



**Rothermere American Institute**  
Annual Report  
2023–24



# Director's Foreword

**Adam Smith**

As I write this on a sunny June morning, with Trinity term behind us and the sunlit uplands of the long summer vacation opening before us, it seems to me that the state of the RAI is strong and getting stronger. Our mission is to support research and to advance the public understanding of America and its place in the world. The RAI, therefore, succeeds when we have a vibrant community of researchers based in Oxford, brilliant academic visitors, partnerships that connect us to other centres of excellence, and programmes that reach wide audiences. There is always more to do, and challenges ahead, but this Annual Report is a moment to reflect on the excellent work we've done over the last year.

At the heart of the RAI are our graduate students and postdoctoral researchers—the academics of tomorrow. In the last few months, we've celebrated as several of our DPhil students have completed their studies and are moving on to exciting new positions, including Nur Laiq (who works on the role of tech in the politics of the late-twentieth century Democratic Party), Gwion Wyn Jones (home missionaries in the late nineteenth century), Josh Lappen (electrification

and capitalism), Neil Suchak (pacifists and imperialism), Katie Fapp (the American woman suffrage movement and the Pacific), Sarena Martinez (urban development), and Elizabeth Rees (who works on the development of the office of First Lady since the 1960s). This was the 'COVID generation' of graduate students, so their achievement is all the greater because of the challenging circumstances in which they began their projects. I am very grateful to them for sharing their intellect, knowledge and general good cheer, and contributing to making the RAI a warm and vibrant place. We have many more brilliant graduate students in American literature and politics, as well as history, who will still be with us next year, and more, of course, who will join us in the autumn.

This is also an opportunity to congratulate one of our junior research fellows, Dr Grace Mallon (herself previously a DPhil student at the RAI), an expert on federalism in the early Republic, who has secured a fellowship at Lady Margaret Hall. Grace will continue, I'm sure, to play a big part in the life of the Institute as she develops her teaching career in Oxford.



In these pages, you can read accounts by our Winant Visiting Professor of American Government, Jason Casellas, and Liz Varon, our Harmsworth Visiting Professor of American History. Both are, needless to say, highly distinguished scholars, and both have made a major contribution to the life of the RAI this year. Our Fellows-in-Residence have likewise helped to make this a memorable year through their generosity to our community and intellectual contributions. Our weekly coffee mornings and frequent post-event evening receptions have been all the more cheerful for their presence.

Overall, we've put on six major public lectures, six book talks, eight lunchtime seminars, and three all-day conferences, as well as our weekly research seminars in American literature and American history. We are also very proud to have supported Emily Brady, our Broadbent Junior Research Fellow in American History, in staging an exhibition of the photographs of Maria Varela, a Civil Rights educator, organiser and self-taught photographer. Maria's talk at the RAI in April, to mark the opening of her exhibition, was one of the most compelling I've ever heard.

In any given week during term time, we've hosted an average of three or four events. I cannot recall a single event this year for which we have not had a respectable audience, so although we do a lot, we are clearly catering to demand. And our podcast, *The Last Best Hope?* has had nearly four hundred thousand downloads. Each documentary-style episode explores a question about what makes America distinctive. Please do search for it wherever you get your podcasts and, if you like it, subscribe!

We can do all this because we have a small but brilliant professional services team comprising Katy Long, Hannah Greiving, and Richard Purkiss (who edits this report). Between them, they ensure that events run smoothly and—even

more vitally, if less visibly—that our finances and building remain in good shape. I am immensely grateful to them.

I am also grateful to Bethan Davies and the staff of the Vere Harmsworth Library. This is the strongest collection of US-related material in the UK and our lovely light-filled reading rooms make it a wonderful place to study. Bethan's role includes not only developing the collections but also working directly with researchers, from undergraduates to senior professors. I know (because people have told me so) that readers come to the VHL because they know they will get informed advice from Bethan and her team, as well as for the material they need to read. Over the last year, Bethan has been working with generous donors from the American Association of Rhodes Scholars to build up the Alain Locke Collection in African American Studies, named after the first African American Rhodes Scholar.

Next year, the RAI may well be even busier. We will have five postdoctoral researchers, in part thanks to a major research grant from the Leverhulme Trust, and we will welcome to Oxford Emily West, our new Professor of Early American History. You can read about the grant and about Emily in these pages. We are also embarking on an exciting new phase in our partnership with the Kinder Institute for Constitutional Democracy at the University of Missouri: a summer school for US undergraduates which will launch in 2025. And I'm delighted to announce that Dr Dan Rowe will take up a new role here as Director of Academic Programmes. Dan gives a flavour of what may be ahead in this Annual Report.

With the US entering the final stages of perhaps the most fraught presidential election for half a century, it remains as vital as ever that Oxford provides a place for non-partisan, scholarly analysis of America: where it's been, where it is and maybe even where it's going. ■





# Academic Planning at the RAI

**Daniel Rowe**

**In the summer of 2025, the Rothermere American Institute's partnership with the Kinder Institute on Constitutional Democracy at the University of Missouri will result in the launch of a new, joint summer school. This represents a significant expansion of the RAI's programming. A new full-time post has been established to lead the summer school and contribute to the wider development of the Institute's academic profile. A familiar face to many in the RAI community, Dr Daniel Rowe, reflects on the work ahead.**

It is with great pleasure that I take up my new position as the RAI's Director of Academic Programmes. I have been involved in the RAI for over a decade. First as a master's and then as a doctoral student in US history, I have called the RAI my academic home, and it is a wonderful community to share in. Since September 2020, as a Departmental Lecturer teaching US history and US politics, I have had the pleasure of contributing actively to the intellectual life and governance of the Institute.

While many things about the RAI remain comfortingly familiar from when I first arrived, change has been afoot. The endowment of the Edward Orsborn Professorship, followed by the appointment of Adam Smith, heralded an exciting process of behind-the-scenes transformation. The recruitment of additional personnel, both administrative and academic, over the past five years has secured old capabilities and added new dimensions to the life of the RAI. In 2024–25 we will have more early-career researchers, not to mention Fellows-in-Residence, working on US politics, history, and culture than ever before. This is a very exciting position to be in as an institution. And it will, I hope, provide new openings for intellectual and academic exchange, and opportunities to reach new audiences. As we approach its quarter-century, the RAI is flourishing, and well-placed to expand its horizons.

On one of these sits the new RAI-Kinder Summer School. In 2025, this month-long intensive programme will bring 20 high-achieving undergraduates from the University of Missouri to Oxford. In subsequent years, it will welcome students from further US universities. Students will immerse themselves in the history and politics of the Atlantic World through courses on the global history of the British Civil Wars and Glorious Revolution, museums and heritage, and geopolitics. For the students, it will be an opportunity to engage in place-based, applied learning, contextualise the study of revolutions and constitutions, and reflect upon America's global relevance and impact. For the RAI and Kinder Institute, it is a chance to deepen existing ties. As Kinder Institute Director Jay Sexton observes, the summer school helps to "advance the mission of both entities" by pushing students to put history and politics into conversation, and consider how transnational ideas, thoughts, and historical developments have shaped and influenced the United States and its place in the world. The departure of Oxford undergraduates in late June changes the pace of academic life in much of the University. The summer school will ensure that the RAI corridors and seminar rooms crackle throughout the vacation with the intellectual and academic excitement that undergraduates bring to their studies.

As Director of Academic Programmes, I will also play an important role in the RAI's general programming. Here too, there is much to be excited about. As I write, I am in the process of devising a series of seminars and public events to coincide with the US elections in November. The outcomes of those elections are difficult to predict. In the weeks before and after, however, there will be much for those who come to, or speak at, our events to consider and discuss. Beyond, that, I am looking forward to working with my RAI colleagues to ensure that the RAI always has a stimulating programme of events to offer the wider public. ■

# Getting to know...

## Emily West



**Emily West joins Oxford's American History community from the University of Reading, taking up her post as Professor of Early American History and Fellow of Brasenose College in September 2024. Her works include *Chains of Love: Slave Couples in Antebellum South Carolina* (2004), *Family or Freedom: People of Color in the Antebellum South* (2012), *Enslaved Women in America: From Colonial Times to Emancipation* (2014), and numerous articles. Here she answers some quick-fire questions about her background as a historian.**

### **What kind of historical problems do you try to solve?**

I am a social historian interested in finding the voices of people usually absent in our archives. As a researcher of enslaved women's everyday lives in the pre-Civil War US South, I am curious about how women navigated intimate relationships with others and how they attempted to raise their children under this system. Centering the lives of people often neglected in more traditional historical analyses allows everyday actions to be seen as political acts, vital forms of resistance that enabled people to survive slavery's brutality.

### **How did you become interested in US History?**

My father read American Studies at Nottingham, so I grew up surrounded by books about the US. Second, as a child of the Cold War era, I look back now and recognise just how much we were bombarded by America's soft power, especially via TV shows, music, and films. When I first visited during my PhD, I was surprised to learn that the glitzy version of the US represented in the media bore no resemblance to the one I discovered, and that disconnect only intensified my curiosity. Finally, studying slavery under Dr Mike Tadman at Liverpool inspired a desire to learn more.

### **Who has shaped your approach to history most?**

I am influenced by Black feminist writers, especially pioneering work by Deborah Gray White, bell hooks, and more recently by Stephanie Camp and Miya Miles, among others. African American women writers often have a more complex and nuanced comprehension of feminism than the one I learned, especially

in their understandings of 'home' as a refuge rather than a kind of restrictive prison for women. Another inspiration is the Haitian author Michel-Rolph Trouillot, who argued that history is not simply about what has happened. It is about who, over time, held the power to shape our understandings of the past.

### **What has been your most rewarding professional experience?**

High on my list is my role as chair of British American Nineteenth Century Historians (BrANCH), an organisation I first joined as a postgraduate in the last century! I am also proud of the fact that I have been able to supervise an incredible group of postgraduate students. There are many more people studying the history of gender and slavery in the UK now than there were a generation ago. I only wish there were more academic jobs for these amazing historians to apply for!

### **Pick a historical fact that you think should be better known or understood than it is.**

The 1662 Virginia ruling of *partus sequitur ventrem*—decreeing that children born to enslaved women should carry the status of their mothers as slaves—has been hugely significant in the development of Atlantic slavery and the modern capitalistic world. Only recently have historians such as Jennifer Morgan and Diana Paton been highlighting its importance.

### **What are your future research plans?**

I am grateful to have a Leverhulme Fellowship for 2024–25, which will provide crucial time and space to complete a monograph. Entitled *Cooking for the Quarters: Enslaved Women and the Labour of Care in the Antebellum South*, this will be published by Cambridge University Press.

### **Do you have any advice for new researchers in US history?**

Sadly, it is a difficult time to be recommending research in history without the proviso that a future career outside academia is the more realistic outcome. But I'd urge all new researchers to take advantage of scholarly organisations that provide support and camaraderie, as well as small pots of funding for research purposes. ■



# A Year in the Winant Chair

**Jason Casellas**

I had never been to Oxford when I arrived in early October 2023 to take up the John G. Winant Visiting Professorship of American Government for 2023–24. When I have travelled in the UK before, I always wanted to visit the university given what I had heard from colleagues and read in books. As I reflect on my time at the RAI and Balliol College, I have to say that this has been the experience of a lifetime. I have met so many fascinating, brilliant, and kind people, and will cherish my memories and friendships of this past academic year.

The RAI is truly a special place and has been a home (away) from home. All the staff including Adam Smith, Uta Balbier, Dan Rowe, Emily Brady, Hannah Greiving, Bethan Davies, Richard Purkiss, Katy Long, Mark Power Smith, and Walter have made me feel welcome and included in the RAI community. The Tuesday coffees, visiting lecturers and receptions, and conferences have made my time here memorable, and I have learned a whole lot more about

American historians and enjoyed getting to know Professor Liz Varon, the Harmsworth Visiting Professor of American history. Her lecture occurred before mine and it was quite the event at the Examination Schools. I remember asking Adam if I would have the same kind of academic procession right before my lecture! “No procession”, Adam told me, “but you will have to wear a gown and white bow-tie for yours”.

My lecture in February was a perfect opportunity to get feedback on my book manuscript, which I fortunately completed during the year. I was impressed by the level of interest and engagement afterwards with many of the research findings. This allowed me to further refine the manuscript, which I sent to the publisher just before Trinity term ended, in late May. The book explores the election of Latino Republicans to Congress and State Legislatures since 2018 and demonstrates the scope and reach of a new generation of candidates beyond the traditional Cuban American Republican base, with implications for American politics in an increasingly divided and fractious polity.

It was a great pleasure to work with Professor Desmond King





and get to meet talented Oxford MPhil students Paddy Cross, Isabella Cuervo-Lorens, Haitong Du, Liam Elkind, and Aaron Jerome. The opportunity to interact with visiting scholars was a treat. I was especially happy to meet many former Winant Professors, who keep coming back to Oxford (as I hope to do!), including Robert Lieberman and Margaret Weir. I was especially grateful to participate in Margaret's workshop on her book manuscript about the new metropolis, which I look forward to seeing in print and using in my classes.

My other home (away) from home was at Balliol College, where I met so many people who welcomed me as one of the Fellows during my year. Dame Helen Ghosh, Nicola Trott, and the staff at Balliol, especially the workers in the dining hall and SCR were gracious and got to see me quite a bit as I loved spending time on the Broad Street site. As a certified foodie, I was quite lucky to have a year enjoying Chef Bertrand Fauchaux's spectacular cuisine in such grand surroundings with a group of Fellows who enriched my life in unimaginable ways, especially Sophie Marnette, Tim Soutphommasane, Steve Freilich, Romain Ruzziconi, Louis Gabarra, Nick Dickinson, Lauren Burgeno, James Kwan, Mark Walters, Atsuko Sato, Anna Deavere Smith, Raghu Srinivas, Sebastian von Hausegger, Sean Wyer, Max Marcus, Alex Binns, Richard Norman, Linda Eggert, and Jim Mallinson. I hope to stay in touch with my new friends at Balliol and thank them for letting me be a part of their community this past year.

I was also able to work with other scholars in the UK, including some former colleagues. I am grateful to Professors Peter Trubowitz and Cathy Boone at the London School of Economics who have been very welcoming in my visits to London. In March, I was fortunate to take part in a Phelan United States Centre event at LSE on the Super Tuesday results. I was also fortunate to be able to visit Professor William Hurst at Cambridge University, where I stayed at St John's College and experienced how that other place does things.

In Trinity term, I really enjoyed organising the Winant Symposium on the Politics of Immigration in the United States and Europe. As the premier issue of the day, I wanted to bring together scholars from the UK and the US to talk about similarities and differences on an issue that constantly generates headlines and often emotional reactions. I was fortunate to have my former colleagues Professors Terri Givens of the University of British Columbia and David Leal of the University of Texas at Austin come to take part in the symposium. Professors Justin Gest of George Mason University and Tim Bale of Queen Mary in London took part in a roundtable discussion which attracted a large audience and thought-provoking questions and commentary. Several other scholars from the UK and from Oxford also participated in what proved to be a very enriching symposium.

It was especially nice to escape at least part of the Texas summer to live in Oxford, and I felt particularly fortunate to live in Holywell Manor at the Praefectus Lodgings, an historic location just minutes away from the RAI and the main college site. I really enjoyed getting to know the staff at the manor, including Praefectus Elena Lombardi, Nick Brown, Yvonne Benton, Mark Hughes, Stephen Sheather, and Patricia Amony. It was always nice to chat with them as I was welcomed back to the manor with a smile and greeting.

Words cannot adequately describe how fortunate I have been to be a part of the RAI, Balliol College, and the Oxford community this past academic year. I will cherish this experience and look forward to sharing so much of what I have learned with my students and colleagues when I return home. ■

*Jason P. Casellas is Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Houston.*



# View from the Harmsworth Chair

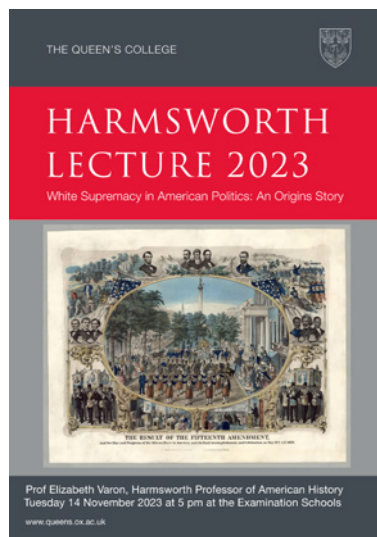
**Elizabeth Varon**

My Harmsworth year began in a singular way, with my attendance at the splendid June 2023 centenary celebration of the Harmsworth Chair. There I experienced the generous hospitality of the Rothermere American Institute and its director Adam Smith; marveled at the efficiency of Hannah Greiving, Katy Long, and the RAI staff; and first set eyes upon Queen's College, the Radcliffe Camera, Bridge of Sighs, Bodleian Library, and Oxford's other wonders. Most important, it was at the centenary that I heard two dozen esteemed former holders of the Harmsworth Chair share the view that their time in Oxford was the highlight of their careers. Needless to say, I began my own year here with the highest of expectations!

Those expectations have been exceeded in every way. When I arrived in Oxford this past September, I began to see, immediately dramatised, the central premise of the Harmsworth Chair and the RAI: that we gain valuable perspective and keen insights from studying American history in Britain. The RAI is a dynamic centre of trans-Atlantic exchange, and it, along with the vibrant community at Queen's

College, has afforded me valued opportunities for intellectual reciprocity—to be shaped by this distinct academic environment, and, in my own modest ways, to try to return the favour.

From the start, being based in England for the year enriched my own scholarship. I began to work on a new book project—a biography of the American humanitarian Clara Barton (1821–1912). Barton founded the American Red Cross, and was a pioneering philanthropist, suffragist, and stateswoman; she was the most acclaimed female public figure America had ever produced. If I had begun this project while I was back home in Virginia, I would have started my research on familiar terrain—with Barton's work as a nurse during the American Civil War. But being based in England motivated me to think in a trans-Atlantic frame, and to use as my entry point into Barton's story the life and times of her British counterpart, Florence Nightingale (1820–1910). There were remarkable similarities between the two women: both, paradoxically, promoted humanitarianism by making themselves authorities on warfare. But there were also striking differences in their attitudes towards







Clara Barton (1821–1912) in 1865



Florence Nightingale (1820–1910) in 1860

nationalism, religion, science, women's rights, and the Red Cross itself. Juxtaposing these two epic lives has thrown into sharp relief for me each woman's uniquely impressive achievements.

At the same time, I had the chance this year to bring to bear here at Oxford some of my experiences at the University of Virginia, on the fraught subject of historical memorialization. In a fruitful conversation with Queen's College Provost Claire Craig, I related the recent efforts of UVA to confront its historic complicity in American slavery—UVA's founder Thomas Jefferson was an enslaver, and the university was built by the enslaved. I was subsequently invited to share my perspectives on a new exhibition the Queen's Librarian Matthew Shaw was preparing, on the complicity of that college's benefactor Joseph Williamson (1633–1701) in the transatlantic slave trade. I affirmed for Matthew, based on my work with UVA's 'President's Commission on Slavery and the University', that such an exhibition was an opportunity not only to illuminate Williamson's biography but also to teach the Queen's community about the slave trade itself, and to centre the resistance of the enslaved. He graciously welcomed my input, and I saw our dialogue echoed in the exhibition that was thereafter installed in the Queen's Upper Library.

Naturally, for me as a teacher, the most uplifting moments of intellectual reciprocity and transatlantic mutuality came in my interactions with Oxford's peerless students, undergraduate and graduate. Oxford has a reputation for being a bastion of tradition. But there is something refreshingly counter-cultural about the way education content is delivered to students here. The small classes, sustained dialogue with professors, demanding reading lists, and intensive vetting of students' writing all produce a remarkable level of student engagement and accountability (unlike in a big American lecture hall, a tutorial student has nowhere to hide!). This pedagogy runs counter to the quick-take, snap-

judgment, impatient tone of popular culture in the US and the UK. In classroom settings such as the MSt course I co-taught with Dan Rowe, and at the RAI's stellar colloquia and conferences—including a lively seminar RAI hosted to discuss my Harmsworth Lecture—I saw illustrated again and again how Oxford's distinct pedagogy has produced the university's unique aura of confidence, dignity, and grace. I will return home to UVA strengthened in my conviction that the best way we can serve our students is to set high standards.

The year sped by all too fast and ended on a glorious note, with two memorable events: a June RAI workshop on the American Civil War, to which we invited some of my dear UVA colleagues and students, and my visit, with my husband and fellow historian William Hitchcock, to the Kent home of Vyvyan and Alexandra Harmsworth. We spent a magical day at the famed Sissinghurst Castle Garden and delighted in the Harmsworths' charming company.

Ultimately, the Oxford campus experience that will linger with me as most emblematic of my Harmsworth year is that of attending Evensong at Queen's College (all of the various college choirs are wonderful, but I am partial to Queen's!). The yearnings expressed, at these moving services, for peace and tolerance; the grand, gorgeous setting; the magnificently complex music; and the sublime talent and dedication of the choristers—these never failed to dazzle me. I came to appreciate how Evensong, like Oxford itself, has transmitted across the centuries a pair of ennobling messages. The first is that young people are to be treasured as our hope and our inspiration. The second is that not all of the beauty in the world is fleeting—some of it, in this enduring city of spires, lasts. ■

*Elizabeth R. Varon is Langbourne M. Williams Professor of American History at the University of Virginia.*



# A New Research Project at the RAI

## Adam Smith

**Over the three years from September 2024, the RAI will run a major research project generously funded by the Leverhulme Trust, under the title *Conservatisms in an Age of Revolutions: The United States in an Atlantic World*. The project's principal investigator, RAI Director Adam Smith, explains.**

In the United States today 'conservatism' is the foe of 'liberalism'. But it was not always so. Conservatism, as a political term, emerged in the United States, Britain, and Latin America at around the same time—the 1830s—in an unstable world with rising revolutionary movements. But having looked closely at the contexts in which political actors used the language of conservatism in the nineteenth century, it is clear to me that it was a far more interesting, nuanced, and adaptable term than many scholars assume.

Conservatives could be reactionaries, wanting only to stop the world spinning so as to get off, but at least in the United States, they were more often people who wanted to balance progress with preservation. Only in the American republic, the argument went, was a conservative posture necessary in order to defend liberal Enlightenment values. Under a monarchy, explained an Ohio newspaper in 1858, conservatism was "the foe of popular liberty"; but in a republic "where political and social movements, being accorded the largest liberty, tend to extremes" it operates as a "wholesome check, restraining excesses". As the novelist James Fenimore Cooper put it, "here [in America], the democrat is the conservative, and thank God he has something worth preserving".

Conservatism, in its many varieties, could induce as well as block change. This was why antislavery activists often claimed that they were the 'real conservatives'—because they were trying to return to the true spirit of the Declaration of Independence. When people referred to themselves as conservatives, when they appealed to 'conservative principles' or 'conservative men', they were doing something far more interesting than just being reactionary. Above all—at least in the US in the context of revolutionary movements abroad and massive political instability at home—'conservatism' became a broad term of legitimation, invoked even by political actors

advocating radical change. Our 'Conservatism' project aims to recover this kind of nuanced and contextualised understanding of the long history of conservatism.

Most historians writing about the history of conservatism up until now have done so in a genealogical spirit, finding the people in the past who passed down a supposedly coherent conservative tradition. Our project will do something different. We want to understand how Americans thought about 'conservatism' during the periods in which they lived. For example, supporters of the short-lived American Whig Party are sometimes thought of as 'conservative' because (relatively speaking, by American republican standards), they were believers in hierarchy and tradition. Yet, their opponents, the Democrats, also called themselves 'conservative', and used the concept to describe a very different worldview, which embraced many more of the trappings of 'modernity'. And so, rather than tracing one linear tradition or group, we are interested in (the plural) 'conservatisms', analysing how a wide range of political actors invested this concept with different meanings. Self-defined 'conservatives' in what we are terming the 'Second Age of Revolutions' (the revolutionary turmoil of the mid-nineteenth century that followed on from the 'first' Age of Revolutions in the eighteenth century) all drew on some combination of liberal principles, which were universalist and progressive, on the one hand, and coercive practices, which were exclusionary, on the other. Our project will ask why certain policies and political practices were defined as 'conservative', and how these interacted with liberal ideas and ambitions. In other words, it will historicise the insight that conservatism is a malleable and relational concept.

There are two further elements of our project that are particularly exciting and original. The first is that we are not just going to research the 'great men' of the past—the politicians and political writers—who used conservative language. We are also going to study how working-class white men and women, and African Americans, deployed the idea of conservatism. These groups had things to conserve even while they pushed for transformation and many used 'conservative' strategies to bring about social change.



**THE PRESIDENTIAL FISHING PARTY OF 1848.**

Martin Van Buren and Zachary Taylor: two conservative candidates?  
(Library of Congress)

The other distinctive element of our project is our focus on the wider Atlantic-world context. Our aim is to understand what conservatism meant in the United States, but to do this we need to understand how US politics and political ideas were shaped by the revolutions and political movements happening elsewhere, and by the movement of people and ideas. How, for example, did the revolutions in Europe and Latin America in the 1830s and 1848 affect how Americans framed what it meant to be a 'conservative'? How did British conservative thinkers influence their US counterparts, and vice versa?

So, how will we do this? By doing empirical research in archives, looking at the contexts in which conservative language was deployed. We have employed two brilliant postdoctoral researchers, Mark Power Smith and Gwion Jones, who will each work on distinctive aspects of the problem, producing a monograph and articles. Meanwhile, I will organise a conference bringing together scholars working on aspects of conservatism in the nineteenth century—from which I will edit a book that, because it will have multiple authors, will be able to engage with the complex, intertwined histories of the US, Europe, and Latin America. With three of us in the RAI working on this project, plus the ten or so scholars who will participate in the conference, we will have a vibrant intellectual community, exchanging ideas, sources, and

arguments. My hope is that the published outputs will be stronger than they could ever have been otherwise. And what will we argue? I expect our conclusions will be that the languages of 'conservatism' across the Atlantic world were a vital response to a world in turmoil. For nineteenth-century people, conservatism provided a ballast against destabilising change but could also be a way of advancing transformation. ■

Since its foundation in 1925, the Leverhulme Trust has provided grants and scholarships for research and education, funding research projects, fellowships, studentships, bursaries and prizes; it operates across all the academic disciplines, the intention being to support talented individuals as they realise their personal vision in research and professional training. Today, it is one of the largest all-subject providers of research funding in the UK, distributing approximately £100 million a year. For more information about the Trust, please visit [www.leverhulme.ac.uk](http://www.leverhulme.ac.uk) and follow the Trust on Twitter/X @LeverhulmeTrust.

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# Time To Get Ready: Maria Varela and the Civil Rights Movement

## A reflection by Emily Brady

I first encountered Maria Varela's photography when writing my undergraduate dissertation on women photographers in the Civil Rights Movement. Flicking through the pages of Stephen Kasher's *The Civil Rights Movement: A Photographic History, 1954–1968*, I pulled up short over one of Maria's pictures: a hand holding a biro, writing on a ballot paper with the icon of a black panther on it. After dozens of images that emphasised the same narrative—of marching, leadership and conflict—the abstraction of this image stood out to me. Whilst the other images all made important contributions to my understanding of the Civil Rights Movement, this image seemed to invite further investigation, further reading, and further interpretation.

Maria Varela's photography offers a perspective that emphasises the everyday contributions of grassroots activists to the Civil Rights Movement. In her images we see men, women, and children not just at the forefront of the struggle for racial justice, but working tirelessly in the background too. Maria Varela was a staff member of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee 1963–67, pioneering community initiatives to empower Black communities in the Deep South. In 1966, frustrated by the media's images of the Civil Rights Movement, Maria picked up a camera herself and began to document the movement.

The chance to collaborate with Maria Varela emerged in January 2022, when I travelled to New Mexico to interview her as part of my research project *Intersectional Iconicities*. After two days of hearing Maria's incredible stories, the idea of organising an exhibition was seeded. Once Maria had signed off on her oral history a few months later, we began to discuss bringing her work (and the photographer herself) to Oxford. It was then that our collaborators began to fall into place: The National Museum of Mexican Art would develop and share a travelling exhibition of Maria's work; St John's College would share their gallery space; and the RAI would facilitate Maria's talk about her work. With additional support from Christ Church, the Oxford Festival of the Arts, and the British Association of American Studies, our funding was ready by February 2024.

In April 2024, the crate of Maria's materials arrived in Oxford. With the help of Art History undergraduate student Jada Richards and my brother Daniel Brady, we began to unpack and hang Maria's work in The Barn space at St John's College. Unpacking these images and placing them on the white walls of the gallery was an

unforgettable experience, with small decisions taking on larger implications in the space. Which photographs should face one another? What photographs did we give more space? And what kind of dialogues were being created by hanging photographs across the room from each other?

We were extremely lucky to bring Maria Varela and her daughter Sabina Zúñiga into such discussions. The chance to discuss the exhibition with Maria and Sabina revealed new parallels and details about the exhibition and its work. For instance, Maria's focus on land and land rights—the right to exist within an established location and engage in cultural initiatives there—persists throughout Maria's work, be it in early documentations of the Civil Rights struggle or later work with rural communities in New Mexico.

It was in Maria Varela's talk at the RAI, however, that such dialogues were able to fully evolve. A natural story-teller and gifted orator, on 30 April Maria spoke about her experiences in the movement, going into further detail about the specifics of certain photographs. Particularly interesting was her expansion of her later work in New Mexico, which is a side of her activism often overlooked by historians compared to her work within the Civil Rights Movement. For over fifty years, Maria has worked in culturally sustainable economic enterprises—such as wool production with rural communities—to help reduce poverty and loss of ancestral lands and waters. The often unglamorous and behind-the-scenes activism that relied on decades of concerted effort is often left out of narratives of struggles for racial justice in the twentieth century, and it was a privilege to hear Maria articulate the intricacies of her activism.

The exhibition was seen by several hundred people, and Maria's talk was seen by several dozen. Feedback left in the guestbook frequently cited the "inspirational" and "relevant" nature of the exhibition. But the opportunity to hear from, and learn from, one of the activists at the forefront of the Civil Rights Movement remains an experience that is hard to quantify. Organising this exhibition was not just an exercise in research, as I had originally envisioned; it became a highly emotional and collaborative experience. It fundamentally transformed my understanding of Maria's images, the wider Civil Rights Movement, and the ways in which I practise historical research. ■

*Emily Brady holds the Broadbent Junior Research Fellowship in American History at the RAI and Christ Church.*



Images © Daniel Brady  
Depicted images © Maria Varela Photography

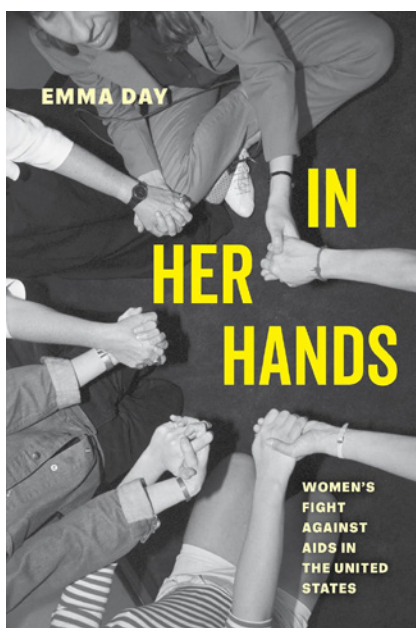
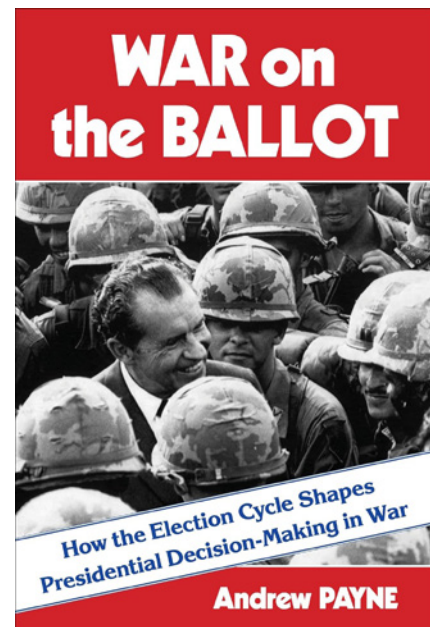


# A Year in Books

The RAI regularly hosts book launches for new titles spanning US history, politics, and culture. The 2023–24 academic year saw five exciting new books featured, with an introduction by the author followed by a panel discussion and audience questions. Naturally, this popular format includes the opportunity for audience members to purchase a copy of the new title. The abstracts reproduced below illustrate the range of topics covered.

ANDREW PAYNE, *WAR ON THE BALLOT: HOW THE ELECTION CYCLE SHAPES PRESIDENTIAL DECISION-MAKING IN WAR* (NEW YORK: COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2023)

The president of the United States is at once holder of the highest elected office and commander-in-chief of the armed forces. How do upcoming elections influence presidents' behaviour during wartime? *War on the Ballot* examines how electoral politics shaped presidential decisions on military and diplomatic strategy during the wars in Korea, Vietnam, and Iraq. Drawing on declassified documents and interviews with senior officials and military officers, Andrew Payne reveals the role played by political considerations during conflicts. He demonstrates how the exigencies of the electoral cycle drove leaders to miss opportunities to limit the human and financial costs of each war, gain strategic advantage, or sue for peace, sometimes making critical decisions with striking disregard for the consequences on the ground. Offering a systematic analysis of the relationship between electoral politics and wartime decision-making, this book raises crucial questions about democratic accountability in foreign policy.

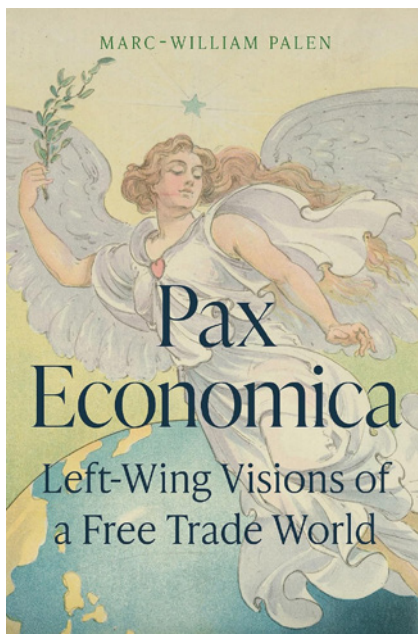
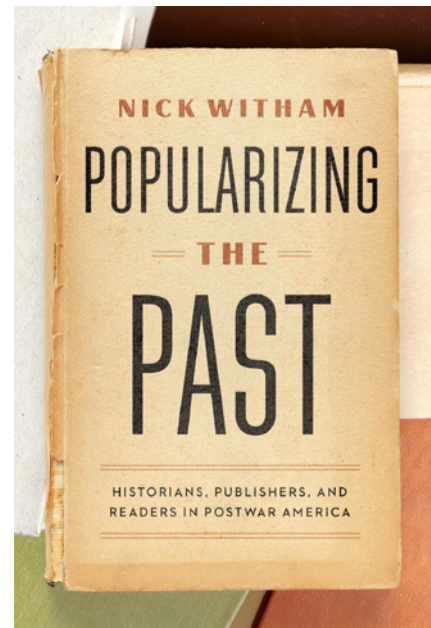


EMMA DAY, *IN HER HANDS: WOMEN'S FIGHT AGAINST AIDS IN THE UNITED STATES* (OAKLAND, CA: UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS, 2023)

*In Her Hands* examines the various strategies women have utilised to fight for recognition as individuals vulnerable to and living with HIV/AIDS across multiple settings since the 1980s. Taking a new chronological and thematic approach to the study of the US epidemic, it explores five arenas of women's AIDS activism: transmission and recognition, reproductive justice, safer sex campaigns for queer women, the carceral state, and HIV prevention and treatment. In so doing, it moves the historical understanding of women's experiences of AIDS beyond their exclusion from the initial medical response and the role women played as the supporters of gay men. Asking how and on what terms women succeeded in securing state support, *In Her Hands* argues that women protesting the neglect of their health-care needs always risked encountering punitive intervention on behalf of the symbolic needs of fetuses and children—as well as wider society—deemed to need protecting from them.

NICK WITHAM, *POPULARIZING THE PAST: HISTORIANS, PUBLISHERS, AND READERS IN POSTWAR AMERICA* (CHICAGO: UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS, 2023)

For decades, critics of the discipline have argued that the historical profession is dominated by scholars unable, or perhaps even unwilling, to write for the public. In *Popularizing the Past*, Nick Witham challenges this interpretation by telling the stories of five historians—Richard Hofstadter, Daniel Boorstin, John Hope Franklin, Howard Zinn, and Gerda Lerner—who published widely read books of national history in the decades after World War II. Witham argues that we should understand historians' efforts to engage with the reading public as a vital part of their post-war identity and mission. He shows how the lives and writings of these five authors were fundamentally shaped by their desire to write histories that captivated both scholars and the elusive general reader. He also reveals how these authors' efforts could not have succeeded without a publishing industry and a reading public hungry to engage with the cutting-edge ideas then emerging from American universities.

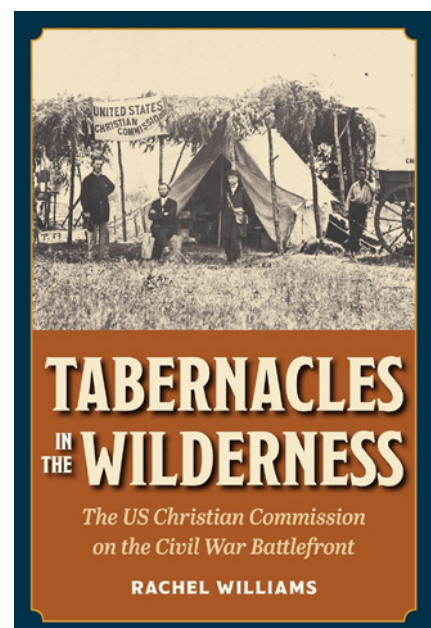


MARC-WILLIAM PALEN, *PAX ECONOMICA: LEFT-WING VISIONS OF A FREE TRADE WORLD* (PRINCETON, NJ: PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2024)

Today, free trade is often associated with the political right. In *Pax Economica*, Marc-William Palen shows that both free trade and globalisation have roots in nineteenth-century left-wing politics. From the 1840s, left-wing globalists became leaders of the contemporary peace and anti-imperialist movements. By the early twentieth century, an unlikely alliance of liberal radicals, socialist internationalists, feminists, and Christians envisioned free trade as essential for a prosperous and peaceful world order. Of course, this was at odds with the era's predilections for nationalism, protectionism, and colonial expansion. Palen shows that an anti-imperial conception of free trade was common to the political left across the British, American, Spanish, German, Dutch, Belgian, Italian, Russian, French, and Japanese empires. This vision of a 'pax economica' evolved to include supranational regulation to maintain a peaceful free-trading system—paving the way for the post-war economic order and such institutions as the United Nations, the European Union, and the World Trade Organization.

RACHEL WILLIAMS, *TABERNACLES IN THE WILDERNESS: THE US CHRISTIAN COMMISSION ON THE CIVIL WAR BATTLEFRONT* (KENT, OH: KENT STATE UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2024)

*Tabernacles in the Wilderness* explores the work of the United States Christian Commission (USCC), a civilian relief agency established by northern evangelical Protestants to minister to Union troops during the American Civil War. USCC workers saw the war not only as a judgment from God but as an opportunity to save souls and perfect the nation. Whether by handing out religious literature, leading prayer meetings, preaching sermons, mending uniforms, drawing up tailored diets for sick men, or bearing witness to deathbed scenes, USCC workers improvised and enacted a holistic lived theology that emphasized the link between the body and soul. Through the papers of the volunteers who performed this battlefield ministry, Rachel Williams examines the proselytising methods of the USCC as well as their practical difficulties and ideological underpinnings. Her book opens a window onto civilian activity within army camps, the bureaucratisation and professionalisation of philanthropy, and the emotional landscape and material culture of faith and worship. ■





# Research Grant Spotlight

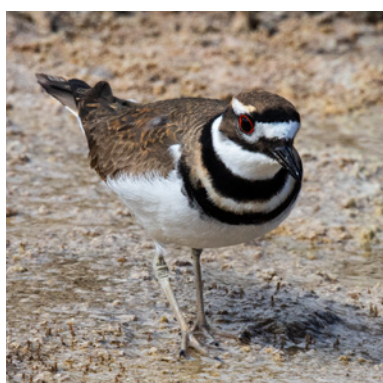
**Bethan Wallace**

**Every year, the generosity of benefactors enables the RAI to award several grants in support of primary research on the history, politics, literature or culture of the United States. The beneficiaries are Postgraduate Members, Postdoctoral Fellows, or Fellows without access to personal research funds. Bethan Wallace received one such grant.**

In April 2024, I travelled to Yellowstone National Park to conduct fieldwork for my doctoral thesis. Yellowstone is famous for its wolf reintroduction programme. It was the world's first national park, founded in 1872, set aside "For the Benefit and Enjoyment of the People" and protected from logging, mining, and wildlife poaching. Wolves were eradicated from the Park in 1926 and reintroduced 70 years later in 1995–6. Wolves are a keystone species, and their return caused

a 'trophic cascade'. They brought down the booming elk numbers, which in turn allowed tree species such as aspen and willow to recover from heavy browsing. Beaver, which rely on the trees for their food and dams, increased. Bears, which eat elk leftovers from wolf hunts, have also increased. All species are interconnected in a complex web, each one impacting many others. This is a very brief summary of a very complex ecosystem interaction.

My DPhil project is titled 'An Environmental History of Yellowstone National Park'. My research aim is to give modern research historical context. Currently, research on the effects of wolf reintroduction typically only use data going back to 1995–6. Some studies may extend to the preceding decade. I want to create a picture of what Yellowstone National Park was like before



Killdeer



Clark's nutcracker



Mountain bluebird





Bison



Bighorn sheep



Pronghorn

the eradication of the wolf in 1926, to create a historical baseline against which modern changes can be compared. With wolf reintroduction, is Yellowstone being restored to its original state or is it becoming something new?

I travelled first with my lab group, and during our fieldwork we were joined by former Senior Wildlife Biologist and project leader of the Wolf Restoration Project, Doug Smith. Doug led us through Yellowstone, from the Roosevelt Arch to the Lamar Valley, pausing at key locations. We hiked off trail to the Park's largest stand of aspen (finding wolf tracks in the snow on the way!), a river bed full of recovering willow, Crystal Creek (the location of one of the reintroduction pens from which wolves were first released back into the Park), and finally Lamar Valley, a hotspot for wolves and bison in the early years of the reintroduction. We saw wolves—probably members of the Rescue Creek pack—two days in a row on the Blacktail Plateau. They were one or two miles off, but I was able to photograph them.

We saw an incredible number of species over the course of the trip, including wolves, bison, elk, moose, pronghorn, mule deer, bighorn sheep, coyotes, Uinta ground squirrels, marmots, bald eagles, sandhill cranes, killdeer, mountain bluebirds, Clark's nutcrackers, golden eagles, ravens, and so many more!

Doug was also able to arrange a meeting for us with former Park historian Lee Whittlesey, who recently published the giant two-volume *History of Mammals in the Greater Yellowstone*

*Ecosystem, 1796–1881*. This work presents both the data and the underlying sources, such as quotes from the journals of Lewis and Clark, or from the diaries of mountain men. It was an amazing experience getting to meet and discuss ideas with the author of this huge piece of research, which has become the cornerstone of my DPhil.

Following this week of fieldwork, my lab group left Yellowstone and I stayed on for another week. I worked every day in the archive, photographing material for subsequent evaluation. I focussed on the turn of the century, in the archives from what is called the 'Army Era', taking up in 1882, where Whittlesey's work stops. I took photographs of the diaries of several early officers and other soldiers from the period 1881–1910, as well as those of Superintendents and Acting Superintendents, 1885–1921. I photographed letters, reports, newspaper clippings, and more from files of the wildlife management programme. I also got to see the map room, and pull out some giant maps of historical distributions of vegetation (which in turn could help predict historical wildlife distributions). I now have over 1,500 photographs to process. This is only a tiny fraction of what is available in the archives, and I hope to return to collect more data in the future.

Without the award of a research grant from the RAI, I could not have made this trip as productive as it was, and I am very grateful to the Institute for its support. ■

*Bethan Wallace is a DPhil candidate in Biology at St Hugh's College. (All images © the author.)*



Coyote



# Research Grant Spotlight

## Nicholas Duddy

With the support of a research grant from the Rothermere American Institute, I was able to travel to the New York Public Library in August 2023 to undertake archival research into the American playwright Arthur Miller. This opportunity allowed me to consult primary documents central to my doctoral project. My thesis, provisionally titled 'Suicide and the Twentieth-Century Stage: Miller, Beckett, Kane and Beyond', explores the relationship between dramatic art and the suicidal act in theatre after the Second World War. This interdisciplinary study applies ideas from suicidology, existential philosophy, and the medical humanities in its examination of the ethics, aetiology, and experience of suicide.

In October 2020, the NYPL acquired the Arthur Miller Library. Part of the Henry W. and Albert A. Berg Collection of English and American Literature, the library contains 692 personalised books, plays, and other publications that Miller amassed over his lifetime. In addition, the NYPL's Billy Rose Theatre Division holds documents—notes, correspondence, photographs, set design sketches, marketing materials—related to Broadway productions of Miller's plays along with the papers of key collaborators and contemporaries, including agent Kay Brown Barrett, set designer Jo Mielziner, and *New York Times* theatre critic Brooks Atkinson. Most of these materials are not digitised and therefore have to be consulted on site. These archival materials offered profound insights into the art and life of Arthur Miller. Several of Miller's plays contained notes and annotations that illuminated the playwright's ideas on his own drama. Moreover, photographs and promotion

posters illustrated how Miller's collaborators marketed and produced his plays in America and overseas. Be it Mielziner's original set design for *Death of a Salesman* or correspondence with actors, these materials also revealed how Miller's dramatic vision has been transposed from the page to the stage by different theatre companies over the decades. Given that this project explores how Miller's suicidal characters have affected audiences, I also read letters from fans to the playwright, which offered striking personal responses to his dramatisations of suicide. Conducting this kind of archival research has greatly enlarged and enhanced my understanding of Miller's drama, adding depth and specificity to my doctoral project.

This research is central to my thesis, which I am due to complete in the summer of 2024. I will also include my findings in other research outputs: a peer-reviewed article, 'Arthur Miller's Suicidology of the Stage: Suicide and Dramatic Form in *Death of a Salesman*', in a forthcoming issue of *Comparative Drama*, and a chapter for the collection *Arthur Miller in Context* (Cambridge University Press), edited by Professor Susan Abbotson and Dr Joshua Polster. Alongside these publications, I will share this research with wider audiences in a range of academic and artistic contexts in the future.

This trip was only possible because of the RAI's research grant, and I wish to express my immense gratitude to the RAI and its benefactors for enabling it. ■

*Nicholas Duddy is a DPhil candidate in English at Balliol College.*



# Research Grant Spotlight

## Ashley Wright



I explore how the President and Congress collaborate and compete to shape US foreign policy. Within this wider struggle over the foreign policy agenda, I focus on how Congress uses foreign aid as a tool of foreign policy. I argue that foreign aid functions as the primary route through which members of Congress can consistently influence the foreign policy agenda, because they control its funding and allocation. As part of my doctoral dissertation, I have developed a new vocabulary for foreign aid that distinguishes the different foreign policy purposes of foreign aid. I have also compiled original data on US foreign aid that reflects the role of Congress in the process. However, even having spent years researching the topic, there is no substitute for speaking directly with key decision-makers and hearing about their experience.

Thanks to the generosity of RAI benefactors, I was able to spend time in Washington, DC in June 2024, interviewing current and former senior members of Congress. These interviews provided crucial insights about the way in which senior members of Congress perceive themselves as interacting with the President on foreign policy and the role that foreign aid plays in that relationship. Every time I have the opportunity to do interviews, I come away with a much fuller, richer picture of the environment in which Congress and the President operate. This allows me to add much-needed nuance and depth to my understanding of how and where foreign aid fits within US foreign policy. For example, Congress has its own vocabulary that it uses for foreign aid—one that is distinctive from other donors and even from the US agencies (like USAID and the State Department) that manage aid. One of the key aspects of my work is clarifying

which aspects of the US foreign aid budget fund development and which fund security assistance. This matters, because Congress treats these categories of aid very differently. All these nuances would be almost impossible to pick up without interviewing key decision-makers.

These conversations also help me connect the existing academic literature with the lived experience of key policy-makers and understand where there may be gaps in the literature. Much of the existing scholarly work on Congress and foreign aid assumes that members of Congress look at foreign aid primarily through the lens of electoral costs and benefits to themselves (whether voting in favour of aid will cost them in an upcoming election). While I don't dispute that this shapes how legislators act, I think this misses the extent to which foreign aid also functions as a way to influence foreign policy for key groups of legislators. On this trip, I had the opportunity to learn about how legislators reacted to the vote on aid to Ukraine in April—which helped me understand this dynamic further.

Overall, this trip was incredibly fruitful. I am tremendously grateful for the support provided through the RAI. Visiting DC when Congress is in session is expensive, but it has been vital for illuminating how Congress engages with foreign aid. There really is no substitute for talking with the people who are making these decisions daily, and I deeply appreciate the chance to do so. I am hopeful that this will ultimately add clarity and depth to our understanding of how American foreign policy is forged. ■

*Ashley Wright is a DPhil candidate in Politics at University College.*





# Fellows-in-Residence 2023–24

**Fellowships-in-Residence offer academics from outside Oxford the opportunity to come to the RAI for up to a year in order to conduct research on American history, politics, literature, or culture. Fellows-in-Residence contribute greatly to our community, using their time at the Institute to conduct research, exchange ideas, and write books and articles. The following fellows joined us for the 2023 summer vacation or 2023–24 academic year.**

**Dr David Anderson**

*Swansea University*

'Postbellum life-writing and the shape of southern memory'

**Professor Carrie Bramen**

*University at Buffalo*

"The journey-work of the stars": a cultural history of astrology in the nineteenth-century United States'

**Dr Joshua Brown**

*Johns Hopkins University*

'Moving beyond the profit dichotomy: revenue strategies of American universities in an age of neoliberal education policy'

**Professor Martin Brückner**

*University of Delaware*

'Literary things: material culture and the performance of popular literature in the Atlantic World, 1700–1900'

**Dr Emma Day**

*London*

'States of intimacy: sexual violence and the carceral state'

**Professor William Hitchcock**

*University of Virginia*

'A shadow over the world: FDR, the fascist threat, and America's road to World War II'

**Professor Ian Isherwood**

*Gettysburg College*

'Remembering America's wars: the culture and politics of commemoration'

**Professor Raphaël Lambert**

*Kansai University*

'Black hopes/Black woes: early African American optimism and twenty-first century Afro-pessimism'

**Professor Michael Lundblad**

*University of Oslo*

'How to live together with animals: multispecies literary idiorrhythmy'

**Professor Janet Wilson**

*University of Northampton*

'The early reception of Katherine Mansfield in the USA and UK'

# Fourth-year Scholars 2023–24



**The RAI's fourth-year scholarships support outstanding doctoral students in American history, politics, literature, and culture. Every year, the Institute makes several awards to Postgraduate Members who require part or all of a fourth year of study to write up their theses.**

**Katherine Fapp (History, St Peter's College)** received a scholarship for the 2023–24 academic year. Her thesis, entitled *'To Clasp Hands...Across the Ocean': American Woman Suffragists in the Pacific World, 1893–1928*, is a transnational history of the American woman suffrage movement which examines the growth and development of women's rights networks in the transpacific in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries from an American perspective. The scholarship enabled Katie to write up the final two chapters, the introduction and conclusion, and further edit chapters already completed. She submitted her thesis in June 2024, and will be Departmental Lecturer in American History at Oxford's History Faculty in the 2024–25 academic year.

**Charlotte Hand (English, St John's College)** received a scholarship for the 2023–24 academic year. Her work seeks to complicate a homogenous concept of white sentimentalism through a temporal and regional examination of the sentimental genre in the antebellum period, complicating its perceived effectiveness in consolidating white power. Receipt of a scholarship enabled her to prepare a fully revised draft of her thesis, entitled *Fractures in the Culture of Sentimentality: Time and Region in Nineteenth-Century American Sentimental Writings*, which she plans to submit early in Michaelmas term 2024.

**Gwion Wyn Jones (History, University College)** received a scholarship for Michaelmas term 2023. His thesis on *Home Missions and the Religious Reconstruction of the United States, 1865–1900*, which he defended in March 2024, is an interdenominational history of the Northern Protestant home mission movement after the Civil War. Home missionaries were evangelists who laboured predominantly within the United States. While most histories of home missions have focused on the activities of the missionaries themselves, Gwion's thesis looked at the thousands of ordinary evangelical men, women, and children across the Northern states who bankrolled them. It argues that home mission donors believed that they were 'respiritualised' by subsidising the soul-saving of their fellow Americans. Gwion will take up a post as Research Fellow on the RAI's *Conservatism* project in September 2024.

**Elizabeth Rees (History, St Catherine's College)** received a scholarship for the 2023–24 academic year to support the completion of her DPhil project, *The Counterpart System: How does the East Wing and the Office of First Lady Develop within the Executive Establishment between 1961–1976?* This addresses the ambiguous position of the First Lady and her staff as political actors within the presidency, as well as the growth of the East Wing as an administrative unit. It seeks to understand who the women of the East Wing staff were, what their impact was, and how the modern office came into being. The project examines a key transformative period, from Jacqueline Kennedy to Betty Ford. Elizabeth defended her thesis in June 2024, and has secured a postdoctoral fellowship at Southern Methodist University's Center for Presidential History in Dallas, Texas.

**Martha Swift (English, New College)**, received a scholarship for Hilary and Trinity term 2024. Her thesis, *World Time: Narrative Openings and Cosmopolitics in Transnational Fiction*, uses frameworks and theory from the field of World Literature to read the autofictional novels, short stories, and films of three contemporary American authors: Nicole Krauss, Téa Obreht, and Ruth Ozeki. These writers each deploy autofiction, a rapidly developing genre that leverages both fiction and autobiography, to address their experiences as what have been termed 'authors of formerly hyphenated American ethnicities', and to express a sense of transnational interconnection in the wake of global catastrophes with personal consequences. The project identifies autofiction as fundamental to the world literary qualities of their work. Receipt of a scholarship enabled Martha to dedicate two terms to completing the final draft of her thesis, which she will defend in September 2024. ■



## Supporting the RAI

**Katy Long  
Adam Smith**

**A research centre like the RAI requires significant resources to maintain its activities. Institute Manager, Katy Long and Director, Adam Smith explain the vital role of our donor community in underpinning the work of the RAI.**

Every year, the RAI supports dozens of DPhil students and postdoctoral scholars, and hosts nearly a hundred seminars, lectures, conferences, and other events. Our podcast has been downloaded hundreds of thousands of times. All this work is only possible thanks to the generosity of our donors, past and present. Our funding model is unique among UK research centres in the humanities and social sciences: although we receive a grant from the University in recognition of our research output, the bulk of our income comes from our endowment and new gifts.

The biggest source of income is our endowment, which comprises seven separate trust funds invested in the Oxford Endowment Fund (OEF) and administered by Oxford University Endowment Management Limited (OUEM). Taken together, the seven trust funds have £14,980,766 of capital at current market value (July 2024). OUEM has achieved a rate of return of 8.1% annualised over ten years. Income from the endowment supports an events programme that costs us around £50,000 per year, as well as all other essential costs, such as maintaining the building and paying salaries.

Also critical to our annual operation are gifts from generous benefactors. In the past year, we have been honoured to receive £83,000 in donations. This is broadly in line with our donations in recent years. Every penny given to us is directly channelled into supporting our core mission of advancing the study of America and its place in the world, and sharing that research with as wide a public as possible. By way of illustration:

- **A gift of £500/\$650** supports one episode of our popular podcast, *The Last Best Hope?* (And a gift of £20,000 would support a whole year's worth of podcasts).
- **A gift of £3,500 / \$4,500** supports seven doctoral students with grants for archival research in the United States, or sustains one doctoral student for one term while writing up their thesis during a fourth year of study.
- **A gift of £10,000/\$13,000** supports a year-long seminar series—for example, two terms of research seminars in US politics with world-leading political scientists.
- **A gift of £80,000/\$100,000** supports a postdoctoral research fellow for one year. (And a gift of £240,000/\$300,000 would support a postdoctoral research fellow for the whole of a three-year appointment.)

Opportunities for naming areas of our activity and for formal recognition from the University are available to donors. If you would like to support the RAI, you can find out more at [www.rai.ox.ac.uk/giving](http://www.rai.ox.ac.uk/giving). ■



# The Vere Harmsworth Library in 2023–24



## Bethan Davies

This has been a year of change and new challenges for the Vere Harmsworth Library, and the end of Trinity term has only just allowed us to catch breath.

We have now passed a full year since the departure of the Radcliffe Science Library, who have settled into their new home at Reuben College. Alongside all our fellow Bodleian Libraries, we have moved to a new library management system called ALMA, and to a new, simplified lending system which has increased borrowing times for readers and extended borrowing privileges to all current University members. We were also one of the first three Bodleian libraries to trial a new online room booking system, which has increased awareness and usage of our three group study rooms. Finally, we have set up a new jigsaw table on the ground floor for readers who need a break.

I would like to take a moment to thank all our readers for their patience during these changes, and our wonderful library staff for their hard work and adaptability. We will be using the Long Vacation to prepare for new students in Michaelmas term and review our open-shelf collections.

We have used VHL funds to give our readers access to four new Archives Unbound databases: *Confederate Newspapers: A Collection from Florida, Georgia, Tennessee, Virginia and Alabama*; *The Election of 1948*; *Franklin D. Roosevelt and Race Relations, 1933–1945* and *Global Missions and Theology*. These four databases greatly expand our resources in nineteenth- and twentieth-century American history, especially for research on politics, religion, and race. The VHL has also contributed towards

purchasing access to *Archives of Sexuality and Gender: LGBTQ History and Culture Since 1940, Part II*, which builds on previous collections to expand the Bodleian Libraries' resources in LGBTQ+ History.

The VHL continues to benefit from the support of the American Association of Rhodes Scholars for the Aydelotte-Kieffer-Smith and Alain Locke Collections. We would like to record our thanks to the AARS for their generous donations. It has been exciting to observe sustained interest in the recently-established Alain Locke Collection from regular readers as well as external visitors. We hope to develop the collection further, both as a research resource and as a space. Please contact me at [bethan.davies@bodleian.ox.ac.uk](mailto:bethan.davies@bodleian.ox.ac.uk) if you have any particular book suggestions.

We are also grateful to all those who have donated material to the VHL, including Professor Richard Carwardine and Professor Henry Shue, the latter especially for his extensive run of *Ramparts* magazine. We record with particular gratitude the bequest of selected titles from the library of the late Sir John Elliott. These enhance the VHL's holdings in early American history, especially in relation to the Iberian colonies. ■

*For the most recent updates on accessing the VHL and other Bodleian libraries, please visit: <https://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/service-updates>. You can find more information on the VHL on the RAI website at [www.rai.ox.ac.uk/vhl](http://www.rai.ox.ac.uk/vhl) and our own site at <http://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/vhl>. We also have a blog (<http://blogs.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/vhl>), Facebook ([facebook.com/VereHarmsworthLibrary](https://facebook.com/VereHarmsworthLibrary)), and X ([twitter.com/vhllib](https://twitter.com/vhllib)) if you want to keep up with our news.*





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