

No One Is in Trouble: Queer Feminist Collaborations in the Amplify Podcast Network, *The SpokenWeb Podcast*, and Witch, Please Productions

HANNAH MCGREGOR, WITH JUDITH BURR, SIOBHAN MCMENEMY,
HANNAH REHAK, AND ZENA SHARMAN

Abstract: At Witch, Please Productions—the queer feminist media production company I co-founded with Marcelle Kosman and Hannah Rehak—we have a motto that underpins and guides our collaborative ethos: “no one is in trouble.” Our insistence that no one is in trouble is rooted in our queer feminist ethics of care, one that prioritizes the well-being of our collaborative team and by extension our larger community of collaborators, interlocutors, and listeners. While stated overtly and frequently at Witch, Please Productions, this care-based ethos of collaborative media creation emerged gradually for me through various collaborative projects, including *The SpokenWeb Podcast* and the Amplify Podcast Network, both projects that were also, notably, built through queer feminist collaborations. By prioritizing care and well-being from the beginning, and building projects from the ground up with that ethos in place, we are collectively learning new ways to make things together. This article takes the form of a conversation with some of my key collaborators, modeling the playful collectivity of these projects, to match in form what I am articulating in content: that we create more radical, expansive, collaborative scholarship when we center care, relationships, and the well-being of the collective.

Keywords: queer feminism, care ethics, collaboration, podcasting

Prelude: Writing in Conversation

When I first proposed this article, at the forefront of my mind was a desire to create a shared discursive space with the collaborators who have so fundamentally shaped my work, one that honored their capacity, inviting them into conversation without adding

another item to their to-do lists. At that moment, I understood myself to be the person within my network of collaborators with the most capacity; I tend to mistake institutional power for capacity in a way that flattens the complexities of how we're each positioned. Of the collaborators I invited into this conversation, I am the only one with tenure and the kind of financial security that accompanies it. I am not a parent, or a student, or an early career scholar, and writing this kind of article is quite literally my job. At no point in the proposal of this article did I ask myself if I had the capacity to write something new when I had just taken on the position of director of my academic program while I was principal investigator (PI) for two grants and had just started work on two new podcasts. (Spoiler alert: I should absolutely have asked myself that question.)

I wrote a first draft of the article and then circulated it via email, inviting pals and collaborators to share feedback, input, thoughts, etc. by commenting directly onto a Google Doc. "The comments can truly be anything," I wrote: "jokes, references, corrections, suggested readings, added context, thoughts and impressions, really whatever occurs to you as you're reading." The feedback that you will see incorporated throughout comes from different people who expressed themselves in different ways. Hannah Rehak, who I will henceforth refer to as Coach,¹ is co-founder and executive producer of Witch, Please Productions; her feedback will appear primarily as interjected anecdotes that add greater context to how our work together has evolved. Also appearing as interjections throughout are the responses of Judee Burr, PhD student in the Department of Geography at the University of British Columbia (UBC) and former project manager of *The SpokenWeb Podcast*. Zena Sharman, LGBTQ+ health advocate, professional strategist, author of *The Care We Dream Of* among other books, and a frequent first reader of my work, responded in a more editorial way, guiding me (as she so frequently does) into deeper nuance and thinking around pivotal points; in some places I have included her comments directly, and in others I have noted where my ideas were shaped by her feedback. And finally Siobhan McMenemy, senior editor at Wilfrid Laurier University Press and co-founder of the Amplify Podcast Network, sent me an email in response, which is included as an appendix. Each of these responses has fundamentally shaped my work, and having their voices present in this article feels vital and nourishing.

As the deadline approached, I intended to reach out again to some of those collaborators who had expressed interest in participating in this experiment but had not yet found the time to do so. Then I had a medical crisis. I'd had a lingering post-viral cough since early March 2024, one that refused to heal largely because I refused to rest. Eventually nearly two months of unrelenting coughing sent my back muscles into rebellion, and on

1. Marcelle gave Coach this nickname at our very first meeting when she found out that Coach had played college volleyball and because having two Hannah's on the team would have been confusing.

April 30, after a long strategic research plan consultation meeting that I'd forced myself onto campus to attend despite being in pain, I coughed wrong and almost immediately lost the ability to walk without assistance. The next morning, I woke up and couldn't stand. It took thirty excruciating minutes to reach my phone and call 911 and another hour of pain before the paramedics could break into my apartment (a firefighter had to kick in my bedroom window because I'd deadbolted myself in too securely, it was all very dramatic) and get me off the ground and onto a gurney. Over the days that followed, I experienced at a material level what networks of care feel like. They felt like friends sitting with me at the hospital, putting my socks on for me, helping me into and out of a wheelchair; they felt like food deliveries and rides to the doctor and the procurement of adaptive devices to help me stand up and put socks on myself; they felt like countless texts and phone calls and expressions of love, reaching out to tell me I'm not alone. They felt like the people who love me most telling me, again and again, how proud they were of me for slowing down and taking the time to heal.

I had to cancel a lot of things in the weeks that followed—meetings and keynote addresses and podcast recordings and social outings—but I kept finding myself drawn back to this article because everything I experienced throughout this traumatic and painful event affirmed what I was already trying to articulate: that we are not okay, but that through the creation of networks of care we can hold one another up, if only long enough to get somewhere we can rest. What follows is an account of the collaborations that have given me space to imagine how intellectual work might happen beyond the constraints of neoliberal productivity metrics and academia's culture of scarcity-based competition, and how liberation from these constraints can in turn free us to make good trouble together.

No One Is Okay [*except Coach, who insists she's fine*]

Since the Canadian government, along with many others around the world, mandated a collective return-to-normal in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns, I've been grappling with a question that feels at once urgent and seemingly endless: What do we do about the fact that no one is okay? [*Zena: Some people (e.g., rich white cishet dudes) are arguably pretty okay and have been enriched by the pandemic. Who is "no one" in this inquiry?*]

That isn't quite how I put it when I talk to friends. The phrase I kept returning to, at the height of my own lockdown isolation, when my forced physical separation from my community sent me spiraling into a mental health crisis, was "we're all crazy now." I said this not to pathologize the collective crisis we were enduring, but to remind myself that the status quo was extremely not quo. Since then, the collective cultural

narrative has placed the pandemic in the past tense, with chronically ill, disabled, and immunocompromised people left to navigate the realities of the still-circulating virus with minimal support while the warnings of those suffering with long COVID, to take the novel coronavirus seriously, fall on largely unsympathetic ears. [*Zena: From an affective perspective, I think this encompasses more than sympathy. There is also a form of collective denial at play, as well as the ableism that holds it in place. The Death Panel podcast is where I've seen some of the most incisive analyses of this ongoing phenomenon.*] In British Columbia, where I live, public health policy, institutional language, and workplace culture collectively insist that things have returned to normal. Just one problem: they super fucking haven't.

Let me pause for a moment here and address an important question of language: Who exactly is the “we” I’m referring to? One function of the COVID-19 pandemic has been the exposure and widening of the many structural rifts that run through our globalized, late capitalist, imperialist and—in places like Canada, the United States, Australia, and New Zealand—settler colonial society. As Naomi Klein describes it in her 2023 book *Doppelgänger: A Trip into the Mirror World*, our world runs on the concealed labor and systemic suffering of the “shadowlands.” [*Coach: The amount you talk about this book makes it seem like you've only ever read this one book and given you're one of the most well-read people I know, that makes me laugh.*] This reality of deep inequity was made even more stark through the divided experience of the pandemic: some of us working from home, ordering our groceries delivered to better adhere to the stay-at-home orders, while others, disproportionately working-class and racialized people, packed and delivered those groceries and thus were infected with COVID-19 at significantly higher rates.² The “we” I am mostly talking about when I talk about “our” experience of the pandemic are those who stayed home, both because we could (we’re knowledge-workers for the most part, and our workplaces pivoted to online) and because we believed it was a sacrifice worth making for those who could not, including health care workers, teachers, and, of course, the people packing and delivering our groceries.

This “we” is meaningful for me as a collective experience largely in the context of my workplace. I work at a university, where my colleagues had similar, though, of course, not identical, experiences of the pandemic. We continued to work full time throughout it, or more-than-full-time, as we redesigned our courses for online delivery without adequate time or support. In some ways I lived an easier version of this: I live alone, didn’t have elderly relatives to care for or children to somehow home school and parent while also continuing to do my job. But months of isolation, months without touching

2. Thanks to Zena for reminding me that this politicized division of labor and precarity needs to be named specifically.

another human being, have been extremely bad for my brain. I'm not the same person I was before. I don't think any of us are.

But grappling with collective trauma, grief, and a continuously unfolding mental health crisis doesn't fit well into our cultural narrative of recovery and return-to-normal, even if that's a "new" normal. And as the neoliberalization of academia keeps accelerating, it particularly doesn't fit into our institutions' encouragements to "do more with less" and "find efficiencies." As I follow up on yet another unanswered email, comfort yet another sobbing student [*Coach: *producer*], sit with a colleague through yet another crisis, and most recently send a bevy of cancellation emails in response to my own medical crisis, I wonder where exactly I'm supposed to be finding the efficiencies here.

The tools that are helping me navigate this transformed landscape are not coming from within academia (shocking, I know). [*Judee: SHOCKED. Just Kidding. But imagine us cultivating self-compassion along with all the other-focused/collaborative forms of compassion you highlight in this article—instead of walking around through an electric current of scarcity, hierarchy, comparison, and competition. This is a Western/North American neoliberal capitalist cultural problem, not just an academic bad habit, but we know it has definitely made it into academia.*] They are, instead, coming out of the queer feminist collaborations that have become central to the work I do around the edges of academia, in the realm of scholarly podcasting. These collaborative projects—particularly the Amplify Podcast Network, *The SpokenWeb Podcast*, and Witch, Please Productions—were built from the ground up via webs of relationality that have taught me, both through theoretical engagements and lived experience, what it means to do work that matters without sacrificing people's well-being for the sake of productivity. In her reading of this article, Zena encouraged me to engage with Hil Malatino's concept of an infrapolitical ethics of care as articulated in his most recent book, *Side Affects* (Zena's interview with Hil about this book is extremely worth the listen; Hyer 2022).³ Malatino defines an infrapolitical ethics of care as:

a form of care that circulates among a beloved community that enables both political resistance and intracommunal survival and resilience. It moves us beyond (sometimes troublingly neoliberal) understandings of self-care and into a terrain shaped by the recognition that caring, in the context of structural marginalization and systemic violence, must always be collective. An infrapolitical ethics of care is comprised of all those phenomena that enable one to piece themselves together in the aftermath of a break, all those forms of caring labour, from attending to basic survival needs to generating, supporting, and collaborating continued reasons for living. (2022, 119)

3. Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0qLnxrLU9I>.

Malatino emphasizes the infrapolitical nature of this care ethics to insist that the embodied practices of care cannot be neatly tucked away into the private realm; care is political, but it also breaks down the boundaries between the private and the public, the personal and the political. I return to Malatino and others' work on care ethics below but recognize the need to flag very early on that I am thinking alongside recent scholars, writers, and activists who have been rethinking care ethics in the context of the collective survival of multiply marginalized communities. My feminist collaborative podcasting work may not literally be enabling collective survival, but I do believe that these collaborations are sites of queer feminist knowledge creation that encourage political resistance, and I believe it matters that they are projects with community care at their hearts.

Scholarly Podcasting as Shit-Disturbing

I began podcasting in 2015, when my long-time collaborator Marcelle Kosman (hi, Marcelle!) and I decided to make a Harry Potter podcast together. The podcasting landscape was much less saturated back then, and Marcelle had enough experience in campus radio and enough support from her partner, Trevor, that we were able to make the original run of *Witch, Please* (from 2015 to 2018) a reasonably professional show from the start and to build a respectable audience over time.⁴ This experimentation in the early years of scholarly podcasting led to my position in the publishing program at Simon Fraser University (SFU), where the possibilities for using podcasting to create publicly engaged, accessible, and community-engaged scholarship became the focus of my research. With Siobhan McMenemy, senior editor at Wilfrid Laurier University Press, I got a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) of Canada Insight Development Grant to experiment with the possibility of creating a peer-reviewed scholarly podcast, which we did between 2017 and 2020 with *Secret Feminist Agenda*.⁵ We followed that project up by creating the Amplify Podcast Network, supported through a SSHRC Partnership Development Grant, for which I quickly head-hunted then SFU communication PhD student Stacey Copeland to be the project manager. Head-hunted from myself, that is.

I had originally hired Stacey as a research assistant to help me develop *The Spoken-Web Podcast*. Funded by a SSHRC Partnership Grant and led by Jason Camlot at Concordia University in Montreal, SpokenWeb focuses on digitizing audio literary archives

4. I describe this collaborative working relationship in much more detail in *A Sentimental Education* (2022).

5. You can find the peer review of *Secret Feminist Agenda* at <https://www.wlupress.wlu.ca/Scholarly-Podcasting-Open-Peer-Review/Secret-Feminist-Agenda/>.

and developing the tools—critical, methodological, and technological—to study these archives as they become increasingly available to students and scholars of literature all over the world. Jason invited me to join the project in 2018 for my podcasting expertise (much less expert six years ago, but the field was also very new), and I worked with fellow scholarly podcaster Katherine McLeod⁶ as well as a series of research assistants—first UBC master’s student Megan Ryland, then SFU PhD student Stacey Copeland, UBC Okanagan master’s student Judith Burr, SFU Master of Publishing student Kelly Cubbon, SFU PhD student Kate Moffatt, SFU Master of Publishing student Zoe Mix [*Coach: I know her!*], Concordia master’s student Miranda Eastwood, and most recently Concordia master’s students Maia Harris, James Healey, and Yara Ajeeb—to conceptualize, develop, and then run *The SpokenWeb Podcast* for five seasons and counting.

If it seems like I’m making a particular point of naming collaborators, funders, and research assistants, it’s because I am. Every major project I have done since I started working in the field of scholarly podcasting has been fundamentally collaborative, embedded in a kind of relationality that has been in turn a rookery for my queer feminist care ethics. [*Zena: Yet they have also been legible enough to merit funding from a national research funder in a highly competitive funding environment. I can imagine this creates possibilities and tensions at times . . .*] Important in a different way have been the assemblages of technologies through which we have crafted and sustained these collaborations, because every one of these projects has been spread across provinces and at times across countries and continents, instantiated on Zoom and in Google Drive folders, email inboxes, and Slack channels. Some of these collaborators I’ve yet to meet in person; almost none of them live in the same city as I do. My hope, in this article, is not only to give an account of the kinds of working assemblages and relationships that underpin all of the podcasts I’ve created, and thus that have led me to make links between scholarly podcasting and queer feminist collaborative methods, but also to create an intellectual archive in which the important contributions of these collaborators are recorded.

So: in 2019, I hired Stacey to be project manager and supervising producer of *The SpokenWeb Podcast*. Stacey, now an assistant professor of media studies at the University of Groningen in the Netherlands, was then a PhD student studying queer feminist activist aesthetics in radio and podcasts, with a background in audio production. She also, I quickly found out, had a facility with spreadsheets and schedules that was a perfect counterbalance to my fondness for starting projects and boredom with actually sustaining them. Stacey helped to frame *The SpokenWeb Podcast* as a space for experimentation in sound-based scholarship, a kind of sandbox in which scholars from across the SpokenWeb Network could play. Drawing on her history in community and

6. Stacey, Katherine, and I write about our collective experience of feminist podcasting in “The Kitchen Table Is Always Where We Are: Podcasting as Feminist Self-Reflexive Practice,” in *Podcast Studies: Practice into Theory* (2025).

campus radio, she eschewed a fixation on “professional” sound quality in favor of an emphasis on pedagogy and play, equipping episode producers with the tools to learn how to edit sound themselves while having a deep well of sound production knowledge that she could draw on when necessary. In their comments on this article, Judee emphasized Stacey’s feminist approach to teaching audio production:

Judee: Stacey’s ability to be both an expert audio producer herself and yet to teach people to teach themselves how to more confidently navigate the software and edit without needing to become experts—this is really one of her superpowers. How many times, when I asked Stacey how to do something, did she ask me “well how does it sound to you?” and remind me that there are many ways to edit sound, and everyone does it a bit differently. She told me to trust my ears. It took me an extremely long time of listening to Stacey and letting her lessons sink in to realize that I didn’t have to try to figure out “the right way” and that I could trust my ears and my judgement. Because . . . no one would be in trouble if an episode had a few weird sounds in it. No one was listening to our podcast for squeaky-clean, invincibly perfect sound design. There’s something about letting go of the aspiration to perfect control, order, and precision in this idea of “no one is in trouble.” This is feminist audio editing. Thanks Stacey, you genius.

It was equal parts Stacey’s critical engagement with queer feminist sonic aesthetics, her enormous technical skill in sound production, and her keen organizational mind that led me to hire her away from myself to help run the Amplify Podcast Network. Together, Stacey and I have co-authored a number of significant pieces of the project, including *A Guide to Academic Podcasting* (published with Wilfrid Laurier University Press in 2021); our three-part podcast series “Why Podcast? Podcasting as Publishing, Sound-Based Scholarship, and Making Podcasts Count” (published in the journal *Kairos* in 2022); and *The Amplify Manifesto*, a collaborative soundwork also published in 2022, with an accompanying zine/transcript designed by then Master of Publishing student and currently production and design coordinator at Fernwood Publishing, Lauren Jeanneau. When Stacey completed her PhD in 2022, she moved from project manager to co-director of Amplify.

One of Stacey’s key solo contributions to the Amplify Podcast Network has been the *Amplified* audioblog series, in which she has interviewed first co-applicants and collaborators on the Amplify grant, then the wider community of scholarly podcasters and creators of sound-based scholarship, and most recently the inaugural cohort of our Sustain stream of the podcast network.⁷ In January 2022, she posted an episode of

7. When we were ready to begin accepting applications to the Amplify Podcast Network, we made the decision to divide the network into two streams: the Resonate stream, which would consist of peer-reviewed podcasts published by Wilfrid

Amplified titled “Be Gay, Do Podcasts, How Amplify Got Its Start,” an interview with Siobhan McMenemy and me about the origins of the Amplify Podcast Network. As we describe it in the interview, Siobhan and I began working together after a casual conversation at the Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences in Calgary in 2016. We were both in transitional moments in our careers, with Siobhan having just moved from University of Toronto Press to Wilfrid Laurier University Press and me having just moved from the University of Alberta to SFU. We were in structurally similar positions, relocating to smaller and younger institutions where we had more institutional power and thus more latitude for experimental work. It was an ideal collaboration.

As Siobhan points out in her email (see appendix), this narrative smooths over a number of the early bumps in our work together. I was nervous about collaborating with a university press, assuming that Siobhan would arrive with conservative notions of what constitutes the scholarly. I had been well and truly disciplined at that stage, in the dual sense of learning how to produce work within the contours of an academic discipline and, with a nod to Foucault, of internalizing norms of appropriate behavior to the point that they didn’t need to be enforced on me from outside any longer. I was good at writing academic jargon, good at applying for grants, good at reshaping ideas into the contours of academic systems. So good at it, in fact, that I didn’t realize I was doing it at all. And that skill, while undeniably useful in my line of work, was fueled not by my values but by an ingrained fear of doing something wrong and, as a result, of getting in trouble. I recall, for example, a mentor chastising me when I listed my relationship to a SSHRC grant incorrectly as being a collaborator rather than a research assistant, not realizing at the time that “collaborator” had a very specific meaning for SSHRC; this mentor assumed I had been intentionally inflating my role to pad my CV and warned me against this kind of behavior, telling me it could jeopardize my chances of getting research funding in the future. Sometimes the experience of being disciplined is subtle, and sometimes it is very overt.

As Siobhan and my collaboration progressed, I was surprised to discover that she would push me in exactly the opposite direction I had expected—away from internalized ideas about what constitutes the scholarly and towards more expansive definitions that made space for work that felt joyful, playful, and exploratory. I returned to this episode of the *Amplified* audioblog not only because it contains the origin story of one of my most vital ongoing collaborations, but also because it’s the first time I articulated

Laurier University Press, and the Sustain stream, which would bring together existing and ongoing scholarly podcasts into a community of practice without subjecting them to peer review. The Resonate stream currently consists of *Secret Feminist Agenda* and Brenna Clarke Gray’s forthcoming podcast *Community of Praxis*. The Sustain stream includes *Keeping It 101: A Killjoy’s Introduction to Religion, Critical and Curious*, *Wrinkle Radio*, and *Critical Technology—A KDMI Podcast*. See <https://amplifypodcastnetwork.ca> for more.

out loud the queerness of the ethos that has informed my collaborative podcasting work. Here's how I describe Siobhan and my collaboration:

We have really different professional backgrounds. We have different kinds of training. We have different, really different jobs. But at the heart of it, we are both big gay shit disturbers. (all laugh) And I think that that is like an ethic that is at the heart of this project. Is just a kind of like a political orientation towards the status quo that does not assume that it is fine or good as it is. Like that is a like a basic premise. I think of the way we both do our work is like, Oh, why would I assume that the way things are now is fine? Why would I assume that the way things have been done is the way they ought to be done? Why would I in any way trust that the way the institutions are currently organized is good or fosters the kinds of things I want to create in the world? Just a “No,” just a “No,” just a kind of general “No” to everything, followed by a . . . “But what if?”⁸

What I referred to in that conversation as an ethic of being “big gay shit disturbers” that leads us to be critical of the status quo is a version of the queer feminist collaborative ethic that has coalesced in my work since then. [*Judee: This is also reminding me of your and Stacey's wonderful convo in the episode “Producing Queer Media.”*]⁹ This ethic has been interwoven with my collaborative podcasting practice, emerging from the material and interpersonal considerations of specific working relationships, becoming more clearly articulated in my own mind and gradually out loud in conversation with my collaborators, those clearer articulations in turn helping to transform those working relationships. As Siobhan writes in her email (see appendix), “In exercising the practices we practice them as exercises and develop stronger practices by virtue of the practicing.”

But what was new in my articulation for the *Amplified* audioblog was not the idea of being a shit disturber but rather the idea of being specifically a *gay* shit disturber—gay in the sense of “be gay, do crime,” in the sense of a political queerness and a queer politics, in the sense of rejecting the status quo and demanding that we imagine how things might be otherwise.¹⁰ For me, this is a specifically queer feminist intervention

8. The second half of this passage also appears in *The Amplify Manifesto*, a sonic collage drawn together out of clips from the *Amplified* audioblog series. See <https://amplifypodcastnetwork.ca/about/amplify-manifesto/> for more.

9. Available at <https://spokenweb.ca/podcast/episodes/producing-queer-media/>.

10. “Be gay, do crime” is a queer activist slogan that, according to Kevin Maimann (2024) in *Xtra Magazine*, emerged in the early 2000s but became mainstream in 2018, when non-binary artist Io Asunder altered a historical Thomas Nast political cartoon from 1880 to depict a skeleton holding a scroll that reads “BE GAY DO CRIME!” Beneath the skeleton, the graphic reads, “Many blame queers for the downfall of this society—we take pride in this. Some believe that we intend to shred-to-bits this civilization and it's [*sic*] moral fabric—they couldn't be more accurate. We're often described as depraved, decadent and revolting—but oh, they ain't seen nothing yet.” Thanks to Zena for reminding me that readers might interpret “gay” differently from “queer” and offering me “be gay do crimes” as a bridging concept to connect gay shit-disturbing to queering scholarly communication.

into scholarly communication. That commitment to queering scholarly communication is something I discovered not from a theoretical but from a material angle, through both building collaborative working relationships that center queer folks and moving into closer relation to a variety of queer activists, artists, and organizers in Vancouver, through whom I learned a lot about what queer collaboration, especially when rooted in friendship and love, can be.¹¹ Since then I have theorized gay shit-disturbing often, though not in those words. On episode 2.7 of *Secret Feminist Agenda*, “Playing, Losing, Failing” (posted March 1, 2018), for example, I drew on Jack Halberstam’s 2011 book *The Queer Art of Failure* to articulate how failure can provide access to what Halberstam calls subjugated knowledges, different stories about how the world works that are not premised on heteronormative white supremacist capitalist notions of success. [Judee: *I’ve been listening to The Queer Art of Failure recently. I underlined his mention of lesbian style as failure and the idea of “antisocial feminisms.” There’s something in queer punk feminism and antisocial feminisms that preclude a certain kind of care—rejecting the archetypal woman as ever-giving, ever-caring, ever-there-for-others. Queer feminist care is different—rooted in respecting others’ needs and your own—and this is the kind of care that’s clearly threaded through this article.*] On episode 3.28, “Living a Feminist Life with Sara Ahmed” (posted May 3, 2019), we spoke about the relationship between queer feminism, refusal of the status quo, and resistance to institutional mandates that insist there is only one correct way of doing things.

It’s no coincidence that the medium through which I built collaborations that eschew a “one right way” approach is one with a history of amateur creation and experimentation. Podcasting is a born-digital medium that emerged from the technology of RSS—syndication, or a subscription to an update-able website like a blog—and, while it owes much of its early norms to radio, it spent its first 14 years in relative obscurity, allowing a huge range of shows to flourish. The early 2020s were an era of corporate consolidation and venture capital investment, with Spotify buying up networks and big-name shows like *The Joe Rogan Experience* and other tech giants like Amazon and TikTok trying to get in on what seemed to be the next big thing. Those investments haven’t panned out, and as ad money dries up and podcasting stops looking like a get-rich-quick scheme, many are acknowledging the greater long-term viability of shows that build committed audiences over time. Podcasting may have failed according to

11. Most recently, for example, I sat down with Stacey Copeland to have a conversation about the future of the Amplify Podcast Network and how we can keep this work going in a way that is sustainable for both of us. Stacey outlined a model of queer feminist organizing in which different members of the collective take turns leading projects, with planning happening only a few months at a time and leadership passing to those who are showing up at that moment. This model at first glance seems profoundly at odds with the long-term deliverables and organizational charts that research grants often require, but I’m intrigued by the possibility of building sustainable lateral organizational models into research proposals. We need data management plans, but what about human well-being plans?

the endlessly expansionist logics of late capitalism, but it is that failure, as Halberstam might put it, that allows the medium to persist as a space for the creation and dissemination of subjugated knowledges. Podcasting has somehow remained a space where there is, in fact, no one right way to do things. Which means it's a fun space to be kind of a pain in the ass, like me. [*Coach: only sometimes.*]

From Shit-Disturbing to Care, or Realizing You're in Charge

Even as I have become ever more enamored with an ethos of gay shit-disturbing, I also find myself returning again and again to care ethics, particularly more recent contributions to the field that attend to the embodied experiences of giving and receiving care. A refusal of the status quo has to go hand in hand with an ethics oriented towards what we build instead, not only rejecting the legitimacy of institutions built on exclusion and extraction but also imagining what forms of relationality, collaboration, and care we might create within, despite, or beyond those institutions. [*Zena: This is aligned with abolitionism, as well as prefigurative politics (both of which I write about in my care ethics otherwise essay on butt-wiping).*]

In the introduction to their 2023 special issue on “Care Ethics Otherwise,” editors Hil Malatino, Amy McKiernan, and Sarah Clark Miller emphasize that recent scholarship on care ethics has been more attentive to disability justice, queer and trans perspectives, and concepts of mutual aid than early feminist care ethics because they draw on different “intellectual genealogies and political histories”:

Centrally concerned with the realities of structural precarity, dispossession, and state abandonment for multiply marginalized peoples, these texts utilize care as a helpful concept in thinking through and further elaborating practices of collective survival. Amidst the mundane depredations of contemporary neoliberal business-as-usual, they theorize care as a necessary component of the work of political resistance, positioning the ongoing labor of staying alive and aiding in one another's flourishing as necessary groundwork for political struggle. (2023, 4)

Citing Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha's 2018 book *Care Work: Dreaming Disability Justice*, the collectively authored *The Care Manifesto: The Politics of Interdependence* (Care Collective 2020), Dean Spade's *Mutual Aid* (2020), and Maurice Hamington and Michael Flower's co-edited volume *Care Ethics in the Age of Precarity* (2021), as well as Malatino's own *Trans Care* (2021), Malatino, McKiernan, and Miller argue that care ethics needs to be rooted not only in the history of feminist philosophy and political

theory but also in other political and intellectual histories that include, notably for my purposes, “queer and trans theorizations of chosen family and the transformation of kin networks,” alongside Black feminist writing, disability justice, and abolitionist organizing (2023, 5–6).

Many of the contributions to this special issue are rooted in material experiences of care-giving; I’m thinking particularly of Zena Sharman’s essay, “Imagining More Care-Full Futures: Care Work as Prefigurative Praxis,” which opens with the evocative line, “I wipe a lot of butts these days” (2023, 11). [*Zena: My greatest scholarly achievement.* 🍑] Care doesn’t get much more material than that. The material encounters with the need for care that I have experienced in my own podcasting practice have been less visceral but transformative nonetheless. I recall in particular a conversation I had with Judith Burr, then supervising producer and project manager for *The SpokenWeb Podcast* and a master’s student at UBC Okanagan, in the midst of the COVID-19 lockdowns. Judee was having trouble getting episode producers to submit their drafts on time; everyone was blowing through their deadlines, and Judee really didn’t want to be hassling people about getting their work done on time in the midst of a pandemic that we knew was disproportionately impacting parents and caretakers, BIPOC communities, and disabled and chronically ill people. Pushing for a business-as-usual approach to deadlines, Judee explained, made them uncomfortable because it felt at odds with our values. But what could we do? We needed to produce episodes.

Have you by any chance seen those images from 2019 of Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau marching in the Climate Strike rally in Montreal? A lot of memes and jokes circulating at the time came down to this: You’re literally in charge. Stop commiserating and do something.

I experienced a similar moment when, in the midst of empathizing with Judee about this conundrum, I remembered that I was in charge. In their comments on this article, Judee shared a similar memory:

Judee: My favorite was when we were talking about the schedule for the year and I was reflecting on the previous December/January episode production process and saying something along the lines of “wow, it sure was too bad to have to be emailing people so much right on top of the end of year holidays” and you so quickly said—let’s skip that one! No episode!

A very “oh! we can do that?” moment of stepping off the regimented production schedule escalator and laughing at it. Who built that thing? Oh, us. Right. Deconstruction time.

As the faculty lead on the podcast, it was not only within my power to change things about how the podcast was run, but in fact my responsibility to model to the early career scholars I was working with that productivity didn’t matter more than their, or

their colleagues', well-being. It's a message I heard from my own feminist mentors as a grad student but almost never one that I saw modeled for me, and I'm continually trying to be the model that my younger self needed by doing radical things like not working on evenings and weekends and asking for help when I need it.¹² So Judee and I crafted a plan, one that empowered them to center compassion and accommodation in their communication with episode producers and that recognized that we actually didn't *need* to publish an episode every month. I said to them what I've said to a whole lot of students and early career scholars at different points: our work is important, but it isn't urgent.

That doesn't mean that urgency is never imposed upon us via things like grant deadlines, funding competitions, and other institutionally created forces. In the case of *The SpokenWeb Podcast*, I was able to be flexible because of the context in which Judee and I and our episode producers were operating: not within the parameters of an institution or organization with its own needs to protect itself, turn a profit, or comply to other external regulations, but within a collaborative relationship in turn framed by a research project, the SpokenWeb partnership, that explicitly values students as colleagues and emphasizes pedagogy and process over productivity. Zena pointed me to this quote from Moya Bailey (2015), which emphasizes the importance of process over product:

I am creating a new way of practicing the relationships I am developing through . . . the advisory panel, transforming a researcher/researched relationship into one of collaboration, thereby shifting out of the position of researcher into a more equal role. This process also includes developing new models of expressing the value of everyone's contributions. For me, the process is the product, meaning that the process itself is productive, creative, and transformative of the conditions we are seeking to understand through the research [Twitterethics2014]. We are building collaboratively in ways that build community and shift existing dynamics. We are actively shaping the project of collaborating through our collective participation so that an end product, while potentially very useful, is not the only thing created by this collaborative investigation.

Institutions and organizations are also full of collaborative relationships, of course, but they do not themselves operate relationally. As Zena put it when helping me to think this point through over the phone one afternoon, institutions rely on policy, which are grounded in principles of fairness but not necessarily principles of justice. Some

12. Coach expressed some shock at this boundary when they read this article, especially because, in their words, I have "nine jobs." In light of my recent injury, I am trying very hard to have fewer than nine jobs.

things—relationships in particular—cannot be reduced to the level of policy. In her response to this article, Zena further nuanced these points:

Zena: It's true that many policies are grounded in principles of fairness and not justice. I'd also say that policies are things created by people within the constraints of the institutions they are part of and the mindsets they've been taught/socialized into. Policies often tend to replicate and hold in place the dynamics of the institutional and organizational contexts they come from. When they seek to disrupt those contexts, policies can stall or get stuck.

I wonder if this is more about getting at the idea that institutions are also made in part off by people and the relationships between them. It's in these relationships that it can become more possible to practice alternative world-building inside institutions, sometimes against the grain of or in opposition to/defiance of its policies.

I experience my queer feminist collaborations as *in excess of* the institutions that both enable and constrain my work, like branching roots of relationality that run through the institutions but also connect me to people and communities and projects beyond the traditional institutional boundaries of the university. Some of my work is facilitated by academic institutions—funded by SSHRC, say, or made possible by the fact that I have a salary and a pension and thus the financial stability to make podcasts that don't *need* to make money—and some of it is constrained by what kinds of publishing and collaboration are visible to academia and by the way my own frames of reference have been shaped by academic culture. It has taken ongoing and concerted work to unlearn the idea that my value as a human is directly proportionate to my productivity, that working hard is inherently virtuous, and that caring about what you do means putting it above everything else in your life.

Within the framework of the neoliberal university, capitalist scarcity holds sway. We are constantly being told that there isn't enough to go around—not enough grants, not enough students, not enough office space—and thus that anything one person gains comes at a direct cost to us. That kind of logic discourages generosity, collaboration, and relationality in favor of competition and individualism. Co-author more, your articles will count for less. Commit your time and energy to teaching and service and you'll get fewer grants, less prestige, and thus are less likely to be promoted. It's not a coincidence that the higher ranks in academia are still disproportionately occupied by straight white able-bodied cis men, a demographic who are less likely to be enmeshed in complex networks of care for all kinds of reasons. A 2018 study, for example, found that “the adoption of gender-neutral tenure clock stopping policies substantially reduced female tenure rates while substantially increasing male tenure rates” (Antecol et al. 2018), while a 2023 study of the pandemic's impact on research productivity found that “the

gender gap in research productivity increased during the COVID-19 pandemic” (Lee et al. 2023).¹³ Both studies attribute these gaps in tenure rates and research productivity to women’s likelihood to have greater childcare and domestic responsibilities.

It may be tempting, then, to think of care work as a burden that takes a negative toll on female academics’ careers—but, as Brenna Clarke Gray explains in her account of care labor in universities during the COVID-19 pandemic, care is only burdensome because our institutions make it so by refusing to make space for it. [*Zena: Yet these institutions also demand these forms of care in order to function. They just don’t resource or reward them, and often actively get in the way of caring. It’s a fundamentally extractive dynamic that mimics the ways caring relations play out in numerous contexts.*] And that framing of care as burdensome, she continues, is a betrayal to the forms of relationality, intimacy, and connection that draw us into care work: “It feels, for me, like a rejection of myself and my choices to imagine caring for my son is exclusively burdensome, but our institutional structures tell this story about our experiences for us” (Gray 2022).

Rereading this piece recently, I was struck by Gray’s reminder that care is indivisible from our embodiment and that much of the rejection of care within institutions comes from a related rejection of the messiness and complexity of embodiment:

The academic myth of the life of the mind, separate from the troubles of the body, was always designed to keep certain bodies out: a white, able, male body is neutral, default, and acceptable because it draws no undue attention to itself; other bodies are not. The disabled body, the pregnant or lactating or post-partum body, the Black, brown, or Indigenous body, the queer body: these shapes are not welcome, nor are the experiences and perspectives these bodies hold. These bodies and the university are at odds, and the tradition for these bodies is always to assimilate as best we can. (Gray 2022)

This, for me, is why being a shit disturber is so enmeshed in my queer feminist care ethics: because it is impossible for me to care for myself and my community while also assimilating to the institution and its norms. For many of us troublesome non-normative bodies, we pay the price of buy-in or burn-out, either deciding that it’s easier just to fit ourselves into the structures as they currently exist or getting so exhausted by all this extra care work that we leave academia altogether. Zena pointed me to a 2022 article by Sophie Lewis, “Free Anthrogenesis: Antiwork Abortion,” that challenges simplistic offerings of care as a solution to all of academia’s problems:

13. Thanks to Zena for pointing me to these studies.

It is a source of frustration to me, as a para-academic, that the coercive character of care under capitalism still seems to go under-emphasised, notwithstanding the “care turn” in academia. In some quarters even of this avowedly critical field, it is sometimes insisted, in sub-*The Beatles* fashion, that what the world needs is simply care, care, care. Inasmuch as care is romanticised, flattened, and abstracted from capitalism, patriarchy, and the state, there can be no liberatory politics around it.

Those on the front lines of forced care would surely be surprised to hear that care is an unalloyed good that we simply need to fund more of. Abolitionists, in my opinion, won't get far thinking of care in this way. No, the meatiest parts of the politics of care dwell in questions like: care *how*, care *why*, care *where*?

I experience a version of the meatiness of this question in the lived experience of my queer feminist collaborations, as we recognize that care is labor and must be recognized as such. Care can help to keep us afloat, but it can also sink us.

Queer Feminist Care Ethics as Making Hard Decisions

Care work, collaboration, and relationality may not be inherently burdensome, but they are inherently work. As I write this, I'm popping back and forth to answer emails and respond to chats in Slack, my attention divided between two upcoming events: a big restructuring meeting for Witch, Please Productions and the launch of my new co-authored book, *Podcast or Perish*. My co-author Lori Beckstead and I are exchanging emails about the importance of inviting everyone who contributed to the book in some way to the launch, which is tricky because we did all kinds of wild things with it like crowdsourced peer review, but also really vital because the book is about collaboration. At Witch, Please Productions we're in need of new systems for managing our work and prioritizing our time now that we've expanded from one show to three, and in preparation for the meeting, I've shared a visioning document from a retreat we did in December 2022, facilitated by Zena Sharman and Scout Gray. I describe this moment to illustrate why it's important to name the kind of labor that underpins collaborations and the way in which queer feminist collaborations can facilitate that labor by making it visible and by valuing it explicitly. It may be work, but it's work that pays off when it comes time to do hard things.

I want to turn to another anecdote here, but first I need to backtrack a few years and talk about how Witch, Please Productions came to be.¹⁴

14. My understanding of how anecdotes produce knowledge was developed through the peer review process for *Secret Feminist Agenda*. In her review of season 2, Anna Poletti (n.d.) invited me to consider how I was making use of the anecdote in my

Marcelle and I made *Witch, Please* from February 2015 to September 2018, during which time Marcelle had her first child and completed her PhD while I finished a post-doc and began a tenure-track position at SFU.¹⁵ In 2018, a variety of obstacles—lack of time and creative energy, geographic distance, lawsuits—led us to put the show on indefinite hiatus. In 2020, we joined *Not Sorry Productions*, creators of *Harry Potter and the Sacred Text*, to relaunch the show with a new format. Marcelle had agreed to the reboot on one condition: she did not have the capacity to do any of the production, and if I did the production it would make our collaborative relationship feel unbalanced, which meant we needed a producer. *Not Sorry Productions* paired us with one of their producers, Ariana Martinez, who helped us to figure out our new structure and to launch a Patreon that would ultimately pay for their work. When Ariana stepped back to focus on other projects, we put out an open call for a new producer, which is how we found Hannah Rehak, a.k.a. Coach. When we eventually parted ways with *Not Sorry* and became fully independent, Coach came with us, becoming a co-founder of *Witch, Please Productions* and a full creative partner in this collective work.

As we began to bring on more collaborators to build *Witch, Please Productions* with us and to share the work as it grew, Coach prioritized helping our new team members take ownership over different dimensions of the project while also offering to mentor them in production and editing skills. Zoe Mix joined the team in 2021, initially as a work study student catching up on our backlog of untranscribed episodes and then, once Coach realized what a talented artist Zoe is, as our social media manager and marketing designer. Both Coach and Judee had something to add here about our approach to hiring and job title creation:

Coach: Something really transformative for me was when we figured out everything Zoe was capable of and then she and I talked about her goals and then I came to you and Marcelle and was like, what should Zoe's title be? And I think it was you who was like "whatever title is most strategic." Or maybe I said that? I honestly don't remember because now it feels so natural to me to think of titles as strategic more than accurate. The work Zoe was doing could not be contained by a title anyway, so might as well make it one that will help her find more work in a field of her choosing.

Judee: This is something Hannah and Stacey encouraged me to do at The SpokenWeb Podcast as well! Such a great idea to get people's input on how they want to frame their work/what they want the name of their role to be.

podcast, encouraging me to say more "about the anecdote as a practice and form of knowledge production." I responded by making episode 3.29 on feminist anecdotes.

15. Thanks to Coach for reminding me that it's important to document personal as well as professional transformations in the history of our collaborative podcasting. In her words, "life sure has been happening . . . and somehow there's still been space or at least creative energy to bring to one another."

Gaby Iori joined in 2022 to help us build out our digital assets and stayed on as our digital projects coordinator, overseeing our newsletter and a number of our Patreon perks. Around that time, Marcelle began developing a new podcast, *Gender Playground*, with her long-time friend Raimi Marx. In 2023, we ended our second run of *Witch, Please* and launched a new flagship show, *Material Girls*, and then in 2024, Gaby and Zoe and I launched a new show called *Making Worlds*. Shall we let Coach insert one more anecdote here?

Coach: It's worth noting that Making Worlds was a show idea that came, in some ways, from a misunderstanding in our visioning meeting of 2022 that left you feeling responsible for coming up with a new podcast idea. When we recorded the pilot it left us all, particularly you, feeling bad and hurt. And you brought that to me and Marcelle and we all did our best to work through how it had come to be, what we could have done better, etc. And the decision was to table the idea because we were all excited about Material Girls, but to continue thinking about Making Worlds. I made the commitment to begin talking about it again in the summer of 2023 once Material Girls had launched. And then through that, and because I happened to know that Gaby liked video editing, and Zoe wanted to produce, and you were excited about the idea, and Marcelle would be working on Gender Playground, Making Worlds came to be!

From an amateur podcast made on Marcelle's couch with a single microphone to a production company that employs seven people (or at least pays their invoices when they send them) and makes three shows, we've grown significantly in the near-decade of our collaboration. And that time has not been without its growing pains.

One of the great pleasures and challenges of doing publicly engaged, community accountable, and explicitly political scholarly work is the way it invites responsiveness. In the early days of *Witch, Please* (2015–18), Marcelle and I learned this when listeners called us in for unthinking transphobia or ableism. I learned it differently while making *Secret Feminist Agenda* (2017–20), when a January 2018 episode called “White Feminists & Listening to Criticism” went viral on Twitter in the worst possible way. And we learned it all over again, this time as a team, when, in the fall of 2023, our listeners began asking us to comment on Israel's violent attacks on Gaza. This ask was not an inappropriate or unexpected one: we have been outspoken in our critique of colonialism, and Israel's ongoing apartheid regime in Palestine is undeniably a violent form of colonial power. It quickly became clear that the hardest thing, for us, would be arriving at decisions on how we would act in a collaborative and care-centered way, while also navigating the rapid and often reactionary waves of social media. We wanted our responses to be aligned with our values and appropriate to our position as a group who make media about anti-oppressive politics, critical theory, and pop culture, and we wanted them to be choices we could all stand behind.

We worked together through the fall and winter of 2023 to develop a multi-pronged response that took seriously Marcelle and my role as public scholars and educators as well as the whole team's commitment to decolonization. We started a fundraiser for the Palestine Children's Relief Fund, through which we directly encouraged our listeners to donate to relief efforts. We incentivized donations by promising a bonus episode, released in December 2023, in which I interviewed Marcelle about her 2015 article "Comic Relief: The Ethical Intervention of *Avodah Aravit* (*Arab Labor*) in Political Discourses of Israel–Palestine"; the bonus episode was accompanied by an unpaywalled version of the article. Our goal was to provide listeners with an entry point to understanding the politics of Israel and Palestine through the lens of popular culture, which is our podcast's focus. We also chose a topic for *Material Girls* that would let us think through the relationship between social media and activism through a slightly more distanced lens. In the November 2023 episode "Blackout Tuesday x Platformization" (Kosman and McGregor 2023), we talked about the danger of conflating social media with the public sphere and posting with political action.

We knew both episodes would articulate our pro-Palestinian stance, but by mid-November, as Israel's attacks on Gaza grew more deadly and it became increasingly clear that we were witnessing a genocide that mainstream North American media would refuse to name as such, we decided that posting a public statement—something we'd originally worried would feel like performative politics without meaningful action to back it up—might actually be necessary. I have a fraught relationship with statements; it often feels like their point is to convince other people that I'm good rather than creating actual change. But as we watched the way our own communities were becoming divided over the need to name what was happening in Gaza as a genocide and to renounce colonial violence in all its forms, we agreed that our responsibility as public scholars was to communicate clearly what we understood to be happening.

We posted the following statement to our Instagram page on November 24, 2023, and then again on November 25 because Instagram literally disappeared it the first time:

Witch, Please Productions stands with the people of Palestine and calls for an immediate and permanent ceasefire and for the end of the State of Israel's colonial apartheid regime against Palestinians.

As a team of artists, academics, and creators, our work is rooted in our shared feminist and decolonial politics. We strive for the work we put into the world to contribute to conversations about collective liberation, which includes an ongoing critique of colonial occupation in Canada and the U.S., as well as globally. The occupation of Palestine by the State of Israel is colonialism in practice, and we join the international community that is full-throatedly condemning not only the current genocidal attacks

in Gaza but the decades-long displacement and ethnic cleansing of Palestinians funded by U.S. and Canadian tax dollars.

Those of us who are proudly Jewish join in the call for this violence not to be done in our names. Zionism does not protect Jewish life; the liberation of one people cannot come at the cost of another people's oppression. None of us are free until all of us are free. (Witch, Please Productions 2023)

This statement was written collaboratively, and slowly; we took the time to make sure it said exactly what we wanted it to say and that everyone on the team would feel comfortable having it attributed to them. We talked seriously about the kinds of risks such a statement might present to us, risks that were unequally distributed: I have tenure at a university in Canada, which is very different from working in media in the United States, for example. We talked about the financial consequences of people leaving our Patreon in response, because our Patreon revenue directly pays everyone who works on the show. And we talked about the emotional toll of potential blowback. We were worried about getting in trouble. We acted anyway.

In the end, our listenership came through. Not all of them—some sent us messages condemning our stance and some withdrew their financial support—but a vast majority. I feel a certain pride, as an educator, in knowing that a community of people who have been engaging closely with our work are not likely to be surprised by our support of Palestine. I am also proud of how we worked together as a team to do something that was risky but that aligned with our values—that, in this moment, we understood our shared commitment to collective liberation to matter more than our bottom line, while also recognizing that our people needed to pay their rent. It's a small action, in the scheme of things, but small actions still matter. I believe in the value of public education and publicly engaged scholarship, and I believe in what we can do when we collectively commit to holding one another up and holding one another accountable. As Zena described it in one of her comments on this article, *"solidarities can grow from getting in (good) trouble together, in the spirit of being gay and doing crimes . . . while also recognizing that the consequences of such trouble-causing are not equitably distributed."* Sometimes insisting that no one is in trouble also means deciding that we can get in trouble together—and weather the risks together as well.

Conclusion: Saying Our Values Out Loud

I've found myself writing a lot of manifestos lately. It's a process I return to often, a vital tool in my killjoy survival kit, as Sara Ahmed (2017) puts it, a bulwark against the overwhelming pressure to chase prestige and productivity over community care and

collective well-being. In my experience, naming your values isn't a one-and-done process but rather a kind of ritual or spellwork that must be practiced again and again. This article is a version of that work, an articulation of what matters to me right now, in the spring and summer of 2024. The Witch, Please Productions team participated collaboratively in a similar process of values-naming as part of our aforementioned December 2022 retreat, guided by Zena and Scout. [*Zena: The design of this process was itself grounded in relationality, queer care, and trauma-informed practice, as well as our multifaceted experience as facilitators.*] The goal of that retreat was to help us co-create a shared vision for moving forward that began from what they called "grounding in purpose," or discovering the "why" of Witch, Please Productions. We began by brainstorming what we each believed made *Witch, Please* unique and special, then worked together to identify themes and patterns that resonated with us collectively. Those themes included the importance of incorporating joy and curiosity into the process of learning, a commitment to keeping friendship at the heart of the project, and the shared desire to build a discursive space in which we take for granted that a better world is possible.

The one that resonated with us most powerfully, though—the one that we ended up having printed on water bottles so we could carry it around with us everywhere, often holding it up to the camera in a Zoom meeting as a collective reminder—was "no one is in trouble." Saying that no one is in trouble is about shifting away from a punitive and productivity-focused approach to our work; it refuses to punish people for their capacity, trusting instead that everyone is doing their best to contribute to the goals of the collective, and that missed deadlines and unfinished tasks instead speak to a mismatch of goals and team capacity. It's about assuming good intentions in one another and in our listeners, about engaging with critiques even if they don't immediately make sense to us. And it's about refusing to let possible repercussions distract us from our values, when the fear of making someone mad, of "getting in trouble," might lead us to stay silent or to make the safe instead of the values-aligned choice.

No one is okay right now. We're burnt out and traumatized, we're filled with grief over ongoing wars and genocides and escalating climate change catastrophes, and we're navigating all of this within a late capitalist hellscape that insists we become ever more productive, ever more efficient, while our social safety nets are stripped away and costs of living creep ever upwards.¹⁶ In moments of collective crisis like this, it is tempting to find someone to blame, ideally someone within our sphere of influence: students who aren't handing their assignments in on time, colleagues who skip meetings and don't answer emails, neighbors who play their music too loud or don't sort their recycling

16. For more on grief in the face of climate change, listen to *Future Ecologies Presents: The Right to Feel*, a two-episode podcast miniseries produced by Judith Burr based on Naomi Klein's graduate seminar on "Ecological Affect" (Burr and Klein 2024).

properly. But the carceral logics of finding someone to blame will only isolate us further, amplifying the conditions that turn us against one another in the first place. My queer feminist podcasting collaborations have also been experiments in centering care and well-being. Through them I have learned that other ways are not only possible but also pleasurable and maybe even transformative.

Author Biographies

Hannah McGregor (she/they) is Associate Professor and Director of Publishing at Simon Fraser University, Canada. Their research focuses on the intersections of publishing and social change, with a focus on scholarly podcasting. She cohosts *Material Girls*, a pop culture podcast that uses critical theory to understand the zeitgeist, and *The SpokenWeb Podcast*, a collaborative research output of the SSHRC-funded SpokenWeb partnership; she is also the co-director of the Amplify Podcast Network. Their books including *A Sentimental Education* (Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2022), *Podcast or Perish: Peer Review and Knowledge Creation for the 21st Century*, co-authored with Lori Beckstead and Ian M. Cook (Bloomsbury, 2024), and *Clever Girl*, a queer feminist reevaluation of *Jurassic Park* (ECW Press, 2024). Email: hannah_mcgregor@sfu.ca; Website: hannahmcgregor.com

Judith (Judee) Burr is a PhD student in the Geography Program at the University of British Columbia. She is an interdisciplinary feminist scholar of the fire-prone ecosystems of Western North America and the historical geographies of power, governance, and knowledge that shape them. She produced the peer-reviewed scholarly podcast *Listening to Fire Knowledges in and around the Okanagan Valley*, which uses creative audio storytelling techniques to create a multi-vocal narration of regional fire history. It is published in the journal *BC Studies* and available on podcasting platforms.

Siobhan McMenemy is Senior Editor at Wilfrid Laurier University Press. She has worked in scholarly publishing for over twenty years, during which time she has built book lists and edited scholarship in the social sciences and humanities. She is committed to publishing scholarship by and about members of communities who have been pushed to the margins for too long. Her editorial work includes cross- and interdisciplinary research, hybrid genres, and collaborative, born-digital scholarship, of which her work on scholarly podcasting is a part.

Hannah Rehak is a performer, podcast producer, and filmmaker with over a decade of experience in improv and sketch comedy. She is currently a NYCo understudy and a

faculty member at the Second City New York. When not doing and teaching improv and sketch, Hannah can be found writing headlines for *Reductress*, producing the pop culture podcast *Material Girls*, or rearranging her furniture.

Zena Sharman, PhD, is a writer and consultant whose body of work pivots around the questions “How do we create change?” and “How do we care for each other?” She’s the author or editor of three books, including *The Care We Dream Of: Liberatory and Transformative Approaches to LGBTQ+ Health* (Arsenal Pulp Press, 2021) and the Lambda Literary award-winning anthology *The Remedy: Queer and Trans Voices on Health and Health Care* (Arsenal Pulp Press, 2016). Her next book, a memoir, is forthcoming from Arsenal Pulp Press in 2025. She’s an engaging speaker who regularly gives virtual and in-person talks and workshops to audiences across North America. You can learn more about Zena and her work at <https://zenasharman.com>.

References

- Adler-Bolton, Beatrice, Artie Vierkant, Phil Rocco, and Jules Gill-Peterson, hosts. n.d. *Death Panel*. Podcast. <https://www.deathpanel.net>.
- Ahmed, Sara. 2017. *Living a Feminist Life*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Ahmed, Sara. 2021. *Complaint!* Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Amplify Podcast Network. 2022a. *The Amplify Manifesto*. Directed by Stacey Copeland and Hannah McGregor. Sound-designed by Stacey Copeland. An accompanying zine/transcript is designed by Lauren Jeanneau. <https://amplifypodcastnetwork.ca/about/amplify-manifesto/>.
- Amplify Podcast Network. 2022b. “Be Gay, Do Podcasts, How Amplify Got Its Start.” *Amplified* (audioblog), January 17, 2022. <https://amplifypodcastnetwork.ca/2022/01/17/amplified-be-gay-do-podcasts-how-amplify-got-its-start/>.
- Antecol, Heather, Kelly Bedard, and Jenna Stearns. 2018. “Equal but Inequitable: Who Benefits from Gender-Neutral Tenure Clock Stopping Policies?” *American Economic Review* 108, no. 9: 2420–41. <https://doi.org/10.1257/aer.20160613>.
- Bailey, Moya. 2015. “#transform(ing)DH Writing and Research: An Autoethnography of Digital Humanities and Feminist Ethics.” *Digital Humanities Quarterly* 9, no. 2. <https://www.digitalhumanities.org/dhq/vol/9/2/000209/000209.html>.
- Burr, Judith, host. 2022. *Listening to Fire Knowledges in and around the Okanagan Valley: A Podcast*. Produced by Judith Burr. July 20, 2022. <https://www.listeningtofirepodcast.ca/>.
- Burr, Judith, and Naomi Klein, hosts. 2024. *Future Ecologies Presents: The Right to Feel*. Podcast, produced by Judith Burr. July 17, 2024. <https://www.futureecologies.net/listen/the-right-to-feel>.
- The Care Collective. 2020. *The Care Manifesto: The Politics of Interdependence*. New York: Verso Books.
- Copeland, Stacey, and Hannah McGregor. 2021. *A Guide to Academic Podcasting*. Waterloo, Ontario: Amplify Podcast Network and Wilfrid Laurier University Press. <https://doi.org/10.51644/9781777948801>.
- Copeland, Stacey, Hannah McGregor, and Katherine McLeod. 2025. “The Kitchen Table Is Always Where We Are: Podcasting as Feminist Self-Reflexive Practice.” In *Podcast Studies: Practice into*

- Theory*, edited by Dario Llinares and Lori Beckstead. Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press.
- Gray, Brenna Clarke. 2022. "The University Cannot Love You: Gendered Labour, Burnout and the Covid-19 Pivot to Digital." In *Feminist Critical Digital Pedagogy: An Open Book*, edited by Suzan Koseoglu and George Veletsianos. Provo, UT: EdTech Books. https://edtechbooks.org/feminist_digital_ped/zXHDRJAq.
- Halberstam, Jack. 2011. *The Queer Art of Failure*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Hamington, Maurice, and Michael Flower, eds. 2021. *Care Ethics in the Age of Precarity*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Hyer, Halsey, host. 2022. *University of Minnesota Press*. Podcast, episode 40, "Side Affects: Being Trans and Feeling Bad with Hil Malatino and Zena Sharman." June 14, 2022. <https://share.transistor.fm/s/c3470ba2>.
- Klein, Naomi. 2023. *Doppelganger: A Trip into the Mirror World*. Toronto: Knopf Canada.
- Kosman, Marcelle. 2015. "Comic Relief: The Ethical Intervention of 'Avodah 'Aravit (Arab Labor) in Political Discourses of Israel–Palestine." *Comedy Studies* 6, no. 1: 18–35. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2040610X.2015.1026074>.
- Kosman, Marcelle, and Hannah McGregor. 2023. *Material Girls*. Podcast episode, "Blackout Tuesday x Platformization." November 27, 2023. <https://www.ohwitchplease.ca/all-episodes/materialgirls-blackouttuesdayxplatformization>.
- Lee, Kiran G. L., Adele Mennerat, Dieter Lukas, Hannah L. Dugdale, and Antica Culina. 2023. "The Effect of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Gender Gap in Research Productivity within Academia." *eLife* 12:e85427. <https://doi.org/10.7554/eLife.85427>.
- Lewis, Sophie. 2022. "Free Anthrogenesis: Antiwork Abortion." *Salvage*, June 1, 2022. <https://salvage.zone/free-anthrogenesis-antiwork-abortion/>.
- Maimann, Kevin. 2024. "Where Does 'Be Gay, Do Crime' Even Come From?" *Xtra Magazine*, March 5, 2024. <https://xtramagazine.com/culture/be-gay-do-crime-explained-263699>.
- Malatino, Hil. 2020. *Trans Care*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Malatino, Hil. 2022. *Side Affects: On Being Trans and Feeling Bad*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Malatino, Hil, Amy McKiernan, and Sarah Clark Miller. 2023. "Care Ethics Otherwise: Introduction." *Essays in Philosophy* 24, no. 1–2: 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.5840/eip2023241-21>.
- McGregor, Hannah, host. 2018a. *Secret Feminist Agenda*. Podcast, season 2, episode 1, "White Feminists & Listening to Criticism." January 19, 2018. <https://secretfeministagenda.com/2018/01/19/episode-2-1-white-feminists-listening-to-criticism/>.
- McGregor, Hannah, host. 2018b. *Secret Feminist Agenda*. Podcast, season 2, episode 7, "Playing, Losing, Failing." March 1, 2018. <https://secretfeministagenda.com/2018/03/01/episode-2-7-playing-losing-failing/>.
- McGregor, Hannah, host. 2019a. *Secret Feminist Agenda*. Podcast, season 3, episode 28, "Living a Feminist Life with Sara Ahmed." May 3, 2019. <https://secretfeministagenda.com/2019/05/03/episode-3-28-living-a-feminist-life-with-sara-ahmed/>.
- McGregor, Hannah, host. 2019b. *Secret Feminist Agenda*. Podcast, season 3, episode 29, "Feminist Anecdotes." May 10, 2019. <https://secretfeministagenda.com/2019/05/10/episode-3-29-feminist-anecdotes/>.
- McGregor, Hannah. 2022. *A Sentimental Education*. Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press.
- McGregor, Hannah, and Stacey Copeland. 2022. "Why Podcast? Podcasting as Publishing, Sound-Based Scholarship, and Making Podcasts Count." *Kairos* 27, no. 1. <https://kairos.technorhetoric.net/27.1/topoi/mcgregor-copeland/index.html>.

- Piepzna-Samarasinha, Leah Lakshmi. 2018. *Care Work: Dreaming Disability Justice*. Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press.
- Poletti, Anna. n.d. Review of *Secret Feminist Agenda*, Season 2. Wilfrid Laurier University Press. <https://www.wlupress.wlu.ca/Scholarly-Podcasting-Open-Peer-Review/Secret-Feminist-Agenda/Season-2/Scholarly-Reviews-of-the-Secret-Feminist-Agenda-Podcast-s2/Review-by-Anna-Poletti>.
- Sharman, Zena. 2021. *The Care We Dream Of: Liberatory and Transformative Approaches to LGBTQ+ Health*. Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press.
- Sharman, Zena. 2023. "Imagining More Care-Full Futures: Care Work as Prefigurative Praxis." *Essays in Philosophy* 24, no. 1–2: 11–25. <https://doi.org/10.5840/eip202352411>.
- Spade, Dean. 2020. *Mutual Aid: Building Solidarity during This Crisis (and the Next)*. New York: Verso Books.
- Witch, Please Productions (@ohwitchplease). 2023. "Witch, Please Productions stands with the people of Palestine and calls for an immediate and permanent ceasefire and for the end of the State of Israel's colonial apartheid regime against Palestinians. . . ." Instagram photo, November 25, 2023. https://www.instagram.com/p/C0FWtEQS6lz/?img_index=1.

Appendix: Email from Siobhan McMenemy, sent April 23, 2024

Greetings Hannah,

I'm writing this note with a tinge of regret, as I read your piece with a good deal of interest and pleasure and began the task of engaging with the work and the others' comments on the doc when I hit a wall. I'll spare you the litany of responsibilities pressing in on me at the moment. It's dull stuff. But it sure is all coming due at once and I just can't find the necessary time and energy to do your piece the justice it deserves.

It seems, however, that you've received some feedback from Zena that certainly echoes some of my own broad responses, particularly where she encourages you to write more on the implications—positive and negative, though I tend to think they're more positive than negative—of having received substantial funding from SSHRC for unconventional work. Relatedly, you might consider what it means that you chose to work with a university press editor, especially since you nearly *didn't* work with me, given the level of my initial ignorance about the podcast form. As I recall, our earliest conversations were in part about determining the differences between a journalistic podcast and a scholarly podcast, and certainly you weren't comfortable not having a ready definition to hand for 'scholarly podcasting.' Then, the series you pitched, while incorporating your early knowledge that an interesting podcast could embrace pedagogical practices without being dull, nevertheless seemed the kind of proposal that people pitch when they're making assumptions about what a scholarly publisher expects or wants to publish. I have spent a quarter of a century pushing back against such assumptions. But what made you forge ahead with me and WLU Press?

Our work together has helped me to articulate my commitment to experimentation, creative collaboration, queer feminist agitating, and an accompanying willingness to reevaluate/reform/rewrite so-called best practices to admit that practices are never *best*, so much as *as good as we can make it for the time being*. In exercising the practices we practice them as exercises and develop stronger practices by virtue of the practicing.

Our work embraces the big gay shit-disturbing spirit, but it's worth noting (and this is what Zena may be getting at) that the conventional stages of evaluation at the funding agency and at the Press nevertheless lay in front of us and we had no trouble with our encounters with them. No one questioned the ways we wanted to experiment. In fact, everyone encouraged and embraced and pushed us further along. Why is that, do you think?

I'm sure you'll have been feeling overtaxed with your programme directorship and and and. I know I've been feeling that way over here. I don't want these comments to

leave you with the impression that your piece needs a tonne of additional thinking. I think you have ideas and responses to these matters already, so I'm hoping you'll have the energy to elaborate a bit more about them, because I remain utterly fascinated by the ways in which, from my point of view, anyway, scholarly publishers—and funders of scholarship—seem ready to do the work necessary to shift conventions in our corner of the publishing industry, but people *still* assert a generalized characterisation of the scholarly publisher as stodgy and dull and straightlaced and conservative.

It seems to me that the biggest problem is that the big gay shit disturbers are still seriously outnumbered and there aren't enough people showing up with their pitchforks to do some of the work of shovelling alongside us. The perennial activist problem is how we deal with this?

I'm sorry I couldn't sit down with the document and engage with it the way I'd hope to, but I appreciate its—your—spirit and energy and I appreciate your generous invitation to comment on the work. I'm not an author here. I'm an interlocutor. No need to worry about citation and so on. Honestly. If my comments and queries are useful, please use them. I know they're in excellent hands.

I'm looking forward to working with you again on the next project . . .

Take care.

Best,
Siobhan