

—read “[Necessity Defense of Institutional Memory](#)” by Camille Rankine

—find a statement (this could be: bank statement, employment letter, the welcome page of a website, government forms, etc) from an institution you’ve been associated with in the past, or will be in the future.)

—look for a personal letter/email/text/etc you wrote to someone this year. Where you told them something you don’t really tell people (a secret). Whether or not they understood you told them a secret is not the point—look for the language you used to when you tried to tell someone you care about, a secret

—Ask yourself (write out notes if possible):

what is an institution?
what is a defense?
what is memory?
what is institutional memory?
does institutional memory, require defense?
why might institutional memory, require defense
defense from what?
how do institutions end?
how are institutions maintained?

who receives defense?
what is the last thing you can remember, receiving defense?
what is the last thing you can remember, defending?

—tell me about the pronouns in this poem. what does it do?

—what happens when we go from 2nd, 3rd to first person (and back to 2nd)?

—what is created by the enjambments and indentions in the first four sections (before “so I may be replaced”)

—does this poem defend institutional memory

—what does this poem present

—what does this poem defend

prompt:

first stanza:

—take an institutional statement of your selection and figure out: what does it uphold, what is it protecting?

—paraphrase what the institution is protecting. do so in 2nd person.

second stanza:

—look at the letter/text/email you have and defend its existence, in 1st person. your secrets, your thoughts, are sacred. defend them.

3rd stanza:

—what will happen if the institution cannot protect what it is protecting? what will happen? tell us.
—make a case for the preservation of the institution, do so in 2nd/3rd person
—make a case for the abolition of the institution, do so in 2nd person

4th stanza:

—what will happen if your letter/text/email cannot be protected?
—make a case for the preservation of yourself, do so in 2nd/3rd person
—make a case for the abolition of yourself, do so in 1st person

re-arrange your poem, as you see fit