Elizabeth Hearne Receives 2023 Lerner-Scott Prize from the Organization of American Historians

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Elisabeth Marsh   emarsh@oah.org

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(Photo of Dr. Elizabeth Hearne)

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The Organization of American Historians (OAH) announces that Elizabeth Hearne, the Bonquois Postdoctoral Fellow at the Newcomb Institute within Tulane University, is the recipient of the OAH's 2023 Lerner-Scott Prize, which is given annually for the best doctoral dissertation in U.S. women's history. The Prize was presented during the OAH's 2023 Conference on American History.

"Reframing Care: Sexual Violence, Mental Health, and Feminist Activism, 1971–1997" [dissertation completed at the University of Illinois Chicago, with Robert Johnston, Chair, Kirk Hoppe, Norma Claire Moruzzi, Catherine Jacquet, and Katrin Schultheiss] traces the role that activists and mental health practitioners played in challenging outdated and misogynist frameworks and treatments for mental health and sexual violence that had been deeply engrained in medical professions like psychiatry and psychology.

Hearne builds on the work of scholars who have documented the rise of antirape activism in the 1970s through her close analysis of medical practitioners' feminist-informed approaches to treating sexual assault and trauma. Drawing on mental health practitioners' published and unpublished papers, Hearne documents how feminist clinicians worked together across institutions and organizations to "create new paradigms for understanding the effects of sexual violence and how best to address the needs of victims who sought their assistance." While feminist practitioners challenged the damaging psychiatric assumptions that led to victim blaming, they did little to understand how issues of race and class intersected with issues of sexual assault and mental health. Hearne examines the activism of trained but unlicensed advocates who developed other forms of "treatment" that included testimony, knowledge sharing, crisis management, and peer-counseling. Women of color activists pushed beyond the limits of feminist practitioners' "expertise" to develop community-based methods for healing trauma.

For the full list of OAH 2023 award and prize recipients, please visit the OAH website.

Founded in 1907, the Organization of American Historians (OAH) is the largest professional organization dedicated to the teaching and study of United States history. The mission of the organization is to promote excellence in the scholarship, teaching, and presentation of American history, and to encourage wide discussion of

historical questions and the equitable treatment of all practitioners of history. The OAH represents more than 6,000 historians working in the United States and abroad. Members include college and university professors, precollegiate teachers, archivists, museum curators, public historians, students, and a variety of scholars employed in government and the private sector.

The OAH is located in Bloomington, Indiana, and is an external agency of Indiana University.