THE MEDIUM IS THE MASSACRE: BROADCASTING FROM THE APOCALYPSE IN *THE WAR OF THE WORLDS*

by

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Abstract

In this thesis, I discuss the 1938 radio play *The War of the Worlds*, analyzing the circumstances of its broadcast, its representation of apocalypse, and its manipulation of the medium of radio through its form of a simulated news program. I propose that the immediate hysteria it caused and the enduring anxieties it left were because of its medium more than any verisimilitude achieved in its tired and recycled narrative of Martian invasion. I consider qualities of radio as a telecommunicative and single-sensory medium, the demands of apocalyptic representation, and how the broadcast manipulated these qualities of radio to satisfy these representational demands, thus portraying an account of simulated apocalypse that was, on a formal and medial level, indistinguishable from a real one over the radio.

Borrowing from the work of Richard Berger, I discuss how apocalyptic representation must occur immediately and immanently with the apocalypse itself; that is, the representation must be separated neither by time nor space with what it represents, right until the annihilating end. While many media cannot facilitate these demands of apocalyptic representation, instead reverting to prophetic or post-apocalyptic representation, I suggest that telecommunicative media are able to navigate the demands of truly apocalyptic representation through their overcoming of spatial separation and temporal delay. Working with the theory of Andrew Crisell, I consider the single-sensory nature of the medium of radio, and its propensity to render real and imaginary events indistinguishable. As a purely acoustic medium, radio necessarily incites an indexical process while simultaneously prohibiting its completion. Because radio prohibits the ability to index a sound with a particular source, and its specific
temporal and spatial location, it creates a level playing field for reality and simulation where the two cannot be differentiated. As such, broadcast sounds become untethered from their particular source, ungrounded in time, space, and even reality. Thus, War was able to represent a simulated apocalypse indiscernible from a real one because of the single-sensory nature of radio, and satisfy the demands of apocalyptic representation with the immanency and immediacy inherent to the telecommunicative medium of its broadcast.
Lay Summary

On the night of October 30\textsuperscript{th}, 1938, the Columbia Broadcasting System broadcast the Mercury Theatre on the Air’s production of \textit{The War of the Worlds}, a radio play adaptation of H.G. Wells’ 1898 novel of the same name. Helmed by Orson Welles, this radio play would take the form of a live news broadcast, simulating the sounds of a Martian invasion as if it were actually happening. As a result, many listeners became convinced that what they were hearing was a live and real broadcast of the apocalypse, happening in the \textit{here} and \textit{now}. This thesis proposes that it was the medium of radio that gave rise to the immediate and enduring consequences of this broadcast by facilitating certain demands of apocalyptic representation, and enabling the presentation of a convincingly horrific account of simulated apocalypse that could not be distinguished from a real one over the invisible medium of radio.
Preface

This thesis is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, Michael De Santis. It was completed under the supervision of Dr. Sandra Tomc.
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To radio,
and its blind devotees
1 Introduction

In the summer of 2015, the Vancity Theatre in Vancouver, British Columbia, offered a retrospective in celebration of Orson Welles’s 100th birthday. Amongst the screenings of many of Welles’s iconic films was a replaying of the Mercury Theatre on the Air’s 1938 radio production of H.G. Wells’s *The War of the Worlds*, an apocalyptic tale of Martian invasion which Welles had produced, directed, and starred in. After the production was introduced, the lights were dimmed, and the play began, preserved with all of the crackle and static so emblematic of old time radio. It was an unconventional experience: sitting in a movie theatre to hear - and not see - a play delivered over an entirely aural medium. Although the surround system of the theatre made the sound of the radio play ubiquitous, all in attendance had their gaze arranged by the auditorium seating towards the screen. The screen itself was not even visible in the dim glow provided by the house lights, as the projectionist, only projecting sound, had left the screen veiled by the red velvet curtains which would usually only be down at the end of an event, not throughout. The velvet curtain, hiding the screen, seemed an appropriate veil to further emphasize the absence of visuals. Sitting in a dark theatre, facing a screen itself not even visible, and listening to a recorded radio broadcast, the audience was left acutely aware of the aural nature of the experience.

Radio is always broadcast without visuals; this is why it is called both the blind and the invisible medium. However, having the absence of visuals so significantly

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1 cf. Welles: “There is nothing that seems more unsuited to the technique of the microphone, it seems to me, than to tune in a play and hear an announcer say: ‘The curtain is now rising on a presentation of’ and then for him to set the stage, introduce the characters and go on with the play. The curtain is not rising at all, as everybody well knows” (qtd. in Estrin 4).
2 Peter M. Lewis and Jerry Booth take this as the name for the title of their book, *The Invisible Medium: Public, Commercial, and Community Radio* (1989), which offers an efficient history of broadcast radio.
emphasized by the darkened theatre and veiled screen provided an interesting setting to examine Welles's radio play, and the experience it generated in the telling of its apocalyptic narrative. *The War of the Worlds* is most famously known for the mass hysteria that it caused with its initial broadcast in 1938 America, which, although certainly real and verifiable, has become exaggerated and elevated into something more than it certainly was. It became a thing of legend, which I knew about before ever having listened to the radio play itself. Many people did tune into the broadcast that I had just heard replayed, and many people really did think the world was ending - and panicked accordingly. Of course, it wasn’t, but I tried to imagine myself in the circumstances of the initial broadcast. How could this narrative of apocalypse generate such experiences of horror in so many of its listeners? What would it have been like to turn on the radio on October 30th, 1938, and really think that I was listening to a live broadcast of the apocalypse?

In his apocalyptic study, *After the End: Representations of Post-Apocalypse* (1999), James Berger presents three meanings of apocalypse. “First,” Berger says, “it is the *eschaton*, the actual imagined end of the world” (5). Secondly, “apocalypse refers to catastrophes that resemble the imagined final ending, that can be interpreted as *eschaton*, as an end of something, a way of life or thinking” (5). Finally, Berger defines apocalypse in the terms of its etymology: “as revelation, unveiling, uncovering.” Summing up, Berger writes: “The apocalypse, then, is The End, or resembles the end, or explains the end” (5). Berger then shifts his discussion to representations of apocalypse, stating:
Nearly every apocalyptic text presents the same paradox. The end is never the end. The apocalyptic text announces and describes the end of the world, but then the text does not end, nor does the world represented in the text, and neither does the world itself. (6)

As Berger moves his discussion to apocalyptic texts, he hints that any representation of the apocalypse, in seeking to represent an end, cannot do so, for this would necessitate the end of representation itself. Representation, and the media of that representation, must fail. What’s more, they must fail simultaneously with that which they represent.

As implied in Berger’s paradox, a truly apocalyptic text must be characterized by a convergent collapse with what it seeks to represent, and this final conflation must be through its media. In the moment of apocalypse, of eschaton or its resemblance, there must occur a completely coincidental annihilation. In order for this obliteration in unison to occur, representation, and that which it represents, must be separated by neither time nor space. Therefore, the media of representation would have to negotiate this collision, facilitating the unison required for such a collaborative and convergent collapse. It is my contention that telecommunication, and in particular broadcast media, can facilitate such a phenomenon, and on a scale large enough to imbue apocalypse with the weight the word seems to appropriately carry. This, I argue, is what occurred on October 30th, 1938.

Telecommunication would emerge in the late 19th century and propagate in the early 20th century to eliminate these disparities in communication, extinguishing the temporal delay and eliding the geographical separation of all previous communicative media. Broadcast media in particular, first in radio, and later in television, became one
of the century’s great innovations of telecommunication. As John Durham Peters notes, “[t]ele- suggests a new scale of distances” (138), and by operating on such a scale of distances, telecommunication effectively abolished it. As it reached across vast lengths with minimal temporal delay, broadcast media would create a sense of immediacy that would embroil representation and reality. This immediacy, as displayed in broadcast radio, would facilitate “a sense of participation in actual events” that Hadley Cantril and Gordon Allport would define in 1935 as “radio’s chief psychological characteristic” (259). Yet, beyond this, broadcast radio would create a sense of participation not only psychologically in the minds of the listener, but also in the medium itself, profoundly involving reality and representation in an unprecedented way. As Berger claims that apocalyptic representation must converge, through media, with that which it represents, I claim that the broadcast media of telecommunication can accommodate such a phenomenon. Because of this quality, and because of the scale on which it could operate, broadcast media became the most perfect media of apocalypse, and one that would propagate prolifically amongst apocalyptic narratives of the 20th century, and beyond.3

To explore the representation of apocalypse, and the function of broadcast media in its representation, I have chosen to analyze the Mercury Theatre’s 1938 The War of the Worlds as a production particularly suited to this kind of study. As an example of apocalyptic representation, delivered over the same medium it is internally obsessed

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3 The films Night of the Living Dead (1968) and Pontypool (2009) were also considered for this study, as two films from later eras intrinsically containing broadcast radio as important elements in their apocalyptic narratives. Zombie apocalypse films, initiated by Romero’s Night, seem to display a pronounced proclivity for including telecommunications and broadcast media in their narratives, perhaps because the filmic figuration of the zombie is so closely intertwined with the ideas of communication that apocalyptic representation often involves.
with, Welles’s radio play presents a unique opportunity to examine the demands that apocalyptic representation makes of its media, and how the broadcast medium of radio accommodates these demands. Through my analysis of the radio play and the circumstances around it, I will argue that *The War of the Worlds* broadcast was able to use certain inherent qualities of its medium, derived from its single-sensory and telecommunicative properties, to satisfy the demands of apocalyptic representation. Through its medium and form, it was therefore able to achieve a convincingly horrific account of simulated apocalypse indiscernible from a real one over the air. Because of this, *The War of the Worlds* broadcast made significant revelations about the medium, and gave rise to very real concerns both during, and after its broadcast.

In Chapter 2, I will consider the circumstances of the *War* broadcast. This will include a discussion of Orson Welles, the status of radio in America, and the qualities of radio that the 1938 broadcast would exploit to become the sensation it did. I will also consider certain precedents to the *War* phenomenon, as well as the consequences in its aftermath.

In Chapter 3, I will perform an analysis of the *War* broadcast itself, applying the media theory outlined in the previous chapter to argue that the confusion caused by the broadcast stemmed, at least in part, from certain inherently confusing qualities of radio.

In Chapter 4, I will continue my internal analysis of the radio play to show how Welles crafted certain elements of the simulated news broadcast to emphasize its apocalyptic nature. I will discuss apocalyptic representation, the demands it places upon its media, and how the medium of broadcast radio can work to satisfy those demands, as I argue it did in *The War of the Worlds*. 
2 Circumstances of the Broadcast

2. 1 Orson Welles

I will begin my discussion with the man central to the mystery: Orson Welles. Welles was an artist whose creative output significantly changed the face of both radio and cinema in 20th century America. Although remembered today more for his important contributions to the cinema through such films as *Citizen Kane* (1941), Welles was an innovator long before the silver screen, noting himself that his “big inventions were in radio and the theatre. Much more than in movies” (qtd. in Heyer vii). Perhaps his most creative innovation came on the night of October 30th, 1938, at 8:00pm EST on the Columbia Broadcasting System. With a script adapted by Howard Koch from H.G. Wells’s 1898 novel, Welles produced, directed and starred in the Mercury Theatre’s presentation of *The War of the Worlds*. The play, in keeping with Wells’s original novel, was about the imminent apocalypse caused by a Martian invasion of Earth. However, several changes were made to make the play more geographically and temporally relevant, updating the time and place of the events to contemporary America. More important than the changes to the story’s content was the manner in which it was conveyed. Taking the form of a simulated news broadcast, replete with the qualities typical of such programs of the time, the Mercury Theatre’s production was essentially a

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4 Berger, in the preface to his book on apocalyptic representation, considers *Citizen Kane* (1941) as a kind of apocalyptic text in itself. See Berger xi-xii.

5 Koch was directed by Welles to rewrite the script to accommodate the change of location from England to the United States in the days before the broadcast, a stressful experience for Koch. For an account of this, see Heyer 78-80.
radio broadcast pretending to be a radio broadcast - and pretending very well. Because of this, the play took on a form of authenticity in the ears of many of its 1938 listeners, exceeding mere verisimilitude through the qualities of the entirely aural medium of broadcast radio. Because of its manner of representation, and its medium, Welles’s production captivated the millions of Americans that had tuned in to listen, and millions more that had not. Thus, I argue that the reaction this radio play roused was not mainly because of the narrative of Martian invasion, nor any verisimilitude in realistically depicting an apocalyptic event; rather, it was because of the medium of radio, and certain powers that this medium possessed, being revealed on a large scale for the first time.

In his opening monologue of the radio play, immediately preceding the commencement of the simulated news program portion, Welles suggests the scale of listenership that the fictional broadcast was supposedly reaching on its imagined 1939 date of broadcast: “On this particular evening, October 30th, the Crossley service estimated that 32,000,000 people were listening in on radios” (War). While these are perhaps ratings the Mercury Theatre could only have hoped for in reality on the night of October 30th, 1938, this number does reflect the far reach of radio in 1938 America. According to Hadley Cantril, head of the Princeton Radio Project, the amount of American households with radios was a large majority at the time of the 1938 broadcast: “It is estimated that of the 32,000,000 families in the United States 27,500,000 have radios - a greater population than have telephones, automobiles, plumbing, electricity,

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Schwartz notes that Welles and producer John Houseman “had not chosen the novel because they particularly liked it, but because it fit a concept that Welles was eager to try. ‘I had conceived the idea of doing a radio broadcast in such a manner that a crisis would actually seem to be happening,’ he later said, ‘and would be broadcast in such a dramatised form as to appear to be a real event taking place at that time, rather than a mere radio play’” (45).
newspapers or magazines” (x). Although Welles’s simulated news broadcast was reaching an estimated fictional audience of 32,000,000, Cantril conservatively estimates the listenership of the The War of the Worlds broadcast to have been at least 6,000,000, although some polls suggest that it may well have been as high as 12,000,000.⁷ In any case, its listenership was large, diverse, and widespread. As Cantril notes at the time of his writing, broadcast radio had made “possible the largest grouping of people ever known” (Cantril x), and as Marshall McLuhan notes, “[e]lectric technology created the mass” (McLuhan and Fiore 68). The mass audience cultivated by radio therefore allowed the immediate hysteria of The War of the Worlds broadcast far reach, and the enduring concern wide appeal.

Although this radio play was declared by Welles as no more than a Halloween joke, as the “Mercury Theatre’s own radio version of dressing up in a sheet and jumping out of a bush and saying Boo!” (War), the horror and panic it caused were very real.⁸ There are many recorded accounts of listeners seeking shelter, fleeing their houses for haven in other cities, and attempting to spread the word of the apocalypse to unaware neighbours who had missed the broadcast.⁹ The panic also played out over the same telecommunicative means as it does in the radio play, as telephone boards lit up with callers seeking information about the events, and radio stations assuring their listeners

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⁷ Cantril, in his speculation of these numbers, considers a variety of sources to arrive at this determination. For an account of his methods, see Cantril 55-7.

⁸ As noted by Heyer, “[t]he extent of Welles’s nefarious intentions has always been a matter for speculation” (98). There exist many contradictory accounts, some from Welles himself, that conflict over the director’s intentions in causing panic with his broadcast. See Heyer 95-112.

⁹ Cantril’s The Invasion from Mars (1941) was the first work to consider these listener accounts; Schwartz’s Broadcast Hysteria (2015) contains the most comprehensive consideration of these accounts.
over the air that what they were hearing was not actually happening. Although the 1938 broadcast is perhaps most famously remembered for this brief but widespread instance of mass hysteria, it is important to remember that, “[e]ven for truly terrified listeners, panic was the exception, not the rule” (Schwartz 82). However, the broadcast did cause real and significant panic, and this panic continued once the the horror of an imminent Martian invasion subsided.

This panic was over the medium of radio itself. Welles and his team had manipulated the medium in a way that not only sent many of its listeners into an immediate hysteria concerning the contents of the radio play, but also in a way that created an even more significant and lingering concern around the medium through which it had been broadcast. Being the primary instigator of this panic, Welles was also among the first to publicly comment on it. On the day after the broadcast, 1938’s Halloween, Welles delivered a seemingly sincere apology to the nation, expressing his deep regret at a news conference. In addition to his apology, Welles also stated:

> In order that this may not happen again the program department hereafter will not use the technique of a simulated news broadcast within a dramatization when the circumstances of the broadcast could cause immediate alarm to numbers of listeners. (qtd. in Estrin 6)

In this careful pledge, Welles acknowledges the power of radio, and in particular its propensity for confusion and the seriousness of the potential consequences that the

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10 According to Cantril, “60 percent of all stations carrying the program interrupted the broadcast to make local announcements when it became apparent that a misunderstanding was abroad” (44).

11 In a reminiscence, Koch stated that he suspected Welles’s contrition was part of a ruse, having seen Welles perform a “congratulatory gesture” after exiting the stage. See Heyer 98.
format of his simulated news broadcast had caused. Welles also expresses his incredulity over the incident:

Despite my deep regret over any misapprehension which our broadcast last night created among some listeners, I am even the more bewildered over this misunderstanding in the light of an analysis of the broadcast itself. It seems to me that there are four factors which should have in any event maintained the illusion of fiction in the broadcast. (qtd. in Estrin 9)

Welles goes on to list these four factors, suggesting that there were sufficient clues provided in the content and context of the program that would have prevented the eventual events incited by the broadcast: the narrative was set in the future; the broadcast occurred during the regular weekly time for the Mercury Theatre; the play was twice announced as a fictional adaptation of H.G. Wells’s novel; and what Welles personally considered the most bewildering of all, “the familiarity of the fable, within the American idiom, of Mars and Martians” (qtd. in Estrin 9). Yet, in noting that both features of content and context existed to prevent the panic that his broadcast caused, Welles implies that there must have been some confounding quality belonging to neither of these categories that led to the mass hysteria produced by the broadcast, even if he could not explicitly articulate it himself. Also interesting in Welles’s interview is his choice of words concerning these factors, that they “should have in any event maintained the illusion of fiction in the broadcast” (qtd. in Estrin 9). In an attempt at verisimilitude in a fictive text, the term implies an attempt to provide and maintain an illusion of factuality or reality. Welles himself was known for going to great lengths to provide verisimilitude in his radio productions, particularly in regards to the use of
sound effects to enhance the reality of the situation acoustically perceived. In this reversal, the idea of maintaining the illusion of fiction points to exactly where the Mercury Theatre production failed, and from which the alarming consequences were born. If the factors of content and context of the radio play were insufficient in Welles’s opinion to maintain the illusion of fiction, it must lie in the arena of form apologized for in his initial statement. Between these two statements, Welles is acknowledging, if convolutedly and imprecisely, that it was the form of the “simulated news broadcast” (qtd. in Estrin 9) that gave rise to the alarming consequences, and that it was therefore some quality inherent to the medium of radio itself which permitted them.

2.2 The invisible and indexical medium

While it may seem obvious, this inherent quality of radio is its entirely aural, and therefore invisible nature. Andrew Crisell points out that radio’s most fundamental and fecund quality is this invisibility (or blindness if considered from the side of the listener), from which its other significant characteristics propagate:

What strikes everyone, broadcasters and listeners alike, as significant about radio is that it is a blind medium. We cannot see its messages, they consist only of noise and silence, and it is from the sole fact of its blindness that all radio’s other distinctive qualities - the nature of its language, its jokes, the way in which its audiences use it - ultimately derive. (3)

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12 Even with the availability of sound machines and other foley tricks, Verma notes that Welles preferred “manually improvised ‘spot’ effects” which “somehow seemed ‘closer’ to the ‘real thing’” (46). Verma provides an example of this: “To catch decapitated heads for the guillotine sequence in his adaptation of Dickens’s *A Tale of Two Cities*, Orson Welles reportedly tried a dozen different woven baskets before settling on the right one” (46).
For Welles, it was the invisible or blind nature of the medium that allowed him to conflate the reality of the CBS broadcast with the fiction of his simulated one in the telling of his apocalyptic tale; for many of Welles’s listeners, it was this same invisibility that allowed them to see the apocalypse so vividly, and panic accordingly. What this hinges on is the nature of sound, and its ability to always indicate or implicate something beyond itself, whether this something is present and visible, or, as in the case of radio, entirely absent from a listening situation. According to Crisell, sound is ‘natural’ - a form of signification which exists ‘out there’ in the real world. It seems never to exist as an isolated phenomenon, always to manifest the presence of something else. Consequently we can say that sounds, whether in the world or on the radio, are generally indexical. (44)

This indexical nature of sound is key to understanding radio, and to how The War of the Worlds achieved what it did. Every sound, whether over the radio or not, must be indexical. Sound does not exist on its own, and its mere presence implicates a source. This is true both physically, and psychologically. It is in this way that sound on the radio functions. A sound is broadcast and received by its listener, who must associate that sound with something, with a something that necessarily caused it. Since radio, by its invisible nature, removes the ability to precisely allocate sound through vision, or any other sense for that matter, it compromises the indexical quality of the sounds it transmits. Transmitted sound, broadcast on the medium of radio, still functions indexically, but without precision. By the very nature of the medium, all sounds

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13 Schwartz suggests that the invisibility of radio actually provides significant visual stimulus, which he credits largely for the hysteria caused by War: “Audiences saw something powerful in their mind’s eye, whether they believed in the Martians or not. Television - or, indeed, any visual medium - can never have the same effect. If radio is the ‘theater of the imagination,’ then War of the Worlds was its defining moment” (215).
transmitted through radio become dissociated with their source, and therefore open up to a sort of indexical imprecision and promiscuity.

The consequences of severing the tie between sound and source, as radio necessarily does, disrupts the indexical process. Without the availability of visual or other sensory cues to aid in its allocation, any sound broadcast over the invisible medium ceases to function as a precise index. As Crisell notes, this is an important quality of sound: “The frequency range of most sounds is narrow and what we often overlook about the way in which we normally recognize them are the clues our other senses afford, notably the visual sense” (47). In his discussion of indexical sounds, Crisell points to the well-known example of “the clapping together of coconut shells to convey horses’ hooves” (47), a technique long used in studio simulations from radio to film. Crisell describes sounds produced in this way as “iconic indexes,” since they “have no direct connections,” but are merely “‘images’ of the sounds made” (47). Yet, despite not being “straightforwardly indexical” (Crisell 47), these sounds can stand in for one another, linking things as diverse as clapping coconuts and horses’ hooves through unaccompanied acoustic information and the indexing it incites.

While the sound of coconuts clapping together can come to represent a horse’s trot, they may just as easily represent the sound of coconuts clapping together. Crisell notes this feature of invisible sound in his discussion of the rustling of recording tape, another studio technique of simulation: “The rustle of recording-tape may sound like someone walking through undergrowth, but it also sounds like the swish of a lady’s gown and remarkably like the rustle of recording-tape” (47). We can turn to the wisdom of Monty Python to see an example of this indexical quality of sound exploited to
comedic effect. In *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* (1975), the visual nature of the filmic medium works to lampoon its auditory nature. Accompanied by his entourage of knights, King Arthur walks rather sillily around the English countryside, with a squire clapping coconuts together in his wake. In its hallmark and hilarious way, this gag illustrates the indexical process of sound. If one were to simply listen to the scene, it may indeed sound like the gallop of a horse, with clues of content and context at first pointing the ear towards a specific indexical conclusion; however, with eyes open, it is clear that no horse is present - only a split coconut (and one allegedly dropped by an African swallow). While perhaps an absurd example, this farcical scene shows the capability that a sightless medium possesses in the use of the indexical process of sound, and how this indexical nature can be deceptively exploited. In *Monty Python*, the deception is intended to be humorously seen through, as film is an audio as well as visual medium. However, in the invisible and entirely aural medium of radio, the sound of coconuts clapping may stand in for the sound of hooves trotting, and without other clue, be it in the form of content, context, or visual information, the listener may be none the wiser. It is not simply the fact that, through a remarkable verisimilitude, the clapping of coconuts sounds exactly like the trotting of a horse, although that may be true; rather, it is what results in excess of this verisimilitude: through the invisibility of the medium and the indexical nature of sound, it is impossible to discern the two sounds, and therefore the sources they are indexical of.

Moving beyond coconuts and horses’ hooves, we can see that invisible sounds sever any tie to a precise source, whatever that source may be. In some sense, the source is rendered irrelevant through radio, because no trace of it is verifiably preserved within
the medium, as it may be in other sighted media. Therefore, radio removes the ability to precisely index any sound, but leaves the necessity of just that indexical process. In doing so, radio sounds therefore open themselves up as promiscuous indexes, no longer monogamous in their bond to a single, sensually evident source. This is what may be called indexical polysemy, or the propensity for any sound, in the absence of other sensory information or separate cues, to serve as an index for a multiplicity of sources. Yet, beyond this indexical polysemy is another quality of sightless sound that has severe implications to the medium of radio. I will call this quality indexical ambiguity, a term I use to mean that it is impossible to discern what an isolated sound, with its polysemous potential, precisely signifies. While indexical polysemy suggests that sounds may just as easily mean one thing or another, indexical ambiguity suggests that it is impossible, without the aid of further non-aural sensory information or clues of content and context, to decide on or affix a single meaning or source from the polysemous litany of possibilities. It is this indistinguishable quality of sound, as it is contained in the invisible medium, which has tremendous implications to the listener’s ability to determine just what, exactly, they are listening to.

Contained within an entirely aural medium that precludes other sensory information and affirmation, all sounds are rendered indexically polysemous, opening up a wide range of meaning through the indexical process, and also presenting the impossibility of precise association through indexical ambiguity. So how, then, do broadcasters maintain control over what their listeners hear? Since the medium is an invisible, as well as tasteless, odourless, and touchless one, the use of alternate sensory information is automatically precluded in radio broadcasts. Verisimilitude of sound is
also an unreliable broadcasting tool to maintain such regulation, as previously noted, since it does nothing to affix or narrow the indexical process. As Crisell notes, “however carefully selected and ‘realistic’ the sounds may be, the listener may still be unclear as to what aspect of reality they are meant to signify” (47). Broadcasters, then, must turn to other techniques in an attempt to regulate the reception of their transmissions.

These techniques can be found in the arena of content and context, which broadcasters employ to reduce the noise of their sound transmission and to ensure, or at most attempt to ensure, appropriate reception in their listeners. Crisell comments on the need for contextual pointing in the broadcast of radio:

> Radio’s codes are purely auditory, consisting of speech, music, sounds and silence, and since, as we shall see, the ear is not the most ‘intelligent’ of our sense organs their deployment has to be relatively simple. The risks of ambiguity or complete communication failure are high, and so in all kinds of radio much effort is expended on overcoming the limitations of the medium, on establishing different kinds of context which we would generally be able to see for ourselves.

(5)

The use of content and context, then, is paramount in the invisible medium; indeed, it appears to be the only way that broadcasters can attempt to regulate and direct the significance and signification of their sounds on the air. As Crisell notes, “sounds require textual pointing - support from the dialogue or narrative. The ear will believe what it is led to believe” (48). Attempting to define this type of textual pointing, Crisell borrows the term “anchorage” from Roland Barthes, who employs the term to describe “the
function of words used as captions for photographs” (Crisell 48). In both the cases of the entirely visual medium of the photograph and the entirely aural medium of radio, words, with more precise semantic meaning, are utilized in order to navigate or circumvent the expanse of meaning and the potential confusion the viewer or listener finds themselves in. In each case, a single-sensory medium is augmented with a means of anchorage, as the term implies, to anchor specific interpretation or significance to an image or sound that is susceptible to ambiguity and confusion. In both the examples of dialogue and narrative in radio, and the photograph accompanied by a caption, there is some incongruity, undesirably wide and fruitful in its expanse, that is sought to be minimized by techniques of anchorage. In radio, dialogue and narrative attempt to constrain the semantic meaning and signification of wild and unruly sound; in the example of the photograph, the caption attempts to narrow and affix the possible significance that will be gleaned from an image.

In my discussion of radio, it is my suggestion that the single-sensory medium, since by definition it cannot rely on other sensory affirmation, severs the tie between sound and source, leading to indexical polysemy and ambiguity. Thus, the term anchorage for the contextual pointing of dialogue and narrative in radio, as Crisell suggests, is an appropriate one: it is an attempt to tether the tie severed between sound and its source, and limit the drift of confusion that is inherent to the process of radio. Anchorage is a fundamental tool of broadcast radio, and perhaps the most important,

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15 For Jarkko Toikkanen, the incongruity between media, such as the “radical incongruity of word and image” (77), incites an “inherently intermedial experience” (4) of horror. Toikkanen’s theory was considered for this study to help explain the instances of hysteria in frightened listeners, but was ultimately out of the scope of this paper.
since it appears to be the only way some regulation of significance can be attempted in
the aural medium. It is also perhaps the only way that a distinction between fact and
fiction can be coerced over the medium, since its single-sensory nature precludes
affirmation from other senses to the veracity of events acoustically broadcast and
received. Thus, anchorage in radio is ultimately a tool to mitigate the medium’s intrinsic
propensity for confusion, a propensity which caused real concern in the early days of
radio. While I suggest that this concern was most perfectly realized in The War of the
Worlds broadcast and its aftermath, this fear of confusion was not without precedent in
the history of radio. While Crisell describes the entirely aural nature of radio as a
limitation or an obstacle to be overcome, and it may indeed be in some regards, it is a
limitation that also brings with it certain potent, and even dangerous capabilities. By
looking at radio history in America, I will suggest that this feature of radio invoked less
worry amongst listeners and broadcasters about its shortcomings, and much more
concern over its potential.

2.3 Precedents and consequences

The concern over this quality of radio was present in the years preceding 1938;
however, rather than a concern over being able to discern fact from fiction, as in the
broadcast of War, the concern was over the potential confusion of prerecorded and live
content, and the inability to differentiate the two in the broadcast medium. This anxiety
centered around the compromise of radio’s immediacy, the unprecedented quality that
telecommunication had introduced to the 20th century. In their psychological study of
radio, Cantril and Allport note the importance of this sense of immediacy to radio
listeners in their discussion of prerecorded and live broadcasts: “Even though such
transcriptions cannot be distinguished by the majority of people from real performances, listeners feel dissatisfied” (259). Or, alternatively put: “The thought of a whirling disk cannot create the sense of participation in actual events that is radio’s chief psychological characteristic” (Cantril and Allport 259). The importance placed on this sense of immediacy was more than just one of preference, than just wanting the real thing as it happened; rather, it was deemed so important because of the deceptive capabilities it had the potential for. The biggest threat to this immediacy was the broadcasting of prerecorded material. As Peters notes, while telecommunication challenged limits of distance in communicative media, recording fundamentally changed limits of temporality: “The sensuous, temporal impressions of events could be preserved. [...] Media of transmission allow crosscuts through space, but recording media allow jump cuts through time” (144). In the case of broadcasting, these “jump cuts,” as Peters calls them, could be imperceptible, as telecommunication could present them with immediacy. Samuel Weber notes that the broadcasting of prerecorded material may be imperceptible even in the broadcast of television:

The minimal difference necessary to distinguish reproduced from reproduction, model from copy, repeated from repetition, is reduced, tendentially at least, to the imperceptible. One can no longer distinguish, visually or aurally, between that which is reproduced and its reproduction. Indeed, one cannot even discern that or when reproduction or repetition, in the manifest sense of recording or replaying, is taking place. (121)

Like the later medium of broadcast television, radio could render live and prerecorded content identical in the medium, and therefore, through the medium’s inherent
propensity for indexical ambiguity, leave the listener with the inability to distinguish the two. As Peters notes, “Once, all sounds had been mortal and particular. With recording, one can build a mausoleum of sound, fixed in a state of suspended animation” (162). Through the invention of recording, sounds, in effect, became eternal and indistinguishable, freeing themselves from their original mortal and particular emanations.

This feature of radio presented great unease in listeners, which would become a concern for broadcasters as well, with all major networks addressing it in agreement through a ban on prerecorded content. As Schwartz notes,

[...] for this reason, the major broadcast networks banned the use of prerecorded content in the 1930s. Everything listeners heard over NBC and CBS in that decade - every concert, every dramatic program, every comedy show - aired live, because of preference, not technical necessity. The networks argued that the use of recordings in news broadcasts, even more than in musical or dramatic programming, was particularly deceptive [...] because audiences had been trained to regard radio shows as live events. By this logic, truth and liveness went hand in hand; one could not exist without the other. A recording, even of a real event, seemed less authentic to 1930s listeners than a live performance of a fictional program. (17)

The ban on prerecorded content shows that there was concern over the ability to differentiate from original and copy, and implies that the worry was great enough to preemptively attempt to stop it. This concern hinged on the notion of immediacy that networks and listeners alike regarded as somehow sacred and essential, even if they
could not precisely articulate why. By creating unnoticeable temporal distance over the medium that had finally eliminated delay in communication, prerecorded content gave the effect of effacing this sacred immediacy of the medium. As well, in addition to this notion of immediacy, I suggest that this policy also had to do with the ability to index sound, attempting to maintain some sense of control over the unregulated and unreliable acoustic indexing that was instigated by radio. Although the acoustic information from a live event or prerecorded information of the same event is indistinguishable once it is captured in radio, by uniformly ensuring that all broadcasts were live and never prerecorded, and therefore immediate, this ban was an attempt to limit indexical ambiguity. In this way, broadcasters sought to provide their listeners with at least some semblance of confidence in the indexing of sound with its source. Making the liveness of radio broadcast official policy on the networks can therefore be seen as an attempt to maintain immediacy, and combat the uncontrollable indexical potential of radio derived from its single-sensory nature. By implementing the ban on prerecorded material, the networks attempted to provide their listeners the confidence and comfort through policy that could not be guaranteed in the medium of radio itself.

The network ban on the broadcast of prerecorded material was largely supported by the American radio public, even when it came to the reporting of news, and perhaps especially in this case. Schwartz notes that,

in the 1930s, it was perfectly acceptable for radio stations to restage news events in a studio, complete with actors and sound effects, and broadcast them for later audiences, as long as the re-creation aired live. (19-20)
In what may appear somewhat counterintuitive, networks added to the authenticity of their news programs not by playing available prerecorded acoustic information from actual events, but rather by completely recreating it from scratch. These recreations, crafted by studio teams in a time and space removed from their original source, could be broadcast live and with immediacy from within the station. As Schwartz notes, the “show that pioneered this technique was called *The March of Time*, and by 1937 it was probably the most popular news program on the air” (20). Although this kind of after-the-fact recreation may seem a move away from immediacy in regards to the actual events being reported, the immediacy of the broadcast was maintained, immediately connecting utterance and audience. Broadcast immediacy, and the sense of participation it invoked, was important enough to gain precedence over recordings of actual acoustic information from real events, and to be codified into policy across all major networks. However, this precedence was not simply motivated by preference; rather, it was motivated by concern.

While this ban on prerecorded content may have circumvented the potential confusion of live and prerecorded material by making all broadcasts live through policy, it does point to the already extant concern that radio, as a medium, had a profound power of confusion concerning original and copy, and even whether these categories could be differentiated or defined over the air. For the early American radio public, it seemed that mere verisimilitude to actual events, rather than the actual acoustic information gathered from those very events, was not only preferable and more

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16 Verma lists other such programs that were popular at the time - *News Comes to Life*, *Eye Witness*, and *Front Page Drama* - calling them “news dramatizations’ with sometimes tenuous relationships to real events” (66).
authentic, but also ethically superior, and ultimately safer - if delivered live and with immediacy. Broadcasters would therefore go to great lengths to preserve this immediacy, as illustrated in their ban on prerecorded content and reenactment of news events. Such measures reveal the value placed on immediacy, and also the underlying concern for what could happen in its compromise.

One notable incident showing the concern over broadcasting prerecorded content was the crash of the Hindenburg zeppelin in 1937, a year before the War broadcast. On May 6th, 1937, the Hindenburg, a German zeppelin, crashed in a fiery inferno at the Naval Air Station Lakehurst, only some 30 miles away from the New Jersey town of Grover’s Mill where the alien pod in The War of the Worlds would fictionally land the very next year.\(^1\) In the Hindenburg incident, the radio networks temporarily, though hesitantly, lifted their ban to play a prerecorded account of the events from field reporter Herbert Morrison. This recording was played the day after the crash, and although this transmission was broadcast with explicit and repeated warnings that it was not a live account, the networks “still regarded prerecorded content as inauthentic and potentially deceptive, likely to mislead the audience into thinking they were listening to a live event” (Schwartz 19). This, as it turned out, is exactly what occurred, as “the piece was so vivid that many listeners still believed they were hearing the event as it happened” (Schwartz 19). In a way, they really were, since the acoustic information from “the event as it happened,” as preserved in the field recording, was identical to the acoustic information of its later broadcast. Without other sensory information, and even

\(^{17}\) As noted by Schwartz, New Jersey was a state that seemed to attract important radio catastrophes, real or simulated: “Purely by happenstance, [Koch] had set the Martian invasion in New Jersey - a state that, from the Lindbergh kidnapping to the Morro Castle to the Hindenburg, had seen more radio crises that decade than perhaps any other” (50).
in the presence of contextual warnings from the station, many listeners were confused. As a result of this broadcast and the ensuing confusion, the “networks’ concerns about the use of recordings had in a sense, been validated” (Schwartz 19). Although the Hindenburg really did burn and crash, the anxiety still persisted in regards to the audience’s inability to distinguish between recording and live event, between copy and original. In a medium that eliminated communicative delay and replaced it with immediacy, the networks, validated by the response of their listeners, deemed that such distinction was rendered impossible through the medium, and that this distinction was somehow necessary for radio to function safely and ethically. For this reason, the networks reinstated their ban on prerecorded content in the wake of the Hindenburg incident. However, even with the safeguard implemented against the confusion of live and prerecorded events in place, *The War of the Worlds* broadcast would find a way to exploit this quality of radio the very next year. This time, the confusion would not be over the crash landing of a zeppelin, but of alien space pods.

In the wake of *The War of the Worlds* broadcast, and the confusion caused, two significant groups became particularly interested in the power of radio that the Mercury Theatre production had revealed. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) launched an investigation into Welles and the CBS, and an academic investigation from the Princeton Radio Project (PRP), headed by Hadley Cantril, was also set in motion. Both organizations, while interested in the the broadcast for different reasons, realized the power, and indeed the danger, of public broadcast radio. While the FCC was vested in legal culpability and the regulation of radio, Cantril’s radio research lab was interested in what the broadcast revealed about the qualities of the medium itself, and
its psychological effects on its listeners. In 1937, the Rockefeller Foundation had “allocated a grant to Princeton University with the assignment of studying the role played by radio for different groups of listeners in the United States” (Cantril v). When Welles’s sensational broadcast emanated through the air a year later, a special grant from the General Education Board was given to the PRP, so that they might “study the event which fitted so well into the whole frame of the Princeton Project” (Cantril v). Cantril, then associate director of the PRP, could not pass up the “unexpected ‘experimental’ situation” (Cantril v) afforded by the broadcast, publishing his findings in *The Invasion from Mars: A Study in the Psychology of Panic* (1940).

Along with these federal and academic investigations, the American public itself was equally concerned about the power of radio that this event had demonstrated. As Schwartz notes, “[t]he broadcast itself has become shorthand for the dangerous power and influence of the media, not to mention the gullibility and ignorance of mass audiences” (8). Thousands of letters poured into the FCC and the Mercury Theatre, addressing varied individual concerns raised by the broadcast:

The letters written to the Mercury and the FCC in the wake of *War of the Worlds* do provide evidence hinting at how many people were frightened, and how fear spread that night. But, more importantly, they also show how the country reacted to the idea that a radio show had supposedly panicked the nation. This, in some ways, was the real *War of the Worlds* panic: the fear the broadcast raised about the power of the media in American society. (Schwartz 11)

Although Schwartz’s study emphasizes that concern grew around the term “the media,” I suggest that the *War* broadcast raised issues fundamentally about broadcast media, and
not just as a metonymy for the mass communication network implicated by the articulated term. How was it that such a thing as a simulated news broadcast of Martian invasion could give rise to very real panic both during and after its transmission? I argue that the answer cannot lie wholly in either the “power and influence of the media” [emphasis mine], nor in the “gullibility and ignorance of mass audiences” (Schwartz 8), the two reasons frequently discussed in academic and popular articles on the broadcast. Rather, I suggest that these causes of the War panic should be considered in the light of the medium of broadcast radio that permitted them.
3 The Broadcast

3.1 Foundations of confusion

Having ignored the content of the Mercury Theatre’s production long enough in my study of it as an historical event, I’ll now turn to an internal analysis of the play to show how Welles’s program manipulated its medium through its simulated news format, and in doing so, presented a profoundly confusing and confused representation of apocalypse.

The broadcast begins, plainly enough, with a clear message from the station announcer: “The Columbia Broadcasting System and its affiliated stations present Orson Welles and the Mercury Theatre on the Air in The War of the Worlds by H.G. Wells” (War). Yet, the broadcast immediately becomes much more complicated in the wake of this adroit address. After a brief playing of the Mercury Theatre theme, Welles is introduced to the listening audience by the station announcer: “Ladies and gentlemen: the director of the Mercury Theatre and star of these broadcasts, Orson Welles” (War). Without delay, Welles’s voice is immediately heard as he delivers a narratorial monologue. However, Welles speaks not simply as Orson Welles, the star and director that was seconds ago introduced, but rather in character as a diegetic narrator within the radio play. Welles, as diegetic narrator, regards the events retrospectively and in the past tense from a point in time that may be considered post-apocalyptic in the chronology of the narrative about to be told. The narratorial Welles recalls that the portending events have occurred in “the thirty-ninth year of the 20th century” (War),
and indicates that he is recounting the story from some future time beyond that.\textsuperscript{18} The events at the outset of the story are described as happening in 1939, and specifically on the evening of October 30\textsuperscript{th}, exactly one year after the date of the immediate CBS broadcast. Already, the fictitious and the factual are confused, as the narrator is introduced as the 1938 Welles, but speaks from sometime temporally beyond the present, and beyond the 1939 setting of the ensuing apocalyptic events to be narrated reflectively. His diction in his opening narration further emphasizes this temporal distance, stressing the discrepancy between his time of narratorial recount and the events so described. Welles begins his narration with such effect, indicating that there has been time enough for reflection between the narrated events and the time of narration:

\textit{We know now} that in the early years of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century this world was being watched closely by intelligences greater than man’s and yet as mortal as his own. \textit{We know now} that as human beings busied themselves about their various concerns they were scrutinized and studied. [emphasis mine] (\textit{War})

In his later interview in \textit{The New York Times}, Welles insists that his narration made clear that the broadcast was performed as if occurring in the future and as if it were then related by a survivor of a past occurrence. The date of the fanciful invasion of this planet by Martians was clearly given as 1939 and was so announced at the outset of the broadcast. (qtd. in Estrin 9)

\textsuperscript{18} This statement could be argued as ambiguous itself, further confusing things, as the thirty-ninth year of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century would correctly refer to 1938, but was probably intended by Welles to indicate 1939, as he would later reassert in interview.
However, this narration clearly did not have the clarifying effect that Welles imagined. While his argument here may seem robust, it does not consider the confusing setup of his introduction and his narration, nor the confusing power inherent to the medium it was broadcast in. Although introduced as the director and star, by speaking in response to this introduction as the diegetic narrator situated in the narrative from some point well beyond the 1939 time of apocalypse, Welles’s two on-air spoken identities are confused, simultaneously distinguished and made indistinguishable through the medium of radio.

This confusion, I suggest, was made possible by the process of acoustic indexing that is intrinsic to radio. As discussed previously, any sound that emanates must do so from a source. It must have an origin that is not itself, and is therefore a product of something else. The indexical process arises as a necessary consequence of this quality to implicate sound with source. Since radio is an entirely aural medium, every bit of information it transmits instigates an indexical process, and this is of course also true of broadcast words. As discussed by de Saussure, words are connected to symbolic meaning through a process of signification, and this is a process irrespective of the medium though which they are encountered, be they written, spoken, or even thought.¹⁹ However, spoken words, as all words on radio necessarily are, have an additional quality that they cannot escape. Crisell articulates this quality, stating that “there is an important difference between words which are written or printed on a page and words on the radio, and that is that words on the radio are always and unavoidably spoken” (43). Thus, as de Saussure suggests, words on radio act as signifiers and

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instigate a symbolic process of signification; however, since they are *spoken*, they also exist sonically, which necessarily instigates the indexical process required by any sound. In the case of voices on radio, these two processes are instigated in parallel. Every voiced word must not only gain symbolic significance, but it must be indexed with a speaker, with an originator of the utterance that lends it timbre, tone, and texture. As Crisell puts it, spoken words, the only kind that the medium of radio can utilize, “constitute a binary code in which words themselves are symbols of what they represent, while the voice in which they are heard is an index of the person or ‘character’ who is speaking” (43). In the case of Orson Welles in *The War of the Worlds*, his voice functions as an index of both “person or ‘character’” (Crisell 43): as star and director of the Mercury Theatre on the Air; and as diegetic narrator. Since Welles’s voice is confused and conflated in the transition from station announcement to narrative commencement, his singular voice is simultaneously indexical of these two figurations. This feature displays what Peters calls electronic media’s propensity for “duplicating and distributing indicia of human presence” (141). As the introduced star and director of the Mercury Theatre, but also as the diegetic narrator within the Mercury Theatre’s production of *The War of the Worlds*, Welles’s singular voice and the words it speaks tethers together and conflates these two personas through the processes of signification and acoustic indexing, profoundly confusing them. As a broadcast famous for inducing the confusion of narrative fiction with factual reality in many of its listeners, the introduction and opening narrative does precisely this on a formal level within its own presentation. In the opening seconds of this broadcast, the seemingly innocent and
innocuous introduction and narration, wittingly or not, already reveals the propensity for confusion that the aural medium of radio can facilitate.

The confusion initiated through Welles’s introduction continues, and on several fronts. Still speaking as both the star of the show as he was introduced, and as the diegetic narrator, Welles continues with his indexically confusing voice to state: “Near the end of October. Business was better. The scare was over. More men were back at work. Sales were picking up. On this particular evening, October 30th, the Crossley service estimated that 32,000,000 people were listening in on radios” (War). Again, his voice serves as an index for two simultaneous identities now established by the program: the 1938 Orson Welles and the post-apocalyptic diegetic narrator. Therefore, in referring to “this particular evening, October 30th” (War), Welles’s voice could be perceived as referring to the date of October 30th, 1939, or indeed this particular evening, the evening of the CBS broadcast of October 30th, 1938. Again, in his two spoken personas, Welles confuses the temporal existence of his broadcast, implicating the real present with the fictional future through the carefully chosen, or perhaps carelessly chosen, spoken words.

In addition to this, speaking in a voice that has been established as an index for two identities simultaneously, Welles is not only emphasizing the scale of audience that radio is able to reach in 1938 America, but also aligning the fictional audience of 32,000,000 with his own millions of real radio listeners tuning into the CBS on that particular evening. In a profound, and profoundly confusing way, Welles exploits the “sense of participation” that is “radio’s chief psychological characteristic” (Cantril and Allport 259), simultaneously implicating his real audience and fictional audience,
involving them together in the events immediately to be broadcast. Again, the distinction between real and fictional is not only blurred, but effaced. Both the real 1938 listeners and the fictional 1939 listeners within the narrative will shortly receive the same acoustic information, and are similarly involved in their listenership. As the program commences, they will not be given a distinct treatment, and they are harmonized into indistinguishable union by the unrelenting form of the simulated news broadcast and the medium of radio. Thus, not only does Welles come to be representative of two simultaneous personas, but he conflates his fictional and real audiences into the same group of listeners. This perhaps helps to account why the experience of horror intended in the fictional listeners came to be so closely replicated in actual listeners of the Mercury Theatre’s broadcast.

Welles, as a dutiful storyteller, also sets the scene of his narrative in a way that confuses real setting with fictional, and he does this by making radio the scene and setting of his broadcast. As Jurg Häusermann notes, “[r]adio does not imitate the empirical space of existing places,” but rather “creates its own space” (192), and this is exactly what the narrator Welles emphasizes in his statement concerning the millions of listeners tuning into the program. Before the simulated news program begins, Welles suggests that what is about to be heard is the news broadcast that reached the 32,000,000 listeners on the particular evening of October 30th, 1939. The scene is not the radio station, nor is it the locations visited by its reporters and their microphones; rather, the scene that Welles sets for the play is radio. It exists in and as the medium. While field reporters may supposedly be visiting particular places and recording distinct events, seemingly bringing the audience to these locations and allowing them to bear
witness, it is important to remember that every place is represented in sound, and mediated through radio. It may provide acoustic information of places, people, and events, but any such information must function merely as an index pointing towards such places, people, and events, all from within the medium. By making the content of his real broadcast a simulated broadcast, Welles undermines the ability to discern such categories over the air.

In a medium that already prohibits the accurate verification of sound with its source through the indexical polysemy and ambiguity inherent to its single-sensory and aural nature, Koch’s script and Welles’s direction further confuse things using the very tools that broadcasters generally employ to provide some semblance of certainty in the indexical process. As discussed above, the tools of anchorage in radio, namely the contextual pointing of dialogue and narrative, exist here. However, instead of being employed to guide the listener towards the real, authentic source of the sounds they are hearing, these tools are used to mislead them to index sounds to imaginary sources. In a regular radio news program, broadcasters would take great care to employ anchorage to lead the ear to index sounds with the real sources of those sounds, to combat the indexical ambiguity imposed by the medium. As exemplified in the ban on prerecorded content, indexical ambiguity was a great concern for broadcasters and listeners alike. In *The War of the Worlds*, these tools of anchorage take advantage of the property of indexical ambiguity to lead the listeners to index the sounds they hear with sources that exist within the fiction of the narrative. This occurs right from the outset of the fictional broadcast, the one said to be occurring on October 30\textsuperscript{th}, 1939, and it occurs even before any mention of unusual Martian activity.
3.2 The broadcast within the broadcast

After the frame provided by the station announcer, and the narratorial frame provided by the reflective persona of Welles, the broadcast within the broadcast properly begins. By yet another radio voice playing a radio voice, the listeners are brought to the evening of October 30th, 1939. One reason postulated for some listeners’ confusion concerning the 1938 broadcast’s veracity is that, quite simply, many of the listeners tuned in late, missing the opening announcements and monologue, joining the broadcast midway. Indeed, the October 30th, 1939 broadcast simulates this experience itself, beginning with a slow fade mid-sentence into the middle of a weather forecast: “...for the next twenty-four hours not much change in temperature. A slight atmospheric disturbance of undetermined origin is reported over Nova Scotia. [...] This weather report comes to you from the Government Weather Bureau” (War). Interjected into the middle of one of radio’s most banal and quotidian programs even to this day, presumably it is business as usual on the fictitious station. To the listener, if they had missed the clues given by the content of the opening announcement or Welles’s monologue, it would sound like regular programming on the Columbia Broadcast System; indeed, for many it did. By beginning with such ordinary and mundane programming in their fictional narrative, the Mercury Theatre production subtly leads the ears of their listeners to index the sounds they are really hearing with sources that exist only in the fiction. For example, the weather report, the one which comes from the Government Weather Bureau, exists only fictionally. Although it is perhaps a very innocent way to begin a deception, this is nonetheless what it does. By using anchorage

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20 For individual accounts of listeners tuning in late, see Cantril, Schwartz.
to link a very mundane and banal report to a fictional entity, the Mercury Theatre is already manipulating their audience. Anchorage is not used here to help index acoustic information with real sources, but with fictional ones.

This trend continues with another subtle deception. The announcer states: “We now take you to the Meridian Room in the Hotel Park Plaza in downtown New York, where you will be entertained by the music of Ramon Raquello and his orchestra” (War). After this shift, Spanish orchestral music plays, and the ear is led to believe it is being played live and with immediacy, and from the particular place stipulated. Like the weather announcement that initiates the broadcast within the broadcast, this is another common feature of radio programs. While New York is a real and recognizable place, the Meridian Room in the Hotel Park Plaza is not. Likewise, Ramon Raquello and his orchestra exist only in the fiction, although they may sound real enough in their playing of familiar tunes. Led by the words of the station announcer, and the music that plays, the listeners are again coerced to associate the sounds they hear with sources that exist only in the fiction. Through these seemingly innocent and innocuous episodes, the Mercury Theatre production creates a link between real sound and fictional source, subtly laying the foundations of deception that would soon lead many listeners to associate the real sounds of the program with a fictional Martian invasion.

In the midst of a musical interlude from the Meridian Room, another interruption occurs from the announcer: “Ladies and gentlemen, we interrupt our program of dance music to bring you a special bulletin from the Intercontinental Radio

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21 In reality, the music was performed by a studio orchestra conducted by Bernard Herrmann.
News” (*War*). In this breaking news segment is the first mention of unusual activity on Mars:

> At twenty minutes before eight, central time, Professor Farrell of the Mount Jennings Observatory, Chicago, Illinois, reports observing several explosions of incandescent gas, occurring at regular intervals on the planet Mars. (*War*)

Building on the foundation of deception created through the quotidian weather report and the playing of music, the Mercury Theatre now moves towards the reports of Martian invasion that will preoccupy the rest of the program. Again, the foundations for this are laid subtly, and the eventual Martian invasion that is to come does not come out of nowhere. In order to build credibility for the inevitable event, Koch’s script introduces this unusual Martian activity through sources of authority, fictional though they may be. The broadcast mentions the Intercontinental Radio News as the source for its special bulletin, and relays a report from Professor Farrell at the Mount Jennings Observatory in Chicago, Illinois. Then, the announcer voices a quotation from “Professor Pierson of the observatory at Princeton,” who “describes the phenomenon as ‘like a jet of blue flame shot from a gun’” (*War*). Again, the names of real places and things are intermingled with the fictional, which bolsters the credibility of such descriptions in the listener. For example, the Mount Jennings Observatory does not exist (although Mount Jennings is a real mountain in Antarctica), but Chicago, Illinois, does. Professor Pierson may be a fictional character, but Princeton is a well known and highly regarded Ivy League university in New Jersey, the state where the fictional spaceship landing will be said to occur. Again, Koch’s script uses a variety of techniques of anchorage to lead the listener to believe they are associating real sounds with their correct, real world sources,
even though such a possibility may be precluded by the nature of radio itself. Through this authoritative intermingling of fictional and real, the Mercury Theatre is manipulating a confidence that is already falsely based, coercing its listeners towards indexing the sounds they hear with fictional sources. The deceptive capability of the Mercury Theatre’s program does not simply rely on misleading the listener through a convincing fictional narrative, as a narrative in any medium might. The whole conceit of the program relies on the indexical ambiguity inherent to radio, and *The War of the Worlds* fully exploits this characteristic of the medium in its real and simulated broadcast.

Throughout the rest of the radio play up until the station break at the forty-minute mark, the broadcast will continually shift around between station jockeys, field reporters, dancehall music, and more, suggesting a wide variety of different places. In this continuous switching between locations, the broadcast shows the vast distances that telecommunications can cover without delay, and what effect this has on the listener. As Häusermann notes,

> [w]hen in 1938 Orson Welles and Howard Koch brought their famous version of H. G. Wells’s *The War of the Worlds* on the air, they displayed a ubiquitous medium, capable of transmitting live music from a dance hall, interviews from an observatory, on-the-spot reporting from the middle of nowhere - and switching between these places easily and fast. (194).

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22 Verma terms this portion of the play as kaleidosonic, arguing that “[k]aleidosonic plays leap from one mike to another, ‘objectively’ arraying the world before us, with everything equidistant” (68). Because of its incredible amount of shifts, Verma claims that *War* “was kaleidosonic run amok” (71). Verma differentiates kaleidosonic style from intimate style, where “the listener seems to nestle intimately with one carefully selected character for the duration of the drama” (63). For a discussion of these styles, and a case study of Welles as a master of using both, see Verma 57-72.
The Mercury Theatre production team emphasize this seeming movement through the use of language pioneered in broadcast media, with the continual repetition of such phrases as “we now take you;” “we now return you;” and “we now bring you;” permutations of which occur with tremendous frequency throughout the broadcast. Not only does this enhance the geographic scale of the narrative in preparation for the global apocalyptic events that are about to occur, but it also emphasizes the immediacy of radio and its ability to transcend distance without delay. In these repeated phrases there is both a temporal and geographic insinuation. Not only is the audience being taken or brought somewhere, this movement is occurring now. In this way, radio announcers suggest that there is some immediate movement occurring either on the side of the radio broadcaster, or on the side of the radio listener, changing what Neil Verma calls the “audioposition” (35) of the broadcast. Telecommunications does seem to remove the barriers of time and distance in communication; however, it does so at a cost: mediation. Although radio announcers claim immediate movement in their repetitive use of such phrases, it is, of course, not occurring. Separation still exists. The listener is not being taken anywhere, and the station announcers are not going anywhere. Everything is now embedded in the medium. Weber, although his discussion focuses primarily on the medium of broadcast television, suggests that this a fundamental quality of telecommunication and its media:

[T]elevision *overcomes* distance and separation; but it can do so only because it also *becomes* a separation. Like radio, which in a certain manner it incorporates, television is perhaps first and foremost a method of *transmission*; and transmission, which is movement, involves separation. (116)
The Mercury Theatre deliberately takes advantage of this feature of telecommunication to emphasize the sense of movement in their radio transmission, even as separation is maintained. Although a plethora of places are announced, and announced as immediately present, there is of course no place in radio but radio itself. However, this constant semblance of immediate movement, and its repeated enforcement through such phrases as “we now take you” or “we now bring you,” stresses the feeling of involvement that is characteristic of radio. By eliding space and time through mediation, live radio broadcast gives the sense that what it is transmitting is spatially and immediately present, whether it be a place thousands of miles away, or perhaps even a place that is wholly imaginary.

Since geographical distance and temporal delay can be conquered, live broadcast radio gives the sense that it must be reporting the here and now. This feature accounts for the sense of profound involvement in its listener. However, since the single-sensory quality of radio opens up the possibility of indexical ambiguity, the listener cannot actually discern the spatial or temporal qualities of the sounds that are broadcast. Live music sounds exactly the same as prerecorded music over the medium, and sounds from one location are indistinguishable from sounds originating in any other once they are mediated through radio. The inability to aurally distinguish acoustic information from different times, and from different places, leads to the question of whether a distinction can be perceived between real and simulation over the medium of radio. As Cantril and Allport suggest, “[i]n annihilating auditory distance the radio has to some extent destroyed for the listener his capacity to distinguish between real and imaginary
Since all sounds “are generally indexical” (Crisell 44), and radio reduces all perceivable information to the acoustic information of sound, the listener is left with no means to verify what the sound is an index of, nor what, where, or when it particularly emanates from. Radio therefore levels the playing field for real and simulated events just as it does for events across large distances, or events across time, since the acoustic information from each can be perceived identically. Whether differentiated by distance, time, or reality, the medium of radio renders all acoustic information indistinguishable based on such categories, making confusion a fundamental quality of the medium. Therefore, while broadcast media might give the “sense of participation in actual events” (Cantril and Allport 259), those events might just as well be simulated, fictional, or imaginary while still imbuing the audience with that same sense of participation.

One useful way of thinking of this inherent quality of radio is outlined in Jean Baudrillard’s 1981 postmodern work, *Simulacra and Simulation*. Here, Baudrillard introduces the concept of the precession of simulacra, and the resultant rise of the hyperreal:

> Today abstraction is no longer that of the map, the double, the mirror, or the concept. Simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being, or a substance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal. The territory no longer precedes the map, nor does it survive it. It is

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23 For a discussion of this phenomenon in regards to *The March of Time* program, see Cantril and Allport 70-1.

24 Peters discusses the ways in which media of telecommunication and recording also challenge the ability to perceive distinction between living and dead, discussing modern media closely with the spirit world and spiritualism: “The two key existential facts about modern media are these: the ease with which the living may mingle with the communicable traces of the dead, and the difficulty of distinguishing communication at a distance from communication with the dead” (149).
nevertheless the map that precedes the territory - precession of simulacra - that engenders the territory, and if one must return to the fable, today it is the territory whose shreds slowly rot across the extent of the map. It is the real, and not the map, whose vestiges persist here and there in the deserts that are no longer those of the Empire, but ours. The desert of the real itself. (1)

While useful comparison may be drawn between Baudrillard’s theory and the qualities of radio outlined here, the two are not identical phenomena. In Baudrillard’s theory, the hyperreal is generated “without origin or reality;” it is pure simulation. However, in radio, I argue that this distinction is not even possible. Copy and original, simulation and reality, cannot be discerned through the medium, prohibiting the categorization of either. Although he focusses his discussion on the broadcast medium of television, Weber argues that this is a fundamental quality of telecommunicative media: “In television, [...] as with radio before it,” the “temporal relation of past and present, the mimetic relation of a previously existent original and a subsequent copy,” becomes “severely perturbed” (120-1). As a result of this perturbation, “the logic and ontology that govern the traditional relationship of mimesis, reproduction and representation are unsettled” (Weber 120-1). Because of this feature of telecommunicative media, what is left is a level playing field for simulation and reality, because such categories cannot be discerned.

Welles’s The War of the Worlds provides an example of this feature, and through its formal qualities of being a real broadcast simulating a broadcast, it emphasizes that the two are indistinguishable through any formal or medial quality, making it profoundly confusing. Even though tools of anchorage may attempt to provide clues
through content and context, these tools are, ultimately, unreliable. The Mercury
Theatre’s program takes full advantage of radio’s indexical quality, and the listener’s
inability to discriminate between real and imaginary sources for the indexical sounds it
hears. Through the formal qualities of the Mercury Theatre broadcast, and the qualities
of radio, the simulation does not replace the real, but the terms are rendered
insignificant as the two exist identically, and indistinguishably. Welles, in really
broadcasting a simulated broadcast, eliminates the possibility of such categorizations,
profoundly involving his listeners with what they are hearing, real or not.
4 Apocalypse

4.1 The demands of apocalyptic representation

Radio, with this capacity for profound involvement, also facilitates the kind of involvement necessitated by apocalyptic representation. In this chapter, I will discuss the paradoxical nature of apocalyptic representation, the demands it places on its media, and how *The War of the Worlds* exploited the involving qualities of its medium to present an unprecedented account of apocalypse that, while simulated, gave rise to very real revelations.

True apocalyptic representation demands that it be profoundly involved with what it is representing; that is, the representation of apocalypse must be immanent and immediate with the apocalypse it is attempting to describe and portray. The representation cannot exist somewhere else looking towards it, nor can it exist in another time looking forward or back to it, therefore rendering it either prophetic or post-apocalyptic representation. Rather, truly apocalyptic representation must occur from within the apocalypse; it must be precisely immanent and in sync with it. For this to occur, it is imperative that the medium of representation itself inherently possess these properties. By eliminating time and space, and reporting with a sense of present immediacy, broadcast media became the perfect media of apocalyptic representation in the 20th century, a phenomenon I argue was a revelation of *The War of the Worlds*. Broadcast radio, reporting from the here and now, is able to achieve the profound involvement of representation with that which it represents, bringing it into the realm of truly apocalyptic representation. Through content, form, technique, and foremost its medium, *The War of the Worlds* broadcast managed to simulate what a real apocalypse
might sound like, and because of this, was able to evoke the reactions it did. By considering theories of apocalypse in an analysis of the apocalyptic narrative at the heart of Welles’s radio play, I will outline how apocalyptic representation demands an embroilment of representation and the “reality” it seeks to represent, and how the War broadcast managed to achieve this profound involvement through its medium. In doing this, I hope to interrogate how the broadcast managed to deliver an unprecedented kind of apocalyptic representation over the 1938 airwaves, and how this representation contributed to such widespread and powerful concern.

As noted, truly apocalyptic representation requires the representation to be profoundly involved with what it is representing, the “reality” it seeks to portray, real or not. To establish that true apocalyptic representation requires this kind of involvement, I return to Berger’s theory of apocalypse. According to Berger, the problem with apocalyptic representation is that it is, essentially, paradoxical:

[N]early every apocalyptic text presents the same paradox. The end is never the end. The apocalyptic text announces and describes the end of the world, but then the text does not end, nor does the world represented in the text, and neither does the world itself. (6).

For Berger, truly apocalyptic representation is inherently paradoxical, and therefore an account of apocalypse cannot exist unless it is told with a conceit to navigate this paradox. Because of this, Berger suggests that narratives of apocalypse must be told “after the end” (6), the main thrust of his study which bears these words as its title.²⁵

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²⁵ Kermode also suggest a similar idea: “We project ourselves - a small, humble elect, perhaps - past the End, so as to see the structure whole, a thing we cannot do from our spot of time in the middle” (8). For Kermode, this projection after the end is also a means of overcoming temporal limitations in apocalyptic representation, but with the motivation of a “deep need for intelligible Ends” (8).
This temporal conceit of narrating “after the end” fundamentally changes the nature of apocalyptic representation, technically disqualifying itself as such:

The narrative logic of apocalyptic writing insists that the post-apocalypse precede the apocalypse. This is also the logic of prophecy. The events envisioned have already occurred, have as good as occurred. Once the prophecy is uttered, all the rest is post-apocalypse. The mind of the writer, and of the believer, is already there, after the end. (Berger 6)

For Berger, apocalyptic representation therefore becomes post-apocalyptic, with the writer, and reader, projecting themselves “after the end” in order to look back on the apocalypse yet to come. Because of this, Berger stipulates that the “apocalyptic writer writes as his own ghost” (18), a paradox in itself.26 It is therefore through this conceit that apocalyptic representation navigates its inherent paradox, and becomes representable, even though it loses the immediacy and immanency that Berger suggests is necessary for a truly apocalyptic account.

It is my contention that in its simulated news broadcast segment, The War of the Worlds achieves what might be considered a truly apocalyptic representation, even by Berger. Its manner of representation is immediate and immanent to the eschaton it is portraying, right until the totally annihilating end. However, the Mercury Theatre broadcast, in its entirety, does contain the kind of post-apocalyptic sensibility and logic that Berger describes, which bookends its simulated broadcast from within the heart of the apocalypse. At the beginning and end of the program, this temporal conceit

26 Pagano, in conversation with Berger, presents a discussion of the apocalyptic author as a “reanimated corpse,” considering films of zombie apocalypse in his study: “The zombie continues on after the end, outlives the temporal project of its life, both embodying and parodying the apocalyptic impulse to find rest in a safe space beyond the exigencies and traumas of time” (77).
manifests itself in a few ways: through Welles’s narratorial frame, where he speaks as a
diegetic narrator in a time post-apocalyptic in the chronological sequence of the story;
and in the last act of the narrative, where the form of the program shifts from the
simulated news broadcast to the first-person narration of Professor Pierson (voiced by
Welles), speaking as a survivor existing in the post-apocalyptic world. In Welles’s
retrospective narratorial view anachronistically introduced at the outset, the listener is
projected into post-apocalypse time, and invited to listen and reflect on the apocalypse
that has already occurred, but has also not yet occurred. The real listeners of the
program thus exist in two times, along with narratorial Welles, in the sequence of the
narrative. They are in 1938 listening to an apocalypse that is to take place a year in the
future, but are with a narrator from some future time beyond that, looking back on it -
all while an immediate account of it is being broadcast. Yes, it is confusing, and this
temporal confusion is listed as an inherent property of apocalyptic representation by
Berger:

Temporal sequence becomes confused. Apocalyptic writing takes us after the end,
shows the signs prefiguring the end, the moment of obliteration, and the
aftermath. The writer and reader must be both places at once, imagining the
post-apocalyptic world and then paradoxically ‘remembering’ the world as it
was, as it is. (6)

While *The War of the Worlds* script might seem to adhere fairly closely to the rules of
representation outlined here, I suggest that Berger’s theory does not adequately apply to
Welles’s program as the radio broadcast it was. When Berger discusses apocalyptic text,
he seems to mean just that: “text.” Using the terms “writer” and “reader,” Berger’s scope
does not extend to other media in its discussion of apocalyptic representation. Thus, I want to consider Welles's radio play with terms like “broadcaster” and “listener” in mind. Therefore, I suggest that within The War of the Worlds broadcast, even though it is bookended with narrative information that adheres to the post-apocalyptic conceit outlined by Berger, the simulated news broadcast segment of the production achieves a level of apocalyptic representation that, at the very least, sounds like what a true representation of apocalypse might. For this reason, and because of the undiscerning representation of real and simulated events facilitated by radio, Welles was able to broadcast a convincingly horrific representation of apocalypse, one that coerced many of his listeners to believe that the world was ending in the here and now. By sidestepping the safety guards posed by the paradoxical nature of apocalyptic representation through the medium of radio, Welles did something unprecedented in terms of this narrative of apocalypse. Therefore, while Berger's claim is astute in narratives of apocalypse represented in many types of media, I suggest that it does not adequately address the kind of apocalyptic representation enabled by broadcast media, and in particular the complicated kind of live radio broadcast that the Mercury Theatre brought to the air with The War of the Worlds.

The central issue at the heart of Berger's paradox is that, in order for apocalyptic representation to occur, everything must, really, end: the narrative, the world within the narrative, the text itself, and even the world outside of the text. More importantly, it must end at the same time. Therefore, in order to achieve the conditions by which this paradox might be overcome, and not just circumvented through the conceit of post-apocalyptic representation, there must be a simultaneous end of everything. A total
coincidental annihilation of narrative, text, and world, both within and without the text, precisely at the apocalyptic moment. There must be no space or time separating the representation with what it seeks to represent; the two must converge and coincide. Since it is media that permits representation, it must be at the site of media that this convergence occurs, and in a tale of eschaton, of a final, cataclysmic, and all-encompassing apocalypse, even the medium itself must end in order to properly represent apocalypse. Everything must be annihilated, and in unison. The representation of the apocalypse must therefore coincide with the apocalypse itself, converging into eschaton that does not discriminate nor exclude.

But how can you tell a story that ends precisely coincidentally with the means of telling it? This is the problem that most media cannot navigate, and why apocalyptic representation defers, as Berger asserts, to using the conceit of prophetic or post-apocalyptic representation. Maybe at the apocalyptic moment the book will end, maybe the credits will roll, but any depiction of an absolute end must be done in conceit, and forgiven by the reader, or listener, or viewer of the text. However, I will argue that telecommunicative broadcast media have the propensity to navigate the paradox that prevents truly apocalyptic representation in other media, and that even a simulated account of the apocalypse, like *The War of the Worlds*, reveals this. While the world did not really end on the night of the of October 30th, 1938, to many, it sure sounded like it did, if only for a few fleeting seconds. In those few seconds, Welles’s broadcast achieved an unprecedented representation of apocalypse, converging representation and that so represented together in startling unison and annihilation over its medium.
4.2 Satisfying the demands

Like any narrative of apocalyptic representation must do, the simulated broadcast segment of *The War of the Worlds* program progresses towards the apocalyptic moment that will end its narrative, and the world of its narrative. However, it is not the fairly simple plot progression towards eschaton that distinguishes the *War* broadcast; as Welles notes in his bewildered interview after the October 30th airing, the narrative of Martian invasion was a very familiar one to the American public, hence his puzzlement that such a commonplace and even overused premise could incite the immediate horror and lingering reaction that it did. Rather than the progression of the plot, itself adapted from a novel decades old, it was the process that accompanies this progression that led to its consequences. This process, I argue, is the gradual and building embroilment of the means of representation of the apocalypse, with the represented apocalypse itself. This phenomenon occurs in *The War of the Worlds* as the medium of radio, the means of representation, becomes contaminated, and ultimately consumed by the apocalypse it attempts to report, proving its immanency and immediacy to it.

Just as the simulated news portion of the broadcast slowly introduces the fantastic into the mundane, and mingles the real with the imaginary, it also develops its involvement of representation and represented gradually, crescendoing into the coincidental collapse of the two in a literally deafening moment of cataclysm. Relying on, and exploiting, the medial qualities of radio, this profound involvement between the representation of the apocalypse and the apocalypse itself is developed in a few ways as the narrative progresses. All of these techniques importantly hinge on the medium of
broadcast radio, and its ability to reduce distance and delay to nil. Just as the listener is profoundly involved through the elimination of these temporal and spatial separations in the here and now of radio, the involvement of representation and represented similarly relies on the same phenomenon. Primarily, this convergent elimination of distance into total coincidence is done through diminishing the temporal and spatial divides between the broadcast and the apocalyptic events as they unfold, bringing the perceived source of the acoustic information ever closer to the events of the apocalypse, and ultimate annihilation.

In a medium that boasts the ability to conquer time and distance to make everything seem like the here and now, this is precisely what happens in *War*. Not only are the receivers of the broadcast, fictional and real, profoundly involved, so are those on the side of the transmission. The separations of time and space of representation are eliminated in the framework of Welles’s story, as broadcasters are drawn closer to, caught up in, and eventually destroyed by the events they are meant to be only reporting. To emphasize the convergence towards annihilation of representation and the reality so represented, Koch’s script begins from a position of relative separation in the first few minutes of the simulated news broadcast. Stuck in the station, the announcer, while eliding distance and delay in communication with his audience, simultaneously establishes the presence of these separations from the actual events he reports. From his studio in New York, the announcer reads out a weather report, delivered unto him sometime prior. He points to a musical performance, happening somewhere else. While the station announcer engages information from a variety of sources and places, the content and context of his speech stresses that he is in fact geographically and
temporally isolated from the occurrences he is relaying. At the first sign of unusual activity on Mars, he reads a “special bulletin” and then provides a quotation, both reports from somewhere else and sometime past. Yet, very soon, the source of the transmission is shifted to a field reporter, Carl Phillips, who is with Professor Richard Pierson at the Princeton Observatory. No longer merely acting as a spatially separated relay point for information, the simulated news program ventures out into the world, and (supposedly) brings actual acoustic information from one of its agents in the field. This standard practice of broadcast radio functions as the first step towards an involvement between representation of the apocalypse and the events of the apocalypse.

At the Princeton Observatory, Phillips begins his report: “Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. This is Carl Phillips, speaking to you from the observatory at Princeton” (War). Still building a foundation for the Martian events that are about to unfold, the listeners of the news broadcast are privy to someone with an actual presence in the field, no longer confined to a station. However, even as the listener is brought closer to the action, so to speak, there is still an emphasis on distance. Firstly, Phillips begins by describing the setting of the observatory, remarking on the “intricate mechanism of the huge telescope,” and describing Professor Pierson “peering through the giant lens” (War). Phillips is not himself looking through the telescope, offering a description of his own sensory perceptions to his listeners. Rather, Phillips is looking at someone who is looking at something else, through something else, and over a long distance. Professor Pierson is peering through a telescope, another device which allows information to traverse distance, this time in regards to visual rather than audio information. Yet, even as this sort of descriptive distance is established, the dialogue
between Phillips and the Professor establishes broadcast radio as a medium that itself can overcome distance. After describing the situation for his listeners, Phillips says:

I ask you to be patient, ladies and gentlemen, during any delay that may arise during our interview. Beside his ceaseless watch of the heavens, Professor Pierson may be interrupted by telephone or other communications. During this period he is in constant touch with the astronomical centers of the world. (War)

In this statement, Phillips suggests that any delay in the broadcast is not from any technical element of the medium that eliminates delay, but rather from potential distractions to his speaker, Pierson. As well, Phillips asserts the “constant touch” that telecommunications provide Pierson, eliminating the distance in communication between him and people all over the world. While distance and delay is stressed, the ability for telecommunications to overcome these phenomena is simultaneously emphasized. Thus, this dialogue in one way establishes real physical distance from the portentous events, and at the same asserts the ability for telecommunicative media to overcome distances.

After this, Phillips asks Pierson to descriptively represent what he is seeing:

“Professor, would you please tell our radio audience exactly what you see as you observe the planet Mars through your telescope?” (War). In response, Pierson does his best to describe sonically what he is visually perceiving, attempting to paint a visual picture through words. Importantly, Pierson’s description is delivered to the radio audience from Pierson himself. As opposed to the earlier reports relayed by the station announcer, this kind of representation shifts closer towards involvement on the side of the broadcast. Whereas in the station the announcer merely acts to relay information
received, information of events is now broadcast in the voice of the person perceiving these events, as this person is perceiving these events. Receiving visual information through his telescope, Pierson describes his sights in spoken language, which is broadcast. However, as Pierson notes, what he is observing is “approximately 40,000,000 miles” away, which Phillips considers “a safe enough distance” (War). In this situation, there is still an emphasis on the vast distance between the site of the events, and the site of their description. Moreover, this distance is a large one, and because of its magnitude, is deemed safe, or at least “safe enough.” This is the first instance within the radio play where distance acts as a measure of safety and danger. However, this distance is shortly diminished, and with it, the safety of representation from what it is representing.

After a brief report delivered from a “Dr. Gray of the National History Museum, New York” (War) is read by Phillips, the broadcast returns to the station announcer. Again, the announcer relays reports delivered from other geographic locations. Firstly, a report from Toronto, Canada, where “Professor Morse of Macmillan University reports observing a total of three explosions on the planet Mars between the hours of 7:45pm and 9:20pm, eastern standard time” (War). Then, another report:

Now, nearer home, comes a special announcement from Trenton, New Jersey. It is reported that at 8:50pm a huge, flaming object, believed to be a meteorite, fell on a farm in the neighborhood of Grover’s Mill, New Jersey, twenty-two miles from Trenton. (War)

In this report, the physical proximity of the events is no longer millions of miles away, but relatively close to the station announcer, even closer to Phillips, and indeed “nearer
home” in terms of everyone involved with the broadcast so far, including the listeners both fictional and real. The announcer then states that Phillips has been dispatched to Grover’s Mill, and will give “a word description as soon as he can reach there from Princeton” (War). The events described are no longer widely distanced from the people describing them. Shortly, the distance will diminish even further, as the events begin to take on an apocalyptic sensibility.

After a brief musical interlude, the announcer states: “We take you now to Grover’s Mill, New Jersey” (War), where Phillips returns to the air from his new audioposition at the site of the Martian landing. While the listeners are only moved in conceit to this new location, Phillips is actually, physically, said to be there. From here, with a direct visual vantage of the object that has crashed to earth, Phillips sets about attempting to describe what he is witnessing. Now, the agent of representation increases its proximity with the object it is describing, and the manner of representation becomes more direct. It is no longer description of events 40,000,000 miles away glimpsed through a telescope, nor the reiteration of previously issued reports. It is a spoken account from a field reporter, with eyes directly on the object being represented. The object of description has come much, much closer to the site of broadcast, and the kind of representation has reflected this reduction of distance, moving from relayed station reports to a direct, eyewitness account.

Amidst the sound of sirens and a chattering crowd, Phillips begins his field report, engaging with Pierson in conversation about the Martian object they are seeing. After a brief description of the scene, Phillips talks to a Mr. Wilmuth, the owner of the farm that now unwillingly hosts the extraterrestrial invader:
PHILLIPS: Mr. Wilmuth, would you please tell the radio audience as much as you remember of this rather unusual visitor that dropped in your backyard? Step closer, please. Ladies and gentlemen. This is Mr. Wilmuth.

WILMUTH: While I was listenin’ to the radio...

PHILLIPS: Closer and louder, please.

WILMUTH: Pardon me?

PHILLIPS: Louder, please, and closer.

WILMUTH: Yes, sir. While I was listening to the radio and kinda drowsin’, that Professor fellow was talking about Mars, so I was half dozin’ and half...

PHILLIPS: Yes Mr. Wilmuth. And then what happened?

WILMUTH: As I was sayin’, I was listenin’ to the radio kinda halfways...

PHILLIPS: Yes, Mr. Wilmuth, and then you saw something?

WILMUTH: Not first off. I heard something. (War)

Wilmuth then goes on to give an account of the landing event, describing the sights and sounds he has seen and heard. This exchange between Phillips and Wilmuth functions to emphasize the involvement of radio with the world it is reporting. Not only has Phillips, the reporter, come closer to the events he is reporting and relaying, but a radio listener too has become entangled with the events so reported and relayed. Listening to the radio, even “kinda halfways,” he has been alerted to something real, actual, and literally in his own backyard. This feature of Koch’s script very deliberately attempts to stress the “sense of participation in actual events” (Cantril and Allport 259) that broadcast radio facilitates, presenting a radio listener now actually involved with the events he just heard over the broadcast, and even involved with the broadcast itself. For
Wilmuth, there is no separation between the events he is a part of, and their representation on the air. By creating Wilmuth as a radio listener, Welles’s program functions to realize the sense of participation and the profound involvement that radio facilitates with its listeners and real events. As well, in terms of apocalyptic representation, it shows the immediacy and immanency of radio to the events being described. As Wilmuth was listening to Pierson’s description of the “gas eruptions occurring on the surface” (War) of Mars, he was also listening to the sounds of the first Martian pod landing through his window. Representation, and its reality, are colliding. A listener is suddenly caught up in the events broadcast to him, and involved with the medium itself, even shifting his role from reception to transmission when he speaks on the air. As Phillips’s repeated plea for Wilmuth to be “closer” and “louder” help to emphasize, everything is coming together in the sound medium. By giving this eyewitness account to a radio listener, Koch’s script emphasizes the immediacy and immanency of the broadcast with what it is describing.

4.3 Ends, the End, and after the End

These qualities of the broadcast are further emphasized in the following minutes, as Phillips presently describes the site at Grover’s Mill. After a brief description of the frantic scene, Phillips states the following: “Now, ladies and gentlemen, there’s something I haven’t mentioned in all this excitement, but it’s becoming more distinct. Perhaps you’ve caught it already on your radio. Listen please” (War). Here, there is a pause in Phillips’s speech, as a low hum emanates over the airwaves. Phillips continues: “Do you hear it? It’s a curious humming sound that seems to come from inside the object. I’ll move the microphone nearer” (War). Again, Phillips pauses, presumably
inches closer to the pod, and allows the hissing sound to be heard even louder. He goes on: “Now we’re not more than twenty-five feet away. Can you hear it now?” (*War*). Again, another incremental movement nearer to the source of the alien sound. In this segment, Phillips is not only closing his distance to the object, alerting the reader to this distance verbally, but changing the kind of representation within his transmission. Having so far only broadcast various accounts of the sights and sounds of the events, all relayed through different voices giving descriptions, there is now actual sonic information from the alien pod, the agent of eventual apocalypse, that is being picked up and audibly broadcast, allowing it to be indexed. Pretty soon more sound from the pod will follow: a scraping as the lid of the capsule twists off; a metallic clanking as it falls to the ground. Accompanying these sounds is Phillips’s description, using his words as a means of anchorage to explain the sounds being picked up and broadcast, and his distance from their source. Eventually, the alien creature emerges from its pod, and Phillips promises his listeners that he’ll describe the events as long as he can: “I’ll give you every detail as long as I can talk. As long as I can see” (*War*). Over the radio, the listeners will be with him right until the end, as long as he has the ability to represent audibly what he can see. Soon, the “monster or whatever it is” (*War*) begins to use some sort of incendiary weapon to incinerate everything around it, inciting a cacophony of screams and explosions. Again, the sounds of destruction are accompanied with a verbal description to help the listener affix meaning to them. Finally, Phillips delivers one last descriptive report: “Now the whole field’s caught on fire. The woods... the barns... the gas tanks... the tanks of the automobiles... it’s spreading everywhere. It’s coming this way. About twenty yards to my right -” (*War*). With this, Phillips is cut off, and only
dead air remains, shockingly silent in contrast to the panicked scene it just ended. In the midst of a frantic description, which includes indicators of scale and distance, Phillips is audibly annihilated, with everything around him. What is left is dead silence. In this moment, radio, the medium of representation, has become totally immanent to the destructive event it is describing, itself annihilated in the representative silence. In the dead air that is broadcast, there is no transmission, no reception. The medium has apparently failed, and in doing so, attests to its immanence in the apocalypse it is representing.

On the radio, silence is death; hence the term dead air. As Solveig Ottmann notes, “a radio announcer needs to speak, or he or she metaphorically dies” (45). In the simulated broadcast, this metaphor becomes a reality, as Phillips is literally killed in the silencing moment. More importantly, as it pertains to Welles’s impending representation of the apocalypse, Phillips’s death occurs simultaneously with the end of his spoken representation of the event, and with the death of the representative medium. Radio fails, if only for a few brief seconds of silence. Representation has converged with what it is representing through the medium, and everything has been annihilated in unison at the moment that distance no longer exists between the two.

In this calamitous representation, silence is a very important sound, or rather, lack of sound. As Crisell notes, in the medium of radio, silence has a significant effect:

27 According to Heyer, Welles made these seconds of silence “seem like an eternity, both for those behind the microphone as well as the audience. It is perhaps the most terrifying moment in the broadcast” (87).

28 Ottmann’s paper on Pontypool (2008), a film considered for inclusion in this study, provides worthwhile observations about broadcast radio in apocalyptic representation, and its use in a filmic medium.
[Silence’s] negative function is to signify that for the moment at least nothing is happening on the medium: there is a void, what broadcasters sometimes refer to as ‘dead air.’ In this function silence can resemble noise (that is, sounds, words and music) in acting as a framing mechanism, for it can signify the integrity of a programme or item by making a space around it. But if the silence persists for more than a few seconds it signifies the dysfunction or non-functioning of the medium: either transmitter or receiver has broken down or switched off. (52-3)

Thus, the silence at this moment in the War broadcast not only represents the death of Phillips, but the death of the medium itself. Dysfunction, non-function, the breakdown of transmitter or receiver; the medium fails. It dies. In the frantic description preceding this dead silence, Phillips sets the scene of his own demise, describing everything around him on fire, and giving an indication of the distance between himself and the “jet of flame springing” (War) from the alien weapon. Everything immediately around him is destroyed, and the distance between the annihilating force that he is describing and his own self is closing. With the impression that Phillips is about to meet this beam head on, the sound of the mike crashing and the immediate silence deliver the final moment of annihilation that cannot be spoken. This silence shows the kind of convergence between representation and represented that live broadcast radio can facilitate. Welles will repeatedly use this feature to show the immanency of radio to the apocalypse it represents, eventually ending the simulated broadcast in the same manner.

Although what occurs with Phillips is an end, it is not the end. Revived by the station announcer, the broadcast continues. After a few bulletins, a “Mr. Harry
McDonald, vice-president in charge of operations,” comes on the air to deliver a “special statement:”

We have received a request from the militia at Trenton to place at their disposal our entire broadcasting facilities. In view of the gravity of the situation, and believing that radio has a definite responsibility to serve in the public interest at all times, we are turning over our facilities to the State Militia at Trenton. (War)

From this point on, the broadcast itself becomes profoundly involved with the events of the apocalypse, continuously being interrupted and commandeered by other transmissions. Field station announcers, militia captains, government secretaries, gunners, air force commanders, and military radio operators all use the broadcast in an attempt to communicate and organize. No longer seeking to only represent, the broadcast becomes directly involved in the events of the apocalypse, and in the resistance to it. Government officials use the public broadcast to advise the behaviour of citizens; military operators use the broadcast to communicate warnings to the masses, urging them to avoid poisonous gas and alerting them which routes to take should they attempt to flee. The broadcast, initially seeking to represent and report events, now becomes active in the unfolding events. In this shift from representation to active participation, Welles stresses the immanence of the broadcast to the apocalypse. It is broadcasting from the heart of it.

29 Schwartz discusses an account from a listener that considers this use of sources as a violation of trust in radio: “It was not because of superior acting that the listening audience became hysterical,’ wrote one anonymous listener to Welles, ‘but, because you used government departments and news flashes which people have always placed faith in, prior to your broadcast.’ Listeners regarded the names of these institutions and officials as essentially trademarks, falsely assuming that they could not be invoked without the government’s permission” (78).
To further emphasize this immanency, Welles uses the conceptualization of distance in a few ways. Firstly, through its great geographical jumps, the broadcast is able to play sonic information of the destruction from a multitude of locations. With its ability to communicate across large distances, radio is used to alert its mass of listeners to the apocalyptic scale of the events unfolding.\(^{30}\) The events that transpire on the air also emphasize distance to convey the impression that the destruction is happening all at once. As well, in many of the military broadcasts, distance is verbally represented to the listening audience to show the immanence of the apocalyptic events to each source of broadcast sound. As the program switches to a transmission from “the battery of the 22\(^{nd}\) Field Artillery, located in the Wachtung Mountains” \((War)\) in New Jersey, the gunners there relay the range of the enemy as they calibrate their artillery and fire. With each shot, the gunners yell out a shorter range, until the transmission is lost when the range is at its closest. Again, dead air. When the broadcast continues, it is with the radio communications of Lieutenant Voght, pilot and commander of a team of eight bombers. Voght provides a countdown of the distance until his squad’s engagement with the enemy: “1,000 yards and we’ll be over the first - 800 yards... 600... 400... 200...” \((War)\). Upon engagement, the commander realizes they are helpless, and issues the order to do the “only one thing left: drop on them, plane and all!” \((War)\). Again, the transmission is lost to dead silence amid the spoken descriptions of decreasing distance as the bombers dive into the alien machines to meet their destruction. Like with Phillips’s indication of diminishing distance before dead air, Koch’s script utilizes these transmissions to show

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\(^{30}\) Sharrett notes that radio broadcasts are effectively used this way in filmic representations of apocalypse, providing an efficient means to convey that apocalyptic events are occurring beyond the limited scope of the frame. See Sharrett 307.
that the sources of the sounds are being annihilated precisely with the means through which they are being conveyed, representing their destruction through meaningful silence. The importance of these transmissions is in their destruction; Verma even suggests that these intercepted transmissions “are included as if only so that the story may annihilate them” (71). Through repetition of this technique, the program enforces the sense that silence on the air is death. It is annihilation. It represents the destruction of the persons speaking simultaneous with the destruction of the medium through which they are speaking. This technique shows the capacity for radio to represent right until the end, and its ability to end precisely with what it is describing, two necessities of apocalyptic representation.

This ability of radio is also used for final effect at the end of the simulated news broadcast segment of the production, at the culminating apocalyptic moment of the narrative. After the chaos of several field transmissions and another instance of dead air, the broadcast returns to the station announcer, now “speaking from the roof of Broadcasting Building, New York City” (War). The announcer describes his view of the city in turmoil, noting the utter hopelessness of the situation: “No more defenses. Our army wiped out... artillery, air force, everything wiped out. This may be the last broadcast. We’ll stay here to the end...” (War). He’s very shortly proven right as he sees the Martian machines on the skyline, noting their rapid advance through the city, and closer to his position. He says, definitely, “This is the end now” (War). He notes that “smoke comes out...black smoke, drifting over the city” (War). A few seconds later, he states: “Now the smoke’s spreading faster” (War), and in his final seconds, provides a more specific description of diminishing distance: “Now the smoke’s crossing Sixth
Avenue... Fifth Avenue... a hundred yards away... it’s fifty feet...” (War). Then, the sigh of a final breath. The sound of a microphone crashing. The sad wailing of boat whistles in the distance. And then - nothing. Eight long seconds of silence. Keeping his promise, the announcer broadcasts right until the end. One last voice then calls out over the broadcast. The military operator from before tries to hail someone, anyone: “2X2L calling CQ... New York. Isn’t there anyone on the air? Isn’t there anyone on the air? Isn’t there anyone? ... 2X2L ...” (War). Finally, there is more dead air as this voice too fades. As Verma notes, “radio itself disintegrates at the end of the act, with its memorable fade of a shortwave plea [...] followed by perhaps the most effective five seconds of silence ever broadcast” (71). The apocalypse has consumed every voice on the medium, and the broadcast has been annihilated. Only the deathly absence of silence persists. As the world within the narrative ends, it does so precisely coincidentally with the means of representing it; the reality of the world being represented, and the means of its representation, are annihilated in unison. Berger’s paradox is seemingly overcome in an end absolutely achieved through the medium of radio in its immanency and immediacy. Dead air.

After the apocalyptic event, and the deathly silence that rings out, the broadcast is revived by the voice of the Mercury Theatre announcer: “You are listening to a CBS presentation of Orson Welles and the Mercury Theatre on the Air” (War). Here, the 1938 broadcast is brought back to life, even though the simulated 1939 broadcast remains annihilated. The apocalyptic moment has passed in the world of the narrative, destroying the medium of radio with it in the dead air before the station break. Because
of this, a new form of narration must replace the simulated news broadcast for the remaining portion of the tale, which is what occurs.

After this annihilating and annihilated period of silence, the narrative shifts from apocalyptic representation to post-apocalyptic. Dropping the pretense of its simulated news broadcast, no longer a viable option, the program instead switches to first-person spoken narration after the station break. The voice of Welles, speaking as Pierson, the Princeton professor who has somehow survived the apocalypse, emanates over the air, and the first words it utters makes clear that it is no longer meant to be speaking over the radio in the world of the narrative: “As I set down these notes on paper, I’m obsessed by the thought that I may be the last living man on earth” (War). Now, with the conceit of voicing the words written down on paper, “on the back of some astronomical notes bearing the signature of Richard Pierson” (War), the Mercury Theatre program emphasizes the fact that it has entirely changed its format.31 The simulated news broadcast is no longer used because it no longer can be used. It has been consumed by the events of apocalypse, and therefore cannot be employed in the narration to come. Now, after the end, it is the spoken account of a survivor that is transmitted to the 1938 audience. The narrative now becomes post-apocalyptic, with Pierson indicating this shift of time in the language of his narration: “All that happened before the arrival of these monstrous creatures in the world now seems a part of another life... a life that has no continuity with the present” (War). Thus, as it asserts a chronological disconnect, the program turns to the kind of post-apocalyptic representation that Berger describes,

31 Verma suggests that this shift also represents a change from the play’s kaleidosonic style towards intimate style: “[War’s] first act is a paradigmatic example of the kaleidosonic style, while its second is a paradigmatic example of the intimate style” (72).
offering a more straightforward formal narration where there is little danger of continuing the kind of confusion earlier caused by the form of the simulated news broadcast. After giving up this format, the program becomes remarkably uninteresting. Heyer notes that this “sequence is as uninspiring as the first three-quarters of the program is riveting,” even calling it “drawn out and unconvincing” (92-3). Although Berger suggests that “the world after the world, the post-apocalypse, is usually the true object of the apocalyptic writer’s concern” (6), this does not seem the case for Welles. After such a virtuoso performance of apocalypse, what happens after the end seems to matter much less.
5 Conclusion

Pierson’s rather dull post-apocalyptic narration continues on uneventfully, and finally ends calmly. After a brief interlude of optimistic music, Welles’s voice returns to the air, this time making very clear what it is: “This is Orson Welles, ladies and gentlemen, out of character to assure you that The War of the Worlds has no further significance than as the holiday offering it was intended to be” (War). Of course, despite this assurance and the several more that Welles would offer in the final moments of the program, it certainly did. The Mercury Theatre broadcast of October 30th, 1938, was irrevocable, and the revelations that it made about the medium of radio could not be covered back up or unheard.

As Welles admits in this final monologue, the War broadcast was the “Mercury Theatre’s own radio version of dressing up in a sheet and jumping out of a bush and saying Boo!” (War). He and his team had played a trick on the American radio public, but one not so innocent as perhaps intended, and with real consequences. Like someone dressing up in a sheet and jumping out for a scare, the experience of horror derived from the War broadcast was not achieved out of verisimilitude. Rather, Welles’s program exploited and revealed the propensity for radio to achieve an experience of horror out of confusion, a confusion fundamentally inherent to the medium of radio. Simulation and reality were rendered indistinguishable through the indexical ambiguity of blind sound, and the representation of apocalypse converged with its events over the telecommunicative medium of radio. Leading and misleading his listeners’ ears through anchorage, Welles managed to represent a convincingly realistic account of the apocalypse, simulated though it might have been.
Welles achieved this through the manipulation of sound, but also and importantly through silence. Silence is perhaps the only case where the indexical process is interrupted, as silence is not caused by something the way that sound must be. Given no index in the presence of silence and the absence of sound, the indexical process cannot be initiated; the listener cannot be incited to connect indexical sound with source. In the absence of an index, radio becomes a void as if it were annihilated, and the world it seeks to implicate through the indexical process with it. As Crisell notes, “[i]n radio the outside world exists as an index, if it exists at all” (128). Thus, in the moments of silence, of dead air, the program becomes properly apocalyptic. Welles comments on this himself in his closing monologue: “We annihilated the world before your very ears, and utterly destroyed the CBS” (War). Although ostensibly intending hyperbole or humour in his words, Welles perhaps speaks more plainly than he realizes. Here, Welles also stresses that such annihilation was profoundly involving of his listeners - happening before their very ears. Of course, if the apocalypse were really happening and being broadcast over the radio in real time with no concerns of distance and delay, the listeners would be profoundly involved. Just like Mr. Wilmuth, the radio listener in Grover’s Mill, New Jersey, many actual listeners did experience “the sense of participation in actual events” (Cantril and Allport 259) so important to radio, even if the events in question were not, actually, actual. If there were a real apocalypse, The War of the Worlds showed that radio could do the job of representing it from within - and “right to the end” (War), as apocalyptic representation demands.

As an apocalyptic work, Welles’s program also instigated certain revelations, a feature inherent to the territory. Elizabeth K. Rosen offers one explanation for the
function of apocalyptic texts: “Apocalyptic literature has traditionally been written to comfort people whose lives are, or who perceive their lives to be, overwhelmed by historical or social disruption” (xii). In the case of *The War of the Worlds*, the broadcast seemed to function in an antithetical way. It did not serve to comfort those disrupted, but rather to instigate disruption and cause discomfort through its revelations about the medium of radio. Rosen goes on to state that apocalyptic literature “is also a vehicle of social criticism, and has always been so” (xii). While this certainly may be true of Welles’s radio play, I would argue that this was not the main thrust of the broadcast. Rather than offer its own overt commentary or critique on society, the broadcast instigated such critique in its aftermath. Welles’s play acted more as an experiment to expose the power of its medium, and did so through that very medium. As McLuhan might note, in regards to *War*, the medium really was the message. It offered a glimpse of the power of radio in its narrative, and, in precise harmony, provided an example of this power in its own broadcast.

In 1938, *The War of the Worlds* relied on its medium, and its facilitated and orchestrated failure, to immanently and immediately represent the apocalypse in the here and now of radio. In an effective way, Welles told a tale of disaster that, because of its medium, was able to facilitate an experience of horror that gave rise to fear, with the real anxiety coming after its broadcast. In the final lines of his on-air monologue, Welles says the following to close out the program:

So, good-bye everybody, and remember, please, for the next day or so, the terrible lesson you learned tonight. That grinning, glowing, globular invader of your
living-room is an inhabitant of the punkin-patch, and if your doorbell rings and nobody’s there, that was no Martian...it’s Halloween. (War).

Although it was a simulated apocalypse, and one allegedly delivered as a Halloween joke, it produced very real and serious revelations about the medium of radio through which it was broadcast. While Welles’s radio play may have become an exaggerated thing of myth and legend, it is important to remember that a very real and “terrible lesson” was learned on the night of October 30th, 1938. In a time that has seen a proliferation of new media and an inundation of apocalyptic texts, The War of the Worlds and its revelations might suddenly be very pertinent.
Works Cited


