

Introduction

For better and for worse, a McLuhan renaissance is in full swing. Although most of his books are out of print and his journals such as *The Dew-Line Newsletter* and *Explorations* ((Concerning McLuhan's journals, almost no critical attention has been given to them. I provide the following information as a guideline for researchers. Twenty *McLuhan Dew-Line Newsletters* were published by the Human Development Corporation in New York between 1968 and 1970. The format changed from issue to issue. The designs were adventurous, and several included supplementary materials such as slides and playing cards. It is difficult to find a complete set. Not even the University of Toronto Archives holds the complete run. For a brief description of McLuhan's commercialization at the hands of Human Development Corp. President Eugene Schwartz, see P. Marchand, *Marshall McLuhan: The Medium and the Messenger* (Toronto: Random House, 1989), pp. 199-200. Of course, McLuhan was no stranger to promotional activities, a good example of which appeared in a letter he wrote to advice columnist Ann Landers (December 17, 1969) concerning the virtues of the 'Dew-Line Deck' (the supplemental playing cards issued with II/3 Nov.-Dec. 1969) as a brain-storming device. Each card contained an aphorism in relation to which problems could be discussed, stormed, bounced off, etc. (See *Letters of Marshall McLuhan*, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1987, pp. 393-4). The complete run included: I/1 Black Is Not A Color (July 1968); I/2 When You Call Me That, Smile (August 1968); I/3 A Second Way To Read War And Peace In The Global Village [included a Sensory Training Kit consisting of the book mentioned and an exploratory essay] (Sept. 1968); I/4 McLuhan Futuregram, No. 1 (October 1968); I/5 Through The Vanishing Point (November 1968); I/6 Communism: Hard and Soft (December 1968); I/7 Vertical Suburbs And High-Rise Slums (January 1969); I/8 The Mini-State And The Future of Organization (Feb. 1969); I/9

Problems Of Communicating With People Through Media (March 1969); I/ 10 Breakdown As Breakthrough (April 1969) I/11 Strike The Set (May 1969); I/12 Ad Verbe: Ad Junkt [included slides] (June 1969); II/1 Media And The Structured Society (July-August 1969); II/2 Inflation As Rim-Spin (Sept.-Oct 1969); II/3 The End of Steel and/or Steal: Corporate Criminality Vs. Collective Responsibility [included playing cards] (Nov.-Dec 1969); II/4 Agnew Agonistes (Jan.-Feb. 1970); II/5 Bridges (Mar.-April 1970); II/6 McLuhan On Russia: An Interview (May-June 1970); III/1 The Genuine Original Imitation Fake (July-Aug. 1970); III/2 The University And The City (Sept.-Oct. 1970).

The other major journal was *Explorations*. The first nine issues are perhaps most well known since selections from them were published in book form as *Explorations in Communication*, edited by Edmund Carpenter and McLuhan (Boston: Beacon, 1960). The first issue of the journal appeared in December 1953, and number nine in 1959. But that was not the end of it. *Explorations* became “a magazine within a magazine” in the University of Toronto alumni association publication, the *Varsity Graduate*. Beginning in the summer of 1964, the *VG* (later *U of T Graduate*) contained an insert of selected articles, edited by McLuhan alone. These unnumbered issues ended with the Christmas issue, 1967. *Explorations* picked up again with issue 21 in March 1968, and this numbered series ended with number 30 in June 1971. The final two issues appeared in 1972. *Explorations* ceased publication in May, 1972. The length of the journal’s run (1953-1959; 1964-1972), in one form or another, is not well known.

)) have acquired rare book status in some quarters, Marshall McLuhan, a thinker of the end of the book, is at home in today’s electronic environments, where he has been firmly and very much posthumously ensconced, and elevated to the status of, in some instances, a saint. He is, to be precise, a patron saint of *Wired* magazine ((Everything new is old again. See Wolf, Gary (1996) “The Wisdom of Saint Marshall, Holy Fool” and “The Medium is the Massage” and “Channeling McLuhan: The Wired

Interview with Wired's Patron Saint," *Wired* (January): 122-5, 182, 184, 186; 126-7; 128-31, 186-7.)) and a regular virtual sidekick of Camille Paglia. In order to understand why McLuhan is again on the menu, *McLuhan, Baudrillard and Cultural Theory* considers the diffusion and lasting effects of his ideas primarily in France and secondarily in Québec. My first step in understanding McLuhan today is, then, to place him in historical perspective among the francophones. The French reception of McLuhan cannot, of course, be isolated from his international influence in the 1960s and 1970s. Further work needs to be done on his influence in Japan, for instance, with special attention given to the debates over the relevancy of the "cult of McLuhanism" in the Tokyo press recounted to McLuhan in unpublished correspondence by Kenichi Takemura ((The McLuhan Papers: (MP) at the National Library of Canada in Ottawa are an invaluable resource for anyone with a serious research interest in McLuhan's life and work. File 38-80 contains letters from Kenichi Takemura to McLuhan regarding the McLuhan phenomenon in Japan. See especially KT-MM, Jan. 9, 1968 for an overview of McLuhan pro and con in Japanese media.)) 38-80). From the very outset it needs to be stated that these series of lectures do not Frenchify McLuhan but, rather, concern themselves with the McLuhanization of French intellectuals and media workers interested and operating in communications and media in general. These lectures also owe a debt to the rhetoric, still very much in evidence, of figuring French intellectuals as if they were in some manner equivalent to McLuhan or 'French McLuhans'.

The debates in French intellectual circles around McLuhan's ideas not only raged widely and intensely during the decades of his greatest influence in the 1960s and 1970s, but the effects of these debates are still being felt today. The McLuhan renaissance is a second coming, of sorts, another quasi-global outpouring of interest and influence tied once again to emerging communications technologies and information systems and the

cunning of capital as it expands into, and transforms for its own ends, these new infrastructures. McLuhanism remains compatible with capital's new means of expansion in the deregulated post-industrial cyberscape. During the 1980s, it needs to be said, McLuhan's work had largely disappeared from view. My investigation of McLuhan's French reception puts this latency period into perspective. The 1980s were also the period of the 'Baudrillard Scene', a pop intellectual phenomenon that spread like wildfire through English-speaking countries in the same delirious manner as McLuhan's notions had done earlier in the 1960s and 1970s. For Baudrillard was, for many critics, the postmodern scene *par excellence*.

When I employ the phrase the 'Baudrillard Scene' ((Regarding the Baudrillard scene, see Frankovits, André (ed.) (1984) *Seduced and Abandoned: The Baudrillard Scene*, Glebe, NSW: Stonemoss Services and Kroker and Levin (1984) "Baudrillard's Challenge," *CJPST* VIII/1-2: 5-16. For a discussion of Baudrillard's place as a feature attraction in the so-called 'postmodern carnival', see Doug Kellner (1989) *Jean Baudrillard: From Marxism to Postmodernism and Beyond*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, p. 92ff. The texts that sought to come to grips with the McLuhan cult include Rosenthal, Raymond (ed.) (1968) *McLuhan: Pro & Con*. New York: Penguin and Stearn, Gerald E. (ed.) (1967) *McLuhan: Hot & Cool* (New York: Dial Press).)), I am denoting the sub-title of the collection of essays, *Seduced and Abandoned*, edited by André Frankovits (1984). In his self-effacing introductory letter, Frankovits makes the astute observation that with Baudrillard's appearance on the Australian academic and art scenes, books by Baudrillard seemed like "after-effects of the circulation of the name." When this scene developed in a Canadian context in the writings of Arthur Kroker and Charles Levin (1984: 13), the scene became a challenge to the "big numbers of the real, power, sex and meaning." "Baudrillard's world," they wrote, "is that of the electronic mass media, and specifically, of television." This world challenges meaning and

significance by neutralizing and devalorizing them, leaving only resistance-as-object as a critical political option, what is tagged hyperconformist simulation or giving back to the media the gift of its own cynicism; this came to be identified as both a punk and new wave style. Hence, Baudrillard is thought of as a 'French McLuhan'. The scene and the challenge both signal the end of the book and the beginning of television; the end of the reading group and the insatiable desire to make the scene.

Revisiting a text such as Raymond Rosenthal's edited collection *McLuhan: Pro & Con* (1968) puts us in a similar scene: the end of the book-oriented culture and the rise of electronic communications. Book-men will be rendered redundant for who needs books when we have television? What will become of 'us'? Rosenthal notes that McLuhan is 'hazy' on this question: in a proto-Baudrillardian vein, it seems that holding one's ground or point of view means "getting into the act of electronic disintegration," that is, hyperconformity. Rosenthal will have none of this. He believes in critical distance, solitary thinking, and writes against the myths of the McLuhan cult: the big numbers of the real will remain standing; scientific objectivity and practicality will win out; authenticity and resistant artistic genius will prevail; consciousness can survive sensation; and mystical participation needs enlightened individuals. This is all resistance-as-subject. McLuhan's challenge is still hazy, not quite as pronounced as Baudrillard's, but just as fearful.

Art critics and artists, critical theorists, social philosophers, and bluffers of all stripes and disciplines attempted to come to some terms with the phenomenon of the Baudrillard Scene. Like McLuhan's body of work, Baudrillard's writings travel well. Baudrillard came aboard *Artforum* as a contributing editor in 1984-85, where several translations of his articles have appeared. The European art magazine *Flash Art* published critical assessments, as did Canadian art

magazines *Parachute* and *Impulse*, echoing the Australian proliferation of translations, interviews and critical articles by the Feral Collective, *Art & Text*, *On the Beach*, etc. By 1984, 'simulation' and 'hyperreality' had become passwords in the art world. The American publications are too numerous to mention, but the trail was blazed by the Telos group and by Semiotext(e). Baudrillard toured London, New York, Buenos Aires ... and the small town of Missoula, Montana. Even the *Economist* reviewed *America*. Kroker began to follow Baudrillard around. The American painter Peter Hally thought he could paint the hyperreal. Baseball caps emblazoned with simulacrum began to appear on the streets of Toronto. Not even sportswear survived the Baudrillard Scene. All the while critical theorists hotly debated whether or not Baudrillard articulated a form of oppositional practice, taking wild swipes at hyperconformist simulation. The term 'silent majorities' re-entered the critical lexicon, even if no one seemed to remember the fatal pronouncement of Richard Nixon on November 3, 1969, in his address to the nation on the pursuit of peace in Vietnam, in which he spoke out against the vocal minority who would have America lose the war and bring the troops home: "And so tonight – to you, the great silent majority of my fellow Americans- I ask for your support." The 'peace with honor' speech was absorbed into the mass. When 1972 rolled around and ballots were cast and Nixon won the election no one, not even Baudrillard, could measure the effects of this hyperconformity: peace without honor, a nation traumatized, a helicopter hanging over the embassy in Saigon, and Watergate. The masses, as Baudrillard once quipped, prefer media to messages.

The writings of Baudrillard represent, then, a vector for the transmission of McLuhan's ideas, often in distorted forms, to be sure. The McLuhan renaissance is an effect of postmodern theory and the enormously influential role played by French social and cultural theory as it has been,

and continues to be, translated into English. My strategies for understanding the McLuhan renaissance are to investigate, firstly, McLuhan's influence on francophone consciousness in general and, secondly, more specifically, to provide a detailed reading of what every reader of Baudrillard already in some respect knows: Baudrillard's debts to McLuhan are substantial. Further, McLuhan and Baudrillard are the key thinkers to whom postmodernists turn to situate their deviations from them. These strategies provide both historical and theoretical contexts for understanding the significance of Baudrillard for the McLuhan renaissance as a thinker who carried forward and simultaneously spread *macLuhanisme*, thus forming, in a way, a bridge between the 'McLuhancy' of the 1960s and 1970s and the renaissance of the 1990s. The 'Baudrillard Scene' contained a good deal of McLunacy. Baudrillard is not, of course, the only vector transmitting *macLuhanisme*, but he is the main carrier. Indeed, the writings of French urbanist Paul Virilio ((Paul Virilio's debts to McLuhan may be even greater than those of Baudrillard. I make reference to his journalistic report of (1992) "Une exposition très fin de siècle," *Le Monde* (16 avril): 26, but this is just the tip of an iceberg. Virilio and McLuhan's key interests include fields or environments of perception, speed and war. Indeed, some of Virilio's central notions such as the aesthetics of disappearance are carried on a McLuhanesque fusion of medical metaphor (picnoleptic fit or petit mal) and measurement (beyond the speed of sound in a relational speed space, the lost dimension). It is instructive to read Virilio's (1989) *War and Cinema*, Patrick Camiller (trans.), London: Verso, with McLuhan and Fiore's (1968) *War and Peace in the Global Village* New York: Bantam. Both concern the creation of new environments by media technologies from which, in turn, further technologies emerge. It is the "trade in dematerialization" in the global environment of weaponry that interests Virilio; that is, the capacities of technologies to either render things visible (by means of radar and thermal imaging) or render things invisible (stealthy objects). Virilio's thesis that the

“history of battle is primarily the history of radically changing fields of perception” leads him to focus on media of all sorts, especially film. The war film need not depict battles since a color stock in itself, for example, has the power to create technological and psychological surprises. American technicolor, as opposed to German Agfa color, agitated Joseph Goebbels, the ‘patron’ of German cinema in WWII, to such a degree that he banned films made with the latter because he thought their quality was shameful. Virilio believes that Francis Ford Coppola’s *One From the Heart* is more of war film than *Apocalypse Now* because the director was consumed by his use of military equipment such as the Xerox ‘Star’ naval computer system. Virilio moves deftly from the cinema, to weaponry, to the pin-up, the bunker and other military architectures, to chronophotographic rifles in a truly McLuhan-like marshalling of anecdotal evidence. Reading Virilio is bit like taking a stroll through the Musée National des Techniques in Paris, giving special attention to the radio, television and photography sections, allowing the photographic rifle and sundry apparatuses to shine in all of their brilliant suggestiveness. Yet, what separates Virilio and McLuhan is the latter’s criticism of the dominance of the eye. For Virilio the war machine is fundamentally an ocular machine. See Fekete, John (1977) “Notes Toward a Critique of McLuhan’s Polemic against Vision,” in *The Critical Twilight*, London: Routledge, p. 213-15.)) are filled with McLuhanisms, none more evident than a concern with the consequences of the speeding up of communication in its most general sense, which was for McLuhan what enabled implosion to replace explosion as the defining feature of the whirling electric, and soon to be electronic, world. In his remarks on Expo ’92 in Seville, which was centred around the theme of the putative ‘discovery’ of America 500 years earlier and the role played by maritime transportation, Virilio (1992) drew a direct line from the imperial ambition of Ceasar to make the world a Roman city to the global village of late capital realized through the *agora cathodique* prophesized by McLuhan. My exploration of McLuhan’s French reception or, perhaps

better, his French revolution, which I will spend several lectures unravelling, establishes a context for my explicit reflections on the concepts and modes of theorizing shared by McLuhan and Baudrillard, among others, in later lectures. At the heart of this project is an obvious relationship between the theories and careers of McLuhan and Baudrillard. This relation is obvious in the Barthesian sense of the naturalness of myth in popular culture and wired ideology and, importantly, of media theory itself as it bears on the relation at issue. Andreas Huyssen ((To the best of my knowledge, only a few articles have been published about the explicit connections between McLuhan and Baudrillard. See Huyssen, Andreas (1989) "In the Shadow of McLuhan: Jean Baudrillard's Theory of Simulation," *Assemblage* 10: 7-17. Incidentally, I unknowingly published an article with the same title, but it had nothing to do with Baudrillard, "In the Shadow of McLuhan," *Art & Design* 11/12 (1995): 60-63.)) (1989) sketched this relation in broad strokes in terms of an inquiry into the 'hidden referent' of Baudrillard's media based theory of simulation, a "postmodern recycling of McLuhan" for the 1980s and beyond. The trope of recycling employed by Huyssen is not fully played out in his writing- not everything is recyclable since, after all, only a few key concepts such as the explosion/implosion distinction and the grand, tripartite, periodizing of history remain the primary recoverable and convertible materials for Huyssen. Nonetheless, Huyssen's significant contribution highlights the aforementioned issue of the mastery of implosion in the shift from McLuhan's optimism to Baudrillard's cynicism, drawing special attention to the role of media in the theological desires of both thinkers to accede to a postmodern potlatch or a cool, retribalized culture, whose very rhythm would be that of television.

Although reports of McLuhan's activities began to appear in the French press as early as 1965, he was not well-known in French intellectual circles until 1967, the year the first translation of his work, *La galaxie gutenberg*, was published in Paris and Montréal. *The Gutenberg*

Galaxy originally appeared in 1962. In 1966, however, reports of McLuhan's activities in North America began to appear regularly in learned and popular French publications such as *La Quinzaine littéraire*, *Le Figaro*, and *Critique*. The French journalist Naïm Kattan ((It would be an exaggeration to say that the Cercle juif de langue française in Montréal was a hotbed of McLuhanism, but one of its memebbers, Nam Kattan, was one of the journalists most active in the dissemination of McLuhan's ideas. He wrote to McLuhan on the Cercle's letterhead in Nov. 1965 (see *MP*. 8-80). See also Kattan, Naïm (1965) "Marshall McLuhan, la comète intellectuelle du Canada," *Le Devoir* (27 nov.) and *idem* (1967) "Marshall McLuhan (review)," *Critique* 238 (mars): 322-34. Kattan's interview with McLuhan appeared in (1966) "L'âge de l'électricité," *La Quinzaine littéraire* 9 (15 juillet): 8-9. His 1965 article was mentioned in the parody of the guru of the electric age in p.s., "McLuhan à la chaise électrique," *Partis Pris* (1966): 77. He was also a contributor to the book *Analisis de Marshall McLuhan*, Buenos Aires: Tempo Contemporaneo, n.d. [1969?], a collection of previously published essays in French and Spanish (*MP*. 8-9). In addition, see Pontaut, Alain (1967) "Tous les livres du monde dans une tte d'épingle," *La Presse* (8 juillet) and *idem* (1967a) "Du fond de cette galaxie," *La Presse* (8 juillet). See also Bonnot, Gerard (1967) "Le prophète de télévision'," *L'Express* (25 sept. – 1 oct.): 83-6; Dommergues, Pierre (1967) "La civilisation de la mosaïque – le message de Marshall McLuhan," *Le Monde* (18 oct.); Ferrier, Jean-Louis (1969) "Le scandale McLuhan," *L'Express* 912 (30 deec. – 5 jan.): 45-6; Garric, Daniel (1967) "Le prophète de l'information," *Science et vie* 599 (aot): 24-9, 142, 144, 147. This is the short list. More substantive efforts were made by Balle, Francis (1972) *Pour comprendre les média: MacLuhan*, Paris: Hatier and Bourdin, Alain (1970) *McLuhan: Communication, technologie et société*, Paris: Editions Universitaires, and Marabini, Jean (1973) *Marcuse & McLuhan et la nouvelle révolution mondiale*, Paris: Maison mame. For McLuhan's politically disastrous interview with his French translator Jean

Paré, see McLuhan (1973) “Marshall McLuhan,” Jean Paré (interview), *Forces* [Hydro-Québec] 22: 4-25. I will have more to say about this interview when I consider in greater depth McLuhan and Québec. And finally, see McLuhan (1980) “La galaxie 80,” Jean Paré (adaptation), *L’Actualité* 5/1 (jan.): 23-7. The idea that the future held “promiscuity without community” is an apt way to describe cybersociality. Mind you, it is a supremely plastic formulation, and perhaps it should read community of the electronically promiscuous.)) (1965 and 1967; also McLuhan 1966), whose location in Montréal gave him access to the places (Toronto and New York) where McLuhan was most active, published widely on his life and work in France and Québec.

In the momentous year of Expo 1967, an anglophone “intellectual comet” – to use Kattan’s imagery – landed in Québec, precisely in the Québec Pavillion, the very site from which McLuhan entered francophone consciousness. It seemed that the dailies *Le Devoir* and *La Presse* covered every step McLuhan took that month in *la belle province*! The launch of *La galaxie gutenberg* at the Québec Pavillon on 7 July was a major media event. To be *avec le maître à l’Expo* was a mediatic obsession, whether it was *Sept-Jours*, *Carrefour*, *Science et Vie* or the Québec dailies covering the events. Alain Pontaut (1967; 1967a) praised Jean Paré’s translation while remaining critical of McLuhan’s very clever ‘mosaic method’, which was no method at all. Pontaut realized that Expo was a living mosaic of cultures, buildings and tourists that played perfectly into McLuhan’s hands, as well as those of his local publisher, Claude Hurtubise. There were critical moments in this coverage already in evidence in 1966 in the separatist journal *Partis Pris* (p.s. 1966) in which McLuhan, the prophet of the electric age, is not to be confused with his delirious interpretation of electricity, but best “seated on the chair of the age in question!” French Canadian ‘tribalism’ was, after all, as McLuhan himself believed, a consequence of

the age of electricity. For McLuhan, the Canadian Prime Minister of the time, Pierre Trudeau, was as tribal as the Beatles.

In France, *L'Express*, *Le Monde*, *L'Aurore* and others followed suit with coverage of McLuhan in 1967; this reporting ranged from the whimsical – overcoming consumer society through *macluhanisme* (Bonnot 1967) – through mild questioning – McLuhan's affirmations are not always convincing (Dommergues 1967) – to full-blown speculation about what should be the proper Gallic response to *la pensée McLuhanienne* (Garric 1967). In 1968, the virulent responses had been institutionalized to such an extent that one could ask in the pages of *L'Express* why these attacks focused on McLuhan and not on consumer society (Ferrier 1968-69). By 1970, however, McLuhan had achieved both fame and notoriety among the French intelligentsia, for many of whom he had become an intellectual impostor unable to live up to his initial promises. By the early 1970s, McLuhan was disciplined for university courses in mass communications, after having mesmerized a significant number of sociologists and teachers. Basic works introducing McLuhan's ideas to French students began to appear (Bourdin 1970; Balle 1972). Explication occasionally went against the grain of McLuhan's liberal notion of exploration since his phrase *j'explique rien* was oft-quoted as evidence that he did *and* did not belong in the university. The so-called 'revolutionary' aspects of McLuhan's thought were developed by Jean Marabini (1973) through the oft-repeated grouping, sometimes for no more than the purposes of homophony, of Marx-Marcuse-Mao-M(a)cLuhan, and the electronic theology of Pierre Babin found new contexts, applications and audiences for McLuhan's ideas. The radical cell and the church were both perfused with *macluhanisme*. McLuhan's public profile declined rapidly as the late 1970s arrived, and by 1980 it seemed he could only be read nostalgically. McLuhan's main French translator Paré was a well-known teacher in Québec with strong connections with the Hydro-Québec

magazine *Forces*, in which his lengthy, favorable interview with McLuhan had been published (McLuhan 1973). Today, Paré is editor of the mainstream news magazine *L'Actualité*, in whose pages McLuhan's prognostications last appeared in 1980, the year of his death. While McLuhan correctly predicted the reflux of conservatism and nostalgia that would mark the 1980s, it was not evident that anyone was listening. As he was accustomed to saying, he only predicts things that have already happened, anyway. But the media guru of the 1960s and 1970s has not been forgotten and his ideas remain vital to recent developments in French sociological and cultural theory.

McLuhan's impact in France and Québec was not only deeply felt but came to be regretted in many circles. This phenomenon has not been critically recounted, theorized and scrutinized. I take up this multiple task by returning to the popular reports and intellectual debates which accompanied McLuhan's emergence as a fashionable public intellectual, with the goal of reconsidering the key debates of the period. In France as elsewhere, McLuhan was simultaneously a revolutionary, a reactionary, a prophet and an impostor. What, however, do these contradictory figures tell us about the conditions informing the production and legitimation of knowledge in the French context? In Lecture 2, 'The End of the book and the beginning of television', I offer a critical overview of how French intellectuals understood McLuhan's ideas in relation to the question of *écriture* posed by Jacques Derrida ((John Fekete was one of the few English critics to ruminate about the McLuhan-Derrida ligature. It was a standard, almost automatic, comparison for French readers. See Fekete's suggestions regarding the general oral form and general writing, "Massage in the Mass Age: Remembering the McLuhan Matrix," *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory* 6/3 (1982): 62ff. McLuhan is a spectre haunting Derrida's (1974) essay "The End of the Book and the Beginning of Writing," *Of Grammatology*, G. Spivak (trans.), Baltimore: The John

Hopkins University Press.)) and others. As the title of this chapter suggests, the post-book age is not that of a general writing but, rather, of television. Indeed, Derrida (1974: 8) ironically pointed out in his essay “The End of the Book and the Beginning of Writing” that the “death of the civilization of the book, of which so much is said ... manifests itself particularly through a convulsive proliferation of libraries.” Whereas Derrida considered this death of the book to be nothing less than the metaphysical exhaustion of full speech, the intimate proximity or presence of voice to thought, the concept and meaning, McLuhan rediscovered the audible universe as the primary space of a tactile electronic culture, and debased writing (the phonetic alphabet, the printing press) as visual and therefore an abstraction from speech concentrated in one sense. Simultaneously, then, McLuhan reaffirms the metaphysics of presence and the secondarity of writing but aligns himself, at the end of book and the beginning of television, with a ‘grammatology’ of sorts based upon his complex sense of a multisensorial acoustic space. McLuhan’s ideas were also becoming influential in the formation of communications policy, which I explore through the important role played by Jean Cazeneuve in the dissemination of the master’s words through his writings on mass communications and administrative work in a series of influential public posts. In addition, I note several places, for example, in Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s *Anti Oedipus*, where McLuhan’s notions appeared for the sake of the critique of the signifier and the release of flows of language in electric environments. What I call a ‘Big Mac Attack’ employs, in Lecture 3, Jacques Lacan’s concept of the *objet petit a* to appreciate the little *a* in the French rendering of M(a)cLuhan’s name, not merely in a psychoanalytic sense, but in terms of the genuine intellectual class struggles in Parisian intellectual circles that raged around who could claim whom as an intellectual. Additionally, it needs to be recalled that Lacan conquered the medium of television in a manner worthy of M(a)cLuhan and that both were thought of as masters of that medium. In ‘Before the Letter’, Lecture 4, I discuss the ‘obvious’ parallels between

McLuhan and Roland Barthes that were widely noted. It is precisely this obviousness that will be interrogated in light of the double tradition of comparing their early writings on popular culture and the attempts to read them together in an entirely unconvincing way as fellow structuralists. The rhetoric of associating McLuhan with Derrida, for example, as well as with Barthes and Levi-Strauss, was a way of legitimating his work even if this bringing together of thinkers did not result in detailed analyses of their texts. McLuhan, Barthes, and Richard Hoggart (read through the lens of his 'French reception'), I will claim, constitute the international cultural studies triumvirate of the 1950s. In the somewhat rarified specialty area of French cultural studies, it is in the work of Brian Rigby ((Brian Rigby is connected with the English journal *French Cultural Studies*. His monograph appeared in (1994) *'Popular Culture' in France and England: The French Translation of Richard Hoggart's The Uses of Literacy*. Hull: The University of Hull Press, and it is full of fascinating observations on French mis-translations of Richard Hoggart's seminal book in British cultural studies, (1957) *The Uses of Literacy*, London: Chatto and Windus; *idem* (1970) *La Culture du pauvre: étude sur le style de vie des classes populaires en Angleterre*, Paris: Minuit. The book was translated by Françoise and Jean-Claude Garcias and Jean-Claude Passeron, with an introduction by the latter. Translating Hoggart into French is not simply a matter, as Rigby notes with evident delight, of "making an Eccles cake a madeleine." Rigby's concern with Hoggart parallels my own interest in the French translations of McLuhan.)) (1994) that one finds detailed consideration of the issues surrounding the French translation of British cultural studies such as those of Hoggart, although no mention is made in his work to the French reception of McLuhan. In addition to the incorporative gestures that turned McLuhan into a structuralist of sorts, a later development in both the English and French literatures emerged positioning him as a postmodernist before the letter. In a dizzy logic reminiscent of McLuhan himself, this development implies that he was both a cause and an effect of postmodernism.

Lectures 5, 6 and 7 all concern the relationship between the writings of Baudrillard and McLuhan. Anyone familiar with the work of Baudrillard, for example, would not fail to be struck by the important influence of McLuhan's ideas on his thinking. A critical understanding of Baudrillard's – among others' – work demands, then, a return to McLuhan in the context of a consideration of the extensions and reworkings of his ideas across the field of French sociological and cultural writing over the last thirty years. I ease into this approach by means of a reflection on the meaning of the term *semiurgy* and similar semiologically-inspired neologisms circulated by French intellectuals in the early 1970s, and later capitalized upon by excremental postmodernists such as Kroker in the mid-1980s. Semiurgy is not, I argue against its popular postmodern intellectual definitions, reducible to what McLuhan meant by *massage*, although the terms are closely related, and even seem to form a kind of retroactively constitutable lineage. My sixth lecture "More McLuhan than McLuhan" uses the standard Baudrillardian formula of potentialization stated as "more x than x" to describe in general terms Baudrillard's appropriation and distortion of McLuhan's ideas in the context of a detailed commentary upon how concepts such as participation, reversibility, the primitive/tribal, and, importantly, implosion, have passed from hand to hand. I will also consider several of Baudrillard's responses to a very common question posed to him in interviews regarding the importance of McLuhan's ideas on his intellectual development. In lecture 7, I compare McLuhan's and Baudrillard's models of historical phases contained in the theses of *The Gutenberg Galaxy* and *Understanding Media* with Baudrillard's original triphasal model of simulation he developed in *Symbolic Exchange and Death* (1976; trans. 1993). While Baudrillard was, like many others, initially critical of McLuhan's technological reductionism, the vagueness of his central concepts such as 'hot' and 'cool', and the 'implicit finality' of American culture, Baudrillard later adopts some of the worst excesses of McLuhan's sense of historical phases and their blank spots, which I bring

into focus in my analysis of McLuhan's comments on the political situation in Québec in the 1970s and the ongoing struggles there against federalism and the politics of language. Baudrillard's published engagement with McLuhan's ideas ((Baudrillard's engagement with McLuhan's ideas begins in print with Baudrillard, Jean (1967) "Marshall MacLuhan, Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man"(review), *l'homme et la société* 5: 227-30. His major theoretical text remains, *L'échange symbolique et la mort*, Paris: Gallimard, 1976; *idem* (1993) *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, Iain Hamilton Grant (trans.), London: Sage.)) dates from 1967 when he published a review of the 'brilliant and fragile' *Understanding Media*.

Why study French manifestations of *macluhanisme*? Why now? Today, many Canadian intellectuals and cultural workers like myself concerned with information technologies dwell in the shadow of McLuhan, regardless of whether we intentionally seek out the cool shade or are only momentarily escaping the hot sun. Put bluntly: McLuhan is unavoidable. No one would deny that a new generation – mark them with an x or any other letter for that matter – is coming of age in the information environment whose emergence McLuhan predicted but did not live to witness. While certain members of an older generation are busily maintaining McLuhan's legacy through personal reminiscences and what they consider to be the long overdue institutional recognition of his accomplishments, especially at the University of Toronto, this new generation is recoding McLuhan's ideas in pop music, alternative theatre and across the cybersphere. The old medium is the content of the new media. Claims of misinterpretation are regularly fired from both generations across their respective screens. In between these extremes, in what McLuhan called the resonant interval of tactile interfaces, new contacts and intergenerational connections are being made between academics, artists and businesspersons that shadow things to come and provide more of the same. Unfortunately, when it comes to McLuhan, everything new is old again. ((Every week, it seems, there is

something new to add to the list of McLuhan-related events. Why not check the McLuhan Gallery Web Site at <http://www.fis.utoronto.ca/mcluhan/>? It is impossible to keep up. A McLuhan Watch is probably in order.)) It's business, as usual.

To put it somewhat crudely, there are two wildly divergent streams of Canadian work on McLuhan whose leading practitioners are the Director of the McLuhan Program in Culture and Technology at the University of Toronto, Derrick de Kerckhove, and at Concordia University in Montréal, the political scientist and performer of theory as fiction, Arthur Kroker. This is the contemporary context in which readers of McLuhan concerned with his French legacy find themselves. Intergenerational struggles around the uses and abuses of the McLuhan legacy go hand and hand with struggles around the profit motive. In one respect, McLuhan is a controlled substance. His work is carefully managed by his literary agent Matie Molinaro and his widow, Corinne McLuhan. It was only recently with the publication of *The Essential McLuhan* ((McLuhan has been revived for the purposes of undergraduate teaching in (1995) *The Essential McLuhan*, E. McLuhan and F. Zingrone (eds.), Toronto, Anansi. McLuhan surfs the electronic maelstrom in McLuhan and Fiore, Quentin (1967) *The Medium is the Massage: An Inventory of Effects*, New York: Bantam. McLuhan's ABC book appeared in (1971b) *Sharing the News: Friendly Teamness: Teeming Friendliness* (Place of publication unknown: McLuhan Associates and ABC). For an unbalanced general critique see Finkelstein, Sidney (1968) *Sense and Non-sense of McLuhan*. New York: International Publishers.)) (1995) a 'reader', edited by Eric McLuhan and Frank Zingrone, with a selection of the master's buzzphrases cobbled together by William Kuhns, that McLuhan was collected at all for purposes of undergraduate teaching. This selective re-editing of McLuhan is far removed from a critique of consumerism. Rather, McLuhanism serves as a navigational device that captures the spirit of a wired, cutting edge youth

culture in a business-friendly manner. For what sort of activity is McLuhan a patron saint? The answer is simple: for the electronic counterculture the saint is an oppositional figure and for business a familiar device for the corporate work of colonization; I do not mean to imply, however, that cyberculture is in its whole at odds with corporate interests, a claim which would be ridiculous. Here, then, the broad audiences already recognize the product and on this basis constitute a receptive mass audience. In a 1992 advertisement, Bell Canada promoted its electronic data interchange network (EDI) for business communications with the famous phrase 'the medium is the message': EDI or DIE! Anagrammatic corporate propaganda surfs the new communications technologies. While surfing the net is a standard buzzphrase employed to diverse ends, it was also a figure that appeared in McLuhan and Quentin Fiore's *The Medium is the Massage* (1967: 150-51) in the form of a black and white photograph of the master on a surfboard, holding onto his hat, as he rode the wave of the electrically-configured whirl. One of McLuhan's favourite nautical metaphors was taken from Edgar Allan Poe's mariner in the story "The Descent into the Maelstrom." Surfing delivers one from the task of criticism in the same manner as Baudrillard's mode of travelling across the deserts of America in a hermeneutical vehicle figures disappearance as deliverance from critical thought. Recall also that an aesthetics of business was the stock in trade of McLuhan as he delivered his fragmented ideas in boardrooms around North America, picking up commissions from ABC (American Broadcasting Corporation)(McLuhan 1971b) to valorize the team concept, dubbed 'friendly teamness', in tv news reporting pioneered by ABC, etc. Perhaps Sidney Finkelstein (1968: 122) got it right when he observed that "McLuhan advises the future ruling powers on how to preserve the happy servitude of the new world-wide tribal village." What I am suggesting is that the McLuhan renaissance is a specific effect of the well-established consonance between postmodernism and late capital; in fact, McLuhan's famous phrases function as globally recognizable jingles

for the work of multinational trading in digital commodities; yet, the plasticity of McLuhan's thought has and continues to serve just as well as a sign – servitude with a happy face – of resistance to consumer capitalism. This is a contradiction central to the McLuhan legacy. And it is also, as many have pointed out, the double bind of Baudrillard's notion of resistance-as-object. In another respect, then, McLuhan's legacy is controllable in some domains (print) but fundamentally undisciplinable as it escapes into the antipodes of the cybersphere in which the very notion of control (copyright, the struggles around encryption) is being called into question.

Under the direction of De Kerckhove, a close associate of McLuhan and a secondary translator of his work into French, the McLuhan Program has become an interface of academics, artists and businesspeople all working with interactive new media. The Virtual Reality Artists Access Program (VRAAP), headed by Graham Smith, provides virtual reality tools such as David Rokeby's Mac-based *Very Nervous System* which renders sonorous bodily movement. The importance of artist-engineers like Smith and Rokeby was recognized by the Canadian pianist and musical theorist Glenn Gould ((The relationship between Glenn Gould and McLuhan is much more interesting than that implied by my reference to Gould, Glenn (1984) "The Record of the Decade," in *The Glenn Gould Reader*, Tim Page (ed.), Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys. There are a smattering of references to McLuhan in *The Glenn Gould Reader*. Gould's 1966 essay, "The Prospects of Recording" uses McLuhan's idea that "the content of new situations .. is typically the preceding situation" to good effect in relation to the ways in which electronic scores have conventional textures superimposed upon them (p. 345). See also Gould's letter to McLuhan, Jan. 24, 1965 in (1992) *Glenn Gould: Selected Letters*, John P. L. Roberts and Ghyslaine Guertin (eds.), Toronto: Oxford, p. 70. The general tone is that McLuhan's concern with media complements Gould's interest in processes of production. Another tube-head from the sixties was Nam June

Paik (1986) "La vie, Satellites, One Meeting – One Life," in *Video Culture*, John G. Hanhardt (ed.), Rochester: Visual Studies Workshop.) in 1968 when he heralded the collaborative effort of engineer Walter Carlos and musicologist Benjamin Folkman on the recording *Switched-On Bach* (Gould 1984: 429-34). Just as, today, the Moog synthesizer seems like a relic, in the future contemporary VR technology may also seem like a museum piece. During 1995, De Kerckhove curated several exhibitions on technology and art, one of which was 'TechnoArt' at the Ontario Science Centre (OSC) in Toronto. It was organized around the theme of interactivity and called into question the traditional exhibition and its distancing mechanisms. Indeed, the OSC's mandate is to provide a tactile interactive environment. Many of the installations at TechnoArt, including those of Rokeby, Nancy Paterson's ride in the virtual countryside *Bicycle TV*, and Hiroyuki Moriwaki's electric mirror *Rayo-Graphy*, put the participant's body to work in the virtual environments created by each piece.

VRAAP also has a high-resolution video conferencing system (PictureTel's System 4000) which makes possible virtual seminars bringing together academics and performers across vast spaces and time zones. Taking as a cue Nam June Paik's (1986: 219-22) experiments in what he called 'satellite art', such as the New Year's Day 1984 simultaneous broadcast of *Good Morning, Mr. Orwell* from Paris, New York and San Francisco, De Kerckhove has orchestrated several ground-breaking transatlantic contacts. The artistic exploration of interactivity at a distance and the emergence of new spatial sensibilities through the medium of video conferencing has, in the projects with which De Kerckhove has been involved since 1986, exposed by trial and error many bugs and, on occasion, fallen back on faxes and telephones and e-mail. For technical reasons the 'trans' doesn't always come off. Transinteractivity is conceived of as a kind of intimacy at a distance, a dialogue of bodies interacting in a virtual tactile space. Many of the performances designed for *Les*

Transinteractifs, a transatlantic colloquium in Paris at the Canadian Cultural Centre and in Toronto at the OSC in 1988, emphasized telephatic communication: Christian Sevette's *Le toucher transatlantique* would have allowed members of both audiences to bring together two pieces of Michelangelo's *The Creation of Man* in an act of divine inspiration; in *Le baiser transatlantique*, performance artist Orlan proposed to project on a screen the profiles of two persons from each city, turned toward one another, whose lips would meet in a kiss as they continued to speak French and English respectively (De Kerckhove and Sevette 1990: 15ff). Recently, the McLuhan Program has organized transatlantic and inter-university Canadian video conferences of the more traditional academic sort such as the 'World Series on Culture and Technology' between the Program and leading cultural theorists of various host countries, including Baudrillard. These are now a staple of its formidable battery of electronic pedagogical tools. Fifteen years after McLuhan's death, the conservative academic community at the University of Toronto finally opened a McLuhan Studies Room in the Faculty of Information Studies. This opening coincided with a preview, by the media giant Southam, of its *Understanding McLuhan* CD-ROM.

Postmodern entrepreneur Arthur Kroker ((The writings of Derrick de Kerckhove and Arthur Kroker represent two divergent strains in contemporary Canadian macLuhanisme; see De Kerckhove and Sevette, Christian (eds.) (1990) *Les Transinteractifs*, Actes du colloque, 4-5 nov. 1988, Centre culturelle canadien, Paris, Paris: ARTE; and Kroker (1984) *Technology and the Canadian Mind: Innis/McLuhan/Grant*, Montréal: New World Perspectives; *idem* (1987) "Body Digest," CJPST 11/1-2: iii; Kroker and Weinstein, M. A. (1994) *Data Trash*, Montréal: New World Perspectives. Guy Debord's opinion is from (1990) *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle*, M. Imrie (trans.), London: Verso. For a rare measured and scholarly reading of McLuhan see Theall, Donald

(1971) *The Medium Is The Rearview Mirror: Understanding McLuhan*, Montréal and London: McGill-Queen's University Press. The 'Theall file' (38-56) in the McLuhan Papers is an exercise in censorship of the sort McLuhan routinely attempted to practice. McLuhan's efforts to deny permission to quote material, which he directed his publishers to enforce, was an unfortunate episode that is best forgotten, but one that undoubtedly contributed to his marginalization in the academy. When I spoke to Theall about this episode in 1995 – it had taken place 25 years earlier – he put it down to an interpersonal breakdown of previously constructive relations between himself and McLuhan.)) remains at the forefront of the performance of advanced theoretical speculation. Kroker almost singlehandedly brought McLuhan into postmodern focus – with a Baudrillardian finding device – through his influential journal *The Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory* and in the pages of the provocative books issued by his publishing house New World Perspectives, especially his *Technology and the Canadian Mind: Innis/McLuhan/Grant*, in which he concluded that McLuhan's fate was to be an 'intellectual servomechanism' of the technoscape he so brilliantly described (Kroker 1984: 86).

The *CJPST* has been superseded by an electronic journal *C Theory*. In the mid 1980s Kroker began issuing supplementary materials such as cassettes (including spoken texts and music such as "Mutant Madonna," and more recently the recombinant experiment in sound called *Spasm*, a CD which features the sounds of virtual reality, that is, processed samples of sound) along with his books, as well as engaging in multi-media performances (Kroker recently completed a European tour in support of the *Data Trash* book with his partner, the designer Marilouise Kroker, and Montréal based composer Steve Gibson, who provided an ambient soundscape for the spoken performances). The video work of the Krokers includes the *Body Program*, a panicky romp through virtual America, made in collaboration with Stefaan Decostere for Belgium TV. According to

Kroker's own promotional materials, he is widely believed to take off from where McLuhan ended in a kind of discipleship in full flight.

If the impulse of transinteractivity is the creative interface between the human body and the virtual environment, then Kroker's gesture moves in the opposite direction: the natural body has become obsolete at the hands of new technologies. The so-called panic body – and, more recently, the body in a spasm of contradictory feelings – is defined by the hyper-exteriorization of its organs and viruses and the hyper-interiorization of designer subjectivities (Kroker 1987: iii)Kroker takes McLuhan's thesis of the 'outering' of human senses by technology and turns it into an emptying into the technoscape and then a reverse 'invasion' of the media environment. Even better, the information highway is paved with human flesh and littered with fresh road kill run over by the corporate behemoths who are trying to run the road. As catchy as a Kroker buzzphrase can be, he never loses sight of the class struggles being waged over the conditions of access and the social choices implied by new technologies (see Kroker and Weinstein 1994). This point needs to be kept in mind since the McLuhan legacy was singularly devoid of progressive political ideas and remains largely the same today, with a few exceptions. The projects of De Kerckhove and Kroker represent two facets of the Canadian aesthetic imagination stirring in the shadow of McLuhan. These two academic outerings in no way tell the whole story of McLuhan today.

The Situationist Guy Debord (1990: 33) once wrote of McLuhan that he was "the spectacle's first apologist, who had seemed to be the most convinced imbecile of the century." Debord also noted that even a global village idiot like McLuhan eventually realized that mass media cannot deliver on promises of freedom and accessibility. Decades of critiques of McLuhan's techno-optimisim have demonstrated the negative consequences of freedom from fragmentary specialism in un-and under-

employment and freedom to be involved in the planetary social process through new technologies requiring high levels of consumption, pay-per-play, and Mcwork in the burgeoning electro-service, server and telecottage industries operating in the ruins of the welfare state. It is important not to lose sight of this critical perspective in today's heady reflux of McLuhanism.

Less an idiot than intellectual jester in the humanist tradition of Erasmus's folly, Joyce's wit, and Rabelais's bawdiness, McLuhan played the clown in order to infiltrate specialist discourses and cross the wires of disciplines and satirise them in a mode he called 'anti-environmental'. While MLuhan may have lacked the sense of folly as a philosophical vocation, by playing the clown he was also playing at being an artist. He chose eclecticism over the effort to synthesize. He used probes, puns, blasts and counterblasts, and the mosaic method instead of interrative strategies. He was a media artist who created the new form that Donald Theall (1971) dubbed the *concrete essay* with its collide-oscopic principles of typographic play, surrealistic juxtaposition of images, and unfortunately, heavy doses of technological mystification.

Yet all of McLuhan's fooling around had a specific faith underlying it: salvation from the fall of literacy might be found in electric technology (McLuhan 1964: 21), with the proviso that a good deal of suffering (Babel) would be concomitant with the electronic spirit of Pentecost. McLuhan had a 'deep faith' in harmony and wholeness, which Huyssen (1989: 10) brings out by asking the reader of McLuhan's *Understanding Media* to perform a thought experiment:

... try an experiment in reading: for electricity substitute the Holy Spirit, for medium read God, and for the global village of the screen understand the planet untied under Rome. Rather than offering a media theory McLuhan

offers a media theology in its most technocratic and reified form. God is the ultimate aim of implosion

It is no wonder that currently, in the pages of the magazine of which McLuhan is the patron saint, one finds a special issue devoted to “Channeling McLuhan” (*Wired*, January 1996). The three articles by Gary Wolf let McLuhan play the fool but, he is after all “Saint Marshall, Holy Fool.” McLuhan’s Catholicism is figured in a new age rhetoric of channeling, a televisual notion of wired convergences made possible by new technologies; on-line, born again capitalists can ‘interview’ McLuhan by e-mail by channeling a simulation of the saint, a McLuhan-bot, if one cares to play along. The adjectives pile up in an absurd, but entirely familiar, way: McLuhan is a conservative Christian, and an anarchist, to boot; he is not a neo-Luddite, but a mystic. In one respect, Wolf has absorbed McLuhan’s lessons in *Explorations* from the late 1950s on the liturgical revival to the extent that electronic culture has the power to radically change Christian ritual, demanding “collective liturgical participation” that is dialogic and creatively passive, in the place of the private reading of the text of the Mass (McLuhan 1957: #17). Getting on-line is just this kind of ritual.

What is significant about Wolf’s emphasis on McLuhan as a ‘holy fool’ ((The question of faith is an important one that the *Wired* articles barely touch. See Wolf, Gary (1996) “The Wisdom of Saint Marshall, Holy Fool” and “The Medium is the Massage” and “Channeling McLuhan: The Wired Interview with Wired’s Patron Saint,” *Wired* (January): 122-5, 182, 184, 186; 126-7; 128-31, 186-7; McLuhan (1957) “The Liturgical Revival,” *Explorations* 8 (October): #17 [np]; and McLuhan (1964) *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, New York: McGraw-Hill. The work of Babin, Pierre and Iannone, M. (1986) *L’ère de la communication: réflexion chrétienne*, Paris: Editions du centurion [Babin and Iannone, M. (1991) *The New Era in*

Religious Education, David Smith (trans.), Minneapolis: Fortress Press] is critical, as are the letters between McLuhan and Babin in *MP*. 18-61: Babin to McLuhan (15 July 1975); McLuhan to Babin (25 Sept. 1975); Babin to McLuhan (28 Jan. 1976); Babin to McLuhan (6 Aug. 1976); McLuhan to Babin (13 March 1978) and n.a., “Review of *Autre homme, autre chrétien à l’âge électronique*,” *Centre for the Study of Communication and Culture Newsletter* [London] 1/2 (1979): 6-7. The best piece of writing on McLuhan’s faith is De Kerckhove’s chapter “La foi en l’église de Marshall McLuhan,” in (1990) *La Civilisation vidéo-chrétienne*, Paris: Retz.)) is that – and this brings us back to the French reception of McLuhan – this was taken very seriously by some of his French readers such as Babin (and Iannone 1991) in terms of new Christian approaches to communication. Indeed, it is by posing the question of McLuhan’s French reception that an informed approach to the question of faith may be made that renders moot both Wolf’s new ageism and Huyssen’s thought experiment. Electronic media frames faith very differently, Babin realized, and he sought to develop, with concepts borrowed from McLuhan, new approaches to communicating faith: “the ear,” as he put it, “is the way” of liturgical development, an imaginative, affective and aural framing of faith in what he called the church of modulation. It needs to be stated that McLuhan collaborated on a book with Babin in the late 1970s (McLuhan and Babin 1977) and the unpublished correspondence between them (*MP*. 18-61) provides a good deal of insight into McLuhan’s reflections on the history of the Church and the effects of media revolutions -from the printing press to the microphone – on it. De Kerckhove (1990), in fact, devotes a chapter of his book *La civilisation vidéo-chrétienne* to the matter of McLuhan’s faith in the church, and quotes amply from McLuhan’s discussions with Babin. De Kerckhove makes it clear why the ear is the way, citing *Matthew* 13.9, *Mark* 4.9 and *Luke* 8.8, all to the effect that: “Listen, then, if you have ears!” Babin’s distinction between the modulation and alphabet churches, the former a warm, resonant space eliciting

participation in the multisensorial vibrations, and the latter a clinical space organized for explanation leading directly to understanding, is based on McLuhan's suspicions about the role played by the Gutenberg inheritance in the church. The deleterious effects of the way in which faith is framed are evident in the way in which the catechism is learned, the hierarchical church bureaucracy and, in general, the triumph of the letter, the scriptures and their interpretation, over the spirit, the communication of a living presence. The issue here is not simply the dislodging of the eye by the ear, of seeing by hearing. The danger is that the former will exclude the latter. The "ear is the way" means, for McLuhan (quoted in De Kerckhove 1990: 93), a subtle distinction between hearing (*écouter*) and listening (*entendre*); the former requiring visual attentiveness to strings of signs, and the latter adjusting to *la bonne fréquence*, tuning in to the right channel, as it were, or what Babin calls modulation, the new style of the electronic church.