

## Erin Anderson interviewed by Melanie Yergeau

### Part 1

#### **Melanie Yergeau**

That sounds great. Thank you for doing that. I have QuickTime going, but already I can hear my fan running. So at some point I might just end the QuickTime on my side, just in case it, on your end, you can hear the fan...

[CROSS-TALK]

#### **Erin Anderson**

Ah, right...

#### **Melanie Yergeau**

... And it clouds up your voice. Thank you so much for doing this!

#### **Erin Anderson**

Of course, yeah. [LAUGHS]

#### **Melanie Yergeau**

I guess, what I was thinking we could do... is we could maybe start with some of the things that Susan had sent in email, in terms of the questions, but then we can digress, or just focus on the things that seem most interesting or relevant to your own work, if that sounds good?

#### **Erin Anderson**

Yeah, that sounds great.

#### **Melanie Yergeau**

And, I think you had asked in email but I think I had forgotten to answer the question of what to do with the stuff we've recorded.

#### **Erin Anderson**

Yes.

#### **Melanie Yergeau**

I know David... I'll write David. He might not have sent out the links, but he was going to create a Google Drive folder because he has like a hundred gigs of space with his university account.

[CROSS-TALK]

#### **Erin Anderson**

OK.

**Melanie Yergeau**

So we should be able to just... upload stuff to that box, for sure.

**Erin Anderson**

OK, that sounds good.

**Melanie Yergeau**

Awesome, ok. Well, maybe a good way of starting is... if you could talk a little bit about your webtext. I know we had talked a bit about it at 4Cs. Like, how it came about, and how you even decided to submit it to Kairos. It would be really awesome if maybe you could contextualize it and talk a bit about the process of creating and submitting it.

**Erin Anderson**

Sure! So, the project was... it began very much as a personal project. The interview I originally conducted with my grandmother, I conducted with no intentions of... first of all, no intentions of using the audio. But it basically was a personal project that I had done right before I moved to Pittsburgh to start my PhD. And, you know, I was kind of leaving home and leaving my family. I'd not really been there for a few years, but I was kind of back in town for a bit for the summer before leaving, and my grandmother was sick. And I'd been doing work in oral history in the past, with some community-based oral history, during my Master's degree. So I had taken that and had done some interviews with my grandfather as well. And so I thought, "Oh, maybe it's a great opportunity to interview my grandma." Then, fast-forward a bit, I showed up at University of Pittsburgh. And honestly, I didn't really know that much about the field of composition at that time, or, really, have any idea about what I was getting myself into. And I had a class my first semester, which was a multimodal composition class. I had definitely never heard the word multimodal before, and it was very new to me. I had never made a website before. I had done a little bit of work before with video projects and things in the past, but not a lot of audio, specifically. Anyway, it just sort of seemed like an interesting opportunity to take up some of the threads that of things that I had been working on before coming to grad school, and continue working on them. And I had this material, and so, I thought, ok, I'm gonna like call my grandma and see what she thinks. [COUGHS] Sorry. Of course, her first response was, "Well, you can do that, but I'm not sure why anyone would want to hear this." You know, you hear that a lot in oral history, actually. You know, the idea of people not being sure why their story would be of interest to anyone. Of course, she's my grandma, and I think everything she says is really cool and interesting. You know, so, she gave me the sort of "go ahead" to do what I wanted. To use it for some kind of... I just told her it was going to be some kind of online project, and I didn't know what it was. And it definitely, through that class, sort of grew from... originally I was just working with the audio recording, and I did some experiments with the audio. And then I started playing around with some 8-milimeter we'd had and had digitized. And then that kind of culminated, I guess, in the little video piece that was part of... like, the first part of the process I was working on. And then, as I started doing more web stuff, I started thinking like, OK...

Like, the idea of... how to actually... I guess the whole thing was driven by constraints, in one sense. Thinking about, first of all, the constraints of her sitting down and telling her whole life story in 2 or 3 hours, and then trying to figure out what could I do with that that would be satisfying. Partially, also, the fact that it was in the scope of this class that I was doing, et cetera, so.... So, I was kind of working with a lot of those complexities. And I come from a background in community-based, and critical and feminist oral history, and so I was thinking a lot... I already had a lot... I was very well-versed in these questions of representation and what it means to use other people's voices, both metaphorically and materially to kind of represent their stories. So, I was just thinking, what could I do with that in a web context. Partially, I think, it was a really great thing that I had absolutely no idea how to build a website until I started working on that project. [LAUGHS] Because every piece of it became like a little puzzle to work out, and so I basically, I'm like, "OK, so this would be interesting. Would it be possible to do this?" And then I'd have to go through and look and figure out, "OK, how do I make a horizontally scrolling website?" And I figured that out. And how do you make no scroll bars... and like, all of that was very much resisting the best practices on the web. There's no reason you would want to have a horizontally scrolling website with no scrollbars....

### **Melanie Yergeau**

[LAUGHS]

### **Erin Anderson**

I was finding these forums, and they were like, "No! Don't do that!" [LAUGHS] And I'm like, "Well, I really want to." So, anyway, I think in some ways not having a sense of what the rules were allowed me to figure out how to break them in some interesting ways. And the actual architecture of the site isn't particularly... I mean, it was advanced for me at the time, but it's basically HTML, CSS, and then some jQuery libraries to make the animation kind of function. It was kind of amazing to figure out what I could actually do with these very minimal skills that I had and have now since had time to kind of build on. So, I guess the project for me kind of launched me into a lot of work in the area of digital and multimodal composing and writing and things. I had no idea I was ever going to do that, so it was a nice launchpad for me. Yeah, so that... I mean, that's how the project came about. And then, so I finished the project over the course of this semester. And in hindsight, I remember being on an airplane. I was flying back to Seattle for my grandfather's funeral. Actually, he had died over Thanksgiving, my grandmother's husband. And I'm on the airplane, just with all of these muddled feelings about everything, and going to see my family, and like tracing out some of the connections between different audio pieces in order to make the connections between the hyperlinks and everything, and listening to these things, and editing clips on the airplane... [LAUGHS] It was a very, you know, condensed process, where I threw my whole... threw everything, really, into that project over the course of the semester. At the end, you know, I submitted it for my class, and I posted all of the work. All of the work we did was posted on the web. And I think it was a week after I put it up on the web, I got an email from Cheryl Ball. And I was like, "From Cheryl Ball?" [LAUGHS] Like I said, it was my first semester in

this program, I've just learned what *Kairos* is, you know. And she had happened upon it through seeing an article... or, not an article... A review I had written of an article she had written and I had posted on my website. And she kind of came to the project and invited me to submit it. So, it was, I guess in a lot of ways it speak to the wonders of the web for, you know, finding an audience. And I honestly never would have... maybe not never... But at that moment, I wouldn't have thought to submit it to *Kairos* because I was just very new in the field and kind of finding my footing. But it was a very exciting springboard for me and led me to all the things I've done thereafter.

### **Melanie Yergeau**

That's really cool. [LAUGHS] Just in terms of the process, and how that came about... I'm wondering, too, what was your timeline like? So, it's published in 2011. How long was the process from when you composed it for class versus it actually appearing live and going out into the world through *Kairos*?

### **Erin Anderson**

So, that was the fall semester of 2009 that I was working on the project. And I finished a version of the project, which didn't include the written piece, the essay, but had the rest of... mostly, it was the video and the interactive piece of it. And then, I think, over... well, then I had my second semester of being a first-year PhD student, and I was very busy taking classes and everything, and so I think I waited until the summer and I wrote that essay and submitted it with the essay and then did a revision of it, and it came out the following spring. You know, it was a good... well... Let's see. I think it was, you know, around a little over a year after I finished it, it came out. But incidentally, I had just finished it, and the first time I ever presented it at a conference... And this was built into the project, now that I'm thinking of it. But, the first time I presented this project, it was like the first conference I'd ever gone to, as well as this graduate student conference at University of Cincinnati, I think. And there was -- again, this is all wrapped up in all of these personal family things. My grandmother had just died and I had just gone back to Seattle to try to see her, but when she wasn't doing so well, then of course as soon as I left, she passed away. And so I was just back in Pittsburgh, and then go to this conference. And like, the conference was either... I think it might have been the day before or the day after her memorial service. And it was just this very interesting thing where I was thinking about the different audiences that the project has, because here I am showing it to, you know, whoever showed up to this graduate student conference, grad students from there and around, and some faculty. And, kind of at the same time, my family was showing it around to other people -- to people in my family, to my grandma's friends. And, just kind of picturing it there, you know, I wasn't able to go to her memorial in the end, because I had just been there the week before. But it was a really interesting... I don't know. It made me feel really good that I could have some sort of presence there, and, you know, people responded. Of course, people in my family love it. It's like this record that they would otherwise never have.

### **Melanie Yergeau**

And that's really... super fascinating too, just in terms of how audience really proliferated as the project went on, and that family is such a vital part of the audience. I remember there was a section in your webtext where... it was under the "how to read" part, where you have the theory laid out, and you have the interactivity kind of laid out. And so you talk about audience as being a kind of co-authority. Or, the ideas around constructing meaning and co-constructing narratives. And so, I'm curious, too, how did that then change over the life of the project, this idea of co-construction? Because you also have credited yourself, your grandmother, and then there's another person, I think an archivist, who's credited too?

[CROSS-TALK]

**Erin Anderson**

My dad. [LAUGHS]

**Melanie Yergeau**

Your dad?

**Erin Anderson**

Yeah. Well, so my... it's funny. Well, I guess, two parts. You had just asked a couple of different questions. The first thing, about co-construction and this idea that part of the purpose of the project is for people to kind of participate in making meaning from all of these different anecdotes and incomplete fragments of stories that they can then experience in different relationships with one another and try to pull out the meaning from the spaces between them. There's this idea, and I think, in some ways, when I think about the different audiences, you can approach this... My family is a very privileged audience in a lot of ways because they know how these things connect to each other, and they have a sense of, you know, how the story of my uncle getting chased by bees fits in with this story of camping, or, you know, there are all these ways that they have this, a very different kind of relationship to it. In some ways, the whole fragmented nature of it isn't all that probably important to them. You know, it's just, this is a collection of grandma's memories, and we understand how they fit into this sort of larger framework. So that was one thing that I've just been thinking about. And, you know, they don't... I don't know how many of them have read and gone through the actual written piece of this, and the essay, and the kind of thinking about the method, and how it fits into conversations around oral history and documentary, and these kinds of things. But I didn't write that for them.

**Part 2**

**Erin Anderson**

I mean, I think... the thing I like about it is that it has this potential to reach a lot of different audiences, and that's something that continues to drive my work. I'm very

interested in public-facing texts, and things that are, you know, not just kind of holed away in little silos for other academics to cite. So, I think, yeah. I like that it has those multiple layers, and then my dad's relationship. So pulling my dad into this was, in many ways, a very practical thing, because I had this oral history interview that I had access to, but all of the family photos, and all of these things were back in Seattle, and I didn't know I was doing this project until I had moved. And so, I was very lucky to have my dad's help... in helping to scan all of the photographs, and sort through the materials that were there, and send the digitized videos of the 8MM film. Because, you know, nobody had ever done this kind of thing before. There was no archivist, right? We're just... you know, it's just a bunch of boxes of things, or bookshelves with old albums on them. So, I was really lucky to have my dad help me with that. And it's funny because I've kind of continued drawing him in as a collaborator in other things. Mostly things related to... I'm working on another project that's kind of come out of The Olive Project, and it involved bringing my dad along with me on this kind of pilgrimage to northern Minnesota in January, to drive around on these icy dirt roads to find the farm that my grandma grew up on. And then my dad just comes along, and he's like helping, you know, he's taking photographs and being the chauffeur, telling me family stories that kind of are the backdrop to these things. So, it's been a really nice thing for me to have this excuse to collaborate with my dad and to have a different kind of relationship with him that we never had when I was growing up. I mean, we had a good relationship, but having a different kind of working relationship. And now he's just retired, and he's started making videos and things. So it's really cool to kind of see how that's rippled out.

**Melanie Yergeau**

Awesome. I'm going to pause, just for second, and lift my computer because of the fan.

[CROSSTALK]

**Erin Anderson**

Oh sure.

**Melanie Yergeau**

And let it cool off for a couple seconds. [LAUGHS]

**Melanie Yergeau**

But so far it's... I hope things are good on your end. My end has actually been remarkable in terms of... usually it heats up a lot faster than this, so.

**Erin Anderson**

Oh, ok!

**Melanie Yergeau**

[LAUGHS]

**Erin Anderson**

Yeah, well, I think the one nice thing about this call recorder that I have installed is that it puts your voice and mine onto separate tracks, and so unless your fan is coming through really loudly through my computer speakers, I don't think it's going to be a huge problem.

**Melanie Yergeau**

Awesome. That's awesome.

**Erin Anderson**

Yeah.

**Melanie Yergeau**

So... I don't know if you can hear it, on your end.

**Erin Anderson**

Possibly, vaguely, now that you mention it. But... yeah.

**Melanie Yergeau**

OK, so... at any point, feel free to stop if suddenly it sounds really loud. [LAUGHS]

**Erin Anderson**

OK.

**Melanie Yergeau**

I'll pause things for a moment. But what you were just describing actually might be a really good segue to... I feel like this one of the harder questions. I would really love to know, too, just in terms of the particular moment in which you composed and published your webtext. Both... what did you think was particularly innovative about it? Or, maybe another way of putting it is, what do you think it contributed to scholarship across the many areas that you're covering within the webtext? I mean, oral history, but also these questions about design and co-construction and audience? But also, what was maybe particular about that moment too? So I guess it's a question of what do you think that your webtext contributed, but maybe also what was happening at that moment in time? What did you observe of other texts in your area?

**Erin Anderson**

So, this is a hard question!

[LAUGHTER]

**Erin Anderson**

Well, I think... one thing that, I think... I mean, it's hard for me to honestly say, what makes it innovative, right? I didn't even know, I didn't have a foundation on which

to understand. You know, my relationship to the field at that time was so new that I didn't even really know what I was responding back to, to be honest. I knew the conversations in oral history a lot better than I knew the conversations in composition and rhetoric. I think one of the things that it did was bring those two fields into conversation in an interesting way. I know with oral history... People have written about oral history, using oral history in the classroom, but in more of a way where students would go out and conduct interviews and transcribe them and then write essays based on them, and kind of something more or less along the lines of what traditional oral historians would do as well. And so I think it was a moment... like, the moment in, I guess, the humanities more broadly with this turn toward thinking about digital media, and thinking about different forms for producing scholarship and for producing texts that kind of blurred the boundaries between scholarship and popular kinds of texts. I think that one of the things that it drew upon was that moment that seemed to be of interest both in oral history and in composition and rhetoric at the time, and found a place where they could meet in the middle. I think... so, I actually, strangely enough, I've been to a number of Oral History Association conferences, but I never... I think I missed going the year that I produced this, where this would have been new and I would have thought to present it. So I've actually never presented this project at an oral history conference. But I'm continuing to be involved in the field. I guess, I don't know -- it's kind of an interdisciplinary subfield kind of thing, or a method, I don't know. But there's a community of people working in oral history who are really at this moment getting interested in different ways of repurposing and using oral history recordings and materials to create different kinds of texts in a way that I think is piggybacking on a lot of the stuff that's been happening in rhetoric and composition. And so, it was, I think, a fruitful moment to start that conversation. I don't know how much it has, you know, rippled out to get more people involved with oral history within composition and vice versa. But I think, you know, I have a graduate student that I'm working with right now who's very interested in oral history and I'd like to think that there's some way in which, you know, these kinds of conversations are starting to get opened up more through projects like this that ask for that conversation. And, I guess, for me, coming to composition and rhetoric, I came from a very interdisciplinary background. I never had and didn't study English. I was, you know, I came from... all of my degrees start with "C." This is how I make meaning of my academic trajectory. I think there is, you know, a way in which composition and rhetoric opens up possibilities for a lot of conversations with other disciplines. And I think that media and digital texts, and thinking about production and making texts is a form of thinking, is a real opportunity to cross those boundaries.

### **Melanie Yergeau**

So... maybe I could ask a question, to go back to something earlier, about the horizontal scrolling?

### **Erin Anderson**

[LAUGHS] Yeah.

**Melanie Yergeau**

Because I think... I mean, it's something that seems so integral to your text, and it totally changes a person's engagement with it because you can click on a photograph, or on one of the keywords beneath the photograph, and it brings you to a different section. So it's not even that you necessarily have control over the scrollbar, but you have, it's almost like a choose-your-own-adventure...

[CROSS-TALK]

**Erin Anderson**

Yeah...

**Melanie Yergeau**

...kind of story...

**Melanie Yergeau**

... where you're navigating these particular narratives. And so, I'm wondering... I don't know what my question is, so much as I'd like to hear more about it?

**Erin Anderson**

[COUGHS] I'm sorry.

**Melanie Yergeau**

But also, out of maybe curiosity, if as you were thinking about horizontal scrolling, if there were particular pieces you had seen online? Because you had described that you were finding all these help sources that said, 'No! Don't do this.'

[LAUGHTER]

**Melanie Yergeau**

But yet you really wanted to do that, and it feels like that's one of the most innovative, like strengths, of the piece, just in terms of not only design, but the narrative arcs, plural.

**Erin Anderson**

Yeah. You know, honestly, thinking back, I can't recall a specific text or website that I had looked at and thought, "Oh, horizontal scrolling." I think it was more that I knew it was not the way that people were used to interacting with the web, that the vertical scroll, at that time especially, was kind of predominant, and I wanted to force a kind of different interaction, I guess, with the interface. And I also, and I mean this is interesting, because I don't even know why I made some of the decisions that I made. You know, it was like, I remember drawing it out on a piece of paper and kind of thinking, you know, here's how it might look, and maybe... what if you could make the scrollbar go away. I didn't even know if I could do that at the time. And so it was very much like one thing led to the next thing, and I'm not sure I had some grand vision from the beginning because it was very much an experiment,

kind of creating the method as I was going based on the basic skills that I had and the things that I could figure out, and all of that. I think, so, I can't remember now... there's one article in *The New Work of Composition*... the Computers and Composition Digital Press e-book. I think Diana George and Tim Lockridge and someone else whose name is escaping me right now... But they wrote an article thinking about linearity and that nonlinear text is not really an issue of nonlinear... That isn't something we should be so concerned with. And talking about the way The Olive Project draws on these tropes of, or conventions of, comics and of the filmstrip sort of moving back and forth across the screen... I'd never, I mean I'm sure that informed my thinking in a way that... we're all humans, we have all of these experiences with different kinds of media, and there was something that prompted me to do that. But I had never honestly, until reading that, I had never thought about that before. And I was like, "That was so interesting." And I think, you know, in a lot of ways, the fact that it kind of goes back and forth across the screen in that way almost makes it seem more linear [LAUGHS] than like, moving up and down. So I think that the main kind of innovation is that there are... it's not, honestly, it's putting two things together that aren't usually put together. So on one hand, it's kind of a pretty standard hypertext interaction, right? You click on, you can choose different links. And based on which link you choose, you go to a different part in the story. If it were, if it didn't have that horizontal orientation, it would feel much more familiar, I think. And then, I think the animation of being able to see, that was something that was really important to the project. Being able to see everything that's happening in between, flashing across as you scroll, so that you're getting a sense of like all the things you're missing and all the things you're moving past in this kind of... yeah. The experience of the incomplete nature of what you're experiencing through the little nodes that you're actually able to access was really important to it. Kind of putting those three things together, you know, hypertext, the horizontal scroll, and that animation, and of course taking out the scrollbar to add the constraint to it, I guess was the formula that I came up with. But it was, I mean, I was drawing on conventions from a number of familiar kinds of texts and putting them together in a new way, I think.

### **Melanie Yergeau**

So... Looking at, we're at about the 30-minute mark, so maybe we can talk for two questions that I think are really relevant. And the first one is the question that Susan had sent about what your position is about curation, and concerns about preservation. I think it's really relevant to your particular piece, because it is in many respects an archival piece. And so, I guess the question of maybe your thoughts on curating digital texts in general but also how you've been thinking about or if you've been thinking about the ways in which what you've created will be kept alive or accessible as an actual archive, especially as technology evolves.

### **Erin Anderson**

Yeah. Well, I think, since already there are things that I would change if I could go back. Maybe I'll ask if I can go back and change out, for example, the video that's

embedded in the website is Flash-based. And so you can't look at it on an iPad. And, of course, I did not anticipate that at the time, and there's no reason that it needs to be in Flash, so it would be an easy fix to go in and say, "OK, here, let's put another, you know, format in there, an mp4, or whatever." But I think, you know, the question of also, once... so... It's kind of an interesting thing because I have certain... anything that's up on my website that I have access to, I would have just gone in and changed that already, right? But this idea of the way that it functions as part of this publication, where, you know, although it has this kind of fluid, continuous access, and it's on the web and it's just there and open for people. And also, it's open to look up, but not open to go back. And, I mean, I'm sure I could request to go back and change something, right, but I would feel like I was putting someone out. But there are things where I've learned so much about... Well, first of all, it's funny. Every time I look at The Olive Project on a larger screen, then the one... So, I composed it on a 13-inch Macbook Pro, and all of the...like, it is built around that screen size, in a way that, I wasn't thinking. It was the first website I ever made. I wasn't thinking about, you know, different devices and different sizes of screens and all of this. It drives me crazy every time I look at it, and I see that line along the wallpaper. I'm like, that would have been so easy for me to crop it, the wallpaper image, at a place where it wasn't, you know... [LAUGHS] But the thing is, I designed it for a particular screen, with a particular... [COUGHS] I'm sorry. I designed it with a particular screen in mind because that's what I had in front of me in the moment. And so I think that's like a kind of metaphor for the larger things that you don't anticipate, right? And it works best, I think, on a 13-inch screen because then you only have access to a certain number of the links that can lead you to different options, different pieces of the story. So if you look at it on a big, you know, 21-inch iMac, you have so many options of clicking all of these different things that some of the constraints that are built into it kind of go away. And so there are all these things that, you know, of course I didn't anticipate at the time. And part of that was just that I was an amateur, you know, trying to figure out what I was doing. But it's also, I mean, I think that's one of the things that makes this kind of work exciting in a way, is the inability to anticipate where it goes, you know. And I mean, honestly, my inability to anticipate that this project that I was doing, kind of as a passion project and a class project, has had all these different lives. I mean, I get emails from people, or I see someone at a conference, and they're, "Oh, I love The Olive Project and I use it in my class." And it's really interesting for me just to think about, you know... I wonder what my grandma would think because she was just... she of course, she let me do it. She looked at it. You know, I had a version of it finished before she died and, you know, she thought it was really interesting, but I don't think she would have had any idea that college classrooms of students would be looking at this thing and thinking her life was interesting. Or, you know, hearing her talk about nursery rhymes in her one-room schoolhouse. So, anyway, I'm now getting off the topic. But I think, so for questions of curation and the degradation of digital texts... I think one of the things that is interesting to me is... Let's see. So, oral history is, of course, as a field dealing with this quite a lot. You know, whether or not to digitize old cassette tapes or reel-to-reel audio, magnetic tape, whether to digitize that and make it part of the collections, and what is the role of the digital in sort of preservation in that sense,

because in some ways we have this kind of absurdist view of the digital being the answer to that. But really what it does, I think, is provide access rather than any kind of security against loss. So I think when we think about archives from a perspective of access, the thing that I guess is most important to me is... I care more that people are able to look at it now and enjoy it than whether or not it will be there forever. You know, I think we have a tendency to, there's this tendency toward accumulation, for example, in oral history. It's like, we need to collect these forgotten stories and they're going to be lost if we don't collect them, but then we collect and we collect and we collect, but what do we do with them? There's this proliferation of these amazing materials that then... what do you even do with them? And so, I guess, I think I'm interested in this project as an example of a piece that is oriented more toward access than toward preservation, and saying, you know, I had this oral history interview, which I could have kept and saved and, you know, I do have a copy of it saved in a few places, and for my family to pass down to my family. And that could have been the primary interest, or I could find ways of repurposing that history and using it to compose something that people, that connects with people and people have access to. And I guess that's more where my heart lies? I'm aware that there will be a time when -- and I'm actually in some ways I'm surprised it hasn't happened already -- when The Olive Project is no longer accessible in its current state. And, you know, the question of whether or not to repurpose it and try to adapt to the new moment, or to say it's lived its life and served its purpose. And I can happily know that it was there, I think, is something, I guess, what I would be left with from that question.

### **Melanie Yergeau**

Then... I think maybe the last question is just asking what you're working on now. And if there are any connections back to The Olive Project, or if you think you're headed on a different trajectory since.

### **Erin Anderson**

The Olive Project was definitely really instrumental in all of the work I've done since, I guess. From there... So, The Olive Project was principally concerned with representing stories and thinking about storytelling and thinking about voice-recordings from the perspective of the content that they hold, I guess. And from there, I started... it kind of set me off on this path where immediately after The Olive Project I started working on some experiments where I was taking... So, both of my grandparents had died at that time, and I was taking their voice-recordings and kind of creating these imagined conversations between them, and trying to think... Basically, it made me start thinking about the flexibility of this audio, and the potential of the audio to actually do exactly what I was working against in The Olive Project. So, the idea The Olive Project was motivated by this fear of kind of getting the story wrong or misrepresenting something, or using it in ways that were not true to the intentions of the original interview, these kinds of things. And then I actually took up that dilemma, and took it as... instead of seeing it just as a liability, kind of thinking of it as an opportunity to imagine, What does that make possible? And what can you do from there? And so, a project that I've worked on, and that I'm

currently reworking for a different format is where I've taken oral history interviews with people who have died. So, in this one I've actually taken my grandfather's interview because I figured it was something I hadn't used yet. And then another interview from an online archive and kind of dramatically repurposed the interviews to imagine both of those people, reimagine their recordings as... basically, remake them as characters in a fictional audio drama, where they are a married couple who are in marital therapy, and I'm their marital counselor and it's this elaborate drama that is drawing from the vocal materials of and the recordings of these oral history interviews, but then dramatically repurposing them for them to do something other than the thing that they were intended for, and thinking through the ethics of that and what kinds of both ethical questions and also the ethical possibilities that that provides. So that was one direction it took. And then I've also... another thing I'm working on right now that's more immediately connected to The Olive Project is... So there's one story that is embedded in the maze of The Olive Project, that is something about my grandmother's baby sister, and it was a story that I was very interested in and very compelled by, and also very scared of, for a really long time. And so, this... I've kind of brought myself to the point where I could start thinking about what would it mean to actually try to tell a story, rather than to avoid telling a story with these materials, and how would I approach that. This is a project that I enlisted my dad, and we went up to Minnesota and found the site of my grandmother's... so, my great-great-grandfather's farm that my grandma grew up on and, you know, doing some documentary kind of photograph projects and working with archives. Like, other kinds of archives, photographic archives, and some documents, and things to kind of think about how to recompose the story in a way that responds to the gaps that are there in the archive, but also things about how the materials themselves can be used as a kind of impetus for the story, and what kind of ethical... How to address the ethical questions that come up around... kind of unearthing things that are implicated emotionally for my family, et cetera. So that's been actually really fun and also really scary because I'm not able to hide behind the, you know, let's just make this a participatory thing where everyone can... you know, farming out the ethics and the responsibility to the audience. I'm trying to think about what it means to take that on and how to work through it in a constructive way.

**Melanie Yergeau**

That's a really awesome place to end, I think.

[LAUGHTER]

**Erin Anderson**

Great.

**Melanie Yergeau**

Ethics and audience... yeah. Thank you so much.

**Erin Anderson**

Thank you.

**Melanie Yergeau**

This is great. I guess what I'll do is I'll write David and ask if he...