

# That Not-So-Silent Sea

*We were the first that ever burst,  
Into that silent sea*  
--- Coleridge

Robert Fulford kindly sent me a copy of *Canadian Notes & Queries*, 45, containing his article on *Explorations*. This was a journal I founded, named, edited, marketed, mailed, partly financed and unsuccessfully tried to bury.

About the time I received the article, an announcement arrived saying *Explorations* would soon resume publication. I also learned of a book being written about it.

Why this interest in a journal now scarcely remembered? Fulford doesn't say. Instead, he aims to offer an inside view of the skunk works. Earlier accounts are much like this. All share two features: their authors never consulted me & most of what they wrote was wrong.

The problem is understandable. *Explorations* (1953–1959) was edited in a manner that could only charitably be called 'casual.' One redeeming quality was its unpredictability. This worried university administrators, terrified one co-editor, & delighted some readers.

The first issue had a printing of 1000, while issues 2–7 ran to 2000 each, all of which sold quickly. Issue 8 had a run of 3000, but sold poorly. Issue 9 was a University of Toronto Press book with *Explorations* printed on the cover. It was sent to subscribers. It enjoyed several printings, plus a revised edition, totaling about 15,000 copies.

*Explorations in Communications* (1960), an anthology from the journal, went through numerous printings, plus many translations. Over the years it sold extremely well, mostly as a textbook in the U.S. It still pays royalties, though only minuscule, primarily for reprint rights.

Fulford's account understandably ignores article missing from *Explorations*, though potential articles were often more interesting than printed ones. Thus I repeatedly wrote to Russian linguists, asking for articles on the effect of electronic media, especially TV, on Marxist theory & practice. Sounds crazy to imagine getting a serious reply, but I knew one scholar there who understood the question. Moreover, that scholar once stood up to Stalin and, with Western help, miraculously survived. I imagined him slipping his essay quietly past authority (which guards only its past), the way De Gaulle shipping transistor radios to Legionnaires "to relieve barracks boredom" and then, at the crucial moment, bypassed their officers and spoke directly to them: "Soldats de France...." Or the

way Chinese & Soviet authorities recently shut down press & TV, but overlooked fax, BBC, CNN. I wanted to know if, or how, anyone thought Marxism, so clearly a product of print, could possibly survive an electronic storm. So I wrote and wrote, suffered Soviet & RCMP visitors, and in the end got only Party Line. I printed this only because the '50s belonged to McCarthy, even in Canada, and survival of dialog seemed more important than quality of dialog.

Even more disappointing were some of the solicited manuscripts. Several writers reserved their best for elsewhere. Because I'd begged, I printed. Some real clunkers got in.

Then there was a series of articles 'authored' by one of the co-editors, Tom Easterbrook. Tom was a bit of a hypochondriac, always in doctor's waiting rooms. On one occasion, he picked up *Medical Economics* or *Your Doctor* or something, and realized that, in an article on enzymes, if 'entrepreneur' replaced 'enzyme,' the article would delight economists. Off the article went to Karl Deutsch, MIT economist & editor. Deutsch was about to publish it when Tom confessed. Deutsch was furious. Tom did many more 'transmutations,' but never let me publish one.

I also remember a class assignment of magazine biases. One student, who worked nights as a printer, chose the *New Yorker* magazine's unillustrated reviews of contemporary art. Using the same typeface as the *New Yorker*, and the same jagged column divider, he reset three reviews, switching artists' names & paintings' titles. He then lay this new type over the old, photographed entire pages, complete with ads, and sent sets to prominent critics & academics, asking specific questions. Of those who answered (and most did), none spotted the substitutions and all agreed with the reviews. I wanted to run these re-writes & responses, but the *New Yorker* objected.

So it went. Much that belonged was missing; much that appeared didn't belong. Focus & thrust got blurred. Still, something must have gotten through. Subscribers included a classicist at Harvard named Eric Havelock, an anthropology student in Rome named Francesco Pellizzi, a high school student in California named Susan Sontag.

### **Focus**

The journal focused on media biases. This concern rested on the belief that certain media favor, while others do not, certain ideas & values, or more simply: each medium is a unique soil. That soil doesn't guarantee which plants will grow there, but it influences which plants blossom or wilt there.

The first 'group approach' to this subject, at least the first known to me, was organized around 1947 by the U.S. State Department to train Foreign Service officers. George Trager headed a team consisting of Edward Hall, Henry Lee

Smith, and, as a consultant, Ray Birdwhistel. They studied & taught language in the broadest sense, including body language. Among their assigned readings were essays by Benjamin Lee Whorf and Dorothy Lee. To make these essays readily accessible, they reprinted several in 1952.

Whorf, a brilliant, independent scholar, wrote his first paper on spatial metaphors, his last on parallels between Hopi metaphysics & language. In between, he published several articles suggesting a deterministic relationship between language & thought. Everything he wrote was fascinating, though I found only his first & last essays convincing. But the word was out, the subject in, and much speculation followed.<sup>1</sup>

### **Dorothy Lee**

About this same time, Dorothy Lee, unaware of Whorf's work, published a series of papers on language, value & perception. These were far more sophisticated than Whorf's efforts and a major influence on and in *Explorations*.

Lee was born Dorothy Demetracopulos in 1905 in Constantinople where her father, a Greek evangelical pastor, served as his country's ambassador. She won a scholarship to Vassar (her brother Raphael won one to Harvard, where he later became Royce Professor of Philosophy). For a time, Dorothy lived at the home of Alfred Whitehead.

In 1931, she took a PhD in anthropology at Berkeley, writing her dissertation on the language of the Wintu, a paleo-Indian tribe. She then married Otis Lee, who shortly afterwards became Chairman of the Department of Philosophy at Vassar. When Lee left Cody, Wyoming, to accept a scholarship at Harvard, the high school band played as the train pulled out. At Oxford, as a Rhodes scholar, he founded a chamber-music group. At Heidelberg, he & Dorothy saw both sides of Existentialism: for Heidegger, Nazism; for the Lees, freedom. They watched helplessly as Nazi thugs drove a Jewish professor from his classroom.

Otis Lee died suddenly in 1948. Just before he died, he asked Dorothy how various tribesmen might answer certain philosophical questions. After she'd finished dinner and helped four children with schoolwork, she wiped the kitchen table clean and sat down to answer those questions. The result was a series of remarkable essays on languages that lacked temporal tenses, adjectives, metaphors, first-person singular, as well as all equivalents to our verbs 'to be' & 'to become'; languages that blurred the distinction between nouns & verbs, that conjugated & declined from plural to singular, but also possessed forms alien to standard Indo-European languages.<sup>2</sup>

As that silent dialog faded, Dorothy gradually gave up writing. She worried that students found "the truth" in her essays. She feared they might follow her uncritically, losing their autonomy. She lived one-to-one: print and public got in

the way. She loved the subject of anthropology, but not the profession. She resigned from Harvard and in her last years moved about the country, teaching in home economics at Iowa State, in art at Immaculate Heart, wherever there was dialog. Then she returned to Greece. If I write at length about her here, it is because she was *Explorations* most influential force.

Whorf died in 1941, so his influence on *Explorations* was only indirect. Lee's, however, was direct. Six essays by her, as well as four commentaries on those essays, appeared in successive issues. Letters from her filled several folders. She met with our group repeatedly, first in Louisville at a conference organized by Ray Birdwhistel. Also in attendance were Edward Hall, George Trager, Henry Lee Smith, Margaret Mead, Larry Frank, Robert Armstrong, and others whose contributions constituted about a fifth of *Explorations*.

### **Communications Seminar**

When I speak of 'our group' I refer to members of the Toronto communications seminar funded by the Ford Foundation, 1952-1953: Tom Easterbrook, Economics; Marshall McLuhan, English; Jacqueline Tywhitt, Town Planning; Carl Williams, Psychology; and me, Anthropology.

The seminar started with great enthusiasm, but instantly got nowhere. I proposed a journal. Claude Bissell, who was then vice president of the university, agreed and obtained Ford Foundation approval. The result was a humanistic journal, appearing at a time when social sciences modeled themselves after physical sciences, complete with claims of 'objectivity,' in the manner of *Time* reporters.

The humanistic approach ultimately led to friction within the seminar, but not at first. Tom Easterbrook took Harold Innis as mentor. Marshall McLuhan saw poetry as the sap of life. Jacqueline Tywhitt regarded architecture as a holy pursuit. I thought of anthropology as art availing itself of scientific findings. Carl Williams, however, sought to refine psychology to an objective science. It was for this reason he was invited to join our group. We felt we needed his bias to balance ours, and also to get Ford funding.

Carl provided the first breakthrough. He used the phrase 'auditory space' in describing an experiment by E. A. Bott. The experiment itself was more roadblock than bridge, but the phrase was electrifying. Marshall changed it to 'acoustic space' and quoted 'inner landscape' poetry. Jackie mentioned the Indian city of Fatehpur Sikri. Tom saw parallels in medieval Europe. I talked about Eskimos.

Earlier I'd wondered if Plato's & Aristotle's 'hierarchy of the senses' enjoyed counterparts in tribal societies. Did each culture possess a unique sensory

profile? Why was sight so often muted in tribal art and dance? Was non-representational art direct sensory programming?

'Acoustic space' offered a clue. If the ear's 'grammar' could pattern space, could other sensory codes explain silent music, invisible art, motionless dance? Were the senses themselves primary media? Was hard-edged art tactile patterning? Etc., etc.

Carl sent a paper on auditory space to *Explorations*, minus all seminar dialog. So Marshall & I put it in. A mistake. Two articles, one on the mechanics of auditory space, the other on 'acoustic patterning' might have been more diplomatic. But we needed some input from Carl, and clearly it wouldn't come without help.

The same problem arose in an experiment about media biases. For several years, I'd supplemented my teaching salary by freelancing in TV, radio, print. I did what all freelancers do: I tried recycling the same material in several media. It rarely works. No medium is wholly neutral. Certain ideas lend themselves kindly, others do not, to specific media. If all media were alike, we'd need only one.

To test this, I prepared a single script for simultaneous presentation as lecture, TV, radio, & print, plus a single examination for the four audiences. I tried not to slant the script toward any one medium. This probably doomed the experiment from the start. Ideally, I should have chosen a subject already available in several media, e.g. *The Caine Mutiny*, then popular as book, play, film & TV. But the mechanics of an ideal experiment weren't feasible.

A former student of mine ran a much better test several years later. He asked two audiences to view the Governor General's funeral on TV: one in color, the other in black & white. Both audiences answered the same factual questions, then wrote essays. Black & white viewers answered far more accurately and their essays were nearly five times longer. However, those who saw it in color expressed greater enjoyment with the show and warmer feelings toward the deceased.

But let me return to the first experiment. I asked the whole seminar to get involved. Carl scored the answers, which was great, but then published a paper on the experiment that missed the whole point. I objected.

There was also a difference over money. The Ford grant provided for released faculty time. A colleague's illness canceled my free time. I asked that the funds be applied to *Explorations*. The University, having spent them, demurred. The head of the Anthropology department, as always, supported the administration. So did Carl. I suggested that we consult the Ford Foundation. The funds went to *Explorations*.

Finally, Carl insisted that his name be removed from the masthead of *Explorations*. The immediate reason was my acceptance of an article by G. Legman on censored ballads, an article now regarded as definitive. Readers today might be puzzled by its reception in 1956. The printer took it to the head of the press. He in turn took it to the president of the University, a former dean of law. President Smith phoned me, using words far more earthy than anything in Legman's article. I offered to delete whatever he blue-penciled. He lived next door to the museum where I worked. I was soon on his doorstep. A maid took the galleys, leaving the door slightly ajar. It was very cold. I wore a raincoat left over from the Marine Corps. I waited & waited. Finally an arm extended the galleys. There were no deletions.

### **Marshall McLuhan**

I mention these differences only because Fulford raises them. He also speaks of differences between Marshall and me. Not so. We got along famously, almost daily, whenever and wherever possible; spent our time in one another's kitchens; shared all readings, all confidences; hung out in jazz clubs; walked the streets. Life with Marshall was pure theatre. I recall one afternoon in the Museum coffee shop. It was pouring outside. A stranger appeared & announced: "Just the two I want to see." He unrolled a great scroll. It showed a crudely drawn giant hurling boulders at a mountain village labeled 'Mechanization.' "Aha," said Marshall, "Toronto's William Blake, with a low IQ." The man rolled up the scroll and, pointing a finger at Marshall, ordered him to put out his cigar, "that product of mechanization." Marshall took a long draw, then slowly blew out the smoke. "That cigar," he said, "was hand-rolled along the thigh of a Tahitian maiden."

In 32 years of friendship, I recall only two differences between us, both minor. One concerned a bungler who interfered with the printing of *Explorations* 7, wasting money. I asked Marshall why he tolerated him. "Every man," he said, "needs a dog." A harsh judgment, harshest on himself.

The second incident concerned *Explorations* 8, which I didn't edit. That was pure McLuhan, his first involvement. *The Toronto Telegram* ran full-page Sunday ads, but these had a reverse effect. The large, costly printing scarcely moved. Marshall stashed the printing at home while gone for the summer. We were obligated to print one more issue. With funds exhausted, revenue zero, no accounting, I wrote to him. I still have his reply:

Gee whiz Ted, what a breath of fresh hair. Let us up the periscope and see if the concrete is hardening. Yep, it's hardening up and down the budget valley. Now don't go into a feminine flap. If I didn't think you could raise \$50,000 in half an hour any time you set your mind to it, I'd do it for you.

I raised the money, though nothing like that, and not in half an hour. The crisis passed. Still, I wanted out. I wrote a book titled *Eskimo*, printed "Explorations" on enough copies to fill paid subscriptions, and hoped I'd buried *Explorations* forever. Marshall, however, wanted it to go on.

Now some things everybody can do: drive a car, serve in the military, work in a factory, edit a magazine. But Marshall wasn't like everybody else. He wasn't even like anybody else. One thing he could never do was edit a magazine. His plan was to provide the ideas, then let the rest take care of itself. *Explorations* became an unread supplement in an alumni quarterly.

I was no longer involved and, in a curious way, I gradually became uninvolved with the earlier issues. I made a selection from them, written an introduction, then taken this anthology to Oxford Press. It was rejected. I mentioned this to Marshall. He offered to show the manuscript to a friend, just appointed editor of Beacon Press. Beacon accepted the book, the only change being the addition of Marshall as co-editor. It sold well, in America & foreign editions. The Japanese edition dropped my name, inside and out. It was also dropped whenever the journal was mentioned in the press, confirming my conviction that hack journalists shun primary sources. The reason was simple: hype focuses. Those who hyped Marshall, starting with Gossage & Feigen, a PR firm, ignored the community of contributors who generated these ideas. Instead, they assigned everything to one guru. This wasn't Marshall's doing, though he never objected.

One idea commonly associated with 'McLuhanism' is the contrast between linear & non-linear codifications of reality. Yet the study itself belongs wholly to Dorothy Lee. She borrowed the term 'linear,' she tells us, from the physical sciences.<sup>3</sup> In *Explorations*, she contrasted preliterate and literate pattern making & pattern perceiving. In another issue of that journal, Harold Innis treated media as history shapers. I linked Lee & Innis and proposed print as the final force in the development of linear codes. Marshall, with his unfailing genius for coining phrases, spoke of "Typographic Man."

### **The Right Phrase**

Phrases. Marshall found them, coined them, modified them and used them in unexpected, sometimes startling contexts. When he was young, he read that the best way to enlarge a vocabulary was to use a new word each day in various contexts. He and Tom Easterbrook were then working on a farm. The farmer, Tom said, was bewildered.

An easy way to find the source of many of Marshall's phrases is to examine the back pages of the books in his library. As he read, he jotted down phrases & ideas, by page, in the rear. 'Global village,' properly noted, appears in a Wyndham Lewis book. Marshall liberated that phrase. It will probably (and properly) enter *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations* under "McLuhan." A more accurate

phrase, as Marshall later realized, was 'global theatre.' But this proved unappealing to journalists, who considered themselves neutral reporters, not theatrical producers.

'The medium is the message' came from Ashley Montagu's lecture, 'The Method is the Message,' which Marshall and I attended. Marshall improved the wording and extended the concept. 'The medium is the massage' came from Sam Zacks. Marshall had been asked to explain his earlier phrase, to which Sam, who favored steam baths & massages, replied: "You mean, like a massage?" At which point, message became massage, mass-age, mess-age, etc., etc.

So it went, an Andy Warhol factory. Everything from classics to comics got recycled. With input from 360 degrees, Marshall distilled, shaped, burnished, orchestrated. He had an astonishing capacity to summarize, then christen ideas with unforgettable headlines. I recall a formal lecture given by Suzanne Langer. The Chair called for questions. Marshall was instantly on his feet. Without preamble, he summarized Langer point by point, in modified nursery rhymes, ending with Little Jack Horner and then, with his thumb in his mouth, left the room. The Chair apologized. It was surely the best commentary Langer ever received.

I also recall an afternoon when Marshall flipped through Vincent Massey's 1951 call for High Kultch in Canada. He laughed & laughed, then scribbled a response modeled after Windham Lewis' *BLAST* (1914). I immediately set it in type on a museum labeling machine. *COUNTERBLAST* (1954), privately printed, appeared a few days later. If you want to know what an hour with Marshall McLuhan could be like, read that review.

Words, words, spoken, written, in earnest, in jest. He warned the expressway loving Premier of Ontario: "Mere concern with efficient traffic flow is a cloacal obsession that sends the city down the drain." When he learned that Harold Innis was baptized "Herald" after *The Family Herald*, and as a child excelled at wringing turkey necks, he remarked: "Hark, the Herald Innis wrings." Images poured forth, day & night, as late as 3 A.M. I sometimes took the receiver off the hook before going to bed.

Writers commonly speak of Marshall's original ideas. He had none. Be grateful. They would have been right off the wall. His genius lay in perceiving, not in creating. He accepted the world as he found it and simply described what he saw, free of the haze he believed obstructed all others. If he'd ever written advertising copy, that copy would have doomed each product. But when it came to analyzing existing ads, he had no equal.

He also made no small talk. He might mention small matters, but when he did, his unflinching directness transformed that subject, no matter how humble. Once

we saw a turd in the center of the broad steps forming the grand entrance to the Royal Ontario Museum. "Human," he said. The bizarre scene this (correct) judgment required would have escaped all conventional minds.

### **Matching**

Marshall possessed what Lévi-Strauss called "the dithyrambic gift of synthesis, the almost monstrous faculty to perceive as similar what other men have conceived as different." He treated academic boundaries as barriers; professionalism as constipation; ignorance as asset. His approach resembled Operations Research, a World War II program where biologists and psychologists worked on problems ordinarily assigned to engineers & physicists.

He loved to apply one discipline's insights to another discipline's data. Stopping a colleague on campus, he'd announce his latest 'breakthrough,' in ten thousand words, nonstop. These onslaughts could wreck anybody's day. Each contained enough truth to put in jeopardy one's dearest convictions. Worse, each contained enough contradictions & comedy to put in jeopardy the university itself.

The magic of joining opposites delighted him. Every cliché became a reversed cliché, borrowed or coined: life imitates art (Wilde); invention is the mother of necessity (Veblen); ideas outlive their uselessness (McLuhan). Scientific laws, he argued, sometimes worked better in reverse.

Everything, absolutely everything, went into the mix. Marshall skimmed several books a day, jotting notes. These became the next article. John Brockman, a devotee, tried the same thing. He asked a dozen academics to list the books most influential to them. He bought a copy of each. Over a long weekend on Cape Cod, he skimmed the lot, briefly summarizing what he regarded as key concepts. These notes became the text for *The Late John Brockman*, a book differing from Marshall's writing solely in quality.

Marshall's files were a pirate's wardroom, lot from Seven Seas, previous owners forgotten. As Pound wrote to him: "yr/ writing will become a lot livelier when yu start looking for credits rather than debts/ not matter much where a man GOT what, but what he did with it (or without it) AFTER he got it."

What, then, did Marshall do with all the loot? Using a format borrowed from Pound, he combined seemingly disparate elements into 'mosaics.' When you interface the right images, each illustrates the other, like a blade on a grindstone. Sparks fly. His ultimate model was the front page of the daily press with its discontinuous, randomly juxtaposed items. His more immediate model, as he repeatedly stated, came from Pound.

The capacity to link seemingly unrelated concepts is also, of course, at the heart of science. Jacob Bronowski compares it to the blind man discovering that the

inside and the outside of a cup hang together, or to the Sherpa who recognizes the mountain he sees in a neighboring valley as the opposite side of the mountain where he grew up. Marshall's early efforts at mixing and matching proved wonderfully productive. I was reminded of one this morning. Today's *Wall Street Journal*, in separate articles, lists recent newspaper & department store bankruptcies, catastrophic in number. Forty years ago Marshall equated department stores (all products under one roof) and newspapers (all news in one paper), and predicted that TV would render both obsolete.

Later, as his health deteriorated, he mixed and matched randomly, with diminished results. He even patented a set of cards, each printed with a riddle or aphorism. Executives were invited to shuffle the deck, draw a card, then apply the riddle or aphorism to a current problem, say a strike or bankruptcy.

Was there a grand scheme behind all this? A grand man, yes, but more? A contribution to science? Most scientists believe that reality is not in appearances, but in the underlying laws that govern appearances. Toward the end of his life, Marshall announced his discovery of four underlying 'laws' that govern media. He invite skeptics to disprove them. No one stepped forward. All four were basic notions long accepted, each with a considerable literature behind it. He simply liberated, described, then juxtaposed those concepts to form a tetrad. He applied this tetrad to a variety of phenomena, in the manner of a parlor game. Like dousing, it sometimes worked.

### **Labels**

Those who misunderstand McLuhan often label him this or that, then responded to their own labels. But no label fit. If he reminded me of anyone (and he didn't), it would have been a 19<sup>th</sup> century tinker, at some crossroads in rural America, who produced endless inventions, some practical, some not, using material at hand and unfamiliar methods.

Post-literate & pre-literate materials, both at hand, provided alien methods. Marshall's interest in myths & oracles extended to the methods that produced them. He borrowed from shamans, tricksters, magicians, as well as from scientists. He accepted evidence of miracles rural priests would question.

I was reminded of this recently, in Washington, at the unveiling of Bill Reid's monumental sculpture, *Black Canoe*. Here, in an overloaded canoe, the principal characters of Haida mythology play out their ancient roles. Each also enacts its modern role in the Washington bestiary. At the bow, a huge bear, moving bare-assed backwards into the future, faces an aggressive eagle; beaver paddles, ignoring both; wolf grasps eagle's wing; etc. In the center sits a tall, serene Haida chief who closely resembles the sculptor. Bill compared this work to a family drive on a rainy Sunday with the car windows closed.

Sit Marshall in a small tub, fill that tub with improbably media characters, especially those up to no good, then set them all adrift into that not-so-silent sea. Or (in fact) sit him a small pub with Walt Kelly, crowd the air with characters from politics & literature, comics and classics, Plato to Pogo. Leaven with songs, drinks, cigars.

Rainmaker, sorcerer, trickster, juggler, poet, punster, magician, scientist; it was no accident he teamed up with an ethnologist. The main difference between us was that he'd long ago crossed over to the other side. What I studied, he lived. Forget art imitates life/life imitates art; for him, life was art/art was life. The world he lived in was not Toronto, 1950. I didn't need to go to the Arctic to find an informant from another world.

When I left Toronto, he arranged for his college to buy my library on European magic & witchcraft. I had assembled it to study what I regarded as pathology. His interests went way beyond my prejudices.

Had Marshall labeled himself poet, artist, composer, few would have objected. But he insisted his 'mosaics' were 'scientific.' This at a time when social scientists took themselves very, very seriously.

Today it's hard to imagine how seriously. In one of Stuart Chase's books, a woman at a cocktail party meets an anthropologist: "Ah, one of the few people we can trust with power these days." Americans emerging from the Second War, their wealth & optimism vastly increased, dedicated both to science, not least to social science. Marshall knew he could never sell himself to the world, nor his services to its leaders, as poet or trickster. So he put on a lab coat.

Later he called *The Gutenberg Galaxy* "a footnote to the observations of Harold Innis." Still later he suggested parallels with St. Thomas Aquinas. Thomists at St. Michael's remained unconvinced.

### **Harold Innis**

I remained unconvinced of his allegiance to Innis. I was present at several of their few meetings, arranged by Tom Easterbrook. Marshall talked on & on, at one point drifting into politics. Innis detested dictators, monopolies, censorship, racism. He was firmly committed to an open society. Marshall was just as firmly committed to a closed society. He thought Blacks, Jews Protestants, would all be happier elsewhere. He defended Franco's suppression of Protestants. Innis said nothing.

Other differences divided them. Marshall loved America's "cornucopia of surrealism." He thought Canadians were missing out on a good thing. Innis feared its impact on Canadian identity. William Lyon Mackenzie King, he wrote

“found Canada a nation and left it a colony in relation to the U.S. — particularly as a result of radio.”

Innis, with only a short time to live, drew up a document to be read after his death. It proposed guidelines for faculty serving as consultants to government & business: unpaid advisors who traveled by coach. He was particularly worried about who his successor might be, so he included faculty evaluations, with recommendations. When this document was opened, it was quickly suppressed.

Innis' successor was Vincent Bladen, author of a textbook on economics. A student took a copy from the Reserve Reading Room to the toilet, defecated between its covers, then returned it to the shelf. The librarian who discovered this went directly to the Head Librarian: “Dr. MacDonald, I thought it was a cookie.”

Bladen's knowledge of anthropology was, as far as I know, nil. Yet he got himself elected President, Society for Applied Anthropology. He wanted to sell anthropology to businessmen, especially advertisers. He asked that a junior member of the staff be granted, without examination, a PhD in anthropology. I objected. But ill feeling followed.

One form it took was a review of *Explorations 1* in the *Canadian Forum*. A member of Bladen's coterie was related to a young English critic named Frank Kermode. Kermode's review was the first of many he wrote on this work, especially Marshall's work. Along with several other journalists, he set himself up as interpreter & judge of these ideas and, over the years, made a good thing out of it for himself. His criticism reminded me of a dog who nips at your heels, then wags when you face him. He commissioned & edited Jonathan Miller's *McLuhan*, a book without merit. Sir Frank continues to provide commentaries, but has yet to contribute to the dialog.

Innis was never Marshall's mentor, not really. Marshall followed no one. Only poetry & scripture escaped correction. Nor would Innis ever have become Marshall's defender. Mixing and matching, OK, but huckstering? Innis remained, even after his death, a symbol of integrity. Identifying with this icon help deflect criticism.

The gap between them was wide, the difference, say between Frost & Pound. Harold Innis, like Northrop Frye, was a social model. Each personified reason, justice, democracy. When they spoke, they seemed to speak for society. Marshall spoke for himself. He suppressed nothing, least of all contradictions. He loved books; he loved the media replacing them. He was totally unique; he announced the end of individualism. He promoted his public image; he loathed that public image.

One day we were swapping 'Greatest Invention' jokes: "Not the lever, not the wheel, but the thermos bottle." "The thermos bottle? That just keeps liquid hot or cold." "Yeah, but how do it know?" Etc. I told him of an elderly farm woman who quietly proposed "Screens, to keep out flies." Marshall replied with equal gravity, "the electric shaver": for ten years he hadn't found it necessary to look in the mirror.

Differences between McLuhan and Innis were unbridgeable though their writings covered much the same ground and employed much the same style. Innis' last books, *Empire and Communications*, 1950; *The Bias of Communication*, 1951; and *Changing Concepts of Time*, published posthumously in 1952, were written in haste, under pressure. Each week he checked out a bagful of books and took them home by streetcar. His distilled notes, on cards, read like telegrams to Tasmania. Each morning he added those cards to several stacks on his office floor. Card by card, stacks became books. These books aren't easy to read. I once assigned them at Harvard, but even the best students stumbled. Everything you want is there, but impossible to grasp until you independently reach those same conclusions.

Marshall independently reached his own conclusions. He took examples from Innis, the best of course. What he did with them was something else.

The same problem arises when we compare tribal & modern art. Did Picasso sit at the feet of tribal artists? We know he collected their art. We know bits from it appear in his art. But Picasso's art is not out of Africa.

This business of who-took-what-from-whom misses the point. In one of his last essays, Eric Havelock, who left Toronto in 1947, suggested that the so-called Toronto School of Communications started with a phrase he used in a lecture possibly attended by Innis. From Innis this went to McLuhan and from there to the world. Nonsense. This wasn't a torch race. It was a light show.

Let's start with Toronto, where it all began. Even into the 1950s, the city remained a depressing place: its architecture, food, meanness, what Marshall called, "The cringing, flunkey spirit of Canadian culture, its servant-quarter snobbishness, resentments, ignorance, penury." Not a joyous place at all. Leopold Infeld described it as "perhaps the finest city in which to die, especially on Sunday afternoon when the transition between the living and the dead is so gradual as to be imperceptible."

Then, suddenly, refugees appeared from everywhere, different hued, many tongued, talented, hungry, including BBC directors looking for work, Hollywood writers fleeing McCarthy. In 1950, CBC-Radio spun off a competitor, CBC-TV. Magnetic tape broke recording monopolies. LPs filled the air with African drums, medieval music, Black humor, anything. Little magazines appeared &

disappeared: the Mellons backed one, the Ford Foundation several, the CIA at least one. A vendor just off campus stocked many, even one from Brazil. Others were available by mail or under the counter. A small bookstore on Yonge specialized in serious writings

A cauldron of diversity; an open market. Even the University showed signs of life. Its elders still suffered from mildewed respectability, its faculty union still smelled of mothballs, but returning servicemen made every class an adult class. Where Northrop Frye could legitimately ask, "How do you teach Milton to a class in heat," now classes included students who had been to Hell & back.

All this was also happening elsewhere in North America, but with one difference: from Toronto, you could see it happening. It was like living on an island, studying the mainland. You saw the whole show. Its main event was the electronic revolution. The local blackout highlighted the distant glow.

There was never a 'Toronto School of Communications.' It was simply a bunch of islanders watching the greatest show on earth. A table in the museum coffee shop served as meeting place. There, at four o'clock, Marshall & Jackie and I gathered, along with Don Theall & John Irving, a few students, occasionally Tom, rarely Innis, plus Dorothy Lee, Siegfried Giedion, Ashley Montagu, Karl Polanyi, Roy Campbell, a dozen other visitors, and talked until the place closed.

Toronto had other oases, all unofficial. Two I knew well. TV producers, film directors, editors, cameramen, talked media far into the night at the home of the Hungarian cartoonist George Feyer. Artists, scholars, composers, architects, gathered almost nightly at the art-filled apartment of Sam & Ayala Zacks. Dialog became Toronto's real academy. I recall working north on Avenue Road with Ashley Montagu. Deep snow slowed us. As we struggled along, he told me the tale of the Elephant Man. Fifteen years later, in New York, I urged an editor to call him. A tale told on Avenue Road moved into Western memory.

Jackie Tywitt knew how to translate thought into reality. Never thanked, never credited, she helped change Toronto. One incident in particular comes to mind. Years earlier, the city had granted leases to private citizens for beach properties on Toronto Island. Those leases were about to expire. Developers had friends. The matter was to be settled by referendum.

Jackie assigned this project to a town planning class. Each student illustrated his proposal with a maquette. Maquettes are perfect for TV. Days before the referendum, Jackie and her class broadcast a one-hour TV show. TV was then new and potentially very persuasive. I recall in particular an attractive Chinese girl eloquently explaining her elegant model. Each student recommended public ownership. Developers were expected to win. Opinion shifted.<sup>4</sup>

You could do that sort of thing in the fifties. For one brief moment, media were open, democratic. I recall another instance, this one personal. I discovered that the ancient Serpent Mound near Peterborough, though on Provincial land, had been subdivided. Trees had been cut. Bulldozers stood ready. Officials ignored me. So I mounted a one-man media crusade. Officialdom closed ranks. On the last day I gambled. I was never certain, but I suspected a \$3000 bribe, at a low level. Higher-ups, I knew, feared the charge of cover-up. I called the Provincial Minister of Education. The moment I got through, I warned: "Destroy that mound and I'll wipe your fucking ass across every headline in this Province." It worked, instantly. The place is now a park. I believe a plaque there honors those same officials.

I mention these two incidents to illustrate changes in media access. Today – in the U.S. at least – private citizens, unless they possess immense wealth, have little access to media. This wasn't true of Toronto in the fifties. Media were then open, competing, democratic. A remarkable moment. It didn't last. Power & profit got their act together. From open market, media went to closed networks.

### **The Gutenberg Galaxy & Understanding Media**

In 1959 I move to Northridge, California, where the State was starting a new campus. When I arrived, it was an orange grove. Today it has over forty thousand students. The anthropology department combined appointments in conventional fields (ethnology, archeology, linguistics, physical anthropology) with appointments in performing arts. Dorothy Lee left Harvard to join us and stayed six years. Other *Explorations* contributors came, as well as a jazz cellist, animator, multi-screen innovator, African author and drummer, folklorist, etc. All fit comfortably into the anthropology curriculum. A fabulous faculty! The administrators backed us all the way, including equipment & funding for a wide range of experiments, especially in film.

Marshall & I stayed in contact through letters, several a week, exchanging ideas & anecdotes. Freelancing had given me some contact with media, but here we were testing & playing, right at the edge. We worked closely with Charles Eames, who was then perfecting the multi-screen film. When U.S. military bases closed, we acquired U2 140mm cameras & editors, which we used for animation; filmed on & through smoke; married a slide projector and a movie projector; painted and scratched 70mm film; mixed animation & shadow plays; etc., etc. – experiments Hollywood lacked time & patience to attempt. Several innovations gained wide acceptance. Several films won international awards.

Marshall followed this with great interest, providing sharp insights. I was writing from southern California, surely the first post-literate society. Students came from homes without books, privacy, conversation. Some reached the university having never heard a completed sentence. When they first encountered an idea, any idea, it had the effect of a religious conversion. This

was a land awaiting the Coming of the Word. That Word arrived, a few years later, via Marshall.

On my first trip back to Toronto, I found him at St. Michael's College, sitting at a long table. Spread out before him were scores of books: Innis, Mumford, etc. Books by contributors to *Explorations* were stacked behind each issue. Out of this came *The Gutenberg Galaxy*, Marshall's best book. It was also, in certain ways, his last.

*Understanding Media* had a more complex origin. In 1959, Harry Skornia, president of the National Association of Educational Broadcasters (NAEB), commissioned Marshall to develop a media syllabus for eleventh-graders, funded under Title VII, an education act administered by the Pentagon. From this came a mimeographed "Report on Project in Understanding Media." Not well received: excerpts were ridiculed on the floor of the House of Representatives, then printed in the *Congressional Record*. The syllabus was put aside.

Marshall suggested we turn it into a book. We enlarged & modified the text, exchanging chapters by mail. I still have them. They fill a box. We'd collaborated before, on articles, but this was a book. My approach was conventional, cautious, pedestrian. His approach was that of the poet who, in the words of Laura Riding, attempts "to make language do more than express: to make it work: to redistribute intelligence by means of the word."

For Marshall, effect mattered most. Exaggeration provided thrust & flavor. I admired his style, stood in awe of it. But it was his, not mine. I gradually withdrew. The final version of *Understanding Media* mixed both our contributions. This partly explains the uneven tone. Before it was printed, its editor asked me to supply the sources of most of the quotations.

Editing Marshall, no matter how sympathetically turned poetic force into prose whimper. Even self-editing didn't help: [6.27.62] "Am trying to translate some of my own mosaic into lineal form, but not doing too well." All his later books were collaborations. All were edited. All were hash. Marshall was at his best in conversation. Next best: informal letters. Over the years, he sent me hundreds, mostly scribbled. Those I saved filled two boxes. Here's one:

On p. 265 of Leonard Duhl's *The Urban Condition* Naomi Rothwell found there 'were few complaints about privacy if the barracks were cold.' Man! Consider that in relation to the fact that Northern Europe seemed to have literate characteristics before literacy. Coolth=fragmentation, psychic and social?

Theme of Duhl about unhappy slum dwellers when transferred to fine new housing. Consider. Slum is tactile, olfactory, discontinuous, asymmetrical, non-linear, ie. synesthetic, deep involvement. New planned housing is visually intense, non-tactile, etc, fragmented etc. No wonder they feel isolated, desolate.

Note modern intellectual 'goes slumming' when he wants synesthetic involvement. High-brow art is slum-tactual. Mad magazine is a high-brow slum.

Editing can stretch this, slow it down, but in no way improve it.

*The Gutenberg Galaxy*, Marshall's best book, suffered least from editing. Everything else got mauled, including a *Playboy* interview, often cited as the one instance when Marshall was understandable. First attempted by Jean Shepherd in 1967, the interview was successfully concluded by Gerald Stern in 1969. I wasn't present, but I was told that Marshall's monologues left Stern stunned. He solved this problem by excerpting phrases & ideas from Marshall's writings, as well as from writings about him, translated these into conventional prose, then organized the whole as questions & answers. The result satisfied the many.

### **Marketing Marshall**

In 1965 I was invited to join Marshall at the offices of a PR firm in San Francisco. Gossage & Feigen held forth in a former firehouse. What I witnessed there is today so commonplace, so accepted, it dates me to say how it disturbed me.<sup>5</sup> Howard 'Luck' Gossage and Gerald Feigen pioneered in creating news for clients. News cost little to create, nothing to broadcast. A network of journalists cooperated.

Gossage invented the icon T-shirt, backed *Ramparts* magazine, converted a ski resort into a year-round operation, mixed marketing & news, design & promotion, PR & journalism, etc., etc. The pump house became an 'in' scene, heady with power, the ultimate in Innis' "fact faking factories." Journalistic ethics weren't high on the agenda. Some day a biographer may detail the personal tragedies that followed. In the meantime, we have Tom Wolfe's *The Pump House Gang*. Tom was there. He left out a lot.

One omission that comes to mind concerned planted news. A secretary quietly interrupted the conference by placing in front of Gossage an open copy of *Time* and next to it Gossage's copy for one of its articles. He compared the two, smiled, then exhibited them.

The conference disturbed me. I left several days early. There were two boys with me. We headed for the Sierra. No gear, but we found old tarps in a dumpster,

bought food at a country store, located a mountain stream. As I crumbled paper for a fire, I noticed a column in a San Francisco paper. It contained a planted plug. I recognized the source. Other examples appeared in the same paper, as well as in a copy of *Time* I was burning. No question, Gossage & Feigen were effective, frighteningly so in clear mountain air.

Having seen possibilities in *Understanding Media*, they offered Marshall their services, plus a \$6000 budget. Their plan: convert him into an internationally recognized media guru, then peddle him as a business consultant, fees to be established. Their success in this endeavor is now history. Immediately following this conference, a hurricane of McLuhan interviews, reviews, articles, books, cartoons, TV & radio shows, etc., etc., swept through the media. Promotional methods previously reserved for products & stars, especially rock stars, were now used on behalf of an academic, all stops out.

Marshall undertook a whirlwind tour as lecturer, consultant, guru. He offered advice to a wide range of executives on every conceivable subject. While stopping over with me in California, he received a call from the Mayor of Los Angeles who sought guidance on riot prevention. Watts was burning.

Fame couldn't have come at a worse time. He was far from well. After finishing his NAEB report, he suffered a seizure so severe the last rites were administered. Blackouts followed. In San Francisco, he blanked-out for ten minutes; in San Diego, for nearly half an hour, unable to recognize me. The conference sponsor refused to pay him. It was a foretaste of what was to come.

Editors begged him for manuscripts. He might dictate several in one day. Each article condensed yesterday's readings, plus old phrases. Some articles got printed; most didn't. A publisher who bought a magazine on politics, another on food, told me she found a McLuhan article in the dead files of each. "I imagine every editor in North America has one."

One journalist, widely quoted, compared Marshall to Newton & Einstein. Marshall agreed. He spoke of the Nobel Prize, in which field I never asked. Though a master at analyzing hype, he became its total victim. In the end, the same journalists who created his public image, destroyed that image. I call this 1=2 journalism: a legitimate story first converted into a false story, then exposed for what it never was.

### **New Game, New Players**

For me, the most interesting aspect of all this was the role of journalists. Many became instant authorities. PR releases, slightly modified, carried different by-lines. Journalists draw from journalists. Errors (repeated, expanded, preserved) entered public memory.

The ball was now in another court. All ideas acquired a single player.<sup>6</sup> Previous players were banned to the bleachers.<sup>7</sup> This created problems.

First: credit. Marshall might protest, "I got it from nobody," but in fact, he got everything from somebody. He just never remembered. It was strange, especially in later years. Describe a new discovery to him, or tell him a joke, and the next day he'd phone: "Big breakthrough..." and back it all came. Explorations became revelations. He once confided to me that God had made him an instrument to convey certain messages to mankind. Not as weird as it sounds, if you keep in mind his use of images, his religious commitment & prophet role. But, though he didn't remember, others did.

In the end, this didn't matter. Innis, one of his main sources, was dead, so that was no problem. But even if he had lived, he was a shy, quiet scholar, hardly one to envy Marshall's public image. Lee was equally private, so much so she discouraged Mary McCarthy from writing a profile about her for the *New Yorker*. On receiving a letter from a stranger who read about her in the press, she protested: "I'm not a news item." Edward Hall, from whom Marshall took "extensions of man," noted that he, himself, picked up the idea from Buckminster Fuller and added: "We all get things from each other." Louis Mumford was upset, so were others, but in the end, acknowledgement was never a serious problem.

How those ideas were used was another matter. I think it safe to say that all of Marshall's sources were personally committed to social betterment. They wanted to harness the new media to human ends or at least prevent their misuse. Marshall declared "his" discoveries to be neutral, and offered them to the highest bidders. During the outcry against the Vietnam War (and its apologist Hubert Humphrey), newspapers nationally showed Marshall at a head table, between Humphrey and a general. He had absolutely no interest in how "his" ideas were used or by whom. True, in the seventies he opposed construction of a freeway into Toronto, but that freeway threatened the tranquility of his neighborhood and opposition to it put him back in the news.

Finally, the real problem was more basic: did Marshall's methods produce the insights with which he is widely credited, or did his 'anti-book' style simply popularize those insights? George Steiner, after accepting Marshall's rhetoric on its own terms, passed judgement on his findings: accepting some, dismissing others. Those that 'Final Word' Steiner accepted were all the works of others, restated by McLuhan.

Did Marshall's methods produce any valid insights? Of course. But not the ones for which he's best known. Those insights were obtained by others, employing conventional historical, literate, Western methods.

Let me offer an analogy. Suppose a publicity conscious explorer, say another Stefansson, announced that his arctic maps were made like Eskimo maps, from direct sensory experience. Some details prove wrong, but overall the maps are the best available. Then it's noticed that these maps are actually composites of pre-existing maps made by conventional means: compass, aerial photography, hard work, etc. Which method do we then choose: Eskimo or modern?

Ethnologists constantly face this problem: our methods or theirs? Must we think like a shaman to understand a shaman? It helps to try. It brings us closer to the subject. But when we analyze that subject, we use Western methods. Ethnologists who identify completely with tribesmen, who 'pass over' (some have), stop writing.

Can we present that subject in its own format? It helps to try. A book written in a style and designed in a format compatible with its subject may bring readers closer to that subject. Marshall's presentation of post-literacy in anti-book format was highly successful; his use of non-literate methods for historical analyses, far less so.

This point must be kept in mind by those seeking to revive the 'McLuhan method' as a means of discovery. That method may work in art & poetry, but for historical analyses, it's questionable. Moreover, why attempt to revive 'McLuhanism' at all? His generation had no idea what he was talking about and this generation has no interest. Perhaps it's all about job making: welfare with dignity.

### **Fordham**

Back in Northridge, the combination of anthropology & art proved immensely popular with students. (It should be duplicated everywhere.) Unfortunately for the future of the department, a disproportionate number of majors backed civil rights and opposed the Vietnam War. One day, with teargas drifting across the campus and students charging the administration building, I overheard the president say, "Here come the anthropologists," and I knew it was time to move on. Twelve of us scattered.

I was about to begin work at the Nationalmuset, Copenhagen, when Marshall asked me to join him at Fordham. Thanks to Gossage's obedient journalists, he was now internationally famous, the world's first celebrity scholar. He was also very ill. A brain tumor was removed. Warmth & brilliance faded. I recall a moment backstage. 'The book' was *A Thousand and One Jokes for All Occasions*. Several jokes were chosen at random and read to him. He laughed at each, though all were awful. In the end that didn't matter: he mixed up punch lines, leaving his audience thoroughly perplexed. One listener asked for help in unraveling what he assumed was a deliberate riddle. Others dismissed the speaker as fraudulent or mad.

Yet even in the worst scenes, there could be wit. During a totally incomprehensible lecture, a student noisily gathered his books and left. As he stalked out, Marshall called after him, "Out, out, bright light."

I also recall an absolutely superb lecture Marshall gave at this time to a group of advertisers. Relaxed, witty, thoroughly enjoying himself, he enchanted them. He said they no longer needed products: images were enough. They loved it. No longer salesmen: they were now recognized as creators. Eight years of Ronald Reagan made that observation cliché. But it wasn't cliché in 1967.<sup>8</sup>

*Harpers Bazaar* commissioned Marshall to write a special McLuhan issue. He was about to undergo surgery. The fee was large & needed. Not a word had been written, not a photograph assembled. On Friday, the publisher warned me: if an acceptable manuscript wasn't in his hands by Monday, the contract was cancelled. It arrived on time and appeared in McLuhan's name. Three years later it appeared as a book, *They Became What They Beheld*, under my name.

The Fordham effort collapsed. Marshall returned to Toronto. I returned to California, this time to UC, Santa Cruz. Then I moved to New Guinea where I worked for the Australian government. From this came, *Oh, What a Blow that Phantom Gave Me!*, on the impact of alien media on tribal peoples.

In 1970 I began teaching at the New School for Social Research in New York. Over the next few years, Marshall & I met irregularly in Toronto & New York. The exuberant, witty rainmaker was now a wary, irritable jukebox reciting old phrases in random order. Sarcasm provided protection. One evening in New York, he arrived first for dinner. When Kurt Vonnegut walked in, Marshall asked, "Who's that?" "Vonnegut." "Can't stand his work." This in a loud voice. When, "Who's that?" "Warhol." "He even looks like a peasant." Sittings were rearranged.

Insults kept critics at bay. Businessmen, OK, but no academics, all hopeless. In Toronto, he surrounded himself with dysfunctionals: sycophants, intellectual basketcases, celebrity parasites, cult followers, the worst. They reminded me of Jackie Tywitt's description of Mahatma Gandhi's entourage.

It was so different when we first met, at his home in a great old house, once St. Mike's infirmary. He stood before the fireplace, Corinne beside him, the fire bright, the two of them tall, extremely handsome, she regal, he witty, punning, quoting jazz lyrics, classics, Yeats, headlines, slang, ads, a Joycean display, then singing, not McCormack, but full & fun.

About a year before he died, a stroke left him permanently silent. I immediately went to see him. There he stood, beside a fireplace, next to Corinne, looking

much the same as when we'd first met, but now no words came & his hands flew about in frustration. Corrine took them & held them before her: "Tell me, Marshall, I can understand you. I can tell Ted." She looked into his eyes & he smiled & they both laughed, holding hands, and this was communication even more dazzling than that first day.

He spent his last summer with us on Long Island, on a farm by the sea. He walked, waded, rode horseback. But he could not speak. Only during Mass did words & songs & gestures return, however feebly. Then it all seemed to come together and his face relaxed.

The rest must have been Hell. One afternoon, we were sitting with Tom Wolfe. The conversation began with jokes. Marshall laughed at every one. But then the talk veered to Shaker furniture at hand and the notion that in simplicity lay function & beauty, as well as spiritual and social amelioration. Marshall desperately tried to speak. His face contorted; his hands froze in mid-air. He stood up with a cry of anguish. Then he shrugged, gave us an embarrassed grin, and went off by himself.

I was called early one morning to be told that he'd died in his sleep. My first reaction was to arrange for a band of pipers to pipe him over, and they were there, playing *Amazing Grace*, their drums encased in black. And if there'd been time, I would have had a New Orleans funeral band playing *The Saints Go Marching In*, for all that belonged to the best years, the ones that mattered.

After the funeral, Tom Easterbrook & I talked & talked. He said, "When I saw the casket coming down the aisle, I knew it was all over." We spoke of earlier times, good times. He'd been Marshall's closest friend, for over fifty years, since school days. When Tom spoke bitterly of the exploiters, his children in particular, who, he said, isolated him from his old friends, prompted celebrity contacts, and exploited him even when ill.

If that's true, in fairness it should be added that no one sought fame more eagerly than Marshall. He never walked over others to achieve it, but he let others walk over him. And they did. His public presence wasn't easy to admire. Yet privately he remained to the very end a proud man, a lonely man, an endearing friend.

I finished Marchand's book, *Marshall McLuhan*, feeling saddened, depressed. In spite of errors & omissions, he caught the man, at least as he knew him: wounded, down, fighting off the dogs.<sup>9</sup> But his account bore no resemblance to the earlier man I knew & loved. The difference reminded me of two events. Years ago, walking north through Central Park, I saw coming toward me, like a silent jet, the most handsome, graceful, powerful man I'd ever seen. Pure energy. He stared me right in the eye as he shot by. Mohammed Ali. Last year, in a hotel lobby in Islamabad, I saw him again: listless, witless, flabby. Strangers lifted his

arms into boxing positions and posed themselves for pictures while throwing mock punches at his jaw. He was then led to the water fountain and his head pressed down to drink. I thought of Marshall.

### **The Message**

I returned to the study of traditional culture. In 1949 I'd publicly debated this subject with Northrop Frye, arguing that Frazier & Frobenius, Jung & Campbell, were blinded by racism. Then, in the late fifties, I met a remarkable scholar. Carl Schuster sought to trace a memory link from yesterday back to paleolithic times. He simply appeared at my back door in desert California. I had just returned from Siberia. He asked about Magdalenian specimens I'd studied there. We became friends. I was with him when he died, ten years later. I promised to finish his work. I thought it would take a year or two. It took seventeen. I moved to Basel where I worked at the Museum für Völkerkunde. At one point, I sent a bit of it to Frye, who expressed continuing interest. When I finished the whole, I asked him if I should send it to his office or home. The question mattered, for each set contains 12 massive books, weighing 97 pounds in total. He suggested his home. He died before it was shipped.

Printing was limited to 600 sets, all sent free of charge to academic libraries & scholars throughout the world. A seedbed to be cultivated, weeded, extended. No reviews, no hype, no consumers. Contributors only. I learned the hard way with *Explorations*.

### **Enough, Enough**

Enough has already been written about these events to fill several shelves in a dozen libraries, plus bulging files in a hundred newspaper morgues. My account, by comparison, is brief, not complete, of course, yet it brings us as close as we shall probably ever be (and that is close enough) to events as I knew them forty years ago, played out among friends now gone, in a city changed beyond recognition.

---

<sup>1</sup> Whorf's collected essays appeared posthumously as *Language, Thought and Reality*, edited by John B. Carroll, 1956. His work is often referred to as the Sapir-Whorf theory. This misleads: Sapir's contribution was minimal. He certainly encouraged and endorsed Whorf and passages about relations between language and thought appear in several of his writings. But he never addressed himself directly to this subject and appears not to have recognized aspectual verbs as timeless.

Whorf's critics focus entirely on his deterministic view of the relationship between language and culture. His more important essays on spatial metaphors and Hopi metaphysics are rarely addressed., perhaps because they ignore determinism.

Whorf and Sapir died before this subject gained wide interest. Dorothy Lee, however, was alive. Critics who wrote about Whorf's writings ignored hers, perhaps because she might have answered. She was by far the most brilliant scholar I ever knew.

In Canada, the *Canadian Forum* (33:387, 1953) published an essay on Whorf by me. The same year, Lister Sinclair did a highly successful radio broadcast on language and culture, principally about Whorf's work, while I did several radio and TV shows on Lee's work.

- 
- <sup>2</sup> Most of these essays can be found in Dorothy Lee, *Freedom and Culture*, 1959. A posthumous collection, *Valuing the Self*, 1976, contains talks to educational groups. Her last ‘publication,’ an interview on dignity (published in the J.C. Penny company’s employee newsletter) was pure Dorothy: she knew what she wanted to say and knew to whom she wanted to say it. Many of her early studies on California Indian languages are listed in the bibliography of the *Handbook of North American Indians* (volume 8, 1978).
- <sup>3</sup> Although Lee went uncredited, the influence of her study of lineal and non-lineal codifications of reality is easily demonstrated. Prior to 1950, the word ‘linear’ was restricted primarily to the physical sciences and, even there, rarely used. Since then, thanks to McLuhan & his promoters, the word has entered common speech with the meaning Lee first gave to it. If McLuhan had never promoted this and other ideas it remains unknown if they would have surfaced publicly of themselves or what other ideas might have appeared instead. Lee, like other unwilling contributors to ‘McLuhanism,’ by choice addressed small audiences. She feared that, when one-way communication replaced human dialog, the message itself changed.
- <sup>4</sup> Anyone who opposes power, pays. Jackie’s teaching contract wasn’t renewed. She stayed on with the Communications Seminar another year, then joined Harvard’s faculty. In fairness, I must add that this sort of thing didn’t characterize the University as a whole. It was a fine university. But departments varied greatly. Jackie’s & mine were at the bottom.
- <sup>5</sup> Earlier this year, here in New York, a new magazine was planned that would detail stories behind the news: why this news, not that; why this slant, not that. The masthead listed more Pulitzer Prize winners than the entire Ivy League employs. A survey indicated high reader interest. But of six potential sponsors, five expressed fear of retaliation against their companies. The magazine never went beyond mock-up.
- <sup>6</sup> Let me illustrate. An encyclopedia editor commissioned me to write an entry on McLuhan. He returned my copy with the request that I credit Marshall with additional contributions, starting with the multi-screen film. I replied that the multi-screen, with French antecedents, was pioneered by Charles Eames in the thirties, transferred to film by Archer Goodwin in the fifties, and introduced into Canada by Christopher Chapman in the sixties. Marshall commented on the finished product. The editor disagreed, paid me, inserted his additions, and left the entry unsigned.
- <sup>7</sup> A typical example is the case in hand. In responding to Fulford’s article about *Explorations*. I’m forced to comment on Carl William’s contribution, which was minimal, and to focus almost entirely on Marshall’s, which were crucial, but no more so than that of several others. Thus, even when I try to correct this imbalance, a journalist defines the subject. A serious account of *Explorations* would cover different ground.
- <sup>8</sup> That year, Clifford Solway’s CBC-TV film, *Mr. Reagan, Mr. Kennedy*, included a political analyst describing an ideal candidate: wealthy, ambitious, handsome, devoid of any commitment. This ideal (actually real) candidate was hidden in the Bahamas, out of sight, out of sound, until after the election. In the meantime, TV & radio ads filled screen & air. He won in every precinct.
- <sup>9</sup> Let me correct one minor error. Marchand tells how, during a graphic lecture on Polynesian sex, I called after a coed who was stalking out, “The ship doesn’t leave for two days.” Alas, it’s an old story. When I was a student, it was attributed to Ernest Hooton of Harvard, but was probably already old then. A better story, perhaps apocryphal, concerned Hooton’s dislike of coeds who knit in class. “Miss X, are you aware that knitting is symbolic masturbation?” To which Miss X is alleged to have replied: “Each in his own way, Professor Hooton.”