

Episode 4.4 Off-Mic Conversations with Khairani Barokka

SEPTEMBER 27, 2019

Hannah McGregor: [00:00:11](#)

I'm Hannah McGregor and this is Secret Feminist Agenda. And once again, I'm recording one of these interests from a hotel room, who even knows what city I'm in. I've had a pretty action packed couple of weeks. I was in New Orleans last week competing in internationals with my chorus, this week I am doing a ton of work travel and I say this not to get into a Classic Hannah I'm-working-too-hard moment, but actually instead to reflect on the experience I had editing this episode while on a plane, which at first I was not looking forward to, not because I wasn't excited about the episode, but because editing on a plane is not my ideal setup. It's kind of cramped, it's noisy and I was feeling overwhelmed and stressed about the work things that were coming up. But putting on my headphones and sitting down to edit this episode was actually this remarkable experience of respite in the middle of a really overwhelming week, particularly because this episode was recorded some time ago and usually I edit episodes only a few days after I've recorded them. But getting to revisit this from a distance of several months was so fun because I really got to return to how much fun I had having this conversation. So I hope you have anywhere near as much fun listening to it as I did having it and then editing it, and without further ado, let me introduce Okka.

Khairani Barokka, who goes by Okka, is an Indonesian writer and artist in London whose work has been presented extensively in 15 countries. She was an NYU Tisch departmental fellow, is a UN FPA Indonesian young leader driving social change and is Modern Poetry in Translation's Inaugural Poet-in-Residence. Okka is most recently co editor of 'Stairs and Whispers: D/deaf and Disabled Poets Write Back' author illustrator of 'Indigenous Species' and author of 'Rope'. Her latest exhibition was 'Annah: Nomenclature.'

Hannah McGregor:

I'm always the loudest person on all of my own recordings. It's fun, it's fun, that's what editing is for

Okka: [00:03:00](#)

Exactly.

Hannah McGregor: [00:03:02](#)

Good times.

Okka: [00:03:02](#)

Have we started?

Hannah McGregor: [00:03:02](#)

I mean it's already recording.

Okka: [00:03:04](#)

Oh okay! Hi! Just casually.

Hannah McGregor: [00:03:12](#)

I recorded the test too, cause I can edit out the beginning. It's all fun. It's all deeply malleable.

Okka: [00:03:18](#) Excellent, excellent. You can start with the laugh and then,

Hannah McGregor: [00:03:21](#) Yeah, exactly. Exactly. Maybe my favorite episode for this was the interview with Ames Hawkins where we're like 10 minutes in and she's like,

Hannah McGregor: [00:03:30](#) Hey, is this the episode? Exactly! A cold open, a cold open.

Hannah McGregor: [00:03:37](#) Yup. Yup. That's what I like to do. Am suggested that like perhaps it would be helpful if I like, tutored guests a little bit more in like what we were going to do and I was like, nah. They're gonna figure it out. It'll be fine. Alright, so can you start off and tell us a little bit about what has brought you to Vancouver and how you have ended up sitting in this office with me?

Okka: [00:04:04](#) Yes. I can't believe I'm here. Thank you so, so much for having me. I've been a listener and a huge fan. So I am in Vancouver for HASTAC, which I just found out is pronounced 'Haystack'.

Hannah McGregor: [00:04:16](#) I believe.

Okka: [00:04:18](#) The noun, there's a stack of hay and not Has Tack. It's a conference that has as its focus for this year, decolonizing technologies, reprogramming education. And so I'm presenting on a panel about digital archiving and about decolonizing that, specifically about my work with digital arts and my use of digital arts to manipulate or to highlight certain archives that have been interpreted in very colonialist fashion, which of course comes with attendant racism, sexism, ableism, transphobia, homophobia, et cetera, ageism and all. So I'm very excited. I love the other panelists who are going to be speaking with me and I'm really looking forward to all of their topics. So that's why I'm here first time in Canada.

Hannah McGregor: [00:05:09](#) Oh, cool. Do you have some time to like see the city after this conference or,

Okka: [00:05:15](#) I will, I'm leaving I think Sunday or Monday. I have a friend in town who I know from Indonesia who lives here now, so I'm going to get to – my tourism is food tourism, always. I'm primarily interested in what I can eat here. I'm excited to try that.

Hannah McGregor: [00:05:31](#) The food here is great.

Okka: [00:05:32](#) It's so great!

Hannah McGregor: [00:05:33](#) Yeah.

Okka: [00:05:34](#) I mean I come from London, you know, like reasonably priced for how great it is.

Hannah McGregor: [00:05:38](#) That's great. That's delightful. Do you want to talk about archives a little bit?

Okka: [00:05:41](#) Yes. Let's go right into it!

Hannah McGregor: [00:05:43](#) I love talking about archives just as you were talking about doing this work on like decolonizing archives. I was like, Oh man, I have not talked about archive theory on this podcast and I'm so into archive theory!

Okka: [00:05:58](#) Oh gosh, it's brilliant isn't it? I mean just meeting other women and non binary people also working on archives through the course of doing my PhD has been really fantastic. There was a conference organized by my colleague and friend Chandra Frank called Archives Matter, which was at Goldsmiths, I believe in 2016 and it brought together so many different feminists working just like a whole conference just devoted to this. It was fantastic.

Hannah McGregor: [00:06:30](#) Have you encountered the work of Lily Cho? She's a Canadian scholar. I just saw her, she just keynoted at a conference that I was at. I know, I also know her, she is also a friend of mine. But I didn't know about this project that she's been working on for a decade, which is called Mass Capture and is about an archive that she has, I mean I was going to say has found, but like that's a troubling language around archives, like we talked about discovering archives as though they weren't like literally created by institutions. So it's an archive she's been working with for some time, which is a document called the CI 9. It was a piece of paperwork that Chinese Canadians were required to complete during the era of the head tax if and when they wanted to return home and be able to come back to Vancouver.

Okka: [00:07:22](#) I see.

Hannah McGregor: [00:07:23](#) It's almost entirely Vancouver and Victoria.

Okka: [00:07:25](#) That sounds very exciting

Hannah McGregor: [00:07:27](#) So it's like exit paperwork, and what it was trying to do was prevent identity fraud so that people couldn't leave and then somebody else come using their name and not like, repay the head tax.

Okka: [00:07:36](#) Yeah, the fear of the immigrant who is sneaky and you know all of this association with Asians.

Hannah McGregor: [00:07:46](#) Oh, for sure. And the sort of anxious documentation, Lily was talking about it in terms of the enormous amount of labor that is required to produce the non-citizen as a subject. But the, I mean the remarkable thing about it as an archive is that it is the first mass photography project in Canadian history. That's how they would document these people.

Okka: [00:08:07](#) That is absolutely brilliant.

Hannah McGregor: [00:08:08](#) So it's this amazing, it's like 40,000 of these documents that are photographs.

Okka: [00:08:15](#) 40,000 is a long, I mean, I've been working on, so I'm talking about two projects of mine specifically on this panel of digital art on digital archives and decolonization at HASTAC. The first is this book which we have before us: Indigenous Species, it was my first book that came out in 2016. And I truly, I didn't think this book was going to get made or if it did, I gave myself a 20 year timeline for it to get made because it's so off the wall. I didn't think anybody would be able to publish it. And thankfully, you know,

Hannah McGregor: [00:08:45](#) Who is the publisher?

Okka: [00:08:45](#) Tilted Axis Press.

Hannah McGregor: [00:08:48](#) Awesome.

Okka: [00:08:49](#) And so it's a digital art book that uses open source, traditional Indonesian cultures' symbols. But I also use contemporary prints here and textiles, I love collaging, so it's all about that. And it's about, it's from the POV of a young girl who's abducted and taken on a boat and she's talking about the environmental destruction around her, the social destruction around her. Which, I mean, a lot of people don't realize that all the Palm oil is attached to literal deaths and literal abuses, especially towards women, nonbinary people in Indonesia that goes along with, you know, culling rainforests and forcing people off their land. So it's about how anti-ableism is a huge part of this book because I conceived of it as a sight-impaired accessible art book and a translation of absence because on every left hand side, as you will see here, there is quote unquote fake braille and it just says 'braille' in braille.

Hannah McGregor: [00:09:45](#) Oh is that what it says?

Okka: [00:09:47](#) Yeah. Yeah. I mean in English braille cause there's all kinds of, there's like Korean braille and Japanese braille and different kinds. But I intentionally want it to be like this because I wanted us as sighted people and though I have, you know, I'm super shortsighted because glasses are not considered, you know, are not as stigmatized as like a cane and not associated with disabilities as much.

Hannah McGregor: [00:10:06](#) Yeah.

Okka: [00:10:06](#) So I wanted us as sighted people quote unquote, to recognize that there should be braille there and there should be audio books and there should be accessibility, which so often isn't. So that's the one project I'm talking about. And then the next project that I'm talking

about is my Annah, Infinite project which, speaking of decade long obsessions, I first conceived of this in 2011 and every time - so thank you for telling me about Lily Cho, will definitely look her up. And also that makes me just feel better that it's not like somebody else has been working on something for a really long time.

- Hannah McGregor: [00:10:38](#) It's okay! Big archives take a lot of time. You know, it's like just.
- Okka: [00:10:41](#) Yes, they really do. And I mean, props to Lily because I've been obsessed with just one visual image for going on eight years, which is the painting Annah La Javanaise by Paul Gauguin. So if you.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:10:53](#) May know Gauguin's work. Yeah.
- Okka: [00:10:55](#) Oh yeah. Oh God, yeah. Syphilis. Tahitian young girls as a whole shebang. So he is, he is a recorded domestic abuser. I mean there's this book that Nancy Mathews wrote called Gauguin: An Erotic Life in which, I know, and which, you know, you read, there's a letter that his son wrote about how he saw his father hit his mother until she bled. So he's like, you know, like physical abuse. And then obviously, you know, he was really interested, interested in like, you know, rape and titillation and all of this stuff. And so Annah La Javanaise means means Annah the Javanese, and I'm a Javanese and Minang woman. And it's this painting of this girl in the nude, she has a monkey at her feet and she, you know, is on a chair looking very inviting. And this was painted around 1893 to 1894. And she was in Paris and I was just so struck by this image. I first saw it in 2011 at the end of my Master's program at NYU, Tisch, and just thought, I never see, I mean like a new Javanese girl in Paris at the turn of the century? Like I've never seen anything like that before so the Parisians were really obsessed with Javanese girls and dances and Javanese culture after the World's Fair, which I believe was in 1884. So like John Singer Sargent also painted Javanese girls – clothed though – dancing in traditional, you know, Javanese garb. And Gauguin was like, this is Java to me, strip the clothes off and give her a monkey at her feet. I don't know why he's talking like 1914.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:12:27](#) I thought it was a pretty good Gauguin impression!
- Okka: [00:12:27](#) Vaudeville presenter. But you know, even though there is actually no recorded evidence of that, they, that Gauguin and this girl that is called Annah were ever sexually intimate, but that was the impression they wanted to give off. You know, because that contributed to the mystique of him as being closer to the savages and, you know, being this, oh he's with this exotic girl. And she's so young and I was looking, I was just, I became so obsessed with her because of all the stories about her that were all completely varied. And it's like, you know, there are Gauguin scholars who nitpick about every single little thing about his life and his work and what it means. You know, the painting now is worth millions of dollars

and it's quote private collection. I've been trying for eight years to figure out exactly where it is. I think I have a hunch. I can't say right now which particular very wealthy family owns this painting. But, you know, it always comes up against a wall because, and auction houses also are very, you know, evade my questions. But the painting itself is a form of capital, right? So Javanese girls' bodies are also form of capital. And I just was thinking about all the ways in which archives have conspired over the past more than a hundred years to make this painting of a young nude girl in Paris with a recorded domestic abuser, a work of art and not evidence of child abuse. A work of art and not pornography. And the links to which people and art institutions go to, I mean, you know, young girls go to museums and they're presented with as they're like, oh, why are... You know, I mean, I'm thinking about how it affects how we as Javanese women view ourselves, right? When we're told to view ourselves through the eyes of Western masters who, you know, put these young girls in very compromising positions. And I constantly talk also about, we were talking a bit earlier about where fragility in academia. I'm mean i've been asked to speak about this by, you know, scholars who call themselves feminists and I'll talk about how, you know, in history the ground was close to many young underage girls, but the white girls were more protected because as soon as their parents saw. I mean at some point he was in Tahiti, he had these patrons who were a rich white family who asked him to paint portraits of their three daughters. I believe it was three, and he painted them in you know, sexually very suggestive poses and immediately, you know, they said go away basically. But the same protection was not afforded to young brown girls. And I've seen even women artists of colour sort of justify, Oh you know, but in Tahiti they're more sexually open and this and that. And not talking about, you know, colonialism and power dynamics and just how much less protection brown and black girls have. And what's very interesting about this Annah case is that, so I was saying earlier, you know, scholars will nitpick about all these details about Gauguin's life and art, but when it comes to Annah herself, she's constantly described as being from different places. She's being described as okay, Javanese, the painting is Annah La Javanaise right? Half Malaya, half Indian. Polynesian. Sinhalese. Half Dutch, half Javanese. Right?

Hannah McGregor: [00:15:43](#)

These are very different.

Okka: [00:15:44](#)

Right! What do these have in common? Girls from colonies. So it doesn't matter what colonies she's from as long she's from a colony. And to me it was just, it was just ridiculous. I was like, these and these scholars don't even say that, Hey, by the way, all these other sources say she's from all these other different places. Because she's unimportant. What's important is what she represents, which is Gauguin's mastery of art as well as of women as well as savages and colonies. And it's, so I've been doing for the past eight years, I've been thinking about this project, which is now my PhD project. I'm doing a PhD, my practice at Goldsmiths and

in the Department of Visual Cultures on, Annah Infinite and Able Normativity as Imperial Duress: Relations, Assumptions, Power and Abuse and Queer Crippling our Knowledge of it. I'm trying to kick down a door because, you know, it was just ridiculous to me that she's been described as all these different things. And also, you know, at some point I was presenting this to my PhD cohort and I was like, I don't understand why she's always described as being around around 13, around 13. And I have to credit my colleague Ella Eunice, who's a Jordanian artist and curator, and she said that was probably the age of consent at that time they were trying to legitimize and I thought, bing! Light bulb, you know what I mean? Of course. And it was, the age of consent in France at that time, you know, so and the way these stories about her, you know, again, archives and scholars, completely different stories. Some say, Oh, she could have been found in the streets or brothels of Paris, streets or brothels, you know, some people. There was, there's a scholar who says that she was brought as a domestic worker from Indonesia by Nina Pack who was an opera singer. And there are some who say that this artist Alphonse Mucha gave her to Gauguin as a gift.

Hannah McGregor: [00:17:36](#)

Yeah. I mean that absolute inability of art history as a discipline to take this woman seriously, or to attend to like her history, it actually reminds me of a point in Lily's talk, you know, which reminded me of other things I have come across in people talking about archives. But Lily was talking about how these documents have the person's name written in Chinese characters and then they are required to provide a trans-literation or a phoneticization of the names that will be legible to the government. And she was like her team of RAs and her have been working through this and finding that in a number, a significant number of cases, there's a mismatch that the name that they're transliterating that they are providing is the person being documented who is doing this. You know, there's something happening there where they are changing their name and she was like, people worked on this archive, like I'm not the first person to do work on this. Nobody has noticed it because none of the people working on this archive have been Chinese.

Okka: [00:18:47](#)

Oh, yes.

Hannah McGregor: [00:18:48](#)

Or have have cared or have thought to stop and look.

Okka: [00:18:52](#)

Exactly. And I mean, I can't say that I'm the first Indonesian woman who's written about this painting. I mean, but it's honestly been asides usually in the published work, you know, just like for an example of exoticism of course, see: Gauguin's, you know, Annah La Javanaise, but I think I'm the first to really look at ableism in particular as very fundamental to this because in 2011 when I first saw this picture, I was in a lot of extreme chronic pain. It's a condition that I continue to manage chronic pain and fatigue. And I just thought her histories and what happened to her and

where she came from are also different. There's definitely the possibility that she was in chronic pain because there are no records where she wrote herself about her about, about her life, there just, you know, visual archives, photographs where by the way, she's only ever pictured alone or with white men.

- Hannah McGregor: [00:19:40](#) Oh, that's terrifying.
- Okka: [00:19:42](#) It's terrifying. It's terrifying. I see this, this child, you know, I think of her as, as a child, she was a child and completely unprotected. And so not to dismiss her agency though as well, right? Because, because there's always, there's always that. So
- Hannah McGregor: [00:19:56](#) The desire always to find agency first can be a way of trying to align the reality of the violence.
- Okka: [00:20:02](#) That is a very good point, right. So I'm trying to be, you know, sensitive and how.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:20:06](#) To hold both of those things.
- Okka: [00:20:07](#) Exactly. So I thought, okay, so my point honestly with this PhD and with a book that I'm writing, I'm very excited about, it's called Annah Infinite, it's my next book project, is, you know, there's the possibility that she was in chronic pain and yet so many scholars have been like, but why, but how she doesn't look like she's in chronic pain. Which as somebody who lives with chronic pain, you don't know,
- Hannah McGregor: [00:20:33](#) Like what do you think that looks like?
- Okka: [00:20:36](#) Exactly. You know, I've been, I've been like smiling in photos and in chronic pain, you know, and it's the same with any quote unquote invisible disability because we're so ocular-centric and we're taught everything can be seen and interpreted according to sighted people who are also in positions of power. Whereas you know, anybody who has had mental health issues can also attest to the fact that you cannot see how somebody is feeling in their body mind. So I'm trying to crip her and, and also, you know, to queer her because the assumption, if you assume that she was with Gauguin willingly and there are horrible films that I have had to watch for this PhD where there's, you know, like a sex scene with her, a young girl and like Donald Sutherland, you know, exactly. It was just like as go again also Kiefer Sutherland played Gauguin, which I think is like a questionable family legacy of like both father playing him in different biopics.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:21:32](#) It's news to me that there are any movies about Gauguin. But like, as I think about it, I'm like, Oh, of course this is like, a figure people are going to be fascinated with, the tortured genius. The dark side. Whatever.

Okka: [00:21:44](#) Exactly. Who's the best friend of Van Gogh also? So that's, yeah, there's another one with Vincent Cassel so, yeah. And there's so many scholars that say, but how, you know, how can you say that? You know, this is a child who is in the company of all older white men, at least two of whom were rumored to have been intimate with her. And where do those rumors come from because they want to be seen as having been intimate with her and that consent is always a part of that. You know, she was so vulnerable, Gauguin was literally a physical abuser. Of course she could have been in chronic pain and I'm just trying to prove this. I've been trying to, I've had performance installations and mixed media, digital artworks and I do performance art. Last year I did a piece called Annah Nomenclature at the ICA in London where I speak to Annah and it really felt like she was in the room. And then there's another bit that I did last year at this gallery called SALTS in Basel during Art Basel Week and it was called Selected Annahs, in selected and mostly perform as different Annahs. But I prefer now to speak to her because I feel like they are, you know, like I feel like there are many different possible Annahs right? I'm also writing many different possible stories for the past eight years I've written like, sci-fi about her. I've written, you know like fantasy because anything is possible. If you say that a girl can be from all of these different places at once, you know like what I'm trying to prove is that you know, our archives are fiction. These are historical artifacts that you think are nonfiction and set in stone, they all contradict each other. They're fictions. I'm not doing anything new. Right?

Hannah McGregor: [00:23:19](#) That's such a powerful way to frame it. To say like, we know this as fictional so I'm going to tell different stories. But also like the, like the thing that struck me immediately when you said, you know, all of these scholars are responding to you and saying, well how could you possibly know that she is in chronic pain? How could you possibly know that she's disabled? It's like, well how the fuck could you possibly know that she's able?

Okka: [00:23:40](#) Exactly!

Hannah McGregor: [00:23:40](#) Like, why does that get to be the assumption? Why is that framing a logical and reasonable and sound one, but the possibility of disability is like a wild premise that demands proof?

Okka: [00:23:55](#) Even though she was, you know, she would've been in Paris in the 1890s like one of the most vulnerable groups to be, you know, to have acquired disability disabled because, you know, disabled women and girls, nonbinary people way more likely to be, you know, sexually abused, physically abused, have acquired disability from abuse. It's just, and also I've, I've gotten a little bit of pushback to be honest from, you know, I was to finish this train of thought earlier, I like to speak in meandering rivers, this is a podcast where that's allowable.

Hannah McGregor: [00:24:29](#) It sure is.

Okka: [00:24:29](#) So, you know, I've been asked to speak about this and one time I was interrupted by, you know, a white feminist scholar who said, she said, well, you know, Brooke Shields was also depicted, you know, as a sexualized young girl. And I...

Hannah McGregor: [00:24:43](#) Like, yeah, misogyny is real.

Okka: [00:24:44](#) Yeah, absolutely. That's terrible as well. And she said, and she was white. And I said, yes, that is also terrible. I'm not saying that's not terrible, but you have to understand that during colonialism, colonialism was built on treating our bodies as capital, especially women and girls. I mean, there was a law. Yeah, you're, yeah, you're at a loss for words too, right?

Hannah McGregor: [00:25:08](#) Like I'm thinking about the R Kelly revelations.

Okka: [00:25:11](#) Oh my God.

Hannah McGregor: [00:25:12](#) And the, the really necessary conversations that came along with that.

Okka: [00:25:15](#) Shoutout to Dream Hampton.

Hannah McGregor: [00:25:15](#) Right? Of the non-concern showed to the predation on black girls and how revelatory, how revealing that was, of the way that black and brown girls are sexualized young, their sexualization as a fundamental logic of white supremacy and colonialism. And not only is it not perceived as a problem by the white gaze, but in fact it then becomes normalized as a sort of logic or rhetoric that is used to dismiss the humanity of black and brown people in general. Right?

Okka: [00:25:55](#) It just, it makes me so happy to talk to somebody who gets it, really, truly like, it's been amazing how I thought I would have thought I would've had like kind of an easy job like yeah, of course, but it's so difficult to undo this internalized ableism and racism, right? Sometimes. And so like in the Annah Nomenclature piece with the ICA – and the piece is online on YouTube in its entirety as well as the Q&A with Aditi Jaganathan – afterwards I juxtapose, you know my poetry and my speaking to Annah in the background I made this short film and you know, I pair what I'm saying with headlines on, for example, ICE detained children in the States and what's going on right now, you know, and what's still happening with foreign domestic workers right now. Cause Annah could have been a foreign domestic worker and it's like, it really is this interchangeability, not only of like where we come from, but who we are and especially, you know, the lack of innocence that black and brown children who are, especially if we're girls and non-binary or trans, we're not allowed to be children as a population, as much

as, as it's just really, it's the same old story. It hasn't changed. I'm using this one painting, I've really thought about this every single day of my life for eight years. And of course, you know, on a personal note, cause I too, you know, I spent years trying to convince doctors that I was in pain because they can see it. So especially in, you know, in Western countries, I mean I also met with resistance where I come from in Indonesia, but the logic as you said, of white supremacy in healthcare institutions is very particular in Western countries. So yeah, I'm just trying to say that this is nothing new, these are all fictions, and we look at these archives and these are the ones that are in, you know, I mean I'm a member of the Tate library for instance, right? And the Tate, you know, I've, I've also performed Selected Annahs at the Tate, which is kind of ironic because in it you know, I talk about how I'm a member of the Tate library and in 2016 I was going through, you know, like, I wonder if she's been mislabeled in the Tate library. Like let me just try and see, you know, go down what's under there, and he was labeled as there's a print labeled as 'Polynesian female nude.' That's how it began. And I was like, I bet that this, you know, seated on a chair with a monkey at her feet. And it was taken out by an artist who has since been nominated for the Turner Prize, but she was working on, I think it's actually still inadequate actually, what she has done in terms of like reproducing Gauguin's gaze with the Tahitian women. And I say it's still an adequate, because to me the resultant film still reproduces the white gaze to some extent, but you know, I talked to her, she very kindly agreed to speak to me and she said she was working on this project about Gauguin and Tahitian girls and said, I want you to know that the print, one of the prints you have out is actually not definitely of a Polynesian girl of this girl named Annah Javaneise who's listed as coming from all these different places, and she had no idea. So.

Hannah McGregor: [00:28:54](#)

You just trust the archive.

Okka: [00:28:55](#)

Yeah. You trust the archive, right? You trust the archive and then the archival imaginary becomes part of your artistic imaginary. And it's, you know, there, these are people who are getting nominated for the Turner Prize and she had no idea. And I have told the Tate library, you know, it's still listed as that. I checked it like this year recently. It's like still listed as Polynesian people because it's with these other Polynesian female nudes. Right. So the interchangeability of us as quote unquote brown girls, you know, it's like, yeah. And I mean, when you speak about black women, girls, and non-binary people as well, Maria Vargas Ilosa won the Nobel prize winner, he wrote a biographical novel about Gauguin and his Peruvian grandmother called The Way To Paradise, and he's writing from Gauguin's perspective and it's very, extremely sexist. And he, at some point it says, I believe, she had such thick lips, she could have been African. I'm paraphrasing, but you know, it's just how people associate traits.

Hannah McGregor: [00:29:50](#) Sorry, I made a face.

Okka: [00:29:51](#) You definitely made a face that is an appropriate face because it just makes you think like, what, what do you think people look like who come from different places?

Hannah McGregor: [00:30:01](#) What the hell does it mean to look African?

Okka: [00:30:06](#) Exactly. What is it?

Hannah McGregor: [00:30:07](#) It's a whole fucking continent.

Okka: [00:30:07](#) And so it's Javanese girls like, you know, my granddad was a Bantanes Arab man. But like probably from Yemeni traders from the 14th or 15th century, like that far back, you know what I mean? He was also very Javanese, like he was just Javanese.

Hannah McGregor: [00:30:21](#) Yeah.

Okka: [00:30:22](#) So, I mean, what, what do these, what does this, I have a whole chapter about like what does Javanese even mean? Right? Like what, what do you think that means? Then I talk about, you know, the French and the Dutch being in cahoots because Indonesia where Java's located at that time was called the Dutch East Indies, right? And you know, the Dutch East India corporation was the very first actual corporation.

Hannah McGregor: [00:30:43](#) Oh, I didn't.

Okka: [00:30:44](#) Yeah. Oh yeah. So it all began with that. And so the French didn't colonize Java but treated it like a colony because you know, France and Holland were, were boys, they were bros.

Hannah McGregor: [00:31:00](#) Right. And the technology of archiving is a corporate and a colonial technology, right? Like, the emergence of these systems and these institutions that are about population management through the accumulation of knowledge. Like both the accumulation and invention or creation of knowledge about the archived subject. Like that's, oh god, I'm trying to think of who wrote this like really iconic archival studies book that is specifically about understanding the archive as a colonial tool and understanding how like the accumulation of knowledge is the whole point of colonialism.

Okka: [00:31:39](#) Tina Campt, Listening To Images, Saidiya Hartman who just came out with a brand new book.

Hannah McGregor: [00:31:43](#) It's not Saidiya Hartman, love her work. I feel like it was called like Reading With the Grain?

Okka: [00:31:49](#) Oh! Against the Grain. Is it Marisa Fuentes?

Hannah McGregor: [00:31:51](#) It's Reading With the Grain, it's specifically with the grain. Yeah. Yeah. And the argument of it, I'm gonna see if I can find it, the argument of it is that while there is value in reading against the grain, but when we are reading archives, there is value in reading them not exclusively resistantly, but reading them in fact along the lines of the work that they are doing. So seeing that the logic is right there in the texts themselves.

Okka: [00:32:20](#) I mean Mass Capture again like.

Hannah McGregor: [00:32:22](#) Right?

Okka: [00:32:22](#) That, that title. Lily Cho, did you say?

Hannah McGregor: [00:32:24](#) Lily Cho, yeah. Great.

Okka: [00:32:26](#) I love that title. Yeah. And so many women of color are now working on archives and creating work on archives. Yes Saidiya Hartman, Tina Campt.

Hannah McGregor: [00:32:36](#) Ann Stoler, this is the book I was thinking about.

Okka: [00:32:38](#) Oh! Along the Archival Grain.

Hannah McGregor: [00:32:38](#) Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense.

Okka: [00:32:42](#) So her Ann Stoler, is where, cause she's worked a lot in Indonesia, so I've known about her work for many years. And so the term Imperial Duress and the title of my PhD comes from her book.

Hannah McGregor: [00:32:52](#) Oh! Okay, okay.

Okka: [00:32:55](#) It's very still, but also I'm also critiquing language of able normativity that may pop up in a lot of archival work as well.

Hannah McGregor: [00:33:04](#) I am sure because I have not encountered discussion of disability in any archival studies work that I've read.

Okka: [00:33:08](#) Really?

Hannah McGregor: [00:33:09](#) Yeah!

Okka: [00:33:09](#) Well...

Hannah McGregor: [00:33:11](#) I mean, which, speaks 100% to that absolute failure of the field.

- Okka: [00:33:18](#) And also, yeah. And disability studies also being so, I mean they're like texts that are supposedly canonical that are actually very, very Anglocentric and really dismissive of colonialism as an able-normative tool. So, but you know, just talking a little bit about in this talk at HASTAC about how able normativity is something we absolutely have to critique because also my colleague Slamet Thohari wrote a book called Disability in Java and in it he talks about four main frameworks for disability in post Suharto Java – Suharto was the dictator, installed by the CIA basically, of course, you know, ruled Indonesia for three decades. And how there were, I mean I'm Javanese I know this, I know we have disabled Gods. I know this and yet there's been so much ingrained ableism that has come from Dutch missionary culture that created the, you know, the medical model. You have to heal everything. You have to cure everything. So, you know, I write in my book, my work in progress about how like before, if you are disabled, in certain cases you are seen as closer to God and possessing of like powers, and it's been really cathartic to be honest, as a disabled Javanese woman to be like, Oh shit. Like fuck this. This is my culture. To have disabled thugs to be like, wow, I never knew until I wasn't, I mean, I knew from when I was a kid, like you see in shadow puppetry, like, Oh, there's the throat disabled God, this God has dwarfism, this God is blind or whatever. And I mean, it's just like never occurred to me that, Oh yeah, look at the difference now between like it's really dire in Indonesia there's, there are women who are disabled who are literally like chained up and the term is pasung and it's just, it's just really shocking. And that was, you know, that didn't come from nowhere that came from colonialism and how colonialism upheld the worst parts of the society that was there before. So it's just been really, it's been a long journey and it's been super cathartic to be able to do these pieces and to translate the visual art and the films and the performance installation into this book. Yeah it's been a real journey and I'm glad I, you know, we're talking a lot about PhDs, Earlier, you know.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:35:33](#) We had an off-mic conversation about grad school.
- Okka: [00:35:39](#) Yes, they are difficult. I'm really glad that I've been able to do, then, do things like come here and meet you, you know, and talk about this in conferences because yeah, I actually, speaking of Sara Ahmed whose book I'm looking at on your desk. I got to speak about this on a panel that she chaired, which is really special.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:35:56](#) Yeah.
- Okka: [00:35:57](#) And I remember at that panel there were a couple other people in that panel who we all came from former Dutch colonies but like different ones like South Africa, you know, and talking about Dutch colonies elsewhere. And it just made me feel like, Oh, we're finally, we're coming together, we women who have been affected by these histories. We're looking into these archives and we're

seeing what doesn't fit with us and how they relate to how things are now, which I think is really special. So, yeah, I mean I think that a lot of disability studies need to be, you know, more cognizant of how white supremacy has shaped the world. And I think people who talk about archives and white supremacy also need to be a lot more aware of how able normativity is part of this. So I think there's a gap in the literature.

- Hannah McGregor: [00:36:43](#) As I'm thinking about the work that I've read about disability or within disability studies. And this is, you know, it's a field that I have only been reading in over the past year, maybe two years. My entry point was actually that I was thinking of this when we were talking about glasses. My entry point to like disability studies and disability justice was, before I made this podcast, I made a podcast about Harry Potter.
- Okka: [00:37:14](#) Oh I know! I'm a Ravenclaw.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:37:17](#) Yeah, yeah. Same, I mean academics, right? And we got a lot of really sort of valuable, thoughtful pushback from listeners early on. So a lot of my sort of early learning was from disabled listeners saying like for this language, this language that you used or these assumptions that you made about this character or you know, showing us readings of characters that we hadn't encountered or weren't familiar with, but that were about crippling characters in the Harry Potter world.
- Okka: [00:37:47](#) It's becoming more mainstream now.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:37:49](#) It is, and we got to do a panel with Lydia XY Brown, I think was their name?
- Okka: [00:37:57](#) Oh I love them! They're a buddy of mine.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:37:58](#) That was a total fluke, they were like the artist in residence at this college that invited us to come and speak. It was a Tufts. Yeah, yeah. And so the students who invited us to speak were like, do you want to speak on a panel with this artist in residence we have? And we were like, yeah? Sure? And then so they were talking about like Harry Potter and what Harry Potter means to them and how fundamental it has been for them to think of characters like Neville Longbottom as like autistic characters. So all of this, like a lot of this came through Harry Potter and it makes me think of glasses because when J.K Rowling took to Pottermore a couple of years ago to write about disability and illness in the Harry Potter world.
- Okka: [00:38:40](#) Oh wow.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:38:41](#) Yeah. She wrote an article about disability and illness where she said that there is no mundane or non magical disability or illness in the Wizarding World. Yeah.

Okka: [00:38:51](#) I did not know this.

Hannah McGregor: [00:38:52](#) It was really wild. So she claimed that the only ill or disabled people you see like Mad-Eye Moody are people who have become disabled via spells that have been done to them, but that the state of magic is such the all mundane disability and illness can be cured.

Okka: [00:39:12](#) I am sure that a lot of Harry Potterheads who are disabled have responded to that.

Hannah McGregor: [00:39:17](#) Well, so we were talking with them on Twitter like people were rightly furious cause that's a fundamentally eugenicist thing to say. And also people were like fucking Harry Potter wears glasses. What the fuck? Like that's a disability. Anyway, this is all, that was a really.

Okka: [00:39:35](#) Also appearance disability. I know the scar thing is kind of sexy, but like.

Hannah McGregor: [00:39:38](#) Absolutely like wait, that counts because,

Okka: [00:39:40](#) Like, as an adult, not...

Hannah McGregor: [00:39:42](#) A magical thing that was done to him.

Okka: [00:39:45](#) Right!

Hannah McGregor: [00:39:45](#) Right? So like that counts.

Okka: [00:39:48](#) Of course. Yeah.

Hannah McGregor: [00:39:49](#) But all of this is a meandering way to get to my point, which is that, of what I have read and what I have encountered, there is a real presentism to disability studies. That what I have seen is people talking to others about their experience or about the world that we live in today. I have not encountered historically framed disability studies and I'm realizing that as we're having this conversation about archives and seeing disability in the archive and how much I would love to read more work that is about looking at disability historically and not just in the sense of understanding how sort of discourses or ideas of disability have changed historically, but also what it means to sort of look back at the past and and see the presence of disability in the past.

Okka: [00:40:39](#) Hidden disabled people, deaf and disabled people absolutely, everywhere. I mean, we're the largest growing minority in the world and it's just like, one in five people in the UK, where I study, are disabled. And it's just really, the world is not built for access and it really is a segregation of bodies and it's, gosh, that's so interesting what you said about Harry Potter, i'm going to, I'm definitely going

to read it when I get back. I'm like, I gotta write this. But it's, you know, I think in terms of fantasy worlds as well, I think people are including where, I mean Uncanny Magazine did a special issue: Disabled People Destroy Science Fiction, that I'm part of that has a lot of essays about, yeah, fiction, poetry, nonfiction about – I think you would really enjoy it's online – about disabled characters in science fiction. But what's interesting is that in the quote unquote 'mainstreaming' of disability studies, which I've seen just the past four years, almost, of doing this PhD, it has become more and more mainstream, but I worry about it being co-opted. Like, I worry about all good things being co-opted is that people know the jargon and the, or I've seen on Twitter people saying like even disability studies and using the word 'even' as a qualifier, as though we're always the last, it's kind of like tangential.

- Hannah McGregor: [00:41:51](#) Disability has now gotten added onto the list of identities that we list when we we're talking about oppression, yeah.
- Okka: [00:41:56](#) Diversity quotas and all of this but not really looking at, so I co-edited with Sandra Alland and Daniel Sluman, the first UK anthology of deaf and disabled poetics. It's called Stairs and Whispers: D/deaf and Disabled Poets Write Back. It's a multimedia antho as well, so there are free films online and all the poets read the audio of their poems if possible. So that's also free online. But we, you know there's so much talent from within the deaf and disabled community that because of all these barriers I think increasingly it's become a thing. I have noticed like people trying to get more disabled, deaf and disabled scholars and writers, but I think it needs to be deaf, disabled led first and foremost. Because I will see these initiatives for diversity that use language which is actually like ableist and then you pointed out and they get upset at you and it's like, well I'm actually disabled. Like I think I can say this that, you know, I think it's, I am a bit worried about care, I know Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha who is an amazing poet and writer who just has this book Care Work that's just come out. I've been a fan of theirs for a really long time,
- Hannah McGregor: [00:43:05](#) Their work, has been deeply transformative for me in terms of disability justice as like not an additive but transformative framework.
- Okka: [00:43:13](#) If you talk about capitalism and how everybody's talking about burnout culture, right? We're all burnt out. That's disability studies and that's disability theory. You know, like you're pushed to feel like you have to max optimize your body-mind and optimize your day and your life and your career, even in your emotional life!
- Hannah McGregor: [00:43:29](#) This fucking biohacking movement out of Silicon Valley, which could not be a more ablest white supremacist framework.

Okka: [00:43:38](#) And using like Iowasca too, to like get back from your retreat and destroy a tonne more rainforest. It's worrying to me about how people use things like the notion of self care and you know how that can actually be weaponized and in service of capital and yeah.

Hannah McGregor: [00:43:56](#) Wellness, right?

Okka: [00:43:58](#) The wellness industry.

Hannah McGregor: [00:43:59](#) I have, I've been thinking a lot about about wellness culture and how much wellness culture is about this sort of capitalist ideal of the perfectability of the self and how insidious it is, this demand that we all become Well.

Okka: [00:44:16](#) Right! To service capital ultimately.

Hannah McGregor: [00:44:19](#) Right! Absolutely right. So people like, we fall into this discourse so readily of like, well vacation is valuable because it makes you a better worker. Cause when you return from vacation you are refreshed and ready to work more effectively.

Okka: [00:44:32](#) This, I mean, this is why all these startups have like ping pong tables and you know, 24 hour whatevers and you know, so people can just stay there and work.

Hannah McGregor: [00:44:41](#) Just work forever.

Okka: [00:44:41](#) It's upsetting. It's upsetting. Also in terms of allowing more and more deaf and disabled people to be become part of these industries, and sort of using, again the diversity tactic and the box ticking tactic to be like, you too can be come part of corporate culture. You know?

Hannah McGregor: [00:45:01](#) As long as you can conform to the norms of corporate culture. It never, never in these conversations about equity and diversity, do we talk about how real equity will involve the transformation of working cultures. Because they are designed deliberately to exclude disabled people. Right? I think about this a lot in Leah Lakshmi's work about how they talk about disabled time.

Okka: [00:45:28](#) Yes, yes.

Hannah McGregor: [00:45:29](#) And that the whole logic...

Okka: [00:45:30](#) Crip queering time and space!

Hannah McGregor: [00:45:34](#) Right? Like the idea that the time in which things must happen, like you're going to have to let go of that.

Okka: [00:45:37](#) Yes! Crippling and queering time. So important. And I think also there's this academic Jasbir Paur who wrote the book *The Right to Maim*, which is, and earlier we were speaking about the need for more work on disability in archives. And so, I mean obviously I come at it from a personal connection that I am Javanese but you know, there's in Java alone, so many models for disability, right? Like I want this to the beginning of a lot of people working on their areas where they come from, how colonialism has shaped ableism in their parts of the world. But I don't want to say that, you know I'm definitely not the first person who's written about disability and colonialism. I just want to say that like, there have definitely been people who've written about that. You know, like Mel Y. Chen, at UC Berkeley,

Hannah McGregor: [00:46:22](#) I don't know, but.

Okka: [00:46:23](#) Oh my God, I'm such- animacies about Oh God. Just so much about, yeah, huge fan of Mel Y. Chan and her work on bodies and disability and how colonial and white supremacist actions affect disablement currently and also the work of Jasbir Paur, *The Right to Maim*, she talks, for instance, about Palestine and how it's like sanction disablement, right? She talks about this concept of debility, Paur does, and how there's certain areas or people who are historically oppressed that are allowed to be debilitated, like deliberately debilitated that, she places that somewhat in opposition to the neoliberal notion of disability as an identity.

Hannah McGregor: [00:47:08](#) Yeah.

Okka: [00:47:08](#) Right. And how, like we were talking about, the absorption of disability as like a protected class, quote unquote that will allow the gears and the wheels of capital to turn or, you know, actually over here this area of like whether it's Flint, Michigan, whether it's in Palestine, whether it's, you know, like you allow children, people to be debilitated, acquire disability and that's the right to maim them.

Hannah McGregor: [00:47:34](#) I have a love-hate relationship with Foucault who I often find offers a useful tool,

Okka: [00:47:40](#) Oh God I do as well.

Hannah McGregor: [00:47:41](#) And who I also recognize actually like appropriated a lot of, I don't know, I was talking to somebody about how like Foucault uses Bentham, and Bentham got his idea of the panopticon from his observation of slave ships, but that gets elided entirely from.

Okka: [00:47:59](#) I actually did not know that...

Hannah McGregor: [00:47:59](#) It's the way like European high theory is appropriating the knowledges that emerge out of transatlantic slavery and colonialism without actually naming them. But Foucault has this phrase where

he talks about the way that power works in modernity to either make people live or let them die. And it's,

- Okka: [00:48:20](#) That distinction.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:48:22](#) Yeah, it's that, like the way that that govern-mentality works on you is that it's either making you live, and that's where wellness culture comes in, that sort of state management of bodies versus Flint, Michigan, which is about letting people die through the sort of removal of what is needed to live.
- Okka: [00:48:41](#) Oh gosh. Speaking about Foucault, I've had a lot of debates on this as well because, I mean, Ann Laura Stoler, who we were talking about earlier, her book, one of my favorite books, Race and the education of desire, is all about colonial Java in Indonesia and the different racial categories and how Foucault doesn't look at how biopower has shaped like literally who gets to fuck whom, who gets to be protected, who gets to, sorry to swear in this podcast.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:49:06](#) I swear so much on this podcast.
- Okka: [00:49:09](#) I was like, Oh yes, I remember now. You know, and who gets to be intimate with whom and who gets to be emotionally close to home and yeah, Foucault has been part of a lot of important reasoning, right? A lot of important academic work. But like you said, like I had no idea about the slave ship business. I think it's important to call Foucault to task and,
- Hannah McGregor: [00:49:32](#) And just not let him be the center of every conversation like that too. Right? Like figuring out what gets lost when you,
- Okka: [00:49:40](#) Idolize the work without critical thinking
- Hannah McGregor: [00:49:44](#) I was thinking about reading, Living a Feminist Life and about how,
- Okka: [00:49:47](#) Citational practices.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:49:47](#) Citational practices and how Ahmed says specifically, I'm not going to cite any white men in this book. And so when she wants to talk about surveillance culture, for example, she goes to the work of women of colour who have worked on surveillance culture, which comes out, of which there is a rich body
- Okka: [00:50:07](#) Shoutout to Flavia Dzodan and Safiya Noble and all of these amazing ladies, women of colour coming out right now with stuff that is beyond, and I also though, in my own citation practices, it's really difficult because there's a lot of white men who are disabled and or deaf who have written really for, I mean Crip theory written by a white man and you know, Robert McRuer, white man, Tobin

Siebers, white man. It's just, it's hard because there's a lot of stuff that I want to cite even just to critique, right?

Hannah McGregor: [00:50:38](#) Yes, yes. And I don't think Ahmed's trying to say like, this is now the rule of feminist work.

Okka: [00:50:45](#) Right, right.

Hannah McGregor: [00:50:46](#) You're just not allowed to engage with that. I think it's, and it's part of the project of this particular book, but that isn't to say that like when you were working on the history of a field that you don't engage with the people who have done the foundational work, but just that to think critically about who you are citing and why and how.

Okka: [00:51:04](#) You know, so few people write about disability and Indonesian women and ableism. Right? You know, for instance, a colleague of mine published this really important essay about Javanese disabilities in a journal that is part of a cultural organization that supports sexual abusers. I just know this, you know, Indonesia is a small world when it comes to the literary arts and the arts in general. And so I was like, God, do I cite, you know what I mean? It's like what, but literally this is the only place where this particular thing has been written about. So, goddammit. You know, and I think I ended up using it, but I still, it's just all these little ways in which we're complicit, right? There's um, for my journal MAI journal, Katie Louise Hood wrote an incredible reviews, that i'm so humbled and like completely blown away with, about Indigenous Species where she talks about, she basically analyzed it according to like these theories that I was like, Oh my God, I got to read those now. Is that what I was doing? You know what I mean? But she, it's up online, it's free access, open access, and it's called Indigenous Species and Intoxicated Feminisms, where she writes about these little ways in which we're complicit. And I mean like in Indigenous Species as well I always knew, so I wrote the poem in 2013 my God, 2013 but then this came out in 2016 so at first it was just a performance, but I knew from the beginning that I wanted visuals in some way. And then when I realized that I wanted to make it into a book, I knew that I wanted this page, page 29 where there's a lipstick made out of rainforest because our lipsticks are made with rainforests. Like that's just a reality. And I think about the complicity of the abuse that happens to people in Indonesia and the literal deaths that come out of it. I write in the intro about how like in 2015 there were like 100,000 deaths or something just from the smog from rainforest.

Hannah McGregor: [00:52:59](#) Wow.

Okka: [00:53:00](#) Yeah, that's a massacre, I believe it is, let me just quickly check this intro to make sure I've got that number right. But it's treated because it's so diffused, the ways in which we're complicit. Yeah in

2015 deadly smog killed nearly 100,000 Indonesians last year alone and many thousands abroad. So that's just Indonesians, right? I mean that's violence.

Hannah McGregor: [00:53:20](#) 100%, and this is environmental racism, right? Which is a thing that people have been trying to draw attention to is like the way that a very small number of people in a small number of countries are creating and actively benefiting off these industries that are killing people by the hundreds of thousands

Okka: [00:53:43](#) Just killing people. That's like in one year just from like also, gosh, like I have this poem that was came out in The Rialto, and it was about, I entered a free pain management program through the NHS, the National Health Service it's a service in the UK. So I got to stay in the hospital three weeks for free and just basically learn finally how to, sort of, manage my pain better. That was a couple of years ago and I wrote this poem while I was there about how like, gosh, I'm here getting pain management treatment and advice. But like in the ainforest, there are so many substances that have been used traditionally for pain and for illness that are just being either extracted from and used by like mega corporations for cosmetics, right? Not benefiting the people who were there before, it causes displacement causes, and women and girls being super vulnerable, non-binary people having to go into sex work, choosing to go into sex work. But like that's very vulnerable right? Because there's not the legislation to protect sex workers and all of that. And I just think like, how ironic cause you know, I mean, it's just as though like Indigenous knowledges and traditional knowledges about how to heal ourselves, how to make our lives bearable, et cetera, are dismissed, right? Or co-opted. It's like with indigenous people in Canada and in the United States and now natural treatments are a thing, right? But where do you get those substances from? Natural treatments, but also like witchcraft.

Hannah McGregor: [00:55:13](#) I was reading something reading about the fact that that white people are harvesting white sage to near extinction, right? That sage has become this thing.

Okka: [00:55:26](#) I didn't even think about sage! Yes.

Hannah McGregor: [00:55:26](#) That like witches want, and so the Indigenous people can't actually like find sage on their own lands because it's getting actively extracted by these like,

Okka: [00:55:38](#) And crystals!

Hannah McGregor: [00:55:39](#) And crystals.

Okka: [00:55:40](#) Crystals! Where'd you get the crystals from? What are the mines doing? You know, yeah, so that'll be an add on to our astrology.

Hannah McGregor: [00:55:51](#) All right, well, I don't want it to be an astrology conversation. I think that we should wrap up.

Okka: [00:55:55](#) All right. Do you want me to read some poetry or something to add?

Hannah McGregor: [00:55:58](#) God, yes. Yeah, yeah. That's exactly what I want.

Okka: [00:56:01](#) All right. This is Indigenous Species. When you abduct me down the rotten river, you make sure to wrap some rope around the hull. Lest the current gets swept into dreaming and the dugout boat loses sight of carvings and knives for the vision of ancestor breath calling us away from great hulks of islands and into water called from the saliva of tigers whose bloodlines we clotted to death on Java, stabbed out of life on Bali. When you wrap chloroform in my mouth, we are drifting past open sores of forest, pestilent red wounds and the trunks exposing great, great grandmotherly rings the circumference as it takes for rainforest to sprout it's many legs of mystery, the soup of a complex resilience, rust bucket water feeding ferocity as green gasps wide and devours canopy, the crazy lush of it tickling away into the ocean. I would tell you this, but you're already nodding. One of my ankles tied to the other. We once left the jungle whittle our lives down to habit four sculpting foraging patterns, spice configurations in soups, longhouse architectural trends, how women live with bleeding, what we can't name our children, how we groomed the pelts on our bodies and develop philosophy so astonishing it will be studied by all of five anthropologists and one movie theater, frostbitten towns and far off lands and drivers and cities the factory built into ash who wished they had more time to know **[inaudible]** nature as teacher and womb zygote, fraternal twin to sapling. When you divorce my arm from my thigh where it rests and pin it to my back in a lock of fingers, I am tempted to tell you how hungry it is making me to feel the tributary wash us in waves left to right and I don't want to grow old as you peddle down river with a mercury beating down your synapses is eating at your unborn childlings while I close my eyes and look away and pretend girls my age don't live here and won't. You have blindfolded me, but I've been down here before so I know how their islands have roots to stand foot on battling for space and historical worth in the eyes of the species we peacock ourselves to be. With reptiles gargantuan is ignorance. Brute biggest guilt and delicate as birdsong. Centrifugal humidity swirling into sweltering heat-soaked, drenched evolution, centipedes big as your forearm orangutan carcass the feast of this famine. Hard to tell from your silence where you're taking me, but I'm guessing it's loin-deep in the place where they're collapsing entire cosmologies into pulp and paper where the length of time we can stay where we were bred before our stories turn into **Pryor** and Palm oil oozes away. Shucking down like lightning. The seconds before we leave because we have to. I bet you from the ruckus machinery I'm hearing and the smell of rashness that this is where the grease deals

are siphoned into miners food and where they're packing down
eons of intricacies and strength from the forest to molecular form
on a woman's lipstick bottle in Iowa.

Hannah McGregor: [00:59:01](#)

That was so great. Thank you.

Okka: [00:59:03](#)

Thank you so much, thank you so much.

Okka: [00:59:05](#)

I wish we could talk for five hours cause this has been really
awesome.

Speaker 3: [00:59:20](#)

I know! This has been so awesome.

Hannah McGregor: [00:59:20](#)

If you want to learn more about Okka, check out her website at
khairanibarokka.com That's K H A I R A N I B A R O K K
A.com and follow her on Twitter @mailbykite, M A I L B Y K I T
E. Links to her work as well as unusually extensive show notes are
available at secretfeministagenda.com as usual, you can follow me
on Twitter @HKPMcGregor and you can tweet about the podcast
using the #secretfeministagenda and of course you can review the
show on Apple Podcasts. It's a super helpful way to help other
people find it and we have four new reviews this time around, so
thanks to zenfreak, withwomanwithwcoffee, TerryD'TO or ditto
and Avamont. 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. Okka's theme
song was Sparkly by Young Magic.

This episode was recorded on the traditional and unceded territory
of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations
where I'm grateful to live and work. It was also edited on the
traditional territory of the magma as well as in an airplane over top
of a lot of folks' territories.

This has been Secret Feminist Agenda. Pass it on.