

Close Talking Episode #117

“Fuck Your Lecture on Craft, My People Are Dying” by Noor Hindi

Saturday January 9, 2021

<https://soundcloud.com/close-talking/episode-117-fuck-your-lecture-on-craft-my-people-are-dying-noor-hindi>

Show Notes

Connor 0:08

Hello and welcome to Close Talking the world's most popular poetry analysis podcast from Cardboard Box Productions Incorporated. I am co-host Connor McNamara Stratton and with my good friend Jack Rossiter-Munley, we read a poem,

Jack 0:22

talk about the poem,

Connor 0:23

and read the poem again.

Jack 0:26

Before we get into today's selection, a quick note that if you like what we do here at Close Talking, and you have a spare minute, it would mean the world to us if you would give the podcast a rating and review on Apple podcasts.

Connor 0:37

Those ratings and reviews help boost us up the algorithm and find new listeners.

Jack 0:42

And if you have suggestions for future episodes or comments on this one, you can send us an email at closetalkingpoetry@gmail.com.

Connor 0:51

You can also find us on social media on Twitter, the show is @closetalking, I'm @connormstratton, and Jack is @jackrossitermun.

Jack 1:01

On Instagram the show is @closetalking, and on Facebook it's facebook.com/closetalking.

Connor 1:08

And our website where you can find all our past episodes is closetalking.com.

Jack 1:15

On with the show.

(Close Talking theme music)

Connor 1:19

Hello and welcome to an all new episode of Close Talking I am one of your co-hosts Connor McNamara Stratton.

Jack 1:26

And I am your other co-host Jack Rossiter-Munley.

Connor 1:30

It's 2021 - could be the new worst year, could be a little better, hard to say. But

Jack 1:42

Whatever this new year contains, we will be filling it in our own lives with a lot of poetry and we will continue to bring poetry analysis, through Close Talking to all of you out there.

Connor 1:54

We got a wonderful poem, the poem is it's got a great title, the title is called "Fuck Your Lecture On Craft, My People Are Dying", it's by Noor Hindi, who is a Palestinian American poet, and also journalist and reporter. This poem came out in Poetry Magazine, I believe in the fall of 2020. And yeah, I think we should just read it and then hop right in.

Jack 2:25

I'm with you. Let's do it.

Connor 2:27

All right.

“Fuck Your Lecture on Craft, My People Are Dying” by Noor Hindi

Colonizers write about flowers.

I tell you about children throwing rocks at Israeli tanks
seconds before becoming daisies.

I want to be like those poets who care about the moon.

Palestinians don't see the moon from jail cells and prisons.

It's so beautiful the moon.

They're so beautiful, the flowers.

I pick flowers for my dead father when I'm sad.

He watches Al Jazeera all day.

I wish Jessica would stop texting me *Happy Ramadan*.

I know I'm American because when I walk into a room, something dies.

Metaphors about death are for poets who think ghosts care about sound.

When I die, I promise to haunt you forever.

One day, I'll write about the flowers like we own them.

Jack 3:44

Yeah, this is such a fantastic poem. And it's one of those where I feel like it is such a complete package that even after reading it, and I made some notes, and I have some thoughts, but like, I kind of don't feel like I, it's the kind of poem where I don't feel like I need to have a coherent analytical response to it. Like it is an experience of a poem, and that experience is enough. And I feel like you can't miss what that experience is and contains. And so you can talk about it, you can analyze it, but the experience stands so strongly on its own. And I feel like that is kind of on a meta level, such a triumph for a poem that is critiquing craft, and it is a finely crafted poem. But at the end, you don't feel like you need to really dig into that, to understand it, or to understand the feeling it wants you to have. And I really kind of enjoyed that when I was first reading through it and thinking about it, I was like, I have thoughts. I have questions. But there are some poems that feel like they are really calling out for that after you read them. And this poem, you know, obviously, the title is a very direct address. But it also feels like such a cohesive piece that you can kind of sit with in its totality rather than the impulse to like pick apart or to create more meaning in new and different ways, right after you first read it.

Connor 5:28

Yeah, no, I really agree. I think that's, that's a good way to put it. Yeah, like a kind of, like, very basic play-by-play, yeah. So it's, it's, I mean, the title kind of says it all, but, you know, "Fuck Your Lecture On Craft, My People Are Dying." So it's about poetry already. But then it's also you know, the Noor Hindi is Palestinian American and then we learn from the second line, the speaker, you know, "Colonizers write about flowers." And then "I tell you about children throwing rocks at Israeli tanks / seconds before becoming daisies." So we're the speaker is, is situating, you know, herself, like very clearly and immediately. And then by the end, it's like, "I know I'm American because when I walk into a room, something dies." So there's, there's like, the diaspora element too and yeah, we're just, we're put right into the Israeli occupation of Palestine. And it's kind of like, just sort of, you know, it's moving through that, along with sort of moving through poetry and craft and things about that. And it's, like, it's interesting, because on the one hand, it has the, like, the fuck your lecture on craft, like, kind of meta self-reflexive, like, I know, I'm a poem, and I'm talking about poems, and stuff like that. But then, you know, like, the, my people are dying. It's like, we're in a, like, a lot of times, the move to do meta, or like self-reflexive stuff in poems, or like to think about poem as a poem, when it's done poorly, but sometimes you understand, well, it's like, it's sort of an intellectual or an abstracting process that kind of takes you further away from whatever's happening in the poem. But in this case, it's the effect is sort of the opposite, where I feel like the reflexive aspect of it, because of the way that it's, it's linked so closely to the Israeli occupation, it feels much more visceral. It takes poems to task, or at least it takes the, you know, this sort of like academic, like MFA craft, ivory tower, hyphenated, you know, white, like gatekeeper vibes of poetry rather than poems, per se. Because, you know, as you say, it's very finely crafted, the poem itself, I believe, is a sonnet. It's not like fuck craft, or like, it's not like, fuck good poems. It's like, fuck your lecture on craft, right? It's, it's the why are you, why is this taking up all your time, while all my people are dying, you know? So yeah, no, I, I, I love it.

Jack 8:49

Yeah, and I personally, I'm a huge sucker for any work that takes on that kind of stance towards craft, because conversations about craft aren't valueless. In fact, this poem is an interesting

counterpoint to some of the conversations about craft and craft analysis, craft-based analysis of poems from marginalized groups, there is the recent anthology, "Native Voices: Indigenous American Poetry, Craft and Conversations" that sought to put the focus on craft in native works. Because so often the level of analysis is about culture only, or is only about message and not as much about the way that message is conveyed. And I like that this poem holds space for craft by being so good at craft and also addressing it but like, not letting that be the end point of conversation, or letting you know a discourse about the discourse overtake what you're actually addressing. And so often, I think that is the downfall of a lot of academic poetry and a lot of academic work on poetry is that you become so obsessed with the the craft element that all the rest kind of falls away. And what I find really interesting is that, while the focus of this poem is on, my people are dying, I think that is the major drive in the poem that the title actually puts fuck your lecture on craft first. And the first line of the poem is about writing and the sort of written engagement with the world that colonizers have, which is colonizers write about flowers. And that's taking on the literary part first, the same way the title does. And I think throughout the poem, you get these call outs to writing or faulty writing or putting the speaker at odds with maybe a mainstream written discourse. So you have "Colonizers write about flowers", that's the fuck your lecture on craft line, followed by "I tell you about children throwing rocks at Israeli tanks", but my people are dying line. And you can see that reverberating through the poem where you have, "I want to be like those poets who care about the moon", fuck your lecture on craft line. "Palestinians don't see the moon from jail cells and prisons" my people are dying" line. And that the way that that moves through the poem, again, beautifully and finely crafted. But the entire thrust of that construction is to keep pointing you back towards my people are dying, my people are dying. There's a really important core to this that you need to understand. You don't have to tell me that I'm doing it in a sonnet. That's not the most interesting part of this. You don't have to tell me, like, learn something from this poem, and learn to refocus the way that you think about writing through this poem, like that, I think, is something that just comes through so clearly. And I really appreciated that.

Connor 12:04

It reminds me I was after I encountered this poem, I was looking up other works by Hindi, and there's this great kind of essay that she wrote "Against Erasure" is what it's called and it, it will, we'll link to it, and it's it's after Solmaz Sharif, who has a great essay that we'll also link to that's also about being against erasure, and it's sort of Sharif's essay is like a kind of engagement with the politics of erasure poetry. And it's it's very fascinating to me, and Hindi's work is like, it begins with the Arab Israeli war in 1948 and with the, like dispossession of Palestinian land, and the creation of the Israeli state, and it's sort of a personal essay about it, in certain ways, with you know, it's like the essay begins "When it starts raining bombs, my great-grandmother is preparing dinner." It just incorporates lots of facts in historical context of the history of Israel and Palestine. And in 1948, I think there were at least 700,000 Palestinians who became refugees. And, you know, it also talks about how like, in the Six-Day War, which was in 1967, it was a very brutal war, and 700 Jews and Israelis were killed during the war, and 18,000 Arabs and Palestinians were killed during the war. And in the piece, Hindi has a line after that, "what is the difference between war and genocide?" And it's, it's kind of crossed out in the kind of against erasure, which is sort of like a feature of the peace. And you know,

Jack 14:11

That's such an important line on this theme, because those are both terms war and genocide that do have technical definitions, like for international criminal law, and you know, in the dictionary, you'll find a definition of genocide and you'll find a definition of war. But are they actually useful in describing what's happening? And when someone is talking about what's happening is that the useful thing to point out when you are looking at it and critiquing it, in an academic or non-academic setting.

Connor 14:45

Right, even war is like, assumes sort of equal forces on both sides. You know, like the line in Hindi's poem the "I tell you about children throwing rocks at Israeli tanks / seconds before becoming daisies." Such a marvelous and devastating line, and it speaks to, you know, children throwing rocks, like is often you know, when Western media or whatever often portrays the, the conflict in, like, occupied Palestine, it's, you know, it often emphasizes those, like Palestinian children, you know, throwing rocks or, you know, sometimes you know, like firing guns or firing rockets. But you know, when you read the articles and you don't know anything about it, it often comes off like it's this equal conflict engagement which which is has a kind of analogy too when you know, you think about, like how Black Lives Matter protests are, like reported on, you know, where, quote unquote rioters are throwing, you know, cans at police and then police responded with so much tear gas, you know, a thing that is not allowed in wartime under international law. And there's there's a similar sort of like, conflation of two sides that I think is like very damaging. And I think that line really like it also the turn to like "seconds before becoming daisies" that the sort of use of right, like there's a sort of implied, you know, either the children are being killed by the tanks or they're, you know, they're being killed in some other way or their, but the kind of implicit critique that's made in the first line, "Colonizers write about flowers" is sort of made explicit in a way with the second line. I guess it's the third line, but the second sentence, "I tell you about children throwing rocks at Israeli tanks / seconds before becoming daisies," where the first line it's like, okay, colonizers are like, you know, it's like, Williams, William Wordsworth is like thinking about his daisies, or whatever, you know, we've got our nice British romantic, poetic tradition, talking about the beautiful flowers. And meanwhile, their nation is engaging in very brutal and violent colonialism. And the flowers are, at the very least, ignoring the violence taking place that in some ways that allows their poetry to exist, and flourish in a way. But then in this in this second sentence, the daisies becomes the, the replacement of death, or of killing, you know, at the, at the Israeli tanks. And so it's, it's put, it's just like put really incisively in this in this poem.

Jack 18:10

I love that you pulled out those lines, because I find that such an effective starting point, because you start off saying colonizers write about flowers, and then immediately mentioned a flower, just two lines later. But it's clear that Hindi is not writing about flowers in that moment, it's about something else, the flower happens to be there. But the use of daisies got me thinking a lot, for a number of reasons. But the first thing you put me in mind of is the like 60s folk song where of all the flowers gone, which is a Vietnam-era piece. And basically it's it follows this cycle from flowers, and then where have all the flowers gone to where have all the and it goes through a whole cycle of things, it ends up talking about soldiers going to Vietnam, and then they come back and the flowers are on their grave sites. And so it's this whole cycle of flowers but being in the Vietnam-era, and being the specific mention of a daisy put me in mind of what is basically

like the most famous political ad in history, which is the daisy ad for Lyndon Johnson, where there's a little girl in the field, picking the petals off of a daisy counting to 10 very poorly, like a little girl, just doing her flower in the field thing, and then it zooms it freezes, zooms in on her eye, and then there's a nuclear explosion. And a voiceover says we either have to love each other or we're all gonna die, vote for Lyndon Johnson. I'm not paraphrasing, and that, obviously, in the context of the Israel-Palestine conflict is such a stark and perfect illustration of the disparity in power because not only do you start with these children throwing rocks at Israeli tanks, but Israel is one of the few countries in the world that is in possession of nuclear weapons. They have 90 nukes at like best estimates, so you have Palestinians who are children throwing rocks at tanks, seconds before becoming daisies, so like dying. But also, you have this sort of image-gistic historical reference going on, that adds a whole other layer of like, look at how bad this power disparity is. And it's another reference point of like a child with a daisy. So that was my kind of immediate little journey upon reading that line, just thinking like, alright, I'm in it. This is, this is bad stuff.

Connor 20:41

So the other part of it, too, is like Hindi and the speaker are American. And so then there's that, that great line at the end, "I know I'm American because when I walk into a room something dies." And like, the speaker is in a complicated position, because on the one hand, her family, you know, maybe she still has family that's in Palestine, but her family's Palestinian and so is obviously colonized in that sense. And yet, being part of the American in the US is essentially, you know, in, right, a citizen of a great empire, and is in a colonizer position in a certain way, you know, especially, and in, like, you know, the complicated position of how the US so intensely supports Israel in material ways, in terms of funding and, you know, weapons and all of this stuff that's really only intensified under the Trump administration. Man, there were two wonderful podcasts that I recently listened to, that are somewhat related in that they, they talk about the those kinds of complicated positions. One was Between the Covers, an interview with Philip Metres, who's a, who's a wonderful poet and critic, and is Lebanese American, and often writes about, you know, these kinds of conflicts, but has has talked about how, like, in some ways, he being in the United States, you know, even though his, his, his roots are in Lebanon, and like, you know, like, are more like, positioned politically in that sense with Palestine, like as a united a US citizen, he's he's finds himself more in the subject position of Israel as like a colonizer because he's, you know, in the US, or whatever. And, you know, navigating that position ethically, is kind of like how, I don't know, it's, it's a lot of what Metres seems to write about and be concerned about. And I think that's very interesting. And then there was another podcast, I think, was The Red Nation Podcast, which is mostly hosted by Nick Estes, who's who's a wonderful scholar. And, you know, it it, the podcast, I think it was actually their Thanksgiving podcast, and it's, you know, it's an indigenous focus podcast, and so it was about the kind of true history, indigenous history of thanksgiving and a lot of that stuff. But it was it also talked about sort of indigenous solidarity with Palestinians. And kind of this recognition of, like, many indigenous peoples in the US of like, a shared history, and like experience with Palestinians, and how like, it just made me think, and maybe this was what they said that I'm now attributing to my own thoughts, but like, you know, the US is several 100 years along, in its sort of imperial and colonial, like settler colonial history, whereas Israel is still decades along, you know, 70 plus years 72.

Jack 24:38

72, it's younger than my dad. Israel is younger than my dad. It's like how the Department of Homeland Security is younger than both of us. These institutions and things that seem like they've been around are new, and they are not immutable constructs.

Connor 24:56

Yes. Yeah. Yeah. And you know, it's like then Britain is like just fucking around in all of this. It's like, I mean, it was the one that brokered the deal to set to establish Israel, like after World War Two. But like, the United States is far enough along on its history and enough generations removed. It's its history making has been successful to a certain degree in terms of like, erasing the very violent struggle and genocide of indigenous peoples in the US. And Israel is that I mean, there's many differences that are important between the two. And I don't want to like, make the 1000s of years long oppression of Jewish peoples, or their, you know, desire for their own state, I don't want to like, make that seem small. But the State of Israel as a as a nation state is on a somewhat similar trajectory with Palestinian people in terms of displacement, and arguably genocide. And I think that the parallel is useful in both in terms of like, seeing both countries and states more clearly, at least for me. But at any rate, it just was that those those kinds of podcasts made me think about it, because the poem is, is grappling with that complexity, too, you know, where there's, there's this issue of death. And yet, there's also this, like, "I wish Jessica would stop texting me *Happy Ramadan*." And, you know, "I know I'm American because when I walk into a room something dies", that like, suddenly, the speaker is grappling with this sense of power, and this sense of death causing power that she has, while at the same time, you know, her people are dying.

Jack 27:14

And I see that tension play out, I think, in a couple of ways through the poem that are really interesting, because when you start off, saying colonizers write about flowers, and then flowers crop up throughout the poem, there is again, that implicit connection of "I know I'm American because when I walk into a room, something dies", like, there's that acknowledgement there throughout the poem of, you know, I'm, I'm writing poetry in a form that for a long time has been the place of colonizers, does the fact that I'm writing poetry imply me in some way, does it make me complicit in something. I think you also see that in some of the, like, I want, "I want to be like those poets who care about the moon", like there's a desire for that. And I think in some ways that desire then reflects back again to the my people are dying critique, because it's like, I want to be able to do all those things. I can't do that until my people stop dying, and you stop killing them, you know that I find a really powerful way of expressing that, because it's not just the straight ahead, this is what's happening. It is tempered by this more complex subject position for the speaker. It's tempered by the duality of the title and the way that that duality plays out in the poem. And I really like that the speaker has this level of complexity because it gives you more avenues into their complexity as a person. And so I think that's part of what contributes to feeling the poem having such a sense of totality to it, because so much of the complexity is included, that if it was just a straight ahead poem, you would be left at the end, thinking about and bringing in some of the contradictions it acknowledges and explores already, you would be doing that as a reader. And it almost preempts your thought process, and includes a lot of what you might consider, which is like, huh, this is an interesting perspective, I wonder how the

speaker or the writer feels about being an American, too. It's like no, no, way ahead of you. I'm actually a genius. I put it all in, what's up.

Connor 29:44
It's all there.

Jack 29:45
Which is really cool. And again, it just speaks to Noor Hindi's mastery of language and craft, which is part of what makes the poem work so well.

Connor 29:54
Yeah, no, I think that's really right. It also makes me think of like not to like, get back into it but partly I was thinking about it as like a counterpoint to like a productive counterpoint to our discussion on Robert Hass's "The Problem of Describing Trees" and like also the social media controversy of like Ocean Vuong's discussion of metaphor and simile and all that. It made me reflect on like, both the speaker in this is on the one hand, sort of at this interesting crossroads, where she's, she's in certain spaces, you know, Hindi got an MFA, she's in the United States, she's an American. And so she's like, being confronted with these lectures on craft, or whatever. And then at the same time, her family is Palestinian, and her dead father is watching Al Jazeera all day, right, like in that kind of surreal, sort of still watching Al Jazeera. And so she's like confronted with this very brutal, you know, reality of, you know, my people are dying. And then at the same time, of course, as you say, the poem itself is very well crafted. So it made me think about, like, the lecture on craft, and in some ways, it's, it's, I'm sort of thinking about our podcast, too, is like, it's in this space that prioritizes certain values, and one of those being kind of like, the discursive power of certain things, which, of course, like, the, the brilliance of Hindi's poem is, like, I think those things have material consequences and like real power. And it's more the, like, the focus on the lecture on craft can obscure its actual power, if that makes sense. And there's also a question to which I, which is not very well thought out, you know, poetry is like, we could say something, I don't know, if it occupies, let me start with novels. There's, there's a history of an of the novel, as a kind of, you know, it, it, it's a form of printed fiction, it emerged in the, in England in the 1700s, or whatever, as a kind of a bourgeois, like, art form for this new class of people who had reading time. And also because now you could print books at a relatively affordable rate, because of mass production, and all that stuff. And not to say anything about the novel specifically, but one can talk about its history, and suggest, like, I think there's an impulse, especially because the arts are so poorly funded in the States, and they don't get much respect a lot of the time to say, you know, art is revolutionary, and art is radical, and like, all writing is a political act and stuff like that. And I do think that literature and art are incredibly powerful. But I think that power is not always good power, necessarily. And one you know, I've mentioned this in the previous the previous podcast, but like, like Edward Said's work, "Orientalism" did you know, and a lot of his work has actually focused on reading novels and, and writing closely and focusing on how those representations of the quote unquote orient are problematic in certain ways and serve to reinforce, blah, blah, blah, I need to think about it more. But poetry as like US American poetry, has its own history and like material realities, if that makes sense. And especially since the MFA, has sort of cropped up and exploded in the mid 1900s to to today, I think it's worth thinking about, like, what is the power of poetry going toward in American poetry. And I think there's maybe an argument in Hindi's poem, like fuck your lecture on craft,

my people are dying, that it's, it's serving, some of it, you know, and the kind of spread of, especially like, certain kinds of craft gatekeeping or whatever, to it's a it's a power that's not like, necessarily radical or even good, I don't know.

Jack 35:07

But I think that's important. And I think particularly calling it a lecture on craft is important because it's not just any engagement with craft, it is the didactic power differential of a lecture. And that's such a big part of what this poem is going after. And a big part of what makes any discussion of craft, I don't know, just challenging and fraught, because craft is kind of in its nature, gatekeeper-y because it is its own language, of forms, and line constructions, and meters. And you know, all these specific terms of art, literally, that go into understanding craft, and that's fine. But any discipline that involves learning its own vocabulary, that is a barrier to entry, and many different disciplines have it, it's there in popular media, we just sort of osmosis a lot of the terminology; low-key lighting is an actual thing in filmmaking. We don't necessarily always use that term properly, but it has seeped out into the culture. And it's actually a technical lighting term from film. And there are many different examples of that sort of thing. You know, any realm of life, once you get significantly technical with it has a terminology that's associated with it, to have someone approach you as a person doing whatever that is, whether it's poetry, or music, or filmmaking, and you make a piece, and for all that they take from it is to then give you a lecture on craft is really disheartening. And obviously, they are not engaging with whatever was in your piece. A filmmaker, a young, starting out filmmaker, makes a documentary, and they submit it to class and all they get are notes about how they didn't frame their shots correctly. And they had a window in the background blowing out the lighting and all this stuff, when really, it was a documentary about, you know, family generational trauma in their family or something. And it has nothing to say about their storytelling, it has nothing to say about the subject matter. It just goes after the technical aspects, that is so unhelpful. And so not the point, like all of the craft stuff is there in service of the story. And so yeah, on some level, if you're getting all the craft wrong, and it's distracting, that's an issue. But framing that as the most important part, and not saying, this is a good invaluable story, let me help you tell it better. Or here are some things you could do differently than just focusing entirely on the craft instead of focusing on the substance of the piece. That is, that's where my head goes with that lecture word, where it's like, I don't want to hear that. And in fact, a lot of really great art was made with either inattention to craft or with deliberate destruction of craft after learning it. So much of the art of the 20th century was people who learned how to do art on a set of standards that they then completely tore up. And anybody from a traditional art background would say, you're doing it wrong, you've spilled the paint, Mr. Pollock, and I would appreciate if you didn't do it again. And that's not the point. It's, you know, actual, like, artistic growth and using forms of art to continue to make important and impactful statements is something that in a lot of ways, relies on the like remixing of craft and the rethinking of craft and the continual conversation around craft as opposed to a lecture on craft. And I think, again, that's something that comes through in this poem, there is care for craft in the poem, both in the actual like, writing of it, but even, you know, in its construction, and in its writing, obviously, there's intense attention to craft in the way that the poem talks about craft, and folds a discussion of that into the message. Yeah, I just think that no one needs a lecture on craft. That's what books are for, like, you can read about it. You don't need somebody to like, lecture you about what a haiku is, you can decide what it is after you read about it. Like, you know.

Connor 39:36

Yeah. Should we read it again?

Jack 39:39

I think we should read it again.

Connor 39:42

Alright, this is

“Fuck Your Lecture on Craft, My People Are Dying” by Noor Hindi

Colonizers write about flowers.

I tell you about children throwing rocks at Israeli tanks
seconds before becoming daisies.

I want to be like those poets who care about the moon.

Palestinians don't see the moon from jail cells and prisons.

It's so beautiful the moon.

They're so beautiful, the flowers.

I pick flowers for my dead father when I'm sad.

He watches Al Jazeera all day.

I wish Jessica would stop texting me *Happy Ramadan*.

I know I'm American because when I walk into a room, something dies.

Metaphors about death are for poets who think ghosts care about sound.

When I die, I promise to haunt you forever.

One day, I'll write about the flowers like we own them.

(Close Talking theme music)

Jack 41:07

So Connor, this was a barnstormer of a poem, obviously. But beyond just this poem, what else have you been reading, listening to, thinking about talking about apparently a lot of podcasts. But, man, what else? What else you got going on?

Connor 41:26

Oh, Jack, a lot of podcasts. It's true. I admit it. I do love The Dig Podcast. I am a I'm a stan. I'm a stan, standard, I stand it. And I will say this as someone who has very mixed feelings about Jacobin magazine, but the podcast I really like. And I basically recommend most of the episodes, I will say it's quite long, the interviews and you probably need to skip the first six to ten minutes, because Daniel Denvir usually has a very long introduction about a different book that you should read, which are probably very good. One of the recent interviews that I really liked was China and the US with Tobita Chow and Jake Werner, it was very interesting, in that I mean, I don't know enough about it, but it was kind of talking about US/China relations in China in the kind of larger geopolitical context. The reason why that I found it very interesting is I feel like there is a lack of perspectives on - like, it's been this weird thing where Trump hates China, and

it was like, but then now it's like, everyone in the US politics scene, like, hates China. And it's this weird thing where it's like, obviously, they're, you know, a global power. And it's like a competition, sort of with the United States in terms of power in economics, and markets and all that stuff. But it's often talked about, like, in a sort of new kind of global Cold War context, like with Russia, and I just I appreciated this because it, it felt like it provided a perspective that was sort of a genuine progressive or left perspective on on China. And, you know, that didn't like apologize for like, its authoritarian regime, but was like, you know, one of the one of the insights from it that I thought was interesting was like, currently in the global capitalism world, it's like a zero sum game. And it's like, if you're not on top, like, you're getting fucked. And so it's like, obviously, if China is going to be number one, then that means we're going to be getting fucked. And we want to be number one. So we don't like China because that's bad. And they're like, well, maybe the world shouldn't be a zero sum game, or something.

Jack 44:25

Hold on back up a minute. It's so true. And like the United States, paradoxically, after World War Two, did so much to create a liberal international order that would, in theory, make global politics less of a zero sum game, which has been kind of a governing theory for a lot of folks that the US has also just tossed out whenever it felt like because it was the only superpower. So now, having sown those seeds, what shall the US reap, well. Here we are.

Connor 45:03

Yeah, yeah. So I would recommend that one. And yeah, I don't know, I just I, I really I listened to most of the podcasts on The Dig. So it's all good. Yeah, well, Jack, what are what's, you know, what's in your YouTube feed? Or

Jack 45:26

Oh, boy, that's a whole other can of have

Connor 45:28

No, I won't make you get into that.

Jack 45:32

There's so much going on in YouTube land. It really is like just such a fascinating platform. Myself, I have also been reading about global politics. And this is actually somewhat resonant with the episode, which is a book called "The Great Game: The Struggle for Empire in Central Asia," by Peter Hopkirk. And it is an excellent history of basically, the ongoing struggle between Britain and Russia for like control over vast swaths of land, that have in the that now are known to us as like Afghanistan and Pakistan. And all of these regions that are sort of lumped together I think very often in American discourse is just like over there. And you know, those places, and this breaks down the ways in which many of the contemporary, like, issues that plague the region, are not endemic to the region, they are, in fact, a result of like, large global powers, just fucking around, which if you look at any areas that are just broadly known as hotspots of conflict, like the Middle East or the Balkans, where it's like, oh, well, those people who keep killing each other, why? It's because they are regions that were fucked around with by empires. And so, a really good historical breakdown of that, that explains all kinds of stuff. Part of my

reread was inspired by seeing somebody put up a tweet about the fact that Abbottabad is actually named after one of these, like British dudes.

Connor 47:20
Abbottabad, basically?

Jack 47:21
Basically, it's Abbott a bad. And he was probably pretty a bad.

Connor 47:29
Man.

Jack 47:29
Yeah. He also wrote a poem called "Abbottabad" before he returned to Britain. It is a Pakistani city, but it's named for James Abbott. And the book is full of tidbits like that, that helped just sort of decode the contemporary world and take something where, like, on the news you're going to hear Abbottabad all the time, but you're not going to identify that as like, I don't know, the same way you would, Jonestown or whatever. Just basically what it is. In terms of its history of naming, it has a name that doesn't automatically hit the colonizers ear as being you know, English in origin. But it is. So anyway, "The Great Game: The Struggle For Empire in Central Asia," highly recommended. Really good, good textual history for basically all of Central Asia and the Caucasus. Yeah, great powers coming into conflict as always.

Connor 48:32
Yeah, no that book seems great though, I'll have to check that out.

Jack 48:35
It's very, very good.

(Close Talking theme music)