the most memorable aspects of the experience was the opportunity to spend time with peers from different countries and disciplinary backgrounds. The Summer School created a welcoming environment in which conversations could continue outside formal teaching sessions, helping to build connections and friendships that will endure beyond the programme itself.



Chloe, June and Rose - Sidney Sussex College



Debadrita & Guanlin - Pitt Building

Foraging in Practice

What can **foraging** teach us about our relationship with the natural world?

Gathering - Observing



Reflecting - Creating



GHI - Research & Engagement Programmes

Collaborative Global Humanities Workshop: Mapping the Legacies of Slavery

In Easter Term, **Prof. Louis HERNS MARCELIN**, Leverhulme Visiting Professor attached to the Global Humanities Initiative, convened a major three-day workshop at Murray Edwards College exploring the legacies of slavery in Haiti and other post-plantation societies. This event gathered over twenty-five experts, including representatives of the **Beniba Centre for Slavery Studies** at the University of Glasgow and the **International Slavery Museum in Liverpool**. Among the contributors were Global Humanities Initiative colleagues: **Prof. Wazi Apoh** (University of Ghana), **Dr Marsha Pearce** and **Dr Neal Spencer** (Fitzwilliam Museum)



"Mapping The Legacies of Slavery" Group Photo - Murray Edwards College



Prof Marcelin and Prof Forsdick with Her Excellency Anaise Manuel, Haiti's Ambassador to the UK

The workshop has led to various plans for collaborative publications and funding bids. Participants have also committed to establishing a **Racial Slavery Afterlives Network**, drawing on the example of Haiti to encourage reparative research and related education and public engagement interventions.



Neal Spencer and Marsha Pearce (Fitzwilliam Museum)

Marsha Pearce and **Neal Spencer** led a workshop session on **Caribbean & Cambridge Collaborative Research Futures**, highlighting innovative curatorial practice, the **Future Legacies** platform, **Tensions of Belonging: Connecting Cambridge**, and Marsha Pearce's UK-Caribbean research initiative **Trembling Abode**.

Francophone Programme Updates

University of Blida Delegation: Francophone programme worked with Sura Qadiri and colleagues at KCL to host a delegation of colleagues from the University of Blida in June 2026.

Battle of Algiers at 60: Support for a conference convened by Luca Peretti in association with CRASSH in November 2026

Doyle Calhoun Fellowship: Doyle Calhoun will spend 2026-27 as a Fellow of the **Cullman Center at the New York Public Library**, working on a new book on abolition in the French-speaking world.

African Humanities Research Network: A new CRASSH-funded network developed by Doyle Calhoun, Sura Qadiri and colleagues.

MEET THE TEAM: Nanjing University

Founded in 1902, NJU is a member of the Chinese C9 League (an alliance of nine elite universities in China). Taking its roots in the Central University and the University of Nanking, Nanjing University has traditional excellence in fundamental sciences and Humanities. NJU is also a pioneer in international collaborations in China. It is home to time-honored international cooperation platforms and centers such as the Johns Hopkins University – Nanjing University Center for Chinese and American Studies, Nanjing University Institute for Jewish and Israel Studies, Sino-German Institute for Legal Studies etc.

With the Global Humanities Initiative, NJU has established its own Global Humanities group composed of administrative staff and relevant faculties from the School of Arts, School of Foreign Studies, School of Government, School of History and the Department of Philosophy. Since 2021, the Global Humanities Program has been listed on the grant program of “Global Engagement for Strategic Partners” at university level.



南京大學

In the Spotlight...



Prof HE Chengzhou

Director at the Global Humanities
Institute
Nanjing University, China



Tromsø, Norway



Running 5K



“A Doll’s House”
(by Henrik Ibsen)

- **What is your Alma Matter?**

BA and MA, Nanjing Normal University; Doctor of Arts, University of Oslo, Norway

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

Western drama and theatre studies, Ibsen studies, intercultural theatre, intermedial studies, comparative and world literature, performance studies

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

It brings a rich set of ideas and knowledge to stimulate intellectual conversations and thoughtful actions. More importantly, the links it provides junior scholars and graduate students from my university to network, nurture and crossbreed ideas among fellow young scholars across the globe.



Prof DU Lanlan

Professor at the Global Humanities
Institute
Nanjing University



Switzerland



Table Tennis



“Cloud Atlas”
(by David Mitchell)

- **What is your Alma Matter?**

BA, MPhil in English Language & Literature, Jilin University; PhD in English Language & Literature, Tsinghua University

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

Comparative Literature & Contemporary Speculative Fiction

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

What I enjoy most is the vibrant intellectual platform it fosters. It enables me to learn from diverse perspectives and interdisciplinary approaches that refine my own thinking. Beyond the academic enrichment, I feel a sense of belonging to a global community, the opportunity to build lasting connections with brilliant scholars from different cultural and disciplinary backgrounds.

