

Rothermere American Institute
Annual Report
2024-25



Director's Foreword

Adam Smith

It is almost a quarter of a century since the Rothermere American Institute was opened. The world, the United States, and even Oxford have all changed dramatically in that time. But the purpose of the RAI remains as compelling as ever: to generate and support Oxford scholarship on America. We claim that it is an overwhelming necessity that, as one of the world's leading universities, Oxford has an energetic interdisciplinary intellectual community of people researching, teaching and writing about the United States. It is at least as evident as it was 25 years ago that the United States casts an unavoidable shadow – or perhaps a light – across the world. There are very few problems in modern history or the study of contemporary culture and politics that can satisfactorily be studied without some understanding of America. But the reverse is also true. To adapt CLR James's famous line about cricket: what does he know of America who only America knows? The great privilege of studying America from Oxford is the outsider's perspective. I like to think that we have the best of all worlds here: we can offer a breadth and depth of research that equals anything available at a top-tier US university, but also offer something slightly different – an analysis of America from the

outside in. In this respect, even in the early stages of the AI revolution, place matters.

In this annual report, you can read about some of the work we have been doing to advance our goals. It includes articles from this year's distinguished visiting professors – the Winant Professor of American Government and the Harmsworth Professor of American History – who each reflect on their time in Oxford during a tumultuous time in US politics. It also includes reports highlighting a few of the many lectures and seminars we have put on across a range of subjects and disciplines. Additionally, one of our early career fellows, Gwion Jones, describes the work we have been doing for a big research project on the history of conservatism in the US and the Atlantic world, generously funded by the Leverhulme Trust.

As you will read in these pages, the inaugural RAI-Kinder Institute Summer School took place this July. The summer school is the fruit of our ongoing partnership with the Kinder Institute for Constitutional Democracy at the University of Missouri. The vision is to bring US undergraduates into an immersive academic programme at the





THE ROTHERMERE AMERICAN INSTITUTE

RAI where they write tutorial essays, are taught by Oxford faculty members, and use the Bodleian Libraries. The University of Missouri provides the college credits the students need; we provide the teaching and the experience. The intellectual focus of the programme is seventeenth-century England, that fiery fulcrum in which the key ideas that went on to shape the United States and the modern world – the meanings of popular government, liberty and equality – were fought over. It was hugely enjoyable to watch the students engaging with early modern texts with purpose and perception, and the whole event seemed to me a good example of how we in the RAI can work productively in partnership with other institutes to provide something that neither of us could do alone.

Another of our partnerships, with the Association of American Rhodes Scholars, has also born fruit this year with the creation of a programme of online lectures on African American history and culture, named after the first Black American Rhodes Scholar, Alain Locke. The collection of books and e-resources, generously funded by the AARS, is being rapidly developed under the direction of the Vere Harmsworth Librarian Bethan Davies. I am immensely grateful to the generosity of the AARS for their support for making Oxford the leading centre for the study of the African American experience outside the US.

Although we have worked hard to make this annual report not just interesting but also representative of the RAI's year, we cannot include everything. In particular, it is hard to convey in print the spirit of the place. One of the great things about working in this building is that there is always something going on and somebody interesting to talk to. Our weekly coffee mornings are buzzy affairs and are emblematic, I think, of the easy, non-hierarchical engagement among our community, ranging from master's students through to senior professors and from those studying everything from policymaking to poetry. There is an invigorating sense of intellectual purpose here, nurtured in our brilliant

library and powered by free coffee and frequent wine receptions. It has been a particular pleasure to celebrate several of our postgraduate members who have successfully passed their doctoral viva examinations during the last year. Six of our early career fellows have also secured teaching positions at universities in the US and the UK.

None of this would be possible without the generosity of our donors, past and present. The RAI is unique, to the best of my knowledge, among humanities or social science institutes in the UK in being substantially funded by philanthropy. The University provides some research income, but all our academic events and the support we're able to provide to graduate students and early career researchers is possible only because of our endowment and in-year giving. If you're able to make a contribution to enable us to continue our work, please get in touch.

Nor would it have been possible without our small professional services team. Katy Long, Institute Manager, and Josh Alexander, Operations Assistant, keep the whole operation running brilliantly. We have been incredibly lucky to have been joined this year by Justine Shepperson, who has been providing maternity cover for Hannah Greiving, and has run our communications and events with immense professionalism. Dan Rowe, as our inaugural Director of Academic Programmes, has not only organised the events programme and led the summer school with charisma and wit, but also stepped in as de facto director for several months when I had to take time off for medical treatment. This year's experience has confirmed my firm belief that the RAI is the best-run department in the University!

These are troubled times, and the United States is more than ever the focus of global attention. In the year to come, the RAI will continue to play our part in supporting world-leading research, convinced, as we are, that our mission is as valuable now as at our founding. ■



20 Years of the Esmond Harmsworth Lecture

Lloyd Pratt

Each year, the RAI hosts the Esmond Harmsworth Lecture in American Arts and Letters, the centrepiece of the University's American literary calendar. In 2025, this lecture was delivered by United States Poet Laureate (2012-14) and Pulitzer Prize-winning poet, Natasha Trethewey. Here, Lloyd Pratt, Drue Heinz Professor of American Literature, reflects on 20 years of this annual lecture.

Natasha Trethewey's splendid Esmond Harmsworth Lecture pivoted on these words: 'She will do *whatever* she wants.' As we learned over the course of the evening, and as those who have followed her career will know, those words led Trethewey to become the moral and aesthetic conscience for the United States – a role she has filled for some twenty-five years now. During her two terms as Poet Laureate of the United States under President Obama, she embodied this role by travelling the US, meeting with a wide range of Americans and developing a PBS series that emerged from the topic. She shared with them poetry – her own and others' – and in doing so recalled them to its radical potential.

Her role as US Poet Laureate followed the even more lastingly consequential act of coming into her own poetic voice, leading the way by example for others to do so as well. There are the many collections of poetry, including the essential Pulitzer Prize-winning *Native Guard* (2006). This simultaneously expansive and meticulous volume of poetry reflects on the lives and significance of the often-unsung African American soldiers who made up the Union Army's Louisiana Native Guards. There is also the wrenching and

unforgettable prose memoir, *Memorial Drive* (2020), which recounts her childhood and the circumstances leading up to the death of her mother in a scene of brutal violence. In these works, and in many more, Trethewey tells truths about her own personal and national history, as well as the intertwining of those two. She forges them together into a poetic register that demands attention to sound and to scene, to love and to the resource of memory.

Trethewey's lecture at the RAI this year centred us in her answer to a question: 'Why I Write.' Trethewey has reflected on this question elsewhere, and in different terms, in her recent book, *The House of Being* (2024). In her lecture for us, Trethewey returned to memories of her early childhood. Much of Trethewey's youth was spent in her grandmother's home, a shotgun house in Gulfport, Mississippi. After the Civil War, a group of formerly enslaved women and men had made the land on which her grandmother's house stood into their home and their resource – a place structured around ways to bring joy, but also to protect against the depredations of the hostile anti-Black world that stood outside. In her lecture, Trethewey recalled the collages that her grandmother created and hung on the walls of that shotgun house. These artworks occupied pride of place in the world of that house. They spoke of a need to refashion the world, to imagine and to manufacture a different universe, one in which Trethewey's people matter and their vision for the world matter. At the core of her artistic autobiography, Trethewey places those collages and her commitment to (as she put it in her lecture) 'study' her grandmother.

It was perhaps her maternal grandmother's sense of the worldmaking possibility of art that inspired Trethewey's own mother's words: 'She will do *whatever* she wants.' As she recounted them, in her lecture and in *Memorial Drive*, her mother spoke those words during a tense dinner with Trethewey and her stepfather. Full of a sense of the possibility of words, the school-aged Trethewey shared her intention to pursue a career as a writer, an artist of words and the possibilities they represent. Her stepfather, whose anger and violence were by then daily features of the young Trethewey's life, responded with an expletive-laced refusal of that vision. In this moment, knowing full well there would be consequences for herself, Trethewey's mother responded: 'She will do *whatever* she wants.' The calm determination, the unceasing self-belief, the commitment to tell truth – beautiful truth, beastly truth – in the face of a sometimes-deceitful world, all these connotations were present as Trethewey repeated these words to us on a hot Juneteenth in Oxford. They were needed words in this moment. One can only hope they are words that stayed with the audience that evening, including the sixth-form class of young women who made their way up to Oxford on the train. They had been reading Trethewey's work at school, and they travelled to hear her speak. Like the rest of us, they were treated to a master class on moral and aesthetic precision of mind and of word – a class that repeated the lessons Trethewey gained from studying her grandmother.

Each year, the RAI meets in Trinity term to celebrate the very best and most inspiring American writing. Since the lecture's inception, the Institute has welcomed Pulitzer Prize winners, National Book Award winners and American Poets Laureate. It has seen a dazzling array of speakers and this year was no exception. The lecture is always a consolidating event. It convenes long-term supporters of the institution, including members of the Harmsworth family, current visiting professors, postgraduates, visiting fellows, fellows and the many others who call the Institute a home. It is also an opportunity for the RAI to welcome the wider University and Oxford communities to this very special place.

Before Professor Nicole King's moving introduction to the lecture, and us celebrating all that American literature has to offer in this, the twentieth year of the lecture, we had an additional duty and honour to celebrate the life of Esmond Harmsworth. As many of the RAI's friends will know, Esmond died unexpectedly in



The Hon. Esmond Vyvyan Harmsworth (1967-2025)

April this year at the too-young age of 58. The RAI has felt Esmond's loss keenly, and we missed his presence at the lecture. Esmond's vision for the lecture, his unstinting support of it, and his steady presence have been mainstays of the RAI's history. The many public tributes to Esmond and the accounts of his life that have reached us have revealed to us a man we knew in part, but also the Esmond who was a staunch advocate of marriage equality in the US, a committed and much-loved literary agent, a cherished friend, a legendary host, and a devoted husband to Jérôme and loving father to their two young children.

We saw versions of this Esmond at the RAI, especially in recent years as he played the proud father, sharing pictures of his growing family with us. We knew him primarily, though, as an unwavering supporter and champion of American literature in all its range and possibility. The most public example of this support is of course the lecture that bears his name, which simply would not have happened without Esmond's generosity. A less obvious and less public example of his generosity has been his funding of completion scholarships for our talented DPhil students in American literature. With no fuss on his part and no expectation of fanfare, Esmond's generosity has supported over twenty American literature DPhil students through the crucial final year of their studies. For many of them, Esmond's support in their final year has meant the difference between finishing and not finishing their doctorate.

Esmond was delighted when he learned that Trethewey would deliver this year's lecture. We only wish he could have been there with us to experience the lecture in all its fullness and to enjoy the uplifting gravity of her words. ■





A Year in the Winant Chair

Kimberley Johnson

My year as the John G. Winant Visiting Professor of American Government was marked by both professional accomplishments as well as witnessing a moment of tremendous political change with the election of Donald Trump for a second term in office. With the assistance of RAI staff and director Adam Smith, I quickly started work on wrapping up a book manuscript and making significant progress on several ongoing research projects, all of which engaged with American state development, urban politics and history, and race and ethnic politics. As autumn 2024 was the USA's election season, much of my engagement with the RAI involved several seminars where I shared my thoughts about the upcoming election and its possible outcomes with members of the Oxford community. It was a pleasure to meet with both undergraduate and graduate students to discuss American politics in general, as well as offer advice and feedback on individual projects. Along the way, I also gave brief talks on the upcoming election (and its aftermath) to a variety of local community groups in Oxford. More exciting and tastier than election returns were the varied entries to the RAI Bake Off event, which was a great source of stress relief and delicious treats. As well as completing the various stages of the book manuscript publication process, I submitted two journal articles and made good progress on a third project.

My forthcoming book, *Dark Concrete: Black Power Urbanism and the American Metropolis* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2025), examines the impact of the Black Power movement on four American cities: Oakland and East Palo Alto, California; and, Newark and East Orange, New Jersey. I trace how the Black Power movement influenced new kinds of political mobilisation in these cities, and how these movements reshaped local, state and national politics. What I show is how everyday people challenged unresponsive political institutions to reshape their communities to create just cities for all. This has implications for understanding not only how American urban political development was reshaped by insurgent political mobilisations that have national

repercussions, but also for understanding a larger process of what I call racial spatial ordering. In March, as part of the RAI's Alain Locke Seminar series, I participated in an online talk, 'Roundtable: Black Urban Politics and History' with Dr Sarena Martinez where we shared our work on Black urban political development. I was then fortunate enough to discuss *Dark Concrete* at the 'Cities are Back in town' seminar at Sciences Po in April.

The two journal articles that I completed while at Oxford continue these themes of considering race, space and political development. A forthcoming article, 'Indexing Negro Main Streets: Black business directories and the making of urban spaces' (*Urban History*, in press), traces the emergence and spread of Black business across the US; while similar to the more well known Green Books, these directories reached their heyday during the Great Migration and offered new Black residents of these cities a guide to manage and prosper within unfamiliar urban environments. The second article examines what I call the Third Great Migration, the movement of African Americans to the suburbs. I examine how political and social mechanisms (ie racial spatial ordering) have structured Black residential settlement in suburban America, shaping both the possibilities and constraints that face these communities. My work of racial spatial orders as well as the 2024 US election inspired my February 2025 Winant Lecture, 'The End of Black Politics,' which discussed the rise of Black voting outside of the South, particularly in cities, during the 20th century, and the impact of this development on Democratic party politics. It was a pleasure to give an online version of the lecture to Balliol College (my other Oxford home) alumni several weeks later.

In May 2025, as I entered the last months of my time at Oxford, I organised the Winant symposium, "Theorizing the US Administrative State." The symposium, co-organised with Professor Desmond King, examined the past and future of the American administrative state with a convening of social scientists, historians and legal scholars from the USA as well as scholars from the University of London and the University



of Oxford. While debates over the history and scope of the administrative state have taken place within different disciplines, this two-day symposium was the first to bring together scholars to wrestle with issues ranging from how to define the administrative state, to speculating about the future of the administrative state given the Trump administration's embrace of significant change via DOGE and other mechanisms. These changes have inspired a new research project, 'Ghost in the Machine: the end of DEI and the development of the Administrative State,' which explores the development of the American administrative state, the role of anti-DEI rhetoric in its dismantling, and how we understand the future of state capacity and governance in an increasingly fragmented and polarised setting. The Winant symposium was an incredible embodiment of the RAI's commitment to foster interdisciplinary and trans-Atlantic exchanges. I hope to continue this spirit as my co-convenors and I plan to continue our dialogue at upcoming academic conferences, and identify a publisher for the fascinating insights presented at the symposium. I presented some of this new work as the keynote speaker for the Political Studies Association's American Politics Group summer conference, as well as a follow-up podcast on the administrative state for *The Ballpark*, sponsored by the Phelan United States Centre at LSE.

Having a base in Oxford also meant having the ability to travel both in the UK and mainland Europe. Although tourist sites were visited, I couldn't shake my scholarly inclinations. My research and teaching in urban studies over the next few years will benefit from seeing urban housing estates (especially Karl Marx Hof in Vienna); witnessing the effect of mass 'over-tourism' and gentrification pressures on cities; learning about the impact of migration and asylum policies on urban development and policy; and contemplating the future of urban regeneration projects in the age of online shopping and remote work, especially resonant in a historic city like Oxford.

Although my year at Oxford began amidst record rainfall which necessitated the purchase of raingear including wellies for long walks in Port Meadow, it ended with visits to beautiful summer gardens and relaxing walks along the canals. The Winant professorship was a culmination of the research projects that I worked on throughout my time at Oxford; my productive engagements with fellow scholars, students and community members while at the University and in Oxford; and, the beginning stages of a new research programme. I'm very grateful for this experience. ■

Kimberley Johnson is Professor of Social and Cultural Analysis and Affiliate Faculty Member of the Wagner School of New York University.

The 2025 Winant Lecture in American Government

THE END OF BLACK POLITICS

Kimberley Johnson
New York University

Tuesday 18 February
1700

Rothermere American Institute
1a South Parks Road
Oxford
OX1 3UB





View from the Harmsworth Chair

Lisa McGirr

Prior to arriving as the Harmsworth Professor for 2024-25, I had visited Oxford once, years ago, to attend a conference. I thought I had a pretty good sense of what to expect during my time at the University. Spending a few days in a room listening to scholarly talks, however, is a world away from what one learns about a place by teaching and researching there for a whole year. The experience has been deeply illuminating. I am grateful to all of those who made it possible, and to the students and scholars with whom I engaged across a year that went by all too rapidly.

I was welcomed into the Rothermere American Institute community in Michaelmas term by Adam Smith, Uta Balbier and Dan Rowe. The autumn semester got underway just as the 2024 United States presidential election was about to be decided. The RAI was buzzing with activity, and it was wonderful to be part of a community of scholars, including the 2024-25 Winant Professor Kimberley Johnson, concerned with analysing and making sense of the momentous election that year. Around that same time, I gave my inaugural Harmsworth Lecture. The lecture was based on my current book project on the roots of

American authoritarianism. Given the election's outcome, there was a great deal of interest in the topic. It was an auspicious moment to share the research on the genealogy of American authoritarian political tendencies.

Aside from preparing my Harmsworth Lecture in the autumn and attending the many lively events at the RAI – from research seminars to guest speakers – I had the pleasure of co-teaching the 'Sources and Historiography' seminar for the MSt in US History and getting to know a subset of Oxford graduate students. During Hilary term, I delivered lectures for the History Faculty on modern America, and I got to know still another group of engaging students, this time undergraduates. In addition, I was grateful for the opportunity to offer talks throughout the UK across the year which enabled me to get to know other places and institutions – from a keynote address for the American Politics Annual Colloquium at the British Library to presentations on my research at the University of Cambridge, the University of Manchester and University College London.





The culmination of my time at Oxford was the Harmsworth symposium during Trinity term – an opportunity I used to bring to the RAI community scholars from elsewhere to help understand recent events in the United States, especially the erosion of democratic norms. I am grateful for the encouragement of Adam Smith and Dan Rowe for holding the event, the financial support the RAI provided, and for Justine Shepperson's incredibly efficient administrative support.

I am also happy to report that I had the opportunity to make substantial progress on my book manuscript across the year on American authoritarian traditions. I benefited from numerous warm and fruitful exchanges in advancing my research with scholars including Sarah Knott, Desmond King, Kimberley Johnson, and Uta Balbier.

I belonged to three communities at Oxford: the Faculty of History, the Rothermere American Institute and The Queen's College. The vibrant cultures of each contributed to the year exceeding the expectations I arrived with (and that is after I had heard other former Harmsworth Professors speak so highly of their experiences). I was especially taken with the vibrancy of college life at Queen's. The delightful intellectual exchanges with fellows across different disciplines at lunch and at High Table (along with the conviviality of excellent food and drink) are something I will always cherish. I hope that I have been forgiven for mistakenly taking home another fellow's gown after one memorable and quite late evening.

Aside from delicious meals, stimulating conversations and the duties of governing board meetings, I will also cherish the memory of the beautiful evensongs and the stellar choir at Queen's. It is not easy to leave behind everyone who made me feel such a part of the community there. This includes fellows and students,

foremost, but also the college's staff who keep college life humming. Savvas Savva, for one, runs the Common Room with grace and efficiency. His warm spirit at lunches and dinners made any dreary day more cheerful.

I could go on but suffice it to say that the Harmsworth year has been a distinctive and unique one in my career as a historian. I hope that my stay has been of benefit to the community of historians at the RAI and History, at Queen's, and the University more broadly. It has certainly been one that I will not forget. ■

Lisa McGirr is Charles Warren Professor of American History at Harvard University.



Eagle on Top of The Queen's College Library
(©OUIImages/Public Affairs Directorate, cropped)



The Alain Locke Seminar

Daniel Rowe

In the autumn of 2024, the RAI launched the Alain Locke Seminar, a regular virtual series dedicated to showcasing cutting-edge research in African American history, politics, biography and culture. The series seeks to highlight the work of individual scholars, but also to shine a spotlight on the Vere Harmsworth Library's important, and ever-growing, Alain Locke Collection.

Named after the first African American Rhodes Scholar and Harlem Renaissance leader, the series is supported by the Association of American Rhodes Scholars (AARS).

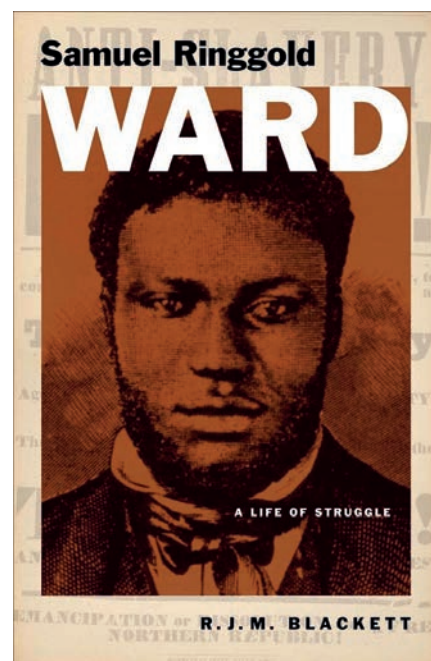


The first Locke Seminar featured former Harmsworth Visiting Professor of American History (2013–14), Richard Blackett, discussing his biography of the abolitionist Samuel Ringgold Ward. Ward was a newspaper editor, Congregational minister and temperance advocate. After the passage of the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act, he fled to Canada, where he lectured widely to improve conditions for formerly enslaved people. Ward then went to Britain as an agent of the Canadian Antislavery Society and published his influential book, *Autobiography of a Fugitive Negro*. He never returned to the United States and died in obscurity in Jamaica. This important discussion about a pivotal figure in Black history was chaired by RAI Senior Fellow Emily West.

Our next seminar was a panel discussion on Black urban politics and history between former RAI postgraduate member Sarena Martinez and Winant Visiting Professor of American Government, Kimberley Johnson. Sarena's current book project examines urban governance

in Baltimore during the tenure of the city's first elected Black mayor, Kurt Schmoke, while Kimberley has recently completed a manuscript exploring the development of Black Power urbanism in the 1960s and 70s. This one-off conversation brought together two scholars connected to the RAI who are working on complementary book projects on US urban history and politics.

In late April, we hosted another roundtable discussion featuring Emily Owens (Brown University), RAI Fellow-in-Residence Kaisha Esty (Wesleyan University), and former RAI postgraduate member Camille (Mimi) Borders (Princeton University). This fascinating conversation, moderated by Mimi, considered the precarious meanings of consent for Black women in the nineteenth century and its afterlives. Like the other Locke roundtable, this was a unique discussion among trailblazing historians that demonstrated the rich intellectual exchanges that come from putting academics working on distinct but related research into conversation with one another.





Two hybrid Locke Seminars took place in Trinity term. In mid-May, Tammy L. Kernodle (Miami University) revisited her research on the celebrated jazz musician Mary Lou Williams. Focusing on Williams during the 1950s, 60s and 70s, Kernodle considered how community-based grassroots music scenes and a generation of Black women furthered the cultural work of the civil rights movement and infused jazz with larger narratives of liberation. In the final Locke Seminar of the year, Brenna Greer (Wellesley College) explored the political and cultural significance of iconic photographs of Black people, the Black past and Black protest that feature seated subjects.

The 2024–25 Locke Seminars – with the exception of the Brenna Greer seminar, which due to technical problems could not be recorded – are



Tammy L. Kernodle (Miami University)

available on the RAI's YouTube channel. Our hope is that, as the recorded web archive grows, the Locke Seminar recordings will become a valuable resource for providing students, academic researchers and the wider public with access to world-leading scholarly conversations on African American history, politics, biography and culture.

The five Locke seminars that we hosted between December and May produced valuable discussions and provided our online and in-person audiences and panellists with opportunities to learn from and interact with each other. For many of us, the Zoom room reawakens memories of the pandemic. The Locke Seminar, though, offered a vivid demonstration of the intellectual and academic opportunities of the virtual. As I write, I am planning several hybrid and online Locke events for the new academic year. I am confident these will enrich our programming in much the same invaluable ways as the inaugural seminars did in 2024–25. ■

Daniel Rowe is Director of Academic Programmes at the RAI.



Roundtable discussion (clockwise from top left): Camille Borders (Princeton University), Emily Owens (Brown University) and Kaisha Esty (Wesleyan University)

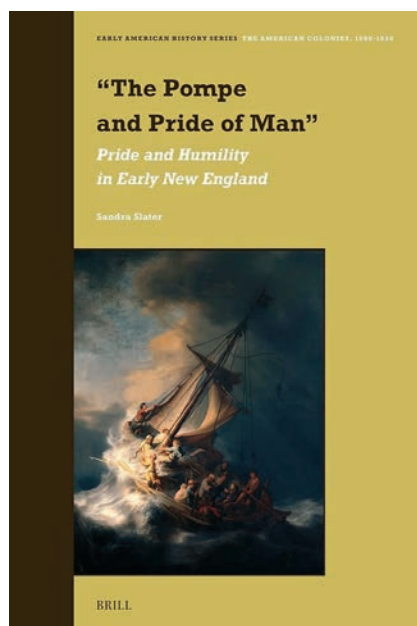
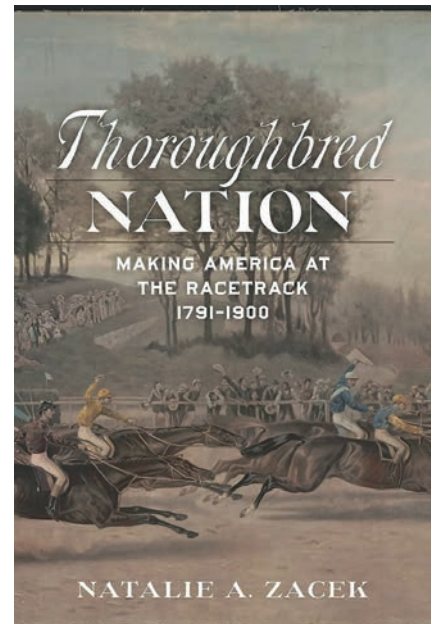


A Year in Books

The RAI regularly hosts book launches and book talks for new titles spanning US history, politics and culture. The 2024–25 academic year saw a number of exciting new books featured, with an introduction by the author followed by a panel discussion and audience questions. Here we have selected four books whose abstracts reproduced below illustrate the range of topics covered.

NATALIE ZACEK, *THOROUGHBRED NATION: MAKING AMERICA AT THE RACETRACK, 1791-1900* (BATON ROUGE: LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2024)

From the colonial era to the beginning of the twentieth century, horse racing was by far the most popular sport in America. Great numbers of Americans and overseas visitors flocked to the nation's tracks, and others avidly followed the sport in both general-interest newspapers and specialised periodicals. *Thoroughbred Nation* offers a detailed yet panoramic view of thoroughbred racing in the United States, following the sport from its origins in colonial Virginia and South Carolina to its boom in the Lower Mississippi Valley, and then from its post-Civil War rebirth in New York City and Saratoga Springs to its opulent mythologisation of the 'Old South' at Louisville's Churchill Downs, home of the Kentucky Derby. Natalie A. Zacek introduces readers to an unforgettable cast of characters, from 'plungers' such as Virginia plantation owner William Ransom Johnson (known as the 'Napoleon of the Turf') and Wall Street financier James R. Keene (who would wager a fortune on the outcome of a single competition) to the jockeys, trainers, and grooms, most of whom were African American.



SANDY SLATER, *THE POMPE AND PRIDE OF MAN: PRIDE AND HUMILITY IN EARLY NEW ENGLAND* (LEIDEN, THE NETHERLANDS: KONINKLIJKE BRILL BV, 2025)

Huddled on dank ships and tossed about in the waves of the Atlantic, English Puritans envisioned a new society predicated on the values of individual and communal humility. Pride, a pervasive sin, jeopardised their very survival and incited God's wrath. The first generation of New England settlers, deeply affected by the miseries of their migration experience, crafted New England society on the dichotomy of pride and humility.

Embracing demonstrative suffering as essential, Puritans embraced perpetual martyrdom, often taking great pride in the extent of their humiliation. This ideology affected self-perceptions and informed legal codes, theology, and community values. Anxieties around pride resulted in violent efforts to eradicate 'proud' individuals, but also whole communities as demonstrated by the Pequot War (1636-37). The dichotomy of pride and humility permeated all aspects of New England Puritanism.

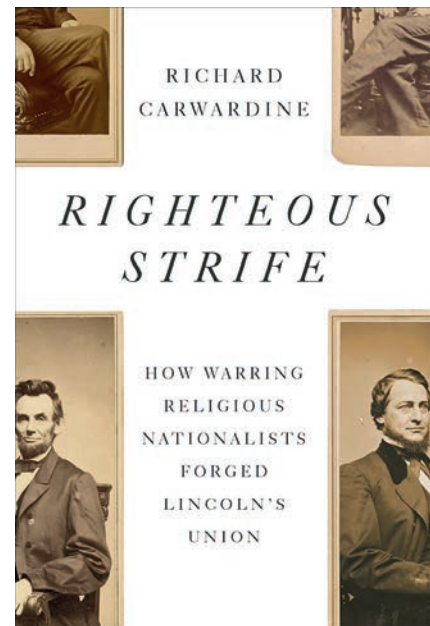
RICHARD CARWARDINE, *RIGHTEOUS STRIFE: HOW WARRING RELIGIOUS NATIONALISTS FORGED LINCOLN'S UNION* (NEW YORK: ALFRED A. KNOPE, 2025)

The first major account of the American Civil War to give full weight to the central role played by religion, reframing the conflict through Abraham Lincoln's contentious appeals to faith-based nationalism.

How did slavery figure in God's plan? Was it the providential role of government to abolish this sin and build a righteous nation? Or did such a mission amount to 'religious tyranny' and 'pulpit politics,' in an effort to strip the southern states of their God-given rights? In 1861, in an already fracturing nation, the tensions surrounding this moral quandary cracked the United States in half, and even formed rifts within the North itself, where antislavery religious nationalists butted heads with conservative religious nationalists over their visions for America's future.

At the centre of this melee stood Abraham Lincoln, who would turn to his own faith for guidance, proclaiming more days of national fasting and thanksgiving than any other president before or since. These pauses for spiritual reflection provided the inspirational rhetoric and ideological fuel that sustained the war.

In *Righteous Strife*, Richard Carwardine gives renewed attention to this crucible of contending religious nationalisms, out of which were forged emancipation, Lincoln's re-election, and his second inaugural address. No understanding of the American Civil War is complete without accounting for this complex dance between church and state – one that continues to define the nation.



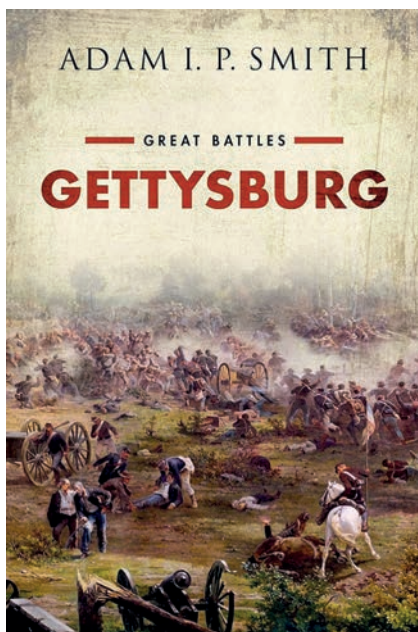
ADAM SMITH, *GETTYSBURG* (OXFORD: OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2025)

How did Gettysburg become the most famous battle of the American Civil War and one of the most consequential in world history? Why is the most visited battlefield, the place where veterans came in the greatest numbers, where Presidents pay homage, and millions of families have vacationed? What was it about this three-day struggle in July 1863 in the rolling hills of Pennsylvania that made it seem the 'turning point of the war', or the 'high-water mark' of the Confederate rebellion?

Gettysburg explains the battle's place in the Civil War, why two vast armies clashed there, and how, in the century and a half since, it has been re-imagined, re-created and re-enacted. It is the story of a battle which no one planned but which became the bloodiest encounter of the war, and one with dramatically high stakes. The postwar romanticisation of Gettysburg as the place of 'might-have-beens' is based on a kernel of reality.

But it also suited the interests of both the winners and the losers for Gettysburg to become the Civil War in miniature: a glorious, storied, tragic tale small enough to comprehend, but large enough to be inspirational. If this was the battle that determined the war, Confederates could tell themselves that if only they had made different tactical choices, they would have won their independence, while Northerners could credit valour for their victory, without the unromantic need to invoke superior resources.

Yet there was only a war because of slavery, and Gettysburg's importance lies in its role in ending it. In the speech Abraham Lincoln gave there, four months after the battle, he expressed the hope that Union victory would inaugurate a 'new birth of freedom'. The history of the battle has been shaped by a contest over what that means. ■





US Politics at the RAI

Daniel Rowe

The RAI hosted a wide range of events addressing and analysing contemporary US politics during the 2024–25 academic year.

There is no shortage of material for political junkies to read or listen to in the age of podcasts, live-update journalism and Substack commentary. This is especially true in a presidential election year. The RAI, however, is uniquely positioned – in Oxford, the UK and globally – to approach US politics from a distinct and neutral angle. We can offer something that talking heads, journalists and other commentators cannot. This commitment to offering something distinct, considered and intellectually grounded was key in shaping how we formulated and ran our 2024–25 politics events.

In Michaelmas term, we launched a new weekly lunchtime seminar discussion series: *The Present and Future of US Politics*. This series explored the structural problems and political challenges behind the headlines. Speakers included Peter Feaver (Duke University), Robert Saldin (University of Montana), Ursula Hackett (Royal Holloway, University of London), Kimberley Johnson (New York University), Richard Johnson (Queen Mary, University of London) and Desmond King (University of Oxford). Topics ranged from the future of the Democratic Party and political violence to the urban-suburban divide and shifting voter allegiances.

Though the looming election shaped much of the conversation, our *Present and Future of US Politics* speakers looked beyond the short term, and offered reflections on long-term patterns in US politics. Rather than provide a conventional academic paper, each speaker was asked to provide 10–15 minutes of remarks and thoughts about their topic before we opened the conversation to the room – a format that we hoped would appeal to informed, but non-specialist audiences. The success of the series exceeded even our high expectations. The discussions were evidence-driven, expert-led, and provoked wide-ranging, incisive engagement. The large number of attendees, and the quality of discussion during them, are testament to what the RAI can offer in this space.

Our other major event in the autumn put the presidential election front and centre. *The US*

Election: What Just Happened?, held two days after election day, was co-hosted with the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. The panel featured former Winant Professor and ABC News election decision desk member Jason Casellas, *New Yorker* staff writer Clare Malone, Republican political strategist Mike Murphy, 2024–25 Winant Professor of American Government Kimberley Johnson, and RAI Director Adam Smith.

As we expected, given the speaker roster, the event was stimulating and insightful. But more than that, it demonstrated – to a large in-person, common room overflow, and virtual audience(s) – the value of bringing voices from politics, journalism and academia into the same conversation.

During the spring and summer, we held two events featuring individuals who had served in recent presidential administrations, both focused on analysing the policies and politics of the second Trump administration.

In May, Robert Wescott, former Special Assistant to President Bill Clinton for Economic Policy, assessed the foreign and economic policies of the Trump administration. With just over 100 days of the administration completed, he reflected on developments since Inauguration Day and considered what might lie ahead.

The following month, we welcomed former White House Counsel Stuart Delery to the RAI for an event exploring how the courts and Congress have responded to the Trump presidency. While it is too early to determine the longer-term impact, both events highlighted the era-defining nature of the political developments unfolding in the early months of this new presidential administration.

Through these events, we have facilitated one-of-a-kind discussions that have drawn large audiences and been exceptionally well-received. We have provided fresh perspectives and an analytic lens rarely found in print, online or on social media.

The enthusiastic response to these events has encouraged us to plan more events in a similar vein for the 2025–26 academic year. Full details will be published on our website and in our email newsletters during the next few months. ■

Leverhulme Project Update

Gwion Wyn Jones



In September 2024 the RAI commenced a major three-year research project generously funded by the Leverhulme Trust. Research fellow on the project, Gwion Wyn Jones, provides an update on how the project is progressing.

We have now completed the first year of our Leverhulme Trust project – *Conservatism in an Age of Atlantic Revolutions, 1830-1880* – based at the RAI. Led by our principal investigator Adam Smith and assisted by both Mark Power Smith and me as postdoctoral research fellows, the project retraces the history of conservatism during a particularly tumultuous moment in world history marked not only by political and economic upheaval, but also – and not coincidentally – by the emergence of ‘conservative’ and ‘conservatism’ as political terms for the first time. Most histories of conservatism heretofore have tended to presuppose a fixed definition of the word that is recognisable to us in the present day. The Leverhulme project rejects this methodology; instead, it tries to understand how our historical subjects themselves used the term to describe their own ideas and actions, an approach that reveals the diverse and perhaps unexpected ways in which the language of conservatism was used not merely to resist change, but also to control or even outright promote it.

The past year has been an extraordinarily productive one. Mark has written an article on gender and politics in the antebellum period which argues that Northern Democrats portrayed themselves as the conservative defenders of patriarchal households in the face of more radical understandings of family and sexuality. Mark’s article will be published in the September edition of the *Journal of the Civil War Era*. I have written an article on the changing meaning of conservatism after the American Civil War, arguing that Radical Republicans often invoked the language of conservatism to justify a more transformational form of Reconstruction that most historians have traditionally understood as revolutionary and distinctly *unconservative*. The article is now wending its way through the submission process at the journal *Civil War*

History, having passed the first round of peer review.

The centrepiece of the Leverhulme Project will be a published collection of essays co-edited by Adam and me that will explore the history of conservatism across the mid-nineteenth-century Atlantic through a series of case studies and surveys written by specialists based in the UK, US and Europe. To that end, we held a conference here at the RAI in late June that brought our collection contributors together for the first time to present and discuss their prospective chapters. Contributors presented on a wide range of topics, including Canadian monarchism, women’s suffrage and the transatlantic legacies of Toryism. United by our distinct methodology, the papers nonetheless displayed the sheer breadth and variety of themes that our project intends to engage with. Above all, the conference affirmed to everyone involved just how fertile a field of historical inquiry the study of nineteenth-century conservatism has become over the past ten years, one that – far from being of interest to political historians alone – speaks to a number of scholarly specialities.

As we look ahead to the project’s second year, we hope to maintain the momentum that we have built up so far, steering the co-edited collection towards publication, while also producing additional research outputs such as an article I am currently writing on conservatism and religion in the antebellum era. ■

The Leverhulme Trust provides grants and scholarships for research and education, funding research projects, fellowships, studentships, bursaries and prizes. Today, it is one of the largest all-subject providers of research funding in the UK. For more information about the Trust, please visit www.leverhulme.ac.uk.

LEVERHULME
TRUST



New Fellows of the RAI

The Fellows of the RAI are lecturers and researchers employed at Oxford University who specialise in any aspect of American history, politics, literature and culture. Here, new Fellows based at the RAI reflect on the research they have undertaken this year.

TOM ARNOLD-FORSTER

Kinder Career Development Fellow in Atlantic History

My research focuses on the political and intellectual history of the modern United States, with intersecting interests in the history of political thought. My first book, *Walter Lippmann: An Intellectual Biography* (Princeton, 2025), provides a new historical account of a prominent journalist and political theorist who shaped the development of American liberalism and democratic theory across the twentieth century. I have also published articles on urban politics, media history, the history of jazz and other topics. My current book project explores the relationship between corruption and the public sphere from Progressive Era muckraking to the Watergate crisis.

As the Kinder Career Development Fellow at the RAI, I work with colleagues at the University of Missouri in delivering the Kinder Institute's MA in Atlantic History and Politics. Before joining Oxford in January 2025, I taught US history and the history of political thought at King's College London for three years. I completed my BA, MPhil, and PhD at the University of Cambridge, where I was also a Junior Research Fellow. My research has been supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, the Library of Congress, the University of Chicago Library and the Newberry Library in Chicago.



SHEILA BYERS

Drue Heinz Postdoctoral Fellow in American Literature



As an RAI fellow, I have continued work on my book project, *Swarms: Ecological Thought in the Early American Environment*. The book focuses on settler colonial and Indigenous depictions of swarming insects to argue that the experience of the swarm reveals the prevalence of ecological thinking in the long eighteenth century, an era usually characterised by an environmental attitude based on the separation of humans from the natural world. Drawing on works by writers including Jonathan Edwards, Hector St. John Crèvecoeur and David Cusick, the book demonstrates the presence of multiple, divergent understandings of ecology and the implications of these ecologies for environmental ethics and philosophies. An article from the project, on swarms and theories of life in the work of the naturalist William Bartram, is forthcoming in *ELH*. Over the past year, I have also given talks at the RAI's American Literature Research Seminar, the conferences of the Society of Early Americanists and the Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment, and a conference on generational time in the American nineteenth century organised by the Université de Lille.

ETHAN PLAUE

Drue Heinz Postdoctoral Fellow in American Literature

I am a literary and intellectual historian of media and technology, specialising in American literature from the colonial era to the nineteenth century. My current book project is an intellectual history of mediation told through the literature and archives of transnational American Romanticism. Through readings of literary works by Hannah Crafts, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Michel Maxwell Philip and Jane Johnston Schoolcraft as well as archival texts including patents for fictitious inventions, theological treatises on capitalism, and scientific papers on statistical mechanics, the project uncovers the historical discourse of mediation as it shaped not only nineteenth-century ways of knowing but also the way we experience our mediated age today. An article drawn from the book is forthcoming in *PMLA*.



BETH WILSON

British Academy Postdoctoral Fellow



During my British Academy Postdoctoral Fellowship at the RAI this year, I have been working on finishing my first monograph, *I Felt All This: Enslaved People's Emotional Lives in the Antebellum US South*, which will be published by Cambridge University Press next year. The book explores enslaved people's testimony from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to consider how enslaved people created their own gendered emotional ideologies, practices and modes of emotional expression to both survive and resist the institution of slavery. Over the course of my fellowship, I have been fortunate to spend significant time researching for this book – both in online collections and US archives. This year, however, I have been based at my desk, writing and editing the monograph for publication. Alongside my own research, I have greatly enjoyed co-convening the American History Research Seminar alongside Dr Emily Brady, as well as teaching a number of Oxford undergraduate and postgraduate students. ■



The RAI-Kinder Summer School

Daniel Rowe

In July 2025, 20 undergraduate students from the University of Missouri's Kinder Institute and Honors College came to Oxford for an immersive summer school based at the RAI.

The four-week curriculum included a 'major' class on the constitutional history and legacies of the British Civil Wars and Glorious Revolution, as well as optional 'minor' courses on museums and material culture, and public policy and political communication. Students lived and dined in Corpus Christi College, and attended bespoke seminars and lectures taught by members of Oxford's History Faculty, and the School of Archaeology. Outside the classroom, the students visited Westminster, Whitehall, Greenwich, Bath and Hampton Court Palace on field trips tied to their study of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century history.

Three students reflect on their experiences below.

Nat Othon

"I am in my second year at the University of Missouri, and had what I believe to have been a great honor to be a member of this first cohort to come to Oxford and the RAI for four weeks – or 26 days to be precise(!) – during the summer. The course load was vigorous, broad and always constructively challenging in a way that made better the skills of myself and my peers. Besides the courses, I must confess to having never been abroad, and in the leisure time we had, was able to, alongside my peers, experience, in what I hope to have been an insightful way, the United Kingdom. For these opportunities I will forever be grateful to the RAI and faculty associated for their welcoming disposition."



Carly Riggs

"Getting to live and study at Oxford for a month was everything I could have hoped for. This experience was not only about learning the 17th century, but also the Oxford method of teaching. Each morning, I came to lectures excited to hear from our tutor and how their insight added further nuance to the narrative of the Glorious Revolution, or whether it was truly glorious."

This program offered me friendships that extended beyond the classroom. It was a privilege to learn from leading academics in their field and tour the sites where these events took place. I left Oxford not only as a better student but with newfound friendships and connections."





Addeline Moran

"The RAI-Kinder Summer School was a rewarding experience that furthered my capacity to think about historical events critically. By examining the Glorious Revolution in a way that overcomes the limitations of typical narratives, I gained a deeper understanding of its impact on constitutional monarchy, the political culture in England, and its ramifications across Europe.

Experiencing Oxford's traditions permitted me to connect my texts and readings to larger historical interrogations while allowing me to develop in both analytical thought and writing. The connections and mentorship I found during this program were profoundly impactful and transformative, and their influence extends far beyond the month. The intellectual rigor of discussions with scholars and the physicality of collaborating with materials allowed me to conceptualise history as a collection of constantly developing narratives that have the power to mold our present day.

Participating in this program was a privilege; it reignited my passion for deeper readings of history and furthered my awareness of the interconnectedness of historical events."



The most heartening and fulfilling aspect of the programme for me, as the person at the RAI who oversees the summer school, was the way that the students rose to the occasion. Classes were intense from day one. The students had to adapt to a new academic culture and environment. Every single one of them worked hard, and made the most of the distinct learning opportunities available on this programme, and did so with a smile on their face. As with the best of teaching, I was left enthused and inspired by the students and their contributions.

I hope never to see the footage the journalism school students captured of the real tennis match I played against Kinder Associate Director, Billy Coleman. However, I very much look forward to seeing the students again soon in Missouri, and to welcoming an even larger group to the RAI next summer. ■





Research Grant Spotlight

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 RAI Postgraduate Members, Postdoctoral Fellows, or Fellows without access to personal research funds. This year Sara Lopes Borga, Isabelle Stuart and Isabella Turilli all received one of these grants.

Isabelle Stuart



In early January of this year, I travelled to Dublin to spend some time in the National Library of Ireland archives, looking at their extensive collection of the papers of W. B. Yeats. My doctoral thesis researches the influence of verse recitation practice and theory on the development of modernist poetics from 1890 to 1945. I'm especially interested in how major modernist poets like Yeats and T. S. Eliot carried out extensive but little discussed Anglo-American tours in the first half of the twentieth century, lecturing and performing to tens of thousands of audience members on both sides of the Atlantic. My argument is that these lecture tours were in fact central to the influential ideas about audience and sense of the place of poetry in society that these poets developed over the course of their careers.

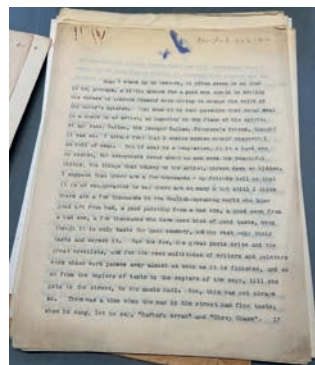
My time in Dublin, and the archives that I saw there, were essential for fleshing out the details of Yeats' lecture tours in the first decade of the twentieth century. Visiting the NLI was an experience in itself; I didn't realise until I arrived at the building to see a crowd of press photographers, that it shares a site with Leinster

House, which is home to the Oireachtas, Ireland's parliament: testament to the high value Dublin places on its rich literary culture!

I had already spent some time looking at John Quinn's papers at the New York Public Library, the lawyer and literary patron who had organised Yeats' American tours, and I found some fascinating unpublished documentation at the NLI which filled in details about Yeats' intention for the tours, especially his astute ideas regarding the appeal of Irish cultural politics to American audiences. Equally valuable was being able to access the accounts and records of the American tour, allowing me to reconstruct precisely where he went and to whom he performed in his time there. A highlight was finding some original notation of the poems Yeats and his performance partner, the actress Florence Farr, who had undertaken her own successful US tour, performed at their lectures.

Thank you very much to the RAI's benefactors for supporting this trip.

Isabelle Stuart is a DPhil candidate in English at Worcester College.



A page of one of Yeats' lecture scripts that he read from during his time in New York in 1903-4, which dwells on the problem of a poet 'trying to change the world'. (Image © Isabelle Stuart)

I am very grateful to have had the opportunity to attend and present my research at the European Association for American Studies Poetry Network inaugural Symposium, held at the University of Göttingen on 16–17 May 2025. The symposium brought together scholars at various stages of their academic careers from institutions across Europe, providing a stimulating environment for intellectual exchange.

The programme featured a wide range of panels engaged with current debates in American Literature and Poetry Studies, specifically on how poetry engages public spaces, questions of accessibility, inclusivity and redressing the boundaries of poetic form.

I presented my paper, titled "'Impractical' and 'unsummarizable': the terms of Tracy K. Smith's poetry", as part of the panel on 'Race, Identity and Collective Selves'. In it, I examine how Tracy K. Smith's poetry navigates the tension between private interiority and a collective voice, particularly through her formulations of the imagination, community and lyric address. Focusing on her tenure as US Poet Laureate and her Pulitzer Prize-winning collection *Life on Mars*, my paper explores how Smith's poetic practice resists reductive critical frameworks, especially those that fail to account for the imaginative and formal complexity of African American poetic traditions.

Sara Lopes Borga



I would like to extend my thanks to the Rothermere American Institute committee and benefactors for supporting my attendance at this event. The opportunity to present my work internationally, receive feedback and build professional relationships has been immensely valuable at this stage of my doctoral studies. I remain deeply appreciative of their investment in the academic development of postgraduate students.

Sara Lopes Borga is a DPhil candidate in English at St John's College.

Isabella Turilli



Thanks to a Rothermere American Institute research grant, I was able to attend and present at the Southern Association for the History of Medicine and Science (SAHMS) Conference, held at the University of Virginia's Bjoring Center for Nursing Historical Inquiry. This was my first conference as a graduate student, and the first forum in which I formally presented the argument of my MPhil in International Relations thesis. I am deeply grateful to the RAI and the generous benefactors of the grant that made this first experience in academic presentation possible for me.

The SAHMS Conference brought together historians, nurses and other researchers to discuss a broad range of topics, ranging from medieval and early modern medicine to the methodological problems raised by

incomplete archives. During the conference, I had the pleasure of attending presentations that were unexpectedly useful for my own research, including one on the nursing training programmes in the 1940s and 50s on tribal lands in the United States.

My presentation was on Lillian Wald, a pioneering social reformer from the early twentieth century who created the field of public health nursing. Through the disciplinary lens of international relations, I examined how her nursing expertise, and the translation of that expertise into power, was mediated by her gender. Wald's influence, both in and beyond nursing (she is also a significant figure in the movements towards child welfare, industrial rights and women's suffrage), is a direct consequence of her engagement with a feminised profession. In my presentation, I discussed how the separation of spheres between gender impacted her development as a nurse, and more generally, her understanding of social progress at the local, national and international level.

Were it not for this grant, I would never have been able to present at this conference, much less network across disciplines (and national boundaries!). Attending the conference marked an important beginning in my academic career, and I cannot thank you enough for making it possible. ■

Isabella Turilli is an MPhil candidate in International Relations at Lincoln College.



Supporting the RAI

**Katy Long
Adam Smith**

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

Every year, the RAI supports dozens of DPhil students and postdoctoral scholars, and hosts more than 100 seminars, lectures, conferences and other events, as well as our podcast, which has now been downloaded nearly four hundred thousand times. In the last financial year we spent £58,000 on our academic programme and £44,000 on direct research support to graduate students. This is only possible because of the generosity of our donors, past and present. The University provides some research income, but we are able to do as much as we can because, uniquely among UK research centres in the humanities and social sciences, we also benefit from philanthropic giving. Our donors enable the RAI to be substantially insulated from the immense financial pressures facing UK higher education. Our aim is to keep it that way.

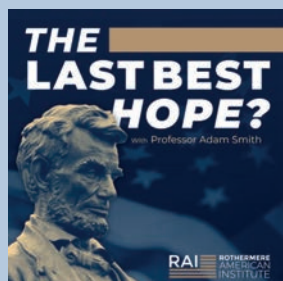
Every financial year, our biggest source of income is from trust funds invested in the Oxford Endowment Fund (OEF) and administered by Oxford University Endowment Management Limited (OUEM). These funds, which we refer to collectively as our endowment, have £15,204,819 of capital at current market value (July 2025). OUEM has achieved a nominal annual net rate of return of 8.9% over 16 years since inception. Income from the endowment supports an events programme that costs us around £55,000 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, whether those are for a specific purpose or for general use. In the past year, we have been honoured to receive £88,220 in donations, every penny of which has been used to support 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 £750/\$1,100** supports one episode of our popular podcast, *The Last Best Hope?* (And a gift of £20,000/\$27,000 would support a whole year's worth of podcasts).
- **A gift of £2,500/\$3,400** supports three doctoral students to conduct crucial archival research in the United States.
- **A gift of £10,000/\$13,500** supports a year-long seminar series with a broad range of speakers. For example, two terms of research seminars in US politics with world-leading political scientists.
- **A gift of £80,000/\$108,000** supports a postdoctoral research fellow for one year. (And a gift of £240,000/\$325,000 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. ■



The Last Best Hope?

Understanding America from the Outside In

How has history shaped America? What does it stand for? Why is it so divided? And what does this mean for us all? Is America – as Abraham Lincoln once claimed – the last best hope of Earth?

Listen to the RAI Podcast with Adam Smith here: <https://www.rai.ox.ac.uk/podcast>

The Vere Harmsworth Library in 2024–25

Bethan Davies



This year, the Vere Harmsworth Library has continued to grow our collections and maintain our study spaces for our readers, whilst continuing to look for ways to improve.

Our group study rooms continue to be heavily used, via the Bodleian Libraries online booking system. General usage of our reading rooms continues to be steady throughout the academic year. And of course, the jigsaw table continues to be popular!

The expansion of our lending collections has not only increased the number of loans, but also expanded the range of readers able to loan out our books, across disciplines and study levels. A reminder that books can be requested via SOLO for a reader to return the book back to the library.

As new readers continue to find and explore the Vere Harmsworth, we have worked to improve the information we provide about our spaces. This includes improved signage and floor plans within the library, and the creation of an online welcome video which includes a tour of the library.

We have also used our funds to purchase a new PC for our digital microfilm reader. This has greatly improved its usability, as the system not only works more quickly, it is also connected to the Bodleian Reader PC network, meaning that researchers can save files (via email or cloud-based systems), and do broader research alongside viewing microfiche/film sources. The new set up also improves the security settings and sustainability of the microfilm reader.

We have two new members of staff who started with us this year – Xanthe Malcolm, Senior Library Assistant, and Catherine Monaghan, part-time Library Assistant (including Saturdays). Please do come in and say hello to them if you have the chance. I'd like to express my thanks to them and

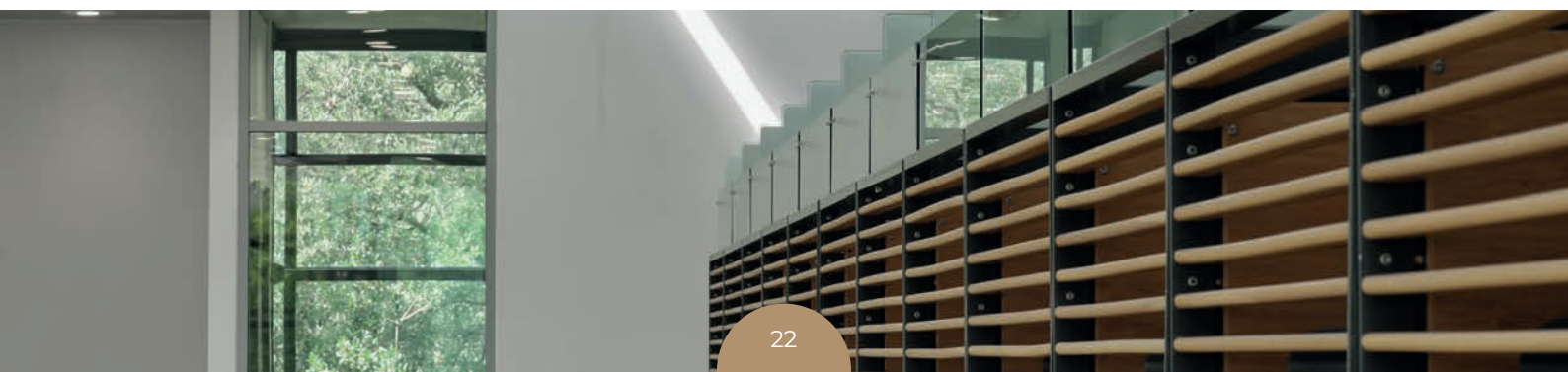
our other lovely staff members for their continued hard work and positive natures.

Using VHL funds, readers now have access to a new Archives Unbound database: *Carter Administration and Foreign Affairs*. This builds up our twentieth-century American history resources, particularly in political studies and foreign affairs. The VHL also contributed funding towards *Slavery & Anti-Slavery: Part IV: The Age of Emancipation* which compliments the Bodleian Libraries' other Slavery & Anti-Slavery database parts, and expands our resources on nineteenth-century American history, specifically the slave trade and emancipation movements.

The VHL continues to receive a donation of materials from the American Association of Rhodes Scholars as part of the AKS and Alain Locke Collections. We would like to record our thanks to the AARS for their continuing and growing support of the VHL. Discussions are currently in place to create a permanent display area for the Locke Collection, including images of Locke's life, to provide the broader context of Locke's life in and outside of Oxford. So, watch this space!

We would also like to record our thanks to others who have donated titles to the Vere Harmsworth Library. ■

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 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), and X (twitter.com/vhllib) if you want to keep up with our news.





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