

## Episode 2.30 Talkin' Podcasts with ME (hosted by Lucia Lorenzi)

August 24, 2018

Hannah (Host): [Music: "Mesh Shirt" by Mom Jeans] Hi, I'm Hannah McGregor and this is Secret Feminist Agenda and this is it, the last episode of season two. When I decided to reformat the podcast back in January, I committed to 15 more interview episodes with 15 minisodes in between, and I did it. And quite frankly, I'm proud of me. Now I'm taking another mini hiatus just for the month of September and I'll be back in October with season three. In the meantime, my collaborators at Wilfrid Laurier University Press have revamped the peer review questions for the second season and just like last time, that peer review will be available publicly on the press website as soon as it's ready. But in the meantime, I'd love to get some more feedback from you, the listeners. In the show notes for this episode you'll see some questions inviting you to reflect on what's working in the podcast and what, if anything, isn't. Last time around I got heaps of enormously generous and helpful feedback, and I'm excited to see what you have to say this time around. Now, without any further ado, the episode. [Music: "Mesh Shirt" by Mom Jeans] This episode is slightly unconventional, so this intro is going to be a little unconventional too. The interviewee is me. So I guess I should tell you that I'm an assistant professor of publishing at Simon Fraser University and that my research focuses on podcasting as scholarly communication, systemic barriers to access in the Canadian publishing industry, and magazines as middlebrow media. And my interviewer is Dr. Lucia Lorenzi, postdoctoral fellow at McMaster University, an activist, scholar, and artist, whose work focuses on sexualized and gendered violence and literature and other media. Lucia just relocated to Hamilton for the second year for postdoc and the day before she left, in the midst of a cross country move and while writing a huge grant application, she took the time to talk to me about Secret Feminist Agenda, nontraditional scholarship and what it means to do feminist work from within the university [Music: "Truth Hurts" by Lizzo]

Lucia: This is going to be a shit show of an episode. You know that, right? Yeah. I mean, it's not my podcast, so like, I just get to cut and run after this. Byeee. Hi, friend. How's it going?

Hannah (Host): [Laughs]

Lucia: Do you want to? Let's sit--

Hannah (Host): Yeah, I think, I think we should be sitting closer than this. I don't, I actually don't understand why when I move the cord to this microphone it makes a terrible noise.

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Lucia: Wait, which cord?

Hannah (Host): This cord. So like.

Lucia: Oh, okay. Yeah.

Hannah (Host): So like it will be recorded that, that sound will record on the mic is like this really terrible like, thunk, thunk, thunk, thunk.

Lucia: [Makes screeching noise]

Hannah (Host): No, it's like a weird thumping. Yeah, I don't like it.

Lucia: Can we talk about how in podcasting, how like having artifacts of a podcast lends a certain something authenticity something?

Hannah (Host): Yeah. Something authenticity something. Are you talking about Kevin McNeilly who was like, "it's better for podcast to be a little bit shitty."

Lucia: Yeah. He's like a jazz guy, like improvising and stuff. So I get it.

Hannah (Host): Yeah. This was a round table that I organized with Siobhan McMenemy, who is the managing editor at Wilfrid Laurier University Press, which is the press that is peer reviewing this podcast. So we did a round table at a conference in Regina in May and it was really, really great. And there was a really interesting question from somebody in the audience about like to what degree sort of bringing podcasts in the university will standardize them in a way that sort of suck some of the spontaneity and joy out of them? And I think that that is like a really legitimate point and something to think about. And also I do not think that there's anything necessary about podcasts sounding bad.

Lucia: [Laughs]

Hannah (Host): I think maybe you can maintain the spontaneity and the joy and have good production values.

Lucia: Yeah.

Hannah (Host): I mean good is like such a loaded word--

Lucia: You can have like, a pop filter and also curse. You can have both.

Hannah (Host): You can have it all. And like, obviously there's like tons of stuff associated with like, who calls something good and how, what's the, what are the hidden expenses behind production quality for sure. And like amateurism is really interesting, but in 2018 you can produce a really listenable to podcast for

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nothing or next to nothing. So no excuses people, stop recording on your phones!

Lucia: Like next to nothing, as in the cost of making it, or that you don't make anything for it, or both?

Hannah (Host): I mean, no, you'll never, nobody's ever going to make any money off podcasts ever again. But yeah, for next to nothing in terms of equipment because you can just go to your library. Like I bet your public library has recording equipment.

Lucia: Oh, probably.

Hannah (Host): I mean, I know yours does because we have the same public library anyway. So the point of this particular episode, which you pitched and, so I'm just following your lead.

Lucia: Hi everyone, this is Secret Feminist Agenda and I am not Hannah McGregor. So I pitched this episode to Hannah, gosh, like three or four months ago. And I think I said well, "hey, no one's really interviewed you about the podcast and what it's like in the past year." So yeah, I thought that we would sit down and I would get to ask you questions about your process, and how it's been, and the future of the show. Like not to pressure you.

Hannah (Host): [Laughs]

Lucia: Like seven seasons and a movie, although in Secret Feminist Agenda movie would be swell.

Hannah (Host): And 3D.

Lucia: Oh yeah. I guess I'll start by asking you, how has the past year been? Very broad and open ended question.

Hannah (Host): Like in general or in terms of the podcasts?

Lucia: Yeah, I guess more, I mean I know when you started the podcast it was really this, this project that was, you wanted a podcast--

Hannah (Host): Oh my God, I started it a year ago!

Lucia: Yeah, like almost exactly to the day probably. Oh yeah. Happy anniversary.

Hannah (Host): Thank you.

Lucia: And when you started it was really this, as far as I understand, it was this project that was kind of like a side project for fun and you just wanted to start something cool. And now in the space of a year it's evolved to this amazing

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robust community of people, and listeners, and you have peer review, and you're working with the press. So yeah. I'm just wondering if you could reflect to a year ago and think about how things changed. Was this what you expected, or were there things that completely surprised you about the directions that it's taken?

Hannah (Host):

Yeah, so a big part of sort of how the podcast started was something that I've also experienced this summer, which is I haven't yet figured out how to use a research semester effectively. So, prior to this in my academic career, I was a student, and then I was a postdoc, and then I was a sessional, and none of those have research semesters. That is the summer semester that people who are not academics incorrectly referred to as being "off." And then that always causes academics to sort of laugh-cry because the idea is that that's the semester that you have to really get a significant amount of your research production done. And that's part of why tenure track jobs are so enviable is because you are in fact paid to do your research and your writing and your scholarly production. So, you know, I got through the first two teaching semesters of my job at SFU and I got to the research semester and was like, "What the fuck do I do? What am I? Who am I? What do I do? What is anything?" And so decided that I would just start this podcast and not explicitly as a research project at all, but just sort of as a like, "Oh God, I have any free time and I don't know what to do with myself when I have any free time, and I will just start a podcast. And I'll start a weekly podcast because I am just an unhinged person." So probably many people already know the origin story, which is that I already owned the URL and had owned the URL for years and had just been waiting for something to do with it, and then was like, "cool. I'm just gonna start a podcast about feminism where I talk to interesting feminists. That sounds like a really easy thing to do." And it wasn't until several months into making it. Probably several months in the making it that the aforementioned Siobhan McMenemy suggested that this podcast could be the podcast we used as the prototype, or the test case, for our project on peer reviewing scholarly podcasts and that. That all came together for me in a really interesting moment in my career when I really was trying to figure out what kind of scholar I wanted to be in this job that I had gotten, and what I wanted to prioritize, and how I wanted to do my work, and what, what would count as scholarship, and how he would think about all of those questions. And those have been really open ended for me since I started my job at SfF because I'm in an interdisciplinary department that doesn't have a particular attachment to me doing a particular kind of work. Whereas if I'd gotten a job in an English department, I think there would have been a very, I know that a lot of English departments there would have been very strong push to say, "publish single authored articles in respected peer reviewed journals and write a monograph so that you can get tenure," and that's how that works. But there's no sense that that's the expectation of the path that my career needs to follow in the department that I'm in. And that is terrifying and very liberating. And so a lot of the business of this year for me has been trying to figure out what I want my career to look like, and I think that there's been some interesting missteps in terms of, you know, maybe taking on some projects that have had emotional tolls that I didn't anticipate and that maybe maybe haven't

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paid off as much as I wanted them to. And just trying different things, you know, organizing events that, you know, aren't the kinds of events I've might have organized otherwise. Like I feel like a lot of it, like I've just been sort of experimenting and, and throwing a lotta, a lotta scholarly pasta at the wall. And sort of just thinking like, "is this the kind of thing I want to do? Or is this the kind of thing that I want to do?" And the thing that has really stuck is this podcast. It's the thing that that has undoubtedly been the most successful project that I've taken on so far in this job. And it surprises me constantly that anyone is willing to think of this as scholarly, not because of the quality of the podcast, but because I have so much fun making it. It's always fun. I like recording it. I love getting to talk to interesting people. I love the listeners. I love talking to people about the episodes. I love working with Kaarina. I love working with Siobhan. It's just like on occasion, like one episode in particular has received a lot of very negative, sort of, trolling attention. Like, so that's a bummer. But like that's not in the podcast's fault. The podcast is, is always great. And so I think there's that, that part of me that's like, "this is a lot of fun. It's probably not scholarly."

Lucia: That's really interesting because, I mean I'm also working with Siobhan on a book project and we had a conversation about you where we were like, Hannah, your work is really important and we want you to like see it as scholarly and like, "how do we convince Hannah to agree to this?" But that's really interesting because I know that, I mean one of the themes that you had throughout the semester was this idea of play. And I've been thinking a lot about this idea of like, especially with the kinds of work that we do, that this work is not supposed to be fun. But I know for instance, like Adrienne Maree Brown, who is an amazing feminist thinker and revolutionary has a new book coming out next year, which is all about like the pleasure and the joy of resistance work. So I'm kind of wondering how you square, yeah, that sense that you shouldn't be enjoying it with the fact that you really do enjoy it.

Hannah (Host): Yeah. I think I've been thinking that season three should have like a mini cluster on joy to sort of go with seasons two's cluster on play because I've been thinking a lot about joy and about joyfulness. And how joyfulness is the flip side of being a feminist killjoy, because for people who have actually read Sarah Ahmed's work on the killjoy, like her point is not the feminists should lead joyless existences. Her point is that a lot of the joys that we appear to be killing are the joys of the patriarchy, and the joys of white supremacy, and the joys of capitalism, and that you kill those joys to make space for real joy. And I like. I like thinking about, about joy a lot and I like thinking about play a lot. And you know, I think sort of the origin for this kind of thinking for me, I'm trying to think about like what it looks like for academia to be fun, or joyful, or playful really came from making Witch, Please with Marcel, who right from day one, Marcel was like, "This podcast is going to be silly. It's going to be fucking owl sound effects in it." [Sound Effect: Owl hoot] "It's going to be whimsical. It's about Harry Potter." And so it set this very silly tone from the beginning while we were doing exactly the thing that we're trained to do, which is close reading, and analyze, and discuss a set of texts. And that sort of the ability to find that space of, of joyfulness and silliness within our work was, I think, revelatory, I think for

both of us, definitely for me. And sort of gave me a moment to step back and look at how I'd been taught to be a critic and how so much of what I was taught was not to take joy and pleasure in the texts that I was reading or the that I was working with, but almost to treat them as my enemies. As though a book was a thing to be defeated by out thinking it, and alongside that is the sort of combative approach to scholarship which is that you prove that you are smart by pointing out the ways in which other people are dumb. So, so finding flaws in other scholarship. And as my career has progressed and I read more and more feminist scholarship, I've realized that it's really not necessary to do that. That you can build up ideas as a scholar by building on and reinforcing and amplifying the work that you love and value. And you can work on texts and subjects that bring you joy, and that doesn't mean that you stop thinking critically about them, and it doesn't mean that you stop engaging in difficult ways with them, but it means that your orientation is towards pleasure and joyfulness rather than towards sort of destruction, and dislike, and distancing. And that feels to me like a much more sustainable way to do our work. Which is like if I'm focusing on things that make me feel joyful, then I'm much less likely to get like, profoundly burnt out by this, by this quite hard job.

Lucia: Yeah. And then that's interesting for me because I'm thinking about like, the idea that we're mean, especially in academia, I think we're told that this is our vocation and we're supposed to, there's a sense of we're supposed to love the job that we're in, but the material we're supposed to have a profoundly different relationship with. But you mentioned the emotional toll of doing this work. So I guess my question is how do you deal with hard feelings? Right, like, you know, without needing you to go into specific details, but like what, how have you dealt with holding that space for yourself while being in the position of the podcast creator and sort of like the, the creator of this community?

Hannah (Host): I asked, when you and I were sitting in a different round table at that same conference in Regina. A round table on public intellectuals in the age of social media. We, we arrived late for this particular round table and all of the chairs were taken, so we sat on a table in the back and it felt like a real bad ass. Like "Hehe. I'm a bad kid. I came late. I'm sitting on a table." And during the Q&A I asked one of the speakers Julie Rack, who is a friend and a collaborator about this question of sort of the emotional toll of doing public feminist scholarship, which I think for all of us who, who do this work, that involves putting ourselves out there in a particular mode, right? As a kind of, as an expert or as a public figure or as a person who starts conversations publicly, you know, like there's a vulnerability involved in that and there's an emotional toll in that and for early scholars for precarious scholars that shit can really like, it's risky for your career and it's risky for your mental health and it can really, really burn you out fast. And so I was asking Julie, you know like, what we do about that. Recognizing that that public scholarship is something that the university loves an absolutely wants more of, but in most ways the university has absolutely not figured out how to support us doing it. And Julie talked about the really important history in feminist activism of sort of collaboratively taking on difficult burdens, and you know, the sort of decentering, the idea that the individual never needs to be the

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locus of, of any kind of attack because there's always a community there that is able to sort of like, join in and help. And she talked to him very sort of concrete ways about, about how we might do that for one another, but it really made me think if you go way back in the archives of Secret Feminist Agenda in a very early episode, I talk about how bad I am asking for help and that is a thing I have gotten much better at over the past year, much better. And part of it is counseling, absolutely. Undeniably. And part of I think was necessity of sort of having a pretty hard year and needing to learn to sort of ask people for help when things get difficult and not, you know, I think that there's this weird way that sort of as like the host of this podcast, I seem like the authority or the person in charge, but it's like I'm just some asshole. So not buying into that thinking that like, I have to somehow present myself as impermeable and unharmable, but like, it's okay to not be okay. It's okay to need help. It's okay to tap out. It's okay to draw on your community. And that has very much become, become the case for me, is that like I just draw on the resources of people who like will help me in all kinds of ways, including, you know, if I have an episode that has gotten negative feedback, being like, "can you listen to this for me and tell me what you think?" And other people helping me with resources to avoid doxing and, you know, professional resources, and then just emotional support. Somebody in my department sent me an article recently that I actually would like to cite. Ooh, "'I Get By With a Little Help From My Friends': The Ecological Model and Support for Women's Scholars Experiencing Online Harassment." It's by Jaigris Hodson, Chandell Gosse, George Veletsianos, and Shandell Houlden. And it is basically about sort of the rise of online abuse of women scholars, which aligns with the ways in which people are doing public, like scholars are becoming more public, particularly around social media, but that harassment disproportionately affects women scholars and particularly women of color scholars. And what, like how women respond to that and how their communities respond. And essentially it sort of makes the argument that like there's multiple levels, so like there's interpersonal support, and then there's support from the departments, and then there's support from the institution, and that all of those are necessary but they all play a different role, and that, so what we have as a sort of ecology of support. And it really, it felt to me like quite an accurate representation of like what, what I have experienced over the past year in terms of like, yeah, just needing, just needing that community help.

Lucia: Yeah. One of the things that I wanted to talk about, because I know we've talked about this at Congress in Regina on panels, but the process of going through peer review and open peer review in particular, which was really interesting process because I've never seen something where there's that kind of openness. But also you had a chance to respond publicly to those. And "critique" and is, is, is a, is a word that doesn't really, "feedback" doesn't also seem to fit. But, yeah. How did, how was that experience of that level of engagement? Because it's like a really solid indepth, like if you go on the website, it's long.

Hannah (Host): It's so long.

Lucia: Get a snack. But it's so good, but like get a snack.

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Hannah (Host): Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Get a snack. Pour yourself a glass of wine. Yeah, it is long. I was really nervous about the peer review, and for context, you should know about me that any nervousness about peer review I might've had when I've submitted my first article for peer review in 2009 has, has not lasted those nine years because like you just, you get used to it. And sometimes you get ungenerous and unhelpful peer reviews. In my experience, for the most part, you get really useful feedback and it is even more useful if you can sort of release a sense of, of personal attachment to your work. But it is impossible for me to release a sense of personal attachment to this podcast because it is so, it's so personal. I mean it's my voice talking. It is also substantially less, like it's edited, but it's not scripted. And it's not like I write a draft and then spend weeks going through and refining the language, like it's often very off the cuff and so it feels like it feels vulnerable again to, to overuse that word. And so I was really, really nervous to see what the peer reviews were going to say and, and after I read them— so it's two scholars, Cheryl Ball and Amanda French, both of whom have a background in sort of non traditional scholarly publishing, media scholarship and are coming at the from the perspective of sort of those questions of what constitutes the scholarly. And both of their responses were this very helpful reminder for me that peer review is really great because it's sustained thoughtful engagement with your work by people who are trained to do that. I love the responses that I get from listeners. I am going to ask for feedback on season two from listeners. I get informal feedback all the time. I think that is wonderful and I, I incorporate it actively into, into the podcast as I go. And at the same time the peer review, it's just a different perspective. Like it's a really different sort of way of thinking about things, which is also the way that I was trained to think about things that is coming in really helpful ways at these questions of like how do we define the scholarly? Where does work like this fit into what we value in the university? You know, the structures of the university and how it separates out service and research and how that might not make space for certain kinds of scholarship, and, and how we can push back against that. And, and what other thinking has happened around those, around those topics that might be useful for us in the work that we're doing and, and these things that I was like, "oh yeah, no, this is wonderful. Like this is so helpful and so thoughtful." And at the end of the day so generous that, you know, two people sat down and put the time into providing these very helpful responses. And the process of sitting down and responding to them really gave me a chance to sort of crystallize in writing where my own thinking about the podcast was at. And, and as I've said on this podcast before, writing forces me to think in a different way than the sort of thinking out loud that I do on the podcast. And so it was really useful to sit down and be like, "okay, why have I made the decisions that I've made? You know, "am I attached to them? How might I think about them differently? What here do I need to sort of go off and think about more in different ways? How are these ideas pushing me?" I really, like if anybody out there is interested in the sort of the thinking that we're doing around around the podcast scholarship, I really recommend going in and reading the peer reviews. They're not written in a way that you will find sort of forbiddingly scholarly. They're written very sort of openly and, and generously and readably. And really sort of, there's some really interesting stuff in there,



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particularly about about how we define scholarship and what kind of work we think scholarly production is doing. Yeah. Yeah. It was a really great process. And now I find myself really looking forward to the next round rather than dreading it.

Lucia636: It's interesting. One of the things I've been thinking about— because I'm working on a grant application right now— are these metrics of what scholarly success is like. And the first is definitely the scholarly monograph and the book. And so often I see scholars who will say, "well, you know, I've written a lot of journal articles and it adds up to be about the same as the book," which is, but why is that all with the metric? But then the other thing that I wanted to talk about is this, and we were just talking about this earlier, but international research impact and the way that funding bodies in particular more and more are looking towards what is your impact beyond Canada? Like how is your— this sounds really gross— how's your research product and export, right? That the nation can benefit from? And I'm really curious how podcasting, you know, in a sense that in anyone can listen to Secret Feminist Agenda. And you have, you know, listeners from all over, but that's not documented in these formal research collaborations, and the types of formal engagement with other people that the university wants.

Hannah (Host): Yeah, I mean the question of county and I think is a really interesting one and one that, you know, if you read the peer reviews, you'll see the peer reviewer sort of pushing against it. You know, Siobhan wrote the peer review questions and she put that question of how do we count the podcast in there? And you know, both the reviewers were like, "Guh. I don't want to answer this question," because it's hard and because it's in some ways just like shouldn't be the point. Like we shouldn't be trying to sort of tally up scholarship, but like, but we, we are working within the neoliberal university and we and we are right. We have to work within these structures. And the same question came up at the round table that we did at Congress or somebody asked, you know, "well why do you care about, about fitting this into the structures of the university?" And I was like, well you know, we need it, we need it to count so that people can build careers on this stuff. And basically the answer was like, "well scholars have always done other stuff that doesn't count, like get over it, do the work that you need to to get a job and then tenure and then do the other work that matters on top of that." But like if we want anything like a sustainable version of being an academic, it would be really nice for that to not continue to be the default that like, you have to publish the same amount and then do the extra thing on top of it. And I would really love to imagine part of the work that Siobhan and I are doing here as like starting to build the infrastructure that will allow people to do this work, to like do something like a podcast and have that count in lieu of a monograph. And so we have to ask those questions about counting. Right? And so, so, you know, international engagement is another version of that, of that counting. That like, if I'm applying for competitive SSHRC grant, you know, will they look at a podcast with an international listenership that has interviewed people from around the world and perceive that as evidence of international collaboration? I don't know. Part of my job as a scholar will be to

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convince people of that. I can't remember who this was, but somebody was recently telling me that you can do absolutely anything you want as a scholar, as long as you can build a convincing narrative around it. So you know, do the work that you want to do and then convince your tenure review board that, that work matters, and convince the grant application readers that that work matters. And, and so I guess that's part of it is sort of like figuring out how to build this work up so that it's perceived as, as a legitimate form of scholarly production. And, and it leads into all kinds of really sort of messy questions for me. A question that I come up against all the time is, you know, one of the on its face, strongest forms of evidence that podcasts are valuable public scholarship is the listenership. So, you know, Secret Feminist Agenda has almost 5,000 subscribers, and according to my Feedburner stats, every new episode about 1,200 people download it right away. That is in terms of numbers and impact that massively exceeds the impact any article I write will have in my entire career combined, like by so much. But I am very wary of a numbers-based approach to scholarly value. That worries the fuck out of me because the things that sell best are hate. It is always, it is always the thing that does best. The scholars who are huge, huge successes are people like Jordan Peterson who are preaching hate and fear. And sort of like click bait version of scholarship is a really, really dangerous direction for scholarship to go in. And as a colleague of mine has said, like part of the task of the university has got to be preserving a space for unpopular thinking. And and thinking that has no immediate obvious relevance in the present day. And so how do you balance a sense that impact matters and that finding a public matters, with a sense that work that can't find a public is also important?

Lucia: Which is interesting because I feel like so many of the cultural narratives that we have, we're like Vincent van Gogh never sold one painting in his lifetime and look where he is now. It's like, dead.

Hannah (Host): [Laughs]

Lucia: And people are making--

Hannah (Host): As we will all be one day.

Lucia: And people are making millions of dollars off of his artwork. But yeah, it's hard because I don't know what metrics to use. You know, it's that sort of thing where like, "well how many paintings is worth a photograph? And then a dance." And like, yeah, and I want to go back to that idea of like just, just do what you have to do to get there. And then do the, like the revolution can wait. But it's never, like we know who's, who's doing that kind of work. You know what I mean? Someone was telling me the other day— was it you, maybe? I can't remember, someone— but the idea that if you don't do the work, there's going to be someone, kind of mediocre, who's got a lot of privilege, who's going to waltz in and happily take that, take that position. And I don't know how to balance the absolute ridiculous emotional and mental toll of trying to do work that pushes, pushes against boundaries, explodes boundaries, crosses

boundaries while also realizing that is so hard to explain, to have to put it in this language. And that's the thing, lot of these projects too. I know, I'm writing this grant proposal and someone's like, "well, you know, just got to make it kind of conservative for the thing," and I'm like, "it's a project about Blackness. This is inherently and like Black Lives Matter is an inherently nonconservative point of view." There's, there's certain projects that just they demand another form of expression and they're never going to be easily made conservative or palatable to the powers that be.

Hannah (Host):

Yeah. I've, I've, I've talked before about the sort of advice that many of us are given as young scholars, which is like play the game until you have tenure. And I get that, you know, I have not. In many ways, my friend Heather once described me as the most ruthlessly professionalized grad student she had ever met, because I was professionalized within an inch of my life. And I went to the right conferences and I published in the right places and I did the international collaborations and I, and I, you know, I, I checked off all of the boxes and I produced the scholarly career that was expected of me so that nobody could look at my CV and say, "no, you have not done what you need to do." And it's not a coincidence, like the way I was professionalized I think is almost impossible to survive for somebody who is not like white and middle class. Like for all kinds of reasons, but I've got real. It got real concrete evidence that I can point to to suggest as much. But like, that version of being a scholar is one, is one that is not available to everyone. And then that idea of like do all of those things and then do this other work on top of it or, or do the right work now and then and, and wait to do the radical work later when it's safer. Like obviously at some point— I actually would link this back to Witch, Please as well, as also being the sort of point in my career when I like stopped doing the right things and started doing at least some of the things that felt like they mattered to me. And the past couple of years I have, I have sort of leaned quite hard in the like, do the things that matter to you direction and I can see why people recommend that you wait until after tenure. Let me put it that way. But, and I think that that is out of a sense of, of, of concern. Like I think when people give you that advice, they're giving you that advice because they want to tell you the tools that will set you up the best to succeed, but it's like if we're only allowed to succeed on very specific terms, then, then all we're doing is perpetuating a very narrow notion of success. And this is like, I'm thinking in terms of scholarly careers, but God, we could expand this to all manner of things. Right? That like, if what you think of as your job as a mentor is teach people how to be you, I think sort of there's something, there's something lacking there. As opposed to, you know, trying to figure out how to, how to open up space for people to sort of tackle things differently. But like even there, I remained divided because like reality is reality and we're working with broken institutions, and if you know that like a student that you're working with isn't going to stand a chance at this thing that they're applying for, unless they've checked this other thing off, then like you'd be doing them a disservice not to say like, "you have to do this thing, go do this thing." And so yeah, that, that, that tension between sort of conservatism and following the rules and then, and then breaking open space to do things

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differently, and to experiment, and to, and to think radically I think is one that we're all, that we're all kind of like negotiating.

Lucia: Yeah, for sure. And I mean I think part of the thing is too, that sort of wait until your tenured to do radical work, often comes from people whose embodied existence is not seen as radical. Do you know what I mean? Like people who have normative gender presentations, or people who have, are thin, or people who conform into these, you know, people who are white. Like people who conform to these ideas of what we, what we think a scholar looks like and, and is. And so it's sort of like, essentially that tells a lot of people like, "wait until the university's changed and then you can be in it," which is an impossible situation. And I know for myself, I decided this year I'm not submitting work to academic journals anymore because I don't want to.

Hannah (Host): [Laughs]

Lucia: Like I just, I just don't want to. And I think there might be some like, "oh no, well you don't know, is this like a wise thing? I mean you want to get your CV..." And I'm like I just, I just don't care anymore. And part of that is the privilege of, you know, I had a job completely outside of academia and I know I can go back. So there is a privilege that allows me to be like, "fuck academia. I'm not going to write, I'm going to publish on my blog again like I used to," or like tweet or whatever. Although I did get a message from a friend telling me that my Twitter thread on Moana is being put on a syllabus. Like how do I put that on my CV? Right. And the thing we're also having to not only do the work, but then having to find these languages so that we can present the work to the institution in these ways that are legible and that will get us money so we can pay our bills.

Hannah (Host): I mean that, that question of like, you know, wait to do your radical work and like how some ways of being embodied just are radical, and that it's like I literally can't wait until tenure because this is who I am. You know, and that, that sort of expectation of, of passing, or concealing, or closeting, or whatever the sort of language is of like put on a cardigan to cover your tattoos, groom your hair in a quote unquote professional style. You know, like all of the, like, make your gender presentation of normative and like all of these things, which are versions of the professional advice that we get in terms of like, this is how you dress professionally for a job interview, you know. Yeah, it assumes, it assumes that you don't bring radicalness with you inherently.

Lucia: Right? Like it's this idea of, I haven't seen Sorry To Bother You yet, but I think there's, I, I'm, from what I've seen, they're sort of discussion of how for some racialized folks, like if you, if somebody hears their voice and they make assumptions about people's race. And for sure, like I know that when I'm in Oakland I speak completely differently than I do when I'm at a conference, for instance. Right? But yeah, it's, it's so, it's so frustrating because I, there's, some of us can't wait. We can't wait, we can't wait for liberation--

Hannah (Host): [Laughs]

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Lucia: On the one hand, because like lots of us are being killed out here. But we also can't wait for the university because that's always the thing, right? Like just, just wait. Just hold up and we'll abolish slavery, and you know what I mean? Like this--

Hannah (Host): Just wait patiently.

Lucia: Just wait patiently. Civility, this discourse of civility, which is coming back. Right? And I think that for me, I'm really seeing academic discourse, and particularly the language of funding as white civility. And making that connection to, for myself has been really, really profound in realizing that there's only so far I can adopt that without A) compromising my work or having to abandon the word completely because it just, it just won't fit into that framework.

Hannah (Host): Yeah. How can you do work that fundamentally cuts to the heart of whiteness as a structure while maintaining the status quo of white civility in terms of how you do that work? I mean, and people have, like people have been forced to do so, but it's a, it's a fundamentally unsustainable proposition. I'm reminded of when I was still a graduate student, I witnessed an incident between a fellow graduate student and an established tenured professor, in which he sexually harassed her in public verbally and she shut him down quite aggressively in a way that he found very offensive because he understood himself to absolutely have the right to speak to her however the hell he wanted. And it was obviously just a joke and anyone who knew him, knew it was a joke. And where did she get off anyway? And everybody was so uncomfortable. Like everybody who was there was so uncomfortable because of her, not because of him, because everybody in that room was used to men treating women like that, and nobody was used to a much younger woman being like, "fuck you, don't talk to me like that." And he, you know, I knew this, I worked with the senior male academic and he said like, "You need to have a conversation with your friend about academia and how it works. She needs to know that I could be on a hiring committee one day and she doesn't want to leave me with this impression that she's so unprofessional." And I went and sat this friend down and was like, "listen, I know you come from an activist background, but you can't act like this in academia. It's too conservative a field. You either have to suck it up and learn to live with this shit or you need to go do something else because there's, there's just no space for that in academia." I have apologized to this person since. I have apologized on multiple occasions to this person for that extremely incorrect advice that I gave that indicated the degree to which I had internalized a misogynistic understanding of what professionalism looks like. And it was years, it took me years to unlearn that, And it took me years more to unlearn the degree to which I had internalized white supremacy and ableism. The internalizing of ableism in the university structure is fucking off the charts and so hard to unlearn, and that like figuring out how the way I was taught to comport myself, the way I was, the common senses that were given to me as how academia just works are rooted in ableism, misogyny, and white supremacy like profoundly. And, and I still find myself, you know, moments where you're at a conference and everybody is acting exactly the same because it's the way

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we've all been taught to act at conferences, and then there's somebody who is acting differently in terms of how they present themselves, in terms of how they've dressed, in terms of, you know, how they speak, the kinds of kind of presentation they've prepared, and I will feel that gut reaction of discomfort because of the degree to which I've internalized that. Like, "no, no, no. That is not how you behave in this space. You behave in a very particular way. You do not have cleavage at a conference. You do not..." Like this shit that like nobody had to teach me. I just saw and reproduced, and was praised for reproducing, and internalized as valuable because that is how this shit works.

Lucia: Yeah, and I mean it's hard because there's this fine line between changing your behavior because you've been or, or trying to change someone else's behavior because you've internalized it and being like, "Holy Shit, I'm so scared for your safety." Like I'm so terrified for your physical safety, emotional safety, your career because academics are passive aggressive as fuck. Right? And that's the thing. Like you never know who's going to be on a hiring committee and who's friend is going to be on a hiring committee, and it makes me really terrified. But I also wonder, and I'm curious if you feel this too, if you've sort of past the point of no return.

Hannah (Host): [Laughs]

Lucia: Like I feel I, I realized that a moment, I'm just like, once you've invoiced the president of your university to pay you for activist work, you've kind of past a certain point. Once you've run your mouth on Twitter about Can Lit, at a certain point you, you really cannot go back to those same ways of being. Like I know for me, I can't go back to, yeah, polite white civility that I learned and keeping my mouth shut. And do I do it in certain situations? Yes. Like the Internet is a very unsafe space for many people. I'm very lucky that it has been relatively safe for me, or safe in different ways and unsafe in different ways. But I'm curious about what happens for folks who, by their very existence but also by virtue of the work that they do, cannot go back.

Hannah (Host): Yeah. And I, it's interesting because I think for all of the reasons that it was comparatively easy for me to professionalize conventional and sanctioned ways, it would be comparatively easy for me to say "sorry for those couple of years when I was being weird. Anyway, have a monograph," like I think I could. I think, I think it would be a lot of work for me to be past that point of no return, and I think the point of no return, you know, as we were talking about earlier, like for some people the point of no return is the moment they walk into the institution and like, are visibly trans. Like, sorry you, you are going to be sort of legible within the institution in a way that means that you never get to choose between sliding into its accepted norms and not. Like, and I'm sorry I say that like it's an absolute into the future, which I don't actually anticipate, but like in the present day of the institution. Like these are, these are choices that some of us have and that other people do not have. But I also, I also think like there's other ways, in terms of the point of no return, that like I have gotten pretty committed to the idea that like scholarship should be, should be working hard to make it's way

outside of the university. And so I have a hard time imagining myself being like, "never mind." You know what? Even then, but even then, as I say it, like in moments when the consequences of doing my work publicly are particularly unpleasant, I think to myself, "I could stop this podcast tomorrow, shut down my Twitter account and go publish three articles on the history of the book and in a year this would all be gone." Like I could go back and it's always there. And it's like, such is the insidious temptation of, of the institution and of institutionalization that like, if it is available to you to slide back into that beautiful well worn path, it's I think a sort of constant like, "nope, nope, nope, off the path, nope. Get off the path." Which is such a different experience for people for whom that path is literally not navigable.

Lucia: Absolutely. And I mean I know that I've been thinking about my own work too that, yeah, I faced risks for sure, but as a light skinned person, not nearly as many risks as folks with dark skin. And you know, for a lot of people, I mean it's, it's been in my life in different ways. The point of no return in terms of like, being within white supremacy is being alive. Like it is birth, right? And it's really interesting to me to have conversations with people who, I think because of, you know, Me Too was a catalyst in, in very particular ways I think within the academy, the kinds of work that's been done around institutional like harassment in institutions. But sort of realizing that for some people they never had to say anything or speak out and it's very confronting, and I think that would be very confronting if you've spent 30, 40 years in an institution where you didn't have to, or you didn't want to, or someone else was going to.

Hannah (Host): Yeah, or it was never a problem for you. I feel and this, this might be presentist. You know, it's not, it's actually, it's actually in part just sort of looking at the historical landscape. I feel very much that we are living through a moment of significant cultural shift, which is why everything feels so fucking hard right now. Because a lot of simultaneously a lot of things that have historically been taken for granted, sort of from a normative perspective, are being shifted. And that is rape culture, and it is white supremacy, and how white supremacy functions in modernity, and it is global capitalism and its devastating impacts on the environment. And like, it's not to say that the stuff happened two years ago or a year ago, because there's long activist and intellectual traditions that this work is emerging out of, but that's always the case with these historical moments, right? There's a long, long, long tail leading up to it into these moments. You know, what friend of the podcast Erin Wunker has been referring to as "rupture events" that sort of tear the world apart in this way. And I think we can think of Me Too as a rupture event. We can think about the Trump presidency as a rupture event. We, in Canada, you know, in Can Lit, which is a field we both work in UBC accountable is a rupture event. You know, there are these moments that sort of break things apart and force us to rethink how they're going to fit together. And there's a lot of rupture events happening simultaneously and there's all kinds of ways to account for that, including the fact that we're a decade into a long and awful recession, while also watching like an increasingly undeniable ecological devastation impact the globe. Like there's all kinds of things happening right now that are making the world the

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way it is, and are making the world feel really hard and scary and everything feel really, really high stakes in a way that I think for many of those people, who have spent their lives and their careers, whether that's, you know, a decade or seven decades— I know that people are older than 70. Sorry, I don't know why I chose seven— have maybe spent that time thinking that stuff isn't their problem and just not needing, not feeling forced to react. And I think a lot of people in different ways are sort of going through a moment of being like, "Oh shit, I don't get to opt out of this anymore." Whatever the "this" is. And I think there's just a million things to say about that. But within our particular sort of small world of academic thinking, I think there's some pressure being applied to the idea that anybody's work isn't political, or that anybody's work is neutral in terms of how it's conducted. We're really putting pressure on the politics of how we produce knowledge, how we circulate knowledge, whose knowledge is legitimate and whose isn't, and that's breaking open all kinds of things and really, really interesting and productive ways. And it's not a coincidence that it's aligning with the worst job market that's ever existed in academia. And it's just leading to this moment where we're all really having to think through, rethink what we think scholarship is. And is scholarship only something that happens within the university or does it exist outside of it? Is it only practiced by people who have tenure track jobs. You know, like, like a lot of these, a lot of these questions are sort of are, are I was going to say percolating, but that's much too gentle. Are coming to a boiling point. Yes.

Lucia: Yeah. No, it's interesting. There's an article I was rereading yesterday by Sherronda J. Brown and it talks about, you know, the anti-intellectualism of Black Studies that does not recognize that like people in Flint don't need to read Rob Nixon's *Slow Violence* to understand like what the fuck is happening in their city. And I think that's really tough for marginalized folks, like queer and trans folks, racialized folks. Like what do we do with the people who are doing, who are doing that work in our community, while recognizing that our existence within university is also a difficult and political thing. But I think I'll make this my last question because it, it occurs to me in this moment of rupture, looking forward to season three and potentially beyond, what is the work that you hope to keep doing?

Hannah (Host): The most exciting thing for me about Secret Feminist Agenda has been the opportunity to sit down and have the kinds of conversations that I don't have space for elsewhere in my life, and that that might be because I have like, in some cases it's because I have brilliant and interesting friends, but the fact of the matter when you have academic friends is that you very often don't talk about the content of your work with each other. You talk about like shit that's happening in your life because your friends.

Lucia: Stardew Valley.

Hannah (Host): Yeah. You Stardew Valley at length and describe your characters and your priorities to each other because that's what matters. You talk about playing stickers with toddlers. Like you talk about the urgent matter of life. You know,



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so that's one form of it. And then another form of it is, you know, having what I've done in Vancouver, which is whenever there was somebody I really wanted to make be my friend, I was like, "hello, would you be on my podcast please?" [Evil Laugh] So many of you fell for that. Or, or people who I admire or find really fascinating, or people who wouldn't have crossed my radar except that they're like, publicist reached out to me and was like, "do you want to interview this person?" And I'm like, "What?! Oh my God, I'm talking to somebody who would never have talked to you otherwise." And so a thing I would like to keep doing in season three is sort of identifying the kinds of conversations I haven't had yet, the limitations of sort of who I've been looking to, you know, one, one thing that I really noticed about the podcast, I think there's, there's all kinds of really sort of practical reasons why this has been the case, but it's really been North American feminists, and I would really like to talk to more feminists speaking from a lot of different global contexts and sort of figuring out like, okay, what do I need to do to make that happen? Like, how do I do that? I had a real fucking pipe dream where I was like, "oh yeah, I'll do like a mini, like a sort of cluster of episodes about joy." And then I was like, "maybe Sara Ahmed would be on my podcast." Like, I don't know. She, she blurbed my friend Erin's book, so I know she's a real human. Maybe she would like to talk to me about joy on a podcast. Hard to say. So yeah, I want to keep sort of pushing myself to have those conversations that I, that I wouldn't have otherwise with people who I might not talk to or, might not talk to in this way otherwise. Which is part of why I'm going to, again, do what I did at the end of season two, which just asked people like, "who do you want me to talk to?" Either specifics or, or general, you know, like are there, are there, like I think I have not talked to enough trans women. I've talked to, to trans nonbinary folks, but like that a thing that stands out to me, I would actually really love to talk to like a trans masc person or a trans man about sort of feminism and trans masculinity, I think would be really interesting. So yeah, like there are, there are particular kinds of conversations that I'm really hoping, hoping to have. But yeah, that's, that's, that's my goal.

Lucia: Well thanks.

Hannah (Host): Thank you. This was fun.

Lucia: Yeah. It was good.

Hannah (Host): You're great.

Lucia: You're great.

Hannah (Host): You're great. You're great. [Music: "Truth Hurts" by Lizzo]

Hannah (Host): If you'd like to learn more about my work, you can always head over to [hannahmcgregor.com](http://hannahmcgregor.com) or follow me on Twitter @hkpmcgregor. For Lucia's work, visit [empathywarrior.ca](http://empathywarrior.ca), or follow her @empathywarrior. You can tweet about the podcast using the hashtag #secretfeministagenda. Check out the show notes

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at [secretfeministagenda.com](http://secretfeministagenda.com). And don't forget to leave a comment with some feedback on this season. I'd love to hear from you. The podcast theme song is "Mesh Shirt" by Mom Jeans off their album Chub Rub. You can download the entire album on [freemusicarchive.org](http://freemusicarchive.org), or follow them on Facebook. My theme song was "Truth Hurts" by Lizzo, who is my fucking hero. Secret Feminist Agenda is recorded on the traditional and unceded territory of the Musqueam, Squamish, Tsleil-Waututh first nations, where I'm grateful to live and work. This has been Secret Feminist Agenda. Pass it on. [Music: "Mesh Shirt" by Mom Jeans]