

Chapter 15: Toward a Feminist Sonic Pedagogy: Research as Listening

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2. Episode 2: Traditional Research by Abby, Carly, and Emily

In Episode 2, Abby, Carly, and Emily tackle the first research method: traditional research. This research mostly yielded videos and current newspaper articles about Grunenwald.

Transcript

[intro music in background: “Come to Me” by Lily & Madeline]

Emily: Does this sound familiar to you? Tall? Lurking? Hunchback?

Carly: Shy? Creepy?

Lily: The unions? College Library? The steam tunnels?

Carly: The silent stalker, or the omnipresent observer?

Lily: An innocent bystander, or a threat to personal safety?

[music fades out]

Emily: If you’re a student or alumni of UW–Madison, the urban legend known as Tunnel Bob probably sprang to mind. Born Robert Gruenenwald, this man has become an iconic figure of UW–Madison’s campus since the 1970s.

Carly: And yet, despite his historic status here in Madison, Robert Gruenenwald is an enigma. It seems that the more people know his name, the less they know the person. However, even though so few people personally know Robert, there isn’t a shortage of opinions and assumptions concerning his life, many of which are conflicting.

[upbeat transition music, fades in and then out as Lily starts to speak]

Lily: He has been described as someone who frequents popular UW attractions such as the Memorial Union Terrace and College Library. Keeping to himself, Robert spends his time casually people watching and enjoying the ambiance of Madison’s campus. Some people have interpreted his personality to be “kind, intelligent, (but) just odd,” furthering his image as UW–Madison’s gentle giant.

Abby: In his book, *The Slow Regard of Silent Things*, author Patrick Rothfuss, a Madison, Wisconsin, native, bases his quirky main character Auri off of Tunnel Bob. He says in an interview his dad used to be an engineer working in the tunnels, and he often spoke with Tunnel Bob. When asked what he does down there, Tunnel Bob replied that he walks around, cleans up a bit, and just takes time for himself. That seems harmless enough, right?

[mysterious transition music]

Emily: On the other hand, some people don’t have such a positive opinion of him. Many claim to feel uncomfortable around Robert due to some of his tendencies, such as unwelcome attention, stalking, and harassment. Some described him as mentally disturbed and potentially dangerous, and there have even been reports of physical damage to property resulting from his supposed anger issues.

Abby: On Reddit, a website where anybody can post their personal opinions on certain subject, the page for Tunnel Bob is quite long. Most people have negative perspectives on him based on rumors they've heard. For example, one user posts about his harassment of women by looking up their skirts, and another states he broke a faucet at Chipotle. This raises more uncertainty about his nature, but these also could be fictitious rumors.

[transition music, remaining in the background]

Carly: Online research of Robert creates more questions than it answers. Is he homeless? A war vet? A previous UW student? An engineer with a fascination for the steam tunnels? Few have the answers, but many are happy to give their opinion. Through our superficial Google searches, we found many unverified and anonymous claims. These claims, while giving us insight into widely held perceptions also perpetuate unfounded bias concerning Robert.

Lily: From innocent observer to threatening stalker, where on the spectrum does Robert truly lie? How did our campus' obsession with Robert begin, and why has it continued through generations of students? What does it say about us that one individual can spark so much intrigue and speculation?

Abby: Traditional internet research gives us clues but not solutions. We hope to dive deeper into his authenticity in order to clear up whatever rumors and perspectives without evidence exist in Madison.

Emily: Join us as we try to unravel the mystery that is Tunnel Bob.