

## Episode 2.16 Feelings Are Dumb (but poetry is cool) with beni xiao and Tin Lorica

May 4, 2018

Hannah (Host): [Music: "Mesh Shirt" by Mom Jeans] Hi, I'm Hannah McGregor and this is *Secret Feminist Agenda*. We did it. We completed the first thematic episode cluster and came out all the better for it. I could probably have made episodes about play in different capacities for the rest of the season and there'll probably be more episodes that fit the theme in the future, but for now I wanted to open things back up for some thematically unrelated episodes, like this one where I talked to two extremely rad poets about why poetry is extremely rad. So here we go. Beni Xiao is a chronically ill, 22 year old, queer Chinese poet and oral storyteller. Their debut book, a collection of poems entitled *Bad Egg* was published by Rahila's Ghost Press in November 2017. Beni is very into lipstick and indirect sunlight. They live on unceded Coast Salish land. Tin Lorica, who heads up, Beni sometimes calls "Justine" in this episode, is a Philippinx poet and stand up comedian residing on unceded Coast Salish territories. They are an Aries sun with a Cancer moon. They're working on the poetry manuscript. They swear.

Beni: I'm Beni Xiao and I'm a Virgo. That's all I got.

Hannah (Host): [Laughs]

Tin: I'm Tin Lorica. I'm an Aries sun and a Cancer moon. I'm also a poet.

Beni: Oh, I should've mentioned that.

Tin: And comedian.

Beni: Should I redo mine?

Hannah (Host): Nope, absolutely not. No, no. So you're both poets and this, this particular conversation emerges I think in large part via the beautiful fairy godmother ask power of Dina Del Bucchia, who we were at a reading and I saw you, is it Tin? You were reading there and Dina, we were chatting afterwards and Dina came up to us and said, "you should do an episode of *Secret Feminist Agenda* about poetry." And I was like, "God, I mean if you say so. Yes, absolutely. Absolutely. We're into it." And I'm really excited for that because I am by training a literature scholar and don't do a lot of episodes about literature and I think there is this part of me that is afraid that like, if I lean too hard into the like, "let's nerd out about words and how amazing they are that," that will lose

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listeners. But we're going to talk about poetry for awhile. So I'm going to start with a really like poetry 101 question, which is I like to know why you write poetry.

Beni: I wasn't one of those people that like, have always been writing and whatever. Like, I didn't read. I mean I did read a lot when I was growing up, but it was like YA novels, you know, like it wasn't like I was in high school reading like, Hemingway or whatever.

Hannah (Host): You didn't miss a thing.

Beni: Good to know. Like, yeah, I wasn't someone who was writing poetry because I was into poetry. It's just that like, I was writing because I was like, you know, I have an idea and I'd be like, "I need to write this down." And I had no idea what I was doing. It was just, I had a collection of notes on my phone that were just like little ideas and I like, it didn't click that I was even writing, you know, it was just like a habit I had. And then at some point, I think at the end of high school, I took this creative writing class. It was called The Writer's Craft, and we did a unit on poetry. And like, I mean even the poetry we were reading in that class was like, contemporary, very, like, "the tree's below and the..." you know? And I was like, it still didn't click. Even then I was like, this isn't, you know, what I was doing. I was just like in this class, whatever. And then after high school in university, I was at UBC, and just like randomly I decided to do a creative writing class, like because it fit in my schedule. It was like Creative Writing 101 with Amber Dawn who's awesome.

Hannah (Host): Good person to take a Creative Writing 101 with. Wow.

Beni: Right? And I just kinda was like, "oh, I like that, that writer's craft class. Like, I'll do this class." And I was taking it and we did poetry and the poems that she brought in for us to look at we're like, a little more modern. And then after that I kinda got into like, I was like, "maybe I'll check this out," and I found a lot of like the American like, alt-lit writers and was like, "Oh, oh this is what I'm doing!" And then after that I was like, "I'm writing poetry!" And then I got really into all those writers and then was like, "oh my God, this is a thing that exists and I'm doing it!" And then that's how I, it's not because I was like, "I love poems, touching people's emotions with my words." It was just like, I was doing and I have no idea what it was, and then I found it and it was an exciting day.

Tin: Actually the first time I started writing poetry was like, in grade five. No one told me to do it. I'd never really read poetry before. I think the only poem that had read at that point and I was like, "oh, that's poetry?" because I've, I've heard, heard about it, but like I didn't know what it was. And then my class did a weird presentation. Like, we were all like, dressed in yellow and we all had to recite like, at the same time in front of the entire school "Daffodils?"

Hannah (Host): Oh yeah, the Wordsworth poem.

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Tin: Yeah. Yes. And then, and then like a month later or something, I started writing a poem because there was like a poetry contest at school. Like no one, no one really, no one else that I knew like, I was writing poetry, so I won first prize. But I didn't, I don't know, I didn't like start writing poetry again until two years ago. I think that just like came out of going through a breakup with someone that I was for three years and then I ended up being in like, a long distance relationship with someone who is also another queer person of color, who was also South Asian, southeast Asian. And then it's just like fucked up my entire life. I was like, "oh, I have all these feelings and people always tell me that I have a way with words. So I'm just gonna start writing poetry. And also I'm funny." So yeah.

Hannah (Host): [Laughs] Yeah. Okay. I am really interested in sort of the genres that sort of you found your way into poetry via because you're, Beni, your description of like keeping a list of ideas resonates so much with what your poetry is like, which is so often like, "here's some ideas!" And like, you know, I was just rereading *Bad Egg*, which actually came with me on my writing retreat this week, where I brought only things that would inspire me to try to burn the current Can-lit establishment down. And I was just rereading it, and there's a number of sort of list poems in there that are like, "here's a number of premises or a number of ideas or advice, good or bad." So like, I know I just described your poetry, but now I'm going to turn it into a question for you, Tin, which is: which came first, poetry or stand up, and how those for you inflect each other or don't? Like, people said you had a way with words and were funny. Is it because you were doing standup already and did that sort of feed into your poetry, or are they separate genres for you?

Tin: The poetry came first because I decided to sign up for Telling It Bent. It was this creative writing program that was put on by the Frank Theater. Do you know the theater? Yeah, Local queer theatre company. And a Katie Sly who's who was like, facilitating the program. I think they went through a similar program in Toronto's, I think it's called Buddies and Bad Times, and it was like, weekly meetings with other like, queer youth. Like half of it, half of it, was like queer youth of color. It was really nice. And we all kind of like, collaborated with our own individual works and put together a show at The Cultch at the end of it. I don't have any like background in theater. And all I had was my poetry and then when I did the audition I was like, "oh, I'm sorry. Like I'm, I'm too shy to, you know, read my own words. Like, I've never, I've never done this before. I just, I just wanted to try it out." I'm still not the best at being onstage, and I wasn't in drama class in high school.

Hannah (Host): [Laughs] I was.

Tin: So yeah, yeah. I feel like a lot of queer people were able to channel their queerness through the drama class. I was not able to do that. I had to hold it in for so long and then I found poetry. So yeah, the poetry came first and when I did the performance at The Cultch it involved like, me standing on top of a chair and reading a poem. It was, it felt really serious and like, it felt really vulnerable

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to me, and then all of a sudden people started laughing. And I didn't know what to do with those line breaks because I had not expected that. So I was kind of forced to pause like, at each line. And then when I left, Katie came up to me and was like, "you got like seven laugh breaks. You know, you, you killed it out there." So that was when I kind of decided maybe I should write material for standup. Yeah. Does that answer all your questions?

Hannah (Host):

No exhausting my questions. That's really interesting because you are so, you are so funny in your readings. And the sort of question of when poetry isn't is not funny, I think as part of the sort of problem that a lot of people have. People who don't think of themselves as poetry readers or don't think of themselves as poets, I think often think of it as a very serious, and sort of self-serious and self interest in genre. Right? Poetry is for serious people. And when you go to like, the right kind of poetry reading, they are hilarious. But I think it really depends on the crowd. Right? It's not just the material itself, it's also the community that you're reading it to, and does it resonate with people in a way that is funny or you know, cause sometimes that laughter is like, "I recognize this thing. You're talking to me in a way I haven't been spoken to before." I was talking to Sam Nock, who is one of the other poets at your reading, who has been tweeting recently about putting together a poetry collection, and I'm like stoked as hell about it. But she was saying that the difference in how her poetry is interpreted in an audience primarily of white settlers versus how it is interpreted when she reads it to other Indigenous people, is that like, Indigenous people get that her work is hilarious, and white people are like, "this poetry is making me uncomfortable." And like, that registers really differently in terms of how people do and do not laugh at what she has to say. Okay. Do you agree the poetry should be funny or poetry is very funny?

Beni:

I think that like, when people think of poetry, they don't really think of modern poetry, or like know or care what people are doing in poetry now. They just think of like, Ezra Pound and it's like, funny to me because it's like, every genre evolves over time. Like, that's like if we thought about movies nowadays, like someone was like, "have you seen a movie recently?" And you're like, "I'm not into silent films." Like that's not, that's not how their minds work when you talk about poetry. And it's like, why though? And so it's like, yeah, everyone seems to think it's like, very serious and very like, everything's supposed to be like sad and beautiful. And like, my understanding of poetry is just supposed to be about feelings, you know? And so like feelings are so like my poetry is dumb, you know what I mean? I don't think, I don't think everyone's poetry is dumb. But like, it's like, poetry is just expressing how you're feeling, in my opinion. And it's like, my feelings are dumb. Like I'm a Virgo, Capricorn, Capricorn. Like honestly, I think that my feelings are very much more hypothetical than like, a real pressing thing. It's like something will happen to me and I will be like, "this person wronged me" but I won't feel it. I will just know. I'll be like, "I've just been wronged." And I've been accused by like romantic partners of being very clinical and cold in relationships. And it's just, my point here is that like the feelings are, the way I feel feelings, I just think they're kind of obsolete and dumb, but I still have them. But it's like the way I express it then I think comes across that way,

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because it's like I'm always talking through my feelings. And the way I express myself and my poetry is very much like, instead of like, talking about like, sadness in a way that people are used to like, the way I talk about it, it is like, "this really dumb thing happened to me," but it's like you get it. I don't know. My point is that I think that people who discredit especially like, alternative poetry or literature when it's like about Internet memes or is Internet memes and as a poem, like people that discredit that I think are a little behind or whatever. Yeah. I don't know where I was going with this, but I, yeah, poetry should be funny if you want it to be, or if your feelings are funny, which I generally think mine are, because it's like, what's a feeling? like why, you know?

Tin: Yeah, yeah. I think, feel. Yeah, feelings are funny and if people are laughing at something that you wrote or just something that you're saying is because of, oh, they're like, "oh, I get it. That's me." Yeah.

Hannah (Host): Yeah. Which is a really pleasurable moment. That moment of like, "oh my God, this is like, this has happened to me." Like, I will never stop thinking about the phrase "carabineer queer." Like it's just like, it's such a great turn of phrase. And that's the sort of magic of poetry, if you will, is that it has a capacity to come up with new turns of phrase that express experiences that haven't necessarily been expressed before. And we know that language and representation is intimately tied to power, and so the question of whose experiences get to be represented in poetry and whose don't is also like a power-laden question. And the poetry that many of us grew up being taught in school was poetry about dead white dudes who took themselves very, very seriously and who we were also being told we had to take very, very seriously. And that can be a real like poetry boner killer. Like, I don't care about how William Wordsworth felt about daffodils. Like, I can't tap into this at any, I also like daffodils, but this is profoundly alienating. So the revelation as you start to sort of become your own reader, the revelation that there's work out there that like, might actually speak to you of something of your own life and your own experiences I think is a pretty incredible one. And the revelation that that might also be poetry is also I think pretty incredible, which is why I think people are sort of losing their minds about poets like Ruby Carr, who like was just a revelation I think for a lot of people that there was such thing as poetry that might be even remotely meaningful to them. Whatever we may think of the actual caliber of Ruby Carr's poems, I think that her, her being shot to fame in the way that she tells us something about like, a generation starved for poetry because they've been being taught shit that just doesn't speak to them.

Beni: Yeah. Like, back to what you were saying about Wordsworth like, I think he wrote this poem about this man fishing because in his day like, maybe this was something. I don't know where he lived. I honestly like white dead poets are. I don't know, I'm like, okay, I assume there's a lot of water running. I assume he saw fishers often and this, this was a part of his everyday life that he was writing about and like, that's what poets now are doing too, but people are not used to it because our everyday life isn't like, horse drawn carriages and fishermen, you know. Fisherman, fisher mans, fishermen. But it's like, nowadays there's a ton of

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poets writing about like, I've seen a lot of riding the bus poems, and a lot of Tinder poems and like, because this makes sense. Like that's what we're doing.

Tin: This is, it's like I see a similar thing with stand up. They always say like when you get on stage you have to, you have to address the thing that's like, the most visible about you. So like every time I get up on stage I'm always like, "I'm dry heaving," because I had--

Hannah (Host): Because you were just doing that?

Tin: Maybe not visibly, but like I was just doing that. What was I was going to? Seinfeld, like I've haven't watched more than like two episodes, so I can't, you know, maybe I'm not the best person to talk about Seinfeld, but like his comedy is always like, "what is the deal with..." you know? It's always something that's like, external. It's something that's like, always outside of like,, he's like observing things. So like I don't know if that makes him kind of like a neutral observer. He's a white, he's a white men. Right?

Hannah (Host): Mmhmm.

Tin: So like my standup's not like that at all. Like, I always tell stories about my life. And yeah, I feel like poetry, dead white poets maybe cared more about like, mastering like, the language in the poem. Whereas I, I just care about what is it, what is the best way to express my feelings in a way where I'm not going to regret it immediately? Like, what's the most gratifying but not like the most embarrassing thing that I can express about what I'm feeling now?

Hannah (Host): I really like the language of gratifying but not embarrassing. Like, which, which just reorients poetry around another kind of set of concerns. Like, it's not, you know, what's the most sort of aesthetically or linguistically sophisticated thing I can do, because that's when you're doing that, you're doing that for a particular kind of audience or for a particular, you know, that's a particular kind of project. But to say like, "I have something I really want to say and I want to say it because it's going to be gratifying and then I also need to negotiate language for other reasons, including the possibilities of embarrassment." Like, that's a really different way to think about poetry and what it does. Um, I seem to draw your attention to the fact that Pancakes has now laid her head down, which is just a next level of cute. So the question of, of neutral observers and neutral anything, which is so bullshit, but is always, always the language that is used to justify the ongoing oppression of the oppressor and the ongoing dominance of the dominant. The question of like, who gets to decide that some literature is good and some literature is bad, is like such a boring question for me. Like, the question of the goodness of some literature is just deeply, deeply worrying to me no matter who it's coming from. Like, this is what like I will get on my high horse when people are like, "50 Shades of Grey is badly written," and I'm like, "Fuck off. That's not the point." Like, people who are reading 50 Shades of Grey aren't reading it because they want to read a finely wrought turn of phrase, they're reading it to bone out. Like, just chill. Like, understand that different

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books have different functions and the notion of universality of like, there is some literature that is somehow universally and uncomplicatedly like good is like, always bullshit. But as is that idea that there is like, a perspective, I mean we know this, right? We know that the sort of the image of the neutral perspective is in fact the perspective of the dominant, who gets to claim their perspective is neutral because they have so much control over what knowledge is and is not produced. Which is why nobody should read anything written by white men for like a decade.

Tin: I always feel like, in my poetry, I'm just, I mean I always talk about myself. That's, that's what I know. So that's the stuff in my poetry is like, my experience being a queer person of color. And a lot of the time I felt debilitated by proximity to whiteness for so long that I just like, didn't understand who I am, so like, I needed the poetry to finally be like, "oh, like I have my own feelings and thoughts," you know?

Hannah (Host): We have been talking about contemporary poets, and contemporary literature, and stuff that like actually resonates with experience. So can you talk at all about like other poets or writers who you read, or make a point of seeking out their readings when they are reading or really love? Who, who do you think of as your literary community, either IRL or like via reading them?

Beni: There's a lot of local writers who I think are really, really talented and who, it's kind of strange because like, I am still considered an emerging writer. So it's like, it's strange like, and when do I finish? Like what do I? It's a lot.

Hannah (Host): What do I become? Margaret Atwood.

Beni: I hope not, Jesus. But yeah, it's like there's a lot of writers whose work I had read and was like really into, and then it was like, now we're like, on a first name basis and I'm like, this is weird. But Dina Del Bucchia is my poet mom. So like, I love her a lot. Her work is really good. And then Billy Nickerson, his work is very funny, and I like that because like, I've been lumped in with the funny poets. I think Billy Nickerson's the best. He like, this queer man who lives on the Drive and like does curling and like, his poetry really reflects that experience. I just think he's the best. And then like, I have my friends whose work I'm really into. I'm really into Justine's work. Our friend Aja Moore does like, really incredible work and not just because she's my friend. It's like, she was submitting to do an MFA and she asked me to read over her like, portfolio and I was reading it and like, I'm not someone who feels a lot of imposter syndrome or whatever. Like a lot of people, I've actually been asked a lot like, "as an emerging writer, how would you do with these feelings, these imposters syndrome feelings" and I'm like, "I don't have them." But I was reading her work and I was like, "I need to step up my fucking game." It's just like my work is just not where hers is, like, I mean obviously our journeys are different but I just like, it's just on a whole other level and like, I just think Aja's the best also as a person. Adèle Barclay, whose work is just so sweet, and so like...And then Kayla Czaga, is that how you say it? Kayla is really talented. Liz Bachinsky is a big one for me. I love her so

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much. I did a reading with her last year and I was so like, "I have a poem of yours on my wall," like sheds a tear. Oh! An American poet that I really like is Anna Carrot. We're like, Internet friends now and I'm like, "how did this happen?" She was like, one of my favorites, she still is one of my favorite writers and then also an American poet, Kimmy Walters, who I love very dearly. And we are not Internet friends, but I somehow became internet friends with her boyfriend who is also a poet. His name is Theron Jacobs. Very talented as well. But yeah, I'm like, we're getting there. Anyways Justine, would you like to speak into this microphone? It's like you just talk about me. Talk about me. Here. Talk about me. Talk about me!

Tin: Do you want me to tell people to buy *Bad Egg*?

Beni: Yes.

Tin: I don't read, but mostly because I always forget to read. I always buy books. I'm just that type of person who buys books and just doesn't read them. I don't know. I have ADHD, so if I want to read, if I want to do anything, I have to really be obsessed by it. I really like Aja's stuff though. I don't know if she knows that, but I've seen her, I've seen her a couple of times, but every time I go to Poetry Is Bad For You, Sam Nock's poetry— It's just Sam or is it also Erinn? Sam Nock. I also love, I also love her work. I came up to her at Real Vancouver's Writers series and I was like, "you're just so funny." I don't, I don't know how she took that, but she was laughing. She was like, "thank you!" I don't read enough, but every time I go to Poetry Is Bad For You, there's always a couple people I'm like, "wow, I really. I should also step my game up." And also I'm just like in awe of the words that come out of people's brains.

Hannah (Host): I am really interested in the point that you just made Tin about not like, not reading but going to readings, because I think readings are really great way into like, maybe if you don't think of yourself as either a poet or a poetry reader, like a reading is a really great way and if you can find the right reading, because I've been to some real, real rough readings. But if you can find, you know, the place where your people are and like, start just seeing people read their work, that becomes a way in at a lot of levels, including, you know, if you don't read poetry, or if you wouldn't even know where to begin, or as is the case with a lot of really interesting poetry, it's not currently published, because like a lot of really great poet aren't published. Which is, you know, in sort of the way that I find local poets is one, I support small local publishing projects. So like, you know, Beni, I read your work because when Rahila's Ghost started their crowdfunding project, I was like, "oh awesome. A Vancouver based, feminist run poetry chapbook press, yes. I will just support this." And so I just, you know, bought all three books and I didn't know any of the poets. So like, that's one way that I have sort of found people, but then also just going to readings. Right? And like trying to sort of figure out like, what does literary scene look like in this place? And if you were a sort of Chapters Indigo centric reader, you maybe would imagine that the literary scene in Vancouver consists of like, that book called Stanley Park. But like, you know, the version of your local literature that



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you would know would be really, really different. So yeah, I am interested in sort of at what point in your, like, careers as poets, you started going to readings and started speaking at readings and sort of what role that has played for you in like, connection to your local poetry scene.

Beni:

I did a few of the intro poetry, well I mean, creative writing, especially poetry classes at UBC during my undergrad. And it was like the intro level poetry class Dina Del Bucchia and Daniel Zomparelli were like, guest lecturing just like, one lecture, and I really enjoyed, and they shared their work at the end. And I really enjoyed both of their work. So afterwards, I like talked to them. I was just like, "I think you do really cool work," whatever, whatever. And then my TA at the time, who is also a very talented Claire Matthews, like, afterwards was like, "just add them on Facebook right now, because that way they'll remember you if you run into them later." So I did, and then I think I went to one or two events that they did, and like, we ended up following each other on Twitter, Instagram. And on Instagram I do, I like, I post a lot of my poem drafts, and just like through that alone, like Dina had never like, really read my work, she just saw like little drafts that I did on Instagram, and she asked me to read at Real Vancouver's Writers series, which is the writing series that she curates. And after that it was just like, I think I was lucky that night that I read because it was a lot of really, really cool writers that were reading alongside me, or that were just present. And like a lot of my opportunities as a writer have honestly just come from like, the fact that Dina gave me that chance. So like, I think that night I read with Billeh Nickerson and Chelene Knight. And like, Billeh he, he like, every year in Victoria for Victoria Pride, they do like, a reading, and he like, organizes that and has for many, many years. And so he had me read for that last summer. And then Chelene Knight is the managing editor of Room magazine, so she, after like, we'd read together was like, "just send me what you read tonight because I want to publish it." And she did and that was like my first publication. And from there it was just like people who had seen me read would ask me to do more readings. And like I have my chapbook out with Rahila's Ghost, and it was literally because like Dom Cormier— who's also a writer— he was at that first reading that I ever did and like, after that we kind of became like acquaintances. And like, when I was asked to do a publish, to, to do a publish, to do a book. I was asked to do a publish? It was because like, it was because Dom works with Rahila's Ghost, and he was like, "Hey, like do you want to do a book with us?" So pretty much, if Dina hadn't asked me to read for Real Vancouver, I wouldn't have a career. So thank you, Dina for birthing me into this writing community.

Tin:

It comes back to Poetry Is Bad For You, which is also where I did my first poetry reading. I did poetry at The Cultch for the first time, but it wasn't a poetry reading, it was a performance. It was supposed to be like an abandoned conference, that was like our whole thing, and then like, each one of us, like the participants were telling a bent. We all did poetry actually.

Hannah (Host):

[Laughs]

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Tin: Yeah. But yeah, like the whole premise was like, it was like an abandoned conference that no one decided to go to. So we just decided to do our own thing. Yeah. And then I started going to Poetry Is Bad For You in the summer last year. I caught this, I caught maybe the second one and the third one. I remember the third one, I was just sitting on the couch. It was like, that one couch at The Toast where they have it. I was just crying like, me and my friend were holding hands and we were just crying, and I was like, "wow, I've never been into poetry like this much. I didn't know it could be so much fun." And then I did Poetry Is Bad For You, like the, like the fourth installment of it and I read my tweet drafts. Alt-lit.

Hannah (Host): That is in terms of genre, that is, that is sort of in the same large genre family as lists of ideas that you wrote down in the notes app on your phone. Like, that sort of like, where are we composing words every day? And like where is there poetry in those words? I mean the thing that is really, that really, really stands out from what both of you have said is like, how incredibly central communities were to sort of moving from like, somebody who is maybe writing poetry secretly or privately, into somebody who's like, part of a community of poets and like, reading and publishing it. Which just really makes me think like, I don't know how closely you do or do not follow the sort of past two years of Can-lit dumpster fire business, but like, the degree to which what I think a lot of us already knew, which is that sort of publishing world in Canada is structured by nepotism in ways that allows people to abuse power in all kinds of ways, but also push a certain people to the forefront, and in Canada those people are white. Really sort of I think stands out in contrast to like, a local poetry scene or like, a number of local poetry scenes where there's actually some effort to like, I don't know, like ethically mentor, emerging poets. I kept, "emerging" just sounds sticky to me. Like, like it sounds like, you're like whatever your emerging out of like your being birth, like maybe a pod, or a like a jelly pool. So like, because I spent a significant amount of my life being an emerging scholar, I felt like, I felt like I should squeegee myself down. Like, you need to get all of this, like amniotic fluid off of myself before anybody will take me seriously. Anyway mentorship, in conclusion, I think that is a really interesting piece of what you have both talked about. I am wondering if you might be willing to share a poem or two, because you're two humans. Would you be willing to share a poem with the listeners?

Beni: Okay. So the first poem I'm reading is in my book. My book is called *Bad Egg*. The poem is called "A Waltz" and it's in three parts because waltzes are in three. Ayyy! Okay. Part one, perhaps a meadow. I feel like I've known this place forever and yet the time we spent here was so fleeting. Part two, salt water. We have looked at each other as we always have, but now the wave hits a rock. A cliff withdraws, leaves nothing but salt. The finality of it. Part three, eternally. On some faraway dream world, we are still sound asleep with our foreheads pressed softly together, pinkies linked in a closed flower blossom intact. Here, I remember that softness, some part of us. And then the other poem I'm going to read is a new one that was recently rejected by Poetry is Dead and it's called "Very Sensible Life Tips From a Virgo." One, follow dentists, hygienists, and oral

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surgeons on Instagram. It will make you very passionate about dental hygiene and get you very excited about keeping your mouth clean. Number two, drink a litre water right after you get up in the morning, and again right before you sleep at night. Number three, cut the martyr complex or take your shit somewhere else. Number four, wash your ass. If you do not know the logistics of this, please use Google. Number five, never stop eating candy that is marketed towards children. It is the best kind of candy and marketing is a lie. Am I on number six? This doesn't actually have numbers.

Hannah (Host): [Laughs]

Beni: Six, stop hanging out with people you don't like or shut up about it. Seven, don't slack on cleansing or moisturizing your face. Eight, Google nasal lubricant and invest in some. Stop putting Vaseline in your nose, it can give you a chronic form of pneumonia. Number nine, green tea should never be brewed in boiled water. Learn this and never do it again. And 10, floss your damn teeth. Thank you.  
[Laughs]

Tin: Okay, I want to start now. This is, this is the part. When Orlando happened, I found myself in Oakland. Left a white lover at home, who was always saving me, who I was always saving when there's nothing left to save. Who cried for me when she heard about the shootings saying, "I can't even imagine what it would have been like." I had spent a week silently meditating at Spirit Rock, left feeling more spiritually confused than anything else. White carabineer queers with good intentions, even when they're willing silence, discovering the beauty in a serene and natural setting for the first time will do that. I was alone in a big, loud city. I never see so many brown people all on one place. Okcupid bio draft: "Looking for community" is the same as "I want so much to be in the arms of someone who sees me, who sees something familiar in the mirror, who feels pain in a lot of the same places," right? I met a beautiful and fiery, hard femme, Southeast Asian babe on the solstice eve who told me not to point at the moon because of a mythical consequence she couldn't recall. Her mother tongue failing her like it does me. I showed her how to light a joint and we share the sweet air. Screen when she got too close to the edge of her balcony, reaching for the fig tree. Careful not to look at each other as we shared a silent intimacy. It is too easy to fall in love when it's summer and you're meeting for the first time in a beer garden, in a rapidly gentrifying neighborhood, telling someone you as sober story about falling out of love. This poem is called "Executive Dysfunction: because I have that. Last summer I was taught to walk into a room like I owned it. "The trick is to do it crotch first," Katie tells me in the sweaty rented studio. I highly suggest it, but only if you've never invoked the feeling, or if you've always felt small. I oscillate between knowing the big truth about the universe, accepting it's flaws and conditions, or I'm hiding in my windowless room. Between being able to look people in the eye, and not knowing why I have so much anger, foregoing human touch too long, waking up with teeth and fists clenched. I fluctuate between anxious and meditative cleaning, but mostly piles of things make the most sense. For times of survival and times I'm thriving, Junior Chicken, McDouble, fries and hot mustard. If you love me, let me know

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multiple times a day, consistently, in the right tone of voice, but not too much like you're trying to convince yourself. As harm reduction. I'm telling myself I'm only allowed to self-sabotage once a month and I haven't used it up yet. I'll never know which exact body part aches, which ones feel desire. Always needing a reminder to plant my feet firmly back to earth. Rehearsing to release the words building up in limbs and joints and undecided organs. I've given up on trying to fix my posture or any of the breathing exercises. I'll never be a fully embodied anything. The big truth is that I will never be the spitting image of health and wellness, but it doesn't mean that I'm trying to die again. Sometimes I get so tired of being so funny. Ever want to have life affirming revenge, but for yourself? Like you'll you know you'll be okay, but you almost resent yourself for it. Marching up the drive, crotch forward, have smile overtaking everyone on the sidewalk.

Hannah (Host):

It was real, really wonderful. Thank you so much for sharing them. [Music: "Run Away With Me" by Carly Rae Jepsen] If you'd like more from Beni, they are @verysmallbear on Twitter and Instagram, and Tin is @selfiemixtape on Twitter and Instagram. As always, you can find show notes at [secretfeministagenda.com](http://secretfeministagenda.com) and you can follow me on Twitter and Instagram @hkpmcgregor, and don't forget that when you tweet about the podcast, you should use the hashtag #secretfeministagenda, and if you wanted to do me a favor and maybe recommend the podcasts to someone you think would like it, that'd be swell of you. The podcast theme song is measured 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. Beni and Tin's theme song is "Run Away With Me" by Carly Rae Jepsen. *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].