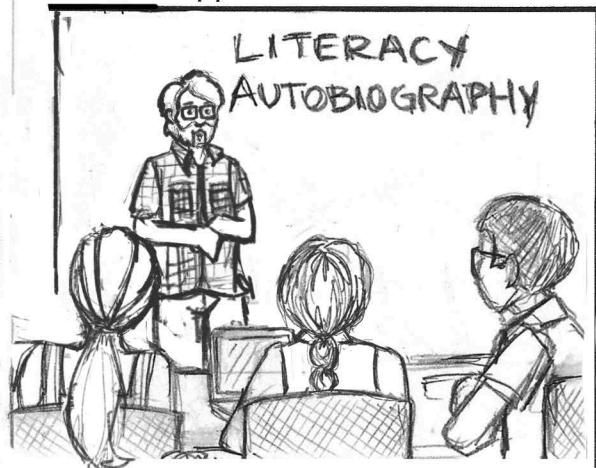


words
and
smileS

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHIC INTERVENTION
INTO ACADEMIC PROFESSIONALIZATION

DON UNGER

THIS IS A LITERACY AUTOBIOGRAPHY.



FOR MANY COLLEGE STUDENTS IN FIRST-YEAR WRITING CLASSES, THE LITERACY AUTOBIOGRAPHY FORMS THEIR FIRST IMPRESSION OF WRITING AS A FIELD OF STUDY.

IN THIS ESSAY GENRE, STUDENTS REFLECT ON PERSONAL EXPERIENCES RELATED TO READING AND WRITING.



SOME STUDENTS WRITE ABOUT HOW AN ADULT TAUGHT THEM THE IMPORTANCE OF LITERACY.

OTHER STUDENTS WRITE ABOUT HOW THEIR LOVE OF A PARTICULAR BOOK HAD AN IMPACT ON THEIR LITERACY.



STILL OTHERS ADDRESS THE TENSIONS BETWEEN THE LANGUAGE USED AT HOME AND THE LANGUAGE USED AT SCHOOL.

THE ASSIGNMENT ASKS STUDENTS TO RELATE THESE EXPERIENCES TO IDEAS FROM CLASS READINGS, WHICH ARE OFTEN CULLED FROM SCHOLARLY JOURNALS.



THESE JOURNAL ARTICLES MIGHT ASK HOW ONE BECAME PART OF A COMMUNITY THAT USES READING OR WRITING IN SPECIFIC WAYS, OR THEY MIGHT DESCRIBE WHAT THESE PRACTICES LOOK LIKE AND WHY THEY ARE SIGNIFICANT.

TAPPING 4 MANA...



YOU DON'T EVEN HAVE 4 MANA.

THE ASSIGNMENT HELPS STUDENTS SEE THE FIELD AND VARIOUS BOUNDARIES IN IT.



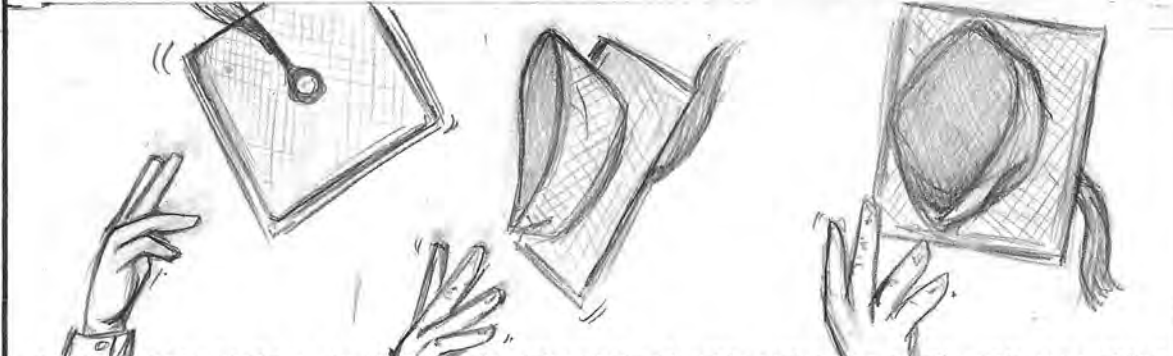
BETWEEN THE PERSONAL AND THE PROFESSIONAL...



BETWEEN A SPONSOR AND THE ONE SPONSORED...

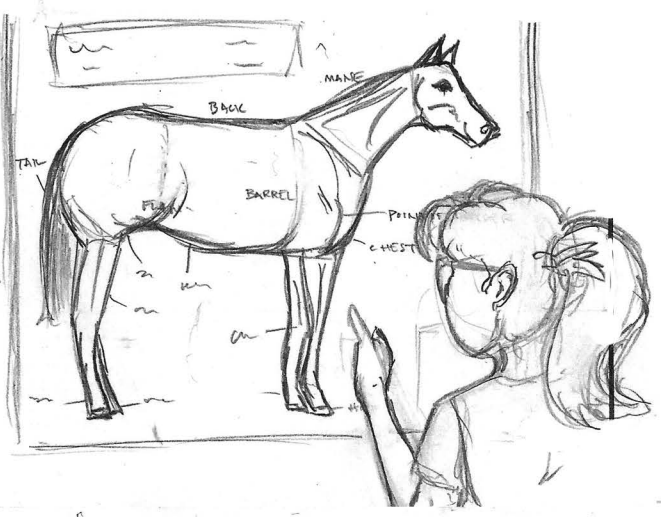


BETWEEN THE STUDENT AND THE TEACHER.



SUCH ASSIGNMENTS ALSO INCULCATE STUDENTS TO THE LITERACY MYTH--THE IDEA THAT ONE'S ECONOMIC OR MORAL PROGRESS RELATES TO THEIR ACCUMULATION OF LITERACY.

IN DOING SO, LITERACY AUTOBIOGRAPHIES REINFORCE THE IDEA THAT FORMAL KNOWLEDGE GIVES DEPTH TO PERSONAL EXPERIENCE, THAT BOOK KNOWLEDGE MAKES EXPERIENCE TRULY MEANINGFUL.



STUDENTS' LITERACY AUTOBIOGRAPHIES OFTEN FALL INTO CATEGORIES.



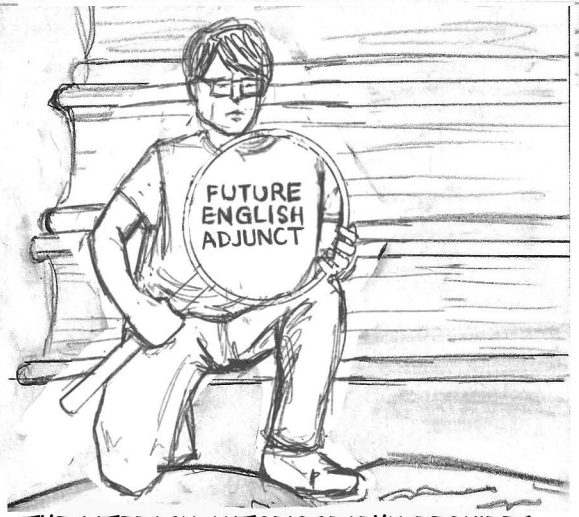
THE SUCCESS STORY OVERCOMES CHALLENGES TO ASCEND TO A HIGHER LEVEL OF LITERACY.



THE PRODIGY LEARNS THE VALUE OF LITERACY EARLY ON AND HAS PURSUED IT TO A FAULT SINCE THEN.



THE VICTIM IDENTIFIES SOMEONE WHO STUNTED THEIR LITERATE DEVELOPMENT.



THE LITERACY AUTOBIOGRAPHY REQUIRES THAT A STUDENT ORIENT THEMSELVES TO THE WORLD AS A WRITING STUDIES SCHOLAR.

SOME STUDENTS LOCATE THEIR LITERACY PRACTICES ON THE MARGINS OF A CULTURE OR A COMMUNITY, OR THEY LOCATE THEMSELVES IN THE BORDERLANDS BETWEEN DIFFERENT COMMUNITIES AND LITERACY PRACTICES.



I LOCATE THIS LITERACY AUTOBIOGRAPHY IN THE MARGINS, NOT BECAUSE MY INSTITUTIONAL AFFILIATION OR RANK, BUT BECAUSE OF MY LIFE EXPERIENCES AND ORIENTATION TOWARDS ACADEME.



SOME LITERACY AUTOBIOGRAPHIES REPRODUCE UNSAVORY TRUTHS ABOUT ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS AND DISCIPLINES, INCLUDING WRITING STUDIES.

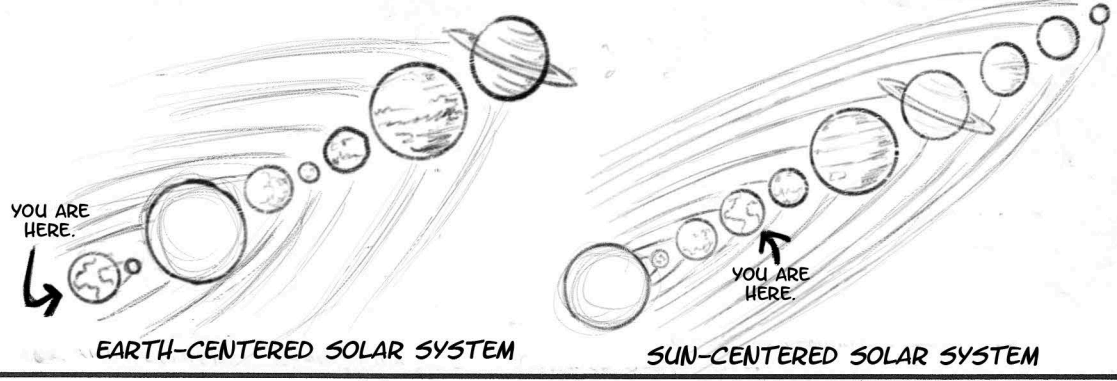
DID YOU SEE HER BLOG?

MORE "QUIT LIT"?

PART OF THE "GREAT RESIGNATION" I'M AFRAID..



HERE'S ONE SUCH TRUTH: LITERACY AUTOBIOGRAPHIES PLACE THE DISCIPLINE AT THE CENTER WITH OUR EXPERIENCES SUPPOSEDLY SPIRALING OUT FROM THERE.



EARTH-CENTERED SOLAR SYSTEM

SUN-CENTERED SOLAR SYSTEM

HERE'S ANOTHER TRUTH: IT'S NOT JUST LITERACY AUTOBIOGRAPHIES THAT DO THIS. ACADEMIC WRITING REQUIRES THAT SCHOLARS PUT THE FIELD FIRST AND LIVED EXPERIENCES SECOND.

HERE'S HOW THIS THEORY HELPS ME UNDERSTAND MY EXPERIENCES...



IN SOME FIELDS, ACADEMIC WRITING OFTEN DISCOURAGES THE WRITER FROM INCLUDING THE SELF IN THE TEXT AT ALL, EVEN IF SUBSUMED BY AN ACADEMIC DISCIPLINE.



BLACK FEMINIST AND WOMANIST SCHOLARS HAVE TRACED THIS RELATIONSHIP BACK TO THE STRUCTURE OF CLASSROOMS, INSTITUTIONS, AND ACADEMIC RESEARCH.



Barbara McCaskill

THE HARDEST PART FOR MANY OF US IS NOT BRINGING WOMANIST PEDAGOGY/WOMANIST PRACTICES INTO ANYTHING. THE DIFFICULTY IS GENERATING OUT OF SELF-RELIANT, SELF-SERVING ACADEMIC SOCIETIES.

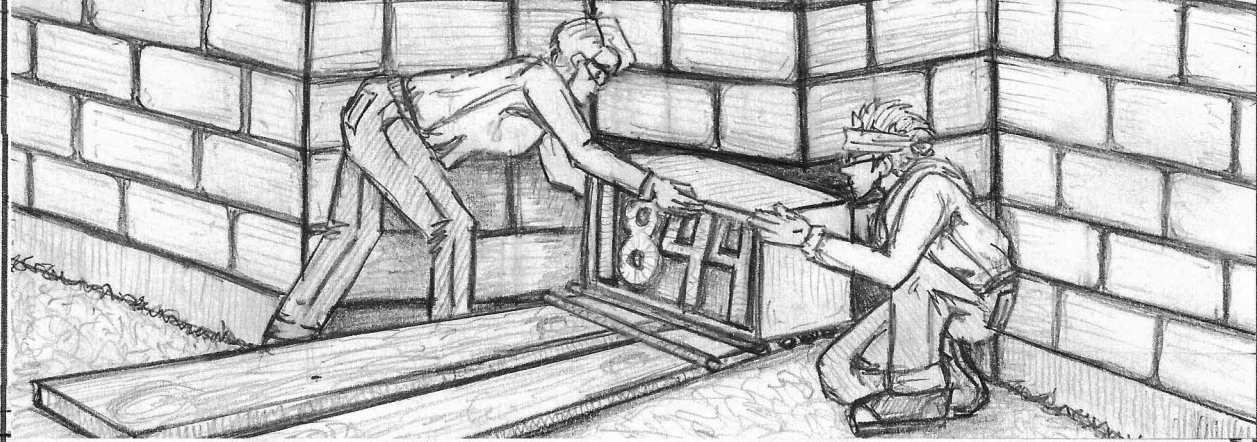
BLACK FEMINISTS AND WOMANISTS OFFER A METHODOLOGICAL STANCE THAT IS DIALOGIC OR CONVERSATIONAL IN APPROACH, THAT VIEWS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RESEARCHER AND RESEARCH SUBJECT AS COLLABORATIVE AND EQUAL.



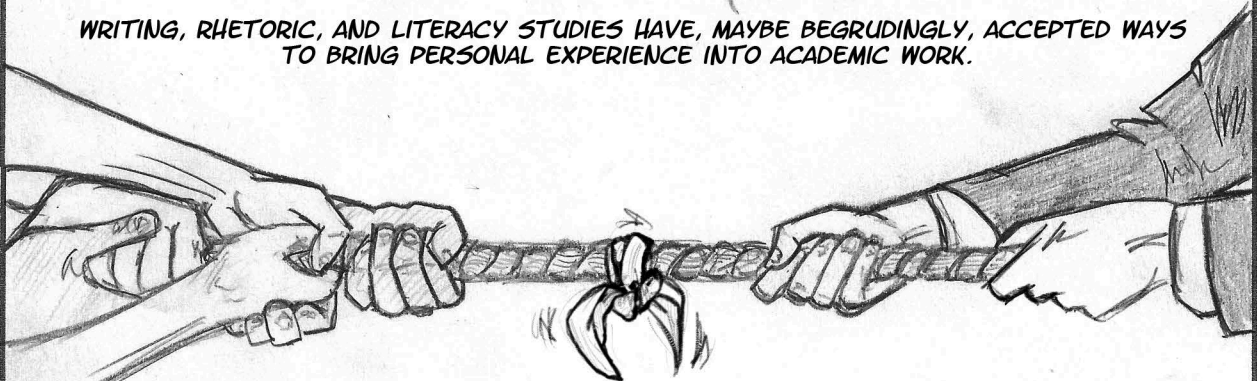
Layli Phillips Maparyan

THESE SCHOLARS HAVE FOUGHT FOR WRITING PRACTICES THAT VALUE THEIR LIVED EXPERIENCES AT LEAST AS MUCH AS DISCIPLINARY KNOWLEDGE.

IN DOING SO, THEY HAVE RESISTED OR RECONSTRUCTED ACADEME IN ORDER TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT A MULTITUDE OF KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS EXIST BEYOND ACADEMIC KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS.



WRITING, RHETORIC, AND LITERACY STUDIES HAVE, MAYBE BEGRUDINGLY, ACCEPTED WAYS TO BRING PERSONAL EXPERIENCE INTO ACADEMIC WORK.



WITHIN WRITING STUDIES, BIPOC AND OTHER MARGINALIZED SCHOLARS HAVE PROMOTED VARIOUS METHODS TO CENTER LIVED EXPERIENCE IN ACADEMIC SCHOLARSHIP.

THESE SCHOLARS ATTEMPT TO SHIFT NOT ONLY WHAT WE CONSIDER SCHOLARSHIP AND WHO WE LOOK TO IN ORDER TO GUIDE THE FIELD BUT WHAT WE CONSIDER PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES.



MALEA POWELL
CONSTELLATING STORIES



AJA MARTINEZ
COUNTERSTORIES



CRUZ MEDINA
TESTIMONIOS



M. REMI YERGEAU
STORYING



LOUIS MIRAS
AUTOETHNOGRAPHY



VICTOR VILLANUEVA



ELAINE RICHARDSON
CRITICAL AUTOBIOGRAPHIES



JONATHAN ALEXANDER

THIS STRUGGLE TO CHANGE WRITING STUDIES EXTENDS INTO SERVICE THROUGH JOURNALS AND ORGANIZATIONS THAT BREAK DOWN THE DIVIDES BETWEEN PERSONAL EXPERIENCE AND PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES, CREATIVE AND SCHOLARLY WORK, AND OUR HOME AND ACADEMIC COMMUNITIES.



THEY HAVE ESTABLISHED NEW METHODS TO CONDUCT ACADEMIC SERVICE. THEY MENTOR AND PROMOTE FOLKS WHO ARE MARGINALIZED IN ACADEME OR LOCATED OUTSIDE IT.



THEY FOCUS ON CONVERSATIONS THAT ARE OFTEN OVERLOOKED, AND THEY PUBLISH GENRES AND MEDIA OFTEN EXCLUDED BY NARROW DEFINITIONS OF SCHOLARSHIP.



SOME ESTABLISH BOARDS OR COLLECTIVES THAT PROMOTE DEMOCRATIC OR CONSENSUS DECISION-MAKING RATHER THAN RELEGATING GOVERNANCE TO A FEW AT THE TOP.

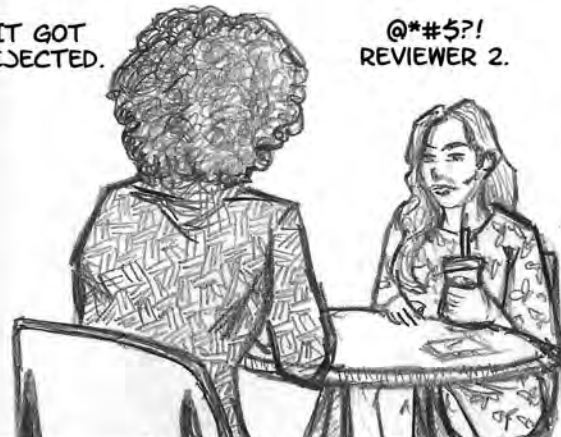
OUR SHAREHOLDERS THANK YOU!



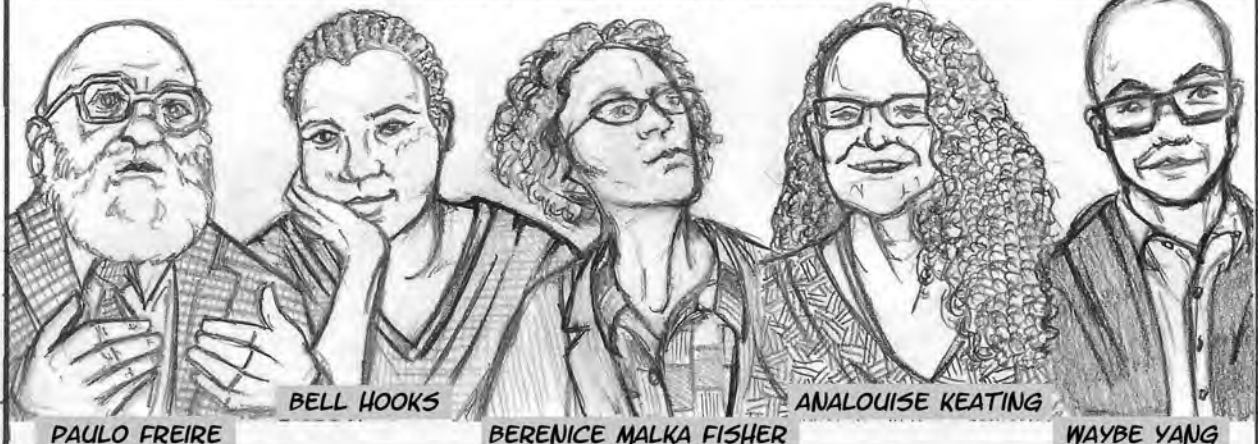
OTHERS REIMAGINE THE PEER REVIEW PROCESS TO BE COLLABORATIVE RATHER THAN HIERARCHICAL, OR THEY INTERVENE IN THE PROCESS TO TRY TO ENSURE THAT REVIEWERS AREN'T USING ANONYMITY TO PUNCH DOWN.

IT GOT REJECTED.

@*#5?!
REVIEWER 2.



THESE PRACTICES MIRROR CRITIQUES OF ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS AND CLASSROOM PRACTICES ADVANCED BY CRITICAL, FEMINIST, WOMANIST, ANTI-RACIST, DECOLONIAL, QUEER AND/OR TRANS, AND COMMUNITY ENGAGED PEDAGOGIES.



BROADLY SPEAKING, THEY ARGUE THAT WE DERIVE KNOWLEDGE FROM CRITICAL REFLECTION ON OUR POSITIONS IN SOCIETY WRIT LARGE AND WITHIN OUR COMMUNITIES.

THEY FOCUS ON QUESTIONS OF POWER, POSITIONALITY, AGENCY, AND EQUITY.



THEY ALSO CONSIDER HOW EDUCATION CAN PLAY A ROLE IN THAT REFLECTIVE PROCESS. STILL, REFLECTION ITSELF IS NOT ENOUGH.

EDUCATION ALSO HAS A ROLE TO PLAY IN PREPARING PEOPLE TO TAKE COLLECTIVE ACTION.



LITERACY NOT ONLY FOSTERS AN INDIVIDUAL'S ECONOMIC OR MORAL GROWTH. IT PLAYS AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN STRUGGLES FOR SOCIAL CHANGE. EVEN IF IT IS CONCEIVED NARROWLY AS READING AND WRITING, LITERACY PROVIDES A FOUNDATION FOR WHAT BELL HOOKS CALLS THE PRACTICE OF FREEDOM.

THAT I ENACT BY PARTNERING WITH COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS FOR ASSIGNMENTS AND BY ENCOURAGING STUDENTS TO THINK CRITICALLY ABOUT THEIR RELATIONSHIPS TO ONE ANOTHER, TO THE UNIVERSITY, TO LOCAL COMMUNITIES, AND TO SOCIETY.



THAT I ENACT BY HELPING TO RUN A JOURNAL ABOUT ACTIVISM IN ACADEMIA AND BY TRYING TO RESHAPE PRACTICES IN MY DISCIPLINARY ORGANIZATIONS AND INSTITUTION.



THAT I ENACT THROUGH MY ACADEMIC WRITING AND CREATIVE WORK.



HOWEVER, MY COMMITMENTS AREN'T BASED ON THEORIES. THEY COME FROM MY LIFE EXPERIENCES, AND I'VE ALWAYS STRUGGLED WITH HOW TO BRING THESE EXPERIENCES INTO MY ACADEMIC WORK.



IN ACADEMIA, WE CRAFT NARRATIVES ABOUT WHO WE ARE IN ORDER TO GET INTO GRAD PROGRAMS, TO GET JOBS, TO KEEP THESE JOBS, TO GET GRANTS, ETC. AND, WE PUT THESE NARRATIVES IN WRITING THROUGH VARIOUS DOCUMENTS.



THE DIVISION BETWEEN WHO WE ARE ON OUR CVS AND WHO WE ARE IN REAL LIFE CAN BE STUNNING, AND THE WAY THAT UNIVERSITIES RESPONDED TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC SHOWED ME THAT SUPPORTING THIS DIVISION IS NO LONGER TENABLE (IF IT EVER WAS).



TO GRAPPLE WITH ANXIETY ABOUT MY HEALTH, FAMILY AND FRIENDS, AND CAREER DURING THE PANDEMIC I STARTED MAKING AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL COMICS AND TAKING COMICS CLASSES ONLINE.



FINDING OTHER PEOPLE WHO USE COMICS TO EXPLORE THEIR EXPERIENCES HELPED ME SEE THAT THE THINGS I LEAVE OUT OF MY ACADEMIC LIFE HAVE VALUE.

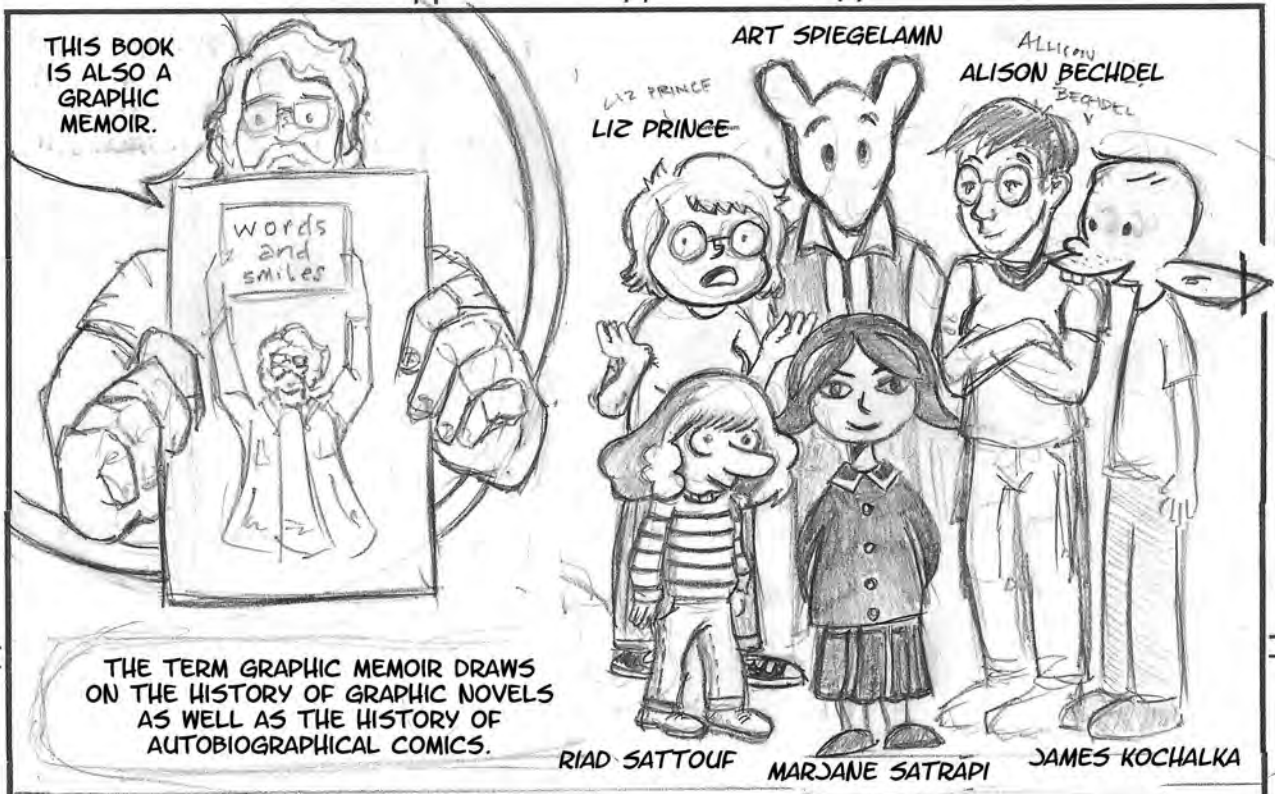


COMICS PROVIDE A SPACE FOR ME TO REIMAGINE WHAT IT MEANS TO BE AN ACADEMIC. THEY HELP ME ENVISION MY PERSONAL COMMITMENTS IN WAYS THAT WRITING ALONE CANNOT.



IN THE END, THIS LITERACY AUTOBIOGRAPHY ILLUSTRATES WHAT COMICS CAN BRING TO THE PRACTICE OF FREEDOM.





Great incl of Bechdel + add. Yoshitomo Tetsu...

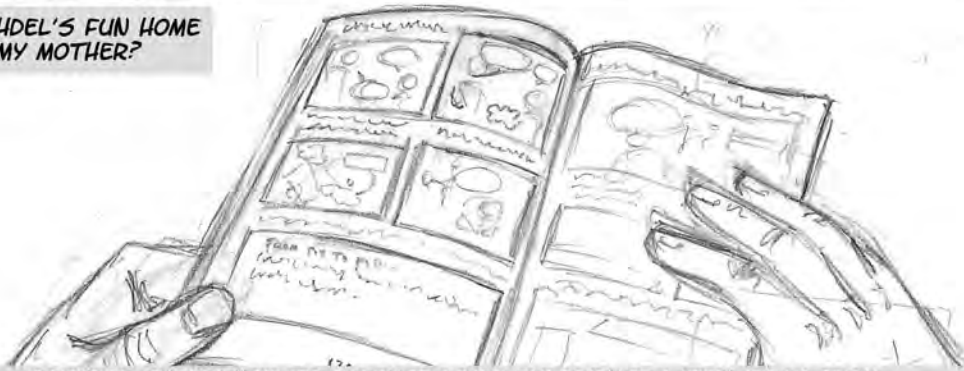
BASED ON HOW YOU DEFINE COMICS AND IF YOU STICK TO AMERICAN COMICS OR CONSIDER WORK FROM OTHER COUNTRIES, OFFERING A SUCCINCT IDEA OF WHAT A "GRAPHIC MEMOIR" DOES CAN BE A DIFFICULT PROPOSITION.



FOR NOW, I'LL STICK TO A COUPLE GRAPHIC MEMOIRS THAT I DREW INSPIRATION FROM IN ORDER TO ADDRESS HOW I APPROACHED THIS BOOK.



ALISON BECHDEL'S FUN HOME & ARE YOU MY MOTHER?



BECHDEL SHOWS HOW TO BALANCE LIVED EXPERIENCES WITH IDEAS FROM THEORETICAL TEXTS. STILL, MY EXPERIENCES IN ACADEME HAVE MADE ME QUESTION WHICH IS MORE IMPORTANT, PARTICULARLY IN AN ACADEMIC PRESS BOOK.

REGARDLESS OF HOW I BRING SOURCES INTO THIS BOOK, ACADEMIC READERS WILL BE TEMPTED TO SEE THE RESEARCH AS THE BOOK'S RAISON D'ETRE.



HOW I EXTEND THEORY BECOMES THE YARDSTICK WITH WHICH TO MEASURE THE BOOK'S VALUE.

IN BECHDEL'S WORK, DO THE STORIES FROM HER LIFE RESONATE WITH READERS BECAUSE OF THE HISTORIES AND THEORIES SHE INCLUDES IN THE BOOKS?



I DON'T READ GRAPHIC NOVELS, BUT THIS ONE WAS SO SMART.



HER DAD REMINDS ME OF MINE. THINK HE'S GAY?

OR, DO THESE REFERENCES BECOME WORTHWHILE BECAUSE THE READER CAN RELATE TO BECHDEL'S EXPERIENCES?

SHE REFERENCES PRACTICALLY EVERYTHING BY JOYCE.



DON'T FORGET PROUST!



YES: MY ANSWER TO BOTH QUESTIONS.

BECHDEL'S GRAPHIC MEMOIRS MAKE ME KEENLY AWARE THAT I MUST ILLUSTRATE SOME RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EXPERIENCE AND THEORY.

WHILE IT WAS A STRATEGY FOR BECHDEL IN WORKS FOR A POPULAR PRESS, I AM EXPECTED TO DO SO BECAUSE I AM WORKING WITH AN ACADEMIC PRESS.

TOM HART'S ROSALIE LIGHTNING

IN HIS GRAPHIC MEMOIR, HART PRESENTS HIS EXPERIENCES AS SUCH, WITH LITTLE ATTEMPT TO INTELLECTUALIZE THE GRIEF HE FEELS AFTER HIS INFANT DAUGHTER, ROSALIE'S SUDDEN DEATH.

THIS IS A GUT PUNCH, SO VISCERAL.



HE DOESN'T EXPLAIN THE EXPERIENCE SO MUCH AS ALLOW THE READER TO FEEL THE EXPERIENCE TO THE EXTENT THAT HE IS WILLING AND ABLE TO REPRESENT IT THROUGH COMICS.

HOW'S YOUR BOOK?

WHILE MY EXPERIENCES DIFFER FROM HART'S, MY GOAL IS THE SAME--TO HELP READERS FEEL THE EXPERIENCES THAT I DEPICT IN THESE PAGES.



HEARTBREAKING...

I WANT READERS TO CONNECT WITH THE BOOK BECAUSE THEY RELATE TO THE FEELINGS EVOKED NOT BECAUSE IT REFLECTS THEIR EXPERIENCES BACK TO THEM OR BECAUSE THE THEORIES I BRING INTO IT MAKE MY EXPERIENCES CONSUMABLE.



IT'S A COMMON ASPIRATION ARTISTS, BUT IT'S OFTEN LOOKED AT WITH DISDAIN BY ACADEMICS.



THIS BOOK APPROACHES COMICS, SPECIFICALLY GRAPHIC MEMOIR, AS A METHOD OF INQUIRY.



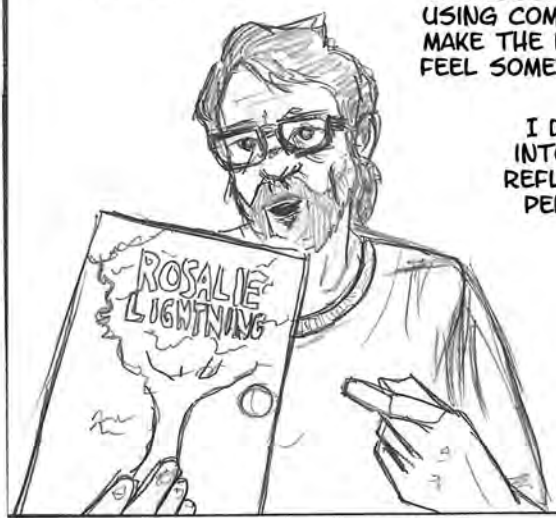
IN PART, THIS METHOD REFLECTS BECHDEL'S WORK.

I TRY TO UNDERSTAND THEORIES BY SHOWING THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO MY EXPERIENCES.



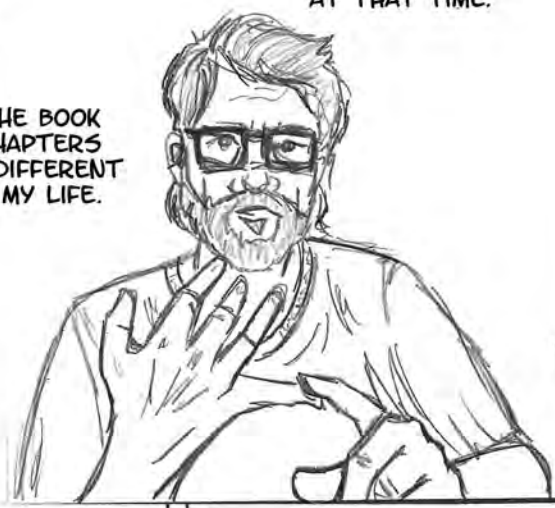
IN PART, THIS METHOD REFLECTS HART'S WORK.

TRY TO MAKE THESE EXPERIENCES ACCESSIBLE BY USING COMICS TO MAKE THE READER FEEL SOMETHING.

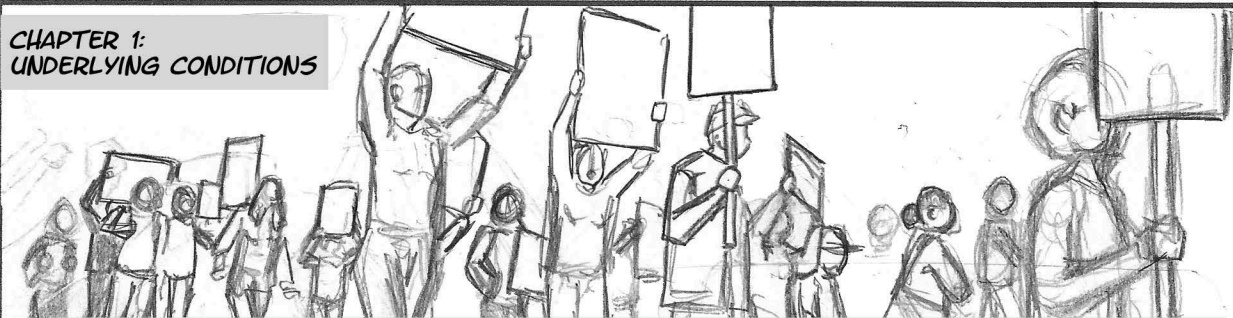


EACH CHAPTER FOCUSES ON A PARTICULAR STORY THAT ILLUSTRATES MY COMMITMENTS AT THAT TIME.

I DIVIDED THE BOOK INTO FIVE CHAPTERS REFLECTING DIFFERENT PERIODS IN MY LIFE.



CHAPTER 1:
UNDERLYING CONDITIONS



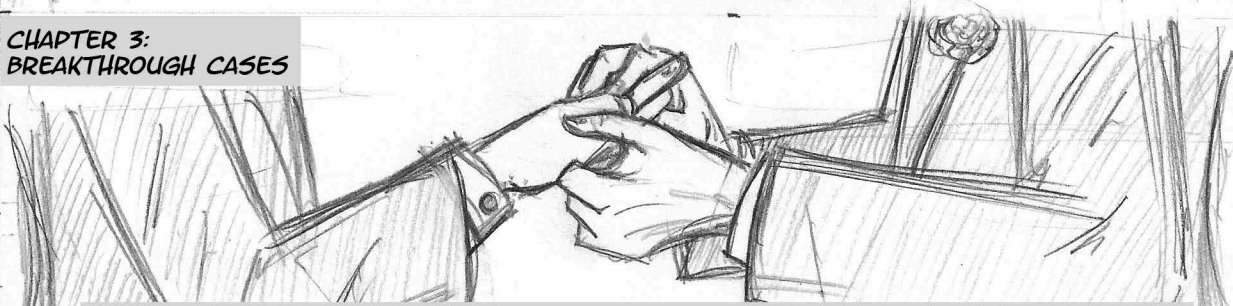
CHAPTER 1 FOCUSES ON GETTING INVOLVED WITH ANTI-FASCIST ORGANIZING IN THE 1990S.

CHAPTER 2:
SOCIAL DISTANCING



CHAPTER 2 DEALS WITH MY TIME AS A CLUB PROMOTE IN LGBTQ+ BARS IN THE LATE 1990S AND EARLY 2000S.

CHAPTER 3:
BREAKTHROUGH CASES



CHAPTER 3 ILLUSTRATES MY INVOLVEMENT IN THE STRUGGLE FOR MARRIAGE EQUALITY IN THE EARLY 2010S AND BRINGING ACTIVISM INTO WRITING STUDIES.

CHAPTER 4:
COMMUNITY TRANSMISSION

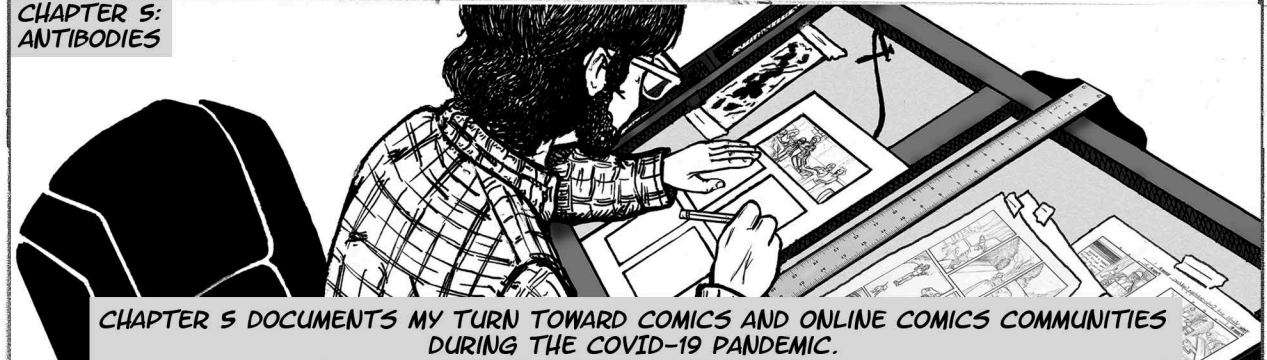


JOIN UNITED CAMPUS
WORKERS OF
MISSISSIPPI!

SIGN UP
TODAY!

CHAPTER 4 DELVES INTO MY WORK HELPING TO ORGANIZE THE FIRST HIGHER-EDUCATION UNION IN MISSISSIPPI IN THE LATE 2010S.

CHAPTER 5:
ANTIBODIES



CHAPTER 5 DOCUMENTS MY TURN TOWARD COMICS AND ONLINE COMICS COMMUNITIES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC.

I FRAME THE CHAPTERS WITH VIGNETTES DETAILING MY EXPERIENCES DURING THE FIRST YEAR OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC.



DEALING WITH THE PANDEMIC GROUNDS THE BOOK IN A PARTICULAR TIME: A TIME THAT WAS INSTRUMENTAL IN SHAPING THE BOOK'S FORM AND CONTENT.

AFTER EACH CHAPTER, YOU'LL FIND AN INTERLUDE THAT CONNECTS THAT PERIOD OF MY LIFE TO ARGUMENTS ABOUT WHAT IT MEANS TO BE AN ACADEMIC.



AS HART'S APPROACH INFORMS THE CHAPTERS, BECHDEL'S APPROACH SHAPES THE INTERLUDES.

THE BOOK MOVES BACK AND FORTH BETWEEN HART AND BECHDEL, THE VISCERAL AND THE INTELLECTUAL, LIVED EXPERIENCE AND THEORETICAL EXAMINATION, AND THE PAST AND PRESENT.



FINALLY, THE APPENDICES OFFER CHAPTER NOTES AS WELL AS RESOURCES TO HELP YOU REFLECT ON HOW YOU SEE YOUR ROLE AS AN ACADEMIC. THESE RESOURCES GUIDE YOU IN CREATING YOUR OWN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL COMICS.

