

Episode 66: Dr. Katie Kane

TRANSCRIPT

Regina Fitzsimmons: Katie is like, the most illuminous human you could ever meet. She's as brilliant as she is breathtakingly funny. She's fiercely loyal to her students, and by leading with example, she fosters a classroom environment that is always welcoming, equitable and kind.

Dusty Keim: I would say that Katie is the epitome of cool.

RF: Some folks describe Katie's classes as tough. And in a way I get where they're coming from, but I don't think tough is quite the right word. Her classes open minds, foster growth, and help a student see the world with sharper, more discerning eyes.

DK: I think that what made Katie unique, or what makes Katie unique is how engaging she is, and how well she engages students and challenges them. But in a way that doesn't feel patronizing, and makes you feel like everybody is kind of on the same level.

RF: With Katie I feel at home.

KINCH: This is Confluence where great ideas flow together, a podcast of the Graduate School of the University of Montana. On Confluence, we travel down the tributaries of wisdom and beauty that enrich the soil of knowledge on our beautiful mountain campus.

You just heard the voices of Regina Fitzsimmons and Dusty Keim, graduate students in UM's Department of English talking about our guest on this week's episode, Dr. Katie Kane, associate professor of English at UM since 1999.

I'm your host, Ashby Kinch, Dean of the Graduate School. Every episode, we ask our guests to read a poem, or a short passage from literature, about rivers. Katie has chosen Tom McGrath's "Beyond the Red River," which places the reader in North Dakota, where the Missouri River carves through the prairie. Katie's selection speaks eloquently to the way her identity as a scholar and graduate mentor blends her grounded childhood in North Dakota with her curiosity and experience in the world at large. Her fundamental values of social justice were formed in an Irish Catholic family committed to helping others, but her research interest in postcolonial literature and her voracious intellectual capacity have pushed her into the most pressing contemporary cultural and theoretical problems. We talk about her rough and rocky academic beginnings, which exemplify the truth about graduate school that persistence and perseverance are the most important traits to cultivate in young scholars. But we also get into the fascinating new work she launches through her graduate seminars, most recently on autotheory and petromodernity, as well as her new book project, "Deep North."

Welcome to Confluence, where we are still unpacking the possibles...

Katie Kane: "Beyond the Red River," Tom McGrath.

The birds have flown their summer skies to the south,

*And the flower-money is drying in the banks of bent grass
Which the bumble bee has abandoned. We wait for a winter lion,
Body of ice-crystals and sombrero of dead leaves.*

*A month ago, from the salt engines of the sea,
A machinery of early storms rolled toward the holiday houses
Where summer still dozed in the pool-side chairs, sipping
An aging whiskey of distances and departures.*

*Now the long freight of autumn goes smoking out of the land.
My possibles are all packed up, but still I do not leave.
I am happy enough here, where Dakota drifts wild in the universe,
Where the prairie is starting to shake in the surf of the winter dark.*

AK: Thank you for joining us on Confluence Katie.

KK: I'm happy to be here Ashby Kinch. Thank you.

AK: What an amazing poem, huh?

KK: Yeah, it is.

AK: Thanks for choosing that. I mean, it's so it's got Red River in the title, and that's the river theme we're always looking for. But the river is kind of a, like a, an implied context rather than the thing itself. What's the thing in this poem?

KK: The thing itself is the prairie and the Dakota prairie specifically, but you know, the great American prairie and the way that it functions in its grasses, like an ocean, like a river, like a current. And so McGrath, who grew up in North Dakota, was very familiar with that kind of movement through the grasses and the wind. And of course the Missouri River cuts the state in two. And then there's the Red River which flows north, really interesting river which is part of the title, but then also the the you know, very cyclic riverine nature of the seasons in North Dakota, which were very distinct and flowed one into the other. So, I chose this poem for the last stanza, which I really love now "the long freight of autumn goes smoking out of the land," perceptible felt sense of the departure of a season.

AK: Yeah, and each stanza kind of has a sense of a season, that's departing or hanging on. You have the summer at the poolside personified as well. I mean, the imagery in the poem is really fantastic, it does take in a certain culture too. In another words, a hard-edged culture, you know, the natural images is

kind of rolls through there, like you brilliantly put it, but there's also a people kind of lurking in the seams of that poem.

KK: Yes, yes, absolutely. And people who are departing, the vacationers who have their homes in the Lake Country of northern Minnesota, because Red River is right on the border of Minnesota and North Dakota. And so that's sort of what's being invoked there, as far as I'm concerned. And that's a very complicated landscape, you know, landscape of settler colonialism in Minnesota, but McGrath himself was an incredibly interesting and influential figure in my life and in the lives of a lot of young people going to college at Morehead State and in Fargo and Morehead, North Dakota and Minnesota.

AK: Yeah, for people who don't maybe know, McGrath and it's going to be a lot of people who aren't in poetic circles and poetic circles people know him, but let's talk about that. Because it connects to your story, right? It's, it's your story of searching as an undergrad to kind of find your place at the university level. So McGrath, you kind of had a chance to know him, but you kind of didn't take that chance.

KK: I don't know what was wrong with me when I got to Morehead State. And actually, to be quite honest, I took my ACT's and then I did nothing after that. And a next-door neighbor signed me up for college. And I didn't actually enroll, and I got an acceptance letter. And I thought, Oh, that's interesting. It must be that you take the test, and they enroll you, no. So he paid the fees, etc. But McGrath was in the creative writing program at Morehead State, which is now University of Minnesota Morehead, and a very popular teacher. But I had some kind of odd disdain for craft at that moment in time, I felt as though if you were a creative writer, you were there already, you didn't need to be taught. And so I certainly wasn't going to take one of those classes. And I also perceived them because they happened a lot outside at least in the seasons when they could as a sort of being a self-help group. Like, you know, I wanted to be an intellectual, not somebody who talked about their stories, which, you know, speaks to my arrogance at that moment in time, really unwarranted arrogance, because I was an unbelievably bad student, terribly bad student.

AK: Yeah. And you kicked around a little bit. And I think that's, that's one of the stories we tell on this podcast is, you know, how professors end up where they end up. It's not always a linear path, a lot of them, you know, struggle as undergrads or just switch fields, find something that interests them later on. And part of what we're doing is sort of demystifying that journey for our graduate students so they can kind of see if they feel like imposters, you know, they can hear these stories of people who kind of kicked around before they found their path. And that's kind of your story.

KK: Yeah, yeah, absolutely. I did not know that I wanted to be an English lit major. And I've told the story of how I thought I was in sixth grade going to be the first female pope and therefore ended up taking philosophy. So I'm not going to bore people with that story.

AK: Not the first female Pope. Let's not forget Pope Joan.

KK: Yes. But you know, potentially apocryphal, you know, the first officially recognized...

AK: You wanted to be non-apocryphal pope, yeah.

KK: Yeah, exactly.

AK: There's no fun in being an apocryphal pope, yeah.

KK: No, no, not from my perspective. I wanted the, you know, clout, the clout.

AK: Yeah, and the clothing.

KK: Yes. And the clothing, let's not forget. And the wine, the wine, the wine. Let's not forget that. So I didn't start out as a lit major. I ended up taking a really amazing class on Russian literature from Chiang that sort of opened the door as it were, for me. But that class did not happen until my second attempt at college. I was kicked out twice for, I was...Once I had below a 1.6 GPA and I appeal that they allowed me to stay in and then I immediately went below a 1.6 GPA. I mean, I think the next quarter and they said, well, sorry, you're done. And then I went off and worked in Portland in the folk music scene out there and little tavern and you know out in Gresham, bartending, blah, blah, blah. And then I soon decided no, I definitely do not like this.

AK: So you found your way, which is the part of the journey for you was finding your way down to Austin, big change in culture, right, to go from North Dakota to Austin, tell us about your time there as a PhD student. Who are your intellectual influences and heroes?

KK: UT Austin was formative for me. It's a, you know, seven-year period that I look back on with great, great, great fun, it's just the intellectual community. And the chance to work with incredibly important scholars, people like Barbara Harlow, the author of Resistance Literature, who was in her own way incredibly central to the field of post colonial studies and very well connected to Gayatri Spivak, and Edward Said, people who came to campus and talked and relentlessly comparativist so somebody who put together South Africa with Ireland or Ireland with Palestine, or India with South Africa. So just really

an amazing, amazing scholar. Also, people like Jose Limon, who is a Chicano scholar who was on my dissertation committee and just did a lot of work with the border and literature of Texas and minor literature as he called it then thinking about canons in a different kind of way so yeah.

AK: So so much of what we do as professors is kind of navigate that, that balance between bringing an intellectual culture with us that we come from a certain place, we, you know, we bring our influences our of our advisors, our peers, and then kind of figuring out how that works in the context where we land. So you landed here in 1999, in a weird way, kind of a homecoming too, like you had connections already to Montana. So maybe accidental in some ways, but then in some other ways, you know, a good fit, a perfect fit. Tell us about that move and that transformation, what you brought to this community and how being in Montana has shaped your especially intellectual work in your graduate teaching.

KK: I was very, very pleased to come to Montana, I felt as though my work comparing Irish and native resistances under colonialism and the kind of strategies that were developed by the settler colonialism that they confronted, I felt like I would be on ground that would be very, very fertile for that. So obviously, you know, the native communities and their history in Montana would be important. And then places like Butte as a kind of bastion of Irish as well as a whole plethora of other ethnic cultures. I felt like it was an intellectual homecoming. But then also, as somebody who grew up in North Dakota, and in the inland West, I felt that Montana was very familiar to me. And indeed, my mother had moved to Arlee in 1981. And my youngest brother and sister went to school up in Arlee. We need to travel away from our homeland in order to see exactly what it means. And I feel like I began to recognize what colonization in the west, what North Dakota, what Montana, what these kinds of spaces actually meant, once I moved away and started studying such things as the colonization of Ireland or the colonization of India. So yes, getting that kind of perspective was really crucially important for me.

AK: Yeah, and you've, you and I've talked, of course, hundreds of times, this is the first time it's ever been recorded, right. But we've had hundreds of conversations about the especially the creative space of our teaching, and how we use our teaching to kind of create new ideas, generate new ideas, especially in a community that we form. And I think you have these two wonderful recent cases. Now you're teaching autotheory, let's talk a little bit about a theory it's going to be new, that term is going to be new to most listeners, you know, they're going to need a little definitional structure. And and what that experience of teaching that material has been like for you intellectually and with your students.

KK: Well, I mean, the first thing I want to say about my choice to do autotheory is that I mean, one of my philosophies of teaching, if such a kind of discourse could set to be in existence is that I like to be in the same position as my colleagues in class. So I don't like the professor student divide to be too sharp. I mean, I recognize that has to be there. But what I'm trying to say is, I like to choose totally new things and, and try and figure out what's going on with, you know, a new history, a new set of texts, a new you know, kind of analytic practice. But to answer your question about what exactly is meant by the term autotheory, I'll just start provisionally by doing a little, you know, Raymond Williams, keyword

etymological breakdown. And that is, it's about autobiography and or memoir, and theory and how you put those two together. Now, there's a way in which if one is doing a kind of genealogy of autotheory, Maggie Nelson's text, "Argonauts" is a beginning. But it's, the genre really stretches back to texts like Gloria Anzaldua's "La Frontera." And so it's about putting theory, and theory in the sense of critical theory. So philosophers, critical thinkers, Nelson, for example, uses the work of Roland Barthes a great deal and exploring her own identity and her love affair with her partner, Harry. And she does so in this really innovative, formally innovative way, by doing citations in the margins, citations in the text. But then, you know, in the margins, she really uses the margin as a, as an unclaimed space in her text. And Anzaldua does the same kind of transmedial work. And so one thing about autotheory is that in its queerness, and in its feminist kind of roots, it seeks to be personal. So the theoretical is the personal, but also to be very transmedial. So you'll see things like the inclusion of citations, annotations, photographs, personal photographs. Just it's very, very transmedial very rich in terms of the kinds of things that it wants to play with. And there are a whole host of people from Paul Preciado, a Spanish auto theorist who documented their work with gender hacking, taking a non-medical protocol dosage of testosterone across a, you know, number of months and then kind of recording what that was all about. To the book, we most recently read, Christina Sharpe's *In the Wake* on blackness and being in which in her opening chapter, she talks about the long delay of the wake of the ship that crossed the transatlantic, the hold of the ship that, across the transatlantic, excuse me. And this opening chapter concludes, it's very brief, concludes, she talks about the denial of beingness, to black people in America, concludes with a series of, I think, four photographs of all the people that have been killed, you know, through medical neglect, through police brutality, through, you know, just the condition of being black in this country. And so it's very personal in the beginning. So that is just a kind of initial definition of what auto theory is. So, it's been really amazing.

AK: So the writing, the liberation there on the genre side is the ability to write directly.

KK: Yes.

AK: And to write from a personal space, but not to have that be, quote, unquote, just personal, that you're bringing in these thought systems behind it and bolstering it. So you're recognizing what, of course, all that continental theory was trying to get to anyway, which is to recognize that as individuals you are enmeshed in these bigger systems, there's no denying that if you're naive to that, then you're not actually practicing the art of any self awareness at all in the modern world, if you don't recognize, but I think what you're pointing to is, in our generation, and I'm a little bit behind you, but you know, we're in the same generation, that way, intellectually, you felt like you had to immerse yourself in the system itself.

KK: Yes.

AK: And that included the way of writing about the ideas. And so that there's something kind of liberating about being on the other side of that, and not feeling like you're having to kind of imitate the voice of your, of your intellectual heroes, that you can use them in different ways. And so that that's, I kind of love I mean, you know, your approach to teaching, quite similar to mine, you know, you structure a class around a problem that you're then sharing with your students, rather than one that you feel like you have already solved, right.

KK: Yes.

AK: And that's a way of keeping the vital energies afloat for you. But also, of course, like you say, bringing everyone onto the same ground, we're searching together, you know, we're...

KK: Yes.

AK: We're working something out together. And, you know, so I love that about your teaching. And it's, of course, you're well known in the department for exactly that, creating an energy and a cohort in your class that's, that's really vital. You've done similar kind of work around prison, and prison writing, prison literature. And then, of course, also, of course, it really jumped out at me, just from the moment I saw the word on the page "petromodernity," you know, what a powerful concept. And what an important way for us to recognize modernity's engine being driven by energy. So, you know, you could approach that same topic, of course, from a geological perspective, you know, a scientific perspective and even information perspective, recognizing that what drives all of these computers that we are using every single day is primarily still a carbon-based energy system. So I'm only bringing that up because, you know, I was very inspired to kind of think a little bit more about energy, especially in a trans-historical context from that class. But it's connected to your ongoing research, and I think it, so I'd like you to talk a little bit about what you learned and discovered in petromodernity and kind of how that fits into this new project that you're working on.

KK: Okay, so petromodernity. This is a class that was really driven, at least initially, by my frustration with, even rage at, the oil industry in western North Dakota, and then my recognition of how surrounded we are in Montana, by the extractive oil industry and wanting to understand that and wanting to understand it as we do in our field from a cultural perspective. And not just necessarily in the literary sense, but in the sense of cultural sub-practices. So, I, I wanted to know, know, what's going on in the man camps? How are women, or female presenting people being impacted? How to rigors construct their identity? And then also, what regime are we inhabiting right now? What energy regime are we inhabiting? What are the consequences, and to some degree, a lot of that is already known and can be known in very productive ways through science, but it's also the case that culture has been really, really neglected in the area of energy extraction. So one of the things I like to do in that petromodernity class, is frame the class in its opening moments with *Moby Dick*, so that we can look at what Melville

was presenting with regard to the whale oil industry, which is a really important precursor to petromodernity, not something that I had even really understood until I started trying to put the class together and figure out what texts I wanted to marshal, and then ending with something that's really contemporary. And what I've decided for this upcoming semester is to close with *Dune* because I like to be as contemporary as I possibly can be in a class like that, and think about what texts today are commenting on, you know, Petro modernity, and by today, I mean, right now, not, you know, 10 years or 10 days ago or two months ago, but like, right this very minute, Bring it in, if you've if you can find it, you know, students. But I think *Dune* is a really interesting metaphor for oil extraction. It's just that it's spice extraction. So that's something I want to work with. And I really take seriously what Amitav Ghosh says about there not being an oil novel. Some people want to argue with that. But there not being a great oil novel, that the novel form kind of resists the, the site of oil extraction, or the site of oil extraction, I should say, resists the novel form, because it's usually polyglot. The novel likes a singular language, because it doesn't have central protagonists. Ghosh is really good at talking about the way in which literature is, is just kind of incapable of fully handling the sight of oil extraction. And that isn't always true. But I do think that to some degree, he's got a point there. And then also, he just recently wrote a book called *The Great Derangement* and he says, people are going to look back on our culture in years to come and wonder why we weren't dealing with the climate emergency, why we weren't dealing with our addiction to carbon culture. And so no, I think that's one of the things that the class is trying to do and trying to do in contemporary moments of cultural consumption. So just to finish and round that sort of thought out about how we are sitting in the current contemporary moment of the class, one thing we do is we always do a playlist, a Spotify playlist. Now that's not an original kind of thing to do. But we have—have a lot of fun with, like, what kinds of songs are, you know, really celebrating or critiquing petromodernity?

AK: And you so you know, the kind of graduate student that is going to gravitate towards your class is, has some traits, right? And I think you've worked with every year you're you're sitting on multiple thesis committees, what kinds of traits are you looking for in a graduate student? And what do you expect or hope will happen to them over the course of their time as a graduate student?

KK: What I do try, I think, to cultivate is a kind of, and this is going to sound so cliché, but a radical open mindedness because we are encountering all of these new forms. And there's this way in which the hermeneutics of suspicion has so dominated the academy that, and I think I was trained in this in this regard. And you kind of noted this earlier on, when we were having a conversation prior to this radio show that we were taught to, you know, get our dukes up, get ready, have a kind of critique of something, critique right away, you know, punch a hole in it, and, you know, figure out...

AK: Blame first and work out the rationalization as you go...

KK: Right, exactly, exactly.

AK: And the hermeneutics of suspicion, just for those who you know, are new to that term, is this idea that you're reading, you're almost reading the text symptomatically, suspecting it has motives that are hidden or occluded, that are somehow, you know, corrupting or influencing negatively the reader.

KK: Yes. And autotheory actually, without continuing to go back to that well too much, has in its investments, in affect theory, an entirely different way of reading that's about reparations, in the in the kind of epistemological sense, rather than in the material sense, although the material sense is always kind of lurking in the background. So how can you find ways to relate to the text, to even love the text rather than to, you know, be in an antagonistic relationship with it. And so, instead of finding fault, trying to be open to what the text has to say, even if it's distressing, and then being okay, with, with the distress, understanding that, you know, the obstacle is the way that, you know, we are going to be distressed, if you're feeling comfortable, then we're, we're, you know, in a place that's not particularly productive.

AK: Yes, so a certain amount of discomfort and coupled with a certain amount of optimism in and like you said, open, open mindedness of vulnerability, but then an ability to dwell in discomfort. And I think that's so important. I mean, we're actually hearing this around campus more and more, which I love, because it's our terrain in the humanities, that our students really need to embrace situations in which there's not clear answers, right? And that's really important to say publicly, right? That's what we do, we traffic in complexity, and placing our students in places where there aren't going to ever be clear answers, that these are things have to be worked out. That's not, that's a different kind of pedagogy right then, than a math class or a STEM class. Even though psychologically, those programs will say the same thing.

KK: Yes.

AK: That they value students, for example, who can dwell in discomfort, right?

KK: Yes.

AK: And that's what we that's what we specialize in, right? If we're doing our job right.

KK: Yes.

AK: We're teaching our students how to navigate that discomfort and convert it into a productive interpretive act. Let's finish by talking a little bit about this book project *Deep North*. As soon as you told me that was the name of your book, I instantly knew not what it meant exactly, but what it was trying to

do, right? That is inventing a northern tier equivalent of the deep south and recognizing there is a culture there that your book is kind of critically excavating, that is on analog with the deep south in terms of how, you know, a certain ideology, a certain, let's say powerful historical forces shaped an ideology that persists over decades, even a couple of centuries well beyond reconstruction and the civil rights movement. So tell us about the *Deep North*, what's that side of it look like? What is the project attempting to do? And where's it headed?

KK: Yeah, I'm very, very excited about this project. I feel like it's, in some ways, a culmination of everything that's gone before it. With the exception of the Irish piece. It used to be kind of a joke, when I was growing up, you know, we live in the deep north, it's almost the same as the deep south in terms of its whiteness. And so starting from the sense of a kind of regional specificity, that seemed so clear to me, both while I was in it, and then even more so after I left it, and trying to put my hands on the outlines of that. So a particular attitude toward whiteness that emerges out of settler colonialism. A kind of sense of whiteness, that that's reflected in things like the Northwest Territorial Imperative, which is a popular idea among white supremacist groups that a white homeland can be set up in a group of states that crossed the American Canadian border, states and provinces, obviously, that have a low population are perceived to have a low population of people of color. So an imperative to reclaim the Northwest: Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana, parts of North Dakota, Alberta, Manitoba, and then to set that up in this, you know, really appalling way as a place for white people to you know, reassume the mantle of America. So, that kind of thing really interested me like, what exactly is going on with whiteness in this particular part of the country? And I do believe that it's very, very different from say, the whiteness that obtains in the deep south or Texas, for example.

AK: Yeah, and slavery not being its pull, but settler colonialism being its major pull.

KK: Yes.

AK: And that's still, in other words, in other parts of the country, people may have repressed the original settler colonial project that displaced native peoples, but in the northern tier, that's not, that's not a fantasy you can indulge, right? In other words, it's, it's a primary. And then there's another aspect of, of northern tier whiteness that comes from the Scandinavian culture, right? That is, that is a group of people who, you know, like, say what you want about the casseroles and the kindness, right, also bring with them a certain self-validating virtue discourse, that we do things the right way. You know, that that's one of the pulls that operates to kind of mystify whiteness in the north.

KK: Yeah, I mean, I think that, I think that it's become a real kind of hash at this moment in time, but I do think that yes, in terms of someplace like North Dakota, the Scandinavian and eastern Montana, the Scandinavian and German influence is really strong and I won't go into this in great detail, but you can see that in some of the iconography of white supremacist groups, and it's absolutely the case that Montana has more hate groups per population than any other state in the nation, which I think is a

shocking figure for people to contemplate, people in the state to contemplate. Because we as northerners like to kind of shove that off into, you know, other places and we, and you're exactly right, the primal theft of the land from indigenous people is not something that you can ignore here in Montana or in a place like North Dakota or Idaho or Wyoming, because you have tribes that are forcefully reclaiming their own sovereignty. I'm stepping into it, and engaging in all kinds of incredible reclamation projects, whether it has to do with water, getting rid of oil companies on their land, their language,

AK: Reintroducing the bison.

KK: Yes.

AK: Recultivating bison...

KK: I'll just say too that yes, absolutely. And I'll just say that I went out to Dixon the other weekend and trumpeter swans all along the Flathead, just as we heard when we went up to SKC. So the Salish Kootenai Pend d'Oreilles tribe on the Flathead, affiliated tribes, brought back the trumpeter swan and are responsible for the return of the trumpeter swan throughout western Montana. So the kind of way in which a rising tribal sovereignty and a rising indigenous and indigenous resistance that's been written about by people like Glen Sean Coulthard in *Red Skins White Masks* or Nick Estes, *Our Past Is The Future*, talking about Standing Rock. So yes, there's white supremacy, but there's also this incredibly rich, incredibly successful indigenous resistance from Idle No More to the work at Standing Rock, and then the work around MMIW.

AK: That's Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women.

KK: Yeah. And, and the the name is a little bit unstable right now, MMIP sometimes, because the desire is to indicate that it's more than just, you know, women, it's female presenting people, it's queer people, it's children, it's men sometimes. But, so, not only is there white supremacy, but there's also this indigenous resistance and indigenous sovereignty that matches and meets the kind of official aspects of the state. And then, just as in the Deep South, there's a specific economic matrix. And I mean, it's not quite as you know, singular, or as clear as cotton, and cotton being king in the south, but it's oil. It's about oil. And it's about mineral wealth in this region,

AK: Extractive industries and...

KK: Yes.

AK: And pulling from the land in a way that's going to destroy the land at a fundamental level.

KK: Yes, absolutely. And the way that tribal nations are or are not, you know, making a contract or refusing that kind of connection. I've had one chapter, published in *American Indian Quarterly* on a really amazing local Salish artist Corwin Clairmont. His conceptual and tribal work, documenting a journey up to the Alberta Tar Sands and its connection to Standing Rock. And then I have a second chapter that I've almost completed, which is on the ways in which, and I think any Missoula high school student or any Western Montana High School student would be interested in this, the ways in which the West is being sold back to tourists and to white Montanans at the old Montana Prison hobby shop in Deer Lodge, Montana. If you go down there, you will find a very interesting version of the West that is a ready and open for you're laying down some dollars to walk away with a horsehair keychain fob, or a Cheyenne rattle, if you'd like. And it's about the appropriation of the labor of indigenous people and incarcerated indigenous people as well as other folks in the Montana State Prison. So yeah.

AK: Thank you for that. So look for that, listener. By the time this podcast comes out it may be out actually. And you're going to record, I hope, some of the material on December 13th. And we can include links to that as well, potentially on the show notes, video and audio.

KK: I would like to. I just also want to say too, that I've been inspired by our collective at the University of Montana. And by our collective, I mean, everybody who's working in our community, of faculty, staff, somebody like Cole, who's here reading the sound, and students, and Cole's also a student, to do creative work as well. So I'm publishing my nonfiction, my creative nonfiction, and my fiction, in ways that I had never expected to do. But I think that that's something that's really unique about our graduate program, is the way in which it is really radically open to production in multiple ways, like you can cross genre boundaries, and you're not going to be asked to explain why you're doing that. You're going to be allowed to move like a river across these, you know, boundaries. And I think you do that in your own work Kinch, is you're not you know, confining yourself to one particular space. You're, you know, vast in your, your production. And I think that's true of a lot of people Brady, you know,

AK: Yeah, and for, you know, prospective graduate students listening to this, whether they want to work in the MFA program and work in the genres there, poetry, nonfiction, fiction, or do an MA in literature or do an MA in teaching. That's the culture we're trying to promote in the department is radical exchange and interchange between and among faculty and between and among students.

KK: Yeah.

AK: Awesome. So we end every show, same way with our quick hitters, you ready for these?

KK: I'm so ready for them.

AK: Morning or night person?

KK: Both.

AK: How do we do that?

KK: We just...

AK: Nap a lot?

KK: No, we don't nap a lot. We just go to bed at the same time. You know, and we get up at the same time. We have a regular life, and we enjoy the evening. And we enjoy the morning, and we don't, you know...

AK: We don't fight about it.

KK: We don't fight about it.

AK: Okay, winter or summer?

KK: Oh winter. Winter winter winter. I mean, I love summer, but...

AK: Skiing?

KK: No, I mean, winter. Absolutely. Like I was out in California recently and everybody was going on and on about the different fruits and I said I would give up all these fruits for snow.

AK: Yeah. Sunrise or sunset?

KK: Both.

AK: Alright. Yellowstone and Glacier?

KK: Glacier.

AK: Finally, we got one you didn't say both to. Well, winter. What's your favorite Montana River and why?

KK: You know, I was born in Chicago. And then a little time in Minneapolis. I grew up in Bismarck. So I spent all my time on the big rivers of this country, of this continent. The Mississippi and the Missouri. And the Missouri in particular I love, and I am also frightened by and it's real, real opacity. It's definitely the Big Muddy and I always had in my mind that you know, that would be my my resting place. There's a place called Double Ditch north of Bismarck and I thought that's where I'm going to be you know, here are the instructions. It's the Middle Fork of the Flathead River. I've spent some time on that and I just, and not where everybody is rafting, a different section, and I just find it to be astounding. My favorite river, Middle Fork of the Flathead. Sorry, that wasn't a quick take.

AK: It's a great one, though. What's your favorite Montana mountain range and why?

KK: I really love the missions. Because there's family history there. My brother calls that his home range, slightly problematic since he's a white boy who grew up in Arlee, but um, he knows it really, really well. And we've gone hiking up there a lot around the Mission Falls, up to Lucifer Lake, and I love the way they look. And I also love the way they produce just the strong emotional reaction people as you crest up over Mission Hill, people always gasp, especially if they're snow capped.

AK: But I've done it dozens of times and I never fail to be moved by that exact moment. What's the one piece of music you'd be willing to listen to for eternity?

KK: Eternity, you know, would anybody want to do anything for eternity? I probably, you know, "Blood On The Tracks," that just, that album was really important to me back when record players were around, and I listened to it repetitively. And it has everything to do with the fact that in addition to it being musically just amazing, it's very strongly narrative. And I would just say that my favorite song is "Lily, Rosemary And The Jack Of Hearts," and that's a song about the West. I mean, even if it's imagined to

just, Big Jim owns a diamond mine, there's no diamond mines in the West. But you know, it's about poker and about casinos, and about bosses and about outlaws and, and, you know, I can probably sing I'm not going to visit that on you, but I can probably sing the whole thing.

AK: Come on, give it a crack. Just a chorus.

KK: I, I'm really not going to do that Kinch, you cannot tempt me into it.

AK: What's the voice you hear in your head when you go to sleep at night?

KK: The voice that I hear in my head, always, always, always is my father's. My father was the youngest boy in a family of eight. Often, the family went without food. My father sometimes grew up without shoes, had to sleep out on the porch. And he was very insistent in his short life, he died when he was 36, on a set, limited unbreakable set of values. And some of them are, you know, not of any use anymore. Like you're an Irish Catholic Democrat is not exactly where I'm at right now. But my dad always said, you always side with the little person, no matter what you always side with the little person, you always take care of your family, you're always slightly suspicious of authority, make sure you do not just say yes to authority. And you're loyal. You pick the people that you know, are your folk, and you stay loyal to them. He had a real commitment to social justice that came through that phrase, you always side with the little guy, who's the person who is not, you know, doing well. That's who you need to attend to. And that set of like sort of ethical imperatives. Just my dad had a way of teaching you how to do that. And my brothers and sisters and I have gone back to those precepts again and again and again. And each of my siblings, I think tries to operate out of that. And so it's the voice of my father, and then my siblings as we have conversations about how should we act here? What should we do? And you're a fool if you don't want to hear the story.

AK: I can tell you've been listening to his voice, anyone who's watched you operate knows you listen to that voice and act on it. Thank you for joining us on Confluence Katie.

KK: You're welcome, Ashby, thank you for inviting me and thank you Cole for helping me out.