McLuhan and Eliot, Music and Cyberspace:
A Fugue on Four Subjects

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By

Andrew Childress

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English
J. William Fulbright College of Arts and Sciences
The University of Arkansas

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And all that was good you must fight to keep with hearts as devoted as those of your fathers who fought to gain it.

-Choruses from the Rock, II

The good man is the builder, if he build what is good.
I will show you the things that are now being done,
And some of the things that were long ago done,
That you may take heart.

-Choruses from the Rock, I

Le Prince d'Aquitaine à la tour abolie
These fragments I have shored against my ruins

-The Waste Land: V. *What the Thunder Said*

The *bricoleur …*is someone who uses "the means at hand," that is, the instruments he finds at his disposition around him, those which are already there, which had not been especially conceived with an eye to the operation for which they are to be used and to which one tries by trial and error to adapt them, not hesitating to change them whenever it appears necessary, or to try several of them at once, even if their form and their origin are heterogeneous -- and so forth.

- Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*

My dear friend, I am sending you a little work of which it cannot be justly said that it has neither tail nor head, since on the contrary everything is at the same time head and tail, alternatively and reciprocally. Consider, I ask you, the admirable advantages this combination offers to everybody – to you, to me, and to the reader. We can interrupt where we like, I my reverie, you the manuscript, the reader his reading; for I do not hang the latter's restive upon the interminable thread of a superfluous plot. Remove one vertebra, and the two pieces of this torturous fantasy will reunite effortlessly. Cut it up in numerous fragments, and you will see that each can exist on its own. In the hope that some of these sections will be sufficiently alive to please and amuse you, I am so bold as to dedicate to you the entire serpent.

-Charles Baudelaire, letter to Arsène Houssaye regarding *Fleurs du mal*

Introduction

The main foci of this paper are Marshall McLuhan, T.S. Eliot, the Internet, and music.

"The content of the nineteenth-century mind was the Renaissance; the content of the twentieth-century mind is the nineteenth century."[1] And so the content of the 21st century mind is the 20th century. "A poem or a painting is in every sense a teaching machine for the training of perception and judgment",[2] and so the training of perception is the artist's task. But what is this other than a fancy way to say that some of us still think in Victorian terms and figures?

McLuhan diagnoses rearview-mirror-users as trying to cram a figure into an inappropriate ground, trying to strap contemporary man to bygone historical conditions and environments.

McLuhan's article on The Waste Land suggests that, by the time he wrote the Four Quartets, Eliot had escaped largely from the influence of Pound and was writing as his true "grammarian" self, which was, for McLuhan, the "right" way to write as a true Western Christian.[3] McLuhan argues that this can be seen in the structure of the entire work. The traditionalist Eliot was the Eliot whose work McLuhan admired and promoted, which shows McLuhan himself as a paradoxical combination of traditionalist and futurist.

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[1] McLuhan and Zingrone, eds., *Essential McLuhan*, 212.
[2] Ibid., 330
[3] McLuhan, "Pound, Eliot, and the Rhetoric of The Waste Land."

I admire *The Four Quartets* so much that I don't dare attempt an explication of the poetry. I will not trespass in that way. What I want to do is to suggest ways of looking at the shell of the poetry, the structure and the ideational content which together hold the poetry itself.

And so, if ways of looking is what I am giving you, my reader, ways of looking it will be. Welcome to my world. My father is an engineer and my mother homeschooled seven children through high school. I suffered from existential despair through my sixteenth and seventeenth years. If I could have any career I could dream of, I would dream of being a songwriter in the tradition of Bob Dylan and Leonard Cohen, although I am not Jewish - I consider myself proudly post-Baptist and objectively Protestant. I know that I live in an undefined postmodern world, and I am learning to love it as I find it. My habits of reading have been shaped deeply by my love of books and by the Internet, and I find little opposition between these two things, the bibliophilic tendency and the fragmented simultaneous medium. I have spent four years at the University of Arkansas studying English literature and piano performance. I have found myself caught between two worlds in the music department: my most important experiences with music before entering the university had to with music evolved from blues, rock, and punk, but the world of classical music has almost no communication with that music. The classical music that speaks to me with fewest barriers is the music of the early to mid-twentieth century French composers who were influenced by American jazz, like Poulenc and Milhaud. Their music is a

unique kind of synthesis, grafting a centuries-old tradition of hyper-

analytical, written, visually-dominated music into a virile, young, constantly

changing tradition of visually illiterate improvisation-based communal

music. The first book of poetry I ever bought was a collection of 100 poems

of E.E. Cummings. I was very largely bored by the Tennyson and Browning

and Shakespeare that I found in my home, although as I have grown up I have

learned to appreciate those writers, too. Cummings wrote with an ironic

detachment from the printed page, a playful but serious involvement that

resonated deeply with me.

So the ways of looking I offer you will be, may I say it without

embarrassment, my ways of looking. In academic jargon I suppose that the

thing I am attempting would be called something like "producing a reading",

but I think it much simpler and more honest and accurate to say that I am

offering a way of looking, not only at Eliot's Four Quartets but, by extension,

Eliot's other work, McLuhan's work, several other literary and musical

cultural artifacts, and certain aspects of the world in the here and now, in this

second decade of the twenty-first century.

"McLuhan has been the subject of a rare act of cultural cannibalism,

ingested piecemeal by many who couldn't take him whole."[4] Eric McLuhan

and Frank Zingrone make this assessment in the introduction to a Marshall

McLuhan anthology, and it rings true. To reduce McLuhan to one insight or

to one discipline is to misapprehend him entirely. Literary criticism, cultural

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[4] McLuhan and Zingrone, *Essential McLuhan*, 7.

history, media theory, religious writing, and educational theory are only part of what McLuhan engaged in.

I won't pretend that I am offering you anything strikingly original, as an undergraduate not particularly well-informed in the ways of the world. What I am giving you is an amalgamation, a non-systematic compendium, an assortment of things I have picked up along the course of my university career, an offering of fragments shored against the ruins. For example: in the third section of Burnt Norton, Eliot writes

> ...Only a flicker
> Over the strained time-ridden faces
> Distracted from distraction by distraction
> Filled with fancies and empty of meaning...[5]

Would I have made the (perhaps obvious) connection of these lines with the Internet had not Nicholas Carr made the same connection in his book *The Shallows*?[6] Perhaps. At any rate, I am just a collector, here, and maybe a bit of a performer.

This thesis is an experiment. It is not an academic paper. It is an experiment in auto-didacticism, youthful exuberance, interdisciplinarity, anti-disciplinarity, Internet studies, postmodernism, intratextuality, Medieval philosophy, pop culture, historiography, musicology, and technopoetics.

In my four years as an undergraduate I have written many a thesis-driven paper. This thesis is not one of them. What I do here is exploration, not argument, as the structure of the paper makes clear. Reading it will be

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[5] Eliot, *Four Quartets*, 17
[6] Carr, *The Shallows*, 119.

more like surfing (or perhaps lurching through) the Internet than reading another term paper or something by Harold Bloom. This is not to say that I am aimless or without intention, but that I question the standard academic ambitions and methods. And if there's ever a time I can get away with this kind if thing, it will be now, at the end of my undergrad career. So here goes.

The structure and devices of this work are inspired by, or maybe stolen from, a book by Marshall McLuhan. The table of contents of McLuhan's *From Cliché to Archetype* is on page 192, right before the last essay in the book. The essays are arranged in alphabetical order, so that an essay titled "Anesthesia" precedes "Archetype", and "Parody" follows "Paradox". And "Table of Contents" precedes "Theater". The content of each essay is related to the content of the others, but not in a way that makes linear progression through the book necessary or even desirable. My table of contents is at the beginning, and my sections are not arranged alphabetically, but nor do the twelve sections of this paper build on one another sequentially.

This paper is casually and completely interdisciplinary. T.S. Eliot's poetry and criticism do make up a sort of backbone, but Eliot is only one of many vertebrae – or perhaps a more fitting metaphor would be that he is one strand of many woven together. Here is my justification for working in an interdisciplinary way: I have often heard that in neglecting the library in favor of the Internet one runs the risk of losing valuable references and sources, because when you don't go to the physical object, you never see the

books around it on the shelf, which can be valuable. But sources on the

Internet are also surrounded by other sources, just in a different way

(hyperlinks, long indexes, unfiltered Google searches) - and that different

way lends itself more to the interdisciplinary approach. It restructures our

stance towards our subject by opening our field of reference to embrace

multiple disciplines in unpredictable ways. And when we work with this

long enough, our very approach to any intellectual work begins to change. I

would argue that it changes for the better, but that's not an argument I want

to start here. In any case, I don't know how to approach this in a way that is

not interdisciplinary.

1: Situating

There is no way in the world we live in to be non-conformist. But I believe we are in a Renaissance, if we could just get over ourselves. In 21st century America, with all our thirst for originality, the most one can do is choose what to conform to. Maybe nonconformity has always been an illusion, but it was easier to deny it in days gone by.   This section looks at style, fame, heroism, and the situation we find ourselves in 21st century America, the cultural situation and the situation of the inner life.

Sufjan Stevens' song "John Wayne Gacy, Jr." chronicles the murders and perversions of the eponymous serial killer, and concludes with the whispered lines, "And on my best behavior/ I am really just like him /Look beneath the floorboards/ For the secrets I have hid".[7] We are seeing an almost Puritan renewal of acute self-consciousness, consciousness of individual and collective guilt.

Aphorism 290 of Nietzsche's *The Gay Science* contrasts a strong character with a weak character and their respective abilities to give style to their own characters. The strong character is "bound by but also perfected under [his] own law" while "the weak characters with no power over themselves *hate* the constraint of style".[8] This question of style is one that we seem to be almost obsessively concerned with; see, for example, Jaron Lanier's essay "Where Did The Music Go?", in which he bemoans the lack of

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[7] Sufjan Stevens, "*Sufjan Stevens Invites You To: Come On Feel the Illinoise.*" Asthmatic Kitty/Secretly Canadian *and* Rough Trade, 2005.
[8] Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 164.

any truly new styles in popular music. "I'm not whining about how crummy the latest pop music is. I'm whining about how there isn't any latest pop music."[9] Jacques Barzun had a slightly different diagnosis of the contemporary situation in the 1970s:

> "Remember how much we now face: all the classics from the caveman onward, all the moderns from the last century onward, and all the styles of all the tribes brought from the ends of the earth westward. The succession and simultaneity of avant-gardes form a jungle in which all but Mowgli and Tarzan lose their way."[10]
> "In culture at large, it is a long time since a single style has prevailed in any art. ...if a period lacks its own style, as well as a sense of style, then the sum of art produced will probably not exert any clear or subtle influence. The influence is scattered; the scattering bewilders."[11]

Are we just weak, in the Nietzschean sense? Do we hate the constraints of style too much to "survey the strengths and weaknesses that [our] nature has to offer and then fit them into an artistic plan until each appears as art and reason and even weaknesses delight the eye"?[12] Can we produce nothing new or unifying?

The hippie generation of the 1960s self-advertised their complete break with tradition so aggressively that we can't find a way to break with them, and it's killing us. James Cameron's movie *Avatar* was old and tired hippie rhetoric in a shiny new digital suit, and no one complained.

We let the diverse styles and worldviews of the multicultural American culture pass through us; we are slow to judge but even slower to

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[9] Miller, *Sound Unbound*, 386.
[10] Barzun, *The Use and Abuse of Art*, 130.
[11] Barzun, *The Use and Abuse of Art*, 129.
[12] Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 164.

adopt, though we can't escape the influences. We struggle to love. We do respect our parents' and grandparents' struggles for justice, although their struggles to enthrone "Truth" are more than a bit suspect in our eyes, whether the Truth in question be political, religious, or psychological doctrine.

America is, for now, the functioning cultural capital and capitol of the world. So many stylistic developments in the world in the last century have come straight from America. Music follows technology. Asian, African, and Indian musics were static, unchanging in style, until the introduction of Western instruments and styles.[13] America is a leader in technology, and so a leader in style. Technology and style are always connected. Of course, I am over-simplifying in order to situate this discourse on ground that I know - Japan is also a leader in technology and therefore important as a global style-maker.

The diversity and size of America, and our never-ending proliferation of subcultural styles, make it impossible to have a defining style or culture, as Barzun argues. This is not a problem. Subcultures may be hard to celebrate in unity, but they have their own strengths. What is Lady GaGa and Kanye West today was groundbreaking subculture in the 1980s. The entrepreneurial model of culture plays havoc with the ecology of style, but my generation has learned (or at least is learning) to not only live with that

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[13] For example, see the soundtrack for the recent movie *Slumdog Millionaire.* The music is a clear example of the radical changes that Western technology makes to traditional music.

havoc but to thrive in Barzun's jungle. To use a musical example, we wouldn't know what to do with a monolith like Beethoven or Mozart or Wagner, but we thrive and build in this odd space between (for example) Simon and Garfunkel, The Roots, Steel Train, Josquin du Prez, Sigur Ros, and Aphex Twin, in between our multiplying subcultures. Our artists may be of smaller stature than Beethoven, but we have more of them, and they have a long-standing agreement to disagree, which has yielded strange fruit. "The music divides us into tribes"[14], but now in this second decade of the 21st century, our tribes are layered over each other and overlap at every corner.

The age of the rock star is over. You cannot be a big deal. That's what I'm saying, to myself, to literary critics, to musicians, to poets, to America. Heroic, yes, but not a big deal. The fragmented nature of our cultural milieu and the flowering of style mean that there is not enough attention available to be given to you (ironically, or perhaps paradoxically, since there are more people now who are more connected than ever before).

Why am I playing speaker-for-our-generation here? Of course I am not representative. There is not and cannot be anyone who is representative; we are too separate.

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[14] The Arcade Fire, *The Suburbs*. Merge, 2010.

2: McLuhan's Trivium: Grammar as Philosophy

McLuhan's *The Classical Trivium* argues that the history of learning in

the Western world can be read as a history of dispute between the three

branches of the trivium: Grammar, Dialectic, and Rhetoric.

> "*Grammatica*, or grammar … is not to be understood in the sense of
> parts of speech, sentence structure, or any other narrow sense
> belonging either to prescriptive grammar or modern linguistics. In
> the widest meaning of the term, and particularly in its relation to
> dialectics and rhetoric… grammar is the art of interpreting not only
> literary texts but all phenomena. Above all, grammar entails a fully
> articulated science of exegesis, or interpretation. Dialectics is,
> variously, a way of testing evidence or the study of kinds of proofs for
> an argument, a method of dialogue, or simply logic. Rhetoric, of
> course, includes the rhetorical devices such as alliteration that are
> most commonly associated with it in general usage today, but as set
> out by McLuhan … it proves to be a very complex feature of discourse,
> involving five divisions.
> "Above all, McLuhan stresses the intertwining of the trivial
> arts, setting out every phase in the complex history of the subject.
> Dialectics is described in grammatical terms from a rhetorical point of
> view by the Greek Sophists; dialecticians subordinate grammar and
> rhetoric to their art; rhetoricians subordinate dialectic to *inventio* and
> *dispositio*."[15]

In chronicling the history of this "war within the word", McLuhan

silently takes up arms with the grammarians. In covering the Doctors of the

Church of the thirteenth century, he gives substantially more attention to St.

Bonaventura than to St. Thomas Aquinas, saying that Bonaventura "was a

master of logical technique [but] he finds his true place in the tradition of

grammatical exegesis along with Hugh of St. Victor and Vincent of Beauvais.

…for all his resemblance to the schoolmen, the work of St. Bonaventura is

animated by the analogical grammatical exegesis which we have seen in

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[15] McLuhan, *The Classical Trivium*, xi, introduction by W. Terrence Gordon.

Philo and St. Augustine."[16] Aquinas, the master of dialectic[17] and syllogism, is

mentioned more in footnotes than in the actual text. McLuhan also writes,

"grammar was far from forgotten during the great age of dialectics. In the

thirteenth century, with the triumph of Aristotle in St. Thomas Aquinas, came

simultaneously the consummate achievement of the grammatical method of

St. Bonaventura".[18] He associates *grammatica* with Plato and pre-Socratic

mythologies, and with the patristic era of Christian exegesis. He states,

> "The doctrine of names, is of course, the doctrine of essence and not a
> naive notion of oral terminology. The scriptural exegetists will hold, as
> Francis Bacon held, that Adam possessed metaphysical knowledge in a very
> high degree. To him the whole of nature was a book which he could read
> with ease. He lost his ability to read this language as a result of his fall; and
> Solomon alone of the sons of men has ever recovered the power to read the
> book of nature. The business of art is, however, to recover the knowledge of
> that language which once man held by nature."[19]

It becomes unclear in the last sentence whether the speaker is the

"scriptural exegetist" or McLuhan himself.

McLuhan continues to align himself with the trivial discipline of

grammar when he writes, quoting Etienne Gilson, "[Bonaventura's] guiding

principles of interpretation are managed in their application not by the logic

or dialectics of Aristotle which are adapted to the analysis of a world of

natures and leave us "without the means to explore the secrets of a symbolic

world such as that of the Augustinian tradition", but by the reasoning of

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[16] Ibid., 143.
[17] "Dialectic" in this sense has nothing to do with Kantian or Hegelian
dialectic but refers to the traditional (trivial) rules and practice of logic.
[18] Ibid., 17.
[19] Ibid., 16.

analogy".[20] As Irvine and Thomson write, "no single medieval discipline embraced all that we call literary criticism or theory today, but the discipline closest to literary criticism – in the sense of the interpretation of a traditional literary canon and the description of literary language – was *grammatica*."[21]

With this definition of grammar as a foundation, McLuhan will proceed to think and write using grammar as a guiding philosophy in *The Classical Trivium* and in his later work in the 1960s, 1970s, and early 1980s, applying these ideas and principles in his analyses of mass media, advertising, and literature from Alexander Pope to James Joyce.

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[20] Ibid., 36.
[21] Irvine, Martin and David Thomson. "Grammatica and literary theory", 15. See also Appendix for Irvine and Thomson's diagram illustrating the scope of medieval grammar.

3: Grammar and Meaning: Analogy

This section attempts to adopt the position of the McLuhanian grammarian.

Using the grammatical principle of etymology[22] casts the conflict between grammar and dialectic in an odd light. Grammar, as attested by Marshall McLuhan and Dionysius Thrax[23], relies heavily on the use of analogy, while logic works on the principle of analysis (Aristotle laid down the groundwork in his *Prior Analytics*). The words "analogy", "logic", and "analyze" all come into English by way of Greek: "analogy" and "logic" both contain the root word *logos*, which is translated and interpreted in many ways: "word", "reasoning", "story", or, in the Gospel of John, the Word of God, Jesus Christ. The Logos is a complex, multi-layered concept, as the many possible translations show, and the fact that the word lends itself to both grammar (in the word "analogy") and dialectic (in the word "logic") suggests an underlying compatibility between these two divisions of the trivium. However, the formal etymological meanings of "analogy" and "analysis" are harder to reconcile. In both words, the "ana-" prefix suggests movement

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[22] See McLuhan and McLuhan, *Laws of Media*, 116. "Etymology is so crucial that it deserves a host of separate studies. Etymology reveals a process of transformation of culture and sensibility and is also a matter of retrieval and of structure: the ground pattern of forces at the levels of molecular and atomic structure. At and beyond this level lies the structure of experience of the utterer; so grammatical flips into rhetorical investigation." I offer these etymologies of "analogy" and "analysis" experimentally.
[23] See Davidson, *The Grammar of Dionysius Thrax*, 3. "Grammar is an experimental knowledge of the usages of language as generally current among poets and prose writers. It is divided into six parts: [the fifth is] an accurate account of analogies."

towards or strengthening of. "Analysis" is formed of that prefix and the verb *luo*, which has a continuum of meanings ranging from "loosen" to "undo" to "destroy". In ancient Greek, the noun *analogia* meant a correspondence, a resemblance, or a mathematical proportion - a movement towards Logos, reason. The realm of analogy is language, where it derives and communicates meaning with reference to parallels and proportions. The realm of analysis is logic, where it elucidates by reducing and resolving compounds into their elements. Analogy builds parallels and creates mental connections; analysis reduces a whole to the sum of its parts by breaking connections.

Grammar is a matter of faith, and faith is the first casualty of a logic (dialectic) which intrudes on the ground of grammar or rhetoric by attempting to provide conclusive proof for every matter of understanding.[24] The "war within the word" is a long one; its history is wrought with sudden changes of fortune and centuries-long ascents of power. Grammar, dialectic, and rhetoric, each a fine thing and each having the potential to harmonize with the others, have rarely been at peace. Understanding is not the same as Proof, and Analysis is not the same as Understanding. Both analogy and analysis can serve as guides to understanding, but only if each stays to his proper path. When analogy strays to the province of analysis, analogy becomes the weakest of the tools of logic and logic falls under suspicion;

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[24] In *Laws of Media*, McLuhan assumes the role of scientist, using Karl Popper's principle of falsification to define "science". This leaves verification (proof) irrelevant.

when analysis strays into the land of analogy, words lose all meaning in a rampant deconstruction and analogy becomes nonsense or propaganda.

The "A is to B as C is to D" of analogical reasoning, "this lively awareness of the most exquisite delicacy which depends upon there being no connection whatever between the components"[25], generally has no inherent way to resist anyone who would screw it down so tightly as to reduce it to a pure analytical logic or an allegory. J.R.R. Tolkien did not write *The Lord of the Rings* as an allegory (a work with syllogistically hidden meanings and strict necessary correspondences) but as an analogical fantasy, yet it was still (and is still) read by some as an allegory meant to refer explicitly to current political situations or to the spiritual life.

The essential power of analogy is not to prove but to *reveal*, to clarify vision. It shares this power with fantasy like *The Lord of the Rings* (or does it give the power?). The unfortunate inverse of this power is the power to reveal a lie as the truth using techniques of fantasy or analogy. Perverse fantasy, like pornography and advertising, bears false analogy to reality, as good analogical fantasy does not, while both perverse fantasy and analogical fantasy have the same power to caress and mold the imagination and the perception. True fantasy holds the weight of a thickly woven analogy to reality, but does not attempt a logical lockstep with reality - only by striking this balance can it do analogy's work of revelation.

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[25] Qtd. in McLuhan, "Marshall McLuhan's Theory of Communication: The Yegg," 30.

This view of analogy and meaning is essentially the same as the view proposed by C.S. Lewis:

> "It must not be supposed that I am in any sense putting forward the imagination as the organ of truth. We are not talking of truth, but of meaning: meaning which is the antecedent condition both of truth and of falsehood, whose antithesis is not error but nonsense. I am a rationalist. For me, reason is the natural organ of truth; but imagination is the organ of meaning. Imagination, producing new metaphors or revivifying old, is not the cause of truth, but its condition."[26]

For contrast: "Maimonides argues that [words] are the objects of the faculty of imagination with which there can be no critical examination. The job of the logician is to translate the misleading constructions of external speech into the logically more perspicuous representations in inner speech".[27] If Maimonides and C.S. Lewis should debate the nature of language and the role of the imagination, who would win? No one, probably. For Maimonides, Psalm 4:4 ("Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still") proves the logical superiority of silent, internal "speech" over external speech embodied in words; for Lewis, truth requires meaning and meaning requires expressive metaphors. Logical perspicuity must be made incarnate in metaphor and analogy.

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[26] Lewis, *Rehabilitations and other Essays,* 157.
[27] Stern, "Meaning and Language", 243.

4: Grave-robbing and Juxtaposition: A Theory

"The besetting sin of a writer such as Hugo is staking all upon the material dynamism of the word-thing. I think on the contrary that it is the province of the poet, who uses words as the material of his work, to react against this tendency of the symbol to transform itself into a thing and so to maintain or recover by force, in the sensitive flesh of the word, the spirituality of language. Hence an invention, a creation of fresh images, which may appear obscure but is nevertheless imposed by absolute precision. Modern poetry, with a courage which is sometimes ridiculous, has undertaken to scour language. In spite of contradictory appearances and stray phenomena... it is making rather towards objectivity, trying to find a form of expression which will not convey a lie, but in which the mind will force the words with its whole weight of matter to be faithfully significant in the cloistered world of the poem."[28]
-Jacques Maritain

Might it not be more appropriate in this age to say the vocation or the responsibility of the poet rather than the "province"? If, as McLuhan writes, "human perception is literally incarnation... our words are analogies of the miracle by which we incarnate and utter the world",[29] and, as Maritain suggests, the "sensitive flesh of the word" has a frightening tendency to turn into a dead thing, the poet must find a way to embody perception that is capable of refreshing the analogical incarnating power of words. How?

In this section I am making a rough sketch of a theory of literature and music - literature with musical resonances, and music with literary resonances. To do this, I am considering I will call impure poetry and impure literature. By impure poetry I mean primarily poetry that uses techniques of juxtaposition and grave-robbing, as exemplified in *The Waste Land*, which was heavily criticized by traditionalists for using those techniques when it

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[28] Maritain, *Art and Scholasticism*, 148.
[29] McLuhan, *The Medium and the Light*, 169.

was first published in 1922. By impure music I mean something that has historically been the object of much less moralizing and value judgment - if "pure music" is music with no text or program, like the classical sonata and symphony forms, impure music is anything that includes words or relies on extramusical associations.[30]

Poetry after Modernism has abandoned the idea that sustained attention on a single theme or metaphor or image is a poetically powerful thing. The works of the past built on the principle of rapt attention to attain a static aesthetic moment will retain their power, but new works will not be written in that way. Eliot saw this, but his poetry was too dense and allusive to attain the effect of total involvement for a large audience. Our image-saturated, word-assaulted, discontinuous existence demands a poetry that goes even beyond radical juxtaposition for effect. The timeless principle of analogy will remain, but instead of analogies being drawn as one-to-one, they will be drawn a thousand to one or fifteen to fifteen. There is no straight single correspondence in a world where the Internet exists. Any description using the tools of analogy, metaphor, or simile will be drawn with multiple vehicles from different spheres. Mixing metaphors is no longer even a venial sin.

A poem like John Donne's "At the round earth's imagined corners" or Shakespeare's "That time of year thou mayst in me behold", or even, to get

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[30] Interestingly, the fledgling discipline of music cognition relies almost exclusively on pure music for any experiments that deal with the neurological effects of music. Apparently impure music skews scientific data.

out of the Elizabethan poets, Robert Browning's "My Last Duchess", uses one vehicle and one tenor to achieve its effect. There is one story involved. The poetics of image these poems use assumes that the poem will exist as a self-contained entity, that it is right to use one sustained image or a set of references from one sphere for one poem.

From Rimbaud through Baudelaire this kind of assumption still held in Modern poetry, although it was being undermined. With Eliot it came apart entirely. The assumption of the necessity or propriety of sustaining single-sphere images was exploded with *The Waste Land*. Not only are the images Eliot uses drawn from discordant spheres of life, the rhythms, the forms, the overall structure, the very languages used are all fractured. This reflects the new non-literate or post-literate, non-visual[31] environment of the 20th century city. The old visual order was falling off, as seen in the section of the poem with the gramophone. As Suarez argues, "the gramophone's prerecorded sound is the condition of possibility for the entire work".[32]   T.S. Eliot said he would prefer an audience that "could neither read nor write",[33] and he made phonograph recordings of his own poetry, including *The Waste Land*. Electronic post-literacy produces conditions in which juxtaposition of apparently unrelated images, forms, and concepts seems natural, and Eliot was responding to those conditions.

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[31] I use the term "visual" in McLuhan's sense, to refer to the dominance of visual experience in traditional forms of literacy. When talking about radio, movies, and television, McLuhan uses the term "audile-tactile". See below on E.E. Cummings.

[32] Suarez, "T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land…*", 751.

[33] Eliot, *Selected Prose*, 94.

This explains why Eliot said he would prefer an illiterate audience and why he wrote *The Waste Land* as he did, because the reasons for those two things are the same: he was responding to a new environment. The newness of that environment is still with us; the Internet fractures and fragments our attention and brings discordant spheres into resonance even more than London in 1922. On the Internet, you can be in a strip club and a seminary library simultaneously, or reading Marx while running a business and buying consumer goods - choose your hypocrisy. Or, if "hypocrisy" is too earnestly moralizing for you, choose your own ironic juxtaposition.

Juxtaposition as a poetic technique is now coming into its own. The Waste Land used it at micro and macro levels for the first time. Rimbaud used it sparingly, perhaps unintentionally. The Surrealists used it intentionally and perversely, but their intuition was right: in the words of Andre Breton, "...we have attempted to present interior reality and exterior reality as two elements in process of unification, or finally becoming one".[34]

Electronic sampling as a musical technique is now coming into its own. Sampling culture is a musical analogy to the literary technique I am trying to articulate - it works by pulling bits and pieces from diverse sources and unifying then.

E.E Cummings ' poetry plays with the boundary between visual and audile. He built audile-style ambiguity out of the elements of the decidedly non-ambiguous visual experience. His technique enters by the accepted path

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[34] Breton, "What Is Surrealism?"

for visual perception but attempts to bring in its wake the entire audile-

tactile complex.

5: Rhythm on the Page

Teo Macero and Miles Davis

Tingen documents how, during the recording sessions of *In a Silent Way* and *Bitches Brew*, Teo Macero's electronic involvement in Miles Davis's band's improvisatory form imposed a version of classical sonata form onto formless jazz by copying and pasting sections of music so that the first few minutes of music on a tune were identical to the last few minutes.[35] In the terms of classical music theory, Macero reused the exposition so that it became the recapitulation. The medium is the message, and here they both change because Teo Macero had (a) technological prowess and (b) training in the lore of classical music. And this changed message changes the way we play music, now: improvisation will be codified and repeated with authority.

Uniformity and repeatability are the foundation of all Gutenberg technology, including the printing presses used to produce finely edited musical scores of Chopin and Beethoven. From Davis's autobiography:

> "That's what classical music is; the musicians only play what's there and nothing else. They can remember, and have the ability of robots. In classical music, if one musician isn't like the other, isn't all the way a robot, like all the rest, then the other robots make fun of him or her, especially if they're black. That's all that is, that's all the classical music is in terms of the musicians who play it - robot shit."[36]

This is the difference between the classical composer's authorship or authority and the post-literate musician's process-based creation: the power of precise long-term retention is lost; the power of

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[35] Tingen, *Miles Beyond*, 60, 68
[36] Davis, *Miles: The Autobiography*, 243-244

extemporaneous creation is regained.   This is the difference between a musical tradition based on uniformity and repeatability and one based on improvisation and transitory, un-transcribed individuality. Of course, since the early 20th century recording technology has blurred the distinction between "transitory" and "repeatable" in music, but Macero's use of recording technology to mold jazz into a classical form after the performance is a milestone in the continuing miscegenation between classically literate music and other styles.

A note on the way I use the word "post-literate" - it is difficult to make any hard-and-fast, all-encompassing definition. I count Miles Davis as a post-literate musician because improvisation is foundational to his style and his solos do not lend themselves to precise visual transcription. But Miles could read music; he went to Julliard and studied with world-class symphony musicians. He is post-literate because his musical literacy (*visual* musical literacy, that is) was largely irrelevant to his approach to music. I do not equate literacy with intelligence or even with an understanding of music theory - there is much music theory that can be taught and understood without recourse to staff paper and abstract symbols. But I also count as post-literate the rock musicians that Miles talks about, saying, "I started realizing that most rock musicians didn't know anything about music. They didn't study it, couldn't play different styles - and don't even talk about reading music".[37] The post-literacy of this kind of rock musician is much

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[37] Davis, *Miles: The Autobiography*, 302

closer to sheer illiteracy than the kind of post-literacy embodied in Miles

Davis, but even this kind of brainless musicianship participates in some small

way in a centuries-long tradition of musical literacy in Western culture, and

so deserves the name of post-literacy instead of illiteracy - some of the roots

of rock music, at least, stretch back into the harmonic and melodic

foundations laid by Bach.

Rhythmic Notation

Bach used all 4 visually-based counterpoint techniques -

augmentation, diminution, retrograde, and inversion - effortlessly and in

improvisation with multiple voices. Improvising a fugue, as Bach is said to

have done, is like working a complicated calculus problem while blindfolded

and juggling. It seems superhuman. However, there are any number of

rhythms that simply come naturally to me that never once occurred to Bach:

they trace their roots back to Africa, but by here and now they (or simplified,

diluted forms of them) are in the blood and hands of most American

musicians.

Medieval vocal music may have had much more rhythmic interest

than our modern recreations seem to suggest - we have really no idea what it

actually sounded like, especially the more complex stuff. "Polyphonic

performance practices, even if we have only a sketchy idea of them, were

surely applied (or at least available for application) to all the early genres of

courtly and urban music... Reports of rustic part-singing are likewise

tantalizing."[38] But by Bach's time, the system of rhythmic notation had

developed into a (relatively) simple and clear way of writing down precisely

what was meant.[39] There were a few exceptions, and there was a tradition of

performance practice that does not show its face in the unadulterated score,

but it was still pretty simple.   However, to notate a piece of African drum

music, even a simple one, is a forbidding task. Compare the visual effect of

the end result of a transcription of a Bach prelude with an example of the

kind of rhythm transcribed by a musicologist working in West Africa.

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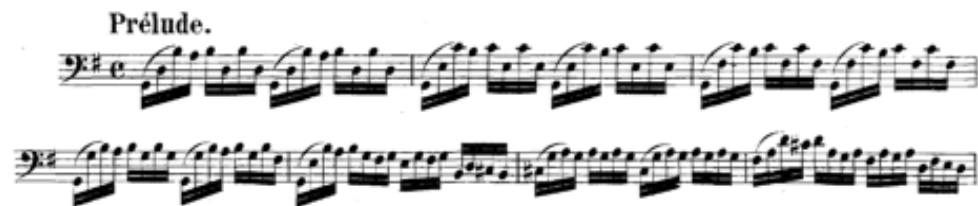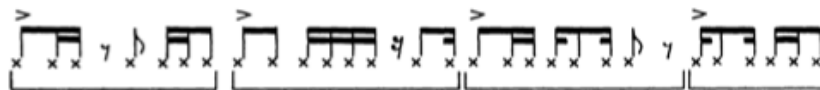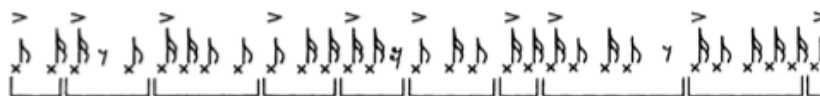
41

The superabundance of 16th rests, odd meter, quintuplets, and

syncopations in African music makes an absolute mess on the page, whereas

a Bach piece gives an impression of rhythmic simplicity and consistency - the

complexity of Bach's music lies elsewhere than in the note-to-note rhythmic

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[38] Taruskin, "Polyphony in Practice and Theory"
[39] Maria, "The Evolution of Rhythmic Notation"
[40] Cello Suite No. 1 in G Major, BWV 1007, Prelude. IMSLP. <imslp.org>
[41] Rivière, "On Rhythmical Marking in Music", 244

interest. Could it be that the very tradition of writing music down led to this

simplification of micro-level rhythm? Could Bach have used those

counterpoint devices improvisatorially if there were not a long tradition of

searching them out with pen and paper?

Erik Davis writes,

"Polyrhythm impels the listener to explore a complex space of beats,
to follow any of a number of fluid, warping, and shifting lines of flight… The
traditional rhythms of West African music are considered additive, a term
which gives us an indication of their fundamental multiplicity. The music's
complex percussive patterns bubble up from the shifting and open-ended
interaction between many different individual drum patterns and pitches."[42]
 Traditional West African music is, of course, completely without a

written tradition.

Using pen and paper to create music leads to a focus on the elements

of music that your notational system is most fluent in. Our system excels at

pitch specification (within a precise 12-tone system), phrase structure,

rhythmic *alignment* (important for polyphony), harmony, and general top-

down organization. The non-visual tradition of African rhythm[43] excels at

rhythmic complexity and multiplicity, responsiveness, spontaneity, and

creating space for exploration.

Eliot's description of the auditory imagination, repeatedly quoted in

full by McLuhan, illustrates the fusion of a musical tradition based on visual

composition and one without a visual element:

"What I call the auditory imagination is the feeling for syllable
and rhythm, penetrating far below the conscious levels of thought and

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[42] Davis, " 'Roots and Wires' Remix", in Miller, *Sound Unbound*, 56-58
[43] This is not meant to reduce African music to rhythm, but a consideration of
melodic and harmonic elements would be out of place here.

feeling, invigorating every word; sinking to the most primitive and forgotten, returning to the origin and bringing something back, seeking the beginning and the end. It works through meanings, certainly, or not without meanings in the ordinary sense, and fuses the old and obliterated and the trite, the current, and the new and the surprising, the most ancient and the most civilized mentality." [44]

The fusion of the most ancient and the most civilized mentality is the fusion of the visual and the audile-tactile, a strange combination of demoticism and elitism, intuition and technology, music and engineering, post-literacy and literacy, the ear and the eye.

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[44] From Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent", as quoted in McLuhan and McLuhan, *Laws of Media*, 102

6: Transcription and Composition

"Je juge cette longue querelle de la tradition et de l'invention
De l'Ordre et de l'Aventure..."[45]

I have begun an analysis of the collision between literate and non-literate musical practice in rhythm. It is something that has happened and is happening right now, specifically in the metalcore scene, in an analogue to the relation between literary "tradition and invention" spoken of by Apollinaire, enacted by Eliot, exegeted by McLuhan. It is an assimilation of demotic chaos of expression (newspapers, punk rock) with traditional arts (academic poetry, classical music), a collision of audile and visual techniques, power amplified by power. [46]

Metalcore breakdowns are codified coordinated expressions of improvised accentual meter. Like in Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*, a primitive beast has learned to use the precision tools of math and flashing chrome power. The basic tools of paper-based notation date back to the 12th century, and the use of them in popular music at least to the mid-19th century, but in metalcore it is something different. The way tradition interacts with the demotic is something qualitatively different. Bands like We Came As Romans and The Word Alive who use strings and classical

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[45] Guillame Appolinaire, "La jolie rousse"
[46] What of harmony and melody? That same collision surely can happen in those realms, too. This is sort of what happened in jazz, especially early jazz, but it is not really happening now except in some obscure corners of indie and experimental scenes.

sounds in ways that are defiantly different from opera-metal bands like

Nightwish are a good probe for this.

> "After a thousand years of diastematic notation, five hundred years of printing, and a generation of cheap photocopying, Western 'art-musicians' and music students (especially those with academic educations) have become so dependent on texts that they (or rather, we) can hardly imagine minds that could really use their memories—not just to store melodies by the thousand, but to create them as well. By now, we have all to some degree fallen prey to the danger about which Plato was already warning his contemporaries some two and a half millennia ago: 'If men learn writing, it will implant forgetfulness in their souls' (Phaedrus, 275a). So it is no wonder that 'classical' musicians habitually—and very wrongly—tend to equate musical composition in an oral context with improvisation."[47]

Transcription of rhythm: transcribing non-Western music makes

demands on the system that break the system. The *visual* aesthetics of the

system are violated. Non-written music tends to subdivide more easily and

more prolifically than written music - improvisation is of course more

flexible in many ways, but especially rhythmically. And, as Taruskin points

out, that flexibility is by no means limited to actual extemporaneous

improvisation, but extends to music that "while 'oral', is not improvisatory",

that is "[worked] out without notation yet meticulously, in detail, and in

advance. [The work is fixed] in memory in the very act of creating it, so that it

will be permanent."[48] The conception of rhythm used in oral composition

does not rely on discrete, quantifiable units, and so the rhythms do not

always lend themselves to easy transcription.

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[47] Taruskin, "Chapter 1: The Curtain Goes Up", "The Persistence of Oral Tradition".
[48] Ibid.

Church Music

This assimilation and collision of two different modes of composition can be seen in microcosm in the varying uses of meter, rhythm, and structure in Protestant church music over the last 150 years.

Classic American pop music from the 1940s and surrounding decades, musical theater, classical art song, and the standard Protestant hymnal all use syllabic meter, and all for the same reason: the words were (generally) conceived and written apart from the music.

There has been a seismic shift over the last 150 years in how Protestant churches write music. The traditional style is impressive, really, from a point of view of compositional craftsmanship - the standard process was to write a single 16-bar melody, usually with a high point 3/4 through, that could stand up to be being repeated back-to-back three to five times without getting old. The lyrics had to be shaped precisely to match both the rhythm of the melody and dramatic arc of the melody. It was almost always strophic.

The new style as seen beginning in the 1960s or 1970s is based on a multipartite song structure with up to 4 musically distinct sections which can usually be rearranged in several different ways and remain effective, each of which sections can change rhythmic patterns, but not tempo or dominant harmony. The contemporary style roughly follows a standard contemporary song structure of soft verse, loud chorus, soft verse, chorus, bridge, chorus, usually with corresponding changes in tessitura so that the verse is sung

about a 5th lower than the chorus. The new style also often features static, non-directed chord progressions, with the dominant chord always having a suspended 3rd. They are progressions that neither determine nor particularly support the melody, but as the melody is normally simple and repetitive in the extreme (unlike the old style), there is no dissonance between harmony and melody.

The old style is much more impressive for its versatility, utility, simplicity, and durability, and its sense of narrative and forward motion. It is strange that the old style should have less of a static feel than the new, since the old style is strophic while the new style has a more shifting structure.

As the practice of music in Protestant churches shifted from a visual focus on the hymnal to an audile focus (learning songs by a process involving recordings and chord sheets with minimal detail), the nature of typical rhythms, melodies, and harmonies changed significantly. This is a clue to what is happening now in music and in poetry.

7: Media Saturation and the Personal Canon

Everyone is media-saturated now. The question is only what media saturates any given individual. Not reading books is as valid as reading the classically accepted canon, and everyone has some media-born frame of reference, be it movies, video games, or books, or all of the above plus more. Old forms of elitism (and literacy) are falling off, and the dominance of printed text is fading. It has to compete with everything else - which it can do just fine; reading is not dying, but the landscape is certainly different. The canon becomes personal, not universal or even culture-wide.

Any literary or cultural canon has to be formed on an individual basis by personal initiative and judgment, which is what I see my generation doing, anyway. We don't trust any "canon" handed to us in a book or a ranked list; we want to see idiosyncratic canons of taste, not lists that try to claim universal validity.

> "Pope has not received his due as a serious analyst of the intellectual malaise of Europe. He continues Shakespeare's argument in Lear and Donne's in the Anatomy of the World:
>
>> 'Tis all in pieces, all coherence gone,
>> All just supply and all relation.'
>
> It is the division of sense and the separation of words from their functions that Pope decries exactly as does Shakespeare in King Lear. Art and science had been separated as visual quantification and homogenization penetrated to every domain and the mechanization of language and literature proceeded:
>
>> 'Beneath her foot-stool Science groans in Chains,
>> And Wit dreads Exile, Penalties, and Pains.
>> There foam'd rebellious Logic gagg'd and bound,

There, stript fair Rhet'ric languish'd on the ground;'"[49]

I quote McLuhan's analysis of Alexander's Pope's *Dunciad* in order to point out that the kinds of anxieties our contemporary situation raises are not new. He argues, "It is Pope's simple theme that the fogs of Dulness and new tribalism are fed by the printing press".[50] Pope, as the defender of the older, elitist, manuscript-based culture, could only react to the proliferation of books and newspapers in the early 18th century with disgust.

McLuhan's article on the Dunciad does not address the issue of the personal canon. It addresses the destruction of wit and spirit by the new tribalism and the collective unconscious. The new technology of print enlarges the subconscious, with all its numbing effects. So if anything, the idea of the personal canon is the idea that now that action is being undone, since the dominance of print is passing, right? Unfortunately, no, not exactly. The personal canon increases the dominion of the subconscious by destroying community and shared constructs of reality - illusory constructs they may have been, but where are we without them? Isolated in masturbatory fantasy. This is the challenge of relational life in the 21st century.

> "The robot's creator, Douglas Hines, helpfully offers, 'Sex only goes so far – then you want to be able to talk to the person.' So, for example, when Roxxxy [the robot] senses that its hand is being held, the robot says, 'I love holding hands with you,' and moves into more erotic conversation when the physical caresses become more intimate.

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[49] McLuhan, *The Interior Landscape*, 173.
[50] Ibid., 174.

…Like AI scientist and inventor Raymond Kurzweil, who dreams of a robotic incarnation of his father who died tragically young, Hines committed himself to the project of building an artificial personality. At first, he considered building a home health aid for the elderly but decided to begin with sex robots, a decision that he calls 'only marketing'."[51]

The Internet makes up a new environment for the collective unconscious to exist in, and a much wilder, stranger environment than that of print ever was.

"…A contextual labyrinth… that can be structured, but never structured definitively. To compound the difficulty, the discourse of alchemy is without a center or a periphery; endlessly self-reflexive, it correlates to no clear external signifiers or interpretants. …A writer creating a work creates two conversations. First, the text that is being written is in dialogue with "all other previously written texts" and, second, the author is in dialogue with a model reader."[52]

In this article, Collette reads Chaucer through Umberto Eco's semiotics. This quote is significant for two reasons: first, it talks about alchemy, which has obvious links to McLuhan's thesis. Second, it talks about intertextuality and the double dialogue of the text with both reader and previous texts, which communicates at the same time with Eliot and with the environment of the Internet. Collette argues that (a) the text communicates with the reader, (b) the text communicates with other texts, and, (c) most importantly, (a) and (b) happen simultaneously and unpredictably, as the reader's knowledge of the references in the text cannot be assumed.

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[51] Turkle, *Alone Together*, 66.
[52] Collette, "The Alchemy of Imagination", 244.

She asserts that alchemy has no clear external referents; it is a self-contained rhizomite system. Structure is ever-elusive.[53] This is an analogy to the individual in the contemporary world. McLuhan writes, "The great alchemists, the Paracelsans from Raymond Lully to Cornelius Agrippus, were grammarians".[54] This is why McLuhan writes as a grammarian: the obscurity and inaccessibility of the human heart.

In *The Waste Land*, Eliot is a master of intertextuality, weaving together bits and pieces from his own personal canon, while in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" he argues for a definitive, culture-wide canon. This contradiction between Eliot's work as a poet and his work as a critic seems to have been overlooked.

The Internet is the base-level tool of intertextuality for the contemporary reader or media-consumer, and the contemporary reader also must create his or her own personal canon. (McLuhan saw this before the Internet. The Internet intensifies it and makes it inescapable.)

This destroys any sense of deep intellectual or academic community. There is no such thing as "one book, one community". We see the canon as suspect and falsely constructed, we wonder what is being hidden from us and what authority would arrogate the right to impose taste on us. The question this presents to us is, what will we make of this destruction? Will we mourn a splintered and fractured intellectual environment where every man is

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[53] Ibid., 243.
[54] McLuhan, *The Classical Trivium*, 7.

individually isolated, or can we celebrate a vision of uniquely individuated minds and spirits working in mutual support and enlightenment?

"The cultural matrix in which the tale was created and to which it contributed emerges as an essential heuristic tool."[55] Behind the jargon, this thought is practically axiomatic for any kind of interpretation we attempt today, but even for something as simple as "reading" an image blog on Tumblr, the cultural matrices for two different tumblrs whose urls differ by one character may be immensely different. Compare <noetic.tumblr.com> with <poetic.tumblr.com>.

"Each generation of Chaucerians will make its own sources and analogues."[56] At first glance, this looks like a radical refiguring of traditional views of scholarship, a stupidly anti-foundational po-mo kind of anarchism. I think it doesn't go far enough. It is not only true that every generation will have its own sources and analogues, reflecting that generation's needs and interests. Every sect and tribe of Chaucerians within a given generation is likely to make its own sources and analogues. Whether that is a "good" thing or a "bad" thing is a question for the historiographer. Collette's words about Chaucer resonate with our experience of being cut adrift in a sea of information:

> "Somewhere in the background… the city and its inhabitants, his reading, his colleagues and their shared culture all become part of the sources of his art. There is no way to trace or document this fact. And so we say the tale has no sources."[57]

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[55] Collette, "The Alchemy of Imagination", 245.

[56] Ibid., 247.

[57] Ibid., 248.

8: After Literacy

Bob Dylan's poetic lyrics would be completely unacceptable if it weren't for his unwinning voice. They would come off as pretentious and self-aggrandizing, like all poetry. Our view of poetry in the 20th and 21st centuries has been sneering and dismissive, as the White Negro scorns all that highbrow stuff, all that well-educated and inaccessible literary business, "sharing a collective disbelief in the words of men who had too much money and controlled too many things".[58] Dylan engineered or stumbled into a singularly effective combination of auto-didactic education in literary tradition, commitment to folk music forms and styles, and an unrefined singing voice that negated what would have been the pretentiousness of his lyrics. In the apocryphal words of John Lennon, "it's not what Dylan says that matters, it's how he says it". Not exactly right, but very close - what Dylan says matters, but it wouldn't matter if he said it any other way or if anyone else said it. His words require the specific oral embodiment that his voice gives them.[59]

> "T. S. Eliot has said he would prefer an illiterate audience, for the ways of official literacy do not equip the young to know themselves, the past, or the present. They are not permitted to approach the traditional heritage of mankind through the door of technological awareness; this only possible door for them is slammed in their faces. The only other door is that of the highbrow. Few find it, and fewer find their way back to popular culture, and to the classrooms without walls that the new languages have created."[60]

[58] Mailer, *Advertisements for Myself,* 340.
[59] "Dylan's artistry places song back into a position where the poetic impulse emerges with new urgency, worlds apart from the fetishist love of the page or of the book as an object." Lebold, "A Face Like a Mask", 69.
[60] Carpenter and McLuhan, "The New Languages", 51.

"Today we also talk about 'digital literacy' or 'computer literacy', and educators around the world are redefining literature, theory and criticism in a radically decentered multimedia communications environment. People today know multiple literacies, multiple objects that we call literature, and multiple methods for criticism and analysis. Studying the foundational assumptions expressed in medieval *grammatica* discloses the way cultural literacy of any kind works. Roland Barthes once said that literature is what gets taught: a culture determines the literary canon through official instruction. This ongoing cultural practice represents a continuity in education since Chaucer's day. The legacy of *grammatica* remains inscribed in all our contemporary literacies and literatures as these are expected and assumed of educated people regardless of language or culture."[61]

My argument assumes that the conditions described by McLuhan and Son are our actual conditions, that traditional forms of literacy are eroding. The literary canon is fading in definition and in value; in this age of global English and subcultures and technical jargon, the integrity of the language is rotting off; and the academy as we have known it is on life support. Seeing "Ph.D" following the author's name on a popular book does not inspire confidence like it used to.

Is there any continuity between the two extremes of radically centered and radically de-centralized literary cultures? The common ground that literacy gave to educated people in the Middle Ages is completely eradicated; in any group of ten digitally literate people you are likely to have ten people who understand completely different references to ten different cultures or sub-cultures. And the common core is hardly worth mentioning, unless the important commonality is the ability to quickly find and absorb

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[61] Irvine and Thomson, "Grammatica and literary theory", 41.

another bit of information or the external features of another culture once given the name of it. This is why McLuhan was scared for the future of education. A radically decentered literacy presents massive challenges to the educator.

Adejunmobi's work on music in contemporary urban West Africa explains that "Walter Ong speculated on a possible re-oralization of communication, or what he termed a 'secondary orality' among literates sustained by electronic technologies" and gives compelling examples of this secondary orality in performance practice and the importance of traditional literary practices in a media environment that is dominated by electronic media reaching a largely illiterate audience.[62]

Alec Wilder's *American Popular Song: The Great Innovators, 1900-1950* is an example of the retrieval of the alphabetic detritus of Western culture. The songs examined in the book, by composers like Irving Berlin, Cole Porter, and Jerome Kern, are often the same tunes that musicians like Miles Davis took and pushed forward into the new world of post-literate, improvisation-based jazz, where literacy was irrelevant. And these songs were established firmly within a musical culture where the visual was dominant, yet heavily influenced by the illiterate syncopations of New Orleans. So in this book (looking a little beyond its borders) we see the path of American music from street brass bands of ex-slaves, to Tin Pan Alley, and up to Miles Davis: from relatively primitive exuberance, into white intellectual sophistication, and

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[62] Adejunmobi, "Revenge of the Spoken Word?", 3.

again back to the spirit of improvisation, having picked up a new level of depth by passing through the visual-alphabetical debris of Tin Pan Alley.

No one is sure what come after literacy, but we are caught up in its formation.

9: A Comment on Carr

"The computer screen bulldozes our doubts with their bounties and conveniences. It is so much our servant that it would seem churlish to notice that it is also our master."[63]
-Nicholas Carr, 2011

"It's vital to adopt a posture of arrogant superiority; instead of scurrying into a corner and wailing about what media are doing to us, one should charge straight ahead and kick them in the electrodes. They respond beautifully to such resolute treatment and soon become servants rather than masters."[64]
-Marshall McLuhan, 1969

Carr argues that the Internet's "intellectual ethic" reduces the human mind and all intellectual work to data bits, zeros and ones. He writes that "Google… believe[s] that [the affairs of citizens] are best guided by software algorithms"[65] and that "Human intelligence becomes indistinguishable from machine intelligence".[66] He uses the rhetoric of neurology to support his argument that the Internet is detrimental to the life of the mind, making a case for a kind of historical neuroplasticity where the development of the Western brain-and-mind can be traced by observing its responses to the introduction and eventual dominance of the written word, the printed book, and finally, electronic media, where Carr exposes the Internet as the most sinister example of how electronic media rots the mind. But, even granting his experimentally unverifiable position that the fundamental structures of the brain have changed over the last twenty centuries, the only conclusion we are left with is that using the Internet makes us better at the Internet.

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[63] Carr, *The Shallows*, 4.
[64] McLuhan and Zingrone, eds., *Essential McLuhan,* 259.
[65] Carr, *The Shallows*, 152.
[66] Ibid., 172.

Beyond that, Carr resorts to Romanticist metaphors and pastoral ideals to support his pessimism. To be fair, I do see aspects of the way the Internet changes our thinking that are potentially destructive, but I also trust the Internet generation to remain fully human, to be conscious of the dangers.

Interlude: Tumblr, Jung, Postmodernism

A cross-platform search of Google Scholar, JSTOR, and EBSCO Academic Search reveals that there are, apparently, no serious scholarly articles or theses on Tumblr. Why? I unearthed a couple of articles from journals of education and pedagogy that mentioned Tumblr in passing, but no cultural or artistic examination, and certainly nothing book-length.

The International Journal of Internet Science describes itself as "A peer reviewed open access journal for empirical findings, methodology, and theory of social and behavioral science concerning the Internet and its implications for individuals, social groups, organizations, and society".[67] The contents of the journal match the ethos implied in that description: quantitative data, sociological statistics, and business advice. Again, no mention of Tumblr.

Tumblr deserves at least the kind of analysis and cultural critique that we give to movies and concert reviews in the New York Times – literary, grammatical, historically minded, contextually aware scrutiny. This is not another blogging platform like Xanga or Wordpress, or a networking system

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[67] <http://www.ijis.net/>

like Facebook or Myspace. Nor is it a simple synthesis of the two. Its self-sustaining strength in its aesthetically-minded circles is bewildering, as seen in the miles-long strings of reposts that can be accumulated by a single image. One Internet denizen writes that the image blog <thisisnthappiness.com> "... should be publicly funded, like a utility."[68] Of course, this is a self-consciously postured ironical rhetorical stance, but it is revealing of the increasing dominance of the Internet in our cultural life.

A post on the same blog quotes Carl Jung: "What we do not make conscious emerges later as fate."[69] Or on Tumblr. The Internet is the final externalization of the subconscious.

The academy is pretending to not be conscious of Tumblr, or is trying to subject the whole blogosphere to their old, outdated techniques of close reading and textual analysis. It may be that what we finally receive from postmodernism, faddish as the movement has been, is the set of tools we need to critically engage with the Internet as the new nexus, or ground, or medium, or field, or ocean - of literature, or culture, or life, or communication, or language, or meaning. Postmodernism's radical decentering of authority and pervasive intertextuality are finally here, writ large in the very structure of the Internet: crowd-sourcing, ephemeral content, etc., etc. There is a reason that the old techniques of reading and analysis don't work – several reasons, actually – and most of them have to do

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[68] Jon R. Rand, <http://fluxism.com/>
[69] < http://thisisnthappiness.com/post/561632623/what-we-do-not-make-conscious-emerges-later-as>

with the structure of the Internet, not the content. But then again, the medium is the message. And the medium promotes anonymity; power as encased solely in design and rhetoric.

All this posits the Internet as a self-sufficient social sphere disconnected from the "real world", as if the poorly-designed website of a successful business actually indicated the failure of the business. But the Internet is the real world; it is our environment, our jungle, our house of the spirit. Discontinuity and distraction and disembodiment and electronic money and electronically-mediated relationships and virtual text and unlimited free content and flippant disregard of copyright laws and constant floods of images all feel like home to us. Carr *says* this, at least, regardless of how he judges it.

If the telegraph and phonograph signaled the beginning of a seismic shift in our cognitive equipment, then the Internet is either the fulfillment of that shift or itself a new signal of a new shift. Either way, we are changing. Umberto Eco and McLuhan have been saying so for a long time.

Ironic, that in the purportedly postmodern academy there is such a pervasive ignorance or incompetence about the Internet and its complete embodiment of postmodern theory. Incarnation of postmodern theory, I might say, were it not for the discarnate nature of internet use. Ironic, so maybe the academy can be excused, since irony is one of the hallmarks of the postmodern experience, right? Then again, McLuhan argued that the new

electronic media with their basically audile-tactile engagement of the senses do indeed engage the body in a carnal way.

Return to Program

There was a massive shift in our cognitive equipment in the 19th century, especially as the century came near the end. Perhaps the cognitive shift we are witnessing now is even more massive. Artists are the antennae of the race,[70] and our antennae are certainly quivering violently, as they have been since Rimbaud. I would argue, though, that Rimbaud is still among our most modern and most contemporary poets. He heralds the fundamental change that has still not been overtaken. Dryden, Swift, Chaucer, Shakespeare, Racine, Voltaire, Goethe, even, to some extent, Keats and Wordsworth, may have used very different techniques among them, but among them all there is nothing like the surface-level fragmentation that we see after Baudelaire. Before the late 19th century, a long poem works in a single metric scheme, be it Pope's heroic couplets or Milton's blank verse. Eliot's long poems are (1) not even all that long, and (2) in form and meter, either schizoid or ADD. Which is perfect and exactly as it should be. It is needed for what truth and beauty Eliot has to display.

McLuhan's theory is that what happened, happened in the mid to late 19th century. Its effects were seen first in the dissolution of content in poetry (later in painting), and later in the dissolution of form. The

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[70] McLuhan and McLuhan, *Laws of Media*, 6.

dissolution of content and the dissolution of form are both results of the same change, the shift of the media environment in the Western world from predominantly visual to audile-tactile. And the introduction of electronic media and the Internet have not really done anything to reshift the foundation. Bob Dylan is still drawing on the resources of literary Modernism and folk music - he is never renouncing his predecessors in the way that Rimbaud renounced his. I locate the inception of Modernism at Rimbaud and the Symbolists, because the dislocation and dissolution of content seen in their work prefigures and contains within itself the dissolutions of forms explored by the Modernists.

This dissolution of both form and content is itself the same thing that Carr bemoans and McLuhan utters oracles about. Carr recognizes that he is talking about the same thing McLuhan was talking about, but he has not paid enough attention to McLuhan to see what it actually is that Marshall is saying. McLuhan is neither a techno-futurist nor a Luddite, although he does use the rhetoric of both types in turns; he is primarily an educator who has paid close attention to the conditions and institutions of learning in the history of the Western world.[71] He paid special attention to literary Modernism and its precursors in the 19th century, because he saw that

> "With the telegraph, the entire method, both of gathering and of presenting news, was revolutionized. Naturally, the effects on language and on literary style and subject matter were spectacular. In the same year, 1844, then, that men were playing chess and lotteries

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[71] See also Jacques Barzun's *Begin Here: The Forgotten Conditions of Teaching and Learning*

on the first American telegraph, Soren Kierkegaard published The Concept of Dread. The Age of Anxiety had begun."[72]

"By 1858 the first cable had been laid across the Atlantic, and by 1861 telegraph wires had reached across America. That each new method of transporting commodity or information should have to come into existence in a bitter competitive battle against previously existing devices is not surprising. Each innovation is not only commercially disrupting, but socially and psychologically."[73]

Here were the real roots of the sea change of the 1960s.

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[72] McLuhan, *Laws of Media*, 252.
[73] Ibid., 250.

10: Had We But World Enough and Time

Our living in sixteen worlds simultaneously may be a liability psychologically, but creatively it is a blessing (which can work out nicely, giving us a way to adjust psychologically). It is mind-wrenching and identity-distorting psychologically, but it opens up a whole new universe of chromatic analogy.

The Internet is the site of the most radical media discontinuity in history, and not only because of the psychological violence of pornography. The Internet, more than any other medium, puts on the user as content. The content of the Internet depends entirely on the user. It depends on his interests, his moods, his capacity for self-governance, his desires and their relative depravity or sanctity. And in as much he is not single-minded (and who is?), it reflects his distraction and inattention, his multiplied and divided attention. It both reflects and furthers the natural discontinuities of the mind. Its ability to do so is supported by its structure; with hyperlinks more accessible than any actual present content, to click a link is easier than to read and digest content, and constant motion from point to point along a trail of hyperlinks leads to radical discontinuity of content, or at least to juxtaposition of things that are only related in the most obscure of ways.

And this radical discontinuity is present not only in cyberspace but all across modern life. Artists started noticing it 150 years ago, when Mallarme was struck by the discontinuous nature of the newspaper, where articles of all different degrees of gravity and emotional tone and geographical location

were juxtaposed in immediate proximity with one another - "two thousand years of manuscript culture were abruptly dissolved by the printing press".[74] And now that juxtaposition is writ large across our whole culture. There is no such thing as conformity, and therefore no such thing as non-conformity - radical discontinuity is now truly the root, the *radix*.

A paradox of the juxtaposing predispositions of our media environment: every media carries embedded assumptions about time and space. What are the assumptions that the iPod makes about time and space? That all time and space are identical, that walking to class at 8:30 in the morning is the same as sitting in your room at 11:30 at night. And those assumptions in turn inspire a similar homogeneity of content, at least dynamically. Juxtaposition demands homogeneity. The experience of dynamic contrast that music has historically depended on for musical interest in live performance is not available for a user of earbuds.

This in turn may demand a reactive movement towards creating a new space or medium for dynamic contrast - live performance, some sort of sacred space apart from the space of the Internet. Some musicians are beginning to do this by leaving compression off of their recordings. Poetry readings and poetry slams do it. They subvert the newly prevailing assumptions about time and space by demanding localized precision of attention.

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[74] McLuhan, "Joyce, Mallarmé, and the Press", 38.

Musical form or structure is something that goes through trends and changes of style just as much as guitar tone in popular music or harmonic language in classical music - a Roger Miller song has a predictably different structure from a Nirvana song, the structure of which is entirely different than an August Burns Red song.

Pure music ideally serves an important structural and expressive purpose in the song, like in the songs on Bruce Springsteen's Born To Run with their long intros and necessary solos. If there is an analogy here, in the context of this paper, it is that the impurities of the content-juxtapositions we have in our new media must be supported by traditional or "pure" media.

So my support of new media, the Internet, and sampling culture is not exactly characterized by unqualified enthusiasm. Music has become increasingly the object of abstraction and visualization over the last few centuries, as techniques for writing music have become increasingly sophisticated and reproducible, and writing exists to transform the audible into the visible. To be perfectly clear, I see the dominance of the visual over the audible in music as a bad thing, as a tragic reduction. And the digitalization of music takes the reduction even farther, as music becomes a physical object, accessible not only through the eye but also through the computer keyboard, reducible from time to megabytes. That reduction is an illusion, and it has been a subliminal influence on 20th century classical music performance practice, not to mention sampling culture and the digital music as a whole. The reduction is an illusion, but an illusion that brings

with it serious power, in the same way that the written word has clear advantages over an irretrievable spoken word. Balance is needed.

The Machine

The drum machine makes its own musical demands, which are then pursued by human musicians. Technical boundaries and the frontiers of complexity are nothing to the machine, and it demands to be used at its limits. This includes taking both literate and non-literate rhythmic practices to their extremes; Bach at 300 inhuman speeds and impossible improvisatory sheen.

The difference between hyper-literate musical practice and ear-based musical practice is the difference between the transcription of an event and transcription as the event. Again, balance is needed. The content of websites like <ultimateguitar.com> is sloppy, crowd-sourced transcription of events, and the result is that those sources are predictably unreliable

A host of new and emerging software programs provide a middle ground between the two extremes of transcription of event and transcription of event. They function in such a way that music can be made by direct manipulation of visual symbols, or music can be played by a traditional instrument (MIDI keyboards have been common for decades, and MIDI-enabled guitars, drum sets, wind instruments, and brass are becoming increasingly popular) and instantly translated into visual and digital data. This is how the machine can help produce an improvisation that is better

than the human product: the spontaneity and in-between-the-cracks nature of the non-linear, auditory musical process can be precisely and accurately transformed as a visual product, while retaining the original character of the performance.

Of course, all of this has implications for literature in the intersections between the written and the spoken word.

11: The Four Quartets

The fisherman (The Dry Salvages, lines 66-79) with their forever bailing and their voiceless wailing call to mind Eliot's twin themes of linguistic relativism and historical contingency, and in a beautiful, just way. There is no end, but addition… a future that, like the past, is liable to have no destination.

Let's not throw around the word postmodern here, not in this sanctuary. Let us do justice. How does Eliot teach us what the job is of the critic?

In Burnt Norton:

"…Shrieking voices
Scolding, mocking, or merely chattering,
Always assail them. The Word in the desert
Is most attacked by voices of temptation…" (153-156)

This is oblique, barely about criticism or doing justice at all, but it works as a full-throated criticism-in-justice of life ,age ,literature, and wisdom, all together, all at once.

"…The poetry does not matter
It was not (to start again) what one had expected." (71-72)

This is the highest justice, but only available after the struggle.

We are undeceived, but risking enchantment. The critic's task is to fight through this way, through this wood, this bramble, along the edge of this grimpen. But is this itself a just reading of Eliot? Yes. "There is only the fight to recover what has been lost…" (East Coker, 186) This is also in all the last stanza of East Coker:

> "...a lifetime burning in every moment
> And not the lifetime of one man only
> But of old stones that cannot be deciphered.
> ...Old men ought to be explorers
> Here and there does not matter
> We must be still and still moving
> Into another intensity
> For a further union, a deeper communion..." (194-197, 202-206)

The old stones cannot be deciphered, yet they burn with the lifetime burning, and surpassing the lifetime's burning of one man they burn, these old stones, written hermetically though they are. And no cheap mystagogy this, no Yeatsian magical excess - Eliot submits himself to the full historical tradition of apophatic reception-in-blindness; he humbly accepts the faith that allows him to say, with the overtones of the voice of Julian of Norwich, "so the darkness shall be the light, and the stillness the dancing". (East Coker, 128) Here and ever after the critic's toolkit is exhausted: "You must go by a way which is the way of ignorance". (East Coker, 139) The tools are useless, and the intentions are tested in the fire.

Eliot, you teach us to do justice to the culture we find ourselves in, the endless distractions and the voiceless wailings, the elusive silences and the powerful stillnesses. You teach us to do justice, and justice is done when the internet, with all its welter of noise and filth, is not only judged rightly, but related to rightly, in purity of heart, purity of intention, purity of gaze.

Purification? It's all over this poem. In the fires, when they are not Pentecostal; in the burning rose, in the hydra purifying the language of the tribe, in "Prayer is more than an order of words, the conscious occupation or

the praying mind, or the sound of the voice praying...", (Little Gidding, 46-48)

in the communication of the dead tongued with fire beyond the (unpurified)

language of the living, and perhaps most of all in

>   "The chill ascends from feet to knees,
> The fever sings in mental wires.
> If to be warmed, then I must freeze
> And quake in frigid purgatorial fires
> Of which the flame is roses, and the smoke is briars." (East Coker, 162-

166)

Again, the fire is purgatorial, purging, we may assume, both the

language of the collective and the individual soul itself. And the justice Eliot

is doing here is also repairing the damage done by the 19th century in its

misguided rationalism, paganism, obscurantism, damage done to the

language of the tribe and to the individual soul, damage embodied and

illustrated in Mallarmé, Baudelaire, Swinburne, sourced in Rimbaud. Their

work was a necessary way forward. Still, it was damage, and Eliot was

working to repair it. This is Maritain's position when he expresses in the

introduction to *Art and Scholasticism*

> "the hope that... these observations apropos of and concerning
> maxims of the Schools will draw attention to the utility of having
> recourse to the wisdom of Antiquity ... at a time when the necessity of
> escaping from the vast intellectual confusion bequeathed to us by the
> nineteenth century and finding once more the spiritual conditions of
> work which shall be *honest* is everywhere felt.[75]

Eliot, you teach us to do justice, to condemn and affirm impartially, to

seek the truth in darkness, to question the culture granted to us, to question

the very word "culture".

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[75] Maritain, *Art and Scholasticism*, 2.

The poem is inexplicable, liturgical. It cannot and perhaps should not be explicated.

Conclusion: The *Bricoleur*

Processes are prophecies. Johannes Brahms looked back to Bach and Palestrina to gain knowledge of the musical future he was creating. Tolkien's process of finding literary power in dead Middle English texts and using them to build worlds was a prophecy of literature (witness the hosts of imitators); were it not a definite process it would not have worked as a prophecy. The same could be said for Mallarme's *Coup De Des* and the work of the symbolists, as Breton suggests when he says "we have no talent."[76] Tolkien's works were guided and unified by a single overarching principle working itself out in a "procedural" way (as were Bach's); that "procedurality" is what made them prophetic. Brahms and Robert Jordan, as heirs of the procedures of their forebears, are not able to serve as models and prophets in the same way. The interesting thing is that Bach and Tolkien both were in their own time regarded as behind the time, even regressive. And their art is not susceptible to charges of being *formulaic*, procedural as it is. Why? How?

Where did Rimbaud's prophetic processes come from? Did even Eliot or McLuhan really know? It was obviously something more than pure rebellious spleen. Whence Mallarmé's poetics? We can see in their works a spiritual collision of Christendom and hermeticism, a reaction to changing technological environments, a potent assimilation of poetic tradition, individual talent and drive. Perhaps those things are all the clues we need.

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[76] Breton, "What Is Surrealism?"

Bricolage

"The bricoleur, says Levi-Strauss, is someone who uses "the means at hand," that is, the instruments he finds at his disposition around him... even if their form and their origin are heterogeneous -- and so forth. There is therefore a critique of language in the form of bricolage, and it has even been possible to say that bricolage is the critical language itself. ...it is stated that the analysis of bricolage could "be applied almost word for word'' to criticism, and especially to "literary criticism."

If one calls bricolage the necessity of borrowing one's concept from the text of a heritage which is more or less coherent or ruined, it must be said that every discourse is bricoleur. The engineer, whom Levi-Strauss opposes to the bricoleur, should be one to construct the totality of his language, syntax, and lexicon. In this sense the engineer is a myth. A subject who would supposedly be the absolute origin of his own discourse and would supposedly construct it "out of nothing," "out of whole cloth," would be the creator of the *verbe*, the *verbe* itself. The notion of the engineer who had supposedly broken with all forms of bricolage is therefore a theological idea; and since Levi-Strauss tells us elsewhere that bricolage is mythopoetic, the odds are that the engineer is a myth produced by the bricoleur. From the moment that we cease to believe in such an engineer and in a discourse breaking with the received historical discourse, as soon as it is admitted that every finite discourse is bound by a certain bricolage, and that the engineer and the scientist are also species of bricoleurs then the very idea of bricolage is menaced and the difference in which it took on its meaning decomposes...

Levi-Strauss describes bricolage not only as an intellectual activity but also as a mythopoetical activity. One reads in The Savage Mind, "Like bricolage on the technical level, mythical reflection can attain brilliant and unforeseen results on the intellectual level. Reciprocally, the mythopoetical character of bricolage has often been noted.

But the remarkable endeavor of Levi-Strauss is not simply to put forward...a structural science or knowledge of myths and of mythological activity. His endeavor also appears ...in the status which he accords to his own discourse on myths, to what he calls his "mythologicals." It is here that his discourse on the myth reflects on itself and criticizes itself. And this moment, this critical period, is evidently of concern to all the languages which share the field of the human sciences. What does Levi-Strauss say of his "mythologicals"? It is here that we rediscover the mythopoetical virtue (power) of bricolage. In effect, what appears most fascinating in this critical search for a new status of the discourse is the stated abandonment of

all reference to a center, to a subject, to a privileged reference, to an origin, or to an absolute arch'."[77]

Paradox and inversion; of course, it being Derrida and all. Obviously, *bricolage* is what I am trying to do here, with this paper.

Now. I would like to grab onto the paradoxes and inversions that Derrida and Levi-Strauss give us here, shake them, and see what falls out. The engineer is a myth, the *bricoleur* is more nearly a reality, and the *bricoleur* constructs the engineer, which undermines the legitimacy of the *bricoleur*. Very well. But this is not, as Derrida argues, a decentering, but a temporally rotating center that moves from place to place, from *bricoleur* to engineer and back again. And perhaps it does occasionally land in some sort of stasis or balance, humming like the electrons in a stationary object.

"Our central thesis is that equal access to even the most basic elements of computation requires an epistemological pluralism, accepting the validity of multiple ways of knowing and thinking."[78] In 1990, when Sherry Turkle wrote "Epistemological Pluralism and the Revaluation of the Concrete", the electronic musician was still an emerging figure. Turkle considers musical thinking among the "multiple ways of knowing and thinking" that she chronicles in her feminist critique of computer programming culture, but she does not even begin to consider musical applications of computers. She argues that "in our culture, those who use hard [technical, linear] approaches don't simply share a style, they constitute

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[77] Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, 285-286
[78] Turkle, "Epistemological Pluralism and the Revaluation of the Concrete"

an epistemological elite", and she proposes a restructuring of programming

education that uses a non-linear, *bricolage* model.

In the 1990s we began to see a new kind of electronic musician, the

mad-scientist-cum-creative-genius archetype as seen in figures as diverse as

Kanye West and Aaron Funk of Venetian Snares. References in hip-hop to the

studio as "lab" contribute to this archetype. Digital music technology

suddenly became cheaper, more powerful, and easier to use, creating a new

environment where the boundaries between musical thinking and "abstract,

formal, and logical" thinking became weaker and the incentives to erase

them became greater.

Of course, this erosion of the boundaries between "artistic" and

"scientific" disciplines is not exactly new. Think of Edgar Allan Poe, Jules

Verne, and Nathaniel Hawthorne as science-enamored storytellers - not to

mention Isaac Asimov and Frank Herbert.

Sampling and Sampling Culture

Paul Miller (aka DJ Spooky that Subliminal Kid) is a prime example of

the new kind of electronic musician described above, and a vocal theorist of

the intellectual background and implications of the new applications of

technology in music.

> "I studied French literature at a time when it seemed that
> America was enthralled by the end of the Cold War – my studies were
> populated with people like Derrida, Foucault, Deleuze, Guattari,
> Lyotard, Baudrillard, Althusser, Lacan, bounded by Badiou. Kristeva,
> Cixous, Irigaray, Wittig… The list goes on but you get the point: these
> figures are part of a pantheon where, perhaps, one of the common

themes is a simple cry for new ways to perceive how the mass media-landscape inadvertently invades and splinters the private mind of the individual. ...What Baudrillard did for me was make the world safe for doubt: doubt about the intentions of governments, corporations, ideologies, and yes, people."[79]

Here is the convergence of two or four streams of this project: electronic music, postmodern theory, media studies, contemporary poetics. At first glance it looks like flux and suspicion are central for a figure like DJ Spooky, but what is really central here is the engineer-bricoleur hybrid. Technical competence is balanced with a scavenging DIY ethic, creating the tech-savvy shaman. Wilson narrates this creation from the formative stage of early 20th century filmmakers to the current phase, early 21st century DJ's.[80]

There is no real social "progressive" movement now - liberal, yes, progressive, no. We've seen what there is, we've seen Communism fail, while Socialism is too old to be radical and too wobbly to present itself as the bright shining future. The "neo" in neo-conservative is misleading if not deceptive. I am not arguing here for or against any particular political position, merely stating that it would be foolish to assert any particular position as *new* and *therefore* justified. But there is a bleeding edge of technology, even if there is not one of political or ideological alignment or engagement. Again, being positioned on the bleeding edge of anything does not guarantee power or even relevance; the design of the concert grand piano has not been significantly updated since the mid-nineteenth century, but the piano is still

[79] Miller, "Baudrillard: A Remembrance of Things Unpassed"
[80] Miller, "Material Memories: Time and The Cinematic Image"

culturally important. The thing I want to bring out here is that the bricoleur is not just a grave robber, as less charitable critics have called both T.S. Eliot and Shakespeare, but is also in the 21st century an engineer.

In Cory Doctorow's stories, the computer programmer, the sysadmin, and the network technician are the heroic characters, endowed with all the virtues of the Romantic protagonist and the mad scientist. Virility and virtue belong to the tech-savvy man or woman. The tech-savvy, which is different from the scientist as extolled in graphic novel biographies of Niels Bohr and Richard Fienman - the sysadmin is important because he can manipulate digital technology and can innovate *within* his pre-extant technological environment, not because he can trace the molecular structure of silicon and uncover the material bases of existence. His is an art of design and rhetoric, an alchemic process of creative transformation and data assessment-absorption-encompassment-mining-analysis, not a systematic examination of the fundamental elements of existence or meaning. He lives unquestioningly in the Internet's postmodern jungle.

Web design and computer programming involve science and art, like computer music. The parts of the mind that are activated have to work occasionally in a linear, left-brain fashion, manipulating synthetic languages and codes in order to arrive at a desired goal, but there is also a significant component of pre-rational or sub-rational intuitive design sense that cannot be programmed. The designer is both scientist and artist in the digital age.

This is another reason why the age of the rock star is over. The purely Dionysian singer or guitar player, no matter how technically proficient, looks weak, arbitrary, and uncontrolled when compared with the musician who can orchestrate, coordinate, and program a music that rings with the power and passion of five humans and a supercomputer.[81] The artist now has to be competent and conversant in the Internet and the digital environment, even if she chooses to work with a traditional medium like the novel.

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[81] Here I use Nietzsche's terms again, but I find the actual content of the passage I quote in nt. 8 to be incoherent, so I adopt the terms and leave Friedrich's conclusions behind.

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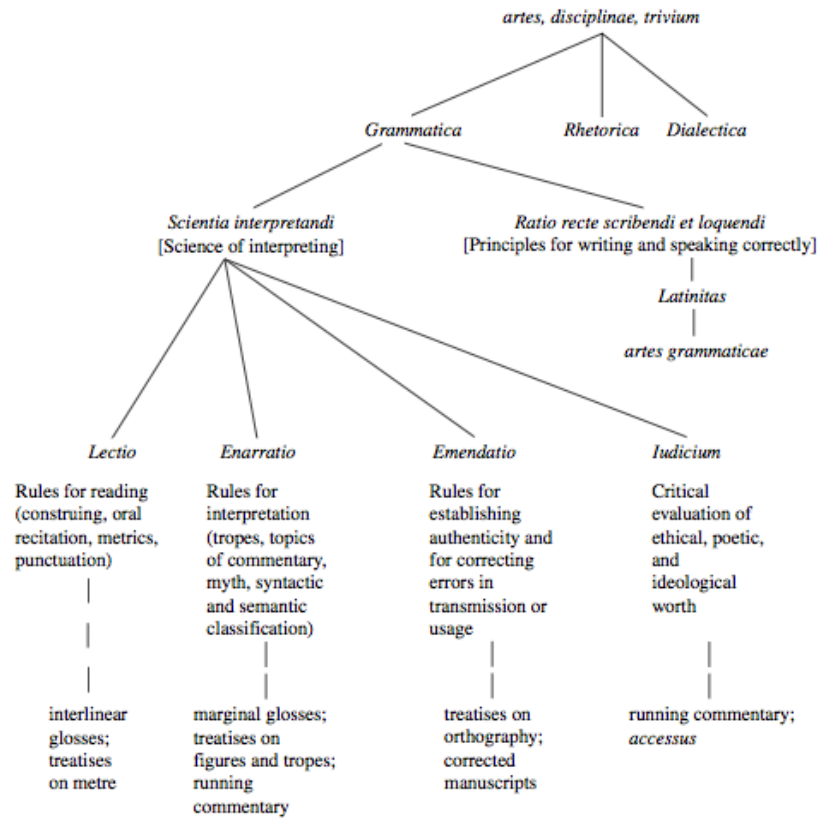Turkle, Sherry. *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other.* New York: Basic Books, 2011.

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Appendix: *Grammatica*

The following diagram illustrates a traditional division of subject-matter
and methodology of *grammatica* within the trivium or arts of discourse.
Following the main divisions we have also indicated some of the products
of grammatical methodology in medieval literary culture:

artes, disciplinae, trivium

Grammatica   *Rhetorica*   *Dialectica*

Scientia interpretandi   *Ratio recte scribendi et loquendi*
[Science of interpreting]   [Principles for writing and speaking correctly]

Latinitas

artes grammaticae

Lectio	*Enarratio*	*Emendatio*	*Iudicium*
Rules for reading (construing, oral recitation, metrics, punctuation)	Rules for interpretation (tropes, topics of commentary, myth, syntactic and semantic classification)	Rules for establishing authenticity and for correcting errors in transmission or usage	Critical evaluation of ethical, poetic, and ideological worth
interlinear glosses; treatises on metre	marginal glosses; treatises on figures and tropes; running commentary	treatises on orthography; corrected manuscripts	running commentary; *accessus*

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82 Irvine, Martin and David Thomson. "Grammatica and literary theory", 16.