

# Bob Dobbs Interviewed by Joan d'Arc

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I joined Mr. Dobbs' interactive forum, Fivebodied.com, in May of 2006 in order to learn more about the technological sensory extensions of our bodies. According to Bob, it takes about ten years to really figure out what he's talking about. I have tried to catch on, with what little extra time I have, but certainly do not feel that I have arrived.

Bob began writing for Flipside magazine in June 1995, in what was termed a "continuing collective clairvoyance" in 25 issues of the magazine, including a column named "[Android Meme's Xenochrony](#)" which began in 1998. Bob advised, "Do not try too hard to comprehend the text ... let the percepts wash over you like a hot shower." With this excellent advice in mind, step into the whirling room that is Bob Dobbs.

## Part 1: How the Meme Survives!

Joan: Bob, we talked about the JFK assassination on an earlier occasion. A German documentary has just named the assassins as the Cuban secret service. They state that Oswald was paid \$6500 to do the job, along with two other guys. What's your take on this?

BOB: I don't have any documents to back up what I say. What I state here is based on my experiences around the time of the JFK assassination. I make them public so they can be judged in 30 years when all the files have been released. The assassination was carried out completely internal to the U.S. There were no foreign elements involved. No Frenchmen, no Cubans, no Soviets, no Canadians, etc. So, those that emphasize the role of Permindex are on the wrong track.

Lee Harvey Oswald did shoot and hit JFK. Oswald had participated in several earlier shootings designed to warn JFK but in those he was instructed to miss JFK. In Dallas, he was told to fire warning shots again but it was also suggested to him it didn't matter if he hit anyone in the car. Oswald, an extremely pliable young man, almost a puppy, was not aware of the actual motives of the conspirators. There were two other snipers. So all those, such as Pres. Gerald Ford, who have stood by their conviction that Oswald was the lone assassin, knew they were correct on that account, to the extent that Oswald was involved.. Hence, their stubborn confidence in the face of the myriad conflicting evidence. The conspirators counted on the diversity of opinion generated in an information-overloaded society to conceal what was a very simple operation in many ways.

From my perspective, no public researcher or investigator has been successful in presenting a completely accurate description of the events of that day nor the causes. None have come close. I suggest James Ellroy's *American Tabloid* (1995) is the best fictional presentation of the complexities of the planning and execution. Joan Mellen's *A Farewell To Justice* (2005) is the best use of information released since the considerable impact of Oliver Stone's film, *JFK* (1991). However, everyone involved in the planning and execution is dead. The last person died in 1989. Carlos Marcello died in 1993 so he was not directly involved. But you wouldn't know that based on the volumes of evidence pointing to his hand. James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* (1939) mimes and anticipates the fate of the Warren Commission.

Those who sanctioned the John Kennedy assassination were not involved in the Robert Kennedy assassination. Nor were they implicated in the Martin Luther King assassination. Three different scenarios, three different clusters of motives. Allen Dulles and James Jesus Angleton didn't figure out the full extent of the conspiracy until 2 or 3 years later. Jack Ruby, in his Dallas life, liked to be seen as a man "in the know" - friend of both police and the criminally organized. He was convinced by the conspirators to act because he believed a larger war was imminent, even though for him it was actually just a vague rumor. A very little-known fact is that J. Edgar Hoover had an idiosyncratic belief for years prior to November 22, 1963, that there was a Catholic conspiracy to destroy the United States government.

In 1963 and 1964 I participated in the cover-up of the true facts of the assassination and I am proud that I did. If the truth had surfaced shortly after the murder, civil war would have broken out in the United States. Not a larger war with the Soviet Union since they weren't guilty. No, a civil war. We on the Secret Council of Ten supported the cover-up by the conspirators in spite of the heinous character of the act. The seamless web of the global economy at the time could not afford such a rupture in the national fulcrum of that theatrical structure wherein the Word Makes the Market.

It is still very dangerous to discuss accurately the events of November 22, 1963. The personal, institutional, and corporate loyalties overwhelm and frustrate any efficient resolution of the immortal events of that day. Once we had a society largely engineered by television, we turned to stone and our lips were sealed. That is one of the laws of electronic media. Fortunately, journalists, publishers, and songwriters don't know this, and much subsequent noise and wealth is generated.

Therefore, I will add that all I've said in response to your question is complete poppycock due to over-indulgent friendships with Mae Brussell, Lyndon LaRouche, and Dr. Peter Beter.

Joan: So Oswald was not a lone assassin?

BOB: Correct.

Joan: Can you say who was that person who died in 1989?

BOB: It is still not wise to name that person. I will not give any names of the conspirators. But it is the ecology among them that is lethal to expose.

Joan: So, from the point of view of the Council of Ten, the JFK assassination averted two wars, one international and one domestic?

BOB: No. The cover-up of the JFK assassination averted only one war - the domestic civil war. Jack Ruby was under the impression there was going to

be a foreign engagement. He was wrong. He was not an insider. He was used.

Joan: So you got involved in the Secret Council of Ten through your father, Rene Dobbs, is that correct? This is fascinating in itself. Can you tell me a little more about your father and how this situation befell you?

BOB: My father was a butler for a very wealthy family in Paris and so was his father and his father's father. The family's lineage in the servant world went back over 300 hundred years, straddling French and Scottish ancestors. My father's great-great grandfather is discussed in a story by Charles Dickens. One can find it in the Miscellaneous Papers Of Charles Dickens, a collection of some of Dickens' journalism. The tale is dated May 26, 1855 and its title is "**The Toady Tree**" (pp.49-54). Dickens writes: "When Dobbs talks to me about the House of Commons (and lets off upon me those little revolvers of special official intelligence which he always carries, ready loaded and capped), why does he adopt the Lobby slang: with which he has as much to do as with any dialect in the heart of Africa?"

My father, Rene F. Dobbs, was born on June 4, 1882 - four months after James Joyce and five months before Wyndham Lewis. These two avant-garde writers had a profound influence on Rene and, therefore, on me. His employers were of the European oligarchy class that held court since the Renaissance. This "fondi" group and its secret intelligence resources were greatly weakened after World War One. With cutbacks in the allocations for extensive espionage, my father was upgraded to the inner circle of his employers' network only out of necessity. Rene became an initiated member of the presently legendary and chimerical Priory of Sion in 1922. His father would never have been such a direct witness to the kind of desperate power negotiations that unfolded between the two World Wars. The panic increased in the Thirties when money as a medium, formerly privately owned, was made public property in the new welfare states.

During the last year of World War Two, my father brought me into his level of access to the global intelligence fields that were preparing the structure of the Solar Government to be set up in the Fifties. In retrospect, my later espionage activities were of the "James Bond" sort compared to his "Jeeves."

He rarely left Europe while I became a man of action in the New World. However, his rather sedentary self developed a perspective considerably wiser than my hyper purview, and by the Sixties his advice on the fate of the Secret Council of Ten saved my life. There are samples of his changing understanding of our family's profession in the diary section at <http://www.fivebodied.com/project>.

My father was a Forrest Gump of European intrigue and thanks to his vocation, I ended up in Adolph Hitler's office in 1936 during the Berlin Olympics, and later, in the laboratory of Albert Hofmann in April, 1943, during the week Hofmann enjoyed his first LSD inquiries.

I did manage to return the favor and give Rene an Alice-in-Wonderland experience when I forced him to see a Frank Zappa concert in 1968 in swinging London. He was absolutely dumbfounded but, nevertheless, recognized the syndrome of classical genius that his ancestors were privy to for centuries in their cloistered world.

Rene died on July 5, 1976, the day after I heard Marshall McLuhan declare, during a broadcast atop the World Trade Center's Twin Towers, that the next bicentennial for America would be, "in a word, apocalypse."

Joan: So, short story, this brought you to Marshall McLuhan's doorstep around what year? Why did you seek out McLuhan?

BOB: Working with MI6 in 1953, I was part of a team in Iran that failed to protect Mossadeq from the CIA's successful move to install the Shah. At that point, British intelligence was becoming weaker than American intelligence and I personally paid the price by being dispatched to the margins: Nova Scotia, Canada. However, in January, 1954, I was assigned to investigate an obscure professor in Toronto who had just started a new publication called Explorations in December, 1953. My employers were intrigued at his discussion of some of the basic principles in our policy of "tetrad-management." We were puzzled at how he came to intuit this. We didn't want this understanding to become too widespread.

I was asked to get to know McLuhan in the role of someone interested in his ideas. I eventually found out that he was clued-in by his friend, Wyndham Lewis, whom McLuhan had met in 1943. Lewis was an old acquaintance of my father's and knew a great deal about the Priory of Sion in the 1920s. He satirized it in his novel, *The Apes of God* (1930).

In 1954, my team fumbled the Guatemalan socialist intervention and Arbenz was forced to resign. I was in the dog house again. I was ordered to get to know the new North American "vectors" since it looked like I wasn't going to be based in Europe anymore. This apparently regretful turn in my espionage career turned out to be very fortunate. I spent the rest of the 1950s becoming very interested in American pop culture, which I had largely been sheltered from during my youth in Paris. This is when my love of American rhythm and blues was embedded and led to my early interest in Frank Zappa's work at Studio Z in Cucamonga, California.

By 1962 I decided to create my own "army" in the American media so I first arranged for influential people in New York to promote McLuhan's work. Tom Wolfe's reputation was one particularly unexpected beneficiary of that project. As McLuhan's image soared internationally, I watched how he handled himself and secretly became a friend. Together we plunged ahead, never looking back.

Joan: What do you mean by the term, "the theatrical structure wherein the Word Makes the Market."

BOB: It's a description of the effect of the Global Theater (post-Global Village) of mixed corporate-media. In the Sixties when the satellite environment went around the computer and TV environments creating the proscenium arch of the Global Theater, the necessary implosion of the resulting information surround led to the "Solar Government" enforcing a global intercom via the Presidential occupant of the White House. The economy and news was dictated by this oral medium. The White House attempted to be the logocentric mouth for programming this intercom.

"Reality" isn't real in this theater until the White House acknowledges the

issue, topic, or concern. There are no UFOs as far as this intercom is concerned until the White House says there are. Some are irritated by this law of the “market” and call it fascism, if not info-fascism. The economists call it “the interest rate.” I would call it the new volatile and ephemeral ground or medium of “public interest.” Outside of the White House there has been a civil war among all the established media and/or technological environments. This war has been the means for making wealth in the last fifty years.

Joan: So the "chosen" oracle of the economy for the past thirty years was Alan Greenspan, a follower of Ayn Rand's Objectivism?

BOB: No. One has to understand there are two economies: the hardware economy and the software economy. The hardware economy meets the needs of our Chemical Bodies - food, shelter, heat, drugs, and weaponry. The software economy responds to the demands of our minds - the community's need to know the “big picture,” to be entertained, and to be challenged mentally. The former was measured by the old medium of money. The latter was relatively free once the electric medium was established in the 1920s. The old medium of money could not measure the information wealth generated by radio so money collapsed. Money then became public property while the software economy grew exponentially through television, computers, satellites, cable, and our present digital media.

Today, the hardware economy is programmed by the Fed Interest Rate. The software economy is programmed by the Nielsen Ratings. This simplified dialectic is how we begin to get a handle on the chaos that is unleashed by the present digital merger of all media and economies into an increasingly shrinking, seamless web that I call the Android Meme of paramedia.

Joan: Can you tell me what you mean by the Solar Government? What exactly is this entity?

BOB: My phrase, "solar government" refers to the management environment that superseded the "world government." The world government saw its forms in the earlier League of Nations (see George Orwell's 1984 [1949]) and the subsequent United Nations (see Aldous Huxley's Brave New World

[1932]). Today, it is in the form of the interplay of the World Bank, IMF, Bank for International Settlements, and NATO. The world government is still largely bureaucratic and merely reactive (see Wyndham Lewis's *The Human Age* [1955] or William Gibson's *Neuromancer* [1984]).

After World War Two, the solar government was initially formed to prepare for humanity's exploration of our solar system. The Nazis had worked with this vision so both the United States and the Soviet Union secretly acquired Nazi rocket scientists to get ahead in this Space Race. Meanwhile, with the development of high frequency radio, microwave, computer, and satellite monitoring networks after Sputnik in 1957, a new form of control - not an economic bureaucracy - was felt to be necessary to manage the effects of the new synergistic information environments, as well as those of unforeseen new inventions. Not so much in the realm of military hardware - that was overseen by the global coordination of national intelligence agencies - but in the rapidly evolving areas of pharmacology, genetics, advertising, and energy utilities.

The solar government was not reactive but anticipatory - more along the lines of what McLuhan would call a "media ecology" orientation. The solar government was a response to both a wider and tinier vision of "inner" and "outer" space than had been the provinces for the world government. The solar government haggled in the style of what we would term today the "entrepreneurial" and the "startup."

Nowadays, people acquire an inkling of the solar government with their knowledge of ECHELON which began with a site in North Yorkshire, England, at Menwith Hill in 1952. The movie, *Enemy of the State* (1998), hints at the solar government but a useful way to conceive it is to realize how deeply minuscule the "global village" was in the Fifties, Sixties, and Seventies and that your historical adversaries lived in the same room as you did. All you could do was dance on each other's toes. And who was that "you"? The Jesuits, Freemasons, Bolsheviks, Nazis, a few scientists, and some fondi. And the location of that room? Your television set. This space, where the word is the market, was smaller than a quark and bigger than a trillion galaxies (see James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* [1939]). In short, the

solar government strolled through the 'hood while billions flew.

Joan: Bob, just to clarify the term "solar" - does it refer to the sun, or to simply a view of the earth from a satellite location, the first satellite phase being Sputnik in 1957?

BOB: I mean the view of the earth from a satellite position. But that's just the eye's biased take on the multi-sensory complex of the solar government. The telecommunications environment that the solar government exploits is a single invisible membrane that became more seamless as the decades since 1950 unfolded. The sun never sets under these conditions. As the Adam Steiffel character says in the film, *The Formula* (1980): "All it takes is a ten cent phone call."

Joan: As a senator in 1957, Lyndon Johnson said "the position of total control over the earth ... lies somewhere in outer space." From your point of view, what did he mean by this?

BOB: It's the typical case of enthusiasm for, and seduction by, a new communications medium. In his instance, the new satellite technology was naturally seen as a further extension of our powers. However, the actual powers unleashed by a new medium are never foreseen. And Johnson wasn't prepared for them when he became President. The traditional powers of that institution were steadily eroded throughout the Sixties by the social turbulence evoked by the satellite medium. The satellite environment actually made the White House, not "outer space," the site of total control over the earth. But no President since Johnson has been able to successfully harness it. They all got creamed by those pressures. McLuhan referred to this paradoxical process with the phrase, "the Word makes the Market." Here's a quotation from McLuhan on the President's, or Central Scrutinizer's, predicament: "The future of government lies in the area of psychic ecology and can no longer be considered on a merely national or international basis." (*Take Today: The Executive as Dropout*, 1972, p.227)

Joan: So, basically Sputnik I was a 184 pound radio floating in space and Sputnik II (Muttnik) was a 1,120 pound radio with a dog, which blew up in

outer space. How did these artifacts floating in space affect us so profoundly?

BOB: One or two satellites don't make an influential or massaging environment, but by the early Sixties the increasing number of satellites started to influence the images the older media (including humans) had of their social functions. Everyone began to feel nobody was listening to them so everyone turned the volume up. LOUD!! became the preferred mode for blocking and merging in all areas of global politics and culture. To cite one sample effect, the economy flipped into "stagflation" in the Seventies because we couldn't absorb the implications of the new wealth created by the satellite milieu.

Joan: Do you think NASA went on to fake the Apollo moon landings in order to save face as the #1 superpower?

BOB: No. I have it on good sources we intentionally left an artifact or two on the moon. They're waiting for our return. However, NASA's image itself was obsolesced and marginalized by the new instant-replay technology of the early Seventies. George Lucas and Steven Spielberg were later drafted to perform artificial respiration on the "outer space" project, and Hollywood's art-film pretensions of the Seventies were quickly dropped. This is another example of how a new medium changes the satisfactions for the audiences of an older medium. Hollywood had to go hyper-kinetic.

Joan: So the solar government represents a new type of control that's beyond economics and which anticipates future technologies rather than reacting to them? So does it then prime us for the future using television and post-television environments, ie., the internet?

BOB: No, the solar government is rooted in the past - preserves the meme of Gutenbergian individualism and ownership. The complementary effect of this old meme has been the "charmed circle," i.e., government by committee - in our case, the Secret Council of Ten. It watched - and it could only watch - as new technological environments were created, with the primary concern that a new environment would make the Gutenbergian meme no longer viable. So far the solar government has kept afloat. How the meme survives is the secret

of the solar government's tetrad management.

Joan: The Gutenbergian meme being the print meme? So the print meme is at war with the oral/aural meme of the tribal new age?

BOB: You've almost got it. The print meme programs the hardware economy but it's controlled by the Fed Interest Rate or "the Word that Makes the Market" - the oral/aural/tribal meme. However, the software economy is completely different. Its super-audience, like the super-enterprise, works for itself. It's not tribal. It's fractal and customized for subsets. It's semi-controlled by the Nielsen Ratings - the obsequious upgrading of Big Brother. This is the participatory nature of the tactile meme which supersedes the print and oral memes who consequently panic. The result is a situation where one-half keeps the other half under constant surveillance. Our Chemical Bodies take turns on one side or the other. You're either employed or unemployed, watching or being watched. Both need each other in a complementary catch-22. YouTube is escalating the chaos factor in this gridlocked paramedia ecology.

Joan: In your website materials you talk about our five bodies. What are those bodies and how did they arise?

BOB: Our communication environments from the printing press on were layered over and through our older linguistic environments. Humans were inevitably servomechanisms of those massive landscapes. The satellite technology, both an interior and external landscape, was the last of that kind. As digital communication environments developed, they gradually shrunk those massive techno-environments and inaugurated a new kind of autonomy for our Chemical Body in relation to the previous scapes. Now, radio-, TV-, newspaper-, booksapes are inside your personal mobile - tiny and invisible. These older media become after-images (or memes) as well as huge bureaucracies to preserve the wealth they'd created. They don't go away - just as ye olde speech never disappeared. They are as real and insistent as our own bodies. They must be fed and housed. However, what once were large corporate vestments now are small enough to be considered as organs, like lungs, that are new additions to our archetypal Chemical Body and Astral

Body.

The Chemical Body is what most people consider to be their “physical body.” The dominant model for this is the product of Western science since the telegraph. The Astral Body is what pervades all cultures - the belief there is more to our makeup than the Chemical Body. It is a huge storehouse of religious and spiritual energy. The third organ is the TV Body - the repository of historical one-way broadcasting. The fourth is the Chip Body - the mutating warehouse of digital omni-directional media. The fifth is the Mystery Body - what we’re still excavating and whose lineaments we cannot fully assess yet, if ever. We now know it’s made up of the previous four bodies but we don’t know what more we will discover about its constituents, affects, and effects.

The Android Meme is the resultant of the interplay, violent and ecstatic, of the first four bodies. I claim this five-body paradigm is a lot more useful or comprehensive when applied to our post-9/11 scene than Samuel Huntington’s “clash of civilizations” probe.

Joan: So we operate within these media landscapes to the point where we no longer have "first nature" bodies?

BOB: In the past 20 years the “media landscapes” have transformed into additional miniaturized bodies attached to our original body, like barnacles. The original body was made by “first nature.” Our descriptions of that “first nature” constitute our human-made “second nature.” Some claim to be getting past our “second-nature” descriptions of “first nature” and are subsequently witnessing “first nature.” Others accept the organisms created by our “second-nature” descriptions and consider them to be improvements on our “first nature.” I say we don’t yet completely know what “first nature” is, so I wouldn’t say we no longer have “first-nature” bodies. But our Chemical Body (the dominant “second-nature” description of our “first-nature” body) is presently subsumed by the TV and Chip Bodies - our invisible barnacles.

Joan: Didn't McLuhan say our technologies are extensions of our first nature

body?

BOB: McLuhan said our technologies are NATURE, not only that they're extensions of our senses and faculties. He didn't use the term "first nature" as far as I know. His son, Eric, does, though.

Joan: So was he doing "tetrad management" without realizing it?

BOB: McLuhan described the approach of the tetrad-managers but he wasn't given the opportunity to be one.

Joan: So your intention was to stop McLuhan and instead you befriended him?

BOB: I eventually befriended, in the early Sixties, his style of teaching. Marshall McLuhan didn't have friends, as he himself reportedly told a close neighbour, York Wilson.

Joan: In effect you rebelled against your own handlers then?

BOB: Yes, but with tremendous caution. It was a 30-year extrication. McLuhan understood how I could get away with it. He didn't fully admit to me he knew I had this problem but I believe he did privately suspect it.

Joan: In Robert Guffey's article, "Synchronistic Linguistics in The Matrix" you say the tetrad managers at the National Security Agency manage the global theatre through synchronistic linguistics, and your effect is to mirror that. So once you say that, we all start to notice this happening. And what then? Finnegans Awake! How did James Joyce anticipate this media effect where we would merge with our technologies?

BOB: The tetrad-managers at the NSA used to manage the global theatre of the hardware economy through the oral meme or what Guffey and Randy Koppang call "synchronistic linguistics." I prefer to call it the "cloning of ESP." Today it's run on abuse value, not traditional use or exchange values. So it's open and vulnerable to any ambitious, hijacking playmates of cities,

nations, or planets. The pentad-managers - digital technology come alive - manage the Android Meme. They are inside us in the most intimate tactile sense. They allow us to think we are in control where self-entertainment is the new yoga. They allow us to have a voluntary relationship with the old cloned-ESP environment. Humanity has never been so EXCITED, although we cover it up with a colossal patina of ersatz boredom. (Look at the recent publicity headshot of Matt Groening.) James Joyce learned the tetrad version from Wyndham Lewis. My procedure is to mirror and echo both tetrad- and pentad-managers. My effect is "xenochrony," or strange synchronicity, where shows like Twin Peaks, the Matrix, SpongeBob, and the film Man of the Year rehearse my life's minutiae.

Joan: You mean the film starring Robin Williams as President Tom Dobbs? How did this film mirror your life?

BOB: Yes. In short, the xenochrony goes like this: when I won the election for chairperson of the Secret Council of Ten in February '88, I was able to use the discarnate condition of my radio show at CKLN in Toronto to distort the Council's closed-circuit computers and beat the other 3 candidates. In the movie, Tom Dobbs wins not only by distorted electronic voting, but the virus was in the code of BB (=22), GG (=14), and LL (=8). Those are the numbers on my charts. And those charts (done in 1995) point to my Presidential status in 2012.

Joan: You say digital technology has come to life. Is this the Android Meme you speak of? Is this what Finnegans Wake refers to?

BOB: Yes, the Android Meme is the digital phase of our 20th Century technology. The Android Meme allows you to speak back to it and to edit it. Like the medium of speech, it's interactive, tactile, and subsequently for the perception of humans, it's organic. It seems to be alive - in the sense of extremely relevant to and involving our lives. And it is!! Finnegans Wake understands this feature of electric media.

Joan: How would you describe an invention like YouTube, which feeds us nostalgic images as well as DIY clips of "a few of our favorite things."

Would this be a post-television environment?

BOB: If you mean by the television environment one-way mass broadcasting, that was marginalized in the Nineties at the latest. It has survived as a meme of conservation and protection of the values of community created when TV was an environment in the Fifties, Sixties, and Seventies. FOX-TV was the best in meeting the needs for this role over the last decade. Meanwhile, the two-way digital environments became the medium for providing the antidote to TV's new role. It forged new adventures in new software landscapes. More and more, the Internet user had become the fragmenting Goliath to TV's centralizing David. But YouTube kills the digital, interactive Internet with its new effects because it turns Goliath into Prometheus, as I show on my charts.

YouTube allows everyone to ignore every other broadcaster and narrowcaster. It's symptomatic of our post-connecting environment which the present Bush unilateralist image had been so resonant with. But when the full effects of YouTube finally snuck up on the President himself, a Democratic Congress materialized. It's the American YouTube solipsist ignoring the ignorer. FOX-TV is now diluted too. Dilution and chaos is the fate of the Democratic Congress also, because it is merely Hollywood's attempt to shore up the entertainment-military complex which rides on the meme of connecting.

Joan: So the solar government anticipated advertising media as a form of control? And by this you mean advertising in the sense of McLuhan's idea that all media (including scientific media) advertises itself and that 'advertising advertises advertising'?

BOB: Yes, in the sense that advertising is the handicraft version of tetrad-management. But the solar government didn't advertise itself per se. It sat on the sidelines letting advertising preserve the Gutenbergian meme, among other memes.

Joan: McLuhan also said, "The hullabaloo Madison Avenue creates couldn't condition a mouse." So was this his way of saying we had moved beyond being driven by economics as ground and into science and technology for

itself? So economics was no longer the ground or background, but the technology itself became the ground? Can you explain what you mean by this?

BOB: The effects of the technology that science produced became the ground. Conditioning in the sense of stimulus-response was anemic but the new global-theater conditioning (and the later digital-conditioning even more so) conditioned people to feel they were beyond being conditioned. Economics itself was subject to the effects of the new digital technology. The meme of "shareholder value," "supply-side economics," "privatization," "free trade," and "corporate raider" reigned supreme.

Joan: Was McLuhan comfortable with technology or did he have concerns?

BOB: McLuhan accepted technology in the sense that he knows it is us. He understood that mechanical, pre-electric technology appeared to humans to be inorganic, alienating and mechanical. The 20th Century had been a period of shock and adjustment to the electric fact that technology is, and has always been, an integral part of our sense life. But McLuhan didn't accept the unconscious use of our senses. He advocated a new yoga, personal and collective, for encountering our shape-shifting selves.

Joan: In what terms did McLuhan describe the approach of the tetrad-managers?

BOB: McLuhan summed up their approach with the phrase "the medium is the message." He understood that the tetrad-managers did not identify with the content of the media. They said "give the public what it wants." They knew that the form of the media was seductive enough for social stability. The Big Brothers, McLuhan said, went inside the sex-death-technology complex and encouraged access to the obsolete (from their vantage point) external social spaces.

Joan: Why is it important to preserve the Gutenbergian print meme?

BOB: McLuhan believed that we should use all our senses and their

mutations. The 20th Century has been an era of the extension of the kinetic sense (movies and autos), the proprioceptive sense (computers), and the acoustic sense (radio), but primarily the tactile sense (telephone, television, and telecommunications - the interplay of all analog media inside the satellite environment). Since print technology is limited to an enhancement of the abstracted variation of our visual sense, it is anemic under present conditions. Print media have responded to these pressures and improvised accordingly. But McLuhan stressed that only James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* anticipated the fate of the print medium and provided the antidote to the annihilation of the Gutenbergian eye. The slogan "*Finnegans Wake*!!" demands that for society to be truly holistic, give the abstracted eye a chance. But our natural somnambulistic response is to create a garbage apocalypse of print and gated communities. And relying on the digital absorption of print does not satisfy the habits created by the old Gutenbergian environment.

Joan: So you mean we should 'get tribal'? Or get more poetic /aural and less linear /alphabetic? But doesn't that describe young people today who are less inclined to read and more inclined to watch videos or create their own videos via YouTube? Is "illiteracy" is a problem? Is reading the only way to learn?

BOB: No, I'm not suggesting we "get tribal." That's a fait accompli. The 20th Century was more tribal, more poetic/aural than linear/alphabetic in its politics, culture and entertainment in the first 70 years, but in its last 30 years a patina of fragmented individualism has marginalized the tribal ethos. This is known variously as neo-conservatism, privatization, gentrification, etc. But McLuhan's sensory categories do not apply to this latter period. There's a lingering of the proprioceptive and tactile media but I would suggest the main constitutive thrust is towards willful and celebratory distortion of any holistic ESP that leaks in. We don't have a category for this new post-five-senses experience. Literacy and learning in themselves aren't relevant for navigation, personally or nationally. We call this post-literate void a "dumbing down" but that is a classic case of rearview-mirror diagnosis.

Like Kafka's *Metamorphosis*, when the whole population actually transforms into cats and dogs, it's frightening - not a mere matter of IQ. You've got to be very cool. So far we've been oscillating between panic cool and panic

boredom. Comprehensive relief is a miracle but not impossible. I claim to have the keys to that whirling room.

Joan: Bob, if George Clooney is the sexiest man alive and Gilbert Godfried is the unsexiest man alive, what man are you? Or at least what's your "cover story" for 2007?

BOB: I'm the only man alive since I'm the only one who knows what's going on. And it's not because "somebody's gotta do it."

## Part 2: POET the World!

Joan: In an interview published in *Understanding Me*, McLuhan says, "the only alternative is to understand everything that's going on, and then neutralize it as much as possible, turn off as many buttons as you can and frustrate them as much as you can. I am resolutely opposed to all innovation, all change, but I am determined to understand what's happening because I don't choose just to sit and let the juggernaut roll over me." So then McLuhan wasn't as comfortable with technology as some think he was. He is even sometimes assumed to be saying quite the opposite. So he's exhibiting a little, shall we call it paranoia, here? Who or what is the juggernaut?

BOB: One can't judge McLuhan by any particular statements he makes. One will easily find apparently contradictory statements in other communiques performed by him. McLuhan means it when he says he doesn't have a point of view. McLuhan mimed a process of awareness, as I write in my published essay on McLuhan: <http://fivebodied.com/project/content/view/30/98/1/2>

This is why an anticipated cursory inspection of McLuhan's books produced the intended effect that they were rampant with confusion - an early and persistent complaint by his critics, which proved the success of the technique ("You mean, my whole fallacy is wrong." - McLuhan's statement in the Woody Allen movie, *Annie Hall*).

One minute McLuhan seemed to be a utopian, the next a neo-Luddite, then a

Gnostic, still later an agent of the Vatican, or a Zen Buddhist, then a technological determinist, pseudo-scientist, Manhattan Project romantic, and on and on and back and forth. But the classifiers couldn't see the method in the actor's performance - the miming of the fate that the Pollstergeist needed "a rapid succession of innovations as ersatz anti-environments" (p.31 of COUNTERBLAST) to disguise the fact it had long disappeared. His satiric retrieval of the mini-module of acoustic and tactile mirrors via the constituency of the homeopathic print mirror, in the genre of a "memory theatre," reflected the contemporary Medusan after-image of collective technological quadrophrenia, and its complementary human echo.

Be that as it may, McLuhan accepted new technology as inevitable but he didn't recommend accepting its hypnosis and our consequent numbness that encouraged us to destroy the best achievements of the past.

McLuhan was not paranoid. He worked to create formulas for decreasing paranoia between both cultures and individuals. These formulas provided the means to enter any culture or medium in order to enjoy and exploit their biased dynamics. See the last two sentences on p.120 of *The Medium Is The Massage*.

Twelve years ago, an entity claiming to be the spirit of McLuhan speaking through the Evergreens told me that we were witnessing the end of paranoia. I interpret "McLuhan's" projection as the understanding of the effect of an experience that is being provided by the great seduction known as the Android Meme.

Joan: In an interview with Norman Mailer (caught at the end of a short film, *Linear Tactility*, Marshall McLuhan says "every age creates as a utopian image a nostalgic rearview mirror of itself, which puts it out of touch with the present." Mailer tries to argue that nature still exists as a protagonist, but McLuhan sees it as only a rearview image. Bob, what have we done with nature?

"The Earth is now an old "booster-stage"... a quaint form of Camp ... a sort of archaeological museum affording immediate access to all past cultures

simultaneously on a classified-information basis."

Marshall McLuhan

BOB: Scroll halfway down to "McLuhan Vid" for the McLuhan vs. Mailer. Here is McLuhan's explanation from his monthly DEW-LINE Newsletter #5 (November, 1968) for corporate executives and other "intelligence" agencies:

"From the first moment of the satellite (October 4, 1957), the Earth ceased to be the human "environment." Satellites automatically enclose the old "Darwinian" nature environment by putting the planet inside a man-made environment. They are just as much an extension of the planet as is clothing an extension of the skin. Satellites are equivalent to enclosing the Earth in a Bucky Fuller "dome" of acoustic space. The consequent process of archetypalisation of Nature ensures that the Earth is now an old "booster-stage"... a quaint form of Camp ... a sort of archaeological museum affording immediate access to all past cultures simultaneously on a classified-information basis.

The satellite is also the shift from the planet as a homogeneous continuum, or visual space, to the planet as a "chemical bond" or mosaic of resonating components. Thus, the Earth has become a "national" or tribal park. It is already a teaching machine, a universal playground for advertisers and teenagers."

Joan: In your essay "Up the Orphic Anti," you say the satellite environment ushered in the phase of the "homeopathic cliché-probe" from 1960 to 1990. Your term "homeopathic" combines the processes of homeopathy and the hologram. Can you tell me more about this process and this phase?

BOB: I concur with McLuhan's description above of the effects of the satellite medium. However, that was then, and I consider the satellite the end of the analogue phase of electronic media. I've attempted to update McLuhan by enunciating the effects of the post-satellite phase of digital technology - what I call the era of "voluntary ESP" (ESP being defined as multi-sensuous, mental dance).

Because the interplay of the resonating components of the satellited (sic) analogue environment created essentially a global hologram effect (the era of "cloned ESP") in the Sixties, I see the later digital effect as shrinking, compressing, layering, and fragmenting (as in any page of James Joyce's FINNEGANS WAKE) this hologram during the Seventies, Eighties, and Nineties. This massage gradually gave humans a sense of ironic transcendence or disconnection from the massive media environments of the analogue phase - relating to them on a merely voluntary basis while increasingly able to create their own media pod.

This does not mean we are returning to Nature or the Chemical Body since we are still pervaded by the holeopathic TV and Chip Bodies. We remain "all one" via the TV Body, i.e., via one-quarter of ourselves, while we celebrate our multiple separatenesses via the Chip Body, the second one-quarter of ourselves. Up until now, there have been no adequate psychological, social, ethical, political, aesthetic, or economic guidelines for such an unprecedented acultural (sic) experience. For background on these points, see my essay, UP THE ORPHIC ANTI, at: <http://fivebodied.com/project/content/view/25/98>

Joan: McLuhan's oppositions, like the eye and the ear, the verbal and the visual, the hot and the cool, the horizontal and the vertical, East and West, have an occult aspect. His ideas of retrieval and reversal, sensory participation, the idea that "you are the screen," are analogous to occult principles. According to Don Theall in *The Virtual Marshall McLuhan*, McLuhan felt that technology is a "civilized substitute for magic." (Theall, 122). What are your feelings on this? Do you agree that McLuhan, as a Catholic humanist, was pointing out the hermetic, Gnostic facets of media, and our interplay with it, as essentially magical?

BOB: This is a question of the utmost relevance for understanding McLuhan's use of the concept "magical." The notion that technology is a "civilized substitute for magic" has its origins in Wyndham Lewis' statement that "art is the civilized SUBSTITUTE for magic; as philosophy is what, on a higher or more complex plane, takes the place of religion" (see p.188 of the Black Sparrow Press reprint [1993] of Lewis' *Time and Western Man*, 1927). To see how the young McLuhan, in his mid-twenties, was immensely

influenced by Lewis, let's take a key quotation that McLuhan would have contemplated in 1935-1936 when he was at Cambridge:

"When Kant is showing that the substantial principle can be deduced from time, but that space is not only indispensable, but capital, for its generation, he says, 'In order to supply something PERMANENT IN PERCEPTION, which corresponds to the conception of substance, we need a perception (of matter) in space; for space alone is determined as permanent, while time and all that is in inner sense is in constant flux.' The objects of our perception, with their mystifying independence and air of self-sufficiency (around which strange and arresting characteristics have gathered all the problems of cause and effect, ground and consequent), are far more uncanny than the unity we experience in our subjective experience. These strange THINGS, that stand out against a background of mystery, with their air of being ETERNAL, and which really appear to be 'caused' by nothing that we can hold and fix, and from which we can see them being actually produced, are far stranger than we are, or more brutally and startlingly strange.

If architecture is 'frozen music' - as it has been rather disgustingly called - what are we to say of these trees and hills and houses? They, at all events, seem far nobler and severer than our minds, or our 'inner sense,' which, in the words of the foregoing quotation, is always in 'a constant flux.' But these 'objects' are the finished product of our perceptive faculty, they are the result, as we are accustomed to explain it, of the organizing activity of our minds. When we say we SEE them, in reality what we perceive is not the direct datum of sensation, but an elaborate and sophisticated entity, or 'object.' We do even in that sense 'create' them more than 'see' them." (Wyndham Lewis, *Time and Western Man*, 1927, p. 350.)

Now here's what McLuhan thinks and writes almost 30 years later in his essay, "Catholic Humanism and Modern Letters" [1954], reprinted in *The Medium and the Light*, edited by Eric McLuhan and Jacek Szklarek, 1999:

".. the dream of ordinary perception seen as the poetic process is the prime analogue, the magic casement opening on the secrets of created being." - p. 158

"In ordinary perception men perform the miracle of recreating within themselves - in their interior faculties - the exterior world. This miracle is the work of the NOUS POIETIKOS or of the agent intellect - that is, the poetic or creative process. The exterior world in every instant of perception is interiorized and recreated in a new matter. Ourselves. And in this creative work that is perception and cognition, we experience immediately that dance of Being within our faculties which provides the incessant intuition of Being. I can only regard the movie as the mechanization and distortion of this cognitive miracle by which we recreate within ourselves the exterior world. But whereas cognition provides that dance of the intellect which is the analogical sense of Being, the mechanical medium has tended to provide merely a dream world which is a substitute for reality rather than a means of proving reality." (p.165)

Did you notice how McLuhan takes the "magical" features of our natural and ordinary drama of perception and cognition and projects them into the forms of our communication technology? Three more samples from the same essay:

"And as we trace the rise of successive communication channels or links, from writing to movies and TV, it is borne in on us that in order for their exterior artifice to be effective it must partake of the character of that interior artifice by which in ordinary perception we incarnate the exterior world. Because human perception is literally incarnation. So that each of us must POET the world or fashion it within us as our primary and constant mode of awareness. And the mechanical or mass media of communication must at least parrot the world in order to hold our attention." (p.169)

"What the advertisers have discovered is simply that the new media of communication are themselves magical art forms. All art is in a sense magical in that it produces a change or metamorphosis in the spectator. It refashions his experience. In our slap-happy way we have released a great deal of this magic on ourselves today. We have been changing ourselves about at a great rate like Alley Oop. Some of us have been left hanging by our ears from the chandeliers." (p.164)

"And the more extensive the mass medium the closer it must approximate to our cognitive faculties." (p.161)

And one more from another essay of that period:

"By pretending that the new magic can be contained in the entertainment sphere we assume the old form-content split which is based on the doctrine that the form of communication is neutral. Even Hitler and Goebbels, fortunately, shared this illusion with the Western world. At present we appear to be living BY an illusion but WITH magical media. Of course this may prove to be an enduring formula." ("Notes on the Media as Art Forms," Explorations: Studies in Culture and Communication, Vol.2, April, 1954, pp. 12-13)

Having established how McLuhan uses the term "magical," let's see how he regards the Gnostic or esoteric mode of the magical. In a letter to his colleague at the University of Toronto, Harold Innis, written on March 14, 1951, McLuhan writes:

"Dear Innis:

Thanks for the lecture re-print. This makes an opportunity for me to mention my interest in the work you are doing in communication study in general. I think there are lines appearing in *Empire and Communications* [1950], for example, which suggest the possibility of organizing an entire school of studies. Many of the ancient language theories of the Logos type which you cite in *Empire and Communications* for their bearings on government and society have recurred and amalgamated themselves today under the auspices of anthropology and social psychology. Working concepts of 'collective consciousness' in advertising agencies have in turn given salience and practical effectiveness to these 'magical' notions of language. But it was most of all the esthetic discoveries of the symbolists since Rimbaud and Mallarmé (developed in English by Joyce, Eliot, Pound, Lewis and Yeats) which have served to recreate in contemporary consciousness an awareness of the POTENCIES of language such as the Western world has not experienced in 1800 years." (Letters of Marshall McLuhan, 1987, p.220)

Again from the same time in McLuhan's thinking, the following quotation illustrates how McLuhan grabs the bull by the horns:

“Professor Mansell Jones in his *Modern French Poetry* (pp.30-31) takes up this theme with reference to two kinds of symbolism which he refers to as vertical and horizontal. Vertical symbolism is of the dualistic variety, setting the sign or the work of art as a link between two worlds, between Heaven and Hell. It is concerned with the world as Time process, as becoming, and with the means of escape from Time into eternity by means of art and beauty. Vertical symbolism asserts the individual will against the hoi polloi. It is aristocratic. Yeats is the perfect exemplar.

Horizontal symbolism, on the other hand, sets the work of art and the symbol a collective task of communication, rather than the vertical task of elevating the choice human spirit above the infernal depths of material existence. In idealist terms, the vertical school claims cognitive status for its symbols, because the conceptual meanings attached to art are in this view a means of raising the mind of man to union with the higher world from which we have been exiled. Whereas, on the other hand, the horizontal, or space school, appeals to intuition, emotion and collective participation in states of mind as a basis for communication and of transformation of the self. The vertical school seeks to elevate the self above mere existence. The horizontal symbolists seek to transform the self, and ultimately to merge or annihilate it.

Mr. Eliot's position is by no means simple or consistent within itself, but as between the vertical and horizontal camps, his poetic allegiance is markedly horizontal or spatial.

To Catholics, (for all of whom pre-existence is nonsense), the anguish generated over the problems of Time and Space and the self may well be baffling. However, if you are frantically concerned with seeking an exit from a trap, it is of the utmost urgency to understand the mechanism of the trap that holds you. Are you a prisoner of time? ('History is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake,' says the young esthete Stephen Dedalus.) If so, there are specific dialectical resources which can conduct an elite few to the

escape hatch. Are you a prisoner of space? Are you a mechanical puppet manipulated by a thread held in remote, invisible hands? If so, you can learn the techniques of Yoga or Zen Buddhism or some related mode of illumination which will show you the WAY. To learn how to make perfect your will, you need to negate your own personality and to learn that detachment from self and from things and from persons which reveals the totally illusory character of self, things, and persons. Existence is not so much an historical trap in time as a wilderness of horrors multiplied by mirrors. Existence creates itself by an endless chain of suggestions ricocheting off each other, just as a symbolist poem of the Eliot kind generates its meanings by spatial juxtaposition. A Catholic poet like Paul Claudel, of course, is not bound by these dichotomies of space and time, the vertical and horizontal. But all he has written is strongly marked with his keen awareness of the space-time controversies in art, politics and religion. (To the European, the comparative American ignorance of these doctrines as elaborated in art, is precisely what constitutes American innocence.) Thus in his section 'On Time' in Poetic Knowledge, Claudel takes up the space position, then appropriates the time ammunition as well: ...

Claudel's thought and poetry obviously move freely in both time and space. As a symbolist he avails himself to the utmost degree of the spatial techniques of inner and outer landscape for fixing particular states of mind. This procedure makes available to him all the magical resources invoked by the Romantics for using particular emotions as immediate windows onto Being, as techniques of connatural union with reality. But he values equally the resources of dialectic and continuous discourse. He can therefore be both Senecan or symbolist, and temporal. That would seem to be an inevitable program for any Catholic for whom Time and Space are not sectarian problems. Today many thoughtful people are torn between the claims of time and space, and speak even of The Crucifixion of Intellectual Man as he is mentally torn in these opposite directions. As the dispute quickens, the Catholic is more and more reminded of the inexhaustible wisdom and mercy of the Cross at every intersection instant of space and time. These moments of intersection became for Father Hopkins (and also for James Joyce) epiphanies. ...

It is not the purpose of this paper to explain the complex falsehoods of the time and space schools of aesthetics, religion and politics. For a Catholic it is easy to admire and use much from each position. But by and large the vertical camp is rationalist and the horizontal camp magical in its theory of art and communication." (Marshall McLuhan, "Eliot and the Manichean Myth as Poetry," Address to Spring symposium of the Catholic Renaissance Society, April 19, 1954, The McLuhan Papers, Vol. 130, File 29, Manuscript Division, National Archives of Canada, Ottawa.)

Similar themes are spelled out in an unpublished book review he wrote during the same period in the early Fifties:

### THE HEART OF DARKNESS

*Melville's Quarrel With God* by Lawrence Thompson, Princeton University Press, 1952. \$6.00 The theme of this book is briefly stated (p. 332) by the author:

"My suggestion is that *Billy Budd* should be viewed as Melville's most subtle triumph in triple-talk; that it was designed to conceal and reveal much the same notions as are expressed years earlier in *Moby Dick* and *Pierre* and the *Confidence-Man*: that Melville came to the end of his life still harping on the notion that the world was put together wrong and that God was to blame and that only the self- profiting authoritarians pretend otherwise, in order to victimize the stupid . . . his chronic anti-Christian pessimism did not abate during the forty- five years which elapsed between *Confidence-Man* and *Billy Budd*."

Phrased that way, Melville's case sounds typical enough. Spelt out by Professor Thompson, however, this very typical attitude of our time is shown to have profound historic dimensions. Melville's diabolism, like that of Byron, Blake, Milton, Nietzsche and Schopenhauer, was directly linked to the old gnostic tradition of the Ophites and Parsees. God and the devil are one. But only the enlightened, the illuminate, know this.

For the populace another version of the facts is expedient. Writing in

Blackfriars of Karl Marx (July-August, 1952) Father Victor White provides a handy description of the myths of Marxist religion and counter-religion which corresponds exactly with the politics of the Marquis de Sade and with the views of Herman Melville - namely that conventional religion and secular humanism are a swindle to put a benign countenance on the devil-god of reality. Through revolution and tribulation men can perhaps mend them hideous defects of the dualistic divine being. Mankind can be the saviour of a helplessly malignant deity. From this point of view, the greater the criminal, the greater his efficacy as saviour. The error of our age has been to regard its diabolical figures and politics as the fruit of impersonal causes and to disregard the historic continuity of devil-worship, with its perennial appeal to the ambitious intellects of every age. Our situation enters its present phase with the eighteenth century 'attack' on belief in the personality of the devil.

As Father White points out, Marxism does not repudiate religion, but channels it against Christianity: "Marxism, in short, only denies God in the sense of setting on record that He is, in our society, in practice denied and ineffectual, and in the sense of echoing the Satanic assurance, 'You shall be as God.' Its power against contemporary Christianity lies in the fact that it has stolen Christ's thunder... But just because it is the ape of God and His Christ, the Christian must see in Marxism a supreme embodiment of the Antichrist ..."

A good portion of this book is concerned to show from Melville's letters and journals, as well as from his stories and poems, his theory of communication as it is linked to his diabolism: "An uncommon prudence is habitual with the subtler depravity, for it has everything to hide."

Melville appears in this book as a conventionally devout Calvinist who happened to get initiated into the esoteric meaning of Calvinism. He got a youthful shock on learning that Calvinistic Christianity was a deliberate swindle, or a popular disguise for the ancient pagan cult of devil worship. For the rest of his life this revelation tormented him. He was torn between rage at the deceit that had been practiced on his youth and innocence, and exultation in a secret knowledge which gave him vast superiority over the majority of mankind. The point is this, that, as with Milton and Byron, the secret

initiation which Melville underwent performed a violent intellectual operation on a genuine core of grace in his soul.

Melville chose Carlyle as his intellectual twin and antagonist. Professor Thompson is very helpful in lining up the two main traditions of European Manicheism as they have been nourished and transmitted by the secret societies. Carlyle and Melville are major representatives of the twin currents. Carlyle, Professor Thompson links to Goethe and Platonism; but Melville is linked via Byron and Milton to the great Eastern masters of the dark arts. Carlyle represents the Platonic tradition which views man as a spirit fallen into a fallen world. Here in the "Cave" we can by unremitting moral effort, by dialectic persistence and self-denial build within our hearts that divine pyramid or temple of Solomon which will enable us to be free of subsequent incarnations. In the Plato-Goethe-Carlyle axis we have the cult of "humanism" and moral moderation. The Zoroaster-Melville axis, however, scorns moderation in favour of heroism. It prefers the irrational leap of Empedocles to the classical croonings of Callicicles. The condition of men in this world is that of a Prometheus betrayed by a devil-god. Instead of a cautiously conducted retreat from the horrors of existence, it is preferable to rush on any course that promises physical and spiritual annihilation.

Melville's works are mainly concerned with dramatizing this heroic attitude against the numerous variants of "moral cowardice and mediocrity" represented by Christianity, common sense and popular traditions. Throughout, Professor Thompson presents us with a Melville who is primarily a diabolic priest and theologian. He presents Melville as a major exponent of a great cult which has long existed in the world but never so powerfully as today.

Any reader who would wish to see Melville in the main tradition of the secret cults can consult such recent books as Kurt Seligmann, *The Mirror of Magic*; Stephen Runciman, *The Mediaeval Manichee*; Walton Hannah, *Darkness Unveiled*; A. E. Waite, *History of Freemasonry*, and also his work on the Grail cults. Perhaps Seligmann is most helpful, although like Waite, he writes in double-talk and triple-talk.

Professor Thompson's book raises a major question for the teacher of literature, poetry and the arts. Since the arts are manifestly linked to the pagan rituals of "rebirth" as understood in the secret societies, what is to be the Christian and Catholic attitude to them? The Catholic Church severed its lines of communication with the secret societies in 1738. Since that time, has there been any "Catholic" art except that produced by previously initiated converts? The arts from Homer to the present day indeed form an ideal order, as Mr. Eliot has said, because they have been representations of the spiritual quests of the pagan rebirth rituals. "Rebirth" in pagan ritual amounts to retracing the stages of descent of the soul in the hell of matter and chaos which is existence. As such, the pagan rituals are in reality representations of the process of abstraction, of the stages of human apprehension. From this point of view, may not the pagan rituals be valid as art and metaphysics in spite of their own assumptions, but impotent as religion? James Joyce seems to have been the first to grasp all of these relationships.

Professor Thompson makes us fully aware of the traditional ritual symbolism of Melville's ships questing over the sea. He is aware of all the other tropes and types of the spiritual quest such as constitute the major art forms of mankind. But in particular, he is aware of the links between Moby-Dick the white whale, and the albatross of The Ancient Mariner. As Porphyry explains apropos of the blinding of the cyclops in Homer's Odyssey, the cyclops is the type of man's earth DAIMON. To kill the whale or albatross is to blind the cyclops, to kill one's earth DAIMON, to seek an immediate spiritual metamorphosis with all its violent consequences.

The novel as a form of ritual quest had its antecedents in the epic and the Romances. But the Renaissance tale and novel carry on the tradition with all the sectarian differences and distinctions. In his History of Freemasonry, A. E. Waite explains how the Gothic romances and science fiction of the later eighteenth century were a direct projection into "art" of the reviving hermetic rituals of that time. Such is presumably the origin of the detective story of the past century, with the sleuth in the role of magus.

Howe's book Wilhelm Meister and His English Kinsmen is a guide to the nineteenth century novels which are directly tied to Goethe's ritual,

incantation novel. Any reader of Wilhelm Meister will also see at once the true ritual character of Alice in Wonderland (a correlation underlined in Hannah's Darkness Unveiled). And in The Atlantic Monthly for January, 1953, Thomas Mann explicitly links the spiritual quests of his novels to the rituals of hermetic or "Eastern" and revolutionary wing of the secret societies. That is the wing to which Melville belonged and which his novels explain in detail. As Norbert Wiener has written of the atomic bomb that the only secret which could have been preserved about it was the possibility of splitting the atom, so with the invisible church of the Antichrist. The only secret that hides it and which it hides, is that of its very existence. The mere hint of its possible organized existence is sufficient to unveil it today, when the massive documentation provided not only by such books as Professor Thompson's Melville and Fyre's Blake, but the laborious testimony of the Romantic poets, is openly available. The symbolists, the surrealists, and all the journalists of revolution point to the existence of this church. Its adherents have never hesitated to profess Christianity when pressure has made such a profession expedient. The irony of such "profession" as it appeared in Melville is, in fact, the main theme of Professor Thompson's book.

On every page of this book there appears the inevitable conclusion of a devil-god resulting from a univocal approach to existence and the problem of evil. Unassisted by grace, the human mind seems to be radically incapable of any but a univocal approach to the problem of evil. Such is the history of all secular society, high and low, ancient and modern. Chaos and suffering can only proceed from a malignant god or else from a spirit god -- one part of whom is malignant and one part benign. This attitude presupposes the simple continuity of the Existence and the Divine. Again, these univocal misconceptions seem to have brought into existence all the magical and expiatory rituals and arts of mankind. And the art, archaeology and anthropology of the modern world have brought them all home to roost at once.

It is this which makes the modern Christian's position so much harder than that of the early Christians and the Fathers. They knew about devil-worship and yet they were confronted with only that small segment of it which was active in their immediate time and neighborhood. Modern communication,

written and mechanized enormously extends the range of pagan experience and practice past and present in which, willy-nilly, we participate today. Moreover, the modern Christian is subjected to the pagan symbols and rituals in novels, poems, operas, radio plays and movies, in entire innocence of their efficacious and magical character. Do we have a communication theory adequate to this situation? Is innocence protection?

As Father White wrote concerning "Jung and the Supernatural" (Commonweal, March 14, 1952, p.561): "A living symbol does something to us; it moves us, shifts our center of awareness, changes our values. Whether it is just looked at, or heard, acted out, painted out, written out, or danced out, it arouses not only thought, but delight, fear, awe, horror, perhaps a deeper insight." In other words, the symbols of our environment, commercial and artistic, are not just signs whose reference has to be understood for them to be efficacious. That is Cartesian and Lockean theory of communication which never fitted the facts. But Catholics today still hold to that theory of communication, and it hands them over bound and helpless to the consciously manipulated pagan rituals of art, literature and commerce. The measure of our unawareness and irrelevance can be taken from the fact that no Thomist has so far seen fit to expound St. Thomas's theory of communication by way of providing modern insight into our problems."

So when I notice that McLuhan's classic text, *Understanding Media*, has thirty-three chapters, I am prepared to allow that McLuhan is making a comment on the mediascape being organized along Machiavellian lines by means of a "freemasonry of the arts" (Lewis) - "arts" including the sense of art as TECHNE. As I am, also, when I contemplate the "cyclops" in the ad that serves as the cover for McLuhan's update of *The Mechanical Bride - Culture Is Our Business* (1970).

But you can see that the way you phrase your question, in light of what McLuhan has written, a "yes" or "no" answer is inadequate. And this is as it should be when we are possessed by the super-magical Android Meme.

Joan: Yes, I was certainly asking for trouble there - and got it. Would you say then, that McLuhan's four governing principles of media - enhancement,

obsolescence, retrieval and reversal - are occult tools for us to understand and manipulate conflict and resolution of media environment?

BOB: Yes, with the proviso that, like the Catholic poet, Paul Claudel, who exploited both the Time and Space esoteric schools for his poetic effects, McLuhan "puts on" the contemporary magicians while embedding the Thomist doctrine of "analogical proportions" in his communiques. In this manner, he satisfies his own demand to have a Catholic "expound St. Thomas's theory of communication." And he does this by ransacking all the new developments in specialized knowledge fields for "providing modern insight into our problems."

Joan: So if these are our tools for "tetrad management" of media/information flow, explain to me how you would work an enhancement, obsolescence, retrieval and reversal? Is it a way to manage cultural evolution? What can these concepts do for my understanding of my surround-sound? Give me an example. I have considerable trouble with this concept. Once you learn how to do it, is it like driving a car?

BOB: In McLuhan's day tetrad-management was not offered for personal use to the citizen. It was the mode of management implemented out of necessity by the Solar Government in the second half of the 20th Century. The best introduction to and forecast of tetrad-management is Wyndham Lewis' *The Art of Being Ruled* (1926). That book served to guide McLuhan and he never missed an opportunity to recommend it to the citizen looking to understand the motives and methods of political and cultural power in his time.

But we now live in a completely different landscape so I've adapted McLuhan's tetrad and offer it to my contemporaries as a balm for understanding the interactions of our four Bodies. Broadly speaking, when you're using or enhancing one Body, the other three are simultaneously in the relative positions or postures of obsolescence, retrieval, or reversal. For example, when the majority of your activity is clicking or thumbing a digital device (your Chip Body) then your Chemical Body is obsolesced and tends to rely on junk food; your Astral Body is retrieved as an obsessional anaesthetic via yoga mats, psychoactive drugs, personal sexual aesthetics, UFO

abductions, etc.; and your TV Body flips from service into crisis - the so-called era of "in-your-face" and "dumbed down" infotainment.

When you shut off your digital effects, the Bodies shift their relations accordingly, depending on what you do next. Understanding these tetradic patterns and processes, I suggest, will enable you to surf the slings and arrows of outrageous wealth.

Joan: According to Theall's *The Virtual Marshall McLuhan*, to McLuhan the electric light bulb represented the new world. He equated the light bulb to a Deity whose essence is its existence. Later he replaced the light bulb with electric circuitry and wrote that electricity is perhaps the hidden god, "whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere." (Theall, 118). Theall explains that to McLuhan the electric world was a "plateau humanity has reached," perhaps symbolizing "redemption through reintegration and transcendence." Do you agree that McLuhan's basic message was panic apocalyptic? How did his Catholicism play into this?

BOB: No, McLuhan satirized the apocalyptic "millennial ecstasies" (his phrase) of his time caused by electric circuitry. As much as possible he attempted to never, ever, become what he beheld. The electric light bulb was the device within the electric-circuitry environment that served as his emblem for the aphorism "the medium is the message," because the bulb had no content - it was "pure" environment, complete transformation, pure "information." The bulb's content was the user as this medium permeated the previous biological and geological "matter." It also represented, for McLuhan, the "inner light" ("whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere") of the Gnostic tradition, which tradition, he knew, would flourish in the later decades of the 20th Century as the last gasp of the literate environment or meme.

Let me add, however, that all of the concerns evoked by your questions above apply to the McLuhan of the Fifties. They are sidelined by McLuhan's preoccupations of the Sixties and Seventies. For him, secret societies and occult trends were, at best, merely benign in influence as the more complex Android Meme materialized.

Joan: McLuhan felt that new media are both "transforming and redeeming mankind by freeing him from the world of fragmented material existence." (Theall, 119). So essentially electricity, with its ethereal quality, replaces the hardware orientation of print? So we're in a software world that is more fleeting, but somehow more whole? Can you explain that seeming contradiction?

BOB: McLuhan interpreted electricity as an extension of the tactile "sense" - tactility not actually being a particular, specialized sensory mode but the interplay itself of the sensory actions. So all the older media as extensions of our particular senses were fleeting while electrically-extended tactility integrated them as their constitutive form or medium. Imagine you are at the center of your "consciousness" and are responsible for keeping its sensory components functioning in harmony or in "whole." The interior landscape you're attempting to cohere (hopefully with success) is moving at the "speed of light" so you aren't able to stop and linger with any one sense, let alone become a partisan for it. If you do, a car wreck will certainly occur on your internal information hi-way. These are the stakes when you're in the vital fulcrum of your personal "culture and technology." Likewise, the tetrad-managers of the Solar Government so attempted to surf and survive their panic-apocalyptic waves induced by the "timid giant" (a phrase used by McLuhan when referring to television) of tactility IN EXTREMIS.

Joan: McLuhan used the terms "angelism" and "robotism" in a Catholic humanist sense very early on. What did he mean by these terms?

BOB: Try these definitions:

The term "robotism" therefore, as we use it, does not mean the mechanically rigid behavior of "Rossum's Universal Robots," as Karel Capek used the word in his 1938 play. Rather robotism in this context means the suppression of the conscious "observer-self," or conscience, so as to remove all fear and circumspection, all encumbrances to ideal performance. Such a man, as Suzuki says, "becomes as the dead, who have passed beyond the necessity of taking thought about the proper course of action. The dead are no longer

returning ON; they are free. Therefore to say 'I will live as one already dead' means a supreme release from conflict." (Marshall McLuhan and Bruce Powers, *The Global Village: Transformations in World Life and Media in the 21st Century*, Oxford University Press, 1989, p.67)

Angelism on the other hand ensures a rigidity of point of view which is largely a consequence of linear and visual logic. It is best characterized as promoting confrontation and fragmentation, some of the chief elements in the illusion of objectivity. One emphasizes the eye over the ear. The function of robotism is the reverse. As Lowell Thomas used to say, "On the air, you're everywhere...." The robotic man is capable of instant adjustment to any social situation without guilt; since he keeps his ear tuned to a collective, a moral identity which we call the audience. Like the attentive crowd, an audience is tuned ground. (Marshall McLuhan and Bruce Powers, *The Global Village: Transformations in World Life and Media in the 21st Century*, Oxford University Press, 1989, pp.69-70)

Joan: Okay, but what did McLuhan mean by "mechanical bride"?

BOB: "To the mind of the modern girl, legs, like busts, are power points which she has been taught to tailor, but as parts of the success kit rather than erotically or sensuously. She swings her legs from the hip with masculine drive and confidence. She knows that 'a long-legged gal can go places.' As such, her legs are not intimately associated with her taste or with her unique self but are merely display objects like the grill work on a car. They are date-baited power levers for the management of the male audience." (Marshall McLuhan, *The Mechanical Bride: Folklore of Industrial Man*, 1951, p.98)

Joan: McLuhan insisted he was a satirist and a surrealist. So we're not to take him completely seriously?

BOB: McLuhan once replied, when asked "if the world had not discovered your great thinking and writing, how would you go about creating a demand for it?" - "I'd put people on... putting people on means teasing them, challenging them, upsetting them, befuddling them; any comic puts on his audience by hurting them. The technique of putting people on IN MY CASE

consists simply in pointing to things that they [the audience] have ignored, the things that concern them very nearly but have been pushed aside as insignificant.... A put on is a situation that I study a great deal." ("Television is Cool and Radio is Hot," Monday Conference, Australian Broadcasting Commission, June 27, 1977.)

Ten years before at the height of his fame, another television interview went this way:

"Question: Marshall McLuhan, you say that TV has turned the world into a global village, am I right? Will it turn us all into global village idiots?"

McLuhan: Again, there are worse fates. An idiot means a very private person, that's a Greek word meaning a very private person. I am losing my idiot status steadily. I am becoming less and less private. I'd much rather be an idiot." ("Do You Like TV?," Sunday, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, March 19, 1967)

McLuhan naturally would appear more "satirical" in a cool medium like TV because its intimate, conversational, talk-show format favored a casual approach. But get him in a classroom and you might think him humorless and grim. The medium, or situation, determined his style. That's because he was strongly committed to, or SERIOUS about, his project of enhancing people's perceptions and awareness of their surroundings. He once said the 20th Century seemed, to him, a vast apparatus constructed by Salvador Dali. He considered his art forms as extremely puny in comparison.

McLuhan wrote in the tradition of learned satire, often called Menippean or Varronian satire, a kind of serious literary medicine. Wyndham Lewis once wrote, "Laughter is again an anti-toxin of the first order." (Men Without Art, 1934, p.93). His essays, "The Greatest Satire is Non-Moral" and "Is Satire Real?" (both in Men Without Art), were important introductions for McLuhan to the Menippean genre.

McLuhan liked to quote Dean Swift - "satire is a sort of glass, wherein beholders do generally discover everybody's face but their own."

Is the following comment the words of a serious Surrealist?:

"I naturally feel flattered that Apollo 11 is scheduled to put a man on the moon on my birthday, July 21. Of course the reason for choosing July, the moon month, is derived from occult symbolism of Zodiac signs. The 12:12 a.m. touchdown will establish a new chemical bond of resonance with space-capsule moon. The reverberations will alter all earthly music and patterns for all time to come. The innovators and perpetrators, now as always, are innocent of any awareness of the consequences of their images." (Marshall McLuhan, "Kahn-Frontation," unpublished MS., 2-3)

Your last question about McLuhan, an important one, raises an issue that will be debated for many centuries to come. Thanks for asking it.