

Annual Review 2021—22





**Over
300
research-led events with
audiences totalling over
18,000
people**

4

**Headline Research
Programmes**

15

**Knowledge
Exchange
Fellows**

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**Research
Networks**

ABOUT TORCH

Launched in May 2013, TORCH stimulates, supports and promotes research activity of the very highest quality that transcends disciplinary and institutional boundaries and engages with wider audiences.



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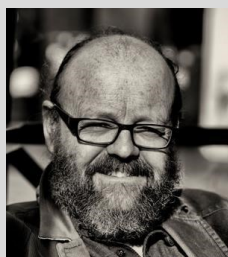
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WELCOME



Prof Wes Williams
TORCH Director

TORCH enjoyed a stimulating and varied year of research, events and public engagement outreach in 2021-2022.

Firstly many thanks to the TORCH Team and our Academic Champion Maria and all the researchers they support who generated so many compelling discussions, outputs and public engagement events.

The TORCH year started with a unique “son et lumière” event at Oxford Castle created by researchers and sound and light artists which attracted thousands of people from Oxford and much further afield. In December we celebrated the end of the Humanities Cultural Programme’s Japan Season with a spectacular event at the Radcliffe Humanities Building to light up the winter night.

Our Research Programmes continued to grow, please do read about their great work later in this review - particularly the Race and Resistance conference ‘Race, Resistance and Belonging’ at the University of Oxford and their collaboration with the ‘Unlock the Chains Collective’ for the powerful and poignant play ‘Still Breathing’.

Environmental Humanities led by Prof Fiona Stafford (English) continued to arrange globally focused seminars on cutting edge issues with numerous researchers across the University and indeed far beyond.

Please also read about the varied and insightful research that our wide range of networks are involved in later in the review.

Two particular projects created inspiring events. The Silk Roads Project inspired by Professor Peter Frankopan’s renowned work ‘The Silk Roads’ culminated in a spectacular evening at the Sheldonian Theatre.



Prof María del Pilar Blanco
TORCH Academic Champion
For Networks and Partnerships,
University of Oxford

2021—22 had a lot to teach us in the way we conducted research collaborations. With the pandemic still looming around us, we tiptoed into face-to-face events whilst making sure we had Plans B and C lined up and ready. On the TORCH Networks front, we welcomed a new funding model thanks to the support of the John Fell Fund. The revamped Networks scheme offers £7,500 for two years which allows interdisciplinary research groups to plan for a more ambitious range of activities.

In 2021-22 we offered funding to some exciting new networks, including ‘Digital Humanities and Music Heritage’ (led by Dr Emmanuela Vai (History) and Professor David DeRoure (Engineering Science)), Rebecca Beasley’s ‘Britain and the Soviet Union: Early Encounters’, and ‘African Languages, Cultures and Literatures’ (headed by Dr Dorothée Boulanger, Dr Rachel Taylor, and Dr Tinashe Mushakavanhu). I am deeply thankful to the TORCH Management Committee for the rigour and generosity with which they treat every network application.

Our four TORCH headline programmes – Environmental Humanities, Intersectional Humanities, Medical Humanities, and Race and Resistance – also began to work under a new structure: each programme is headed by one or two academic leads and a steering committee that draws from expertise across the University. We were especially thrilled to open a one-off funding call: the TORCH Interdisciplinary PER awards, which allowed us to fund fascinating projects, like ‘African First-Generation Neurologists’ (Sloan Mahone, PI) and “Vesuvius 22” (Fiona Stafford, PI).

We continued to grow our international networks. In 2021-22 TORCH launched the Paris-Oxford Partnership with the Université Paris Cité. This is a generous exchange scheme that allows established and early-career academics from Oxford to collaborate with academics in Paris. Along with our ties to the Oxford-Berlin alliance and other collaborations, these opportunities helped many of us feel connected with others across the world, despite the many challenges that the (post) pandemic landscape threw our way.

Some of our Highlights of 2021-22



December 2021 | Eyes on Africa, Readings from Oxford

TORCH was honoured to welcome Dr Obari Gomba (Port Harcourt, Nigeria), in 2021 as the Global South Visiting Professor. As part of his Professorship programme, we held a panel discussion event, where Dr Gomba led a panel on contemporary African culture featuring Dr Tinashe Mushakavanhu (English) and Professor Elleke Boehmer (English), followed by a musical performance by Jali Fily Cissokho from Senegal.



May 2022 | On Sonic Remediation; or, the Art of Sounding Sustainable

Visiting Professor Sherry Lee, University of Toronto, posed questions of remediation and sustainability in sonic terms in a talk that considered the potential for aesthetic sounding practices and sound epistemologies to contribute to critical humanities discourses of environment; it queried the ambiguous roles of creative, sounding, and listening in reimagining ecological violence, recuperation, and new relations.

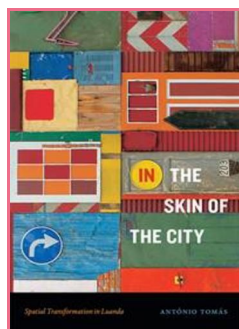
April 2022 | The Silk Roads Project

In April we held an evening in the iconic Sheldonian Theatre, that transcended musical styles. Inspired by stories from Professor Peter Frankopan's *The Silk Roads*, Katie Melua and Dr Luke Lewis guided University of Oxford students and young people from local charities Young Women's Music Project and In-Spire Sounds, through the process of songwriting to create a unique soundscape, where stories new and old sang their way down the Silk Road.



November 2021 | Oxford Castle at 950 years - son et lumière

Woven into the fabric of the city, the ancient patchwork walls of Oxford Castle sit in the centre of the city. For the first time in its long history, the castle hosted a full-scale video projection. Created by sound and light artists in collaboration with researchers, a video projected onto the side of the Castle was shared as part of a unique and free public event welcoming 2,000 people.



May 2022 | In the Skin of the City by Antonio Tomás | book discussion

Dr Antonio Tomás was a Visiting Fellow who came in May 2022. We held a roundtable to discuss his book, with Idalina Baptista (Continuing Education), Ricardo Soares de Oliveira (Politics), and the author. With 'In the Skin of the City', António Tomás traces the history and transformation of Luanda, Angola, the nation's capital as well as one of the oldest settlements founded by the European colonial powers in the Southern Hemisphere.

Some of our Highlights of 2021-22



November 2021 | So You Want to Write A Novel?: Workshop with Sarah Schulman

The award-winning writer Sarah Schulman (CUNY Staten Island), ran a one-off workshop on novel writing. Sarah is an American novelist, playwright, nonfiction writer, screenwriter, gay activist, and AIDS historian. Her new book *Let The Record Show: A Political History of ACT UP New York, 1987-1993*, has been described by the New York Times as a "masterpiece tome: part sociology, part oral history, part memoir, part call to arms."

February 2022 | Black British Theatre Today: A Roundtable

An exciting range of established and early-career theatre-makers and researchers came together in conversation to discuss some key questions:

- What are the most exciting new developments in contemporary Black British theatre and scholarship?
- What new opportunities have appeared?
- What are the challenges that face Black British theatre-makers and scholars today?



October 2021 | Anagama Kiln Firing - Live

In October we held a special firing event in collaboration with the Embassy of Japan in the UK and Oxford University Kilns as part of Japan Season. Based in Oxford's Wytham Woods, the traditional Anagama Kilns were recreated together with expert potters from Japan, and Dr Robin Wilson. Anagama means 'cave' and the kiln was constructed to plans based on archaeological investigations of this ancient type of pottery kiln.



December 2021 | Look back: Drummers Unite! - Japan

The finale event of Japan Season, part of the Humanities Cultural Programme, ended on a high note as the courtyard of the Radcliffe Humanities Cultural Programme exploded with light, sound and theatre for Drummers Unite!

90 minutes of an outside performance against the backdrop of the beautifully lit Radcliffe Humanities Building, high-impact drumming, dynamic choreography and beautiful lighting design. 400 people gathered in the courtyard arriving from 5 different points around the building.

Programmes

Our 4 headline research programmes bring together existing major research groups and individuals working in the same field to collaborate and incubate new ideas. For more information about our programmes, please visit www.torch.ox.ac.uk/programmes

Environmental Humanities

Intersectional Humanities

Medical Humanities

Race and Resistance

Race and Resistance

Alongside regular Friday seminars, Race and Resistance held some key important events.

Still Breathing

That fear of mistaken identity

Wrong place/wrong time

Born in the wrong skin/colour

Evidently.

Being Black is not a death sentence

The Race and Resistance programme supported the Unlock the Chains collective in the development of a new play, 'Still Breathing' by Oxford artist and producer, Euton Daley. Work began on this project in response to the events of 2020. Still Breathing voices the fears, frustrations, fatigue and anger as yet another Black life is taken by the system that is there to protect. It explored a sense of hopelessness, déjà vu, resilience and a renewed spirit of hope in the struggles for equality, justice and freedom, in a memorial of poetry, music, song, dance and ritual.

Set at a funeral, the production explored rituals, the role of the Black Church and collective (community) grieving, and trauma as another life is taken by the hands of the police or white vigilantes. A highly visual production fused spoken word with music, song and dance and came about as a result of active engagement with various activism during 2020.

In the era of the Black Lives Matter movement, Euton Daley's Unlock the Chains Collective looked at generations of prejudice in a powerful tribute and remembrance to the fallen and the millions still fighting for a just world.

Inspired by real life experiences, 'Still Breathing' was an urgent cry in the continual struggles for freedom, equality and justice - *"This time things can be different"*

The play will premiere at the Sheldonian Theatre, Oxford in October 2022.

Unlock the Chains Collective make and produce theatre that explores the Black experience through the fusion of dance, music, song and spoken word. This project is supported by Oxford Playhouse, The North Wall Arts Centre, Dancin' Oxford and TORCH.



Race and Resistance

The Race and Resistance programme also held a conference in April 2022 called **'Race, Resistance and Belonging at the University of Oxford: A Long History'**. The project examined the history of ideas about race, of anti-racist resistance, and of the lived experiences of students and employees at the University of Oxford and members of the city from the 19th century to the present day. A memory map of experiences was created to capture the critical link between place and experience, by revealing the memories and emotions a particular site elicits for those who have moved through the city past and present. These personal reflections both painful and positive provided a snapshot of the emotional dimension of this history. The project was the product of collaboration between academics, activists and archivists based in Oxford and around the world, and a book is planned based on the conference.

Environmental Humanities

The programme held a series of Lunchtime Seminars in Trinity Term 2022 that included:

'Greening Chronos, Growing Kairos: Turning Time in Religion and the Environmental Humanities'

Speaker: **Devin P Zuber**, Associate Professor, Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley

This workshop explored the contested role that different kinds of time have played within recent conceptualizations in the environmental humanities. The opening talk was delivered by Dr Devin Zuber and was followed by responses from Dr Netta Cohen (Junior Research Fellow in History, Christ Church) and Oxford doctoral students Huw Jones (History, Jesus College), and Natasha Chawla (St Cross College, Theology and Religion).

A premise of the workshop was that some of these contemporary problematics around time also intersect with the fraught role of religion (and/or theology) in environmental historiographies.

We also held a key lecture in March 2022.

"Anthropocene Storytelling: Homecoming or far from home?"

A lecture and workshop hosted by the Oxford Penn Toronto International Doctoral Cluster

Speaker: **David Farrier**, University of Edinburgh

The collapse of Antarctica's Thwaites Glacier—forecast to occur before the end of the decade—could raise global sea level by three metres. The grounding line, eroded by currents of warm water, is arguably the most important place on Earth right now, yet it lies a kilometre beneath the ice's surface and 7,000 kilometres from the nearest human settlement. Thwaites shows that we need stories that reveal what is happening far from where humans live, but in places where humans are highly active. Drawing on recent trends in environmental literature and on his own experience in writing about what legacies we are leaving for the very deep future (in *Footprints: In Search of Future Fossils*), David explored the challenges of telling Anthropocene stories.

Medical Humanities

Medical Humanities examines the relationship between health and society, situating medicine and disease within their political, social, historical, ethical, and cultural contexts. It often uses ideas, tools and methods from disciplines such as history, art, philosophy, theology, and literature to create innovative strategies for understanding and improving health and healthcare. Decisions about whom to treat or when to treat them, how to prevent disease, and how to fund and develop health services cannot be made on the basis of science alone. They remain contentious ethical and political judgments, reflecting economic realities, contested histories, cultural norms, future aspirations, and socially-conditioned perceptions of risk.

During 2021-22 Medical Humanities continued with networking and forming links across different divisions.



Intersectional Humanities

In July we invited a range of community/arts organisations and individuals in Oxford to a conversation over supper at the Ruskin Bullingdon Road project space (the only part of the university in east Oxford). The event was a collaboration between Kelly Lloyd (DPhil student, RSA) and Alexander Stavrou (ex-MFA at the RSA and independent artist in Oxford), and with the kind assistance of Jon Roome and Simon Lewis at the RSA.

The food was provided by the Damascus Rose Kitchen (a social enterprise which supports refugee women). There was no agenda, and the idea was to create a space for very open discussion, from which we could all learn. There was an overwhelmingly positive response, a strong will to keep the conversation going, and a desire to use the project space (e.g. for dance and other performance art).

Intersectional Humanities funding helped to support Kelly and Alexander for their work on this event and for reflecting on the scope for developing art projects which might help to reconceive relationships between the university and other groups/individuals and spaces in Oxford. As part of this process, Alexander was selected as a participant in a group show at Modern Art Oxford and OxfordBrookes University - 'Adapt Transform' - bringing together artists, architects, designers and others with a commitment to urban renewal, creativity and sustainability. He exhibited work at Brookes' Glass Tank Gallery and gave an electrifying performance at MAO responding to the gallery space by negotiating with the exposed surface of a fragment of a piano discarded next to his studio.



We continued to support the Feminist Thinking Seminar Series and two of the events we hosted are highlighted below:

Parenting for Social Justice: An Inter*Sectional Queer Approach to Parenting with Del LaGrace Volcano

Do you ever wonder what our world would look and feel like if we celebrated rather than denigrated difference? Imagine all the people living life in peace or at least without the crushing need to conform to obligatory norms, including but not limited to gender, body, racial and cognitive norms. Del LaGrace Volcano, aka as MaPa to their two young enby children, shows what theory put into practice can look like. Del LaGrace Volcano (born California 1957) is considered to be one of instigators of queer LGBTQI+ culture with a working practice that not only documents a 'queer time and place' but are also iconic testaments to the love, lust, and burning desire to defy the forces that seek to destroy, disrespect and deactivate us. Volcano has produced five photographic monographs and their work has also been included in numerous books, journals and films, on art, gender, photography and the body for the past 40 years!

The Trouble with Pronouns

Prof Madhavi Menon was the speaker in a talk about the politics of pronouns as they affect sexuality and language. It is imperative to get our pronouns "right" and the talk asked what it would mean to get them wrong? In which languages do pronouns matter, and what does a "correct" pronoun signify? The talk focused on the politics of pronouns as they affect sexuality and language, and pay attention to the "trans" that inheres equally in translation and trans* theory. Where might a queer reading of pronouns take us, and do we even want to go there?

Madhavi Menon is Professor of English and Director of the Centre for Studies in Gender and Sexuality at Ashoka University. She has published extensively on queer theory, Shakespeare, and is the author, most recently, of 'Infinite Variety: A History of Desire in India' (2018), and 'The Law of Desire' (2021).



Networks

Since TORCH started, we have supported over 60 research networks, which reach across disciplines to build communities of scholars from a range of career stages to work together on Innovative projects. The networks we supported in 2021-22 are listed below. For more information about our networks visit www.torch.ox.ac.uk/networks

Art Biodiversity and Climate

Britain and Soviet Union: Early Cultural Encounters

Caribbean Studies Network

Climate Crisis Thinking in the Humanities and Social Sciences

Critical Indigenous Studies

Digital Humanities and Sensory Heritage Network

(En)coding Heritage

Images and Thought

Queer Intersections Oxford

Oxford and Empire

Oxford Comics Network

Oxford Network for Armenian Genocide Research

Reimagining Performance

Silence Hub

Sleep and the Rhythms of Life

Writing Technologies



Queer Intersections Oxford

In October 2021, Queer Intersections Oxford was launched as the continuation of the previous Queer Studies Network. The re-launch involved a re-branding and for this reason, a new logo was designed by Kathleen Quaintance, our social media pages were rejuvenated, and a new mailing list was created. This year, QIO has offered a rich programme of extremely well-attended events, whose audience consisted of undergraduate and graduate students, early career researchers, faculty, and members of wider local, national, and international communities.

Following the Welcome Drinks at the Rothermere American Institute in October, we have regularly met for Research Lunches either in person or online, where master's students, doctoral students, and ECRs have presented their work. The 15 speakers across the period have been from, to name a few: Oxford, Georgia State University, Sciences Po, UC Davis, the University of Manchester, and Mid Sweden University.

We also hosted events with key figures of the queer studies and gender studies fields, such as a conversation between **Sarah Schulman** (CUNY) and **Amia Srinivasan** (Oxford), and a feminist mentorship panel with **Emily Cousens** (LSE), **Libe García Zarranz** (NTNU), and **Merve Emre** (Oxford). Moreover, we launched a new series, 'Notes on Craft', designed to showcase the work of early career academics. The first iterations featured **Xine Yao** (UCL), **Ama Josephine B. Johnstone** (Birkbeck), and **Andy Reynolds** (Princeton).

This year we have also collaborated with a number of activists, in line with our focus, as a Network, on intersectional thinking. We hosted a meet-and-greet event with ACT UP London, a conversation between activist and writer **Dan Glass** and journalist **Sergei Khazov-Cassia**, and an event titled 'INTERSEX INTERVENTION' with artists and activists **Valentino Vecchietti** and **Dani Coyle**. Finally, we are currently receiving submissions for our Undergraduate and Post-graduate Essay Prizes.

Networks

Art, Biodiversity, and Climate Network

Among the Garbage and the Flowers

An Art-Science Exhibition focused around the Theme of Figuring Feasible Futures

The exhibition brought together artists and scientists to question the imaginary divide between the urban and the wild, between anthropogenic and so-called "natural" landscapes. brings together members of the Flute & Bowl: Oxford Art and Science (coordinated by Anya Gleizer and Katja Lehmann), Oxford ONE network (coordinated by Tristram Walsh), the Biodiversity Network (coordinated by Cecile Girardin) and the Oxford Climate Research Network to bridge the gap that separates the Humanities (and, more specifically, the arts, music, performance and dance) from crucial research into conserving our planetary support systems. This network engages creative practitioners and researchers to build a new common imaginarium of the world as-it-could-be, transcending academic disciplinary boundaries and short-term political incentives.

The ABC Network took over 6b Center of Contemporary Art, Paris - an ideal meeting point between urban wilderness and culture, an island oasis in the heart of the Seine - to explore which natural and cultural forces are shaping our collective future and where we can look for hope among the garbage and the flowers, in the much-anticipated run-up to the COP26 in Glasgow this year.

The Flute & Bowl is an international interdisciplinary collective of artists and researchers dedicated to creating and promoting artistic and ecological initiatives at the crossroads of art and science.



Creative Conversations with Artists and Scientists

A Late Night event at the Museum of Natural History

The Art, Biodiversity, and Climate network also brought their collaborations between artists and scientists together for an evening at the Oxford Museum of Natural History. The event included performances and artworks, and introduced to the partnerships of scientists and creatives behind them, exploring their processes to find out more about the latest in climate and biodiversity research at the University and its relevance to COP26.

The aim was to inform participants of current research into the Climate Change and Biodiversity Crises, the work of the ABC network and the power of the arts as a means of communicating the importance of these crises.



Climate Crisis Thinking in the Humanities and Social Sciences

During COP26, the Climate Crisis Thinking in the Humanities and Social Sciences Network held a series of events on ways to think about the Climate Crisis.

Networks

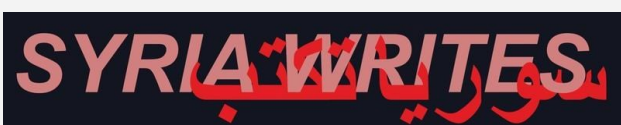
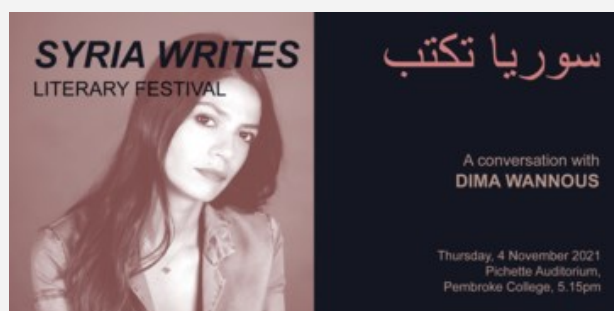
Silence Hub

October this year saw the launch of Syria and Silence. Syria & Silence was a collaborative project between the Silence Hub and the Oxford Network for Armenian Genocide Research, created in response to the silence surrounding the war in Syria where a peaceful uprising turned into a humanitarian catastrophe.

The launch featured a performance by Dervish Sufi Dancers Ahmad Al Katib and 10-year-old Omar Al Katib. Participants were able to browse the maktabah and enjoy nibbles and drinks provided by the Syrian Sisters, a women's community group based in Oxford.

The programme ran from 18 October to 28 November 2021 and featured a pop-up maktabah (library) of books in Arabic, Kurdish and English for members of the public to read in Blackwell Hall; conversations with Syrian authors; a cookery class; a graphic novel workshop for young adults; and a 'show & tell' with some of the Bodleian Libraries' finest oriental manuscripts.

We also held a "Syria Writes Literary Festival" in November as part of the Syria and Silence project which featured public talks from Syrian authors and activists and intimate lunch-time conversations with some of Syria's most beloved authors. The Festival was co-hosted by Suzan Meryem Rosita, Curator of Syria and Silence, and Mohamed-Salah Omri, Professor of Arabic and Comparative Literature.



Caribbean Studies Network

The Caribbean studies network held a series of events between October 2021 and May 2022.

We held a talk by Rocío Zambrana (Emory University) in February on **Colonial Debts: The Case of Puerto Rico**. With the largest municipal debt in US history and a major hurricane that destroyed much of the archipelago's infrastructure, Puerto Rico has emerged as a key site for the exploration of neoliberalism and disaster capitalism. In *Colonial Debts*, Rocío Zambrana develops the concept of neoliberal coloniality in light of Puerto Rico's debt crisis. Drawing on decolonial thought and praxis, Zambrana showed how debt functions as an apparatus of predation that transforms how neoliberalism operates. Debt functions as a form of coloniality, intensifying race, gender, and class hierarchies in ways that strengthen the colonial relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States. Zambrana also examined the transformation of protest in Puerto Rico. From La Colectiva Feminista en Construcción's actions, long-standing land rescue/occupation in the territory, to the July 2019 protests that ousted former governor Ricardo "Ricky" Rosselló, protests pursue variations of decolonial praxis that subvert the positions of power that debt installs. As Zambrana demonstrates, debt reinstalls the colonial condition and adapts the racial/gender order essential to it, thereby emerging as a key site for political-economic subversion and social rearticulation.

In May we held a talk Dr Louisa Layne.

Linton Kwesi Johnson and the Literary Problem Space of Black Music

Johnson's work, seen within the wider Black British cultural archive of the 1970s, offers opportunities for rethinking afro-diasporic and transnational black aesthetics. Reggae music and dub poetry were closely related to other forms of black music and poetry in the UK in the 1970s, and inspired important conversations about blackness, radical politics and aesthetics.

Drawn from her working paper, "From Jazz to Dub Poetry: LKJ, Langston Hughes and the Literary Problem Space of Black Music", Dr Layne asked: what is the contemporary relevance of looking closer at this period in Black British culture? How might revisiting this period improve our understanding of reggae's role in a broader theoretical and diasporic conversation about the relationship between blackness, aesthetics and poetry?

Paris-Oxford Partnership

The international engagement programme at TORCH enables Oxford to thrive on global collaboration by creating opportunities for scholars across the world to study in Oxford and Oxford Scholars to visit institutional partners.

The Paris-Oxford Partnership scheme launched, motivated by the exceptional strength, range, and quality of Humanities research in the University of Oxford and the Université de Paris in partnership with the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS). It is designed to enhance and support the existence of prior research links, and identify potential for significant Interdisciplinary activity.

The Visiting Fellowship Programme at Université de Paris supports Oxford researchers for stays of 1-2 months (4-8 weeks) to undertake advanced research in collaboration with colleagues at Université de Paris and vice versa.

This Fellowship Programme aims to support innovative new paradigms or research questions, the creation of substantial new outputs and research findings; and to foster relationships that may lead to collaborative research grant and award applications (for instance, from the European Research Council).

Visiting Fellows

Alexandra Vukovich, University of Oxford

Research project: Imperial Imaginaries and Pre-Conquest Narratives of Siberia

Niall Winters, University of Oxford

Research project: An interdisciplinary approach to learning design in the digital humanities

Marylin Booth, University of Oxford

Research project: Rewriting French conduct literature in Arabic: Pedagogy and transculturation in Cairo and Paris, 1870s–1920s

Anne-Sophie Bentz, Université Paris Cité

Research project: 'The Political Mobilization of Tibetan Refugees in the United Kingdom'

There were also a couple of Early Career Researcher partnership projects as part of this scheme which brought together researchers from both universities to run joint conference events and initiate work together.



International

Dr Obari Gomba

Global South Visiting Professor

The TORCH Global South Visiting Professorships and Fellowships Programme is designed to bring world-leading figures to the University of Oxford for at least one term and be included in the teaching and research environment, hosted by leading academics in the humanities. The Programme is a flagship scheme that supports Visiting Professors from institutions based in countries included in the United Nations 'Group of 77'. The Programme is a collaboration between the Faculties of the Humanities Division and All Souls College of the University of Oxford.



TORCH was honoured to welcome **Dr Obari Gomba** (PhD) in 2021 as the Global South Visiting Professor. Dr Obari Gomba is an award-winning poet and writer, and his research is at the forefront of recent developments in eco-criticism and energy humanities. Dr Gomba is currently a lecturer at the University of Harcourt, Nigeria and teaches Literature and Creative Writing. He is an Honorary Fellow in Writing of the University of Iowa (USA). He is a recipient of Rivers ANA Distinguished Writer Award, Halogen Award for Poetry, and Kangaroo Poetry Festival Poet of 2018. He is a two-time winner of both the Best Literary Artiste Award and the First Prize for Drama of the English Association of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

His works include *Guerrilla Post* (Winner of ANA Drama Prize 2018/ Shortlisted for the Nigeria Prize for Literature 2018), *For Every Homeland* (Winner of ANA Poetry Prize 2017/ Shortlisted for the Nigeria Prize for Literature 2017), *Thunder Protocol* (Winner of ANA Poetry Prize 2016), *Length of Eyes* (Shortlisted for ANA Poetry Prize in 2013 / Shortlisted for the Nigeria Prize for Literature 2013), and *Pearls of the Mangrove* (adopted as a 'Book of the Festival' for the 2011 Garden City Literary Festival and the 2019 Festival Poetry Calabar). He curated an anthology featuring 35 writers from 33 countries, entitled *A Piece of Daily Life*, for the International Writing Program of the University of Iowa (USA) in 2016.

During his stay in Oxford, he focused on researching the historical representation of this "oil culture" in three plays set in the pre-colonial period as well as developing his own poetry. Dr Gomba's visit enabled him to consult archival sources, and to share insights on the works of Niger Delta poets and playwrights. He also spent time writing his own poetry, a collection for which he was subsequently awarded the Pan Africa Writers Association Poetry Prize.

Dr Gomba was hosted by Professor David Pratten, and took up his Fellowship at All Souls College in Michaelmas term, 2021.

"He is a distinguished literary scholar and writer who is at the forefront of contemporary eco-criticism."

"As one of the leading literary commentators on the politics of oil in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria he is a key partner and participant in an ongoing collaborative research programme between Oxford University and the University of Port Harcourt called 'The Arts of Oil: A cultural history of Port Harcourt'."

- Professor Pratten

International Visiting Fellows



Dr Sherry Lee, University of Toronto

Dr Sherry Lee teaches a range of courses in 19th- and 20th-century music and culture, dealing with instrumental, electroacoustic, and vocal-dramatic genres and aesthetics. Her research interests are focused in the 19th and 20th centuries and include music and culture in fin-de-siècle Vienna, opera, music and technology, and the musical thought of Theodor W. Adorno. Dr Lee's work is informed by literary and critical theory, gender studies, performance studies, philosophy and aesthetics. Her published and forthcoming research includes articles in the *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, *Cambridge Opera Journal*, *Music & Letters*, the *University of Toronto Quarterly*, *19th-Century Music*, and collected volumes including 'Berg and His World' (Princeton UP), 'Franz Schreker and His Time' (Hermann), and the 'Oxford Companion to Music and Disability Studies'. Her book, 'Adorno At The Opera', is forthcoming from Cambridge University Press.

Dr Sr Beena Jose, Virmala College, Kerala

In May, Sr Beena Jose, who was visiting the Ian Ramsey Centre from India, offered a public presentation about her research into human dignity. The concept of human dignity plays a pivotal role in contemporary ethics and bioethics and it is considered as a moral standard for patient care at the bedside. Nowadays we have come across numerous incidents in which human dignity is defiled; how can we ground human dignity in healthcare and medical research when faced with situations in which such dignity has or may be violated? In her presentation, Sister Beena Jose aimed to bring interdisciplinary and Anglo-Indian perspectives to bear on these questions. Sr Beena's time in Oxford was made possible thanks to a TORCH fellowship.



plinary and Anglo-Indian perspectives to bear on these questions. Sr Beena's time in Oxford was made possible thanks to a TORCH fellowship.

Professor Jorge Flores, University of Lisbon



The Faculty of History was pleased to announce that Professor Jorge Flores was awarded a TORCH International Fellowship in Oxford for May 2022. Jorge Flores is Coordinator Researcher at the Interuniversity Centre for the History of Science and Technology and the Department of History and Philosophy of Science of the University of Lisbon. Professor Flores brought his unique expertise on the history of empire, cross-cultural interaction, and knowledge production in early modern Iberian Asia to Oxford. His encouraged a conversation within Oxford about the importance of decentring the Atlantic world and rethinking Iberian exploration by recovering Asian perspectives on the trajectories of the Spanish and Portuguese empires.

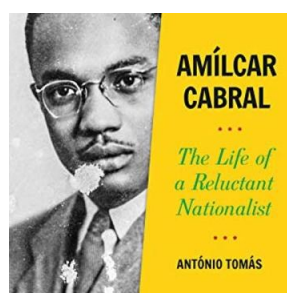
During his time at Oxford he was involved in a rich programme of events including:

- * A Masterclass with Jorge Flores: Iberian Asia & Global History
- * Hands-on Talk 'The Archive of a Visual and Written Dis-sent in the Early Modern Iberian World'
- * International Conference: 'What Was Iberian Asia? New Perspectives on Spanish and Portuguese Exploration

Professor António Tomás, University of Johannesburg

António Tomás is Associate Professor in the Graduate School of Architecture at the University of Johannesburg. He holds a PhD in Anthropology from Columbia University, in New York. He has worked as a journalist in Angola and Portugal and has written extensively on issues related to Lusophone Africa.

Tomás' research engages with two sets of ideas. He is firstly interested in colonialism, decolonization and the politics of independence in Africa. Another stream of his work engages with urban studies, and particularly urban transformation. Some of his recent publications are: 'Amílcar Cabral: the Life of a Reluctant Nationalist' (Hurst, 2021); and 'In the Skin of the City: Spatial Transformation in Luand' (Duke University Press, 2022).



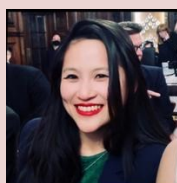
My Name is Laura Kieler: The True Story of Ibsen's A Doll's House

This project was the next phase of the collaboration with Breach Theatre company to create an original theatre piece based on the true story behind Ibsen's most famous play, 'A Doll's House'. Ibsen based his character of Nora directly on the real-life figure of Laura Kieler, an aspiring writer and a friend of Ibsen's, whose private difficulties furnished the plot of his play-- without her knowledge or permission. Seeing her personal problems put up on stage for all to see was a shock that caused Laura life-long trauma, and yet she managed to go on to establish a successful career as the author of novels, plays, and newspaper articles even while struggling to set the record straight about how Ibsen used her as his raw material and capitalized on her anguish. Laura's story is a powerful example of a woman overcoming adversity and exploitation by men at a time when women's voices were only just beginning to be heard. Building on the KE Innovation fund project, which allowed us to explore this extraordinary story's possibilities for performance, we will expand and develop our ideas into a full-length play that will powerfully illuminate Laura's relevance for contemporary issues and debates, such as the MeToo movement and the 'bad art friend' controversies.



Kirsten Shepherd-Barr is Professor of English and Theatre Studies at the University of Oxford, and a Tutorial Fellow in English at St Catherine's College.

Tzen Sam is a DPhil Candidate in the Faculty of English, researching Ibsen's first female English translators under the supervision of Kirsten Shepherd-Barr.



The Alternative Queen's Speech

This project brings together creative artists and Oxford researchers to develop a new 90-minute opera entitled *The Alternative Queen's Speech*, based on Margaret Atwood's *The Penelopiad* (2005), by composer, Cheryl Frances-Hoad and opera director/librettist, Jeanne Pansard-Besson. *The Alternative Queen's Speech*, like Atwood's novella, turns the canonical narrative of Homer's *Odyssey* upside down: Odysseus' wife, Penelope, traditionally the model of marital fidelity and patient endurance, is given the chance to offer her side of the story from the underworld.

The residency explored the pressures exerted by the patriarchy on all the women of the household, and the tensions between Penelope and the twelve enslaved women, in whose execution at her son's hands she too is implicated. The first aria was commissioned in 2021 from the National Opera Studio and a preliminary workshop took place in Oxford before a three-day residency, 6-8 June 2022, in the Jacqueline du Pre Music Building at St Hilda's College. The composer, director/librettist, two singers and a student actor, together with researchers from Classics, English, Modern Languages and Music, and students from the Cheney School, Oxford, developed the next stage in the collaborative project.

There was a lecture/performance and a film was made of the project.

Fiona Macintosh



Selfish Road

Selfish Road emerged from a series of autobiographical events that took place on highroads and dirt tracks in and around Jerusalem, where I grew up until I arrived to Leicester at the age of 19 as a young immigrant. The filming process took place over many weeks of me filming roads with a smartphone camera, sat next to drivers who also acted as researchers. Additional footage came from a Palestinian photojournalist and an Israeli human rights photographer, who used incredibly large telephoto lenses to ambitiously capture the material architecture of Road 60 from various hilly vantage points on either side of Beit Jala.

The editing process, music and sound design, graphics, and voiceover (of which there are several in the film, akin to a choir or a reading group) were done with input and through rich conversations with KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin who commissioned the film.

'Applying to TORCH for support and the discussions that took place in this context helped me further articulate what I was trying to do before I knew what it would become. It can be challenging for visual artists to apply for funding, as we need the space to 'not-know' and experiment before we have a sense of the outcome'.

The film was elegantly installed at KW and from there disseminated to film festivals, exhibitions, talks and panels. Selfish Road was screened in Neuendorf am Sande, a 36-hectare farm outside Berlin, and invited by the queer farming collective LAWINE (avalanche in German) who resides locally alongside other farming groups. Neuendorf am Sande was owned by a Jewish family and operated as a Jewish Agriculture school, until WWII when the farm became a Nazi deportation centre. I continue to work with LAWINE, particularly in relation to the history of the site and current discourses around farming, gender and the International Peasants' Movement (La Via Campesina). This period of initial research in Germany was funded by Oxford – UdK

Berlin Partnership in Arts and Humanities— Seedfunding for Creative Collaboration. My current research continues to be based on this collaboration in parts.

"Commentary"

Journeying through their homeland and recalling autobiographical memories along the way, Ashery observes how both senses of belonging have and continue to fuse with the vertiginous and winding flows of nation-building, infrastructure and land use.

Turning a camera onto the contested land in and around Jerusalem, Selfish Road draws upon the genres of science-fiction, stand-up comedy, the family photo album, and the implicit privilege of the slacker road movie. The film reveals a composite portrait of a rapidly changing landscape: roads collapse into sinkholes, diseased cacti line highways, and location-monitoring apps map circuitous routes to flag "high risk" and "prohibited" areas. This episodic reflection of space and place attempts to work through the paradox: How can you own something that is stolen?

Selfish Road depicts a contradictory environment of industrial extraction obscured by spiritual wellness practices. With anger, grief, hope, and resistance, it dreams of material ecological visions for indigenous life away from settler occupation and seeks out an ethics in and beyond the beauty of the region.

Oreet Ashery (Ruskin)



CELL: Exploring New Theatre Visions of Julian of Norwich

Often reduced to the aphorism “Sin is behovely, but all shall be well”, Julian of Norwich (c. 1343–c. 1416), a visionary, recluse, and the earliest known English woman writer, is often thought of as an unperturbably serene, even disembodied holy woman. Springing from a collaboration between writer-performer Cindy Oswin and four Oxford medievalists, the play “Cell” unsettles such received assumptions: it examines the continuation of Julian’s intense spiritual life within the physical limitations and privations of old age.

Over several months in 2022, Oswin composed ‘Cell’ in conversation with the researchers. Group meetings explored, for instance, the texture of medieval lived religion and the pronunciation of Julian’s Middle English. Tryouts allowed the performer to collect feedback on the play-in-progress. Two TORCH-funded graduate assistants vitally supported the project throughout. Following the performance in Somerville College chapel on 16 July 2022, a Q&A between the performer and the large audience examined Julian’s many roles today. As intended, Oswin has since developed the play further and will continue to perform it, with the British Library and the Julian Centre in Norwich having shown interest. Throughout, the researchers relished seeing the play evolve, witnessing, for instance, the inclusion of an evocative prop. Learning points were limited to practical matters.

Outputs range from a play quite unlike other reimaginings of medieval women’s lives (in its immersive soundscape, for instance) to a generative knowledge exchange between artist, researchers, and audience. The discussions allowed the artist to reframe her thinking about Julian, age, and spirituality; for the researchers, “Cell” added an experiential dimension to their objects of study. An audience survey revealed that the play enthralled academics and non-academics alike; the play’s themes of suffering and resilience not only changed their perceptions of Julian, but also resonated powerfully with all.



Godeline Gertrude Perk

Godeline Gertrude Perk is a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellow at the Faculty of Medieval and Modern Languages and a Fulford JRF at Somerville College (Oxford).

Cindy Oswin

Cindy Oswin is a writer/actor/director working in theatre with a special interest in archive material leading to performance. Commissioned by the British Library, her academic research into Gertrude Stein culminated in writing and performing the solo play ‘A Salon with Gertrude and Alice.’ Her long fascination with Julian of Norwich has led her to enquire into the effects of ageing on a medieval enclosed woman.

Dr Antje Chan

Antje Chan is a DPhil candidate at the English Faculty & Lincoln College (Oxford). Her DPhil project sheds light on lay participation in communal and personal devotions to Christ.

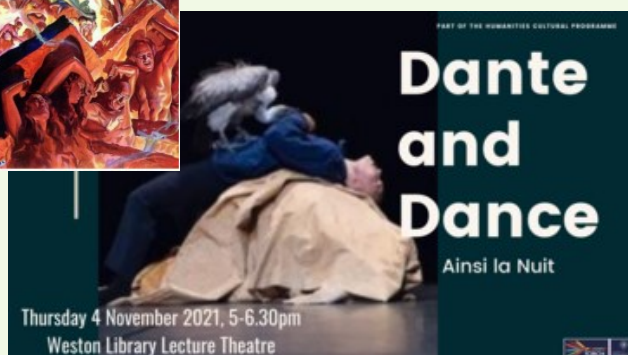
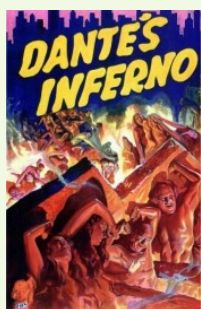
Dr Alicia Smith

Alicia Smith holds a DPhil from the English Faculty (Oxford) and has recently been awarded a postdoctoral Mellon Fellowship with the Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies (Toronto), starting in Autumn 2022.

Dr Raphaela Rohrhofer

Raphaela Rohrhofer is a lecturer in Medieval English Literature at Somerville and holds a DPhil from Oxford's English Faculty.

Humanities Cultural Programme



Dante Season

In Michaelmas Term, the Humanities Cultural Programme celebrated the 700th anniversary of Dante's death, exploring his work and its many and rich afterlives. It was an opportunity to explore new forms of public engagement with research, with artistic practice, and with political and cultural history. The programme brought together the strength of Oxford's research community by curating a wide-reaching cultural festival with a range of public events, including live in person and online programming.

Innovation Provocation: Transnational Avant-Gardes

In Hilary Term this season tracked the disruptive, creative energy of avant-garde artistic practice across history, across the world, and into present practice. The season explored the transnational reach and momentum of the avant-garde, and celebrated its enduring capacity to engage and excite, innovate and inspire in equal measure.



Japan Season

The Japan Season included an 'After Hours' collaboration with the Ashmolean Museum including a vibrant programme entrancing visitors as they entered the museum. Audiences were greeted with projections in the atrium of The Legend of Urashima Taro, one of the most well-known folk-tales of Japan brought to life through shadow puppetry, and Marewrew's Voice - performance excerpts from a full film created by Eiko Soga (Artist and Researcher, Ruskin School of Art and St. John's College, University of Oxford) as well as a short film from calligraphy artist Kaoru Akagawa.



Humanities Cultural Programme

Visiting Fellows

We were thrilled to welcome world renowned artists from a variety of backgrounds to work alongside Humanities researchers. These included **Tom Hammick** who joined us (remotely) to offer a series of events and activities. Tom is the creator of paintings, woodcuts, prints, drawings, monotypes and tapestries. His subjects have included the deep North, lunar voyages, boats and bodies of water, the night, forests — all of which are characterized by silence and stillness.

Tom joined **Professor Kate Loughlin** (English) in conversation to discuss the creation, significance and history of silence in painting and poetry, juxtaposing pictures and texts in a mutually illuminating way. The conversations focused on (1) The Silent Vision (2) The Colour of Silence and (3) Silence & Perspective.



Walking Home
by
Tom Hammick

Silence, Painting, Poetry goes in-person!

In May 2022 we also held a première screening of **Lunar Voyage**, in Maevadi Hall, Harris Manchester College. In the 45-minute film, Professor Kate McLoughlin and artist Tom Hammick discussed Tom's stunning 2017 woodcut series **Lunar Voyage**, originally exhibited at the Flowers Gallery in New York.

After the screening, Kate and Tom were joined by literary critic **Alexandra Harris** (Professorial Fellow in English at the University of Birmingham) and astrophysicist **Dominic Dootson**, (DPhil student at Balliol College, Oxford) for a further 45 minutes to discuss the silences of space, moon-voyages and the loneliness of vocations.



Professor Kate Loughlin, English

Kate is writing a literary history of silence and editing an anthology of poems about silence.



Over the 2021/22 academic year, **Katie Melua** (pictured above) joined us as a Humanities Cultural Programme Visiting Fellow. Katie collaborated with a select group of students and faculty from Oxford University and Oxford community organisations to create an original musical story inspired by Professor Peter Frankopan's best-selling book, **The Silk Roads**. This unique songs-based project was presented at Oxford's Sheldonian Theatre in April 2022.

"I believe that songs are one of the most potent carriers of culture, human experience, and story-telling. I have forever felt that universities are the source of cutting-edge thinking and cultural development, but rarely do I see the two playgrounds of musical artistry and academic study come together."



World-renowned theatre director **Katie Mitchell** OBE, recipient of the 2017 President's Medal of the British Academy for outstanding services to innovation in opera and theatre, pushed forward her work exploring new sustainable practices for touring work.

Book At Lunchtime

www.torch.ox.ac.uk/book-at-lunchtime

During 2021-2022 the Book at Lunchtime roved widely across Humanities faculties and beyond, across historical timescales and with inter-continental geographical reach. 'Living I was your Plague', authored by renowned Martin Luther biographer, Professor Lyndal Roper, explored how Luther carefully crafted his own image and how he has been portrayed in his own times and ours, painting a unique portrait of the man who set in motion a revolution that sundered Western Christendom.

From there we dived into a cinematic experience to discuss 'Greek Weird Wave', by Professor Dimitris Papanikolaou and then back in time to the 'Oxford Handbook of Dante' edited by Professors Manuele Gragnolati, Elena Lombardi and Francesca Southerden. A particularly interesting and vibrant discussion as part of the Dante Season.

In 'Don't Follow the Wind', the authors Nikolaus Hirsch and Jason Waite, explored an acclaimed collaborative project which was situated in Fukushima's radioactive exclusion zone. The book focused on the long-term environmental crisis in the coastal Japanese region and asked what can art do in a continuing catastrophe when destruction and contamination have made living impossible?

We journeyed across Russia for 'Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow' by Alexander Radishchev, translated by Andrew Kahn and Irina Reyfman. From the age of Catherine the Great we roved to a different era for Literary Cosmopolitanism in the 'English Fin de Siècle: Citizens of Nowhere' by Dr Stefano Evangelista and then 'The Career and Communities of Zaynab Fawwaz: Feminist Thinking in Fin-de-siècle Egypt' by Professor Marilyn Booth.

We moved to the World Heritage site of 'Great Zimbabwe for Reclaiming a 'Confiscated' Past' by Professor Shadreck Chirikure (Archaeology)

From archaeological investigations our discussions moved covertly to espionage and counter-intelligence activities with 'Spying Through a Glass Darkly: The Ethics of Espionage and Counter-Intelligence' by Professor Cécile Fabre (Philosophy).

The year ended with by taking a global focus with a wonderful discussion of 'Unseen City: The Psychic Lives of the Urban Poor' by Professor Ankhi Mukherjee. This is a magisterial work of literary and cultural criticism which examines the relationship between global cities, poverty, and psychoanalysis.



TORCH | THE OXFORD RESEARCH CENTRE IN THE HUMANITIES

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- see Website for more details.

