

NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
MUSEUM & LIBRARY

Center for Women's History  
Early Career Workshop  
2018-2019

**Megan Armknecht**

*Bio:* Megan Armknecht is a PhD Student at Princeton University. She studies 19th-century U.S. History and has a MSt in U.S. History from Oxford University and a Bachelor's degree in English from Brigham Young University.

*Abstract:* I am interested in looking at the ways gender, power, diplomacy, and space interact. My larger project focuses on what I call "diplomatic households" in various locales (from St. Petersburg to Liverpool), how U.S. women shaped and negotiated U.S. foreign relations in the 19th century, and the implications of diplomatic households at a time without official U.S. embassies or the professionalization of diplomacy. My project for this workshop looks at how Louisa Catherine Adams created a diplomatic household in the Imperial Russian Court during the Napoleonic Wars, and how creating a physical space for American diplomacy facilitated diplomatic relations within and without the Adams' household.

**Meredith Benjamin**

*Bio:* Meredith Benjamin is a Postdoctoral Fellow in First-Year Writing and the Department of English at Barnard College. She received her PhD from The Graduate Center, CUNY and is currently at work on a book project about U.S. feminist writing and community formation in the 1970s and 80s.

*Abstract:* "Writing Feminism: Archives and Community Formation in U.S. Feminist Literature" examines how U.S. feminist writers in the 1970s and 80s used literary and archival engagements to create a new public. I offer a new approach to studying the literature of this period by focusing on how archives—and feminist engagements with them—are key to complicating simplistic narratives of feminism as a homogenous movement that was later fragmented. As feminist writers in this era engaged with the traces of past women's lives—reading, recovering, and often incorporating them into their own work—they found the motivation to tell their own stories and create new forms and structures in which to tell them.

**Ayelet Brinn**

*Bio:* Ayelet Brinn is a PhD Candidate in History at the University of Pennsylvania. She also holds master's degrees in History and Library Science from Indiana University. Her research interests include American Jewish cultural and gender history and Yiddish studies.

*Abstract:* My dissertation focuses on the changing relationship of early-twentieth-century Yiddish mass-circulation newspapers to their female audiences and writers, and the connections between these changes and similar changing gender dynamics in other spheres of the American popular press. A central argument of my dissertation is that gender is a crucial lens through which to understand the connections between American Yiddish- and English-language newspaper culture in this period. Many of the transformations happening in American English-language newspapers at this time centered around attempts to attract female readers. Therefore, the fact that many American Yiddish newspapers modeled themselves on the contemporary American popular press had important implications for how issues of gender played out within these Yiddish-language publications.

### **Emily Brooks**

*Bio:* I am a Ph.D. candidate in the history department at the Graduate Center, CUNY and a Martin E. Segal Dissertation Fellow. Over the past few years I have taught the second half of the U.S. History survey course, Women and Gender in U.S. history, and the history of New York City. I am originally from the Baltimore and Washington, D.C. area, but I have lived in New York City for the past six years.

*Abstract:* My dissertation explores anti-vice policing in New York City during World War II from the perspectives of gender history and urban history. The mobilization for war presented political opportunities to expand policing in the name of preventing prostitution, juvenile delinquency, gambling, and urban disorder. I examine how New York City Police Department leaders and municipal politicians seized these opportunities and encouraged officers to enforce anti-vice laws differently based on the perceived gender, as well as the race and class, of New Yorkers.

### **Rachel Corbman**

*Bio:* Rachel Corbman is a doctoral candidate in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at Stony Brook University, with research and teaching interests that span feminist studies, queer studies, disability studies, the public and digital humanities, and the history of gender and sexuality. She is currently an Andrew W. Mellon Predoctoral Fellow in Women's History at the New-York Historical Society and a Public Humanities fellow at Humanities New York.

*Abstract:* "Conferencing on the Edge: A Queer History of Feminist Field Formation, 1969-89" is a history of the acrimonious feminist conflicts that shaped women's studies and gay and lesbian studies in the 1970s and 1980s. This project was awarded the 2017 CLAGS fellowship award for a dissertation, first book, or second book in

LGBTQ Studies, and portions of this project have been published (or are forthcoming) in *Feminist Formations* and *GLQ*.

### **Yvonne Garrett**

*Bio:* Currently pursuing her Ph.D. (ABD) in History & Culture at Drew University, Yvonne Garrett holds an MA-Irish Studies (NYU-2014), MLIS-Archiving (Palmer-2014), MA-Humanities & Social Thought (NYU-2010), MFA in Fiction (The New School-2008), and a BA-English (Smith College-1985). Her current academic work focuses on American Feminism, Punk Rock & DIY culture, women & labor activism, the politics of archiving, post-colonial & gender theory, and Irish & Native American literatures. She is the Assistant to the Dean of Undergraduate Studies at The New School and Senior Fiction Editor at Black Lawrence Press. She has taught creative writing at Manhattanville College & the Brooklyn Veteran's Center, and regularly writes for *Publishers Weekly* and *The Brooklyn Rail*.

*Abstract:* My dissertation, "(Re)Constructing Identity: Structures of Female Empowerment in 1980s American Subculture" focuses on the formation of female identity within in the American subculture specifically the broader movement loosely termed "punk." I am particularly working on questions of gender identity in the New York City punk scene in the 1980s including challenges to traditional ideas of what it means to be "female" by Kathy Acker, Lydia Lunch, and other members of the New York scene. My dissertation aims to explore the importance of gender as a primary category of identity within punk rock but also queries whether gender was a negotiable category – sometimes important and sometimes subordinate to other elements of identity. At the core of my dissertation is a challenge to the assumption of the centrality of men in histories of punk (literature, music, and performance).

### **Anna K. Danziger Halperin**

*Bio:* Anna K. Danziger Halperin is a lecturer in the Department of History at Columbia University, where she recently completed her PhD. She also teaches at St. Joseph's College Brooklyn. Her research focuses on comparative social policy, gender, and childhood. Her article, "'Cinderella of the Education System': Margaret Thatcher's Plan for Nursery Expansion in 1970s Britain" was recently published in *Twentieth Century British History*.

*Abstract:* My manuscript comparatively analyzes child care policy in Britain and the United States from the 1960s to the 1990s, highlighting proposals for the creation of universal, public programs in both countries in the early 1970s. Although never fully implemented, these failed policies raise questions about conceptions of motherhood

and children's needs, and perceptions of state interventions in the family. Conflicting visions of child care as an educational intervention versus a welfare service—as a universal provision benefiting all children versus a means-tested program targeted to low-income families, largely non-white single mothers—explain a second tipping point: the divergence in the two countries' child care policies in the 1990s.

### **Fatemeh Hosseini**

*Bio:* Fatemeh Hosseini is the Assistant Director of Academic Affairs at NYU in Washington, D.C. Previously, she taught at Georgetown University in the Women's and Gender Studies Program and worked as a curriculum adviser with the Center for New Design in Learning and Scholarship.

*Abstract:* This project centers on Tehran's red-light district and the politics of sex work in Iran between 1940s and 1980s. It tells the history of modern Iran through the prism of prostitution. Using original archives, I theorize this contested space and the body of the prostitute in public popular imagination. I argue for the centrality of prostitution not only in understanding Iranian sexuality and sexual politics but also to state-building, governmentality, and class relations.

### **Marsha Jean-Charles**

*Bio:* Marsha Jean-Charles is interested in transnational literary studies of black women's bildungsroman and immigration novels. She studies the cosmologies and revolutionary politics aroused from forced migration and statelessness. An organizer at her core, she fuses her academic work with her activist work and to expand understandings of the uses of literary and performance art as tools for activism.

*Abstract:* My dissertation is about a concept I'm calling Black Feminist Citizenship, the tenets of which are decolonial love, radical black liberation, and global citizenship. I'm using texts about coming of age in migration written by black, Haitian American women authors to catalogue the concept.

### **Heather R. Lee**

*Bio:* Heather R. Lee is an Assistant Professor of History at NYU Shanghai, the newest degree-granting university in the NYU Global Network. She earned her PhD in American Studies from Brown University and held the Mellon Humanities Postdoctoral Fellowship at MIT. She is currently the David Lion Gardiner Fellow at the New-York Historical Society.

*Abstract:* Heather R. Lee is completing a book on the history of Chinese restaurants in New York City. Alongside the book, she is also developing a historical database

of immigrant restaurants, which she will make publicly available through an interactive digital platform ([www.EatingGlobally.com](http://www.EatingGlobally.com)). She has started subsequent research projects on human smuggling and global food chains.

### **Sarah Litvin**

*Bio:* Sarah Litvin is a 6th year PhD candidate at the CUNY Grad Center and the Director for a new museum, the Reher Center for Immigrant Culture and History, in Kingston, New York. She was a 2016-2017 Mellon Predoctoral Fellow at the N-YHS Center for Women's History. Sarah earned her undergraduate degree in History and Jewish Studies from Oberlin College and worked in education and exhibit design at the Lower East Side Tenement Museum from 2008-2013.

*Abstract:* My dissertation uses the upright parlor piano as a lens through which to explore gender roles in the late-19th and early 20th century US. Whereas common knowledge both then and today suggest that the parlor piano was an instrument through which women displayed and maintained women's roles of accomplished gentility, I argue that women used the upright parlor piano as a tool through which to explore and forge new identities both inside and outside the parlor.

### **Nicole Mahoney**

*Bio:* Nicole Mahoney is a PhD candidate in American History at the University of Maryland, College Park. Her primary research interests include early American social and cultural history, the eighteenth-century Atlantic World, and comparative literature. She is currently a Research Fellow at the Hagley Library and Museum in Wilmington, DE. Nicole earned a B.A. in History and French Studies from Wagner College and an M.A. in History and Literature from Columbia University.

*Abstract:* Nicole's dissertation, "Liberty, Gentility, and Dangerous Liaisons: French Culture and Polite Society in Early National America," explores the import of French political culture and sociability in the development of early American identity. Not content to be passive consumers of British goods on the fringes of empire, many Americans used the values and vestiges of French courtly culture to proclaim that they were instead dynamic cosmopolitan actors in transatlantic communication, economic, and intellectual networks.

### **Yael Merkin**

*Bio:* Yael Merkin is a PhD candidate in History at Harvard University. She was born and raised in Manhattan, and the New-York Historical Society is where much of her dissertation research is based. She hopes to devote this year primarily to writing, and am incredibly excited to be a part of this community of scholars!

*Abstract:* My dissertation, "We Were Much Afraid of Our Voices For A Long Time: Women and Power In Gilded Age New York," argues that female elites are a critical and unexplored nexus between the history of that time and place, and of women's and gender history. Using the tenets and methodologies of both fields, it excavates the unconventional power afforded to women by their wealth, as well as the ways they found meaning in their privilege. Afforded the time, space, and means to leave a record for posterity, female elites have bequeathed historians a rich trove of letters, diaries, and household and business accounts. Retrieved from the men's and dynastic collections in which they frequently are buried, these sources paint a newly human—and far from sanitized—portrait of some of the era's most formidable actors, male and female alike.

### **Kelsey Salvesen**

*Bio:* Kelsey is a PhD candidate in History at the University of Pennsylvania. Her research focuses on gender, race, religion, and material culture in early North America. She holds a Master's in History from the University of Pennsylvania and a B.A. in French and International Studies from UNC Chapel Hill. This year (2018-2019) she is a Marguerite Bartlett Hamer Dissertation Fellow at the McNeil Center for Early American Studies.

*Abstract:* Kelsey's dissertation project, "The Word Became Thread and was Stitched Among Us: Gender, Empire, and Religion in Early North America," examines women's intellectual and religious history in early North America and the broader Atlantic world through the lens of feminine material culture produced through needlework. She looks at needlework as both practice and product and how it shaped and reflected the lives of girls and women in the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries. As stitchers grappled with ideas about faith, race, class, and personal and national identity, these struggles played out in their needlework. Items like embroidered samplers and other sources of stitched text--made by female hands, typically under female instruction and supervision, and circulated among networks of female friendship and descent--provide unique insight into how girls and young women thought about themselves and their places in their families, their communities, their faiths, and the wider world.

### **Pamela Walker**

*Bio:* Pamela Walker is a fourth-year doctoral candidate at Rutgers University specializing in African American History and Women and Gender History. She received a B.A. in History from the University of Tennessee at Knoxville and an M.A. in History from the University of New Orleans. In 2016, she co-authored an article in *Scarlet and Black Volume 1: Slavery and Dispossession in Rutgers History*

entitled “‘and I a Poor Slave Yet’: The Precarity of Black Life in New Brunswick, 1766-1835.” Last year, Pamela was a 2017-2018 graduate fellow in the Rutgers Center for Historical Analysis Seminar on Black Bodies.

*Abstract:* My dissertation, “‘Everyone Must Think We Really Need Freedom’: Black and White Mothers, The Mississippi Box Project, and the Civil Rights Movement,” examines the Mississippi Box Project, a grassroots person to person antipoverty program, to gain a fuller picture of the participants of the Civil Rights Movement. The Box Project, I argue, is a microcosm through which to explore the relationship between motherhood, race, activism, and political consciousness in 1960s era social movement networks. By examining letter correspondence between the two disparate groups of women found within the Box Project collection, rural black women in Mississippi and rural white women from the Northeast, I consider the ways in which everyday women imagined themselves as participants in the Civil Rights Movement and analyze their constraints to more direct forms of political engagement.

### **Amy Zanoni**

*Bio:* Amy Zanoni is a PhD candidate in U.S. and Women’s & Gender History at Rutgers University, specializing in the histories of social movements, healthcare and welfare policy, and political economy in the postwar United States. She is currently an Andrew W. Mellon Predoctoral Fellow in History Education at the Museum of the City of New York (2018-2019).

*Abstract:* “Poor Health: Retrenchment and Resistance in Chicago’s Public Hospital, 1945-2002” examines the history of public sector retrenchment, its effects on marginalized populations, and those who fought against it through the lens of Chicago’s only public hospital. When financial turmoil in the 1970s compelled officials to cut Cook County Hospital’s budget and vital services, lay off workers, contract with private companies, and consider closing the safety-net institution, a broad-based coalition of patients, employees, and community members mobilized to resist such policies and their deleterious effects on the hospital’s majority African American and Latinx patient population and staff. Viewing this history through a single institution, this dissertation illuminates the entangled histories of macro-level political economic change, intimate experiences of care, and activists who mediated between the two.