

Episode 3.30 Brilliant and Disgusting with Brenna Clarke Gray, Lucia Lorenzi, and Erin Wunker

May 17, 2019

Hannah (Host): [00:00:10](#) [Music: "Mesh Shirt" by Mom Jeans] Hi, I'm Hannah McGregor and this is *Secret Feminist Agenda*, and this is it. It's the final episode of season three. We did it. Congratulations everyone. You will hear a little bit more from me in the future in the form of a audio recorded peer review for season three, so look forward to that. I don't quite know the timeline on that yet, but we're playing around a little bit with how this season is going to be peer reviewed. In terms of future episodes, I'm taking a slightly longer than usual hiatus. I am going to take much of the summer off so that I can focus on writing and on doing other projects, and I'm going to be back with season four at the beginning of August. I've already got a couple of really exciting episodes lined up for you. I will have a couple in the tank already, and as I've mentioned before, I already have a list of incredible people that I am going to be talking to for season four so I'm excited for that. I am equally excited for a little bit of time to work on some other projects, which you'll get to see as well if you like, things that aren't podcasts, things that are slightly more book shaped. So this final episode, much like episode 29, is also an explicit response to a piece of the peer review of season two. And specifically it's a piece of peer review that asked me to assemble a panel of public feminists, people doing public feminist work, public feminist thinking, to talk about some of the issues surrounding being a public feminist that that came up in season two and, and have absolutely continued to come up in season three. So I took advantage of the fact that I was going to be in the same place at the same time as three former guests of the podcast, all of whom are other people doing this kind of feminism and public kind of work. And I made them hang out with me in a hotel room at 8:00 AM and record the conversation you're about to listen to. This is probably one of my favorite episodes of the podcast ever because I love all of these people, and I think that they are brilliant. And I really appreciate what you're going to hear in terms of how carefully they listen to each other and how generously they respond to the specificity of one another's experiences. I hope you enjoy it as much as I did. So let's meet Brenna, Lucia and Erin. [Music: "Mesh Shirt" by Mom Jeans] Brenna Clark Gray teaches in the Department of English at Douglas College just outside of Vancouver. She is a scholar of Canadian Literature as well as

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comic books. She also has a podcast that I absolutely love that she makes with her friend Joe. That's about YA novels and their filmic adaptations. It's called *Hazel & Katniss & Harry & Star*, and I super recommend it. There'll be a link for it in the show notes. Lucia Lorenzi is a scholar, activist and writer based out of Vancouver, BC. She's currently a postdoctoral fellow in the Department of English and Cultural Studies at McMaster university where she works on Trauma Theory in Canadian Literature. She's also pretty famous for being a really great on Twitter. And Erin Wunker is an assistant professor of English at Dalhousie University in Halifax. She has also a writer, best known for her book *Notes From a Feminist Killjoy* and is the cofounder of the Feminist academic blog Hook and Eye: Fast Feminism, Slow Academia. [Music: "Remember My Name" by Mitski]

- Hannah (Host): [00:04:14](#) I didn't introduce the framing of today's episode. I'm going to read a little bit out of the peer view from season two, but before we get into that, can I everybody just introduce themselves and say their names so that the listeners know whose voice is whose?
- Erin: [00:04:43](#) I'm Erin Wunker.
- Lucia: [00:04:44](#) I am Lucia Lorenzi.
- Brenna: [00:04:46](#) I'm Brenna Clark Gray.
- Hannah (Host): [00:04:48](#) [Laughs]
- Erin: [00:04:48](#) Such dulcet tones.
- Brenna: [00:04:48](#) [Laughs]
- Hannah (Host): [00:04:48](#) Okay. So in the peer review to season two, Carla Rice, who is I believe coming back to a peer review season three as well, had the following critique, I'm going to read it to you. It was about episodes 2.1 and 2.29. 2.1 is the episode about being a shitty white feminist. So in episode 2.1 I talk about Atwood and in 2.29 I talk about Judith Butler, and both of them are about sort of rethinking your relationship with feminists who maybe are proving to not enact their feminism in ways you had hoped to. So Rice writes, "Both episodes, while they raise urgent issues of profound relevance to feminist knowledge production and mobilization, also miss the all important opportunity to delve into the messy dynamics surrounding criticism and accountability. Each of these commentaries and its follow up

episode would potentially have been more powerful had McGregor moved beyond critique of Atwood's and Butler's highly questionable actions and her own experiences of online abuse, toward a discussion of reflexivity, vulnerability, and accountability in public scholarship. McGregor does gesture toward thinking about the vulnerability of feminist public intellectuals where she notes, 'the individual never needs to be the locus of attack because there's always a community there able to join in and help,' but she doesn't link up her discussion of the emotional tolls of being trolled as a feminist public figure with the serious responsibility and need for accountability that comes with this role/territory. Follow up episodes featuring panels of feminist scholars, educators and activists could have opened space to reflect on ethical processes of speaking out and listening to criticism, on how critique might engender difficult emotions such as anger and shame in panelists, on how they've worked through these emotions, and on how attending to difficult emotions can lead to new learning." So she goes on to talk about the various ways in which we can think about accountability, shame, harm, and particularly the emotional messiness of doing public feminist work. So I asked you, my friends, to sit in this cool hotel room with me at 8:00 AM to talk a little bit about public feminist education, and activism, and scholarship. And you know, I want to talk sort of broadly about it, about the work that we're doing in different ways and why we do the work that we do, but also what the feelings attached to that work. So let's maybe, let's start if you could talk a little bit about like how you personally define the scope of what your public feminist work looks like. Like what do you do and why that you would personally sort of put under the rubric of like public feminist work? Anybody can start.

Erin: [00:07:36](#) Do you think it's useful for us to say our names at the beginning?

Hannah (Host): [00:07:39](#) Yeah.

Erin: [00:07:39](#) So this is Erin talking. I'm thinking about public feminist work started with Hook and Eye: Fast Feminism, Slow Academe, which is a, a blog, a feminist academic blog that was started by Heather Zwicker and Amy Morrison and I some years ago now. And before that I hadn't really thought of any of the work that I did in the academy (so I'm a Canadian literature scholar and a poetry scholar) and I hadn't really thought of anything that I was doing as public beyond going to present a conference paper or anything like that. And I was not an avid blog reader, which means that I was not a very good blog writer either because I hadn't done my homework.

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- Hannah (Host): [00:08:25](#) [Laughs].
- Erin: [00:08:25](#) And for anybody who's listening, who's interested in blogging, Kerry Clare of *Pickle Me This* has an incredible recently posted, sort of, how to reinvigorate your blog. But all of this sorta started because we realized that there was, and it was Heather's idea initially, she recognized that there was a void in the Canadian Academy, especially this, the newest, sort of, star system of national recognition of scholarly excellence had just happened and there were no women named to these particular positions. [Laughs] And so we thought, you know, that seems like a problem. I mean, we did start it a while ago, but I think it was like 2011.
- Hannah (Host): [00:09:10](#) [Laughs].
- Erin: [00:09:10](#) So you know, and writing in that public space didn't feel like I was writing in a public space. I felt like I was writing to Heather and Amy, who were senior scholars to me. I was untenured, a contract worker, and so I wanted to write in, in a way that was acceptable to them, which is I think an interesting thing to think about for me now, what that might've meant. And then I also, when we started getting comments back, I realized that people were reading it and that's when it became more public but, but not big. It felt like a conversation and that was really exciting. So I think that's the first place that I've done some public facing feminist work.
- Lucia: [00:09:54](#) Hi, it's Lucia.
- Hannah (Host): [00:09:56](#) [Laughs].
- Lucia: [00:09:56](#) Hello?
- Erin: [00:09:59](#) Yes it is!
- Lucia: [00:09:59](#) Hello. I think my way into public feminism was that I wanted to keep a journal, but I didn't want to have to write it out by hand, so I just blogged on the internet. And my sense of what public feminism was about for me was just me having an opinion and putting it out into the void of angry screaming about institutions, and not really even seriously thinking that anyone would read it until people started reading it.
- Everyone: [00:10:32](#) [Laughs].
- Hannah (Host): [00:10:32](#) That got so many like, "[Knowing hums]"

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- Everyone: [00:10:36](#) [Laughs].
- Lucia: [00:10:36](#) Yeah. And so it wasn't, there was never an intention to do public work of any kind. And then I think, I guess the, this sort of dual, the dual paths of my public work have been, on the one hand being real mad and real mouthy and being like, "you should take care of yourself. Here's some nice things you can do." So the my, I see the work that I do as, they're both forms of building community. And I do think that part of that building of community is like intellectual labor, and research, and thinking through, and offering space for people to be messy, because I myself am very messy. But yeah, it felt very, for me in particular the sort of jump in people reading my blog to like people who just sort of like, "oh yeah, I know Lucia," to random strangers and a lot of media attention was very rapid and it, it took place in the context of a lot of institutional struggle. And so I think that was difficult because it felt like I was doing it but then there was sort of this sort of, I don't want to say "nonconsensual," but sort of nonconsensual uptake and feedback that was really hard to cope with.
- Brenna: [00:11:42](#) Hi. I feel like I don't have any answer to this question. This is Brenna by the way.
- Hannah (Host): [00:11:46](#) [Laughs].
- Brenna: [00:11:46](#) If someone starts with, "I feel like I don't have any answer to this question," it's usually me. I think I came to a public facing feminism, not through my scholarship at all but through a writing for *Book Riot*. So I was one of the launch writers for *Book Riot* in 2011. And *Book Riot* got this explicit sort of diversity and inclusive and just like equity mandate in terms of its coverage of books now. And that was because of the ethos of the people who founded it and because of ethos of the first writers for sure, but that statement wasn't made explicit right away. And so it was sort of like we arrived on the bookish internet and people were like, "Oh wow, there's this like fun voice in book. Wait a minute, they're telling me to read books by brown people. What is happening? This is not what I signed up for."
- Hannah (Host): [00:12:36](#) [Laughs].
- Brenna: [00:12:36](#) And so all of a sudden they went from like a handful of Twitter followers to, not massive, but way bigger than anticipated presence in the bookish internet. And then suddenly I was making people really, really mad with just stuff that I felt was obvious. And so I got real strident real fast. And that's, I mean I

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often describe my feminism as "yelling at people on the internet" feminism because that's what it primarily is, because that's the space that I'm writing in and that's where I'm getting responses, and that's where I'm seeing just so much grossness all the time. And so that has expanded to become a critique of the academy and my position within it as a college scholar from a feminist perspective, but that's certainly not where it started.

- Hannah (Host): [00:13:15](#) That's so interesting. Like the really different ways that people arrive at the business of doing scholarship feminism. Scholarship feminism. Uh oh.
- Everyone: [00:13:22](#) [Laughs]
- Brenna: [00:13:24](#) I've heard of it.
- Hannah (Host): [00:13:24](#) Yeah. [Laughs] You familiar with doing scholarship publicly? Okay, so here's a, cuz I said "scholarship feminism," which is not a phrase, but it did make my brain do a thing which was like, which comes first: the interest in speaking publicly or on non-traditional platforms, or the feminism? Like is there something about feminist commitment to your scholarly work that maybe inclines you towards taking up these public platforms differently, or more readily, or with a greater sense of urgency that is perhaps less evidently necessary to scholars who aren't thinking of feminism as, as part of the work that they're doing?
- Erin: [00:14:09](#) I think that's a really interesting question. And it's Erin. And I think that I have an answer, well I certainly have an answer, but I'm not sure that it is totally in line with what you're saying. What you may, what you said made me think and listening to Lucia and Brenna, made me realize the ways in which even in this room amongst friends and colleagues that our public facing a feminism takes such different forms. So despite the fact that my public feminism began and has maintained itself, to a certain degree, on a blog on the internet, I feel like I learned fairly quickly when trying to move into others genres such as Twitter, that I'm not, my mode of thinking and my, my feminist practice is not suited to that genre.
- Hannah (Host): [00:15:00](#) Mmm.
- Erin: [00:15:00](#) It is a real skill, to write in the way that I'm thinking, you know, of, you know, you Lucia who, who's writing I knew before I actually knew you in person. And it is a skill to, to teach people and to have conversations. Not only is it a skill, it's, it's a kind of a whole skill set and range of emotional intelligence that I have

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in different forms. And so I feel like I'm just recognizing now, even though I've been, sort of, nominally off things like Twitter for over a year, that it's not a failure on my part in terms of my public feminism to not do that in that way, but that I do better thinking, more generative thinking maybe in longer forms. So, for example, writing essays and writing books and blog posts is the form in which I feel most if effective or not, not even effective. That's not the word that I want to use. Even though it came right out of my mouth, hopped right out of there.

Everyone: [00:16:04](#)

[Laughs].

Erin: [00:16:04](#)

It's like, it's like where you feel both comfortable and that right amount of risk in which you're reaching towards people and you don't know how it's going to be picked up. But this is a form in which you feel, I feel myself, you know, have some, some oxygenation.

Lucia: [00:16:20](#)

I think for me maybe because, so there's, there's a couple of things. And the first is that I, my trajectory through academia has always been that I don't always know what I want to study, but I know that it has a feminist lens.

Hannah (Host): [00:16:33](#)

[Laughs].

Lucia: [00:16:33](#)

And so for me, I think of myself sort of feminist first scholar second, even though the two are, are obviously related. And I think that Twitter for me has been really important because it's the place where I, where I work out ideas, and I work out what for myself as much as for, sort of, other people what feminist scholarship or feminist thought could be. And I know we were, we were sort of, we've been talking about open access and open scholarship and I, I sort of never even think about it in, in the sense of academic journals because I, a lot of the work that I do is by default just on the Twitter where people can read it.

Hannah (Host): [00:17:13](#)

[Laughs].

Lucia: [00:17:13](#)

And so I think there's that difficulty of, for me identifying as a feminist scholar, or solely as that, because "scholar" doesn't always feel like a word that sits with me. Maybe "feminist cultural worker" or, or like I haven't quite found the word that just sits well with me. I mean I think I'm learning also to not denigrate my own work because a lot of, I mean I've met all three of you on Twitter. Like I even met all three of you on the internet before meeting you in person. And a lot of people say, "oh, I know you from Twitter," which sometimes I want to say "I

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also write very serious academic articles. You can find them in the following paywall journals." It's fine. But I think a lot of it is my own like coming to terms with my own baggage around the term feminist scholar and what that means. And like I'm not Judith Butler, I'm not writing feminist scholarship in these very sort of high theoretical terms. But yeah, I think for me there's still a lot of me trying to work out what it is that I do. And right now I'm in that place where I don't know, I don't have anything lined up in the academy next and realizing like, oh, that doesn't actually matter. I get it. It's mattered. But there's been this through line of doing work in a different sphere that is still serious intellectual and emotional labor. But what I necessarily call it scholarship at times, yes. And at times, no.

- Brenna: [00:18:38](#) Hi. I feel weird. I don't know why.
- Hannah (Host): [00:18:43](#) [Laughs].
- Brenna: [00:18:43](#) Definitely leave that in. Yeah. Does.
- Hannah (Host): [00:18:44](#) Is it cuz sitting around the circle, just passing the microphone back and forth is like a really natural and normal way to hang out with your friends?
- Brenna: [00:18:52](#) [Laughs] It's cuz holding the microphone, you feel like you have to have something worthwhile to say. It's very--
- Hannah (Host): [00:18:58](#) This is Brenna coming at you from 97.7 The Edge.
- Brenna: [00:19:02](#) That's true. Not everyone with a microphone has something worthwhile to say. Thank you for that. I, like Lucia, have found Twitter to be a really generative place, in that it is also sometimes a nightmare hellscape. It can be both. And that's a really interesting thing about Twitter, I think, when it comes to public feminism. I also use it as a place for working out ideas that I always swear I'm going to put in long form somewhere and then don't. And then somebody is like, "I storified it for you." And I'm like, "cool. Then it's done. I don't have to do anything with that." And again, but one of the things I like about that is that people I like and respect will jump in, many of them in this hotel room, and help me think through the idea that I'm working on. And at the same time people will jump in, sometimes with generous criticism, and sometimes to say horrible things. And I think that when I do then turn to long form writing, but I think actually even more appropriately to my teaching, I feel armed and ready to address the kinds of knee jerk reactions that can come up in the classroom, the kinds of

defensiveness that can come up in the classroom because I've already, I've heard it and I've been able to like parse it for myself so that when it comes from a student, I can respond to it in a much more generous way than I necessarily do to a troll on Twitter. And it's funny, I'm only just realizing this as I'm saying it out loud, but I do think my interactions on Twitter and the way I approach these same issues in the classroom are much more analogous than I have thought about previously. It was interesting for me this semester I was teaching gender studies for the first time. Like, I always teach gender alongside literature, but for the first time I was teaching just like Intro to Gender Studies. I was a last minute replacement and it was the best experience because for the first time I was teaching like gender issues in a classroom and I didn't have to spend the first three weeks being like, "So, gender matters. Here's Gender 101. Here's like, here's what oppression is. Here are some concepts." Like I had a classroom full of students who were already in and I didn't realize how much of my teaching I spend dealing with initial defensive reactions, whether seated in whiteness, or cisness, or able-bodiedness, or straightness, or maleness. It was really exciting to not have to work through all of that, but I realized that I do a lot of that working through with the, with the help of people on Twitter, for better or for worse, before I get to the classroom.

Lucia: [00:21:41](#)

Yeah. Just, it's Lucia. Brenna as you're talking, I was thinking about, I guess thinking about who my Twitter audience. Like I always assume that most of the people who follow me are not bots and that they have a buy-in to the work that I do, that they're not just sort of following because they hate me and want to see me make a fool of myself. So there's that buy in. And I think that it, because I assume that the majority of people who follow me have a buy-in, I feel like I've learned how to be so much more careful and thoughtful. Which isn't to say that I don't like tweet things off the cuff, but I think that it's made me much more attentive, not sort of scared. I mean I think that some people sort of frame that argument of like, "Oh, I'm scared to say anything because of call out culture. And on Twitter it's so bad, and if I make a mistake..." But I think that I, I've sort of built a space for myself where I try to assume that the people who are engaging with me are doing so in good faith and that, that I also have the responsibility to think through in good faith but not, not say, "oh, this is just a draft," and then say a bunch of really awful shit.

Hannah (Host): [00:22:52](#) [Knowing hum].

Everyone: [00:22:52](#) [Laughs]

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- Lucia: [00:22:52](#) But actually really like, you know, think through, and sometimes I do. Like if I write a Twitter essay, sometimes I do work it through in a word document before. And I, I think I always have the intention of doing long form writing, but then I just get really frustrated and just decide to like bang it out on Twitter instead. But yeah, I think thinking about audience has been really important for me in that kind of responsibility. But there's that anxiety like, as I've seen my follower count sort of steadily increase over the past few years. And people actually, not that people weren't listening to what I said before, but there's a sort of very rapid uptake of things that I say. Like I want them to be thoughtful or I want them to be real funny...
- Erin: [00:23:34](#) Yeah.
- Lucia: [00:23:34](#) Also important.
- Hannah (Host): [00:23:34](#) [Laughs] Yeah.
- Lucia: [00:23:34](#) You know? Yeah.
- Erin: [00:23:37](#) Yeah, it's Erin. I find myself thinking about the ways in which, and it's almost certainly because we all met each other, not only in the context of public facing feminism, but public facing feminism that was operating precariously or centrally or more stably, depending on the fluctuations of our, our lives over that past number of years within academic spaces. And so I've been struck at the ways in which, though I understand them, we've been thinking about scholarship as something that happens in universities spaces or college spaces, those institutional spaces. When of course as we all know and have written about variously and in many different places, scholarship, isn't, that's only one of the places that it happens. And so I was thinking as you were speaking Brenna and Lucia, that maybe public feminist scholarship and the two mantles of feminist and scholar operate for me, most generously and generatively, when I am thinking about a readership or reception in some way, be it students in a classroom or the hope that someone picks up the book that I've written, not for reasons of popularity but for reasons of conviviality and communities that happen through textual engagement or discursive engagement. And so that for me, I'm realizing, listening to you all, that scholarship is actually that pause that you indicated Lucia, where I'm thinking, "okay, I'm working this out for myself because I want to," you know, I always want to be working on being a better feminist and a better person in the world and in my life, as though those two things are divisible. But in some ways they are, right? Your public self, your private self are not identical all the time. And

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also that that pause is me thinking about how to engage in a way that somebody may respond, whether or not it is positive, or critical, or generous, or you know, really those knee jerk reactions. And so I really, I yeah, thanks for that. Thanks for teaching me about what I actually do, friends. Good job.

Hannah (Host): [00:26:03](#) [Laughs] So let's talk about response and that, that sort of beautiful unpredictability of response. I feel like there is, we are all at a conference right now, and I've been thinking about like conference Q&A's and how wildly boring they are. And how, for the most part when they aren't boring it's because they're terrible. Like people rarely surprise you in good way in a conference Q&A. Like, on occasion you get the pleasure of the surprise of a really insightful question, but for the most part what you get [laughing] is a surprise racist. Is what we've really been getting been getting at this conference.

Lucia: [00:26:44](#) It's not a surprise anymore.

Hannah (Host): [00:26:47](#) [Laughs] It's just, "stuplimity," is a word we learned yesterday: the, the shock and boredom. There's this way for me, at this point in my career where I feel rarely surprised or delighted by responses in institutional settings. And that's like even with my students, who I love the specificity of each classroom, and the way that the sort of classroom communities emerge, there is still so much about the working within that the institution of the university of the classroom that frames the possibilities for the kinds of engagement we can have. And there's something about the kinds of public scholarship I do, at least, this sort of deep on predictability of the podcast listenership that leads to real surprise. Like really surprises. And that's both in terms of that, that is positive surprise sometimes. You know, who listens? Who engages? Who finds something of value in the work that I'm doing or the things that I'm saying? And then it's also bad surprises. When you sort of think you know who your audience is and then it turns out that like somebody you would never would've thought you were speaking to is, in fact, listening to you and hates you so much. Yeah. So, so I would love to hear a little bit about responses, about those kinds of responses that you've received, the sort of responses from the public and like moments, those have been surprising, pleasing, displeasing, shocking, awing.

Erin: [00:28:18](#) It's Erin again. I, I am looking out the window between everyone sort of in the middle distance because I'm putting together something and I'm going to try it. I'm not sure if it's accurate, but I think that in terms of surprises of the good kind, by which I mean, "Oh wow! Huh. I didn't expect that. That's really, wow,

I'm excited about that," or "that's interesting," or "Wow, I'm speechless. You've taken my breath away in a good way." Those have almost always come in response to longer things that I've written. So, for example, the collection of essays that I wrote, even, and perhaps especially, when I was getting a book review, that was what I would think of as a strong book review, by which I mean, the reviewer says, "here's what I really," you know, "here's what the book is doing. Here's what I really like about it. Here's some places of real weakness. Overall, this is my takeaway from it." That was wonderfully surprising because the, the amount of times in which I feel as though, and I suspect it's not, I'm not alone in this, you're speaking into a void. You know what I mean? I think, of course you say we're at a conference. The number of conference papers I've written and I've gotten, you know, the throwaway that people are just trying to do, to be polite or civil so that everybody on the panel gets a question, and there's no deep engagement with the ideas that you're trying to work out in this partial and provisional way. And the really negative responses that I've had are the deeply surprising like, "wow, what? I did not expect you human who has, I thought, no connection to the orbits that I move through, to even have me on your radar, care about anything that I say, and then care enough about it to weaponize it in certain kinds of ways." That's been shocking and it's a bit, again for me been as genre experience. Like those experiences have happened, and I'm not talking about call out or call in. I've been called out and called in on digital spaces in ways that, you know, maybe we'll talk a little bit later about those responses, in ways that have been upsetting for me initially and then have moved into something I think more, more generative for the ways in which I'm thinking and being attentive. I'm talking about that, "wow, you hate me and we've never met." And this medium allows this kind of interaction in, in which, you know, I just find myself constantly thinking like, "what would you do if I, in my five foot whatever body was standing in front of you? Would you say like would you have the guts to talk to me that way?" Maybe, but maybe not. And that, that's when I find it really curious. Right. Yeah. So, so it's, it's been so far from me a genre experience, but let's see what happens. Maybe that'll change.

Hannah (Host): [00:31:31](#) [Laughs]

Lucia: [00:31:33](#) Hi, it's Lucia. The response for me has been interesting because, by and large, it's all been positive. Like it's been really positive. Then I realized that, you know, the privilege of being a light-skinned Black woman on social media, and sort of insulated in some ways by, sort of, the scholarly circles that I move in, that I haven't gotten really vitriolic responses. What I have gotten are

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really difficult, I think I was prepared for the, like "you are an awful person, here is a death threat," but I wasn't prepared for were the, sort of, very passive aggressive responses from within the institution, from even people that I don't interact with in these spaces. And so I'm sort of trying, I'm realizing more and more that, you know, they're the things that I write on social media, there are people reading them who might never tell me that they read them and they're responding and I don't know that they're responding to that. But I think the hard thing about assertive globally positive response, which I don't think is like, "Lucia is so great, and so perfect, and she never messes up."

- Brenna: [00:32:35](#) You're great, though. And perfect.
- Hannah (Host): [00:32:35](#) [Laughs]
- Hannah (Host): [00:32:36](#) I'm pretty okay, like the city of Ottawa. I think that that's made me feel a certain, sort of, like a bit of a pressure to like, sort of, keep being a good person and to keep being in good--
- Hannah (Host): [00:32:49](#) [Laughs].
- Lucia: [00:32:49](#) Oh, I am not a monster.
- Erin: [00:32:52](#) You're a murderer, are ya?
- Everyone: [00:32:52](#) [Laughs]
- Lucia: [00:32:52](#) I swear! I'm real bad. But it also sometimes makes me feel, not misunderstood, but sort of that there's more, that I wonder if I'm not putting all of my complexities out there. Like, yeah, I tell people to be gentle with themselves every night, but I'm kind of a jackass to myself. Like I and I, and I can be resentful and I can be all those things. And I think I do talk about them, but there is something very interesting about a sort of public response that has generally been really great, but my problems have been in institutions. Like I am unhireable as a staff member at UBC because I speak about UBC all the time. Right? Like, and I'm aware of that and I'm aware of sort of the institutional responses of that I'm a troublemaker, and often because of the power dynamics, I can't even talk about those things. Like I can't retweet and be like, "look at this shitty troll." It's, I literally can't say anything. And so for me, navigating those institutional responses that sometimes are passive aggressive, sometimes are more overtly, "you're a problem." I think that's been difficult for me because it feels like I have no outlet to like even prove that it happened.

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- Hannah (Host): [00:34:04](#) Yeah, right? It's the moment of being called into somebody's office to have a conversation about a tweet you did where you're like, "oh," like, "you're not going to engage me on Twitter where everybody sees. You're going to use that institutional positioning to move the conversation out of that public space into a space where power operates differently." Yeah. Yeah. I've had those meetings.
- Brenna: [00:34:28](#) Yeah, that's what I was going to bring up. I was gonna bring up this surprising experience of someone calling your boss because of something you did. Actually, and the hilarious thing was it was not, it was not even, it was not even part of a feminist project. In 2011 I gave a paper at Congress about Wikipedia. And did you know that--
- Hannah (Host): [00:34:51](#) Boo!
- Brenna: [00:34:51](#) Did you know there's a whole community of people who are very concerned about the Wikipedification of higher education? And then they will call, I mean I also think there's a gender component here. I was very young, 2011. I was a year into my very first real job. I had defended my PhD 12 months prior. And this like really nothing subtle talk I gave about using Wikipedia in the classroom and what it did for my students resulted in like more than one person calling my dean to discuss this issue with them. And I later realized that this was being discussed on like these anti-Wikipedia forums. My information was being shared in this space. I did not think I had presented anything controversial. I have said much more controversial things since that time, without that response. And it's interesting because I'm still not quite sure why that didn't shut down my relationship to being in the public and I think it's because I, I wasn't really. I'd given a paper at Congress. There'd been like a couple of little write ups about it and like the National Post and a couple other places and it went into wire copy and it went out a few places and like none of that felt public to me until it suddenly was. And I think what I realized from that is that a, you can absolutely not predict response. [Laughs] There was nothing controversial about this paper. I mean really and that my gender was always going to impact my experience like, and my age at the time too. I think definitely, I definitely don't think a senior scholar giving the same, frankly cute, little subtle paper about Wikipedia use would have had their, their dean called. More difficult for me to navigate have been the times when I have written critically about the institutions of higher ed more generally and found myself called to answer for them personally. So I wrote a blog post years ago now about the relatively conservative nature of the community college and the

way that, the way that transfer demands that our courses stay relatively conservative. We answer to other institutions and we have to manage that relationship. And sometimes the institutions get to be wildly innovative. And when we try it, they sort of pat us on the head and say like, "no." And a colleague brought that blog post to the department meeting and said, "so you think we're all conservative?" And it was like, "okay. I mean, no, but also yes." But also what if you had commented on this blog post on the blog where the discussion about it is happening and where I wouldn't have to sort of personally account for what is an institutional issue? Instead, if you, if that colleague had engaged in that space, they would've seen lots of different voices and lots of different perspectives, but instead it became a personal issue. And I think that public work can sometimes be, sort of, deeply misconstrued by people who don't recognize that you do have a public profile, that you may not be talking about them personally. You probably aren't. That they're larger institutional critiques that you are trying to make, and maybe not successfully, but that I still think the generous and fair thing to do is to have those discussions in the spaces where they have context. Because all that moment did in department meeting was upset my colleagues who had no idea what was going on. They just apparently think that I, I run a trashed blog about them all.

Hannah (Host): [00:38:42](#) [Laughs].

Brenna: [00:38:42](#) Right? And then it's like, "cool. This is not wildly helpful."

Erin: [00:38:46](#) This makes me think, it's Erin, that I, you know, again, we have in academic spaces of all sorts of levels. I mean, I can't imagine because it's not my experience at all. But I, I suspect that if you're working in a, in a secondary institution or a primary institution of education, that the way in which you do or do not take up public feminist space is complex in ways that are beyond my experience. The, I am thinking about the ways in which in universities and colleges, public facing scholarship, which is so often done by, you know, women, People of color, Indigenous people, trans people, queer people, disabled people like, you know, all of those folks that public scholarship is slow to be recognized as scholarship by the institution and colleagues whose interests do not lie in those areas. And they don't have to. Although it is interesting to me to remember that in Canada, most of our universities are publicly funded institutions, which is a fundamental difference from other places. But, you know, not everybody has to be a public facing scholar in the ways that we're talking about today. And so there has to be then that internal additional labor of learning about what public

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scholarship is, what it entails, the kinds of skills and qualities that you have to learn. That sort of pedagogical experience of actually becoming praxis oriented in your scholarship that is public facing. And either, you know, either the institution decides to learn how to, you know, teach itself how to value that scholarship or individuals have to do that. And that's an additional kind of feminist labor that is the minutia, you know, that unseen invisible labor that takes a toll as well, or costs. At, at the very least at costs time. And I think it's often very worth it. but it is another, another kind of labor. We're at a conference on institutional work, so that's on the forefront of my mind too.

- Hannah (Host): [00:41:10](#) Yeah, that's so key, right? I mean, it's always the, the additive framing of public scholarship, which I think we've probably all experienced is that it's never, "oh, you're doing this and so this will count as your scholarly work." It's, "Oh, you're doing that and that's really great, but you're going to have to do 100% of the other expected things that your colleagues are doing, and you're going to have to do this thing over and above." But then also you're going to have to do all of this management of the fallout or the expectations or the repercussions or the, you know, behind the scenes work of it, which for me, 2018 was a year of like wild levels of burnout that largely had to do with behind the scenes management of the follow of things that I had said.
- Brenna: [00:41:56](#) Oh really?
- Hannah (Host): [00:41:56](#) [Laughs].
- Hannah (Host): [00:41:56](#) I know it's news to you.
- Brenna: [00:41:58](#) News to me.
- Hannah (Host): [00:41:58](#) Yeah, yeah, yeah none of that, definitely none of that was also happening to you for sure. But that like just the number of fucking meetings, and emails and exchanges, and reading collective agreements, and just making sure I really understood academic freedom and how it worked like that isn't working. It is exhausting and it is hard and that's the work that for sure does not show up when people are like, "Ooh, you make a podcast. That's neat." And it's like I have sent like 5,000 emails about like, blow back for just one episode. Just the one.
- Erin: [00:42:34](#) It's Erin. Sorry, I don't, well I do mean, I grabbed the mic right from your hand.

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- Hannah (Host): [00:42:38](#) [Laughs].
- Erin: [00:42:38](#) [Laughs] I don't mean to interrupt you here. But one thing that I would love to add to what you've just said Hannah, is that, you know, as someone who also spent much of 2018 in closed door meetings, understanding and going through collective agreements, and these sorts of things to understand how academic freedom and research works, especially in Canada, where we have institutions that are required in terms of federal funding and provincial funding to increasingly turn our scholarship to a public facing way. And then the institution, because of the way that it works, and, and all institutions are different each, you know, university and college is different. Each collective agreement is different, but they're slower to figure out how to support scholars doing that work. And we've seen it happen in a range of examples. The additional tributary to that is that I realized, in what was a very challenging year for me last year and around these issues, the incredible privilege to work as a public facing feminist scholar within an academy. Because, even though there are many examples of the institution failing feminists and many others, there is also, you know, in Canada, most of universities have collective agreements, not all of them. But most of them do. And so there are ways in which there is support that, you know, I mean, I think about the work that so many Indigenous and People of color, you know, are doing on Twitter and the ways in which, and I'm thinking, for example, if someone like Arielle Twist, who I have the luck to know in person, but also see the way that she operates on the internet. You know, she's always pointing out that she's doing this labor in a totally precarious space without this kind of infrastructure. Right? And so there's, there's that too.
- Lucia: [00:44:39](#) Yeah. I think for me, this Lucia. One of the things that I didn't, it took me a while to realize because I sort of cut my teeth on public feminist yelling--
- Hannah (Host): [00:44:47](#) [Laughs].
- Lucia: [00:44:47](#) --in my PhD where, you know, I knew I wasn't going to be there for very long, and I was a student. And people, people cared what I said, but they weren't messaging my department head to be like, "this woman is a liability." And even in the post doc, as I was approaching the job market and thinking about academic jobs, I think I've been wondering what all of this work has done. Like was this a good idea? And it's, I don't mean in terms of my use of time, because if you look at my CV, I think it, you know, I've always been like, I got to hustle to do that other work. But I

think my sort of fear going forward is that, you know, I didn't really take the time to think about it. I mean, I didn't have certain protections, but I also didn't have to deal with those, you know, conversations. But I realized when I was in a non-academic job, nobody knew. Like nobody was aware of this whole other life that I have, but I do remember in 2017 and 2018 when certain things were happening, being like, "is, is my boss at this health economics company going to get an email?" And, sort of, those fears about bleeding into this other life that I had built for myself. But I've always, I think part of being a student activist was the ability to speak very freely about the institution without fear of repercussion in some ways. But then also being like, "oh, I have no, I literally don't have protection from this institution," and that the protections that I depend on are sort of informal. It's are faculty members gonna stick up for me, or ask me how I'm doing, or also submit a statement? And realizing that there was a sort of loneliness at times. And being willing to do that work and then realizing that other people weren't and perhaps they couldn't. Perhaps they also had those fears about speaking out and being public. But yeah, I think that's been hard for me is like, have I have, I ruined my chances or whatever. But I think it just wasn't something that I was thinking about because the, the, it felt too urgent that I, it wasn't like I had a job lined up or anything, and I don't think, you know, like waiting for tenure hasn't served, hasn't, hasn't served anyone very well.

Hannah (Host): [00:47:03](#) I mean, show me the person who was like played at super fucking safe up to the minute they got tenure and then became a radical afterwards. Like, I mean, maybe there's an example, but I think for the most part, people who aren't doing the work before tenure don't suddenly go like, "and now post tenure." Do you disagree?

Erin: [00:47:22](#) Well...

Hannah (Host): [00:47:22](#) I mean, you're allowed to disagree. I said that in a tone of shock and horror.

Erin: [00:47:26](#) I'm just thinking of, you have one example that was really important for us when we started Hook and Eye, and it was American, an American blogger who blogged under the name Tenured Radical. And the way in which this blogger worked was to say, you know, "I am tenured. Now let me break down institutional knowledge for you." And, and so there was a, an overt as opposed to tacit recognition that after tenure comes not just relief and exhaustion and post traumatic stress but also a degree, a real degree of, of responsibility that came with the

freedom. So that's that. That is a, "yes, I agree with you," and there's one particular example in which I learned actually how not to overexpose myself, which I also think that I did too much. You know, when I was a contract worker, and I've not been a contract worker for now two years I'm in a tenure track position, which is not permanent but is the track to permanency. But when I was a contract worker, I wrote a lot about not just the material conditions of contract labor, which are so often as we know, but need to keep saying horrifically inequitable, but also the affective repercussions of contract labor. And there was a point, and I think perhaps it's, you know, still there, in my career where people knew me for my public writing on academic precarity and contract work rather than the, the air quotes "actual scholarship" that I did, which was the feminist literary scholarship and that was curious as well. And that felt very risky. Very risky.

Brenna: [00:49:18](#) Okay, it's Brenna. I'm going to respond to something Erin said and then I'm going to respond to something Lucia said. I am definitely better known in our circle as a college faculty activist than I am as a CanLit scholar. Like 90% of the time that I'm invited to speak about something, it's definitely about activism and not scholarship. And I think that would feel a lot scarier to me if my PhD wasn't stale. If literary scholarship was still like, an opportunity that was available to me, which I mean I still do it off the side of my desk because I'm belligerent like that--

Hannah (Host): [00:49:51](#) [Laughs].

Brenna: [00:49:51](#) --but I'm never going to be capital L, Literature, capital P, Professor. And so, I mean that has a lot of freedom attached to it. I think I said this at Congress a couple of years ago, but like, it's this great situation of having like full time job that I enjoy, a strong collective agreement, and a stale PhD What are you going to do to me? What do you have to offer me? Nothing. What are do you gonna do to me? Nothing that was freeing when Lucia was talking, I was thinking about one space where I do a lot of public scholarship, which is at science fiction and fantasy conventions, mmhmm, which is the place where I take my comic scholarship and my feminism. And I serve on panels, particularly at Norwescon in Seattle. And one thing that has always struck me on the feminism panels there is how much more real life, the work that those folks are doing feels like than the work that I'm doing. And by that I mean I'm often serving on panels with people who have been targeted by Gamergate, by Comicsgate, people who have been doxed, people who have been SWATted, people who have had to go into like the HR at the Bank of America where they work as a part time teller and

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say like, "Hey, so I've been doxed, here's what that word means to start with. Here are the consequences that might have for me. Do you have my back?" And walking in there going like, why would they, right? I am so in awe of that work. And I'm wildly aware of how often that work is done by women of color and queer women primarily, who find themselves targeted first and foremost, and then who have to, who are already existing in precarious spaces and have to live with that consequence. But like when Lucia was saying like, "am I gonna have to like try to explain to UBC accountable to this like technical writer?"

Hannah (Host): [00:51:52](#) [Laughs]

Brenna: [00:51:54](#) But that's what like so many people are having to do, who dare to take their activism public, who dare to challenge these frankly ridiculous movements in our culture, and who are rewarded for that by just the underscoring of their own precarity and they speak anyway, right? Like I'm serving on these panels with these women and they're like, and some of them have great stories about their boss at Bank of America who was like, "thank you for introducing me to the concept of trolling. Your job is safe and here's what we're going to do to protect you. We're going to put you in this non-public facing position for a little while until things die down." Like there are really good stories of people recognizing like that these women are not coming into this through any fault of their own. But for every good story, you know that there's one that doesn't end so happily. And I think even in the case of being a college scholar, where we do not have academic freedom entrenched in the same way as our university colleagues do, there is a recognition within the institution that academic freedom in general is a good idea, [laughs] right? And there's a respectability about not throwing me under the bus when someone calls the dean that protects me in a way that so many people don't have access to. And that's like part of the reason why any modicum of institutional privilege comes with so much responsibility in my mind. Just so much responsibility to, to amplify at least, like at the very least to amplify those voices, to show them some solidarity. And there, there are a myriad more sort of like throw some money behind it, right? Like there's a million ways to do that work, even for people who don't want to be vocal, who don't feel like that's their role. But I think if you have safety and security and you're not using it, what, what is the point?

Lucia: [00:53:48](#) It's Lucia. One of the things I was thinking about as you were speaking Brenna, is that one of the things that's been really good for me is that public feminism is how I've built a safety net that is like, it's related to like, I'm thinking about like the folks

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that I'm in a room with right now. Like it's, it's peripheral to the institution but it's not like locked into an institution in a particular way. And for me, because I speak out against institutions, I've had to find that safety within another kind of net. And so, you know, if UBC isn't going to vouch for me cuz I invoiced, the president was like, "pay me" and they're like [inaudible] maker and I'm like, "you're not wrong, but also pay me." Listener, I was paid.

Hannah (Host): [00:54:33](#) [Laughs].

Lucia: [00:54:33](#) But that, you know, the people who sort of then vouch for me are the people that I meet via the internet. Right? Like I'm thinking about like last year at Congress I was on a round table about Black and Indigenous solidarities and I was invited by Daniel Heath Justice, who I know primarily through the internet. And so I feel like those are the relationships that I depend on, which is why friendship is so important and just why our panel later today is going to be really great. Because I feel, I feel like because I have burned bridges with certain sort of institutional structures that I really depend on that safety net, and that's what makes it possible for me to do the work. You know, that people will intervene on Twitter, or I can text someone and say "this is really crappy." But I certainly don't look to institutions for support. And in some ways that's sort of not freeing. I don't think it's freeing to feel precariously in a relationship with the institution, but it means that I've had to develop other kinds of connections and safety nets, and that's been, yeah, really, really valuable.

Hannah (Host): [00:55:38](#) Freedom's just another word for nothing left to lose.

Everyone: [00:55:40](#) [Laughs]

Brenna: [00:55:43](#) I'm sorry. It spread it. It was just the deadpan way that Hannah, it's fine.

Everyone: [00:55:47](#) [Laughs]

Erin: [00:55:50](#) The moment may have passed, but I live for Janis Joplin reference. What I really was thinking though, in terms of what you just said, Lucia, about burning bridges, is that perhaps, perhaps it's also that the bridges we're burning and you stepped off to save yourself and those other networks that you've built have, you know, acknowledged yes, that was a, that was a fire and you saved yourself. And also do you need some aloe? Like, let me get you some aloe. Right? You know, like [laughs]. I think,

I think that's one thing that we do for each other outside and inside of institutions. Hannah and I were talking about this last night is that feminist friendship, not just feminist scholarship, and not just not only, but certainly included in that as public facing feminist scholarship is a kind of a wilding of the repressive nature of institutional spaces.

Hannah (Host):

[00:56:48](#)

[Laughs] Also it's yeasty. [Laughs] There was an amazing presentation yesterday or an amazing clip of some feminists in the 1970s referring feminist work as "yeasty" and it was really [sighs] evocative. Yeah, that's, that's, that one's for Emily Hoven and I think we'll enjoy that reference to yeastiness Okay. The last thing that I would like to talk about, because I am cognizant of the time and editing out none of this because you're all brilliant, is that is shame. That's the other thing that [laughs]. I know, right? But that's the specific thing Carla wanted us to talk about. So here we go. Which I think is helpful to frame around the question of call outs and call ins and moments of fucking up publicly, which for me has been the story of public scholarship, has been the experience of making mistakes. Particularly because, you know, podcasting is kind of a long form genre and I go back and I edit but it's also quite an off-the-cuff genre, and so I do say things that I don't catch when I'm saying them and I don't catch in my edits, or that I don't know. Like I don't understand the repercussions of the language that I'm using. I don't, you know, I have been called in on transphobic language, on ableist language, on not making my podcasts accessible in the ways that they need to be. And I say call ins in those cases because they are people who are listeners to the podcast, intend to continue being listeners to the podcast and are saying like, "I want you to signal that you value me. I want you to work harder on this thing. I want you to do better." You know, and I contrast that to, to like a call out, which is somebody who doesn't actually care about the work, doesn't feel like part of the community and just wants to publicly shame me in some way and I have more experience with the former, fortunately. I feel very grateful to have more experience with the former, but it's happened a lot like people saying like, "Hey, you fucked up again. That's fine. We all fuck up. Here's what we want of you," and have been answerable to that and, but I have certainly experienced that sensation of shame and the way that that shame can productively move me to try harder, to think otherwise, to push myself, to read more, to educate myself all of these things. But that shame can also cause a reaction, and I've seen it happen in collaborators and I felt it in myself, of saying "perhaps I shall just stop." Like, maybe this is too hard. Maybe I don't like the way this feels and I will just go back to doing the much safer forms of work that are available to me.

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Brenna:

[00:59:36](#)

I was thinking about this yesterday, Hannah, at the conference when you asked a question of panel, a whole panel. Hannah, if you've never had the pleasure of hearing, Hannah ask a question in a conference setting is an incredibly generous asker of questions. Hannah can point to what is deeply problematic in someone's work without triggering a defensive or a shame reaction in them, giving them a space to hold on and pull themselves out of, or at least acknowledge what is problematic in the work that they've done or what might be harmful. And it was just a perfect moment yesterday when Hannah asked this one question in a panel where there was, sort of, like a couple of things going on that needed to be addressed. You can tell it has a great teacher from the way she asks a question like that. So generous and so willing to let people be their best selves. That's a call in, right? That's reaching out and saying to someone, "it's possible you haven't thought of this but you need to. I'm going to give you the context for why. I'm going to let you address it a little bit here, but I'm going to encourage you to go away and think about it." And what you see in the way people respond to those kinds of questions is either "yes, I'm going to take this opportunity" or "I have nothing to learn from you," and we had both those responses in yesterday's conference in response to that question. Scholarship at its best is supposed to be that generative call in. And ideally when we take our scholarly practice public, we should be both able to do that work, but also to receive it. Right? The thing that I notice as I attend more to public, I'm gonna call it "public thinking," cuz I think a lot of the people I'm thinking of would not consider themselves public scholars but public thinking, is that not everyone is equally invited to be called in. I think there are many folks who present themselves in a way that makes a call in seem pointless, right? I mean, I've had this experience so many times where I'm listening to a podcast and it's somebody who I listened to all the time who I like and respect and they say something and I immediately sit down and I write an email. And I've had the same experience where it's a podcast that I listen to all the time and I like and respect and they say something and I don't. There's a gendered dynamic to that. There's a racialized dynamic to that I think, too. I think that people who exist on the margins or who engage deeply with activist culture, we expect them to receive, right? Just as we expect them to give when appropriate. But so this is a roundabout way of saying that I really believe in, maybe I just, maybe this is just self serving, but I really believe that when you're on the recipient of that call in frequently, it signals an openness in your scholarship and openness in your thinking, an openness in your connection to other people that they think that that call in is worth the time. Because when I've been on the receiving end of that, it has

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paradoxically it's been because I've fucked something up, but I fucked something up in the context of something that is worthwhile. Right? If it's not worthwhile, nobody bothers and if you're closed off, nobody bothers.

Hannah (Host): [01:03:09](#) Yeah, I, I've said it a number of times, like in other contexts that often when I am being called in, I think, "oh, that's wonderful. I have somehow earned the trust of people who are willing to ask me to do better." And like I often feel like, I don't know if I actually deserve that trust, but I am going to try really hard to honor it because it is scary, vulnerable work. Like we're talking about the vulnerability of being, you know, a public thinker. It is scary, vulnerable work to ask people to do better, to like that is hard and so, yeah. Yeah, there's a lot of trust there.

Erin: [01:03:44](#) I think two of the physical reactions that I've had, which I mean we were, we were, I'm not going to say what entirely what we were talking about before we began recording, but we were talking about gut responses to things, right? Am I right? Yes, I'm right. And you know, I've, as we've discussed, I've been on the receiving and I've call ins and call outs of the varieties of kinds that we've been talking about. And then also really, I mean, you've said it already hadn't I, but I want to underscore like that kind of call out in which the person has, doing that calling out, actually has no investment in you doing better whatsoever. They're just really interested in seeing you fail and the reactions are so different. Brenna, I love the way that you, I mean, talk about realizing that people are good at what they do: teaching, thinking, writing, you know. I mean everybody in this room, everybody that I'm listening to, I'm learning something from, again, of course always. But the way in which you described the both the, the kind of, the receptiveness to being called in the more that it happens when you think, "wow, this is, my work is worth this." I mean, that makes me think of the way that I was talking earlier about receiving what would feel to me, what does feel, has felt to me like a really generous book review of writing that I've done that is not over the top laudatory, you know? I mean, that's nice, but it also, I feel suspicious about it because, you know, nothing that I will ever write is free from the possibility of improvement. And, and so, you know, that's great, but those moments of calling out and calling in, I've recognized in the last 18 months as I've experienced them and sort of at a search that was unexpected and unprecedented, has a physical reaction for me that is like a cortisol dump, and a racing of the heart, and a shakiness that has taken me, as you know, many of you in this room know, has taken me 18 months to metabolize both psychologically and physically. And that is instructive because that is teaching me, I mean that's my body

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teaching me things that I thought I could intellectualize my way out of, when in fact that gut reaction is, is my body is saying, "you're not ready for this. You have to take a pause so that you can actually see straight to think, is this a useful call in? Okay, it is. So why are you having such a enormous physical reaction to it? Is it because of the privilege that you occupy and you're not used to somebody telling you you need to do better? Here's how. Okay, that's useful. That's really interesting. Or is it because somebody really doesn't like you and they're going for the jugular? Okay, that's useful. You don't actually have to respond to that."

Hannah (Host): [01:06:55](#) No.

Erin: [01:06:55](#) That's actually not discursive. That is oppressive. That doesn't deserve your time. So that's been really instructive for me too, learning how to live in the body that I've been, that is my body that I live in. What, you know, like realizing that I have a body that knows as much as my brain does. Did I just do some sort of mind-body thing that, I didn't mean to do that, you know? Sorry Descartes.

Hannah (Host): [01:07:21](#) [Laughs].

Lucia: [01:07:21](#) I think my, sort of, experiences of, of public feminism and shame are twofold. Again, on the one hand I, I say that like I haven't been called out or called in in sort of very public ways that have sort of made me feel that flush of shame. But I have had experience where I see it happen to other people and I get afraid and my sort of like, "oh, I don't want that to happen to me." And sort of this almost preemptive shame and learning how to sit with that and being like, "if you are so worried about your own ego and your shame and that stops you from doing the work, like that's bad." Like you need to do the work and be willing to preemptively sit with that feeling of discomfort. But I think also what I'm learning, because I'm a, I'm the kind of, I really like to be liked and when you talk about how institutions like universities or CanLit are really awful and you're not liked, you have to learn how to sit with like, you can't be liked and do the work. And I've had to learn that that is a thing. But also I think I've also learned, as a racialized person, that sometimes I take on shame that isn't mine. And learning how to sit with the discomfort of somebody who feels ashamed or feels a sense of guilt about something that I've said and be like, "that is, that is theirs." And they might project it onto me in a particular way, but it's not my job to then sort of be like, swallow it and feel it churning in my belly as my own. So I think that, yeah, the sort of preemptive shame, which is, has instructed me as a scholar, like

I'm taking on a project like a book project right now, and I had to sit down and say like, really, I literally wrote like a declaration of intent that's like, "you have these feelings and these biases. And this might make, like you need to watch out for this and you need to do like you need to do this community work and these sort of things," which isn't something that's going to prevent me from fucking up. Cuz I'm sure that I probably will, but not using that potential feeling of shame as an excuse not to engage in the work because "oh, it's so scary and I want to be liked." But it's been really hard too because when people don't like me, I just want to swallow all of that. And I, I mean I do feel, I do experience shame. It's the shame of I shouldn't, I shouldn't have said anything. I'm a bad person. I'm such a troublemaker. So, so learning what shame is mind and what isn't. And then also learning, you can't intellectualize your way out of ever experiencing it, so all you can do is be prepared to deal with it.

Erin: [01:09:59](#) And that strikes me as such an important differentiation between feeling shame and something being a shame. You know? It would be a shame not to take the time to pause, and to move on, and to move through, or to kind of, you know, think through or feel through those different things including shame. You know, I think, yeah. I think that there's a really interesting kind of split in the, the flow of feelings there between feeling shame and having something be a shame. Which is lamentable right? Lamentable if it happens or lamentable that it did happen.

Hannah (Host): [01:10:37](#) Yeah. And between, feeling ashamed and being shamed too, right? Like the way that, that those feelings are sort of coming at you from outside and coming from within you out into the world. And, and so often, you know, I think, I think that, you know, preemptive shame, fear of being ashamed, incorporation of other people's experiences of shame can make us quiet, can make us silent in contexts in which we should not be silent. And that has all kinds of things to do with like, being a woman speaking publicly and being told that you are speaking too loudly, that you should shut up, that you are making, making a fuss in a way that you shouldn't make a fuss. And that, I mean we're, we're, we're going on to talk about feminist friendship later today at this conference, but a thing that I have been thinking about a lot lately is the role that feminist friendship plays, not just in boosting you up, and supporting you, and working against the, sort of, coercive social logics of the institution, but also like helping you to register times when [laughing] you actually should feel ashamed. Like the generosity of somebody you love and trust saying like, "No. Yeah dude, you, yup. Yup. No, that was actually bad. That was actually a

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bad, let's talk about how I can support you through this, but like hmmm nope. That was not a great move." We have been, we have been recording for hour and 18 minutes and we need to leave. So unless anybody has a burning anything else, they would like to say.

- Brenna: [01:12:22](#) A burning yeastiness, Hannah?
- Erin: [01:12:22](#) [Shrieks]
- Hannah (Host): [01:12:24](#) A burning yeastiness? Woohoo! Yeah. Okay. That's, thanks. You're all, you're all brilliant and disgusting. [Music: "Remember My Name" by Mitski]
- Hannah (Host): [01:12:47](#) If you'd like to hear more from today's guests, they're all on Twitter. Brenna is @brennacgray. That's G R A Y. Lucia is at @empathywarrrior and Erin's @erinwunker. As you might gather from the episode's discussion, some are more active on Twitter than others. I'll, of course, include links to everyone's work in the show notes, which you can find alongside all the episodes of *Secret Feminist Agenda* on secretfeministagenda.com. You can follow me on Twitter @hkpmcgregor and you can tweet about the podcast using the hashtag #secretfeministagenda. Also, you can go onto Apple Podcasts and review the show. It's a great way of supporting this project. There are three new reviews this week from Earth Wide Homes, Jen Meadow and Claire Palmer. Thank you all so much. The podcast theme song is "Mesh Shirt" by Mom Jeans off their album Chub Rub. You can download the entire album on freemusicarchive.org or follow them on Facebook. As our very special friendship theme song, I chose "Remember My Name" by Mitski. This episode was recorded on the traditional unceded territories of the Algonquin nation and edited on the traditional, unceded territory of the Musqueam, Squamish, and 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]