The medium is the mess: what Marshall McLuhan didn't know

or

Abcendmindedness, William S. Burroughs, chaos, Jacques Derrida, enjoyment as an imperative, Fight Club, Google, Hypertext, invisibility as a tool of power, Shelley Jackson, Franz Kafka, Jacques Lacan, MadMen, New Orleans, Barack Obama, pseudo-politics, quotation cultures, riots without reason, spam, the test drive, Gregory Ulmer, Paul Virilio, WMDs, X-Factor, Y!NOT!, Slavoj Žižek

– an abcedarium of post-McLuhan phenomena

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Apologies, first, for inflicting on you yet another lame version of what is probably Marshall McLuhan's most famous aphorism[1]. I'm well aware that by 1978 McLuhan, in a somewhat better joke, was suggesting to friends that in fact "the tedium is the message"[2]. Nevertheless, my punning distortion of "the medium is the message"[3] does have serious point. The mess is how mass media often present the world to their consumers (McLuhan has taught us to be suspicious of every term in this sentence). For example, as far back as 1982, well before the proliferation of broadcast channels via satellite[4] or the advent of YouTube[5] or the Internet, the British lecturer and independent TV producer John Ellis pointed out how difficult it is to discuss television's content except in an impressionist way. Even 30 years ago he saw no hope of offering a comprehensive overview of the variety available to viewers.[6]

A torrent of words and images

By **2001**, though, McLuhan's ideas had drifted invisibly into the mainstream[7], and conventional academics such as Todd Gitlin felt free to simply state without qualification that "the torrent of images and sounds overwhelms our lives"[8]. It has been suggested that we are re-entering a world of "blooming buzzing confusion"[9].This year, the number of pages on the World Wide Web, as indexed by the major search engines, totalled 10.46 billion, at least, on 29 August 2011, and 11.56 billion on 28 October[10]. Google indexed pages were estimated at nearly 47 billion[11]. More important, as the author of the estimate, Maurice de Kunder, points out, the exact figure is unknowable[12].

The commodity is chaos, the medium is fragmentation

Clichés of the digital world though such statistics have become, they have produced generalizations that are eerily reminiscent of McLuhan's memorable and much-discounted[13] aphorisms. "The merchandise of the information economy is not information; it is attention." This comes not from *The Medium is the Massage* but from *The New York Review of Books* for 18 August 2011 in an article about Google by James Gleick[14]. The computer pioneer and digital contrarian Jaron Lanier indicates why Google might be happy with a maelstrom of information against which we desperately need a barrel to navigate across successfully: "They want a lot of chaos that they can have an ability to undo"[15]. Not that we should mistake the Internet search engines, web page aggregators and RSS feeds for effective tools for living in the electronic age's global village[16]. Most of the results these programs return seem to be about as useful as the spam that accounts for nearly 90% of our emails[17]. I'm reminded

of McLuhan's words in *Understanding Media* about electrical 'labor-saving' devices such as toasters, washing machines and vacuum cleaners: "Instead of saving work, these devices permit everybody to do his own work. […] This principle applies *in toto* in the electric age"[18]. Digital machines enable us all to do our own re-assembly work.

As McLuhan indicated with his apercu that embracing any technological extension of our senses involves sacrificing or numbing ourselves to benefit of our earlier environment[19], in the current state of the electronic village we give ourselves over to an interruption culture: ever shorter television soundbites[20] and shot-cutting[21], news crawls across the bottom of our television screens along with picture-in-picture broadcasting, pop-ups on web pages, "alerts" issued to our computer desktops and "multi-tasking" as a laudable standard of performance. From telephones to video games, from email spam to advertising in news and fiction broadcasts, from reality TV to computer viruses, interruptions have become the standard fare of media and individuals in the 21st century have become used to the flow of their time being continually interrupted[22].

Many of these tools were sold as increasing the liberty and empowerment of consumers (the TV remote control, the cellphone, public Internet, email, multi-channel television, CCTV and electronic texting, for example). What does it mean to be offered such choices?

If we fast-forward to the McLuhan of the 21st century, the Slovene cultural critic Slavoj Žižek*, we learn that "Western societies expose the subject to radical ambiguity in the face of his [or her] desire. The media constantly bombard [us] with requests to choose, addressing [us] as the subject *supposed to know what [we] really want* [23](which book, clothes, TV programme, holiday destination…) [/] The very evocation of a choice to be made performatively creates the need for the object of choice. [/In the cyberspace universe,] distances /[are] suspended […] However, the obverse of this suspension […] is that […] excess of choice will be experienced as the impossibility to choose" [24].

The freedom to choose becomes as tyrannical as the labor-saving device. At the same time the proliferation of choices requires us to develop professional skills or take expert advice on the most fundamental aspects of everyday life: time management, shopping, work-life balance, parenting and tourism.

'You still know nothing of my work'
Doubtless, other commentators at the conference celebrating McLuhan on the 100th anniversary of his birth have defended McLuhan against the standard charges of being a technological determinist, of book burning (though he may have kindled a little fire under the industrial age's obsession with paper and linear thinking), of presuming that the electronic global village presaged a harmonious retribalized future, or of suggesting that simply embracing everything the electronic world has to offer would make us free. To many of his critics, as well as some of his supporters, McLuhan could rightfully declare, as he did to an overbearing professor in a cinema queue in Woody Allen's *Annie Hall*: "You know nothing of my work"[25]. It is remarkable to me that so few who dismiss his ideas have given credit to his son Eric for, first, putting together Marshall McLuhan's later papers into a set of laws that have not been superseded[26] and devised scientific testing of his father's key differentiation between movies and television[27].

McLuhan's message
Equally, I would hope that others at the conference identified the characteristics of McLuhan's work that I found the most stimulating as a student of media:

- his application of anthropological findings from other cultures to reveal the historical contingency of our Western civilization;

- his recognition that artists, no matter how weird their social or political ideas, can offer enlightenment about technology's impact on our mental as well as physical environment;

- his insistence that all the extensions of our senses, not just the mass media, affect our psychological well-being;

- his center-staging of electronic and digital media in studying the organization of our daily lives;

- his determination to put cultural studies on a scientific footing; and, perhaps most important for the future,

- his permanent effort to rescue humanities education from its crisis resulting from narrow-minded marginal positions, impracticality and moral blindness.

The godfather of postmodernism
From all these aspects, Marshall McLuhan should be celebrated not just as the father of cultural studies but also as the godfather of postmodernism[28], particularly in its struggle against the ahistoric universalism – the 'soft' totalitarianism – of digital globalization[29], the return[30] to out-of-fashion thinkers such as Nietzsche, Marx and Freud in order to re-read them for new insights (as well as embracing the subversive positions of the Surrealists if not the theories), the postmodern practice of questioning the 'natural' wherever it presents itself[31], the precise delineation of how the mass media respond to and exploit the fantasies encouraged in their publics[32], their insistence on the philosophical pedigree of their conclusions, and their rigorous theorization of their detailed observations (to the exasperation of many critics educated in a narrow literary tradition).

But too much fast food for the French
Granted, several of the postmodernist, post-structuralists or post-theorists – whatever you call them – do not acknowledge McLuhan's contribution to their thinking. In part this is because many of his ideas have entered into the mainstream and swim invisibly among the other ideas[33], sometimes being drowned in the process[34]. Except among comparatively marginal figures such as Jean Baudrillard* or Paul Virilio*, his work proved difficult for the university and intellectual system of France to digest Perhaps the aphorisms came too fast, and the probes were too outrageous, as many found later with Baudrillard.

McLuhan knew of Derrida…
However, a number of McLuhan's remarks could fit easily into the postmodern canon: "At high speed […] every solution creates more problems than it can resolve"; "When the planet became the content of a man-made surround, it ceased to be NATURE for its occupants. It has to be programmed totally from now on"[35]. He certainly knew of the most influential

literary French philosopher of the time, Jacques Derrida*[36],and referred in *The Gutenberg Galaxy* to postmodernism's existential master Martin Heidegger[37].

… but gagged on his ideas

In spite of parallels between McLuhan's observations and anti-metaphysical thought, he was never able to take on board in his theories the essential insights of postmodernists: the aporia (or undecidability) at the heart of many issues facing individuals in society, the deceptions of language, the breakdown of all 'big ideas' and associated loss of authority or legitimacy of institutional forms such as science, the dissolution of the subject and the unintelligibility of the world in many of its aspects. These ideas were still working their way into academia during the 1970s and 1980s[38].

One indicator of the psychological distance travelled since the 1960s can be found in McLuhan's regular usage of "man" where today even the least sensitive would use "humans", "people" or even "s/he"[39]. Gender studies, of course, represent a major branch of postmodernist thought[40]. A scrupulous acknowledger of his own sources, McLuhan could not know that the European postmoderns would neglect, offer only a superficial reading of, or take on his ideas without recognition of, his pioneer work[41].

From abcedmindedness to abc*end*mindedness[42]

Just as significantly, and perhaps a partial explanation for his sudden neglect, Marshall McLuhan never presented a fully fleshed-out theory of the process of diffusion of new media through society as a transforming environment[43]. He did, however, gather together several elements: we have the tetrad of characteristics set out in *Laws of Media* (new technology enhances a human capacity, displaces an older form, revives a previous practice and, at the limit of its potential, reverses into what had been some of the original characteristics)[44].

Break boundaries, painful transitions

Kenneth Boulding gave him the notion of a "break boundary", the point at which a system "passes some point of no return in its dynamic processes"[45]. McLuhan likewise had no doubt that the transition to a global digital culture would be painful, turbulent and distressing[46].

The site of struggle

McLuhan also provided an indication of where the struggle between the past and future would take place, embodied in his theory that individuals and authorities treat new technologies with a "rear-mirror" view[47], that is, extrapolate helplessly from the previous culture's experiences when struggling to master the transformed environment. From Harold Innis he learned, if he did not know already, how business and government control new technologies[48].

As early as 1947 McLuhan described commercial advertising and cinema techniques as "action for direct social control" aimed at "the exploitation of all emotional sets and preferences as just so much raw material to be worked up by centralized control for purposes of super-profits"[49]. He wrote of the "totalitarian techniques of American marketing research"[50] and clearly indicated his awareness of the political dimension: "Appetites for private power are inventing the means of possible political power for the future. […] Appetite is essentially insatiable"[51].

Hardly the words of someone unconcerned with the political and economic implications of his ideas, as the British commentators Jonathan Miller[52] and Raymond Williams charged[53]. He also repeatedly declared: "The classroom is now in a vital struggle for survival with the immensely persuasive 'outside' world created by new informational media"[54] and even outlined a high-school syllabus, inaugurating the field of media studies[55].

Schweik with Machiavelli

Nevertheless, McLuhan did not know that conventional media[56] could so easily subvert his aims by embracing his ideas almost immediately, a Schweikian gesture[57] that unfortunately for McLuhan came with a Machiavellian twist. Each journalistic celebration of McLuhan both promoted and validated the concept of the global village and the message of electronic media, though not as he expected[58]. Instantaneity, global tribalism, the politics of enjoyment, the symbiotic relationship between war and technology[59] and the erosion of privacy – all McLuhan's regular themes – have become distinguishing characteristics of post-industrial society. Yet their expression in the 21st century has not been in terms McLuhan had presumed would be inevitable and inescapable: that is, instant communication ensuring all factors of the environment and experience co-exist in a state of active interplay[60], and participation/involvement of one's whole being[61].

News jouissance

On the contrary. The global audience that switches on major sports broadcasts or events such as Princess Diana's funeral in 1997 or Ronald Reagan's in 2004 participates only in a superficial way, and is much less involved than in video gaming[62]. At the same time, commentators and the authorities insist on the communal nature of what takes place[63]. McLuhan's fascinating chapter on games in *Understanding Media* recognized this part of their function: "Games as popular art forms offer to all an immediate means of participation in the full life of a society, such as no single role or job can offer to any man" (1964:210).

Over the next 45 years, television educated viewers and spectators to demand an emotional satisfaction from all television (news became minutely orchestrated, weather broadcasting turned into a low art form). The anonymous and largely invisible community fostered by television[64] has become mainly important as a marketing target. For example, programs that seek to attract young people capitalize on being outrageous to their elders (*Ibiza Uncovered*, *Braniacs*).

On the commercial level, Apple, which became the world's largest traded company and the biggest-earning technology firm under Steve Jobs after he negotiated a $150-million investment from Microsoft[65], advertised itself and wooed its purchasers as a community of pirates and rebels[66].

In recent years television has positioned itself as the repository of record for imaginary communities, even fantasy-driven ones, through programs such as *Treme*, *Mad Men* and *Glee*[67] (in contrast to group-focused shows: *Friends,* innumerable cop dramas, or family soaps)[68]*.

From electric nowness to Occupy Wall Street

Post-mechanical society in the second half of the 20th century delivered on McLuhan's expectations of the impact of "electric nowness" on all levels of life[69]. Once again, however, his predictions enabled media to push forward with their own agendas while claiming to be

simply following the inevitable curve of technological progress. Thus, U.S. television in the 21st century could present and celebrate itself as a global force while offering nothing more than a U.S.-centric view of the world. It flew anchorpersons and reporters to remote places from which to stand up in front of a picturesque background and speak to camera about events that usually take place offscreen. The "news hole" remained the same size[70].

Conversely, unfilmed human-made catastrophes, whether in the Balkans[71], Rwanda or Sudan[72], receive minimal coverage relative to their importance[73]. McLuhan himself seems to have been ambivalent about the effects of universal media. He predicted[74] the collapse of single-viewpoint approaches to living ("the zombie trance of Narcissus narcosis that numbs the state of psychic shock induced by the impact of new media"[75]). At the same time, he envisaged the decentralization of humanity into a mosaic of "multitudinous tribal existences"[76]. This included "a new nub of conservatism" emerging in the U.S. as the home and family become the center of society with "shared psychological and economic interests"[77].

But if the Tea Party and new radical Right represent this new nub, they show no sign of collapse and provide a continuously lucrative channel for Fox News as well as a source of hired commentators. The rest of television, rather than seeking to "cool" the situation down by presenting multiple viewpoints, tends to ignore such self-assertion, as with the Occupy Wall Street movement[78].

Instead of the cultural coalescence that McLuhan saw in James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* and constantly cited as a guide to the environmental transformations effected by media, the streams of non-communicating information[79] are more reminiscent of the "cut-up" novels of William S. Burroughs post 1960, with their obsessive phrases, incomplete scenes, disjointed chronology and abrupt changes of narrator[80] – an attempt to reproduce "the actual facts of perception", as Burroughs explained in 1983[81].

This sends us back to the remarks of Jaron Lanier, that from this chaos the organizers of meaning can make money and gain social control. But we would also add that, surfing across McLuhan's electric universe, they also – and often simultaneously – create the disorder[82]. Euronews on television has a section entitled *no comment* which just identifies its segments by the place and date. They are often unintelligible, as are many of the uploaded cellphone videos rebroadcast by mainstream television from disturbances[83]. These new media may make viewers aware of how much their old environment was constructed, but such experiences only underline the desperation with which post-industrial society needs its "rear-view mirrors" to survive comfortably, even knowing the artificiality and unreality of such constructs[84].

Not conspiracies – just lies
Quotation, bricollage[85], cut and paste, intertextuality, parody and pastiche – all these terms from the postmodern vocabulary to identify responses to fragmentary experience align, even when unacknowledged, with McLuhan's identification of the mosaic as a form embraced by media as a result of the electrical environment. However, the pattern recognition that McLuhan expected us to develop to deal with this mess of information[86] has failed to prove as useful or as reliable as he anticipated[87]. Video gaming may train future soldiers to react instinctively to data overload but other patterns offered for public comprehension may be misleading rather than empowering: the 9/11 attacks by fanatical Saudis led to the

destruction of an anti-fundamentalist regime in Iraq that supposedly had weapons of mass destruction to deploy against the West. Embedded journalists in Iraq and Afghanistan deliberately took the side of western forces with little opportunity to hear the story from the other side.

Writers and artists, as McLuhan told us they would, reflect this situation most accurately[88]. As deliberately traditional a writer as Alan Hollingshurst writes repeatedly about the ways in which pattern recognition blinds people to more important realities[89] than their constructions. From Thomas Pynchon to Chuck Palahniuk, conspiracy narratives in novels abound but today they are fake, ludicrous or misleading. Ridiculous has become the dominant style of television advertisements, in the U.K. at least. For at least 20 years television news has been constructed in in forms that make the stories hard to remember despite research work on organizing broadcasts so that items were memorable[90]. Without memory, except for what is summoned on the instant for the immediate purpose[91], no conspiracies are possible[92].

In politics conspiracies are no longer needed: a lie will do. Thus we see the only U.S. newspaper of record, *The New York Times*, publishing unchallenged what it should have known were governmental lies about weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, and published false reports of black violence, rape and looting in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina in 2005[93].Barack Obama's questionable birth certificate, his Muslim background, association with black separatists, and Socialist agenda including death panels (all false) seem to have made more of an impact on public opinion than any of the President's economic policies or foreign policy initiatives[94], except for the dubiously legal execution of Osama Bin Laden, where it was falsely announced that the Al-Qaeda leader had fired at U.S. forces[95]. Conspiracies still abound in movies, a sign that perhaps, as McLuhan noted, films are now a superseded environment to be recycled for aesthetic purposes[96].

You do not talk about torture

Ridicule – a style more openly derisory than irony, and more dismissive of the materials it is discussing – has become a stock tool of the modern novelist[97]. Chuck Palahniuk's *Fight Club* (1996), for example, can be seen as a private-life transposition of official U.S. policy and schizophrenia (Rwanda, Kosovo, Abu Ghraib), where the rule is not to talk about what happens[98]. This has obvious parallels with the "Don't ask, don't tell" rule applied in the U.S. military in an act of open institutional hypocrisy[99]. Other writers foreground the impossibility of narrative, among them *Harry Mathews, the first American member of the French Oulipo experimental group. His early novels such as *The Conversions* (1962) and *Tlooth* (1966) relate spoof quests. *The Sinking of the Odradek Stadium* (1975) offers an index that may be misleading[100]. *The Journalist* (1994) collapses under its own weight when the author tries to record everything that happens to him, while *My Life in CIA* (2005) is classified as a memoir and/or fiction[101].

The delusions of linear narrative

Similarly, Christine Brooke-Rose, the true inheritor of Joycean forms, creates worlds where the instability of language and the delusions of linear narrative mislead her protagonists as well as the reader[102]. Her experiments recall, and sometimes anticipated, those of the French writer Georges Perec, who was himself influenced by McLuhan and Oulipo and became a friend of Mathews[103]. Notoriously, Perec's *La Disparition* (translated as *A Void*) excluded any use of the letter 'e'. This has been taken as a reference to the disappearance of Jews in World War II as well as that of the writer from the work.

In the writings of Mathews and Perec there is a pattern but not necessarily one that helps us understand the work, just as the alphabetization of the first letters of the sections in this paper is a formal conceit that adds nothing to the significance of what is said, though it may underline McLuhan's point about the linearity (completely arbitrary though historically grounded, as it is) of phonetic letters[104].

Each of these writers creates novels as a test for the reader, whether po-faced[105] or seriously – and sometimes it is hard to tell which. The Derrida scholar *Avital Ronell has written about the nearly ubiquitous presence of testing in the contemporary environment, whether in science, business, politics or television[106]. Kafka is the master of this world, as Ronell points out, whether in highlighting the link between testing and torture or devising a tale ("Before the Law") in which a man's test consists in not knowing he is being tested[107].

The tattooed skin of culture

The Trial bears an uncanny resemblance to McLuhan's own experiences when misunderstanding McLuhan grew into a cottage industry: a man who is slandered tries to clear his name and finds that each step gets him into deeper trouble, until he is finally eliminated (academically in McLuhan's case) without it ever being clear exactly what he is accused of or whether he has committed a crime. Good bedtime reading for President Obama, no doubt.

Kafka's writings, enigmatically autobiographical, seem much more in tune with this aspect of contemporary experience than the elitist modernists' of his time, who found the fragmentary nature of their lives distressing and a cause to retreat to their ivory towers. Kafka presents us with puzzles from everyday experience but not ones that seem worth striving to solve, though they tempt the reader to try. In fact they may not have a solution and maybe do not exist after all.

The high modernists, for their part, are gradually being incorporated into a mosaic world that subverts their claims to singular authority. The publishers of T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922) have released an iPad version with four readings of the poem (including two by Eliot), a comparison version with Pound's editorial markings (cutting the first 53 lines of the original), video commentaries by critics, and sidebar notes that make this the most comprehensible version ever. What then in 2011 is the authoritative version? Eliot himself admitted that he added the final notes only to make a bigger volume for the publishers[108]. Here, too, are a series of puzzles without answer. Each version has its own validity and can only be experienced, not organized into a single pattern.

More recent writers have embraced such undecidability. *My Body* (1997), by *Shelley Jackson, provides a hypertext online collection of writings (http://www.altx.com/thebody/body.html) about a, if not her, body, though Jackson does not attempt to assemble them into a narrative – and this is part of her joke. Her pioneering hyperfiction *Patchwork Girl* (1995), published on CD, riffs on the story of Frankenstein's monster (which therefore becomes Shelley's monster in a double sense – both hers and Mary Shelley's). The heroine, named after Frank Baum's character, is (Mary) Shelley's second child, a monster with a loving mother.

"I made a quilt, where each patch is itself a patchwork (in crazy-quilt style) of quotes from divers sources," Jackson said in 1998. "I wanted to write about the liberating potential of […]

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unseatedness. I had […] a disorderly tangle of ideas, bits of narrative, quotes and drawings, […] interconnected in my own mind. Where I contradicted myself or found myself drawn in two directions at once became the branch point for parallel structures. I guess you could say I want my fiction to be more like a world full of things that you can wander around in, rather than a record or memory of those wanderings."[109].

In 2003 Jackson launched her *Skin* project, a short story tattooed one word at a time on 2095 volunteers, a realization in the flesh of *The Skin of Culture*[110], Derrick de Kerckhove's study of the loss of psychological boundaries between self and the environment. The participants do not see the story until they have received their tattoo and they are the only persons who can read it[111]. "The story will find its coherence in its readers' minds, rather than in the world," Jackson said in 2004[112]. The echoes of Franz Kafka are deliberate[113].

Extensions of McLuhan
Understanding McLuhan means more than grafting his ideas onto developments since 1980. He insisted he was careful to predict only what had already happened[114], and he didn't mind being proved wrong[115]. He clearly did not expect to be 100% right and saw his work as a continuing process rather than a finished project[116]. The scholars closest to his way of thinking, known as media ecologists, have seen no reason to agree with the conclusions of his 'probes'[117]. Neil Postman, for example, says he disagrees with McLuhan's answers but insists "the asking of the questions is sufficient"[118].

 Indeed, McLuhan provided a tetrad of questions with which to analyze and assess technological innovations. We do not need to blame him for his unknown unknowns as well as for unknown knowns. McLuhan is not the enemy[119]. Extensions of McLuhan can incorporate his ideas as starting points rather than seek to contradict him. Paul Levinson, for example, has suggested that "media tend to make their grand entrances into society at large as toys – as a gadget or gimmick thing that people appreciate just for the fun of it, not for the work that it may accomplish"[120]. The role of the cellphone in the U.K. August riots provides an opportunity to apply McLuhan's theories, those of his predecessors, those of his successors, and the ideas discussed in this paper.

Protest and electracy
Violence and looting, particularly by gangs assembled via cellphone messages[121], was the focus of much of the political concern over the disturbances in several English cities after riots in London[122]. The British Home Office called in the representatives of social media sites to discuss steps to take in times of riot and Prime Minister David Cameron proposed that suspected rioters be barred from websites.

Wired headlined a report on 26 September 2001: "The Twitter Riots"[123] but how justified was this? In fact, the story by Paul Lewis was about how much Twitter messages by 'citizen journalists' informed users of where cars were burned out and shops looted. "Twitter was not just at the site of trouble – but present too where riots failed to materialize, dispelling false rumors. It also led a national campaign to clean up the streets in the aftermath of the disorder," he reported[124]. In all there were 2.5 million related tweets, most of them after the riots[125].

All this came out after the fact. At the time the British Prime Minister David Cameron blamed the disturbances and looting on criminals who lack moral principles rather than protesters,

with a variant explanation that people were swept up in the mindless contagion of the moment and lost their standards in the crowd[126]. Cameron spoke of a broken society, while former Prime Minister Tony Blair blamed a narrow but recalcitrant underclass[127].

The radical economic commentator Naomi Klein pointed out that the looting was minor[128]. Nevertheless, the major newspapers referred to the rioters as "gangs of mindless yobs"[129], "anarchists"[130], "morons", "thugs" and "idiots"[131].

Professor Stephen Reicher wrote in the *New Scientist*: "These theories translate into convenient solutions. In the short term, don't try to reason with rioters but use a big stick to repress them; in the longer term, look at the sickness within their communities that has turned them into amoral beasts"[132].

All these aspects of the U.K. riots were in perfect concord with McLuhan's theories of the disturbing impact of electric technologies, particularly their immediacy, their demonizing by authorities, and the "rear-view mirror" reaction by both politicians and mass media. However, it explains only part of the story, and perhaps the least interesting part.

The police role in instigating the rioting (as in many other disturbances), in allowing the looting to get out of hand, the tactics used against crowds[133] and the revelation of how much of English life is recorded and tracked by authorities – as well as police use of social media to pinpoint rioters and criminals after conviction – none of this led to an urgent public review of policing in depressed areas, police provocation of crowds, or the erosion of civil rights in the U.K[134].

Another neglected element is the amount of misinformation involved in handling the riots. Gangs played only a minor role in the riots, while a Government minister who claimed they played a significant part said tackling gang culture was key to preventing disturbances.

Governmental databases showed that those arrested came mainly from deprived areas and were often backward educationally, and most of those arrested were black, though the Prime Minister had rejected poverty as a cause of the riots and other commentators denied a racial element to the disturbances (though they ignored racial bias in arrests)[135].

Rioters were three times more likely to go to jail compared to typical offenders and received sentences three times longer, according to Ministry of Justice figures, but this has not led to government intervention to impose more reasonable penalties. The government denied that magistrates had been told to ignore normal sentencing guidelines (the message was sent out by a lower court official)[136].

Looting was common in Manchester city center but not in Liverpool. Several major cities that had earlier riots saw no disturbances at all[137]. A Tottenham solicitor complained his clients were being treated as rioters just for being arrested in the same postal code, and minor previous convictions were being used to claim many had previous criminal records[138].

The information is all publicly available, but in patchwork form, a mosaic that does not come together (as a Google search will show), except in the minds of injustice collectors and the odd cultural theorists. Such blanks in McLuhan's account of environmental disruption might seem to point to failures in an overarching theory.

Occupying McLuhan

Well, despite the criticisms from rival cultural theorists that he showed little concern with economic or political issues, and though he always announced himself as a conservative Catholic, McLuhan showed a constant preoccupation with current and future violence in society, resulting as he saw it from people's difficulties in coping with the new environment created by technological innovations. "All the fantasy violence of TV is a reminder that the violence of the real world is motivated by people questing for lost identity," he wrote in 1978[139]. Identity, he suggested, was more concerned with a search for roles rather than jobs, with a place in society rather than in business. Such characterizations seem to fit the Arab Spring rather than the U.K. riots, with the caveat that the Middle East protesters were asserting rather than searching for their identity. The same can be said of the Occupy Wall Street crowds.

Cultural critic Slavoj Žižek observed: "The reason protesters went out is that they had enough of the world where recycling your Coke cans, giving a couple of dollars to charity, or buying a cappuccino where 1% goes towards developing world troubles, is enough to make them feel good"[140]. To understand the U.K. riots perhaps we need to go back to Hegel, with Žižek as our guide. In *Philosophy of Right*, he demonstrates that the growing class of 'rabble' (*Pöbel*) in modern civil society "is not an accidental result of social mismanagement, inadequate government measures, or simple economic bad luck: the inherent structural dynamic of civil society necessarily gives rise to a class which is excluded from its benefits (work, personal dignity, etc.) – a class deprived of elementary human rights, and therefore also exempt from duties towards society, an element within civil society which negates its universal principle, a kind of 'non-Reason inherent in Reason itself' – in short, *its symptom*"[141].

This proto-Marxist view says plainly what is disguised and buried in modern society, with its rationalist and scientific theories of deprivation. A society that boasts concern for those on the "bottom rung of the ladder" through natural inequalities, as David Cameron promised before the riots, has created the conditions for "an uncontrolled explosion of *ressentiment*," Žižek points out. "In it, I would know that my lower status is fully 'justified' and would thus be deprived of the ploy of excusing my failure as the result of social injustice"[142].

This certainly matches what some of the rioters told reporters afterwards: "All the upper generation are judging the lower generation because they think they're fuckin' bastards"[143]. Referring back to riots in the Paris suburbs in 2005, Žižek warned against the temptation to seek a deeper meaning or message in the outbursts. "What is most difficult to accept is precisely the riots' meaninglessness," he acknowledged. "They were neither offering a solution nor constituting a movement for providing a solution. Their aim was to create a problem, to signal that they were a problem that could no longer be ignored"[144].

But what links the Occupy Wall Street protesters and the British rioters is that both groups recognize, as did the French six years before, that postmodern capitalism with its rational management credo asserts that the global market mechanism can accommodate itself to all civilizations, but in fact this leads only to a 'crisis of sense' – "the disintegration of the link between, or even identity of" facts and meaning, in Žižek's words[145]. Fundamentalism is an alternative response. But both conservative and liberal reactions – more law and order or more social programs – are equally ineffective in restoring a sense of meaning to their lives[146]. The trainers, TV sets, cellphones pillaged from shops, the messaging between

looters, the roaming through the streets were a pastiche of what a commoditized society has to offer its citizens. Perhaps this is why so many were picked up for stealing derisory objects such as bottles of mineral water. We can find parallels 45 years before, in Michelangelo Antonioni's sardonic tour of 'swinging' London, *Blow-Up* (1966), where a rock star's smashed-up guitar is fought over by the audience and then immediately abandoned by the film's protagonist who wins the struggle.

The Blow-Up Effect

X-Factor's creator Simon Cowell announced in October that the show will be partnering with Twitter for the next popstar voting contest. The news prompted immediate questions such as "Will Simon Cowell's X Factor hookup with Twitter spell the end of the social medium's idealism and cool?"[147] The process might be dubbed the "Blow-Up Effect", in opposition to the well-known psychological phenomenon known as the endowment effect, in which we overvalue objects we own. Bob Garfield wrote: "If Simon Cowell, the oligarch of cheap theatrics, the evil prince of middlebrow, the V-necked grifter who conned mass audiences into imagining themselves imbued with rarified tastes … if he has embraced Twitter, doesn't that mean, *ipso facto*, that Twitter has been defiled? Twitter, the engine of the Arab Spring! Twitter, the life-and-death news source out of Haiti. Twitter, undoer of pervy congressmen and crappy airlines. Twitter, barometer of the Zeitgeist. Does its expropriation for something so trivial and bombastic as 'The X Factor' not trivialize it, and us, along the way?[148]" By the way, X-Factor voters can also use Facebook, but that has already suffered from the Blow-Up Effect as soon as *The Social Network* revealed that its original function was to provide a way for unappealing college boys to date-rate unwilling girls.

Time for a new tetrad

Yet another way to give Marshall McLuhan his due is to develop a new tetrad of questions that provoke researchers into studying the issues he was not able to. Each question can be formulated as a conjecture to be confirmed or refuted, as Karl Popper's writings suggested to McLuhan[149]. From the topics discussed in this paper, one series of questions seem particularly worth investigating to identify the conflicts created in society by a technology, and the response:

1. How does a technology spread?

> In the case of mobile phones we would need to take into account poor infrastructure, monopoly pricing and cheap handsets in developing countries. Paul Levinson's theory of technology as toy could be applied here.

2. How is it blocked or resisted?

> Opposition from fixed-line suppliers, control over microwave installations, high costs of cellphone calls, early publicity for complaints about cellphone use (leading to the rise of texting), campaigns alleging brain damage and elite contempt for the technology seem worth mentioning, along with highlighting of cyberbullying incidents[150].

3. What new practical, liberatory benefits does it bring?

> These can be related to the events mentioned in this paper. A European Graduate School student is using cellphone technology to enable illegal immigrants crossing

the border into to California to find the nearest sources of water. But one could also question why hire car services do not automatically provide cellphones in cars for those who do not have them or why social services do not offer them automatically to the aged and infirm.

4. What is the downside?

Apart from cyberbullying (see question 2), we can analyze cellphone voicemail monitoring by newspapers, particularly in the U.K. with the help of police officers, and, of course, cellphone use by rioters and looters to assemble. As this section makes clear, technologies often work together as well as in opposition, and not just as the content of the more recent.

These questions need not seek to replace the Laws of Media, but can act as a supplement. Question 3 could include the elements of McLuhan's four laws, for example, if one believes that email has not only made obsolete our snailmail but also the telephone (which some would consider a benefit), with the emoticon as a reversal/throwback to moods conveyed by the voice. For many young people, the cellphone text message has made email obsolete. But the questions are also formulated to make researchers think about exactly what technology is involved, and how it is to be judged. Cellphones now need to be judged alongside Twitter and Facebook, since convergence has brought these technologies together.

Life as a nightmare and a game

Žižek warns against overlooking the psychological aspect of human relations with technology – against taking it at its interface value, as he puts it, adapting Sherry Turkle's phrase. He highlights the difference between Kafka's novel *The Castle* and a CD-game based on the story: "That which was, in the case of Kafka, a nightmarish experience turns all of a sudden into a pleasurable game: nobody really wants to enter the Castle fully; the pleasure is provided by the endless game of gradual and partial penetrations"[151]. But new media also exercise the tyranny of choice.

At a more fundamental level, however, Žižek stresses, "the new media deprive the subject radically of the knowledge of what he wants […] the very evocation of a choice to be made performatively creates the need for the object of choice"[152]. We saw this nightly on old quiz shows when contestants had to choose between two closed boxes.

Today the choice imperative has spread across television (from *Deal or No Deal* to *Pawn Stars*) and the Internet. Spam, which accounts for four-fifths of emails, even if we do not count marginally relevant messages, requires us to decide whether to read them. Yahoo! earned its early success in the mid-1990s through a hierarchical offering (hence the H in Yahoo!) with a relatively small number of sites. Even then it was moving towards the tyranny of choice, since originally it was "David and Jerry's Guide to the World Wide Web" rather than a simple search engine[153]. Altavista offered unsorted search results, but back then people were expected to know what they were searching for.

Don't be evil geniuses

Google, founded in 1998, opened up the empire of choice with its PageRank system that displayed pages at the top of search lists according to the number of others linked to them. In a sense, this was saving users from the tyranny of having to choose, but has obvious

limitations, and encourages users to go to the most popular (not necessarily most reliable) sites. "Don't be evil" is Google's motto, but this seemed less innocent a slogan when publishers found out Google was digitizing books without the agreement of authors or when the public learned that Google was censoring search results in China in submission to the Beijing authorities[154].

In *The Net Delusion*, social commentator Evgeny Mozorov has similarly cautioned against overrating the impact of Twitter on street action[155]. When demonstrations against the current regime in Iran took place in 2009, a journalist declared "The Revolution Will Be Twittered", and described Twitter as "the critical tool for organizing the resistance in Iran". The U.S. government launched a campaign to give Twitter the Nobel Peace Prize. But the Mideast-based news channel Al Jazeera was only able to confirm 60 active Twitter accounts, and this fell to six when the authorities cracked down on online communications. Probably most of the Twittering was via the diaspora[156], and most of the myth of Twitter's power was promoted by rightwing commentators[157] exercising "a giddy sense of superiority that many in the West felt"[158]. They glossed over the alignment between U.S. business and U.S. government interests[159]. Nevertheless, even in October 2011 we are still offered programs such as "How Facebook Changed the World"[160], without documentation of the role played by U.S. authorities and organizations[161].

The computer scientist and artist Jaron Lanier has equally fundamental objections to the basis for Google's success and much of "Web 2.0" design: crowd-sourcing, which we might label as as Y!NOT! for its anti-hierarchical philosophy[162]. In *You Are Not A Gadget* he argues in language that sounds close to McLuhan's (though he makes no reference to him) Web 2.0 behaviors "tend to pull us into life patterns that gradually degrade the ways in which each of us exists as an individual" since they are "oriented toward treating people as relays in a global brain"[163].

"On one level, the Internet has become anti-intellectual," he told an interviewer. "Web 2.0 collectivism has killed the individual voice. It is increasingly disheartening to write about any topic in depth these days, because people will only read what the first link from a search engine directs them to, and that will typically be the collective expression of the Wikipedia. Or, if the issue is contentious, people will congregate into partisan online bubbles in which their views are reinforced. […]I don't think a collective voice can be effective for many topics, such as history–and neither can a partisan mob."[164].

At the same time, aggregators such as Google get rich while content producers remain poor." It might sound like it is only a problem for creative people, like musicians or writers, but eventually it will be a problem for everyone[165]. De-emphasizing personhood and the intrinsic value of an individual's unique internal experience and creativity leads to all sorts of maladies"[166].

A similar echo of McLuhan permeates Douglas Rushkoff's *Program Or Be Programmed[167]*, and he cites *Understand Media* as essential reading. Like Lanier, he argues: "The cybernetic organism, so far, is more like a cybernetic mob than new collective human brain"[168]. The response, he says, "must be a wholesale reorganization of the way we operate our work, our schools, our lives, and ultimately our nervous systems in this new environment."

The real question, it seems to me in looking at the mess of 21st-century electric immediacy, is not what McLuhan didn't know, but why we didn't listen.

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Notes

[1] Paul Levinson describes "the medium is the message" as "no doubt McLuhan's best-known aphorism" (1999:35).

[2] Levinson 1999:36.

[3] "The medium is the message" made its first appearance in 1959 in an address to a conference sponsored by the American Association for Higher Education (reprinted in *Understanding Me* 2005:3). It also figured in the 1960 typescript "Report on Project in Understanding New Media" (p. 9,) which he wrote for the "National Association of Education Broadcasters pursuant to a contract with the Office of Education, United States Department of Health, Education and Welfare" (Levinson 1999:35).

[4] The first commercial digital satellite broadcast, to the United States, came from HBO (Home Box Office) in 1976. It was a boxing match, delivered to cable (Gareth Marples, "The History of Satellite TV – A Vision for the Future", 1998, at http://www.thehistoryof.net/history-of-satellite-tv.html). France introduced the first digital satellite television in Europe in March 1996. The United Kingdom started up its DTV service in 1998 (Christopher Marsden and Monica Arino, "From Analogue to Digital", in Allan Brown and Robert G. Picard (eds). 2005. *Digital Terrestrial Television in Europe*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, p7.) The exponential growth, however, started in 1994 when 150-200 video and audio channels became available (Marples 1998). By 2002 Europe had more than 1500 channels, compared with 47 in 1989 (Pertti Naranen, "European Regulation of Digital Television", in Brown and Picard 2005:48).

[5] This video dissemination service started in 2005. See http://www.usatoday.com/tech/news/2006-10-11-youtube-karim_x.htm.

[6] "Broadcast TV is a notoriously difficult phenomenon to write about except in the impressionist way that Clive James has made into a form of criticism. Broadcast TV is extensive and ever-present: it gives the impression of carrying on regardless of what anyone in its audience is doing. A critic's attempt to catch all of broadcast TV is doomed to failure like all paranoid attempts to pin everything down, to know everything" -- John Ellis (1982) *Visible fictions: cinema, television, video*. Revised ed. p2).

[7] *Arts in Society*, a cultural studies compendium from the British magazine *New Society*, covered very much the same ground as McLuhan (nostalgia, painting, films, pop music, marketing, television) but had no index entry for him, even in 1977. Yet it is replete with comments like this: "One *sees* films in bits. Only the very young tell one another the stories of films" (107). By the turn of the century, McLuhan had become a source for writers on digital developments without much question of his status. See, for example, Janet H. Murray's *Hamlet on the Holodeck: The Future of Narrative in Cyberspace* (1997) where his comments on the transformative powers of media become a motto for the book (1), and his remarks on the informational mosaic patterns of contemporary media are given full and respectful treatment (156). Similarly, Don Tapscott's *Growing Up Digital: The Rise of the Net Generation* (1998) has five indexed references to McLuhan.

[8] Todd Gitlin (2001). *Media Unlimited: how the torrent of images and sounds overwhelms our lives.*

[9] Levinson 1999:73, citing William James's *Principles of Psychology I,* referring to an infant's perceptions (1890:488), though "most child psychologists now think James was wrong" in describing a baby's perceptual world in this way (Ruth Anna Putman, 1997. *The Cambridge companion to William James*, p47).

[10] http://www.worldwidewebsize.com/.

[11] The pingdom blog in January 2011 pulled together some estimates from various sources at the end of 2010. It put the total number of Websites at 255 million and the total emails sent via the Internet at 107 trillion (of which 89.1% were spam). It reported two billion videos were viewed on YouTube every day (http://royal.pingdom.com/2011/01/12/internet-2010-in-numbers/). Google had reported in July 2008 that it had found its 1 trillionth page on the Web, though many are too similar for Google to index them or represent auto-generated content such as calendars (http://googleblog.blogspot.com/2008/07/we-knew-web-was-big.html).

[12] Because of overlaps between search engines.

[13] In a 1969 review of books by and about McLuhan, D.W. Harding wrote that the "borrows the techniques of advertising copy, not to expose them as in the Bride, but to use them as the advertisers do. […] His command of the limpidly meaningless never fails him." ("Trompe l'oeil", *The New York Review of Books*, 2 January 1969). Thirty years later, Russell Baker, also writing in NYRB, dubbed McLuhan "a master of murky prose" ("What Else is News," NYRB 18 July 2002).

[14] http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2011/aug/18/how-google-dominates-us/?page=2.

[15]"If we enter into the kind of world that Google likes, the world that Google wants, it's a world where information is copied so much on the Internet that nobody knows where it came from anymore, so there can't be any rights of authorship. However, you need a big search engine to even figure out what it is or find it. They want a lot of chaos that they can have an ability to undo. ... when you have copying on a network, you throw out information because you lose the provenance, and then you need a search engine to figure it out again. That's part of why Google can exist. Ah, the perversity of it all just gets to me." – Jaron Lanier 29 August 2011 (http://edge.org/conversation/the-local-global-flip).

[16] "The new electronic interdependence recreates the world in the image of a global village" (1962: 31). "The image of a global village" returns "about 396 results" in a Google Books search (taking just over one-fifth of a second (2 September 2011). The McLuhan source is on page 3 of the search results. As Levinson points out (1999:27), McLuhan's emphasis is on the image, not an equivalence between real villages and electronic networks. At the book's publication, the electronic village where "its members could not converse with one another, unless they happened to be seated in the same physical room" (28), no matter how prescient McLuhan's aphorism has turned out to be. The science fiction author William Gibson declared in 1999: "The future is already here — it's just not very evenly distributed." Asked about that observation in 2011, he stuck by his judgement: "We can see it from orbit, as electric light versus its absence. We can see it in the differences in infrastructure in various neighborhoods of a city. […] We can see it in a human skeleton: where there's been a joint replaced, the future's arrived" – *Scientific American*, September 2011(http://www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=gibson-interview-cities-in-fact-and-fiction.

[17] See note earlier.

[18] McLuhan 1964:47. In *Laws of Media* (1988:108) he cites research indicating that women were still spending up to 50 hours a week on housework despite all the labor-saving equipment. British architectural historian Adrian Forty, in *Objects of Desire* (Thames and Hudson, 1986) supports McLuhan's point without mentioning him. He also underlines the political values embodied in 1920s design: "What is considered to look best in the home is what enables the housewife to fulfil her role of caring for her children and workers most efficiently" (118), arousing conflict with the 19th-century principle that the appearance of the home should express individual personality in contradistinction to the workplace (ibid). The coalescence of office and home design promotes its own political message, one in consonance with McLuhan's views that in the global electronic village we experience the implosion of the 19th-century's mechanistic separations.

[19] Though many of his critics ignore or forget it, McLuhan based many of his generalizations on sound scientific work by others, in this case on the writings of Harold Innis (Levinson 1999:52), harking back also to Emerson (Gordon 2010:102:location 1357 on Kindle).

[20] The average film or tape segment of someone speaking within a news story dropped from more than 40 seconds in 1968 to less than 10 seconds in the 1980s (Daniel C. Hallin. 1986. 'Network News: We Keep America on Top of the World.' In Todd Gitlin (ed.) 1987. *Watching Television: a Pantheon Guide to Popular Culture*. Pantheon. ISBN: 0-394-54496-X (0-394-74651-I) p57. By 2002 average sound-bites for political candidates were down to 9.5 seconds (Chuck Raasch. 2002. 'In politics, TV sound bite becomes a nibble.' *Gannett News Service*, 17 October 2002).

[21] From three seconds to 1.5.

[22] The French philosopher Alain Badiou speaks of the "profoundly illogical regime of communication" as typifying modern experience ('Philosophy and desire' in *Infinite Thought. truth and the return of philosophy*. Continuum: p41): "Communication transmits a universe made up of disconnected images, remarks, statements and commentaries whose accepted principle is incoherence. Day after day communication undoes all relations and all principles, in an untenable juxtaposition that dissolves every relation between the elements it sweeps along in its flow. And what is perhaps even more distressing is that mass communication presents the world as a spectacle devoid of memory, a spectacle in which new images and new remarks cover, erase and consign to oblivion the very images and remarks that have just been shown and said" (ibid).

[23] The editorial changes are designed to offer a gender-neutral version of the original text.

[24] 1997:197, 198. In an uncanny premonition of explanations for the U.K. riots of August 2011, Žižek adds: "Universal direct participatory democracy will exclude all the more forcefully those who are prevented from participating in it [the homeless, the ghettoized, the permanently unemployed]" (ibid:199, 162).

[25] 1973, cited by Levinson 1997:108.

[26] Terrence W. Gordon writes: "The McLuhan challenge to find a medium to which fewer than the four laws apply, or to find a fifth law, remains open" (2010: locations 1940-1941 in the Kindle edition).

[27] The testing, designed to explore McLuhan's distinction between "light-on" (cinema) and "light-through" (TV) effects, was known as *The Fordham Experiment*. It was first conducted in 1967-

8 (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fordham_Experiment) at Fordham University and repeated several times since then to confirm the findings (http://www.media-ecology.org/publications/MEA_proceedings/v1/Fordham_experiment.html).

[28] Jean Baudrillard acknowledged his debt to McLuhan (see Genesko 1999:88). Paul Virilio was directly inspired in his comments on the impact of speed on modern life (see *Pure War:25 years later, 2008, p54)*. Avital Ronell's *The Test Drive* (2005) picks up from comments on the pressures of choice created by electracy, while Gregory Ulmer, though originally motivated by Jacques Derrida, is one of the few postmodernists to interpret the electronic environment as a challenge to develop new forms of (*The McLuhan Dew-Line Newsletter 2/1* July 1969: 3) education (see *Internet Invention*, 2003).

[29] A special target of Baudrillard's (see *Symbolic Exchange and Death*1976 trans.1993:125 or *The spirit of terrorism and requiem for the Twin Towers*, 2003).

[30] The phrase is the psychoanalytical philosopher Jacques Lacan's (*Ecrits:A Selection*, 1966, trans. 1977, reprinted Routledge Classics, 2001, p130).

[31] Roland Barthes, in his earlier phase, questioned 'the natural' most overtly, but both Derrida and Baudrillard dismantled the concept most extensively, both in our language and in our social structures.

[32] Slavoj Žižek is today's most famous exponent of this technique, finding Lacanian explanations for everything from *Jaws* (*Enjoy Your Symptom!* 1992[2008]:152) to *New York Times* reporting on Katrina (*Violence* 2008[2009]:84).

[33] This, for example, from Žižek's *Violence*: "Hadn't Marx already asked: what are political upheavals in comparison with the invention of the steam engine? Didn't this do more than all revoluations to change our lives? And would Marx not have said today: what are all the protests against global capitalism worth in comparison with the invention of the internet?" (2008:17). The parallel is with McLuhan's 1964 dictum: "Any technology gradually creates a totally new human environment" (viii).

[34] Genosko asserts: "The writings of Baudrillard represent, then, a vector for the transmission of McLuhan's ideas, often in distorted forms, to be sure" (2002:3).

[35] Newsletter 2/3 Nov.

[36] But he referred to deconstruction as "phenomenology as it is currently in vogue at Yale and elsewhere" (*Letters* 1987:528), and continually used 'phenomenology" to refer to structuralism (Genosko 2002:26). In defence of McLuhan one can cite Donna Haraway*, whose *A Cyborg Manifesto* (1985) became a key text both in postmodernism and feminism: though she was at Yale during the "high moment of American deconstruction" (Thyra Nichols Goodeve), she told her interviewer in *How Like a Leaf* (1998) "I knew about none of it. Not a word" (20).

[37] "Heidegger surf-boards along on the electronic wave as triumphantly as Descartes rode the mechanical wave" (1962:248). But McLuhan adds: "In fact, Heidegger seems to be quite unaware of the role of electronic technology in promoting his own non-literate bias in language and philosophy" (ibid).

[38] Jean-François Lyotard*'s *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* was first published in 1979. Jacques Derrida's *Writing and Difference* (1967) appeared in English in 1978. *Of Grammatology* (1967), perhaps less likely to interest McLuhan, had its English publication in 1976. *Glas*, a text whose mosaic form might have appealed to McLuhan, had to

wait till 1986 to appear in English. *Applied Grammatology: Post(e)-Pedagogy from Jacques Derrida to Joseph Beuys*, Gregory Ulmer*'s earliest examination of the implications of deconstruction for pedagogy – and education was the major concern of McLuhan, dates only from 1985. Paul Virilio's *Speed and Politics: An Essay on Dromology* appeared in French in 1977, and was influenced by McLuhan's ideas on digital instaneity but awaited English translation until 1986. Giorgio Agamben*'s *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, whose theories chime closely with McLuhan's on the effect of the transformation away from print culture (with ideology replacing electracy in Agamben's vocabulary), was printed in Italian in 1995 and in an English translation in 1996.

[39] For example, from *War and Peace in the Global Village*: "The extreme provinciality of our ideas of seeing is a simple result of living in a visual environment. Man-made environments are always unperceived by men during the period of their innovation. When they have been superseded by other environments, they tend to become visible" (1968:17).

[40] Allucquère Rosanne "Sandy" Stone* has undertaken major efforts to show how gender and transgender issues fit into broader postmodern theory. See, particularly, *The War of Desire and Technology at the Close of the Mechanical Age*, 1995 (MIT Press). You can also follow her at http://sandystone.com/.

[41] One can point particularly to the later Michel Foucault (yet another critic of modernism who refused the label of postmodernist) and his theory of biopolitics, the application of political power in all aspects of life, notably through self-policing, which aligns closely with McLuhan's ideas of retribalization.

[42] McLuhan quotes *Finnegans Wake* in *War and Peace in the Global Village* with Quentin Fiore: "(Stoop) if you are abcedminded,…in this allaphabed!" (FW 18). In "Joyce, Mallarmé and the Press" (1953), McLuhan sees *FW* as being "linked both to the cabbalistic significance of the letters of the alphabet and to the psychological effect of literacy in creating a general 'abcedmindedness" in human society" (reproduced in *Essential McLuhan*, 1995:63). In *Understanding Media* (1964) McLuhan spells out that he reads abcedminded as "ab-said" or "ab-sent" or "alphabetically controlled" (249). Here, however, abc*end*mindedness refers to the end of print-dominated culture and the cult of instaneity (the culture of participation and obliviousness).

[43] Stephanie McLuhan and David Staines write that "McLuhan always insisted that he was not trying to create a self-contained body of theory" (2003/2005: 277). In the 1970s McLuhan, having learned of Sir Karl Popper's doctrine of falsification, struggled with the help of his son Eric to put his insights onto a scientifically testable basis (see next note). However, the resulting tetrad, formulated as questions, would seem inadequate without an understanding of cause in social institutions, as he wrote to the philosopher Jacques Maritain in 1969 (2011:3). As he declared in 1967, "a connection is not a cause" (2011:85). Maritain put him onto the notion of formal cause (the cause of the form which a phenomenon takes), derived from Aristotle's rather obscure differentiations between our various uses of the word 'cause'. Applying the idea to media, McLuhan was able to explain in 1973 the paradox that media effects seem to precede their cause (43): for example, an audience determines the form of a concert and also becomes part of its content. His son Eric gave the concept a thorough explication in 2005 after co-publishing *Laws of Media: The New Science* in 1988. However, publication of the full background material in one package had to wait until 2011. Bruce R. Powers has given us the most detailed amalgamation of McLuhan's thinking 25 years after *Understanding Media* in *The Global Village* (1989). However, its emphasis on the clash

between acoustic and visual space as well as on right-brain/left brain contrasts might seem to many of his supporters to treat hypothetical probes into findings.

[44] Originally printed in "McLuhan's laws of the media", *Technology and Culture*, January: 74-8, reprinted in *Essential Media* 1995:379. The model (this term is from Powers, 1995:x) is spelled out most extensively in *The Global Village* (1989). The fourth stage of the tetrad, perhaps the most interesting for postmodernists, because of its implication that the first three stages are not the whole story, is sketched out vaguely in *Understanding Media* (1964, p45 onwards).

[45] *Understanding Media*, p49.

[46] "All our alienation and atomization are reflected in the crumbling of such time-honored social values as the right of privacy and the sanctity of the individual, as they yield to the intensities of the new technology's electric circus, it seems to the average citizen that the sky is falling in. As man is tribally metamorphosed by the electric media, we all become Chicken Littles, scurrying around frantically in search of our former identities, and in the process unleash tremendous violence" (*Playboy* interview 1969, reproduced in *Essential McLuhan* 1995:249).

[47] "When a new technology strikes a society, the most natural reaction is to clutch at the immediately preceding period for familiar and comforting images. This is the world of *The Virginian* and *Bonanza* and frontier entertainment. […] We might say that Hollywood houses more redskins and more cowpunchers than ever existed on the frontier. […] What is called progress and advanced thinking is nearly always of this rear-view mirror variety" (1968:126). "We are now in the midst of our first television war. Television began to be experienced in the ordinary home after 1946. Typically, the FBI and CIA were looking in the rear-view mirror for the revolutionary agents who were threatening the identity of the country. The television environment was total and therefore invisible" (1968:134).

[48] "The BBC was set up to some extent, according to Innis, under the pressure of newspapers, postoffice, and various political pressures which felt that this form would be altogether too radical or mutational if it got out of hand" (1959), cited in *Essential McLuhan* (1995:279).

[49] In *Horizon*, October 1947, reprinted *Essential McLuhan* (1995:15).

[50] Ibid, in *EM*:16.

[51] Ibid, in *EM* 15). A key idea taken up by postmodernism's gurus Jacques Lacan and Deleuze/Guattari.

[52] In *Marshall McLuhan*, New York: Viking, 1971) Jonathan Miller accused him "of abdication of political intelligence" (76).

[53] Williams, in *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (1974) accused McLuhan of ignoring that "virtually all" instant transmission "is at once selected and controlled by existing social authorities" (2003:131). To accused McLuhan of blindness to the social implications of his theories seems notably blind on Williams' part.

[54] 1967:100. Mischievously, he also noted that teenagers "are the best teachers of media to teachers, who are otherwise unreachable" ("Is It Natural That One Medium Should Appropriate and Exploit Another" in Gerald E. Stearns's *McLuhan: Hot and Cool* (1967), reprinted in *Essential McLuhan,* 1995:182).

[55] 2011:168.

[56] i.e. not language or electric light, automation or technology, which also mediate between the individual and the world.

[57] Jaroslav Hašek's *The Good Soldier Schweik* (1923), a major influence on Joseph Heller for *Catch-22* (1961), hilariously recounts how a soldier brings down authorities through an enthusiastic embrace of all official ideology and literal enactment of their orders. Information from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Good_Soldier_%C5%A0vejk.

[58] He was at his most euphoric in the 1969 *Playboy* interview: "I feel that we're standing on the threshold of a liberating and exhilarating world in which the human tribe can become truly one family and man's consciousness can be freed from the shackles of mechanical culture and enabled to roam the cosmos. I have a deep and abiding belief in man's potential to grow and learn, to plumb the depths of his own being and to learn the secret songs that orchestrate the universe" (reprinted in *Essential McLuhan* 1995:268).

[59] "Every new technology necessitates a new war" (*War and Peace in the Global Village* 1968:98). John Ralston Saul, who cites McLuhan in explanation of civil violence in society (*V oltaire's Bastards: The Dictatorship of Reason in the West*, 1992:447-8), also provides some factual support for his fellow Canadian's bon mot: "The largest item of international trade is armaments. […] Our own senior civil servants and senior corporate leadership together are responsible for more than 90 percent of the arms traded" (12).

[60] 1967:63.

[61] 1967:125.

[62] In *Understanding Media*, McLuhan wrote that games and art have become "a mimetic echo of, and relief from, the old magic of total involvement" (1964:209).

[63] A detailed examination of the manipulations involved in the Reagan funeral can be found in my 2004 thesis *Atrocity, Celebrity, Deictics* at http://www.e-mediate.net/egs/thesisphulm.pdf.

[64] The techniques of involvement reached their-21st century apogee in voting shows: *Big Brother*, *X Factor* and multiple dance contests judged by call-in viewers. Interestingly, these are known together as 'reality television' (Annette Hill. 2005. *Reality TV: Audiences and Popular Factual Television*, and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reality_television).

[65] http://arstechnica.com/apple/guides/2011/08/does-this-metric-make-my-company-look-big.ars. and Miguel Helft and Ashlee Vance (2010). "Apple Passes Microsoft as No. 1 in Tech". *The New York Times, 26 May 2010* (http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/27/technology/27apple.html). For the Microsoft loan see http://www.theregister.co.uk/2011/10/06/steve_jobs_bio_1/page10.html.

[66] Apple's most famous advertisement compared itself to rebels against a world of '1984'. Directed by Ridley Scott, it appeared during the 1984 Superbowl and can be seen online at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OYecfV3ubP8. It has been viewed over eight million times. The story behind the ad is at http://lowendmac.com/orchard/06/1984-apple-superbowl-ad.html. 'Community self-branding' is practised most assiduously by Pepsi-Cola (McDonald's prefers family branding). However, Pepsi targets only young people. Apple's technique is aped by Budweiser with its comic animations designed to make its consumers congratulate themselves for the cleverness of the ads.

[67] *Bad Bloods* enjoys the distinction of being nostalgic for a cop show that never existed on earlier TV, with its furrow-browed crypto-fascism injecting a note of spurious psychological concern into crime dramas of the past where cops were always right and criminals bad guys.

[68] McLuhan recorded the straight-faced ancestor of such programs: "With TV, the western acquired new importance, since its theme is always: 'Let's make a town'" (*Understanding Media* 1964:279). The differences are clear: compare the family orientation of *Six Feet Under* with the community focus of *True Blood* (both created by Alan Ball).

[69] "History becomes 'mythic' through time-compression and juxtaposition of events as past, present, and future merge in electric *newness*." From "Causality in the Electric World" (1973), reprinted in *Media and Formal Cause* (2011:29). McLuhan also stressed: "Anything I talk about is almost certainly to be something I'm resolutely against" (1966), reprinted in *Understanding Me* (2005:102).

[70] The *journalisted* website contrasts celebrity with serious news in the U.K. press. In its report for the week of 23 October it featured: Stone Roses reunite, 95 articles versus Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit is released in exchange for 1,000 Palestinian prisoners, 92 articles; Carla Bruni, wife of French President Nicholas Sarkozy, gives birth to a baby girl, 40 articles versus Basque separatist group Eta lays down arms, 39 articles; Irish boy band Westlife spilt up, 31 articles versus Moody's downgrades Spain's credit rating to A1, 27 articles; Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard fails to curtsey to Queen Elizabeth, 20 articles versus Turkey deploys thousands of troops to Iraq to combat Kurdish rebels, 20 articles; Catherine Tate and Jason Orange are dating, 18 articles versus heir to Saudi throne, Sultan bin Abdulaziz al-Saud, dies aged 80, 14 articles (http://journalisted.com/news/weekly-digest-17-10-2011).

[71] The Literature of the Holocaust website reported in 1995: "At least 85% of the 200,000 killed in three years of fighting have been civilians" (http://writing.upenn.edu/~afilreis/Holocaust/balkans-atrocities.html).

[72] See http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/1288230.stm (800,000 Rwandans slaughtered in 100 days) and http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/3496731.stm (300,000 dead, mostly from disease, and 2.7 million Darfur refugees).

[73] The *American Journalism Review* reported in 2005 over an article by contributing editor Sherry Richiardi: "In an eerie echo of the past, the American news media have drastically underplayed genocide in Sudan's Darfur region just as they did a similar catastrophe in Rwanda a decade ago", reprinted at http://www.ajr.org/article.asp?id=3813. Edgar Roskis described Rwanda as "a genocide without images" in *The Media and the Rwanda Press* (1998) (ed. Allan Thompson), Pluto Press available at http://web.idrc.ca/openebooks/338-0/#page_238.

[74] "In most of my work, I'm 'predicting' what has already happened" – The Playboy Interview (1969) in EM:257.

[75] *The Playboy Interview* (1969) in *EM*:249.

[76] Ibid.

[77] *The Global Village* (1989:88).

[78] See http://www.savethenews.org/blog/11/10/21/media-circus-occupy-wall-street-coverage. In a controversial opinion peace, new media commentator Douglas Rushkoff wrote: "Occupy is anything but a protest movement. That's why it has been so hard for news agencies to

express or even discern the 'demands' of the growing legions of Occupy participants around the nation, and even the world. Just like pretty much everyone else on the planet, occupiers may want many things to happen and other things to stop, but the occupation is not about making demands. They don't want anything from you, and there is nothing you can do to make them stop. That's what makes Occupy so very scary and so very promising. It is not a protest, but a prototype for a new way of living" (http://edition.cnn.com/2011/10/25/opinion/rushkoff-occupy-prototype/index.html?hpt=op_t1). For criticisms of his final assertion see http://boingboing.net/2011/10/26/rushkoff-ows-is-not-a-protest-but-a-prototype-for-a-new-way-of-living.html?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%253A+boingboing%252FiBag+%2528Boing+Boing%2529.

[79] One may note the rise since the 1960s of the credibility of multiple personality disorder. The philosopher Daniel Dennett wrote in 1991: "Multiplicity is not only biologically and psycho-logically plausible, but in some cases may be the best – even the only – available way of coping with a person's life experience" (*Speaking for Ourselves*, with John Humphrey, p54).

[80] Gerard Cordesse, cited in Paula Geyh et al. 1998. *Postmodern American Fiction*, p15.

[81] McLuhan wrote a sympathetic essay on Burroughs in *Nation* 199, December 1964, reprinted in *Media research* (1997:86-91). He declared "*Finnegans Wake* provides the closest literary precedent to Burroughs' work" (90).

[82] My Ph.D. thesis, *Atrocity, Celebrity, Deictics* (2004) has a section entitled "the demise of intelligibility" on the exploitation of unintelligibility in art and media products (pp172-4) in the chapter on 'The Death of the Reader'.

[83] *Atrocity, celebrity, deictics* notes the ways in which the unintelligible contingent events of public life (captured by video) are tamed into submission and banal meaning by words: "It is easy to find equivalents of these experiences in almost any television news program: repeated shots of a film star turning up for premieres or award ceremonies with a voice-over commentary that makes no identification of the events and talks about other things, politicians shaking hands and turning to go into a building that may or may not be related to the event that is being narrated, a sports highlight is presented without any of the run-up to the ecstatic moment" (p174).

[84] Apart from all those vampire and sci-fi series currently in vogue, television offers us many dramas suggesting our world is difficult to control (from *The Wire* to *The Good Wife*). Hollywood has produced a glut of movies about the Manic Pixie Dream Girl (MPDG), identified by critic Nathan Rabin as "that bubbly, shallow cinematic creature that exists solely in the fevered imaginations of sensitive writer-directors to teach broodingly soulful young men to embrace life and its infinite mysteries and adventures." This recurrent stereotype is now spreading to television (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manic_Pixie_Dream_Girl).

[85] A combination of Claude Levis-Strauss's notion of cultural *bricolage* (assembling scraps of cultural heritage) and collage, e.g. Robert Rauschenberg's assemblages.

[86] McLuhan in one of his post-1964 puns did declare "The medium is the mess-age" (in *Counterblast*, by McLuhan and Parker, 1969:23, cited by Levinson 36) but, not surprisingly, he did not explore the meaning very deeply, while providing an apparent mess for the reader to master. "[N]o one punned more seriously than McLuhan," wrote the Canadian poet bpNichol in a memoir "The Medium was the Message" (*Journal of Canadian Poetry*, 4, 1989:1-3), cited by Richard Cavell in *McLuhan in space: a cultural geography* (2003:146).

87 *The Global Village* states: "Data overload equals pattern recognition […] a patterns stand out loud and clear for the first time" (1989:19).

88 To quickly note the arts outside literature one can point to *Formless: A User's Guide* (1997) by *Yve-Alain Bos and Rosalind E. Krauss, where Robert Rauschenberg's work is accorded a prominent place. In music, the jazz pianist Ake Takase has created group works that are deliberately impossible to play as written (pers. comm. 2008).

89 See Daniel Mendelsohn (2011) "In Gay and Crumbling England", *New York Review of Books* 10 November 2011, http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2011/nov/10/gay-and-crumbling-england/.

90 See Barrie Gunter (1987) *Poor Reception: Misunderstanding and Forgetting Broadcast News.*

91 A former British Minister, George Walden, pointed out in 2006 that "for the first time in our history, both major political parties are now led by what are inverted elites: privately educated men who vie with one another in affecting popular attitudes" (*New Elites: A Career in the Masses*, 7-8). The current Prime Minister, David Cameron, he observed, became the Conservative Party leader as "an Etonian of three years parliamentary standing (whose experience of life had been predominantly as a PR executive for a TV company notorious for its low standards)" (p7).

92 The French philosopher *Alain Badiou puts the charge in the strongest terms: "Communication transmits a universe made up of disconnected images, remarks, statements and commentaries whose accepted principle is incoherence. Day after day communication undoes all relations and all principles, in an untenable juxtaposition that dissolves every relation between the elements it sweeps along in its flow. And what is perhaps even more distressing is that mass communication presents the world as a spectacle devoid of memory, a spectacle in which new images and new remarks cover, erase and consign to oblivion the very images and re-marks that have just been shown and said" (1999:41 in *Infinite Thought. truth and the return of philosophy*. 2003).

93 See Slavoj Žižek (2008/9) *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections.*

94 A TIME poll in the summer of 2010 found 24% of respondents mistakenly believed the President to be a Muslim-(http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,2011799,00.html). A June 2011 poll found a 46 percent disapproved rating of Obama (http://www.eagleworldnews.com/2011/06/10/us-public-opinion-of-obama-very-negative/). See the urban legends website (http://urbanlegends.about.com/library/bl_barack_obama_muslim.htm). It has nearly 80 entries on false stories about Obama.

95 See http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-south-asia-13257330.

96 Recent examples include Martin Scorsese's *Shutter Island* (2010), whose ambiguous ending has sparked numerous attempts at explication (http://screenrant.com/shutter-island-spoilers-discussion-vic-46052/). A conspiracy is the story but the viewer is not sure in the end which one it was.

97 Damien Hirst's work is an art equivalent.

98 A group of English celebrities on a quiz show entitled *QI* were shocked to discover that the U.S. relies on poorly paid prison workers for 100% of its auto license plates, many items of military equipment and other products whose prices are thus kept artificially low

(http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zYuwN5giyVA). The moderator Stephen Fry commented: "They've reinvented the slave trade." Note that the YouTube video has been removed from many websites.

[99] It is also echoed in Rob Reiner's *A Few Good Men* (1992) about the unwritten rules followed by a military community to clandestinely beat soldiers who break ethical standards (discussed by Žižek in *Violence* (2008/9: 148).

[100] Mathews told *The Paris Review* in an interview published in 2007: "There are certain facts of the story—minor ones, I admit—that are only to be found in the index, and there are also some jokes. Look up "Stephen Spender" (http://www.theparisreview.org/interviews/5734/the-art-of-fiction-no-191-harry-mathews)

[101] Mathews says: "I avoid conclusions, not just to frustrate readers but to make them realize that they're going to have to take the book for what it is—a piece of writing that exists on its own and whose essential interest is its process. Isn't that the way life is, after all?" (ibid).

[102] At the time of McLuhan's *Counterblast*, designed to be shuffled and read randomly, the British writer B.S: Johnson produced a box of paper sheets with no binding (*The Unfortunates*, 1969), His work, like McLuhan's, has experienced more sympathetic reviews in recent years.

[103] Brooke-Rose, who in 1968 published a novel that completely excluded use of *to be*, said Perec's habitual writing "plunges the reader into a strange duality, forcing him both to believe and not to believe what he is reading" (*Stories, Theories and Things*, 1991:220).

[104] See *Understanding Media* 1964:85.

[105] The most po-faced of modern artistic movements is the Slovene art, music and cod-politics group Laibach, founded in 1980, whose name recalls that of the Slovene capital under Nazi occupation (1943-5). They wore military uniforms, put out CDs entitled *Let It Be* and *Sympathy for the Devil*, *Jesus Christ Superstars* and a double CD of national anthems reworked into their rough rock style. Accused of being right wing, they have said: ""We are fascists as much as Hitler was a painter". See Alexei Monroe (2005) *Interrogation Machine*.

[106] Rüdiger Camper on *The Test Drive* (2005).

[107] *The Test Drive* (2005:13-14).

[108] An iPad version of James Joyce's short story *Araby* also exists, with animations, illustrations, background sounds and music. As it currently exists, it seems unlikely to replace the original, though it may introduce inexperienced readers to the work.

[109] "Stitch Bitch: The Hypertext Author As Cyborg-Femme Narrator" (1998) at amerika-online gives a full account by the author of Jackson's strategies (http://www.heise.de/tp/artikel/3/3193/1.html).

[110] Derrick de Kerckhove (1995) *The Skin of Culture.* Its epigraph is from McLuhan: "In the electric age, we wear all mankind as our skin."

[111] Rosita Nunes (2004) "Written On (and Under) the Skin", Tattoo Highway (http://www.tattoohighway.org/8/sjinterview.html).

[112] Ibid. It has been pointed out that the story will be erased word by word as the volunteers die.

[113] Jackson said the project started in part "as a vaguely Kafkaesque joke: to drape an absurdity in the trappings of law and order" (ibid).

[114] See De Kerckhove 1995:176 for one version of this much repeated bon mot.

[115] "I'm completely ready to junk any statement I've ever made about any subject if events don't bear me out, or if I discover it isn't contributing to an understanding of the problem" (the *Playboy* interview of 1969 in *EM* p236). Perhaps the last part of that sentence is the most interesting for would-be critics.

[116] ibid.

[117] The *Playboy* interview, in *Essential McLuhan (*1995:236).–

[118] Neil Postman (1985) *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, Penguin (1986:161).

[119] * "The Derrida of the digital age" (http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2011/oct/21/friedrich-kittler?fb=optOut), Friedrich Kittler, a German 'post-structuralist' media theorist, considered himself in opposition to McLuhan. ""Media are not pseudopods for extending the human body. It is we who adapt to the machine. The machine does not adapt to us," he wrote, apparently not giving much credence to McLuhan's insistence that extensions of human organic capabilities through technology involve a corresponding autoamputation (*Understanding Media*: 1964:52). What we lose in Kittler is McLuhan's point that we are not only perpetually modified by technology but people "in turn finds ever new ways of modifying […] technology" (*Essential McLuhan* 1995:282). Kittler also asserted that we can only read technology in McLuhan's terms because media links are just partially connected (*Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, 1986/1999:2), without taking account of McLuhan's conviction that media convergence was inevitable.

French critical theorist *Paul Virilio declared: "It is not the *medium* which is the message, but merely *the velocity* of the medium. […] Digital messages and images matter less than their instantaneous delivery" (*The Paul Virilio Reader* 2004:205-6, from *The Information Bomb* 2000). The 'correction' makes no difference to McLuhan's point, as the second sentence makes clear (see the discussion of news practices above).

[120] Paul Levinson (1977) "Toy, mirror, and art: The metamorphosis of technological culture," *et cetera*, 34, 2:151–67, cited in *Digital McLuhan*.

[121] "Each new technology creates an environment that is itself regarded as corrupt and degrading" (*Essential McLuhan* 1995:273).

[122] The article "2011 England riots" at wikipedia.org gives a well-sourced account of the disturbances, which led to six deaths, 16 injuries, an estimated £200 million of property damage, and over 3,100 arrests. They broke out after a peaceful protest march by 200 people in Tottenham, a rundown district of London, demanding answers about the death of 29-year-old Mark Duggan the day before, shot dead by police, who falsely issued a statement that he had a gun (http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2011/aug/07/tottenham-riots-peaceful-protest). The area has long suffered from police-resident tensions, particularly over police stop-and-search actions in the drug-infested area, not all racially motivated (http://www.webcitation.org/60nZwmoYJ).

By comparison, the July 1967 Detroit riots, also precipitated by police action (a raid on an unlicensed bar), resulted in 43 dead, 467 injured, more than 2,000 buildings destroyed, and 7,200 arrests (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1967_Detroit_riot).

¹²³ Another case of fitting the news to the print. Blackberry's encrypted messaging service was said to be the most popular network for rioters (http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2011/aug/24/uk-riots-facebook-twitter-blackberry), and two young men who allegedly posted a message on Facebook inciting people to join a riot had no effect (they were still jailed for four years). Twitter and Facebook were used more to energize what has become known as the Arab Spring (which started in December 2010) (http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/interactive/2011/mar/22/middle-east-protest-interactive-timeline).

¹²⁴ Twitter and Facebook were more involved in communicating the Arab Spring. Peter Beaumont (2011) "The truth about Twitter, Facebook and the uprisings in the Arab world." *Guardian* 25 February 2011 at http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/feb/25/twitter-facebook-uprisings-arab-libya?INTCMP=SRCH. See also Anne Nelson (2011) "The limits of the 'Twitter revolution'." *Guardian* 24 February 2011 at http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/cifamerica/2011/feb/24/digital-media-egypt?INTCMP=ILCNETTXT3487.

¹²⁵ Jon Henley (2011) "The UK riots and language: 'rioter', 'protester' or 'scum'?" *The Guardian* 10 August 2011 (http://www.wired.com/cs/promo/blogs/changeaccelerators/2011/09/26/the-twitter-riots/).

¹²⁶ Cory Doctorow (2011) "Trying to understand riots isn't the same as excusing riots". *boingboing*. 20 September 2011 (http://boingboing.net/2011/09/20/trying-to-understand-riots-isnt-the-same-as-excusing-riots.html).

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Naomi Klein (2011) "Daylight Robbery, Meet Nighttime Robbery", *The Nation*, 16 August 2011 (http://www.thenation.com/article/162809/daylight-robbery-meet-nighttime-robbery). She added: "Of course London's riots weren't a political protest. But the people committing nighttime robbery sure as hell know that their elites have been committing daytime robbery.

"The Tories are right when they say the rioting is not about the cuts. But it has a great deal to do with what those cuts represent: being cut off. Locked away in a ballooning underclass with the few escape routes previously offered—a union job, a good affordable education—being rapidly sealed off. The cuts are a message. They are saying to whole sectors of society: you are stuck where you are, much like the migrants and refugees we turn away at our increasingly fortressed borders.

"David Cameron's response to the riots is to make this locking-out literal: evictions from public housing, threats to cut off communication tools and outrageous jail terms (five months to a woman for receiving a stolen pair of shorts). The message is once again being sent: disappear, and do it quietly."

¹²⁹ *Daily Mirror*. This and all following labels are cited in Jon Henley (2011) "The UK riots and language: 'rioter', 'protester' or 'scum'?" *Guardian* 10 August 2011 at http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2011/aug/10/uk-riots-language/print.

¹³⁰ *Daily Mail*.

¹³¹ *The Sun*.

¹³² http://boingboing.net/2011/09/20/trying-to-understand-riots-isnt-the-same-as-excusing-riots.html.

[133] The technique used as "kettling", with police containing groups without food, water, toilets or hope of release, was used against peaceful U.S. Occupy protesters as well as against the U.K. rioters and peaceful demonstrators in London. It often leads to clashes as individuals try to leave. Dan Hancox (2011) "The Real Reason Why Police Cage Peaceful Protestors." *Alternet*, 3 October 2011 (http://www.alternet.org/rights/152606/the_real_reason_why_police_cage_peaceful_protestors).

[134] The Metropolitan Police review denied that officers were ordered to stand aside when rioters trashed shops and other property, though it admits police were too few on the ground at the beginning. The essential word seems to be "ordered". The government gave the police powers to use water cannon, but the review notes these are most effective against large, static crowds rather than small and highly mobile groups. It also mentioned plans to "examine new technologies" to deal with riots but did not specify what these might be. Vikram Dodd (2011) "Cost of English riots much higher than first thought, Met police report suggests", *Guardian* 24 October 2011 (http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2011/oct/24/england-riots-cost-police-report?CMP=twt_gu).

[135] Alan Travis (2011) "UK riots analysis reveals gangs did not play pivotal role." *Guardian*, 24 October 2011 (http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2011/oct/24/riots-analysis-gangs-no-pivotal-role?CMP=twt_gu).

[136] Paul Lewis, 24 October 2011 at http://twitter.com/#!/search?q=%23readingtheriots.

[137] "Reading the Riots: Q&A with Paul Lewis." *Guardian*, 10 October 2011 at http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/blog/2011/oct/10/reading-the-riots-q-and-a-paul-lewis?intcmp=239.

[138] Fiona Bawdon (2011) "Courts mistreating cases as riot-related, says defence lawyer." *Guardian* 26 September 2011 at http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/reading-the-riots-blog/2011/sep/26/courts-mistreating-cases-riot-related.

[139] Cited by Levinson 1999:57. Levinson then seems to misunderstand McLuhan by reading him as arguing that TV violence inspires real crimes. In the 1969 *Playboy* interview, McLuhan declared: "From Tokyo to Paris to Columbia, youth mindlessly acts out its identity quest in the theatre of the streets, searching not for goals but for roles, striving for an identify that eludes them" (*EM* 249).

[140] Slavoj Žižek (2011) "Occupy first. Demands come later." *Guardian*, 26 October 2011 (http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/oct/26/occupy-protesters-bill-clinton).

[141] Slavoj Žižek (1997) *A Plague of Fantasies* (2008:161)

[142] Slavoj Žižek (2008/9) *Violence,* p75.

[143] Shiv Malik (2011) UK riots: 'We don't want no trouble. We just want a job.' *Guardian*, 12 August 2011 at http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2011/aug/12/uk-riots-analysis/print.

[144] *Violence*, p65-6.

[145] ibid 68, 70.

[146] ibid, p68.

[147] Bob Garfield (2011) "Simon Cowell's Twitter revolution." *Guardian* 26 October 2011 at http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/cifamerica/2011/oct/26/simon-cowell-twitter-revolution?INTCMP=SRCH.

[148] ibid.

[149] *Laws of Media*, Chapter 3, in *EM* 1995:374.

[150] See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cyberbullying for a summary of research, with the most comprehensive, in 2008, reporting rates much lower than those given most publicity.

[151] *The Plague of Fantasies* 1998/2008:197.

[152] ibid, p198.

[153] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yahoo!.

[154] James Gleick (2011) "How Google Dominates Us." *New York Review of Books*, 18 August 2011 (http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2011/aug/18/how-google-dominates-us/?pagination=false). On 24 October 2011 Cord Jefferson reported at *Good Technology* that *China Digital Times* had discovered that "Sina Weibo, China's hyper-popular microblogging site, is now banning any and all search keywords that could theoretically be associated with OWS [Occupy Wall Street]" (http://www.good.is/post/occupy-now-a-banned-search-term-in-china/ and http://chinadigitaltimes.net/2011/10/the-%E2%80%9Coccupy%E2%80%9D-series-sina-weibo%E2%80%99s-new-list-of-banned-search-terms/).

[155] Morozov Evgeny (2011). *The Net Delusion.*

[156] ibid, 15.

[157] ibid, 2.

[158] ibid, 6.

[159] ibid 26. The U.S. State Department has been training Arab and Iranian activists in the use of social media for political purposes.

[160] BBC World, 30 October 2011.

[161] See Ron Nixon (2011) U.S. Groups Helped Nurture Arab Uprisings, New York Times, 14 April 2011 (http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/15/world/15aid.html?pagewanted=all).

[162] The Web pioneer Paul Chapman and former Yahoo associate wrote ascribed the company's decline to thinking they were a classically stratified media enterprise rather than a technology firm, leading them to undervalue programmers. It is reminiscent of Marshall McLuhan's story about IBM misunderstanding its business and recovering only when it realized it was in information processing.

[163] Lanier, Jaron (2009). *You Are Not A Gadget* . Vintage:Kindle Edition, location 120.

[164] "A Q&A with Author Jaron Lanier" at http://www.amazon.com/You-Are-Gadget-Vintage-ebook/dp/B002ZFXUBO/ref=kinw_tu_recs_3?ie=UTF8&m=APZETQFSWU1YM.

[165] ibid.

[166] *You Are Not A Gadget*, ibid.

[167] Douglas Rushkoff (2010) *Program or be Programmed: Ten Commands for a Digital Age*. Orbooks.

[168] Ibid, location 110 in Kindle edition.