

SYMPOSIUM: PODCASTING: A DECADE IN THE LIFE OF A “NEW” AUDIO MEDIUM

Podcasting, *Welcome to Night Vale*, and the Revival of Radio Drama

Andrew J. Bottomley

This article takes the surrealist fictionalized talk radio-style podcast Welcome to Night Vale (2012–Present; WNV) as a case study of the revival of the mid-twentieth century radio drama form. With affordable digital production tools and the inexpensive distribution of podcasts over the internet, WNV is helping to foster a new wave of creative audio production. Yet, much of this newfound creativity is arriving through a remediation of older radio forms, techniques, and styles. Putting this “new media” in historical and cultural perspective, the author argues, emphasizes the many continuities present during moments of media change, troubling simplistic notions of media disruption.

Something unusual happened in the podcasting world in July 2013: a relatively unknown, independently produced serial drama about the strange goings-on in a fictionalized American Southwest town suddenly leaped to the top of the Apple iTunes Podcasts charts, surpassing chart mainstays like *WTF with Marc Maron*, *The Nerdist*, *TEDTalks*, and American public radio powerhouses *Radiolab*, *Freakonomics*, and *This American Life*.¹ Debuting a year prior in June 2012, the twice-monthly podcast series *Welcome to Night Vale* (WNV) had received approximately 150,000 downloads across its first 25 episodes. With the help of an outpouring of fan support on social networking Web site Tumblr, the series abruptly gained 150,000 downloads in a single week; in total, WNV had 2.5 million downloads in July 2013 alone and another 5.8 million downloads that August (Carlson, 2013; “Making,” 2013). The podcast has remained in or near iTunes’ Top 20 rankings in the United States ever since, and regularly charts internationally too (<http://www.itunescharts.net>). The

Andrew J. Bottomley (M.A., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2011) is a doctoral candidate in media and cultural studies in the Department of Communication Arts at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. His research interests include the cultural history of broadcasting in the United States and the history of new and emerging media, in particular the development of Internet radio, podcasting, and other innovative forms of Web audio.

popularity of *WNV* is remarkable for two reasons. First, it is an independent podcast succeeding in a space increasingly dominated by professional media producers, in particular people and institutions affiliated with NPR public radio, and celebrity entertainers, such as Maron and fellow comedians like Adam Carolla and Chris Hardwick. Second, and most important for the analysis provided here, *WNV* is a radio drama—a format that was central to radio’s “golden age” from the 1930s through the 1950s, but which has been almost entirely absent from U.S. airwaves in recent decades.² In this article, I examine *WNV* as a case study of how podcasting has opened up spaces for a new wave of creative audio production. Yet, much of this newfound creativity is arriving through a remediation of older radio forms, techniques, and styles—most notably radio drama, along with local community radio and fringe categories of talk radio. That is, there is little about podcasting that is truly new, when the full range of radio’s history and forms are taken into account.

Welcome to Night Vale tells the story of Night Vale, a small desert town somewhere in the Southwestern United States, where strange, supernatural events are commonplace: a hovering Glow Cloud rains dead animals and controls the local school board; the Sheriff’s Secret Police are run by an unknown leader and surveil the town’s citizens with Gestapo-like tactics; The Dog Park is surrounded by an electrified fence, hosts meetings of mysterious Hooded Figures, and is off limits to dogs and people; unidentified lights and sounds regularly emerge from nearby Radon Canyon but citizens are prohibited from speaking about them; a subway system spontaneously appears; a shady private corporation, StrexCorp, runs the neighboring town of Desert Bluffs and steadily attempts to infiltrate Night Vale; and a tiny underground city is located underneath the local bowling alley. What’s more, these unusual entities and occurrences are treated as mostly normal by the series’ narrator, Cecil Palmer (voice acted by Cecil Baldwin), a radio host at Night Vale Community Radio (NVCR). A hybrid of the science fiction, horror, and comedy genres, the podcast utilizes a serialized narrative form, weaving together a story that features more than 50 recurring characters and an expansive geographic universe with over 60 locations. Yet, with a few exceptions, the only voice the audience hears is that of Cecil. That is because the series is narratively framed as a radio broadcast with the podcast listener positioned as a listener of Cecil’s news program on NVCR. While Cecil is occasionally joined by a guest or plays pre-recorded material on-air, the majority of *WNV*’s 60-plus episodes consist of Cecil, the radio journalist, reporting on the actions of the townspeople and quoting other characters in what is, effectively, an ongoing monologue.

Created by New York City experimental theater writers and performers Joseph Fink and Jeffrey Cranor, *WNV* is among a small but growing niche of United States-based radio drama podcasts that also includes *The Truth, Our Fair City, Knifepoint Horror, Getting On with James Urbaniak, Imaginary Worlds, We’re Alive,* and *The Thrilling Adventure Hour* (a live staged production with which *WNV* has collaborated). Fink and Cranor were members of the New York Neo-Futurists, a performance art oriented experimental theater collective, when they started *WNV*; however, the podcast was developed independently and has no affiliation with

any radio station or podcast network. It is a free podcast, and to date episodes have remained commercial-free; the creators support themselves and the production through crowdfunding, merchandising, live performances, and select premium or bonus content, namely paid downloads of live show recordings (Greenfield, 2015). The way Fink and Cranor tell it, *WNV* is a profoundly D.I.Y. production: the pair collaboratively write the scripts, Baldwin (a friend from the New York Neo-Futurists) records all the audio alone in his apartment on a \$60 USB computer microphone, original music is mostly provided by another friend (Disparition, a.k.a. Jon Bernstein), and Fink edits the show in his apartment on Audacity, a free digital audio editing software application (Scherer, 2013). Audio files are uploaded to Libsyn, an inexpensive podcast hosting service that likely costs them about \$75/month (much less initially), and then aggregated free of charge to iTunes, Soundcloud, Stitcher, and various other podcast apps and internet radio platforms. Apart from social media accounts through Twitter, YouTube, and the like, the podcast has never paid for any advertising or promotional campaigns. Indeed, marketers have turned *WNV* into a case study for “viral marketing” done right (Kelley, 2013; Kilinskis, n.d.). Its success has been almost entirely driven by online fandom.

In many ways, then, *WNV* can be viewed as a textbook case of podcasting as a type of disruptive user-generated content. Indeed, back in its early days in the mid-2000s, the journalistic discourse on podcasting frequently framed it as a disruptive practice that mainly operated outside the existing media content industries, and in turn was capable of threatening those traditional industries. Podcasting is “the latest form of jailbreak media that has plain old citizens pulling up the microphone and mainstream media running scared,” wrote David Carr in *The New York Times* in 2005 (par. 3). That discourse of disruption continues today, albeit slightly tempered, with podcasting frequently positioned as a competitor to traditional media. For instance, podcasting’s audience growth is often correlated with declines in broadcast radio and television consumption (Willens, 2015). Much of the existing scholarly discourse on podcasting has also focused on its prevalence amongst independent, non-professional producers (i.e., amateurs) working outside the traditional media industries (Berry, 2006; Crofts, Dille, Fox, Retsema, & Williams, 2005; Heise, 2014; Markman, 2011; Markman & Sawyer, 2014). Podcasting is typically categorized as a type of de-professionalized, de-institutionalized “personal media” alongside other Web 2.0 forms of user-generated content, such as blogging and YouTube videos (Lüders, 2008). As such, it is strongly connected to discourses of “produsage” (Bruns, 2006), “participatory culture” (Jenkins et al., 2013), and broader theories about the democratizing effects of the Internet (Benkler, 2006; Castells, 2012)—all of which assert, to varying degrees and ends, that networked digital media like podcasting are opening up the media environment for an increasingly active audience, empowering more diverse cultural production and eroding traditional hierarchies between media producers and consumers/users/audiences.

While media scholars tend to accurately acknowledge that podcasting has more recently been widely adopted by traditional media producers and other corporate entities, there is nevertheless a romantic privileging of the amateur or independent

podcaster in their research. Moreover, there is a tendency in this research to focus on audio genres, styles, and forms that are presumably new, or at least socially or culturally distinct from the content of mainstream radio. The fact of the matter is that, in 2015, the podcasting field has become highly professionalized and increasingly consolidated. Almost every major American media outlet is present in the industry, from television networks like ESPN, CBS, and MSNBC to the new media companies BuzzFeed, Boing Boing, and HuffingtonPost to old-guard print media outlets like *The New Yorker* and *The New York Times*. A growing number of podcast networks have developed—Radiotopia (PRX), Gilmet Media, Panoply (Slate Group), Earwolf (Midroll Media), Nerdist, Maximum Fun—further consolidating podcast production and distribution (Greenfield, 2014). Accompanying this consolidation has been the proliferation of a few distinct styles borrowed from traditional radio production, including the public radio narrative journalism or “storytelling” approach.³ This is a style heard across popular United States podcasts like *This American Life*, *StartUp*, *The Moth*, and *99% Invisible*—and which has recently come under criticism for being overwhelmingly White, upper-middle class, and male (Kumanyika, 2015; Shapiro, 2013). There is certainly still space in podcasting for independent, non-hegemonic voices and perspectives. Yet, as the industry becomes more crowded and dominated by a handful of major players, the risk is that those voices will become harder and harder to hear.

All of this is to say that *WNV* represents the potential for podcasting to foster a new wave of creative audio production, and yet it is also something of an outlier in the contemporary United States podcasting industry. It is an independent production, made on a shoestring budget by a small group of creative personnel with no ties to the traditional radio industry, a podcasting network, or any other major media institution. (They are not truly amateurs or non-professionals, though, as they are trained theater writers and performers.) Despite the discourses of disruption and de-professionalization/de-institutionalization mentioned earlier, a truly independent production is a rarity amongst the ranks of today’s most consistently popular podcasts in the United States. *WNV* is also a radio drama, a genre/form that has all but disappeared from American airwaves since the early 1960s. As Neil Verma has shown (2012), radio drama was a staple of United States network radio programming during the medium’s “golden age” from the 1930s through the 1950s. It was a bastion for innovative dramatic storytelling and performance that greatly influenced both television and film conventions. With the cultural ascendance of television in the mid-century, though, the networks ceased to regularly produce drama on radio, due to the loss of advertiser sponsorship, programming shifts, and the breakup of the network model (Fink, 1981). Radio drama has continued to enjoy considerable popularity and institutional support in some foreign countries, including the United Kingdom. There, the BBC (with its public service monopoly) has maintained a commitment to high production quality radio drama, broadcasting hundreds of hours of radio plays each year, often featuring the talent of the nation’s biggest stage and screen stars (Hand & Traynor, 2011).⁴ In the United States, there have since been occasional radio drama productions, such as *CBS Radio Mystery Theater*

(1974–82), *The National Radio Theater of Chicago* (1973–86), the National Public Radio anthologies *EarPlay* (1971–81) and *Playhouse* (1981–2002), and the various KCRW productions of Joe Frank (1986–2002). Still, there has been extremely little in the way of new radio drama commissioned, and almost none whatsoever since the 1990s. If remembered at all today, radio drama is mostly regarded as a historical phenomenon, vintage programs nostalgically revisited through occasional “old-time radio” (OTR) broadcasts on local public radio stations and Web sites like Internet Archive (<https://archive.org>). In this light, *WNV* is unique, reviving a long-fallow format and, in the process, greatly expanding the universe of digital audio available to today’s listeners—introducing many younger audiences to radio drama for the very first time. Without the podcasting format—combined with affordable digital production tools and inexpensive distribution platforms like iTunes—there would likely be no contemporary radio drama being made, as there is no institutional support for drama within the current United States radio industry.⁵

In the remainder of this article, I wish to outline how *WNV*’s uniqueness is arriving through a remediation of these older radio forms, techniques, and styles—even though its producers and fans often distance the podcast from the medium of radio. To put it another way, *WNV* is not quite as new or unprecedented as it first seems when put into proper historical and cultural perspective. This is not meant to discount the podcast’s creativity: it is a skillfully written and acted series, and its particular mixture of genres and themes is highly original. Befuddled critics often resort to recombinant phrases to describe the series: “where David Lynch meets *The Twilight Zone*” (Baker-Whitelaw, 2013); “one part David Lynch, one part New Weird, and one part Bizarro fiction” (Doctorow, 2013); “like *A Prairie Home Companion* set in an arid version of the author Stephen King’s community of Castle Rock” (Biese, 2014). Other reviewers regularly compare the podcast to the work of authors H. P. Lovecraft, Lemony Snicket, and Douglas Adams. These descriptions can be read simply as attempts to make legible a text that is unfamiliar. Yet, as these appraisals suggest, much of the discourse surrounding *WNV* privileges literary, theatrical, or even filmic sources. Despite some similarities to other media, I argue that *WNV*’s core elements are all deeply rooted in radio. Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin’s concept of “remediation” explains how emerging media forms, from Renaissance painting to the Internet, present themselves “as refashioned and improved versions of other media” (2000, p. 15). That is, so-called new media always negotiate with, and incorporate elements of, pre-existing media in their formation, while simultaneously attempting to minimize their relation to the past and even erase all traces of mediation. Through this theory of remediation, it is possible to see how *WNV* both revives classic radio and reconstructs it for audiences in the hypermediated world of the twenty-first century.

The first radio form that *WNV* remediates is the radio drama. The podcast is a scripted, dramatized serial narrative that is written, performed, and produced to be heard. This fundamental structure and approach are hallmarks of radio drama.⁶ In interviews *WNV*’s creators, while usually regarding radio with a necessary deference, nevertheless discursively locate its roots in the theater and oral traditions.

"The inspiration came less from radio and more from the much older tradition of storytellers and monologists, people standing in front of you and telling you a story," claims Fink. "That's really where *WNV* came from for me, finding a format where you could find a single voice and have that single voice tell you a story. I think it was a lot more to do with the storytelling tradition for me than for radio" (as cited in Gallagher, 2014, par. 19). It is perhaps not surprising that Fink, trained in the theater rather than radio, would position *WNV* and himself in this way. Nonetheless, plays and speeches tend to be written and performed as single, non-serialized pieces; the serialized, multi-episode audio drama is the domain of radio (Hilmes, 1997). In terms of medium specificity, too, the podcast's recorded, non-live status lends itself more to radio than the stage.

WNV's use of genre is also highly reminiscent of mid-twentieth century radio drama. The mystery, science fiction, horror, and fantasy genres that the podcast mixes certainly all have rich histories within twentieth-century theater and literature. However, these were also among the most popular types of programming during radio's "golden age," with series like *Suspense* (1942–62), *Inner Sanctum Mystery* (1941–52), *The Whistler* (1942–55), and *X Minus One* (1955–58). Even prestige sustaining series, such as *The Mercury Theatre on the Air* (1938) and *Columbia Workshop* (1936–43; 1946–47), featured mysteries and thrillers, some with supernatural themes not dissimilar to *WNV*. What's more, a number of classic radio's most acclaimed psychological thrillers, including "Sorry, Wrong Number" (first broadcast on *Suspense*, 1943) and "The Hitch-Hiker" (first broadcast on the *Orson Welles Show*, 1941), are essentially one-person shows. Even "The War of the Worlds" (first broadcast on *The Mercury Theatre on the Air*, 1938)—perhaps the most famous of all American radio dramas, alongside "Sorry, Wrong Number"—features a lengthy 20-minute closing act that consists almost entirely of voiceover narration from Orson Welles as Professor Richard Pierson. Thus, there is considerable precedent in radio drama for the monologue format that Fink cites. Moreover, American radio and theater were intertwined during this era, with many of New York theater's writers, directors, and performers working in both industries. Plays that were produced to be listened to rather than seen, designed to take advantage of the intimacy of the voice and the listener's own imagination (as is the case with *WNV*), would have been culturally and aesthetically recognized as radio, not live theater (Guralnick, 1985).

The second radio form that *WNV* remediates is community radio. Most obviously, Cecil's broadcasts from NVCR are the narrative frame of the podcast. Community radio, though, is more than just a useful storytelling device; it is deeply embedded in nearly every aspect of the series. While the topics Cecil discusses may be unusual—the Children's Science Museum exhibit "The Moon is a Lie," the commercial airliner that suddenly appears and disappears inside local homes and schools, the cat that is stuck hovering in the NVCR men's bathroom, the faceless old woman who secretly lives in everyone's homes—the presentation of this bizarre information is actually quite normal. Each episode/broadcast is divided up into segments typical of local news and talk radio: news reports, community calendar notices, public

service announcements, live-read advertisements, traffic, and weather, as well as “breaking news” style interruptions with updates on unfolding events. A running gag in the series is that “the weather” is, inexplicably, a musical performance. There are various other segments, such as the “Emergency Dream Broadcast System” and horoscopes, which draw upon ordinary radio conventions. Despite exploiting their meanings, often for humorous effect, it is nonetheless these radio practices that structure the series and provide the context in which the narrative operates as entertainment. Moreover, diegetically the series is quite faithful to the concept of broadcasting. For instance, when Cecil’s love interest Carlos the scientist is attacked by the residents of the tiny underground city, Cecil is unable to join him because he must continue to broadcast live (Episode 25, “One Year Later”). Breaking news is regularly delivered to Cecil on-air via phone calls and notes from station staff. The verisimilitude of community radio is central to the podcast.

Notably, Cecil’s delivery of the strange and alarming goings-on in *Night Vale* is mostly deadpan; he *sounds* like a serene, reassuring local radio host. This juxtaposition creates much of *WNV*’s distinctiveness and charm. The podcast’s basic use of speech, music, noise, and silence—“the primary codes of radio” (Shingler & Wieringa, 1998, p. 51)—corresponds with standard radio production. Cecil’s DJ chatter creates continuity between the different elements (e.g., the news, traffic, weather), giving the podcast its basic form and also its distinct identity: it is a mode of speech that is intrinsically rooted in radio broadcasting. Cecil’s words are tightly scripted yet presented in such a way that sounds natural and spontaneous, so as to give the appearance of informality, creating a sense of intimacy between the broadcaster and the audience. As Andrew Crisell explains (1986), this scripted but impromptu sounding mode of address is a definitive characteristic of radio. Paddy Scannell points out that “the central fact of broadcasting is that it speaks from one place and is heard in another,” the result being that radio talk “attempts to bridge the gap by simulating co-presence with its listeners” (1991, p. 2). Cecil creates this co-presence by addressing the audience directly, using words and phrases such as “dear listeners.” He also often breaks from script at times, discussing his affection for Carlos or expressing his distaste for certain townspeople, such as the Apache Tracker (“What an asshole that guy is!”; Episode 13, “A Story About You”) or Steve Carlsberg (“I don’t even want to read an email from that jerk”; Episode 19A, “The Sandstorm”). These moments serve to endear Cecil to the listener, reducing broadcasting’s separation between addresser and addressee.

Indeed, podcast listeners might take Cecil’s quirks and digressions, where he gets emotional and rants about his personal life or opinions, as evidence of how *WNV* deviates from traditional radio. Such an argument, though, would be based on a rather narrow view of radio programming and styles. Much of the journalistic and fan discourse surrounding *WNV* compares it to NPR public radio-style programming, where hosts present with a civil, pseudo-objective vocal tone. The fact of the matter, though, is that news and talk radio is much more diverse than just the “socially conscious” (Loviglio, 2007, p. 78) and “serious, carefully modulated, genially authoritative” “NPR Voice” (Montopoli, 2003, par. 1), or for that matter,

the bombastic, snark-filled style of Howard Stern or Rush Limbaugh. There is a wide range of local radio in the United States, including non-profit community stations operating outside the NPR network as well as low-power FM (LPFM) and college and other educational stations, where the mode of delivery can be much more informal and personal. It is not so uncommon to hear hosts on these stations mix news with opinion, and even divulge impassioned confessions. Compared to these sources, Cecil's more idiosyncratic moments are not so surprising.

The aesthetic of an individual talking into a microphone and narrating all that he or she sees, thinks, or feels—the “intimate” style for which podcasting is so often applauded—is hardly a new technique, even if it does seem novel compared to most of the professionalized mainstream radio heard in the past few decades. That said, there are many parallels between *WNV* and fringe forms of talk radio, such as late-night paranormal and conspiracy theory programs like Art Bell's *Coast to Coast AM* (1984–Present; now hosted by George Noory), religious and right-wing conspiracy shows like *The Alex Jones Show* (1996–Present; previously *The Final Edition*), and love, sex, and relationship shows like *Loveline* (1983–Present; most famously hosted by the team of “Dr. Drew” Pinsky and Adam Carolla). On these programs, the frank, offbeat, or supernatural subject matter of *WNV* is the order of the day. To his credit, Cranor confirms the influence of some of these programs on his work (Heater, 2015). The point here, though, is there is a long and rich history of more marginal forms of talk radio that *WNV* is drawing upon but which receives little acknowledgement in popular discourses of radio—or in academic studies of radio, for that matter.

In conclusion, the *WNV* podcast remediates radio drama along with local community radio and other fringe categories of talk radio. The new practice of podcasting is not divorced from earlier media like radio; it is refashioning radio and, I would argue, paying homage to it. While *WNV* is, as I have shown, something of an outlier in today's podcasting field—among other things, there are still relatively few drama/fiction podcasts originating from the United States—some of its lessons can be extended to podcasting as a whole. When put into historical and cultural perspective, there is little that is truly “new” about podcasting, at least in terms of form, technique, and style. It is especially important here that we take into account the full range of radio's forms, not only those that are the most recent or the most culturally mainstream. This is true of radio drama as well as most of the news and talk and narrative journalism podcasts that are popular with modern audiences. These podcasts either have roots in broadcasting or, if scrutinized, are comparable to radio predecessors. As Josh Richmond has recently contended, podcasting to date has lacked a truly experimental or avant-garde “bleeding edge” (2015, par. 1). Nearly all of the available content falls into a handful of predictable genres or categories (e.g., interviews, news, talk, game shows, comedy, drama), each with roots in radio. Too much of the scholarly and journalistic discourse about the internet and podcasting divorces these “new media” from the past and depicts them as disruptive technologies. Instead, through the example of *WNV*, I have chosen to map out the continuities between the “old” and “new.” Podcasts like *WNV* may

be bringing much-welcomed diversity and ingenuity to the current audio field, but it is doing so through a creative refashioning of radio's rich cultural heritage.

Notes

¹iTunes is far from the only podcast distribution platform available; however, it accounts for approximately 70% of all podcast downloads internationally. As there currently exists no industry standard audience measurement system for podcasts, the iTunes chart rankings are generally accepted as the closest thing the format has to a publicly available "ratings" system. See Blattberg, 2015.

²I simply define radio drama (or "radio play") as a fictionalized, purely acoustic performance; it is a dramatized text (including adaptations of stage plays, novels, short stories, etc.) that is designed to be heard, its essence being sound.

³Curiously, *Night Vale* often gets lumped into this "storytelling" genre/category. However, that is a rather ambiguous formation, and nearly all the other texts grouped into the category are non-fiction.

⁴The BBC now has a digital-only channel, BBC Radio 4 Extra (launched in 2002 as BBC Radio 7), which specializes in drama and comedy.

⁵I adhere to Sterne et al.'s definition of podcasting as a practice—"a group of connected technologies, practices, and institutions"—rather than a new medium or a new format (2008, par. 20). Here, I am referring specifically to the technology of podcasting, delivering digital audio files via RSS feeds for on-demand playback.

⁶Radio dramas do not need to be serialized; many are single plays, including adaptations of stage plays. However, the serial, along with the series (self-contained episodes involving the same group of characters or actors), proved to be the preferred forms.

References

- Baker-Whitelaw, G. (2013, June 10). *Welcome to Night Vale*, where David Lynch meets *The Twilight Zone*. *The Daily Dot*. Retrieved from <http://www.dailydot.com/entertainment/welcome-to-night-vale-podcast/>
- Benkler, Y. (2006). *The wealth of networks: How social production transforms markets and freedom*. New Haven, CT: Yale University.
- Berry, R. (2006). Will the iPod kill the radio star?: Profiling podcasting as radio. *Convergence*, 12, 143–62.
- Biese, A. (2014, June 30). Cecil Baldwin & Joseph Fink on *Welcome to Night Vale*. *Asbury Park Press*. Retrieved from <http://www.app.com/story/entertainment/arts/2014/06/27/cecil-baldwin-joseph-fink-welcome-night-vale/11547587/>
- Blattberg, E. (2015, February 5). The measurement challenge facing podcast advertising. *Digiday*. Retrieved from <http://digiday.com/platforms/measurement-challenge-podcast-advertising/>
- Bolter, J. D., & Grusin, R. (2000). *Remediation: Understanding new media*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Bruns, A. (2006). Towards produsage: Futures for user-led content production. *Proceedings: Cultural Attitudes Towards Communication and Technology*, 1–10.
- Carlson, A. (2013, July 24). America's most popular podcast: What the internet did to *Welcome to Night Vale*. *The Awl*. Retrieved from <http://www.theawl.com/2013/07/americas-most-popular-podcast-what-the-internet-did-to-welcome-to-night-vale>
- Carr, D. (2005, July 4). Big media wants a piece of your pod. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/07/04/business/media/04carr.html?>

- Castells, M. (2012). *Networks of outrage and hope: Social movements in the Internet age*. Malden, MA: Polity.
- Crisell, A. (1986). *Understanding radio*. New York, NY: Methuen & Co.
- Crofts, S., Dille, J., Fox, M., Retsema, A., & Williams, B. (2005). Podcasting: A new technology in search of viable business models. *First Monday*, 10. Retrieved from <http://firstmonday.org/article/view/1273/1193>
- Doctorow, C. (2013, December 12). *Welcome to Night Vale*: An appreciation of the spookiest, funniest podcast. *Boing Boing*. Retrieved from <http://boingboing.net/2013/12/12/welcome-to-night-vale-an-appr.html>
- Fink, H. (1981). The sponsor's v. the nation's choice: North American radio drama. In P. Lewis (Ed.), *Radio drama* (pp. 185–243). London, UK: Longman.
- Gallagher, D. (2014, March 12). *Welcome to Night Vale* creators discuss inspiration, podcasts, Texas roots. *Dallas Observer Blogs*. Retrieved from http://blogs.dallasobserver.com/mixmaster/2014/03/a_qa_with_welcome_to_night_val.php
- Greenfield, R. (2014, September 26). The (surprisingly) profitable rise of podcast networks. *Fast Company*. Retrieved from <http://www.fastcompany.com/3035954/most-creative-people/the-surprisingly-profitable-rise-of-podcast-networks>
- Greenfield, R. (2015, March). The future of media is podcasting. *Fast Company*. Retrieved from <http://www.fastcompany.com/3041522/pod-power>
- Guralnick, E. (1985). Radio drama: The stage of the mind. *Virginia Quarterly Review*, 61.
- Hand, R., & Traynor, M. (2011). *The radio drama handbook: Audio drama in practice and context*. New York, NY: Continuum.
- Heater, B. (Producer). (2015, March 4). Episode 095: Jeffrey Cranor (of *Welcome to Night Vale*) [RiYL podcast episode]. Retrieved from <http://riylcast.tumblr.com/post/112688741205/episode-095-jeffrey-cranor-of-welcome-to-night>
- Heise, N. (2014). On the shoulders of giants?: How audio podcasters adopt, transform and re-invent radio storytelling. *Transnational Radio Stories* [MOOC course]. Retrieved from https://hamburgergamele.files.wordpress.com/2014/09/podcasts_heise_public.pdf
- Hilmes, M. (1997). *Radio voices: American broadcasting, 1922–1952*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota.
- Jenkins, H., Ford, S., & Green, J. (2013). *Spreadable media: Creating value and meaning in a networked culture*. New York, NY: New York University.
- Kelley, S. (2013, December 17). *Welcome to Night Vale*: 5 marketing lessons from America's most popular podcast. *Lonelybrand*. Retrieved from <http://lonelybrand.com/blog/welcome-to-night-vale-five-marketing-lessons-from-americas-most-popular-podcast/>
- Kilniskis, M. (n.d.). Accidental viral marketing lessons from *Welcome to Night Vale*. *Quality Logo Products*. Retrieved from <http://www.qualitylogoproducts.com/blog/accidental-viral-marketing-lessons-from-welcome-to-night-vale/>
- Kumanyika, C. (2015, January 22). Chenjerai Kumanyika (Manifesto). *Transom*. Retrieved from <http://transom.org/2015/chenjerai-kumanyika/>
- Loviglio, J. (2007). Sound effects: Gender, voice, and the cultural work of NPR. *The Radio Journal—International Studies in Broadcast and Audio Media*, 5, 67–81.
- Lüders, M. (2008). Conceptualizing personal media. *New Media & Society*, 10, 683–702.
- The making of a podcast phenomenon: *Welcome to Night Vale* by the numbers (2013, November 6). *Details*. Retrieved from <http://www.details.com/blogs/daily-details/2013/11/the-making-of-a-phenomenon-night-vale.html>
- Markman, K. (2011). Doing radio, making friends, and having fun: Exploring the motivations of independent audio podcasters. *New Media & Society*, 14, 547–65.
- Markman, K., & Sawyer, C. (2014). Why pod?: Further explorations of the motivations for independent podcasting. *Journal of Radio & Audio Media*, 21, 20–35.
- Montopoli, B. (2003, January/February). All things considerate: How NPR makes Tavis Smiley sound like Linda Wertheimer. *Washington Monthly*. Retrieved from <http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/2001/0301.montopoli.html>
- Richmond, J. (2015, February 10). Noisecasting: The search for podcasting's bleeding edge. *The Timbre*. Retrieved from <http://thetimbre.com/noisecasting-search-podcastings-bleeding-edge/>

- Scannell, P. (1991). *Broadcast talk*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Scherer, J. (2013, October 8). A primer on New York podcast *Welcome to Night Vale*. *Time Out New York*. Retrieved from <http://www.timeout.com/newyork/things-to-do/a-primer-on-new-york-podcast-welcome-to-night-vale>
- Shapiro, J. (2013, February 26). Women hosted podcasts. *Transom*. Retrieved from <http://transom.org/2013/women-hosted-podcasts/>
- Shingler, M., & Wieringa, C. (1998). *On air: Methods and meanings of radio*. New York, NY: Arnold.
- Sterne, J., Morris, J., Baker, M., & Freire, A. (2008). The politics of podcasting. *The Fibreculture Journal*, 13. Retrieved from <http://thirteen.fibreculturejournal.org/fcj-087-the-politics-of-podcasting/>
- Verma, N. (2012). *Theater of the mind: Imagination, aesthetics, and American radio drama*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago.
- Willens, M. (2015, January 23). Americans listen to 21 million hours of podcasts every day, cutting into radio, research finds. *International Business Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.ibtimes.com/americans-listen-21-million-hours-podcasts-every-day-cutting-radio-research-finds-1792814>