

Annual Review 2022—23





Over 300
research-led events with
audiences totalling over
17,000
people

4

**Major Research
Programmes**

7

**Knowledge
Exchange
Fellows**

19

**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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Professor Wes Williams
TORCH Director,
University of Oxford



This year marks the 10th anniversary of TORCH, a moment to celebrate a decade of connecting Oxford academics with partners across industries and communities. Together, we have explored new ways of working, told important stories for contemporary audiences, and expanded the horizons of humanities research.

TORCH was founded on the belief that the humanities thrive through collaboration. By bringing together diverse voices, we uncover fresh perspectives and innovative approaches to the challenges of our time. Our mission remains clear: to connect research with real-world impact. Whether through ground-breaking projects funded in Networks and Programmes, Knowledge Exchange and Humanities Cultural Programme, which responded to a global subject with creativity and insight, or ongoing partnerships with organisations beyond the university, our mission remains clear: to support interdisciplinary research and connect research with real-world impact.

As we reflect on the past year, it is inspiring to see how TORCH continues to generate transformative work that bridges disciplines, sparks dialogue, and fosters understanding. Looking ahead, we are excited to deepen these connections and shape the next decade of humanities scholarship.

Thank you to everyone—researchers, partners, and audiences—who has been part of this journey. Here's to celebrating a decade of achievement and forging even stronger collaborations for the future.

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



In my final year as TORCH Academic Champion, I got to see many of the initiatives and transformations implemented in previous years flourish. In 2022-23, TORCH was again a flurry of in-person activity, and the team kept incredibly busy with a fantastic array of network, programme, and international events. During this first “normal” academic year in some time, we were able to hold a networking lunch for networks and programmes, so that our wonderful intellectual communities of graduate students, and academics from different career stages could come together and exchange notes about their experience at TORCH.

In funding news, the Medical Humanities programme, led by Professor Erica Charters secured £117k in John Fell funding for the “Health Humanities” project, which will enable exciting new activities within that interdisciplinary space. The Intersectional Humanities programme developed an event and exhibition, ‘Who Took These?’, to commemorate the women activists that helped launch the ‘Rhodes Must Fall’ movement in Oxford, and the photographers who documented that important moment in the university’s history.

We were lucky to celebrate an active year of international collaborations. We welcomed Érico Nogueira (Uni Federal de São Paulo) as our TORCH Global South Visiting Professor. In addition, we also hosted scholars from Paris as part of our ongoing exchange programme with the Université de Paris Cité. The Princeton University Press lecture series kicked off again, too, with the visit from Professor William Marx (Collège de France), who delivered three lectures on the “Libraries of the Mind”. On the funding front, we were delighted to offer Humanities colleagues funding through our international partnership and travel awards.

My experience at TORCH has been profoundly enriching and energising, and I’m grateful to all the wonderful colleagues who make this Centre so special and irreplaceable.



May 2023 | Radical Art in Anti-Colonial London - Onyeke Igwe

Race and Resistance

The influence of anti-colonial politics from the 1930s to 1950s was explored through the making of A Radical Duet, an artist moving image project by Ruskin Senior Tutor, Onyeke Igwe. In her non-fiction video work Onyeke uses dance, voice, archives, sound design and text to create structural 'figure-of-eights', a format that exposes a multiplicity of narratives. The work comprised untieable strands and threads, anchored by a rhythmic editing style, as well as close attention to the dissonance, reflection and amplification that occurs between image and sound.



June 2023 | Carey Young Symposium: Vision and Justice

In this exciting interdisciplinary symposium, Visiting Fellow Carey Young was joined by art historians, legal theorists and women judges discussing the themes in Young's solo exhibition, including relations between law, images and fiction, and between power, gender and the cinematic. This event was in partnership with Modern Art Oxford.

June 2023 | Estella Tse. In Bloom. Augmented Reality Exhibition

"In Bloom" the Augmented Reality Exhibition by Visiting Fellow, Estella Tse was an astonishing, powerful and poignant experience. A story of redemption, overcoming the darkest days in one's life to find light again.

In collaboration with Oxford University, virtual + augmented reality artist Estella Tse shared her story of overcoming Complex PTSD and debilitating Depression through her immersive art. The exhibition used tech to tell a story. Symbolic and metaphorical elements of plant and other life forms were woven through the visitor journey, creating a technologically enhanced naturescape through which to explore the mind and the imagination. Each piece reflected the larger ecosystem of Estella's life and growth.



May 2023 | Brecht on Love and War

In May we were delighted to present, Brecht on Love and War: The Bauhaus Band and Singers. This performance was the culmination of Prof. John Harle's (renowned English saxophonist and musical director, Guildhall School of Music and Drama) year long visiting fellowship at the Humanities Cultural Programme. Prof. Harle working with Prof. Tom Kuhn (Professor of 20th Century German Literature, Brecht expert and translator, University of Oxford), will presented a spectacular multi-media programme of Brecht poems and songs. In the first half, Marc Almond sang hit songs and ballads of the 1920s and 30s, from Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill ('Mack the Knife') to Duke Ellington.



June 2023 | Shaping Destiny Presents

Shaping Destiny brought together members of the Department of Physiology, Anatomy and Genetics and TORCH, and the fields of immersive technology, developmental genetics, and creative performance. The project ran an event to explore the power of the embodied imagination in an experiment combining scientific analysis and dance, cultural history and virtual reality where participants could wrestle with key shared notions such as fate, determinism and culture in both cellular and creative domains, investigate human 'norms', our histories, and your futures.



January 2023 | EPOCH 2023 TORCH Knowledge Exchange

As part of our Creative Industries programme, the EPOCH collaboration came about in the pilot year of the “Science Together” public engagement with research scheme. It brought together local partners Inner Peace Records and Urban Music Foundation with a team from Oxford University and Oxford Brookes University. We supported our external partner to launch their ambitious concept album, a week-long public event at the Old Fire Station titled ‘Epoch: human innovation and response’.



June 2023 | Gifts and Books

The exhibition explored the giving and receiving of gifts, highlighting the fundamental role to human societies. Funded by the Knowledge Exchange Fellowship research fund, Professor Nicholas Perkins drew on material from ancient Sumerian writing tablets to contemporary fiction for children. Gifts and Books explored the importance of gift-giving through books and across time, and how this apparently simple act reveals wider interactions, relationships and belief systems. TORCH also had a Book at Lunchtime event linked to the exhibition.

(Re)Acting Romanticism: Disability and Women Writers

This project sought to engage with visitors at Wordsworth Grasmere and bring attention to the experiences of Romantic women writers with disabilities. It covered online workshops with students with disabilities to explore their responses to writing by authors such as Dorothy Wordsworth, Mary Robinson, and Susanna Blamire. The Community Gallery at the Wordsworth Museum encapsulated the past and present of understudied women writers of the Romantic period, aiming to resonate with visitors’ preconceptions, conversations and creative responses via blog post.



June 2023 | Laura Kieler and the Liverpool Institute For Performing Arts Event

A new production, performed by second-year acting students, at LIPA, was a collaboration with award-winning company Breach. The performance was an irreverent and radical approach to examining the origins of Henrik Ibsen’s ‘A Doll’s House’, shining a light on Laura Kieler and how her life was forever changed by Ibsen’s dramatisation and what a lack of recognition for her influence tells us about gender bias, then and now! Combining a forensic documentary approach, the company brought a playfulness to this piece.



April 2023 | The Woodcutter, or The Three Wishes

The Woodcutter, or, The Three Wishes, was written in 1797 by Elizabeth Countess of Hardwicke as a play to amuse the children, an example of the shared literary culture between Wimpole Hall and Wrest Park. As part Christine Gerrard’s Knowledge Exchange Fellowship, students from Lady Margaret Hall brought The Woodcutter to life in the same playful spirit. Student directors, Sylvie Knight and Eleanor Housden, commented on the experience: “We are all delighted to have the opportunity to perform in the country houses of Wrest and Wimpole.”

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



Environmental Humanities

From understanding the origins of the climate crisis to exploring the personal and cultural dimensions of ecological grief, the environmental humanities are essential for addressing some of the biggest challenges facing the twenty-first century. The collection of scientific data regarding biodiversity loss, carbon emissions, and industrial pollution will only get us so far. Not only do the environmental humanities bring a critical eye to the very construction of scientific knowledge, they are also essential for understanding what this data means for social structures, political institutions, and cultural practices.

The Environmental Humanities Programme at TORCH is a community of scholars drawn from a wide variety of disciplines, from literary criticism and theology, to music and history. It offers scholars and students the necessary, innovative platforms and resources to connect different strands in order to generate meaningful collaborations and to add an essential Humanities voice to the debate aimed at answering some of the most pressing questions of our time.



Programmes

Intersectional Humanities

This dynamic research Hub foregrounds the principle of intersectionality. In doing so, it both asserts and activates the core role and responsibility of the Humanities in reflecting on questions of identity, subjectivity, interiority and language. Intersectional thinking strengthens nuance and sensitivity to difference, and builds resistance to essentialism and the polarisation of culture wars. The need for this is now more urgent than ever.

The Hub recognises the complex interaction of diverse markers of identity, categorisation and self-understanding: according to gender, sexuality, racialisation, disability, ethnicity, class, religion, citizen status, ideological standpoint, generation. The application of multiply-refracting interpretative lenses sharpens the focus of debate within feminist, queer, trans, non-binary, critical-race, post-colonial and disability studies, as well as carrying the potential to be more broadly transformative of intellectual and institutional structures and assumptions. The Hub can only do this by remaining aware of the history of the concept of intersectionality as a critique of racialised and other forms of privilege, and is thus committed to openness, humility and self-reflexivity.

Creative and critical conversations are opened up across academic disciplines, and between academics, artists, activists, practitioners and policy-makers. There is scope to highlight the multicultural and transnational nature of the University of Oxford, of other educational institutions in the city, and of the wider local community, in addition to developing national and international networks.

It works closely with other TORCH Hubs and networks to foster exploratory research which does not fall into neat categories. It supports workshops, symposia and performative events which are designed to further its overarching goals, and provides a platform for grant



The Hub has a close affinity with the community of the interdisciplinary MSt in Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies, which has a 25-year history (until 2021 as Women's Studies) of intersectional critical engagement in which theory and practice have cross-fertilised. The interplay of activism within and outside the academy speaks to the politics of naming – conspicuously to that of 'woman' - and to the understanding of all terminological descriptors in their most capacious sense.

Race and Resistance

Race and Resistance brings together a supportive and exciting group of students and staff. The general ethos of Race and Resistance - focused on anti-racist praxis and learning - was demonstrably embraced by all participants in Michaelmas 2022. It is rare to find an interdisciplinary space where there is so much respect and appreciation of different modes of understanding (and theorising) about society. Race and Resistance provides an incredibly important space for learning, development and the co-production of knowledge within the TORCH community.

The regular Friday sessions were varied and were all attended by over 20 participants.



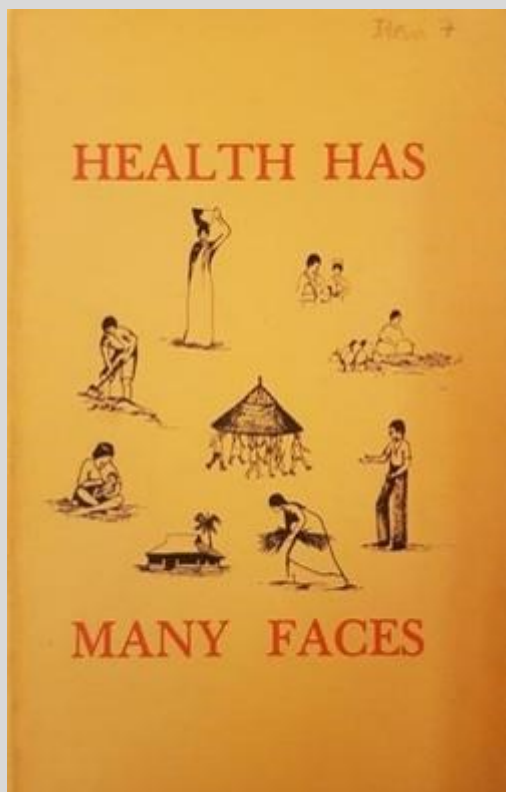
Programmes

Medical Humanities

In 2022-2023, under the leadership of Prof. Erica Charters, TORCH's Medical Humanities network continued to build on its strength in interdisciplinary research and activities, hosting a number of events that examined a variety of aspects of health and medicine. In particular, the academic year 2022 opened with a prestigious Astor Lecture given by Professor Lawrence Gostin (Georgetown) on 'Global Health Emergencies: From Ebola and Covid-19 to Monkeypox and Polio'. This was followed by an interdisciplinary roundtable discussion featuring responses from University of Oxford historians, philosophers, legal scholars, and public health specialists; as well as a graduate student and early career lunchtime workshop led by Professor Gostin, discussing what expertise humanities brings to navigating medical emergencies. All events were oversubscribed; they were also the result of successful coordination with the Faculty of Law, Faculty of History, Uehiro Centre for Practical Ethics, Ethox Centre, Oxford Wellcome Centre for Ethics and Humanities, and the Pandemic Sciences Institute. As well as hosting various book talks and seminars, in 2022-23 Medical Humanities also collaborated with the Bodleian Libraries (Medical and Digital Humanities Workshop, Nov 2022; Informal Archives and the Making of Medical Worlds in Africa, May 2023).

A particular strength of the network is the number of events for and organized by postgraduate students and Early Career Researchers, including a weekly writing group; a work-in-progress conference; and in May 2023 a two-day PG-ECR Workshop hosted in collaboration with Medical Humanities at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Charité-Universitätsmedizin Berlin, and King's College London (with funding from the Oxford Berlin Research Partnership.)

The year 2022-23 also initiated planning for substantial future events, as a major University of Oxford John Fell Fund Grant was awarded to start January 2023. Under the umbrella of 'Health Humanities', this grant will support research activities which relate to global health, public health, and community health – and particularly those which examine the relationships and tensions among these three key categories of scholarship, practice, and policy.



Networks

Since TORCH started we have supported over 65 research networks, which reach across disciplines to build communities of scholars from a range of career stages to work together on innovative projects. In 2022-23 we supported the following networks:

African Languages, Literatures and Cultures Network

Ancient Anatolia

Art Biodiversity and Climate

Britain and the 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

Oxford and Empire

Oxford Childhood and Youth Studies

Oxford Comics Network

Oxford Network for Armenian Genocide Research

Queer Intersections Oxford

Reimagining Performance

Silence Hub

Sleep and the Rhythms of Life

Writing Technologies

Queer Intersections Oxford



In 2022-2023, QIO provided a fruitful space for queer, gender, and sexuality research to flourish at Oxford. Our events offered a platform to students, early career scholars, and artists, allowing them to present their work and to develop together. The inclusive nature of events allowed QIO to create a distinctive and welcoming environment for people from different career stages and disciplines.

Our staple event consisted of regular Research Lunches where master's and doctoral students, as well as ECRs, shared their work. The speakers came from: Oxford, the University of Edinburgh, the University of Brighton, Université Sorbonne Nouvelle, Université PSL, RWTH Aachen University, and West Chester University. While the Research Lunches were not themed, the events were particularly successful when the speakers came from the same field. In order to benefit from these synergies, this year we turned the Research Lunches into themed events.

While the Research Lunches, as well as the film nights and socials we organised last year, mostly took place in person, we hosted a series of online events, which were particularly useful in reaching a wider community. For instance, we hosted a series of talks with young Italian academics, titled "Noted on Craft" and we hosted a successful online conversation with French writer Édouard Louis. The popularity of the latter moved us to continue planning both online and in person events.

Last year, we also collaborated with the African Languages, Literatures, and Cultures Network, the Reimagining Performance Network, and the Intersectional Humanities Network. Liaising with other TORCH groups did not only foster cross-pollination and knowledge exchange, but it also allowed QIO to become a part of the Intersectional Humanities Network and to consequently become a more stable entity.

Finally, we ran our second Undergraduate and Postgraduate Essay Prize competition, which fostered Oxford's young scholars.

Alice Parinello (MML)

Sleep and the Rhythms of Life

‘Sleep and the Rhythms of Life’ brings together researchers with an interest in sleep across all four academic divisions and the arts. It has launched the first sleep-focused programme in Oxford that connects medicine and science to the social sciences and the humanities, contributing to shared knowledge production. Rhythmicity is not only at the heart of sleep and circadian rhythms, but is also fundamental to music, literature, and the humanities. This shared structure of rhythmicity across the sciences and the arts raises multiple questions including:

- (i) How has Western modernity impacted our bodily rhythms, including sleep?
- (ii) Can humans adapt to the 24/7 society, and what are the benefits and costs?
- (iii) How can we embed the study of rhythmicity and sleep as key concepts across a range of disciplinary fields?

To date, ‘Sleep and the Rhythms of Life’ has organised a variety of events and activities, both with an academic and a public engagement focus. The network held an initial interdisciplinary symposium for Oxford researchers to establish an exchange across fields and forge new connections. Since then, the network has hosted well-attended interdisciplinary seminars with distinguished speakers from the sciences and the arts. Foci included *“Sleep, Light, Architecture,” “Dance Music, Wakefulness and Embodied Rhythm,”* and *“The network furthermore served as an intellectual hub that cross-listed relevant events across the university. Finally, the network launched a small podcast series to share its activities with a broader audience. Collaborators of “Sleep and the Rhythms of Life” have come from fields such as sleep medicine, psychiatry, endocrinology, neuroscience, circadian biology, experimental psychology, sociology, music, modern languages, English, and architecture.*

Dr Sebastian Klinger (MML)



African Languages, Literatures and Cultures Network

The African Languages, Literatures and Cultures TORCH Network offers an interdisciplinary meeting space for a wide range of perspectives and projects engaging with African cultures, languages and literatures at the University of Oxford and beyond. It complements the African Studies Centre, reaching across the University and departments. It aims to bring together scholars based at institutions across the UK, to raise the status of African humanities and scholarship nationally.

Encouraging discussions, debates and collaborations, the network bridges the divides of language, discipline and region, moving beyond a focus on Anglophone countries and literatures. We bring together African intellectual and cultural history, philosophy, performance, film and theatre studies, visual arts, literature studies, and other fields related to African arts and creativity.

We also seek to centre African voices, histories, and ways of knowing in contemporary debates about African Studies and the academy.

In the past year, the network has worked hard to develop its virtual presence. On our revamped website you can explore a community of scholars, the resources and research they’ve gathered, and a list of events, reading sessions, archival studies onto shared colonial histories in artistic work, for example, ‘Contemporary Lens-Based Art and the Democratic Republic of Congo’ and seminars connected to the network. A significant project of the past year has been the New Directions in African Humanities: Graduate and Early Career Researcher Conference. It set out multiple panels to explore on storytelling, modernities, new methodologies and African art.

Dr Dorothee Boulanger (MML)



Reimagining Performance Network



The TORCH Reimagining Performance network has had a glorious two years! Our activities have covered a broad spectrum of topics within theatre and performance as well as, crucially, attracting a range of different audiences. We wanted the network to be relevant and topical for today's theatre makers, scholars, and audiences, especially in the post-pandemic landscape. We also wanted to showcase emerging scholars and their work in progress. Our network has helped to forge a community of theatre-interested researchers at all career levels who support each other and help to advocate for drama, theatre, and performance within Humanities.

Our second year alone had ten feature events and several ongoing initiatives such as termly Reading Groups and the Graduate Work-in-Progress seminars. In Michaelmas 2022, we launched the Reimagining Performance podcast series called 'Practice Makes' which stages discussions between leading performance scholars and theatre practitioners – actors, playwrights, directors and more — to crack open the connections between theatre research and performance in practice. The first episode features Jess Thom of Touretteshero and Hannah Simpson, author of *Samuel Beckett and Disability Performance* (and co-founder of our network), discussing relaxed performance, accessibility, and the Touretteshero production of Beckett's 'Not I'. That term also saw a roundtable on 'Embodiment Onstage' with doctoral candidate Alice Baldock, Professor Felicia McCarren (Leverhulme Visiting Professor in the Faculty of Modern Languages at Oxford), and Emeritus Professor Sue Jones as well as a special event on Women and War in Ukrainian New Drama, featuring a reading (in English) of

excerpts from two new documentary plays by leading Ukrainian playwrights Anastasiia Kosodii and Kateryna Penkova.

Highlights of Hilary 2023 were a roundtable discussion of 'Theatre and the Archive,' involving theatre scholars from Oxford and guest speakers Ulla Kallenbach (University of Bergen), talking about her extraordinary find of archives documenting over 200 years of theatre history at the Royal Theatre in Denmark, and Billy Barrett and Ellice Stevens of Breach Theatre discussing their process in making new productions, such as 'It's True It's True It's True' and 'After the Act', based on archival material. Hilary term rounded out with Ben Haggarty (Visiting Research Fellow in the Creative Arts, Merton College) discussing the art of storytelling and with the first 'Dragademia', an event exploring drag art and life through performance and discussion. In Trinity 2023 we featured *Queer Faces of War: Stories of Ukraine*, and held a further instalment of the hugely successful 'Dragademia.' All of our events have been well-attended and we have welcomed a mixed audience from both academic and public life.

The Graduate 'Work-in-Progress' seminars enabled doctoral students to discuss their research in a constructive environment. These seminars also fostered interdisciplinary and cross-institutional collaboration, bringing together researchers from across the Humanities Division as well as a visiting student from Aarhus University. Developing their ideas based on audience feedback, several students have now published and presented this research in academic journals and at conferences in the UK and overseas.

We are grateful to TORCH for providing the opportunity to explore how performance today is being richly reimagined.

Prof Kirsten Shepherd-Barr (English)

Oxford Comics Network

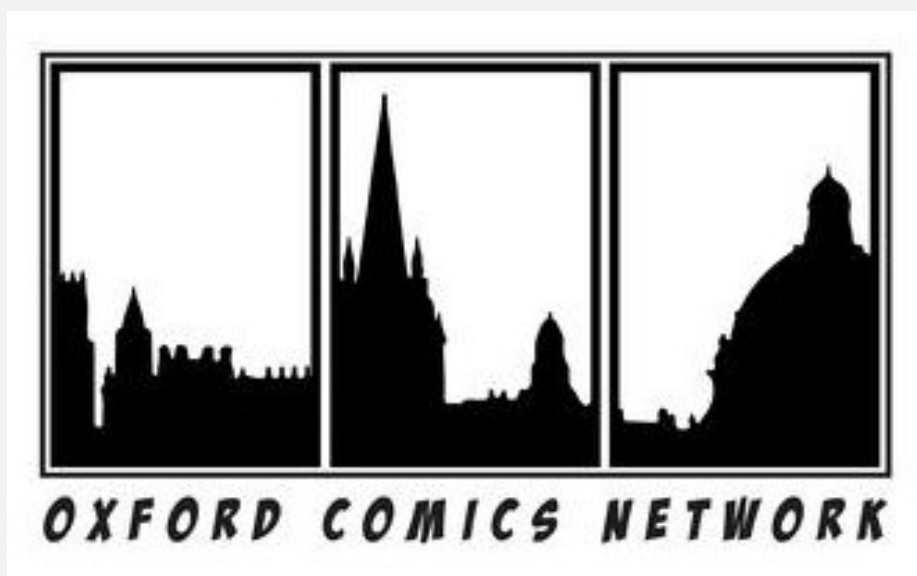
The Oxford Comics Network at the University of Oxford (UK) brought together students, academics, and practitioners from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds to explore the power, politics, and potential of the comics form. In 2023, the team of Graduate Convenors – Laura Bergin, Cailee Davis and Carolin Gluchowski – and the Lead Convenor Dr Alexandra Lloyd, organised an interdisciplinary and international conference on ‘Comics and/as Resistance’. Comics is a highly diverse and versatile medium, able to speak across boundaries, languages, temporalities, and cultures. This kind of formal flexibility makes it a particularly potent form for mediating resistance and resistance narratives. Resistance can also be a useful concept with which to examine the way that comics as a medium engages with categorizations, ideas about cultural legitimacy, and dominant forms of storytelling and historical representation. The conference called for scholars and creators to explore the poetics and politics of resistance within comics and graphic literature. They were asked to consider how stories and histories of resistance are mediated through comics; how resisters and their agency are depicted; how comics creators contest dominant narratives and formal expectations and constraints; and how ‘resistance’ is conceived of and enacted within the comics medium.

The Call for Papers attracted over 100 abstracts from a range of academics and comics creators from around the world. Over forty speakers were invited to present at the conference, either in person in Oxford, or online.

The conference began on Wednesday 21 June 2023 with a live-streamed discussion on the role of comics in academia: “‘Why Do We Study Comics?’ A Round-Table Discussion on Teaching, Researching, and Learning from Comics’ at Magdalen College, Oxford, chaired by Peter Kessler. The conference continued on Thursday 22 June 2023 with a welcome by the organisers, followed by a series of parallel panels. Topics included the climate crisis, political resistance, depictions of war and displaced peoples, and health activism. The first day concluded with a drawing workshop where delegates were invited to collaborate on the creation of comics inspired by resistance. The second day featured another set of rich and fascinating parallel panels and concluded with a panel on the curation of comics and readers’ (often subversive) interactions with them. The conference provoked much discussion of the role of comics in the academy, its potential as a form, and medium-specific opportunities and issues. There were moving and thought-provoking contributions on the potential of this form to have a positive impact on the world.

Dr Alexandra Lloyds (MML)

The conference was generously supported by TORCH and by the St Edmund Hall Academic Enhancement Fund. The Organisers would like to thank the team at TORCH and the Taylor Institution Library, all those who helped to organise and document the conference, and the speakers and audience members.



Critical Thinking Communities

Each year, TORCH supports groups of Oxford DPhil candidates looking to collaborate with the students across faculties and divisions through TORCH Critical Thinking Communities. These Communities critically consider a broad range of historical, cultural, or aesthetic ideas or methodological issues.

Decolonial Reading Group

During 2022-23 we met on a weekly basis with a group of about 5 students (both undergraduate and postgraduate) from multiple disciplines (including History, English, Political Science, and Public policy) across the university and discussed 3-5 theoretical readings centred on decoloniality and related themes. We facilitated discussions about the presence of colonialism and necessity of decoloniality within each of our specific academic and personal settings. The reading group led to individuals involved forming a greater understanding of how decolonialism effected their academic lives previously and gave them the ability to move forward with a greater understanding of a wide variety of international decolonial scholars, spanning decades worth of work. Our student-led discussions led by guiding questions allowed for students with greater experience with decolonialism to share their thoughts and encourage those without the same knowledge and establish an open dialogue between all members.



Language and Education Reading Group

The reading group aimed to bring together scholars working on language and education in the Global South. We organised four meetings over the course of the term (TT23) that were attended by 10-14 participants in person and few others remotely. Group participants came from diverse disciplinary backgrounds - linguistics, education, anthropology, area studies, development studies, sociology, etc., and with research interests spanning across the Global South. We had scholars share their experiences of

conducting research in countries like Japan, Haiti, Uganda, Pakistan, Egypt, Nepal, Bangladesh, and India, among others. The meetings had different themes and suggested reading lists. The overall aim of the group is to produce a comprehensive foundational teaching resource that can be used by group members to conduct workshops, training programmes and academic teaching. The most significant outcome of these meetings is the creation of a network of scholars that enable members to learn from each others' work and stimulate their intellectual growth. The group now has over 40 scholars on its mailing list and the activities planned for the next term will build and further expand on this to create a vibrant community for a long-term and meaningful collaboration. The support and encouragement received from TORCH were instrumental for the group's success.



Oxford Islamic Studies Network

The termly Work-in-Progress Colloquium provided the space for postgraduate scholars of Islam from different disciplinary backgrounds to come together to present the topic of their research. On average about 15-20 students would attend this event each term. The ISN ran two reading groups and one discussion group throughout the year (Reading Groups in the Anthropology of Islam and Religious Literature and a Discussion Group in Islamic Philosophy and Mysticism). There was also a co-working community that met weekly in Trinity term, which, though small, provided a group of DPhil students with a regular designated time and space to write and discuss their theses. The end of the academic year concluded with a seminar which brought two professors into conversation to form a Panel on Religion and Poetry in South Asia: Dr Ankur Barua (Senior University Lecturer in Hindu Studies at the University of Cambridge) and Ali Asani (Professor of Indo-Muslim and Islamic Cultures at Harvard University). TORCH resources and assistance throughout the funding period were excellent.



War and Peace: Twentieth-Century Responses from the Global South

The aims of our critical-thinking community were threefold. First, to engage in a critical interlocution with twentieth-century thinkers from the Global South on war and peace in their times by paying close attention to their words and actions, so as to generate inquiries and imaginations for thinking normatively against warfare in our own times. Second, to start an interdisciplinary conversation on war and peace — their veils and vagaries — within and beyond the humanities, to unsettle ongoing technocratic conversations on the legality and efficacy of warfare in the twenty-first century. Third, to developing an experimental and alternative curriculum that is cross-disciplinary and non-Eurocentric — capable of creating conditions for more public-facing interventions in the future.

We were able to achieve these objectives by hosting four sessions throughout Trinity Term. These were well attended by a small, cohesive group drawn from a range of faculties. Via the TORCH website and regular venue to meet all helped us to build the community and keep a wider cluster informed about our activity. The Critical Thinking Communities scheme of TORCH is an excellent avenue to foster interdisciplinary dialogue among peers in Oxford who may not otherwise always find common ground to co-create lasting intellectual networks.

Games & Technologies Group – Board Game Café Ethnography

Games & Tech is an interdisciplinary mix of students, researchers, and industry professionals all interested in the potential influences of games in our everyday. We hail from Classics, Neuroscience, the Oxford Internet Institute, and beyond. This project gave us a grounded example through which we discussed our weekly readings. It also provided hands-on opportunities for students to learn how to conduct research with games. Our aim was to explore how board game cafes, as a unique



space, foster a community of critical thinkers. The end results of this project are twofold. Firstly, many members acquired new methodological experiences, being involved in conducting an ethnographic project. Secondly, this project has brought us together more than a simple reading group would be able to. Playing board games together allowed us to learn more about the different closer, making our group feel less like an academic formality and more of a community of critical thinkers. The Critical Thinking Communities Fund gave us the means to be able to actualize this research. Our support from and gratitude for TORCH extends beyond financing the project and we have built many fruitful and engaging connections with others through this experience.

Polish Studies Working Group

The Polish Studies Working Group emerged out of a shared interest in the intersections of Polish Studies and Comparative Literature, and how their theoretical corpora can productively be put into dialogue. It was established at a time when, following Russia's brutal invasion of Ukraine, it became particularly crucial to advocate strongly for equal study of all Slavic languages and cultures. We also intended for the group's activities to promote the study of Polish culture in the United Kingdom, with Polish being the second most widely spoken language in the country. Firstly we ran fortnightly in-person discussions, tackling topics such as the Polish literary canon, the afterlives of Polish Romanticism, multilingualism in Polish literature, émigré and migrant writing, autoexoticism, as well as the relevance of postcolonial theory to the Polish and Eastern European contexts. We then organised three online sessions which attracted an audience of some 150 participants in total. We were joined by scholars from the United Kingdom, the United States, Poland, and Germany for events such as the launch of Dorota Kołodziejczyk's most recent book on postcolonial theory in East-Central Europe. The events which the Polish Studies Working Group facilitated in the past year have allowed us better to identify the issues that scholars of Polish literature and culture face, and to seek remedies. TORCH's invaluable help in advertising our activities, on the other hand, helped us reach a large and diverse audience. As a result, we were able to expand our planned activities.



This year, we have further strengthened our commitment to fostering meaningful international research collaborations. Building on the success of past partnerships, we have welcomed new opportunities to connect with scholars and institutions globally, emphasizing the rich intellectual exchange that defines our work. Through these partnerships, researchers at every stage of their careers have initiated and expanded collaborative projects, enriching academic discourse across disciplines.



Global South Visiting Professor Professor Érico Nogueira

A particular highlight of the year was the TORCH/All Souls Global South Visiting Professorship, which welcomed Professor **Érico Nogueira** from the Universidade Federal de São Paulo, Brazil. Recognised as one of Brazil's leading poets and a prominent scholar of Latin literature, Professor Nogueira brought profound insights into poetry, translation, and metrics and versification. He was joined by an extensive panel of Oxford scholars and moderators in the 'Dyer's Hand: Poetry and Translation conference', held in November 2022. The event built on the complex inter-relationship between the composition and translation of poetry, featuring an interdisciplinary discussion amongst scholars, poets, and translators. Paying tribute to intersections between Anglophone and Lusophone traditions, the conference explored the relations and tensions between the composition and translation, as well as celebrated diversity and enriched dialogue on literature's evolving global contexts.

Looking ahead, the Global South Visiting Professorship continues to serve as a vital platform for cross-cultural engagement. This initiative amplifies voices from regions traditionally underrepresented in global academia. We are proud to see how it fosters critical discourse on contemporary issues. For example, Professor Nogueira's contributions shed light on the nuanced relationship between creative expression and cultural translation, offering new perspectives on important Brazilian poetry writing that resonate far beyond the conference hall.

As we continue to build on these successes, we remain committed to broadening the scope of our international partnerships, ensuring that our institution serves as a vibrant hub for academic innovation and exchange on a global scale.



Oxford x UdK Berlin Partnership

Since the beginning of 2020, the Berlin University of the Arts, Oxford in Berlin, and the Oxford Research Centre for the Humanities (TORCH), have been undertaking the development of a research “bridge” between UdK Berlin and the Oxford Humanities, exploring new methodologies, new modes of representation, and new users of language that are applicable to the Arts and the Sciences alike.

Seed funding projects have been taking place at the UdK Berlin and the University of Oxford since 2021.

These included:

- Defensive Images: Considering and re-considering AI, Large Language Models, and Legacies of
- Conceptual Art (Prof. Josephine Pryde, Devin Kenny)
- Anticipation and Belatedness (Prof. Dr. Barbara Wittmann, Prof. Dr. Karen Leeder)
- Everyday objects of musical improvisation (Prof. Dr. Berit Greinke/ Dr. Federico Visi, Dr. Robert Laidlow)
- Shitsukan: Interrogating non-visual sensory expertise of bread and bread-making (Prof. Gesche Joost, Maciej Chmara/ Berlin Open Lab, Prof. Charles Spence)
- Living Soils - new approaches to soil (Prof. Timothee Ingen-Housz, Paola Perrin de Brichambaut, Prof. Alan Grafen, Dr. Katja Lehmann)
- Displaced and disremembered? Sounding out the legacies of émigré musicians from Nazi Berlin and Vienna (Prof. Gottlieb Wallisch, Prof. Leitmeir, Oxford Lieder Festival)
- Chamber music topographies (Prof. Dörte Schmidt, Prof. Laura Tunbridge)



Visiting Fellows

During the academic year we welcomed an exciting mix of visiting researchers. These included:

Dr Louise Esher
Researcher
Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique



Louise Esher, a TORCH International Fellow during Trinity Term 2023, was hosted by Professor Martin Maiden and Dr Xavier Bach in the Faculty of Linguistics, Philology and Phonetics. Their project, on ‘Gender-neutral and gender-inclusive language: the view from linguistic theory’, brings the rigorous analytic and formal techniques of descriptive linguistics to the study of gender-neutral and gender-inclusive language (i.e. language which is non-discriminatory with respect to sex and gender).

Professor Marina Benedetti
Professor of General and Historical Linguistics
Università per Stranieri di Siena



Professor Marina Benedetti was a TORCH International Fellow during Trinity Term 2023. Professor Benedetti is the president of the Società Italiana di Glottologia, and the Principal Investigator of two National Interest Research Projects, one on language contact in the ancient world, with a specific focus on Biblical texts, and another on the history of Classical grammatical tradition. During her stay in Oxford, she collaborated with colleagues across Linguistics and Classics, including the roundtable ‘Past, Present, and Future of Historical Linguistics’ at Ertegun House, Oxford.

Visiting Fellows—Africa-Oxford Initiative



Dr Nelson Mlambo
Senior Lecturer, Language & Literature Studies
University of Namibia

During Trinity Term, 2023 Dr Mlambo was an AfOx-TORCH Visiting Fellow at the English Faculty, University of Oxford, as part of the Africa Oxford Visiting Fellowship Programme.

Dr Mlambo is a literature and cultural theories researcher and a leading scholar of postcolonial African literature with a specialism in Southern African writing, mainly focusing on Zimbabwe and Namibia.

While in Oxford, he worked on the research project: “Literary Archives of Conflict for Peaceful and Prosperous Societies: Memory, Truth and Faction About the Herero/ Nama Atrocities in Namibia.” Nelson’s project sought to explore the often-overlooked dimensions of the Herero/ Nama characteristics in the discussions about the conflict: their agency, resilience, and ability to survive. These qualities have been silenced in discourses of colonial conflict, and the project argued that to build democratic futures of equality and humane considerations, such positive qualities of the victims need to be registered. The project used trauma and resilience theory, postcolonial ecocriticism, and thoughts from memory studies to argue how modes of representation help reflect genocidal historiography and how global futures of peace can be imagined and conceived.



Dr Madhlozi Moyo
Head of the department of Greek, Latin, and
Classical studies
University of the Free State, South Africa

Dr Madhlozi Moyo is a classical studies researcher interested in Classical Presences in Zimbabwe and was welcomed in Trinity Term 2022 as an AfOx TORCH Visiting Fellow at the Department of Classics, University of Oxford, as part of the Africa Oxford Visiting Fellowship Programme.

Dr Moyo is head of the Department and lecturer at the Department of Greek, Latin, and Classical studies at the University of the Free State, South Africa. He served as a senior lecturer in classical studies at the University of Zimbabwe and an external examiner at the Department of Classics, University of Cape town. He is currently working on a monograph entitled “Classical Presences in Zimbabwe: Colonisation, education, and the Arts”, with Bloomsbury publishers.

While at the University of Oxford, Dr Moyo's research project, “Classical Presences in Zimbabwe: Colonisation, education and the Arts”, was the first comprehensive treatment of the Classical presence in Zimbabwe. His proposed book was to examine the long and complex history of how Classics have been taught, received, and influenced the country’s education system, architecture, and literature.

Book At Lunchtime

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

During 2022-2023, the Book at Lunchtime series celebrated books across Humanities faculties and beyond, roving thousands of years, a famous TV series, crossing Europe, the Middle East, South America and India.

The series started an incredible year by heading back to 'The City of Babylon' to discuss Stephanie Dalley's highly acclaimed book. 'This detailed history, drawing on fascinating ancient texts and the archaeology of the site, is valuable reading for anyone wanting to get to grips with ancient Babylon'.

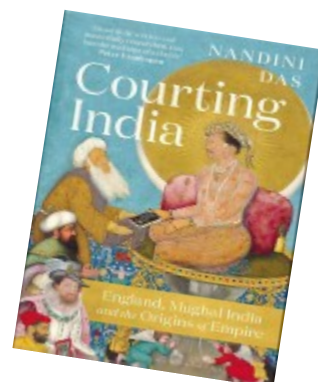
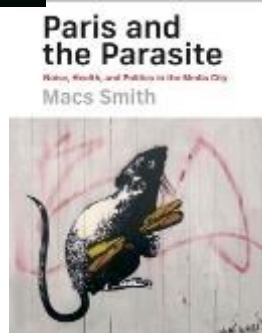
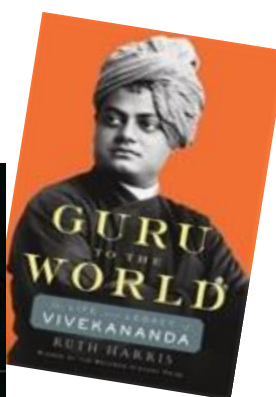
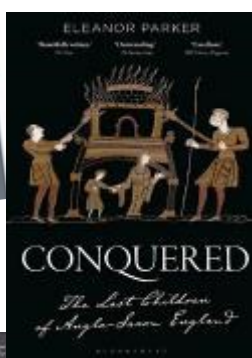
We moved to the world of fiction and the TV series of the decade, Games of Thrones, with a stimulating discussion of Professor Carolyne Larrington's 'All Men Must Die'. Paris was our next stop with Dr Macs Smith's 'Paris and the Parasite'.

As we moved into 2023 to celebrate the 10th Anniversary of TORCH we welcomed Adriana X. Jacobs (Asian and Middle Eastern Studies) and Claire Williams (Medieval and Modern Languages) to discuss their recently published work, 'After Clarice; Reading Lispector's Legacy in the Twenty First Century' a work that brings together scholars,

authors, artists, and translators working in a wide range of languages and disciplines to address Lispector's place, as a Brazilian writer, in twenty-first century configurations of world literature. It aims to evaluate the fluctuations and swerves in Lispector's critical fortunes, focusing on the way her works have been reread and transformed in other languages, genres, and media.

In a captivating series for TORCH at 10 we welcomed authors from across the university for 'Becoming Beauvoir', 'Reformation, Resistance and Reason of State', 'Why Modern Manuscripts Matter Guru to the World', 'Compassion in Healthcare'.

We ended 2023 with interactive and compelling responses to Terence Cave's Live 'Artefacts – Critical and Creative responses'. Poetry, puppetry, discussions and analysis. A fitting tribute to the many astonishing books we have featured in 10 years of discussions. If you missed these they are available to watch on TORCH's YouTube channel.



TORCH's work in Knowledge Exchange fosters dynamic partnerships between researchers and external organisations, creating opportunities to bridge academia and the wider world. By championing interdisciplinary collaboration, we enable innovative approaches to public engagement and open up new pathways for impactful research.

Our Knowledge Exchange programme includes a vibrant array of initiatives, from Knowledge Exchange Fellowships to Seed Fund projects, all designed to nurture creative and impactful collaborations. These activities allow researchers to work closely with partners in diverse sectors, sharing insights and co-developing solutions that address contemporary subjects.

We focus on several key areas that highlight the humanities' relevance in society today. The busy programme is a mixture of Knowledge Exchange Fellowships and Innovation Funds projects, and we seek out and support work taking place in the key areas of Heritage, Theatre and Performance, Creative Industries, and Policy Engagement. By facilitating connections and building relationships, TORCH continues to expand the reach and resonance of humanities research, ensuring it remains at the heart of conversations that shape our world.

This year saw seven new Knowledge Exchange Fellowships, with highlights including Prof. Christine Gerrard's collaboration with National Trust and English Heritage on 'Mithraic Groves and Gothic Towers: Reuniting the Lost Literary Legacies of Wrest and Wimpole', a project uncovering the vibrant intellectual culture that characterised Wrest Park and Wimpole Hall in the eighteenth-century.

Mithraic Groves and Gothic Towers: Reuniting the Lost Literary Legacies of Wrest and Wimpole

This was a one-year Knowledge Exchange Fellowship between the University of Oxford, English Heritage, and the National Trust. The project aimed to uncover the vibrant intellectual culture that characterised Wrest Park and Wimpole Hall in the eighteenth-century when both properties were owned by Philip Yorke, second earl of Hardwicke, and Jemima Marchioness Grey. Yorke and Grey, sharing a passion for gardens, architecture, and books, regularly invited their like-minded friends to Wrest Park and Wimpole Hall where they collaborated on private literary projects and created intellectual games in the gardens.

Despite the close historical connection between the two properties, today Wrest Park, with its famous Mithraic Grove, is owned by English Heritage, and Wimpole Hall, with its Gothic Tower, is owned by the National Trust. This collaboration between Oxford English Faculty, English Heritage, and the National Trust brought together Wrest and Wimpole to revive the rich literary and intellectual cultures that once united them.

The project showcased different generations of the literary culture at Wrest Park and Wimpole Hall. It created an exhibition around the Yorke family portraits at Wimpole Hall, using their private compositions in the Wrestiana Manuscript and their correspondence with the gilded frames: their social networks, literary interests, and playful humour. Then 'Woodcutter' a play written in 1797 and performed by family members at Wrest Park in the nineteenth-century was staged again. It was performed and directed by undergraduate students at Lady Margaret Hall, followed by subsequent touring at Wimpole Hall and Wrest Park. It has been wonderful to see the Fellows reimaging research output in different forms.

Professor Christine Gerrard (English)



Finding our way

The Finding our way project seeks answers to challenging and fertile questions through a unique collaboration amongst art practitioners and researchers from across Oxford and Oxford Brookes Universities. This Knowledge Exchange funding enabled us to work in a trajectory of distinct areas - performances in historic venues, organised creative student workshops, visited archives, digital storytelling, museum studies and working with community activists to bring to the fore Afro-Caribbean memories, histories and stories in Oxford.

Maps have time and again detailed trajectories and stories of class, racial, and ethnic privilege that obscure, silence, and obliterate the journeys of other bodies through space and time. The maps that trace Black Atlantic history reveal this most intensely.

As objects that embody movements, maps can be repurposed as powerful tools that enable paths toward recognition and reclamation of those hidden stories, as well as (re)encounters and future connections. If we think along these lines, what would a map of the past and present of Afro-Caribbean Oxford look like? What individual and collective trajectories would it trace, and which landmarks would it include? How could this map be constructed in such a way that it could continue to evolve, documenting both past and unfinished journeys of the Afro-Caribbean diaspora that traverse and settle in this city?

We contend that the mapping of Afro-Caribbean movements in Oxford entails a dialectic between Interactions with troubled and violent institutional archives and collections on the one hand, and the rematerialisation – through storytelling and public performance – of the individual and communal stories these archives (fore)tell. This process is more resonant if it entails the participation of wider, varied audiences. To this end, live performances at key locations in the city centre were used to redraw an Oxford city map that focalises Afro-Caribbean experience,

past and present. Accompanying workshops invited participants and local-community members to develop narratives through community history, archival material, and storytelling.

Recordings of performances as well as responses of participants were used to begin building a digital map of the spaces constituted by the performances and experiences. In further stages of the project, the aim is to continue developing this digital, interactive map as a platform to facilitate participative archiving and decentralised, pluralised knowledge production.

Prof. María del Pilar Blanco (MML)



Humanities Cultural Programme

7,500+ people engaged with the programme, with the majority of those engagements in person in Oxford. Projects with public outputs included work with Professor of Poetry **Alice Oswald**, virtual residencies with Ukrainian writers **Oleksandr Mykhed** and **Olena Stiazhkina**, and “Castor et Pollux”; a concert at the Sheldonian which was the culmination of a two-year partnership between academics in the Music Faculty. The Rameau Project, and The Opera Company with a future extended version including dance now in development.



2022/23 played host to 3 seasons of activity: Egypt Season celebrated the centenary of the discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamun. Working in collaboration with the Bodleian Libraries and Being Human Festival, this season collectively drew almost 4,000 people across 11 events, including 2 pop-up exhibitions of work by Egyptian visual artists and featured a Visiting Fellowship with Grammy-Award winning countertenor and producer **Anthony Roth Costanzo** (Akhnaten, ENO) working with academics based at the Griffiths Institute.



For the Artificial Intelligence Season (spring/summer 2023) co-hosted with the Institute for Ethics in AI, international AR/VR artist **Estella Tse** developed her augmented reality “In Bloom” exhibition with local partner Fusion Arts, engaging 400+ members of the public in a digital experience promoting engagement with nature as protective/restorative for mental health. 100% of participants expressed interest in further AR-related Cultural Programme activity.



A further season of work on Transnational Avant-Gardes featured a range of events including a talk with prominent artist **Zoe Belloff** which drew over 2,000 online viewers, and a late-night takeover of the Ashmolean where 1,500 people engaged with avant-garde music, dance, and theatre.



Humanities Cultural Programme

Visiting Fellows

Again this year we were delighted to welcome some talented and distinguished artists and as visiting fellows.



The Humanities Cultural Programme welcomed **Estella Tse**, the renowned Virtual / Augmented Reality Creative Director & Artist. Based in Oakland, CA. Estella integrates emerging VR/AR technologies and visual storytelling into a new art form.

Estella has been an artist-in-residence with Google, Adobe, Cartoon Network Studios, performs and speaks internationally. She strives to inspire new ways to connect, educate, and build empathy with her work in creative innovation. In collaboration with Oxford University, Estella shared her story of overcoming Complex PTSD and debilitating Depression through her immersive art.



Ivor Novello-winning saxophonist Prof **John Harle** (Guildhall School of Music and Drama) and British-Iranian composer and artist Shiva Feshareki (winner of the 2017 Ivor Novello award for Innovation) delivered new compositions inspired by Bertolt Brecht and Oxford's Soundscape respectively.



Distinguished Zimbabwean composer, theatre director, and mbira performer **John Pfumojena** (Warner Music) who drew diverse audiences with almost 500 people over 3 events featuring his interrogation of the existence of traditional African instruments in Western museums.

Prof **Farah Karim Cooper** (previously Director of Education at Shakespeare's Globe and President of the Shakespeare Association of America, now the newly appointed Director of the Folger Shakespeare Library) examined race in Shakespeare.

Poet Dr **Jenny Wong** explored the concept of home for diasporic audiences; writer and translator Polly Barton promoted translation as an act of creative urgency and renewal.

Visual artist **Carey Young** worked with local partner Modern Art Oxford to host an exhibition and symposium on women and the law with commentary from the most senior members of the judiciary in the country.

TORCH | THE OXFORD RESEARCH CENTRE IN THE HUMANITIES

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Professor María del Pilar Blanco, TORCH
Academic Champion
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Ruth Moore
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Professor Dan Grimley (Head of Humanities
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Professor Wes Williams (MML)
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Dr Rachel Fraser (Philosophy)
Professor Sondra Hausner (Theology)
Professor Polly Jones (MML)
Professor Gascia Ouzounian (Music)
Professor Sian Pooley (History)

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- see Website for more details.

