

From Mercury to Mars: Jennifer Hyland Wang's "After the Martians" from Antenna

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Blog post published January 24, 2014 in *Sounding Out!*

<https://doi.org/10.59350/ssg50-7se19>

Abstract

"What I find so intriguing about the heated public discussion immediately following the War of the Worlds broadcast – in letters to the FCC and to Orson Welles, in newspaper pages, and in industry trade journals – is not just the way the controversy comments about the power of radio or the susceptibility of the [...]"

Keywords

Music (Subfield), Aesthetics, Article, From Mercury To Mars, Gender, History



Recommended citation

Verma, N. (2014, January 24). From Mercury to Mars: Jennifer Hyland Wang's "After the Martians" from Antenna. *Sounding Out!*. <https://doi.org/10.59350/ssg50-7se19>

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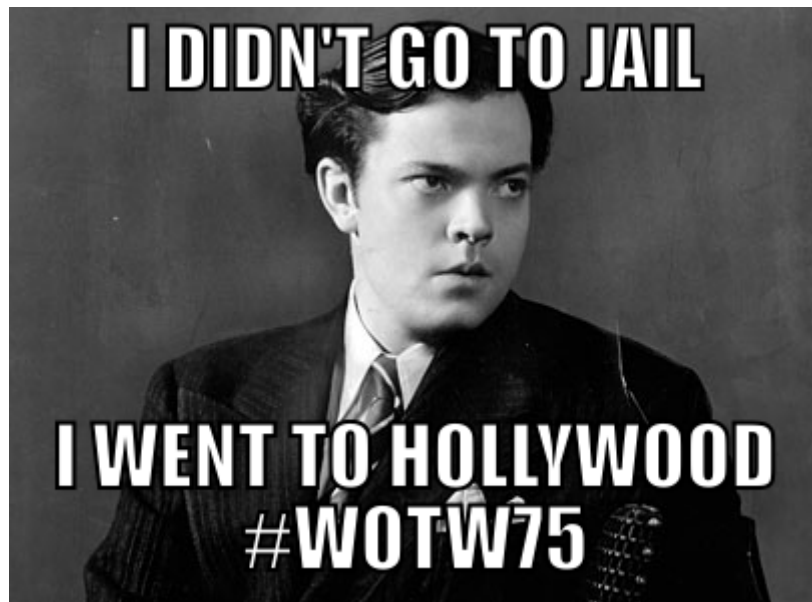
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"What I find so intriguing about the heated public discussion immediately following the War of the Worlds broadcast – in letters to the FCC and to Orson Welles, in newspaper pages, and in industry trade journals – is not just the way the controversy comments about the power of radio or the susceptibility of the audience, but the way in which the gendered logics embedded in the broadcast system rose to the surface in these debates and informed the popular, industrial, and regulatory discussions about the mass "hysteria" of October 30, 1938 ..."

[Reblogged from [Antenna](#)]

With **Jennifer Hyland Wang's** terrific exploration of the gendered logics surrounding the reception of the "War of the Worlds" broadcast and its implications for communications regulations, our six month series on the radio work of Orson Welles — **From Mercury to Mars** — comes to a close.



I have many supporters to thank for helping to bring this project together, but none so much as the **Sounding Out!** team – **Jennifer Stoever-Ackerman**, **Liana Silva-Ford** and **Aaron Trammell**, as well as our co-conspirators **Nick Rubenstein** and **Monteith McCollum** who contributed so much to the **#WOTW75** project. Also a big thanks to **Andrew Bottomley**, my counterpart at Antenna and recruited all the authors from that end.



Chiefly, however, I want to thank all our writers for such smart and entertaining work. I think it's fair to say that the **Mercury to Mars** project brought more insight into Welles' radio years than virtually any other body of collected writing. In August, Cornell professor **Tom McEnaney** started out the series with a detailed study ([here](#)) of the role that Latin America played in Welles' radio imagination and early film projects. **Eleanor Patterson** of the University of Wisconsin Madison followed up with her take on WOTW as a kind of residual radio ([here](#)). In the early Autumn, Professor **Debra Rae Cohen** of the University of South Carolina took on Welles' first play in the Mercury cycle – his version of "Dracula" – explaining how it commented on the medium ([here](#)). On Antenna, **Cynthia B. Meyers** from the College of Mount Saint Vincent provided keen insight ([here](#)) on her experiences teaching WOTW in the classroom. Soon afterward, **Kathleen Battles** of Oakland University brought us her fascinating take ([here](#)) on

Orson Welles' self-parodies on the Fred Allen show and elsewhere, and in the lead-up to our **#WOTW75** event, NYU's **Shawn VanCour** made a compelling case ([here](#)) for why the second act of WOTW was so much more remarkable than the first.



On the 75th anniversary of the "War of the Worlds" broadcast last October, we organized (or at least inspired) listening parties and collected hundreds of [real-time tweets](#) from participants in seven states and three countries all listening at the same time and using our hashtag **#WOTW75**. The exercise was coordinated with a three-hour **SO!**-produced broadcast from [WHRW](#) at SUNY Binghamton, with comments on the show by a dozen prominent scholars and writers, including **Kate Lacey** of Sussex University, **Alex Russo** of Catholic University, **Brian Hanrahan** of Cornell, **John Cheng** of SUNY Binghamton, **Damian Keane** of SUNY Buffalo, **Jason Loviglio** of the University of Maryland, **Paul Heyer** of Wilfrid Laurier University and more. We couldn't be more proud of the depth of the material and the breadth of the event, which stretched from the University of Mississippi to Northwestern University, from Bournemouth University in the U.K. to the Ontario College of Art and Design in Toronto. [Here](#) is the navigator page we put up the night of the event, [here](#) is **Aaron Trammell**'s remarkable audio documentary that aired early that night and [here](#) is **Monteith McCollum**'s amazing WOTW "remix" that aired later.



After the anniversary, our series continued to grow. **Josh Shepperd** of Catholic University reflected on what WOTW meant for the development of media studies ([here](#)) based on new archival research, and **Jacob Smith** of Northwestern wrote a terrific article ([here](#)) about "Hell on Ice," Welles' great drama of sailors lost in frozen wastes. We also commissioned new writing ([here](#)) on

Welles' adaptations of Sherlock Holmes by **A. Brad Schwartz**, who co-wrote a [PBS program](#) on the WOTW scandal. We also heard from two of the most prominent media studies scholars out there: **Michele Hilmes** of Madison wrote about the persistence and evolution of radio drama overseas after Welles ([here](#)), while **Murray Pomerance** of Ryerson University wrote a rich and provocative study ([here](#)) of Welles' voice itself.

Thanks to one and all. For my part, it's simply been a joy to share my boundless fascination with Orson Welles's radio work with so many friends, fans and colleagues. Signing out now, on behalf of **Mercury to Mars**, I remain your obedient servant, **Neil Verma**.

