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WITHOUT LATENCY

CATHODE IMMERSIONS AND THE NEGLECTED PRACTICE OF XENOCASTING FOR TELEVISION AND RADIO

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The Museum of Forbidden Technologies is proud to announce their new special exhibit: A startling and highly forbidden piece of technology brought to us by time travellers; or, ancient long-dead aliens; or, Russians; or, whatever…

Joseph Fink and Jeffrey Cranor
Welcome to Night Vale, episode 33 'Cassette'[1]

1 A full transcript of this episode is available at the blog ***Cecil Speaks – Night Vale Transcripts***.

Abstract: This paper discusses a three-year radio project *Cathode Immersions*, which was aired on 2SER in Sydney Australia. The audio that accompanied free-to-air television was remixed and rebroadcast in real time without latency. It explores the human and non-human aspects of the convergence of these two media, introducing ideas of xenocasting and media adjacency. The weekly xenocast of *Cathode Immersions* afforded unique translations of cultural narratives, from commentary on the Gulf War to machinic perspectives on the desires that surround commercial broadcasting.

Keywords: simulcast, experimental, radio, xenocasting, media, soundscape, improvisation, composition, adjacency

1 Introduction

Histories of broadcasting technology, while enthusiastically exploring issues of locality and scheduling, sometimes neglect the artefact of latency. This time-shift variable (the temporal gap that exists between the moments of broadcast and reception) is embedded within and moulded by the media environment. With the emergence of digital radio and television, latency has become unavoidable, as the encoding process currently requires 3–4 seconds to complete. Previously, analogue radio was technically able to broadcast without perceptible delay, however most commercial stations adopted a voluntary 5–7 second 'profanity delay' as a safeguard against the deleterious effects of uncensored liveness. As a result, simultaneous radio and television practices during the era of analogue transmission were generally blocked by the difficulties of resolving barriers imposed by the political economy of the broadcasting milieu. Simulcast programming tended to be rare, and was largely restricted to the replica radio broadcast of a televised soundtrack to accompany a televisual broadcast, or an alternate radio commentary for live televised events of high cultural interest.

However, at the turn of the century such limitations were not insurmountable, and this paper discusses a three-year radio project *Cathode Immersions*, which explored the possibilities afforded by simultaneity between two different broadcast mediums. *Cathode Immersions* aired on 2SER radio weekly between 2002 and early 2005, in Sydney Australia. Radio 2SER was a significant broadcaster within the region, but as a community organisation that relies on voluntary support, this station had chosen to eschew latency restrictions. The public nature of the television broadcast that was used as source material and the lack of perceptible latency of radio transmission afforded an uncommon interrelationship between mediums: specifically, a dialogue between image and sound that was not driven by the necessities of economic or political capital.

This temporary ad hoc assemblage involved cross-purpose actors, including the media and sound technology itself. The small analogue television that provided the initial sound was a discarded set that had been retrieved from roadside waste. This was tuned throughout the program, and then fed through a number of machines, both digital and analogue. In particular, the Yamaha A4000 sampler, although digital, operated with no noticeable delay yet allowed for stacked effects with parameters that shifted according to both programmed and random waveforms. This enabled the broadcast to be effectively recomposed within the machine, often with unpredictable results. Added to this, fragments from the ambient soundscape were brought into the studio through prepared repetitive ambient drones, archival materials, and soundscape recordings. As such, the machines and broadcasters in this network would experience moments of convergence and divergence in relation to the simulcast television broadcast, which would frequently disrupt the semiotic edifice of each medium. I've termed this intrusion to mediated human perception *xenocasting*. The exploration of this terrain allows for a disruptive media archaeology, and the weekly xenocast of *Cathode Immersions* brought with it new translations of cultural

narratives, from commentary on the Gulf War to machinic perspectives on the desires that surround commercial broadcasting.

This paper outlines the cultural milieu within which the practice of xenocasting emerged, and situates this practice in relation to the affordances provided by the *schizophonic* qualities of radio and television and the relationship of these material technologies with the non-human communicants in the ambient environment. The *Cathode Immersions* xenocast is then discussed as a practice that allowed for media to exist in relation to the surfaces of the city and the gaps in signification: requiring the people who tuned in to recompose meaning from semiotic holes and non-human expression.

2 A Note Concerning the Accompanying Images

The *Cathode Immersions* xenocast was ephemeral, and due to the auditory emphasis of the studio set-up and copyright issues, no archival recording of sound with image has been recorded. The accompanying images are scans from personal photographs taken during the Cathode Immersions era. They present some of the surfaces of the city in the space surrounding the studio. In terms of territory, they cover the area surrounding my own flat in Chippendale and ending with the interior of the UTS building that housed the 2SER studios: a walk of approximately fifteen minutes. Although digitised for this paper, the photographs themselves were taken with analogue film, and the impact of light on these technologised surfaces reflects the mediated perceptual ground of this territory at the turn of the century.

3 Prehistory of *Cathode Immersions*: Light and Sound in the Fissures of Semiotics

Perhaps understandably, television and radio broadcast temporalities have attended primarily to the care-structures of human experience of space and time,[2] while relegating the weirdness of their material relation to electromagnetism to an increasingly occluded elsewhere.[3] Wolfgang Ernst highlights that—beyond any layers of convention for television and radio broadcasting—human engagement with the technology of these mediums has always involved an experimental relation with material qualities:

> The word radio was accordingly meant literally, used to emphasize the specific properties of electromagnetic fields, namely, the radial effect of the waves, broadcasting on the physical plane. It is therefore not enough to characterize radio simply as a device for receiving radio broadcasts, referring primarily to their content. Based on radius, that is, ray, the message is above all the medium: electromagnetic waves and high-frequency electrical signals, transmission, and sound…
>
> All such mass media as the phonograph, kinematograph, radio, and electronic television were first developed for experimental research. Media are measuring devices, and as such they are scientific, analytical apparatuses. To put it roughly, any listening to music on records or to radio programs is essentially experimental, a kind of reverse experimentation.[4]

Erik Davis similarly notes the emergence of the codes of radio in relation to electromagnetism and spacial perception:

> Imagine for a moment what the radio spectrum presented—a space that was not a space, wide-open, unknown, literally cosmic. As people began to interact with the world of vibrating waves, a sort of "hacker" culture developed around it: people began to build their own crystal sets and talk to with others in unknown places, exchanging information and building their own networks. In fact, broadcast radio emerged from the ground up—from these smaller radio hackers deciding to broadcast music and news.[5]

Early traditions of radio broadcast incorporated this materiality much more strongly. In the US in the 1920s, for example, a number of local stations instituted 'silent nights,' where they would cut transmission so that listeners could try to tune in to far away stations.[6] This allowed the audience access to an eerie new mediated space that could be discerned through the machine's unearthly voice of static and feedback. At the same time, in the UK, the BBC was exploring the embeddedness of transmission and recording technology within specific environments. One annual broadcast in the first few years of the 1920s set up microphones in a woodland area in Surry to record nightingales on early summer evenings.[7]

The long-form, soundscape-based transmission of *Cathode Immersions* xenocast held much in common with these early precedents. However, it was not alone in exploring this tradition. This section deals with the contemporary milieu in which the xenocast was founded. The discussion predominates around radio broadcasting, where such experiments were particularly fruitful; although it is acknowledged that both radio and television transmissions share a material relation to electromagnetism that can shape both temporal and spacial experience.

2 Paddy Scannell, *Radio, Television and Everyday Life: A Phenomenological Approach*, Blackwell Publishing, 1996.

3 See Adam Hulbert, '**The Persistent Elsewhere: Radio in the Novels of Philip K Dick**,' talk delivered for the conference, *The Prosaic Imaginary: Novels and the Everyday, 1750-2000*, Australia, 2014.

4 Wolfgang Ernst, *Digital Memory and the Archive (Electronic Mediations)*, University of Minnesota Press, 2012, p. 162.

5 Erik Davis, '**Acoustic Cyberspace**,' a talk delivered at the *Xchange* conference, Latvia, 1997.

6 Susan Douglas, *Listening In: Radio and The American imagination*, University of Minnesota Press, 2004.

7 Paddy Scannell, *Radio, Television and Everyday Life: A Phenomenological Approach*, Blackwell Publishing, 1996, p. 154.

4 Schizophonia and the New Soundscape

In his chapter on *Radical Radio*, R. Murray Schafer suggests the possibility of long-form audio becoming an increasingly significant actor within media ecologies, while arguing that an anthropological approach to the emergence of the technology itself has resisted this due to intractable ties to Western rhythms imposed by the invention of the clock.[8] His resultant proposal for the importance of long-form radio based on rhythms other than those of the clock continues a discussion that began in his seminal work, *The Soundscape*[9], where he argues for an approach to composition that acknowledges the soundscape as part of an ongoing global composition with human and non-human participants and multiple convergent rhythmic architectures.

8 R. Murray Schafer, *Voices of Tyranny; Temples of Silence*, Arcana Editions, 1993, p. 134.

9 R. Murray Schafer, *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World*, Destiny Books, 1977

Schafer studied under and admired Marshall McLuhan.[10] Perhaps drawing from McLuhan's understanding of electronic media as an extension of the human body, he notes that an electromagnetic broadcast has a disruptive impact on bodily acoustic relation. For Schafer, the separation in radio of a sound from any sense of origin or image makes it a 'fearful medium.' To describe this, he uses the term *schizophonia*: the schism that electricity, technology and electromagnetism afford in relation to a sound and its electroacoustical reproduction.[11] The radio as a schizophonic device undermines any claims to unified temporal and spacioacoustic orientation. In this way, the radio punctures holes into the everyday:

> Sounds have been torn from their natural sockets and given an amplified and independent existence. Vocal sound, for instance, is no longer tied to a hole in the head, but is free to issue from anywhere in the landscape. In the same instance it may issue from millions of holes and millions of public and private places around the world.[12]

The term schizophonia has a deliberately nervous quality: tuning into the electromagnetic soundscape has potentially abductive qualities in relation to the spacial and temporal aspects of human experience (teleportation and chronoportation).[13] Schafer himself remains ambivalent regarding the implications of this: although his interest in acoustic ecology leads him to be deeply concerned for the environmental impacts of mechanised reproduction, he is also profoundly inspired by the possibility for wide scale immersion into alteric cultures through this superimposition. He describes this immersion through alien rhythms as a form of cultural becoming:

> Why is it not possible for radio to take hold of the pulse of another civilization? …If total immersion is the way to learn languages, it's also the way to learn cultures.[14]

In this sense, it becomes possible to literally transplant the flow of an alien pulse into the experience of the listener; Schafer provides examples of these pulses in flows of water, soundings of insects, and intimate discussions between strangers. Using this formulation, the broadcast model of radical radio was adopted by Schafer and others involved in the World Soundscape Project in a series of broadcasts of the natural cycles of rural villages for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) in 1974, entitled ***Soundscapes of Canada***.

Nearly 30 years after this broadcast, a station that followed Schafer's model of radical radio emerged onto airwaves in Sydney. For a period, this station broadcast sounds of an environment, with cycles that seemed to be uninterrupted. I discovered this station by accident and left my radio tuned to it. The movements of birds or the wind, or the rumble of an impending storm, would drift into my small room in the urban centre of Sydney at any time of day or night. Without station idents, breaks, narration or advertising of any kind, this station is—perhaps—all but lost to posterity, having situated itself as an elsewhere in the context of broadcast economies and their related documentation. Nevertheless, its impact on my understanding of radio as a medium was significant: affording, as it did, an eerie ontological engagement with a non-contextual elsewhere that was to inform *Cathode Immersions*.

10 Glen Carruthers, '**Marshall McLuhan and R. Murray Schafer: Canadian Perspectives on Music Education**,' paper presented at the annual meeting of the ISME World Conference and Commission Seminars, China, 2010.

11 R. Murray Schafer, *Voices of Tyranny; Temples of Silence*, Arcana Editions, 1993, p. 132.

12 R. Murray Schafer, 'The Music of the Environment' 1973 reprinted in Christoph Cox and Daniel Warner eds., *Audio Culture: Readings in Modern Culture*, Continuum, 2001 (2nd Edition), p. 34.

13 See Marc Couroux, '**Preemptive Glossary for a Technosonic Control Society (with lines of flight)**', 2013.

14 R. Murray Schafer, *Voices of Tyranny; Temples of Silence*, Arcana Editions, 1993, p. 146.

5 The Uneasy Domestication of Media Technology

While Shafer highlights the schizophonic qualities of radio in terms of its ability to transpose locations and rhythms, media archaeology draws attention to the qualities of television and radio as material technological objects of reception in addition to any immersive qualities of the broadcast itself.[15] That is, in addition to any spacial or temporal dislocations made possible through recording and broadcast are the always-present non-human relationships to space and time that are enfolded into the technology as an object. Although such devices become domesticated to some extent through regular use,[16] they remain, in part, wild, due to their relation with non-human and invisible forces. For this reason, the domestication of these objects is uneasy. The television receiver, for example, throws flickering colours of ambient light that strangely alter the visual environment when witnessed from any position except directly facing the set. Douglas Kahn highlights this uneasy wildness of radio in relation to energy:

> As time passed, radio fled into the wilderness, a place where nature once existed, and was forced from technology, a place where nature could not be found… Unlike other forms of nineteenth-century media that developed upon a tried-and-true base of writing and storage, the sphere of telecommunications technologies of

15 Jussi Parikka, 'Archival Media Theory: An Introduction to Wolfgang Ernst's Media Archaeology' in Wolfgang Ernst, *Digital Memory and the Archive*, University of Minnesota Press, 2013, pp. 1–22.

16 c.f. Roger Silverstone and Eric Hirsch (eds.), *Consuming Technologies : Media and Information in Domestic Spaces*, Routledge, 1992.

> telegraphy, telephony, and wireless resonated with energetic environments and received signals from terrestrial and extra-terrestrial sources. Thus, receiving radio may mean that someone is listening but not always that anyone is sending.[17]

Prior to *Cathode Immersions*, an earlier program on 2SER, Tom Phillipson's *Aeon*, exploited the wildness of telephony by feeding it directly into live broadcasting. A public phonebox was used to call into the studio and the resulting soundscape would be patched back into the desk. The ubiquity of radio and television means that the soundscape is always potentially open to abduction: an alien wildness can slip readily into the semiotically cloistered privacy of the lounge room or bedroom as artefacts such as static, simultaneous tuning, ghosted images, or xenocasting.

Furthermore, as television and radio became widespread, this technology was increasingly available in the public domain. Television screens could be seen, for example, from shop windows; and the portable TV used for *Cathode Immersions* was found on the side of the street, abandoned to council garbage collection. Around the corner from my flat, a second-hand store had a wall of personal radio sets and 'ghetto blasters,' and would give one away with any other purchase. This ready-availability of what was increasingly becoming superseded technology opened the medium to ongoing recontextualisation.

An anecdotal example of enwilded technology at this time involves a stranger who came into my lounge room through the open front door. He took hold of our portable radio, declaring that it had an unrecognised value, insofar as it could be used as an instrument. He then used the various tuning, volume, and equalisation dials to improvise a composition. Voices plummeted into oceans of pops, hums, and static, and there was a sense that this was the expression of a listening-in that continued before and after the actual annunciation. Such an approach to the surface of radio operates in the gaps between creation and consumption. This approach to composition resonates with Jaques Attali's idea of machine-use as a method of cultural change, which operates by dismantling the hegemony of the deferred time of capital through improvisation:

> Exteriority can only disappear in composition… The listener is the operator. Composition, then, beyond the realm of music, call into question the distinction between worker and consumer, between doing and destroying… to compose is to take pleasure in the instruments, the tools of communication, in use-time and exchange-time as lived and no-longer stockpiled.[18]

Television and radio receivers, with their strange relation to electromagnetic production of space and time, have become ubiquitously domesticated household objects: as a result, machinic and cultural interpretations of electromagnetism now provide a structure for everyday life. This structure is, however, to a large extent enacted via an arbitrary cultural negotiation with materiality that uses the semiotic predictability of encoded content and scheduling as the guarantor for its stability. Through improvisation with materiality, the proto-xenocasting activities discussed in this section highlight the weirdness of this relationship, hinting that the familiar orientation of space and time is always threatened by the abductive virtuality of an elsewhere that can seep through the technology of broadcast media.

17 Douglas Kahn, *Earth Sound Earth Signal: Energies and Earth Magnitude in the Arts*, University of California Press, 2013, p. 1.
18 Jaques Attali, *Noise: The Political Economy of Music (Theory and History of Literature #16)*, Manchester University Press, 1985, p. 135.

6 Cathode Immersions: Television and Radio as Adjacent Media

The practices outlined above focused primarily on audio; *Cathode Immersions*, however, worked by broadcasting sounds drawn from the real-time audio of free-to-air television transmission. This could be experienced on its own as a schizophonic radio broadcast, or it could feed back into the televisual broadcast (with the original televised audio muted). The latter brought television and radio together in a kind of convergence that reconfigured the different sensory modalities of these mediums. I use the term media adjacency to describe the juxtaposition of materials and content that affords the material conditions for emergent semiosis within broadcast structures.

The track numbers for the broadcast content in this section refer to an **archival recording of Cathode Immersions** from 2003, hosted on The Internet Archive.

Audio 1. Archival recording of ***Cathode Immersions***, April 2003.

7 Media Adjacency: Crossed Lines and Cross-Purposivity

In relation to networked transmission, material examples of adjacency can be identified as early as the 1900s, with the introduction of the first patented example of a musical synthesiser, prior to the advent of amplification. Thaddeus

Cahill's *telharmonium* carried electric waves of musical sound through wires originally intended for telephony. As these were laid adjacent to actual telephone lines, the sympathetic vibrations of signals from the telharmonium meant that the music intended to be piped to various locations and the voices often blended in unintended ways.[19]

Similar effects can still be found—albeit much more rarely—on telephones that rely on older infrastructure, with the phenomenon of *crosstalk* allowing the intrusion of a ghostly other when wires become physically connected. This phenomenon accompanies heavy rain, for example, where waterlogging in the street surrounding the cabling connects two intentionally discrete channels. Unintended artefacts also occur in mobile media; track three of the recorded broadcast from *Cathode Immersions* evidences mobile reception static, immediately recognisable as an artefact of the conflation of two signals in the electromagnetic field during that era, as it has almost entirely been erased from contemporary communication through assiduous research into methods of shielding.

The communication of artefacts via material adjacency is a kind of technological noise, which disrupts the cultural message; however, when dissimilar media converge for sustained periods (either through incorporation or via xenocasting practices such as *Cathode Immersions*), this noise disrupts the system itself. McLuhan identifies that such a meeting requires a new subjectivity: "the parallel between two media holds us on the frontiers between forms… the moment of the meeting of media is a moment of freedom and release from the ordinary trance and numbness imposed by them on our senses."[20] Media adjacency therefore releases culturally disruptive and affective *hybrid energy*: "the crossing or hybridisations of the media release great new force and energy as by fission or fusion."[21] McLuhan uses an example of the impact of electric light on human cultures of space and time to illustrate the disruptive scattering of existing modes of spacial and temporal orientation. As such, the energy generated by the meeting of adjacent media can form the basis for a new social order.[22]

19 Reynold Weidenaar, *Magic Music from the Telharmonium*, The Scarecrow Press, 1995, p. 135.

20 Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, Routledge Classics, 2001, p. 61.

21 Ibid., p. 53.

22 Jaques Attali, *Noise: The Political Economy of Music (Theory and History of Literature #16)*, Manchester University Press, 1985.

8 Walking, Tuning and Channel Hopping: 'Wandersmänner' as Vector

The arbitrary requirement that has arisen for both television and radio to broadcast content without gaps or spaces of non-signification (silence or station close), results in an excess of the material of communication. This excess provided the conditions of emergence for *Cathode Immersions* in two ways. Firstly, it meant that there was a surplus of late night radio in relation to presenters, which opened this time to experimentation (*Cathode Immersions* was initially broadcast at the most conventionally undesirable time of Wednesday 12pm). Secondly, it meant that there was always an available television signal to provide the material for improvisation.

Arguably, this transformative use of excess reflects de Certeau's concept of the 'wandersmänner' (pedestrian),[23] who, in walking through the city without intention, reconfigures the semiotic and institutional structures that govern space and time in the city. The 'wandersmänner' engages with "excesses coming from elsewhere… furnished by the leftovers from the nomination, taxonomies, heroic or comic predicates, etc. That is, by fragments of scattered semantic places."[24] As such, the 'wandersmänner' becomes part of an ad hoc assemblage based on fragments and holes in relation to any presupposed symbolic order: "the surface of this order is everywhere punctured and opened by ellipses, drifts, and leaks of meaning: it is a sieve-order."[25] If de Certeau's elsewhere is intractably woven into his Catholicism[26] and therefore potentially evocative of an occluded depth, an alternate understanding of this sieve-order would eschew any such hidden other, instead finding elsewhere in the multiplying of surfaces themselves as *plot holes*[27] and *poromechanics*.[28]

Engaging with *Cathode Immersions*, listeners could become vectors for the spread of these semiotic plot holes by recontextualising the visual *surfacescape* of the city. One listener, at least, evidenced the potential use of portable devices while travelling:

> 2RRR seems to have something on at the moment, but I can't get reception, so listening to 2SER's psy-trance show while waiting for their Cathode Immersions programme to come on in about an hour. Might have to invest in a teeny-tiny radio walkman if I'm going to catch this stuff.[29]

This also alludes to channel hopping as a response to the physical necessity of radio broadcast reception, as well as the dictates of desire and taste. In addition to locational changes, the practices of channel hopping and radio tuning are commonly used to engage directly with the sieve-order, as they bring about a series of jumps through the electromagnetic spectrum. With this spectrum as the field of meaning, channel hopping is no longer ontologically disjunctive: instead, it is a process of emergence made manifest through *asyndetonic* unfolding. De Certeau describes asyndeton as "the suppression of linking words…either within a sentence or between sentences. In the same way, in walking it selects and fragments the spaces traversed; it skips over links and whole part that it omits."[30] This practice, wherein texts are folded into each other to create new and potentially disruptive meanings, is similar to William Burroughs' cut ups. For Burroughs, cut ups are an improvised engagement with surfaces that is immediate and available to all participants: "Cut ups are for everyone. Any body can make cut ups. It is experimental in the sense of being something to do. Right here write now. Not something to talk and argue about."[31]

23 Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Steven F. Rendall (trans), University of California Press, 1984, p. 93.
24 Ibid., p. 107.
25 Ibid., p. 107.
26 Ian Buchannon, *Michel de Certeau: Cultural Theorist*, Sage Publications, 2000, p. 2.
27 Reza Negarestani, *Cyclonopedia: Complicity with Anonymous Materials*, Re.Press, 2008
28 Ben Woodard, *On an Ungrounded Earth: Towards a New Geophilosophy*, Punctum Books, 2013.
29 Caitlan Rowley, '**Potentiality of the Interactive**' (blog post), 2005.
30 Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Steven F. Rendall (trans), University of California Press, 1984, p. 101.
31 William Burroughs, '**The Cut Up Method**' from Leroi Jones, ed., *The Moderns: An Anthology of New Writing in America*, Corinth Books, 1963.

Such recontextualisation is not only possible for the receiver; it is also available to the broadcaster. In *Cathode Immersions* the television was literally tuned at random intervals throughout the broadcast, and this was not always announced. However, cut-ups also happened within a single channel through sampling: the sampler would often take snatches of dialogue or soundtrack and repeat them—with or without variation—until they were dumped and spliced into another annunciation in real time. Outside human intention, these machinic cut ups allowed for unexpected meditation and value systems to take precedence, undermining the logic of the various political economies of free-to-air broadcasting and offering instead a series of emergent semiotic architectures.

9 Lines of Sight and Fields of Influence

Although the portability of the radio meant that any listener could engage with physical and media adjacency of their own late-night wandering, the journey of the broadcaster was also an important aspect of the overall transmission. Personal DAT Walkmans and minidiscs were used to capture the sounds from outside the studio, which contributed to the remixing of spacial as well as temporal adjacency on those tuning in late at night. One listener acknowledged the value of such spacial translocation:

> The actual process of transforming the high-tech dribble which comes out of the television, into something more simple and 'easy' or 'uneasy' to listen to, requires significant thought and effort. But then you can take a simple sound such as a rainy evening and broad cast this sound 'as is' to the delight of people who are willing to make the time to listen.[32]

32 Simon Henry, cited in the **World Forum for Acoustic Ecology Newsletter**, December 2004.

This approach is appreciated by some, although as Simon Henry acknowledges the reinsertion of the outside into the mechanics of a broadcast network becomes a kind of noise to others.

Although now situated on the lower floor, the 2SER studios used to be situated on level 26 of the University of Technology (UTS) Tower building,[33] and it broadcast from the top of this iconic structure. Located on Broadway, a few minutes from Sydney's Central Station, level 26 affords a line of sight across a large section of the city. At that time, few broadcasted programs were enacted from a position of elevation (nearby, stations such as the national broadcaster ABC and local stations such as FBI, Bondi Radio and Koori FM were mostly street level or a few stories high). Although this may not have impacted prepared broadcasting, the location had—potentially—some impact on the improvised broadcast.

At the street level, opposite the UTS tower was the Clare Hotel.[34] This was established early last century and had become a meeting place for academics and ABC personnel, as well as *Cathode Immersions* presenters: the latter passing the time while waiting for that late night space where the routine of broadcast scheduling was considered flexible enough to allow for long-form improvised radio to be broadcast.

This journey from the acoustic and visual labyrinth of street-level walking (sometimes including public transport from more rural parts of greater Sydney) and the social context of the pub contributed to the emergent convention of layering frantic media cuts with slower ambient soundscapes in the broadcast. Audio of this journey was captured and broadcast at various points during the programme's history. The relation between the scopophilic experience of elevation and the immersive field of the ground arguably provides a useful way of thinking about the differences between television and radio that characterise the morphing interaction between figure and ground enacted in the media adjacency of *Cathode Immersions*.

33 Click **here** to see photo of the UTS in-situ.
34 Clare Pickett, '**The Clare is Closing**', 2013.

10 Xenocracy After Finitude: Non-Human Perspectives on Human Issues

The *Cathode Immersions* xenocast had some impact in reframing local political issues in non-human ways. Particularly notable was reporting on the 2003 Gulf War conflict. The audio of tracks 06 and 26 of the *Cathode Immersions* archival recording has a particularly marked presence in my own memory of this era. A little over one month prior to this recording, live television coverage of the invasion began with the US strategy named 'shock and awe,' which was reflected in footage that emphasised a kind of pyrotechnic event that occluded human casualties.[35]

After that time, footage was ongoing, but most often replayed and mediated through technological infrastructure. As a result, technological actors took centre-stage, with "shots of bombs raining down on Baghdad and tanks driving through the desert became familiar TV viewing during the Iraq War."[36] This was the continuation of a broadcasting strategy that emphasised a "new kind of high technology war between machines, not men."[37]

While the imagery was one of scopic distance and technological spectacle (the war began at night, predominated by a strange green hue), the accompanying spoken narrative was strident, framed by US President Bush's rhetoric surrounding "a monumental struggle of good verses evil."[38] A particular type of xenophobia was apparent in the language of war, which was supplied through the public initially through military press releases and then primarily through briefings to military-sanctioned embedded journalists. One example, just prior to the initial attack, treated the warfare with the logic of domestic pest control:

> A Reuters story published in the New Zealand media reports that the US military aims to minimise civilian casualties in the conflict in Iraq by using guided weapons and a mathematical formula known as 'bug splat.'[39]

In responding without latency to the live broadcast of the second Gulf War, the *Cathode Immersions* broadcast used alternate mathematical formula via the techno-affective architectures of the Yamaha A4000 sampler. The Yamaha A4000/5000 series were famously unwieldy to program, with the machines forcing the user to think according to its own logic, or—as Yamaha advertised in their slogan—to "Think Different."[40] Yamaha Corporation is associated with heavy industry such as semiconductors, engines, metal alloys and industrial robots. Accordingly, when audio was effected and randomised through low frequency oscillation (LFO) then placed adjacent to a televised image, the legacy of heavy industry afforded a sieve-order. Artificial spaces were created in-between the 24-hour broadcast as sentences dissolved into sound. Specific words came into prominence according to a machinic logic that entirely reshaped the narrative logic of the broadcast. Affectively, existing feelings of loneliness, alienation and disorientation could be impacted with a strangely-accelerated exuberance of machinic transformation. In this way, significantly alternative listener subjectivities were able to seep through the plot holes in the prevailing media narrative.

Capitalism and advertising also became transformed within the *Cathode Immersions* xenocast. In tracks 21 and 22 advertising is spread out and slowed into a narcotic dreamscape. Commercial advertisements are overlaid with soft flute music drenched in echo and punctuated by cryptic recordings from numbers stations.[41] Through this abductive

35 Footage from Sky News Australia can be viewed **here**.

36 Usula Boser, '**Two Channels, Two Truths: Reporting the Iraq War in Control Room**,' *Screening the Past*, 4, 2011.

37 Sarah Miskin, '**Reporting Conflict in Iraq**', *Parliament of Australia, Publications Archive*, 'Technology, para. 4, 2003.

38 Cited in Emily Camins, '**War Against Terrorism: Fighting the Military Battle, Losing the Psychological War**,' *Current Issues in Crime and Justice* 15,2, 2003, p. 95.

39 Tabassum Zakaria, '"Bug splat" formula to minimise civilian casualties', Reuters report carried in the *New Zealand Her*ald, 7 March 2003, cited in Sarah Miskin, '**Reporting Conflict in Iraq**,' *Parliament of Australia, Publications Archive*, 2003.

40 See ***Sound on Sound***, April 2000.

41 For a useful outline of this phenomenon, see Roman Mars, '**Episode 97: Numbers Stations**' *99% Invisible* (podcast), 2013.

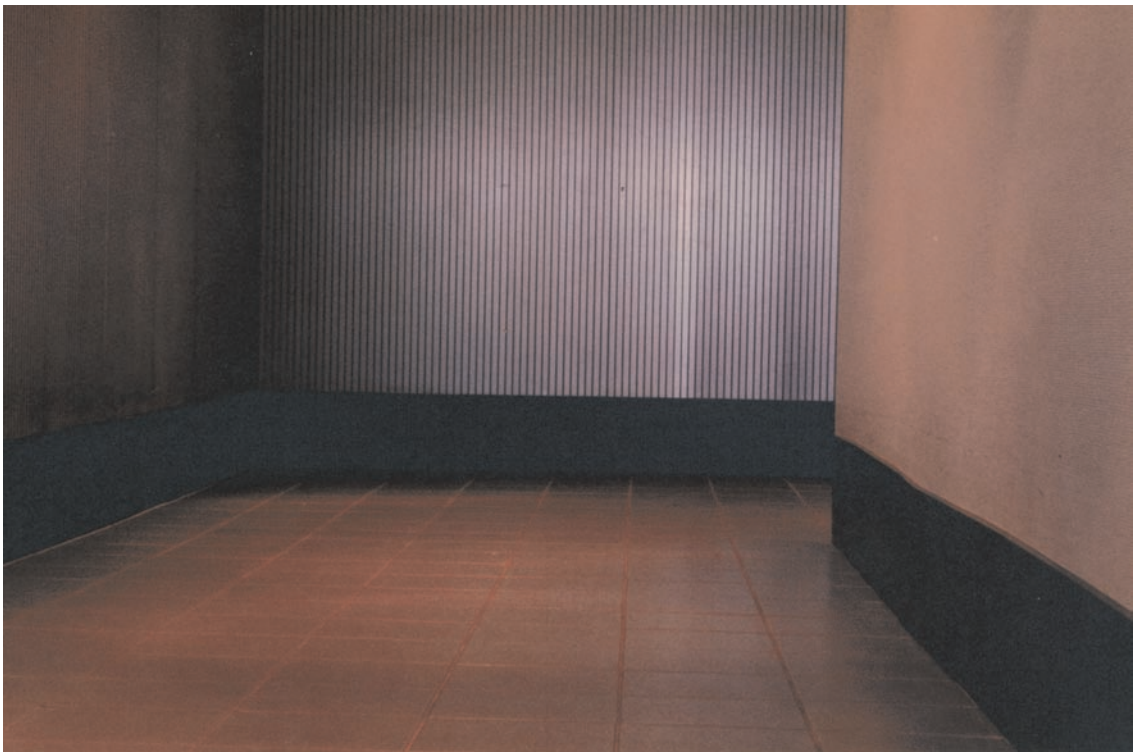
process the commercial imperative to co-opt desire as the primary activity of commerce is made alien. Intended as commercial interruption, these broadcast interstices are designed to operate effectively in the domain of the exception; when these are re-incorporated into the continuum of the soundscape, the voice of the machine becomes a contributor to public debates surrounding capital, control, desire, and subjectivity. This and similar inclusions arguably provide the foundation for a multimodal *xenocracy*.

11 Elsewhere

Speaking again about the photographs included in this text: they capture some of the experience of de Certeau's 'wandersmänner.' I remember taking these at a time when I was overwhelmed by the surfaces that operated in a kind of elsewhere to the narrative of the city that most of the media was discussing. This was often quite beautiful, but also grimy and unrelenting. The xenocast of *Cathode Immersions* attempted to create a sieve structure in the spaces adjacent to television and radio, to allow for some of the elsewhere in the city to drift into the media landscape in all its multivalence.

Like the special exhibit that prefaces this paper, the agencies of xenocasting can be attributed to time travel, alien technologies, other cultures, or 'whatever.' All of these elements, I suggest, help to engage with radio and television as technologies of elsewhere and make a strong argument for the ongoing relevance of xenocasting to media ecologies.[42]

42 Given that the brief potential that the lack of latency afforded for the hybrid energy of two mediums has seemingly passed, any new strategy may be required to identify ways to hack time in order to bring about forward-chronoportation.



Biography

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