

Refashioning History: Women as Sartorial Storytellers

A Work in Progress Session with Research Associate
Siobhan Meï



Wednesday, April 13
11am - 12pm EST
Remote over Zoom

“Refashioning History: Women as Sartorial Storytellers” is an interdisciplinary project that illuminates the relationship between history and literature as fields of cultural production within the African diaspora. By examining clothes and textiles as narrative forms of individual self-expression and of diasporic connectivity, “Refashioning History” shows how twentieth and twenty-first century women writers from Haiti, the United States, Jamaica, and Guadeloupe mobilize the authorial possibilities of fashion to counter colonial archival silences around the everyday experiences of enslaved women. By telling the stories of enslaved, indentured, and free African women and women of African descent that national and colonial histories often ignore, I argue that authors such as Toni Morrison, Marie Chauvet, Simone Schwarz-Bart, and Andrea Levy collectively offer a powerful vision for a decolonial Black feminist history of slavery in the Americas.

Siobhan Meï (she/her) is a lecturer in the Manning College of Information and Computer Sciences at UMass Amherst. Siobhan’s research explores the intersections of fashion, narrative, and identity in the Caribbean and its diasporas. Her writing and research have appeared in *Mutatis Mutandis*, *Small Axe*, *Callaloo*, *Caribbean Quarterly*, and *The Routledge Handbook on Translation, Feminism, and Gender*, among other places. Meï’s dissertation project “Refashioning History: Women as Sartorial Storytellers” is supported by a 2020-2021 Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship in Women’s Studies (now the Institute for Citizens & Scholars) and a 2020-2022 Research Associateship at the Five College Women’s Studies Research Center in Amherst, MA.



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