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MARSHALL MCLUHAN AND THE ARTS

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MCLUHAN AND THE ARTS AFTER THE SPECULATIVE TURN

ADAM LAUDER AND JAQUELINE MCLEOD ROGERS

McLuhan and the arts is a well-trodden theme yet surprisingly still fertile ground for original scholarship and research-creation. Milestones include excavations by Richard Cavell and Elena Lamberti of the aesthetic sources of McLuhan's media analyses in the literature and visual arts of his time as well as his influence on a range of contemporary artistic projects, from happenings to installation art. Janine Marchessault and Donald Theall have also presented compelling portraits of the media thinker as himself an artist or "poet-artist manqué" (Theall, *The Medium* 6).[1] More recently, case studies of specific artists and movements inspired by McLuhan—notably Kenneth R. Allan's exploration of McLuhan's notion of the "counterenvironment" as a mode of immanent critique practiced by conceptualists ranging from Dan Graham to the Vancouver-based N.E. Thing Co. Ltd.—have lent additional definition and texture to existing accounts of the *longue durée* of McLuhan's influential percepts. Yet no authoritative survey of McLuhan's global impact on contemporary art has emerged to-date. This special issue of *Imaginations* does not, and for reasons of space alone cannot, fill this gap. Nonetheless, the articles and artists' responses gathered here, both collectively and individually, constitute a significant advance in our still evolving conception of McLuhan as a thinker and practitioner of aesthetics.

A notable acceleration in the uptake of McLuhan's thought in recent years points to something of a mutation in the trajectory of recovery, restoration, and revision initiated by the publication of his *Letters* in 1987. It has become commonplace to attribute McLuhan's post-contemporary revival to the forces of retrospection and reassessment focused by centennial celebrations of his birth in 2011. Yet there is more than chronology driving this renaissance.

Richard Cavell has recently drawn parallels between McLuhan's thought and contemporary affect theory and new materialisms. It is also not coincidental that McLuhan's thought experiments have been the object of renewed attention amidst the intellectual sea-change spelled by the speculative turn. While it would be dubious and unfruitful to retrospectively claim McLuhan as a new realist *avant la lettre*, compelling resonances between his transgression of disciplinary boundaries and present-day intellectual currents illuminate some of the leading concerns propelling the present special issue of *Imaginations*. If the 1990s gave us a "virtual" McLuhan who was simultaneously a philosopher of difference and a forerunner of the spatial turn, today the media analyst is ripe for reevaluation as the generatively unclassifiable thinker that he is.

In common with the proponents of various Speculative Realisms, McLuhan's writings are characterized by a profound wariness of the "Subject" produced by Enlightenment epistemologies and conserved, if profoundly reconfigured, by the linguistic turn which coincided with the waning of his own reputation after 1968.[2] "Man" may be the unapologetic subject of McLuhan's media explorations, yet it is no liberal-humanist individual—no Vitruvian Man—that emerges from his *collagiste* prose. Rather, McLuhan presents us with an oddly prosthetic and generic humanity that anticipates the contemporary French thinker François Laruelle's provocative contention that "there are no longer subjects" ("Is Thinking Democratic?" 233). Likewise anticipatory of Speculative Realism, McLuhan drew upon a range of scientific discourses to expand the scope of humanistic study beyond the confines of Greek metaphysics and Judeo-Christian theology. In particular, McLuhan emerges as a prescient critic of linguistics as the master signifier of the human. For the Toronto School thinker, as for contemporary realists, "ontology is politics" (Bryant, Srnicek, and Harman 16)—an orientation made plain by his prefatory profession of faith in "the ultimate harmony of all being" in *Understanding Media* (5).

Yet McLuhan's non-Kantianism—derived from Henri Bergson, as traced by Stephen Crocker—thwarts any meaningful alignment with contemporary neo-Kantians such as Graham Harman or his noumenal world of "objects." It is, rather, the eccentric project of "non-philosophy" elaborated by Laruelle that comes closest to McLuhan's non-standard humanism and best illuminates the experimental currents propelling this special issue.

Laruelle (b. 1937) is Professor Emeritus at the University of Paris X (Nanterre). Of his more than 20 monographs, some dating back to the 1970s, English translations have only begun to appear since 2010, although they are now being published at a rapid rate by the most distinguished academic presses. Laruelle began his career by extending but also hybridizing the seemingly incompatible post-structuralist theories of Jacques Derrida and Gilles Deleuze. By the early 1980s, however, he was beginning to push against these "Philosophies of Difference" to formulate his own non-philosophical alternative (discussed in detail below): a rethinking of the central assumptions of continental philosophy that nonetheless makes new, if sometimes unrecognizable and perverse, uses of its now-familiar concepts and vocabulary. Some commentators group Laruelle with Anglo-American thinkers associated with Speculative Realism—an affiliation that the non-philosopher would likely reject. Nonetheless, Laruelle's project shares with SR an ambition to think beyond such hallmarks of French Theory as the linguistic metaphor and the centrality of the Subject utilizing techniques and terminology derived from science.

Like Laruelle, McLuhan is a gnomic thinker who defies standard disciplinary taxonomies and norms. Indeed, McLuhan's currently accepted designation as a media theorist or media philosopher is questionable, not only on the basis of his own oft-noted resistance to systemization; the Toronto School thinker preferred, like Laruelle, an aesthetic and experimental methodology substituting non-rational "percepts" for the concepts of conventional epistemology. Even the default subsumption of McLuhan's protean speculations under the rubric of media studies is debatable, if only given his noted lack of training in communications and resolutely literary methodology. Like Laruelle, McLuhan's project is more accurately characterized as an irreverent bricolage of seemingly irreconcilable methodologies that effects a mutation of the central *forms* of classical Western epistemology and its contemporary offspring.

The formal orientation of McLuhan's analyses was long dismissed as a methodological shortcoming, a holdover from the naïve formalism practiced by an earlier generation of humanists. Jessica Pressman has persuasively argued for a recovery of McLuhan's approach as an innovative modality of New Critical techniques of close reading. In light of Laruelle's trenchant critique of the enduring *form* of Western philosophy, however—what he describes as its circular, "decisional" structure (the constantly rearticulated yet functionally invariant dyads of Subject/object, Idea/representation, One/multiple, Being/beings, etc.)—McLuhan's formal methodology emerges with renewed relevance as a perspicacious excavation of the *a prioris* of Western epistemology and aesthetics. Indeed, there is a strikingly proto-Laruellian orientation to McLuhan's recognition of the dyadic figure/ground dynamics of typography as an artefact of Western *rationalism* and its binary apparatus of subjectivization. Anticipating the quantum chaos, or *chôra*, that Laruelle opposes to the empirico-transcendental doublets of philosophy, McLuhan, himself partially influenced by developments in quantum mechanics,[3] hypothesized a non-perspectival "acoustic space" in contradistinction to the dualistic positions structurally inscribed in print culture and perspectival optics alike (*Counterblast* n.p.). Paralleling the originary "blackness" that Laruelle attributes to the Real (thereby rejecting standard metaphysical metaphors of illumination and enlightenment), McLuhan described this acoustic space as "the dark of the mind" *(Counterblast).*[4]

Moreover, McLuhan's acoustic space as well as the "mosaic" form that he developed to communicate its heteronomous essence (*Gutenberg Galaxy* 265) can both be likened to Laruelle's insistence upon the foreclosure of the Real to epistemological capture: a "One" that unilaterally equalizes all attempts at its representation as necessarily incomplete. Laruelle's universe establishes an irreversible vector *from* the Real-One *to* its representations, thereby standing on their head the pretentions of philosophers to transform the Real. McLuhan's mediatic Real is likewise misconstrued as relational. After all, *the medium* is *the message*: the terms of this most celebrated yet persistently obscure of McLuhan's axioms being as irreversible as the variables in Laruelle's non-philosophical matrix. The medium is a vector that only travels in one direction. In other words, content, always inadequate as a description of the medium and secondary to its effects in McLuhan's writings, can be likened to Laruelle's view of philosophy's doomed attempts at capturing the Real.

The conflicting percepts superposed by McLuhan's textual mosaic issue unilaterally from a non-totalizable mediatic Real. His analyses thereby unfold "alongside" the blackness of acoustic space in a manner consonant with Laruelle's non-philosophical project (*Intellectuals and Power* 32). *The medium is the message* can also be understood as articulating a form of radical immanence; that is, the message does not transcend the medium, but is immanent to its form. This immanental orientation corroborates Donald Theall's likening of McLuhan's thought to that of Deleuze, whose 1968 text *The Logic of Sense* influentially proposed a neo-Stoic reading of the "blank word," which (like McLuhan's medium) "says its own sense" (79).[5] McLuhan's maxim equally resounds in Laruelle's radical deconstruction of Deleuze's philosophy of immanence; the former proposing, in the words of John Ó Maoilearca, a thought capable of "*doing what we say we do*" (45, original emphasis). What more concise description of McLuhan's medium than that it, too, *says* what it *does*?

McLuhan elaborated his prescient critique of the dyadic *technics* of Western thought in a performative style that Richard Cavell has productively likened to performance art.[6] Similarly, Laruelle has stated that, "what interests me is philosophy as the material for an art" (Mackay and Laruelle 29): an aesthetic project that he characteristically qualifies as non-standard aesthetics. The mosaic of quotations assembled by *The Gutenberg Galaxy* "clones"—as Laruelle would say—its philosophical and aesthetic reference material through a scriptural reduplication that deliberately contravenes the hermeneutic norms of philosophical commentary and interpretation. McLuhan thereby reduces his chosen objects of study (François Rabelais, Peter Ramus, *The Tragedy of King Lear*, etc.) to so many "simple materials" (Laruelle *Principles of Non-Philosophy* 9) or, what he would term with Wilfred Watson, "clichés," stripped of their pretentions to transcendent Truth. This citational procedure—which sets the stage for Laruelle's practice of radical paraphrase—powerfully foregrounds the materiality of print as an instrument of rational thought while simultaneously exposing and sterilizing the dyadic representational machinery of Platonic epistemologies more generally.

The mannerist theatre staged by McLuhan's "non-book" collaborations with designers Quentin Fiore and Harley Parker (Michaels, "Foreword" 8) abounds in quotations and images gleaned from a beguiling gamut of pop-cultural and "serious" sources (not to mention their incessant paraphrase of McLuhan's own earlier, single-authored texts). Precedent for such assemblage is found in the ventriloquism of mass-media formats (comic-strip, editorial, newspaper) and the high-Modernist prosody performed by *The Mechanical Bride*, the media analyst's first monograph. Yet McLuhan's *détournement* of readymade materials can be traced further back to the anti-Bergsonian (yet, paradoxically, enduringly Bergsonian) rhetoric of Wyndham Lewis: the Canadian-born multimedia Modernist whose impact on McLuhan has been analyzed in depth by Lamberti and is the subject of the recent anthology *Counterblasting Canada*.

Lewis—whom McLuhan first read during his doctoral studies at Cambridge in the mid-1930s, and subsequently befriended during World War II while lecturing at St. Louis University and Assumption College (today's University of Windsor)—was a prominent critic of the non-logical metaphysics of Bergson. Yet, as SueEllen Campbell and others have demonstrated, Lewis's anti-Bergsonian polemic remained perplexingly Bergsonian in its mere upending of the driving dualisms of Bergsonian metaphysics: "matter and memory, perception and recollection, objective and subjective" (Deleuze, *Bergsonism* 53). However, where Campbell and other commentators on Lewis's fraught relationship to Bergsonian modernisms have tended to view the British artist-author's enduring if covert Bergsonism as an unwitting inconsistency, it is equally legitimate to recognize in Lewis's "perverse" (Edwards, "Wyndham Lewis's Vorticism" 39) Bergsonism a deliberate logic of paraconsistency. A similarly heretical reuse of Bergsonian dualisms in tandem with borrowings from contemporary scientific discourse was made earlier by Marcel Duchamp (see Henderson; Luisetti and Sharp; Ó Maoilearca), whose para-painterly masterpiece *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even* (1915-1923) also informed McLuhan's *Mechanical Bride* (see Cavell, *Remediating McLuhan* 50). Much as Duchamp seized upon the denigrated mechanical and rationalist pole of Bergson's dualist apparatus to enact an unauthorized, and pointedly anti-vital, reuse of the French vitalist thinker's conceptual apparatus, Lewis, too, can be understood as appropriating Bergson's popular writings as "a whatever material" for unsanctioned remediation (Ó Maoilearca 164). Clearing a path for the non-philosophical "clones" of Laruelle as well as the clichés of McLuhan and Watson, Lewis's heteroglossia of Bergsonian formulas belongs to a Bergsonian tradition and yet remains defiantly *non*-Bergsonian in its divestiture—and, indeed, overt satire—of the transformational potential of philosophical concepts. In McLuhan's reworking of Lewisian strategies of pastiche, paraconsistency emerges as a primary characteristic of what he alternately termed "post-lineal" or "post-alphabetic" culture: neologisms that are strikingly consistent with the non-Euclidean model pursued by the egalitarian thought of Laruelle in their radical expansion and mutation (but not abandonment) of the schemata of classical epistemology.[7] In advance of Laruelle, McLuhan was drawn to non-Euclidean models of space that liberated humanity from what he dubbed the "straight-jacket" of the parallel postulate and the constraints of logical consistency, whose "proof" it purported to embody (*Counterblast* n.p.). In the post-lineal world inaugurated by electronic media, "[a]ll knowledges are equal" (Ó Maoilearca 28), just as no representation of the Real can dominate in Laruelle's democracy of thought.

Much as Laruelle has strategically appropriated theoretical material from the neo-Bergsonian Deleuze, whose imperative (as paraphrased with collaborator Félix Guattari) to "create concepts" (5) he has divested of its metaphysical impulse, Lewis mimicked Bergson's metaphysics of creative evolution in his 1930 masterpiece, *The Apes of God*. The latter text stages a carnivalesque pageantry of modernist clones mocking the French philosopher's artistic acolytes, who are represented as little more than stereotyped "walking ideas" (Edwards, *Wyndham Lewis* 320). Occupying the perspectival centre of Lewis's literary vortex is the absentee philosopher Pierpoint (or "peer-point") (Miller 117), whose insights are parroted by the denizens of Lewis's counterfeit "society of creators" (Deleuze, *Bergsonism* 111). Acting as the prototypical *medium*, the Virgil-like Horace Zagreus "broadcasts" (*Apes* 271, 418, 433, 434) Pierpoint's views via mock-radiophonic performances of the reclusive guru's "encyclical" (125) as he guides protagonist Dan Boleyn through a Dantean Bloomsbury. Lewis's satirical reversal of the dynamics of Bergsonian comedy (as theorized by the French thinker in his popular essay *Laughter*)—which Lewis dubbed "non-moral satire" (*Men Without Art* 107-108) in opposition to the socially corrective function that Bergson attributed to the mechanical essence of the comic—can be likened to John Ó Maoilearca's description of non-philosophy's "mockery of the philosopher's truth" (176): a mockery enacted through a quasi-behaviourist, "postual" miming of philosophical positions (see also Hokenson). Similarly, Theall situated the Menippean satire of academic norms practiced by McLuhan's irrevent non-books within a tradition of "learned satire" with which he also connected Lewis (*The Virtual Marshall McLuhan* 41).

A key point of tension between the non-Bergsonian mimicry practiced by both Laruelle and Lewis emerges from the latter's emphatic anti-humanism, which cannot be reconciled with the persistence of the Human in non-philosophy. Laruelle insists that the "non-" prefix which he appends to his minoritarian practice of thought is in no way synonymous with the negation implied by anti-philosophy. Non-philosophy does not aim to overturn or nullify philosophy, but—on the model of non-Euclidean geometry, which accepts the axioms of classical geometry yet adds seemingly incompatible postulates thereto—sets out to expand the scope of humanistic study by multiplying and mutating its disciplinary resources, even at the risk of inconsistency. The persistence of the Human in Laruelle's thought is framed in emphatically futural terms, as the open question of humanity's "salvation" (Smith, *Laruelle* 6), a formulation that recalls the future tense in which McLuhan cast his prophetic pronouncements on social and sensorial transformations that he associated with the proliferation of electronic media. A shared modality of science fiction is an additional manifestation of the two thinkers' common literary orientation: a re-description of philosophical and extra-philosophical materials that Laruelle theorizes (in reference to his own project) as "philo-fiction." Refusing to abandon the contents of conventional philosophical discourse, Laruelle instead "superposes"—an operation transplanted from quantum physics—concepts and vocabulary from divergent domains to fabulate novel thoughts that are real but fictive: not authoritative descriptions of the Real but rather fictions composed of statements that, however conflictual or incomplete, are nonetheless real in themselves.

A contemporary artist whose work suggests compelling analogies with Laruelle's practice of philo-fiction is Robert Smithson (1938-1973), whose photo-essays transgress disciplinary boundaries and protocols to spin unreliable narratives cannibalizing the work of other creators. The early Smithson text "Entropy and the New Monuments" is axiomatic in its transformation of a conventional survey of recent art (in this case, Minimalist sculpture) into a free-ranging meditation on the ineluctable *fatum* of an entropic cosmos, weaving references to everything from tourist guides to Claude Lévi-Strauss into a deliberately anti-academic heteroglossia. Smithson's compulsive fabulation echoes McLuhan's reconfiguration of the "critic as creator" (Cavell, *Remediating McLuhan* 79) through his innovation of the multimodal "essai concrète" (Theall, *The Medium* 240).

"Incidents of Mirror-Travel in the Yucatan," Smithson's signature 1969 mock-travelogue, reported on a recent tour of the Mexican peninsula in a satirically hypertrophied impersonation of the first-person narrative conventions of embedded journalism that may have been inspired by the artist's familiarity with the ironic travel writings of Wyndham Lewis, whom he referred to as his "favorite author" in 1965 (qtd. In Crow 37).[8] "Incidents of Mirror-Travel" is eminently philo-fictive in its superposition of its host text—the 19th-century American travel writer John Lloyd Stephens's 1843 *Incidents of travel in Yucatán*—with more dubious "histories" of the mythical continents of Atlantis and Mu by James Churchward and Ignatius Donnelly. This pseudo-scientific travesty of Atlantean utopias effects a ludic "revers[al of] Platonism" (Deleuze, *Logic of Sense* 291).

Smithson recounts his temporary installation of "hypothetical continents" along his Yucatán itinerary based on the imaginative cartographies of Churchward and Donnelly: piles of seashells or stone conjuring the conjectured coastlines of the "lost" landmasses of Lemuria and Mu. In thus materializing a specious facticity, Smithson manifests a logic of paraconsistency anticipatory of Laruelle. "Contrary to affirmations of nature," writes Smithson, "art is inclined to semblances and masks, it flourishes on discrepancy" ("Incidents of Mirror-Travel" 132).

"Incidents of Mirror-Travel" simultaneously mobilizes the camera in unconventional ways that clear a path for Laruelle's discourse on "non-photography" as an instantiation of "vision-in-One," the French thinker's term for a unilateral modification of human perception. Photographs accompanying Smithson's textual account of his Yucatán expedition pointedly depart from the formalist conventions of a medium then struggling to acquire critical legitimacy. Smithson's defiantly casual photographs redirect the reader's touristic gaze away from the expected archaeological monuments portended by the title's nod to Stephens. They record instead an anti-spectacular inventory of sites/sights: ephemeral arrays of square mirrors, or "mirror displacements," installed by the artist on beaches and the jungle floor. Perversely, these crude grids refuse a specular optics, reflecting instead monochromatic expanses of sky or dazzling solar flares. The rigorous abstraction constituted by the "broken geometry" (127) of these mirrored arrays can be likened to the "matrix" that Laruelle posits as the *a priori* of a (non-)photographic vision preceding the emergence of the technical apparatus of the camera—which, in his account, is only incidental to a longer trajectory of philosophy's "onto-photo-logical" unfolding (*Photo-Fiction* 3).[9] The alternating flares and mottled obscurity manifested by Smithson's arrays can also be likened to the "blinding of the light of logos by the really blind thought of photography" postulated by Laruelle as a refusal of the representational metaphysics of Platonism (*The Concept* 58). As Smithson writes, "mirror surfaces cannot be understood by reason" ("Incidents of Mirror-Travel" 124).

The non-photographic image theorized by Laruelle as an alternative to the specular optics of conventional photographic discourse is confoundingly "obscure and black" (*The Concept* 58). Like the non-photographic "clones" of an unrepresentable Real formulated by Laruelle, Smithson's mirror displacements are, moreover, "empty in general of phenomenological structures of perception: horizon, field of consciousness, fringe and margin, pregnant form (Gestalt), flux, etc." (*The Concept* 102). The artist superposes mottled or monochromatic mirrors with generic stretches of beach or jungle to produce not a photographic representation but rather a non-mimetic "clone" of the Real. The phenomenologically void visuality composed by Laruelle's photographic clones is a "vision-in-One": not a representation *of* the (non-visualizable) Real-One, but the manifestation of a "specific relation to the real" (*The Concept* 143, 6).

Unlike philosophy's attempts at remaking the Real in its own image, Laruelle's non-philosophy aims at "[a] radical modification not of the

World but of our vision(-in-One) of the World" (*Principles of Non-Philosophy* 190). This ambition, particularly as expressed through the matrix of non-photography, can be likened to the mediatic and sensorial project of McLuhan, whose "mosaic" resembles Laruelle's vision-in-One. Both offer unilateral manifestations of the Real's precession: not an illuminating and specular *light on*, but an opaque and vectorial *light through*. But what then to make of McLuhan's frequent designation by communications scholars as a *transformation* theorist? Does not his celebrated re-description of the "matching" model inscribed in classical Information Theory as creative "making" disclose a nakedly philosophical pretension ("Environment" 118)? Our answer must be no. In common with Laruelle, it is our vision of the world that McLuhan aims to modify and whose prior modifications he painstakingly historicizes through case studies of specific media such as the printing press. The Real remains emphatically impervious to the mediatic (re-)"making" of McLuhan's Man. McLuhan's "medium" is not an alienated relation but something closer to what Laruelle terms a "unilateral duality": a non-dialectical *distance* or (non-Kantian) transcendental.[10] This notion of immanent distance is perhaps most powerfully conveyed by McLuhan's influential theorization of the "Anti-Environment" (or counterenvironment) brought into visibility by the artist, which exposes habitually unseen aspects of the everyday without thereby negating them. Due to its quantum essence, the vectorial Real is, however, never deterministic, notwithstanding its unidirectional character.

Smithson's familiarity with McLuhan's theses on media and perception is attested to by direct references in such texts as "A Museum of Language in the Vicinity of Art," where he cites McLuhan's notion, advanced by *Understanding Media*, that cinema generates a "Reel World" (91)—a postulate which we might retrospectively liken to Laruelle's discourse on photo-fiction. Inspired by the form as much as the content of McLuhan's writing, Smithson's photo-essays do not so much represent a pervasively mediated world as elaborate intricate fictions conjugating photographic and philosophical materials.

Another contemporary creator amenable to interpretation through a superposition of McLuhan's aesthetic speculations with the non-aesthetic thought of Laruelle is the former Vancouver-based conceptual enterprise, N.E. Thing Co. Ltd. (NETCO, 1966-1978). From its 1966 founding by Canadian artist Iain Baxter (b. 1936), the fictional corporation was thoroughly McLuhanite in inspiration. Baxter had been early exposed to the media analyst through his participation in planning the 1965 McLuhan-themed Festival of the Contemporary Arts at the University of British Columbia (UBC), where he was then employed as an assistant professor. Notes for a "self-interview" delivered at UBC in the spring of 1965 deploy such McLuhanite terminology as "lineal," "mosaic," and "interplay of media," the artist proposing that "macluen [sic] says [w]e must learn to arrange the sensory life in order to…fashion the environment itself as a work of art" (n.p.). In the same year as these initial engagements with McLuhan, Baxter joined forces with fellow Washington State University alumnus John Friel to form the artists' collective IT, which also involved occasional contributions by future NETCO co-president, and Baxter's then wife, Ingrid Baxter (b. 1938; known until 1971 as Elaine Baxter). Anticipating the corporate authorship of the N.E. Thing Co.—whose inhabitation of business frameworks would parallel McLuhan's corporate "de-authorization" of Romantic constructions of the singular creator (Cavell, *Remediating McLuhan* 31)—IT's products were the work of "more than one mind" (Baxter to Deborah, April 22, 1966). The anonymous participants of IT and NETCO simultaneously portend the "generic" humanity that Laruelle places in tension with the shared "Subject" of humanism and post-structuralism.

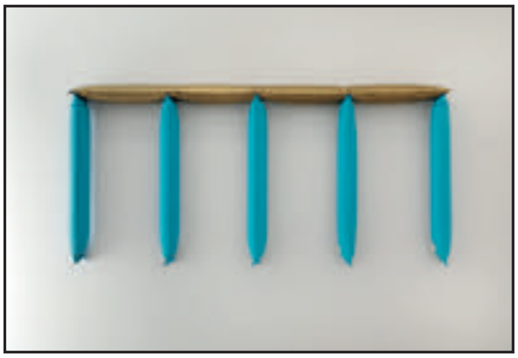
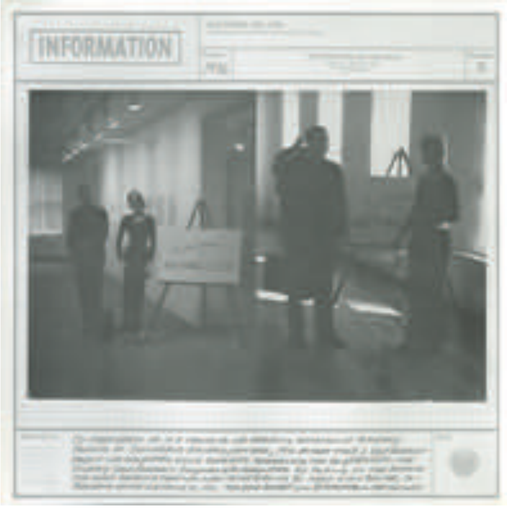


Figure 1. IT, Pneumatic Judd, 1965. Courtesy Iain Baxter& and Raven Row.

The disorienting familiarity of IT's stock-in-trade was a calculated effect of the collective's unconventional methodology of cloning artworks by the recognized names in contemporary art: from Donald Judd (Fig. 1) to Kenneth Noland and Claes Oldenburg. IT's re-performance of well-known canvases and sculptures pointedly stripped their referents of all aesthetic pretension through an irreverent substitution of non-art materials betokening the generic textures of everyday life under late capitalism for the transcendent realms of formal autonomy or self-referentiality attributed to their prototypes by critics and art historians. This cloning procedure would realize its apogee only after IT was subsumed within NETCO's cunning "COP" (or Copy) Department when, in 1971, the co-presidents appeared as "dummies," or clones of themselves, as part of a solo exhibition at the Sonnabend Gallery in New York (Fig. 2). More than a postmodern recognition of pervasive mediation, IT's clones dramatize the foreclosure of the Real: transforming aesthetic objects into inert material for disarmingly generic fictions.



INFORMATION

Figure 2. N.E. Thing Co. Ltd., Dummy Self-Portrait Sculpture, 1971. Courtesy Iain Baxter& and Raven Row.

In parallel with his involvement in IT, Iain Baxter experimented with techniques of non-verbal pedagogy that radicalized McLuhan's critique of print-based classroom procedure. Incorporating found objects gleaned from his urban explorations, Baxter's lectures at UBC and later at Simon Fraser University (SFU) mimed a choreography of generic actions (such as "swimming on dry land," Fig. 3) to a rigorously abstract soundtrack of John Cage and Edgar Varèse (see Baigell and Smith 370). These interventions mounted a dramatic challenge to scriptural epistemology inspired by McLuhan's audile-tactile speculations and incorporating Edward T. Hall's insights on non-verbal communication (which, significantly, also served as a point of departure for McLuhan's extension thesis). In Laruellian terms, non-verbal teaching constituted a "postural" thought in which, to quote John Ó Maoilearca, "ideas are turned into behavior" (144). The embodied "stance" (Laruelle, *The Concept* 12) that Baxter's McLuhan-inspired non-verbal pedagogy substituted for the logical content of conventional teaching served as a gateway to the sensorial information products subsequently manufactured by the N.E. Thing Co.—the company itself being an indirect product of Baxter's involvement in crafting a McLuhan-inspired "panaesthetic grammar" of the arts at SFU (Schafer, "Cleaning" 10).

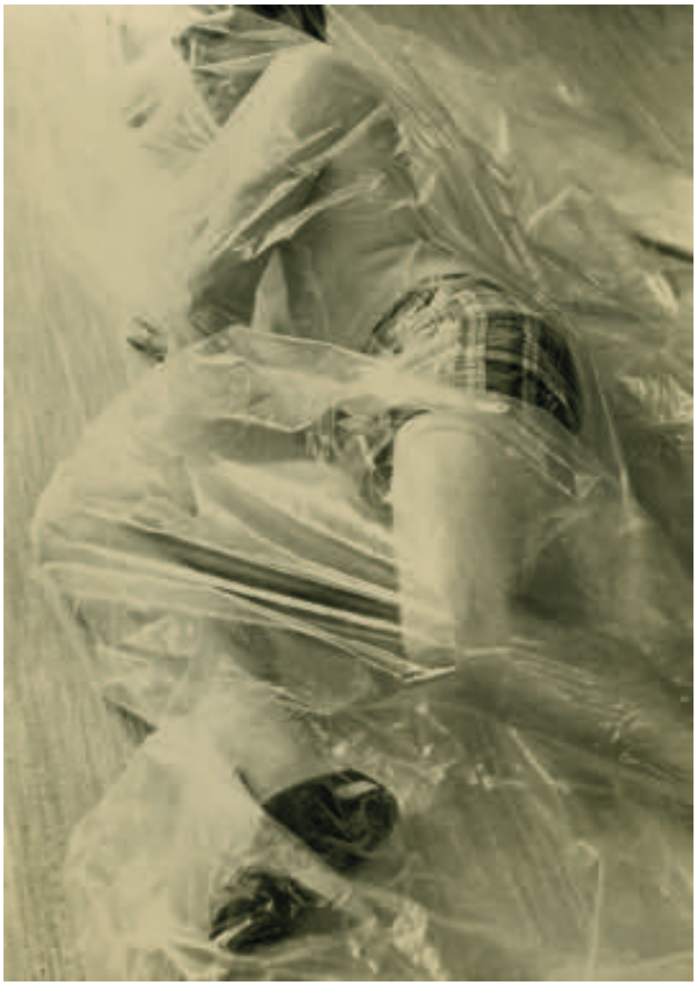
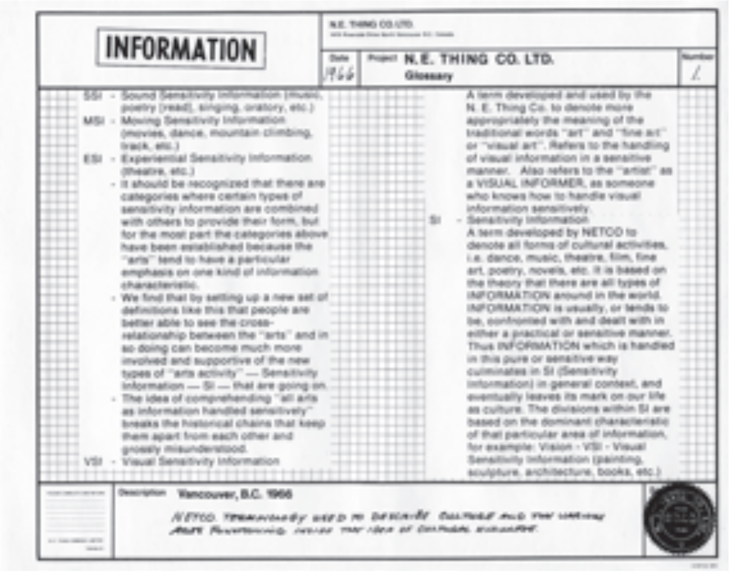


Figure 3. Iain Baxter, Non-Verbal Teaching ("Swimming on Dry Land"), ca. 1964-1966. Courtesy Iain Baxter& and Raven Row.

NETCO was established as a transdisciplinary "umbrella" (Baxter, "Interview") for the manufacture of a diversified product line envisioned as varieties of what company personnel termed "Sensitivity Information": Sound Sensitivity Information, or SSI ("music, poetry [read], singing, oratory, etc."), Moving Sensitivity Information, or MSI ("movies, dance, mountain climbing, track, etc."), Experiential Sensitivity Information, or ESI ("theatre, etc."), and Visual Sensitivity Information, or VSI ("a term developed and used by the N.E. Thing Co. to denote more appropriately the meaning of the traditional words 'art' and 'fine art' or 'visual art'") ("Glossary" n.p., Fig. 4). The company's discipline-defying inventory and sensorial taxonomy resonated with the efforts of Baxter and fellow SFU faculty—notably composer and "soundscape" theorist R. Murray Schafer—to forge an interdisciplinary curriculum at the non-credit Centre for Communication and the Arts fueled by McLuhan's non-Kantian hybridization of media and disparate disciplinary knowledges. Positioning themselves as pedagogues-at-large, the company's co-presidents identified as public "educators of the senses" (Fleming 37). Sensitivity Information products generated by company researchers through their interactions with the environment were registered utilizing NETCO's proprietary glossary of code-like Sensitivity Information acronyms (listed above), sometimes assuming the form of absurd formulae mocking the structuralist drive to mathematize knowledge. These were inscribed on generic "information forms," designed by "Director of Information" Brian Dyson to serve as an infinitely extensible corporate archive. The greater part of these information forms documented the generic infrastructure of suburbia. Sitting somewhere between a conventional photo album and a McLuhanesque blueprint for social media image-sharing sites, the 1978 compendium of information forms, *N.E. Thing Co. Ltd., Vol. 1*, anticipates Mohammad Salemy's recent likening of Instagram to the generic properties of Laruelle's non-photography.



INFORMATION

N.E. THING CO. LTD.

Date 1966 | Project **N.E. THING CO. LTD.** Glossary | Number 1

SSI - Sound Sensitivity Information (music, poetry [read], singing, oratory, etc.)
MSI - Moving Sensitivity Information (movies, dance, mountain climbing, track, etc.)
ESI - Experiential Sensitivity Information (theatre, etc.)
- It should be recognized that there are categories where certain types of sensitivity information are combined with others to provide their form, but for the most part the categories above have been established because the "arts" tend to have a particular emphasis on one kind of information characteristic.
- We find that by setting up a new set of definitions like this that people are better able to see the cross-relationship between the "arts" and in so doing can become much more involved and supportive of the new types of "arts activity" — Sensitivity Information — SI — that are going on.
- The idea of comprehending "all arts as information handled sensitively" breaks the historical chains that keep them apart from each other and grossly misunderstood.
VSI - Visual Sensitivity Information
A term developed and used by the N. E. Thing Co. to denote more appropriately the meaning of the traditional words "art" and "fine art" or "visual art". Refers to the handling of visual information in a sensitive manner. Also refers to the "artist" as a VISUAL INFORMER, as someone who knows how to handle visual information sensitively.
SI - Sensitivity Information
A term developed by NETCO to denote all forms of cultural activities, i.e. dance, music, theatre, film, fine art, poetry, novels, etc. It is based on the theory that there are all types of INFORMATION around in the world. INFORMATION is usually, or tends to be, confronted with and dealt with in either a practical or sensitive manner. Thus INFORMATION which is handled in this pure or sensitive way culminates in SI (Sensitivity Information) in general context, and eventually leaves its mark on our life as culture. The divisions within SI are based on the dominant characteristic of that particular area of information, for example: Vision - VSI - Visual Sensitivity Information (painting, sculpture, architecture, books, etc.)

Description **Vancouver, B.C. 1966**

Figure 4. N.E. Thing Co. Ltd., "Glossary," 1966.
Courtesy Iain Baxter& and Raven Row.

The Company's mock-psychophysical transcriptions of its corporate operations can be likened to the "economy of pure force" recorded by the oeuvre of August von Briesen in Laruelle's perspicacious reading ("La plus haute" 144). Through a process akin to Surrealist modalities of automatic writing, or the techniques of psychophysical registration, or involuntary "writing down" (304), studied by German media theorist Friedrich Kittler, Briesen's abstract drawings manifest "blind" transcriptions of musical performances, their seemingly random marks functioning somewhat akin to a "seismograph" (Galloway, *Laruelle* 163). NETCO's registrations of Sensitivity Information comprise analogously non-mimetic inscriptions of "affect and its intensity" (Laruelle, "La plus haute 144), having similarly developed in dialogue with musical performance (in NETCO's case, R. Murray Schafer's computational reimagining of conventional musical notation as a record of"exact frequencies" as well as Iain Baxter's redeployment of Cage and Varèse within the context of his own gestural experiments in non-verbal teaching) (Schafer, *The New Soundscape* 3). Von Briesen's blind inscriptions of musical performance manifest an audible-tactile Real comparable, moreover, to the acoustic space constituted by NETCO's

McLuhan-inspired corporate archive of Sensitivity Information.

The intention of this admittedly somewhat perverse Laruellian reading of McLuhan and his artistic respondents is not to impose a false image of McLuhan as non-philosopher but, rather, to claim him as "material" for novel thought experiments that de-authorize canonical portraits of the media analyst, thereby opening up his percepts to new possibilities for non-standard usage. Without applying a Laruellian lens *per se*, the articles assembled by this special issue are exemplary demonstrations of just such a performative approach to McLuhan. Together, they constitute an appropriately fractalized image of the media analyst and his contested legacy.

While they examine new territory and are wide-ranging in focus and methodology, the articles in this volume are assembled according to likenesses of theme and approach. The first two examine McLuhan's interactions with artists he knew, his contemporaries Sorel Etrog and P. Mansaram. The next two identify points of continuity between McLuhan's perspectives and contemporary work as well as points requiring adjustment and amendment, particularly in relation to Indigenous knowledge. Following these are two studies by artists who adapt McLuhan's ideas in their own work. The remaining four articles are theory-oriented, each sounding McLuhan's insights for resonances with current critical engagements.

Both artists featured as McLuhan associates in the first two articles were newcomers to Canada, whose art reflects their encounter with the culture of Toronto as fresh and strange. Elena Lamberti animates a lesser-known collaboration that expands our sense of figure-ground interplay, between McLuhan and Sorel Etrog, the Romanian-born Canadian artist who passed away in 2014. In 1975, Etrog's experimental film *Spiral* was shown at McLuhan's Centre for Culture and Technology, triggering the collaborative publication based on that movie, *Spiral. Images from the Film*, published in 1987. Lamberti teases out Dadaist elements in Etrog's montage, indicating how their assault on familiarity and conformity appealed to McLuhan and inspired his proposal to select stills and match them with a free-form text of quotations from various writers as well as original commentary.

Lamberti points out that McLuhan himself can be understood as an artist who made a conscious shift from modernist avant-garde to neo-avant-gardes and the art forms of the 1970s. Apart from rounding out the record of McLuhan's oeuvre by bringing this lesser-known project to light, Lamberti also pays homage to Etrog and his contribution to the Canadian artistic renaissance.

The story of McLuhan and Mansaram provides a friendly and productive biographical animation of a Joycean phrase favoured by McLuhan: "the West shall shake the East awake" (*Understanding Media* 236). Alexander Kuskis describes the dialogue between McLuhan and Mansaram begun when Mansaram arrived from India to establish himself in Toronto. McLuhan was interested in easternisms, and discovered in Mansaram and his art a primary and informing source. Coming early in this volume, this article serves as a felicitous point of departure by introducing a number of references foundational to McLuhan's art theory. For example, Kuskis reveals several places where McLuhan developed his equation of art with national security by linking art to Distant

Early Warning (DEW Line) signals, underscoring how, for him, the artist fulfills a social or civic calling, being both "defensive and prophetic."

Kuskis's close reading of a McLuhan-inspired collage, *Rear View Mirror 74*, reveals how montage and mosaic are complementary in being fragmentary, co-authored, and multi-perspectival. Kuskis also exhumes the collaborative process of making: McLuhan hand-wrote several text passages onto the collage canvas, penciling in excerpts from sources he found compelling in literature and life. There is also a photograph of McLuhan mid-collage, taken by Mansaram and paying direct homage to McLuhan as inspiration. While McLuhan is frequently cast as artist in this volume, this article provides a concrete instance of his aesthetic activity.

Speaking as a theorist grounded in French and Québécois tradition, Adina Balint draws on several of McLuhan's key concepts to reveal how they remain vital to the interests and practices of three contemporary Canadian artists. She also demonstrates how they can serve as critical tools and vocabulary illuminating our understanding of three recent exhibitions of their art: *Vision trouble*, *Our Land: Contemporary Art from the Arctic*, and *Superimposition: Sculpture and Image*. These shows share a central drive to explore the interaction of perception, experience, and media, and she identifies four characteristics that for McLuhan distinguished our encounter with art: an appeal to the senses, viewer engagement, the creation of relationships, and recognition of the unseen or complexity that exceeds what can be perceived in everyday experience. Although Balint does not urge this connection, readers might want to consider how these artists are performing the key role of the artist as McLuhan saw it—to explain the environment, both human and human-made, from a stance at once atemporal and situated in space.

Jessica Jacobson-Konefall, May Chew, and Daina Warren analyze Cree artist Cheryl L'Hirondelle's multidisciplinary art work *nikamon ohci askiy* (songs because of the land), a piece that began as a technologically-recorded performance of L'Hirondelle's walks through Vancouver city spaces in 2006 and endures as an interactive website. They present this work as an example of how Indigenous artists use digital media to explore their relation to the land—a relationship divergent from that of non-Indigenous colonizers with cultivated reliance on media as tool extensions. In place of roads cutting through land and settlements asserting property rights and ownership, L'Hirondelle's art draws on a tradition of movement pathways of Indigenous ancestors across the land of North America. The authors argue that in Indigenous art, content is more important than form or medium, and that media are tools adopted by First Nations artists for purposes of circulation and engagement.

For both contemporary artists represented here, McLuhan provides theoretical precedent and kinship. In his artist's statement, Tom McGlynn complicates subject/object relations he identifies in the medium of photography and in his photographic work as related to McLuhan's understanding of the photograph as both real and mediated. McGlynn links his decision to photograph incomplete worlds—"partial instantiations"—to McLuhan's concept of the human encounter with external reality as being one of self-imposed limitation and incompletion. He accepts what he takes to be McLuhan's challenge to avoid narrowing our gaze and our sensory lives by categorizing and naming, instead being receptive to perceptual shifts and environmental change. McGlynn points out that the photograph, for McLuhan, changed our relation to the object world, allowing the individual holding the camera to capture a view of reality at once detailed and holistic—yet at the same time, one limited by the photographer's selective focus. He says that the objects he presents in his photographs should be understood as having lives of their own, and also as subjects of his composing.

In "L(a)ying with Marshall McLuhan: Media Theory as Hoax Art," Henry Adam Svec's artist response examines media theory and hoax from his dual perspective as trained media theorist and hoax performance artist who has engaged in several projects that chase the question "wouldn't it be fun if ?" He invokes Innis as an iconic "scholarly persona" whom he plays off against, and finds fellowship with McLuhan, who was both performer and trickster—what Lamberti refers to in this volume as a "sham" artist, a concept which, like Svec, she employs to refer to his practice of de-centering and de-familiarizing assumed patterns and practices with the grace of humour and even a measure of self-deprecation. Svec cites Glen Wilmot's description of McLuhan as consummate mask-wearer, increasingly adept at the "put on." In Svec's assessment, McLuhan maintained agency and controlled his performative persona, combatting forces of media exploitation by crafting his image in deliberately staged performances. Whereas a common trope of hoax art is the ultimate "reveal," where the performance culminates in a clarifying statement by the artist, Svec notes that McLuhan was entirely committed to the performative rhetorical process of lobbing probes to excite audience engagement or participation; he was willing to be perceived as gnomic guru, and avoided publishing a retrospective guide to assist the audience navigate his work via a script redacted to impose a particular form of consistency. It is this commitment to the play and refusal to break the spell by imposing temporal constraints that Svec admires as precedent-setting in his own hoax work.

The final four essays offer theoretical examinations of McLuhan's work that resonate with elements of the speculative turn—its materialism and realism, its rethinking of historicism, and its de-emphasis of the Subject through an engagement with the non-human (animal).

Offering a *longue durée* of the "counterenvironment," Kenneth Allan places McLuhan's concept in relation to the other and prior expressions of "defamilarization" in art theory and practice, helping us to see shifts and continuities amongst users of this concept. While he does not dismiss the ways in which McLuhan put his signature on the idea, particularly in his response to the media environment of his cultural moment, Allan is interested in the broader contours of defamiliarization—its at least 200-year history—and reminds us not to "imagine that the idea emerges out of nowhere in the many instances of its appearance." He provocatively links defamiliarization to the phenomenon of institutional critique, which probed the silent power of cultural systems, flipping the silent ground of institutional space into force fields shaping human attention and agency. By locating McLuhan's use and development of the term within a historical context, Allan paradoxically reveals the extent to which McLuhan's formulation was timely and original—a perspective that resonates with contemporary reassessments of historicism.

Mohammad Salemy recuperates a significant media event, the first global satellite feed of a news show, BBC's *Our World* (1967), which united an "estimated 500 million viewers in 24 countries" spatially and temporally. Salemy theorizes this form of "televisual intersubjectivity" as a new way of experiencing reality and time, with "accessible liveliness made a mediated experience almost as tangible, real and authoritative as any physical encounter with the world." He differentiates this perspective from a Benjaminian understanding of temporality grounded in phenomenological experience, which filters present through past. He argues that for McLuhan virtuality adds another dimension—a "technologized intersubjective temporality," which "includes technologies' impacts on our understanding of that entity and of time itself." Salemy establishes the importance of *Our World* as a media event, reproducing the transcript of the interview with McLuhan featured as part of the Canadian segment in which McLuhan explores themes including space/time acceleration, participatory engagement, and media history. According to Salemy, McLuhan emerges from this media event as an ahistoric mediator.

Introducing the lens of critical animal studies, Jody Berland urges us to revise our understanding of McLuhan as a devoted humanist, arguing that McLuhan's theory of extensions irrevocably moved away from anthropocentricism toward a posthumanist perspective heralding a nature/culture intersection. She notes that McLuhan was not only interested in media assemblage and machinic nature, but also in the broader environment and how it shapes "our participation in a common situation." This is where animal lives play a role: Berland argues that McLuhan's theory indirectly opens the door to new forms of human/machine interchange and assemblage which instantiate the notion that all forms and species are ecologically interdependent and co-evolving.

Several recent theorists have employed affect theory to differentiate humanity from the machine world—Berland suggests that this theory may help move us beyond simply conceding that we have entered an ever-accelerating loop of exchange between humans and technology. It should be remembered that McLuhan emphasized feeling as a key ingredient of the Human, arguing that media amputations can induce narcosis. By contrast, animals assist us in feeling and even remind us of our losses: "the pleasure and anxiety of witnessing the merging of bodies, technologies, and nonhuman species." While McLuhan never made this argument, Berland is likely accurate in thinking it is not one he would have opposed; namely, that we are implicated in animal and plant life, which, like the human world, is also caught up in processes of machinic change. By examining ourselves from a non-human perspective, we can respect animals' struggles and experiences and potentially reconceive our own position within a shared ecology.

Contributing to the media-archaeological project of unearthing lesser-known figures and materialities, Gary Genosko examines Harley Parker's productive collaborations with figures other than McLuhan. Genosko presents the relatively unknown and still contested history of Flexitype—whose creation he attributes to Allan Fleming (who engineered the technology) and to Harley Parker (who pioneered experimental and creative applications)—to reveal the confluence of design innovation in late-1950s Toronto. Genosko also examines links between father and son, tracing how Harley and son Blake Parker both experimented with the intensities of sensory experience and contributed to installation and performance art.

This final essay explores how print-making processes contributed to the production of "non-books"—monographs conceived and constructed to disrupt the systematized and linear Gutenberg format. As Genosko observes, "such books may be analyzed as quasi-acoustic spaces, unbound from sound, remaking reading and repositioning the reader, injecting ambivalence and retaining tactility and inviting multi-sensory participation." The mosaic-like non-book format pioneered by McLuhan and collaborators sets a compelling precedent for the fractalized form and content of the present volume.

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Image Notes

Figure 1. IT, *Pneumatic Judd*, 1965. Courtesy Iain Baxter& and Raven Row.

Figure 2. N.E. Thing Co. Ltd., *Dummy Self-Portrait Sculpture*, 1971. Courtesy Iain Baxter& and Raven Row.

Figure 3. Iain Baxter, Non-Verbal Teaching ("Swimming on Dry Land"), ca. 1964-1966. Courtesy Iain Baxter& and Raven Row.

Figure 4. N.E. Thing Co. Ltd., "Glossary," 1966. Courtesy Iain Baxter& and Raven Row.

Notes

1 "McLuhan obviously is, as he himself declared, not a philosopher, a theorist, or a traditional scientist…but rather an artist playing with percepts and affects" (Theall, *The Virtual Marshall McLuhan* 13). "We can read [McLuhan] as an artist who creates tools that foreground the ethics of reflexive methodologies" (Marchessault, *Marshall McLuhan* xix).

2 "McLuhan found himself at odds with the regnant theories of his time, especially the linguistic metaphor that informed structuralism, post-structuralism and deconstruction" (Cavell, *Remediating McLuhan* 10).

3 "McLuhan particularly invoked the new physics as support for his critique of visual space, drawing on Heisenberg's use of the term 'resonance' in his account of quantum mechanics to argue in *The Gutenberg Galaxy* that the random state in physics was cognate with the auditory domain" (Cavell, *Remediating McLuhan* 93).

4 "In the beginning there is Black" (Laruelle, "Of Black Universe" 2; see also Galloway, "The Black Universe"; Laruelle, "A Light Odyssey").

5 McLuhan's immanental orientation can also be traced to Scotist elements in the writings of James Joyce, also noted by Theall (see *The Virtual Marshall McLuhan* 74). An early influence on McLuhan was the neo-Scotist Catholic poet Gerard Manley Hopkins (see McLuhan, "The Analogical Mirrors").

6 "McLuhan, by mid-career…increasingly sought to address himself to artists and, more radically, to be understood as an artist himself" (Cavell, *Remediating McLuhan* 79).

7 "[M]odelling the name 'non-philosophy' on an analogy with 'non-Euclidean geometry,' Laruelle proposes a broadened, pluralistic science of thought and philosophy as well as a major reworking of philosophical concepts" (Ó Maoilearca, *All Thoughts Are Equal* 8).

8 Smithson's personal library, preserved today with his papers at the Archives of American Art, contains a Signet paperback anthology of Lewis's writings that includes excerpts from his 1932 Moroccan

travelogue, *Filibusters in Barbary* (see Lewis, *A Soldier of Humor*, *Journey into Barbary*).

9 "Well before the invention of the corresponding technology, a veritable automatism of photographic repetition traverses western thought" (Laruelle, *Photo-Fiction* 2).

10 "We call 'unilateral duality' or 'dual' the *identity without-synthesis of a duality* where identity is assumed by the first term or more precisely its clone, not by the second, and duality by the second alone and not by the first" (Laruelle, *Principles of Non-Philosophy* 130, original emphasis).

PRINTING A FILM TO MAKE IT RESONATE: SOREL ETROG AND MARSHALL MCLUHAN'S *SPIRAL*

ELENA LAMBERTI

Abstract | *This essay investigates the collaboration between McLuhan and the Romanian born Canadian artist, Sorel Etrog. In 1975, Etrog's movie Spiral was shown at the Centre for Culture and Technology, established by McLuhan at the University of Toronto. Following that event, McLuhan suggested that Etrog select "stills from the film so that he could provide an annotation to those images – a free form text of quotations from various writers – as well as a commentary". Thanks to another great protagonist of the Canadian cultural scene, Barry Callaghan, that idea became a tangible object a few years after McLuhan had passed away: Spiral. Images from the film. Text by Marshall McLuhan, was in fact published in 1987 by Exile Editions in Toronto. Today, it remains as a memento of an original artistic encounter. It also remains as a tool to reconsider our environment through poetry and images, as words and still-shots are cast to pose an intellectual challenge to an increasingly materialistic society. As a book, Spiral is conceived to make ideas on media and society resonate through a witty juxtaposition of images from the film and literary quotations from a broad Western tradition that encourages readers to navigate the ongoing profound cultural shift. Known but not often investigated when discussing McLuhan's artistic associations, the collaboration between Etrog and McLuhan ought to be delved into for different reasons. It is, in fact, strategic to appreciate how McLuhan has acted as a facilitator of a renewed 20th century inter-art dialogue. Then, it helps to consider the conscious shift from modernist avant-garde to new avant-gardes and art forms of the 1970s in relation to McLuhan's environmental explorations. Finally, it also pays homage to an artist that deserves to be remembered as one of the most original voices of the Canadian artistic renaissance.*

Résumé | *Cet essai étudie la collaboration entre McLuhan et l'artiste canadien d'origine roumaine, Sorel Etrog. En 1975, le film Spiral d'Etrog a été présenté au Centre for Culture and Technology, créé par McLuhan à l'Université de Toronto. En réponse à cet événement, McLuhan a suggéré qu'Etrog sélectionne « des images du film pour qu'il puisse leur fournir une annotation – un texte libre de citations de divers auteurs – ainsi qu'un commentaire ». Grâce à un autre grand protagoniste de la scène culturelle canadienne, Barry Callaghan, cette idée devint un objet tangible quelques années après la mort de McLuhan : Spiral. Images from the film. Text by Marshall McLuhan fut publié en 1987 par Exile Editions à Toronto. Aujourd'hui, il demeure un souvenir d'une rencontre artistique originale. Il demeure également un outil pour reconsidérer notre environnement à travers la poésie et les images, alors que les mots et les images fixes sont jetés pour poser un défi intellectuel à une société de plus en plus matérialiste. Comme livre, Spiral est conçu pour faire résonner des idées sur les médias et la société par une juxtaposition spirituelle d'images du film et des citations littéraires d'une large tradition occidentale qui encourage les lecteurs à naviguer dans le profond changement culturel en cours. Connue, mais rarement étudiée lors des discussions sur les associations artistiques de McLuhan, la collaboration entre Etrog et McLuhan devrait être explorée pour différentes raisons. Il est, en fait, stratégique d'apprécier comment McLuhan a agi en tant que facilitateur d'un dialogue interartistique du 20e siècle renouvelé. Ensuite, il est utile de considérer le passage conscient de l'avant-garde moderniste à de nouvelles formes avant-gardistes et artistiques des années 1970 en relation avec les explorations environnementales de McLuhan. Enfin, cela rend également hommage à un artiste qui mérite qu'on se souvienne de lui comme l'une des voix les plus originales de la renaissance artistique canadienne.*

In Marshall McLuhan's narrative on media and society, the artist is the hero opposing the actions of the "many thousands of the best-trained individual minds [that] have made it a full-time business to get inside the collective public mind … in order to manipulate, exploit, control" (*The Mechanical Bride* v). Against these invisible forces, the artist is the individual who uses their integral awareness to perceive the emerging subliminal societal patterns and anticipate change. As an explorer, the artist is the interface of juxtaposing environments; their art is meant to keep people awake to the figure and ground interplay. The artist is the antidote to the Narcissus narcosis that numbs perception and kills free will.[1] Inevitably, the artist cannot be prudent, nor decorous. McLuhan portrays him as a sham and a mime, a character who "undertakes not the ethical quest but the quest of the great fool" (McLuhan, *The Interior Landscape* xiii-xiv). In McLuhan's *media poetic*, the arts are privileged probing tools precisely because they turn given perceptive rules upside-down and let the artist take different roads. Inevitably, the arts are at once a mirror of their time (hence the artist as a *mime*) and barometer of all that is new, transgressive, and mystifying (hence the artist as a *sham*). For this reason, the "serious artist" opposes and challenges official art and refuses to comply with the established models (McLuhan, "Art as Anti-Environment" 56); in fact, they detect the techniques of manipulation, exploitation, and control through the contemplation of official art. That is the preliminary step to develop a counter-environment and to restore *sensorial and cognitive awareness*. Mannerism numbs because it comforts us, while avant-garde art awakens because it shocks us. Official art preserves the status quo, but experimental art navigates change.

Unmistakably, McLuhan's ideas on art are rooted in his profound knowledge of Modernist artists. He learned from Ezra Pound to consider the artist as "the antenna of the race." Reading James Joyce disclosed to him the probing powers of etymology as a key to sensorial playfulness. T. S. Eliot's poetry and criticism opened up new "doors of perception on the poetic process" (McLuhan, *The Interior Landscape* xiii-xiv). Wyndham Lewis's vortexes and spatial philosophy offered McLuhan a conceptual form designed to capture the inner truth of a situation through a distorted and grotesque perspective. McLuhan's intellectual debts to these artists (and others), have been acknowledged, discussed, and investigated.[2] However, being a "serious artist" himself—that is, a mime and a sham—McLuhan did not indulge in "Modernist mannerism." Instead, he *put on* the Modernists and then started new explorations of his own, engaging in original collaborations with contemporary artists. He got along better with artists than with most of his fellow academics because his own modus operandi was *intrinsically* artistic; that is, experimental, innovative, and outrageously non-academic. If not *anti-academic*.

McLuhan's works with Harley Parker, Wilfred Watson, Quentin Fiore are well known. His connections with Wyndham Lewis and Sheila Watson have been explored to better understand McLuhan's creative probing method (Betts et al.). We know that a variety of artists and celebrities came to his Centre at the University of Toronto to discuss contemporary trends in society, politics and, of course, the arts, including John Lennon, Yoko Ono, and Keith Carradine. John Cage's *Roaratorio*, first produced at the Paris Festival d'Automne at Beaubourg in January 1980, was presented as a tribute to Marshall McLuhan when brought to Toronto on the centenary of James Joyce's birthday, two years later. The list is long and interesting because it cross-reads different and inspiring artistic experiences. However, in this brief essay, I want to focus on a collaboration that is not often investigated when discussing McLuhan's artistic associations and which I think ought to be delved into for different reasons. It is, in fact, strategic to appreciate how McLuhan has acted as a facilitator of a renewed 20th-century inter-art dialogue. I consider the conscious shift from modernist avant-garde to new avant-gardes and art forms of the 1970s in relation to McLuhan's environmental explorations. This essay also pays homage to an artist that deserves to be remembered as one of the most original voices of the Canadian artistic renaissance. I focus on the brief but meaningful collaboration between Marshall McLuhan and Sorel Etrog, the Romanian-born Canadian artist who passed away in 2014.

Sorel, Marshall, and Dada: Changing Perspectives

In 2013, the Art Gallery of Ontario hosted a major retrospective dedicated to Sorel Etrog, showing five decades of his works and art projects. The exhibition closed at the end of September; Sorel passed away a few months later, in February 2014. Born in 1933 in Jassy, Romania, in a Jewish family, Etrog was a young boy when the Germans occupied the city in 1939, followed by the Russians a few years later. The family succeeded in escaping to Israel in 1950; here, Etrog served in the army (doing a period of active duty during the Suez crisis in 1956) and received an Army scholarship to attend a new school of art in Tel Aviv (Heinrich). His first group exhibition was in 1956, but his life took a new turn in 1959, the year he met the Canadian Art critic, Samuel J. Zacks. That same year, in October, "he held his first one-man show in North America at the gallery Moos. It contained twenty-six new and old painted constructions and some drawings" (Heinrich 98). Etrog became a Canadian citizen in 1963, when he was thirty years old. Coincidentally, that same year on October 24th, the McLuhan's Centre for Culture and Technology was also established at the St. Michael College at the University of Toronto. Twelve years later, in 1975, Etrog's experimental film *Spiral* was shown at the Centre (also broadcast on CBC television), an event that triggered a collaboration between the Romanian-born sculptor and the Canadian media guru and literature professor. They worked together on a publication based on that movie: *Spiral. Images from the Film. Text by Marshall McLuhan*, published in 1987 by Exile Editions in Toronto.

Primarily a sculptor and a visual artist though he also wrote plays, non-fiction, and poetry, Etrog already had a history of collaborations with important writers of his time, among them Eugene Ionesco and Samuel Beckett. Similarly, by 1975 McLuhan had published his most celebrated (and controversial) artistic books: *The Medium is the Massage* and *War and Peace in the Global Village* (with Quentin Fiore, respectively in 1967 and 1968); *Counterblast* (illustrated by Harley Parker, 1969) and *Through the Vanishing Point* (also with Parker, 1969); *From Cliché to Archetype* (with Wilfred Watson, 1970). Inter-art collaboration was very much part of the artistic spirit of time. However, with McLuhan all experiments were associated to his media investigations, meant to perfect a discontinuous form of writing capable of rendering the acoustic dimension of the new electric environment. A form capable of alerting to the ongoing perceptive shift and of making people aware of and even experience the continuing cultural and societal change: a form that McLuhan called the *mosaic.*[3] Similarly, Etrog's artistic search intended to explore the invisible cultural patterns underpinning the visible surface. McLuhan and Etrog shared not only the will to experiment with art forms, but also a deep knowledge of Modernist avant-garde experiments with form, as well as of later artistic explorations. The Theatre of the Absurd was also a shared area of investigation. Knowing both Ionesco and Beckett, Sorel Etrog was familiar with their post-war poetics; as an artist who had survived German and Russian occupation he, too, felt that "what is absurd, or rather what is unusual, is first and foremost what exists, reality" (Bonnefoy 127). McLuhan also defined the absurdist theatre movement as penetrating reality through a provocative use of verbal cliché: "Ionesco particularly cultivates the art of the verbal cliché, and he uses the verbal cliché to probe one of the most fascinating phenomena of our age and that is the way in which the Western mind is changing its mind", (McLuhan and Watson 5). For McLuhan, the theatre of the absurd was instrumental to understand that, perhaps, "the universal human condition today in a period of rapid innovation is necessarily that of alienation" (McLuhan and Watson 9).[4]

As an artist, Etrog had grown in the wake of "The Dada Circus" (his term),[5] so much so that his work stands at the cross-road of the historical avant-garde of the early-20th century and the more experimental artistic trends of the 1960s-1970s. According to Tristan Tzara, also a Romanian and one of the founding fathers of Dadaism, "The beginning of Dada were not the beginning of art but of disgust" (qtd. in Rubin 12). This disgust was for a materialistic society that had led to a horrible and unprecedented war and was not changing its priorities: élites over common people and conformism and orthodoxy over creativity and original thinking. Through Dada, art becomes "anti-art," a process of rebellion against "the inconsistency of conventional beliefs" (citation). Like Dada, Etrog too opposed the habits of the public and the intellectuals alike. Similarly, this is what McLuhan intended to do with his first published volume, *The Mechanical Bride*, where he openly stated that he wanted to take his readers inside the revolving picture and make them sort out the behavioural patterns subliminally imposed on them by some of the best-trained minds of the time. In later books, McLuhan was never so explicit again; however, all his work on media, culture, and society was intended to help people acquire awareness of more or less visible cultural and societal phenomena through a disruptive use of language and formal techniques.

Sorel Etrog never doubted McLuhan's Dadaism. I met him in 1997 through Barry Callaghan, a Canadian intellectual who must be acknowledged not only for his own work as a writer and a critic but also for his incessant role as a generous advocate and supporter of literary and artistic causes. Barry Callaghan turned the project conceived by Sorel and Marshall into a book and introduced me to Sorel's work, pointing out the correspondences with some of McLuhan's ideas I was exploring at the time. Thanks to Barry, meeting Etrog became for me a journey into artistic and cultural discovery. His studio was a place where many media theories of the time materialised in front of my eyes: I found myself immersed in a strange wood made of sculptures combining a variety of coloured inorganic elements to shape curious humanoids. Etrog walked me along his creatures, himself a tall man whose long arms continued to move around as if also translating his words into whirling objects. To follow him into his own creative maze was not only a fascinating but also an enlightening journey into both Etrog's inner landscape and poetic. I could not but think of him as a young boy surviving German and Russian occupation, and of him discovering ways to shape his own "disgust" through artistic patterns. After all, Dada itself started at the outbreak of World War I. Anti-Art was not "art for art's sake" but rather a form of protest against societal conformity, especially against intellectual conformity. This is precisely what brought McLuhan and Etrog together many years later. Acting after another horrible World War, they both operated against the cultural homologations of their time. While sharing his art with me, Sorel was explicit in pointing out what he meant by defining McLuhan as a Dadaist:

> For me, I decided that McLuhan was a Dadaist. I tell you why. Because of his literary criticism. Since the first book, he was involved in the absurd, he explored the ads. He conceived the comic and the absurd as an attack. This was Dada! Anti-art. Give bourgeois insomnia to wake them up. Dada liked to put traps. Same for McLuhan. Dada was an art of reaction. McLuhan, too, taught us to react, to change perspective, to look at things in a different way.

To change perspective. To look at things in a different way. Etrog was right. This is what McLuhan taught us when he started to employ the poetic process to "adjust the reader to the contemporary world" (McLuhan, *The Interior Landscape*, xiv), exploring ads through his literary knowledge. This is also what he taught us when he started to read the global village through artistic patterns, emphasizing the uncanny through a grotesque (absurd) rendering: he shocked the bourgeois of his own time but attracted many other mimes.

As Sorel told me, "Art is a language" and "artists only have different languages." Sometimes, the different languages contaminate each other and flourish to touch our senses and our minds. This is what happened when Etrog's visual imagery and McLuhan's media poetic met. McLuhan found Etrog's explorations interesting for many reasons: they were rooted in the modernist avant-garde he loved so much; they explored different perceptive modes; they investigated form as a tool to make you see, feel, and hear in a renewed way. The two men met in Toronto where McLuhan accepted to screen Etrog's film *Spiral* at the Centre of Culture and Technology. McLuhan suggested that Etrog select "stills from the film so that he could provide an annotation to those images—a free form text of quotations from various writers—as well as a commentary" (McLuhan and Etrog, back cover). Thanks to another great mime and sham of the Canadian cultural scene, Barry Callaghan, that idea became a tangible object a few years after McLuhan had passed away. Today, it remains as a memento of an original artistic encounter. It also remains a tool to reconsider our environment through poetry and images, as words and still-shots pose an intellectual challenge to an increasingly materialistic society. As a book, *Spiral* is conceived to make ideas on media and society resonate through a witty juxtaposition of images from the film and literary quotations from a broad Western tradition that encourages readers to navigate the ongoing profound cultural shift.

Moving Printed Images Through Literary Voices

> Midway in our life's journey,
> I went astray from the straight
> Road and woke to find my-
> self alone in a dark wood.

These verses open not only Dante's *Divine Comedy*, but also the volume *Spiral. Images from the film*. Chosen by McLuhan, they accompany the first two images taken from Etrog's film and show the face of a man reflected in a mirror: eyes shut in the first image (*Midway in our life's journey*); eyes open in the second (*I went astray from the straight / Road and woke to find myself alone in a dark wood*). From the very beginning, the combination of image and text engages the reader in a series of juxtaposing *movements* that alter the linearity and the fixity of the printed page. The first and immediate one is purely mechanical and playful as it consists in the optical illusion if readers quickly turn the first two pages: a short film showing the man on the first page opening his eyes on the second page, suddenly staring at them. In fact, it is a double optical illusion as the man is looking at himself through a mirror. The trickery reflex replicates the opening scene of the film; it becomes here a challenge to the idea of point of view or perspective. At the same time, it retrieves McLuhan's famous image of *the rear-view mirror*, another optical illusion that challenges your way of perceiving an environment while moving. The words by Dante add emphasis to the idea of inner journey and visual/perceptive illusions, as they develop a metaphor also shaping a shifting environment: the main character leaves the straight road and enters a dark wood alone. He leaves the known for the unknown as he embarks in a journey of discovery. We know that Dante's journey proceeds not through straight lines but through circles, as he moves down and then up again, defining a movement that recalls that of a spiral. Similarly, while marching into the dark and then into the light, Dante meets people and ideas of the past as well as of his present. He inhabits a temporal continuum that blurs traditional perceiving patterns, as he is talking to the dead and to the immortals alike, as well as to himself and to his readers. His final epiphany is therefore reached through a different approach to historical time and space, as if spiraling across ages. According to Etrog:

> The Spiral is a single continuous line that creates within itself the parallel that exists conventionally between two lines. Therefore, you can have on this single line moments in time and space that signify the past, the present, and the future – and these moments occur in this unique situation as parallel. Time and space are collapsed. Chronology is obsolete. (McLuhan and Etrog 123)

Certainly, Etrog's fascination with the *spiral* as a form appears to be in line with the visual and conceptual culture of his time, from land art (consider *Spiral Jetty* by Robert Smithson, 1970) to the new industrial design, especially the so-called *psychedelic design* that became a sensation from the 1960s for more than a decade. However, his definition clearly reveals how he goes beyond the mere visual leitmotif in the pursuit of a deeper search, which is at once philosophical and ontological: he is looking for a shared existential meaning within a technologically evolving society. At the same time, he is investigating across art forms to find the most suitable one to serve that purpose. Metaphorically, the spiral perfectly captures a new, universal human condition through the dynamism of a movement that renders *spacetime* and neither just space nor time ("time and space are collapsed"). Similarly, the storyline of Etrog's film follows an analogous spiraling movement.

The movie runs for about 30 minutes, with music by Dmitri Shostakovich, and unfolds through parallel visual motifs that divide into two main themes (life and death), which therefore work as the two imaginary lines within the also imaginary spiral (the film sequence). The film narrative is not easily rendered through an ordered telling, precisely because it is conceived as a spiraling montage of symbolic images creating a thematic rather than linear plot. This captured McLuhan's attention too:

> The film *Spiral* was not scripted but iconically drafted, image by image. The structural theme of *Spiral* presents the oscillation of two simultaneous and complementary cones or spirals, constituting the synchronique worlds of birth and death. Spiral is not a diachronique or lineal structure, but a synchronique and contrapuntal interplay in a resonating structure whose centre is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere. (McLuhan and Etrog 125)

The opening scene of the film, later retrieved as the opening image of the book, introduces the theme of perception and shows the reader how to interplay with its narrative construction. As anticipated, it shows the close-up of a man with his eyes wide closed. Suddenly, he opens them and stares at himself in a mirror. Due to the reflecting illusion, he seems to stare at us too, challenging us to look through things and not at them. Consistently, the story then unfolds along a journey that oscillates between two main leitmotifs: the juxtaposition of images of death and of images of life, and the juxtaposition of natural and mechanical elements—indeed, the melting of the human body and inorganic components of our civilization. In a sort of *progression d'effet*, Etrog shows a gun extending the human arm; a hand playing with two eggs on a female breast; naked human bodies packed as food in tins; a watch and a human hand taking turns on a plate as nourishment on display; warms and screws blurred together as rotten corpses; a new born baby in an incubator (artificially fed) and a blindfolded man sedated with a pacifier; a naked child drawing the sun on a blackboard; naked adults in prison whose hands tries to break free from the wooden cage; and others. Among all these pictures, a blindfolded nurse and a gravedigger burying a blindfolded man return along the spiraling narrative to represent the passage from one human condition to another (and from organic to inorganic), in an incessant existential dance. The idea of repeated and interrelated patterns reaches its climax through the image of two mouths (of a man and of a woman) connected through a pipe; they create an air circulating system controlled through a faucet positioned at the centre. You live or you die depending on the (mechanical) faucet position (open or closed), but both lives are inter-dependent.

In its montage, Etrog's 1974 spiraling film recalls Fernand Léger's 1924 avant-garde film, *Ballet Méchanique*, as it also proceeds with no linear but conceptual plot through a montage which alternates a series of images combining organic and inorganic elements. However, while in Léger's filmic experiment, the cubist montage creates a dance that transcends the traditional idea of a story, in Etrog's the *story* remains. *Spiral* points to the numbing process induced by media as environments, something that McLuhan had investigated since the early 1950s. The spiral is precisely that which provides a discerning direction that orients the audience's psycho-perceptive responses. Therefore, Etrog's filmic experiment goes beyond the cubist urge to overcome a representative (narrative, pictorial) model, as it engages with the human existential and physical condition within the consolidating mass-society, following new wars and cultural revolutions.

In spite of other more cruel (and "real") images already seen by the television audiences of the time (Vietnam was still happening and broadcast and on air), in 1975 when *Spiral* was broadcast on TV, CBC opted for a late evening time. Etrog's film was all but traditional or conformist and the accelerated montage of somewhat disturbing images in the film (including some explicit nudes and some implicit sexual metaphors) risked shocking audiences outside the avant-garde circles. As Mcluhan would say, experimental art not only navigates change but also challenges comforting aesthetical models; it is no surprise to know that McLuhan decided to show *Spiral* at his Centre. Etrog's film resonated with McLuhan's explorations of old and new media as extensions of man, as well as with his idea of how those extensions affect the human sensorium. Etrog, too, was pursuing "not the ethical quest but the quest of the great fool" (McLuhan, *The Interior Landscape*, 31). Etrog's *Spiral* made visible the shift from linear into acoustic space, the shift from one sensorial mode to another, something that McLuhan called the passage from the eye to the ear, from the mechanic to the electric age. In the initial part of the film, a woman seems to give birth to a dial and to an adult man; in the final part, a naked baby plays with a broken watch. Humanity is born again in a world where time is no longer measurable along a line, and space needs to be rethought. Etrog's experimental film, too, navigated the environmental change that McLuhan had been exploring for more than 20 years. The film was the perfect correlative objective to his own ideas on media, art, and society. Both Etrog's film and McLuhan's explorations were meant to awaken their audiences.

Like in the film, the *Spiral* book, too, collapses time and space and chronology is obsolete; the first two pages are meant to alert readers on that. The playful optical illusion and the carefully chosen literary quotations are offered neither as an amusement nor as an introduction to the original film content. Instead, they are assembled to show the perceptive strategy that readers must adopt to start their own journey of discovery, to open their eyes. This book must not be *read*. It must not be *watched*. This book must be *experienced*. Readers are invited to shift their mode of observation from *light on* to *light through*. The inter-art dialogue McLuhan proposed here becomes not a captivating technique simply following the art trends of the time. Instead, it is employed as a strategy to overcome traditional and linear modes of perception that he considers no longer fit for the individuals inhabiting the electric age. Alienation also comes from schizophrenic attitudes to an evolving habitat, from our inability to remodel our sensorium. For this reason, the printed *verbo-voco-visual* version of Etrog's *Spiral* is developed as a perceptive counter-environment consciously conceived to resonate into the readers' inner landscape in more pervasive ways than the original cinematic one.

The paradox is explained once one recalls McLuhan's original definition of film as a form, as "the final fulfilment of the great potential of typographic fragmentation" (McLuhan *Understanding Media* 393); similarly, "movies assume a high level of literacy in their users and prove baffling to the non literate" (384). Here, the focus is neither on the content nor on the montage technique of films, but rather on their mode of fruition prior to the invention of electronic and digital techniques. Until that moment, films were a manifestation of the civilization of the eye and their mode of fruition was truly *literate*: the audience *looked at* the screen where lights and images were projected. They *looked at* the screen as they *looked at* a written page: words run one after the other creating a *train-of-thought*. Similarly, images run one after the other, creating the illusion of movement, in fact, a *train-of-still-shots*. Therefore, if as a film Etrog's *Spiral* is considered avant-garde in terms of content and technique of montage, it nonetheless remains traditional in terms of perceptive modes: it engages its spectators mostly conceptually, challenging their standardized understanding of reality. With later technological developments (and starting with television), images and sounds were instead *projected on* the audience, changing the psychophysical dynamics of *watching* a movie. Spectators are turned into screens as images are projected towards them; spectators enter the technological flux and complete the communicative flow physiologically. Electric media induced a new *tactile* form of perception that McLuhan defined as a multi-sensorial and acoustic (that is, non-linear and all-embracing) interplay, something that returns *spectators* to their role of *audiences*. The term *audience* is in fact particularly appropriate for the electronic and digital forms of communication and media, as it returns the communicative process to an auditory dimension as per its original etymology. Spectators (from the Latin *spectator*, viewer/watcher) watch what is in front of them (light on); audiences (from the Latin *audentia*, listening) engage acoustically in a communicative process. As a book, *Spiral* engages the readers cognitively and physiologically, creating an acoustic (verbo-vocal-visual) montage; readers must fill in the gaps connecting the visual (the images from the film) to the aural (the text chosen by McLuhan) in a process that requires a multisensory approach—indeed, a mobile point of view that helps them to see "the action that is in progress and in which everybody is involved" (McLuhan, *The Mechanical Bride* 8). As a book, *Spiral* invites the *spectators* of the movie *Spiral* to become an *audience* so as to fully experience a dynamic, interactive communicative process that alerts them on the absurdity of all environmental dynamics.

The collaboration between McLuhan and Etrog translates into an editorial inter-art project that conveys movement to the printed page, giving shape to what McLuhan terms the "concrete essay." McLuhan, a knowledgeable literary scholar, was familiar with *poésie concrète* and how it had inspired different uses of old printing techniques. His interactive mosaic of words, images, and gaps plays with that tradition to create a new form of essay that does not *narrate* theoretical investigations but rather *renders* them directly on the printed page. At the same time, Etrog's original movie offers him a series of pertinent *illustrations* to ideas he had been exploring for decades:

> In the film *Spiral* the ubiquitous and moving centre intensifies awareness of the fragility and transience of existence. In the uncertainty of the interval between the pram and the coffin, between birth and death, *Spiral* presents many labyrinths and portraits of the human cognitive process. The drama of these two imbalances is portrayed by the action of the two ambulances in the labyrinth of the city streets. The body in the incubator points

> to a labyrinth (spiral) of respiration in a blind struggle for survival. The open-heart surgery reveals the spiral of human circulation in a parallel struggle for blind survival. One of the bizarre conceits of the sequence of the sardine can concerns the obsession of a consumer age with packages, whether books or hi-rise or the nuclear family. This witty observation pervades the film as a continuing metaphor, as do the two ambulances. (McLuhan and Etrog, 126)

In the film, the two metaphors introduced here (a "witty observation" and the "two ambulances") are juxtaposed with a series of visual symbols that immediately reinforce the spectator's "awareness of the fragility and transience of existence" within what is presented as "a consumer age" where thoughts, people, and ideas are equally turned into pre-packed goods. The list is long: eggs/breast/womb (life) and arms (death); clocks (mechanic and limited existence) and the natural birth of a baby (permanence of the human species); blinded man and books; people in a cage and burning books; a pram and a coffin; cans of worms and cans of people; naked bodies and artificial (mechanically induced) breathing; and many more.

The storyline of the iconically drafted movie spirals to an ending where a naked baby plays with a broken clock and open eyes are painted on the bandage covering the real eyes of a naked man. Elaborating modernist poetics, "In *Spiral* Etrog confronts us with the same Waste Land situation on the wired planet in the form of both a visible dialogue of cinema and the action of symbolist drama" (McLuhan and Etrog 127). In his final comments, McLuhan connects the evident social and cultural denunciation in the film to Etrog's creative process, here presented as a form that translates the universal search of many other artists of the 20th century; he confirms that Etrog also belongs to McLuhan's own sacred wood of conscious artists enlightening on the archetypes of human logic and ingenuity. *Man as the medium* is, in fact, the title of McLuhan's afterword in the book; it is the final epiphany of an artistic journey meant to trigger awareness of a complex societal process. A journey that has put traps on the readers/audience as the spiraling story has been told to invite them to change perspective, to look at things in a different way. Consciousness of one's own actions follows a renewed sensorial consciousness, something that can be achieved only if we are ready to leave comforting but numbing intellectual and artistic cocoons; it implies a shift from mannerism to experimentalism.

The journey of initiation conceived by Etrog and McLuhan is not a reassuring one. Contrary to the one that takes Dante to progress from Hell to Paradise "to see again the stars," our consumerist society makes the individuals spiral upon themselves, as if they were navigating a never-ending cultural maelstrom. Inevitably, the human condition cannot but be one of constant alert and struggle to remain awake and acquire sensorial insomnia because we inhabit a world of constant technological innovation and deep cultural shifts. The request is therefore to overcome habits and embrace (artistic) challenges. Virgil guides Dante out of his ignorance and takes him to Beatrice, the woman representing pure love and honesty of intents, the woman who will lead him to reach the highest pick. Through *Spiral*, Dante's search becomes not only the poet's and the philosopher's quest but *everyman's* search. It acquires a different meaning because human ignorance mainly reflects environmental ignorance, as the film and the book came after not only Dante and his natural and theological "world architecture": they came after World War II and Sputnik[6] The world Etrog and McLuhan inhabited was a new manmade environment built on "an electronic interdependence" that recreated the world "in the image of a global village" (McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy* 36). McLuhan and Etrog lived and rendered a passage from a given environment to a new and evolving one. Consistently, to accompany Etrog's spiraling symbols, McLuhan selected texts from writers and artists who had experienced and rendered ages of passage, that is, ages marking the making of new cultural and technological environments. Dante himself was a poet who lived at the end of the Middle Ages and at the dawn of Italian Renaissance. McLuhan also quoted Shakespeare, the bard who blurred the auditory into the Gutenberg Age. He quoted Joyce, Eliot, and Yeats, the Modernist masters who retrieved the aural while the Gutenberg's mechanic age shifted into the electric age. He quoted Etrog's favorite authors, Ionesco and Beckett, who used the grotesque to unveil the absurd of intellectual conformism. In the book, these voices—altogether forming a sort of perceptive leitmotif of McLuhan's discourses on media as environment—combine with those of other writers and philosophers, (Thomas Hardy, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Blaise Pascal, Elizabeth Akers Allen, David Herbert Lawrence, Fyodor Mikhailovich), poets (Geoffrey Chaucer, Samuel Taylo Coleridge, Wystan Hugh Auden, Robert Frost), and theorists (Claude Elwood Shannon and Warren Weaver, Alfred Tomatis) to accompany the journey unveiling *man as the medium*. These voices too are collapsed to shape the continuous movements of the human consciousness. Together, images and texts are used as fragments shored against intellectual conformism and cultural hypnosis, portable still-shots that move beyond the fixity of the printed page to enter the audience's interior landscape and alert them to new knowledge of their time.

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Notes

1 "The youth Narcissus mistook his own reflection in the water for another person. This extension of himself by mirror numbed his perceptions until he became the servomechanism of his own extended or repeated image… . He was numb. He had adapted to his extension of himself and had become a closed system." (McLuhan, *Understanding Media* 63).

2 See: Marchand; Theall; Willmott; Moss and Morra; Barilli.

3 "*The Gutenberg Galaxy* develops a mosaic or field approach to its problems. Such a mosaic image of numerous data and quotations in evidence offers the only practical means of revealing causal operations in history." (McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy* 7). On the idea of McLuhan's mosaic see also Lamberti, *Marshall McLuhan's Mosaic.*

4 Concerning McLuhan and the Theatre of the Absurd, it is interesting to recall what writes Philip Marchand in his biography of McLuhan: "On December 24th, 1980, in the company of Corinne and Teri, McLuhan visited an exhibition of sculptures by Sorel Etrog at a local gallery. Etrog, an admirer of the works of Samuel Beckett as well as of McLuhan's writings, had infuriated McLuhan earlier that month by comparing him to Beckett. McLuhan, who regarded the absolute godlessness of Beckett's work with something approaching horror, grew so red in the face that one of his vein stood out" (275). This vehement reaction did not compromise the friendship between McLuhan and Etrog, who spent part of McLuhan's last Christmas vigil together. Nonetheless, this reaction may surprise the reader, as McLuhan often referred to the Theatre of the Absurd to exemplify the societal contemporary *malaise*. For instance, in the introduction to his *Understanding Media*, McLuhan writes: "The Theatre of the Absurd dramatizes this recent dilemma of the Western man, the man of action who appears not to be involved in the action. Such is the origin and appeal of Samuel Beckett's clown" (20).

5 See: Etrog, *Joyce and the Dada Circus: A Collage / An Irish Circus on Finnegans Wake*. This work was first published together with John Cage's *About Roartorio. An Irish Circus on Finnegans Wake*, edited and with and Introduction by Robert O'Driscoll for the The Dolmen Press in 1982.

6 "When Sputnik went around the planet, nature disappeared, nature was hijacked off the planet, nature was enclosed in a manmade environment and art took the place of nature. Planet became art from" (*The Video McLuhan*).

MANSARAM AND MARSHALL MCLUHAN: COLLABORATION IN COLLAGE ART

ALEXANDER KUSKIS

Abstract *| Mansaram is an Indo-Canadian artist who immigrated to Canada in 1966 with a prior interest in the media ideas of Marshall McLuhan, sparked by reading about him in LIFE Magazine. In Toronto the media guru soon introduced him to Av Isaacs at his Yonge Street gallery, which led to a 1967 Happening there called East-West Intersect, influenced by McLuhan's ideas. Between 1966 and 1972 Mansaram worked on his Rear View Mirror series of paintings and collages, to one of which McLuhan contributed several items of textual content. Collage with its mosaic structures appealed to McLuhan because he thought it better represented the post-literate "allatonceness" of electronic media and acoustic space, which better integrated the full human sensorium and called for pattern recognition for comprehension. McLuhan had a high regard for artists for their integral awareness and sensitivity to changes in sense perception, enabling them to act as a distant early warning (DEW) line against potentially harmful effects of technology. He viewed their art as anti-environments to the electronic media maelstrom. Mansaram has enjoyed increasing recognition through recent exhibitions, but some of Canada's premier art galleries have yet to acquire or recognize his art, although the Royal Ontario Museum is planning to do so.*

Résumé *| Mansaram est un artiste indo-canadien qui a immigré au Canada en 1966 possédant un intérêt antérieur pour les idées médiatiques de Marshall McLuhan, suscité par la lecture d'articles à son sujet dans LIFE Magazine. À Toronto, le gourou des médias l'a rapidement présenté à Av Isaacs à sa galerie de Yonge Street, ce qui a mené à un « happening » en 1967 appelé East-West Intersect influencé par les idées de McLuhan. Entre 1966 et 1972, Mansaram a travaillé sur sa série de peintures et de collages Rear View Mirror, dont une à laquelle McLuhan a apporté plusieurs éléments textuels. Le collage, avec ses structures en mosaïque, plaisait à McLuhan parce qu'il trouvait qu'il représentait mieux la « concordance » postlittéraire des médias électroniques et de l'espace acoustique, qui intégrait mieux l'ensemble du sensorium humain et appelait à la reconnaissance des formes pour la compréhension. McLuhan avait un grand respect pour les artistes en raison de leur conscience intégrale et leur sensibilité aux changements dans la perception des sens, leur permettant d'agir en tant que réseau d'alerte avancé (DEW, pour « Distant Early Warning ») contre les effets potentiellement néfastes de la technologie. Il considérait leur art comme des antienvironnements au tourbillon des médias électroniques. Mansaram est de plus en plus reconnu à travers les expositions récentes, mais certaines des plus grandes galeries d'art du Canada n'ont pas encore acquis ou reconnu son art, bien que le Musée royal de l'Ontario ait l'intention de le faire.*

> *The West shall shake the East awake . . .*
> *while ye have the night for morn . . .*
> *–James Joyce,* Finnegans Wake

Marshall McLuhan's corpus of published work includes many collaborations with associates, including Quentin Fiore, Harley Parker, Wilfred Watson, Barrington Nevitt, Kathryn Hutchon, Bruce Powers, McLuhan's son Eric, and others. He published more collaboratively written books than self-written ones. Analogous to his favourite method of discovery, which he called probing, collaboration offered McLuhan a means or method of dialogical perception that is "discontinuous, nonlinear; it tackles things from many angles at once" (McLuhan and Carson 403). This essay describes a different kind of artistic collaboration for McLuhan, one that demonstrates his eagerness to understand and experiment with unfamiliar and new media: his collage art with Indo-Canadian artist Panchal Mansaram. This essay describes the collaboration and its artistic outcome, *Rear View Mirror 74 (RMV 74)*, considering what attracted McLuhan to the work as well as his more general views on art and artists.

According to Mansaram in a personal interview by the author of this essay, McLuhan acted with "innate kindness and generosity" in helping him get started in Canada as a newly landed Indian artist. McLuhan was likely attracted to working on one of Mansaram's *Rear View Mirror* collages for a couple of reasons. First, from his reading of modernist writers such as Charles Baudelaire, James Joyce, and T.S. Eliot—whose works in some ways anticipate subsequent East-West artistic interactions and exchanges including The Beatles' pilgrimage to India and Ravi Shankar's popularity in the West—McLuhan was keenly interested in the proposed theme of the intersection of Eastern and Western cultures. These perceived cultural interactions were a subset of McLuhan's "global village" metaphor: the people of India and the West coming to know each other through media and mutual visitations. Second, collage art appealed to McLuhan because he associated it with the ancient mosaic form, which integrated the whole human sensorium of vision, hearing, taste, smell, and even touch, and could better reflect the simultaneity of post-literate electronic technology, the output of which would require pattern recognition to apprehend.

Panchal Mansaram, known professionally as P. Mansaram or sometimes just Mansaram, immigrated to Canada from India with his wife and daughter in 1966. He had a special interest in the work of Marshall McLuhan, initially inspired by reading an article about him in *LIFE* magazine. The February 25, 1966 issue of *LIFE* had published an article titled "Oracle of the Electric Age," which mentioned that artists, musicians, critics, and theatre people, particularly those in the avant-garde, found McLuhan's media theories to be artistically relevant and exciting, so much so that there had been a Marshall McLuhan-themed Festival of the Contemporary Arts at the University of British Columbia the previous year (Howard 91). Intrigued and excited by McLuhan's ideas on technology and culture, Mansaram wrote the University of Toronto English professor to convey his admiration for his work.

In 1966, Mansaram immigrated to Canada with his wife Tarunika and their three-month-old daughter Mila. Arriving in Montreal, they initially explored the city and its Expo 67 World's Fair site, then under construction, before settling in Toronto—initially living at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel on Charles Street. He soon contacted Marshall McLuhan, who invited him to meet him at his office at the University of Toronto, where he was about to be interviewed for French Television. After witnessing the taping of this interview, Mansaram went with McLuhan and a writer friend to The Isaacs Gallery at 832 Yonge Street, where he was introduced to its owner, the now legendary and recently deceased Av Isaacs. This introduction led to a Happening in 1967 at the Isaacs Gallery titled *East-West Intersect*, produced by Mansaram and influenced by McLuhan.

Early Life in India[1]

Mansaram was born in Mount Abu, a hillside town in Rajasthan, India, where the Maharajas owned summer palaces (McGovern, "Collaborative Collage Painting"). His father encouraged him to study engineering for its greater employment opportunities, but after spending four years in a science college, he enrolled instead in the Sir Jamsetjee Jeejebhoy School of Art (often shortened as Sir J.J.) in Bombay (now Mumbai), from 1954 to 1959.

His artistic talents enabled him to secure free tuition, including free residency in a school hostel and eventually a gold medal and fellowship to teach at the Art School. He also met his future wife Tarunika, who is also an artist, at the School. In 1959, he won the highest cash prize at the Bombay State Art Exhibition, in competition with numerous professional artists. In Bombay, Mansaram took full advantage of the cultural life of this cosmopolitan Indian city, befriending art critics, the editors of several magazines, and attending lectures by the world-famous philosopher, Jiddu Krishnamurti, who lectured at the Art School compound. After art school, he moved to Calcutta for his first job, where he met Satyajit Ray, the world-famous filmmaker. Watching Bengali films created an ambition in Mansaram to become a filmmaker himself.

He won a Dutch government scholarship at the State Academy of Fine Arts in Amsterdam during 1963-64, where he started to experiment with collage art. In 1964, Mansaram discovered inscriptions on a rock surface while visiting Greece, which inspired him to introduce writing into his collages. His own collage style later included pages of printed text, handwritten manuscript pages and notes, and even hand-drawn scribbles juxtaposed with canvas figures and images.

Back in Delhi, he met the English art-critic George Butcher, who had come to India to research his PhD thesis on Modern Indian and Folk Art; he later moved to Montreal. It was George Butcher who showed Mansaram the *LIFE* magazine article that introduced him to the Canadian media theorist and led him to seek out McLuhan after arriving in Canada.

Working with Marshall McLuhan

In Toronto, Mansaram's family were befriended by and socially engaged with the McLuhan family. Marshall McLuhan sometimes personally drove over to pick up the Mansarams at their hotel to host them at his home at 29 Wells Hill Avenue. Corrine McLuhan baked cookies for Mansaram's daughter, while Marshall enjoyed tending the fireplace while they chatted.

During 1966 and 1967, Mansaram painted several pictures for McLuhan, including a portrait of the scholar as a media guru. In the late 1960s, he also created a collage that was used as the cover art for two McLuhan-authored high-school English textbooks: *Voices of Literature,* *Part 1* and *Part 2*. In 1994, he designed the cover art for *Who Was Marshall McLuhan?* by Barrington Nevitt, a collaborator of both Marshall and his brother Maurice McLuhan. Marshall asked Mansaram to create collages on their furnace in the basement of their family house; two of the daughters, Elizabeth and Teri McLuhan, recollect playing in front of these works with their brothers when they were children. (McGovern, "Collaborative Collage").

In 1967, Mansaram made an important career move when he accepted a position as a high school art teacher with the Hamilton Board of Education, and moved to the Hamilton-Burlington area, west of Toronto. He began his teaching career at Hamilton's Central Secondary School with its special art program, which employed eight art teachers. The students spent half of each day studying art and the other half on academic subjects. After two years, his whole school was moved to a new building in downtown Hamilton, Sir John A. Macdonald Secondary School. After later transfers to Glendale Secondary, then Barton Secondary, he took early retirement from teaching in 1989, allowing him to concentrate on his artistic endeavours full time.

Mansaram became involved with several workshops at McLuhan's now famous Monday Night Seminars at the University of Toronto. From one of these unstructured and interactive group discussions came the idea of a Happening with the intersection of Eastern and Western cultures as its theme.

The *East-West Intersect* Happening 1967

Popular during the 1960s, Happenings were inspired by the ideas and techniques of Futurists, Dadaists, and Surrealists, with the American painter and art historian Allan Kaprow being a principal proponent of this new theatrical form (Brockett 625). Happenings appealed to McLuhan's interest in new artistic forms that engaged in Figure/Ground analysis of artifacts in their everyday environments. Kaprow was also interested in the environments surrounding art works, arguing that, particularly with performance art, audiences should be given assignments and comprise part of the total context. Such performances were typically non-linear narratives, with audiences involved in the action, and would usually include improvisational elements. McLuhan encouraged Mansaram to pursue this initiative, despite being unable to attend himself, as he was going to be a visiting professor at Fordham University in New York during the 1967-68 academic year as the Albert Schweitzer Chair in the Humanities.

Before leaving for New York, McLuhan sat down with Mansaram for a short interview during which the artist sought the media scholar's advice about the production of his *East-West Intersect* Happening. McLuhan discussed issues such as the convergence of Western and Eastern cultures in the global village; Eastern elements in the literary works of T.S. Eliot and James Joyce; the strong Eastern influence on Western culture in the 1960s; the tribalism of hippie culture in Toronto's Yorkville district at that time; time and space in the Electric Age; and the effects of TV on oral cultures. The previously unpublished interview is available online on the McLuhan Galaxy blog (Mansaram "An Unpublished Interview with Marshall McLuhan"), the official blog of the McLuhan Estate.

The most important cultural takeaway from Mansaram's interview with McLuhan and his subsequent *East-West Intersect* Happening is McLuhan's discussion of the convergence of Eastern and Western cultures. He was aware of that convergence from his knowledge of how modernist writers such as Charles Baudelaire, James Joyce, and T.S. Eliot as well as artists such as Paul Cézanne and Pablo Picasso included Indian elements in their works. He would have been aware of the hippie movement's embrace of Eastern religions and its emergence in popular culture. Toronto's focal point for hippies during the 1960s was the Yorkville area. Yorkville Avenue was just six blocks north of St. Michael's College, where McLuhan taught.

McLuhan's observations about East-West convergence anticipate such pop cultural events as the Beatles 1968 trip to India (Swanson "History of the Beatles") and the growing fame of Ravi Shankar in the West. McLuhan told Mansaram:

> Well, the simple fact of the matter is the whole world is an East/West happening, and while the Western world is going Oriental, the Oriental world is going Western. This has been going on for a century, and so what could be a bigger East/West happening than that? See, all the Western artists have gone Oriental since Baudelaire, and all the painters, all abstract art is Oriental art. ("An Unpublished Interview with Marshall McLuhan")

McLuhan later connected East-West convergence to the hippie movement, with its predilection for psychedelic drugs, electronic technology and media:

> I think the problem about the East/West Happening is that it is very difficult to find a difference between the East and West. The West is so eager to appear Eastern in everything and is so keen on the inner trip. In the Electric Age, by the way, in the Electric Age the whole world is taking the inner trip; because of the circuit, the feedback, the electric technology is psychedelic. So the Western world is going Eastern in that sense of inner trip. ("An Unpublished Interview with Marshall McLuhan")

The *East-West Intersect* Happening was produced for two nights in 1967 at the Isaacs Gallery. Elements that Mansaram proposed to include in it were a dancing go-go girl juxtaposed with another woman doing a Western concert dance in a cage; a five-minute 16-mm film of McLuhan speaking; a Dictaphone-recorded interview of McLuhan by Mansaram; talks by a hippie leader, a theosophist, and a Buddhist monk; taped Indian-influenced Western music as well as Western-influenced Indian music; portions of Western films; Indian films with little narrative line, but using music, dance, and circus elements; and an installation by Peter Sepp and Mansaram. The Happening was covered on television by the prime-time CBC program *The Way It Is* on Saturday night. Surviving media artifacts from that event include: the five-minute 16-mm film of McLuhan, the recorded interview, the transcript of the Mansaram interview (Mansaram, "An Unpublished Interview with Marshall McLuhan"), and Mansaram's photographs and documentation of the event.

All the above media artifacts of the original Happening of 1967 were resurrected, or in McLuhan terminology, retrieved, in June 2012 by Ed Video Gallery in Guelph, Ontario for an exhibition of Mansaram's collages, paintings, and media art, including his collaboration with McLuhan. The theme of *East-West Intersect* was recapitulated under the title *Intersection: Mansaram & McLuhan*, described on the poster as "Collages, paintings, and media art by P. Mansaram inspired by and in collaboration with Marshall McLuhan from 1966 to 2012" (Beedham, "Medium = Message").

At around the same time, Mansaram started working on a series of paintings which he titled *Rear View Mirror*, which became a sustaining focus from 1966 to 1972. He produced a film on the same subject in 1966, later re-edited in 2011 for screenings at Ed Video in Guelph, Ontario in 2012 and the Experimenta 2013 Film Festival in Bangalore, India. Mansaram described this project: "As in the case of 'Rear View Mirror' we are constantly creating our past, while living in the present. Past appears in present in various forms; paintings, drawings, photos, memories, words, sculptures, films. I have woven some of those remnants thru this medium" ("Festival Programme 2013"). The title refers to a McLuhan meme, the idea that we drive into the future using only our rear view mirrors: "We march backwards into the future. Suburbia lives imaginatively in Bonanza-land" (McLuhan and Fiore 74-75). Initially, the paintings were displayed at George Rackus's Picture Loan Gallery, one of the oldest art galleries in Toronto.

Mansaram also made other experimental films, including *Intersect* (1967), inspired by the films of Satyajit Ray and Ritwik Ghatak, and reflecting his collage work, which combined radio and television commercials with film content. His later film *Devi Stuffed Goat and Pink Cloth* (1979) is another collage made in Mumbai; it explores the gaze of an Indian artist in Canada looking back at his nation of origin ("Festival Programme 2013"). Commenting on Mansaram's work in a personal letter sent to Mansaram in 1973, Marshall Mcluhan wrote that, "Mansaram is a kind of two-way mirror, living simultaneously in the divided and distinguished worlds of the East and West."

The Mansaram-Mcluhan Collaborative Collage

The title of the collage to which McLuhan added his touch is *Rear View Mirror 74* (*RVM 74*) [Fig. 1], part of Mansaram's *Rear View Mirror* series created between 1966 to 1972. Mansaram started *RVM 74* in 1969 and added several additional elements over four decades later in 2011. It was recently acquired by the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto (ROM), along with many of his other paintings, collages, prints, and supporting documents.

To appreciate *RVM 74*, it is necessary to identify and interpret the approximately two dozen images and textual passages introduced by Mansaram and McLuhan. McLuhan added the six English-language passages. Starting at the top of the collage and moving counter-clockwise, McLuhan's contributions are as follows:[2]

> 1. NOW THAT LADER'S GONE,
> I MUST LIE DOWN AGAIN
> WHERE ALL LADDERS START IN THE
> FOUL RAG & BONE SHOP OF MY HEART

This is a quotation from W.B. Yeats's *The Circus Animal's Desertion*, which, according to Eric McLuhan in a personal email to the author of this essay, is often cited in *From Cliché to Archetype*. There are errors, no doubt intentional, in the way it appears on the collage. In a personal email to the author of this essay, Mansaram stated that McLuhan wrote the quotes on the collage in pencil and then

Mansaram highlighted the letters with a magic marker to make them legible.

2. HOW PIERCEFUL GROWS
THE HAZY YON
HOW MYRTLE PETERED [unclear]
THOW UP [unclear]
FOR SPRING HATH
SPRUNG THE
CYCLOTRON,
HOW HIGH BROWSE
THOU,
BROWN
COW?

In a personal email to the author of this essay, Eric McLuhan identified this as being one of the *Songs of Pogo* on a record by Walt Kelly, an American animator and cartoonist who initially worked for Walt Disney and later created the Pogo comic strip for Dell Comics (Stern "We Have Met the Enemy"). The text contains errors, as Mansaram's intention was to communicate the idea that "the medium is the message": that the overall form and ground of an artifact are its transformational elements far more than its content. The last line — "HOW HIGH BROWSE THOU, BROWN COW?"— is a take on a speech exercise used in the U.S. South In the early 20th century, to train a speaker in forming vowels: "How now brown cow?" Again, as Mansaram informed that author of this essay during a personal interview, McLuhan wrote the quotes on the collage in pencil and then Mansaram highlighted the letters with a marker to make them legible.

3. HELP
BEAUTIFY
JUNKYARDS
THROW
SOMETHING
LOVELY
TODAY

As Eric McLuhan informed this author in a personal email, McLuhan saw this writing on a billboard advertising a junkyard in Toronto. In correct grammar, it would read: "Help beautify junk yards. Throw something lovely away today." The quote comes up elsewhere in a moderated conversation between McLuhan, Malcolm Muggeridge, and Norman Mailer, the former telling the others that "There's a wonderful sign hanging on a sign in Toronto, which says, Help beautify junkyards—throw something lovely away today. I think this is a thought that conservatives need to consider" (Lennon 134). McLuhan inserted the phrase in other contexts as well; in this case, Mansaram applied this McLuhan-supplied phrase to the collage in his hand.

4. THE
PARANOIDS
ARE
AFTER
ME

This was a wisecrack that Marshall McLuhan thought up, as related to this author by Eric McLuhan in a personal email. Again, McLuhan penciled the quote onto the collage and then Mansaram highlighted it.

5. "H M McLuhan" on the right side of the collage and a little above half way up, tilted vertically, is Marshall McLuhan's signature which he added himself.
6. Time wounds all heals heels

This appears on the right side, just above McLuhan's signature, but the phrase is upside down to the viewer; "heals" is crossed out and "heels" is substituted above it. The phrase is a rearrangement of the aphorism "Time heals all wounds." According to the online Quote Investigator Garson O'Toole ("Time Wounds All Heels"), Groucho Marx delivered the phrase in the 1940 film *Go West*, but the expression had already been in circulation at least since 1934.

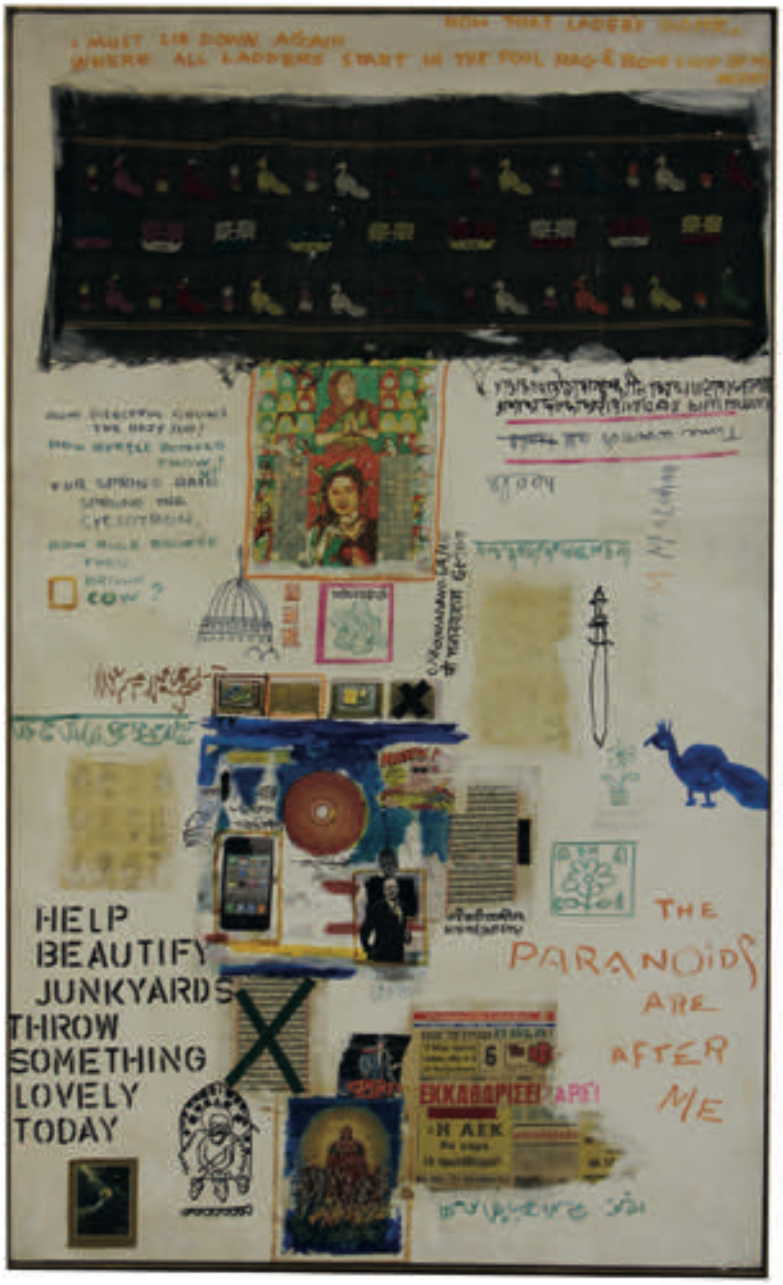
Mansaram provided the rest of the collage images, as well as the non-English texts—almost two dozen elements. The dark strip of fabric along the top, with its motif of birds and flowers, occupies about 20 percent of the collage, representing nature or, in the artist's words, the "master controller of the world." Farther down on the right side are a peacock, a potted plant, and another flower, once again symbols of the natural ecology; another flower occupies the centre of the collage, to the right of the dome. There are several symbols of the divine: at bottom centre is a representation of the pre-Vedas Indian god of the wind, Varun; to its left is a generic image of a god; to its left is a 3-D postcard of Jesus Christ; finally, the dome just to the left of centre represents temples, synagogues, or churches. Miscellaneous elements include a sword or dagger, which might represent defense, justice, or punishment—all of which guard civilization; at the bottom, to the right of centre, is a segment of text from a Toronto Greek newspaper; immediately above the dome, and slightly to its right, is a large colourful lottery poster from India, depicting pictures of two well-known Indian actresses of the time, with rows of little envelopes containing rewards to be won by shooting a pellet gun at balloons mounted on a board; there is a manuscript with an X through it to the right of HELP BEAUTIFY JUNKYARDS, with the X signifying the irrelevance of content, in other words, that "the medium is the message."

The irrelevance of content is also represented by the text that looks like Hindi or other Eastern script, but is meaningless scribbles, just below the right-hand section of the dark bird/flower motif band along the top. The same applies to the upside-down scribbles, just above the dagger's handle. The textual images in English, pseudo-Hindi, and Greek represent the Gutenberg era of print literacy. In 2011, Mansaram added representations of electronic media to signify a new communication era: the brown circle below the centre and slightly to the left is a compact disk (CD), below it and to the left is the first iPhone, and to its left is a pre-Xerox blueprint used by architects. Above the blue patch and the compact disk are four TV sets in a row. The first and third from the left display flower images, a juxtaposition of nature and technology; the second has side doors closed over the picture tube, and the fourth has a black X over it, again suggesting the irrelevance of the programming that appears on it—"the medium is the message."

Finally, there is a photograph of Marshall McLuhan in the centre, smiling and with his right hand in a pocket while his left hand clutches a book. Mansaram took this photo near McLuhan's Coach House, behind what is now the Kelly Library at St. Michael's College, University of Toronto. Mansaram has signed his work vertically, almost in the centre of the collage, with his starting and completion dates indicated by "69/2011"—spanning almost a half century.

Mcluhan's Take on the Collage Art Form

On a page that is untitled and unpaginated, preceding page one of the Prologue to *The Gutenberg Galaxy* (1962), McLuhan wrote of his "mosaic or field approach," stating that it represents


NOW THAT LADDER'S GONE,
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TODAY
THE
PARANOIDS
ARE
AFTER
ME
ΕΚΚΑΘΑΡΙΣΕΙ
Η ΑΕΚ

Figure 1. Rear View Mirror 74 (RVM 74) – Collage by Mansaram and Marshall McLuhan (1969, with new elements added in 2011)

"the galaxy or constellation of events" in a "mosaic of perpetually interacting forms that have undergone kaleidoscopic transformation—particularly in our own time." That is an apt description for Mansaram and McLuhan's *Rear View Mirror 74*, which represents elements from the converging cultures of India and the West, including aspects of their natural ecologies, media ecologies, and religious symbols. Elena Lamberti argues that meaning from such a mosaic assemblage is acquired:

> … through the interplay with its own ground. By doing so, a pattern gets created and in turn revealed through our active observation. Pattern recognition is the way we approach all mosaics: we look for the overall design that the assemblage of the various tesserae brings to light, something which transcends their mere sum. (xxviii)

Such mosaic structure forces viewers to employ pattern recognition, to pay attention to the total design, and to participate in the process of deriving meaning from what they are experiencing. It promotes active engagement, rather than the passive and detached observation that is characteristic of representational art.

McLuhan appreciated collage art and supported this aspect of Mansaram's artistic expression because he sensed that this art form better reflected the post-literate "allatonceness" (McLuhan and Fiore 63) world of electronic media and technology. As Margarita D'Amico argues, "In his own published work if McLuhan was not the first to have used collage, [but] it is he who has best captured the totally new character of the new mass means of communication and the social impact of new technologies" (Nevitt and Maurice McLuhan 232). The superseded Gutenberg era of widespread literacy based on the dominance of writing and print media in the form of relatively inexpensive books, magazines, journals, and newspapers favoured visual space. Yet what McLuhan called "new media" favoured the ear via technologies such as radio, movies, TV, recorded music, and satellites, which replaced visual space with acoustic space. The visual aspect still existed in film and TV of course, but sight was no longer the most dominant of the senses in the new electronic media.

Marshall McLuhan and Barrington Nevitt opined that:

> Our world … is an invisible Rim Spin—all the communication that surrounds us. It is like a cyclone, a vortex that has transformed the old world of visual connections into a new world of audile-tactile resonances: a global theatre of instant awareness. (Nevitt and Maurice McLuhan 231)

In a collaborative text with Marshall McLuhan first published in Spanish in Venezuela, D'Amico linked collage and mosaic using McLuhan's terminology:

> We live in an acoustic space … like discarnate minds floating in the magnetic cities of radio, television and satellites. …Our world is a great multimedia poem. To understand this world we must study its processes, investigate their effects to recognize their causes: to program our future … Perhaps our one possible approach may be of mosaic type or collage, rather than a lineal one of logical demonstration. (Nevitt and Maurice McLuhan 231)

The art of the previous Gutenberg era of print had been mostly representational: street scenes, natural landscapes or seascapes, and portraits that were identifiable as such. The introduction of perspective, around the same time in the mid-15th century as Gutenberg's invention of moveable type, enhanced the lifelikeness of this representationality (McLuhan, *Gutenberg Galaxy*). Just as the linearity of typeset printed pages endowed readers with a fixed point of view, perspective in art made "the single eye the centre of the visible world" with everything converging on it "to the vanishing point of infinity" (Berger 16).

Yet electronic media substituted simultaneity or all-at-onceness for linearity and ABC-mindedness, and acoustic space for visual space, thus eliminating perspective and the possibility of a fixed point of view. Representational art was no longer reflective of electronic media, satellites, space flight, and new conceptions of space/time that they stimulated. Abstract art in its non-representationality provided one solution, and the ancient art of collage provided another. D'Amico explains why mosaic and its application to collage art appealed to McLuhan:

> Mosaic emphasizes that all elements together create the total effect. As for collage, the association, arrangement and juxtaposition of objects, phrases, different concepts, both heterogeneous and absurd, that comment upon and influence each other, all of this has very close affinities with concepts of chance, accident or "serendipity" (making accidental discoveries of valuable, but unsought, knowledge), important concepts in present science and culture. (Nevitt and Maurice McLuhan 231-232)

Marshall McLuhan, a cultural medievalist by training, was especially interested in the lower three of the seven liberal arts of the medieval educational curriculum: grammar, rhetoric, and logic. He was aware of medieval artistic expression beyond the literary, including the pre-Renaissance mosaic art that followed the Byzantine practice of decorating walls and ceilings with tesserae. Art historian Alexander Nagel explains that the medieval mosaic represented for McLuhan "a mode of apprehension" that integrated the full human sensorium of vision, hearing, taste, smell, and even touch, whereas Western representational art biased perception in favour of the eye and sequential vision:

> Mosaics engaged an integrated medieval "sensory ratio" where the visual was not disconnected from the other senses and if anything was subordinated to the "audile" and "tactile" forms … [In] *The Gutenberg Galaxy*, [he wrote that the mosaic is] "a multidimensional world of inter structural resonance"—in contradiction to modern perspective, which was "an abstract illusion built on the intense separation of the visual from the other senses. (160)

Indeed, McLuhan found "the mosaic mode of being relevant in the new age of electronic media, which were exploding the bounds of a mechanically understood world, putting things once again into multiple relation across space and time" (Nagel 160) .

Mansaram also related a relevant side note to this essay's author: at the opening of his 2012 exhibition of collages at the J.M. Gallery, now the Ashok Jain Gallery in New York, Teri McLuhan, a documentary filmmaker and daughter of Marshall McLuhan, commented to

Mansaram, “That is how my dad spoke, just like your collages.” Those who are still mystified by some of McLuhan’s cryptic and non-linear pronouncements might possibly agree.

Final Remarks: McLuhan’s Take on Mansaram’s Art

Marshall McLuhan followed the modernist writers that he greatly admired—especially Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, James Joyce, and Wyndham Lewis—in holding artists in high esteem for their perceptual acuity and “integral awareness” (*Understanding Media* 65), which equipped them to be what Ezra Pound called the “antennae of the race.” In his introduction to the second edition of *Understanding Media*, McLuhan explained that art is a kind of radar or “early warning system” that enables the alert to anticipate social and psychic effects before their potentially harmful consequences (x) and to develop appropriate controls. He considered art to be particularly important in the technological era that he lived in because the effects of the new electronic technologies were subliminal but had the effect of altering human “sense ratios or pattern of perception” (*Understanding Media* 19); users had no resistance because of their lack of awareness. However, what he called the “serious artist” can “encounter technology with impunity, just because he is an expert aware of the changes in sense perception” (19). This idea of the arts as being defensive and prophetic elevates the importance of the arts well above the common idea of its being mere self-expression for artists and aesthetic enjoyment for viewers.

McLuhan developed his art-as-early-warning-system metaphor into the Distant Early Warning system, or DEW Line, referring to the defensive system of radar stations installed across Canada’s Arctic north during the Cold War. Art as a DEW Line was a powerful metaphor during the Cold War with North Americans as well as the rest of the world. McLuhan later applied the DEW Line metaphor to his *Marshall McLuhan DEW-LINE* newsletter, published from 1968-1970 by Eugene M. (“Tony”) Schwartz in New York. The off-shoot DEW-LINE playing card deck (1969) similarly intended to stimulate problem-solving in a “thinking-outside-the-box” manner.

Just as he had adopted a broad view of what constitutes a medium, McLuhan considered an artist to be any person “in any field, scientific or humanistic, who grasps the implications of his actions and of new knowledge in his own time” (*Understanding Media* 65), including business scholars such as Peter Drucker and futurists like Buckminster Fuller. However, McLuhan held certain modernist writers and painters in especially high regard for their capabilities in the training the perception of readers and viewers. “Integral awareness” implies an integrated human sensorium in which the other senses are not subordinated to the visual sense, a sensibility that McLuhan attributed to James Joyce especially, whom he referenced probably more than any other artist in his own work. He sought this Joycean sensibility in the work of visual artists as well, especially in the painters and designers in Toronto at the time such as Sorel Etrog, Harley Parker, René Cera, and, of course, Mansaram.

McLuhan also viewed the arts as cognitive and social correctives to the harmful aspects of electronic media. Artists could help people adjust their perceptual capabilities to the new environments resulting from new media by creating anti-environments with their art works:

> Art as an anti-environment is an indispensable means of perception, for environments, as such, are imperceptible. Their power to impose their ground rules on our perceptual life is so complete that there is no scope for dialogue or interface. Hence the need for art or anti-environments. (E. McLuhan and Gordon 3-4)

Influenced by Edward T. Hall, McLuhan held that the "ground rules, the pervasive structure, the overall pattern eludes perception" by those living in it, "except in so far as there is an anti-environment or counter-situation constructed to provide a means of direct attention" (qtd. in E. McLuhan and Gordon 4). In other words, those living in any environment are oblivious to it, as the one thing they can never see is the element through which they move: "we don't know who discovered water, but we're pretty sure it wasn't a fish" (qtd. in S. McLuhan and Staines 106).

Anti-environments are important for their capacity to raise subliminal and hidden environments to conscious awareness, the first step in "understanding media" and thereby gaining control over them. In a *Playboy* interview (1969), McLuhan urged: "The central purpose of all my work is to convey this message, that by understanding media as they extend man, we gain a measure of control over them." Alice Rae notes McLuhan's use of "The Emperor's New Clothes" to illustrate the manner in which only someone on the outside of an environment can see it for what it is. McLuhan's interpretation of the Hans Christian Andersen story was that:

> "Well-adjusted" courtiers, having vested interests, saw the emperor as beautifully appointed. The "antisocial" brat, unaccustomed to the old environment, clearly saw that the Emperor "ain't got nothin' on." The new environment was clearly visible to *him*. (qtd. in *McLuhan and Fiore* 88, original emphasis)

Today, as throughout history, artists are often outsiders to the power and moneyed interests of those who manage, own, and benefit from the global high technology corporations. Like the "antisocial brat" of Andersen's story, artists can see the downsides and the losers of the technological maelstrom. While new technological extensions of ourselves generate what McLuhan called "Narcissus narcosis" (*Understanding Media* 41), numbness, and somnambulism, artists sharpen our perceptions, making us aware of subliminal technological environments and aiding us in overcoming the disservices of new technologies.

How much of what has been described in this theoretical discussion of McLuhan's views on the relationship between artists and society did the media scholar see in the artistic work of Mansaram? Clearly, he principally saw it as a convergence of Eastern and Western cultures and sensibilities, a subset of his global village idea that he described in *The Gutenberg Galaxy*: "The new electronic interdependence recreates the world in the image of a global village" (31). As in a village, people were becoming more aware of each other because of television, movies, radio, telephones, and affordable global travel:

> Ours is a brand-new world of all-at-onceness. "Time" has ceased, "space" has vanished. We now live in a "global village" … a simultaneous happening. Information pours upon us, instantaneously and continuously. As soon as information is

> acquired, it is very rapidly replaced by still newer information. Our electrically configured world has forced us to move from the habit of data classification to the mode of pattern recognition. (*McLuhan and Fiore* 63)

Mansaram's art is an anti-environment to the increasingly technologized culture of North America, which Neil Postman, a New York University colleague of McLuhan, would later term technopoly: a state of mind that "consists in the deification of technology, finds its satisfaction in technology, and takes its orders from technology" (Postman 71). Mansaram's collages are anti-environments to representational art and its recognizable images of external reality. McLuhan especially appreciated Mansaram's collages, which he insisted better reflected the "all-at-onceness" of electronic communication and information. McLuhan later showed his approval by writing the following appreciation of Mansaram's collage art in a personal letter:

> The work of Mansaram presents a natural dialogue between the cultures of the East and of the West. His Oriental frame of reference and sensibility … brings many forms and many media to participate in one another. Mansaram's cosmopolitan perception enables him to entertain Western leitmotifs easily and naturally. As the West loses its intense visual preference and enters the iconic world of sculptural and acoustic values, the painterly and graphic idiom of India gains steadily in Western habits of acceptance. The work of Mansaram brings the mosaic forms of T.S. Eliot and James Joyce to the Orient in the very moment and by the same means that Mansaram enables us to contemplate the Orient as a variant modality of The Waste Land. In short, Mansaram is a kind of two-way mirror, living simultaneously in the divided and distinguished worlds of the East and West.

Mansaram has enjoyed dozens of exhibitions of his art in galleries in both Canada and India. Since 2012, he has been gaining greater recognition with major exhibitions in Mumbai, Bangalore, Guelph, Mississauga, Hamilton, Toronto, and New York. Although important galleries have acquired some of his paintings and collages, the National Gallery of Canada and the Art Gallery of Ontario have not yet been among them. Recently the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) undertook a major acquisition of over 700 of his works. According to Dr. Deepali Dewan, a Senior Curator in the Department of World Culture at the Royal Ontario Museum, itemized in a personal email to the author of this essay, this acquisition was comprised of 94 works on paper, 11 large paintings or collages, 216 prints from his *Image India* series, 13 black-and-white or hand-painted photographs, and 125 supporting documents including exhibit posters, postcards, and pamphlets, with more items to be assessed and counted. Why this recognition from a museum, rather than Canada's major art galleries? The ROM clearly acknowledges and declares its purpose in its mission statement: "to be a champion for the natural and cultural worlds; to serve as a forum for our diverse communities; and to create knowledge that contributes to a better future" ("Purpose and Strategic Objectives"). Canada's major art galleries might still need to do more to acknowledge Canada's multicultural diversity through their collections, or so it seems by examining the example of Mansaram's heretofore neglect.

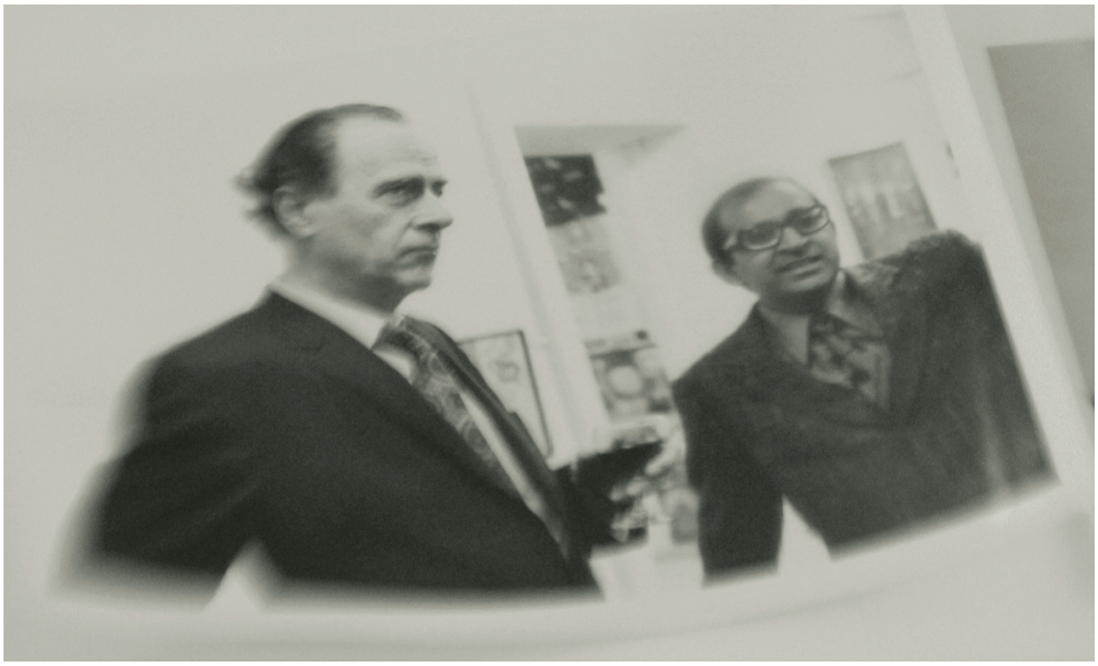

Figure 2. Marshall McLuhan & P. Mansaram at the opening of Mansaram's "Rear View Mirror" Exhibition at the Picture Loan Gallery in Toronto, 1974

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Image Notes

Figure 1. *Rear View Mirror 74 (RVM 74)* – Collage by Mansaram and Marshall McLuhan (1969, with new elements added in 2011)

Figure 2. Marshall McLuhan & P. Mansaram at the opening of Mansaram's "Rear View Mirror" Exhibition at the Picture Loan Gallery in Toronto, 1974

Notes

1 Previously unpublished biographical information by Scott McGovern of Ed Video, Guelph from notes supplied by Mansaram. McGovern, Scott. "Collaborative Collage." *McLuhan Galaxy,* 6 Aug. 2012, mcluhangalaxy.wordpress.com/2012/08/06/collaborative-collage-painting-marshall-mcluhan-mansaram/

2 Eric McLuhan kindly assisted in identifying the quotations on the collage that are in English and were contributed by his father.

CRITIQUE, TEXTE ET ART CONTEMPORAIN. REPENSER L'HÉRITAGE DE MARSHALL MCLUHAN AUJOURD'HUI

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***Résumé** | À l'ère d'Internet, quelle signification donner encore à l'héritage culturel de Marshall McLuhan? Si la question a inspiré des penseurs français (Michel Serres, Jean Baudrillard, Régis Debray) et canadiens (Derrick de Kerckhove, Pierre Lévy), nous y revenons sous un nouvel angle, en lien avec les arts plastiques contemporains. Par l'exploration de trois expositions : Vision trouble d'Annie Briard, Our Land. Contemporary Art from the Arctic et Superimposition: Sculpture and Image, qui se sont déroulées à Saint-Boniface et à Winnipeg, au Manitoba en 2016-2017, nous soulignons la pertinence actuelle des notions d'expérience de la perception, de mosaïque et de village global de McLuhan. Après tout, quels liens novateurs s'établissent entre l'art, les nouveaux médias et la pensée, à partir de Marshall McLuhan aujourd'hui ?*

***Abstract** | Nowadays, in our interconnected virtual world, how can we rethink Marshall McLuhan's cultural heritage? If the issue has already inspired a number of thinkers in France (Michel Serres, Jean Baudrillard, Régis Debray) and in Canada (Derrick de Kerckhove, Pierre Lévy), this essay approaches the question under new light, in relation to contemporary visual arts. By studying three exhibitions: Vision trouble d'Annie Briard, Our Land. Contemporary Art from the Arctic and Superimposition: Sculpture and Image opened in Saint-Boniface and Winnipeg, Manitoba (2016-17), it outlines the current relevance of McLuhan's concepts, such as: the sensory experience, the mosaic and the global village. After all, how do visual arts, new media and critical thinking contribute to redefining Marshall McLuhan's theories today?*

1/ Critique des médias aujourd'hui…

Nombreux sont ceux qui accusent aujourd'hui les médias d'engendrer tous les maux de la terre, ou peu s'en faut. On critique ces outils de transmission de l'information comme s'il s'agissait de dispositifs autonomes, détachés des êtres qui les ont créés, qui les animent et les alimentent quotidiennement. L'on se trouverait ainsi confronté à une sorte de machine infernale qui aurait la capacité de se découper de son créateur ou de sa créatrice en produisant ses propres signes et significations et en devenant sa propre finalité. Son emprise serait quasi infinie, permanente, et l'homme ne parviendrait plus à s'y soustraire.

Au-delà de quelques griefs communs, la critique à l'égard des médias prend des formes diverses et variées. À l'instar du philosophe français Jean Baudrillard[1], théoricien de la société contemporaine, d'aucuns mettent l'accent sur le déplacement qui se produirait du message vers l'instrument de diffusion lui-même, autrement dit, du contenu vers le contenant[2]. Cette inversion des priorités (le moyen se transformant en une fin en soi) renoue avec le scénario déjà esquissé par le Canadien Marshall McLuhan dès les années 1960 : le *medium* supplante le message – le fameux "*the media is the message.*"[3] Dans la biographie qu'il consacre à McLuhan en 2009, Douglas Coupland précise ce qui est désormais devenu un cliché :

> "The medium is the message" means that the ostensible content of all electronic media is insignificant; it is the medium *itself* that has the greater impact on the environment, a fact bolstered by the now medically undeniable fact that the technologies we use every day begin, after a while, to alter the way our brains work, and hence the way we experience the world. Forget the ostensible content, say, of a television program. All that matters is that you're watching the TV itself, at the expense of some other technology – probably books or the internet. Those mediums we *do* choose to spend our time with continually modify the way we emphasize our senses – seeing versus hearing versus touching – on a scale so large and spanning so many centuries that it took at least a decade after Marshall's death for him to be proven right, with the triumph of the internet. (18-19)

Après tout, cette conception du *medium* qui supplante le message aboutit-elle à la création d'un univers privé de toute authenticité ? Un univers balayé par des images vidées de leur essence, à des jeux d'apparence et à des « simulacres » ? Oui, selon Jean Baudrillard, qui, dans son ouvrage *Simulacres et Simulation*, parle de surfaces sans profondeur, de miroirs qui ne réfléchiraient qu'eux-mêmes et derrière lesquels ne se cacherait aucune vérité.

Néanmoins, afin de remonter à l'origine de ces réactions critiques, n'oublions pas que dans les années 1960, McLuhan était le premier à attirer l'attention du monde vers les nouveaux médias et à exalter leur toute-puissance, que ce soit la radio, la télévision, le téléphone, le télécopieur, la presse, etc.. Il est désormais connu que McLuhan a considéré les médias d'une façon globale et qu'il a été ainsi le chef de file d'une pensée technodéterministe des médias dont l'influence se fait encore sentir plus d'un demi-siècle plus tard chez des théoriciens au Canada et ailleurs sur la planète. Dans la lignée de McLuhan, rappelons les penseurs français contemporains Michel Serres ou Régis Debray et le Canadien Derrick de Kerckhove ou encore, Pierre Lévy, dont la notion de "global brain"[4] est une expansion du "*global village*" macluhanien, par exemple.

Que dit McLuhan ? C'est le progrès technologique qui détermine prioritairement la forme de civilisation au sein de laquelle l'homme évolue : à l'ère des médias électroniques, nous quittons la « Galaxie Gutenberg »[5] pour anticiper ce qui deviendra la Galaxie Internet. Ou encore : la roue est un prolongement du pied, le livre un prolongement de l'œil, la radio l'extension de l'oreille, le téléphone et la télévision sont l'extension du système nerveux. L'invention de Gutenberg a développé le sens de l'abstraction en sollicitant l'œil, notre sens le plus intellectuel ; les *mass media*, au contraire, mettent en valeur nos sens les plus intuitifs et sollicitent l'ouïe, un sens plus archaïque. Et paradoxe ! Les découvertes de la modernité nous renverraient à un tribalisme d'antan.

Marshall McLuhan a séduit toute une génération d'intellectuels et de penseurs qui ont fait de la noosphère, du cyberespace, de la logosphère, de la médiasphère, des formules-miracle parce qu'elles permettent de réduire toute complexité du monde à un système de relations codées. Selon ces penseurs, les médias déterminent la forme de société dans laquelle nous vivons : « le village global » est au fond la métaphore de la mondialisation. Les médias contribuent au nivelage des cultures, annoncé comme la fin apocalyptique de l'histoire et de la civilisation. Si la pensée de McLuhan a été si bien acceptée par un large public dans les années 1960, c'est qu'elle surestimait le rôle des médias de masse et établissait la prépondérance des grandes entreprises sur les industries culturelles. Mais si ce système contente du monde, en même temps, il hypostasie la réalité.

À partir de cette mise en contexte et en nous penchant sur trois expositions d'art contemporain canadien, nous proposons de réfléchir à la pertinence de la pensée de McLuhan aujourd'hui en vue d'une meilleure compréhension du milieu artistique. Comment les nouveaux outils de communication agissent-ils sur les arts plastiques contemporains au Canada ? Quelle est l'influence des divers médias sociaux sur les pratiques artistiques ? Ou encore, à quel point Internet a-t-il modifié le milieu artistique, notre façon de concevoir, d'analyser et de percevoir les arts ?

2/ Lire McLuhan aujourd'hui

Lire McLuhan aujourd'hui, ce serait chercher le mot ou la phrase qui à un endroit quelconque du texte envahit soudain la conscience du lecteur tel un souvenir auquel il ne s'attendait pas. L'image que l'on se fait de l'expérience intérieure change qualitativement. Une sorte de transparence semble illuminer le texte qu'on est en train de lire. La mémoire individuelle du lecteur cède à une mémoire plus vaste, soucieuse de ne pas imposer ses préjugés. Ces résonnances jettent un défi au discours logique et suscitent souvent un espace de perceptions multisensorielles qui captivent le lecteur. Cependant, la méthode de pensée dans l'écriture de McLuhan a ceci de particulier et de parfois irritant : elle se dispense d'analyse en fournissant plutôt des synthèses. Disciple des artistes et écrivains symbolistes, McLuhan ne semble donner que des conclusions à l'instar des poètes : comme eux, il propose des effets sans donner les causes. Écrivant à partir de la synthèse déjà faite, il ne se soucie pas de faire remonter le lecteur au point de départ d'une pensée. Il l'invite à y faire face d'un coup ou à y renoncer. Il place ses phrases en rapport de résonance. Rappelons une technique des surréalistes qui consistait à juxtaposer deux termes naturellement incompatibles pour faire surgir un éclat d'intelligence entre eux. Il s'agit d'un *mini-happening*, au sens d'une performance, d'une pratique artistique. C'est cet effet de *happening* que nous fait ressentir McLuhan dans ce passage sur les "*hidden effects*" dans *The Global Village.*[6] Dans sa biographie *Marshall McLuhan*, Coupland paraphrase :

> If you have ever sat in a hot and airless lecture room trying to follow the speaker's line of argument, you have experienced the psychic nature of a figure: it is the momentary area of your mind's attention. As you sit there, you will notice perhaps successively a sudden shift in the air, the radiator knocking, an insect buzzing between the screen and the pane, or the pressure of your legs against the chair. Within the context of all the things that exist in that room, points of awareness (attention) will arise and recede. In a larger sense, nothing has meaning except in relation to the environment, medium, or context that contains it. The type on this page is the figure against the ground of the blank page. The figure of the geometric construct is revealed against the void in which it is imagined. The left hemisphere of the brain is figure against the ground of the right brain in Western culture and the opposite for the Oriental. (18)

Dans ces quelques propos de Coupland, McLuhan semble nous inviter à tirer de notre propre expérience des idées stimulantes : c'est la nature des moyens de communication et non pas leur contenu qui donne du sens au monde dans lequel nous vivons ; ce sont les techniques nouvelles, non pas d'emblée l'évolution de l'esprit humain, qui font que l'homme prête attention à ce qui l'entoure. Ces techniques agissent comme des « extensions » de nos sens, comme il le souligne dans sa vision du concept de "*global village*", qui est : "a way of paraphrasing the fact that electronic technologies are an extension of the human central nervous system, and that our planet's collective neural wiring would create a single 24-7 blobby, fuzzy, quasi-sentient metacommunity" (Coupland 18-19). Là encore, les moyens de diffusion se verraient dépouillés de leur substance, et la communication s'érigerait en but ultime de la communication, dans une sorte de tendance autophage. McLuhan ne cesse de poursuivre sa réflexion en concédant aux outils technologiques le pouvoir de s'émanciper de leur créateur, puis d'agir à leur tour sur lui en produisant des effets imprévus qui modifient sa façon d'être et de penser.

Lire McLuhan, c'est aussi essayer – après avoir été saisi de la synthèse – de la rendre disponible, mais c'est avant tout de la percevoir comme le but même de la lecture. C'est dans le même ordre d'idées que Maurice Blanchot souligne, en guise d'avant-propos pour *L'espace littéraire* :

Un livre même fragmentaire, a un centre qui l'attire : centre non pas fixe, mais qui se déplace par la pression du livre et les circonstances de sa composition. Centre fixe aussi, qui se déplace, s'il est véritable, en restant même et en devenant toujours plus central, plus dérobé, plus incertain, plus impérieux. (13)

Comme ce n'est pas l'espace littéraire, mais l'espace acoustique qui intéresse surtout McLuhan, son intuition du centre n'est pas d'emblée basée sur la logique. « L'espace acoustique est une sphère dont le centre est partout et la circonférence nulle part », écrit-il dans *Du cliché à l'archétype*[7], en reprenant une idée de Blaise Pascal dans les *Pensées* (1670). Nous savons que l'espace acoustique est une des métaphores les plus courantes dans l'œuvre de McLuhan. C'est l'espace de la résonance et de la simultanéité globale de toute expérience humaine. L'art en est une des clefs.

Pourquoi le rôle de l'art est-il crucial pour McLuhan ? Rappelons que dans son œuvre-phare, *Pour comprendre les médias : les prolongements technologiques de l'homme*, paru au Canada en anglais en 1964 et traduit en français en 1968, McLuhan ne parle pas explicitement de l'art. Néanmoins, depuis les années 1950, le théoricien se consacre activement à la compréhension des médias comme enjeux épistémologique et artistique. Ainsi, il est possible de synthétiser ses idées sur l'art à partir de ce qu'il écrit sur les médias (presse, télévision, radio, livre etc.) et leurs impacts sur le système nerveux. Dans ce sens, McLuhan distingue quatre caractéristiques de l'art : 1/ l'œuvre d'art s'adresse d'abord aux sens ; 2/ l'œuvre d'art engage le spectateur, entre autres, en exposant le processus de création ; 3/ l'œuvre d'art crée des relations formelles nouvelles, souvent à travers la mosaïque ; 4/ l'œuvre d'art représente une énigme : elle va toujours au-delà du réel.

Qu'est-ce que cela veut dire pour les arts au Canada aujourd'hui ? En discutant certaines répercussions d'internet et des nouveaux outils de communication sur les arts de la francophonie contemporaine, nous nous pencherons particulièrement sur une exposition qui a eu lieu à La Maison des artistes visuels francophones de Saint-Boniface, au Manitoba : *Vision trouble* de l'artiste Annie Briard. Ensuite, nous examinerons la notion de mosaïque à travers deux expositions de Winnipeg : *Our Land. Contemporary Art from the Arctic* à Winnipeg Art Galery et *Superimposition : Sculpture and Image* à la galerie d'art contemporain, Plug In Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA).

3/ Vision trouble d'Annie Briard et l'impact d'Internet sur l'art aujourd'hui

Pour Annie Briard, artiste montréalaise qui vit à Vancouver et qui a exposé dans de nombreuses galeries au Canada et à l'étranger, l'image est intimement liée au sens de la vue, la vision étant « le moyen le plus poignant pour saisir ce que nous comprenons du monde qui nous entoure ».[8] L'artiste s'intéresse aux « actes physiques de la lumière » et tente de « comparer [s]a réalité à la [n]ôtre »,[9] ce qui fait, entre autres, l'objet de l'exposition présentée du 21 avril au 28 mai 2016 à la Maison des artistes visuels de Saint-Boniface au Manitoba.

À l'instar de McLuhan qui s'interroge sur l'impact des médias sur la vue, Annie Briard réfléchit à la manière dont l'image influence nos regards et le positionnement de nos yeux. Dans son art, l'image peut être en mouvement, captée, simulée, construite, fixe, et même provenir de divers horizons : de la mémoire, de ses souvenirs, ses rêves, ses fantasmes. Au fond, le parti pris de *Vision trouble* est de réfléchir aux espaces entre le visible et l'imaginaire en jouant sur l'image et, par le fait même, sur la vision. Passionnée de détails et minutieuse dans sa technique, Annie Briard semble piéger le regardeur le plus assidu, qui aurait du mal à déjouer les artifices de sa démarche quand il s'agit de retracer les étapes de son processus créatif derrière les séries d'images qui lui sont présentées. Car, pour reprendre McLuhan : une exposition d'Annie Briard, ça ne se regarde pas, ça s'éprouve.

L'exposition *Vision trouble* met en lumière, d'une part, la troisième dimension des arts plastiques, avec des installations immersives et des productions utilisant la vidéo, la sculpture, le dessin et la photographie, qui nous plongent dans le champ de la phénoménologie de la réception, voire dans celui de l'intersubjectif et de la relation à l'œuvre. D'autre part, le montage de Briard se situe dans la fausse troisième dimension, celle de l'illusion optique rendue possible par l'intermédiaire de lunettes 3D devant une œuvre à deux dimensions. Bref, nous sommes immergés, « dedans », pour reprendre Blanchot. Difficile donc de s'imaginer cette exposition ; il faudrait, plus que la voir, la vivre, l'éprouve de tout son corps pour en déployer le sens. Par ailleurs, Douglas Coupland, dans sa biographie sur McLuhan, reconnaît l'importance de l'expérience dans la perception de l'espace et du volume : "Marshall wasn't simply discussing the way we perceive volume but rather the way those volumes are *experienced*" (Coupland 147).

Pour revenir à Annie Briard : elle détient un bac en Beaux-Arts de l'université Concordia et une maîtrise en arts médiatiques de l'Université d'art et design Emily Carr. Sa pratique artistique est fortement engagée dans une recherche formelle et théorique à la croisée de la psychologie, des neurosciences et de la littérature (pensons à son œuvre *Le Marronnier*, inspirée de *La Nausée* de Sartre). Nous n'avons pas tort d'affirmer que par l'interdisciplinarité de ses préoccupations, son travail explore des questions dans la lignée de Marshall McLuhan. Dans son *artist statement*, Annie Briard affirme:

> I am interested in the multiplicity of perception paradigms, differing within the fields of psychology, phenomenology, neuroscience and film theory. There is space for creative experimentation within the gaps and intersections between these models. Our sensorial system – physically fallible and influenced by memory, mood, ideology – mediates what we know of the surrounding world. Sometimes, the limits between our ideal and physical visions become blurred. How, then, does what I see compare to what you see? How does this perception influence our way of being in the world, of encountering wonder, and communing with one another?

Les œuvres de *Vision trouble* relèvent d'une « multistabilité dans la perception humaine ».[10] Suivant ce concept, le monde est "a fictional construct, […] where 'truth' is always provisional, subject to interpretation, relative to the position of the observer" (Jirgens, "Virtual Realities and Chaos" 148).

Il en va de même pour le titre de l'exposition, *Vision trouble*, où le mot « vision » est au singulier. On pourrait le prendre pour une vérité objective, mais c'est plutôt une construction déterminée par nos différentes perceptions. Selon cette perspective, on pourrait avancer une idée de Gaston Bachelard, pour qui l'œuvre permet l'expérience du monde extérieur et intérieur et montre « la correspondance de l'immensité de l'espace du monde et de la profondeur de "l'espace du dedans" » (Bachelard, *La Poétique de l'espace* 186). Le spectateur attentif devant les installations d'Annie Briard remarque que les images – sortes de paysages-lumière qui semblent fixes au premier regard – changent et se transforment : la lumière du soleil sur les arbres fluctue, l'image prend vie, la tête d'un personnage remue. Certains spectateurs s'en rendent compte, d'autres peut-être pas du tout. Entre ce qu'on perçoit ou non, un objet artistique nous fait pourtant signe, nous rappelant qu'il y a là quelque chose à voir.

Si en 1962, Marshall McLuhan, dans son livre *The Gutenberg Galaxy,* soulignait l'évolution de l'homme d'une communauté tribale à la modernité en se référant à des cultures orales et à des cultures mécaniques ("*acoustic space*" vs. "*mechanical culture*") – aujourd'hui, nous pouvons mesurer l'impact d'internet, des sites de partage et des réseaux sociaux en termes de transformation des pratiques artistiques et d'assurance d'une pérennité des œuvres. Rappelons encore Coupland, qui écrit :

> Marshall defined tribal societies as oral cultures whose members used emotionally laden speech to communicate. These non-literate societies were politically engaged, emotionally charged, tightly woven together, and unified. They lived in what Marshall called "acoustic space."
>
> This space was eroded by the phonetic alphabet. It stripped speech of its emotional dimension, creating in its Finneganian wake linear, individualistic, Western Man – "Gutenberg Man". Beginning in the sixteenth century, the eye overtook the ear as man's dominant sense organ. The printing press was ultimately responsible for the Industrial Revolution, the middle class, nationalism, and capitalism, ultimately creating a "mechanical culture." (Coupland 164)

Il est certain que de nos jours, internet est devenu presqu'un passage obligé pour nombre d'artistes, surtout s'ils tiennent à garder l'attention sur leur art et s'ils souhaitent privilégier des rencontres – virtuelles, et pas seulement – avec d'autres artistes, des collectionneurs, des commissaires d'exposition, des directeurs de galerie, des critiques et le public. La présence culturelle sur internet se traduit de différentes manières : conception et réalisation de vidéos, partage de ces dernières sur les réseaux ou en exposition ; mise en service de sites d'artistes en arts visuels avec accès à une galerie virtuelle ; apparition de l'art mobile, qui est toute forme de créativité composée à partir d'un appareil mobile, d'un téléphone ou d'une tablette.

Au fond, au centre de ce type d'art, l'instantanéité, la connectivité et la dimension collective priment. Ajoutons à cela, la dématérialisation des œuvres et l'hybridation des pratiques. Dans tous les cas, nous sommes placés devant l'expérience ; l'expérience qui était essentielle pour McLuhan et qui a motivé son désir d'analyser presque tout ce qui l'entourait.[11] C'est ce désir d'expérimentation et d'expérience auquel nous convie également l'exposition d'Annie Briard.

4/ Critique et effet de mosaïque dans deux expositions d'art contemporain à Winnipeg

La contribution la plus marquante de McLuhan à l'examen de la pensée occidentale dans les années 1960 a été de lui faire prendre conscience d'un certain nombre d'impasses, parmi lesquelles le fait que la logique formelle est remise en cause dans un monde acoustique. À cela s'ajoute le fait que l'époque de l'électrique n'est plus celle du raisonnement déductif et de l'analyse des opérations élémentaires. Elle est celle de la simultanéité, donc celle de la réflexion sur les enchaînements et les constructions hybrides. Il est désormais connu que la révolution des médiums bouleverse le sens de la perception, la notion d'environnement, la capacité d'assimilation et la conception des arts en général, que ce soit la peinture, la sculpture, l'architecture, le cinéma, etc., qui deviennent d'« anciennes » formes d'art par rapport aux nouvelles : la radio, la télévision, la vidéo, par exemple.

Dans les années 1960, McLuhan posait une question qui n'a pas perdu de sa pertinence : les « anciennes » formes d'art, qui ne semblent plus génératrice d'avant-gardes, sont-elles condamnées à perdre de leur importance ? Ou bien, continuent-elles à subir des métamorphoses dont on ne cesse de discuter la teneur ? Pour y répondre, sans doute a-t-on besoin de reconnaître le dynamisme des transformations successives qui ont eu lieu dans le domaine des arts plastiques, pas seulement au temps de McLuhan mais bel et bien aujourd'hui. C'est ce que nous allons montrer à partir de deux expositions d'art contemporain à Winnipeg.

Avant de parler de l'exposition *Our Land. Contemporary Art from the Arctic*, organisée par la Winnipeg Art Galery en collaboration avec le gouvernement de Nunavut et le musée Peabody Essex en Nouvelle-Angleterre, arrêtons-nous un instant sur la manière dont le penseur québécois Pierre Bertrand conçoit l'artiste. Bertrand écrit :

> L'artiste, dans son art comme dans sa vie, ne procède pas à partir d'une foi, d'une croyance, d'un principe. Mais c'est quelque chose en lui, d'invisible, d'imperceptible qui ne demande qu'à être, à la source de tous les devenirs, qu'à s'exprimer, à être à la source de toutes les actions. […] Cette force de vie, qui est essentiellement *force de joie*, est réellement invisible, imperceptible, elle est même presque au-delà de la sensation, de la perception. C'est comme être en vie. […] Tel est le moteur de tout art digne de ce nom, y compris bien sûr l'art de vivre. (15-16)

Pourquoi cette évocation de l'artiste ici ? Parce que l'exposition *Our Land* se présente comme une mosaïque d'histoires individuelles – joyeuses et sombres – d'artistes qui partagent leur art de vivre et de créer, et qui nous dévoilent ainsi la grande histoire de leur communauté, celle des Inuit – ces populations qui occupent depuis des centaines de générations, la vaste étendue de l'Arctique, de la Sibérie à l'Alaska, du Canada au Groenland. Dans le catalogue de l'exposition *Our Land*, on lit :

> L'art inuit puise dans un riche patrimoine culturel. Il a fait naître, autrefois, chants, récits, danses, sculptures et certains objets utilitaires d'une beauté remarquable. Aujourd'hui, viennent s'ajouter à ce patrimoine d'expression, la gravure, la photographie, la musique populaire et la réalisation vidéo. (Monroe 24)

Les œuvres d'art inuit présentées dans l'exposition : sculptures, gravures, litographies, tapisseries, photographies, vidéos, manteaux en fourrure portés par les shamans, constituent une véritable mosaïque de l'univers inuit, et à la fois, elles dépeignent des récits de vie et le quotidien de ces gens. Les Inuit respectent la parole réfléchie et l'écoute, aptitudes qu'ils estiment essentielles à la cohésion et la survie collective. Dans cette optique, l'art du récit dépasse le simple divertissement. Il s'agit d'une expression privilégiée de transmission des valeurs de la collectivité. Avant tout, l'art inuit fait état de l'être. Etre Inuit ne signifie pas simplement parler l'Inuktitut ou maîtriser les compétences nécessaires à la vie dans l'Arctique. Il s'agit d'être un *Inuk* :

> […] un être humain qui incarne la perspective, l'optique et le regard de l'Inuk sur le monde. Le savoir ancestral inuit, *l'Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit*, véhicule les valeurs inuites, la vision du monde, la langue, l'organisation sociale, le savoir dynamique

> de la vie, les perceptions et les attentes. (Monroe 24)

Il est intéressant de noter que dans les années 1950 et 1960, dans *Explorations 8* (1957) et dans la version revue de ce recueil, *Verbi-Voco-Visual Explorations*[12], parue en 1967, Marshall McLuhan s'intéressait déjà aux cultures et aux pratiques artistiques des peuples autochtones du Grand Nord canadien, particulièrement aux Inuits appelés alors Eskimos. Le chapitre "No Upside Down in Eskimo Art" (1-2) est révélateur de ses intérêts. Dans les pas de l'anthropologue Edmund Carpenter, avec qui il a collaboré, McLuhan reconnaît la force des "Eskimo space concepts, their mechanical skill and their power of accurate mapping of islands whose shores had not been seen but where the sounds of water alone gave them contour" (1). Il est évident que les capacités sensorielles autant des Inuit que des Eskimos sont remarquables, ce qui nous permet de souligner la pertinence de l'intuition de McLuhan et Carpenter, et l'actualisation de ces réflexions dans des productions artistiques contemporaines, comme l'exposition *Our Land*.

Mais quelle est la situation des Inuit aujourd'hui ? Qu'est-ce que l'exposition *Our Land* nous apprend sur la vie et l'art des Inuit contemporains ?

En parcourant l'espace du musée, en lisant les extraits de texte disposés sur les murs dans les salles d'exposition, on réalise vite que les Inuit d'aujourd'hui, y compris le peuple du Nunavut, font face à d'énormes défis, bien différents des contraintes d'il y a une ou deux générations. Les préoccupations de sauvegarde de la langue, des traditions et des savoirs inuits sont brouillées par une nouvelle réalité où priment la télévision, la radio, internet, les réseaux sociaux etc. Dans ce contexte, une exposition comme *Our Land* fait bel et bien figure d'initiative exceptionnelle de sauvegarde de l'héritage ancestral et contemporain inuit. Il s'agit aussi d'une belle collaboration entre les gouvernements du Canada et du Nunavut, le ministère de la Culture, de la Langue, des Aînés et de la Jeunesse et le musée Peabody Essex[13] pour préserver un héritage unique des peuples du Nord canadien.

En outre, l'exposition multilingue (Inuktitut, anglais et français), la référence à la série télévisuelle *Nunavut* et au film de renommée internationale *Atanarjuat : l'homme rapide* qui a influencé le montage des œuvres dans l'exposition, ainsi que la diversité des objets d'art (sculptures, gravures, peintures, tapisseries, vidéos, etc.) réalisés par des artistes issus de différentes régions polaires : Cape Dorset, Igloolik, Panniqtuuq – tout cela nous permet d'évoquer la notion de « mosaïque » qu'a explorée Marshall McLuhan dans les années 1960. C'est une manière de jeter des passerelles entre le passé et le présent en soulignant l'importance de la pensée de McLuhan et sa pertinence aujourd'hui en vue d'éclaircir la mise ensemble de différents objets dans une exposition contemporaine et leurs significations.

Après tout, que dit McLuhan sur la mosaïque ? Pour y répondre, contextualisons d'abord la question. Lorsqu'il écrit pour des contemporains immergés dans une civilisation de l'audiovisuel, McLuhan rompt délibérément avec les formes de l'écrit linéaires et rationnelles, telles que les a consacrées l'usage académique. De la sorte, pour mieux rendre compte de la rupture apportée par la « période typographique » dans le cours des civilisations, il rédige *The Gutenberg Galaxy* sous la forme d'une mosaïque de petits paragraphes, les chapitres étant précédés de résumés qui ajoutent de l'information, contribuant à la complexité du total. McLuhan justifie son choix dans ces mots: « La mosaïque constitue le seul moyen de faire apparaître les opérations causales dans l'histoire » (McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy* 45).

Par ailleurs, McLuhan introduit une perspective radicalement nouvelle dans la façon de conceptualiser les médias. Refusant de se cantonner aux technologies capables de véhiculer des messages – telles que l'écriture, l'imprimé, le cinéma ou la télévision – il considère toutes les technologies susceptibles de transformer, pour l'homme, l'expérience sensible de la distance et du temps, et donne à la notion de média, une extension considérable : la roue est médiatrice du pied et ainsi son « agent anti-inflammatoire » (McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy* 45), le vêtement est médiateur de la peau, etc. Comme nous disions plus haut : ces technologies font sens par elles-mêmes et non par le contenu des messages qu'elles véhiculent :

> C'est une des principales caractéristiques des médias que le contenu nous en cache la nature […]. La lumière et l'électricité en effet sont distinctes de l'usage qu'on en fait. Elles abolissent le temps et l'espace dans la société exactement comme la radio, le télégraphe, le téléphone et la télévision et imposent une participation en profondeur. (McLuhan, *Pour comprendre les médias* 62)

L'originalité de cette vision est certes rassemblée dans l'aphorisme : *the medium is the message*. Prenant à contre-pied le schéma linéaire de la communication, McLuhan affirme que les médias, par leur existence même, et indépendamment des messages qu'ils véhiculent, imposent leur logique de consommation aux civilisations qui les façonnent. Cela lui permet de repenser une histoire de l'humanité en trois grandes époques : d'abord, l'ère tribale, où dominait la parole, puis, l'ère typographique, déterminée par l'imprimé, et enfin, l'ère moderne, retribalisée par les médias électroniques. Cette vision ne fait-elle pas figure de mosaïque ? Oui, puisque nous pouvons envisager la mosaïque comme « un lieu composite où coexistent, de manière irénique (tolérance envers les croyances différentes), et non contradictoire, toutes les valeurs entassées au cours de l'histoire » (Dällenbach, *Mosaïque* 167), selon la conception de Lucien Dällenbach.

Étant donné que la diversité de l'exposition *Our Land. Contemporary Art from the Arctic* porte sur la multiplicité des productions artistiques, sur l'hétérogénéité des individus, des populations et des histoires de vie, la notion de mosaïque – telle qu'exposée par McLuhan, et plus tard, par Dällenbach – nous permet d'envisager l'être-ensemble des différences dans un montage stimulant et inclusif[14]. Cette approche est également celle des perspectives multi- et transculturelles articulées à la littérature, dans la conception du critique canadien Patrick Imbert, pour qui : « ce qui importe dans les récits multi- et transculturels, c'est justement cet instant plein, complet, mais dans sa dimension positive, celle de la reconnaissance de l'autre et de soi vis-à-vis de l'autre » (Imbert, « Multiculturalisme, violence fondatrice et récit 29). Ainsi est-il du « coup de foudre » qui agit comme une épiphanie permettant de reconnaître l'altérité positivement et d'aller au-delà du cliché ou des situations problématiques.

L'idée de mosaïque comme cohabitation d'éléments cosmopolites se retrouve aussi dans la deuxième exposition qui nous intéresse. Cette fois, il s'agit d'une exposition d'art contemporain occidental, intitulée *Superimposition: Sculpture and Image*, qui a eu lieu à la galerie Plug In Institute of Contemporary Art de Winnipeg. C'est un montage-mosaïque qui réunit le travail de huit femmes artistes canadiennes et européennes : Nadia Belerique, Valérie Blass, Ursula Johnson, Kelly Lycan, Ursula Mayer, Kristin Nelson, Dominique Rey et Andrea Roberts. Ces artistes (2 francophones, 3 anglophones, 1 autochtone et 2 germanophones) travaillent toutes dans l'interdisciplinaire : de la sculpture à l'architecture, en passant par la photographie, la vidéo, la science-fiction, le textile ou la performance. Par-delà la diversité de leurs préoccupations, ce qui donne l'unité de cette attrayante exposition est la manière dont chacune des artistes et les huit ensemble réfléchissent à la capacité de l'homme et de la femme contemporains de faire l'expérience des objets, des images, des films et des performances – ce qui rejoint la conception de McLuhan sur le rôle déterminant de la perception et de l'expérience dans la compréhension des médias et du monde.

Il y a plus d'une « superposition » ("*superimposition*") dans cette exposition : entre la sculpture et l'image, entre la photographie et l'installation. Mais ce qui est intéressant, c'est que l'acte de "*superimposition*" introduit le visiteur à un espace en trois dimensions, où il se déplace et se positionne en sorte que ce qui est caché ou presqu'invisible se dévoile, devient visible. Dans cette démarche ludique, s'active ce que Marshall McLuhan nommait expérimenter le monde et l'art par les sensations, et non pas d'emblée, par la logique et la raison.

En bref, les œuvres de l'exposition : relèvent d'une passion évidente pour le travail sur l'image et la manière dont différentes images-mosaïque entrent en relations et se transforment pour donner l'impression d'espace ; pas seulement un espace plat, uni-dimensionnel, mais tri-dimensionnel.

Nadia Belerique, *I hate you don't leave me*, 2015 (4 inkjet photographs mounted to aluminum and Plexiglas; 3 powder coated rolled steel; carpet)

Valérie Blass, *Vices – épater,* 2014 (Photographic print on plaster base, pipe, pigment); *High-up, dignitary, panjandrum, high muckamuck*, 2015 (Styrofoam, foamcoat, gouache, steel, rubber, inkjet print on cotton, metal hanging structure).

Ursula Johnson, *Ode to Miss Easgle Testickle*, 2016 (yellow/silver birch bark, black ash ribbon, acid free watercolour paper, PH neutral adhesive).

Kelly Lycan, *Save*, 2008 (carpet bench) ; *I Walked Into a Moment*, 2014 (2 inkjet prints).

Ursula Mayer, *Drawing Abdroid 6*, 2014 (cast concrete) ; *See you in the Flesh 1,2,3, & 4*, 2014 (glass and metal) ; *Gonda*, 2012 (16mm film on HD ; 30 min).

Kristin Nelson, *A Model for Living*, 2016 (porcelain).

Dominique Rey, *Untitled #3 (Photo Assemblage)* (laser cut Plexiglas, inkjet prints, wood) ; *Continental Drift,* 2016 (collage) ; *Sejourn, diptych*, 2016 (collage) ; *A Momentary Lapse of Reason*, 2016 (assemblage).

Andrea Roberts, *The Stridents #1 (sigh, gasp, hiss, rale),* 2016 (mixed-media) ; *The Stridents #2(total insolvency),* 2016 (polycotton, steel) ; *The Strident #3 (there is gold dust),* 2016 (mixed-media) ; *A Mirror for Recluses*, 2016 (sound installation).

Ainsi, par le biais de l'exposition d'art contemporain *Superimposition: Sculpture and Image*, nous revenons à McLuhan et à son idée du "*the medium is the message*", pour affirmer que toute œuvre d'art est susceptible de stimuler notre pensée par elle-même, indépendamment de son contenu.

4/Conclusion

Les écrits de Marshall McLuhan ont suscité à la fois passion et critique. On lui a notamment reproché d'être ouvertement déterministe et de faire comme si la société était aveugle à elle-même et qu'une élite devait se charger de lui révéler ce qui est occulté. Par ailleurs, Umberto Eco, dans *La guerre du faux*[15] en 1985 a violemment critiqué autant le parti pris épistémologique – ne pas séparer le message et le vecteur – que la forme du propos de McLuhan, délibérément obscure, notamment dans l'analyse des médias « chauds », tels l'imprimerie, la presse et le cinéma, capables de permettre un détachement critique, et des médias « froids », telle la télévision, engageant les sens et les facultés du spectateur et produisant une forme d'hallucination. Enfin, on a reproché à McLuhan le fait d'associer étroitement une époque à un média dominant, ce qui permettrait mal de rendre compte de phénomènes importants comme le réinvestissement de contenus d'un média ancien dans un média nouveau ou les liens entre divers médias à une même époque.

En effet, McLuhan est un de ces auteurs exceptionnels à la pensée aussi créative que déconcertante qui continue à nous interpeller aujourd'hui, comme le montre l'analyse des pratiques artistiques des trois expositions d'art contemporain ici convoquées. McLuhan est parmi ces "*extraordinary Canadians*" – pour reprendre l'intitulé de la collection où est publiée la biographie de Dougas Coupland, *Marshall McLuhan* – dont l'œuvre simultanée au développement mondial de la télévision a donné lieu à des concepts stimulants et souples, qui ont permis de penser non seulement les transformations en cours dans la société, mais aussi les mutations dans les domaines de l'art et de la culture, en général.

Finalement, nous n'avons pas tort d'affirmer que des notions comme le "*global village*" ou la « mosaïque », par exemple, nous permettent aujourd'hui de dévoiler de nouvelles significations dans l'art actuel et de mesurer la force d'anticipation de la pensée de Marshall McLuhan qui, dès les années 1960, semblait nous avertir à la fois des aspects positifs et des travers du monde virtuel.

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Notes

1 Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacres et Simulation*, Paris, Galilée, 1985.

2 Voir : Lucien Sfez, Gilles Coutlée (dir.), *Technologies et symboliques de la communication*, Grenoble, Presses universitaires de Grenoble, 1990.

3 Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extension of Man,* Mentor, New York, 1964.

4 Voir : Pierre Lévy, *The Semantic Sphere I: Computation, Cognition and Information Economy,* London, ISTE, 2011, particulièrement le chapitre : 'The prophets of media and the 'global brain''.

5 Voir : Marshall McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy,* Toronto, The University of Toronto Press, 1962.

6 Voir : Marshall McLuhan, *The Global Village. Transformation in World Life and Media in the 21st Century*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1989.

7 Marshall McLuhan, *Du cliché à l'archétype, la foire du sens*, avec Wilfred Watson, trad. de l'anglais par Derrick de Kerckove, Montréal/Paris, Mame/Hurtubise HMH, 1973. *Il existe dans les *Pensées* de Blaise Pascal une comparaison devant laquelle depuis deux cents ans s'extasie la critique : Pascal parlant de ce monde visible qui n'est qu'« un trait imperceptible dans l'ample sein de la nature », ajoute, sans aucune référence – « C'est une sphère dont le centre est partout et la périphérie nulle part » (Éd. Léon Brunschvicg, Section II, 72).

8 Propos de l'artiste cités sur les murs de l'exposition.

9 *Ibid.*

10 Dépliant de présentation de l'exposition.

11 En parlant de McLuhan, Coupland écrit: "As for an anthropologist, any artifact that might represent a culture was up for analysis" (116).

12 New York/Frankfurt/Villefranche-sur-Mer, Something Else Press, Inc., 1967.

13 Voir le catalogue de l'exposition. *Our Land. Contemporary Art from the Arctic*, *op.cit.,* p. 24.

14 Lien avec le multiculturalisme canadien.

15 Umberto Eco, *La Guerre du faux*, trad. de l'italien par Myriam Tanant, Paris, Grasset et Fasquelle, 1985.

SONGLINES, NOT STUPOR: CHERYL L'HIRONDELLE'S NIKAMON OHCI ASKI: SONGS BECAUSE OF THE LAND AS TECHNOLOGICAL CITIZENSHIP ON THE LANDS CURRENTLY CALLED "CANADA"

JESSICA JACOBSON-KONEFALL
MAY CHEW
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Abstract | *Marshall McLuhan's ideas have been foundational in shaping understandings about the role of media and mediation in landscape, identity, and nationhood. At the same time, his theories remain tethered to a liberal humanist schematic of citizenship and technological modernity, which advances—implicitly or not—colonial constructions of the land as terra nullius, and thus severely limits or frustrates attempts to enlist them in anti-colonial analyses. In response, this paper places McLuhan into dialogue with Cree artist and scholar Cheryl L'Hirondelle, arguing that such a move can begin to disrupt the settler underpinnings in McLuhan's ideas, and also broaden the potential for these ideas to be applied within contemporary queries into decolonial citizenships on Turtle Island. Our paper focuses on L'Hirondelle's nikamon ohci askiy (songs because of the land). An interactive digital platform framed through Cree cosmology, nikamon ohci askiy is a multilayered work that explores technological mediations of nation, land, and Indigenous citizenship. Similar to other Indigenous theories of new media, this work challenges the view of land as barren/hostile, in particular by emphasizing land-based animate relationships. Ultimately, this paper argues that the new media ecologies proffered through L'Hirondelle's work contest settler liberal citizenship, and reorients understandings of "networks" and "the digital" as crucially grounded in Indigenous notions of reciprocality and relationality*

Résumé | *Les idées de Marshall McLuhan ont été fondamentales dans l'élaboration des compréhensions sur le rôle des médias et de la médiation dans le paysage, l'identité, et l'idée de la nation. En même temps, ses théories restent attachées à schéma humaniste libéral de la citoyenneté et de la modernité technologique qui avance, implicitement ou non, les constructions coloniales de la terre comme terra nullius, et limite ainsi ou freine sévèrement les tentatives de les enrôler dans des analyses anticoloniales. En réponse, cet article établit un dialogue entre McLuhan et Cheryl L'Hirondelle, artiste et universitaire crie, soutenant qu'un tel mouvement peut commencer à perturber les fondements qu'ont les colons des idées de McLuhan, et également élargir la possibilité que ces idées soient appliquées dans les requêtes contemporaines de décolonisation des citoyennetés sur l'Île de la Tortue. Notre article se concentre sur les nikamon ohci askiy de L'Hirondelle (chansons à cause de la terre). Plateforme numérique interactive encadrée par la cosmologie crie, nikamon ohci askiy est un travail complexe qui explore les médiations technologiques de la nation, de la terre, et de la citoyenneté autochtone. Comme d'autres théories autochtones sur les nouveaux médias, ce travail remet en question la vision de la terre comme stérile/hostile, en particulier en mettant l'accent sur les relations animées terrestres. En fin de compte, cet article soutient que les écologies des nouveaux médias véhiculées par le travail de L'Hirondelle contestent la citoyenneté libérale des colons et réorientent la compréhension des « réseaux » et du « numérique » comme fondamentalement ancrée dans les notions autochtones de réciprocité et de relationnalité.*

> *…we stake a claim here too as being an intrinsic part of this place–the very roots, or more appropriately* routes*. So let's use our collective Indigenous unconscious to remember our contributions and the physical beginnings that were pivotal in how this virtual reality was constructed.*
> *-Cheryl L'Hirondelle, "Codetalkers Recounting Signals of Survival,"* Coded Territories

In *nikamon ohci askiy: songs because of the land,* Cree new media artist Cheryl L'Hirondelle highlights Indigenous practices of decolonization in the arts, challenging assumptions about nation, liberal citizenship, land, and technological modernity. L'Hirondelle's theoretical and artistic works advance Indigenous citizenship networks towards a decolonized civic ecology. L'Hirondelle's work *nikamon ohci askiy: songs because of the land* presents a peopled landscape resonant with voices and histories. *nikamon ohci askiy: songs because of the land* demolishes the settler mythology of land given to us by canonical national thinkers including Marshall McLuhan and George Grant, who offer its understanding as a barren and hostile challenge to overcome in the liberal humanist trial of Canadian citizenship. As an iconic Canadian media theorist, McLuhan shaped views of land, national identity, and citizenship through the lens of media. By delineating and embodying Indigenous histories of land and networked subjectivity in media arts, L'Hirondelle figures technological relationships from Cree perspectives that differ from those of McLuhan's arguments about Canadian nationhood and the technological individual.

Indigenous Media Art and Civic Ecology: nikamon ohci askiy: songs because of the land

The accounts and works of Indigenous theorists, artists, and media technologies differ from their presentation in McLuhan's arguments, although Indigenous articulations of new media do resonate at times with his vision of a global—though Eurocentric and colonial—framing of the return of tribal man through media (Loft, "Mediacosmology" 181). McLuhan does not emphasize the situated colonial national context of his perspective and writing. His argument around processes of what he calls "retribalization" places attention on the potential for "the primitive role of art" to serve as "consolidator and a liaison" with the cosmos (qtd. in Loft, "Mediacosmology" 181-2). In this specific aspect, Mohawk scholar and theorist of new media art Steven Loft writes that McLuhan "nails it" as regards Indigenous praxis and cosmology (181). Yet McLuhan's formulation is overly abstract; his "tribal" media argument presumes an unmarked world citizen within an undoubtedly abstract and liberal framework that, while it dissembles back into the "primitive" (181) is not grounded, as Indigenous media theory is, in the specificity of relationships in specific lands within which technology is figured in Indigenous ontological contexts.

Winnebago scholar Renya Ramirez provides a context for discussing Indigenous media art when, drawing on Indigenous women's experiences, she writes from the ground up against settler-colonial frameworks of liberal humanist citizenship such as McLuhan's. Ramirez argues that urban Native peoples practice relational citizenship by composing "hubs" formed by cultural processes and geographic places, including the use of technology, thereby "*re-member[ing] the native body* torn apart by colonization" (23, emphasis added). For Dene theorist Glen Coulthard, this Indigeneity:

> is deeply *informed* by what the land *as system of reciprocal relations and obligations* can teach us about living our lives in relation to one another and the natural world in non-dominating and non-exploitative terms; [a] place based foundation of *grounded normativity*…[underlies] the modalities of Indigenous land-connected practices and longstanding experiential knowledge that inform and structure our ethical engagements with the world and our relationships with human and nonhuman others over time. (13)

Ramirez and Coulthard focus on contemporary translocal and land-based relationships and their longstanding forms. Unlike for McLuhan in his famous formulation, content here is as significant as form. Hubs embody land-based relationships between city and reserve spaces, between Indigenous nations, and between settler and Indigenous peoples (Ramirez). Indigenous citizenship practices, oppositional to settler framings of the concept, originate from the grassroots practices of Indigenous communities on their own terms. Indigenous media art is produced in the longstanding and unfolding context of these land-based relationships.

Loft takes a genealogical stance in relation to the term *new media art*, situating it in the function of media within Indigenous cosmologies that are always in flux and, most importantly, connected to the land. Loft discusses what he calls the media ecologies (Cubitt; Fuller; Strate)[1] of Indigenous art as longstanding in Indigenous societies, citing "winter counts, birch bark scrolls, and the Aztec codices" as a few examples ("Mediacosmology" 172). Loft shows how media has functioned for Indigenous peoples in ways that are consonant with the functions of cyberspace and digital forms within it, such as hypertext (172). For example, he cites Angela M. Haas, who describes wampum precisely as hypertext, citing it as "an American Indian intellectual tradition of multimedia theory and practice" (77-100). Not only are the forms and concepts that undergird, support, and materialize new media consonant in uninterrupted lines of continuity through Indigenous media ecologies, but, as L'Hirondelle notes, the movement pathways of Indigenous ancestors across the land of North America provide the routes on which settlers built their roads, and these ancient Indigenous routes are the infrastructure for the electrical lines along which digital data travels (L'Hirondelle 152-53). Indigenous thoroughfares, based on relationships with the land and animal nations, form the material networks of movement for new media forms. L'Hirondelle argues that understanding Indigenous sovereignty, especially in relation to media art, requires an awareness of the material ground as it articulates within Indigenous ontologies.

Within Indigenous media histories, land, and its animacies are content, and form follows in a relational equilibrium. As Ahasiw Maskegon-Iskwew writes, "the ancient process of… innovating the application of best practices to suit complex and shifting flows—from a position of equality and autonomy within them, is the macro and micro cosmos of contemporary Indigenous cultures: a truly networked way of being" (n.p.). L'Hirondelle's work is inextricable from its cultural and land-based specificity in the eyes of those who remember land-based Indigenous histories. As Loft argues:

> The phrase "all my relations" is often used to explain the interaction of all things within an evolving, ever changing social, cultural, technological, aesthetic, political, and environmental intellectual framework (what I would refer to as the cosmological dynamic) and can certainly be applied to the landscape of media. Cosmological intellectual ecosystems exist as media, as message, and as a form of knowledge transferal. They are epistemological [ontological] environments wherein notions of nationhood are interspersed with, connected to, and integrated with a larger sense of the plurality of life. ("Decolonizing the Web" xvi)

Indigenous aesthetics emphasize experiential land-based knowledge. Media arts shape conditions of perception in relationship with the land, as they have from time immemorial. Indigenous media, on and with the land, advance Indigenous knowledge that is embodied, material, animate, relational, and land-based. Coulthard situates emphatically land-based, spatial, and ecological grounded normativity of Indigenous worldviews against the temporal context of possessive colonial perpetuity in the theories of the Western left. In many Western media theories, for example, theorists follow Marx in measuring oppression by theft of workers' time and labour, now understood as "attention" (Crary). We can observe this orientation in McLuhan's use of the Narcissus myth to analyze technological subjectivity: Narcissus dies because time passes; in his hypnotic stupor, he starves. Land is absent from this story. Indigenous media arts frequently rearticulate mainstream liberal humanist theorizations of embodiment, technology, and citizenship: the screen-based works capture the viewer; the "time" of attention is held by the priority of the expansive and agential ecological frameworks of Indigenous land.

L'Hirondelle's interactive website, *nikamon ohci askiy: songs because of the land*, is a multidisciplinary work that engages technological mediation of nation, land, and citizenship, including bodily comportment and material and technological relationships. It elucidates a Cree cosmological philosophy conceptually far from the Narcissus myth: that of the teepee pole teachings. The piece began as a technologically recorded performance of L'Hirondelle's walks through Vancouver city spaces in 2006 and continues as an interactive website: *www.vancouversonglines.ca*.

Grunt gallery, which funded the work, reflects upon the complex layers of this project in its publication, *brunt magazine*. The work began as a mobile communication arts project with various conceptual parts developed throughout including: "performance art, concept art, an interactive web-based installation, musical composition, musical performance, compact disc recording, DVD, web 2.0 exhibition (via YouTube, Twitter, Blogger and MySpace), and [a] spirit quest" (Boyce 43). This paper focuses on the website and the various performative/musical parts directly connecting to the online project.

The interactive website embodies and extends L'Hirondelle's projects, which are described on grunt gallery's website:

> During the month of December 2008, the artist will make daily journeys throughout Vancouver and "sing" the landscape she encounters. These encounters will be captured by mobile phone by the artist and whatever other technologies are made

> available by participating viewers/audience (video, photo, audio)… .During the live performances, Cheryl will sing, record and upload audio clips to an online database. Each audio clip will be tagged to one or more of the 16 Cree values. The clips will automatically be available to online audiences interactively through a rich online media experience available at VancouverSonglines.ca. (n.p.)

These sound samples are a compelling aspect of the work, representing her musical communication with her environment, a self-made Cree mapping of place. She explores various downtown urban environments and simultaneously records who, where, and what was immediately surrounding her through impromptu singing into her cell phone (Figure 5). This musical mapping not only became an outlining of the city's urban space, but also a daily or weekly diary of her world as she describes it through city-inspired lyrical and oral history. Glenn Alteen, curator to the project, further explains:

> During its development *nikamon ohci askiy (songs because of the land)* has moved around a lot. It was always about the city and how it was used but we never exactly knew where it started. So we started taking walks. Much of what this project became was envisioned during those walks or because of them. Walking the city with Cheryl continued over many months… .In the genesis of this project for Cheryl was the idea of songlines, an essential part of Australian Aboriginal culture. According to their beliefs ancestral totemic beings sang the landscape into existence and these songs are still used to navigate a territory. Cheryl had just moved to Vancouver and wanted to navigate her new city through songs and audio (n.p.).

Figures 1 and 2. Cheryl L'Hirondelle, nikamon ohci askiy: songs because of the land, grunt gallery, http://www.bruntmag.com/issue5/cheryl-lhirondelle.html.

L'Hirondelle's actions, engaging with the concept of Australian Aboriginal Songlines, map the world through an Indigenous perspective and provide an organic, sonic visualizing of the landmass and its inhabitant animacies. In *Cities as Sustainable Ecosystems: Principles and Practices*, Leonie Sandercock applies the Indigenous perspective of Songlines to urban space. She later expounds on how "Songlines can take many forms in today's digital world. … They can facilitate connections between city dwellers and their bioregions, linking city and country, and providing a tangible broader context for city life" (154). The work, although informed by several various outside influences, is undergirded by Cree cosmological structures in which each sound sample attributes to a value of the teepee pole teachings.[2]

Indigenous new media artists merge personal experiences, Indigenous tradition, technologies, and ecologies. Coulthard makes clear that settler exploitation of Indigenous peoples through technology is a theft of land, or spatial dispossession—what McLuhan's theories render invisible or posit as empty. Indigenous new media arts focusing on civic spaces assert grounded normativity against settler configurations of technology in practices, theory, and ontology. Indigenous new media arts prefigure spatial, relational, and ecological forms of Indigenous nations in multifaceted relationships that challenge the conventional, temporally, and acquisitively oriented settler gaze, and humanistic settler sensorium in technology, through what Steven Loft, Melanie Townsend, and Dana Claxton discuss as Indigenous media and cosmology in their collection, *Transference, Tradition, and Technology: Native New Media Exploring Visual and Digital Culture*.

L'Hirondelle's work alters perspectives on Vancouver and urban space broadly, rearticulating the boundaries between the city and other urban and non-urban Indigenous spaces through a website enabling online interactivity and collective praxis through Cree citizenship forms. In contrast to McLuhan's views that Canadian land is "empty space" that functions as passive content for media forms, these standpoints affirm that colonial and sovereign Indigenous materiality (content) are just as significant as the discursive, narrowly technological, and human perceptual. As Warren writes, "the worldviews conceptualized [in the artists' projects] rebuild the integrity of [an Indigenous environment] for peoples within the particular situations and frameworks defined by the artists' projects" (4). Further, they actively decolonize conceptions of technology and citizenship framed within the lens of humanism. L'Hirondelle's artistic contention is an act of citizenship that participates in constituting peoples eschewing state-based politics of recognition, instead affirming themselves in intergenerational relationship, in relational and contextual practice on the land. Indigenous media, in Taiaiake Alfred's phrase, *creatively contends* with and in the city.

The vancouversonglines website tags the audio-clips with 16 Cree values associated with the teepee pole teachings, interactively visualized on the site's page. The first page presents the viewer with a large black background with three light-blue animated icons: a teepee, branches for a fire, and a button "go." Each icon, when clicked, leads visitors into the teepee teachings. Down to the bottom right, one can see three branches, and an animated blue hand takes one of the branches and drags it to the left where three slender poles are being erected over a fire. The hand drops the stick into the flames and embers rise from the fire, after which the hand turns into a selection tool and the pointer finger touches on one of the rising embers. This animation repeats until the viewer clicks on the word "go," at which point they enter into the body of the website (Figure 3).

A second page presents the words "choose 3," which slowly fade as a third page uploads. As a black background transitions to dark grey-green hues, sixteen Cree syllabic words present in a loose grouping: each word blurs and appears, as if waiting for the viewer. When moving, the viewer can select any three words. Once all three are selected, each statement turns into a wood-like pole and the perspective moves downward on the screen. We are then taken into a darkened landscape that contains a forest, a teepee-like structure, a fire pit, a pile of small logs. One discerns in the right-hand area of the page a distant wolf's silhouette, the Lion's Gate bridge, and obscured mountain ranges (Figure 4).

Following the first page's directions, we raise the teepee poles over the fire. White markings then appear on the upper areas of the poles. Selecting one of these markings, we can see that the pole represents one of the words that we had previously chosen. Each selection causes a digital sound sample of the artist singing a melody. When one adds a few logs from the pile into the fire, the fire gets brighter and embers begin to float out of the pit. By selecting several of the embers, we participate in an interactive self-directed digital sound mixing. On the lower left of the web screen, there is a "reset audio" button, which ceases the digital sound samples when pressed. Selecting another pole builds up the fire once again, adding more embers to create an entirely new sound composition that connects the theory and practice of songlines to the relational praxis of teepee pole teachings.

By developing her musical mapping into a website and DVD, L'Hirondelle underlines how all of her artistic processes reflect accountability to her community. She places herself and the participants that she encountered on the city streets in relationship with online users, creating "place" or an embodied and land-based communal environment framed through Cree cosmology. The teepee pole teachings become a structure assisting individuals in how to interact or engage within community or communal situations. For L'Hirondelle, "[t]he very act of erecting a tipi is a ceremony" (157). These sacred technologies animate in virtual spaces that are composed of the Indigenous material infrastructure of lands and routes.

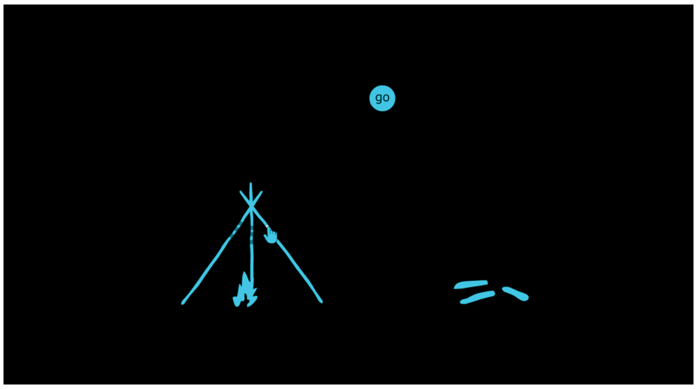

Figure 3. Cheryl L'Hirondelle, nikamon ohci askiy: songs because of the land, grunt gallery, http://www.bruntmag.com/issue5/cheryl-lhirondelle.html.

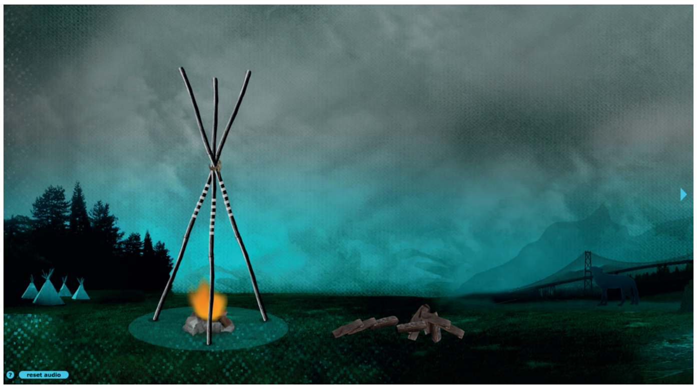

Figure 4. Cheryl L'Hirondelle, nikamon ohci askiy: songs because of the land, grunt gallery, http://www.bruntmag.com/issue5/cheryl-lhirondelle.html.

L'Hirondelle's website-as-participatory-artwork allows the visitor to create their own non-linear perspective of Vancouver and personal relationship with Cree teepee pole teachings. Her singing honours her own body in and with the land, while the media work extends this perspective to other Indigenous peoples who interact with the site. Visitors can explore and create their own recursive and shared experience of Vancouver's time and space through Cree relationship paradigms. In many ways these could not be farther from those articulated by McLuhan on media and "the Canadian question."

McLuhan's Themes: Land as "Empty," Sensorial Extension, and Settler Colonialism

In, "Canada and Counter-Environment," one of his rare undertakings of the Canadian question, McLuhan argues that the Canadian spirit inherits a "war on empty wilderness" from its settler ancestors. Antagonistic relations with the brutality of nature defined a population, forging a particular type instilled with "initiative amidst solitude" ("Canada and Counter-Environment" 75). For McLuhan, the "emptiness" of nation reflects Canada's oscillation between the ballast of British tradition—from which it is alienated—and the lure of American futurity, which it observes as a "spectacular light show from afar" (Marchessault 81). McLuhan claims that Canada is a "counter-environment" that functions as the "psychic theme park" for the U.S., "something like a Hollywood set that simultaneously links the past with the present, a city with the wilderness" ("Canada and Counter-Environment" 73). He references the installation of the United States' Distant Early Warning system (DEW line) in the Canadian north to argue that Canada is an "anti-environment" that provides a neutral setting for the working through of "other people's fantasies" (73). McLuhan's argument is similar to Maurice Charland's on technological nationalism; rather than providing "substance or community" for the construction of a polis, technological nationalism constitutes the nation as reflective surface, or "common carrier" of foreign signals and content (Charland 198). Such constructions of Canada as empty carrier point toward the nation as the triumph of form or mediation. To adapt McLuhan's phrasing, it is medium trumping content. The "absent nation" expresses ambivalence about Canada's technological sovereignty, highlighting colonial exertion wherein the terrain of "nation" becomes a backdrop for the exercise of individual will. The lack of content reveals the power of the technological capitalist structures and the self-sustaining exercise of formal seductions carried ever forward and onward towards totality.

McLuhan's absent nation, as technological drive, reflects colonial constructions of the land as *terra nullius*, land passively "empty" of its original inhabitants and available for settlement. In this vision, technological, material, juridical and imaginative apparatuses "clear" the land, making it an amenable ground for the flowering of European civilization. This absent nation may be an unintended symptom of the conditions for Canada's existence, according to Charland. Under the lens of settler colonialism, however, it reflects an active and willful imperial landscaping. This process embodies Patrick Wolfe's concept of the "logic of elimination," describing the mechanisms of settlers' violent incursions into Indigenous land and communities in order to claim these as their own. Wolfe distinguishes settler colonialism as structure rather than event, reverberating Charland and McLuhan's arguments regarding the "empty nation" predicated through form over content. Elimination becomes the "organizing principal of settler colonial society rather than a one-off (and superseded) occurrence" consigned to a distant past (Wolfe 388).

In Wolfe's view, settlers must perpetually enact the logic of elimination, at both structural and individual levels, in order to naturalize European settlement and render its mechanisms invisible. The analysis of the "absent nation" here is not motivated by mournful clarions to replenish an impotent nation/alism. Instead, the concept hints at how colonial national narratives are mobilized through form, medium, and structures of feeling. These key themes inflect McLuhan's idea of sensory extension through technology, which, while it does not explicitly centre Canada as a foundational context, nonetheless reflects settler-colonial logic.

The sensory extension of man through technology is one of McLuhan's most influential ideas. In *Understanding Media*, McLuhan examines how various media—ranging from the printed word, clothing, the light bulb, and television (to name but a few)—function as prostheses for our bodies and their sensory capacities to extend into the world: "[t]oday, after more than a century of electric technology, we have extended our central nervous system itself in a global embrace, abolishing both space and time as far as our planet is concerned" (19). Here, McLuhan's liberal humanism is on bold display; the "extension" of man assumes the ontological category of "man" tied to the notion that man's body (and its sensory amplitude) can undergo hypnotic externalization and be mirrored forth in cosmic perpetuity as the extension of man's "final phase" (Kroker 19).[33] At the same time, McLuhan tempers the humanist subject by suggesting that, while electronic media extend man's central nervous system out into world, technology also reshapes man, "incorporate[ing] the whole of mankind in us" (20). While George Grant views technology as a force of domination and subjugation, McLuhan believes not only that human freedom and creativity can be unleashed through new media, but also that true human potential is to be achieved not "'outside' the technological experience, but…'inside' the field of technology" (Kroker 64). McLuhan's vision of sensorial extension in technology is hopeful, even celebratory. However, his reference to the myth of Narcissus shows that he also sees that technology can dominate the individual subject.

McLuhan believes that exteriorization induces a state of narcosis—and *failure* of self-recognition—wrought through the traumatic amputation of the self in technology. This perspective relies on the notion of the liberal subject's boundaried body, again a historically specific paradigm of "the human." McLuhan points out that Narcissus comes from narcosis, or numbness. His recounting of the myth inflects less the infatuation with the repeated image so much as the stupor induced through this repetition. For him, bodily and sensory extensions involve narcosis or numbness, because "amplification" through extension/amputation produces a shock that the body then seeks to alleviate through a denial of recognition. Therefore, conceiving of extension as merely ecstatic embodiment misses McLuhan's point regarding auto-amputation as the body's attempt to bring an overstressed and overstimulated system to equilibrium. While this stress and stimulation inheres in McLuhan's theory of technology, it also resonates with his figure of Canadian man, individually struggling in a hostile and barren circumstance wherein technology becomes the form through which it is possible to extend subjectivity and embodiment, while at the same time numbing and misrecognizing. He emphasizes reciprocity with "man's" own technologies rather than with the land or its peoples.

McLuhan's argument on the technological extension and amputation of limbs and nervous systems usefully shades the questions of Canadian national identity and belonging through the lens of media as liberal humanist and settler colonial. He argues that man's extension and amputation (and attendant hypnosis) cannot easily be pried apart. Ecstatic declarations of technological amplification function as intended cures for an overstressed system as well as narcissistic-narcotic yearning to confirm the uncertain body—or Canadian settler subjectivity, citizenship, and nation.

Conclusion

Indigenous theorists of technology in media arts emphasize ongoing land-based animate relationships. We extend these elaborations to show how they inflect accounts of Indigenous land-based citizenship, opposing McLuhan's notions of the "empty" nation. Marshall McLuhan's media theories rarely engage with the question of Canadian identity and nationhood directly, but when they do, McLuhan describes technology as a means for overcoming a hostile empty landscape—not only for heroic Canadian settlers who would prevail over this hostility through the use of technology as colonial endeavour but also for ambivalent settlers caught in an embarrassing crux between the nostalgic bombast of Britain and the American "spectacular light show from afar" (Marchessault 81). McLuhan's theories of empty space and the sensorial extension of man in technology ratify a settler-colonial humanism that ignores the land and other-than-human animacies, while also positing technology as a teleological tool for human beings (settlers) to extend themselves indefinitely, to re-tribalize, to be reborn in an ultimate, cosmic, end-time, technological futurity that moves past the original trauma of technological articulation of the self.

In the context of the sovereignty of Indigenous citizenship and attendant media arts, Indigenous lands provide the material support and a key foundation for digital networks as demonstrated in L'Hirondelle's work. Arts-based approaches to relational urban civic ecology are oriented through Indigenous relationships to land, which Coulthard calls grounded normativity. These foundations accord with technological relationships, where Indigenous arts posit the priority of land-based relationships and decolonize media theories that figure abstract form over animate material content. McLuhan's media theories do not attend to land as the material and animate space of relationship or as an agent in relationships. Media artworks such as L'Hirondelle's *songs because of the land* articulate land-based relationships as Indigenous citizenship.

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Image Notes

Figures 1 and 2. Cheryl L'Hirondelle, *nikamon ohci askiy: songs because of the land*, grunt gallery, http://www.bruntmag.com/issue5/cheryl-lhirondelle.html.

Figure 3. Cheryl L'Hirondelle, *nikamon ohci askiy*: songs because of the land, grunt gallery, http://www.bruntmag.com/issue5/cheryl-lhirondelle.html.

Figure 4. Cheryl L'Hirondelle, *nikamon ohci askiy*: songs because of the land, grunt gallery, http://www.bruntmag.com/issue5/cheryl-lhirondelle.html.

Notes

1 Lance Strate described media ecology as "the study of media environments, the idea that technology and techniques, modes of information and codes of communication play a leading role in human affairs," "Understanding MEA," *In Medias Res 1* (1), Fall 1999. Indigenous conceptions of media ecology differ, decentering the human. See also Ahasiw Maskegon-Iskwew, "Storm Spirits: The Cultural Ecology of Aboriginal New Media Art," *Storm Spirits — Aboriginal New Media Art.* Artist's Statement, 2005. http://stormspirits.ca/English/curatorial.html (Accessed May 4, 2012).

2 Glenn Alteen argues L'Hirondelle's work can be compared to that of the Situationist movement in the 1950's: "In the 1950's the Situationists explored notions of Psycho-geography and central to this was the practice of 'derive' translated in English as drifting. It meant to walk through the landscape with no purpose or destination" (n.p.).

3 Kroker argues that the technological humanism espoused by McLuhan is "expansive, pluralistic, universalistic, and creative" precisely because it is rooted in the perceived alliance between technology and the potential for freedom (14).

MCLUHAN'S PHOTOGRAPHIC GESTALT (AND THE PROJECT OF THE OBJECT WORLD)

TOM MCGLYNN

Marshall McLuhan would often initiate discourse simply to see where the conversation would take him. His abiding interest was the perpetual advent and expanding potential of human communication—its twists and turns of phrase, rather than any point to be made (what one *has* to say) or any ideological resolution. He was fond of interjecting at his public lectures, "I'm putting you on" ("The Medium is the Message"), intentionally deploying the term in a playful misdirection, as Joyce might signify a specific turn of a colloquial Irish phrase with a transcendent epiphany, both as a fool's game to get the language flowing. McLuhan's fooling was akin to the court jester who creatively expresses a transgressive grievance to the accepted rule by making his statements transcendently equivocal and therefore universal. McLuhan's wide-angled lens worked many angles. The residual relevancy of McLuhan's work derives from his ability to look at the kaleidoscopic big picture without getting hamstrung by the delimiting perspective of the historically determined, private subject. His work predicted today's de-subjectification of private identity in social media and the confounding logic of the private subject-as-object within the public network-as-verb of modern communicative media. McLuhan, ultimately, was never after any literal meaning but more a figurative vision of language as projected sense. He would rather play with language than have its force of naming constitute "the wretched mesh or sieve of our (private) attention" (*The Gutenberg Galaxy* 249), which tends to limit the phenomenal richness of mutable experience.

In perpetuating my photographic project I consider incidental topographies in street furniture, infrastructural anomalies, walls, trees, roads, buildings, and people that occur in interstitial rambles through both urban and rural contexts. I take in partial instantiations of these worlds. The object of my photographic project, therefore, is never meant to be a classically-completed subject. My aim is rather to create an objective topology of subjective partition. The private, in this sense, is always already subsumed within the statement of an exteriorized field. McLuhan described how, "conferring the means of self-delineation to objects, of 'statement without syntax,' photography gave the impetus to a delineation of the inner world. Statement without syntax or verbalization was really statement by gesture, by mime, and by *gestalt*" (*Understanding Media* 181). Contemporary photographic gestalt has become the panoptic theater of exteriorized reason, a reason that paradoxically "fixes" the external in the darkroom development of the erstwhile private soul. If McLuhan has anything relevant say about this, it is probably found in his statement "The immense tidying-up of our inner lives (is maximized by)the new picture gestalt culture" (*Understanding Media* 177). In light of the ever-accelerating efficiency of our photographic tidying-up devices distributed in hyper-networked and increasingly fluid platforms such as Instagram, Snapchat, and Facebook, my intent at working toward the elucidation of a subjective "objecthood" in the virtual gestalt of the photographic realm might seem a fool's wager, but then again that would most likely be a bet that Marshall McLuhan would have very familiarly "put" on.

Image Notes

McGlynn, Tom. Bangor, Maine, Goodwill Furniture, 2013.

McGlynn, Tom. Benches at Horseshoe (Canadian) Falls, 2015.

McGlynn, Tom. Kalamazoo mailboxes, January 2016.

McGlynn, Tom. Lower East Side grocery awning, NYC, 2015.

McGlynn, Tom. Manila St. news boxes, Jersey City, 2015.

McGlynn, Tom. metal pre-fab building, Judique, Nova Scotia, August 2013.

McGlynn, Tom. Montreal (McGill) block and sign, 2015.

McGlynn, Tom. New Jersey Turnpike weeds, 2016.

McGlynn, Tom. NYC car with body spot, 2015.

McGlynn, Tom. painted over crosswalk, Jersey City, 2016.

McGlynn, Tom. sunset park Brooklyn painted stereo speaker, 2016.

McGlynn, Tom. west side Manhattan silver van and dirty snow bank, 2014.

McGlynn, Tom. yellow loading dock, New Jersey, 2015.

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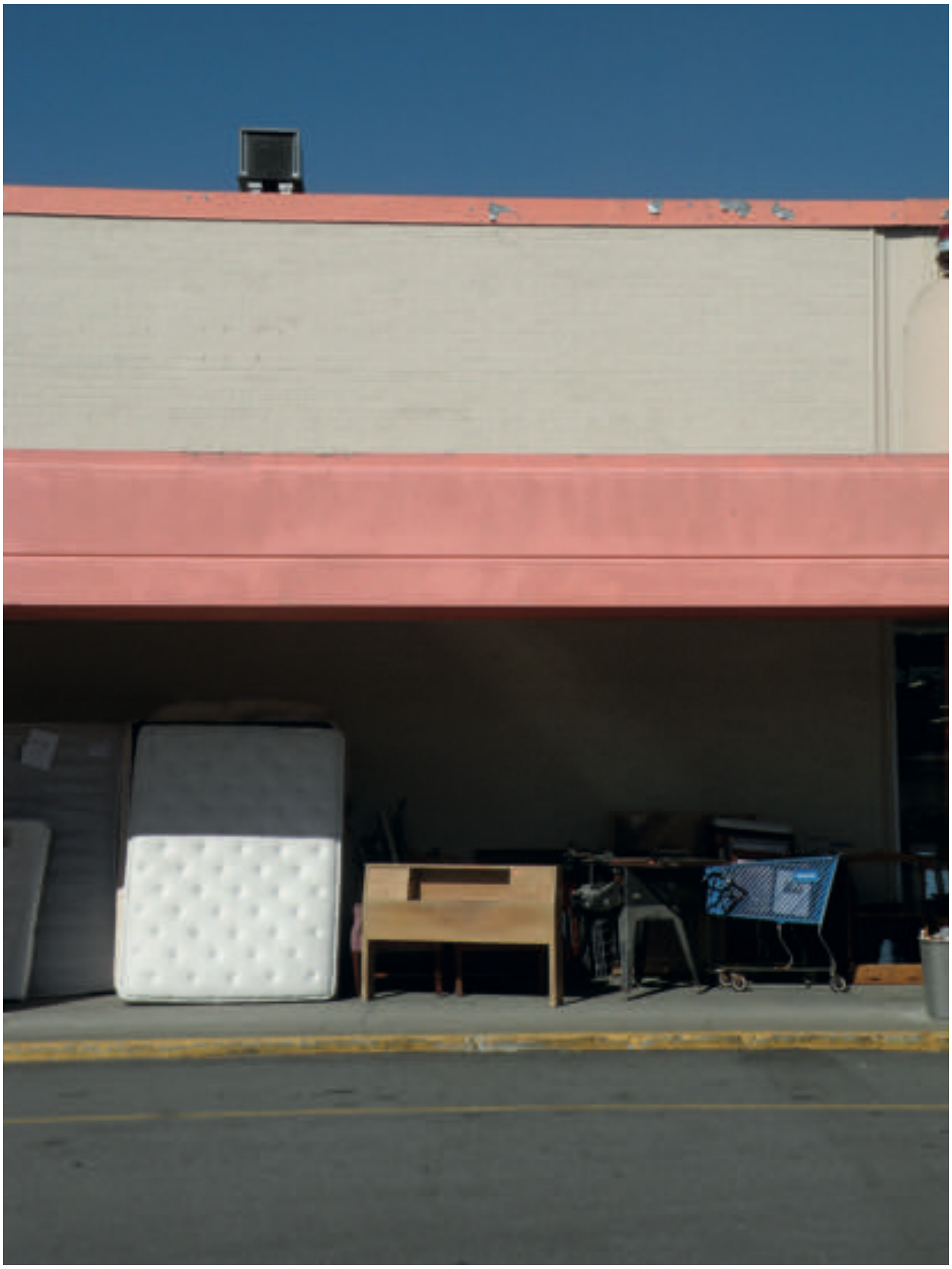
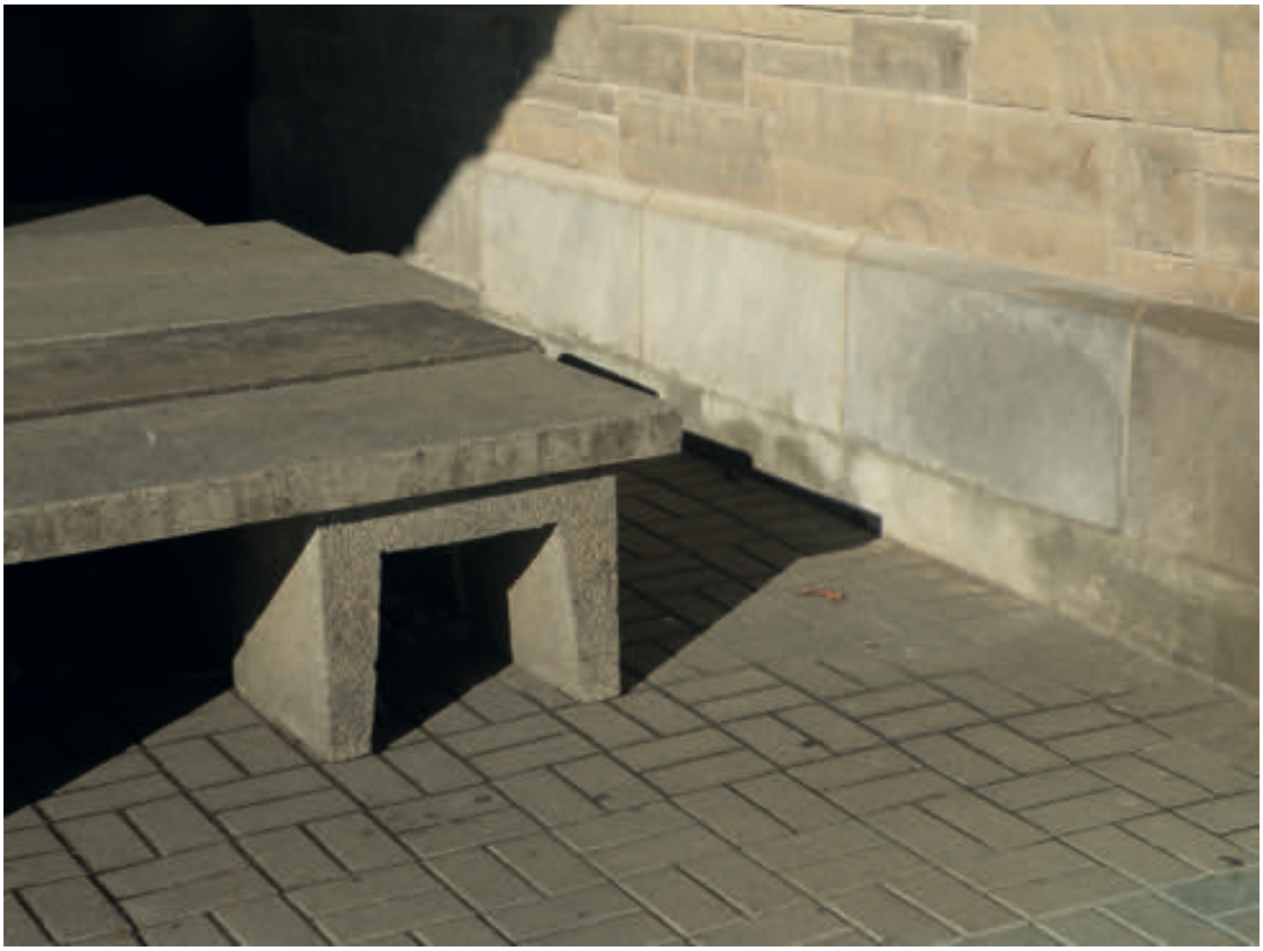


Tom McGlynn. Bangor, Maine, Goodwill Furniture, 2013.



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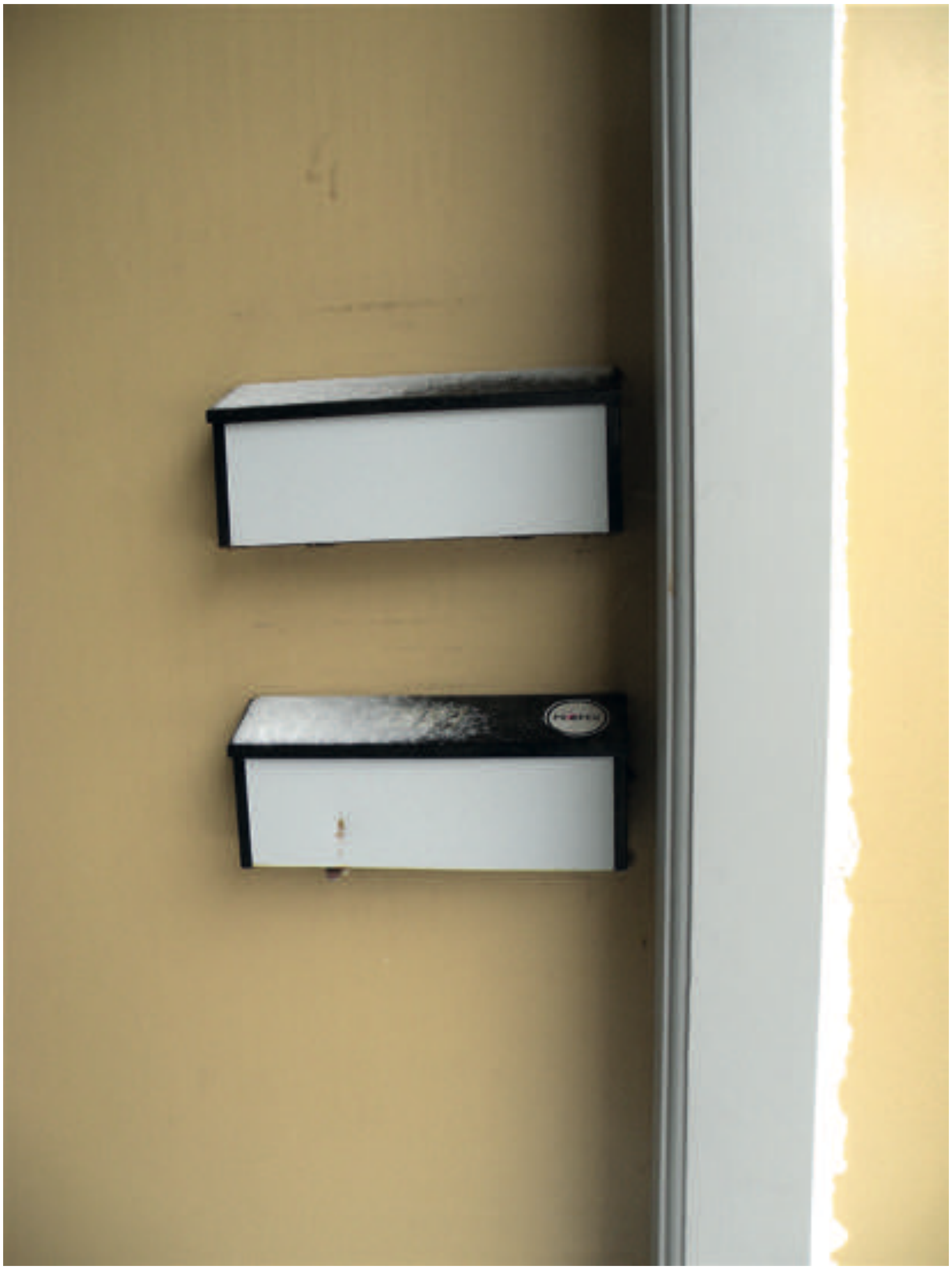
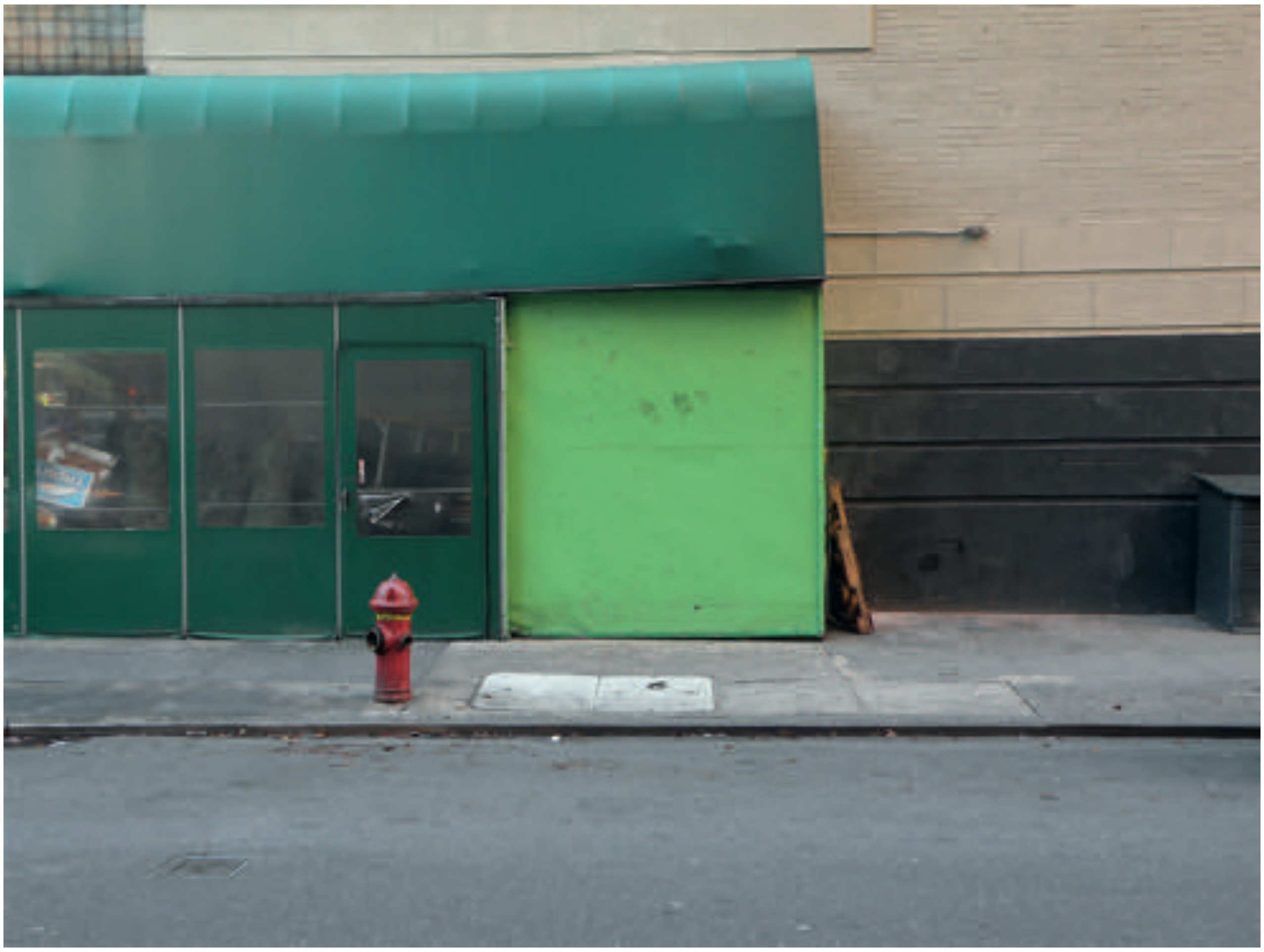
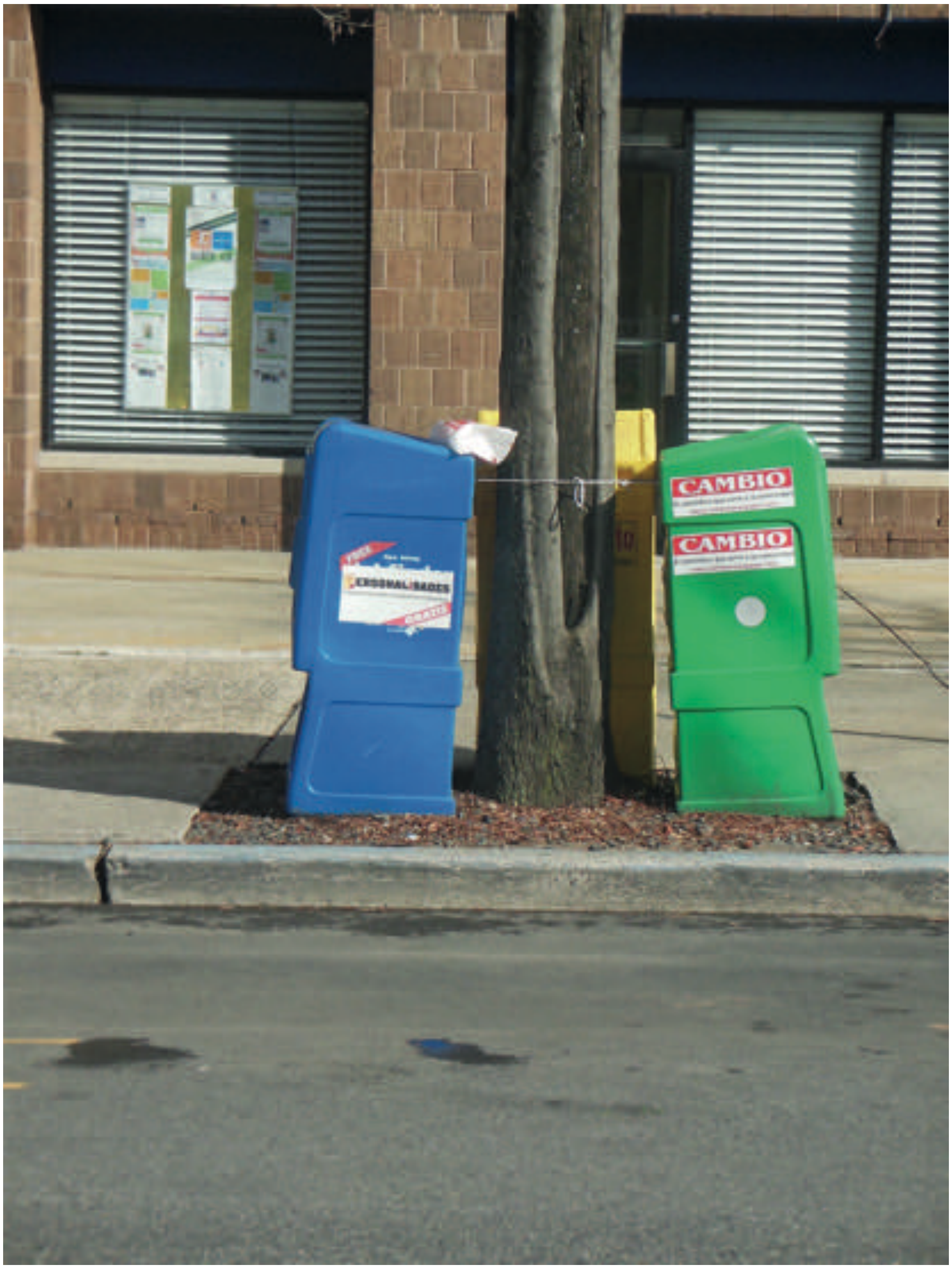


Tom McGlynn. Kalamazoo Mailboxes, January 2016.



Tom McGlynn. Lower East Side grocery awning, NYC, 2015.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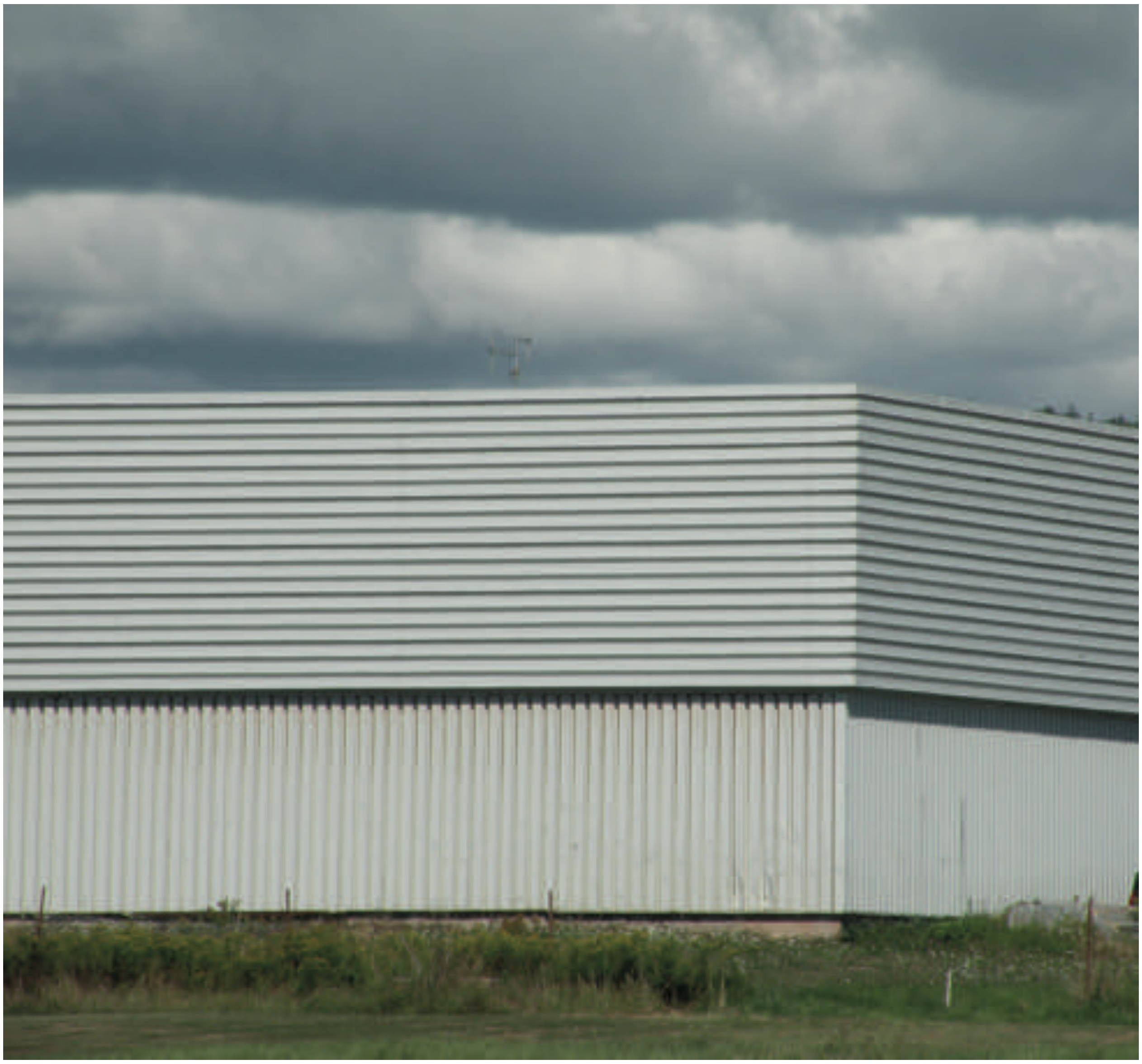
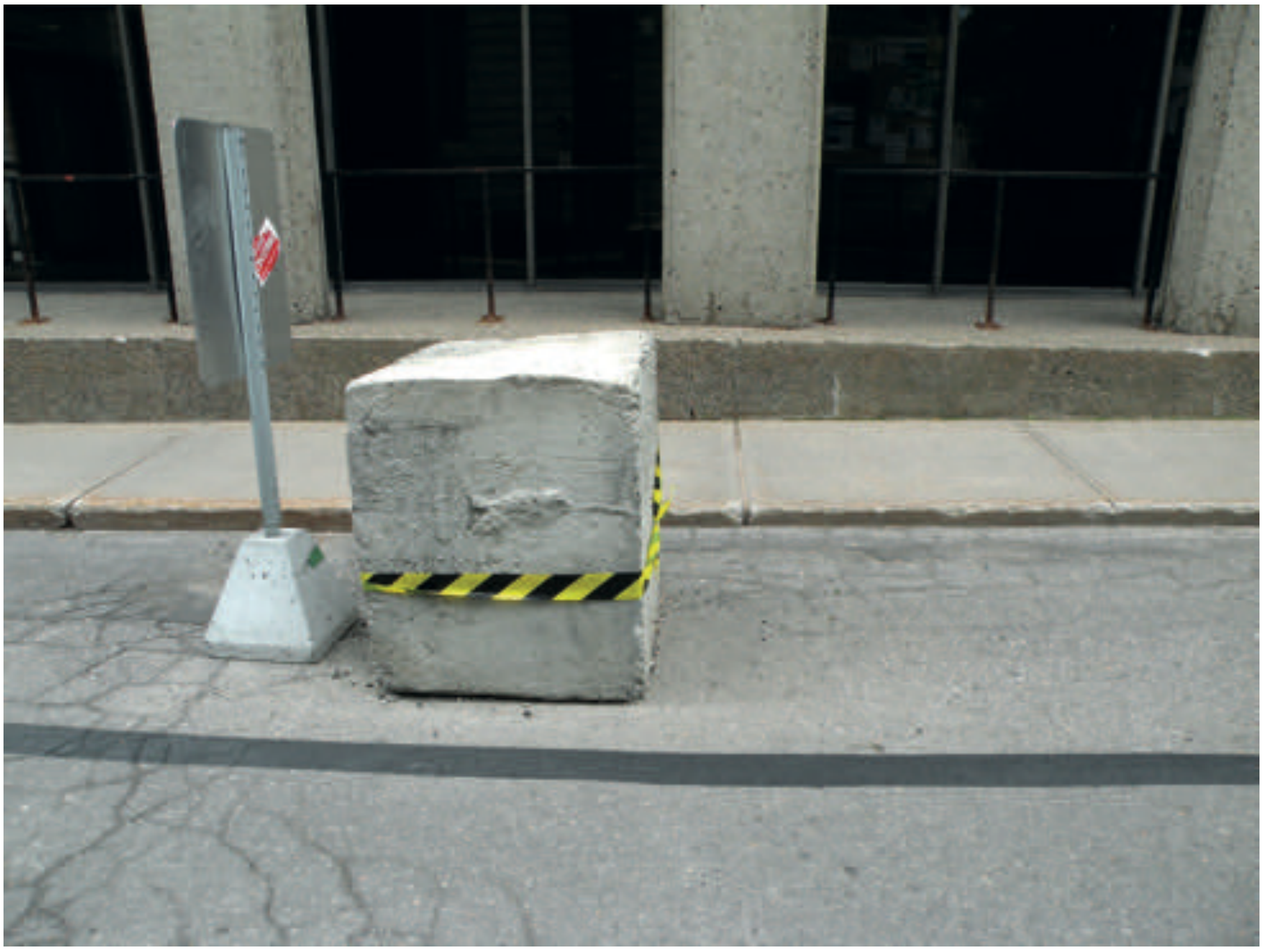
Tom McGlynn. Manila St. news boxes, Jersey City, 2015.

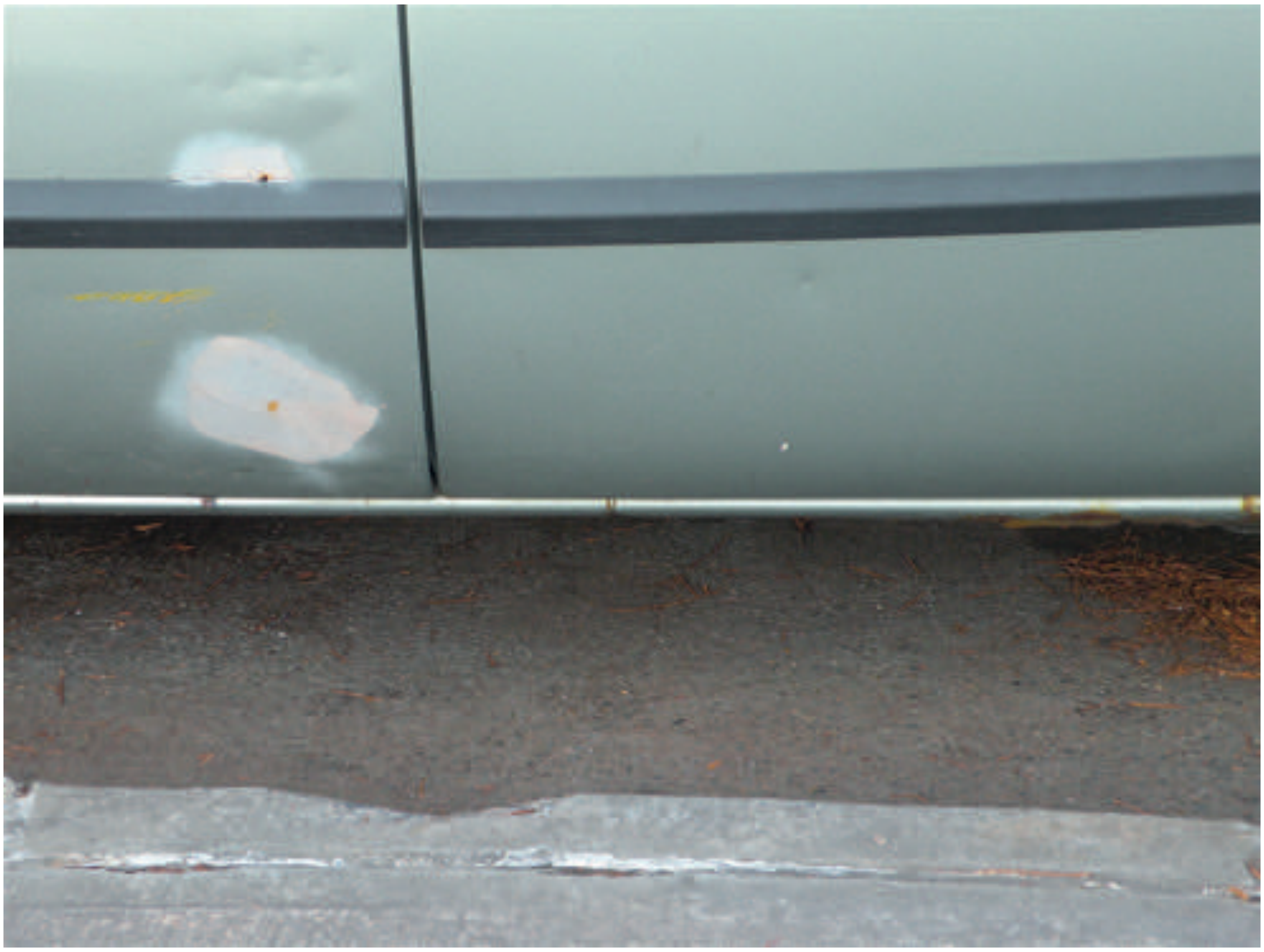


Tom McGlynn. metal pre-fab building, Judique, Nova Scotia, August 2013.

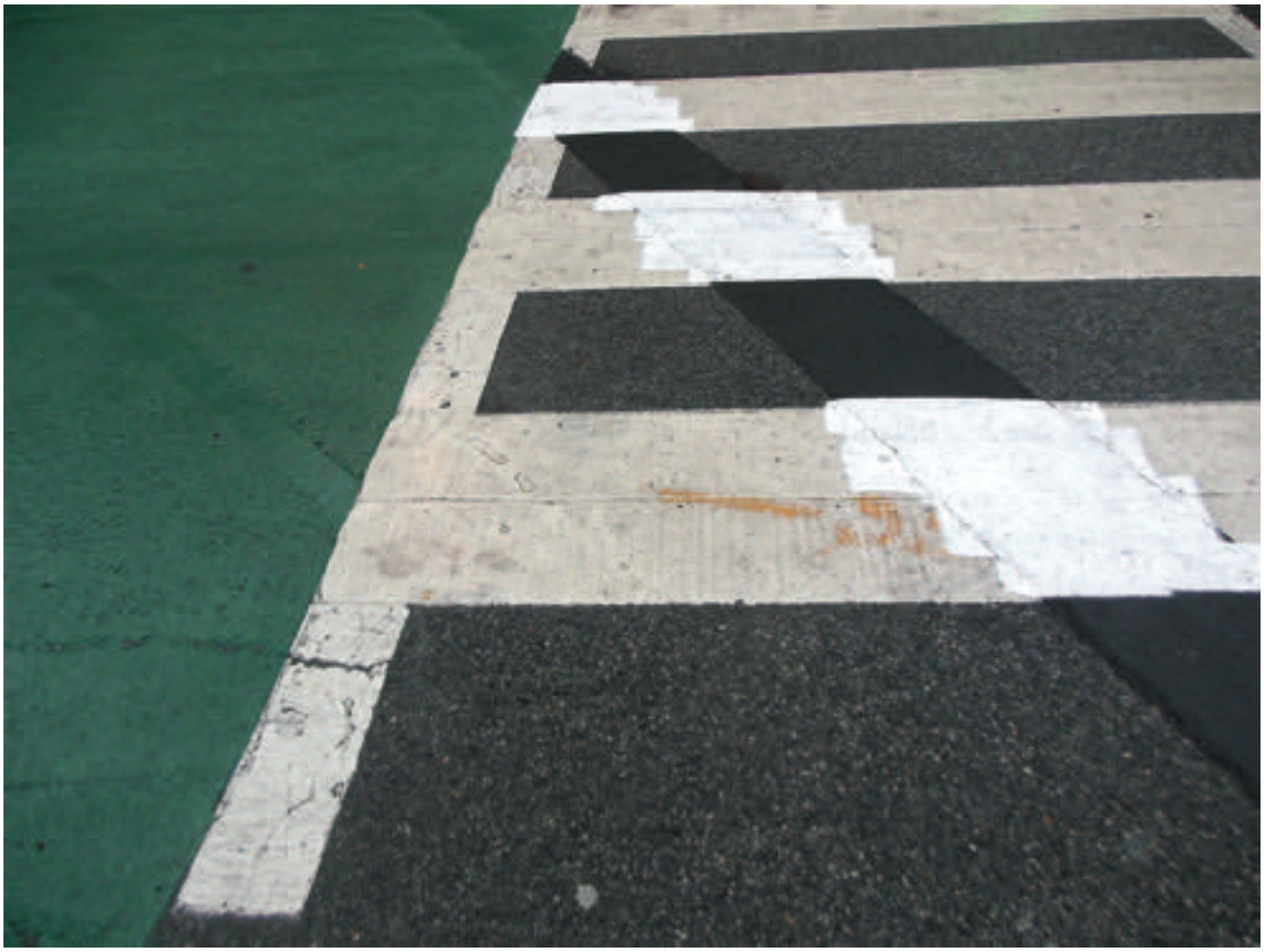


Tom McGlynn. Montreal (McGill) block and sign, 2015.

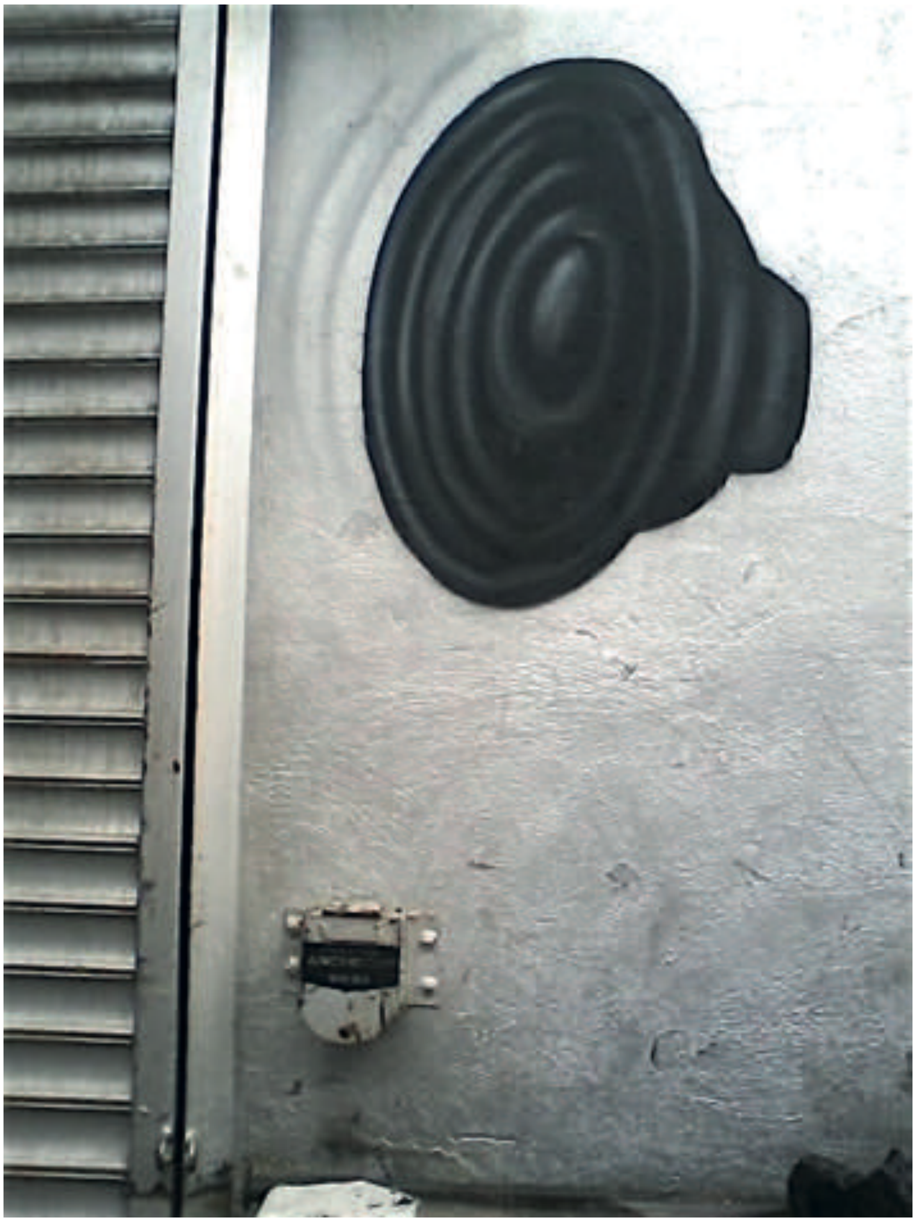
Tom McGlynn. New Jersey Turnpike weeds, 2016.



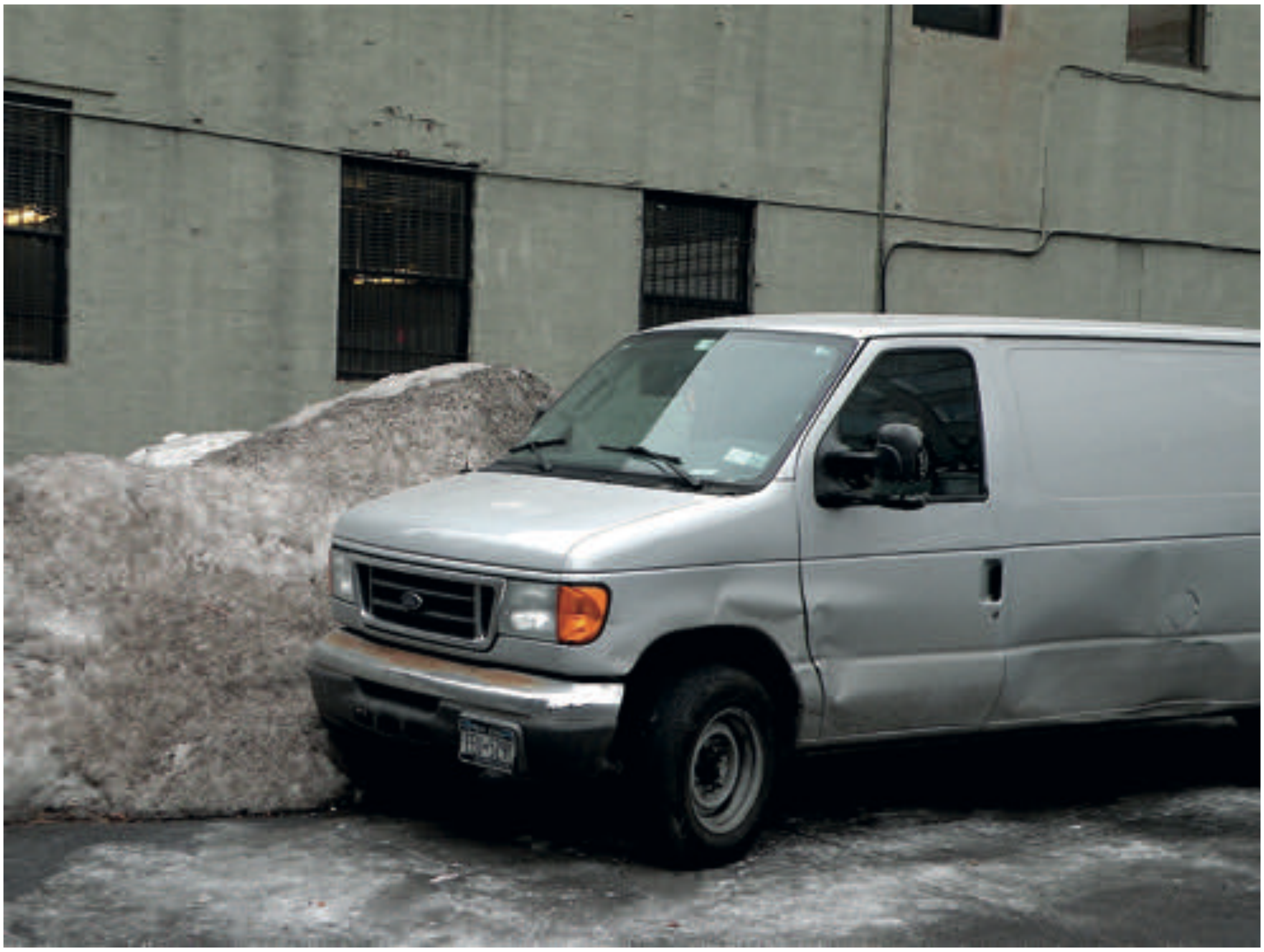
Tom McGlynn. NYC car with body spot, 2015.



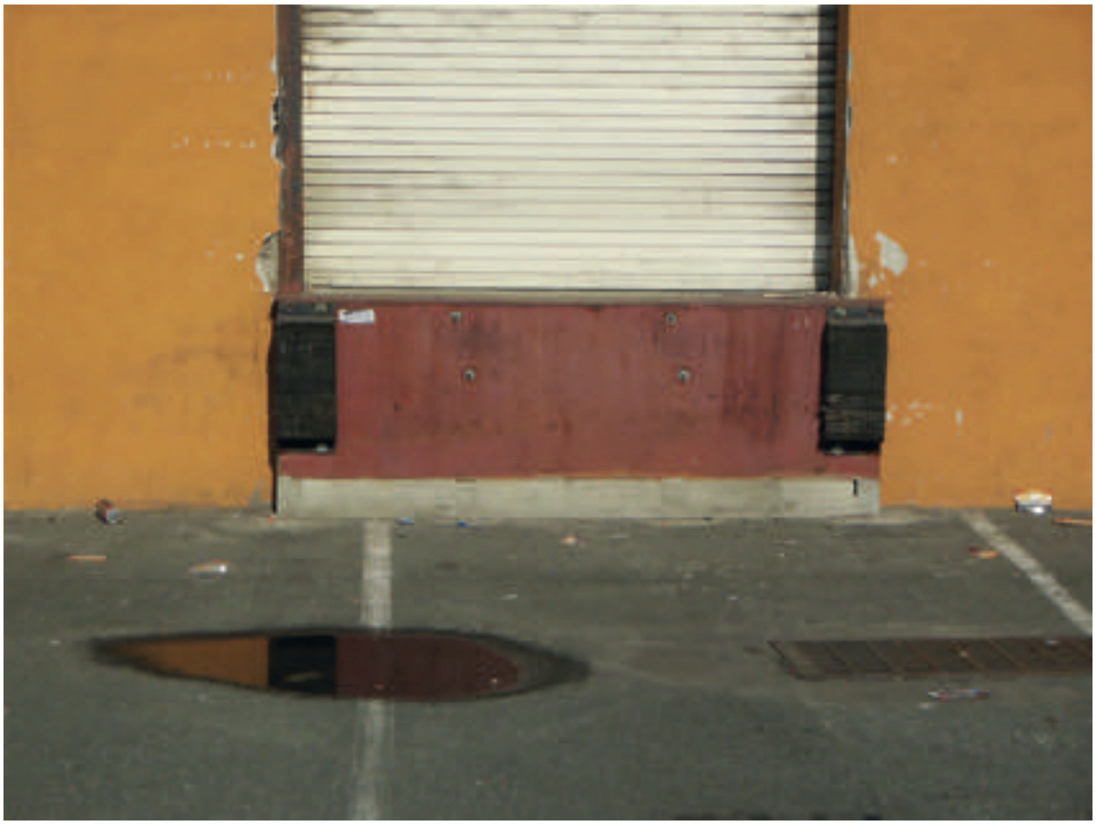
Tom McGlynn. painted over crosswalk, Jersey City, 2016.



Tom McGlynn. sunset park Brooklyn painted stereo speaker, 2016.



Tom McGlynn. west side Manhattan silver van and dirty snow bank, 2014.



Tom McGlynn. yellow loading dock, New Jersey, 2015.

L(A)YING WITH MARSHALL MCLUHAN: MEDIA THEORY AS HOAX ART

HENRY ADAM SVEC

Abstract | *This artist-response essay examines some ethical and aesthetic contours of media-theoretical hoaxes (and of a hoaxing media theory). I accomplish this through an exploratory reflection upon my own experiences and dilemmas as a media hoax artist, a vocation that has been influenced by Harold Adams Innis's "authentic" scholarly persona as well as by McLuhan's "probing" methods. Whereas recent work in the field of hoax art has tended to rely on the eventual text-bound revelation of the truth of the situation, my McLuhanite method aims rather towards magic and mediation.*

Résumé | *Cet essai et réponse d'artiste examine quelques contours éthiques et esthétiques des canulars médiatiques (et d'une théorie des canulars médiatiques). J'accomplis cela à travers une réflexion exploratoire sur mes propres expériences et dilemmes en tant qu'artiste de canular médiatiques, une vocation qui a été influencée par la personnalité académique « authentique » d'Harold Adams Innis ainsi que par les méthodes « exploratoires » de McLuhan. Alors que les travaux récents dans le domaine de l'art du canular ont eu tendance à dépendre de la révélation éventuelle de la vérité de la situation, ma méthode McLuhanite s'appuie plutôt sur la magie et la médiation.*

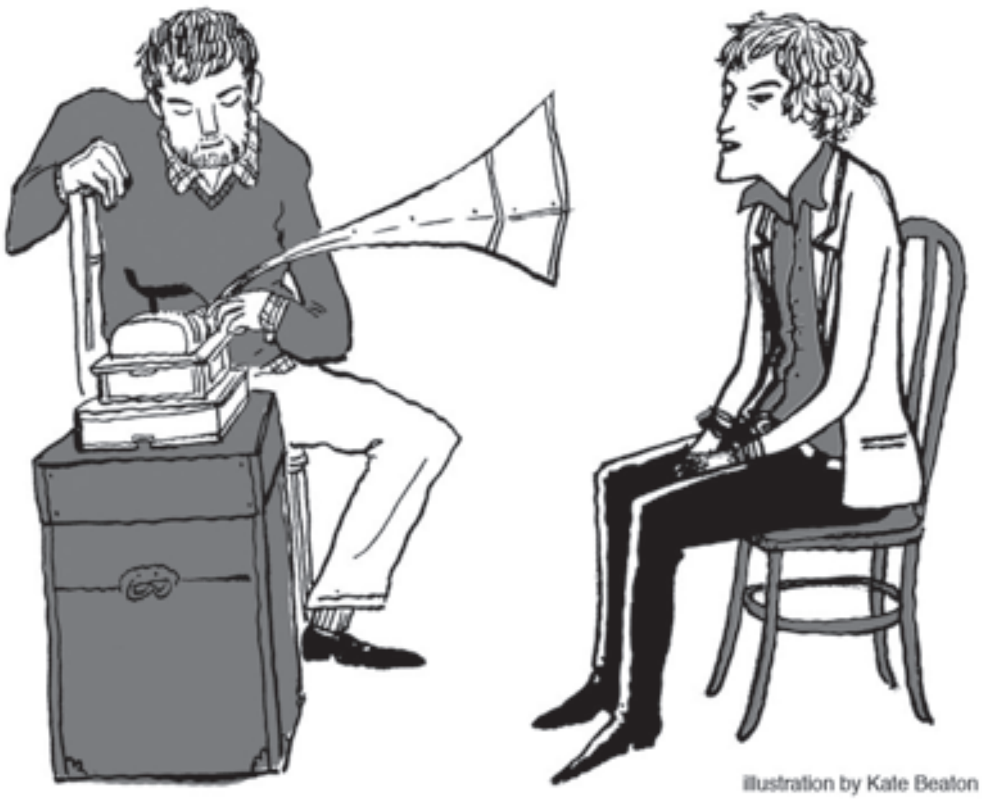


Illustration by Kate Beaton

It's a commentary on our extreme cultural lag that when we think of criticism of information flow we still use only the concept of book culture, namely, how much trust can be reposed in the words of the message.
*– Marshall McLuhan (*Counterblast *119)*

The content of every Harold Adams Innis is always another Marshall McLuhan.
– Staunton R. Livingston

The world itself has become a probe.
*– Marshall McLuhan (*From Cliché *12).*

I never meant to bamboozle. I have just enjoyed the ways that things can get in the way—on stage, on record, online, on the air, on the street. Possibilities can be opened and unexpected pathways can be paved; directions one never thought possible can be made to cascade out into blooming black tops. I have not meant to conceal (I would not know where to start) but rather to embrace, which often involves only desiring and wondering: *Wouldn't it be fun?*

Marshall McLuhan's mischievous printed matters and performances have offered insight and inspiration. Although notions of "the real" and "the true" ironically haunt contemporary hoax artists, the approach that I have borrowed reimagines the rules of this game—which can measure less than they engender and can signify less than they amplify. McLuhan offers a light for hoax artists who want not to lie but merely to have lain with others across the techno-cultural termini of all that might be, or become, or have been becoming.[1]

A Hoaxer's Dilemma

First there was Henry Thomas, the actor who played "Elliott" in *ET: The Extra-Terrestrial*, who I decided not to research except for the sparsely narrated filmography I found on the *Internet Movie Database*. I knew only his image—a sweet face and voice that could have been mine, more or less, from a certain distance. Wouldn't it be fun if "Henry Thomas" was from Southwestern Ontario and has decided to move back home to focus on his songwriting? *The Boy from ET* was not a matter of obscuring, concealing, and then revealing. I saw myself rather putting into motion branching streams of possibility, joining myself up with an image and rummaging around, scavenging what I could and fabricating what I could not, and placing my final findings for pleasure within the reach of others.[2] When "Henry Thomas" proper messaged me through MySpace and asked me to stop, I learned that his own version of "The Boy From *ET*" was also trying to make it as a singer-songwriter, which is an incredible coincidence. I eventually obliged him by adding a disclaimer and we both went onto our separate ways (see www.myspace.com/theboyfromet and www.myspace.com/henrythomasmusic).

In 2010 my interests shifted from former child stars to the concept of the folk. I wondered if it would be fun to have discovered tapes recorded in the 1970s by "Staunton R. Livingston," the iconoclastic Canadian folklorist who believed that culture was common property—and also believed that, if one wanted to document authentic Canadian folklore, one would need to scour the teams of the Canadian Football League for the players' tales, legends, and songs. (I could not have been sure why "Livingston" believed this, because he did not write or publish, but he was committed to the belief as far as I could discern.) Wouldn't it be fun if these folk songs of the Canadian Football League evinced a remarkable perspicacity regarding the universality of boredom and drudgery, yet also the possibility of redemption via solidarity, under late capitalism? Fun, too, if some of the coaching staff of the University of Toronto varsity football team came out to a performance, curious about this historical wormhole, asking excellent questions after the show? It was, indeed, very fun (see www.thecflsessions.ca).

My dreaming has most recently been pulled by the possibility of an intelligent machine having decisively passed the Turing Test in Dawson City, Yukon (see www.folksingularity.com).[3] With the help of Czech computer programmer "Mirek Plíhal" and Canadian songwriter Mathias Kom, I desired to have constructed an artificially intelligent database of folksong that can both comprehend the totality of the Canadian folk archive and simultaneously generate new yet hyper-authentic works based on the source data. (In honour of my favourite communist folklorist, we named this machine LIVINGSTON™.) There were some glitches and errors, to be sure, but we nonetheless managed to redirect media evolution towards less spectacular and more egalitarian (and weirder) ends, a task as difficult as it was fun (see Svec, "From the Turing Test").[4]

Obviously, there can be multiple yearnings involved in any act of communication, including a hoax performance, and for me they have not always aligned. For instance, once, in Toronto, I was kicked in the leg by a well-known playwright when I let it slip, after a show, that I was not actually an accredited folklorist and that there was not actually a basement in what I had been calling "The National Archives".[5] Another time, in North Bay, on the day after I had autographed several CDs for artificially intelligent Canadian folk music fans at the White Water Gallery, I received an email from someone who had heard that my explanation of artificially intelligent folk music given in North Bay was an elaborate hoax and would I please clarify. I wrote back that I would not describe it that way, and we left it at that. But I was stricken with grief and with shame: my hard work of guiding others through fields of possibility had been ricocheted back to me, reappearing now only as obstruction or shroud. Having recently received a doctorate for a not-entirely-unrelated body of researches, I felt guilty in North Bay, even if the presentation I had offered occurred on stage in an art gallery and not in a university or at a folklore conference.[6]

Authenticity and Media Theory

In one of Marshall McLuhan's many media appearances, he is especially elusive. Audience members pose questions about the sage's controversial and famous pronouncements, while the English professor slowly spins in his chair, lobbing probes: "I have no point of view. See, for example, now, I couldn't possibly have a point of view—I'm just moving around," he more or less explains (globalbeehive). McLuhan makes the non-articulation of a clear position into a playful Great Refusal. He will not serve print-oriented logics. At least, he would prefer not to.

As Glenn Willmott's book on the character and context of McLuhan's proto-postmodernism has demonstrated, McLuhan's inconsistencies and media games can be generously viewed as a performative embodiment of his analysis of contemporary media culture: "McLuhan became less and less, let us say, sincere. He became increasingly the mask-wearer of postmodern satire, a master of the 'put-on'" (172). Thus, as McLuhan himself had already gone to great pains to remind his readers in many of his books, his work should not solely be judged from within the conventional paradigms of scholarly practice in the humanities. As Willmott describes:

> To [the "irrational" grammar of modern existence], McLuhan submitted himself, in his postmodern masquerade as the first imaged, incorporated, commodified, and disseminated 'Pop' philosopher… . When "total" is worldwide and technological, rather than tribal and verbal, the self can no longer hope to recognize itself in an ontological mirror projected upon it: the individual boundaries and coherence of the self are increasingly problematized as a collective techne penetrates and absorbs everything in sight. (134)

The corporeal and inter-subjective modes of communication and awareness fostered by "cool" media demand multiplicitous modes of perception and exposition (see McLuhan, *Understanding*), which McLuhan's complex personae, performances, and texts aim to open. As McLuhan himself put it in *The Medium is the Massage*, "The main obstacle to a clear understanding of the effects of the new media is our deeply embedded habit of regarding all phenomena from a fixed point of view" (68).

Yet McLuhan's splintered optics and playful modes of exposition, if logically consistent and rhetorically necessary, famously sat unwell with many of his contemporaries, despite (or perhaps because of) McLuhan's mainstream successes. As Theodore Roszak declared, "McLuhan's assertions are not, he would have us believe, propositions or hypotheses. They are 'probes.' But what is a 'probe'? It is apparently any outrageous statement for which one has no evidence at all or which, indeed, flies in the face of obvious facts" (268). McLuhan's method from this angle seems nothing but charlatanism—a spectacular show for the spotlight.

Even critics sympathetic to Canadian media theory sometimes prefer to see McLuhan as an inauthentic echo of the originary source, Harold Adams Innis. Such distinctions appear both intellectual and personal. Consider James W. Carey's opening to his influential essay on Innis: "During the third quarter of this century, North American communications theory—or at least the most interesting part—could have been described by an arc running from Harold Innis to Marshall McLuhan. 'It would be more impressive,' as Oscar Wilde said while staring up at Niagara Falls, 'if it ran the other way'" (109). Carey goes on to render Innis as an un-commoditized hero with integrity, swimming against fashions, currents, and colleagues. Using words and phrases such as "commitment" and "revolt" and "ransacked experience without regard to discipline" and "rescued" and "freed" and "attempted to restore" (114), Carey paints Innis with vigor and virility.

Although McLuhan has been given his due since the backlashes (we have recently seen edited collections, conferences, and centenary celebrations), it has seemed to me that, at least in water-cooler discussions in subterranean folk-music archives, one of the two progenitors of Canadian media theory is rendered as committed intellectual, the other as celebrity sellout. One toils away in relative obscurity, bucking trends and pursuing truth, the other riding his predecessors' coattails, making cameo appearances in films and spinning in his chair on television. I am not endorsing these judgments but am merely pointing out that they have had some weight, durability, as Innis himself observed of oral dialogue in *The Bias of Communication*.

However, personas and the affects they let loose, like arguments articulated in academic monographs or journal articles, are raw materials for the hoax artist. Thus, both ideas and performances are to be found in the "Toronto School" of Canadian media theory, both content and media, which just so happen to have drawn me out of the ethical impasse I encountered in North Bay. Innis's and McLuhan's convergent theoretical propositions and their divergent styles of being and thinking together make up a palette of signals and noises in which we can find both truth and hocus-pocus, both authenticity and that against which it has historically been defined, and in potent combinations.[7]

Authenticity, Media, and the Folk

I had already been toying with Innis's work and with the myth of the committed rebel-scholar. Consider the biographical details of "Staunton R. Livingston," the character whose recordings of CFL players singing authentic Canadian folk songs I claimed to have found in the basement of "The National Archives," and after whom I named my artificially intelligent folk database, LIVINGSTON™. Staunton R. Livingston was born and raised in Windsor, Ontario (is there a more authentic city?); he was an autodidact who briefly studied at the University of Toronto but who dropped out before taking his degree (Innis was one of his teachers); he was a communist folklorist who did not publish or hold an academic position; and he died in 1977 in Trois-Rivières, QC of heart failure. Like Innis, Livingston was a "marginal man" (Watson), on the outside looking in, paying little attention to disposable and external processes of validation or accreditation. Livingston was a truthful seeker of truth, a capturer and assembler of real voices; he refused even to write or to publish, thoroughly committed as he was to the arts of orality and phonography. Audiences seemed to love this side of our hero and to desire more reliable information.

Consider too Livingston's approach to his folkloristic arsenal of tools, in particular the magnetic tape recorder, which was marked for him by an insatiable desire for presence, touch, and time; Livingston sought to dig below consciousness and meaning, down to the fundamental grounds of authentic existence.[8] As I rendered his folkloristic method in my play *On Livingston's Method*:

If you were to take the tapes that Livingston made of CFL players in the 1970s, if you were to lay these tapes across the ground, and if it were possible to see on tape the grain of the music, you would see nothing but this grain on Livingston's tapes. It would not be possible to see, there, the lack that is the opposite of the grains of music. This means that to listen to *The CFL Sessions* is not to hear a singer who is simply passing on a song. If we follow the path Livingston has laid out for us, in *The CFL Sessions* we can hear the singer become something other than a mere channel of a message; we can hear the singer reach towards communion—an instrument for itself and yet longing for others.

Sound, in this light, has a utopian ringing built into it, which magnetic tape recording has a unique ability to locate and magnify. Livingston's use of phonography—given that he did not record for a record label or even for a public institution—can thus be understood as a folk approach to folksong collecting: he figured himself as a pure reservoir for pure reservoirs, a clear window for clear windows. So the legend goes, I claimed.

Signals can get crossed, however. Clearly smitten with Livingston's life and methods, I myself (Livingston's legacy's caretaker) tended to misuse my sources, variously reading too far and not far enough (see www.folksongsofcanadanow.com/). In speaking and in making digital archives, and in writing and singing, I tended to get in the way. The work of a "Gutenberg man [sic]" (McLuhan, *Gutenberg*), my academic discourse contended with Livingston's implicit pleas for being together, for I essayed too much (see http://www.folksingularity.com/faq.html). I could often see it in my audience's glazed-over eyes—could feel the disdain and, sometimes, contempt for their too-tight relay. They wanted Livingston, and his Folk, but were stuck in the middle with me.

And yet, in spite of the calculated incompetence of his progeny, even and perhaps especially when our "cover" was blown, Livingston's method functioned across both time and space. Some kind of authenticity echoed out and away from our ceremony (and from all its other incarnations), in which folk-singing footballers can sing and revel and make poetry, and in which technology can be recalibrated towards human and un-commoditized ends. "Don't let the sound of your own wheels make you crazy," as the machine LIVINGSTON™ wrote in "Take It Easy But Take It to the Limit," ironically entranced therein by its own powers of composition. Which is to say that in spite of the glitches and noise communion was made to happen. No lie. I could feel it.

Hocus Pocus

In my experience, it is impossible to predict how an audience will react, but it seems to me that ideal auditors have suspected, doubted, believed, wondered, accepted, delighted, and revolted altogether. As the contemporary McLuhanite media theorist Siegfried Zielinski puts it, "It is of vital importance to know that a magical approach toward technology continues to be possible and to be reassured that investment in it is meaningful" (*Deep Time* 255). Thus for me it was important not to include in my work a hoaxer's reveal. Zielinski again: "When the spaces for action become ever smaller for all that is unwieldy or does not entirely fit in, that is unfamiliar and foreign, then we must attempt to confront the possible with its own possibilities" (*Deep Time* 11). Livingston's radical phonography and LIVINGSTON's authentic archive are only two possibilities within late-modern media culture, but I wanted to foreground them—and to make them both real and durable.

Yet, "hoax art" has often tended to require a moment of unmasking, a moment at which the personas are deflated and at which the true meaning or intentions of the artist are revealed. According to Chris Fleming and John O'Carrol, this strategy makes hoaxes an inherently educative type of text or performance: "Like irony, the hoax means the opposite of what it says and its ultimate truth, if we are still brave enough to talk in these terms, depends on its falsity being *taken* for truth. The deception, in this respect, is temporal and temporary—the hoax is no good if it cannot, at some stage, be revealed (unless, of course, the aim is simply to defraud)" (48). Fleming's and O'Carrol's theorization of the hoax draws on Jacques Derrida's engagement with J.L. Austin; although they acknowledge that hoaxes operate across numerous genres and can exist as texts or performances, they see the hoax as a primarily parasitical (and inherently discursive) form of communication. "Hoaxes are at once textual and metatextual in their strategies of attack" (57), they write.

Some of the most high-profile hoax artists of late would seem to agree with Fleming and O'Carrol about the inherent textuality and metatextuality of the form as well as its educative function of writing truth to falsity. One of the most visible practitioners, The Yes Men, have especially required moments of unmasking in which their deconstructive intentions have been revealed. They spend weeks or months or days joining up with and inhabiting various media apparatuses and ideologies; setting truth and representation aside, they meld their bodies and clever faces with the military-industrial-entertainment complex in a way that foregrounds and heightens its absurd logics and tendencies (see Hynes, Sharp, and Fagan). But the satirical function of The Yes Men's performances requires a moment at which we realize that it has all been a polemical act: masks are stripped away, costumes discarded, and they finally help us to see their *point of view* on the global consequences of various neoliberal policies. In other words, despite their clear knowledge of and investment in the tactical guidelines of media theory, the knowledge that The Yes Men have to offer is a print-based and visual knowledge. In their first documentary *The Yes Men* (2003), for example, while explaining their mission and role one of The Yes Men points to stacks of printed newspapers and magazines that have covered their antics, implying that their real work is the drawing of attention (using media stunts) towards print-based argumentation.

Another influential and famous hoax artist, Iris Häussler, has also required a moment of unmasking, though as a visual artist she is motivated by a different set of disciplinary concerns than The Yes Men. Gilles Deleuze's claim that "[e]very actual surrounds itself with a cloud of virtual images" is concretized in her expansive artworks (Deleuze and Parnet 148), which invite the viewer into apparently limitless worlds. I had the good fortune of attending Häussler's *He Named Her Amber* (2010) at the Art Gallery of Ontario. After being led through an exquisitely detailed excavation site at The Grange by a guide who explained and recounted the most fanciful of historical tales in a way that made the story feel all-too-real, we were given a letter by our tour guide and sent on our way. It was in this letter, on this page, that we learned of the artist's imprint on the site and narrative: "Finally revealing the fictitious nature of Amber's story—after a time of reflection—is absolutely as much a part of my artwork as constructing the story is in the first place" (Häussler, "Disclosure" n.p.). In reading the artist statement, which according to Häussler is necessary, the expansive "cloud" of virtualities were thus cast into the dustbin of the individual imaginary of a single creator.

I admire both The Yes Men and Iris Häussler (and even Alan Sokal), and also recognize that they are in different leagues than my poor folk. But for me the hoax is not a text, nor should it end with one. It is ritual, enchantment, and community. It is a bringing together and a making possible, not a lie but a kind of hocus-pocus, which is the originary meaning of "hoax."[9] According to Fleming and O'Carroll, many contemporary media and academic hoaxes have an educative function: "[The hoax] commences with the premise that it has superior knowledge of some kind" (57). However, following McLuhan's lead(s), my kind of hocus-pocus is not so severe or print-dominated, because it does not reveal superior, discrete knowledge from an authentic margin, or even articulate a point of view. I am rather joining up with others, including machines, and expanding, multiplying, and thickening (or at least trying). "A moment of truth and revelation from which new form is born," as McLuhan observes of media hybridization in general (*Understanding* 80). Similarly, the unrevealed hoax is not necessarily untrue, and does not need to be framed as such. It is rather a new form of truth—a new kind of revelation.

Conclusion

It might seem like a paradox, or entirely inauthentic, that I am following up an allegedly McLuhanite, mixed-media hoax project with a peer-reviewed "artist response" essay on the work. It is, in a way. Certainly the communist folklorist Staunton R. Livingston—who, again, never wrote or published—avoided such indulgences. But this article is merely a component pointing throughout to others (e.g. www.loststompintomsongs.com), a meeting place for the hybrid media assembled by my comrades and me. Which is to say that this document does not contain the final word but perhaps just the first one, which leads to others (and not just words) even more real. Such as the output of LIVINGSTON™, the artificially intelligent archive of Canadian folk music that I built in Dawson City, Yukon:

> I'm gonna burn all my bridges
> But can I get a witness?
> I've got a shovel.
> I'm gonna dig a tunnel.
> It ain't gonna be long but
> It's going to carry my song. ("Winter Is Cold and Good")

Who will join in this ceremony of witnessing, digging, singing, and sounding? Who will join in this ceremony of burning?

Image Notes

Featured Image: Kate Beaton, *The Song Collector* 2011.

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Notes

1 In addition to McLuhan, my methods owe much to the "imaginary" media research of Siegfried Zielinski (*Audiovisions*; *Deep Time*), who runs very far with the media-theoretical maxim that our communicative ecologies are contingent and thus could be otherwise. Perhaps not surprisingly, as Zielinski's first major book *Audiovisions* made clear in a way that his more recent researches have not, he is a card-carrying McLuhanite.

2 The work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari also informed my early attempts at hoaxing, in particular *A Thousand Plateaus* as well as Deleuze's "The Virtual and the Actual," an essay in his book of interviews with Claire Parnet, *Dialogue II* (148-59).

3 Alan Turing's famous examination is won when a machine successfully impersonates a human in the eyes of another human judge, performing not through the body but through the manipulation of symbols (Turing). So, given that it involved a human (me) impersonating a computer impersonating a human, my A.I. hoax was in a sense a hoax of an originary hoax.

4 I have skipped over two of my hoaxes for brevity's sake. I also claimed to have retraced the steps of folklorist Edith Fulton Fowke, re-documenting that which she once documented (see www.folksongsofcanadanow.com), and under a moniker (Staunton Q. Livingston) I appeared to have found a lost recording by Stompin' Tom Connors that was influenced by The Beach Boys' *Pet Sounds* (see www.loststompintomsongs.com).

5 As I myself learned after a show in Ottawa, from an actual archivist at The National Archives, "The National Archives" is not even what that place is called (it is in fact "Library and Archives Canada"). It was from this kind archivist, too, that I learned about the lack of a basement there.

6 For evidence of these researches, see Svec "Folk"; Svec "iHootenanny"; Svec "Pete."

7 In making these performances and in thinking about them now, I am indebted to so much great work in media and cultural studies on the discursive production of "authenticity." See, for instance, Bendix; Keightley; Peterson; Miller.

8 Thus Staunton R. Livingston is a carrier of what Jonathan Sterne has described as "the audiovisual litany," a Christian ideology that identifies sound and hearing with presence and salvation, on one hand, and sight with alienation and individuality, on the other (Sterne 14-19). I very much had Sterne's discussion of "the audiovisual litany" in mind when constructing Livingston's approach to song collecting.

9 I am indebted to Fleming and O'Carroll for pointing out that the ambiguous origins of "hoax," according to the OED, includes "hocus pocus" (51).

MARSHALL MCLUHAN'S COUNTERENVIRONMENT WITHIN THE STREAM OF DEFAMILIARIZATION

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Abstract: Marshall McLuhan's theory of the counterenvironment is within a larger tradition of defamiliarization that emerges in Romanticism and can be further traced through the writings of Henri Bergson, English literary modernism, Russian formalist* ostranenie*, Brechtian estrangement, and more recent institutional critique. Among related Romantic writings, Percy Bysshe Shelley's essay "A Defence of Poetry" (1821) clearly anticipates later theories that both repeat and develop fundamental notions of defamiliarization. Bergson's writings on the comic revive Romantic ideas when he states that the object of the arts is "to brush aside the utilitarian symbols, the conventional and socially accepted generalities, in short, everything that veils reality from us, in order to bring us face to face with reality itself." English modernists such as T.E. Hulme, T.S. Eliot, and their contemporaries drew on Bergson and were major sources for McLuhan's counterenvironment. Russian formalist and English modernist defamiliarization share roots in Romanticism and Bergson, which account for their sometimes parallel perspectives. McLuhan had some limited exposure to Russian formalism by way of Constructivist cinema as well as the art and writings of László Moholy-Nagy. Later writers sometimes mistakenly view Viktor Shklovsky's* ostranenie *to be at the origin of defamiliarization, although it was a point of departure for Bertolt Brecht's "alienation effect." McLuhan began using the term counterenvironment not long before some artists (who were aware of McLuhan's writing on the subject) started to direct the audience's aestheticized attention to the situation's contextual framework rather than to discrete objects alone. Like the counterenvironment, later institutional critique proposed a Gestalt reversal of attention by turning the environmental ground to figure, thereby prompting awareness of what had been earlier ignored. McLuhan's theory of the counterenvironment, and the variations of defamiliarization more generally, are historically specific while also partaking in transformative historical processes that involve a fusion of communication, change, continuity, and repetition.

Résumé | *La théorie du contre-environnement de Marshall McLuhan s'inscrit dans une perspective plus large de défamiliarisation qui a vu le jour dans le romantisme et peut être retrouvée dans les écrits d'Henri Bergson, la littérature moderniste anglaise, le formalisme russe, la distanciation brechtienne, et la critique institutionnelle plus récente. Parmi les écrits romantiques apparentés, l'essai de Percy Bysshe Shelley, « A Defense of Poetry » (1821) anticipe clairement des théories ultérieures qui à la fois répètent et développent des notions fondamentales de défamiliarisation. Les écrits de Bergson sur la bande dessinée font revivre les idées romantiques quand il déclare que l'objet des arts est de « mettre de côté les symboles utilitaires, les généralités conventionnelles et socialement acceptées, bref tout ce qui voile la réalité, pour nous mettre devant la réalité elle-même ». Des modernistes anglais tels que T.E Hulme, T.S. Eliot, et leurs contemporains, se sont inspirés de Bergson et ont été des sources importantes pour le contre-environnement de McLuhan. La défamiliarisation du formalisme russe et du modernisme anglais tirent leur origine du romantisme et de Bergson, ce qui explique leurs perspectives parfois parallèles. McLuhan a eu une exposition limitée au formalisme russe à travers le cinéma constructiviste ainsi que l'art et les écrits de László Moholy-Nagy. Les auteurs ultérieurs considèrent parfois erronément l'ostranenie de Viktor Shklovsky comme étant à l'origine de la « défamiliarisation », bien que ce soit un point de départ pour « l'effet de distanciation » de Bertolt Brecht. McLuhan a commencé à utiliser le terme contre-environnement peu de temps avant que certains artistes, qui étaient au courant des écrits de McLuhan sur le sujet, commencent* *à diriger l'attention esthétisée du public sur le cadre contextuel de la situation plutôt que seulement sur des objets distincts. À l'instar du contre-environnement, la critique institutionnelle ultérieure a proposé un changement de direction de l'attention gestaltiste en transformant l'environnement en figure, suscitant ainsi la prise de conscience de ce qui avait été auparavant ignoré. La théorie de McLuhan du contre-environnement, et plus généralement les variations de la défamiliarisation, sont historiquement spécifiques tout en participant à des processus historiques de transformation qui impliquent une fusion de la communication, du changement, de la continuité, et de la répétition.:*

Marshall McLuhan's theory of the counterenvironment is central to his understanding of aesthetics. As with every innovative idea, however, its background may be acknowledged, avoided, or reinterpreted according to evolving requirements. As a knowledgeable literary scholar with an interest in modernity, McLuhan drew on a wide variety of sources that at times employed ideas linked to defamiliarization. His counterenvironment is within the historical stream of defamiliarization that appears to emerge in Romanticism and may be further traced through, for example, the writings of Henri Bergson, English literary modernism, Russian formalist *ostranenie*, Brechtian estrangement, and institutional critique.[1] I will provide a brief outline of some of these theoretical and practical relationships as they pertain to McLuhan's work.

Defamiliarization plays a role in the Romantic literary theory of Novalis as well as the theoretical writings of the English poets Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Percy Bysshe Shelley, among others. Many contemporary writers and theorists situate Viktor Shklovsky (problematically historically, but understandably in ideological terms) as the point of origin for defamiliarization. Though he downplays the influence of Bergson on Russian formalist literary theory, Douglas Robinson suggests that Romanticism anticipates Shklovsky's theory of *ostranenie*, or estrangement. In a late article from 1966, Shklovsky quotes Novalis, who writes: "The art of pleasing estrangement, of making an object strange and yet familiar and attractive: that is Romantic poetics" (qtd. in Robinson 79-80). Robinson further notes: "Novalis is not the only inventor of Romantic estrangement, of course; the concept is one of the central ideas of German and English Romanticism and German Idealism… . The basic idea is that conventionalization is psychologically alienating, anesthetizing, and that the reader therefore stands in need of some sort of aesthetic shock to break him or her out of the anesthesia" (80-81). Walter Benjamin also points to this aspect of defamiliarization (applied to artworks) in Novalis:

> When Novalis says, "What is at the same time thought and observation is a critical germ," he expresses–tautologically, to be sure, for observation is a thought process–the close affinity between criticism and observation. Thus, criticism is, as it were, an experiment on the artwork, one through which the latter's own reflection is awakened, through which it is brought to consciousness and to knowledge of itself. (Benjamin, "The Concept of Criticism" 151)

Similarly, Robinson mentions Coleridge's 1817 *Biographia Literaria*, in which he writes:

> Mr. Wordsworth, on the other hand, was to propose to himself, as his object, to give the charm of novelty to things of everyday, and to excite a feeling analogous to the supernatural by awakening the

> mind's attention from the lethargy of custom and directing it to the loveliness and the wonders of the world before us; an inexhaustible treasure, but for which, in consequence of the film of familiarity and selfish solicitude, we have eyes which see not, ears that hear not, and hearts which neither feel nor understand. (Coleridge 314)

At this early date Coleridge provides some of the fundamental characteristics of defamiliarization as it comes to be known. When Romanticism deals with pantheistic notions of nature, there is a sublimation of religious sentiment. The emergence of defamiliarization in Romanticism may therefore involve a secularization of earlier religious revelation that Coleridge seems to point to when noting that Wordsworth aimed to "excite a feeling analogous to the supernatural by awakening the mind's attention from the lethargy of custom."

Shelley's essay "A Defence of Poetry," written in 1821 and published in 1840, anticipates well the later writings of Bergson on laughter; Shklovsky (who appears to have borrowed defamiliarization from Bergson) on *ostranenie*; Bertolt Brecht (who adapted Shklovsky's *ostranenie*) on the alienation effect; McLuhan on the counterenvironment; and various writers on institutional critique (who tend to assert its point of origin to 1968 or refer back to Brecht). Shelley, like McLuhan later, claims that poets (McLuhan refers to "artists") are not only those who work within the disciplinary confines of the arts, but are rather those people in any social role who recognize actuality and direct our attention toward it:

> But Poets, or those who imagine and express this indestructible order, are not only the authors of language and of music, of the dance and architecture and statuary and painting: they are the institutors of laws, and the founders of civil society and the inventors of the arts of life and the teachers, who draw into a certain propinquity with the beautiful and the true that partial apprehension of the agencies of the invisible world which is called religion. (Shelley 482)

McLuhan, for his part, employs a Gestalt point of reference, identifying those people as artists who are able to reverse the figure-ground relation of what he terms the environment by creating a counterenvironment. Doing so directs our attention to the environment's otherwise unperceivable processes and constraints, making us aware of them. This new awareness allows us both to recognize actuality and act upon it in a responsible and informed manner. As with Shelley, the individuals to whom McLuhan refers need not be professional artists, or even have any interest in the fine arts: "The artist is the man in any field, scientific or humanistic, who grasps the implications of his actions and of new knowledge in his own time. He is the man of integral awareness" (McLuhan, *Understanding Media* 65). These "artists" (broadly understood) create counterenvironments that defamiliarize the original under-perceived environment or context and allow for its genuine appearance to be recognized.

Shelley, following Coleridge, sets forth some of the ideas that come to permeate the literature on defamiliarization when he considers the nature of poetry:

> It reproduces the common universe of which we are portions and percipients, and it purges from our inward sight the film of familiarity which obscures from us

> the wonder of our being. It compels us to feel that which we perceive, and to imagine that which we know. It creates anew the universe after it has been annihilated in our minds by the recurrence of impressions blunted by reiteration. (505-06)

Note the phrase "film of familiarity" borrowed directly from Coleridge. Shelley's essay informs later writers on defamiliarization, and perhaps Bergson's thoughts on the critical and illuminating effects of laughter and art, when Shelley writes of poetry: "It awakens and enlarges the mind itself by rendering it the receptacle of a thousand unapprehended combinations of thought. Poetry lifts the veil from the hidden beauty of the world, and makes familiar objects as if they were not familiar" (487). The subsequent literature on defamiliarization presents many references to removing the veil on appearances, which allows for the creation of new phenomenal perceptions of the everyday. The percipient is thought to have sudden access to a greater understanding of both sensual and social actuality.

Bergson had considerable influence on artists and writers seeking to align their works with new developments in philosophy and science in late 19th– and early 20th-century Europe.[2] McLuhan appears to have drawn theoretical ideas from Bergson both directly and indirectly via the English modernists. Stephen Crocker suggests that McLuhan also drew on a stream of Catholic Bergsonism (Crocker 17), which may suggest further affinities between defamiliarization and spiritual revelation. Bergson's short book *Laughter* lays out the ideas developed more fully by subsequent theorists of defamiliarization. Bergson employs the same veil metaphor and writes about art in a manner reminiscent of Shelley, who had earlier claimed of poetry that "it strips the veil of familiarity from the world, and lays bare the naked and sleeping beauty which is the spirit of its forms" (Shelley 505). Bergson for his part asks: "What is the object of art? … . All this is around and within us, and yet no whit of it do we distinctly perceive. Between nature and ourselves, nay, between ourselves and our own consciousness a veil is interposed: a veil that is dense and opaque for the common herd—thin, almost transparent, for the artist and the poet" (157-58). Bergson proclaims the essence of his argument when he states that "art, whether it be painting or sculpture, poetry or music, has no other objects than to brush aside the utilitarian symbols, the conventional and socially accepted generalities, in short, everything that veils reality from us, in order to bring us face to face with reality itself" (162). This is one of the definitive statements on defamiliarization, and it can serve as the basis for recognizing later variants of the aesthetic or aesthetic-social-political type.

Bergson's analysis of laughter informs later approaches to art, linked to McLuhan's counterenvironment, that are structurally comedic in nature even when they deal with serious and socially critical subjects. Laughter has an aesthetic element, but it also involves a "social gesture" that "pursues a utilitarian aim of general improvement" (73). It is in this utilitarian aspect that laughter's defamiliarization comes to resemble counterenvironmental art's critical dealings with its social framework. Bergson writes, "there remains outside this sphere of emotion and struggle… a certain rigidity of body, mind and character that society would still like to get rid of in order to obtain from its members the greatest possible degree of elasticity and sociability. This rigidity is the comic, and laughter is its corrective" (73-74). For

Bergson the comic is a consequence of a lack of personal awareness that may extend to being oblivious toward others and the social context. He calls this inattention "unsociability," linking it to rigidity, automatism, and absentmindedness (155-56).

Just as Shelley maintains that poetry "creates anew the universe after it has been annihilated in our minds by the recurrence of impressions blunted by reiteration", Jan Walsh Hokenson suggests that Bergson's notion of the mechanical involves it diminishing individuals' freedom in terms of behaviour and perception. By carrying out the same activity repeatedly, the person is overwhelmed by routine, resulting in a situation where "one ultimately becomes ignorant of the true sources of one's actions" (Walsh Hokenson 44). Walsh Hokenson further writes: "Bergson insists that the comic is a function of the mechanical encrusted *on* the living, which includes society no less than the individual and nature" (44, original emphasis). Paul Douglass identifies the process by which Bergson feels we can be liberated from this mechanical encrustation: "At the same time that we are being consumed in time, 'our living and concrete self gets covered with an outer crust of clean-cut psychic states.' The artist cannot change the nature of this reality, but by 'dissolving or corroding the outer crust' of our lives, art can 'bring us back to the inner core,' restore the awareness of 'real time,' and thereby return us 'back to our own presence'" (Douglass 110). Like Shelley's "veil," references to a "crust" forming on appearances, necessitating disruption, repeatedly arise in the literature on defamiliarization. Douglass explains the technique for carrying out this disruption: "Bergson suggests, then, that the writer 'insinuates' into the reader's mind the perception of truth, 'baffling' the reader on purpose. In Bergson's poetics, literature employs misdirection, stealing in upon the conscious mind and tricking it into a temporary moment of self-realization" (110). McLuhan takes a similar approach when he writes that one "can never perceive the impact of any new technology directly, but it can be done in the manner of Perseus looking in the mirror at Medusa. It has to be done indirectly. You have to perceive the consequences of the new environment on the old environment before you know what the new environment is" (McLuhan, "Address" 228). Such perception involves memory. Jonathan Crary positions Bergson's view of personal memory in relation to the social operations of laughter. Attention can assist memory in reinforcing and renewing current perception, which can multiply and create a web of related memories. Memory may let us grasp in one intuition many moments of duration, distinguishing itself from the larger flow of phenomena. Regarding the revitalization of perception, Crary explains, "Bergson sought to describe the revelatory vitality, even the shock, of a moment when memory ceases to merely confirm or adjust a perception and instead opens up a reverberating process of 'endosmosis,' of remaking an object of perception, of creating something new" (Crary 322-23). Such a creation of something new is one of the aims of modernism, suggesting that the stream of defamiliarization joins early on with the emergent ideals of avant-garde modernity.

Perhaps because Bergson's popularity as a public intellectual diminished following World War I, he has not been sufficiently acknowledged for his essential contributions to the development of defamiliarization theories. When the extent of his influence in the early-20th century is taken into account, however, it becomes easier to trace his later impact, such as in the works of the English modernist literary theorists who drew on their own literary heritage while also being influenced by Bergson's almost cult-like appeal at the time. In some ways the popular McLuhanism of the mid to late 1960s was a repetition of the earlier rage for Bergsonism. T.E. Hulme, a Bergson-influenced critic, wrote foundational essays that set the stage for later theoretical developments in English modernism. McLuhan valued Hulme's book of essays, *Speculations*, to such a degree that according to former graduate student Donald F. Theall he assigned it as a required reading for graduate students in the 1950s (Theall 209). His interest in Hulme matters because in the McLuhan literature Bergson is often downplayed as a potential influence due to the supposition that, because McLuhan's early idol Wyndham Lewis railed against him in later years, McLuhan himself must have paid little attention to Bergson. Yet Mary Ann Gillies records that Lewis was a great admirer of Bergson in his younger days and that Lewis typically assimilated what he could from sources and then repudiated them (Gillies 50). Hulme translated some of Bergson's writings and advocated his ideas, such as those related to defamiliarization, found in several essays including "Bergson's Theory of Art," in which he writes:

> The creative activity of the artist is only necessary because of the limitations placed on internal and external perception by the necessities of action. If we could break though the veil which actions interpose, if we could come into direct contact with sense and consciousness, art would be useless and unnecessary… . [T]he function of the artist is to pierce through here and there, accidentally as it were, the veil placed between us and reality by the limitations of our perception engendered by action. (Hulme 147)

Elsewhere in his essay Hulme employs a variant of Bergson's "crust" reference when he states that in every art form "the artist picks out of reality something which we, owning to a certain hardening of our perceptions, have been unable to see ourselves" (156).

Critics such as James M. Curtis have argued that T.S. Eliot draws considerably from Bergson,[3] notably with Eliot's employment of defamiliarization: "[Eliot] wrote in *The Use of Poetry*, 'It [poetry] may effect revolutions in sensibility, such as are periodically needed, may help break up the conventional modes of perception and valuation which are perpetually forming, and make people see the world afresh, or some new part of it'" (Curtis, "French Structuralism" 373). It could be argued that Eliot is deriving his idea as much from the Romantics as from Bergson, but Douglass identifies Bergsonian elements in many of Eliot's works, including *The Waste Land* and *Four Quartets* (Douglass 114). In *The Mechanical Bride* (1951), McLuhan adopts one of Eliot's statements on defamiliarization in poetry (without citing it) in an early iteration of the counterenvironment. Regarding modern advertising, McLuhan argues that advertisers have invaded the "collective public mind… in order to manipulate, exploit, control" (McLuhan, *The Mechanical Bride* v). McLuhan's critical approach operates in a manner that presages the counterenvironment: "This book reverses that process by providing typical visual imagery of our environment and dislocating it into meaning by inspection. Where visual symbols have been employed in an effort to paralyze the mind, they are here used as a means of energizing it" (v-vii). In "The Metaphysical Poets" Eliot employs a similar vocabulary of dislocation when writing: "The poet must become more and more comprehensive, more allusive, more indirect, in order to force, to dislocate if necessary, language into his meaning" (Eliot 289). In the above passage McLuhan's referencing of Eliot demonstrates an indirect use of Bergson's defamiliarization during the early stages of McLuhan's formulation of the counterenvironment.

In "It's Alive! Bertram Brooker and Vitalism," Adam Lauder considers McLuhan's relation to Bergson by way of Lewis (who was both indebted to and conflicted about Bergson) and posits a possible connection in the Canadian context through the painter, author, advertising executive, and theorist Bertram Brooker (81-105). In the latter part of his doctoral dissertation, Lauder discusses McLuhan's possible use of Bergson's *Laughter* in creating a template for his counterenvironment. Lauder develops the idea (also suggested by Theall and McLuhan himself) that McLuhan's humour involves Menippean satire. Lauder links this form to Lewis's satirical writing, McLuhan, Mikhail Bakhtin on the carnivalesque, and artist Robert Smithson, who was an admirer of Lewis:

> As in Bergson's earlier commentary, Lewis viewed the mechanized body as a key locus of the comic. But whereas the French thinker identified a utilitarian purpose in laughter—namely as a corrective 'intended to humiliate' unsociable behaviour—Lewis, by contrast, took aim at Bergson's anthropomorphic illusion. Rather than shoring up the humanist delusions of liberal democracy, Lewis's comedic bodies reveal the subject's inherence in posthuman patterns of mechanization that we would now recognize as specifically proto-informatic. The cynical overtones of Lewis's transformation of Bergson's theorization of the comic reveals his indebtedness to traditions of Menippean satire: an ancient Greek genre that cast a long shadow on the subsequent development of European literature, which was likewise an enduring inspiration to McLuhan. (Lauder, "Digital Materialisms" 357-58)

Regarding Bakhtin's writing on humour and satire, Larissa Rudova notes that among the many Russians reading Bergson in the early-20th century was Mikhail Bakhtin, whose book *Rabelais and His World* is said to have much in common with Bergson's *Laughter* (Rudova 107n). Elena Lamberti favours the Menippean satire argument, writing that "more than a moral and cynical satire, McLuhan's can be perceived mostly as a Menippean satire, which is devoted to intentionally attacking the reader in order to wake him/her up" (Lamberti 192). It does seem that Menippean satire can involve a form of deautomatizing defamiliarization not unlike that theorized by Bergson, meaning that McLuhan could have employed Bergsonian defamiliarization (at a time when Bergson's reputation had long been in eclipse) as a model for his own counterenvironmental defamilarization, while also understanding himself to be writing in the more esoteric form of Menippean satire.

Though the English modernists and Russian formalists were ideologically distinct from each other in many ways, both Curtis and Ewa Thompson have observed that each group adopted Bergson's ideas on defamiliarization within a short time of each other (Curtis, "French Structuralism" 373; Thompson 67). Many writers cite Shklovsky's theory of *ostranenie* as the point of origin for defamiliarization more generally, despite the idea developing for a century or longer by the time he promoted it as a radically new interpretative tool. It may be that Shklovsky is given this credit largely as a consequence of ideological affiliation in that his place at the origins of the Russian avant-garde may make him a more ideal and convenient ancestor figure than Bergson or the Romantics, who might seem less in tune with the social-political concerns of defamiliarization as it evolved in the later-20th century. It does appear that defamiliarization in Russian formalism and English modernism share similar roots in Romanticism and Bergson. Robinson argues that Shklovsky borrows one of the deautomatizing effects of *ostranenie*, seeing as opposed to recognition, from Bergson in his 1914 essay "The Resurrection of the Word" (Robinson 118-19). Curtis earlier proposed that Shklovsky employed Bergson as a template for "the paradigm, the structural principles" for his own theoretical ideas (Curtis, "Russian Formalism" 110). Shklovsky's *ostranenie* was little known in North America when McLuhan was formulating his notions. However, McLuhan does cite the writings of the Russian Sergei Eisenstein and Hungarian László Moholy-Nagy, both related to Constructivism, as being among his intellectual influences of the late 1940s and 50s. Theall points out that McLuhan read Moholy-Nagy's *Vision in Motion* as well as Eisenstein's *Film Form* (Theall 43). Even earlier, circa 1940, McLuhan wrote about his teaching methods at St. Louis University: "I always spend at least two weeks introducing them to the writings of Pudovkin and Eisenstein on film technique and make them adapt a novel to scenario form" (Gordon 97; McLuhan, *Letters* 107). While Eisenstein's (or more suitably Dziga Vertov's) use of montage can be an example of defamiliarization in practice, Eisenstein does not discuss defamiliarization as such in *Film Form*. R. Bruce Elder more recently considers Eisenstein's use of montage in terms of defamiliarization (Elder 290-91), despite the language of defamiliarization being absent in the discussion of montage in *Film Form*.

Oliver Botar recognizes Moholy-Nagy's indebtedness to the Italian Futurists and indicates a difference between them:

> As early as 1913 F.T. Marinetti wrote of 'multiple and simultaneous awareness in a single individual,' a potentially destabilizing state that the Futurists sought to aestheticize and harness. However, this destabilization was not utopian in impetus. In their responses to modernity, the Futurists sought, for the most part, to instill a sense of discomfort and disorientation rather than adaptation in their audiences. In Moholy-Nagy's scheme, art and artists are accorded the role of educator rather than that of agent provocateur, and it is through this pedagogical prism that art is refracted and projected toward medial experimentation and sensory training/expansion. (Botar 11)

In this scenario, it is the Futurists, more so than Moholy-Nagy, who were interested in the possibilities of defamiliarization. McLuhan makes multiple references to the Futurists in his writings, and it is well known from their various manifestos that they were devotees of Bergson. McLuhan, given his personal relationships with Lewis and Ezra Pound, was even more sympathetic to the Futurist-related English Vorticists. Botar shows that Moholy-Nagy had considerable access to Russian Constructivist ideas in the early 1920s, noting that "in 1922 Moholy-Nagy teamed up with Hungarian art historian Alfréd Kamény, who had just returned from Moscow full of the ideas of Alexander Bogdanov and his Proletkult movement" (21). Moholy-Nagy also knew El Lissitzky and the

Hungarian Béla Uitz, who was familiar with many members of the Russian avant-garde. Moholy-Nagy and McLuhan shared a friend in the architectural and technology historian Sigfried Giedion. Botar recounts that Giedion "remembers Moholy-Nagy lying on the ground and pointing his camera upward from the ground and straight downward from a balcony during a joint vacation at Belle-Île-en-Mer in 1925, shortly after Moholy-Nagy began to use a camera. Moholy-Nagy's obsession with novel viewpoints and visual qualities was part of his effort to 'educate' vision" (Botar 33). Moholy-Nagy's early photography is of a defamiliarizing nature, but his diverse influences and activities make it difficult to situate him within a single tendency. Herbert Molderings writes about Moholy-Nagy's photograph of the Berlin Radio Tower, circa 1928, in a manner that consciously applies Shklovsky's ideas and vocabulary related to *ostranenie*: "The steep view from above alienates the viewer and makes the depicted detail of reality difficult to recognize at first glance. Instead of passively perceiving what the photograph shows, the viewer is expected—as he is when standing in front of a Cubist painting—to piece together the depicted shapes into a recognizable whole. Thus seeing becomes a difficult, delayed and hence conscious process" (Molderings 41). Here Molderings discusses the photographs rather than Moholy-Nagy's texts, making it possible that his defamiliarization references derive more specifically from Shklovsky as well as the later literature on photographer Alexander Rodchenko and filmmaker Dziga Vertov.

Botar points out that Moholy-Nagy was very much involved with theories of "Biocentrism" (12). His own writings about art in *Vision in Motion* sometimes resemble Piet Mondrian's and Theo van Doesburg's writings on De Stijl, which deal in a philosophical way with relationships:

> This development of the visual arts from fixed perspective to "vision in motion" is *vision in relationships*. The fixed viewpoint, the isolated handling of problems as a norm is rejected and replaced by a flexible approach, by seeing matters in a constantly changing moving field of mutual relationships. This may start a new phase in the history of mankind, based upon the universal principle of relationships. It is the clue to all the changes which took or will take place in the sciences as well as in philosophy, including education and all other fields, in fact, in our whole civilization. (Moholy-Nagy 114, original emphasis)

Moholy-Nagy concentrates more on integration and relationships than defamiliarization, focusing less on revelation than his idea of the Total Work. In one instance, however, Moholy-Nagy echoes Shelley and McLuhan on the nature of creative persons:

> The artist unconsciously disentangles the most essential strands of existence from the contorted and chaotic complexities of actuality, and weaves them into an emotional fabric of compelling validity, characteristic of himself as well as of his epoch. This ability of selection is an outstanding gift based upon intuitive power and insight, upon judgment and knowledge, and upon inner responsibility to fundamental biological and social laws which provoke a reinterpretation in every civilization. This intuitive power is present in other creative workers, too, in philosophers, poets, scientists, technologists.

> They pursue the same hopes, seek the same meanings, and—although the content of their work appears to be different—the trends of their approach and the background of their activity are identical. (Moholy-Nagy 11)

Moholy-Nagy emerged as an artist at a time when Bergsonism suffused European modernism, and by the early 1920s he would have had direct contact with the Russian Shklovsky version of it. Hence, his practical and theoretical references to defamiliarization may be associated with multiple sources.

Shklovsky's adoption of Bergson's automatism and defamiliarization is evident when he writes:

> In studying poetic speech… we find material obviously created to remove the automatism of perception; the author's purpose is to create the vision which results from that deautomatized perception. A work is created "artistically" so that its perception is impeded and the greatest possible effect is produced through the slowness of the perception. As a result of this lingering, the object is perceived not in its extension in space, but, so to speak, in its continuity. (Shklovsky 27)

In a manner reminiscent of Bergson and the Romantics, Shklovsky dwells on the deadening of response that results from over-familiarization and the necessity of disruption in order to gain clarity of vision:

> Habitualization devours works, clothes, furniture, one's wife, and the fear of war. "If the whole complex lives of many people go on unconsciously, then such lives are as if they had never been." And art exists that one may recover the sensation of life; it exists to make one feel things, to make the stone *stony*. The purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known. The technique of art is to make objects "unfamiliar," to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged. (20, original emphasis)

Jurij Striedter outlines Shklovsky's ideas on defamiliarization as follows:

> On the one hand, the exclusive focus on the artistic function of defamiliarization (neglecting any extra-artistic reference of implication) now takes the form of a thesis: Changes in art and in artistic forms occur through a process, wholly contained within the realm of art and indispensable to it, whereby automatized forms and devices give way to new ones that defamiliarize them afresh. (Striedter 30)

McLuhan similarly suggests about the counterenvironment: "All the arts might be considered to act as counterenvironments or countergradients. Any environmental form whatsoever saturates perception so that its own character is imperceptible; it has the power to distort or deflect human awareness. Even the most popular arts can serve to increase the level of awareness at least until they become entirely environmental and unperceived" (McLuhan and Parker 2). Importantly, the operations and effects of defamiliarization or the counterenvironment are historical and are not inherent properties of the work. Like a joke that loses its provocative power with repetition, what defamiliarizes at one time may operate very differently with repeated exposure or when conditions and expectations have changed.

According to the commentary of John Willett, Brecht began writing and speaking about *Verfremdungseffekt*, or the alienation effect, following his visit to Moscow in 1935. Willett reasonably argues that Brecht's notion is derived from Shklovsky (Brecht, "Alienation Effects" 99), despite the fact that formalism was suppressed at that time in the Soviet Union with the institutionalization of socialist realism. Brecht's alienation effect became a great influence in the West at a time when references to earlier Russian formalist and Soviet avant-garde sources were difficult to come by. Brecht's significance is not only for the value of his version of this theoretical idea, but also for his political position with which many later theorists and artists could identify—perhaps more so than with Bergson or certainly the Romantics—if they wanted to maintain their sense of radicalism.

In his essay "Short Description of a New Technique of Acting Which Produces an Alienation Effect," Brecht writes:

> The first condition for the A-effect's application to this end is that stage and auditorium must be purged of everything "magical" and that no "hypnotic tensions" should be set up. … The audience was not "worked up" by a display of temperament or "swept away" by acting with tautened muscles; in short, no attempt was made to put it in a trance and give it the illusion of watching an ordinary unrehearsed event. As will be seen presently, the audience's tendency to plunge into such illusions has to be checked by specific artistic means. (136)

Brecht's discussion of the alienation effect prepares the groundwork for McLuhan's counterenvironment and later contemporary art techniques that come to be known as institutional critique because of the insistence on removing the magical, the trance, and the illusion of the setting, resulting in what Shelley terms laying bare or Bergson, Shelley, and Coleridge the removing the veil that suppresses our encounter with actuality. Brecht rephrases the Romantic's understanding of defamiliarization:

> The achievement of the A-effect constitutes something utterly ordinary, recurrent; it is just a widely-practised way of drawing one's own or someone else's attention to a thing… . The A-effect consists in turning the object of which one is to be made aware, to which one's attention is to be drawn, from something ordinary, familiar, immediately accessible, into something peculiar, striking and unexpected. What is obvious is in a certain sense made incomprehensible, but this is only in order that it may then be made all the easier to comprehend. (143-44)

Here Brecht does not essentially add more to what Shelley, Bergson, and Shklovsky had already proposed. Yet these repetitions are paradoxically admired for their theoretical originality, which may call to mind Rosalind Krauss's argument concerning the recurring format of the grid in avant-garde art. (Krauss 54-58) Brecht's truly innovative departure is in the already mentioned focus on the effects of staging on the viewer.

In "The Author as Producer," Benjamin writes about Brecht's epic theatre:

> I remind you here of the songs, which have their chief function in interrupting the action. Here—in the principle of interruption—epic theater, as you see, takes up a procedure that has become familiar to you in recent years from film and radio, press and photography. I am speaking of the procedure of montage: the superimposed element disrupts the context in which it is inserted… . The interruption of action, on account of which Brecht described his theater as *epic*, constantly counteracts an illusion in the audience. For such illusion is a hindrance to a theater that proposes to make use of elements of reality in experimental rearrangements. … Epic theater… does not reproduce situations; rather, it discovers them. This discovery is accomplished by means of the interruption of sequences. Only interruption here is not the character of a stimulant but an organizing function. It arrests the action in its course, and thereby compels the listener to adopt an attitude vis-à-vis the process, the actor vis-à-vis his role. (234-35, original emphasis)

Benjamin characterizes Brecht's montage as a procedure of interruption that "disrupts the context in which it is inserted", thereby prompting the dissolution of the audience's illusion, leading to their recognizing the reality of their situation. This is very like the aesthetic and social operations of McLuhan's counterenvironment as well as institutional critique, which have the capacity to transform awareness, leading to potential change.

Benjamin considers the relation of humour to the epic theater:

> To construct from the smallest elements of behavior what in Aristotelian dramaturgy is called "action" is the purpose of epic theater. Its means are therefore more modest than those of traditional theater; likewise its aims. It is less concerned with filling the public with feelings, even seditious ones, than with alienating it in an enduring manner, through thinking, from the conditions in which it lives. It may be noted, by the way, that there is no better start for thinking than laughter. And, in particular, convulsion of the diaphragm usually provides better opportunities for thought than convulsion of the soul. Epic theater is lavish only in occasions for laughter. (236)

Benjamin's reflections on Brecht's theatre are remindful of Bergson and McLuhan, who both identify the comic and the structure of comedy as being models for the defamiliarizing production of revelatory awareness.

The English translation of *Brecht on Theatre*, which outlines the alienation effect, was published the same year as McLuhan's *Understanding Media*. McLuhan formalized the term "counterenvironment" around that time, although he had already outlined the basics of it in *The Mechanical Bride*. The counterenvironment is engaged in a reformation of consciousness; it develops out of a modern tradition in which the role of art is to direct people's critical attention to their context and reawaken their sensibilities so as to enable a fresh engagement with their own immediate situation. This is similar to Bergson's defamiliarization and how Fredric Jameson characterizes Shklovsky's *ostranenie* as "a way of restoring conscious experience, of breaking through deadening and mechanical habits of conduct (*automatization*, as the Czech Formalists will later call it), and allowing us to be reborn to the world in its existential freshness and horror" (Jameson 51, original emphasis). What is largely new with McLuhan is the focus on the environment as the locus of change and transformation. However, in *Culture and Environment* (1933), McLuhan's Cambridge instructor F.R. Leavis and Denys Thompson write about the environment's adverse effects on the citizenry as well as the need to struggle against it and train awareness (Leavis and Thompson 4-5; Marchessault 28). Their use of the term environment resembles McLuhan's because, importantly, they do not use it to refer to space or nature but rather to processes that shape and alter our outlooks and perspectives. As McLuhan argues: "Environments are not passive wrappings, but are, rather, active processes which are invisible. The groundrules, pervasive structure, and over-all patterns of environments elude easy perception. Anti-environments, or countersituations made by artists, provide means of direct attention and enable us to see and understand more clearly" (McLuhan and Fiore 68). There is less a sense of repetitive action causing an automatist state than there is a recognition that we are always in an environmental situation that requires ongoing defamiliarization.

McLuhan proposes that

> [t]he function of the artist in correcting the unconscious bias of perception in any given culture can be betrayed if he merely repeats the bias of the culture instead of readjusting it. In fact, it can be said that any culture which feeds merely on its direct antecedents is dying. In this sense the role of art is to create the means of perception by creating counterenvironments that open the door of perception to people otherwise numbed in a nonperceivable situation. (McLuhan and Parker 241)

McLuhan's passage on defamiliarizing perception echoes Shklovsky's claim that "art exists that one may recover the sensation of life; it exists to make one feel things". McLuhan does not entirely equate conventional or traditional art with the counterenvironment because for him the role of the artist is to readjust the bias of culture rather than to repeat or reinforce it. In some respects, he is restating the idea and role of the avant-garde in modernity.

McLuhan began referencing the counterenvironment around 1964, at a moment of great change in the North American art world with the emergence of Minimalism, Pop Art, Fluxus, and shortly afterwards, Conceptual Art, new media art forms, and institutional critique. It is easy now to forget that the texts of Poststructuralism as well as those of Guy Debord and the Situationists were not readily available in North America at the time. English translations of Pierre Bourdieu's sociological writings on culture were still to come. But McLuhan was a North American cultural phenomenon, with his writings easily accessible and widely read by artists, critics, and others in the artworld. Some of Brecht's theoretical writings were also available, and some artists, especially the more politicized, cite his alienation effect as an influence on their work. However, for the type of artwork that emerged in North America in the mid 1960s to early 70s involving directing one's attention to the contextual framework of one's own situation and activity, McLuhan's theory of the counterenvironment appears to have played a significant and under-acknowledged role in laying down the theoretical groundwork (Allan, "Conceptual" 131; "Counterenvironment" 22-45; Lauder, "Drop-In" 48-49).

The term institutional critique emerges in the mid- to late-1970s and is most closely associated with the writings of Benjamin Buchloh that deal with an art form that, like the counterenvironment, does a Gestalt reversal by turning the ground to figure. Buchloh was the second editor of the German magazine *Interfunktionen*, which specialized in providing space for artists' magazine projects that are artworks employing mass-publication techniques. The first editor was Friedrich Heubach whose initial issue of 1969 originated out of Wolf Vostell's actions in opposition to the 1968 *Documenta* exhibition. This issue includes references to McLuhan in relation to the intermedia approach of Vostell (an artist with Fluxus connections) and his fellow artists (*Interfunktionen* 17). Buchloh states that it is with the rise of Conceptual Art in the late 1960s (he specifies 1968) that the canonical artists whom he associates with institutional critique emerge: Michael Asher, Daniel Buren, Marcel Broodthaers, Hans Haacke, Dan Graham, and Lawrence Weiner. Buchloh writes: "There I would suggest that only at this time did a radically different basis for critical interventions in the discursive and institutional frameworks determining the production and reception of contemporary art become established" (xxiv). This claim may be largely true of this cohort of artists at this specific moment in contemporary art, but the general theoretical parameters had been set for a very long time.

Authors on institutional critique typically adopt Buchloh's narrative. Paradoxically, however, these authors are often reluctant to use the tools provided by institutional critique to examine its own presuppositions and historical background. For example, Blake Stimson writes: "Institutional critique, as it will be understood here, was a child of 1968" (20), assuming this year of political unrest as the technique's point of origin. Other writers on institutional critique, perhaps partly as a consequence of the increased popularity of Hans Haacke's work in the 1980s, begin stressing the importance of legible political content for such work, often referring to thinkers such as Michel Foucault, Bourdieu, and Debord as new points of reference. Debord and the Situationists employed a form of defamiliarization in work related to their theories of the *dérive* and *détournement* (both seemingly adopted from the Surrealists). Bourdieu, in the introduction to the English-language edition of *Distinctions*, writes of "a sort of estrangement from the familiar, domestic, native world, the critique (in the Kantian sense) of culture [that] invites each reader, through the 'making strange' beloved of the Russian formalists, to reproduce on his or her own behalf the critical break of which it is the product" (Bourdieu xiv). With Bourdieu, the connection to the tradition of defamiliarization is maintained, although it is curious that, as a French writer, he does not recognize the partly Bergsonian origins of the Russian formalist idea that he cites.

In "What is Institutional Critique?" Andrea Fraser states that institutional critique "engages sites above all as social sites, structured sets of relations that are fundamentally social relations. To say that they are social relations is not to oppose them to intersubjective or even intrasubjective relations, but to say that a site is a *social* field of those relations" (Fraser 305, emphasis original). It is not only the visible aspects of the site that are dealt with, but more importantly "their structure, particularly what is hierarchical in that structure and the forms of power and domination, symbolic and material violence, produced by those hierarchies" (307). Fraser appears to be drawing on Bourdieu as well as Foucault, employing a changing vocabulary to describe defamiliarization. Yet the structural manner in which second-generation institutional critique functions remains remarkably similar to that of McLuhan's counterenvironment and to the work of those artists who were influenced by his writing on that subject. Like institutional critique, the counterenvironment is both aesthetic and social in its revelatory qualities. However, McLuhan had fallen out of critical favour by the mid-1970s, making him an ancestral figure many avoided until the late-1990s. As a consequence, McLuhan remains largely invisible in the literature on institutional critique.

An interesting figure who straddles historical perspectives is the artist Krzysztof Wodiczko, a Polish émigré to Canada and subsequently to the United States. Wodiczko's public-monument photographic slide projections of the 1980s were a fascinating form of institutional critique. His work was championed early on by the journal *October*, of which Buchloh is a founding editor. Wodiczko notes the importance of Brecht and Soviet precedents, but he also references McLuhan and the Situationists. He quotes from McLuhan: "In the name of 'progress' our official culture is striving to force the new media to do the work of the old" (qtd. in Wodiczko 59). This quotation introduces an illumination proposal for Philadelphia in 1987. In a fashion that illustrates the continuity of Wodiczko's ideas with the long history of defamiliarization, he writes: "The new task for City Hall will be to transform the sense of the entire public institution and its architectural body into something sensitive, responding, and responsible, to acknowledge the daily rhythm or daily life of the city. Our task is to reattach the public domain's hold on contemporary life and to challenge its alienating, elusive effect" (60). Peter Boswell quotes Wodiczko as saying: "What is implicit about the building must be exposed as explicit, the myth must be visually concretized and unmasked… . This must happen at the very place of the myth on the site of its production, on its body—the building" (qtd. in Boswell 16). The action must interfere with the physical building itself and its public address. Furthermore, Wodiczko maintains: "This will be a symbol-attack, a public, psychoanalytical séance, unmasking and revealing the unconscious of the building, its body, the 'medium' of power" (qtd. in Boswell 20). In this last statement, Wodiczko seems to link his approach to defamiliarization with the languages of Surrealism, psychoanalysis, and Foucault.

In this brief sketch of the relation of McLuhan's counterenvironment to the larger history of defamiliarization, I have addressed numerous points of continuity. However, because the basic idea is at least 200 years old, emerging in tandem with the historical period of modernity, the temporal frameworks specific to the repetitions of this concept will themselves be transformed in the ever-changing environment. Leszek Kolakowski (a polymath who also wrote on Bergson) identifies a problematic view of historical repetition in which:

> … the only factor of importance is that which constitutes the uniqueness of a particular historical complex, every detail of which—although it may be indisputably a repetition of former ideas—acquires a new meaning in its relationship to that complex and is no longer significant in any other way. This hermeneutic assumption clearly leads to a historical nihilism of its own, since by insisting on the exclusive relationship of every detail to a synchronic whole (whether the whole be an individual mind or an entire cultural epoch) it rules

> out all continuity of interpretation, obliging us to treat the mind or the epoch as one of a series of closed, monadic entities. It lays down in advance that there is no possibility of communication among such entities and no language capable of describing them collectively. (Kolakowski 11)

Likewise, with McLuhan's counterenvironment and the stream of defamiliarization more generally, it behooves us to not imagine that the idea emerges out of nowhere in the many instances of its appearance, but to consider its historical specificity, while understanding it in relation to the transformative historical processes that involve a fusion of communication, change, continuity, and repetition.

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Notes

1 I deal with some of these sources in relation to a counterenvironment-related art practice of the 1960s and 70s in my article "Counterenvironment" (22-45).

2 For more detail on the cultural politics surrounding Bergson in early-20th-century France, see Mark Antliff.

3 Gillies suggests that Paul Douglass's *Bergson, Eliot, & American Literature* (1986) makes a convincing case for Eliot's being influenced in his critical writing by Bergson (64).

OUR WORLD: MCLUHAN'S IDEA OF GLOBALIZED PRESENCE AS THE PREHISTORY OF COMPUTATIONAL TEMPORALITY

MOHAMMAD SALEMY

Abstract | *The 1960s was the decade in which satellite technology was introduced to the television world via a series of live broadcasts. With the active participation of 46 stations, BBC's Our World (1967) was undoubtedly the most globally far-reaching of them all. Conceived around Marshall McLuhan's concept of the communicative global village, the special program took full advantage of satellites to reach a truly global audience and use the occasion to announce the dawn of globalization and what living in a small and thoroughly connected world would mean for its inhabitants. Prominent in the broadcast was the program's Canadian segment, which aired right after the introduction and included an interview with Marshal McLuhan in the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's studio in Toronto. This paper considers McLuhan's contributions both to the ideas and practices of planetary communication as well as his direct involvement with the production of Our World. I demonstrate how McLuhan's understanding of the co-constitution of time and space not only set live television broadcasts apart from other temporal media but that, through these spatiotemporal affinities, One World can be considered to belong to the prehistory of our contemporary telecomputational technologies such as the Internet and mobile phones.*

Résumé | *Les années 1960 ont été la décennie où la technologie satellitaire a été introduite dans le monde de la télévision par le biais d'une série d'émissions en direct. Avec la participation active de 46 stations, Our World (1967) de la BBC a été sans aucun doute été l'émission la plus diffusée à travers le monde. Conçu autour du concept du village planétaire de communication de Marshall McLuhan, le programme spécial a profité pleinement des satellites pour atteindre un public véritablement mondial et a saisi l'occasion pour annoncer l'aube de la mondialisation et ce que vivre dans un monde petit et complètement connecté signifierait pour ses habitants. Le segment canadien du programme, diffusé juste après l'introduction, a été mis en vedette et comprenait une entrevue avec Marshall McLuhan dans le studio de la Société Radio-Canada à Toronto. Cet article considère les contributions de McLuhan aux idées et aux pratiques de la communication planétaire, mais aussi son implication directe dans la production d'Our World. Je démontre comment la compréhension de McLuhan de la co-constitution du temps et de l'espace non seulement sépare les émissions télévisées en direct des autres médias temporels, mais aussi, par ces affinités spatio-temporelles, comment One World peut appartenir à la préhistoire de nos technologies de télécommunication contemporaines comme Internet et les téléphones mobiles.*

The 1960s was the decade in which satellite technology started to be incorporated in the production of live television programs. However, with the active participation of 46 stations from round the world, BBC's *Our World* (1967) was undoubtedly the most global in its reach. Conceived around Marshall McLuhan's concept of the communicative global village, the special program took full advantage of satellite technology not only to reach a global audience but also simultaneously produce its live televisual content from different locations around the world. Satellite technology allowed *Our World* to function as a planetary announcement of the dawn of globalization and what living in a small and thoroughly connected world would mean for its inhabitants. *Our World* also played a major role in defining the visual and presentational style of not just live broadcasts, which became widespread with cable television in the decades to come, but both the aesthetics of the 24-hour cable news and the mainstream Internet.

According to the media scholar Lisa Parks, the production of *Our World* in 1967 was largely predicated on the ratification of a UN treaty enabling the free use of the earth's outer space in accordance with international law and banning its monopoly by any single nation (Parks

76-77). The countries involved urged the producers to focus on humanitarian themes and purposes. The producers, on the other hand, used the mass audience of the program not only to publicize but also visualize urgent global issues. Park emphasizes that *Our World* emerged at the peak of the Cold War, the space race, and during the decolonization of the developing world (Parks 75). It was as if all the villages of the globe were brought together by the convergence of media and political interests to pronounce the dawn of a new era of global cooperation and competition not just between the west and east but also the north and south. *Our World* was broadcasted on June 29, 1967 with an estimated 500 million viewers in 24 countries. It required more than two years, thousands of technicians, miles of cable, and $5 million dollars to produce.

Prominent in the broadcast was the program's Canadian segment, which aired after the introduction and included an interview with Marshal McLuhan in the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's studio in Toronto. In this illuminating conversation, which contains the most compressed version of the philosopher's concept of the Global Village, the producers lay the theoretical ground of the show's propositions and made explicit Mcluhan's centrality to their concerns.

In *The Medium Is the Massage*, McLuhan and Quentin Fiore wrote: "Ours is a brand-new world of all-at-once-ness, time has ceased space has vanished we know live in a global village a simultaneous happening" (63). The technological rebirth of the world as a global village was emphasized in the start of the program with images of newly born babies from around the world. *Our World* included segments about various national efforts to increase the world food supply and find solutions to housing problems. The show also highlighted examples of skills in sport and adventure from, notably, a professional Canadian female swimmer breaking her own world record live in an open pool in Vancouver. Perhaps the most entertaining sequences of the program were rehearsals of *Lohengrin* at the Bayreuth festival, Franco Zeffirelli rehearsing a filming of *Romeo and Juliet* in Italy, Leonard Bernstein and and Van Cliburn rehearsal at the Lincoln Center in New York, Joan Miró in his studio in France, and The Beatles and their producer George Martin recording their hit song "All You Need Is Love" in London.

Our World began very early Monday morning in Australia and Japan, Sunday afternoon in North America, and late Sunday evening in Europe. However, for its duration, the viewers from these different time zones around the world were bootstrapped to a new technology capable of uniting them both spatially and temporally. This form of global presence was never technologically possible before. Today's networked media takes for granted the mass participation of millions of users as the precondition for its authority and legitimacy, but in 1967 the audience's knowledge of the fact that millions of others were also watching the program added a new dimension to the televisual experience. The accessible liveness made a mediated experience almost as tangible, real, and authoritative as any physical encounter with the world. This mode of experiencing time is what I refer to as televisual intersubjectivity, a mode that only enhanced as we moved from live satellite broadcasts to the 24-hour cable television cycle and later on to the Internet's own global temporality. However, this intersubjective and participatory immanence could only be possible by way of the media's reorientation of the viewers' attentional resources away from their actual and physical experience of the world and into the audiovisual reality of the television monitor. The togetherness can only become tangible if the cognitive consciousness of the audience is drawn into a convincing virtual world with its own temporal logic. This definition of temporality is much closer to McLuhan's and goes against its contemporary phenomenology and its Marxist recuperation via Walter Benjamin's philosophy of history.[1] In this sense, temporality is not grasped exclusively through inner time of consciousness nor the measured outer time of the world, but rather the way the passage of time from the standpoint of external beings, including technologies, affects our understanding of being and time. It was through utilizing the potentialities of this technologized intersubjective temporality that *Our World* was able to draw millions of viewers into itself, providing a new perspective from which one could see the Earth as a thing situated outside of the viewers' physical and local realities, thus transforming how they understood the present in retrospect. One can only notice how this model of understanding complex facts is similar to how we experience the Internet as a whole today. It was the first time in history that humans could watch the planet as a single entity in both time and space, similar to how Yuri Gagarin and Neil Armstrong had previously viewed the Earth from the outer space.

It is noteworthy that the style and visual design of *Our World* had ramifications for both the presentation of live coverage on television and for how objective news and commentary were to enter public space in the future. For instance, the humming and buzzing environment of the control room from Toronto's CBC studio where McLuhan was interviewed foreshadowed what in the 1990s became known as the aesthetic frame for 24-hour news broadcasters such as CBC Newsworld and CNN. In addition, by combining live use of the television studio alongside maps, photographs, charts, and live footage from remote locations, the program pointed to the computational future of the media in which the credibility of the present is established in a network, or what McLuhan would term a "mosaic" of different types of information.

Looking back almost 50 years at this experiment in mass communication, one might ask, was this only the start of a new life for the medium of television, or is the program also the harbinger of our post-cybernetic planetary life? To answer this question, we should measure *Our World* against three different philosophies of history and their temporalities. This consideration highlights the significance of the program to our shared televisual history in threefold. The classic conception of history treats its subject as a concrete object from the past with an exact archaeological point of origin, worthy of unearthing and burnishing by the historian. In this respect *Our World* constitutes a time capsule of the modern western liberal *weltanschauung*, a term defined by the Viennese art historian Alois Rigel and expanded by the Hungarian sociologist Karl Mannheim. According to both, worldview is not an ideal category but rather the material and formal capabilities of artifacts, especially monuments, to preserve the virtues, aspirations, practices, and technologies of the past and present times. As a media monument, *Our World* speaks to both the form and content of the postwar Modernism advanced by the US and its Western allies as they competed internationally with Soviet communism for the developing world. *Our World* is also significant in our contemporary conception of history as formulated by Walter Benjamin in the "Theses on the Philosophy of History." For Benjamin, historical consciousness is the backward reconstitution of the ruins of the past in the present against the inevitable force and direction of futurity. This particular conception bears resemblance to how the Husserlian phenomenology describes the temporal process of experiencing the world as well as how Norbert Weiner configured the temporality of cybernetic feedback loops (34-35). This conception of history is also graspable through McLuhan's own characterization of the future as being graspable only through the rear-view mirror (McLuhan and Fiore 110-11).

Yet there is a third and speculative concept of history associated with Promethean realism, to use Ray Brassier's term. One can arrive at this conception particularly via Reza Negarestani's reading of Hegel and Suhail Malik's concept of risk rationality in relation to the operational logic of finance capitalism. These thinkers share an understanding of history as a temporal platform for how future and the past struggle against each other in the substrate of the present time. From these more recent perspectives, *Our World* defines the moment in which the alien and artificially intelligent future, channeled through the figure of McLuhan, travels back in time to liberate the present from the clutches of the past. From these perspectives, reason, even if abstracted from its biological substrate and operationalized via our media technologies, can still play an autonomous role in shaping the future history. Thus, if one day in the future, our intelligent machines find the capability to look back into the mirror of history, they would be able to recognize in *Our World* and particularly the McLuhan segment a noticeable trace of their own existence.

There can be no doubt that the television monitor—in general, as the ubiquitous optical data output device and live satellite television programming, and in particular, for its immanent temporality—are the harbingers of the planetary-scale computation and Internet today. However, we can also claim that McLuhan was at least unconsciously aware of the futurity of the television medium, as evident in *Our World*'s opening interview with the author. McLuhan's use of x-ray as a metaphor to explain the depth of televisual experience compared to the superficial nature of print media not only reveals the specific epistemic qualities of television but also points to the further deepening of this x-ray effect as we shift from the analogue signal via satellite to the digital one via the Internet.

In addition, McLuhan's clearly understands the mosaic and fragmented essence of the television paradigm as reflecting an era in which the separation between the spectator and the participant can no longer be maintained. It is not hard to see how this conflation of object and subject, user and used, and consumer and producer is reaching its peak during our current Internet paradigm. At the heart of these transformations rests the question of time, its qualities and logic during social, political, and epistemic transformations. Here, McLuhan recognizes the temporal revolution which television facilitates as an inexpensive and universal dispenser of information in a time-based form and its intensification via inexpensive live satellite broadcast. In short, for McLuhan, these media transformation were essentially about the fundamental change in the relationship between humans and the notion of time mediated by media technologies.

The Transcript of Our World's interview with Marshal McLuhan[2]

CBC: Good afternoon. This is the control room here in Toronto where viewers in Canada will see our world this afternoon. It's one of 45 control rooms around the world, linking the world, or the developed world, in this first global television program. I have with me in the control room Professor Marshall McLuhan, the so-called prophet of this electronic communication age. I hope you don't object to that word, "prophet," you must be tired of it.

MML: I'm quite helpless.

CBC: I don't know if you know what is going around here Professor McLuhan. I don't.

MML: It's a real humming, buzzing confusion.

CBC: Can you say what message the medium has on the world this afternoon?

MML: Well, I can say right off for example that everyone will look at this program as if it were something they have already seen before, with just a little addition of this and that, because that is the inevitable way in which we look at everything. It's the same old thing with a little item or two added. In fact, what is happening around the world today, is what has happened with the [Montréal] Expo: a huge mosaic has been created in which, in effect, an x-ray of world cultures, not a story-line, not a perspective, not a point of view, but a kind of x-ray through this mosaic, is created in which everybody can participate. Everybody is surprised at Expo at how deeply they appreciate and participate in the show. Nobody seems to realize why it is so unlike other world fairs. And I think this show this afternoon will have some unexpected repercussions in that way. People will be drawn into it as participants, whereas they are merely viewing themselves as spectators at this moment.

CBC: Doesn't this, though, it's creating an entirely new intellectual spirit, climate, for those who can communicate. Doesn't it present another problem of dividing those who can from those who can't?

MML: Well, what is called for example a generation gap today, the TV generation of kids, have a completely different set of perceptions from their parents. Their parents grew up in a visual world like the world of movies, where they have cameras and pictures and points of view. The kids have grown up in an x-ray world. The TV camera does a perpetual job of x-ray on them and they take this for granted. X-ray means depth, x-ray means participation in depth in whatever they are doing, and calls for a totally new kind of commitment to everything they are doing. That is why when they encounter situations in which they are merely classified entities as in the school room; they don't feel wanted, they don't feel needed, they just drop out. Now, this strange new all-at-once situation in which everybody experiences everything all at once creates this kind of x-ray mosaic of involvement and participation for which people are just not prepared. They have lived through centuries of detachment, of non-involvement. Suddenly, they are involved. So it's a big surprise, and for many people a kind of exhilaration. Wonderful!

CBC: But there are people in the world, the majority, who don't live in this new, involved society, and they are still in the age of the camel—

MML: They are trying to live in the rear-view mirror. They are still desperately trying to get an image of themselves in a situation that is familiar and known, whereas in actual fact the situation that they find themselves in is not well known, it's utterly surprising and terrifying. The people have always, in all ages, Stan, have always been terrified of the present. The only people that seem to have enough gumption, or nerve, to look at what is happening right under their nose are artists. They are specialists in sensory life. They just deliberately look at the present, you know, as if they dared it to ruin, or do something to them. They are like Perseus and the Gorgon. The artist looks into the mirror of art and says, the heck with the Gorgon's image, I'm not terrified. But most people simply expect, when they look at the present, to be turned to stone, as by the Gorgon's spell, and they are terrified. Therefore they prefer the rear-view mirror. Nearly everybody who looks ahead, as it were, is in effect looking at the rear-view mirror, and if people try to prophesize about today's show, they will be steadfastly looking in the rear-view mirror.

CBC: But we are, nevertheless, as you have said, those of us who participate in this new society, this electric society, it is a new sense of awareness and involvement, but, my question is this: the majority of the world's people in our satellites are going around the world today, are completely out of it. The cameras don't reach them, they don't hear the message—

MML: They aren't watching the show at all.

CBC: And they are not in the rear-view mirror. They are in the past, centuries, and isn't that gap widening as our rocket-like society goes forward?

MML: You know, something like Expo, though, creates a mosaic of all those societies as well as all the latest ones, and everything happens at the same moment. You can be in Beirut, or in Tokyo, or in New York at the same moment, in this kind of mosaic world of all-at-onceness, and so, in effect, the backwards countries have to become contemporary simply because of this instantaneous quality of the mosaic. To be brought into the show, they are all participants. It's no longer a question of philanthropy or just do-gooderism. They just realize these people are part of the show and they have to get into the act, until we put on their makeup or something they can't go before the camera, so, the whole backward territories of the world are being upgraded at very high speed. In fact, one of our most mistaken efforts in upgrading is warfare, because when you fight a backward country you in a sense educate it to hurry its education up into the present. That's the way Julius Caesar did it.

CBC: But didn't we just see an example in the Middle East where one nation had an army which was a complete master of this mechanized society, fighting another which was mentally caught in a camel age.

MML: You can see that the generation gap there, or the technological gap, created frustration (inaudible) even though the war didn't.

CBC: You are confident that these nations, the backwards nations who are not yet in the electric age, they are in the transition to radio age, as you have already pointed out, but—

MML: But you see, in our own homes, the generation gap between child and parent is fantastically great, but we always accepted that as a normal, natural growth gap. Now, today, because of an enormous speed up of information, the child is becoming an adult, the adult has to acquire all the empathy and intuition of childhood in order to live with his own children. The gap between adult and child is just disappearing overnight. That is as big as any revolution as any backwards country has to face when it's being updated into the 20th century. The biggest revolutions in the world are taking place under our own roofs, at our dinner tables. This all-at-onceness just wipes out the old distances and times between age groups, ethnic groups, civilized groups, and so on. This kind of speed up enables you, for example, at Expo, to see all the cultures of the world, in x-ray form, in depth. What you encounter at Expo is not history, but the immediate experience of these countries. You walk into a pavilion and you experience them not as they were, or they will be, but as they are, as an immediate experience, as immediate as the smell of a cigarette.

CBC: I'd like to, on this day, when Mr. Kosygin and President Johnson, are meeting at Westborough, to look back at a comment you made back a number of years ago, around eleven years ago, I think. You pointed out the differences mentally between a print society and the newer oral, the electric society. You made the interesting observation that the United States and the Soviet Union are the two great countries which came to greatness in the era of the printing press. Do you—

MML: Well, no I'm not sure that I wish to say just that. The United States is entirely a product of the printing press. Russia had many centuries of history before print, and still has huge commitments—

CBC: But the soviet Communist society is a printing press-minded organization—

MML: Ah, ah! Right, the 1917 October Revolution was entirely the result of the print technology of that era. Yes.

CBC: But do you find in those two countries today, any indications of, perhaps, the problems they inherited from the printing press?

MML: Oh yeah, because the United States is always looking for blueprints and always looking for solutions in forms of classified data. This, of course, is utterly alien to Russian culture with its oral traditions of involvement, and so there are great gaps, culture gaps, between the US and Russia. The Russians haven't had time to become completely permeated with print culture by any means.

CBC: Did you by any chance see Mr Barouni, the delegate from Saudi Arabia speaking the complete Arab oral—

MML: No, and a man who resented the coming of the European civilized blueprint into the Arab world imposing on them. What we considered, that is the way we have always thought of civilization, giving the benefits of civilization to Africa has always come down to print-oriented people as the laying down of new blueprints, new times for work and education, programming, but today it has to be done by dialogue, by a completely new kind of involvement and participation in their problems. And the old blueprint method is disappearing without questions. Television is an x-ray not a blueprint, so it goes right inside problems, inside cultures, in depth. There are so many numerous stories that express the grievances and the tensions that arise from these situations. I wish we had time to rehearse them.

CBC: I'm afraid that our time is up. I've got to get down to the studio. Many thanks, Professor McLuhan.

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Images Notes

Featured Image: From left, Paul McCartney, George Harrison, Ringo Starr and John Lennon of the Beatles pose for photographers during a break in rehearsal for a performance of their song, "All You Need Is Love," on June 25, 1967. (AP Photo) Used with permission.

Notes

1 The temporal logic of Walter Benjamin's angel of history is similar to the phenomenological experience of human subjects. In both cases a contingent and unexpected encounter with the future is made sense in the present vis-a-vis the subject's reconstruction of the past in which the Benjaminian "ruins" stands as a metaphor for the disintegrated nature of past information. See both Benjamin and Husserl.

2 Transcribed with help by Manuel Correa and Olivia Leiter, certificate students at the Thew Centre for Research and Practice.

ASSEMBLING THE (NON)HUMAN: THE ANIMAL AS MEDIUM

JODY BERLAND

Abstract | *This article revisits McLuhan's well-known phrase "the message is the medium," and it asks: What if the medium is an animal? McLuhan's understanding of his own phrase was profoundly anthropocentric, as critics have noted. But his legacy in mediation theory combined with the insights of interdisciplinary animal studies make it possible to expand the possibilities of the phrase. Media history also challenges the anthropocentric concept of the medium or the mediation process. While the use of animal as medium predates the electric media with which McLuhan was concerned, early computer devices and later mobile technologies have pursued users' engagement through didactically visible identification with/as animal spirits. Animals have become "naturalized" along with the indispensability of these devices as essential mediators of connectivity. In contemporary media arts, we see animals mediate and metaphorically stand for the vitality of mediated connectivity. Recognizing animal figures as mediators of mediation shifts the balance, the affect, and the price of what McLuhan called our "shared media situation." They are both luring enchantments into digital connectivity and anxious premediations of rising challenges to anthropocentric humanism and its destructive blind spots which continue to shape the world.*

Résumé | *Cet article revisite la phrase bien connue de McLuhan « le message est le médium », et il demande : et si le médium est un animal? La compréhension de McLuhan de sa propre phrase était profondément anthropocentrique, comme les critiques l'ont noté. Cependant, son héritage dans le domaine de la théorie de la médiation, combiné avec les connaissances des études interdisciplinaires sur les animaux, permet d'élargir les possibilités de la phrase. L'histoire des médias remet également en cause le concept anthropocentrique du médium ou du processus de médiation. Bien que l'utilisation de l'animal comme médium soit antérieure aux médias électriques dont parlait McLuhan, les premiers dispositifs informatiques et les technologies mobiles subséquentes ont poursuivi l'engagement des utilisateurs grâce à une identification didactiquement visible avec/comme des esprits des animaux. Les animaux sont devenus « naturalisés », parallèlement au caractère indispensable de ces dispositifs comme médiateurs essentiels de la connectivité. Dans les arts médiatiques contemporains, nous voyons les animaux faire de la médiation et métaphoriquement représenter la vitalité de la connectivité médiée. Reconnaître les figures animales comme médiateurs de la médiation modifie l'équilibre, l'effet, et le prix de ce que McLuhan appelle notre « situation médiatique partagée ». Ils entraînent à la fois un ensorcellement vers la connectivité numérique et des préméditations anxieuses des défis croissants de l'humanisme anthropocentrique et de ses angles morts destructeurs qui continuent à façonner le monde.*

Assembling the (Non)Human: The Animal as Medium

> *In the electric age, when our central nervous system is technologically extended to involve us in the whole of mankind and to incorporate the whole of mankind in us, we necessarily participate, in depth, in the consequences of our every action. It is no longer possible to adopt the aloof and disassociated role of the literate Westerner.* (Understanding Media 20)

> *A cyborg world might be about lived social and bodily realities in which people are not afraid of their joint kinship with animals and machines, not afraid of permanently partial identities and contradictory standpoints. The political struggle is to see from both perspectives at once because each reveals both dominations and possibilities unimaginable from the other vantage point. ("Cyborg Manifesto" 153-4)*

The Medium is the Message

In a 1953 article published in the Toronto journal *Explorations*, McLuhan introduced an early version of the idea that made him famous: "the medium is the message." Critiquing his contemporaries' tendency to interpret media in terms of its content, he wrote: "This assumption blinds people to the aspect of communication as participation in a common situation. It leads to ignoring the *form* of communication as the basic art situation which is more important than the basic idea or information 'transmitted'" (Gordon 56, emphasis added). This introductory remark gives us a slightly different portal to the phrase, "the medium is the message." McLuhan does not ask us to focus solely on electronic media as a technical assemblage that connects us or mutates our nervous systems or modifies our machinic natures; he asks us to investigate how it shapes our "participation in a common situation." Echoing what he learned from Harold Innis, he writes: "Every medium is in some sense a universal, pressing toward maximal realization. But its expressive pressures disturb existing balances and patterns in other media of culture" (Gordon 86-87). For Innis, such expressive pressures involve different technically mediated configurations of space and time, centres and margins, and their shaping of monopolies of knowledge. For McLuhan, these configurations are further delineated through technically mediated structures of embodiment and perception that we should examine from both perspectives at once: looking at the technology and looking at the technology looking at us.

A medium does not just transmit something from one party to another, or from one to many; it is part of forming a relationship or set of relationships, while sensually as well as socially shaping the subjects who participate in it. New media forms engender new relational processes. Today, when the technical and aesthetic forms of the media multiply so fast that we constantly have to compare and adjust, we may be more aware of this aspect of communication—consider how the press panics about millennials. Perhaps commentators have forgotten what the (no) future economy looks like now to that generation. In any case, there are still aspects of our shared social situation of which we remain largely unaware.

For McLuhan, "man" is the measure of meaning. Yet there is nothing in McLuhan's argument that excludes the nonhuman animal from the definition of a medium. Consider this premise at the simplest level: if you have a dog, your relationship with neighbours and the neighbourhood is different than if you do not have a dog. You share a particular "common situation" with other people and animals and with the spaces around you when your pet mediates your relationships with them. When you meet through dogs, the dog is an essential medium of communication, as evidenced by the fact that you are more likely to know the name of the dog than that of the person on the other side of the leash. As you prowl the neighbourhood at various times of day and night, you are perhaps acting as the servo-mechanism of the four-legged creature leading you on—just as McLuhan says, in one of his more histrionic phrases, that humans act as the servo-mechanisms of the machine world. As you stop to greet other dogs and people, you become a little bit more dog-like in your awareness of your environment, although becoming-animal in this milieu does not involve the freeing of unconscious energies and instincts with which Deleuzians generally equate the phrase. Rather, we are, following Haraway ("Companion Species Manifesto") simply recognizing the reciprocity of bodies through which humans and animals become companion species.

In a different but not unrelated manner, you share a common situation with people to whom you are connected online who post cat pictures that you like to view and share. Much has been written about this activity, and the way that cats lure so many people in to the space behind the screen ("Cat and Mouse"). For example, the Facebook page "Cats Against Capitalism" offers a space to share and comment on cat pictures, metaphors, lives, and deaths as a gateway to friendly solidarity and banter in desperate times, making comradery, cats, comedy, and politics creatively interchangeable for me and thousands of other members. Who or what is the subject here? You took the picture, the cat is the object, the screen is the subject—or is it the other way around? Indeed, "When I am playing with my cat, how do I know the cat is not playing with me?" (Derrida 7). The cats mediate your relationship with the screen as much as the screen is mediating your relationship with the cats; both are mediating your connection to a community of amenable cat and human comrades who are talking or not talking about the world. There is more than one history haunting this activity, whether as tragedy or farce. Historically, cats were seen as "familiars" possessing the souls of women, and like the so-called witches they were tortured or killed by Christians for their putative carrying or mediating Satan. This mediation has taken a different form in the modern age. Pictures of animals have launched new electronic devices since moving pictures were first made in the 1890s. The first moving picture, made in 1889, featured a running horse; in 1984, both Étienne-Jules Marey and Thomas Edison made short films of cats in motion.[1] Since then, the ability of animals to evoke and provoke the human compulsion to connect has been a crucial product of the growth of social media. We may have become a new form of possessed subject reproducing altered human and nonhuman animal population management strategies at a micro-level.

Rather than attend to the finely textured and often bewildering phenomenologies of these experiences here, I want to explore more closely what it means to claim that the medium is the message and can even be an animal. What does introducing animals mean for mediation theory? What does McLuhan's own medium theory teach us about human-animal relations? What light might this discussion shed on our conventional understandings of human-animal relations and differences?

The Animal is a Medium

McLuhan's "New Media as Political Forms" appeared shortly after another article he published earlier that year on media and art; both demonstrate the emergence of his medium theory. Like Walter Benjamin, McLuhan sought a deeper connection between media as art form and media as a political process, a connection that could only be explained by reference to how our interactions with media technologies change our perceptions of space and time, our sensory experiences, and our relations with one another. McLuhan understood the "expressive pressures" of a medium in terms of its materiality, how that materiality shapes or reshapes users' sensory and haptic dimensions, and how it interacts with other media within a changing media ecology. As he elaborates in *Understanding Media*, each medium absorbs and extends our body and our attention in specific ways. One could apply this principle equally to clothes, cameras, cars, or cats. We live among them in a state of complex mutual mediation, not just as individuals but also as interactive participants in a "common situation" of media involvement. McLuhan used the light bulb to illustrate this point: it has no content of its own, but it extends our shared environment into the night and alters our perceptions and structures of participation. This extension of light into night creates new affordances and new challenges. Mediated in new ways, the human body no longer coincides with itself. With this understanding of the mediated human comprised of its relationships, McLuhan took a first step towards posthumanism.

Media theorist Friedrich Kittler was strongly influenced by McLuhan's ideas, but drew a sharp dividing line between them on the issue of what he perceived as McLuhan's anthropocentrism. For McLuhan, media are the "extensions of man" (*Understanding Media*). As Geoffrey Winthrop-Young suggests, "…this prosthetic logic has its point of origin in the human body and nervous system. From Kittler's point of view, McLuhan still subscribes to the anthropocentric delusion that man is the measure of all media, even when the latter reshape the former" (van den Oevre and Winthrop Young 235). Yet Kittler's critique of anthropocentrism does not extend to a consideration of nonhuman species. Like McLuhan, he overlooks the ways that nonhuman bodies experience the world, mediate our relationship with technology, and change our understanding of life. Kittler does not propose that if a train or light bulb can be a medium, so can a horse or a giraffe. Even Claude Shannon, author of the so-called "mother of all models" of information theory (Wikipedia contributors, "Information Theory") would have acknowledged horses as instruments of communication. Information theory studies the quantification, storage and communication of information. Horses transported people and mail for centuries before the faster, automated "horsepower" machines were invented to replace them. Just as problems with data compression could introduce "noise" into the transmission of information, a problem with weather and roads could challenge the efficiency of the pony express or the legibility of the mail. The transmission of information can arguably include and even depend upon a giraffe, or a fox, or a cat, whose relations with humans have been thoroughly mediated and multiplied by communication technologies that are in turn thoroughly mediated and changed by all the cats ("Animal and/as Medium;" "Cat and Mouse") Are YouTube cats re-enacting or even fetishizing some pre-technological sociality within the context of changed nature-technology configurations?

We require a larger frame for this interpretive process. Animals were among the first mediators of social relations between humans. In some pre-capitalist societies, the bodies of cows or goats were exchanged between families, often for wives, while in others, kinship relations were structured by the totemic enactment of animal spirits. As food, property, companions, or tributes, animals comprise a significant part of the materiality and meaning that constitutes likeness and difference in all societies. Animals appear in all foundational religious texts and played a notable role in the transformation of polytheism to monotheism. Historically, representatives of specific species, including cats, cows, bears, foxes, and goats, have embodied and performed symbolic roles within strongly hierarchical social systems. Such symbols/bodies have been mobilized to perform and legitimate practices of human hierarchy, connection, and violence.

Animals have not just served as mediations between people; as the history of the horse reminds us, they are also mediations between people and machines. A horse and cart can no more be separated than a tribute giraffe from the ship that carried it to an emperor ("Attending the Giraffe"). Understanding animals as mediators in the interplay between these mutually reconfiguring machines and humans is different from viewing animals as content transmitted via a media technology. Surely a horse or giraffe extends our capacity for relationality or changes our "common situation" differently than a lamp does, even when it is housed in a menagerie or a zoo rather than travelling from one place to another. Just as surely, one must take the history of the beaver into account in examining the maps of Canada or the fashions and perfumes of the 19th century. Many of our mediating materials—from writing implements to transport vehicles, clothes, scents, flavours, and even film, as Nicole Shukin has shown (2009)—have been rendered from animal bodies.

The idea of media affordances and the way they alter our shared environment takes on a particular intensity when faced with our damaged culture-nature habitus. We do not think of animals as media because we think of media as technology and animals as nature within an epistemology that still insists on separating them. So much of what we habitually consider to be "natural" is shaped, though, by interactions with human and technological activities and interventions. It is easy enough to point out the human agency that contributed to forming an animal such as a dog, or more broadly to see how plants, animals, foods, and households are shaped by human activities. Indeed, nature is always-already nature-culture; the world of nature is equally co-constituted by our culture and technology. These concepts are so porous that our understanding of nature-culture has been thoroughly complicated, especially in the last several decades.

This fraying of the boundaries of language corresponds to a process in which "nature and technology leak, spill over, blend into each other. A number of neologisms—NatureCulture (Donna Haraway), MediaNature (my own), Medianatures (Jussi Parikka), entangled ontology (Karen Barad)—have been proposed to highlight the changing relationship between these two domains, whose repercussions and implications have also long begun to inform debates over the new knowledge formations" (Angerer 18). Humans continuously shape nature-cultures and the parameters of nonhuman life. The reverse is also the case; none of us can be human without our extensions. When I think about media as an extension of myself in personal terms, I also think about what is at the end of my hands: a pen, a musical or alphabetical keyboard, my cat's fur, my dog's nose. Without them, my hands are incomplete; I am not-me. That is to say, I am not modern. When forms of mediation change, whether from cow to coin, horse to car, bird-song to recording, live music to gramophone, painting to photograph, typewriter to computer, pet cat to Grumpy cat, we change too.

It is not just the history of animal sacrifice, displacement, or dismemberment that invites us to look at the animal as a medium. In the mid-2000s, I was researching the television weather forecast as a post-representational assemblage of colonial-spatial-optical-digital-environmental materials. Given the interdependency of these lucrative institutions and the flawed accuracy of the forecast, I concluded that the television forecast was best seen as a cultural technology of risk in everyday life ("Animal and/as Medium"). Then the deluge of cat images began to flood my inbox. By 2004, the visual field of the network was morphing from a mélange of landscapes, logos, digital graphics, maps, celebrities, babies, and angels to a cacophony of cats ("Cat and Mouse" 8). Why are there so many cats on the Internet? For some critics, virtual animals compensate for the loss of our direct contact with a variety of species in the animal world. In "Why Look at Animals?" Berger writes: "What man has to do in order to transcend the animal, to transcend the mechanical within himself…is often anguish. And so, by comparison and despite the model of the machine, the animal seems to him to enjoy a kind of innocence. The animal has been emptied of experience and secrets, and this new invented 'innocence' begins to provide in man a kind of nostalgia" (12). In *Electric Animal—Toward a Rhetoric of Wildlife*, Akira Lippitt reiterates Berger's claim that animal imagery circulates in electronic media as compensation for the loss of direct encounters with animals. While there is clearly some truth to this idea, it does not explain the function of such compensation in the constancy of digital animal motifs as commercial symbols of technical innovation. These images restore some of the fantasies of childhood, making new media appear to be friendly and anthropomorphically familiar to young users who are more likely to adopt new media tools.

Graham Meikle and Sherman Young argue that LOL cats are videos not only for "creative audiences" to look at but also to make and share for themselves. Making their own LOL cats "bridges the gap between doing nothing and doing something." (115). To intercede between downloading and uploading some video is to engage in "participatory culture" (ibid) Indeed, McLuhan argued in *Understanding Media* that anyone can be an artist, or rather, that art is whatever you can get away with—a favourite sentiment of the blogosphere. Yet once again, this does not account fully for why animal imagery in particular engenders such widespread online participation. Film critic Jonathan Burt, rejecting Berger's focus on the viewing of animals as failed compensation, suggests that the image of the animal evokes and questions the relationship between visuality and life that lies at the heart of film itself. The virtual-cat phenomenon brings to the forefront a vital but perhaps previously less visible triangulation of humans, technology, and the so-called natural world that now saturates our planet.

To dig into the logics of a technocultural object or phenomenon is to embark on an excavation of the present. It involves outlining the various material and technological trajectories that have led to this present; it also involves acknowledging what Raymond Williams called the "structure of feeling" through which people embrace these objects and processes. We need to think through these processes with Williams and McLuhan together, rather than continue to accept the critical opposition between them that once dominated cultural studies. Technology and affect come together in complicated particularities through which their pasts and presents are continuously channeled by various power dynamics, and thus extended and articulated through the trends and objects that arise. It is difficult to formulate clearly what happens when McLuhan's medium theory is bounced against concepts like "the animal." Our theoretical language, like the imagery I am describing, gives vitality and emergence to media as though they are or were animals already. As technology becomes more mobile, more responsive, more apparently autonomous, we humans, as Haraway famously put it, become increasingly inert.

When you connect to people online with people who post cat pictures that you like to view and share, you are sharing and helping to constitute a "common situation" as McLuhan put it. Much has been written about this activity, and the way that cats lure so many people in to the space behind the screen (cf. Berland, "Cat and Mouse"). This situation is formed from technological and affective ingredients which, like any sociotechnical object, meets in the act of its constitution. Unlike many sociotechnical objects, though, its materiality is elusive.

As Werner Herzog observes in his documentary *Cave of Forgotten Dreams,* cave drawings over 30,000 years old already look cinematic in how they capture the fluid motion of animal bodies. The drawing of an animal in motion was the first metaphor for life and its mysteries. The association of animality, movement, and life in these apparently primitive lines evokes both human control over life and the vitality of life that is always on the brink of eluding such control. It is possible that this tension is transmitted in one way when the image is still and another when the image is moving. Modernity made images of animals in motion central to experiments and shifts in imaging technologies, evident in Eadweard Muybridge's studies on motion in the 1870s and his zoopraxiscope, the first movie projector. In short, the relationship between animality, life, motion, and mimesis extends much further back in human history than the age of electronic reproduction, but it is clear that electronic technology affects these processes, how they interact, and how artists respond.

We must ask not so much what these animals mean, but what they are doing in terms of the environments or assemblages in which they appear. "Our conventional response to all media," McLuhan writes, "namely that it is how they are used that counts, is the numb stance of the technological idiot. For the 'content' of a medium is like the juicy piece of meat carried by the burglar to distract the watchdog of the mind" (*Understanding Media* 18).

McLuhan uses this metaphor to contest his contemporaries' failure to understand electronic media in terms of their specific forms and materials, their modes of sensory mediation, their alteration of space and time, and thus the relations and perceptions of viewers. Focused on the content of a medium, we might not understand what a technology does to or with us; without the robber's meat, the watchdog might notice what the cats are up to. In any case the cats have gone elsewhere.

Like our screens, our language is full of animal metaphors. McLuhan chose the watchdog metaphor to represent how the mind works when encountering and yet not perceiving the media environment despite the fact that the media environment he is describing is an extension of the human brain. For John Durham Peters, however, the animal is not a metaphor: "Media theory concerns the different sense ratios with which mind interacts with world and the various worlds that come into being" (60). The senses that concern him are the crustaceans', and the environment that concerns him is the ocean. Taking up the insight that "the medium is the message" without abandoning the dogs, cats, squids, and horses (or the dead animal the robber carries to distract the dog) means acknowledging, as Peters has, the degree to which animals challenge and expand our understandings of mediation whether they occupy aqueous, digital, or philosophical environments.

Animals expand not only our understandings of mediation but also our spaces and platforms of mediation. For more than a century, animals have provided the first images in the cumulative unveiling of the platforms, spaces, and practices of electronic media. The animal mediates the screen while we focus on the screen animating the animal. Moving pictures were launched with horses and cats. American animation began in 1913 with the image of Gertie the Dinosaur strolling out of a cave, drawn by Windsor McKay of Nemo fame. The graphics identifying early software products included penguins, monkeys, birds, and snakes. The first amateur video posted to YouTube was shot at the zoo; the second and third were cat videos produced by software engineer/graphic designer Steven Chen, titled Stinky the Cat, I & 2. YouTube was launched with zoos and cats; the iPhone 5 was launched with a GIF of a splashing elephant; the anti-spyware encryption technology recently used to open an iPhone 6 was first used against an animal-rights campaign in 2002. Telecommunication hardware and software, computers, and new mobile technologies have all put forth new products with stylized images of animals. In short, animal images are central whenever the new "common situations" of electronic spaces and devices appear (Berland 2014). In the governance of human populations, the more distributed we become, consciously or otherwise, the more the lines between human, machine, and animal become porous and affectively charged. Evidently the presence of virtual animals in new media shapes (or at least is perceived to shape) human users' feelings about these interactions. Commenting on McLuhan's work on the occasion of its half-centenary, Richard Grusin writes: "In the first decades of the 21st century, we find ourselves in the midst of a shift in our dominant cultural logic of mediation away from a predominantly visual, late 20th-century focus on remediation toward a more embodied affectivity of premediation generated by the mobile, socially networked media everyday of the 21st century" (56) The greatest contribution of *Understanding Media,* Grusin suggests, is "to turn our attention away from a primarily visual analysis of media and toward an understanding of how media operate as objects within the world, impacting both the human sensorium and the nonhuman environment alike" (56).

Animals enact and symbolize this affective turn. As Grusin and others suggest, affect is perhaps a subtler (if no less debated) concept for talking about how people are touched by media encounters than McLuhan's speculative cybernetic physiology. Locating the animal-medium connection in the context of 21st-century technology also highlights its tangible relationship with risk culture. If cats, dogs, elephants, and other animals are premediating our so-called new technologies, they are do just issue an invitation into the portal of mobile digital computing but also provide a means to actualize and reconcile contradictory responses to the risky worlds we have constructed. With nature and technology so closely intertwined, the embodied affect of being-with virtual animals can be explored with some of the same concepts that have been used to analyze the human sensorium mutating in interaction with electronic and digital technologies.

Mediating Risk

For McLuhan, "The body, in sum, is a capacity for relationality that literally requires mediation and that, in a sense, cannot be conceptualized without it" (Mitchell and Hansen xiii). The human body's reliance on technology is precisely what makes humans human. This dance of mediated becoming does not only involve technology; understanding animals as mediators between humans and our technologies is different than viewing them as content in the media milieu. This distinction allows us to talk about the representation of animals as a form of risk management. The animals are doing something—mediating—while metaphorically standing for the vitality of this activity. This double duty conveys the impression that the symbolic, the material, and the vital can coincide in the world beyond the screen just as they do in the body of the animal. Describing this dynamic as a form of risk management playing out in the space and time of human-technology interactions is significantly different than talking about the representation of animals. It is also different from talking about how people represent the risks animals themselves face in their interactions with humans and human technologies, although these may well be connected. There is no doubt that the representation of animals is connected to the wellbeing of animals, but understanding *how* they are related or exploring this relationship artistically calls for a fuller and less anthropocentric theory of mediation.

If we consider risk as something that arises and is managed through processes of mediation—rather than thinking about risk in terms of the "content," such as pictures of endangered animals or poisoned places—what are the implications for re-examining the human-technology mediation so central to McLuhan's concerns? Risk takes many forms, financial, and social as well as biological. The animal figures circulated by Apple, Fido, Bell, and Telus invite potential mobile phone buyers to join a tribe in which small devices are semiotically and affectively interchangeable with small animals. Everyone loads their devices with animal images, while animals themselves are increasingly linked to or followed by electronic devices. Both cell phones and cats cultivate attention that extends from our hands and arms; they are extensions of us, they extend us into something, some "common situation" that is not-us. Such connection both enhances and depletes our powers. These digital-animal hybrids emerge within a culture in which the use of technology requires ever more developed techniques and constant innovations, or what Edward Tenner calls "the performative use of technology, the skills and know-how that go into the effective operation of devices" (4). Given the commercial and governmental contexts of control society in which such innovation occurs, it is crucial that users *want* to adapt to these new techniques, that they feel welcome in the changed environment in which these technologies appear, and that they respond to them as simultaneously linked in to them and free from the implication or effects of being so confined. Animals are part of a regime that stimulates our interaction with digital processing, collects data about that interaction, formulates new communicative and surveillance strategies based on that data, and shapes our perceptual and cultural capacities in ways that feel natural. Consider how children are inundated with images of happy animals that have nothing to do with habitat or struggle from the minute they can see. If we are interested in how media (in the case of McLuhan) or animals (in the case of animal studies scholars) invite us to look back at ourselves differently, what do these images tell us, truthful or otherwise, about their own condition?

The evocation of the animal-digital connection runs across the surfaces of culture: digital animals, logos, art projects, GIFs, stop-motion photography, taxidermy, cartoons. It is no longer strange to see an animal talking; the history of cartoons is based upon this premise, although we no longer really think of them as animals, if indeed viewers of allegorical or anthropomorphic animals ever did. Digital pictures of people's pets travel daily through social media while digital pets delight their "owners" with presents and remind them to stay connected to their mobile phones in case they miss one. Figures comprised of bits of animals, machines, and humans can be found everywhere from cell phones to military labs to art galleries to political Twitter posts, from high theory to children's television. However, to learn about the realities of wildlife or animals in confinement or factory farms requires documentaries and webcams. This proliferation confirms our fascination with animate life and the pleasure and anxiety of witnessing the merging of bodies, technologies, and nonhuman species. It is not surprising that the contemporary virtual menagerie includes not only pets but also monsters, which explicitly challenge the species barrier.

In the interactive hybridity of digital space, the distinction between sculpture, genetics, animals, and technologies, as well as those between galleries and laboratories, inner and outer space, or information and intelligence, has begun to unravel under the didactic logic of emergence. The experimental relationship between life-like behaviour and system activity is often structured as metaphorical, as when computer-controlled objects are programmed to look or move like life forms such as animals or fish. The practice of modelling software design on evolutionary and biological structures goes back as far as the 1950s, so the relationship is actually not just metaphorical. Multimedia artist Luis Bec created the term "zoosystemic" to describe his art practice of "dynamic morphogenesis and digital bio-modeling" (qtd. in Wilson 346). "Cyborgian" refers to when the quasi-object is comprised of both live and inert matter; "A-life" is configured to be both autonomous and evolutionary. In such experiments, the art work comes to stand for evolution, which Thomas Ray conceives as an autonomous "creative process, which acting independently, has produced living forms of great beauty and complexity" (qtd. in Wilson 353). The search for self-organizing systems is an important part of this same history, and raises some of the same questions. Life forms do not only evolve autonomously; the ideal of autonomous self-production has a particular salience in evolutionary biology, with its investigation of how a species sustains itself, but the fascination with this idea also speaks to the power of a neoliberal imaginary. If the agents in a particular biological process or species history include other species, humans, and technologies, that is to say if they inhabit an environment, then these life forms are inescapably and increasingly interdependent with dynamics of governmentality and power. Even if this were not the case, even if McLuhan or Foucault or Haraway or Marx have nothing to teach us, we know that life forms and species are fundamentally interdependent and that they co-evolve with others within their environments, within an ecological process, whether that ecology contains media technology or not.

McLuhan invites us to look at ourselves as changed beings from the perspective of the media through which we construct and view the world; critical animal studies scholars invite us to look at ourselves from the imagined perspectives of nonhuman animals attempting to survive as we watch, cuddle, or eat them. Thinking of the animal as a mediator and not just the content of a medium allows us to begin to answer questions about what they see, looking back, and what they are telling us. If a medium creates a "common situation" in human culture, as McLuhan put it, that is, if a medium does not "mean" things but "does" things, then a post-anthropocentric interpretation of mediation must acknowledge that human-technology relationships rely on the presence of animals in their various material and symbolic reiterations as much as they do upon their human-created technological extensions. We need to look more closely at the suppression and exploitation of the nonhuman and how it mediates our media practices and knowledges. With their contradictory evocations of innocence, Darwinian struggle, childhood, and the liberation of repressed impulses, these mediating animal figures can be seen as a strategic means to shift the balance, the affect, and the price of what McLuhan called our shared media situation. They are also premediations of the rising challenge from nonhumans and other others to anthropocentric humanism and its destructive blind spots as it continues to shape the world.

Notes

This article is a thinking through of my book *Virtual Menageries*, forthcoming, MIT Press/Leonardo Books. It is a spinoff from my piece, "Attending the Giraffe," *Humanimalia: Journal of Human-Animal Interface Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 1, Fall 2017, http://www.depauw.edu/humanimalia/. Thanks to *Humanimalia* editor Istvan Csicsery-Ronay for his kind permission to borrow and extend these ideas here.

1 A short history of the first motion picture narrated by Kerry Decker includes a clip of moving horses: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dDmAxdL-vdQ4. Both Étienne-Jules Marey and Thomas Edison entered the field with films of cats. Marey's film *Falling Cat* (1894) can be viewed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XqL9siGDeBA. Edison's film, "Boxing Cats" (also 1894) can be viewed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k52pLvVmmkU.

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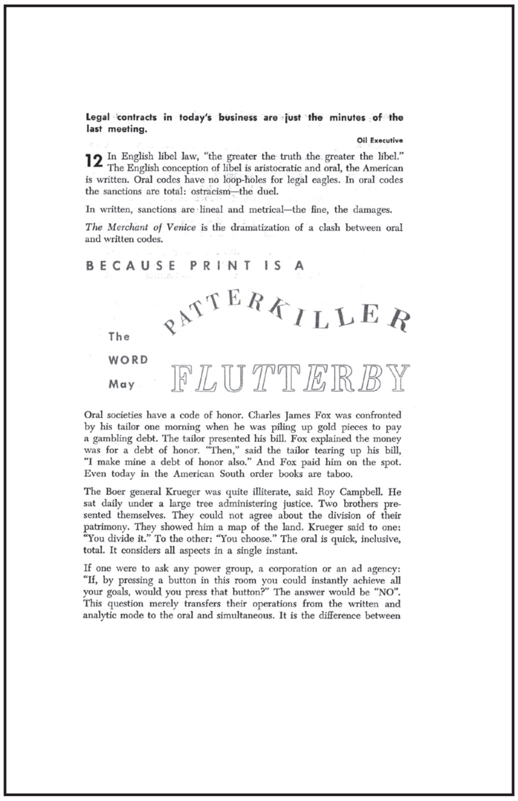
THE DESIGNSCAPES OF HARLEY PARKER: PRINT AND BUILT ENVIRONMENTS

GARY GENOSKO

Abstract | *In this paper I present two views of Harley Parker, Marshall McLuhan's longstanding collaborator. In the first I underline how Parker's training in the arts as a typographic designer was put to work on the print projects for which he is best known, namely, on the original series of Explorations. I debate the claim that his work on Explorations 8 was not his own, and in this phase of argument I draw upon the legacy of other notable designers working in Toronto, namely, Allan R. Fleming of Cooper & Beatty Inc., the developers and promoters of Flexitype. Second, I resituate Parker's link to installation and performance art in Canada by following the line established by his eldest son Blake Parker as resident poet of the experimental electronic band Intersystems, whose activities in 1967-68 included installations and performances at Perception 67 on the University of Toronto campus. The Mind Excursion psychedelic maze had its debut a few weeks after Harley Parker's Hall of Fossils opened at the Royal Ontario Museum and marks the group's origin proper. The connection between father and son is explored through the influences of elder Parker's artistic proclivities as a painter, typographer, exhibition designer, critic, his collaborations with Marshall McLuhan, and the blend of McLuhan's ideas, psychedelia, and kinetic art that animated Intersystems.*

Resume | *Dans cet essai je présenterai deux perspectives de Harley Parker, qui pour un longtemps collaboré avec Marshall MacLuhan. Premièrement, j'explique comment Parker a utilisé son training typographique pour le travail dont il est plus connu, le journal Explorations. Je dirais que son travail sur l'Explorations est original et son propre en utilisant l'histoire des autres designers notables à Toronto, spécifiquement, les producteurs de Flexitype, Allan R. Fleming de Cooper & Beatty Inc. Deuxièmement, je désire à resituer le connexion entre Parker et l'exposition au musée d'art et le performance au Canada, par suivais la ligne de son fils, Blake Parker, et la groupe musique expérimentale d'Intersystems. Pendant 1967-68, cette groupe a performé dans un labyrinthe psychédélique, The Mind Excursion, durant l'évènement du Perception 67 à l'Université de Toronto. Le Hall de Fossiles de Harley Parker au Musée Royale d'Ontario a ouvert en janvier et quelques semaines plus tard The Mind Excursion a ouvert. Le groupe d'Intersystems a commencé avec cet évènement. J'explore les relations entre père et fils par voie des influences artistiques de Harley, et son collègue MacLuhan, et la combinaison la culture de psychédélique et l'art kinésique. Ces idées ont animé d'Intersystems.*

Harley Parker's core career accomplishment was as Display Chief in art and archaeology at the Royal Ontario Museum (1957-67). He was co-conspirator and collaborator with Marshall McLuhan on print projects, journals, books, and films. Parker was visiting professor at Fordham University (1967-68) during McLuhan's visiting research chair, and later held the post of William A. Kern Institute Professor of Communications at the Rochester Institute of Technology (1973-74). From 1967 to 1975 Parker was a Research Associate at McLuhan's Centre for Culture and Technology at University of Toronto. However, he had worked out a non-stipendiary cross-appointment with the Centre as early as 1963, the year of its establishment.



Legal contracts in today's business are just the minutes of the last meeting.

Oil Executive

12 In English libel law, "the greater the truth the greater the libel." The English conception of libel is aristocratic and oral, the American is written. Oral codes have no loop-holes for legal eagles. In oral codes the sanctions are total: ostracism—the duel.

In written, sanctions are lineal and metrical—the fine, the damages.

The Merchant of Venice is the dramatization of a clash between oral and written codes.

BECAUSE PRINT IS A

The

WORD

May

PATTERKILLER

FLUTTERBY

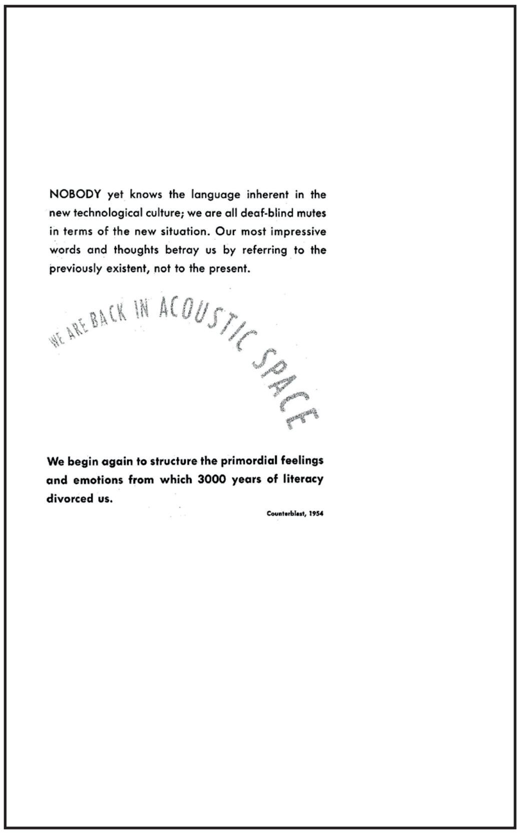
Oral societies have a code of honor. Charles James Fox was confronted by his tailor one morning when he was piling up gold pieces to pay a gambling debt. The tailor presented his bill. Fox explained the money was for a debt of honor. "Then," said the tailor tearing up his bill, "I make mine a debt of honor also." And Fox paid him on the spot. Even today in the American South order books are taboo.

The Boer general Krueger was quite illiterate, said Roy Campbell. He sat daily under a large tree administering justice. Two brothers presented themselves. They could not agree about the division of their patrimony. They showed him a map of the land. Krueger said to one: "You divide it." To the other: "You choose." The oral is quick, inclusive, total. It considers all aspects in a single instant.

If one were to ask any power group, a corporation or an ad agency: "If, by pressing a button in this room you could instantly achieve all your goals, would you press that button?" The answer would be "NO". This question merely transfers their operations from the written and analytic mode to the oral and simultaneous. It is the difference between

Fig. 1. Harley Parker and Marshall McLuhan, "Because print is a patterkiller," section 12, in Explorations 8, ed. Marshall McLuhan and Edmund Carpenter (1955; repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2016): n.p. © Estate Of Marshall McLuhan. © Estate Of Harley Parker. Used with permission.

In this paper I situate the contributions of Parker along two connecting para-academic corridors of the Toronto School, focusing on graphical art and sound experimentation. The first refers to his design of McLuhan's seminal communications journal *Explorations*, in particular, issue number 8 from October 1957 (Figs. 1 and 2). Although a few of the earlier issues involved Parker in several tentative experiments with the spatiality of the printed page and the plasticity of then new typographic methods, it was not until issue 8 that the results became substantive and influenced the look and feel of an entire issue. Transiting from the page to the built environment, Parker would become a trailblazer in museum installation, as his masterpiece of museum display, the Hall of Invertebrate Fossils at the ROM, attests. Students of Parker's role in the Toronto School have observed that "perhaps the most literal application of Parker's design theories was made by the Toronto art-and-music collective Intersystems, which included Parker's son, the poet Blake Parker" (Lauder, "A Clash of Spaces"). However, it is productive to isolate two events in the aforementioned months in order to solidify this observation. The connection I make here is between the Parkerian page and performance spaces in which his son, poet Blake Parker, participated through his membership in the electronic music group Intersystems, with specific reference to installations of the group's Mind Excursion structure, which debuted in the same year as the elder Parker's opening of the Hall of Fossils. His agile movement from print to installation and back again



NOBODY yet knows the language inherent in the new technological culture; we are all deaf-blind mutes in terms of the new situation. Our most impressive words and thoughts betray us by referring to the previously existent, not to the present.

WE ARE BACK IN ACOUSTIC SPACE

We begin again to structure the primordial feelings and emotions from which 3000 years of literacy divorced us.

Counterblast, 1954

Fig. 2. Harley Parker and Marshall McLuhan, "We are back in acoustic space," section 14, from Explorations 8, ed. Marshall McLuhan and Edmund Carpenter (1955; repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2016): n.p. © Estate Of Marshall McLuhan. © Estate Of Harley Parker. Used with permission.

solidifies Harley Parker's legacy within the Toronto School.

Part 1. The Colophon Caper

The kind of questions that Jeffrey T. Schnapp and Adam Michaels ask in *Electric Information Age Book*—about McLuhan's picture books with Jerome Agel and Quentin Fiore with regard to role clarification in collaborative production and the technomateriality of publishing—may similarly be asked of Parker and McLuhan's collaborations. Schnapp and Michaels reconstruct the history of the creation of *The Medium is the Massage* and *War and Peace in the Global Village* as experimental "inventory books" and properly remedy the erasure of the team's efforts, that is, the roles of co-author and corporate communications consultant Fiore and publishing coordinator Agel, not to mention details about McLuhan's own participation. No matter how non-bookish these books appeared, in examining the layout and printing decisions as well as underlining the differences in de-bookification undertaken in *Massage* in contrast to the more lineal and textual *War and Peace*, Schnapp and Michaels enable us to augment earlier critical statements, such as by Don Theall, who disparaged the Agel-Fiore books as "corporate art" (*Electric Age* 103). Theall included in this category McLuhan's collaborations with Parker on the books *Through the Vanishing Point* and *Counterblast*. Yet he made an exception when it came to the long-established affinity of Parker for McLuhan's penchant for James Joyce—*War and Peace* is after all shaped by the quotes from *Finnegans Wake* in its margins—which required a prefatory note and recognition of hidden collaborator Eric McLuhan's role in decoding the ten thunders. This made a difference for Theall: "the collaboration with Parker seems more successful than that with Fiore, possibly because Parker has worked closely with McLuhan for years and shares the same interests in Joyce, in various contemporary movements, in the visual arts, and in cinema" (*Medium is the RearView Mirror* 155). It was Theall who originally coined the term "concrete essay" to describe the collaborative books noted above, including the way in which *War and Peace* achieved the "technique of marginalia" that McLuhan had harbored since publishing *The Gutenberg Galaxy*, opening a space for greater consideration of the collaborators themselves and the techno-material processes of these books' production. Indeed, such books may be analyzed as quasi-acoustic spaces, remaking reading and repositioning the reader, injecting ambivalence and retaining tactility and inviting multi-sensory participation—these are so-called "non-books" in an entirely salutary sense. By contrast, the term "non-book" was used within journalistic circles to disparage McLuhan and Parker's *Through the Vanishing Point*. For instance, in "McLuhan Nonbook" former UCLA English professor Jascha Kessler mocks this "illustrated manual" as "non-enlightening."

However, my approach is less concerned with the negative tropes of de-bookification and is more overtly and positively focused on the acoustification of printed pages. This is especially pertinent to *Explorations* 8 and the caper that accompanied the erasure of its colophon. The augmented reprint of this issue ten years later in 1967 by Fluxus press Something Else—a rarity given that issues of *Explorations* have not been reproduced until 2016, with the exception of an anthology of selected essays that appeared in 1960—omitted the colophon of the original altogether. A colophon appears at the end of a publication and makes note of the design, typesetting, and printing details. Not incidentally, such details and notes, once regained, are not completely transparent, even though they provide insight into the details of production. The modification of Parker's "original design" is acknowledged in the reprint.

Parker rightly counted *Explorations* 8 in his portfolio of key design accomplishments, and his contribution has been noted in detail by keen observers of the journal such as Robert Fulford, who praised his "flamboyant and highly original typography" ("All Ignorance" 314). Parker was specifically acknowledged on the front page of the original issue, receiving credit for the cover and the interior, his choice of colour inks, and modified typefaces; the eight-page yellow section looks forward to the style of the "unknown" *Explorations* once it moved to the University of Toronto alumni magazine in 1964. However, it was not his first involvement with *Explorations*. He designed the cover of *Explorations* 7 earlier the same year, where it is briefly noted that the next issue will be "an experiment in photo-type designed by Harley Parker." He also received credit for the Anna Livia pages in *Explorations* 5 (June 1955) along with colleagues Richard Grooms, Frank Smith, and Cooper & Beatty Ltd., which also gets a small mention on one page of the spread itself: "Experimental typography by Cooper & Beatty, Ltd." This design brings into focus typical content from a descriptive colophon, which early issues of *Explorations,* with the exception of issue 8, for the most part integrated into "Notes on Contributors" and "Acknowledgements" or spread out on pages throughout the issue.

What does the 1957 colophon tell us? The typography was known as Flexitype, expertise in which was provided by Cooper & Beatty Ltd. of Toronto. This use of Flexitype migrated from the world of commercial advertising and design to the academic publication process at University of Toronto Press, and it marks an alleged first—at least in terms of the concentrated quantity of its use, but also in relation to the high quality of printing provided by another outfit, Bomac Ltd. of Toronto—not to neglect the type of paper, Paragon Offset Brilliant, and the company that sold it, Provincial Paper Ltd. Together with the sponsorship note from the front matter indicating that the funder was the Toronto *Telegram* newspaper, there is an

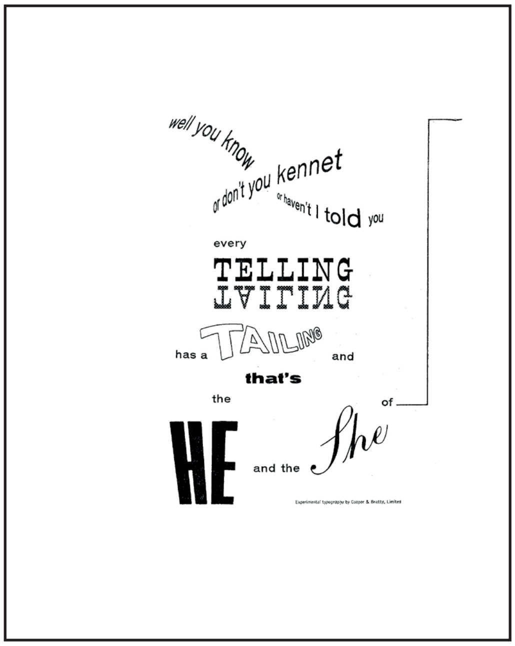


Fig. 3. Harley Parker and Marshall McLuhan, "Anna Livia," from Explorations 5, ed. Marshall McLuhan and Edmund Carpenter (1955; repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2016): n.p. © Estate Of Marshall McLuhan. © Estate Of Harley Parker. Used with permission.

unusually rich array of information about products and businesses but not persons.

After Parker graduated from OCA in 1939, he undertook an apprenticeship in typographic design with Cooper & Beatty in Toronto before moving into a position as typographic designer with the T. Eaton Company, probably working in the catalogue division, after which he joined the Canadian army, where he served three years (1942-45). Upon his return he began teaching classes at Ontario College of Art, where he continued until 1957, the year he joined the ROM. He would have known designer Allan R. Fleming through OCA, who became head of typography at the college in 1955, the same year he began working informally with Cooper & Beatty, quickly becoming its Creative Director in 1957. Fleming, too, began his career at Eaton's (1945-47), but after Parker (Parker is 14 years older than Fleming). The fact that the colophon does not mention Fleming has angered Martha Fleming, who writes in "The Man who Branded a Nation": "The company was forefront; its creative director unmentioned."

In addition to pointing out many of her father's accomplishments as a designer and researching his legacy and influence (some of the visible manifestations of the academy in Ontario during the 60s and 70s results from Fleming's work for Trent University and Massey College, not to mention corporate logos for Toronto Hydro, TSO, Gray Coach, and CN), Martha Fleming also calls into question Parker's role in *Explorations* 8. She further claims that:

Nominally this issue of *Explorations* was designed by Harley Parker, who taught colour at the Ontario College of Art where Fleming taught typography. Parker, as display chief of the Royal Ontario Museum, would have also helped install the exhibition Fleming assisted in curating (by selecting books for display) there in 1956 to commemorate the 500th anniversary of Gutenberg's 42-line bible: "The Art of Fine Printing and its Influence upon the Bible in Print."'("The Man who Branded a Nation")

The choice of the term "nominally" suggests that the reality is different from the official credit affixed to the journal. This involves two related events. The first is that Père Fleming's catalogue essay for his curated exhibition, "The Development of Printing as an Art," ends on a rather sour note as he points out the paucity of fine Canadian books for display in a Canadian setting, remarking that "the production of printers and publishers here are still at the level of England in mid-nineteenth century, a period not of bad taste, but of no taste at all" ("Development of Printing" 19). In the end, he found only one Canadian book to display. The cultural cringe of an accomplished Torontonian does not amount to a critical insight.

The salient point is that Parker did not arrive at the ROM until September 1957, while the exhibition "The Art of Fine Printing" took place a year earlier in September-October of 1956. Although these dates do not support Martha Fleming's claims, the second factor looms large. The product known as Flexitype was promoted by Cooper & Beatty through a substantive brochure with abundant typeface samples and glowing self-promotional discourse grounded in the machinic modernization of tradition; Fulford was an admirer of Fleming's brochures for C&B ("Allan R. Fleming"). Flexitype was in the mid-50s a new photography-based typesetting that directly generated negatives rather than rely on relief surfaces on metal plates, and Cooper and Beatty promoted their advantage this way: "We're proud to be the first company to introduce photographic typography to the printing industry across Canada" ("FLEXItype").

Beginning in 1955, the distorted typefaces that Parker utilized in *Explorations* were generated by placing a prism before the camera's lens, captured in a photographic negative; Cooper & Beatty did this in-house using a photo-mechanical process. It seems likely that the advertising copy for Flexitype was the work of Fleming, as his repeated point of reference is Gutenberg, a curatorial interest. For instance, a typical piece of hyperbole: "Typesetting directly into film is the greatest advance in the development of graphic arts since Gutenberg first invented movable type" ("FLEXItype").

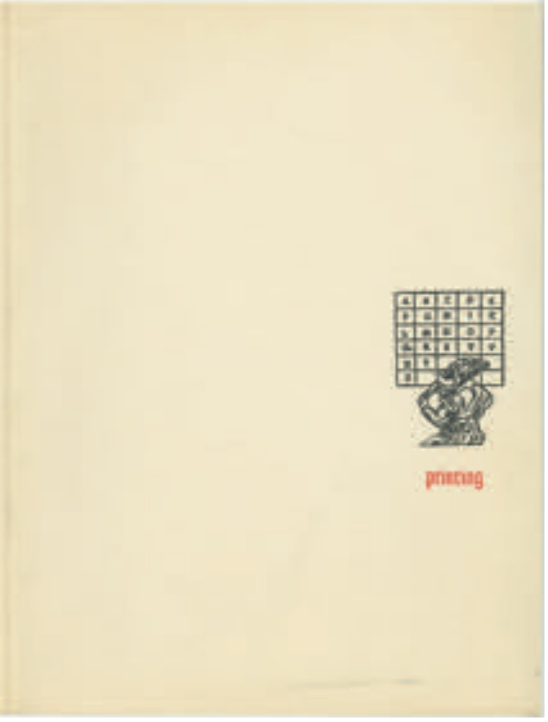


Fig. 4. Marshall McLuhan, "Printing and Social Change," in Printing Progress: A Mid-Century Report (Cincinnati, Ohio: The International Association of Printing House Crafts- men, 1959), pp. 86. Graphic design and page layout (1958) by Allan Fleming (1929-1977), as Typographic Director, Creative Department, Cooper & Beatty Type Craftsmen (Toronto). © Estate Of Marshall McLuhan. Courtesy Clara Thomas Archives and Special Collections, York University. Used with permission.

As a graphic design professional in Toronto, Parker seized the opportunity to experiment by crossing over from commercial methods to academic publishing, a process of de-specialization that was at the heart of his critique of the position of the curator and his public loathing for 'POBS'—print-oriented bastards. Additionally, the yearly Typography exhibitions and lectures, at least from 1958-64, occasionally involved McLuhan, who guest lectured at the 1960 luncheon, and also Parker, as these exhibitions would have been his responsibility to mount as they occurred at the ROM (ie.

Typography ’58-’59-’60-’61 and ’64); moreover, Fleming designed invitations to the exhibits and arranged for OCA students to show their work in them alongside his own. McLuhan’s work was known among members of the Typographic Designers of Canada, especially Carl Dair. Parker and McLuhan tried to enlist Dair to design *Through the Vanishing Point*, but Dair would not take up the project and passed away in 1967, a year before the book’s publication.

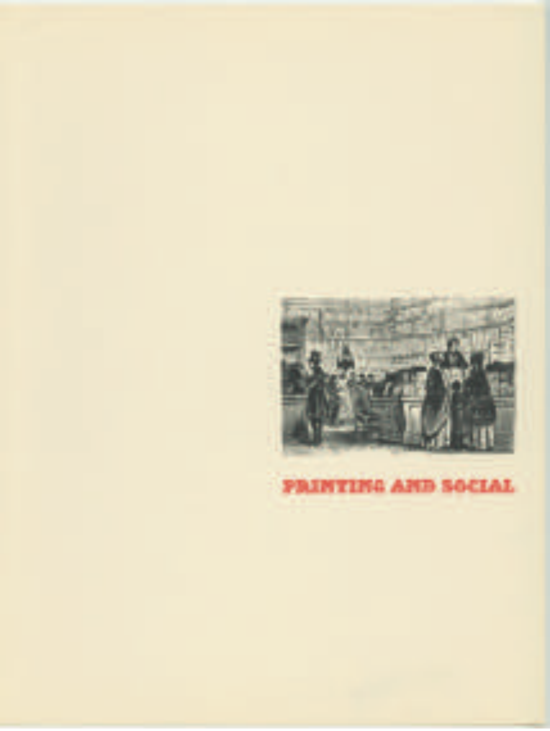


Fig. 5. Marshall McLuhan, “Printing and Social Change,” in Printing Progress: A Mid-Century Report (Cincinnati, Ohio: The International Association of Printing House Crafts- men, 1959), pp. 887. Graphic design and page layout (1958) by Allan Fleming (1929-1977), as Typographic Director, Creative Department, Cooper & Beatty Type Craftsmen (Toronto). © Estate Of Marshall McLuhan. Courtesy Clara Thomas Archives and Special Collections, York University. Used with permission.

Martha Fleming astutely reminds us that it was her father who designed McLuhan’s paper “Printing and Social Change” for the 1959 report published by the International Association of Printing House Craftsmen, in Cincinnati. This remarkable publication is clear about attribution as each paper has a detailed colophon, including a personal reflection by the designer, who explains, in this instance, that he sought to “evoke a feeling of change in the reader” by means of a series of introductory pages consisting of wood cuts and a photograph and the title of the essay, a motif taken up in the page headers in the remainder, using red and black inks, and two colours of paper stock. Still, Fleming attributes the design to the collective efforts of all eleven Canadian Craftsmen clubs. Moreover, it is not Cooper & Beatty but rather the Society of Typographic Designers with whom Fleming identifies himself; C&B provided the type for the body and display elements, and preliminary printing and binding for the essay was done in Canada.

Although Fleming and Parker were fourteen years apart in age and Fleming died young at the age of 48, they shared the C&B and the Eaton’s art department connections and both were OCA teachers. They both had, most importantly, McLuhan and University of Toronto in common, as Fleming joined UTP as chief designer in 1968 and later even designed protest signs for the Stop Spadina campaign in which Marshall was active; Parker had already joined McLuhan’s Centre as an associate. Both Parker and Fleming contributed design elements to Expo 67 and were active, one as curator and artist and the other as display chief, at the ROM during the years when Typography took place there. Typographic 58 was, as Fulford described it, a “one-man show” by Fleming who even designed the invitation card:

"everywhere you turned in the small room in the Royal Ontario Museum in which the show was held, it is more than obvious that Canada's first attempt at an annual typographic exhibit was dominated by the work of one man" ("Allan R. Fleming" 268). Ironically, Martha Fleming's complaint is not so different from the absence of credit for display and installation in published records such as catalogues undertaken by Parker for much of his everyday ROM work. The important point is the confluence of design intelligence in Toronto in the late 1950s, with the commercial training and product innovation and C&B, its leaders such as Allan Fleming, design figureheads such as Dair, and the inter-institutional cooperation between the ROM, C&B, McLuhan, and University of Toronto Press.

Part 2. The Winter of '67

Everyone has heard about the summer of '69, but I would like to revisit the winter of '67, January and February to be precise. In the last week of January the elder Parker's masterwork, the Hall of Fossils, opened at the ROM; in February, the building and opening of Michael Hayden's Mind Excursion installation for Perception 67 took place at University College. During these two months the dailies in Toronto and New York were chewing over the Hall of Fossils' opening, each trying to outdo in wit the McLuhan in/of the museum motif. Then Mind Excursion burst onto the Canadian arts scene as a strange psychedelic built environment that would catalyze the founding of Intersystems, help Blake Parker find his voice, and put Intersystems on the international map of kinetic art.

The environmental impetus in kinetic art—which moves toward collapsing the space between work and spectator-participant, who is brought into close contact with movement, colour, and light, underlining psycho-physical experience in a defined and controlled space (Popper 204-7)—is shared with the Intersystems' built environments, especially Mind Excursion, and the tools that Harley Parker utilized for the Hall of Fossils, including a range of invisible beams and pressure sensitive mats that triggered light and sound events, a low cloth ceiling, round walls, sand and shells on uneven flooring, a bank of wall-mounted dial-less telephones delivering recorded messages in lieu of typical didactics, and an acute aversion to labels and glass display cases. Parker's goal was to make the "changing sensory orientation of the public" a key factor in inventive exhibition design, citing that much can be learned from "Go Go girls and the psychedelic event … [without] the misdirected enthusiasm of the hippies" (296).

Sculptor Michael Hayden had successfully exhibited a number of kinetic pieces in Toronto and New York in 1966 at Gallery Moos and Martha Jackson Gallery respectively, and had begun collaborating with Blake Parker who contributed textual elements but had not yet begun to perform and record them himself. By 1967, Head Machine was shown at National Gallery of Canada; it featured composer Mills-Cockell's soundscape and Parker's recorded recitations, an "environmental container with its own sound and light systems and a timing device which programs the action of each piece in the whole," but within an 8'x8'x8' cube, (NGC, *Intersystems and Lajeunie*).

Intersystems as a trio was born in February at University College (U of T) at the Hayden-coordinated Perception 67, a psychedelic event featuring visual art, music, poetry, and a range of countercultural luminaries. Mind Excursion was a built structure: a ten-room maze that heightened by parceling sensory experience into rooms by means of modifying floor and wall and ceiling surfaces augmented with various substances including chocolate, cotton balls, candy, and projections of images, with soft and hard substances for shoeless visitors, live dancers, low ceilings, and slanted floors. Given its room-to-themed-room sequentiality, a given trajectory would result in a series of experiential transitions rather than a true multisensual simultaneity. While McLuhan and partner Corinne attended the event, he was not on the bill. Mind Excursion was later reconstructed in 1968 in Montréal and included a Mindex Department Store selling packaged art objects, giving the notion of "exiting through the gift shop" an early referent (Reid 98). Mind Excursion is, however, a three-part work consisting of the soundtrack of the third Intersystems album, *Free Psychedelic Poster Inside,* and Blake Parker's narrative for *Mind Power*, a collectively produced bilingual graphic short story borrowing from group members' family photos (in addition to photographer Brian Thompson) of the courtship and marriage of fictional Gordie and Renée, an ordinary couple whose experiences indicate some of the excursion thematics (i.e., room of mirrors, confetti room, pastoral room).

Hayden-Parker-Mills-Cockell first performed live together as the foursome Intersystems in Vancouver at the VAG's spring 1967 event Direction 67, an "electrosonic" installation and performance in near darkness. Intersystems' public presentations were enhanced when Mills-Cockell acquired a Moog synthesizer in 1968 and the machine became a performer in its own right, especially at its first appearance at the AGO in March 1968 during the band's Duplex performance (later revisited at Carbondale courtesy of an invitation from Buckminster Fuller). The band acquired new member architect Dik Zander, who had been active already with Hayden during the construction of Mind Excursion. Duplex is again architectural in inspiration, with Mills-Cockell and Parker (voice and sound) on the ground floor, and Zander and Hayden (lights and projections) upstairs. Parker recites a tale of an ordinary duplex, with laundry machines and framed diplomas. This motif would become progressively darker as Parker troubled domesticity and suburban life ("Intersystems" 89). Parker was a poet of the everyday, of the foreboding ordinary. Intersystems would only survive until early 1969 after their performance of Network II at the Masonic Temple in Toronto.

For A Post-Typographic Practice

While a case can be made for broad overlapping extra-psychedelic themes in Parker's late 1960s collaborations with McLuhan in print and film media ("Intersystems" 84), when Blake Parker found his voice and began performing his poetry for Intersystems—as it had hitherto been rendered and recorded by others, a fact he allegedly disliked according to Hayden (26)—then a controlled exploration of integrated multi-sensory elements emerged and the possibility of taped performances within the plastic elements of custom designed and built environments could take place: Blake Parker moved from published poet to spoken word performer, making kinetic art, records, and performing live, sometimes within the structures themselves (i.e. Duplex 1968). Of course, in its initial incarnation Mind Excursion only stood for two days, a far cry from the long run enjoyed by the Hall of Fossils. While Hayden had insisted on exploring olfactory differences amongst the "programmed" rooms of Mind Excursion, Harley Parker once joked that it would have been appropriate to infuse the entire Hall with the smell of rotting fish to augment the bird, storm, and other sounds and recorded voices, both thundering and quiet, not to mention flashing lightning and film projection of a wave overhead—in the process de-emphasizing the graphical and eschewing naturalism for abstraction in pursuit of a carefully deduced audience whose role would be to "operate" the gallery. The Hall of Fossils is certainly less boxy and more sensorily integrated than Mind Excursion, with its calculated sequential changes and hyper-concentrated atmospheres. Still, the Hall relied on standard built motifs of museum design such as dioramas and borrowed the semi-circular ambulatory from church architecture (*Medieval Modern* 164-65). Mind Excursions's rhetoric of programming and its floor plan, viewed from above in standard architectural bias, may have forced sensory experience into tight spaces and thus intensified it without reflecting on the control elements of interplay imposed by both design and institutional factors.

By the end of the 1960s, Harley Parker had returned to typographic experimentation and book design in the rollicking pages of McLuhan's *Counterblast* (1969). *Counterblast* can barely contain the Lewisian eruptions of print, and the niceties of print craft are gone—no more colophons and no more nods to the ink and paper producers. The designer's name is actually on the cover, in capital letters, fixing identity and authority, a hard-won acknowledgement that uses its power in the pages of the book to disorient and disrupt in grand gestures of de-signifying glitches and the construction of word-objects whose stability goes only as far as the foreign translations that of necessity remake and remodel them. What Parker taught us about print culture is that a page is a process, sped up by translation, slowed down by a redesigned reprint. Furthermore, as he wrote with McLuhan in the preface to *Through the Vanishing Point*, "labels as classification are extreme forms of visual culture" (xxiv); a gallery that limits the use of labels and transforms them into recorded messages and projections erodes stable visuality for the sake of new movements and relations. Blake Parker took opportunities for releasing new intensities when he decided to record his own poetry for art works and to perform it live, becoming the "singer" in an experimental band. Harley Parker, in moving Flexitype from a commercial to an academic context, initiated novel intensities of aesthetic and conceptual relations, building pages like environments with all of the special effects available at the time.

In opening up the space of the printed page, Harley Parker also addressed the transition from the visual bias of illustration to the synaesthetic icon as a way of understanding the predicament of serials in the post-literate age that typically include both. He tried to make his design work in print and in natural history galleries more iconic, breaking up large masses of grey type dynamic flourishes reduces word counts, suggesting that writing will need to become increasingly non-sequential. Exposition will proceed in clusters rather than sequentially. Phototype will flourish, and sound will be invoked in a myriad of ways. Parker was imagining a post-typographic practice akin to the post-labeled artifact in the museum setting; the immersive psychedelic environments that concentrated elements borrowed from kinetic art practices.

Image Notes

Fig. 1. Harley Parker and Marshall McLuhan, "Because print is a patterkiller," section 12, in *Explorations* 8, ed. Marshall McLuhan and Edmund Carpenter (1955; repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2016): n.p. © Estate Of Marshall McLuhan. © Estate Of Harley Parker. Used with permission.

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Adam Lauder est boursier postdoctoral du CRSH à l'Université York de Toronto. Il a obtenu un doctorat du Départmement des études supérieures en arts de l'Université de Toronto à l'automne 2016. Ses recherches actuelles utilisent l'esthétique non standard de Laruelle pour étudier l'art de l'information canadien dans les années 1970, alors que les artistes ont commencé à explorer de nouveaux cadres scientifiques et de nouvelles modalités de « fiction ». Il a contribué à des revues savantes, dont *Amodern*, *Art Documentation*, *Canadian Journal of Communication*, *Future Anterior*, *Imaginations*, *Journal of Canadian Studies*, *Technoetic Arts*, *The Journal of Canadian Art History*, *TOPIA* et *Visual Resources*. Il a aussi publié des textes plus courts dans des revues comme *Art Handler*, *Border Crossings*, *C*, *Canadian Art*, *e-flux*, *Flash Art*, *Hunter and Cook* et *Millions*. Il a édité *H& IT ON* (YYZ, 2012), mettant en vedette l'art original de l'artiste pionnier de l'information IAIN BAXTER&, et est l'auteur de chapitres apparaissant dans *Finding McLuhan* (2015), *The Logic of Nature, The Romance of Space* (2010), de même que *Byproduct: On the Excess of Embedded Art Practices* (2010).

Adam Lauder is a SSHRC Postdoctoral Fellow at York University in Toronto. He obtained a Ph.D. from the Graduate Department of Art at the University of Toronto in Fall 2016. His current research employs the non-aesthetics of Laruelle to study Canadian information art in the 1970s, as artists began exploring new scientific frameworks and modalities of "fiction." He has contributed articles to scholarly journals including *Amodern*, *Art Documentation*,

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Adina Balint, professeure agrégée à l'Université de Winnipeg, travaille sur les littératures française et francophone des 20e et 21e siècles, particulièrement sur la poétique de la création et les dynamiques inter et transculturelles. Elle est l'auteure d'une monographie intitulée *Le processus de création dans l'œuvre de J.M.G. Le Clézio* (Rodopi/Brill, 2016) et de plusieurs articles sur des écrivains d'Europe et du Canada (N. Huston, A. Nothomb, S. Kokis, R. Robin, P.K. Page, etc.).

Adina Balint is Associate Professor of French at The University of Winnipeg. Her field of research is 20th and 21st-century French and Francophone literature, with an emphasis on the poetics of creation and on transculturalism. She is the author of the monograph *Le Processus de création dans l'œuvre de J.M.G. Le Clézio* (Rodopi/Brill, 2016), and of several scientific articles on European and Canadian writers (N. Huston, A. Nothomb, S. Kokis, R. Robin, P.K. Page, etc.).

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Jody Berland is Professor, Department of Humanities, and Graduate Programs in Communication and Culture, Humanities, Science and Technology Studies and Social and Political Thought, York University, Toronto, Canada. She has written more than 50 articles and book chapters on processes of mediation involving music, technology, culture, place, and nature. Her forthcoming book, *Virtual Menageries in Network Cultures* (MIT Press, Leonardo Books 2018) traces the role of animal mediation from early colonial trade to new connective technologies. Her book *North of Empire: Essays on Cultural Technologies and the Production of Space* (Duke University Pres 2009) was awarded the Canadian Communication Association's G.J. Robinson book prize in 2010. Berland is Principle Investigator of the SSHRC funded project, "Digital Animalities: Media Representations of Nonhuman Life in the Age of Risk" and Visiting Professor, Centre for Human Animal Studies, Edge Hill University, UK. She is Editor Emerita of *TOPIA: Canadian Journal of Cultural Studies,* and has supervised many theses and dissertations.

May Chew a reçu son doctorat en études culturelles de l'Université Queen's, où sa recherche a examiné l'utilisation des technologies interactives et immersives dans divers lieux muséologiques à travers le Canada, et comment celles-ci facilitent la pratique matérielle de la citoyenneté nationale et culturelle. Elle est actuellement boursière postdoctorale MITACS au Sensorium Centre for Digital Arts de l'Université York. Chew collabore à Houses on Pengarth, un projet de recherche et de conservation axé sur le développement, dans la communauté de Lawrence Heights à Toronto, d'un laboratoire d'art expérimental engagé socialement. Son travail récent apparaît dans l'anthologie *Material Cultures in Canada*, *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, et un numéro à paraître du *Journal of Canadian Art History*. Chew enseigne actuellement au Cinema Studies Institute de l'Université de Toronto. Elle est également rédactrice en chef de la revue *PUBLIC: Art/Culture/Ideas*.

May Chew received her Doctorate in Cultural Studies from Queen's University, where her research examined the uses of interactive and immersive technologies in diverse museological sites across Canada, and how these facilitate the material practice of nation and cultural citizenship. She is currently a MITACS Postdoctoral Fellow at York University's Sensorium Centre for Digital Arts. Chew collaborates on Houses on Pengarth, a research and curation project centred on developing a socially-engaged, experimental art lab in Toronto's Lawrence Heights community. Her recent work appears in the anthology *Material Cultures in Canada*, the *International Journal of Heritage Studies* and an upcoming issue of the *Journal of Canadian Art History*. Chew currently teaches in the Cinema Studies Institute at the University of Toronto. She also serves as Managing Editor for the journal, *PUBLIC: Art/Culture/Ideas*.

Gary Genosko est professeur de communication et d'études sur les médias numériques à l'Institut universitaire de technologie de l'Ontario à Oshawa, en Ontario. Son livre *The*

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Jessica Jacobson-Konefall (Ph. D.) est chercheuse postdoctorale du CRSH à l'Université de Toronto, au Département d'histoire de l'art. Son travail porte sur l'art écologique et la citoyenneté environnementale au Canada (2017-2019). Elle a complété son doctorat à l'Université Queen's à l'automne 2015 (2011-2015) et a été chercheuse postdoctorale au Centre for Globalization and Cultural Studies de l'Université du Manitoba (2016-2017). Elle enseigne à l'Université de Winnipeg et à l'Université du Manitoba (2010-) et travaille comme assistante et archiviste auprès des artistes Rebecca Belmore et Osvaldo Yero (2014-). Elle travaille actuellement sur une monographie avec la conservatrice crie Daina Warren : *Indigenous New Media Arts: Translocal Cosmologies* (McGill-Queen's University Press, en cours). Son travail est publié dans de nombreuses anthologies universitaires et revues.

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Alexander Kuskis, Ph. D. (Toronto) a connu des carrières dans les secteurs de l'enseignement supérieur et de la communication, en particulier dans la l'édition de livres, l'informatique, et la formation aux logiciels et à l'informatique. Il a enseigné aux universités de Toronto, du Manitoba, Wilfrid-Laurier, et en ligne pour Connected University et l'Université Royal Roads. Il a également travaillé comme consultant en formation en ligne et il enseigne actuellement en ligne des cours de communication pour l'Université Gonzaga. Ses intérêts académiques incluent l'écologie des médias, Marshall McLuhan et l'école de communication de Toronto, la communication assistée par ordinateur, et l'histoire de la communication. Ses recherches portent sur Marshall McLuhan en tant qu'éducateur et il publie le blogue McLuhan Galaxy à l'adresse https://mcluhangalaxy.wordpress.com/.

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Elena Lamberti enseigne la littérature nord-américaine et les études des médias au Département des langues, littératures et cultures modernes de l'Université de Bologne. Ses domaines de recherche incluent : le modernisme anglo-américain, la littérature et la technologie, la mémoire culturelle, et la littérature de guerre. Elle a publié plusieurs essais sur le modernisme anglais et anglo-américain (Ford, Joyce, Pound, Hemingway), ainsi que sur la culture anglo-canadienne de la fin du XXe siècle (Coupland, Cronenberg, McLuhan). Elle est l'auteure du volume primé *Marshall McLuhan: Tra letteratura, arti e media* (Mondadori, 2000), auteure de *The transatlantic review: Note sulla rivista che traghettò gli Yankees in Europa* (Asterisco, 2012), directrice de *Interpreting/Translating European Modernism* (Compositori, 2001), et co-directrice de divers volumes dont *Ford Madox Ford and The Republic of Letters* (CLUEB 2002) et *Memories and Representations of War in Europe* (Rodopi, 2009). Son volume *Marshall McLuhan's Mosaic. Probing the Literary Origins of Media Studies* (U of T Press, 2012) a été finaliste des Prix du Canada en 2013 et a reçu le Marshall McLuhan Award for Outstanding Book in the Field of Media Ecology en 2016. Elle coordonne le projet culturel UE / Canada « PERFORMIGRATIONS : les gens sont le territoire » (www.performigrations.eu), qui explore le thème de la « mobilité » (à la fois culturelle et technologique), ainsi que le projet UNIBO « Performative Storytelling & Civic Engagement ». Elle siège au conseil d'administration du programme de deuxième cycle de « Communication historique » de l'Université de Bologne, au conseil d'administration de l'Association italienne d'études canadiennes (AISC), ainsi que sur plusieurs comités éditoriaux et scientifiques (*Explorations in Media Ecology*, *Wi: Journal of Mobile Media*, et *The International Journal of McLuhan Studies*).

Elena Lamberti teaches North American Literature and Media Studies at the Department of Modern Languages, Literatures and Cultures at the University of Bologna. Her areas of research include: Anglo-American Modernism, Literature and Technology, Cultural Memory, War Literature. She has published several essays on English and Anglo-American Modernism (Ford, Joyce, Pound, Hemingway), as well as Anglo-Canadian culture of the late 20th Century (Coupland, Cronenberg, McLuhan). She is the author of the award winning volume *Marshall McLuhan: Tra letteratura, arti e media* (Mondadori, 2000); author of "*the transatlantic review*": *Note sulla rivista che traghettò gli Yankees in Europa* (Asterisco, 2012), editor of Interpreting/Translating European Modernism* (Compositori, 2001); co-editor of various volumes including *Ford Madox Ford and The Republic of Letters* (CLUEB 2002); *Memories and Representations of War in* Europe (Rodopi, 2009). Her volume *Marshall McLuhan's Mosaic. Probing the Literary Origins of Media* Studies (U of T Press, 2012) was a finalist for the 2013 Canada Prizes and received the 2016 Media

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Tom McGlynn est un artiste, écrivain et conservateur indépendant établi dans la région de New York. Son travail d'art visuel est représenté dans les collections permanentes du Whitney Museum, du Museum of Modern Art, et du Cooper-Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum. Son travail et son écriture critique ont été publiés, entre autres, dans *Artforum* et *&&& Journal*. Il collabore à *The Brooklyn Rail* depuis 2012 en tant qu'éditorialiste et il est affilié à Parson/The New School, NY. En septembre et octobre 2017, le Rick Wester Fine Arts, NY, a présenté une exposition solo de ses peintures.

Tom McGlynn is an artist, writer, and independent curator based in the NYC area. His visual art work is represented in the permanent collections of the Whitney Museum, The Museum of Modern Art, and The Cooper- Hewitt National Design Museum of the Smithsonian. His work and critical writing has been published in *Artforum*, and in *&&& Journal* among other publications. He has been a contributor to *The Brooklyn Rail* since 2012, where he is an editor at large, and is academically affiliated with Parsons/The New School, NYC. In Sept-Oct 2017, a recent one-person exhibition of his paintings were shown at Rick Wester Fine Arts, NYC.

Mohammad Salemy est un artiste, critique et conservateur indépendant établi à New York. Il possède une maîtrise en études critiques en conservation de l'Université de la Colombie-Britannique. Il a montré ses œuvres dans Home Works 7 d'Ashkal Alwan (Beyrouth) et Witte de With (Rotterdam). Ses écrits ont été publiés dans *e-flux*, *Flash Art*, *Third Rail* et *Brooklyn Rail*, et il a préparé des expositions à la Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, Access Gallery, et Satellite Gallery à Vancouver ainsi qu'à tranzitdisplay à Prague. En 2014, il a organisé la conférence Incredible Machines. L'expérimentation de conservation « For Machine Use Only » de Salemy a été incluse dans la 11e édition de la Biennale de Gwangju (2016). Il codirige actuellement les programmes d'éducation au New Centre for Research & Practice.

Mohammad Salemy is an independent New York based artist, critic, and curator who holds an MA in critical curatorial studies from the University of British Columbia. He has shown his works in Ashkal Alwan's Home Works 7 (Beirut) and Witte de With (Rotterdam). His writings have been published in *e-flux*, *Flash Art*, *Third Rail*, and *Brooklyn Rail*, and he has curated exhibitions at the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, Access Gallery, and Satellite Gallery in Vancouver as well as Transit Display in Prague. In 2014, he organized the Incredible Machines conference. Salemy's curatorial experiment "For Machine Use Only" was included in the 11th edition of Gwangju Biennale (2016). He currently co-organizes the education programs at The New Centre for Research & Practice.

Henry Adam Svec (Ph. D., Université de Western Ontario) est un artiste de performance et un écrivain. Son travail a été présenté dans des galeries et des festivals tels que 7a*11d, FADO, The Rhubarb Festival, Sappyfest, et New Adventures in Sound Art, et il a été un artiste en résidence au Banff Centre et à l'Institut des arts et de la culture du Klondike. Également spécialiste des médias, il est actuellement professeur adjoint d'études en communication au Millsaps College à Jackson, au Mississippi. Son premier livre, *American Folk Music as Tactical Media*, sera publié en décembre 2017 par Amsterdam University Press.

Henry Adam Svec (PhD, UWO) is a performance artist and a writer. His work has been presented at galleries and festivals including 7a*11d, FADO, The Rhubarb Festival, Sappyfest, and New Adventures in Sound Art, and he has been an artist in residence at The Banff Centre and the Klondike Institute of Art & Culture. Also a scholar of media, he is currently Assistant Professor of Communication Studies at Millsaps College in Jackson, Mississippi. His first book, *American Folk Music as Tactical Media,* will be published in December of 2017 by Amsterdam University Press.

Diana Warren est membre de la nation crie Montana ou Akamihk à Maskwacis (Bear Hills), en Alberta. En 2000, elle a été récipiendaire du programme d'aide aux conservateurs autochtones pour des résidences en arts visuels du Conseil des arts du Canada afin de travailler avec grunt gallery à Vancouver. Cette opportunité a mené à un poste permanent au centre d'artistes autogéré en tant que conservatrice adjointe et administratrice jusqu'en 2009. Warren a terminé sa résidence au Musée des beaux-arts du Canada à Ottawa, en Ontario, où elle a été conservatrice de l'exposition collective *Rien ne m'arrêtera*. Elle a obtenu son baccalauréat en 2003 de l'Emily Carr University of Art and Design. Warren est diplômée d'un programme de maîtrise en histoire de l'art, ayant fait des études critiques en conservation de l'Université de la Colombie-Britannique (2012). En 2015, Warren a reçu le Emily Award de l'Emily Carr University. Elle a aussi été sélectionnée comme l'une des six conservatrices autochtones de la délégation du Conseil des arts du Canada pour participer en décembre 2016 à l'International First Nations Curators Exchange à Porirua, en Nouvelle-Zélande. Elle est actuellement la directrice de l'Urban Shaman Contemporary Aboriginal Art à Winnipeg, au Manitoba.

Daina Warren is a member of the Montana or Akamihk Cree Nation in Maskwacis (Bear Hills), Alberta. In 2000, she was awarded Canada Council's Assistance to Aboriginal Curators for Residencies in the Visual Arts program to work with grunt gallery in Vancouver. This opportunity led to a permanent position with the artist-run centre as an associate curator and administrator until 2009. Warren completed the Canada Council's Aboriginal Curatorial Residency at the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa, Ontario, where she curated the group exhibition *Don't Stop Me Now*. She has received her Bachelor's degree in 2003, graduating from the Emily Carr University of Art and Design. Warren graduated from a Masters in Art History program, completing the Critical and Curatorial Studies from the University of British Columbia (2012). Warren was awarded the 2015 Emily Award from Emily Carr University and selected as one of six Indigenous women curators as part of 2016 Canada Council for the Arts Delegation to participate in the International First Nations Curators Exchange in Porirua, New Zealand in December 2016. She is currently the Director of Urban Shaman Contemporary Aboriginal Art in Winnipeg, Manitoba.