MARSHALL McLUHAN, JOHN PICK, AND GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS

> . . . those pretty mirrours, which like a crevice in a wall thorow [through] a narrow perspective transmit the species of a vast excellency (Jeremy Taylor, 1613-1667 qtd. in McLuhan, *IL* 66)
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> The object with Klee became a gate or door or a window opening into the countries of the mind . . . (McLuhan, Review of *Paul Klee*)

THE paths of John Pick and Marshall McLuhan came together in 1936 at the University of Wisconsin in Madison. Both were 25 that year and both intensely interested in Gerard Manley Hopkins. Pick, the future founding editor of *Renascence*, was completing his pioneering Ph.D. thesis on Hopkins; McLuhan was in the process of converting to the Catholic Church, a process in which Hopkins played a decisive role.

Pick and McLuhan were born within two months of each other in 1911 — McLuhan on July 21, Pick on September 18 — and they died only a little over a month apart — McLuhan on New Year's Eve at the end of 1980, Pick on February 6, 1981.

John Pick was born in West Bend, Wisconsin, 40 miles north of Milwaukee and 700 miles southeast of Winnipeg, where McLuhan grew up. From West Bend, Pick went to South Bend, Indiana, graduating from Notre Dame in 1933. He obtained his M.A. from the University of Wisconsin, did research at Harvard and Oxford, and returned to the University of Wisconsin to obtain his Ph.D. with a dissertation on Gerard Manley Hopkins. At Wisconsin he was an English department teaching assistant in the 1936-1937 school year, along with McLuhan. Pick received his Ph.D. in 1938 and took up his first academic appointment at Boston College in 1939. In 1945 he returned definitively to Wisconsin to teach at Marquette where he remained for more than thirty years.

It is possible that Pick and McLuhan were already acquainted in England in the small world of Oxbridge North Americans.[1] Pick's first research visit to study Hopkins materials at Campion Hall, Oxford, doubtless overlapped with McLuhan's much longer time in Cambridge. In any case, after meeting or remeeting at Wisconsin, the two became close friends. McLuhan, writing from St. Louis to Corinne Lewis, a few months before their marriage in 1939, reported: "John Pick [. . .] was my best

friend at Wisconsin. He is Catholic, one of the very few on the staff there, and was my sponsor when I was received into the Church" (February 1, 1939, *Letters* 108). In this same letter, McLuhan notes: "Am enclosing the Phd. thesis abstract of John Pick." This abstract is not included with the published letter and is therefore given here (in an addendum) to complete the record — but also for the important indications it gives of the common interests of the two friends (as seen especially in McLuhan sending it to his future wife).

In his Foreword to *The Interior Landscape* (1969), McLuhan recalled:

> In the summer of 1932 I walked and biked through most of England carrying a copy of Palgrave's *Golden Treasury* [*of Songs and Lyrical Poems in the English Language*]. [. . .] "Pied Beauty", the single poem of Hopkins in my copy, was quite startling. I assumed he was a Victorian eccentric who had been noted for one or two small poems such as this. Nobody could tell me about him. (xiii)

Two years after this 1932 summer tour, in the fall of 1934, McLuhan was back in England and attending the lectures of I. A. Richards at Cambridge. Richards and his former student F. R. Leavis, now a Cambridge don and editor of the influential journal *Scrutiny*, were vocal champions of Hopkins's poetry. It is probable that one or both of them influenced McLuhan to give renewed attention to Hopkins. In any case, McLuhan mentions buying a volume of Hopkins's poetry during his first term at Cambridge (in a December 6, 1934, letter to his family, *Letters* 42) and he was enthusiastically reading a biography of Hopkins a month later at the time of a January 1935 letter to them (*Letters* 48). Later that year, a September 5 letter to his mother cites from Hopkins's "On a Piece of Music":

> But good grows wild and wide,
> Has shades, is nowhere none;
> But right must seek a side
> And choose for master[2] one. (*Letters* 74)

In 1936 at Wisconsin it must have seemed providential to McLuhan to be teaching alongside Pick, a Catholic, a fellow Midwesterner of the same age as himself, and an expert on Hopkins at a time when Hopkins was little known. Less than a year later, in March 1937, McLuhan entered the church with Pick as his sponsor. Then, early in 1939, McLuhan sent Pick's thesis abstract on Hopkins to Corinne Lewis.

Pick's abstract touches on three themes which concerned McLuhan for over 40 years and which he found difficult or impossible to communicate, exactly because they form a foundational *complex* in an age fixated on foundational *singularities*. The three themes concern (1) "sensuous beauty," (2) "the sacramental apprehension of beauty" via an "integral act of sense and intellect," and (3) "delight in the beauty of the world without considering it man's final end or worshipping it," therefore the apprehension of "created things as means," not as ends, not as complete in themselves.[3] The envisioned prospect is that of the sensuous world in which things are seen to *be*, and to be *beautiful*, but whose being and beauty are seen to consist *also* in what shines *through* them, in what can be seen, as McLuhan was later to put it, in their *interior landscape*. McLuhan often speaks of words or things as being "a gate or door or a window" in this sense (Review of *Paul Klee* 80) — "like a crevice in a wall [. . .] transmit[ting] the species of a vast excellency" (Taylor).

Hopkins frequently, and marvelously, reverted to this vision. For example: "for Christ plays in ten thousand places, / Lovely in limbs and lovely in eyes not his" ("As kingfishers catch fire" qtd. in *Interior Landscape* [*IL*] 66). Or, as cited above from McLuhan's September 5, 1935, letter to his mother "But good grows wild and wide, / Has shades, is nowhere none" where Hopkins's point is not that all things are *only* good, or that the good may simply be read off their surface, but that all things function (or can function) as "a gate or door or a window" through which a varied ("wild and wide" / "has shades") perspective on the good is available.

Finding in Hopkins (along with Aristotle, Thomas, and others) the possibility of "delight in the beauty of the world without considering it man's final end" must have had great personal significance for McLuhan at this time, ultimately leading to his conversion. In a note from the early 1930s retrieved by his grandson, Andrew McLuhan, and transcribed in his *inscriptorium* blog for April 27, 2011, McLuhan considers "the great problems of the soul":

> life offers no more momentous question than this: can the soul injured by temptation and seared by sin ever recover its pristine vigor and strength and beauty? is it true that the breach can never really be mended but only guarded while always by the broken wall there lurks the stealthy tread of a foe that waits to renew his unforgotten triumphs?

At the time of this note, McLuhan considered sensuousness only as a "temptation" which "always [. . .] lurks." Marchand's biography, referring to a diary entry from April 1930, confirms the impression from McLuhan's note that "he was tormented by concupiscence" at that time (Marchand

20). He had "injured" his soul, experienced it as "seared by sin" and wondered anxiously if and how "its pristine vigor and strength and beauty" could be restored. He was stricken by conscience in regard to the past and by trepidation in regard to the future: he could see that further "temptation" only "waits to renew [. . .] unforgotten triumphs." In the event, the sensuous world and the soul were seen in an either/or perspective where only a "wall," as McLuhan imagined, could fend off the one and protect the other. But this was a wall which had already suffered a "breach" and which, he worried, might "never really be mended but only guarded." Would his life therefore unfold only as a defensive action which was doomed to repeated failure? Where only the unaccountable grace of God could aid the fallen (and always still falling) sinner? Some such Calvinistic notion must have been the McLuhan family's understanding of religion (at least on his father's side, stemming, according to Gordon's biography, from his father's mother), a notion of the working of religion strong enough that McLuhan's brother became a United Church (i.e., Presbyterian-Methodist-Congregational) minister.

There is evidence in his letters that McLuhan began to see an answer to this existential and theological predicament at roughly the same time as he became acquainted with Hopkins at the end of 1934 and the beginning of 1935. In a letter of November 10, 1934, he writes:

> It is useful broadly to distinguish Pl[ato]. and Arist[otle] as tending towards Bhuddism [*sic*] and Christianity respectively. Plato was an oriental in mind [. . .] Aristotle heartily accepts the senses just as Browning did and [who] says "[. . .] nor soul helps flesh more, now, than flesh helps soul" ["Rabbi Ben Ezra" 1864]. And that is why great Aquinas accepted Aristotle into Christian theology. (*Letters* 39)

McLuhan was clearly reassessing the relation of flesh and soul and, typical for him, saw differences in the possible relationships between the two as extending "broadly" over western civilization since Plato and Aristotle and even over east (Buddhism) and west (Christianity). Given his Protestant family background and his voracious reading of Chesterton, he must also have seen the same structural contrast at work in differences between Catholicism ("great Aquinas") and Protestantism. A letter two months later (January 18, 1935) to his mother records "[h]ow rapidly my ideas have been shifting and rearranging themselves" (*Letters* 51). Another month later, in a February 1935 letter to his family, he observed regarding Rupert Clendon Lodge, the philosophy professor for whom he had done his "best work" (*Letters* 79) at the University of Manitoba:

> Lodge is a decided Platonist, and I learned [to think] that way as long as I was trying to interpret Christianity in terms of comparative religion. Having perceived the sterility of that process, I now realize that Aristotle is the soundest basis for Xian doctrine. (*Letters* 53)

Soon thereafter (February 7, 1935), again in a letter home, McLuhan wrote of "the salutory [sic] mean of sense and sanity" (*Letters* 57).

With these slapdash characterizations of Plato, Aristotle, Buddhism, and Lodge, McLuhan was rehearsing in his own intellectual and emotional life what he would later trace from the Greeks to the Elizabethans and beyond: the "ancient quarrel" of the trivium between dialectic, rhetoric, and grammar.[4] As shown in his "great problems of the soul" note, he had vacillated between a dialectical stance associated with Plato and Lodge in which the intellectual soul was valorized against the senses and a rhetorical position associated with "the stealthy tread of a foe" in which the sensual world was held to overmatch the soul. Now he began to conceive a third fundamental position, grammar, founded on the "integral act of sense and intellect" (as it is expressed in Pick's abstract) which McLuhan associated particularly with Aristotle, Aquinas, and Hopkins.

In another note retrieved by Andrew McLuhan from his grandfather's books and dating to Cambridge in 1935-1936, McLuhan cites Grierson's *Metaphysical Lyrics & Poems of the Seventeenth Century: Donne to Butler* as follows:

> the troubled soul [. . .] has found rest and a full expansion of heart in the rediscovery of a ritual and a faith and order which give entire justification to the imagination and the affections. The Catholic poet is set free from the painful diagnosis of his own emotions and spiritual condition which so preoccupies the Anglican Herbert. The Catholic poet loses this anxious sense of his own moods in the consciousness of the *opus operatum* calling on him only for faith, and thankfulness and adoration. (*Metaphysical Lyrics* xlvi-xlvii as transcribed in *inscriptorium* blog, July 24, 2011)

McLuhan had come to see that the self, in fact the whole world of lived experience in which each self finds itself situated, is always already implicated in one of three possible universal orders: that of the "sensory order" (rhetoric, beauty, flesh), that of the intellectual order (dialectic, soul, sanity), and that of the "integral act of sense and intellect" (grammar, analogy, proportionality). Since the first two orders originate in opposition to each other, they are inherently and inextricably "troubled," "painful," and "anxious." In the third order, that of "the *opus operatum*" of achieved

integration, such opposition is fundamentally put aside "in the rediscovery of a ritual and a faith and order which give entire justification to the imagination and the affections."

In his seminal 1951 essay, "Tennyson and Picturesque Poetry," McLuhan described the breakthrough in play here and its association with Hopkins: "Hopkins, pursuing 'inscape', as Joyce did 'epiphanies', broke through to the life which restored body and solidity to art in an existential vision that is truly metaphysical . . . " (*IL* 151). The breakthrough "restored body and solidity," gave "entire justification to the imagination and the affections" (as McLuhan cited Grierson) and did so in a way "that is truly metaphysical," i.e., *fundamental*. But it did this without going over to some variety of sensualism or materialism, such that it could, as Pick had it, "delight in the beauty of the world without considering it man's final end or worshipping it."

The nature of this restorative "existential vision" is described in Hopkins's 1877 "Pied Beauty," a poem McLuhan recommended to Corinne Lewis in the same letter enclosing Pick's abstract (February 1, 1939, *Letters* 108): "All things counter, original, spare, strange; / Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)" McLuhan would take Hopkins's "all things" into areas little considered by his academic colleagues, and he would follow Hopkins in the apprehension that "all things" are "counter [. . .] strange [. . .] freckled" not only in and through chronological time, but also in synchronic or "instantaneous" depth. Both points were implicated in a note to Norbert Wiener, "Even so obvious an idea as using ads as windows rather than targets is hard for them" (November 10, 1951, qtd. in Chrystall 75). McLuhan was fully conscious that the crux of the matter lay in the knot of horizontal and vertical times, plural. As McLuhan put it in his 1944 review of a Hopkins biography in *The New York Times*: "The endlessly astonishing fact about Hopkins is the way in which he not only touches but [also] escapes from his age" ("Gerard Hopkins").

Thirty years after sending Pick's abstract to Corinne Lewis, McLuhan wrote to Fr. John Mole on April 18, 1969, as follows:

> I am a Thomist for whom the sensory order resonates with the divine Logos. [. . .] Analogy is not a concept. It is community. It is resonance. It is inclusive. It is the cognitive process itself. That is the analogy of the Divine Logos. [. . .] [I]mmediate analogical awareness [. . .] begins in the senses . . . (*Letters* 368-369)

McLuhan was saying to Fr. Mole as his academic career was winding down exactly what he was saying to Corinne Lewis, with Pick's abstract, as his career was just beginning. The "sensory order" is real and the relation of our "senses" to that order is real as well; hence "the cognitive process"

transpiring between these two, the "integral act of sense and intellect," is equally real. But these compounded realities of world and self, body and mind, are ultimately, ontologically, neither one-sidedly material nor one-sidedly conceptual. Instead, they are "inclusive" realities of "resonance" and "community" of each with the other. Further, these complexes relate analogously to that *prior* "resonance" and "community" which is "the Divine Logos." The referential relationship of these different horizontal and vertical resonances is "analogy" or, as McLuhan said even more frequently, is "metaphor": "When we look at any situation through another situation we are using metaphor" ("Catholic Humanism" 154).

McLuhan noted in a letter to Ezra Pound (December 21, 1948) that "the principle of metaphor and analogy — [is] the basic fact that as A is to B so is C to D. AB:CD" (*Letters* 207). Thus the "community" of "the Divine Logos" in the Trinitarian Godhead . . . is analog to the "community" of "the Divine Logos" with the finite world . . . is analog to the "community" of mind and world in "the cognitive process" . . . is analog to the "community" of the "senses" with the "sensory order" — A:B::C:D::E:F::G:H. Each of these "communities," together with each of their constitutive terms, stands on its own — but each is also analog with (and thereby shows forth) all the others.

This whole complex of inter-related and mutually reflecting "communities" is what McLuhan styled the "Analogical Mirrors." By analogy it is possible to know of the Trinitarian Godhead from the workings of the human senses and intellect in regard to their objects. But this is possible only because the Godhead first of all constitutes that community through which the senses and the intellect successfully apprehend their objects, as well as that community between levels of reality as which such analogy itself functions.

The ontological foundation of such analogical relationships is the dynamic life of the trinitarian Godhead. Because the Trinity is first of all fundamentally diversified, yet just as fundamentally unified, so is this same complex structure — because ontological — active everywhere in and between the elements at any one level of reality and in the relationship of those levels themselves (Dante's "La forma universal di questo nodo"). This depth dimension to reality — the community of levels — is linked in peculiarly knotted fashion, "di questo nodo" again, with what is seen in and through it, culminating in the life of "the Divine Logos." On the one hand, it is the *Logos* which supplies the structural form for such analogical perception; on the other, it is only through such analogical perception that the dynamic life of the *Logos* is known. Here medium and message fall together: "the medium is the message."

In an unpublished talk late in his career, McLuhan touched on these points as follows:

> communication takes place not by mere transportation of data from point to point. It is, in effect, the sender who is sent, and it is the sender who becomes the message [. . .] There is a strange property about innovation and change that can be stated by saying that effects tend to precede the causes. Another way of putting it is to say that the figure tends to come before the ground. ("Reading and The Future of Private Identity")[5]

Human beings and human societies are figures or effects. To find ground or cause, it is necessary to go inwards and backwards to their source. We start with what is later and lesser and proceed to what is earlier and greater. This is possible only because the medium and the message, if different, even fundamentally different, have their foundation in resonant community.

In *Explorations 8* (1957), McLuhan put this point, and linked it to Hopkins, as follows:

> The interval is the means of epiphany or revelation.
> It is the release which Hopkins called Sprung Rhythm.
> It is the instrument of analogical intuition of Being. (*Essential McLuhan* 208)

The structural form of the "Divine Logos" — of Being — is characterized by a resonant "interval" between the divine Persons which both differentiates and unites them. But this same resonant interval is "the means of epiphany or revelation," "the instrument of analogical intuition of Being," because it links different levels of reality culminating in the Trinity. The dynamic life of the trinitarian Godhead is in this way seen by means of itself: "the medium is the message."

Hopkins is explicit about this depth dimension to perception (and, of course, as a Jesuit, about what it reveals): "As tumbled over rim in roundy wells / Stones ring . . . " ("As kingfishers catch fire"). Similarly in McLuhan: a December 1947 letter to Walter Ong speaks of "multi-levels of simultaneous presentation" (*Letters* 190); a December 23, 1960, letter to Jacquelin Tyrwhitt of "the character of language itself, in which [. . .] words [. . .] in evershifting ratios [. . .] permit ever new light to come through them" (*Letters* 278); and a May 6, 1969, letter to Jacques Maritain of "the reverberations of the Logos reaching across language barriers" (*Letters* 371). Everywhere: Hopkins's stone ringing down the well of analogical perception in instantaneous, synchronic time.

Over the decades McLuhan described this "analogical awareness" in terms of a background x-ray and of figure/ground Gestalt and of formal causality. But while his ways of attempting to communicate the insight changed repeatedly, the matter at stake did not. A late (May 10, 1976) letter to Eric Havelock equates "analogy and formal causality" (*Letters* 520). The difficulty always lay in the question of how to expose the background form operating via "light through" *toward* us, without the essential distortion of throwing "light on" it *from* us — a point treated below in terms of what McLuhan (following Maritain and Pick) called "the ontological secret."

In a 1961 *Renascence* review of Richard Ellmann's *James Joyce* biography, McLuhan touched on all these points at once:

> . . . "naturalistic detail" in Flaubert or Joyce is not arranged in perspective or from any "point of view." It is arranged by juxtapositions of themes to effect ratios among forms. The result is not light *on* but light *through*. This is what is meant by "inscape" [. . .] in Hopkins and by "epiphany" in Joyce. ("Producers" 217-218)

In an important *Renascence* essay a decade earlier in 1951 ("Joyce, Aquinas, and the Poetic Process") McLuhan had noted the "profound effects to be achieved by analogical juxtaposition of characters, scenes, and situations without copula" (9).

It was Hopkins who, at the turn of the year 1934-1935, revealed to McLuhan how to perceive via "analogical juxtaposition [. . .] without copula." Although Richards and Leavis in their attention to Eliot and Pound certainly played an important role in this discovery, only Hopkins among the modern poets and critics was a Catholic at a time when, as McLuhan later noted, "In those years [at Cambridge] I was deeply interested in things Catholic . . . " (letter to John M. Dunaway, September 1, 1976, *Letters* 521). On the one hand, this threw open the door for him to modern literature, art, and music. On the other hand, and even more decisively, this threw open the door for him to *himself*. What he would later characterize as the "interior landscape" was even more complex in individual human beings, he now realized, than in the "characters, scenes, and situations" in art. The deep background of the individual — the x-ray, ground, or formal cause of the individual's being — was inherently *dramatic* (a word that appears frequently in McLuhan's writing in the 1930s and 1940s meaning *dynamic*) and *plural*.

The individual *qua* individual experiences (knowingly or unknowingly) both itself and its world of lived experience as "light through" *from* an "ancient quarrel" of world- and self-generating structural possibilities. It followed that the individual, here McLuhan himself, could not "make

up" his being, but neither was that being fixed. Instead, it was necessary to align himself (or find himself already aligned) with that one possibility which made sense of the complexities — the analogical juxtapositions — of the artist's vision and of the individual's own self.

A defining relationship with rival fundamental orders or "countries of the mind" is both natural to humans and yet mostly unknown and unattended. Regardless if known or unknown, however, the potential for world transformation provided by the archimedean lever of this foundational access is always in place and is the key to the understanding of all individual and societal change:

> The effects of new media on our sensory lives are similar to the effects of new poetry. They change not our thoughts but the structure of our world. (*IL* xiv)

McLuhan's conversion — the "change" in "the structure of [his] world" — marked the time when the tumblers of this complex movement fell into place and the lock came open. He had realized a way *to be* which followed from a newly won perception of *Being* in such a way — such a *knotted* way — that the cause or ground he had thereby found was able to explicate the effect or figure of his finding it. Inquiry into the history, logic, and implications of this complex experience would occupy him for the remainder of his life.[6] And, incessantly, he would probe into the ways in which this experience might (or, in the event, might not) be communicated.

The "vast excellency" unveiled in the resonating depths of such perception can be termed, using a phrase from McLuhan's March 14, 1951, letter to Harold Innis, "the *potencies* of language" (*Letters* 220) or "the *potencies*" of the Word. Throughout, horizontally and vertically, diachronically and synchronically, *communication* is the formative power, a communicative power which expresses itself through uttering-outering, creation, multiplication, pluralization, but just as much through a unifying "resonance" and "community."

Such a "sacramental view" both beholds this communicative power and responds to it by becoming it: "They became what they beheld," as McLuhan often cited from Blake (e.g., *Gutenberg Galaxy* 265), though usually negatively (e.g., *Gutenberg Galaxy* 272). Referring to Allen Tate in 1954, McLuhan noted that "it is precisely the recovery of analogical perception that marks Tate's conversion" (*Medium and the Light* 156). McLuhan was, of course, speaking from his own experience here and setting out his prescription for the healing of the world (since it had healed him): "the recovery of analogical perception."

When McLuhan writes that this "analogical awareness [. . .] begins in the senses," he is not at all saying that "analogical awareness" has its

foundation in the "sensory order" as a kind of material substrate or in the senses as providing some kind of immediate certainty. McLuhan noted the problem to Corinne Lewis that in John Dos Passos "there are no standards beyond those of immediate sensation" (January 21, 1939, *Letters* 102). Further, as he put it three decades later to Jonathan Miller (April 22, 1970): "inputs are never what we experience, since any input is always modified by the entire sensorium as well as by the cultural bias of the individual" (*Letters* 404). Equally, however, "analogy is not a concept" is a matter "not [of] our thoughts but [of] the structure of our world." The decisive point is that where the third possibility, "resonance," is reality itself, where "resonance" belongs first of all to "the Divine Logos," there is nothing that escapes its potency/potencies. Even "*immediate* [. . .] awareness" which "*begins* in the senses" *already* reflects, in multiple ways, this *ontology*.

The converse to this analogical ontology is what McLuhan called Gnosticism. This is the view that finite beings do not *shine* or *resonate* in this way, but instead are either complete in themselves (and therefore opaque), or are so utterly transparent that they have no being or beauty of their *own*. As Pick notes with Hopkins: "But man, 'life's pride and cared-for crown', fails to use created things as means" — either because they are taken to be ends in themselves, such that nothing is revealed *beyond* them, or because they are taken to be nothing in themselves at all, such that what is revealed, if anything, is *only* beyond them.[7] In either case, beings are useless as "means," i.e., as media. Therefore, if Gnosticism in this sense were to be opposed, there was an imperative need for — "understanding media."

In 1937 McLuhan had, like Hopkins, followed Newman's path to conversion and must have sent Pick's abstract to Corinne Lewis from St. Louis University in 1939 both as an indication to her of his own faith and as a kind of recommendation for hers (Corinne McLuhan entered the Church in 1946). Shortly thereafter, in 1941, McLuhan directed Walter Ong's St. Louis University master's thesis on Hopkins (*Letters* 162). In 1944, in the process of leaving St. Louis for Windsor, McLuhan wrote the *New York Times* review of the Hopkins biography by Eleanor Ruggles and, in one of his first critical essays for a series of different quarterlies, detailed his (still debated) reading of Hopkins's "The Windhover" ("The Analogical Mirrors"). This essay (which, like Pick's abstract, uses the phrase "sacramental view," *IL* 65) ends with a series of superlatives which McLuhan allowed to stand in the reprinting, 25 years later, in *The Interior Landscape*:

> There is no other poem of comparable length in English, or perhaps in any language, which surpasses its richness and intensity or realized artistic organization. There are two or three sonnets of Shakespeare (for example, "They that have power to hurt" and "The expense of spirit") which might be put with Donne's "At the round earth's" for comparison and contrast with this sonnet. But they are not comparable with the range of the experience and multiplicity of integrated perception which is found in "The Windhover." (*IL* 72-73)

A 1947 letter to Ong continued to locate Hopkins among the greats:

> Interested to note recently that James Joyce's esthetic doctrine of the *epiphany* [. . .] is same as Hopkins's *inscape*. Scotus Erigena uses term *epiphaneia* in this sense. Plato implies it apropos of intuition which occurs during dialectical activity. And it is the *claritas* of St. Thomas. (*Letters* 189)

In a 1949 letter to Hugh Kenner cited in Gordon's biography, McLuhan reminds Kenner (who had mentioned this parallel in a paper without crediting McLuhan) of his discovery of the "Hopkins-Joyce hook-up (inscape-epiphany)" (389, n121). The impression from Gordon is that this was a matter of McLuhan claiming precedence and his resulting right to develop the theme. But in fact the point at stake was the insight — namely, analogical perception — which shaped McLuhan's faith and thereby his whole personal and professional life. Communicating this insight was nothing less than McLuhan's *raison d'être*, what he felt the world desperately needed to know at a time when it was slipping into chaos. Since such communication could begin only with single individuals understanding him on this point, that is, "understanding media" as Hopkins did, thereby bringing about the "recovery of analogical perception" in those single individuals, it was all-important to know if Kenner had the idea: "the question remains, is the firm to be Kenner and McLuhan or Kenner operating on his own with the combined assets?" (Gordon 389). The words "and" and "own" in this passage designate the presence and absence of "resonance" and "community," therefore the presence or absence of "analogical perception." These are two different forms of "combined assets." One is detached (one of McLuhan's favorite words) though still associated, the other is merged; one is characterized by a mediating border or interval, the other is consolidated into singularity; one opens itself to a fully real other and relates to it as an other, the other closes itself even to the possible existence of the other by taking it over; one can talk with the other, the other is ultimately silent.

The chief "asset" at stake for human beings is Being itself. The great issue between the two 'firms,' Catholicism and Gnosticism, concerns if and how this asset is "combined." For the Church, combination ("community," communication) is already the case *in principio*: "and the Word was with God." For Gnosticism combination is a mistake or an illusion, in any case something to be combated and annulled. Prior to this 1949 letter to Kenner, McLuhan had already stressed the point (first of all for Kenner himself) in his introduction to Kenner's *Paradox in Chesterton* (1948). Here Chesterton is repeatedly hailed as "a master of analogical perception" (xi and xxii) — that is, as one who preserves "community" in viewing the "combined assets."

McLuhan took Hopkins's "inscape" and Joyce's "epiphany" to be just that synchronic analogical complex which he followed Pick in naming the "sacramental view." As specified in these words themselves, in-scape and epi-phany, the action at stake here comes first of all *toward* the subject as in-formation, which thereby enables the subject to mirror this action in taking *its* view — a point called "the ontological secret" by McLuhan in the 1944 "Analogical Mirrors" (*IL* 65) and wonderfully put by Hopkins in "Henry Purcell" (as McLuhan cites in the same place): "It is the forgèd feature finds me; it is the rehearsal / Of own." McLuhan would repeat this citation in his 1951 "Tennyson and Picturesque Poetry," immediately after the observation given above regarding the breakthrough of Hopkins to "body and solidity" (*IL* 151).

In a March 8, 1971, letter to J. M. Davey in the prime minister's office, of all places, McLuhan quoted Fr. Joseph Owens, his colleague at St. Michael's, as illustrating from Aristotle and Aquinas how "my communication theory is Thomistic to the core":

> . . . the cognitive agent itself becomes and is the thing known. [. . .] Its structure comes from the thing known, and not from any apriori in the intellect. (*Letters* 427)[8]

McLuhan's "communication theory" was founded on "the ontological secret" that "the cognitive agent itself becomes and *is* the thing known. [. . .] Its [ontological] structure comes from the thing known, and not from any apriori in the intellect." In short, "the cognitive agent" resonatingly relates itself to that prior resonance of "the Divine Logos" through the power of that priority: "Through him, in him, and with him. . . . "

The phrase "ontological secret" came from Maritain's *Art and Scholasticism*, but probably via Pick since Pick uses it in 1942 (*Gerard Manley Hopkins* 33) to describe Hopkins's "inscape" (just as McLuhan

was to do two years later in the 1944 "Analogical Mirrors"). On the same page Pick also quotes Maritain's use of the term:

> "Form" here must be understood in the philosophic sense as "the principle determining the peculiar perfection of everything which is, constituting and completing things in their essence and their qualities; the ontological secret, so to speak, of their innermost being."[9]

Pick probably brought Hopkins and Maritain together in this way in his 1938 thesis. This thesis must have been finished in 1937 and been well along towards completion in the fall of 1936 when McLuhan first came to Wisconsin and when Pick became his "best friend" there. There can be no doubt, at any rate, that Hopkins and discussion of Pick's thesis must have played an important role in this friendship at just the time when the process of McLuhan's conversion began its culminating phase. Late that fall, on November 26, 1936, McLuhan wrote Fr. Gerald Phelan in Toronto saying that he would like to be admitted to the Church.

The value of this Hopkins-Maritain association to McLuhan may be judged from a letter he wrote to Maritain three decades later (May 6, 1969):

> My first encounter with your work was at Cambridge University in 1934. Your *Art and Scholasticism* was on the reading list of the English School. It was a revelation to me. I became a Catholic in 1937. (*Letters* 371)

It may be guessed that Pick's knowledge of Hopkins and of the Hopkins-Maritain association played a critical role in McLuhan's passage between these two dates. When McLuhan sent Pick's abstract to Corinne Lewis early in 1939, he was therefore indicating to her not only something about his view of the Church and of Hopkins, but may well also have been specifying for her the path that he himself had taken to his conversion three years before.

THE importance of Hopkins for McLuhan (and therefore also of Pick) lay in the fact that Hopkins brought to unified focus in his achieved "analogical perception" a series of currents which were crucial to McLuhan's conversion. (This aside from the fact that Hopkins was a convert to the Church like Newman and Chesterton and therefore provided an example to him also in this respect.) First of all, Hopkins's poetry was an early — and wonderful — realization of the "Catholicity of mind" which McLuhan

cherished in modern thought. As he expressed the point in an early (1944) essay on Wyndham Lewis:

> . . . although Catholics necessarily live in the world of Eliot, Stein and Einstein, their emotional organization is done for them by Kipling, Galsworthy, Shaw and Chesterton. For let us not suppose for one instant that Catholicity of mind is conferred by grace or that we are freed from "the world's slow stain" [Shelley, *Adonais* 1821] by immersing ourselves in the best sellers of yesteryear. All question of the artistic value of Joyce and Picasso apart, the man whose sensibility and judgment cannot cope with them easily and naturally has not the equipment to consider the world he lives in. ("Wyndham Lewis" 179-180)

Hopkins provided astonishing demonstration of the use of this "equipment." Second, by temperament and persuasion (where Wyndham Lewis already played an important role), McLuhan saw detachment as one of the essential characteristics of "Catholicity of mind" — but detachment in "community" and "resonance." As McLuhan observed in a 1953 essay on James Joyce: "Reconciliation is not merging" ("James Joyce: Trivial and Quadrivial" 79). Hopkins gave unique expression to the sacramental working of such resonating detachment: "lovely in eyes not his." Third, Hopkins was thereby able to celebrate the sensuous world *both* in its "own" being *and* in its resonating relation to the "vast excellency" revealed through it: "Glory be to God for dappled things — / For skies of couple-colour as a brinded cow." Fourth, as detailed by Pick[10], Hopkins brought his "Catholicity of mind" into relation with the scholastics, particularly Scotus. In turn, this association could be compared to, and illuminated by, Maritain's effort to consider the bearing of scholasticism on art and poetry (and, as McLuhan shortly came to see, also to Joyce's recourse to Thomas in his work — the "Hopkins-Joyce hook-up"). Fifth, and most important of all for McLuhan, Hopkins unforgettably formulated what is seen and felt by "analogical perception" — the "inscape" of the world, its "*in*terior land*scape*."

In the figure of "the forgèd feature finds me; [. . .] the rehearsal / Of own," a knotted conception of *time* is once again implicated, since a movement of the self is envisioned as engaged toward (future) its original (past and present) meaning and reality. The possibility of this reversion, in turn, is given in the "resonance" or "community" of events in chronological time with the synchronic "rehearsal of own" in "the Divine Logos." Because "the Divine Logos" first of all reaches out of itself to itself ("Through him, in him, and with him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit"), so is such reversion to "own" possible for us. Since McLuhan saw that "recovery of analogical

perception" was essential to the renascence of the Church, and since such recovery presupposed insight into the complications of time, he observed to Ong: "The Church has more at stake than anybody. Should set up an institute of Perennial Contemporaryness!" (September 21, 1957, *Letters* 251). And as he noted in his 1954 address to the Catholic Renascence Society, "Eliot and The Manichean Myth As Poetry":

> the Catholic is more and more reminded of the inexhaustible wisdom and mercy of the Cross at every intersecting instant of space and time. These moments of intersection became for Father Hopkins (and also for James Joyce) epiphanies.

McLuhan's enduring interest in Hopkins may be seen in the fact that he was named as one of the vice-presidents (along with J. Hillis Miller and Walter Ong, among others) of the Hopkins Society upon its founding in 1969. Indeed, from his *NYT* review and the essay on "The Windhover," both from 1944, until McLuhan's latest work in the 1970s, Hopkins was continually on his mind. He is cited in *Explorations 8* (1957), *Gutenberg Galaxy* (1962), *Through the Vanishing Point* (1968), *From Cliché to Archetype* (1970), *Culture is Our Business* (1970) and *Take Today; the executive as dropout* (1972). *Take Today* cites Hopkins's "No worst, there is none" as indicating how "minding is the new business":

> O the mind, mind has mountains; cliffs of fall.
> Frightful, sheer, no-man-fathomed. Hold them cheap
> May who ne'er hung there. (*Take Today* 256)

These lines from Hopkins had already been cited in the 1944 "Analogical Mirrors" (*IL* 66) and thereby provide a sign of the continuity of McLuhan's work across the intervening three decades.[11] They may be taken together with a citation from Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* which appears over and over again in texts[12] from the last twenty years of McLuhan's life:

> The providence that's in a watchful state
> Knows almost every grain of Plutus' gold,
> Finds bottom in the uncomprehensive deeps,
> Keeps place with thought and almost, like the gods,
> Does thoughts unveil in their dumb cradles. (iii.3)

These two passages from Hopkins and Shakespeare form a structural backbone for McLuhan's efforts at communication from 1935 to 1980. He had seen a way that "Does thoughts unveil in their dumb cradles," but this way had "mountains; cliffs of fall. / Frightful, sheer, no-man-fathomed."

Since such "thoughts [. . .] in their dumb cradles" are prior to the experience of world — this priority is one of the ways in which they are "Frightful, sheer, no-man-fathomed," therefore "dumb" and "uncomprehensive" — they are foundational "cradles" or *media* through which the world, together with the world-experiencing self, is always already structured. Mediated. There is a *diversity* to the possible ways of being, including human being, that is yet *foundational*. McLuhan's work on "new media" and "mass communications" was simply one of the ways in which he attempted to communicate this insight concerning the natural communication humans have with these media, plural, at the base of their being — one of which is communication or "community" itself.

In the meantime John Pick had influentially contributed to the expanding interest in Hopkins.[13] Along with his work on Hopkins, Pick participated in the 1948 founding of *Renascence* and became its first editor.[14] A biographical note dating from this time, doubtless written by Pick himself, reads: "His deepest interest lies in literary criticism which is at the same time scholarly and thoroughly Catholic" (Hoehn 620). The idea of Catholic rebirth — *Renascence* — lay in the combination of exact literary scholarship and a 'thorough' Catholicism. One of the first regular contributors to the quarterly was Pick's friend and godson from their University of Wisconsin days together, Marshall McLuhan. Beginning in 1949 and continuing until 1963, McLuhan contributed 36 essays and reviews to the quarterly and gave talks (one on Hopkins) for at least two of the annual Renascence Society meetings. A note to Ong from September 23, 1950, records "Grand visit here [Toronto] with John Pick [. . .] I'm doing a few jobs for him" (*Letters* 216). McLuhan's contributions to *Renascence* concentrated on the usual suspects: Yeats, Pound, Joyce, Lewis, and Eliot: 28 of his 36 contributions treated one or more of these figures. Maritain was frequently cited and was the subject of an important contribution in 1953. With Pick and the Renascence Society generally, McLuhan shared the conviction that culture revealed a light shining in and through it, like "a gate or door or a window" transmitting "the species of a vast excellency."

Addendum: Abstract of John Pick's Ph.D. Thesis (1938)[14]
Religious Thought and Experience in the Poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins

This is a study of the religious thought and experience expressed in the poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins. It is based on a consideration of his temperament, life, published letters, essays, notebooks, diaries, journals, sketches, sermons, and reading. Special emphasis is placed on the relationship between his poetry and the

religious ideals of the Society of Jesus, of which he became a member. Hopkins's early work reveals unusual sensibility and attachment to sensuous beauty. But when he entered Oxford he sought a principle of control and direction. While he was attracted to the esthetic movements of the eighteen sixties, he repudiated a religion of beauty. He rejected also the liberalism and rationalism current at Oxford, and chose the way of the Tractarians. In this period his asceticism came to modify the sensory richness of his earlier work; in the verse he wrote the intellectual element predominates. In neither period does his poetry effectively combine the sensory and the intellectual. Following the path traveled by Newman, he became a Catholic and, shortly after leaving Oxford, a Jesuit. His entrance into the Society of Jesus changed the whole direction of his life and of his art. Especially profound in its influence was St. Ignatius' Spiritual Exercises, the Jesuit's chief guide to the spiritual life. These exercises set forth the Ignatian ideal of using all created things as means to man's final end. For twenty-one years Hopkins studied, meditated, and practiced the Spiritual Exercises. They became part of his life and attitude, giving direction to all he experienced, thought, and wrote. They influenced his most exuberant and joyous poems; they were part of his suffering and desolation. He delivered sermons suggested by them, started to write a commentary on them; he gave them to others. Their impact is found in his humility, his asceticism, his scrupulousness, his consciousness of imperfection, his abnegation, and the integrity with which he faced hardship and disappointment. They shaped his native temperament and sensibility to an ideal of perfection.

It was during his noviceship that Hopkins worked out an esthetic in which experience of beauty and religious experience coalesce. Created beauty became a call to higher Beauty, and the poet learned to use his awareness of the beauty of the world in the service of God.

The principle of beauty in things he called "inscape," which is analogous to the scholastic description of beauty as "splendor formae." In arriving at this concept he was aided by Duns Scotus. Esthetic and religious experience became one in the sacramental apprehension of beauty. His sacramentalism, molded by Scotus and the Spiritual Exercises, gave him warrant for the use of the senses. The integral act of sense and intellect in which the artist seeks God allowed him to delight in the beauty of the world without considering it man's final end or worshipping it; rather he used beauty as a means, directing it godwards so as to give it supernatural efficacy.

Hopkins's poems are studied chronologically in groups, each of which represents a phase of the development of his religious life. The poems of 1875-78 express a sacramental view of nature; they are full of joyous wonder at the beauty of created things, a joy enhanced and made more exuberant because the world is experienced as news of God. Progressing from earthly beauty, from particular "inscapes" to God, the priest-poet finds the One ablaze in the many; through variegated and transient beauty he rises to Immutable Beauty. Natural things pursue their perfection, which is nothing more than their likeness to the divine. But man, "life's pride and cared-for crown," fails to use created things as means to his end.

Different in their emphasis are the poems of 1879-81, in which Hopkins is more specifically concerned with moral beauty. Man's waywardness, he insists,

is due to original sin, but God's grace can give back to him the beauty which he has lost. The poet's constant admonition is that man mold himself to the Ignatian ideal, and several poems express his troubled concern at his own imperfection.

Most of his last poems, those of 1882-89, were written when he was teaching at University College, Dublin. Hopkins had just completed his Tertianship, during which the whole course of his religious life was deepened. In Ireland, amid uncongenial surroundings, a routine of heavy duties, and ill health and the mental fatigue and depression that accompanied it, he redoubled his effort to fulfill the Ignatian ideals of self-abnegation and identification with the will of God. The trial and suffering of these years may have been caused or accompanied by a condition well known to ascetic writers as aridity or interior desolation.

Shortly before his entrance into the Society of Jesus, Hopkins had voluntarily burned his poetry because he thought it would interfere with his vocation. When he became a Jesuit he subordinated it to more sacred and binding duties. While he felt that encouragement and recognition were almost necessary as a stimulus to the artist, he renounced fame as spiritually dangerous. The result was that, lacking both time and recognition, the continuance of composition became increasingly difficult.

But on a religious plane his life was not tragic but heroic. He wrote little, but what he did write, both of the joys and of the sorrows of his spiritual life, is eminently expressive of his own experience with the ideals he was so wholeheartedly pursuing.

Notes

1) At Cambridge McLuhan certainly met another of his future teaching assistant colleagues at University of Wisconsin, Morton Bloomfield, who was then studying at the University of London. Bloomfield, a fellow Canadian, may have alerted McLuhan to the possibility of a job at UW. See *Letters* 473.

2) The original Hopkins poem has "chieftain" where McLuhan cites "master."

3) All quotations here taken from John Pick's thesis abstract (appended).

4) McLuhan uses the phrase "ancient quarrel" in his thesis (*Classical Trivium* 226) and, of course, in "An Ancient Quarrel in Modern America" (*IL* 223-234).

5) The typescript reverses "figure" and "ground" in this text in error.

6) It takes a lifetime to explore the implications of an event like conversion, even (or especially) for the individual involved. So McLuhan had little knowledge in 1937 when he arrived at St. Louis University just how his transformative experience over the last four years, 1933-1937, might be articulated. But here in St. Louis he met and became close friends with the philosopher Bernard Muller-Thym (1909-1974), who was the best man at McLuhan's wedding in 1939 and the godfather of McLuhan's first child, Eric, in 1942. In the course of this intense friendship, McLuhan studied and discussed with Muller-Thym the latter's many papers from this period. In one of these, "The To Be which Signifies The Truth of Propositions," McLuhan must have been thunder-struck — in a way which gave direction to the remainder of his intellectual life — by Muller-Thym's capsule summary

of the understanding of Being in St. Thomas: "for being, which is analogous, and in which beings are proportionately and not generically one [. . .] always expresses a proportion to its act to be, which to be is diverse . . . " (232-233)." If Being itself is incomparably more diverse, *qua* Being, than any beings can be, then the cohesion or proportionality of beings must stretch across (so to say) the greatest possible difference between them. They cannot be more diverse than Being itself. And their diversity cannot function other than it does in Being. In this way, McLuhan's understanding of his own conversion fell together with his understanding of modern letters in Pound, Joyce, Eliot, and especially Hopkins: "lovely in eyes not his" . . .

7) In his 1972 "Foreword" to Harold Innis's *Empire and Communications*, McLuhan notes that Innis "was surrounded by people for whom his trained perceptions and insights were merely opaque or [were] transcendental" (ix).

8) These passages from Owens may now be found in his *Collected Papers* (1980) 50-51.

9) Pick places this text in quotation marks but without reference to its source in *Art and Scholasticism* 20.

10) Pick has an appendix on "Duns Scotus and Hopkins" in *Gerard Manley Hopkins: Priest and Poet* 156-159.

11) Already in 1938, McLuhan concluded a review of Lewis Mumford's *The Culture of Cities* (*Fleur de Lis* 38:2 [December 1938]: 39) with a citation from Ronald Bottrall which F. R. Leavis had cited in his 1932 *New Bearings in English Poetry* and which clearly was inspired by Hopkins: "The soul has precipices, slippery footholds. Fearful . . . "

12) The citation appears in "The Humanities in the Electronic Age," "The Electronic Age — The Age of Implosion," *Understanding Media*, the "Foreword" to Innis's *Empire and Communications*, *Take Today*, and the posthumous *Laws of Media.*

13) Pick's reworked thesis from 1938 was published in a shortened version in 1942 as *Gerard Manley Hopkins: Priest and Poet*. In 1949 he provided the introduction for *Immortal Diamond*, edited by Norman Weyland, S.J., a war-delayed collection of essays commemorating the one-hundredth anniversary of Hopkins's birth on July 28, 1844. Then, in 1953, he edited the *Gerard Manley Hopkins Reader*. Both *Gerard Manley Hopkins: Priest and Poet* and the *Gerard Manley Hopkins Reader* were published by Oxford University Press (the publisher of Hopkins's letters and papers in the 1930s and of his collected works today) and were repeatedly reprinted. Pick later edited and introduced *Gerard Manley Hopkins, The Windhover* (Merrill Casebook, 1968), with 24 contributions on "The Windhover," beginning with an excerpt from I. A. Richards's pioneering 1926 *Dial* essay and including sections from McLuhan's 1944 "Analogical Mirrors."

14) Pick was also active with another journal, *Victorian Poetry* (founded in 1962). Its first issue after his death was dedicated to him as follows:

> In Memoriam John Pick 1911-1981
> Have fair fallen. O fair, fair have fallen, so dear
> To me, so arch-especial a spirit...
> [Gerard Manley Hopkins, "Henry Purcell"]
>
> An exciting and provocative lecturer; a flamboyant and unforgettable teacher; for thirty years the outstanding professor of Romantic and Victorian literature at Marquette University — an inspiring model and kind friend to a junior colleague; founding editor of *Renascence*; pioneer

and preeminently influential Hopkins scholar; from its founding an enthusiastic and valuable supporter of *Victorian Poetry* — to John Pick we dedicate this issue with gratitude for debts incalculable and with memories ineradicable.

15) Summaries of Doctoral Dissertations, University of Wisconsin, University of Wisconsin Press, 1938, 299-301.

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