

THE GEOHUMANITIES PLATFORM

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INTRODUCING THE GEOHUMANITIES PLATFORM III

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DEPARTURES: RE-IMAGINING PRACTICE FROM A RADICAL MIDDLE.

Anderson, J. and Hutcheon, R. with Christensen, M. D'Ascenzo, F. Griffiths, A. Hill, C. Jones, P. Lambert, P. Morgan, C. Orford, S. Prior, J. Quinn, K. Singleton, A. Smith, L.

Abstract.

This is the third and final paper in the series introducing the Geohumanities Platform, a venture which seeks to explore interest in the combined worlds of Place / Literature / Augmented realities / Theatre / Fiction / Originality / Reality / and Media, broadly conceived. As we have seen in the series to date, explicating our interest in the Geohumanities reminds us afresh of our disciplinary 'situatedness' as researchers; our home disciplines anchor many of our interests, yet in some cases they also limit some of the trajectories we would like to explore. We have seen how a range of gatekeeping practices serve to not simply "ensure [...] the rigor and validity" of disciplines (after Vareberg et al, 2006: 1), but for many – and especially those wishing to work in interdisciplinary areas – these, "...scholarly standards [...] often become sites of exclusion" (Abusaada and Elshater, 2026: 5). Thus, for those interested in pursuing the possibilities of the Geohumanities, new spaces are required in which to experiment. As Abusaada & Elshater (2026:1) identify:

"Knowledge spreads only when [...] gatekeepers operate within active, participatory platforms [...], systems that allow ideas to be codified, shared, and critically absorbed *across institutional and epistemic boundaries*" [our emphases].

Beyond the coincidental terminology, the Geohumanities Platform is a venture seeking to do just this, positioning itself alongside the conventional system in an attempt to do things differently. In the third and final paper of this series we outline how the Geohumanities

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Platform will realise itself as a space of radical possibility, de- then re-situating traditional gatekeeper positions to produce and communicate different forms of knowledge. The paper will outline the Platform's hopes to champion alternative languages of research, experiment with new forms of 'peer review' (reframing collegial contributions as actively generating new forms of collaboration), and giving space to research as both process and product.

A Platform of Radical Possibility.

As we have seen across the first two papers in this series, drawing on insights shared from the inaugural meeting of the Geohumanities Platform, we have identified a number of strengths which arise from being located within modern disciplines, but also a number of limitations. For addressing complex and multi-faceted issues, disciplinary foci, journal guidelines, funding criteria, and procedural-based modes of operation remains problematic and often actively obstruct the exploration of new approaches. As Hawkins sums up:

“university-based academic cultures are fundamentally ill-equipped [to foster interdisciplinary research].... There is a lack of infrastructure (whether buildings and equipment, or social networks for support and critique), and institutional cultures and contexts (from funding mechanisms to the formats of conferences and modes of evaluation) are too rigid. Research in these cultures is seen as plagued by neoliberal creativities and dogged by textual imperialisms and latent scientism” (Hawkins, 2021: 4).

For all researchers operating within these frameworks creativity is, to a degree, censored as curiosity, ideas, and approaches become habituated in the conventions of institutional infrastructure. Although this situation is long-standing, it is important to note the particular influence of the contemporary moments in which the Geohumanities Platform is being established. In these moments the terrain of academic and creative expression is under pressure, not simply from broader societal shifts toward the authoritarian, but also through sectoral change in which ideological moves to centralisation, and economic pressure from

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income reduction, is acute. In the words of participants, the consequence of these contemporary processes is that:

“we all feel incredibly threatened; it’s an incredibly precarious existence for researchers if we have no home amongst the established landscape of academia”.

This sense of precarity extends to the future of the field itself:

“If humanities departments are being closed down across the country then what is the future of new ideas like the Geohumanities? I think that is a really valid question.”

Others described the pressure as coming from multiple directions at once:

“I guess the geo is also being squeezed; it’s coming from all directions”;

for some, this squeeze is felt most acutely in the erosion of creative space:

“Any form of creativity is always ripe for being culled, you know?”

In such a context, ‘doing something’ differently (after Manning and Massumi, 2014, cited in Boyd, 2022: 4) becomes a political act. More precisely, creating a space in order to de-, then re-situate researchers in a different relation to the world may be greeted with ‘suspicion’ by some (as one participant put it), but it may also be empowering; curating a ‘platform’ to explore the potential of interdisciplinary work can respond to the impulse that forged Geohumanities in the first instance (see Paper I): to think differently, “not only about the world and our place within it, but the nature of human being itself” ((Cresswell et al, 2015: 2).

It is possible to identify resonance between the creation of a platform in which to explore the Geohumanities and the importance of doing something in the ‘middle’ of these

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moments (after Massei, 2025: XVI), a middle which has – due to the influence of disciplinary silos, in effect become ‘marginal’ (to use the vocabulary of hooks, 1989). Resonating with the spirit of hooks’ feminist politics, to operate from a Geohumanities platform in the current context is not easy; to paraphrase hooks:

“Locating oneself there is difficult yet necessary. It is not a ‘safe’ place. One is always at risk. One needs a community of resistance” (1989: 19).

Akin to hook’s margin, the platform is enabled to become a “site of radical possibility” (ibid: 20), a “space of [...] openness” (ibid.: 19), where researchers mobilised by ‘currents’ of culture, creativity, spatiality, and perhaps more crucially relationality (see Paper I and Anderson, 2025 for a review), approach the world afresh. As Gillot puts it, “informed by [these] ‘new’ ontologies [...] in which we are not separate from the world but entangled and embedded within it” (2022: 3¹) we are able to de-situate ourselves from disciplinary conventions which bear the legacy of objective positioning, and re-situate ourselves (back) in the middle of things. Following Gillot (2025:11), to start afresh from here,

“is to feel-think with the creative-relational, to start in that hyphen that interferes, and to sense how relating creates us.... It is to think with relations [...] that shift bodies into new registers of experience”.

The nature of this space is yet to be fulfilled, but its spirit is anticipated to have the following dimensions: to be open to a range of languages of research and communication; to celebrate the negotiations between contributors to the Platform (actively problematising conventional ‘gatekeeper’ roles and hybridising dialogue between reviewer-reader-authors); and in so doing, creating space for dialogue at all stages of the ongoing research process (for more, see podcasts available on the Geohumanities Platform, www.geohumanitiesplatform.com).

¹ Boyd labels these ontologies as, “new materialist and speculative, but ultimately Deleuzian” (2022:3). However, it is possible to also understand them in line with much indigenous praxis, or (deep) ecological philosophy (see, for example, Solnit, 2026).

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New languages

Re-situating research through taking relational ontologies seriously – producing a relational situatedness if you will – is an attempt to reflect the geohumanities impulse and transcend formal disciplinary reference to ‘geography’ (or any other situational silo) and reorient participants in the middle of complexity. As noted in Paper I, this new ‘relational situatedness’ demands a commitment to use any conceptual and creative means available – before, beyond, or across many disciplines of endeavour – to try to understand our position with and through the world. It also involves developing an awareness that new situations will lead to new identities as researchers (or new ‘epistemic subjects’, see Paper I), and perhaps more importantly, new knowledge constitutions (in other ‘words’, what and who composes knowledge, what ‘good’ knowledge is, and what it seeks to do). Taken together, these commitments formally recognise that situations are generative, and all knowledge-making emerges through relational situatedness. As they do so, these commitments move beyond the outmoded orthodoxies of the modern (including objective positionality (see Haraway, 1988; Rose, 1997), the disembodied scholar (see for example Butler, 1993 and Davidson et al, 2005), and “textual imperialisms” (after Hawkins, 2021: 4 and above), and open up the possibilities to experiment with a different range of knowledges (i.e. situated, embodied, and creative). When operating from the Platform, therefore, radical possibilities are enabled to open up the possible range of ‘languages’ to research and communicate knowledge.

In this way, the ‘graphy’ commonly associated with the discipline of ‘geography’ (for example) is also now reconfigured (reflecting the way in which the ‘geo’ of ‘geohumanities’ could be seen to transcend the narrow affiliation to geography as a discipline). ‘Graphy’ has often been considered to refer directly and solely to geo-graphy as ‘earth-*writing*’ (as Peters, no date, sums up), whereas in a new relational situatedness a wider etymology can be acknowledged, as one participant reflected:

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“I like the ‘graphic’ because geohumanities is liberating geography from a limited way of thinking about the verb – ‘graphy’ – allowing a flexibility, that it’s not just writing, or even a particular genre of writing, because it ‘what’s we have always done’”

Others extended this sense of liberation further, emphasising how ‘graphy’ has always exceeded writing alone:

“Yes! *ethno-graphy* has to me, always been about drawing rather than writing”.

A relational situatedness can therefore help to draw attention to the implicit creativity which has been intentionally silenced through the modern enlightenment tradition. Our ‘graphies’ can now refer to ‘charting’ or even ‘communicating’ through a variety of media (see for example photo-graphy (e.g. Pink, 2021), films (e.g. Gandy, 2021), the graphic (e.g. Peterle, 2021), as well as a range of new (digital) technologies (as discussed by Cresswell et al, 2015). Reflecting Ash and Simpson (2018: 7), operating from this space is therefore:

“about creating languages and vocabularies that establish connections between previously unconnected things and, through this connecting, generates new ways of thinking, seeing, and feeling such things”.

A relational situatedness therefore leads to a commitment to be open to doing knowledge production differently. In some cases, writing will be the ‘go to’ strategy because it serves the nature of the situation, but as many have offered, the style and form of that writing style may change (see for example Denzin, 2003), or writing will be jettisoned altogether in favour of other forms of expression. As stated above, this is an integral consequence of the generative nature of the new situation, and the ultimate purpose of the knowledge produced. As Kitchin notes, (2013: 153), disciplines like geography have,

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“long debated for whom and for what ends academics should research and publish, how geographical knowledge is produced, and the use and value of such knowledges”.

Relational situatedness means this debate has contemporary relevance; should our situation in the middle of things mean that we solely produce knowledge for others within our disciplines, translating the insights from respondents into peer review articles that serve the broader academic industry as it stands? Or, could the knowledge produced also be used to inspire and mobilise other publics, opening up different forms of engagement and action?

Departures: “the greatest enemy to academic creativity is disciplinary boundaries” (Dear, 2011: 12).

Taking account of the discussions in this series, the Geohumanities Platform will take the following practical steps for its initial departure. As the accompanying podcasts outline in further detail, the Geohumanities Platform is envisaged as an opportunity for contributors at any stage of their academic or creative career, from any and all subject areas, to operate in a space alongside their conventional scholarly and creative work. Given the need to showcase a range of communicative languages, for its inception the Geohumanities Platform will be online, and open to sounds, stills, moving images, and words. Although there remain debates regarding access – which circulate principally around whether research has already been paid for (by salary and funder), or undertaken by unfunded independents – the platform is planned to be free at point of access². With respect to the gatekeeping roles (see Paper II), rather than reproducing the conventional distinctions between author, reviewer, and editor (which as we have seen are often abstracting and become guided by disciplinary convention and journal regulations), all contributors are invited to publish their engagement with submissions, articulate what they see that is new

² Initially, costs for web hosting and domain names, will be absorbed by the key contributors, and the website constructed and maintained by the same.

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and exciting about any piece, and how it might grow when connected to other lines of praxis.

This dialogic approach means that contributions (be they initial submissions, or reviews) may take multiple forms. A participant might offer a short paper developing an idea, while a response may be brief, or extended, in a -graphic deemed most appropriate by the contributor. These responses would be attributed and published on the Platform, where they can act as new nodes in a rhizome – points of growth that others may add to or re-work. Importantly, therefore, any contribution itself becomes citable, introducing transparency, accountability, and (if desired) a metric in its own right, but principally a means of encouraging constructive criticality across and before disciplines³. Indeed, these interactions hold the potential to be directly generative in nature, leading to further conversations, recorded dialogues (which could be hosted on the Platform), and the possibility to mobilise collaborations alongside the original submission.

As the accompanying podcasts outline, in line with more traditional ventures, we hope to offer a space for the Geohumanities community to talk about their books, performances, exhibitions and other compositions through interview and review, and therefore help to publicise exciting work in this area. But crucially, in the spirit of the steps above, it is hoped to not only showcase work when it is 'complete' – or formally ready for public engagement – but also to share ideas for these works as they are forming. We wish to showcase the labour, the energy, excitement, the false dawns, the birth, emergence, and regeneration of ideas as they happen. The Geohumanities Platform is therefore not just about outcomes in their conventional sense but a place where the creative 'process' will also be the 'product'. By making our working an 'output', the Geohumanities Platform will record our travel as it happens, and provide the momentum to translate this work into other academic and artistic forms in the future.

³ Functioning, as some human geographers may have experienced, akin to a series of mini-*Dialogues in Human Geography*

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Motivating the Geohumanities Platform is therefore the desire for a community that brings together people from a range of different conventional disciplines who would not normally engage with one another, a community in which individuals can feel part of something larger than themselves. In a sense, this may be an obvious sentiment, but it nevertheless remains a genuine and deeply felt human need. The impulse to create the Platform arises from a desire to contribute at least some of our creative labour to see if we can do things differently; as Dawney sums up:

“to give value to each other’s ideas, take the time to chew them over and push them further, [whilst contributing to the creation of] spaces where discipline-changing and discipline making ideas can happen” (2025: 183).

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