

English Studies in Canada



Modeling the Audio Edition with Mavis Gallant's 1984 Reading of "Grippes and Poche"

Kate Moffatt, Kandice Sharren et Michelle Levy

Volume 46, numéro 2-3-4, juin-septembre-décembre 2020

New Sonic Approaches in Literary Studies

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1111320ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.1353/esc.2020.a903555>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Association of Canadian College and University Teachers of English (ACCUTE)

ISSN

0317-0802 (imprimé)

1913-4835 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer cet article

Moffatt, K., Sharren, K. & Levy, M. (2020). Modeling the Audio Edition with Mavis Gallant's 1984 Reading of "Grippes and Poche". *English Studies in Canada*, 46(2-3-4), 141-159. <https://doi.org/10.1353/esc.2020.a903555>

Modeling the Audio Edition with Mavis Gallant's 1984 Reading of "Grippes and Poche"

Kate Moffatt
Simon Fraser University

Kandice Sharren
University of Galway

Michelle Levy
Simon Fraser University

AT LUNCHTIME on 14 February 1984, Mavis Gallant read her 1982 *New Yorker* short story "Grippes and Poche" at Simon Fraser University in a lecture hall of faculty and students. In May 2019, the authors of this article discovered that a recording of this event existed in the SFU Archives and requested its digitization. Two years later, in March and June 2021, we presented the archival audio as an "audio edition" in two episodes of *The SpokenWeb Podcast*. In the first episode, we presented the reading with some contextual and biographical material; in the second, we attempted to reconstruct the event through the evidence provided by the contents of the recording, interviews with its organizers, additional archival information we uncovered, and even the tape itself. Framing these episodes as an audio edition required that we respond to Jason Camlot's claim that, "To think critically about sound recordings as literary works, we need to explore the historically specific convergences between audio-recording technologies, media formats, and the institutions and practices of the literary context" (4). In print, critical editions of literary works imbue them with institutional value; approaching a sound recording through the lens of scholarly editing practices both appropriated that institutional value and raised questions about the print-based assumptions embedded in those practices.

KATE MOFFATT is a
PhD student in the
Department of English at
Simon Fraser University.
Her research focuses
on eighteenth- and
nineteenth-century
women's book history
and book trades, archival
(in)visibility, and the
digital humanities.

Thinking about this sound recording as a literary work forced us to interrogate whether and how book historical methods and concepts can be meaningfully adapted for use in the realm of literary audio. We were confronted by questions about how audio features relate to the familiar conventions of print, including how to incorporate an introduction; how to annotate a spoken text; how to define spoken asides that in print might take the form of footnotes but during a reading inevitably become part of the story itself; and how to highlight features of the object on which the recording was preserved (in this case, a cassette tape). In textual theory, scholars have devised a range of models for grappling with—or sometimes ignoring—the thorny problems posed by written texts and the material forms they occupy, including manuscripts, periodicals, and books. In this article, we explore the practice of what Jason Camlot and Christine Mitchell term “*audiotextual criticism*,” or, “the necessary principles of bibliographical and textual scholarship in relation to a corpus of audio recordings that documents a reading series,” by considering three of the most prominent models for editing literary texts: copy-text, versioning, and the facsimile or documentary edition—the latter of which has become particularly important in digital media.

As book historians, we found ourselves considering the production of both the event and the recording, including the human hands that shaped them and preserved the surviving material artifacts. In thinking through the various editorial models theorized for print, we realized these questions of production and preservation were central to our understanding of Gallant's reading rather than supplemental to it, which raised further questions about what, exactly, we sought to capture with our “audio edition.” In attempting what Al Filreis terms “a consideration of the phonotext as valid ‘edition,’” we were influenced by Jerome McGann's insistence that linguistic and bibliographical codes are entwined. We also internalized Robert Darnton's model of the “communications circuit,” which acknowledges the many actors and social networks involved in the creation of any literary work (68). In this case, the archival recording of Mavis Gallant's story, as read on 14 February 1984, was the result of social, professional, and technical interventions. From her *New Yorker* editors who shaped the story, to friend and colleague Grazia Merler who invited Gallant to SFU, to Kurt Vanel who set up the recording equipment and mastered the production of the cassette, to the archivist who digitized it, we wished to account for this entire chain of production, transmission, and reception.

At the same time, sound recordings pose different practical and theoretical problems than written texts, and we grappled with these issues in

our episodes of *The SpokenWeb Podcast*. We questioned the distinction between text and paratext in a phonotext and the principles that should govern their presentation in an audio edition. Although both a cassette tape and a digital audio file have different affordances than a printed book, our conversations were scattered with language more often used to describe books and their parts: editions, footnotes, paratexts. If these discussions were grounded in the language of the book, where else might our prior understanding of book history and print editions have affected, and even limited, our work? In the language of textual editing, which model was best suited to our purpose—the copy-text model, interested in a version of the work closest to the original manuscript? Or a versioning edition, that captures various iterations of the text, or documentary edition, that captures the text as it exists in a particular physical form at a particular moment in time? And what, for that matter, were we creating an edition of: the story, the event, or the artifact?

In this article, we retrospectively consider these questions, using our experience with the recording of Gallant's 1984 reading as a case study, so as to demonstrate how the methods and concerns of book history enable us to engage with audio recordings of literary events in new ways, but also how the categories, taxonomies, and concepts of book history must be reshaped to accommodate a different medium. Although we began to use the phrase "audio edition" early in the process, it was not until after the episodes had been produced and released that we began to think more critically about what, precisely, we meant by that. As we look back at our episode production process with an eye to the methods, theories, and contexts that informed it, we reflect on our editorial decisions and how treating the audio recording as story, event, or artifact has implications for what is included and what is ignored in the audio edition. In describing how we crafted our audio edition, we turned to the opportunities and limitations presented by various prominent editorial models. In the end, we argue for an approach to editing literary sound recordings that highlights the impossibility of isolating a "pure" text from the background noise, the circumstances of the event, or everything else that may surround the reading.

Modeling the "Audio Edition"

The first editorial decision we made was to present our audio edition in an audible format—specifically, as podcast episodes. While using excerpts of archival audio is common for *The SpokenWeb Podcast*, we knew it would be difficult to present the story in an excerpted format; we had the full

KANDICE SHARREN is a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Galway. Recent writing has appeared in *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, *Huntington Library Quarterly*, *Review of English Studies*, and *Digital Studies/Le champ numérique*.

MICHELLE LEVY is a Professor in the Department of English, specializing in women's book history. Recent books include *Literary Manuscript Culture in Romantic Britain* (Edinburgh UP, 2020) and *How and Why to Do Things with Eighteenth-Century Manuscripts* (co-authored with Betty Schellenberg, Cambridge UP). She also directs The Women's Print History Project <https://womensprinthistoryproject.com>.

recording and wanted to share it in its entirety. The reading was just under fifty minutes, which meant it could just fit within *The SpokenWeb Podcast's* standard of hour-long episodes, but that would leave us with little time to provide contextual or analytical material. And so we proposed two episodes: one that made the reading available, and another that functioned as a critical apparatus akin to the introductory material, notes, and appendices that surround a printed critical edition.

Our first episode consisted of introductory material, the recording of the reading, an interruption at the point between Side A and B, and a short conclusion that gestured toward the questions we planned to explore in the next episode. We introduced the story by outlining Gallant's literary and biographical history, contextualizing "Grippes and Poche" and her relationship with the *New Yorker*, and providing a brief material history of the SFU Archives tape (figure 1). The recording of the reading was shortened to fit the time constraints of a podcast episode by not including the ambient noise prior to any speaking, Grazia Merler's introduction to Gallant's reading, or the question-and-answer period. The second episode focused on what we termed the paratexts of the reading, including Merler's introduction, an excerpt from the question-and-answer period, and selections from an interview with two organizers and attendees, Carolyn Tate and Ann Cowan-Buitenhuis, that provided information about the event beyond that available in the sound, literary, and material archives. Together,

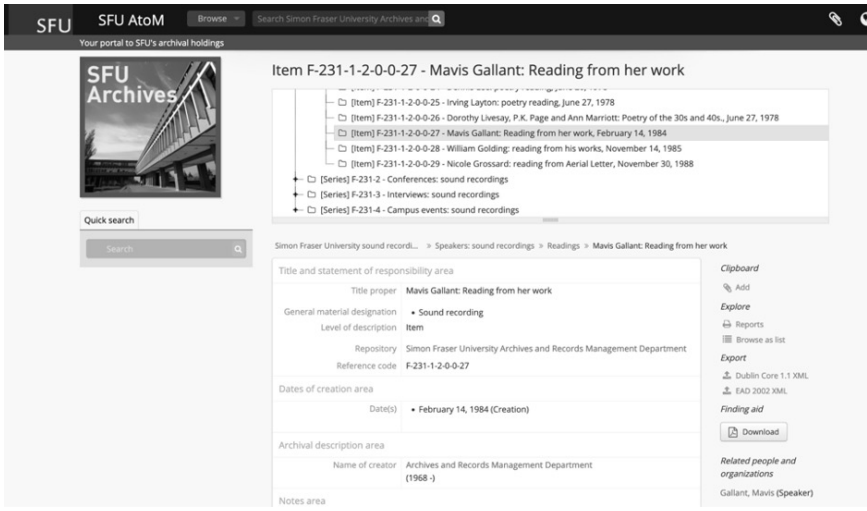


Figure 1. SFU AtoM record for Item F-231020202027—Mavis Gallant: Reading from her work.

the two episodes formed what we termed an “audio edition,” which made public Gallant’s reading and contextualized it with supplementary material.

While it may have been possible to remediate the literary reading through a process such as transcription, anything other than an audible format would not reflect all the aspects of the event that are captured in the recording. Every *SpokenWeb Podcast* episode is ultimately transcribed—our two-part audio edition episodes included; the transcripts are available on the *SpokenWeb* website—but, as Katherine McLeod and transcriber Kelly Cubbon point out in the ninth episode of season 3 of *The SpokenWeb Podcast*, transcription is a creative process requiring its own editorial choices as the audible content moves to a visual medium with its own constraints (“Talking Transcription”). Our instinctive choice to present the reading audibly was shaped in part by the fact that, while multiple editions and forms of written and printed versions of the story already exist, we knew of no version of Gallant reading aloud that had been subjected to scholarly treatment. The podcast format allowed us to preserve the event’s audible features, such as the introduction and the audience reactions and the parts of Gallant’s reading that resist transcription, but it also raised an important question about the nature of an audio edition: what might it mean to centre the phonotext and relegate the manuscript and print versions to secondary status?

In a print edition, features like the introduction and audience’s responses would be easily identified as part of what Gérard Genette terms the paratext, which is “a zone between text and off-text, a zone not only of transition but also of *transaction*” (2) that is comprised of features that “surround [the text] and extend it, precisely in order to ... ensure the text’s presence in the world, its ‘reception’ and consumption in the form (nowadays, at least) of a book” (1). Of course, a tape recording of a reading is not, strictly speaking, a book, and its features, both textual and paratextual, manifest differently; describing the recorded literary event as a “phonotext,” Al Filreis identifies the following elements (here related specifically to poetry readings):

- (1) the totality of sounded significations, meaning made by actualization of the “poetic voice”; (2) text as score, or “the scripted incarnation of the poem,” in Charles Bernstein’s phrase, presented as orality but “also” available in print; (3) accidental ambient noises, made by audience and by the room itself, as Middleton observes, for readings that are recorded; (4) signs of the technological medium itself; and (5) vocal

interpolations by the poet that are not, but can seem to be part of the text-as-score as delivered. (Filreis 1)

Filreis's taxonomy highlights the difficulty of isolating what he calls the "score" of the work from other features of the recording such as "accidental ambient noises," "signs of the technological medium itself," and "vocal interpolations by the poet," which may be embedded in the recording. Similarly, Camlot and Mitchell describe the "layerings" of the historical and material contexts of sound recordings, noting how "[t]hey begin with material traces of events about which we may know very little, and then, through our interventions, beg to expand in multiple directions." To work through these layerings, they propose "a variety—or fusion—of media and literary historiography" that they term "audiography."

The close entanglement between text and paratext in the recording invites questions about what, exactly, constitutes the "text" of an audio edition. Despite Genette's "clear preference for the book as a proper guarantee for the unity of a particular individual work" (Stanitzek 31), his framework emphasizes its instability; he notes that "we do not always know whether these productions [such as an author's name, a title, a preface, illustrations] are to be regarded as belonging to the text" (Genette 1), calling the paratext "a *threshold* ... an 'undefined zone' between the inside and the outside" (2). In the case of Gallant's reading, audience laughter overlaps with her narrative voice, meaning that even with judicious editing we could not extract or isolate the story of "Grippes and Poche" from many of these potentially paratextual sounds—or the paraphonotext, to use Filreis's term.

Nor did we want to. Scholarly print editions often maintain paratextual features, with editors reproducing the title pages and volume breaks that accompanied and shaped the version of the text they deem authoritative. These editorial features argue implicitly that these elements are part of the "bibliographical code" that contribute to the meaning of a text. Examining our audio edition retrospectively, we can see how our audio edition layered different potential editorial approaches over each other, each of which drew attention to a different potential text. While copy-text asked us to pay attention to the story as Gallant read it, the editorial models of versioning and the documentary edition led us to consider the event and the artifact of the tape as texts in their own right. Considering each of these potential texts alongside the others expands our understanding of Gallant's reading and how it had been recorded, but it also destabilizes the idea of a discrete text, separable from its various contexts.

Edition of the story

In early conversations about how to share the recording of this reading, we thought about established practices for creating scholarly and critical editions. The foundational editorial theory is that of copy-text, as introduced by Ronald B. McKerrow and developed by W.W. Greg, Fredson Bowers, and G. Thomas Tanselle. It aims “to follow the threads of transmission back from an existing document and to try to restore its text as closely as possible to the form it originally took in the author’s Manuscript” (Gaskell 336). Determining the appropriate copy-text is based on a full evaluation of the textual materials available, in order to create “a critical edition which will represent as nearly as possible the author’s intentions for his text” (Gaskell 336). Whether dealing with print or manuscript, copy-text places at its centre the written text, and it presupposes that an author has a fixed and discernible intention in relation to the literary work in question. Embedded in this editorial mode is the assumption that “an editor’s primary responsibility is to establish a text; whether his goal is to reconstruct that form of the text which represents the author’s final intention or some other form of the text, his essential task is to produce a reliable text according to some set of principles” (Tanselle 45). The rationale of copy-text most closely aligns with the impulse to focus on the story in our audio edition, rather than the artifact or the event, and in some respects audio might present some advantages: a story read by its author might clarify ambiguities through intonation or help select the most authoritative version of a text.

In this case, our copy-text was the story as Gallant performed it on 14 February 1984, a version that clearly had her seal of approval. Producing the two podcast episodes required listening to Gallant reading dozens of times, and, in doing so, Moffatt noticed one of Gallant’s asides in particular—a moment, near the end of the recording, where she deviates from the story to say, “I have an editorial query here. ‘Is he imagining this?’ [Laughs] Yes. These are proofs” (Gallant “Grippes and Poche”). During a question and answer session to celebrate the first episode’s release, we discussed this reference to elusive “proofs.” Following that event, SFU Professor Carole Gerson informed us that the proofs for this story, as well as a cassette copy of the 1984 reading, were held by the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library. With help from Roma Kail, a librarian at Victoria University, we were able to access scans and determine that they were the same proofs Gallant had been reading from. On page 24, her editor adds an interlinear pencil notation between lines six and seven —“Is he imagining this?”—just as Gallant had read aloud in 1984. Her choice to read from

The rationale of
copy-text comes
into play here.

these proofs instead of from the printed *New Yorker* version suggests a textual authority in line with Gaskell's call for editors to identify a text that reflects an author's final intentions—that is, before editorial suggestions and queries interfered. Access to the proofs gave us the opportunity to directly compare the audio recording to the typeset version of the story she had been reading from, which differ both from each other *and* from the *New Yorker* edition.

The rationale of copy-text comes into play here. Copy-text is first and foremost an attempt to access authorial intent, often as embodied by the author's manuscript. The proofs take us a step closer to this understanding of authorial intent by taking us a step back in the editorial process. But how should copy-text be interpreted in the context of an audio recording? Should we prioritize the text-as-written or what in the context of the reading becomes the script-as-read? Gallant was clearly reading an earlier version of the story than what was ultimately published. We knew from comparisons of the recording to the printed *New Yorker* version that the reading differed, but the proofs allowed us to see that the reading departed from all existing versions, from the very proofs she had before her to the version collected in *Overhead in a Balloon: Twelve Stories of Paris*. Moffatt used AudiAnnotate, an online annotation tool for literary audio developed by Tanya Clements and her team at the University of Texas, to annotate where Gallant's performance differed from the proofs and found evidence of more than fifty instances. Deviations during a live reading by the author suggest a kind of authority not explicitly addressed by copy-text. We hear the author directly editing her own work. This is a clear expression of the authorial intent that copy-text aims to capture but is not one that has been reflected in a written manuscript or printed text.

In addition to changes to the words of the story itself, Gallant also made many departures from the script to address her audience, an additional complication to defining the scripted story as copy-text. Gallant's asides, interjections, and emendations, as well as the audience's reactions, are not part of the proofs but are essential to the text of the story as she reads it, and difficult—if not impossible—to separate from the text; what Filreis calls “the text as score” decidedly does not stand alone but is enmeshed in the delivery, the audience response, and other elements of the event and the tape. Gallant's brief explanation of French tax law, for example, does not appear in any of the written versions of the story. While sometimes distinguishable from the story itself by a shift in Gallant's tone, from scripted narratorial precision to a more confidential and informal mode of address, the asides can be difficult to discern; as listeners, we are

responding to subtle verbal cues that tell us Gallant has spontaneously gone off-script, in the example mentioned above to explain a narrative detail to this specific audience on this specific day. As such, her footnote asides underscore how much of what is in the recording is specific to this particular event. To edit them out by following the copy-text of the typescript, beyond being technically difficult, would betray the fact that they have become part of the story itself, as addressed to this particular audience.

Our attempts to identify the “text” of Gallant’s reading audio invited comparisons to audiobooks. While having the entire short story recorded felt comparable to an audiobook, which similarly presents an entire text, this recording resisted many of the format’s other distinctive attributes. Audiobooks offer planned performances; they are recorded without a live audience and thus without the spontaneous asides and interjections, audience responses, or false starts we hear in the Gallant reading (Have and Pederson). Comparing our recording to the audiobook format ultimately helped us understand that we were interested not in creating an edition that mimicked an existing format but, rather, an edition that captured and emphasized the particularities of this reading.

Paying attention to the “text” of the recording that was unique to this event highlighted the limitations of trying to understand it within the theory of copy-text. Gallant brought proofs to read from. Is that because she preferred an earlier version to the published one? She explained some, but not all, of her jokes. At SFU, in addressing a Canadian academic audience, she glossed French income tax law but not her references to Flaubert; would she have done the same for a different audience elsewhere? These questions are, of course, unanswerable, but they speak to the ways in which the particularities of this reading disrupt the idea of textual stability even as her seemingly spontaneous edits during the reading represent authorial intent. By presenting the recording in full, in an audible medium, we hoped to capture some of this intent and reveal what might not be as accessible in the published, written story. At the same time, our awareness of how much of the recording was dependent on the circumstances surrounding the event forced us to acknowledge the instability of both the text and Gallant’s intent; what she meant at SFU on 14 February 1984 might be substantially different than what she meant in the *New Yorker* on 29 November 1982. While the rationale of copy-text allowed us to think about the intent behind this one performance, its emphasis on establishing stable textual meaning meant it had a limited ability to capture what was unique about this particular event and also highlighted the limitations of

copy-text in general: its attempt to access authorial intent through a single text assumes that an author's intended meaning is discoverable, unchanging, and not context-dependent.

Edition of the event

Although copy-text was the leading model of textual criticism until at least the 1980s, since then another model, that of textual pluralism, or “versioning,” has attracted more critical attention. It argues against the traditional copy-text method, rejecting the belief that an editor can identify and reconstruct an ideal text based on their divination of authorial intention. It acknowledges that the author often disseminates many different versions of a work and that no one version is necessarily more authoritative than another; in fact, different versions should be studied as reflecting changes in authorial intention and reception history. Championed by Jack Stillinger and Jerome McGann, this approach has become more plausible in the digital era, when constraints on reproduction are lessened. Textual pluralism acknowledges that a literary work can manifest itself in the world in various media. In our case, the typescript, print magazine, story collection(s), and live literary readings are all “versions” of Gallant’s “Grippes and Poche” that exist in the world.

The versioning model also reflects an awareness of what McGann, in *The Textual Condition*, called the “socialization of texts” an understanding that texts circulate over time and place, are adapted and have shifting audiences (69–87). Each text that is reproduced has value both in understanding this evolution but also in tracing a history of that text’s reception. Drawing on a model of textual pluralism for our audio edition meant understanding Gallant’s SFU reading as one version of the story among many. To explore this version of the text, the second of our two podcast episodes drew on interviews and email correspondences with organizers and attendees, which highlighted the extent to which this version of “Grippes and Poche” is an event tied to a specific date, in a specific room, at a specific time.

After first listening to the recording, we were left with a number of questions about the event. Who was introducing Gallant? Where was the reading held? Who were the people laughing in the audience? What were the circumstances of the invitation? SFU Archives had provided only a photo of the tape, the digitized recordings, and an event poster—these held few answers (figure 2). In order to contextualize this version of the story, we had to find the evidence we were looking for. Fortunately, our

colleague Carole Gerson remembered the event and put us in contact with the event's organizers and participants: Grazia Merler, Carolyn Tate, and Ann Cowan-Buitenhuis. Through emails, in-person conversations, and Zoom interviews, we were able to build up a full portrait of both the short- and long-term history of the reading. We learned about the planning for the event, the setup of the microphone and recording equipment, why it was held at 11:30 a.m.—lunch hour scheduling to maximize attendance—and how the timing caused stress for the organizers when Gallant was still reading as the lunch hour was coming to an end. We learned about

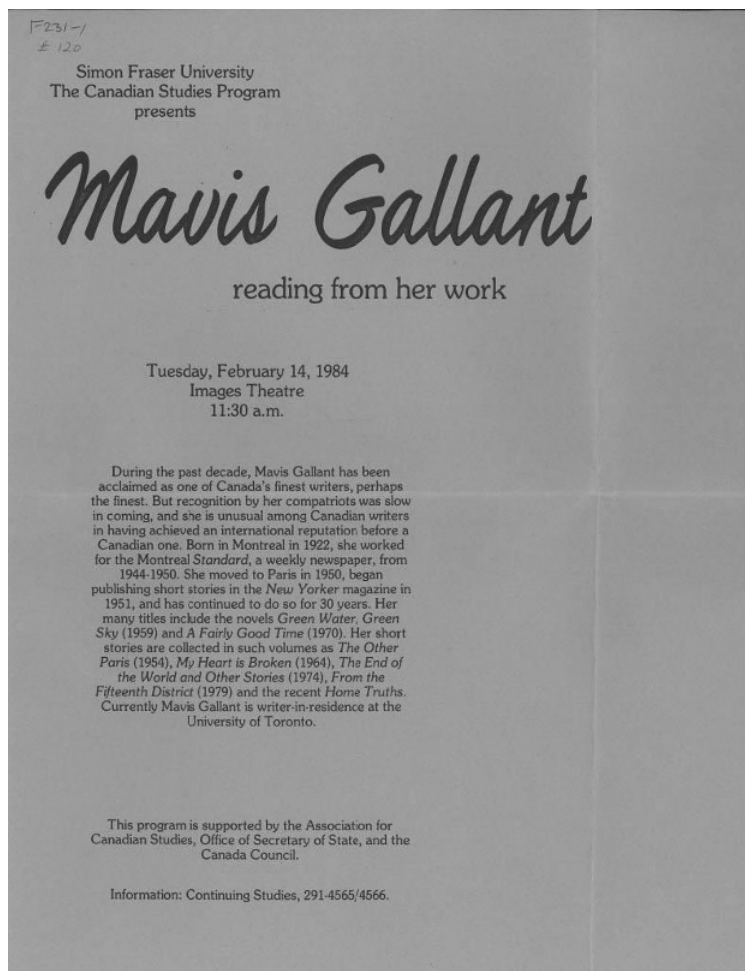


Figure 2. Event poster for Mavis Gallant's reading in Images Theatre on 14 February 1984. Photo courtesy of SFU Archives.

members of the audience and their reactions and were even able to connect certain audience reactions with individuals: Cowan-Buitenhuis shared how she had immediately recognized her husband in the audience by his laugh when she listened to the recording. It was unexpected and emotional to hear, she said, as it had been so long since she had last heard it; a former chair of SFU's English Department, Peter Buitenhuis had passed away in 2004 (Moffatt, Levy, Sharren "Mavis Gallant, Part 2"). Our conversation with Tate and Cowan-Buitenhuis also revealed that a reading, of which no recording or archival evidence survives, had been held the day before in downtown Vancouver; they had technical problems with the microphone and an overcrowded room, and that created the conditions for the event at SFU the next day—at the start, you can hear Gallant expressing concern about if she can be heard by the audience.

The strikingly detailed recollections of the organizers and participants gave us insight into how their personal relationships intersect with institutional history. From Tate and Cowan-Buitenhuis, we learned about Gallant's trip from France and some of the challenges of international air travel during the 1980s. We were able to contextualize the introduction by Merler, too; in the first email she wrote about it to Levy, she explained:

If the introduction to the reading of Grippes in 1984 speaks of a first visit when SFU was still under construction then it was me because on a visit from Paris a few years before, I had driven Mavis to see this new campus Acropolis-style on top of a mountain. Never thinking that I would end up teaching there. I must have invited her and the introduction was done out of sheer friendship because I would normally try to get out of such presentations.

Merler was very happy to write to and speak with Levy about her friendship with Gallant and the event, but she did not want to be formally interviewed about it, so we reported on her conversations and included excerpts from the oral history interviews with Tate and Cowan-Buitenhuis. When conceiving of the recording as an edition of the event, we found we wanted to trace both this immediate and longer history. Merler had been good friends with Gallant for over forty years, and we heard many stories about their friendship. During Gallant's previous trip to Vancouver, referenced in the email, they had also visited Tofino, and we longed for the imagined Gallant Tofino story, wondering what she might have thought about its counterculture.

We also learned how the visit to Canada was one of several Gallant had taken in those years, supported by the Canada Council and other arts institutions. There was a radio interview she had given when in Vancouver in 1984, and other readings in Victoria and Ottawa, although we could not track down audio for those events. We were able to locate and listen to a reading of her story “Virus X” from the University of Alberta archives from 1975, and in this earlier recording, Gallant’s delivery was more rushed and less assured, which caused us to wonder if she had worked on her performance style since. Or had she chosen a story in 1975 that was too long to be read in the allotted time? Focusing on the event as a version of the story opened up avenues for further research to reconstruct many of the circumstances of a single literary reading, including the histories of previous visits, long-standing friendships, and earlier readings, as well as subsequent readings of the same story. At the same time, we realized that there are practical constraints to versioning; just as textual editors understand that readers often lack tolerance for multiple versions, there are limits to listener interest and patience. It was also impossible to fully reproduce the event because our access was limited by a temporal distance of nearly forty years, mediated by the memories of our interviewees and the digital file of the tape recording. Although we could contextualize what we learned about the story as Gallant read it and make another version of the story available, our audio edition was limited to what had been recorded and what we could learn from outside sources.

Edition of the artifact

Our attempts to reconstruct the event highlighted the extent to which our experience of the event, as listeners of a digitized cassette recording, was different from the experience of attendees in 1984. To reflect on that experience, we drew on a third model of editing: that of a facsimile, or documentary edition. In this model of editing, the material form in which the text exists is primary. When critical editions are printed, they can take the form of a facsimile, where the editor would seek to reproduce the typography of a print edition or the paleography of a manuscript, or, even, in a full-scale photofacsimile edition, to reproduce the exact materials, dimensions, and colours of the original (“facsimile edition”). The production of a documentary edition is often motivated by the belief that the original bears witness to the making of the text in a way that is both legible and important. A documentary digital edition of a manuscript with cancellations and revisions might shed light on an author’s compositional process. A high-quality facsimile edition that reproduces the

original typography of a first edition could be used to identify particular printers and hence to better understand how books “bear traces of the physical effort that went into their making” (Tanselle 7). In this editorial model, the paratext—especially what Genette calls the peritext, or paratextual elements “within the same volume” (4)—sits at the heart of the edition, rather than on its margins; to understand the text, we must first understand the material form it has taken.

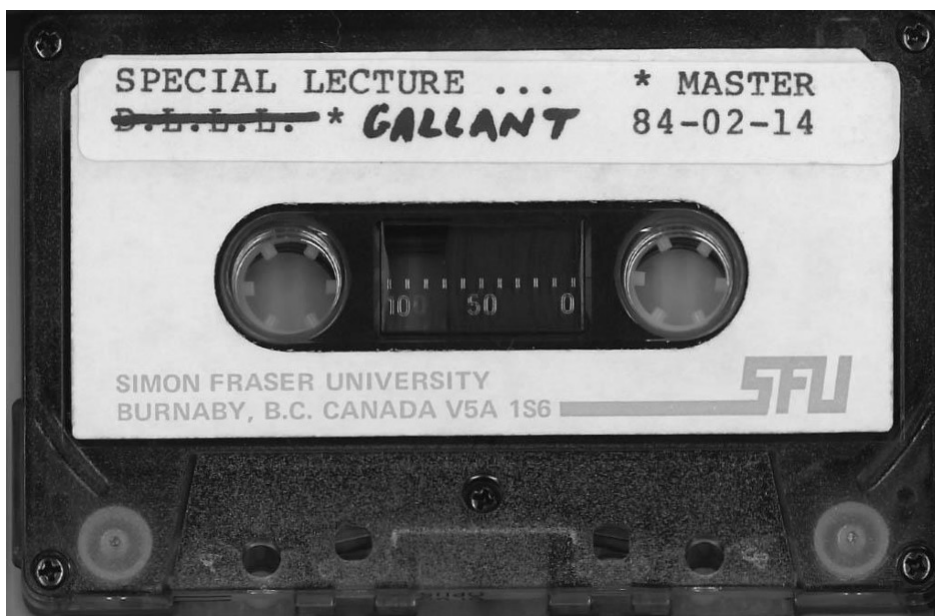


Figure 3. Cassette tape holding the recording of Mavis Gallant reading at SFU in 1984, OBJ-3331024. Photo courtesy of SFU Archive.

Using the documentary edition as a model for our audio edition invited us to consider what Jason Camlot and Christine Mitchell have termed “audiographical work,” investigating “the basic material, media migration, and circulation history of such artifacts.” We turned to evidentiary sources identified by Camlot and Mitchell, namely, “extant paper technical documentation connected with the tapes, technician’s memos, cataloguing records, and, especially, the tapes and tape boxes themselves, which are both informative and enigmatic.” The audiographical materials we located were the cassette tape, its label, accompanying J card, and the digital file that we listened to (figure 3). While we knew how the tape had been digitized, we did not know whether the reading had been recorded on a

cassette or using other technology, like reel-to-reel, or how that related to the surviving cassette in SFU Archives. From the recording itself, we knew that Gallant became frustrated with wearing the microphone after the question-and-answer period and hastily removed it, but there was less internal evidence about features like the editing work that went into ensuring the audio broke cleanly, at the end of sentence, between Side A and Side B. The cassette that survived, much like a draft manuscript or a book printed in the hand-press era, held clues about its own making, including ones that suggested the reading had originally been recorded on reel-to-reel, that we were eager to decipher. We looked to the surviving physical evidence, as well as information we gleaned from witnesses about how A/V recordings were done at SFU, to at least partially reconstruct how the recording was made and transmitted to us.

Our relationship to the artifact was complicated by the fact that we encountered the reading as two digital sound files (for Side A and Side B) not as a cassette. However, what we could hear in the digital file told us quite a bit. In addition to the high quality of the recording, which was part of our rationale for making the reading available at all, we were struck by the break between the end of the Side A file and the beginning of the Side B file: at the end of Side A, Gallant finishes one sentence, followed by twelve seconds of silence, and Side B begins with the next sentence in the story. This break raised two important issues about the artifact that housed this recording. The first was the unintentional ways that a text is structured by the medium and the available materials. This cassette allowed for forty-five minutes on each side—ninety minutes in total—meaning that, including the introductions, the break occurred forty-five minutes into the recording, or thirty-five minutes into the story, with only fourteen minutes left. This lopsidedness speaks to both the structure of the cassette tape and the way tapes are typically listened to. While a nineteenth-century publisher dividing a novel into the standard three volumes would try to keep each volume roughly the same length, breaking the recording evenly in half, with about thirty minutes of audio on each side, would cause problems for listeners of the tape, who would be confronted by fifteen minutes of silence at the end of Side A. Instead, a short break at the end of Side A's capacity ensures an easy transition to the next side.

This led us to the second question: who had crafted this clean transition? The cassette was labeled “Master,” which seemed to suggest that it was the original recording, but, given the structure of the cassette form, it was unlikely that the tape had just happened to flip between one side and the next at the end of one of Gallant's sentence and before the beginning

of the next; instead, we hypothesized that the event had originally been recorded on reel-to-reel, then transferred onto a cassette. Upon digging deeper, we learned that in 1984 the head of SFU's audiovisual department was Kurtis Vanel, described in a *Vancouver Sun* article as "one of Vancouver's top recording engineers" in the 1960s. While it seemed unlikely that we would ever be able to determine definitively whether Vanel was the person who pressed "record" in Images Theatre on 14 February 1984, learning that the A/V department was run by a skilled professional suggested that event recordings would follow industry standards. If this was the case, "Master" would mean the cassette was the clean version used to make subsequent copies (see figure 3), like the one housed in the University of Toronto's archive. An email from Cowan-Buitenhuis confirmed our hunch: while she could not recollect this event with certainty, she told us that Kurtis Vanel often presided over them, setting up the mic and using a reel-to-reel apparatus to record.

While the break that listeners of the cassette tape or digitization hear would not have been something that event attendees would have experienced, our audio edition not only kept the break between sides but highlighted it by pausing to analyze the effect that the break had mid-story. For dramatic effect, Kate Moffatt edited in the sound of a tape flipping after our analysis. By emphasizing "signs of the technological medium itself" (Filreis 1), our audio edition adhered to some of the strictures of the documentary edition, folding in details of the experience we had of listening to the recording and the way that experience was shaped by the materiality of the cassette, which was different of course than how it was heard and experienced by attendees in 1982. The material object prompted us to consider the hidden labour involved not only in the original recording of the reading but also in the processes of media migration, transferring the recording from reel-to-reel to a cassette, complete with edits, copying the cassette for other individuals and institutions, and finally the digitization of the cassette that we had initiated. By following the documentary edition's impulse to capture the material object as well as information about the story and the event, we were able to uncover some of that labour and make it explicit for listeners of the episodes. While we could emphasize some of the audible features of the tape, we could not reproduce its visual and physical qualities within the episodes themselves. Nor could we reproduce the original sound of the reel-to-reel recording, which we have not been able to locate. To acknowledge the materiality of the archival object, our second episode was accompanied by an image gallery, which included the picture of the tape sent to us by SFU Archives, as well as reflections

on the likely process by which the cassette had been made and the labour involved in its making.

Conclusion

It is worth reflecting on our audio edition as a new text in its own right: one that includes Gallant's reading but that also disseminates new material alongside it. In producing the podcast episodes, we had to work within our own paratextual constraints, namely the hour-long standard length of *The Spoken Web Podcast*. These constraints shaped many of our decisions, including splitting the audio edition into two parts, and consigning Grazia Merler's introduction and the question-and-answer session to the second episode. Thinking about these constraints highlighted how textual production is a negotiation between artistic or scholarly goals and a wider context, whether that context is an audience in an auditorium, the editorial expectations of the *New Yorker*, or the established format of a monthly podcast.

Our audio edition's relationship to the distinct lenses of copy-text, versioning, and documentary edition was another such negotiation between established editorial models for written texts and the challenges presented by working with a phonotext. Although no single editorial model proved sufficient for capturing all the features of Gallant's reading that we found significant, a capacious approach that drew on all three meant that we were able to account for the entire chain of production, transmission, and reception. Versioning allowed us to honour the recording as an event by documenting the memories of those who organized and attended it; copy-text theory brought into view the many other forms in which the story lives, like the paper archives of the University of Toronto, the *New Yorker* digital archives, and the 29 November 1982 print edition of the magazine; and documentary theory drew upon our interest in material history and the processes of production and transmission, leading to a series of discoveries about the history of SFU's A/V practices. Indeed, it seems to us that different editorial models present a false choice, for within the cassette and the recording itself, all three were embedded in each other.

While our editorial choices were guided by the familiar models drawn from dealing with the written, new paradigms are necessary for thinking about the audio archive and the way we choose to edit and present it. The audio archive is just as messy and complex as the paper-based one, and scholars of manuscript and print have devised multiple methods, over hundreds of years, to edit and present, faithfully and creatively, written materials and to investigate the history of their production, circulation,

The audio
archive is just
as messy and
complex as the
paper-based
one.

and preservation. With audio materials, a similar process of trial and error is now underway. Although it is technically possible, in the context of editing written sources for a written media, to pick and choose between different versions or to correct obvious errors, we believed that to edit a historical audio recording in this way—to remove, for example, Gallant’s asides, or her “ums” and “ahs”—would raise ethical questions and strip the recording of the elements we most valued and wished to honour in our audio edition: the spontaneity, the engagement with the audience, and the meta-textual commentary found in Gallant’s live reading.

Works Cited

- Camlot, Jason. *Phonopoetics*. Stanford UP, 2019.
- Camlot, Jason, and Christine Mitchell, “The Poetry Series,” *Amodern* 4: The Poetry Series, March 2015. amodern.net/article/editorial-amodern-4.
- Darnton, Robert. “What is the History of Books?” *Daedalus* 111:3 *Representations and Realities*. Summer 1982: 65–83.
- “facsimile edition.” *The Oxford Companion to the Book*. Oxford UP, 2010.
- Filreis, Al. “Notes on Paraphonotextuality.” *Amodern* 4: The Poetry Series, March 2015. www.amodern.net.
- Gallant, Mavis. “Grippes and Poche.” SFU Archive, 1984.
- . “Grippes and Poche.” *The New Yorker*. 29 November 1982: 42. www.newyorker.com.
- . *Overhead in a Balloon*. Random House, 1984.
- Gaskell, Philip. *A New Introduction to Bibliography*. Oak Knoll Press, 2012.
- Genette, Gérard. *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*. Trans. Jane E. Lewin. Cambridge UP, 1997.
- Have, Iben, and Birgitte Stougaard Pedersen. *Digital Audiobooks: New Media, Users, and Experiences*. Routledge, 2015. doi.org/10.4324/9781315743080.
- McGann, Jerome. *The Textual Condition*. Princeton UP, 1991.
- McKenzie, D.F. *The Sociology of Texts*. Cambridge UP, 1999.
- McLeod, Katherine, and Kelly Cubbon, producers. “Talking Transcription: Accessibility, Collaboration, and Creativity.” *The SpokenWeb Podcast*, The SpokenWeb Podcast. Season 3, episode 9. 6 June 2022.

- Merler, Grazia. "Inquiry re Mavis Gallant reading in 1984." Received by Michelle Levy. 10 June 2019.
- Moffatt, Kate, Michelle Levy, and Kandice Sharren. "Mavis Gallant, Part 2: The 'Paratexts' of 'Grippes and Poche' at SFU." Spokenweb Podcast. Season 2, episode 5. 7 June 2021.
- . "Mavis Gallant Reads 'Grippes and Poche' at SFU." Spokenweb Podcast. Season 2, episode 6. 1 March 2021.
- Stanitzek, Georg. "Texts and Paratexts in Media." *Critical Inquiry* 32.1 (2005): 27–42. doi.org/10.1086/498002.
- Stillinger, Jack. *Coleridge and Textual Instability: The Multiple Versions of the Major Poems*. Oxford UP, 1994.
- Tanselle, G. Thomas. "Some Principles for Editorial Apparatus." *Studies in Bibliography (Charlottesville, Va.)* 25 (1972): 41–88.