

2022 AWP Conference & Bookfair in Philadelphia Event Outline

EVENT TITLE: Research as Survival: On Archival Research as Creative Practice & Reparative Act

EVENT DESCRIPTION: “I do not intend to speak about, just nearby,” Trinh T. Minh-Ha says in her film *Reassemblage*, critiquing the documentary genre. What does it mean to speak nearby, as women writers who practice archival research and make work in conversation with difficult histories? How do we reclaim and remake the act of research itself? How do we speak with, without speaking for? Join us for a conversation on the joys, challenges, ethics, and possibilities of research as creative practice and reparative act.

EVENT CATEGORY: Multiple Literary Genres Craft & Criticism

EVENT PARTICIPANTS:

Josina Guess is a writer, mother, farmer, and editor whose work revolves around land, history, and healing. She is a senior writer for *The Bitter Southerner* and enrolled in the MFA narrative nonfiction program at the University of Georgia (class of 2023). Her writing is in *Ecotone*, *Fourth Genre*, *About Place Journal*, *Sojourners*, and more including *Bigger Than Bravery: Black Resilience and Reclamation in a Time of Pandemic* edited by Valerie Boyd (Lookout Books, Fall 2022). She was born in Alabama, raised in Washington, D.C., studied art at Earlham College, and lived in Philadelphia for over a decade before putting down roots in rural Georgia.

Jennifer Loyd is a PhD candidate at Texas Tech and a former editor for *West Branch* and *Copper Nickel*. For her poetry investigating marine biologist Rachel Carson, she has received a Stadler Fellowship and travel grants for research at the Edmund S. Muskie Archives and Special Collections Library.

Kathryn Nuernberger's latest book is *The Witch of Eye*, about witches and witch trials. She is also the author of the poetry collections, *RUE*, *The End of Pink* and *Rag & Bone*, as well as a collection of lyric essays, *Brief Interviews with the Romantic Past*. She teaches at University of Minnesota.

Chet'la Sebree is the author of *Field Study* and *Mistress*. For her work, she has received fellowships and awards from the Academy of American Poets, Hedgebrook, MacDowell, and Yaddo. Currently, she directs the Stadler Center for Poetry & Literary Arts and teaches at Bucknell University

Sophia Stid is the author of the chapbook *Whistler's Mother* (Bull City Press). She is the 2019 – 2022 Ecotone Postgraduate Fellow at the University of North Carolina Wilmington, where she teaches creative writing and serves as an associate editor for *Ecotone*. (Moderator/Organizer)

OPENING REMARKS [5 – 10 minutes]

Sophia will welcome the audience, introduce the panelists, and briefly frame the overall scope and concerns of the panel.

OPENING QUESTION [15 – 20 minutes]

1. Some writers are drawn to the experience of research itself, while others are drawn to research because it serves a specific creative project. What is your history with research as a practice? Introduce us to your creative work and interest in research by telling us about an experience with a current or recent research project. How did you first come to the project? Tell us about the context of your research: who, what, where, why, etc.
 - a. Notes for panelists: during this opening question, feel free to share a brief reading (up to 5 minutes) from your work if you would like to do so, or if there's a moment or passage from your project that you'd like to refer back to throughout the conversation.

DISCUSSION [45 minutes]

Questions for Panelists

1. We often first learn about research outside of the context of creative writing: for an academic project, for example, or at work. Do you consider research to be a part of your creative practice? How is research for creative projects different than other kinds of research for you?
2. Research can feel like a complicated endeavor for many writers. Archives and institutions have been used at times to categorize, silence, or harm; there are gaps in archives, often from the voices we would most want or need to hear from. How do you reckon with and navigate these difficult histories and gaps, both in the research process and on the page?
3. Relatedly, engaging in research brings its own craft questions with it. What are the ethical or craft-based questions that have surfaced for you in your work? How did you navigate these questions?
4. If research is a part of our craft, it would make sense for our relationship to it to shift or evolve as we shift and grow as writers. How has your relationship to research evolved over time, or over different projects? Is there a time when your research has surprised you?
5. What is your research process like in practice? Are there any particular tools (i.e., index cards, digital programs, commonplace books, etc.) or rituals that you use, and do these practices shift depending on the project?
6. Finally, as we close, what are the possibilities of research as a reparative act? How do we reclaim and remake the act of research, as we write in conversation with difficult histories?

