

# WOMEN at the CENTER

**Sallie Bingham Center for Women's History and Culture**  
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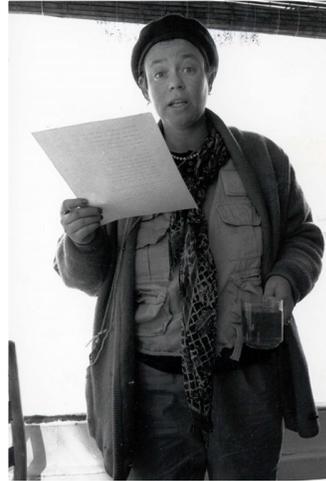
Issue 31, Spring 2017

## Batya Weinbaum, a Maverick in Her Field

*Contributed by Valerie Szwaya,  
Technical Services Graduate Intern*

For the past several months, I have been processing the personal papers of Dr. Batya Weinbaum. Dr. Weinbaum is a Jewish-American artist, musician, poet, author, editor, and professor—described by many of her fellows as a “maverick” and a “free spirit.” She is the founding editor of the interdisciplinary feminist journal *Femspec*, and has published five books and more than 250 articles, poems, essays and reviews.

The collection, spanning 1960-2015, covers a significant portion of Weinbaum's personal and professional history, including substantial materials related to Weinbaum's writing and research, drafts of her



**Batya Weinbaum, author photo for *Islands of Women and Amazons* (1999)**

books and several decades of journals and sketchbooks.

The collection contains an extensive photography series, including photos she took professionally as a documentary photographer. Weinbaum earned a B.A. in photography at Hampshire College, then traveled through Latin America in the 1970s, where she witnessed Salvador Allende's Unidad Popular socialist movement in Chile. In her photography, she made it a point to document the struggles of women fighting for

freedom on the world stage, most notably in South America, China and Israel.

Weinbaum received her M.A. from SUNY at Buffalo in 1986, where she studied ethnomusicology and began painting

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## Profiles in Research: Hanne Blank

*Contributed by Hanne Blank, historian, writer, and Ph.D. candidate at Emory University. She received a Mary Lily Research Grant, and this is an excerpt from her blog post reflecting on her research.*

Riffling through the Atlanta Lesbian Feminist Alliance (ALFA) Papers is a deep dive into this social and political moment. Even a cursory tour through the twenty-some years of ALFA's newsletters, pamphlets, and papers overwhelms the researcher with a sense of a tight, sometimes contentious community full of heady politics, plans, and personalities. It is surprisingly seductive. I did not approach the ALFA

papers to research the group itself—I research feminist health care in the South, and was looking specifically to find out the extent to which it might've been part of the concerns of the lesbian community in Atlanta's 1970s and 1980s—and yet in a matter of hours I fell headlong down the proverbial rabbit hole.

Imagine, if you will, a rented clubhouse to which any member could, by arrangement, get a key. A woman, or a group of women, might unlock the doors of the ALFA house to visit the ALFA library, hold a meeting, convene a coven, or put together a

*(Continued on page 3)*

## Recent Acquisitions

### **Martha Olds Adams Papers, 1970s-2015**

Journals and personal correspondence, writings, and her publishing imprint, House of Myrrth.

### **Association of Professional Communication Consultants Records, 1980s-2014**

Records and publications created by the APCC, a majority-women organization founded by Lee Clark Johns, WC '64.

### **Camp Fire Girls Leader Archive, Arlington, MA, 1947-48**

A range of materials from administrative records to plays to be enacted by the girls, song sheets, brochures and more.

### **Mary M. Matthews Sketchbook, Duaneburg, NY, 1910**

The pencil works of a talented 13 year old girl including calendar pages, and picture stories.

### **Terry Schooley Papers, Greensboro, NC, 1980s**

Records from the North Carolina chapter of NOWs statewide campaign in support of the Equal Rights Amendment

### **Laura Williams Diary, Charleston, WV, 1905**

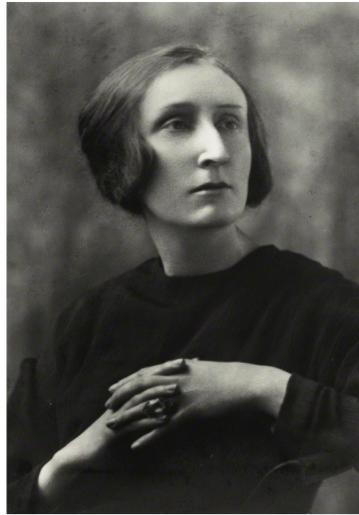
The diary of a young girl from an affluent family detailing her life from school to church to interactions with family and friends.

## Edith Sitwell, “an Unpopular Electric Eel”

*Contributed by Megan Lewis,  
Technical Services Archivist*

One of the newly cataloged manuscript collections from the Lisa Unger Baskin Collection contains two autograph manuscript poems by the British poet and critic Dame Edith Sitwell (1887-1964). Sitwell was born into an aristocratic literary family that included brothers Osbert and Sacheverell. She was intimately connected to the British literary intelligentsia of the early 20th century. Sitwell suffered from health complications related to Marfan Syndrome, but used her height to dramatic advantage in her manner of dress and style, particularly when giving her famously theatrical readings.

The Sitwell poems recently acquired by the Bingham Center, “Lullaby” and “Serenade: Any Man to Any Woman,” appeared in her 1942 collection *Street Songs*. They contain no corrections, so it’s likely that she wrote these out as presentation



**Edith Sitwell, portrait by Elliott & Fry, 1929**  
NPG x82160 © National Portrait Gallery, London

copies sometime between 1940 and 1950. The poems were inspired by the early years of World War II and are ironically titled.

“Lullaby,” sung by a baboon, describes a chaotic, primeval world destroyed by wartime chaos and despair in which, “All is equal—blindness, sight/There is no depth, there is no height.”

“Serenade,” spoken by a dying soldier, regards his love through the lens of death and destruction. He identifies his love with a cannon and invites her to “die with me and be my love” in a reversal of

the famous Marlowe line. Stylistically, Sitwell’s poems helped usher British poetry into the modernist era, and her World War II poems were critically embraced.

Although considered an eccentric genius, Sitwell famously said of herself, “I am not eccentric. It’s just that I am more alive than most people. I am an unpopular electric eel in a pool of catfish.”

## Batya Weinbaum Papers *continued from page 1*

and composing music. She received her Ph.D. from University of Massachusetts at Amherst in 1996 in American Studies. She conducted her dissertation research in Isla Mujeres, Mexico, where she gave birth to her daughter Ola in 1992. The experience of having a child led her to write several poetry collections, a collection of fiction, and found the Feminist Mothers and Their Allies Task Force in the National Women’s Studies Association.

From 1998 to 2003 at Cleveland State University Weinbaum taught courses in multicultural literature. From 2003 to 2007 Weinbaum was a peripatetic educator teaching speech and debate and organizing literary events in Cleveland Heights, Ohio.

Weinbaum routinely corresponds with influential figures in various fields, such as Alix Kates Shulman and Marguerite Young, who mentored her in New York City when she began publishing fiction and poetry. She also exchanged letters with composer John Cage, whom she met at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign when she was an artist in residence, and received a letter from Kurt Vonnegut, who offered her advice when she was writing about the Beat Generation.

Weinbaum has made immense contributions to the fields of multiculturalism, women’s studies, sexuality studies and education. Her career is a testament to her extraordinary strength and determination.

## Mary Lily Research Grant 2017-2018 Recipients

**Mary Bathory Vidaver**, M.Div. candidate, Yale Divinity School, "Saving the South: Lucy Randolph Mason, Liston Pope, and the Southern Social Gospel."

**Heike Bauer**, senior lecturer, English Literature, Gender Studies, Birkbeck College, University of London, for a journal article about gender and domestic violence in contemporary comics and graphic narratives by women.

**Lisa Beard**, postdoctoral fellow, Political Science, UC-Riverside, for a chapter, "They Are Both My People": Southerners on New Ground on Divide and Conquer Politics and the Object of Organizing, 1993-2014."

**Rachel Corbman**, Ph.D. candidate, Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, Stony Brook University, for dissertation research, "Feminist Conference Archive: The Intellectual and Infrastructural History of Feminist Field Formation, 1969-1989."

**Angela Elder**, postdoctoral fellow, History, Virginia Tech, for work on her book, *Married to the Confederacy: The Emotional Politics of Confederate Widowhood*.

**Rachel Hurst**, professor, Women's and Gender Studies, St. Francis Xavier University, in support of a work of fiction focused on creating intergenerational dialogues about women's studies.

**Vanesa Menéndez Cuesta**, Ph.D. candidate, Artistic, Literary and Cultural Studies, Universidad Autonoma de Madrid, for a journal article, "Preserving the Slut's pleasure(s): zines, archives and the power of sorority's healing and solidarity in archives."

**J. E. Morgan**, Ph.D. candidate, History, Emory University, "American Concubines: Gender, Race, Class, and Power in the Colonial and U.S. South, 1662-1865."

**Brianna Nofil**, Ph.D. candidate, History, Columbia University, for dissertation research examining the relationship between the women's movement and the "War on Crime" in the late 1960s through 1980s.

**Emily Roper**, associate professor, Kinesiology, Sam Houston State University, for an article examining the ways in which athletic girls are represented in young adult literature published prior to 1972.

## Profiles in Research: Hanne Blank *continued from page 1*

potluck. Imagine the voices, the laughter, the intensity of a small house full of passionate, thoughtful, iconoclastic, sometimes hot-headed women learning, organizing, and socializing.

In what seems a perpetual whirlwind, ALFA women simultaneously created, curated, and celebrated a burgeoning by-women-for-women culture: women-owned restaurants, feminist therapy collectives, women's self-defense classes, lesbian sexuality workshops, dyke softball tournaments, DIY gynecology seminars, political rallies, community debates over subjects like butch/femme and BDSM. Even the ads placed by community businesswomen were,

like this one (*see sidebar*), definitely and defiantly, sometimes hilariously, lesbian feminist.

Atlanta's lesbian feminists pushed boundaries, their own as well as the wider world's, as they wove their webs of women's community out of little more than motherwit and the desire to see if they could. As with the world-transforming aspirations of many other 1970s radicals, ALFA eventually sputtered out. It folded in the middle 1990s, but as the newsletters, the flyers, and the meeting minutes in ALFA's papers tell it, ALFA was full of stalwart, soulful daughters of a distinctively American revolution.

**Read more:** <http://blogs.library.duke.edu/rubenstein/2017/04/26/say-want-revolution-revealing-lesbian-feminist-atlanta/>

## Spring Instruction

**Archival Appraisal**  
UNC School of Information & Library Science

**Fashion & Feminism**  
Gender, Feminist, and Sexuality Studies

**Mad Men: Gender and Work**  
Gender, Feminist, and Sexuality Studies

**Queer Memoir**  
Writing 101

**Women and Memoir**  
Writing 101

**Women and Sexuality in the Christian Tradition**  
Religious Studies

**Zines**  
UNC Communication Studies



**Cartoon by Alison Bechdel** in ad for a "Lesbian Haircutter" who makes house calls (ALFA newsletter)

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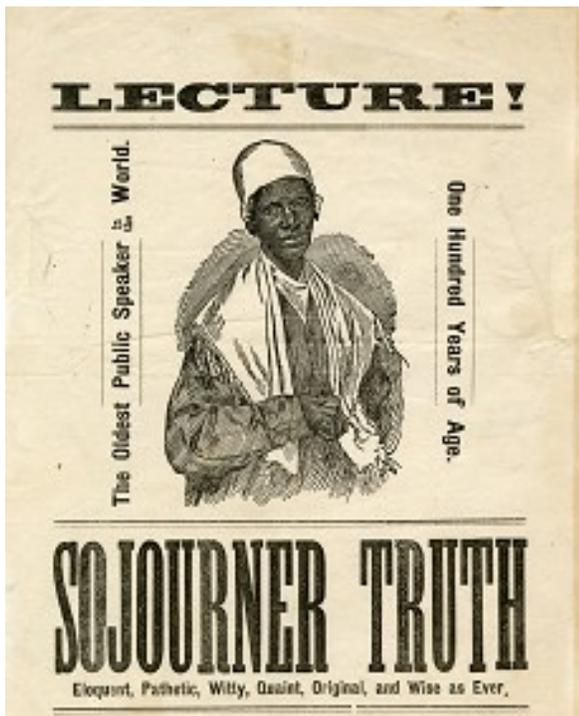
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## Recent Acquisition of Extreme Rarity: Nevertheless, She Persisted



**“Lecture!: The oldest public speaker in the world. One hundred years of age. Sojourner Truth, eloquent, pathetic, witty, quaint, original, and wise as ever...”**

An advertisement, circa 1880, for a public lecture by pioneering African American abolitionist and women’s rights activist, Sojourner Truth.

Testimonials from anti-slavery and women’s rights leaders to Truth’s character and her public speaking ability appear at the bottom including those by Harriet Beecher Stowe, Frederick Douglass, Susan B. Anthony, and others.

This is one of two known copies of this rare broadside bearing an iconic image of one of the greatest abolitionists of the 19th century, herself a liberated slave. *(Detail pictured.)*

This item is part of the Lisa Unger Baskin Collection.