

Chapter 15: Toward a Feminist Sonic Pedagogy: Research as Listening

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3. Episode 3: Interviews by Abby, Carly, and Emily

In Episode 3, Abby, Carly, and Emily interviewed fellow students about their interactions with Grunenwald on campus.

Transcript

[intro music in background: "Come to Me" by Lily & Madeline]

Abby: Hey, everyone, and welcome back to "Substratum," our week-by-week mystery podcast. This is Abby, and I'm with my colleagues Carly and Emily. We're still unraveling the mystery of Robert Grunenwald, otherwise known as Tunnel Bob.

Carly: Last episode, we covered some superficial means of internet research, which didn't really answer any questions for us, but created more. We established that people's opinions on him are extremely contrasting, and no one can really decide on a concrete truth about him.

Emily: For this week, we did some random interviews to better understand what people think of Robert. In these interviews, we also explored why people such as community members, students, and city workers are so fascinated with him.

[music fades out]

Carly: So, you've never actually interacted with him? You've just seen him?

Christian: Uh, yeah, for sure. I've seen him and heard stories about him.

Carly: Do you know anyone who's interacted with him?

Christian: I don't, actually. No. He's made an urban legend out of himself, something really interesting to talk about.

[music fades into background]

Carly: This is Carly, and that was a good friend of mine, Christian, a Madison local who has lived near campus for about four years. While he isn't a student at UW, he is still aware of the mysterious guy who roams the steam tunnels. Like many, he has never personally interacted with the man people call Tunnel Bob, but he has heard many of the common stories about him.

The only other information Christian was able to offer from his perspective was a physical description of Robert, that he looks pretty normal, other than how tall he is. He also did share what other's opinions of Robert have been.

Christian: By word of mouth, it seems more of like a scary thing than the actual interviews that were done, you know? It seems more of like this dude just wanders lonely in the steam tunnels, but it's like, you see him walking around and he's like a pretty normal guy. He's tall. He's a tall dude, but other than that, he just looks normal, you know, but it's like, the way that it's spread about comes across as stereotypical, lurking figure, urban legend sort of thing.

Abby: Like Christian, many UW students have heard about but never interacted with Robert. But one of our own creators, Emily, an undergrad here, has had a first-hand experience with him while she was studying at Union South.

Emily: And then, I asked, I had to go to the bathroom, so I asked the people next to me, I'm like, "Hey, can you keep an eye on my stuff?" And then he was the one who responded. He was like, "Don't worry, your things are safe with me." And I was like, "Okay, thanks." And I went to the bathroom. I came back. It was fine. *[laughing]* All my stuff was still there, and he was just, like, still hanging out on the windowsill, just watching people. And that was—and then he like left and he was like, "Have a good night," and I was like, "Thanks, you too."

[music fades into background]

Abby: Even more students alongside Emily have had interactions with Robert, which proves his active role on campus. He's not just a myth. He's a real person, and he likes to participate in society with other community members, like Josh for example. Josh is a student who interned for UW–Madison's physical plant. He's one of the people who does maintenance around campus, including in the steam tunnels.

[music fades out]

Emily: Are there any rumors that you've heard about him?

Josh: I know that he has asked people that I used to work with to play hide and seek with him in the tunnels.

Emily: Oh!

Josh: They just told me that they were studying somewhere, presumably kind of by E Hall, maybe, and then they got asked to, uh, play hide and seek. And they did it.

Emily: They did?

Josh: They did. I don't know, nothing bad happened, but they did, they did go down there.

[music fades into background]

Carly: Josh's insight raises even more questions about the essence of Robert. Does playing hide and seek prove he has a sense of humor? Does it prove he's potentially dangerous and should be avoided at all costs?

Abby: We've put in a lot of time and effort trying to figure out exactly what Robert Grunenwald is thinking and doing and his motivations for doing so. So far, we've come up empty. We don't have any specific details about him. Wait, maybe this is an error on our part. Maybe we're looking for the wrong things.

Carly: We honestly have no answers, but we're still so obsessed.

Emily: I mean, that could be why we're so obsessed, though. Right?

[outro music]