

## **Our New Aural Ecologies: Podcasting, Publicity, and Secondary Orality**

**Robert MacDougall  
Curry College  
rmacdoug0907@curry.edu**

### **Abstract**

This paper begins by looking at the growing popularity of “podcasting” as yet another manifestation of Walter Ong’s secondary orality. I also consider podcasting in relation to the work of McLuhan and other medium theorists. In the tradition of the beat poet, the DJ, and most recently the blogger, podcasting recasts the personal experience (the “phenomenological feel”), as well as the actual perspectives and preferences accessible to people on-the-fly via digital storage and playback of audio content. Podcasting certainly seems to blur notions of “public” and “private” in unprecedented ways, and a recent concept dubbed “publicity” (privacy that occurs under the intense acceleration of instantaneous communications) accounts for this. While the podcast may be the latest and perhaps purest form of publicity, is publicity itself really anything new, or is it just a new form of orality (ie. secondary orality) that recasts us all as witness/participants to the chants and decrees of the iconoclast, village elder, and cultural mystic? I argue that podcast consumption, itself the product of complex cognitive and cultural processes, is consequential to its reconfigurations of our everyday soundscapes and the personal experiences bound up in them.

## Introduction

In this paper I'll draw on Marshall McLuhan's distinction between percepts and concepts, Walter Ong's notion of *secondary orality*, Mark Federman's *publicity* concept, and Donald Horton and Richard Wohl's characterization of the *parasocial relationship*. Together, these ideas situate podcasting in our new media matrix, and help us understand the social, phenomenological and epistemological significance of real-world podcast consumption.

MP3 audio files (most featuring music) have been swapped over the Internet for nearly a decade. *Podcasts* (audio files of varying types often featuring news and talk) were first deployed on the Internet in mid-2004. Podcast consumption has similarities to both the traditional radio broadcast listener's experience, and the tape-recorded radio show played back on a stationary tape player or mobile Walkman. While numerous "idiot guides" and manuals online and in printed form exist for the budding podcaster (i.e. podcast producer), the fast adoption rate of the podcast by Internet content-providers and users seems to be due primarily to the ease with which these files can now be manipulated. The "one-click-and-you-get-what-you-want" formula has been found.

As more news and media services turn to the pay-per model, content producers and consumers are realizing that podcasts can be an economical alternative to maintaining subscriptions to various online and satellite services. National Public Radio, for instance, is moving vigorously in this direction, with programming content dispersed via podcast, Facebook and Twitter. For the media consumer specifically, the advent of large memory capacity, long-life battery power, file archiving on the Internet and digital encoding make the content and the experience of content obtained through a podcast quite distinct from that of the traditional radio broadcast – whether that be a typical news segment, a celebrity DJ's themed music-banter hour, a call-in interview on a political talk show, or a church sermon.

However, the term *podcast* is misleading, as neither creating nor listening to podcasts requires an iPod, or any portable device for that matter. Indeed, the name has been a marketing coup on the part of Apple Computer Corporation. Whether the name achieves the eponymic status of *Coke* or *Kleenex*, or begins to slip as more consumers utilize these sound files in a wide variety of non-Apple products, the outcome will not alter the ever-increasing ease by which DSL or T1+ connections, super fast processor speeds, and the digital MP3/4 formats allows the downloading of compact sound files that can be played back and/or edited on even the most basic audio player programs and devices. The podcast data file encodes a relatively high-fidelity audio signal that is ideal for voice reproduction.

Technically, the term *podcasting* refers to the production and posting on the Internet of podcast content – not its consumption. No definitive term has yet surfaced that references the growing audience of podcasts in all their stripes (like "radiohead" or TV junkie). "Podpeople" is one suggestion a colleague recently offered, though the allusion to automatons and "bodysnatchers" is certainly less-than-gracious and, mostly likely, extreme. Unfortunately, the allusion to broadcasting is also inaccurate as nothing is being broadcast per se. Instead, to the contrary, and well beyond the tuning-in of a radio or television signal, podcast listeners must

consciously point their browser to a particular web site that archives these compressed digital recordings and deliberately choose specific files for download. More recently, “aggregator” programs can be set up that automatically check for and download the desired new content, however the source site, topic, genre, and or production time-frame still has to be pre-selected by the user. Some of the conscious deliberation has also eased more recently with the “smartest” aggregators even transferring the latest content to one’s mobile listening device immediately upon establishing a hard or wireless connection to a host computer.

The majority of podcasts feature talk – not music – so this prompts us to shift our thinking from features and effects associated with the mobile soundtrack (first popularized with the SONY walkman) to the mobile narrative track. Similarly, but often without an explicit set of physical referents, we’ll see below how the religious sermon, the DJ’s commentary, or the pundit’s rant nonetheless performs an attention-directing function. We’ll see, given the unique features attendant to the auditory sense, how we often can’t help but incorporate and *fold in* what we see, taste, touch (as we ride, walk, or jog through the physical environment) with what we hear.

But while podcasts are not limited to portable consumption, this analysis focuses on the mobile phenomenon for three key reasons: First, listening to podcasts on-the-go is becoming a common practice in urban centers, especially where many commuters who use public transit or pedestrians navigating the high-rise city-scape report considerable trouble tuning in radio signals for a variety of purposes (listening to sports, news or their favorite radio talk shows). Second, listening to portable podcasts raises many intriguing questions concerning a person’s subjective understanding of the world as experienced on a minute-by-minute basis. In this respect, podcasts and the appliances that enable their consumption, are among the latest instantiations of mobile digital communication technology that represent a further alteration of the phenomenological experience of everyday life. Finally, this technology seems to fundamentally alter the meaning and import of certain kinds of content. Especially where clichés and generalities are regularly employed as a key feature of discourse (as in the cases of religious and political discourse) the *mobilization* of such content can be shown to reorient the listener to the world and the world to the listener, prompting (internal) memory and (external) layout to function together as props and foils for the often detailed yet punctuated discourse that typifies the podcast.

### **A Very Brief History of Portable Audio Technology**

Indeed, going mobile with on-board audio changes everything. While we could begin with “portable” record and reel-to-reel tape players, or the bona fide portable transistor radio of the late 50s and early 60s, the history here is in fact very brief if we limit ourselves to the sea-change that occurred with the advent of portable personal sound programming. The portable cassette tape player brought this capacity to the consumer in the late 1970s. The first was invented by engineers at SONY corporation. The SONY Walkman radically altered the nature of our soundscape, and with a pair of stereo headphones, made the private soundtrack a practical possibility for the first time in history. The portable CD player followed about a decade later, enhancing the fidelity for the listener on the move, but temporality suspending the programmability option (with programmability soon returning in several lesser-known portable digital formats like DAT ).

However, it was not until the Mp3 audio file type was invented in 1991 that the possibility for the convenient recording and storage of audio became a reality. But then the portability feature needed time to catch up. SaeHan Information Systems' *MPMan* portable Mp3 player hit the scene in 1998. In October of 2001 Apple introduces its first generation iPod. And, indeed, the rest is history. A host of competitors continue to vie for second place to the iPod. From hereon, however, I'll focus less on the different physical media that carry podcast content. Instead, the various ways people consume podcasts is the object of analysis.

### **The Phenomenology of the Mobile Podcast Listener**

An intellectual movement that is generally accepted to have originated with Edmund Husserl, phenomenology was a pragmatic departure from the highly abstract and conceptual-analytic trends in fashion at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. In keeping with Husserl's original formulation, contemporary phenomenologists are guided by a philosophical perspective and method of inquiry based on the idea that reality itself consists of objects and occurrences as they are perceived or understood in human consciousness. Phenomenological arguments lay at the root of much media theoretic thinking (cf. especially the Media Ecological tradition including McLuhan, Ong, Gumpert and Cathcart, Meyrowitz, etc) and research about communication media in general.

Some research participants who contributed to this study reported marked perceptual shifts while listening to podcasts featuring the spoken word – especially the mobile experience employing dual headphones. The formidable power of the disembodied human voice became obvious with the first successful telephone conversation between Bell and Watson in 1876. However, it was Reginald Fessenden's 1906 Christmas Eve radio services intended for merchant mariners and the crews of ships at sea from Brant Rock, Massachusetts that firmly demonstrated the emotional and persuasive capacities of voice-over-distance. Fessenden talked informally, sang along with his wife while playing the violin, and read passages from the bible for his listeners just off the coast – and beyond.

Even though Fessenden's financial backers did not express any interest in vocal communication (or the transmission of music for that matter), his work and play with early radio apparatuses set the stage for what would follow in the electrification of the human voice. This includes but is not limited to the broadcasting-qua-publicizing of private thoughts, concrete, real-time referencing of local and distant events, the direct-address of audiences, and the subsequent development of compelling, and often enduring *parasocial relationships* between audience members and their favorite media personalities.

One of the striking characteristics of the new mass media - radio, television, and the movies - is that they give the illusion of face-to-face relationship with the performer. The conditions of response to the performer are analogous to those in a primary group. The most remote and illustrious men are met *as if they* were in the circle of one's peers; the same is true of a character in a story who comes to life in these media in an especially vivid and arresting way. We propose to call this seeming face-to-face relationship between spectator and performer a *para-social relationship* (Horton and Wohl, 1954; 215).

The podcast, and particularly the podcast listened to on the move, may be part of an evolution in parasocial phenomena and a fundamentally new form of mediated interpersonal communication. Podcasts enhance the personal feel and all attendant psychodynamic effects of Fessenden's primordial radio show, adding infinite mobility and manipulability to the equation. Many of the listeners of podcasted religious sermons, news magazines, political pundits, and music DJs participating in this study often described a kind of organic connection, or an enveloping, even holistic involvement as part of the experience. Marshall McLuhan's description of a media-induced blending of the senses, or *synaesthesia*, helps to account for some of this. Such an effect can occur because sound incorporates (whereas vision is a highly focusable, abstracting, even distancing sense). This distinction was also a recurrent finding in Ong's fieldwork. The point is that sonic percepts simply are not isolatable by the human ear in the same way visual percepts can be isolated by the eyes. This is easily illustrated if one imagines, say, listening to the third part of Bach's Brandenburg concerto. The French horn's acrobatic dance can't be fixed in time but it can be tracked and separated from the other audible strains without too much trouble. However, the basic quality of the instrument borrows some of its essence from the relation it develops with the mix of strings, woodwinds and additional horns. In the process of consciously attending to just one instrument the experience of the "surround" is literally muted or set off-color. As listeners, we can't help but naturally hear the French horns as a living, organic part of the whole ensemble.

For similar reasons the mobile headphoned podcast listener of the human voice brings Ong's sonic incorporation thesis into its own. Even a short (two or three minute) podcast can uniquely focus the attention, mnemonic, and persuasive functions of the church sermon, the radio talkshow, or the nightly television news hour such that a holistic experience can be had. The podcast is the latest manifestation of a turning away from the visual/analytic mode, to what McLuhan called the "tactile embrace" of the oral/aural. While the idea of secondary orality (as a re-emergence and reorientation of many of the primary oral cultural ways of being) has been crystalizing since the mid-point of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the sense of presence – and the immediate sense of the present – that is encoded in the human voice is further enhanced when the listener can center sound emissions around the head with low-cost, high-fidelity miniature speakers abutted to or affixed inside the ear canal. With this equipment, the modern version of soothsayer or village elder is aesthetically enhanced, often rendered more compelling than even the televised audio visual representation.

Indeed, the auditory sense is particularly open to active/additive referencing, association and expansion through the inputs of memory and the other sensory modalities in the reality-building process (rivaled only, perhaps, by the olfactory sense in this regard). Psychologist JJ Gibson's (1979) general theory of perception "as an achievement of the perceiver" further bolsters this view. According to Gibson, animal perception is not a passive phenomenon. Rather, perception is always a participatory, active, ongoing process that is only partially (perhaps minimally) under the conscious control of the perceiver. While the stationary media user is certainly free to imagine and associate at will in the stationary or location-based situation, we are not prompted, cued or perhaps distracted to the same degree as the mobile case (walking, running, or in automobiles, buses, trains and planes).

Moving through physical space, the listener can't help but bring the world they confront into the unfolding monologues and conversations cached on their digital audio device. As mentioned above, in the mobile case the physical environment functions as a kind of perpetual set or backdrop, thereby recasting the recorded talk as a form of discourse, requiring the user to integrate the visual percepts with the audio. This creates a new hybrid media experience, and should prompt us to rethink McLuhan's traditional characterization of audio media as engendering "hot" or low participation experiences. Indeed, McLuhan's typology is a bit inflexible in this regard. There are some analogous media worth mentioning here.

With hard-wired/location-based telephony moving steadily toward obsolescence, the mobile phone experience edges closer to the cool end of McLuhan's spectrum. Mobile telephony is becoming cooler/more participatory and a generally more involving and distracting activity because we are not allowed to focus as easily on simply what we hear. For similar reasons, the most popular (ie. mobile) podcast experience is also a more involving enterprise. The mobile podcast experience is perhaps even more participatory than the mobile radio experience for the following reason. The suggestion here is that humans are not passive, but active information processors, and this idea finds support in the work of Gibson (1979), and Avery and McCain (1982), who both essentially described the human sensory apparatus active and *homeokinetic*.

"Human sensory modalities are not dormant sensors waiting to be stimulated and affected by objects in the environment. Instead, the perceptual systems of the human body are searching systems, actively and constantly scanning their environment for information appropriate to the needs of the information processor" (Avery and McCain, 1982; p.30).

While the machine metaphor Avery and McCain extend throughout their research has some limitations, the basic point cannot be disputed. We are all essentially associative, searching interpretive systems that try to sustain equilibrium (physical, psychological, etc). If there is any consistent component to "human nature," it is the urge to find meaning in the world that corresponds to one's current understanding of it. We are always looking for examples, illustrations, connections – especially if they are presented in relation to a set of ideas one already believes or at least holds some stock in. This is the "homeokinetic" tendency in a nutshell. Based upon data collected from the limited number of respondents to date (8 in total including the principle researcher and graduate assistant), no firm conclusions can reliably be drawn regarding the relation and correspondence of podcasted content to the philosophical, religious, or political predispositions of podcast consumers at this time. That part of the question of consumption patterns will have to be deferred to a future study. However, we can make a preliminary set of claims now regarding the likelihood of using certain content for "world-view-building" purposes (for lack of a better term).

Again, the argument here is that human beings are incessant interpreters. We do not passively stand in a wash of stimuli. Instead, we always try to incorporate, in some meaningful way, the dynamic perceptual flux going on all around us. And when individuals select particular podcasts, what often attends is a heightened perception of personal relevance regarding that content. Even in the face of our rapidly expanding universe of media experiences, all of that experience nonetheless remains, at bottom, "local." Short of some cognitive impairment, psychedelic drug use, and barring for the moment any potential for astral projection, human

beings are enmeshed in a highly localized state of consciousness. That is to say, despite the appearances of multi-mediation, we remain physically embodied beings. We can't help but experience the world in-context, or *immediately* so to speak.

To understand why this might be the case, we have to first re-conceptualize our understanding of media as *media-in-use*. Otherwise, we are not really talking about media at all. Just as *radio* is never just “what’s on” the radio, the *podcast* is never simply the sound file. Put another way, there is no media without a media consumer (reader/viewer/listener). To have meaning, these must all, ultimately, eventually, be instances of symbolic content consumed and “filtered” through the particular biases of someone’s personal history, their medium of choice, and the particular context in which they dwell. This is a simple but subtle point that tends to resist apprehension. Let us consider a few examples to clarify.

With the first inscriptions on stone tablets, papyrus and other early portable media, the content a medium carried became unbound from its original context (The content is also unbound, in a sense, from the medium that carries it precisely due to its carrying capacity). And yet humans have always used mediated content in particular places. Put another way, our media consumption is always embodied, as well as embedded within particular spatio-temporal contexts. So while portable media are, by design, not bound to particular places, the meaning/s we glean from our media use has always nonetheless been context-dependent. Just as Shelley’s Frankenstein read in the quiet comfort of one’s home study is not the Frankenstein read on a busy subway car, a podcast of Rush Limbaugh’s radio show listened to while dozing off in bed is not the same as Rush listened to on the frantic walk from the subway to the office. These are uniquely dynamic processes of active mediated perception and experience that are always our own private experiences (ie. inherently *personal*).

The preceding suggests why ostensibly “aural” media experiences have to be considered with particular nuance. A relatively poor acuteness (in terms of reception and gain) characterizes what really is now a vestigial sense of hearing in human beings. We are still equipped with multiple sense modalities, as our tribal ancestors were, though we are now heavily biased toward the visual sense, and the stimuli that sensory apparatus is tuned to. Indeed, modern humans do not hear or see the way ancient humans did. Yet McLuhan suggests that the *tribal echoland* endures inasmuch as hearing maintains “no margins” in the experience of the modern human. That is, due primarily to the physics involved, sound still envelop us. There is no “edge” or border to auditory sensations as there is in a visual display (whether that display is bracketed by our brow, cheek, and peripheral views, or in the four edges of a video screen). Given this fact, the aural communication participant is not so much the center of what is happening as they are part of an undifferentiated whole – an always less-than-clearly-defined experience. Put another way, hearing is rooted in abstract concepts (as opposed to the relatively concrete percepts of vision).

### **Ong and Secondary Orality**

In *Orality and Literacy* (1982) Walter Ong elaborated upon McLuhan’s characterization of the perceptual habits fostered by oral, written and electronic media cultures. In so doing Ong went on to describe the cultural milieu of contemporary electronic media as one of “secondary orality.” Primary orality, Ong suggested, cultivated and sustained a special kind of

communicative experience that began to fade and lose traction on the human psyche with the advent of the phonetic alphabet about five thousand years ago. That way of being lost further traction with the broad dissemination of the printed word following Gutenberg's moveable type press in the mid 15<sup>th</sup> Century. A progressive internalization and privatization of the phenomenal life-world continued through the 19<sup>th</sup> Century until instantaneous electronic communication was made possible with the invention of the telegraph at century's end. In the third chapter of *Orality and Literacy* (1982) Ong lists a number of characteristics that define the way people in a primary oral culture think, perceive, express themselves:

1. Expression is additive rather than subordinative.
2. It is aggregative rather than analytic (or separating)
3. It tends to be redundant or "copious."
4. There is a tendency for it to be conservative.
5. Out of necessity, thought is conceptualized and then expressed with relatively close reference to the human lifeworld.
6. Expression is agonistically toned.
7. It is empathetic and participatory rather than objectively distanced.
8. It is Homeostatic.
9. It is situational rather than abstract (ie. percept over concept).

Ong, like McLuhan, drew analogies between these features of primary orality and our modern forms of mediated interpersonal communication, including various forms of "intimacy-at-a-distance" (Horton and Wohl, 1954). Much in the way a camp fire story commands rapt attention and fosters intense participation, the agonistic modes of address now typical of radio or television news programs (conveyed through variances in volume, tone, gesture, eye contact, and emotionally-laden intonation) intentionally prompt, and then often appear to correspond in kind to, reactions in the audience. We see this in David Letterman's stoic gaze after dropping an obscure one-liner or non-sequitur, or Jon Stewart's verbal hedging up on repeating some circumlocution he found in the news, or Rush Limbaugh's hearty guffaw after offering some overwrought interpretation of the president's statement to the press.

### **Publicity as Secondary Orality**

Fessenden's ability 100 years ago to publicize the private in real-time in a manner never before possible has more recently been described as a form of *publicity*: "privacy that occurs under the intense acceleration of instantaneous communications,...[publicity is] an artifact of literacy...silent reading led to private interpretation of ideas that lead to private thoughts that led to privacy" Federman (2003). The essence of publicity as a side-effect of secondary orality (itself derivative of primary orality) is captured in the following *Playboy Magazine* interview featuring McLuhan published in 1969. The instance is worth noting because, as the interviewer makes clear in a short preface to the interview itself, this was one of the rare occasions when McLuhan's penchant for oblique, meandering observations was largely held in check. His thoughts were focused and clarified in the give and take process of face-to-face dialogue. As is the case with many of the podcasts downloaded and analyzed for this study, the inclusion of an interlocutor is central in creating traction and a kind of resonance in the audience. In an effort to get to the bottom of a point McLuhan just made regarding several distinctions between oral, print



and electronic culture, the operative question asked by the interviewer is simply put: “*What do you mean by "acoustic space?"*” McLuhan then replies in an uncharacteristically concise manner:

I mean space that has no center and no margin, unlike strictly visual space, which is an extension and intensification of the eye. Acoustic space is organic and integral, perceived through the simultaneous interplay of all the senses; whereas "rational" or pictorial space is uniform, sequential and continuous and creates a closed world with none of the rich resonance of the tribal echoland... The man of the tribal world led a complex, kaleidoscopic life precisely because the ear, unlike the eye, cannot be focused and is synaesthetic rather than analytical and linear... By their dependence on the spoken word for information, people were drawn together into a tribal mesh; and since the spoken word is more emotionally laden than the written--conveying by intonation such rich emotions as anger, joy, sorrow, fear--tribal man was more spontaneous and passionately volatile. Audile-tactile tribal man partook of the collective unconscious, lived in a magical integral world patterned by myth and ritual, its values divine and unchallenged, whereas literate or visual man creates an environment that is strongly fragmented, individualistic, explicit, logical, specialized and detached.

The present analysis is really a detailing and clarification of several key points made by McLuhan in this section of the interview (indeed, even this instance of “McLuhan being clear and distinct” remains fairly opaque by most standards). Most notably the “organic and integral” experience of the world resulting from the “simultaneous interplay of all the senses” that itself stems from being immersed in an acoustic milieu. The experiential wholeness and synaesthesia that incorporates the headphone-clad podcast listener indeed puts them dead-center in the middle of it all.

And yet we find that a key distinction between the primary and secondary oral situation is a heightened degree of self-consciousness (attended by a kind of *self-centeredness*) in the latter case. Whereas an individual sense-of-self (the phenomenological feel of being distinct and separate from the world) is not characteristic of a primary oral experience, such self-centeredness typifies the secondary-oral situation. Regarding this, Meyrowitz’ (2004) observed that “all experience is local,” and this applies well to the experience of being connected to a digital mobile listening apparatus. Words or music, in fact, the same applies. We seem to become the nexus of all that is occurring. We’ll see below how the use of stereo headphones is key to enhancing this effect.

The idea of a modern phenomenological situation mimicking that of an “Oral/Tribal” way of being was clearly predicted by McLuhan in *The Gutenberg Galaxy* (1962), where he asserted that “our age translates itself back into the oral and auditory modes because of the electronic pressure of simultaneity.” For instance, listening to a human voice on the radio, or watching someone on television often fosters a palpable sense of involvement, of being hailed, or addressed personally. This, by extension, is attended by a powerful sense of *being there*. McLuhan went so far as to say that radio and television were “tactile” media because of the way they seem to envelop us, facilitate the dynamic interplay of the senses, and “work us over” in the process through this kind of forced synaesthesia. The experience by an attentive person of a one-way radio or television signal featuring a human voice (or voice and body), can sometimes create the illusion of a two-way communicative exchange to the point of even prompting some active emotional, even physical participation in the recipient. Indeed, the parasocial relationship first described by Horton and Wohl in the mid-twentieth century is a cultural commonplace

today, whether particular members of the media audience realize it or not. We all *engage* with mediated personae to varying degrees. But this does not require any kind of acting out or talking-back-to, that occurs often enough.<sup>1</sup> What's much more common is a subtle collection of cognitive/bodily/emotional experiences. Extending far beyond the way readers of novel might report sympathy for (or may empathize or identify with) various characters, the experience of reading a book prompts corporeal engagement far less intensely, and much less often. Certainly, we rarely talk-back to –let alone yelling at– a page of printed words.

### **Media and the Imagination**

Podcasts take secondary orality, publicity, and the power of the parasocial relation to a new level. With the headphones in place, we hear someone (or several people) speaking, quite literally, between our ears, adding a certain reality to the phrase “getting inside someone's head.” Surely, at one extreme, this is what has led some research participants to describe almost feeling possessed by another. But if apparently extreme, such a sentiment suggests that the experience generated by the mobile podcast listening experience is at least akin to having someone speaking to/with you while walking, sitting, or standing next to you. And yet, the podcast retrieves some of the phenomenological characteristics of reading – but with a twist. I used to regularly assign Shelley's *Frankenstein* as part of an external reading list in an undergraduate media theory course. Invariably, several students (some of whom had seen multiple adaptations of the tale on the theatre stage or screen) report, upon finishing the book, a more vivid experience of the story and a more nuanced understanding of Shelley's vision of autonomous technology. Let's briefly examine reading, along with several other modes of consumption, to compare the experiential outcomes common to each.

While it is increasingly difficult these days to locate “regular,” un-coerced readers of novels, the descriptions tend to be generally consistent with those of my students. It seems likely that the popular experience of reading *Frankenstein* when the book was first published in 1831 (eight years prior to the invention of the dargerrottype) would be qualitatively different than the experience of the same book a century later, after the advent of celluloid film technology. Thomas Edison's 1910 silent (and short) production of *Frankenstein* at his studios in the Bronx initially recast and redirected subsequent readings of the story. But especially with the large-scale cinematic versions of the mid and late twentieth century, we began to see the unprecedented power of a visual medium to prefigure the experience encoded in hitherto text-bound tales. The same certainly applies to early radio audiences of *Frankenstein*.<sup>2</sup>

Reading stories can trigger thinking via *mental picture* in a way that seeing stories often short-circuits. This seems to be a truism. And yet, a particular reference or metaphor is sometimes missed when reading, or re-reading a story. Of course, no claim is being made here regarding the accurate or inaccurate representation of any particular truth or underlying reality. Rather, it is merely that experiencing stories in different modes exposes us to a different selection

---

<sup>1</sup> John Hinkley, Henry David Chapman, etc.

<sup>2</sup> This is all well and good, but do modern cinema goers report being less terrorized by, for example, DiNiro's rendition of the monster (as some of my students insist)? Certainly, mis-guided casting can inadvertently short-circuit the hopes of the director in capturing the right feeling and flavor in a character.

of powerful, but often subtle form of persuasion. Consider the following three ways of experiencing Frankenstein.

Shelley challenges her readers to stretch their senses by filling in the details of the familiar and unfamiliar alike. She walks us through a humid English moor; a mad scientist's laboratory; then finally, the stark wasteland of the arctic tundra. While some of this effect naturally depends on the writer's talents, and a particular reader's imagination, the written words, once read, prompt a filling in of the story with all kinds of residual details. We just can't help but be affected by the descriptions. With Frankenstein the book, we walk through a perceptual door. The imagination goes to work, if sequentially directed by Shelley's rich imagery. A serial radio version produced in 1938 adhered closely to the plot and spirit of the novel (and lasting nearly three and a half hours). In that instance we are walked through a different door. The unique listener's imagination is allowed to run a bit more freely with the ability to intermix the actor's language and linguistic cues.

But with the radio the imagination is, in part, driven and guided (in 15 minute segments) by the real-time "action" emanating from the speaker. The radio play, in other words, literally sets temporal delimiters on the way someone imagines the unfolding story. During the action, the pacing and patterning of the listener's imaginings, with all of the residual detail, must be in step with the temporal pace and sequencing, or the enveloping virtual reality breaks down. And the movie director walks us through yet another door, sits us down in a comfortable chair, and bombards us with their much more explicit version (or vision) of things. As in the comparison between different media forms of Shelley's gothic novel, we might also compare Howard Stern's or Sean Hannity's or Glenn Beck's or Bill O'Reilly's television shows with their podcasts or radio shows. Indeed, as the televised debate between JFK and profoundly illustrated, these different media selections often result in very different experiences and perceptions.

Like Kennedy and Nixon, both Stern and O'Reilly also have unique (and peculiar enough) physical features and mannerisms. Here too we find that viewers often report being distracted from the content of monologues and discussions to the point of even losing track or interest in what is being said. This fact alone is fair reason for Stern and O'Reilly to limit themselves to the sound signal. It seems reasonable as well to suggest that the success of Rush Limbaugh, Tom Ashbrook, and Al Franken as media personalities is largely attributable to their either remaining with, or returning to, the sound-only medium. In these cases, leaving the visual picture to the imagination appears to enhance the power, presence and, by extension, the powerfully parasocial persuasive effect of the messenger and his message.

It was established in his heyday of the 1990s that the average Howard Sterns fan tuned in for about 60 minutes (half the duration of his morning show) to hear what he's going to say next. This is an impressive statistic in and of itself. Fan allegiance with Stern may be second to none. Of course, many of Stern's harshest critics continue to "tune" their satellite receivers to hear him rant tirelessly about the latest political conspiracy, corporate media plot levied against him, or the most recent sex-plots of his favorite *diva de jour*. Still more impressive, and certainly more interesting, is that fact that many Stern-haters themselves spent between 90 and 120 minutes listening, and also to hear what he was going to say next (two of Stern's program directors back at NBC who were interviewed in Stern's 1993 biography admitted to this). While no staunch Stern detractors have yet to be interviewed for this project, we can predict that in such cases as

this, the opinion-leader function is not being positively met (though one could imagine cases wherein consistent, long-term Stern listenership might sway individuals less resolved in their previous dislike of *all things Howard*. The same surely applies to Keith Oberman, Glen Beck and Sean Hannity.<sup>3</sup>

The consumption (and the production?) of podcasts might therefore be thought of as a primarily ritual/istic form of communication (Carey, 1989). Carey's "ritual view" bolsters the homeostatic function of media. While Carey did not focus on mediated contexts per se, he did observe that human communication is constitutive far beyond the simple transmission or exchange of information (the "transmission view"). Of course, Carey's two views are not mutually exclusive. Information of course continues to be transmitted through media. What Carey was getting at here is that we have to also conceive of the symbolic exchange at the root of human communication as also, if not primarily, fostering the therapeutic affirmation of some collective worldview. The sustained worldview then functions to affirm both *broad perspectives* (including political, moral, and religious outlooks), as well as *narrow practices* (habits like listening to the radio during the drive home, reading the newspaper or watching TV at the breakfast table, or listening to a favorite podcast in any of these situations).

Listening to podcasts, therefore, may have less to do with obtaining particular bits of information from elsewhere in order to learn something new, or know what to do next, and more with participating in a form of catharsis from the overall sense of the here-and-now that is sustained. On this view, podcast consumption provides a comforting ritual or ceremony. McLuhan's image of "getting into the morning paper like a hot bath" certainly conjurs this same idea. These ideas align closely with some of the more cognitive and neurological arguments. As cognitive philosopher Andy Clark (1998) has pointed out in discussions of his "brain-body-world" thesis, the human cognitive apparatus may be a much more energetically conservative and broader set of synergies between bodily components and features of the physical and symbolic environment than has hitherto been proposed. Clark describes a collection of "inbuilt synergies" that are exploited to enable the high level of coordination we see in human behavior and thought.

It increasingly appears that the simple image of a general purpose perceptual system delivering input to a fully independent action system is biologically distortive. Instead, perceptual and action systems work together, in the context of specific tasks, so as to promote adaptive success. Perception and action, on this view, form a deeply interanimated unity (Clark, 1998; p.8).

Avery and McCain offered an early version of this argument with their homeokinetic thesis. And this may explain the tendency in humans embedded in an oral milieu to be "conservative" as McLuhan (and then Ong) suggested. Of course, to act conservatively in this sense does not imply adopting the political disposition opposed to liberalism. While it certainly could include that perspective, the conservatism McLuhan and Ong described concerned the active and ongoing maintenance of a world view: the constant effort to reify a status quo of familiar habits, traditions, and ways of being in (and seeing) the world. If this seems tenable, then

---

<sup>3</sup> Indeed, I've met numerous Stern converts since his talk show began syndication in 1988. (cf Stuart Hall's observations on the different kinds of decodings that occur: "dominant," "negotiated," and "oppositional"

the communicative processes fostered by many of our new media forms (including the podcast) may end up being much more ritualistic than informative in both nature and function.

### **The Primacy of the Percept**

In *New Media as Political Forms* (1955), McLuhan wrote “one is perceptive when something is penetrated, extracting uncommon insight. Perception is enhanced when attuned to the ‘secondary’ senses, the tactile, olfactory, and acoustic. Only when the senses are at work, can the eye see. Percepts function via the sensory world, not by concept. Percepts are participatory, involved. Percepts feel....transmit subliminal energy.” “The distinction McLuhan made between concept and percept offers us some insight into the shift (back again) from the culture of the written word to that of the spoken. “Concepts in contrast are detached systems that neutralize participation by explaining the world. Concepts distance us from objects by relying on the passivity of the eye” (ibid). The synaesthesia than be had with the podcast experience recombines concepts with the persuasive concreteness of perception.

With the mobile podcast, more than any other media form perhaps, we see the emergence of powerful kind of “horoscopic effect” regarding a listener’s relation to the content that is selected. Media use in the digital age (with the media consumer now able to perform “easy ins” and “easy outs” in unprecedented ways) can allow us to systematize the “cherry picking” of data and information. Selective perception often occurs where one seeks to find correspondence between their “theory” or concept of the world, and percepts – their sensory/corporeal experience of that world. Some of my research participants have indicated that similar processes seem to be at play during their consumption of podcasts. Much work in media studies, and media ecological studies in particular, has recognized the importance of something we might call the *primacy of the percept* in individuals’ subjective experience of the world, as industrialized societies move progressively away from a typographic focus, to that featuring image and sound as the primary modes of symbolic representation (with the latter re-invoking many of the “concrete realist” cognitive and behavioral tendencies common to a primary oral milieu, including suspicion, superstitious/mythic thought, spontaneous emotional response, and the like).

Here, as with blogs perhaps, the user becomes (part of) the content, as they find themselves participating as *pod-clad* “news makers” in the reality-building process. Consider the serendipity or “happenstance” of the daily commute while listening to a favorite podcast. The potential to over-ride a conceptual way of thinking by a more concrete or percept-based mode of thought and awareness is well illustrated in the following statement made by a research participant ruminating on his recent podcast experiences.

“Look, he’s right you have to admit it. There is a really long history of protectionism in this country right? And people who care about this country *protect us* by buying local, buying American. That just makes sense. And, I know a lot of liberals, and they don’t tend to buy American. I mean just look around. Who’s in the Toyota Priuses?” Notice how the cherry-picking process is in full effect as Sam (a male sales executive in his early forties living in the Jamaica Plain neighborhood of Boston) interpreted<sup>4</sup> the observation made by the host of a conservative radio talk show that “liberals don’t buy American” as a kind of truism.

---

<sup>4</sup> Interpreted, of course, also through the lens of his own past and present experiences.

Or consider the following statements made by a church preacher who's podcasted sermon about greed was being monitored by a woman via her iPod as she strolled through part of Boston's commercial center. The preacher, obviously a very talented young orator, was saying "Jesus does not tell us that having money ...or being skilled at making money is wrong...the problem with the rich man is not that he's wealthy, but greedy." Now the listener, Erica, a thirty-something office worker, was listening for the second time to a 7min excerpt of the sermon she had downloaded several days prior. Discussing the way she was listening and looking around while walking through the downtown crossing shopping district, she described a powerful kind of resonance in, and new reverence for the words spoken the previous weekend by the new preacher at her church who's sermon she was unable to attend live. Wonderfully illustrating Avery and McCain points regarding the tenacity of the "human information processor," she said, "I can make all kinds of connections...I totally see what he's talking about even when I'm not there." The argument I'm putting forward is that she now makes "all kinds of connections" precisely because she is not there. Mobile podcasts allow the incorporation of any kind of observation into our everyday lives in new ways. It might be this new disconnect between the people and places where utterances are produced, and where and by whom they are experienced that adds new breadth, depth, power and force to the significant citizen or opinion leader, our modern versions of the village elder, mystic or seer. But with anyone now potentially able to podcast their chants and decrees, our "wise ones" may begin devolving into lunatics no longer on the fringe.

The downtown stroller continues: "I never miss the speakers now. And now I notice all these new things during my walk." I asked what kinds of things she noticed and she replied: "well, you know, there are also a lot of pretty unthinking people driving around in really big cars still. I mean, look, my dad has a big car, but a lot of people in the older generations can't shake the belief that bigger means safer. But they're wrong, it's not true." When the ambient sounds begin to overwhelm the recorded voice, Erica turns up the volume. "Yeah, the resolution is really good. I can hear him take breaths between sentences. He's a great speaker. Like he's next to me."

Erica, the mobile parishoner, continues: "or when you see someone filling the trunk of their big brand new German sports sedan with shopping bags from Prada and Macy's you have to wonder just who it is they care about in this life..." This response to the greed sermon suggest a subtle set of directives with respect to how to interpret the social environment for someone already potentially predisposed to this outlook. Unfortunately, the mobile podcast used in this way may become a pernicious sort of prescription for perceptual distortion. Indeed, does one you have to wonder in this way? One *could* wonder this (and might even be accurate in making such assumptions), but as far as intuiting the precise subjective cares and concerns of that unknown person finishing up a shopping excursion who *seems* to fit the linguistic description is, to be sure, a leap of faith.

Certainly, one can, and probably should wonder otherwise – that is to say additionally. Explanations about the world, or regarding just why the world is the way it is, abound on talk-radio and television with entertainment, news/information and the hybrid infotainment genres now coalescing. Given the analysis so far, the content of so much that is podcasted today may be more accurately characterized as a form of infotainment and ritualistic self-assurance. As has

already been hinted at with Carey's ritual view of communication, thinking about podcasts as the gathering of assurances (as opposed to the intake of information) seems apt.

I can offer at least one personal example to illustrate the potential power of decontextualization. Until I was a teenager and stopped attending, going to church and listening to the priest's sermon was rarely a savory proposition. My impressions were I think due in part to the space in which the communication took place. The church our family belonged to was a quite typical late nineteenth century Catholic cathedral, and as such, was a fairly dark, cold, and musty place. Due to the physical environment, the words being spoken mostly took on the hue of the immediate environment – scary, creepy, loathsome – and this certainly contributed to my process of thinking about and looking for examples that might help illustrate what was being spoken. I found my referents, but they did not enhance my understanding of the scriptures in the way my pastor might have wished.

While I have long forgotten the details or even subject matter, had I been able to move about the everyday cityscape while listening to the priest's words, getting out of context like that may well have made the message more powerful, and positive. On a positive note then, it is conceivable that moving religious/sacred content out of its typical spaces and places may be a fruitful way to rekindle waning congregations and build general cohesion, where the world becomes a stage for a virtual pulpit with new kinds of powers – a back drop to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century morality play writ large. Muslim and Jewish communities are embracing new technologies in haste. Ironically, podcasting sacred language may be what many institutionalized religions has been waiting for.

Much like a horoscopic/astrological effect, mobile podcast listeners may essentially create a situation where they see something that provides an example for whatever they are listening to, already believing in, or are trying to prove to themselves. If you want to see it, the proof will appear (people carrying shopping bags are not necessarily greedy, but the believer may very well interpret them to be at that moment). The point to be made here is that with mobile sermons, as opposed to those previously experienced in the church pew (or even the living room via television or radio), the chances of the social world giving rise to this kind of circumstantial evidencing drastically expand. And the otherwise familiar can often perturb perception, setting the stage for this kind of effect. Think about a walk, ride or drive across town that you have done a hundred times or more. It is likely that you notice little about your environment as you make your way. We tend to proceed quite automatically from point to point. Similar to the way a music/lyric track can motivate new perceptions, the podcasts' "narrative track" often offers a much more explicit way to prompt novel views onto, and interpretations of, the otherwise mundane environments we inhabit. The mobile parishioner's experience described above illustrates in a profound way.

McLuhan pointed out how "perception is mercurial, comes out of nowhere suddenly, and is instantaneous, boundless, and involving" (ginkopress.com). On the other hand, "[c]onceptualization is static, repetitive, detached, and self-enveloping" (ibid). This is why we may have found in the podcast the most ideal medium for 21st Century politics. The citizen consumer reacts in a visceral fashion to the agonistic utterances and exchanges of the sermoner, the iconic DJ, the politician or pundit.

Now, are Sam's and Erica's ideas about the social world points of fact? Are they more tenuous observations? Or a collection of bland generalities? We should put aside, for now, questions regarding the rigor behind the sentiments (or the broader intentions) of the media personalities who uttered the statements prompting Sam's ponderings about liberals, or Erica's thoughts on greed subsequent to their podcast experiences. The potential misapprehension, misalignment, and *buying-into* on the part of the listener is what's striking, and it seems to be occurring on all sides. Indeed, it may be representative of an emerging pattern that constitutes efforts on the part of many new media consumers who try to reconcile the world as experienced, with the picture of the world created and sustained in their head through their media use. Regarding the mobile podcast phenomenon specifically (with all of the necessary preparations that go into the process), are similar tendencies to "go with the flow" playing out with the growing numbers of people regularly "jacked in"? There are of course, so many exceptions to this tendency toward groupthink. Indeed, we have to admit that certain media personalities may attract a following for reasons that are, perhaps, more counter-intuitive, as the Howard Stern phenomenon discussed earlier abundantly illustrates. That is, media consumers sometimes just tune in for the "shock and awe" of it all.

### **Programming Predispositions**

The agonistic, emotional tones push a focus on percepts. Like the response more typical of religious experiences, our response to modern political discourse (which is increasingly designed to be very concise so as to fit the various news holes of media outlets) is often an emotional response. Personality over policy, image or perceived character over idea and content lends itself to a "conservative" activity. It fosters ritual forms and maintaining culture over time, as opposed to extending or exchanging information through space. In short, the content that fits most podcasts seems well-suited to maintaining the "choir," but a discontinuous collection of micro-cultural political enclaves is what that new choir may become.

While this description of someone seeking to make sense of the world around them might paint the image of a lone agent distinct and separate in a turbulent sea of anonymous others, this ultimately supports the social interactionist position that each of us is a *collective*; embodied intersubjectivities inexorably connected at both conscious and pre- and sub-conscious levels with those around us (actual people in our physical proximity and mediated personalities wrapped around and in our heads). Mead's (1934) description of the self as a collection of "generalized others" is one of the first formal articulations of this idea. Granted, Mead did not mention the possibility for a kind of inter-personal communication taking place even when there are no embodied others in one's physical presence. But there is now broad recognition in the field that sustained parasocial relationships with a wide variety of media personalities makes even ostensibly "one-way" communicative forms a form of interpersonal communication. And indeed, this certainly complicates the issue of how questionable thoughts and behaviors are perpetrated in the name of staking out the *truth* about the world.

There are an almost infinite number of ways, then, that a listener might take direction or interpretive cues from a mediated message – as there are surely an infinite number of ways those messages can be interpreted. Recently in the news: a man in Pittsburgh shot several police officers while raving about the Obama administration's alleged conspiracy to slowly take away



every American's right to bear arms. It has been noted on numerous news programs to date, that the shooter had downloaded content from Glenn Beck's hyperkinetic television show, and had been listening to Beck rave about this same issue with aplomb. Just as echoes of the "magic bullet" (or "hypodermic") media hypothesis have again been swirling through the typical outlets (as was the case after the Columbine shootings and Oklahoma City bombing), there is, potentially, something a bit more subtle possibly at work here.

Media consumers can now perform the equivalent of a detailed "reading" of the *Turner Diaries* during several walks through the middle of town. One can only guess what props will crop up. Given this, the rants and decrees of our new shamans and seers may be enhanced beyond measure. What's new to this media equation is the way these platforms carry and, in so doing, re-constitute their messages. Now people can walk down the street alongside Tom Ashbrook or Glen Beck. With podcasts, the world really functions as a stage for our predispositions (often aligned with those of our narrator). And these new "surrogate situations" (Clark, 1997) will provide us with endless fodder. But unlike the predispositions of our ancient elders who, for mnemonic reasons, had to employ aphorisms and broad generalities, and speak in circles and rhyme, portable recording formats like the podcast free us from the ephemerality of speech. Indeed, now all the talk (that matters?) is being systematically archived for download and playback.

If blogs have proven to be more than a passing fad, and as we are seeing less and less discretion on the part of Google, Yahoo and the other popular search engines regarding the difference between news blogs and traditional /mainstream news sources, the blurring of news and opinion is more obvious than ever before. While podcasts need to be posted on websites, they remain, for now, at the discretion of the downloader. They are not subject, like blogs, to the popular aggregations of search engines – at least not yet. Given the way podcasts are selected and consumed, it is likely that, for "the choir" at least, the messenger will be significantly enhanced and empowered.

In 2006 folk/rock legend Bob Dylan began moonlighting as a DJ for XM satellite radio. With a receiver module anyone, anywhere, can tune in to hear Dylan take on the persona of a old-fashioned jockey "spinning" favorite tunes in keeping with his weekly theme. Satellite subscribers were not Dylan's exclusive audience for long. Bootlegged podcasts of Dylan's shows were made available online within days of his first engagement.

While podcasts are not limited to linguistic streams, they tend to be filled with talk. Even as Dylan satellite radio shows are more music than speech, they are worth mentioning because for so many people it is the moments between the music, when the bard makes reference to the contemporary significance of the tune, or offers up an acerbic quip about some recent political folly, that things really begin to resonate in his audience. In these cases, Dylan becomes the father figure, the village elder, the wise man-qua-cultural interpreter for a broad listenership (purported to be in the millions across the country and around the world). I've never been anything more than a casual listener of Dylan music myself, yet, I have to admit that there is something quite magical, and certainly mystical about his intimate-sounding, yet very public ponderings. It is, in short, publicity on high! The power of the parasocial - to attract and even activate his audience. Now Dylan can be in our head, or walking next to you at last. Dylan, Glen Beck, Tom Ashbrook and the religious sermons. All as one serving the same

cultural/social/ritualistic function? This is different from the legendary newscasters like Cronkite and Brokaw, who presumed they were giving us the news (as we did), and not their interpretation of events. Is the podcast a new medium of hero worship, one less empty than that upheld by the “Che” and Marley t-shirt wearing crowd? Indeed, much seems lost in the visual-only mode; lost in the generalizations of those “thousand words. Listening to Dylan however, folks get the message – or a message – a bit more directly anyway. Like the availability of the museum audio tour, the world is interpreted for us. While resonance with the walking narrative is all but assured, what happened to wonder?

In the same way the examples and references in the podcasts discussed here can prompt the listener to resonate with “anger, joy, sorrow, and fear” (McLuhan, 1969), these diatribes – these externalized screeds on the move – can push people to action. And so one more thing from the high priest of pop cult. In response to a question from his interviewer as to whether McLuhan was claiming, with our continued move into the world of electronic media, if there will be no taboos in the world tribal society he envisioned, he suggested otherwise.

No, I'm not saying that, and I'm not claiming that freedom will be absolute--merely that it will be less restricted than your question implies. The world tribe will be essentially conservative, it's true, like all iconic and inclusive societies; a mythic environment lives beyond time and space and thus generates little radical social change. All technology becomes part of a shared ritual that the tribe desperately strives to keep stabilized and permanent; by its very nature, an oral-tribal society--such as Pharaonic Egypt--is far more stable and enduring than any fragmented visual society. The oral and auditory tribal society is patterned by acoustic space, a total and simultaneous field of relations alien to the visual world, in which points of view and goals make social change an inevitable and constant by product. An electrically imploded tribal society discards the linear forward-motion of "progress." We can see in our own time how, as we begin to react in depth to the challenges of the global village, we all become reactionaries.

The oral/aural co-opts the visual. As David Hume opined, *reason is slave to the passions*, and in this new world of sound and vision made possible with the podcast, the passions seem again to be pulling rank.

## Conclusion

The theory of the Internet is that it blows open the doors of perception and experience, flattens an artificially narrow set of conversations about the world, and allows bona-fide dialectic interaction to occur between members of vastly different-minded interpretive communities. But we see how podcasts, in particular, might be the new media form that reifies Carey’s “ritual view” of communication. Examples to this effect abound.

Jerry, a married father who describes himself as a “demonstrably not-knee-jerk partisan wing nut, but rather a thoughtful and pragmatic conservative.” Jerry mines the online multi-media presence of the National Review and Weekly Standard. Or Eve, a single mother who refers to herself as an “open-minded, liberal, social progressive.” Eve keeps NPR bookmarked and regularly downloads podcasts of *OnPoint*, *This American Life* and *All Things Considered* for her daily commutes and workout sessions. And here we see how the medium can be the message (or predetermine the message).

In other words, not in theory, but in practice Podcasts often ensure a fairly narrow information diet that bolsters what may often be equally narrow views onto the world. This is due, in part, to the podcast's relatively short duration, the intentional way they are selected, and the manner in which they are consumed: on the fly with a world of things and people serving as the background to the "story".

So if McLuhan's newspaper reader at the mid-point of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century settled into its "hot bath" in the morning, noon, or night, today's podcast listener is enveloped in a swirling, multi-jet, hot-massage tub whenever (and wherever) they deem fit. Podcasts blur the distinction between medium and content, sender and receiver. Even without the ability to call-in to the recorded show, the listener is a cyborg – part medium part message. Playing with all the props that crop up on the endless horizon of our new surrogate situations, the user (and everything else) becomes content. What will we do with these new "teaching machines" (as McLuhan described electronic media on CBC TV in 1960).

## References

- Alexander, Joy (2005). Reading with the ear: the necessity for language and literacy learning of the aural imagination. <http://www3.educ.sfu.ca/conferences/ierg2005/viewpaper.php?id=61&print=1>
- Avery, R K. and McCain, T. A. (1982). Interpersonal and mediated encounters: A reorientation to the mass communication process. In G. Gumpert and R. Cathcart (eds.), *Inter/Media: Interpersonal communication in a media world*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Carey, J (1985). *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society*. Boston: Unwin Hyman.
- Clark, A (1997). *Being There: Putting Brain, Body and World Together Again*. Cambridge: MIT.
- Federman (2003). *Publicity*. ([http://www.mcluhan.utoronto.ca/blogger/2003\\_12\\_01\\_blogarchive.html#10718409336](http://www.mcluhan.utoronto.ca/blogger/2003_12_01_blogarchive.html#10718409336)).
- McLuhan, M (1955). *New Media as Political Forms*. Originally published in *Explorations* 3.  
To be republished in: *Marshall McLuhan Unbound I: Gingkopress* ([http://www.gingkopress.com/\\_cata/\\_mclu/\\_newmed.htm](http://www.gingkopress.com/_cata/_mclu/_newmed.htm)).
- (1962). *The Gutenberg galaxy*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- (1964). *Understanding media: The extensions of man*. New York: McGraw Hill.
- McLuhan, M., and Fiore, Q. (1967). *The medium is the message: An inventory of effects*. New York: Bantam Books.
- Mead, G.H. (1934) *Mind, Self and Society*. Chicago Univ. Press.