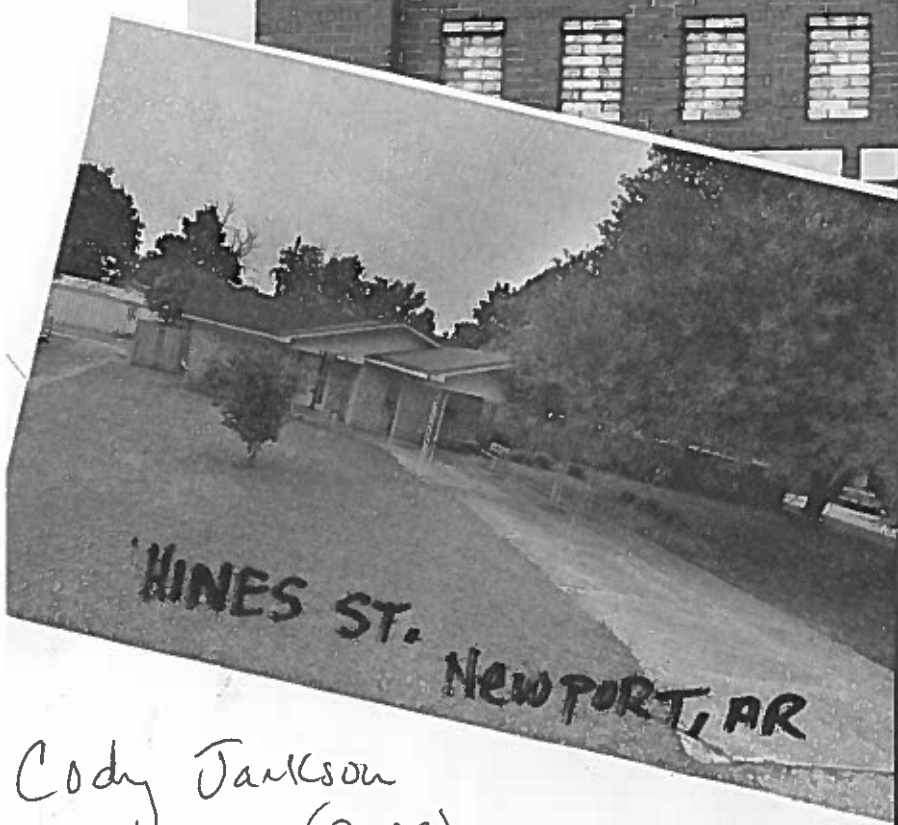
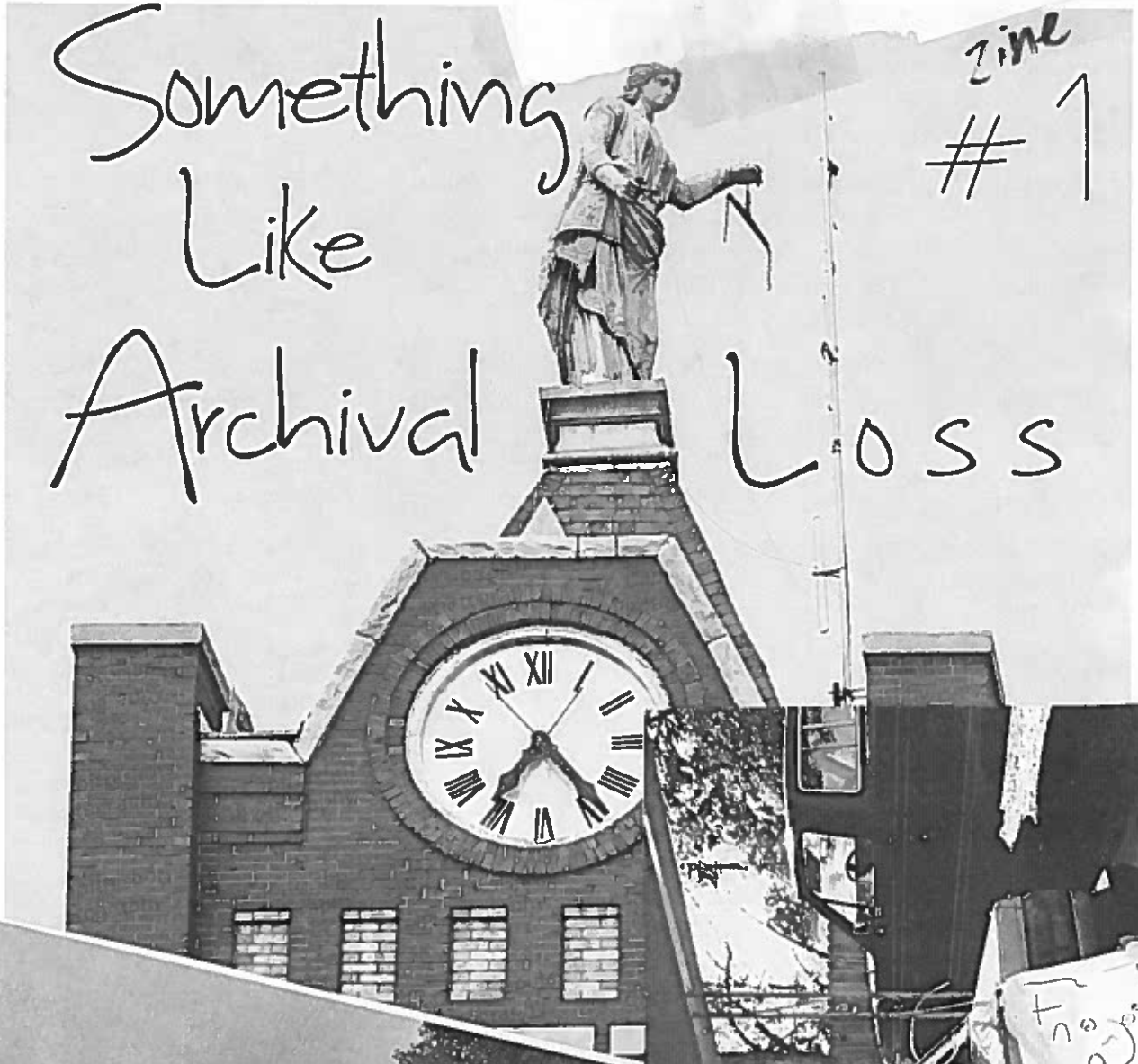


gesturing toward

Something
Like
Archival

zine
#1

Loss



Cody Jackson
(2019)

"The archive still promises...What if the recuperative gesture returns us to a space of absence? How then does one restore absence? Put simply, can an empty archive also be full?" - Anjali Arondekar

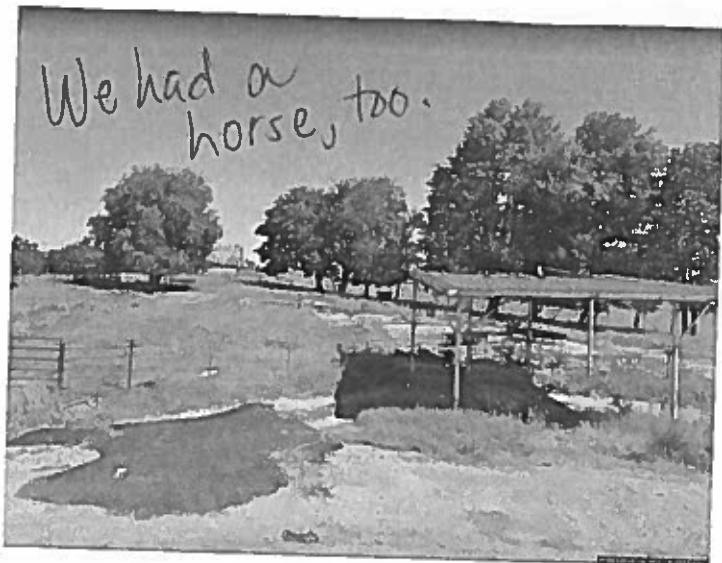
This is a set of confusing stories¹, whose methodologies are inspired by a number of colleagues, friends, and scholars I hope to give credit to and do justice with as we go along. I'm not sure where my story starts, but here's a shot:

I think about the flames. About the searing heat of the house fire that consumed my family's archive of VHS tapes and so many photographs from my childhood -- our childhoods. I wasn't in the home at the time--in fact, to my knowledge, no one was home when it happened thankfully. But it did happen. In what feels like an unspeakable event, this momentary gap and space and time, opens up a space of loss that I will never quite be able to explain, hence why I am telling you these stories through image, text, and shitty handwriting. That's what a zine is, right? Right?

What I *can* say about this fire, these flames, is that it, however subconsciously, led me to pursue a PhD, a degree through which I can and already do archival theory and practice. The fire wasn't a stepping stone. Rather, it continues to be a space and time of utter loss and trauma that cannot be overcome. But, out of such a loss I hope to generate more capacious understandings of the rhetorical possibilities of loss. I draw inspiration from Alexandra Hidalgo's multimedia essay "Family Archives and the Rhetoric of Loss." While Hidalgo questions how "the family archive allows us to use material evidence...to discover the stories that shaped us," I want to dwell in the unrecoverable gaps of loss that are still generative of rhetorical possibility. That are still generative of lives being lived².

"We are worldless without one another."
- Judith Butler

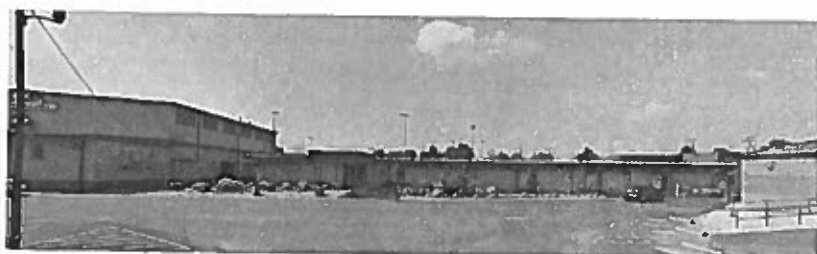
"What does it mean to be-at-home? [...] Can we understand 'leaving home' as the breaking apart of this coexistence, such that where one usually lives is no longer where one's family lives...?" Sara Ahmed



Our bodies are the stuff of history...

This is the empty lot in rural Arkansas that used to belong to my mother. A home used to be here. An archive used to be here. But the stories are still here. I can feel them bubbling up from beneath the tension of the surface of the image that I pulled from Google Maps.

The fragile nature of the archives, this provisional stuff we like to call "truth," haunts the hell out of us - whether we want to recognize this or not. The archives, even when they are "empty" do not wait for our recognition, but they do become tools for the politics of recognizing and mis-recognizing others, as Anjali Arondekar's *For The Record* (2009) details.



This is an image of my high school in Tuckerman, Arkansas. I'm not sure if I miss it. I don't know. I simply don't know. I don't miss most of the people, only a few.

In her 2012 Chair's Address at the *Conference on College Composition and Communication*, the largest conference in the academic field of composition studies, Malea Powell - alongside her relations - encourages us to consider the ways that stories *take place*. Dr. Powell's talk was an embodied archive of movement *and* stillness, moving in between objects, spaces, places, and bodies. And, although I was merely a senior in high school at the time - and, therefore, oblivious to this kind of work - when I read Dr. Powell's address, I look back on a past-self that isn't squarely in the past. Much like Philip J. Deloria's essay "Thinking About Self in a Family Way," Dr. Powell's address invokes the physicality of the flesh³, of bodies-in-alliance, doing the bodily work of performance and writing. Acting up together.

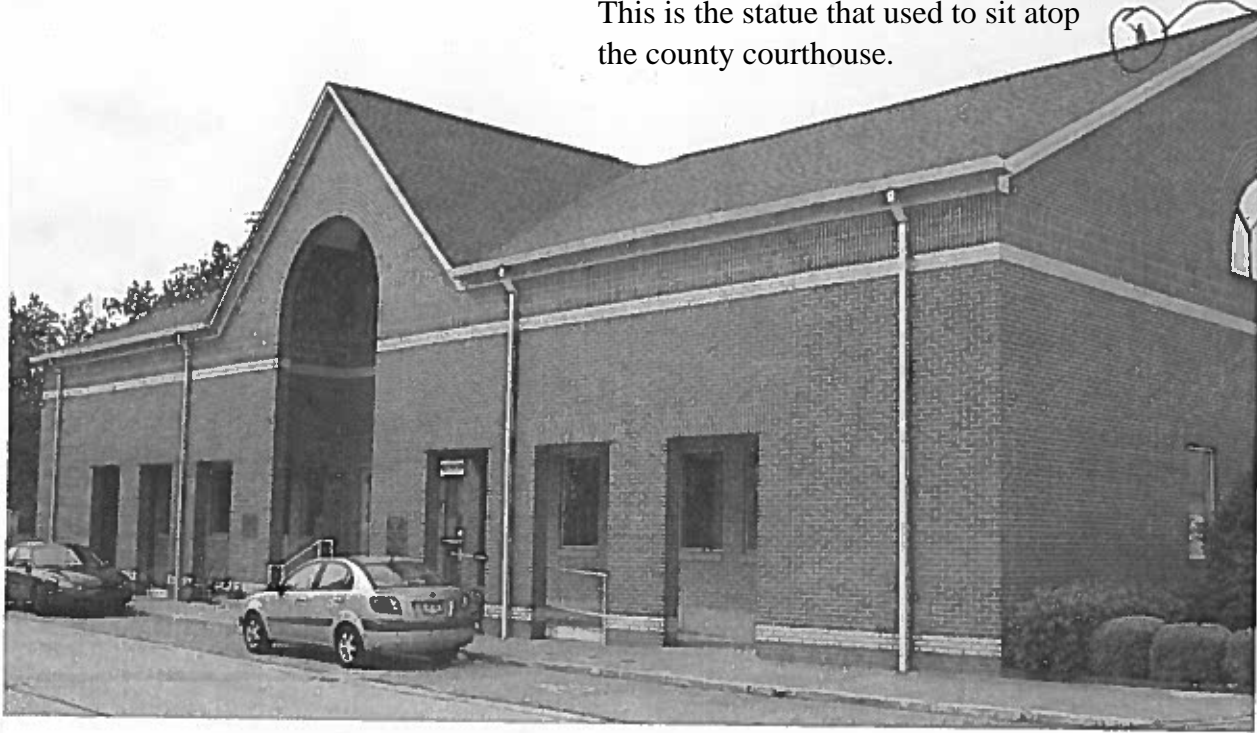
Dr. Powell continues to teach me about the staying power stories have, and how story influences the construction of place. The places we'll drive by in this zine are an example of this staying power.

Thank you, Malea Powell, for constantly teaching me something new.

"Historicity" is just a fancy way to say "historical authenticity."

The class of 2012

This is the statue that used to sit atop the county courthouse.



A piece of the courthouse
It fingers
doesn't it?

The W.A. Billingsley Memorial Library in Newport, Arkansas, serves as the Jackson County Library. Image source: [City of Newport, Arkansas](#).

I've only gone to the Jackson County Library a couple times, but this is what I remember of at least one of my visits.

The library and all libraries, like all physical and structural archival spaces, simultaneously *contain* and *distribute* knowledges. But, if one were to ask any librarian or library archivist, they would no-doubt tell you that there is also an immense amount of unraveling, of becoming un-composed through collecting and curating these materials. And oftentimes that labor, their labor, is concealed under an illusory appearance of neatly shelved material and meticulously catalogued databases. But, these are **bodies** doing this work, bodies actively curating the distribution of knowledge.

The point I'm making, or *trying to make*, is that the façades of physical structures of libraries and archives, including the Jackson County Library, conceal the permeability of knowledge circulation. The physicality of the building works to collect the uncollectible, to make concrete the fluidity of words, and to contain "the epistemology of the letter⁶."

I'm not trying to criticize librarians or libraries for that matter. Radically the opposite: I'm suggesting that we, in the words Gesa Kirsch and Jacqueline Jones Royster⁷, "withhold judgment for a time and resist coming to closure too soon in order to make the time to invite

creativity [and] wonder." I'm suggesting that, in our exploration of curatorial politics of queer im/possibility, to take momentary pauses, to linger, to consider the ways that the containment of knowledge works to define various "communities" and how its various forms actively work to constitute the *very stuff* of community *as such*.

our bodies are the stuff of literacies.

See also: Hogg (2002)
Librarians are spaces & times of literacy.

Jenna Freedman

Through zine collections like the one I curate at Barnard College, young women's voices find a home on library shelves. Libraries do not typically house works unmediated by publishers and editors or those by authors uncredentialed by educational degrees or professional accomplishments. Libraries also may not be strong on current criticism of their institutions, first-person narratives from young mothers of color, the naughty things red-and-black-clad protestors shout at political demonstrations, or recipes for an herbal abortion.¹ While the peer review process and other checks on the validity of authorship are important, librarians and scholars also need to be mindful of the contributions made by non-traditional publishers and authors.

[Signs: *Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 2009, vol. 35, no. 1]
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Too much text?
Too bad! :)

When I was a pre-teen, just in middle school at the time, I wandered into the library for the first time. I wasn't an avid reader then (and this is quite the understatement) but even then I had a fascination and admiration for the work of archives and genealogy. Although I didn't have a word for it then, I was already, in one form or another, becoming a queer archivist. A becoming still in the making. A becoming still being curated at the level of the body...

One distinct memory I have of our library was stumbling upon a set of books that were marked with a phrase like "mature content" or something like that. Regardless of the wording, patrons under 18 were required to obtain written parental permission to check out these books, most of which contained LGBTQIA or queer content. As a closeted queer at the time, I would pick up these books, hold them, flip through the pages, glance around to make sure no one was watching, and quickly put them back onto the shelves. The library contained knowledge that I so desperately needed and desire but could not grasp. And, in

that containment, defined the very limits of participation in the circulation of knowledge. Looking back on *that* self, I felt outside the sphere of queer possibility, even though "queer" was another word, in the way I embody it today, that I had yet to *come-to-know* as liberating. But, even though this particular memory has a staying power, and a negative one, it reminds me that local, rural libraries still contain the possibility of queer life: the operative word being *contain*. Say it again: *contain*.⁸

I may have never checked out those queer texts from the Jackson County Library, but little did I know, they taught me more than I could have ever imagined: about the possibilities and impossibilities of queer literacies of place, movement, and knowledge...about how knowledge both sustains and controls us at the level of the body. Even in my current institution, Texas Christian University, finding evidence of queerness's remains is difficult...but that's for another *story*, another *time*, another *place*.

8/10/2019

Zine: Our Library Crushes

Date: 2012, Date accepted

Number of Pages: 8

Languages: English

Format: Mini Zine

Keywords: librarian, crush, queer, lesbian, Chicago, radical cataloging, MLIS, Jenna Freedman, Megan Sweeny, Erica Meiners, Celeste West, K.R. Roberto, Joyce Latham

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CREATED BY

Becca Sorgert (creator) Jane Sandberg (creator)

QZAP.org

→
Thank you
Dr. Hogg!

CHARLOTTE HOGG

The library in the western Nebraska town of Paxton (population approximately 500) is small, and my grandmother was president of the library board for many years. When I was younger, I learned about the history of the library from her research and writing published in the local county newspaper. In write-ups for both the library's twenty-fifth and fiftieth anniversaries, she described how women "were found to be very handy with hammer and saw" when starting the library.¹ I saw my grandma frequently and had been hearing her stories

Great Plains Quarterly
Vol. 27, no. 3, 2002,
pp. 183-198.

Good ole Merriam-Webster defines the word "compose" in the following ways:

6

To produce...

To arrange in proper or orderly form...

To form the substance of...

To form by putting together

To deal with or...reduce to a minimum their differences...

yeah, fuck that...

As Robert McRuer reminds us in a 2003 article, we (composition studies scholars and classrooms) are *haunted* by disorder and de-composition, by the messiness of ourselves and the messiness of archives and the messiness of stories. This is a story, or a web of stories, about stumbling around in disorder, loss, pain, and trauma, in the spaces of absence that may well ground any and all archival movements. But let's not get ahead of ourselves just yet. Yet. Writing for me, and undoubtedly for so many others, is less an attempt to compose the amorphous and shape-shifting relations we care and *more* of an attempt to *become uncomposed in the process*. Becoming uncomposed *is* the process. Selves scattered like leaves on the ground; selves that are uncollectible⁴ but, maybe - just maybe, recognizable as the bond that keeps us together (and apart) in the bodily work of performance and writing.

Currently, I'm living in the Dallas/Fort Worth metroplex, one of the largest metropolitan areas in the United States -- yes, traffic is shit. I'm not from here (or is it *there?*). I'm from a small county in Arkansas -- Jackson County -- with a population of about 22,000. The county is more-or-less a fabric or stitching-together of small and unincorporated towns: Newport, the county seat; Tuckerman, where I graduate high school; Swifton, where my dad still lives; Campbell Station, where my mom lives. So, in a way, the image of the vacant lot I've shared with you already is, *itself*, not an archive of absence. Rather, archives of absence, or loss, are the everyday mundane spaces that move between us and that very much define who we are and how we perceive our myriad selves. For me, these myriad selves are constellated⁵ through a network of places that might have been "home" at one point or another.

the over photo
↓



This is the Jackson County Courthouse in Newport, a place that, itself, contains multitudes. My last relationship with this place was in my job as an assistant in the County Clerk's office, but before then it was in the half-dozen custody battles that tore me and my sister between two worlds. This is a place that can wreck families, but that's not the full story. It's only one snapshot, one place, on splice in a configuration of loss and recovery.

This empty lot, containing only sand and gravel, used to contain the middle school where I attended in fourth and fifth grades. Emptiness. Emptiness. Just emptiness.

sand and gravel, used to contain the



The Gibbs Albright Middle School in Newport was closed down in 2016.

Thank you, Margaret Price
Melanie Yergean

This is for all neuroqueers!

below, I hand over a snippet from a recent diagnostic report I was given by a psychologist.
a dose of irony above. did they know I teach writing? does my including this make me out to be an impaired teacher? My goodness, I hope so.

WRITTEN EXPRESSION	104	Writing	97-111	61	AVERAGE
Essay Composition	81		71-91	10	Low Average

I wonder how Joey's doing?

This is the gas station in Cord (AR) where my friend Joey's mom used to work.



HARRIS HOSPITAL IS OVER HERE ↘



This empty circular lot use to contain the elementary school I attended from Kindergarten to third grade, with some gaps in-between because we moved around a lot. More emptiness. It was Castleberry Elementary, and it was demolished due to frequent flooding. Probably for the best.

"Precisely by splicing out this moment, and freezing it, all photographs testify to time's relentless melt."

SUSAN SONTAG
on Photography
p. 11

Tic. Toc. Tic. Toc.

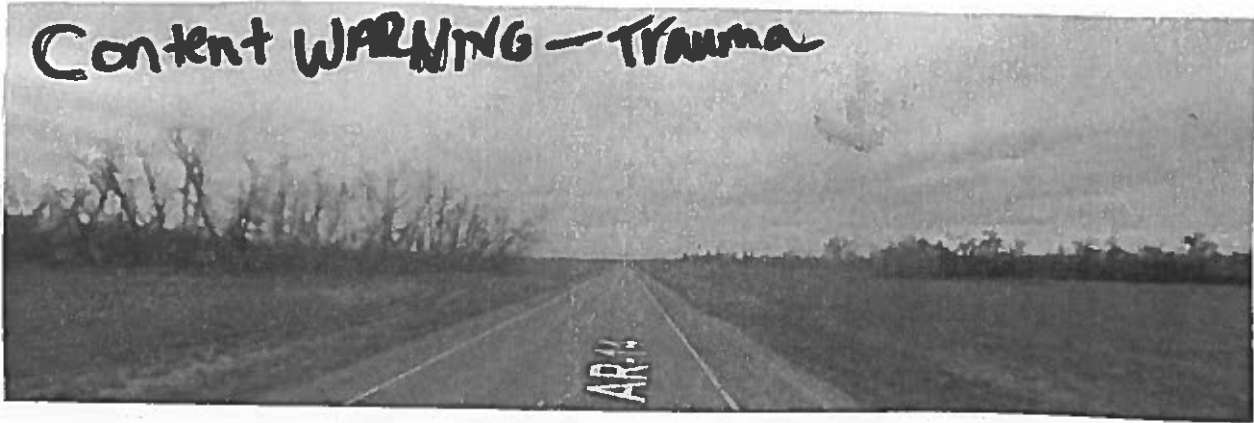


Shards
& glass.

Ambulances.

The line of
cars backed
up.

Arkansas
Highway
14



Content WARNING - Trauma

It was on this stretch of road that my life exploded into bits and pieces. My mother and her boyfriend at the time were in an argument. With all the kids, myself and my siblings, in her car, my mother raced him down the highway at speeds up to 90 and 100 mph. She pulled the car over the shoulder, stepped out, stood in the middle of the road. Like a flash of lightning, her boyfriend's car struck her. Her body was flung into the air. It twirled at least six times before slamming onto the concrete. You can't tell this happened by looking at this image curated from Google Maps. But it happened, and my bodymind remembers quite clearly collapsing in the emergency room as I watched my mother lay in the ICU. My mother and I have recovered our relationship, and we're still working through the trauma. Oftentimes archival work isn't relegated to a solitary location or file; rather, it's the bodily work of remembering and forgetting. Of pulling the pieces of ourselves back in from oblivion.



day care
Newport AR

Miss
Shitkey



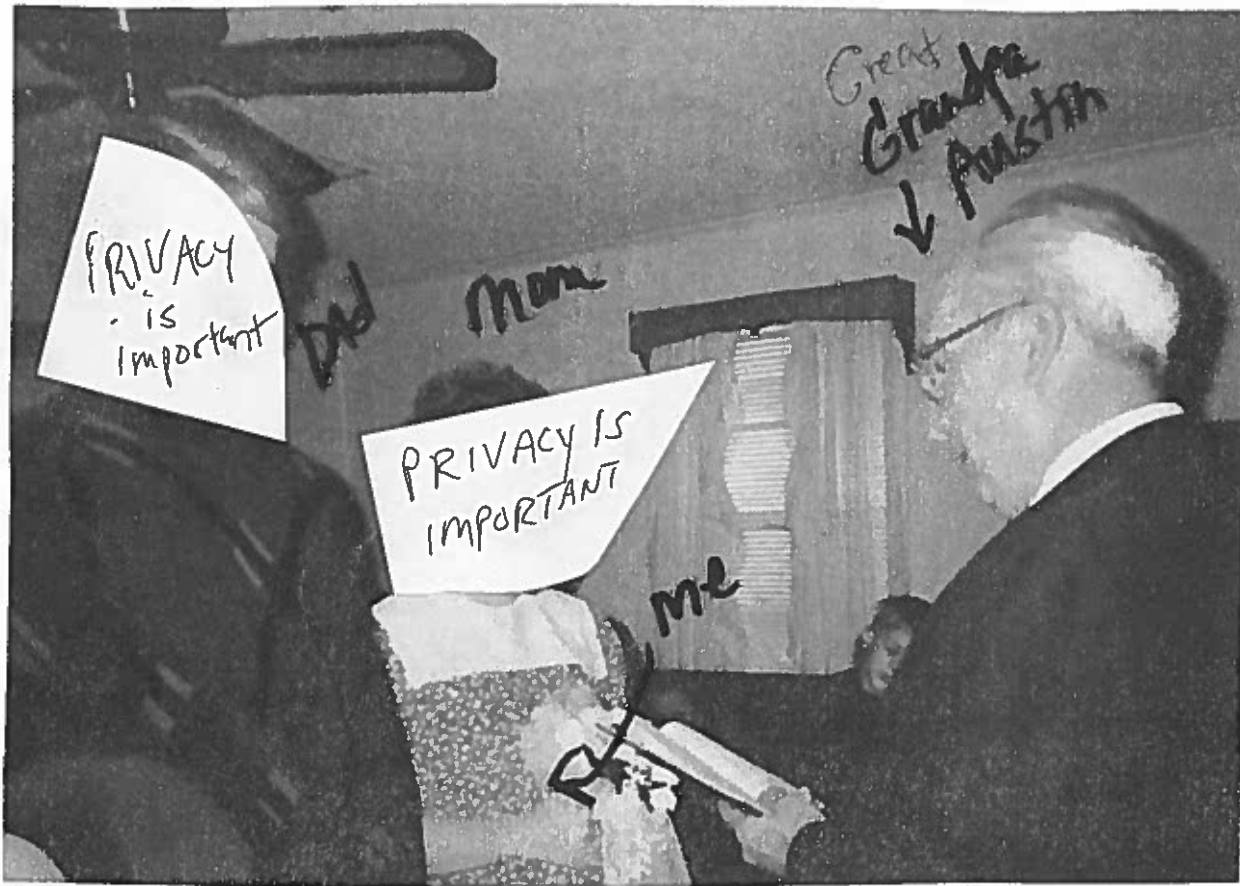
Grandma

Me

Photography
(can be a fraction.)

↑
That's little
me. I bet that
shirt was bothering
me at the time
I can feel it.

↑
Sister
KATE

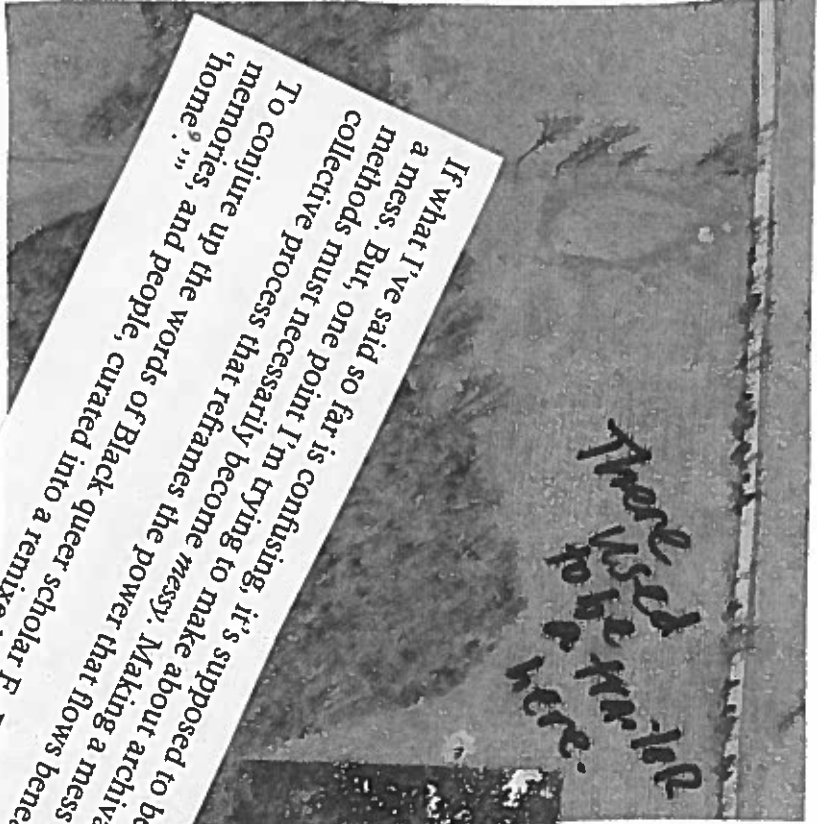


This is a very queer image and its complexity turns my stomach with the most potent forms of nostalgia for a past that never was. I am in this photo, in my mother's womb, under her hands cradling her stomach. My father is on the left. My great-grandfather, Austin, is performing the marital ceremony...the exchange of vows. One of my cousins is in the background on the couch. The wedding took place in my grandparents' living room. It's one of the only photographs I have of my biological parents together; their two marriages were chaotic, but those are not my stories to tell. The image is visceral for me to experience. It's the portrait of a nuclear family in the making that never was. This is one of the fragments that I do have of a family archive that has since been scattered, burned, or never formed to begin with. It contains a presence that no longer feels possible. The impossibility of it all overwhelms me.



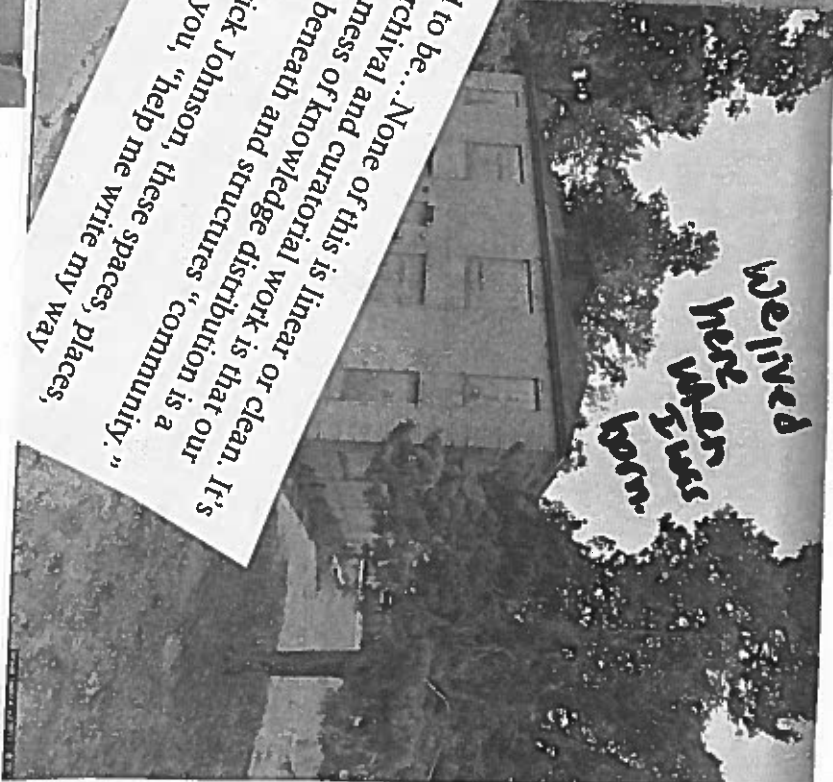
This is an image of the Cherokee Drive Church of Christ in Newport, where my father would re-marry his second wife for the first time. A couple years later, they'd divorce to then be re-married again until 2017, when they divorced for a second time. My family's archive is full of divorces, custody hearings, traumas, and losses. But in curating the fragments left behind, in collecting images of the places where some of these stories *took place*, it has been my hope to write into being a self that is multiplied beyond the humanistic vision of the liberal subject...More on that soon. *MAYBE*

"Writing is the means by which I have always theorized my life."
 E. Patrick Johnson (2011)



If what I've said so far is confusing, it's supposed to be... None of this is linear or clean. It's a mess. But, one point I'm trying to make about messy memories, and people, and places, curated into a remixed zine with you, "help me write my way."

To conjure up the words of Black queer scholar E. Patrick Johnson, these spaces, places, memories, and people, curated into a remixed zine with you, "help me write my way."



We continue to undo
 Name the intention
 through intention
 ↳ Intention

The weight of invention is far too heavy for one to carry alone.

Writing can only be possible through our embodied relations. Only then can we navigate the violence of language together.

All three of these images contained, at one point in time, what could have been called "home." The first still contains a series of trailers where my maternal grandparents and kinfolks live to this day. When I lived with my mother as a child, our double-wide trailer resided in the empty lot at the top right of the image. The second image is where another one of our double-wide trailers use to be when my mother had temporary visitation rights of me and my sister, after the first couple custody hearings. It was not long after then that my mother would sign over her rights completely. On paper, and in the archives, she was no longer my mother. But, today, she and I are curating another archival record...together... The third image is of an apartment complex where, in one of the tiny units, we lived when I was born. In fact, my mother sent me an image of this building just the other day. Had it not been for that Snap message, I wouldn't have known this was the building. In fact, her Snap led to this zine.

Interview —

Malea Powell on Story, Survivance & Constellating as Praxis



2012 CCCC Chair's Address: Stories Take Place: A Performance in One Act
Author(s): Malea Powell
Source: *College Composition and Communication*, Vol. 64, No. 2 (December 2012), pp. 303-406
Published by: National Council of Teachers of English
Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43490757>

Archival Science
March 2016, Volume 16, Issue 1, pp 33-51 | [Cite as](#)

Be/longing in the archival body: eros and the "Endearing" value of material lives

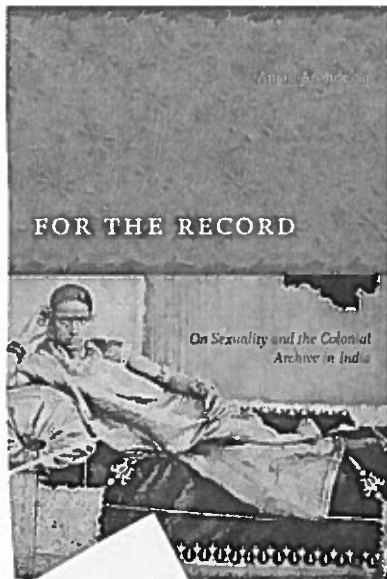
Authors Authors and affiliations

Jamie A. Lee

TEXTS/CONTEXTS

MAMA'S BABY, PAPA'S MAYBE: AN AMERICAN GRAMMAR BOOK

HORTENSE I. SPILLERS



Is this an improper works cited page? Hmmmmm?

Family Archives and the Rhetoric of Loss
PROVOCATIONS
Reconstructing the Archive
ALEXANDRA HIDALGO

QUEER EPISTEMOLOGIES: THEORIZING THE SELF FROM A WRITERLY PLACE CALLED HOME
Author(s): E. PATRICK JOHNSON
Source: *Biography*, Vol. 34, No. 3, PERFORMING QUEER LIVES (summer 2011), pp. 429-446
Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23541224>
Accessed: 10-08-2019 15:20 UTC

"PRIVATE" LIVES AND "PUBLIC" WRITING
RHETORICAL PRACTICES OF WESTERN NEBRASKA WOMEN
CHARLOTTE HOGG

Composing the Uncollectible

Franny Howes

Composition Studies 43.1 (2015): 15-17

I am both an academic and a comics creator: these writing selves have grown up together and are deeply intertwined. The indie comics creator in me drives my academic work to move between analysis, autobiographical reflection, and cartoon art, and the academic in me theorizes how comics work or could work as they pour out of me.

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Home and away
Narratives of migration and estrangement

● Sara Ahmed
Lancaster University