

Episode 4.28 Welcoming the Roasting of the TikTok Youth with andrea bennett

November 6, 2020

Hannah McGregor: [00:00:00](#) [Theme Music: "Mesh Shirt" by Mom Jeans] Hi, I'm Hannah McGregor, and this is *Secret Feminist Agenda*. And I'm coming at you this morning with some big November energy. [Laughs] All I have written in the script for this intro is square brackets: November energy. And I feel it without even needing a more complex prompt than that. Listen, this is a bad week for a lot of people. This is the week of the US election as everybody waits days and days to find out the political future of a country that for better for worse has a lot of impact on a lot of us, as well as of course the many, many people who actually live in that country. So for all my American listeners, I'm thinking of you, I am staying belligerently hopeful in the face of the current terrifying uncertainty. And for non-American listeners, like same. I have a, a complex relationship to hope and it feels silly right now. Naive even. I see a lot of disparaging of hope happening, you know, and partially that's because hope is a privilege and partially that's because people say a lot of nonsense like, "we'll all get through this". And that ignores the fact that some people don't get through a lot of things, it ignores the stakes. But for me hope's one of my motivators. A sort of pessimistic, belligerent insistence that we can do better. And so, I'm just going to keep believing we can do better and trying to do better myself. And, I hope whether you're powered by optimism or pessimism or rage or love that something is powering you this week. Maybe naps. Maybe naps and leftover Halloween candy. Listen, whatever's getting you through, you're doing a great job. But I don't want to dwell on this. I want us to move now quickly to a delightful conversation that I got to have that brought me great joy and pleasure, and that I think, hope, believe will bring you some joy as well.

Hannah McGregor: [00:02:42](#) So, let's go meet andrea. [Theme Music: "Mesh Shirt" by Mom Jeans] andrea bennett is a national magazine award-winning writer and editor, and the author of one book of poetry, two travel guides and a book of essays, *Like a Boy but Not a Boy*, now out with Arsenal Pulp Press. They live in Powell River, BC on the territory of the Tla'amin people just a quick couple fjords slash ferry rides north of Vancouver.

Hannah McGregor: [00:03:05](#) [andrea's Theme Music: "La Demeure" by Stereolab] Hello? Hi. How are you?

andrea bennett: [00:03:23](#) Hi, I'm you know, I'm okay. Yeah. I'm okay today. We are —our interview is starting basically the same time as the US presidential debate. The second one. That's all I need to say about that, but I don't know, the world's weird right now. I'm fine.

Hannah McGregor: [00:03:39](#) Good. Good. [Laughs] I'm glad you're fine. I made a real sort of intentional decision last week that I am going to try to answer when people ask me how I am. I'm going to try to say that I am okay. Like, unless I'm actively un-okay. Like I'm just going to try to make my default just a bit of a mind shift to be like, "I'm okay". And it's helping a little bit because for the seven months leading up to that, when people were like, "how are you?" I was like, "BAD" -

andrea bennett: [00:04:10](#) Yeah. [Laughs].

Hannah McGregor: [00:04:12](#) - "Obviously!" I feel like maybe that was sort of, you know, creating uncomfortable interactions with people and, and maybe just sort of, sort of convincing me to be pessimistic, but, it is an interesting experience to know right now that everybody's a little bad.

andrea bennett: [00:04:36](#) Yeah. So I have like diagnosed anxiety, like generalized anxiety disorder and bipolar disorder —two, bipolar two, which comes up in the book. But, I think probably everybody's stress level or anxiety level, like baseline -

Hannah McGregor: [00:04:53](#) Yeah.

andrea bennett: [00:04:54](#) - has been kind of like turned up a bit this year in particu—just since, yeah, you know since March or February or December, depending on what time the pandemic reached one's region.

Hannah McGregor: [00:05:08](#) Yes.

andrea bennett: [00:05:08](#) But I did actually make the decision today, or I guess last week to get in touch with my doctor and finally get a referral to see a psychiatrist. Because yeah, I was just living with the volume knob past the end of the volume scale. It gets a little tired after a while. And so I've reached my limit. [Laughs].

Hannah McGregor: [00:05:28](#) Yeah.

andrea bennett: [00:05:28](#) Who knows if anything good will come of that, but always worth it to give it a shot, I suppose.

Hannah McGregor: [00:05:35](#) It is. It's interesting because I know a number of friends actually, who in the past week or so have sought out referrals to either psychiatrists or counselors. And I do think that there is something— like we've reached a, maybe a moment of being far enough in with a fair amount of this ahead of us, of being like, "maybe time for some new strategies". Maybe I need to add to my arsenal of things that are going to help me make it through this.

andrea bennett: [00:06:03](#) For sure. I was actually, I've have been hoping that the provincial or federal governments would do something around mental health and mental illness. Something extra during the pandemic, because you know, I'll be on my wait list for three months or six months or twelve months. That's a long period of time to wait. So, I just wish there were more supports in place for people. Not necessarily myself. I'm used to this waiting game -

Hannah McGregor: [00:06:29](#) Well...

andrea bennett: [00:06:29](#) -but, but in general. Especially for people who are dealing with this for the first time, dealing with like a flood of anxiety or dealing with depression for the first time. Yeah. It would be nice to actually have some supports in place for people

Hannah McGregor: [00:06:42](#) It sure would. I am always underwhelmed by the kinds of supports we have available within universities. SFU at least has added some new programs that are free and available for students and that are available in multiple languages, which is always good because we have a lot of international students. I can't imagine being an international student right now and being stuck far away from home. But there is also, I feel in the university, a tendency towards a sort of — Mmmm you're being slowly crushed by late capitalism and the heartlessness of a neoliberal institution, but don't worry we brought in dogs you can pet for an hour.

andrea bennett: [00:07:21](#) Mmm-hmm.

Hannah McGregor: [00:07:21](#) Like it's [Laughs] the kind of vibe sometimes.

andrea bennett: [00:07:25](#) Or like stress squishy balls -

Hannah McGregor: [00:07:27](#) Yeah.

andrea bennett: [00:07:27](#) - or things of that nature. Yes.

Hannah McGregor: [00:07:30](#) Students are like, "we would like free tuition." And they're like, "we got you a branded stress ball!"

andrea bennett: [00:07:34](#) Yeah. [Laughs].

Hannah McGregor: [00:07:34](#) [Laughs]

andrea bennett: [00:07:37](#) "There are yoga classes on the ...quad!" I don't even know. It's been a long time since I've been in university.

Hannah McGregor: [00:07:43](#) Yeah. There's — you know what, there were yoga classes on the quad. Now those yoga classes are online. But don't worry, there's yoga classes online. [Laughs] Those are available to us.

andrea bennett: [00:07:55](#) Yoga classes and puppies can be helpful in particular situations, not to totally discount them.

Hannah McGregor: [00:08:01](#) Absolutely not knocking puppies. I mean, I'm going on record as saying, "I hate two things: yoga and puppies."

andrea bennett: [00:08:08](#) Yeah. [Laughs].

Hannah McGregor: [00:08:08](#) [Laughs] Famously. It must be an interesting moment considering how much at the forefront conversations about mental health have been for the last six months, to have just published a collection that includes essays that speak very, very frankly, about mental health. Particularly the essay, that you referred to, which is about bipolar, which was excerpted in The Walrus, so has been getting, you know, a lot of, a lot of circulation. Has there been, do you think a different kind of uptake around that conversation than there might've been a year ago?

andrea bennett: [00:08:44](#) That's a good question. I think probably the honest answer is no. Because, I think socially we're kind of triaging things still. And so often times culturally, I think like the cultural "we"—we think of health in terms of like physical health and not, not-mental health as as much. And that's like a secondary concern. So I've been hearing from folks who have bipolar disorder themselves, like getting lots of DMs and emails and messages, just saying that what I wrote resonated with them. And that's great. Like, I'm —that was what I was hoping for the essay. But I think I probably would've gotten a similar response if it had come out last year or the year before. I don't think that our mental health needs are being prioritized as much as they

should be right now. I do think, you know, that factored into decision making around whether or not schools should reopen. It's come up in terms of talking about whether gyms should be open or bars should be open.

- andrea bennett: [00:09:53](#) Those last two things are, you know, obviously capitalists interventions. Or they're not [Inhales Sharply] they're -
- Hannah McGregor: [00:10:03](#) [Laughs].
- andrea bennett: [00:10:03](#) - they're pieces of the puzzle. I don't know. I don't want to be too harsh. I am a person for whom like exercise is super important for my mental health. So I'm walking around the block or going for walks every day. It's important for me to get fresh air. That's part of the reason why I work in my garden. But I don't think that that can be the, be all and end all. People don't really understand how to navigate anxiety or depression on their own. Often.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:10:27](#) Yeah.
- andrea bennett: [00:10:27](#) You can't just tell people like, "Well, all right. You can go have a pint with your buddy if you wear a mask into the venue and then like, take it off when you sit down." I personally don't think that that adequately addresses, you know, all the things that people are experiencing around loneliness or, or, or on the other end of the scale, like never getting to be alone anymore.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:10:50](#) [Laughs] It's one of the other...
- andrea bennett: [00:10:51](#) I love my family! But you know -
- Hannah McGregor: [00:10:53](#) It would be nice if they went away briefly.
- andrea bennett: [00:10:56](#) I actually think — yeah, my partner and I been talking about it, because the winter is, it's a hard time. It's just a hard time. You can't be outside as much. Some people can. And maybe if you get an adult sized like muddy buddy and just really lean into it, I don't know. But yeah, it's going to be tricky. I think what I might do is actually like rent a place in my town and go to stay in like a little hotel or something alone in my hometown.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:11:21](#) Ok.
- andrea bennett: [00:11:21](#) Just like, not even travel, just like travel to a hotel room with like my sketchpad and a few books and just actually have a little weekend alone. And then when my partner said that he wanted

was for me to do the same thing, but the second time to like take our toddler. [Laughs] So -

- Hannah McGregor: [00:11:37](#) [Laughs].
- andrea bennett: [00:11:37](#) - he'll be at home alone. And so I think that, that's a somewhat indulgent thing we're going to choose to do.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:11:42](#) Yeah.
- andrea bennett: [00:11:43](#) Deploy selectively at times throughout the winter. We're both terribly introverted, I guess I should say. People are going to find their own solutions. And we're lucky enough to be able to budget to do that, I guess, too. But anyway.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:11:56](#) Yeah. Yeah. I mean, we're all, we're all finding the solutions that are within our means and that are possible right now. I have three days at a cabin booked this coming weekend and it feels very weird because I live alone. And one of the big challenges for me has been being alone all the time because I'm very extroverted. And my normal job is working in an office with a bunch of other people and then teaching and like it's a huge amount —and all of my hobbies are like, I sing in a hundred person choir. I'm always like, "how many people can I have around me all the time?" And then I love being able to come home to my quiet managed space, which is a really valuable, you know, antidote for me so that I can be extroverted and out of the house, twelve hours a day.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:12:44](#) And now I'm just in this space all the time and alone in this space all the time. And so over the summer, the real thing I was prioritizing doing was like, just how often can I be outside? How often can I be around other people? Let's go to the park every day. Let's go for walks every day. Let's go to the beach every day. I just want to be out every second it's not raining. But you know, work for me really amped back up in September. And, now that I'm working so much a thing that I am really finding a desire for is to like be alone, but somewhere else. Because it's like, this is just the middle of my apartment. Like I get —just work can never be far away when I work from home. And so I'm excited to go somewhere and turn my email off and just stare unblinking at the ocean for three days.
- andrea bennett: [00:13:38](#) That's super relatable. Yeah. I used to do most of my own like personal writing out of the house. I would go to a coffee shop early in the morning once a week and then find some time on the weekend too. And I can't do that anymore. And I haven't

been like nearly as productive. And I've just sort of decided to roll with that and not worry about it too much for now. I'm — maybe I'll try to work when I go away alone into, to a hotel, but also maybe I won't. Maybe I'll just read instead. It's really hard to read when you have a toddler. They use you like a jungle gym and I can't focus. So yeah [Laughs], I think I'm actually looking forward to just like reading more than I am to writing at this time. But...

- Hannah McGregor: [00:14:27](#) The event —event's the wrong word. Where I was that made me five minutes late for our interview was —I have co-bubbled with a friend and her baby over the summer and have been babysitting a couple of days a week. And the baby is just short of 11 months now. And is very like, has, you know, is not walking, but is standing and pulling herself up and climbing and crawling moving. And you know, when she is at home with her mom, her mom is a jungle gym.
- andrea bennett: [00:14:57](#) Yeah.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:14:57](#) She described it at one point as, like on bad days, that she'll feel like the baby's hand on her ankle and it's like a scene out of a zombie movie. [Laughs] And you're just like, "No!" It was just that, that desire, you know, like —I take the baby away for two hours so that she can just like have her own body for two hours. [Laughs] And that desire to just have a little bit of sort of bodily autonomy in relation to a young human who wants to touch you all the time. I empathize.
- andrea bennett: [00:15:31](#) Very relatable. My partner currently has —they're eating —I made oven baked mac and cheese for dinner and they're eating mac and cheese in the, in our bedroom.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:15:41](#) [Laughs].
- andrea bennett: [00:15:41](#) Because that's the door that closes.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:15:45](#) [Laughs].
- andrea bennett: [00:15:45](#) [Laughs] So I've been like quite busy with, like book-related stuff and like events and media and it's been lovely. But yeah, I think when I surface from that, I think my partner is going to need several days of getting pulled out of the zombie pit -
- Hannah McGregor: [00:16:03](#) [Laughs].
- andrea bennett: [00:16:03](#) -for bike rides and things of that nature.

Hannah McGregor: [00:16:05](#) Yeah. Being pulled out of the zombie pit. That's very important. I was thinking, there's a lot of pieces of this book that resonated with me very powerfully, including I think in general, the sense of a very weird generational experience being articulated very powerfully. But the essay that has really stuck with me, is the one about not being a mother. Which is, you know, as, as a childless person myself, but a person with a lot of very sort of intense relationships with children in my life in general, the idea of the way that queerness and transness expands the relationships that we have to children has been, you know, something that has been sitting with me for a long time and the way that essay articulates the sort of expansion of what a parental relationship looks like outside of the gender binary I think is incredibly powerful.

Hannah McGregor: [00:17:03](#) And I've been thinking about it all the time as I walk this baby around the West End for hours at a time and have dozens of strangers refer to me in the third person as mom, because I am the person who looks like a woman who is near a baby.

andrea bennett: [00:17:22](#) Mmm-hmm.

Hannah McGregor: [00:17:22](#) But what has really been sticking with me as I, as that has been happening over and over again, is how powerful the interpolation of parenthood is. How even sorta like chill, West End Vancouverites have some very, very rigid and naturalized understandings of like, "Oh, there's a baby. I know how this works."

andrea bennett: [00:17:48](#) Yeah, it's a really surreal experience. I was quite shocked by it at the beginning of parenthood. And the other thing is that my partner does the bulk of the childcare. I —we'd started off both freelancing and switching back and forth. But when Sinclair was about five months old, I started working at Talon Books in Vancouver and we all moved west from Montreal. And I was commuting — my commute was about three hours total. And so I was out of the house for about eleven hours and I was, you know, traveling a bit. And I have never said anything about being my kid's primary caregiver. Like at — cause it's not true. I've never said that. But the assumption that people make is that I am. And generally older folks would often after they're like, "well, where's your kid?" after making like small talk or whatever, like on a train or plane when those still were part of our lives. I'd be like, "Oh, well she's, she's at home with my partner. He's taking care of her." "Oh, and you trust him to do that?"

Hannah McGregor: [00:19:00](#) Wow. [Laughs].

andrea bennett: [00:19:00](#) Yeah! It's a joke that boomers make. No offense to those who are listening who would never make that joke. I'm sure there are many of you. But yeah. That's, that's who I heard that quote unquote joke from and like, like men, boomer men also. And I was like, why are you telling on yourself? I don't know you [Laughs] -

Hannah McGregor: [00:19:20](#) [Laughs].

andrea bennett: [00:19:20](#) - I don't need to know any of this. But then yeah getting called over and over and over again, like "mom!" Or "mummy!" or, you know, things of that nature. I also think that's weird to do to another adult. Like just in general, aside from being misgendered -

Hannah McGregor: [00:19:35](#) Yeah.

andrea bennett: [00:19:35](#) - which I find very uncomfortable. I also think it's a strange way to talk to just another adult. If someone is walking in adorable dog and you want to say hi to the dog, generally you also say hi to the person. Or I think, you know, it's somewhat respectful -

Hannah McGregor: [00:19:54](#) You don't call that person "fur-mummy" [Laughs].

andrea bennett: [00:19:54](#) Yeah, like "Hello fur-father!" We have other ways of addressing adult humans we don't know.

Hannah McGregor: [00:20:01](#) We really do.

New Speaker: [00:20:02](#) But there, yeah, there is this cultural tie. And then if you have any proximity to womanhood at all, then then automatically you're just rendered: mother. Which is such a strange thing. And it does feel like an area in terms of feminism that has not progressed as much as it would be nice to have it progress. Sarah Liss has a really good essay in *Extra*. Sarah and her partner —it's two moms in that relationship. And Sarah talks about, you know —sometimes I think sometimes when we set up queer family structures, you can free yourself from some of the heteronormative expectations around domestic labor, around how our relationship was to —around many, many things. But then Sarah writes also about the experience of being in a two mom family, where instead of freeing themselves from those strictures, they just feel like double the guilt.

andrea bennett: [00:21:05](#) And so -

Hannah McGregor: [00:21:07](#) Wow.

andrea bennett: [00:21:07](#) - that was also interesting to read. So I think both of those possibilities exists. Most of us grew up being socialized a particular way and it's more or less possible to set some of those expectations aside. But they do seem to persevere. They're quite strong.

Hannah McGregor: [00:21:24](#) Yeah.

andrea bennett: [00:21:24](#) I think for everyone's sanity, they need to be revisited.

Hannah McGregor: [00:21:28](#) Yeah.

andrea bennett: [00:21:28](#) Yeah. Because it's not doing, you know, if we are talking about like a typical, a heterosexual relationship like mom and dad or whatever, it's not doing that couple any good either. It's not doing anyone who's a dad any good to be assumed useless. There are probably, you know, there are a lot of dads who would like to have strong relationships with their kids and be involved in parenting. Why have a kid, if you don't want to be involved in parenting? [Laughs].

Hannah McGregor: [00:21:56](#) [Laughs].

andrea bennett: [00:21:56](#) I don't know. So that's my long series of rambling thoughts about that question.

Hannah McGregor: [00:22:00](#) It wasn't rambling at all. It resonates with me so much. I think that there is a really interesting thing happening where the more people have the agency to recreate their families the way they want them to be, the more variations of that we see. And the more variations of that we see, the more we feel empowered to, to reinvent those variations ourselves. And I was thinking about what you were saying about sort of boomers making those jokes and how —it just brought back to me, this interaction I had with my father, who is a lovely, gentle hippie and folk musician, and also a boomer and so very oriented towards openness and kindness, and also raised in a very particular world and set of expectations. And he and my stepmother were on a tour and they passed through Edmonton and they did a house concert in Edmonton.

Hannah McGregor: [00:23:00](#) And so I brought— I was living in Edmonton at the time — I brought a bunch of my friends so we can all see them perform. It was lovely. They're great musicians. And they performed one song written by a friend of theirs called "In the Doghouse Now", which is a song about [Laughs] a husband who keeps you know — bought his wife a, a scale for Christmas and now he's in the

dog house. And it's, you know, one of those —and the audience was a mix of sort of people in their demographic or older and then like me and my friends. And during that song, me and all of my friends sort of got very quiet and just avoided making eye contact until it was over. And they returned to like, you know, nice, nice folk music. And afterwards he brought it up. He said, "you know, I noticed that when we played that song, you and all of your friends looked really uncomfortable."

Hannah McGregor: [00:23:54](#)

And I was like, "Oh yeah. Well, you know, I think that for our generation, that kind of joke about couples hating each other. Doesn't really resonate -

andrea bennett: [00:24:03](#)

[Laughs].

Hannah McGregor: [00:24:03](#)

- Like that's not really a script that we identify with. Like, Oh, isn't it funny? We're married, but we secretly resent everything about each other." And he was like, "Oh, well, Wendy and I don't secretly resent each other." And I was like, "well, but that's the whole joke of the song is like, you hate each other because men and women hate each other and live in an eternal nightmare of conflict." [Laughs] And he was like, "Oh yeah, no, that's yeah, that's bad. Maybe we should stop singing that song." I just [Laughs] -

andrea bennett: [00:24:35](#)

[Laughs].

Hannah McGregor: [00:24:35](#)

- I had this real moment where I was like, wow, actually you also need to be freed from these terrible garbage scripts. Like you need to be told that pretending or having to pretend that you somehow secretly hate or fundamentally are incapable of understanding the person you are choosing to share your life with. That's actually a nightmare. And you don't have to pretend that you have no tenderness for, or ability to care for your children or your grandchildren. And you don't like —you actually are also allowed to just reject these things. And, and I think that that's kind of like exciting to just be like -

andrea bennett: [00:25:18](#)

Nice. Job well done.

Hannah McGregor: [00:25:19](#)

- [Laughs] So we can throw all of this garbage if we want. Not necessarily with ease, like you said, there are these roles and scripts that are hard to get rid of, and people are going to keep trying to force us back into them a lot of the time. But like, I don't know. It's, it's helpful to remember.

andrea bennett: [00:25:39](#) I have a very random question that is somewhat related to this. Have you seen the show *Dream Home Makeover*?

Hannah McGregor: [00:25:46](#) [Laughs] No.

andrea bennett: [00:25:47](#) Okay. So, I'll just be super brief. It's set in Utah. It's a couple called the Mickeys who redesigned homes or do like renovations for people. [Cat Meows] And they — it's a lot of beautiful tile, brass finishing, knick-knack shelves, clean open rooms. Design-wise there are a lot of McMansions. Design-wise it's very aspirational America standard stuff. But the interesting thing about this show —and also the subtext of it is a little bit, is pretty sort of like Mormon family centered. There are a lot of kids, like all families tend to have a lot of kids. And it does have that, it has a feeling of what should be every other home renovation show where the wife has the beachy wave -

Hannah McGregor: [00:26:42](#) [Laughs].

andrea bennett: [00:26:42](#) - and I dunno, nice skinny jeans. Everybody's very attractive. They have adorable children wearing bows in their hair. But the interesting thing is that their family dynamic is really kind of focused on the husband taking care of the kids and the wife kind of running all of the sort of creative stuff. And his job is just kind of to support her in this relationship. I watch a lot of garbage TV about home decorating, just like in the background as I work. I do like some design work so it just kind of helps you focus. And it's an interesting, albeit small, like inversion of the expectations that I would have about this. They have kind of like a sweet relationship. I dunno. It's interesting to see it in what is otherwise an incredibly homogenous show.

Hannah McGregor: [00:27:32](#) Yeah. Do you think that that person has ever un-ironically referred to herself as a momtrepreneur?

andrea bennett: [00:27:39](#) It's possible she has. I haven't heard it yet. I'll report back. I did finish the season. I was going to say, but then I remembered like Netflix is like, would you now like to watch *The Staircase*? And I was like, no, I never want to watch *The Staircase*. Stop asking me if I want to watch -

Hannah McGregor: [00:27:52](#) [Laughs].

andrea bennett: [00:27:52](#) - *The Staircase*. Anyways. I dunno.

Hannah McGregor: [00:27:56](#) I, I just — just as I was asking that, I realized I've never tried to say that word out loud. I've only seen it written, so I don't know how — it really didn't feel good coming out of my mouth. It felt -

andrea bennett: [00:28:07](#) Mom-tre-preneur. Momtrepreneur. I don't think there's a good way to have that role out of the mouth.

Hannah McGregor: [00:28:14](#) Entrepreneur's already a hard word. Momtrepreneur's an unsayable nightmare of consonants. [Laughs].

andrea bennett: [00:28:22](#) Perhaps not necessary to enter, you know, Miriam Webster might need to just set that one aside.

Hannah McGregor: [00:28:29](#) [Laughs] That is not my particular sort of taste in background television while I'm doing things. I of late have just been rewatching all of *The Great British Bake Off* from the beginning.

andrea bennett: [00:28:42](#) Oh yes. That is also — I love *Great British Bake Off*. This season — the current season, Season 11, that's on, I am slightly disappointed, but -

Hannah McGregor: [00:28:52](#) Like, I think we should probably talk about your great book, but -

andrea bennett: [00:28:53](#) - [Laughs] Yeah.

Hannah McGregor: [00:28:53](#) - I just feel like the bakers actually don't have a lot of basic baking skills. And my concern is that with Mary Berry being replaced by Pru -

andrea bennett: [00:29:05](#) Yeah.

Hannah McGregor: [00:29:05](#) - who is much more of the like *Nailed It!* like stunt baking vibe.

andrea bennett: [00:29:13](#) Mmm-hmm.

Hannah McGregor: [00:29:13](#) I think that they're getting more stunt bakers on -

andrea bennett: [00:29:17](#) Yes.

Hannah McGregor: [00:29:17](#) - and fewer like nice grandmas who have been baking for 60 years and just know how to make a good choux pastry because who doesn't know how to make a good choux?

andrea bennett: [00:29:28](#) There are fewer people you can just chuck into a room and be like, "all right, make me a short crust."

Hannah McGregor: [00:29:34](#) One hundred percent.

andrea bennett: [00:29:34](#) And I don't watch the cake decorating shows because I'm actually really uninterested in the decorating part of things -

Hannah McGregor: [00:29:42](#) Same. Except for *Nailed It!* Because Nicole Byer is perfect.

andrea bennett: [00:29:46](#) - oh yeah. In old school *GBBO*, they would have sometimes a showstopper where they asked you to make a bread face or whatever -

Hannah McGregor: [00:29:54](#) [Laughs].

andrea bennett: [00:29:54](#) - but I don't think you can come out of the gate and week one and ask people to make like -

Hannah McGregor: [00:29:58](#) It was a cake bust.

andrea bennett: [00:29:58](#) - what was it? A cake bust. I don't even know that was an absolute nightmare.

Hannah McGregor: [00:30:05](#) It really was.

andrea bennett: [00:30:05](#) It was just mean to those people. And I think also what happened was Paul Hollywood was supposed to sort of step into that Mary Berry like nice host role. And he's not good at that.

Hannah McGregor: [00:30:16](#) No.

andrea bennett: [00:30:16](#) So now they have like, it's just, it's just not well balanced.

Hannah McGregor: [00:30:21](#) No.

andrea bennett: [00:30:21](#) It's unfortunate.

Hannah McGregor: [00:30:23](#) It's like, they're both being the bad cop. And then maybe the hosts are supposed to be the good cop, but they hired two extremely weird comedians to replace the like very nice gentle hosts. Like Mel and Sue brought this beautiful dynamic. Like the show needs a lesbian, one -

andrea bennett: [00:30:40](#) It does.

Hannah McGregor: [00:30:40](#) - it doesn't make any sense.

andrea bennett: [00:30:42](#) It's lacking.

Hannah McGregor: [00:30:42](#) It's wildly lacking. But like you've just got these two unhinged comedians circling the tent saying truly baffling things to these poor bakers [Laughs].

andrea bennett: [00:30:55](#) Absolutely baffling. Noel has clear favourites this season, which I did not know was allowed. I do love Noel. I won't mention the other one. He's not my favourite. He has made a couple jokes that have fallen so flat. I almost felt bad for him. But anyway. And Mel and Sue, like they brought the food history part of it too. And so I really miss that.

Hannah McGregor: [00:31:17](#) Yeah.

andrea bennett: [00:31:17](#) Yeah. When they had people make babka and it didn't go over well. It just didn't go over well.

Hannah McGregor: [00:31:23](#) Twitter is mad about the babka.

andrea bennett: [00:31:24](#) It was just a bad call.

Hannah McGregor: [00:31:27](#) [Laughs].

andrea bennett: [00:31:27](#) Mad online about the babka. I am so happy that all of these folks decided that they would bubble for us and they would give us our season of *Great British Bake Off*. I am sorry to say it has been a little disappointing so far.

Hannah McGregor: [00:31:41](#) It has been a little disappointing. And that said, as with every season of *Bake Off*, there are at least three contestants who I would jump in front of a car for.

andrea bennett: [00:31:49](#) Of course. I like Mark. Beard Mark -

Hannah McGregor: [00:31:51](#) Beard Mark. Correct.

andrea bennett: [00:31:53](#) - is one of my favourites.

Hannah McGregor: [00:31:54](#) Hermine. Is just like incredible. When she was making the -

andrea bennett: [00:31:57](#) Oh yes.

Hannah McGregor: [00:31:57](#) - the — what did she make where she was like, "I'm putting salmon and cheese in. I don't even know if you're allowed to do that, but I'm going to do it anyway." And I was like, "ah! You're a rebel!"

andrea bennett: [00:32:06](#) She has great flavour combinations and is great to watch. She, I think is going to be a sleeper hit. She's going to like, they'll see her like sort of sneak through and then she might just take the whole thing.

Hannah McGregor: [00:32:17](#) I really hope so. I really hope so.

andrea bennett: [00:32:17](#) And then - I, you know, I hope things work out for young Peter or whatever his name is.

Hannah McGregor: [00:32:21](#) Oh yeah. Oh yeah.

andrea bennett: [00:32:21](#) There always has to be a young one. And I always feel a little bit like, okay, I really hope —you're trying. You're so young.

Hannah McGregor: [00:32:27](#) Yep.

andrea bennett: [00:32:27](#) There's one that my group chat calls Dexter. You can probably guess -

Hannah McGregor: [00:32:31](#) Mmm-hmm. I know. I absolutely do the one who looks like if you had to remove your skin to make a pie, he would. [Laughs] I like -

andrea bennett: [00:32:40](#) He seems...nice?

Hannah McGregor: [00:32:42](#) No he doesn't. He seems like a murderer. I like a Lottie. I think Lottie's fun.

andrea bennett: [00:32:48](#) Lottie's great. Oh. Is she?

Hannah McGregor: [00:32:50](#) She's still on.

andrea bennett: [00:32:50](#) Yeah, but it was tight the last episode.

Hannah McGregor: [00:32:52](#) It was tight the last episode.

andrea bennett: [00:32:52](#) She almost left.

Hannah McGregor: [00:32:52](#) She did almost leave. It's because she made a bad pasty.

andrea bennett: [00:32:58](#) Oh yeah. And she, well, she made it —they all, well, they all messed up the brownies.

Hannah McGregor: [00:33:01](#) Oh and her babkas. She — wow, we are talking way too much about *Great British Bake Off!* [Laughs].

andrea bennett: [00:33:03](#) I'm sorry. It's my fault.

Hannah McGregor: [00:33:09](#) It's not your fault [Laughs].

andrea bennett: [00:33:09](#) I completely derailed this conversation into reality television.

Hannah McGregor: [00:33:15](#) [Laughs] I love it. But this is like —if there was ever a moment when we were all sort of collectively stewing in culture, like it feels like the way we are relating collectively to cultural moments is different right now. And maybe that isn't surprising because everything about the way that we live and the way that we interact has changed drastically and to a degree that I think everybody's having a hard time wrapping their heads around still. But, there is this, this sort of intense collectivity around cultural moments and then a very rapid, like, remember Tiger King?

andrea bennett: [00:33:54](#) Yeah.

Hannah McGregor: [00:33:54](#) Like that was everything. And now it's gone forever.

andrea bennett: [00:34:00](#) For sure.

Hannah McGregor: [00:34:00](#) And so there is this sort of just cultural miasma that we're all just kind of like bathing in. That is interesting.

andrea bennett: [00:34:07](#) I think we all need to escape into other fictional worlds briefly. Like we're stuck in our houses. We're stuck in this moderately bleak reality. It makes sense that we all want to submerge ourselves for a minute. I put out a call for suggestions for novels that had sort of like immersive worlds on Twitter the other — well last week. I don't — what is time? I don't know.

Hannah McGregor: [00:34:33](#) It's nothing.

andrea bennett: [00:34:33](#) But for that exact reason so that I could just sort of pretend in my head to be somewhere else for a bit.

Hannah McGregor: [00:34:39](#) Yeah.

andrea bennett: [00:34:39](#) So I think that's part of what it is. Like let's all focus on, yeah *Tiger King* or *babkas* for a day — it's really flash in the pan. It is surprising how fast everything moves and you know, there's sort of a dark side of that. The like Jeffrey Toobin news cycle -

Hannah McGregor: [00:34:56](#) [Laughs].

andrea bennett: [00:34:56](#) - Oh God. I was done with that the second it started.

Hannah McGregor: [00:35:02](#) I can't — by the end of the day that the news broke, I like texted some friends and I was like, "have we talked about Jeffrey Toobin yet?" And they were like, "yeah, like 500 messages today."

andrea bennett: [00:35:14](#) [Laughs]

Hannah McGregor: [00:35:16](#) And I was like, "Oh!" Yeah I remember those jokes that you're mentioning. It just feels like those were last week, but those were today? Cool. All right. The main joke is that Toobin sounds like a verb. And so now that is the name for when you are jerking it while you're on zoom you're just Toobin.

andrea bennett: [00:35:32](#) Oh yeah. Toobin. Toobout.

Hannah McGregor: [00:35:35](#) [Laughs] There was just so many fucking men on Twitter telling on themselves being like, "whomst among us has not had the dick in their hand during a zoom call?" And I was like, "Uh. Me."

andrea bennett: [00:35:46](#) This is the thing. That was on day two, I think, and on day one it was mostly jokes. And so a friend and I were talking in the DMs and my friend was like, their partner had said, you know, in eight months we're going to get a Toobin essay, you know, like we got the Jian Ghomeshi essay. Some editor's going to make the poor decision to let this man write a personal essay about how the breakdown between work and home in the COVID era led to this yada yada yada. And I was like, I think your partner is right. But, I think far sooner, like in like eight weeks, we're going to get the first round of takes that are, that are not from Toobin, but from other people. And it turns out we were both right. And both terribly wrong in that the takes began coming hot and fast the next day -

Hannah McGregor: [00:36:37](#) Eight hours.

andrea bennett: [00:36:37](#) - eight hours later. Oh God.

Hannah McGregor: [00:36:40](#) [Laughs].

andrea bennett: [00:36:40](#) Yeah. I know. It's just too much. I don't, it's — I always find it baffling what we'll excuse for certain men when you know, everybody else is just getting ground through the meat grinder that is capitalism on a daily basis.

Hannah McGregor: [00:36:58](#) Yep.

andrea bennett: [00:36:58](#) It's baffling and frankly, a little sickening.

Hannah McGregor: [00:37:02](#) Speaking of the way in which we tell stories that excuse nightmare men, can we talk about my favourite essay in the book?

andrea bennett: [00:37:11](#) [Laughs]. Sure yeah.

Hannah McGregor: [00:37:11](#) Which is about CanLit and our histories of not even — not only excusing, but like praising and celebrating the nightmarish behaviour of men in the name of genius while we let women just get ground down by those experiences.

andrea bennett: [00:37:33](#) Yes we can.

Hannah McGregor: [00:37:35](#) [Laughs] Tell me what — one thing that stood out to me as I was reading the volume as a whole was the sort of interesting relationship between that essay, which in a lot of ways is much less personal than a lot of the essays, the rest of the essays in the book, which are all —like your writing is always very conceptual and is always sort of working through a theoretical problem, but in many of the essays in the book it's working through that theoretical problem via sort of embodied personal set of experiences. And in that essay in particular, it felt like it was sort of working through it via engagement with literature, engagement with history, sort of trying to, to unpack this problem in a different way. And so I'm curious how you think about that essay fitting into the rest of the book.

andrea bennett: [00:38:19](#) Yeah, I think that's a good question. I think it's slightly an outlier for that reason. I wanted to include it because it was something I was, I just had been thinking quite a lot about. And it felt a little bit like fit in the book, and it also felt like the book was the right context to say the things that I wanted to say. Because it's a bit of a difficult conversation and when the conversation happens online or in like a different context, it's just tends to become dramatized like a lot faster. Just that, that whole like 'take' cycle. So I wanted the essay to sort of be in there as part of a, you know, a series of other things that I had been thinking about.

Hannah McGregor: [00:39:06](#) Yeah.

andrea bennett: [00:39:06](#) And no you're right. Like a lot, they're personal essay is most of them, but the essay part of that is super important. So it is like, yeah, concepts I'm working through most of the time I'm drawing on my personal experiences. In this case, I'm drawing

on kind of the experience of being a bystander to a particular situation. And then, you know, processing the experience of being a bystander by reading about these historical precedents and just having the feeling that not much had changed. And that we were continuing to have these same conversations over and over again. And I think that's true of different segments of Can Lit more broadly. So I do talk about, I mean, so Margaret Atwood comes up in this essay and she comes up in this essay in a few ways. One being that she was sort of there at the feting of Al Purdy, that she signed a UBC Accountable letter, but then also her participation in sort of the colonial project of Can Lit.

andrea bennett: [00:40:11](#)

And yeah, what that means in terms of the relationship between the colonial project of Can Lit and Indigenous writers who are producing important work in a country that is currently called Canada. And I do think, you know, we've, we've had the same conversations about race in Canadian literature, like over and over again. I think also that's something I'm not, I'm not situated as a white writer in the same place to talk about and make judgements about those conversations in the same way that I am to talk about sort of gender dynamics, but it's something I know from like reading and listening, people have been having symposia —like writers of colour, Black, Indigenous, writers of colour have been having symposia, have been having talks, have been writing essays about how white and colonial Can Lit is, since Can Lit began.

Hannah McGregor: [00:41:06](#)

Yes.

andrea bennett: [00:41:06](#)

And yeah, it's been an important part of Can Lit since Can Lit began. I think I also talked about "The Onondaga Madonna" in the essay. So all of those things exist in a bit of a miasma for me. They're interrelated. And they were interrelated in terms of the UBC Accountable situation unfolding because I think it was the precipitating incident that finally encouraged people to bring their concerns about Joseph Boyden's lineage, to, to a more broad public conversation. And then his Indigenous roots were brought up as a briefly, very briefly as a potential excuse for Galloway's behaviour. That essay is interesting because there — I have another notes at the back of the book, there are notes for all the essays, but for that essay, it's like kazillions of notes.

Hannah McGregor: [00:42:00](#)

[Laughs] Yeah.

andrea bennett: [00:42:00](#)

Well it's because there was a lot of research. And then because so many people I name have proved to be like incredibly litigious. And so -

Hannah McGregor: [00:42:07](#) Yeah. They sure have .

andrea bennett: [00:42:09](#) - so, so it's noted out the wazoo.

Hannah McGregor: [00:42:12](#) It really is.

andrea bennett: [00:42:12](#) Any of those people can go ahead and they can look at the notes [Laughs] and they can see that I'm citing already reported things.

Hannah McGregor: [00:42:19](#) I was also thinking about this when I was thinking about sort of, you know, the way some of the essays sort of move inward to think a thing through, and this one was outward to think a thing through —what it made me think about is the incredible difficulty of writing in this moment personally, about our encounters with rape culture in Can Lit -

andrea bennett: [00:42:44](#) For sure.

Hannah McGregor: [00:42:44](#) - because everybody's getting fucking sued. And right now a lot of the cases that are, that are tied up in the court are cases about, you know, can you get sued for articulating a personal experience?

andrea bennett: [00:42:58](#) Yeah.

Hannah McGregor: [00:42:58](#) Can you get sued for saying, you know, "I always had a bad feeling about that guy." Can you get sued for saying, "I believe this person and what they're saying to me." You know, can — we're, we're basically at a moment in which a particular form of storytelling has been made illegal. And so I think it's quite powerful in that essay to take something that was a collective experience in our literary culture and to say, "I actually can't work through this via the personal, because that has been at least for the time being outlawed." But you know what we can do, we can talk about history. We can, we can go -

andrea bennett: [00:43:39](#) Yeah.

Hannah McGregor: [00:43:39](#) -we can find plenty of evidence for plenty of things.

andrea bennett: [00:43:42](#) You can't defame and dead person...is an illegal thing.

Hannah McGregor: [00:43:47](#) Mmm-hmm.

andrea bennett: [00:43:47](#) But I don't know if that came out wrong. I'm not saying go "off" people. I'm saying I can write about historical figures, just to be clear.

Hannah McGregor: [00:43:55](#) Can't defame the dead. [Laughs].

andrea bennett: [00:43:57](#) But, but no, I think it is a good point. I thought about that a lot. And I think that I have like several thoughts about it, but I think from the perspective of, and as an editor and a writer and as someone who is pretty practical, just my makeup — it is a hundred percent safer legally to take your story to a reporter, who's going to report it out within the context of like a newspaper or a magazine that has liable insurance and fact checking. Fact checking —so newspapers don't have the same like factoring processes as magazines do. But if you go through a fact checking process that does also give you some legal cover because you're doing your due diligence in terms of trying to make sure that everything that you're reporting is accurate.

andrea bennett: [00:44:39](#) I think that this has the effect though —and this is kind of an interesting trend in the way we think about nonfiction in general — it has the effect of taking someone sort of narrative power away from them. And I think that when someone, when people experience trauma and sexual assault, one way of processing trauma and sexual assault is narratively. I am a person who processes things in general, narratively. Being able to write an essay about something helps me clarify my thinking. And it might help me feel a little bit more at peace with it. That's not to say it's a form of therapy, that's a different thing, but having the power to link my thoughts up in a particular way and share that with people that that's like a powerful thing. So not being able to tell your own story in a way that is like you, you have a control of the narrative that perhaps restores some control, but our particular situation took away from you.

andrea bennett: [00:45:38](#) That's just kind of, it just sucks. I think it just sucks. It's not great. And then the, I guess the last point I, I would make is I'd [Laughs] I don't know how like much more broadly to ascribe this, but there is a particular nonfiction writer in Canada, he has a lot of —he's not on friendly terms with tons of people.

Hannah McGregor: [00:45:59](#) [Laughs].

andrea bennett: [00:45:59](#) But he won a major prize recently. And he wrote on his website a blog post -

Hannah McGregor: [00:46:08](#) Ugh! Sorry.

andrea bennett: [00:46:08](#) - about how there was a dearth of, you know, [Text Message Notification] important nonfiction in Canada today because we are now prioritizing memoir and personal essay. So there are both like gendered and racialized, connotations there. The other interesting thing that I think about as someone who shifts between third person writing and first person writing — sometimes I'm interviewing people and writing long form stuff, sometimes I'm writing long form personal essays. The other interesting thing about that because he writes biographies this particular non-fiction person. So to say that it is more intellectually rigorous or important for an impartial authority figure to report out a story and tell the story of someone's life than it is for someone to tell the story of their own life. I have a lot of problems with that.

Hannah McGregor: [00:47:06](#) Yeah.

andrea bennett: [00:47:06](#) Aside — I mean, I that's bound up [Text Message Notification] in then gendered and racialized aspect of this quote unquote critique. But that is the other thing I think about when — that's a little bit aside from the legal stuff, but it exists in that same, in that same situation. If you want a story to get out, you have to give it to someone else.

Hannah McGregor: [00:47:27](#) If I recall correctly, that essay suggested that Tanya Talaga's *Seven Fallen Feathers* didn't count as reportage, despite the fact that it literally is that, because she is Indigenous and she is talking about Indigenous issues which has also -

andrea bennett: [00:47:44](#) Absolutely bananas argument.

Hannah McGregor: [00:47:44](#) - a really remarkable claim because — I mean, this is what, this is just like the, just the goofiest, like feminism and critical race theory 101, but it's just like, "but when a white men writes about other white men that is objective." Like we can't, I just, I hate that we're still stuck in these conversations it's, they're so boring in so many ways. And yet they obviously are still resonating with some people.

andrea bennett: [00:48:15](#) Yeah.

Hannah McGregor: [00:48:15](#) Yeah.

andrea bennett: [00:48:15](#) I mean, with, with, for that particular fellow, like fewer and fewer people, let's be clear.

Hannah McGregor: [00:48:21](#) I believe the same fellow wrote an essay recently about how libraries are stealing from publishers.

andrea bennett: [00:48:28](#) That was a — was that a different -

Hannah McGregor: [00:48:30](#) That was a different -

andrea bennett: [00:48:30](#) - I think that's a different guy.

Hannah McGregor: [00:48:33](#) Was that a different bad guy?

andrea bennett: [00:48:33](#) Yes. I think you're talking about Ken white, maybe.

Hannah McGregor: [00:48:36](#) Oh yeah. And the, the, the non-fiction guy was —I think Ken White also wrote something about how you can get nonfiction published -

andrea bennett: [00:48:47](#) He did, yes.

Hannah McGregor: [00:48:47](#) - around the same time as this other. Yeah.

andrea bennett: [00:48:49](#) Yeah. He was trying to become a publisher at the time. So there was again, like kind of a personal aspect to this. I think he, I think he had tried to acquire Porcupine's Quill-

Hannah McGregor: [00:49:01](#) He did acquire Porcupine's Quill.

andrea bennett: [00:49:02](#) - and he, yeah. And then he discovered that some of the — so I've written a book of essays, a book of poetry and two travel guides. My travel guides have earned out -

Hannah McGregor: [00:49:14](#) Congratulations.

andrea bennett: [00:49:15](#) - but they don't count. You know, when I do a grant application, they don't count.

Hannah McGregor: [00:49:20](#) Yeah, they're not Canada Council books.

andrea bennett: [00:49:21](#) They're not. And I think it is probably time to raise some questions about like what we consider art and what we set to the side, what the line is between journalism and art. Because I know some people write like really important journalism, but then their clips don't count, because they're not writing like essay based kind of stuff.

andrea bennett: [00:49:41](#) I don't personally feel like I need my tour guides to be included. I don't, you know, there's the same question about cookbooks.

There's this question about like crosswords or there are a lot of books that get published that you would put on the back of like your toilet tank at your cottage. Those don't count on the list, the granting list — *708 Wacky Ways People Have Died Tending to Cattle*. It doesn't count. So if you acquire a press -

- Hannah McGregor: [00:50:10](#) It sounds like art, though.
- andrea bennett: [00:50:12](#) - Yeah. [Laughs] If you acquire a press I feel like these are really basic things to be cognizant of. And if you don't know those things and you get yourself into a situation, that's on you I would say perhaps. But maybe having a basic knowledge of what you're getting yourself into, if you want to just decide to be a publisher of books, that that might be a good idea. But I've never been a dude in his sixties with enough money to buy a press, so far be it for me to judge.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:50:42](#) Is there a through line between men who buy presses and then write think pieces about how it's hard to run a press and that must be the fault of libraries -
- andrea bennett: [00:50:51](#) Yeah. [Laughs].
- Hannah McGregor: [00:50:51](#) - and men who make jokes about not trusting your partner to take care of your child?
- andrea bennett: [00:50:57](#) Oh gosh. [Laughs].
- Hannah McGregor: [00:50:57](#) Like maybe. Maybe there's some sort of continuity here.
- andrea bennett: [00:51:03](#) Who complains about libraries? Like for that reason -
- Hannah McGregor: [00:51:07](#) I don't know. [Laughs].
- andrea bennett: [00:51:07](#) - I, I don't know.
- Hannah McGregor: [00:51:10](#) [Laughs] It's so silly.
- andrea bennett: [00:51:12](#) It's also -
- Hannah McGregor: [00:51:12](#) "They're stealing books from us!" Like, dude. Dude. Dude.
- andrea bennett: [00:51:16](#) - like we have the PLR in Canada so authors benefit from, from books being taken out of the cannon — out of the library. It's like a public lending right ensures that we all get a little bit of money every time our books are taken out of the library. So I don't know.

Hannah McGregor: [00:51:30](#) Yeah and libraries make people into readers -

andrea bennett: [00:51:31](#) Yeah.

Hannah McGregor: [00:51:31](#) - and we need people to read, or they won't buy books from anyone.

andrea bennett: [00:51:38](#) Yeah. [Laughs].

Hannah McGregor: [00:51:38](#) It's not library user or book buyer -

andrea bennett: [00:51:41](#) Oh yeah.

Hannah McGregor: [00:51:41](#) - it's reader, or non-reader.

andrea bennett: [00:51:44](#) One hundred percent.

Hannah McGregor: [00:51:44](#) Like, that is the issue threatening publishing is Netflix -

andrea bennett: [00:51:47](#) For sure.

Hannah McGregor: [00:51:48](#) -not libraries.

andrea bennett: [00:51:49](#) Yeah. I, I buy books and I take books out of the library and there are a million things that are socially good that libraries do. Even if I'm looking at it as a purely self-involved theoretical book publisher, I'm shooting myself in the foot to start [Laughs] complaining about libraries. But anyway.

Hannah McGregor: [00:52:10](#) [Laughs] I want to ask you one last question, if you have time for it.

andrea bennett: [00:52:12](#) Yes.

Hannah McGregor: [00:52:13](#) I want to ask you about the essay that weaves all the way through the collection, which I'm trying to remember the name of right now. What's that essay called?

andrea bennett: [00:52:23](#) "Everyone is Sober and No One Can Drive".

Hannah McGregor: [00:52:26](#) [Laughs].

andrea bennett: [00:52:26](#) It was a jokey title that was only ever supposed to be a placeholder and it just stuck around. I just kept it.

Hannah McGregor: [00:52:33](#) [Laughs] It's such a good description of queer community though. How did I forget that? Can you, can you tell me a little

bit more about like, why you decided to bring this structurally unconventional essay into the collection and to weave it through the way that you did?

andrea bennett: [00:52:51](#) Yeah, for sure. So before I even thought about writing this particular book ages and ages ago, when I was thinking a lot about the word tomboy, the concept of tomboy, which comes up in an essay, I had thought about the idea of doing a book about tomboys, people who identified as tomboys and youth and having it sort of be a chorus of voices, wherever people ended up. Whether they ended up identifying as non-binary as butch women, as trans men, as cisgender women. And that book project didn't happen. I did a bunch of interviews for it, but it just, it just didn't materialize the way that it needed to. But that idea of having sort of like a chorus of voices, I really liked having a bunch of people talk about experiences that were perhaps a little bit similar, shared a moment in time, share some things in common.

andrea bennett: [00:53:46](#) The idea of being a queer millennial in Canada, coming of age in Canada, and what that was like as same-sex marriage became legal kind of around the time we became adults so that we could see our similarities and see our differences and just kind of capture — I think it's probably a bit of a weird moment in time. Like we're a little bit of a crux generation that has a before and has an after. And I think probably in 50 years, when we look back, we'll just have that date. Like same sex marriage was legalized in Canada in 2006. And that's not really how time works when we experience it on like a granular level. It was like, all right. I mean, I'm speaking in generalities now, but grew up in sort of a lot of us pretty homophobic queerphobic environments.

Hannah McGregor: [00:54:43](#) Yep. And then things slowly start to change. We have this landmark decision. It's not like everything got better at that very second and now we're in a period that's, that's again, different, where the conversation is again different. So it just felt important to sort of capture a snapshot of that moment in time that was filtered through other people's experiences. The book is in some senses, like my experience of that moment in time. And I love talking to people and interviewing them and, and just hearing what people's lives are like. And as a writer or editor of those sections kind of feeling like I would step back and just let people talk about what felt important to them and just ask them really nosy questions about their lives.

Hannah McGregor: [00:55:32](#) [Laughs].

andrea bennett: [00:55:32](#) And then structurally it just sort of felt like the best place for those pieces was, was almost like as interstitials so that they could build on each other over a time. And so that they could stand alone so that I wasn't as the sort of like wizard of Oz narrator jamming them all together. And coming up with, you know, synthesizing a thesis that maybe is there, and maybe isn't there. Maybe, you know, borrowing from some of my practices, like a poet, maybe I'd kind of leave the pieces on the table and then people can kind of bring a bit of themselves into the process of putting the puzzle together, or whatever.

Hannah McGregor: [00:56:20](#) [Laughs]. Or whatever.

andrea bennett: [00:56:20](#) I think that you can leave people. Yeah. You can leave people with space, you can leave your reader with some space and they'll, they'll like they will bring a little bit of themselves into it and they'll do the thinking and they'll make the connections and they'll make the connections that are important to them -

Hannah McGregor: [00:56:33](#) Yeah.

andrea bennett: [00:56:34](#) - also, and maybe different connections than another reader would make. But that was the impetus behind why that, that 16 part essay is in there and why it's in there the way it is.

Hannah McGregor: [00:56:48](#) Yeah. I found it really, really powerful as a reader. I mean, as a reader who is part of that generation, you know, who didn't grow up in a small town, I grew up in Ottawa, but you know, Ottawa. It's like [Laughs] not exactly a metropolis. And it certainly, I certainly didn't grow up —I mean, I grew up in that generation. Your description of the effect as choral, I think really resonates and particularly does this really interesting work through the collection of taking the personal and amplifying it via shared experience. Of saying like, here are some things that have happened to me. And without ever saying these things are happening to a lot of people, I'm just going to tell you 16 other stories and, Oh look, huh. Would you look at that? It's happening to a lot of people, huh? And so there is this evocation of shared experience that I think, for me as a reader at least, also invited me to, to layer my own experience onto that and to make the whole feeling of the book feel very, very personal in a generational way. Which is to say, you know, like it felt, it felt like in part, it was telling me a story of my own generation and I am not used to stories of my generation being told in any way, other than making fun of us because we're so poor.

andrea bennett: [00:58:11](#) Yeah. We eat well and we're poor. I think is the prevailing — Yeah. We like plants. [Cat Meows].

Hannah McGregor: [00:58:21](#) We like plants. We don't own homes. We use tote bags. We eat avocado.

andrea bennett: [00:58:27](#) Yeah. [Laughs].

Hannah McGregor: [00:58:27](#) You know, everybody, everybody hates millennials. Wow. [Laughs].

andrea bennett: [00:58:32](#) They do. And now, I mean, we've gone past being relevant in some ways, and now we're sort of old. [Laughs].

Hannah McGregor: [00:58:38](#) Yeah we are.

andrea bennett: [00:58:39](#) That time has passed. [Laughs]

Hannah McGregor: [00:58:41](#) We are. The TikTok youth like to make fun of us for liking Harry Potter too much.

andrea bennett: [00:58:46](#) Yeah. I mean, fair enough.

Hannah McGregor: [00:58:48](#) Yeah. They're bad books. I get it.

andrea bennett: [00:58:50](#) Yeah. [Laughs].

Hannah McGregor: [00:58:53](#) Shhh don't tell anyone I said that I have a whole other podcast about Harry Potter.

andrea bennett: [00:59:00](#) I know! I know!

Hannah McGregor: [00:59:00](#) [Laughs].

andrea bennett: [00:59:00](#) Yeah. I welcome the roasting of the TikTok youth. I'm ready for it. It's fine.

Hannah McGregor: [00:59:07](#) Yeah. I love the TikTok youth, but it is — I feel like it is, it must be nice as a youth to be able to look at a generation of queer people and make fun of them.

andrea bennett: [00:59:16](#) One hundred percent. Yeah.

Hannah McGregor: [00:59:17](#) Because I didn't have an older generation of queer people to look at.

- andrea bennett: [00:59:21](#) Yeah. No, that's true. I'm thinking of like a handful of small, a very small handful of examples that would have been like later gen Xer's making movies. But it's not, you know, the fact that it's like a handful of examples and they're all kind of negative examples. There's a documentary on Netflix about media representation of trans people, cultural representation of trans people. And I'm spacing on the name. But it's interesting. I have a poem in my first book, which I wrote when I was trying to, when I was figuring things out for myself gender-wise. It's the, the book is the experience of writing through figuring that out. And so it's a little bit sort of messy, but I have a poem about the Silence of the Lambs. And it really is about a sense of identifying with the most evil character in the film and being drawn to that film.
- andrea bennett: [01:00:21](#) So it was interesting for other people to talk, to hear other trans people talk about that experience and being drawn to these — they're mostly, it's mostly most trans people in film are the evil, this like evil, awful character, but being drawn to that representation because there's so little representation. And I think that that's true also just sort of more broadly of like queer folks in film. Obviously there are exceptions and I'm talking kind of about mainstream culture. Anyway, whatever. So yeah, so the TikTok youth get to roast us. There's so many of us, we're prevalent. We're talking about our avocados. We like our cats. We, you know, that's how nice for them. I'm glad.
- Hannah McGregor: [01:01:01](#) [Laughs] [andrea's Theme Music: "La Demeure" by Stereolab]
- Hannah McGregor: [01:01:12](#) If you want to learn more about andrea's work, you can find their website at andreaabennett.ca. That's andrea a-n-d-r-e-a Bennett b-e-n-n-e-t-t dot c-a. As always, you can find show notes and the rest of the episodes of *Secret Feminist Agenda* on secretfeministagenda.com. You can follow me on Twitter at [@hkpmcgregor](https://twitter.com/hkpmcgregor). And you can tweet about the podcast using the hashtag [#secretfeministagenda](https://twitter.com/secretfeministagenda). Of course you can always rate and review the show. There are no new reviews this week, which is fine because as stated at the beginning of the episode, we are all just doing our best. The podcast's 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. andrea's theme song was "La Demeure" by Stereolab off their album *Margarine Eclipse*. This episode was recorded on the traditional and unceded territories 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. [Theme Music: "Mesh Shirt" by Mom Jeans]

