Article

Lend Us Your Earbuds: Shakespeare/Podcasting/*Poesis*

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Abstract: Podcasts by nature break down traditional economic barriers to making and accessing content. With low costs to both distribute and access, does podcasting provide a new outlet for academics, practitioners, and audiences to explore typically "high-minded" art or scholarly discussions usually blocked by the price of a theater ticket or a subscription to a paywalled database? To answer these questions, we define a *poetics* of podcasting—one that encourages humanities thinking par excellence—and, more importantly, carries with it implications for humanities studies writ large. To think in terms of poetics of podcasting shifts attention to the study of how we can craft, form, wright, and write *for* and *with* different communities both inside *and* outside the academy. In examining the current field of Shakespeare studies and podcasting, we argue podcasting incorporates elements ranging from the "slow" professor movement, to composition studies, to the early modern print market, discussing different methods that are both inspired by and disrupt traditional forms of knowledge production in the process.

Keywords: podcasting; poesis; Shakespeare studies; composition; multimodality

1. Introduction

As anyone with a functioning smartphone and a substantial commute will tell you, podcast consumption has rapidly become a way of life for many modern Americans. Summon up the vast fields of the search function on any podcatcher and you will encounter a staggering amount of information at the touch of your fingertips. As of March 2018, Apple's iTunes had approximately 500,000 active podcasts that netted over 50 billion downloads (Miller 2018). Available podcasts range from current in-depth political commentary, humor, fancasts devoted to certain figures or productions, narrative storytelling, and investigative journalism—the list goes on and on. The "original" podcasters were more traditional radio media personalities, such as Howard Stern and Ricky Gervais, who took advantage of increasing internet speeds and storage options to transition storage of their programming to a digital environment, thus making it easier for listeners to ignore the pressures of "appointment consumption" that meant they were limited to listening to a specific program at a specific time. Listeners with access to devices capable of storing downloaded versions of the programming could enjoy that programming at their leisure, multiple times, or in increments that best matched their own scheduling demands. Eventually, podcasting became a means of expression for artists seeking ways to produce content without being bound by traditional media structures. Early adopters of podcast recording and delivery, like writer/director Kevin Smith and comedian Marc Maron, are still titans of the genre.

However, if we may be permitted a moment of Hamlet-like pondering, what is Shakespeare to podcasting or podcasting to Shakespeare? In opening this section with such a question, it might be easy to simply answer it with "everything" or "nothing". Shakespeare studies in all their forms were around for a long time, so obviously podcasting could learn from them. On the other hand, why would podcasts be interested in what Shakespeare studies could tell them? Podcasting is its own medium and, given its recent success, may not follow the long-standing arguments regarding the ways in which Shakespeare is always brought to bear to establish credibility and authority for a new platform. Indeed, Burt's claim that "electronic publishing may confer legitimacy on Shakespeare rather than the reverse" now seems to be an understatement of the legitimizing relationships at play between Shakespeare and digital media today (Burt 2002, p. 3). As is often the case, the answer probably lies somewhere in between the two extremes, and we argue there are significant ways that podcasting could learn from and engage with the work happening in Shakespeare studies and vice versa.

In the opening lines to *The Shakespeare User*, Valerie Fazel and Louise Geddes evoke the ongoing relationship between Shakespeare and media: "New uses are always being found for Shakespeare. When innovative communication platforms emerge, new Shakespeare use appears almost on point with the arrival of the new medium" (Fazel and Geddes 2017, p. 1). Recognizing how new media platforms and ecologies are inevitably used to create content and, thus, (un)intentionally contribute to ever-expanding Shakespearean archives, Fazel and Geddes emphasize use and the user as productive means for understanding and theorizing such content: "To study use is to acknowledge the role that affective experience, non-human agents, and digital practices play in thought production, and recognize that academic criticism has indeed plenty of room for speculative thinking and creative production" (Fazel and Geddes 2017, p. 5). It may then be in use, and in users, that podcasting finds inspiration from Shakespeare studies, looking both forward and backward in the process. As we consider the role Shakespeare studies forged for themselves on the frontier of this new media, we are afforded a unique opportunity to observe the field's steps into the brave new world of podcasting. Shakespeare's looming and prodigious cultural currency means that, even considering the media burgeoning more than 400 years after his death, Shakespeare studies and podcasting would naturally come to find one another. What we seek to explore in this piece is what is to be gained by understanding the relationship already forged, and continuing to develop, between podcasting as a medium and Shakespeare studies. What can the podcaster learn from Shakespeare studies and traditional modes of academic inquiry? What can the Shakespeare scholar learn from podcasters and the ebb and flow of the already voluminous podcast market? Finally, what can both of these figures learn from the means by which we theoretically observe and engage with acts of creation and poetics? Although more traditionally minded Shakespeare scholars may be wary of the perceived informality of podcasting as a means of academic expression, the benefits derived by an act of poesis unobstructed by those of conventional avenues of publication provide gains that outstrip the drawbacks. Furthermore, by embracing podcasting as one model of academic expression, Shakespeare studies are poised to join one of the most popular public-facing means of intellectual engagement since the invention of the printing press, bringing passion back to our work in the process.

2. Shakespeare Studies and Podcasting: Strange Bedfellows

For many who study digital Shakespeares in varying contexts, Lanham's concept of "the attention economy" is influential. With more digital content being created each day, Lanham argued that attention is now the scarce resource that digital content must compete for, attending to both individual users and larger collectives in the process (Lanham 2006, pp. xi–xii). Podcasting is no different, and the podsphere blew up in recent years, with more podcasts being created now than ever before. As can be gleaned from the podroll included in Appendix A, Shakespeare and Shakespeare-adjacent podcasts began proliferating in recent years. Not surprisingly, Shakespeare institutions such as the Folger Shakespeare Library and Shakespeare's Globe have podcasts that highlight and extend their work to broader audiences. For the Folger, *Shakespeare Unlimited* regularly features scholars and practitioners

in episodes exploring a plethora of Shakespeare-related topics. For the Globe, their recent *Such Stuff* podcast focuses on relevant themes and behind-the-scenes work at the Globe, in addition to their long running "Adopt-an-Actor" series. Podcasts like *Shakespeare Unlimited* and *Such Stuff* make institutional work more accessible to audiences, especially those who may not be able to visit institutions' physical sites, creating a greater sense of openness and access with their work. Yet, these podcasts are also part of institutions' larger digital outreach continually designed to strengthen and safeguard the cultural value of their work; thus, their format and content are often still dictated by larger institutional needs and guidelines.[1]

However, it is not only Shakespeare institutions taking advantage of podcasting as a means to compete in online attention economies; scholars, practitioners, audiences, and fans are all using podcasting to expand the reach and scope of their work, such as with Jess Hamlet and Aubry Whitlock's *The Hurly Burly Shakespeare Show!*, Emma Smith's *Approaching Shakespeare*, Issac Butler's *Lend Me Your Ears: A Podcast about Shakespeare and Politics*, Neema Parvini's *Shakespeare and Contemporary Theory*, or Cassidy Cash's *That Shakespeare Life*. Many other podcasts, such as Howlround's *The Theatre History Podcast* or our own *Remixing the Humanities*, feature Shakespeare-specific episodes, even if he or his plays are not the main focus of those series. While these are selective examples that might initially seem to compete with one another, the reality is that these and other Shakespeare-centric or adjacent podcasts all participate within larger networks of evolving knowledge.[2] They also represent particular perspectives; for example, we bring our views as teachers and scholars at North American institutions of higher education to our own podcast, and this greatly influences the issues we discuss and the content of our podcast. Other podcasters bring their own perspectives to their series, and independent podcasters also have a freedom from institutional restraints, although as a result they may have to work harder to build audiences and establish broader recognition. One of the main benefits of podcasts is their ability to foster diverse perspectives; rather than privileging singular voices or narratives, podcasting can be conversational and polyvocal, opening up spaces of exploration for the many rather than the few. Alone, each podcast may compete for its own audience within online attention economies; however, together, they represent a growing community of varied and thought-provoking conversations around what Shakespeare studies are and can be.

Looking at these podcasts also begs the question: in what ways have we seen Shakespeare used in recent years? Answers for this could come from the scholarly communities invested in Shakespeare, and the multivalent approaches used to study Shakespeare and his works. In a brief survey of panel, seminar, and workshops titles from the past five years of the Shakespeare Association of America (SAA) annual meetings (2015–2019), it becomes clear how diverse Shakespearean scholarship can be, engaging with topics and theories from critical race theory, gender studies, disability studies, queer theory, transgender theory, ecocriticism, digital humanities, film and media studies, history of the book, theater and performance studies, animal studies, biopolitics, adaptation, cultural appropriation, and so much more. This list is not intended to be either evaluative nor comprehensive, but instead it offers an example of the fluidity and adaptability of Shakespeare studies and the communities within Shakespeare studies that encourage and pursue such work. SAA is by no means the only conference at which such exciting and innovative work occurs, but SAA's dynamic seminar offerings serve as inspiration for the types of exchanges that podcasting could tap into and model, whether Shakespeare is at the center of these conversations or not. Even more so than SAA seminars, podcasting can tap into the potential of "speculative reading" by paying "attention to the ways in which any given

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[1]　For more on Shakespeare performance institutions and digital access, see (Way 2016). For more on Shakespeare performance institutions, branding, and outreach, see (Lehmann and Way 2017).

[2]　We attached a partial "podroll" to the end of this article to highlight some Shakespeare-themed podcasts. Podcasts that ended their run of active production, but that are still available for download/consumption are designated "ended." Yet another unique facet of podcasting as a medium is the fact that, although podcasts may end active production, the cost of hosting them is so low that many content producers simply leave the work available for future audiences to discover and consume.

unit of a text has its own propensities and relations that might pull against the system and open it to productive errancy (literally, "rambling", "wandering", moments of becoming stray)" (Joy 2013, p. 29). Many podcasts tapped into the speculative and performative natures of the medium, including standouts such as Night Vale Presents *Welcome to Night Vale*, Gimlet Media's *Homecoming,* and Aaron Mahnke's *Lore* (both *Homecoming* and *Lore* were adapted into Amazon Prime Series), and the potential of speculative approaches may be yet another way that podcasting could learn from Shakespeare studies. Rather than just discussing what Shakespeare is or represents for us now, podcasting may be a platform where we can explore what Shakespeare *could be*.

In thinking about the speculative possibilities of what podcasting could learn from Shakespeare studies, we realize that such a question is not really about a one-to-one relationship between Shakespeare studies and podcasting, but about the interdisciplinary potential of podcasting as a starting point for new work and new conversations. Performance studies lend a useful framework here in the form of Sack's definitions of "possibility" and "potentiality". For Sack, *possibility* refers to the known and the ways in which our work in the present is built on and calls back to the past, but it is *potentiality* where "a withheld realization, a possession of the capacity to do or develop" exists (Sack 2015, pp. 6, 9). As with any medium, podcasting and new podcasts are shaped by the traditions and conventions that shaped the medium, but this does not mean there is not *potential* for podcasting to explore new frameworks and approaches.[3] One of the things that Shakespeare studies may be able to teach podcasting is not to be limited or confined by preexisting conventions, but to tap into the unknown. What approaches we see dominant now in Shakespeare and Shakespeare-adjacent podcasts may be only the starting point for what new relationships or frameworks we could see employed in future podcasts. The potentiality of podcasting, what podcasting could become, may lie in its intermedial nature and the ways that podcasting can reconfigure representation "through an array of media and cultural forms that arise out of specific contexts, diffuse histories, technologies, and creative practices" (Fischlin 2014, p. 3). Podcasting has clear roots in aural media such as radio; however, more broadly, podcasting is rooted in performance of all types, whereby the frameworks and approaches we find at play in podcasting are influenced by media ranging from radio and the stage to television and the internet.[4] Much like Shakespeare studies continuing to incorporate various theories, frameworks, and media into their critical and creative processes, podcasting can also find new productive approaches by opening up and embracing its intermedial nature to discover those "withheld realizations".

Here it is useful to return to our opening question to highlight the fact that podcasting already *is* learning from Shakespeare studies, while Shakespeare studies are simultaneously learning from podcasting. Shakespeare not only found his way into numerous Shakespeare-centric and adjacent podcasts, but he also found his way into podcasts which are distinctly *not* focused on Shakespeare. Kathryn Vomero Santos discussed how Shakespeare is a recurring talking point on Marc Maron's *WTF with Marc Maron*. Often intertwined with current political and cultural issues in interviews featuring guests such as Ian McKellen and Kathy Bates, Santos argues how Shakespeare is of use to not just Maron's audience, but podcasting in general.

> Examined together, these moments from Maron's enormously popular podcast call attention to the fact that Shakespeare has audiences beyond theaters and film screens—publics who are hungry for conversation. A master of dialogue himself, Shakespeare might just be one way to start thinking about and, ideally, to start talking about the increasingly urgent issues that we face today. (Santos 2018)

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[3]   Katherine Rowe fruitfully explored the relationship between Shakespearean adaptation and new forms of media in her entry. For more, see (Rowe 2016).

[4]   For more information on Shakespeare's relationship to radio broadcast, see (Greenhalgh 2011).

Although Shakespeare does not occupy a space at the center of podcasting (nor should he), it is clear that, when we do encounter Shakespeare in the podsphere, it is worth exploring where and how Shakespeare is employed, and to what ends. Corredera did so in her consideration of how the hit podcast *Serial* evoked Shakespeare indirectly, particularly the plays *Romeo and Juliet* and *Othello*, to frame its telling of Adnan Syed's story, lend it cultural weight, and emphasize its engagement with modern and early modern conceptions of race. "As *Serial* exemplifies (and numerous other artifacts as well as lived experience corroborate), even today, descent, foreignness, skin color, culture, and religion all shape ideological constructions of the racial Other" (Corredera 2016, pp. 49–50). What the recent work of Santos, Corredera, and others reveals are the fruitful (and problematic) connections and deployment of Shakespeare to various audiences for different ends. Podcasting, a medium for easily creating and distributing knowledge, may be where Shakespeare studies can tap into the medium's *potentiality* to foster new forms of making, and it may be even where we find new *poetics* taking hold.

Just as podcasting has much to learn from Shakespeare studies, so scholars of Shakespeare might consider themselves equally indebted to the lessons podcasting may have to teach them about accessibility and engagement. When surveying the vasty landscape of the podcast market, one cannot help but conjure images of the early modern print market. Both the explosion of the print market and the development of podcasting as a burgeoning media force are tied to parallel advancements of forms of literacy and access and cost of materials. The early modern print market exploded with the invention of the moveable-type printing press in the mid-15th century. As print culture developed and spread, literacy rates significantly increased as vernacular instruction became more accessible to people outside of what was largely a class-based educational system that dominated the Middle Ages. Printing became more financially viable as a means of expressing and promulgating ideas, although there were certainly financial barriers to both printing your materials and accessing them. In the 16th century, printers and authors addressed the financial access challenges of the print market by beginning to design materials that were meant to cut down on the cost to both the printer and the customer. In her seminal study, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1550–1640*, Watt identified the commercial forces that pressured the print marketplace into adapting itself to its consumers and discussed the way they accomplished these adaptations. For instance, the cost of longer-form texts that were popular with scholars and those with more discretionary spending was often prohibitive for the bulk of the population. As a result, producers of print materials would focus on items like broadsides of popular ballads[5], text that leaned heavily on woodcut illustration, "to appeal to those on the fringes of literacy", and the condensation of longer works into shorter, more affordable octavos (Watt [1991] 1996, p. 5).

As a genre and a means of producing content, podcasting mirrors the Shakespearean-era print market in multiple ways. Many home computing products come pre-loaded with the equipment one might need to record and distribute a podcast (notwithstanding quality control of sound, etc.). Podcast hosting fees for the amateur are cheap, oftentimes free for a limited period. Free social-media platforms provide ample support to distribute and promote your work. Furthermore, as previously discussed, Shakespeare-themed podcasts are multitudinous and readily available. However, what does podcasting itself as a form of expression and distribution have to contribute to our culture's ongoing and sometimes oversaturated conversations about Shakespeare? Additionally, the early modern print market was an integral part of the construction of early modern "publics". Building on the Habermasian theoretical framework of the "public sphere", Wilson and Yachnin explored the manner in which the development of early modern publics was unique, in that it involved "the active creation of new forms of association that allowed people to connect with others in ways not rooted in family, rank, or vocation, but rather founded in voluntary groupings built on the shared interests, tastes, commitments and desires of individuals". Akin to podcasters, who get involved with the genre

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[5] Broadside ballads enjoyed their own digital renaissance thanks to resources like the UCSB English Broadside Ballad Archive: https://ebba.ucsb.edu.

for myriad reasons, those who bound themselves together with others in early modern "publics" did so for atypical reasons not connected to political or financial gain, but rather as a result of "a complex of motives including sheer curiosity and creativity, the need to make a livelihood, a desire for fame, as well as sometimes an aspiration to reimagine or even transform the world" (Wilson and Yachnin 2011, p. 1). Even the briefest inspection of the wide world of available podcasts indicates that the same is true in this new era of media production.

However, what of the actual *creation* of a podcast? How does the act of creating a podcast for listener consumption shape the way one interacts with the material that provides the inspiration? Scholars of composition and rhetoric have long tapped into the multimodality of podcasting as a potent tool for teaching students how to compose information and arguments. As English composition instructors were initially grappling with the impact of an increasingly digitized environment in the early 2000s, Selfe encouraged instructors to look to multimodality's embrace of aurality (or at a very minimum, other modes of expression) when teaching composition, due to the fact that intelligence was inextricably linked with "good writing" in the academy, and that writing was privileged above all other forms of composition (Selfe 2009, p. 644). This, of course, overlooks the fact that composition is an act of creation, not simply an act of writing. As podcasting becomes more and more common in the composition sequence, instructors are already noticing the benefits of such assignments. Jones notes instructors saw that, when students were asked initially to create podcasts instead of writing traditional essays for coursework, they "jumped into the assignment, took creative risks—the kind they feared with writing assignments—and seemed to enjoy doing so" (Jones 2010, p. 76).

These sorts of influences on the process of composition are often evident in the range of Shakespeare-related podcasts. Some are promotional materials designed by festivals and other performance venues. Already mentioned above, *Lend Me Your Ears: A Podcast About Shakespeare and Politics* mirrors brief analytical works by incorporating aural performances from the text with the hosts' commentary supported by interviews with prominent Shakespeare scholars—all describing how works ranging from *Measure for Measure* to *King Lear* are mirrored in our current political climate. The structure and result are decidedly academic, but the podcast construction and delivery mean that it is more convenient and accessible to a large cross-section of interested parties. Podcasting does not only offer benefits to those listening, but those creating podcasts often enjoy similar benefits to students who are freed up from traditionally academic constraints around productivity and publication. For humanities scholars, it is not unusual to spend several months (or even years) researching and drafting an article for publication. Add in months to wait for journal responses, revising and resubmission, and potential publisher backlogs, it can be years before a scholar reaps the benefits of a traditional writing-based interaction with those interested parties in the field. A podcast, however, exists in a timeline that is uniquely decided by the creator, not a publisher. One can record, edit, and distribute a podcast in a matter of hours, not years. One only needs a basic understanding of social-media access to adequately promote their podcast to garner feedback and interaction with interested listeners.

How does podcasting, then, help us be more productive scholars of Shakespeare? Many early-career researchers seem to approach the mode with the same gusto as producers of early modern print "ephemera". It is a space to work out ideas with relatively low stakes and the potential for high impact. As a result, since it exists temporally and logistically outside the typical academic print market, it allows for a form of syncretism between "publish-or-perish" and "slow professor" movements. One can enter a cycle of presenting work and ideas-in-progress to an audience of other scholars or the public at large and receive immediate feedback. Likewise, as the humanities continues to grapple with a perceived crisis of public "use value", early-career scholars are finding podcasting to be a way to remove ivory-tower perceptions surrounding their research and interests and discuss their work with the public directly—in a way that does not require significant financial or temporal investment by the public. Much like that early modern marketplace of ideas that was populated by short, cheap, and easy-to-transport texts full of new and confrontational ideas, podcasting promotes a similar ideological aesthetic in humanities academia. It seems that Shakespeare studies can only gain by embracing a

form of expression that is built on ease-of-access, allowing room for ideas to be tried out, abandoned, or re-worked, and an immediacy that allows the public to see, at any given moment, the fascinating work of which we are capable.

3. Poesis, Potentiality, Podcasting

The symbiosis between podcasting and Shakespeare studies lies in an examination of poetics itself. The academy at large, and humanities in particular, have long obsessed over how to turn abstractions of knowledge and theoretical "thought experiments" into practical application that demonstrates the fruits of our labors. Like composition instructors who seek to help students express themselves in engaging and meaningful ways, so too might Shakespeare scholars turn to the theoretical underpinnings of poetics to account for how podcasting became such an intriguing mode of expression for academics. Poetics, simply put, is the study of how something is made, its purpose or capacity for meaning-making in the world—and meaning-making is at the core of the current perceived crisis in the humanities. In its more ideological turns, poetics begs questions about the uses to which a work might be put: how an art object, system, structure, or medium might be made to do something, the functions it does or might serve. The term is derived from the Greek word *poiesis*, which means "making" or "to make". It is also the etymological root of what we name *poetry*: the *poiema* (poem) is "that which has been made". Given these linguistic turns, it is easy to recognize the common ancestry that poetry and poetics share. Yet, such definitions lack nuance. In *The Human Condition* (1959), Hannah Arendt advances poetry as "the most human . . . of the arts, the one in which the end product is closest to the thought that inspired it" (Arendt 1959, p. 149). Thus, for Arendt, poetry is a medium of and for thinking; poetics, by this formulation, is the making of thought.

As the media theorist and radio practitioner Seán Street reminds us, "sound is itself a poetic concept" (Street 2017, p. 3). Street's direct point is that sound is a form of *poiesis* precisely because poetry existed in oral form at its origins. Poetry became textual; it was not born so. There is, within the oral and aural, a physical and ephemeral simultaneity via the "text" of sound waves. There is in the liveness of spoken poetry what we might call thought-making. Sound is the medium of "airy nothing" through which we give our thoughts their initial voice (whether through internal monologue, that voice in our heads, or by direct speech). To be, therefore, attentive to our arts of making, our poetics, we might, thus, surmise podcasting as both the practice and performance of thinking via sound. In this turn, the scholar becomes poet and poet *cum* podcaster. However, perhaps we have gotten too far ahead.

What might it mean to consider ourselves as scholar poets? In roughly 350 before Common Era (BCE), Aristotle (1999) adduced in his *Poetics* what we might recognize as the first work of "critical theory" on the subject. By his account, "[t]he poet's function is to describe, not the thing that has happened, but a kind of thing that might happen, i.e., what is possible as being probable and necessary . . . a kind of thing that might be" (quoted in Aristotle 1999, p. 152). Aristotle's poet is one who trades in Sack's *potentiality*, which has its roots in the philosophical work of Walter Benjamin, Hannah Arendt, Giorgio Agamben, and others. In other words, the poet's vocation is to offer new ways of seeing and thinking about our being in the world, not merely as what has happened, but how we might change the world for the better *today* and *tomorrow*. In this sense, G.E. Lessing, the 18th-century philosopher (and art critic), had the right of it: poetry is the medium of time. Has the time come then for the scholar poet, or for the return to such vocation? Moreover, if so, then toward what potentialities should his or her attention be directed?

A contemporary scholar poet, Nathan Brown, offers one such direction in his "Ten Theses on Poetics", a manifesto of sorts. Thesis nine is perhaps the most decisive for our purposes: "Defamiliarization remains the essence of *poiesis*" (Brown 2017). One might hear the echo of Martin Heidegger's present-to-hand (*vorhanden*) ghosting about Brown's injunction to defamiliarize. For Heidegger, that which is present-to-hand exposes flaws within the system by bringing to the fore the system as-such. To use Brown's phrasing, to practice poetics we must defamiliarize ourselves from the

systems that create our *selves* and that we use to create meaning. At this juncture, it seems timely to ask some pressing questions. What does it mean to be an "academic" in today's world? Has "scholar" become synonymous with "specialist"—and is this good? Has our thinking become trapped by the hegemony of the publish-or-perish paradigm, what we might call the textual industrial complex? If so, how might podcasting serve as a medium—or bridge—to defamiliarize our current situation in productive and generative ways?

If podcasting, as we are suggesting, is a vibrant poetic medium for the 21st century, then radio held the same poetic potential for the 20th. This medium (these media), as with all technologies, harbors both peril and promise. In his "Benjamin [1931] (2005)", Benjamin criticizes the medium as a vehicle of and for non-thinking. The function of radio, as he saw it at that time, was either to mentally numb and distract mass audiences, or to alienate them due to its specialized and technical language: listeners "switch off" because of the "remoteness of the subject matter" (Benjamin [1931] 2005, p. 544). In either case, whether mass distraction or alienation due to technicity, the potential to think is rendered inoperative by a medium-imposed closure.

We see in Benjamin a challenge to create work that elicits intimacy over remoteness, relevance over apathy. Presumably, audiences would neither "switch off" nor be blindly entertained if the work had something meaningful to say to we the masses. On a public-facing academic front, have we lost potential audiences due to our overly technical scholarly language? The answer is, no doubt, yes. Perhaps the better question is, *do we desire public-facing academics in the first place?* However, the failure—or at the very least, the disconnect—is likely not one of communication alone. Passion is also to blame. This generation is witnessing a recoil from expertise heretofore unseen in Western history. Pundits replaced scholars as the voice of public reason. Tom Nichols wrote persuasively of this phenomenon in *The Death of Expertise: The Campaign Against Established Knowledge and Why It Matters* (Nichols 2017). The sad reality is that pundits incite passionate responses; scholars, all too often, do not. This begs the question, is this passion (or at least our ability to communicate it to the public) lost in the translation from thinking to print, particularly the process through which an idea is initially thought by vocalization (talking to oneself, or someone else), but ultimately rendered as text? This translation process, we would note, is one required by academe: publish-or-perish. Has such translation necessarily limited our thinking?

Marshall McLuhan tells the story of the African Prince Modupe, who, upon meeting Western envoys for the first time, was astonished to see ideas contained in printed books. Modupe's was an oral culture; thus, from his view of the situation, "[t]he ink of the print trapped the thoughts" (McLuhan [1964] 1994, p. 81). How often are our scholarly musings "trapped" by the print technologies that sustain our tenure? As a medium, might podcasting untrap or free our thinking from the limitations and confines of print? By McLuhan's estimation, "electric technology seems to favor the inclusive and participational spoken word over the specialist written word" (McLuhan [1964] 1994, p. 82). To be sure, he did not conceive of podcasting in his analysis of "electric technology", yet the correlation holds. McLuhan makes the distinction between participation (orality) and specialization (writing), between inclusivity and alienation or apathy (which is often the state of the scholar's relationship to the public).

As a mode of poetics, podcasting is an invitation to think beyond writing alone as scholarly work. By its very nature, podcasting is conversational, intimate. It elicits passion. As a public-facing scholarship, perhaps better rendered as *public-facing thinking*, podcasting is neither entertainment nor edutainment, but the co-creation of meaning (and meaningful thinking) between hosts and hearers. In a poetic if not grandiose gesture, podcasting might yet bear witness to the return of Milton's areopagus in our digital age, at least as a form and forum for public speech and debate. From Milton's hilltop vantage (or Prince Modupe's, if you prefer), one can see that the problem is one of specialization; we do not invite enough others to the discussion. Indeed, at the risk of ominous oversimplification, the spectral "crisis of the humanities" might well be the very real threat of becoming hyper-specialized—*of missing the forest for the trees*. If we fail to make our work relevant to audiences outside our fields of

specialization—if we fail to make our work competitive in the attention economy of today—we do so to our detriment. Relevance is the culprit and academic text-making is largely to blame.

As a poetic act, how then are we to translate the relevance of our work? For Derrida, "[w]hat the translation with the word 'relevant' also demonstrates, in an exemplary fashion, is that every translation should be relevant by vocation. It would thus guarantee the *survival* of the body of the original (*survival* in the double sense that Benjamin gives it in 'The Task of the Translator,' *fortleben* and *überleben*: prolonged life, continuous life, *living on*, but also life after death)" ([Derrida 2001](#), p. 199). In this Derridean sense, making-relevant is a vocative calling; it is a vocation. Located within this formulation is the *voice*, that which both calls (vocative) and answers the call (vocation). But Derrida's "relevant by vocation" is also a response to the oft-touted "death of the humanities". The translation of our work into the vocal processing of our thinking is what podcasting offers, to ourselves and for our wider audiences. The art of podcasting—its poetics—is an invitation to make (*poiesis*) our work more accessible to public audiences. This would indeed secure a greater survival rate for our work beyond the libraries of academe as our voices are rendered legible in the ears of those who would listen. It is, therefore, incumbent upon us to seek, or to create, such communities.

4. Conclusion: The Revolution Will Be "Bardcasted"

In thinking about expanding the reach and relevance of our work, Marjorie Perloff provides an instructive example:

> The assignment from PMLA was to write a 100-word letter on 'the notion of the intellectual in the twenty-first century'—a letter that should be 'double spaced and … avoid using the universal ungrounded 'we.'

> That says it all doesn't it? For what function can the intellectual have in a world that prescribes double-spacing but doesn't permit the use of the first-person plural? ([Perloff 2015](#), p. 222)

The dilemma posed by the PMLA is the problem of a missing or undesirable "we" within and without academia. In our current social and political moment, one might also read the impetus to suspend the "we" as evidence of the deep political divides that continue to suspend productive dialog and civil discourse, whether within the Halls of Congress or around our family dinner tables. As practitioners within academe and at its more public fringes, we—Devori, Geoff, and Michael—here propose podcasting as a medium (indeed, perhaps *the* medium) that possesses the potential to reinstate, indeed to re-*make* (*poiesis*), the communal *we*. The reader will no doubt recognize our nod to *Caesar* in this paper's title. Within our reference is a tacit *we*, an implied and immanent community: lend us your ears so that *we* might chat a while.

For Perloff, the erosion of the "we", its forced (or coerced) omission, is "the sign that there is no longer a generic intellectual class to which 'you' or 'I' or 'one' might belong" ([Perloff 2015](#), p. 223). The emphasis on "a generic intellectual class" furthers our discussion on two fronts: generic in the sense of a wider constituent base (to a common or "generic" class, one not privy to nor excluded by the auspices of specialization) and in the aspect of genre itself (specifically, podcasting as a poetic genre). Can publics not also be intellectuals, or is this title reserved solely for the purview of those with advanced degrees? Were the public not once co-intellectuals in dialog and debate pursuant to a greater good? We might do well to extend this definition of intellectuals to include the desire toward greater civic good for the restoration of both *civitas* and *communitas*. What might it look like to return to such "a generic intellectual class"? Perhaps it is incumbent upon us as academics to reconsider and re-envision our vocation as that of the scholar artist or poet scholar, one who occupies boundaries or even, as Ruben Espinosa argues, breaks them. "By breaking boundaries and crossing borders when it comes to Shakespeare, the benefits are twofold: we achieve a fresh perspective on Shakespeare, and we tap into a new market for Shakespeare studies in the process" ([Espinosa 2016](#), p. 57). The present

is a boundary par excellence which might yet find its poetic actualization through podcasting as the medium (or genre) that best affords such boundary crossing, blurring, and extending: private into public, scholarly critique into public conversation.

In a gesture toward such conversation, former MLA president Sidonie Smith warns scholars of our own restrictive terminology. In her *Manifesto for the Humanities*, Smith distinguishes between "scholarly publication" and "scholarly communication" (Smith [2015] 2018, p. 55). Publication, she argues, is valued within academe upon the supposition of its materiality, its suspected stability as a print medium: bound, bonded, and archivable (whether as the monograph, journal article, etc.). The publication, it would seem, is stable knowledge (and, thus, maintains academic stability). Publication is tangible where communication is more nebulous. Yet, for Smith, scholarly communication signals wider opportunities for broader thinking in the humanities, opening the "processes of scholarship . . . to a variety of modes, lengths, media, and . . . circulation systems" (Ibid.). As a mode of potentiality, podcasting is such a circulation system (indeed, a communication medium in its own right), one that is conceptually no less material than print and, therefore, no less "legitimate". The podcast imprints its message along the physical waves of its acoustic transmission and reception, oral to aural. It, too, is bound and archived in the form of bits and bytes, whether stored in the "cloud" infrastructure of interlaced RAID servers or on local hard drives. Podcasting is no mere transient digital ephemera.

We argue the inverse: podcasting is a new "old" medium not unlike print, yet one that advances scholarly communication by disrupting the false scholar–public divide. By rendering our thinking public through shared intimacy with listeners, by thinking out loud in human voices—our voices—we invite the public into our discourse, into our research, and into our process. In truth, we invite them into our thinking, the composition of our ideas and, therefore, into our lives. Through its liveliness, podcasting harbors the potential to transform the future of scholarship as we know it. We must, however, recognize its potentiality: *its potential as a form of composition and research output, no less viable or substantive than a conference paper*; *its potential to extend our pedagogical reach beyond the physical confines of our singular classrooms*; *its potential to cohere a communal "we" around shared investment in the co-creation of new ideas*. Here, the scholar–audience and author–public roles cease to occupy their comfortable binary positions and become instead "networked nodes of a knowledge collaboratory", what Smith imagines as "knowledge communities" (Smith [2015] 2018, p. 105). It is our task—one might aver, our *calling*—to make such communities.

To render podcasting as such, we must return to the origins of *poiesis* as a concept, that is, to the act of poetic *making*. As Street reminds us, "[i]n its beginning [*poiesis*] was a verb, an action that transforms and constitutes the world" (Street 2017, p. 3). Not unlike the poetic act for Aristotle, the poet—one who engages in *poiesis*, in making—is involved in the direct action of world-building. *Poiesis* in this sense is ontological; it is both an act of being and the action of bringing that which is not-yet into being. Yet, as Street is keenly aware, *poiesis* is often a making *of* and *with* sound. Now, we have arrived at the juncture of podcasting as poetics, and, in this particular register, the poietic act is both intimately and necessarily bound to listening. As the philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy puts it:

> What secret is at stake when one truly *listens*, that is, when one tries to capture or surprise the sonority rather than the message? What secret is yielded—hence also made public—when we listen to a voice, an instrument, or a sound just for itself?...What does *to be* listening, *to be* all ears, as one would say "to be in the world," mean? What does it mean to exist according to listening, for it and through it, what part of experience and truth is put into play? ((Nancy [2007] 2017) quoted in Street 2017, pp. 3–4)

By Nancy's formulation, listening, like *poiesis*, takes an ontological form. Listening and making are modes of being. Such ontological turns are deeply relational. We become by coming together to speak with and listen to one another, to build better worlds together by thinking *with* one another. *To be*, Emmanuel Levinas might have said (or Hamlet for that matter), *is to listen*. Perloff's concern for an elided "we" in the academic and public discourses of "a generic intellectual class" ends with a call to action: to seek (or perhaps to become) "a new breed of artists and poets on the boundaries" (Perloff

2015, p. 224). This calling finds its answer, at least in part, in Nancy's invitation to listen and in our invocation: *friends, colleagues, countrymen—lend us your earbuds.*

Appendix A Partial List of Shakespeare-Related Podcasts

- *Lend Me Your Ears: A Podcast about Shakespeare and Politics* (Ended) (http://www.slate.com/articles/slate_plus/shakespeare.html)
- *The Hurly Burly Shakespeare Show!* (https://hurlyburlyshakespeareshow.com/ and https://twitter.com/HurlyBurlyShake)
- *The Theatre History Podcast* (https://theatrehistorypodcast.net/)
- Folger Shakespeare Library: Shakespeare Unlimited (https://www.folger.edu/shakespeare-unlimited)
- *Let's Talk Shakespeare* (Ended) (https://www.shakespeare.org.uk/explore-shakespeare/podcast/)
- *Shakespeare and His World* (Ended) (https://itunes.apple.com/us/podcast/shakespeare-and-his-world/id433557951?mt=2)
- *Shakespeare's Restless World* (Ended) (https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b017gm45/episodes/downloads)
- *That Shakespeare Life* (https://www.cassidycash.com/thatshakespearelife/)
- *American Shakespeare Center Podcast* (Ended) (https://americanshakespearecenter.com/category/podcasts/)
- *Approaching Shakespeare* (Ended) (https://podcasts.ox.ac.uk/series/approaching-shakespeare)
- *Not Shakespeare: Elizabethan and Popular Theatre* (Ended) (https://podcasts.ox.ac.uk/series/not-shakespeare-elizabethan-and-jacobean-popular-theatre)
- *Oregon Shakespeare Festival Podcast* (Ended) (https://www.osfashland.org/podcasts.aspx)
- *Shakespeare and Contemporary Theory* (Ended) (https://soundcloud.com/surreyshakespeare)
- *Play On Podcast* (Ended) (https://www.bard.org/play-on-podcast/)
- *The State of Shakespeare* (http://stateofshakespeare.com/ and https://twitter.com/StateofShakespe)
- *How to Get Away with Shakespeare* (https://www.gabrielveiga.ca/podcast.html)
- *Such Stuff* (http://www.shakespearesglobe.com/such-stuff-podcast)
- *No Holds Bard* (https://www.noholdsbard.com/)

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