

HUMANITAS

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los cinco. De estos conciliábulos salió el que en el primer mes del año 1908, recibíáramos a Rubén Darío en la masonería.

Y, así llegó el veinticuatro de enero de mil novecientos ocho, de la iniciación de Rubén en la Francmasonería. Es el caso: que Enrique Ramírez Medal y otra persona que ahora escribe, cumpliendo parte del ritual de iniciación en la Masonería, situados en el cuarto de reflexiones de la Logia Progreso, desnudamos a Rubén, de medio cuerpo arriba. Te repito que esto es de ritual; un simbolismo muy hermoso, muy imponente, cuando el Venerable Maestro, dice al neófito "desnudo te recibimos en esta hermandad..."

—Relato que se nos hace de la ceremonia—

Una estimable persona, amiga de "El Centroamericano", nos envía el relato de cuando en 1908, Rubén Darío, estando en Managua se inició en la Masonería:
Helo aquí

Cuando Rubén estuvo en Managua, en 1907 estuvo unos días en lo que se llamó "en su retiro de La Palacina". Pues bien, "La Palacina" era una quinta que el bien conocido y bien recordado don Napoleón R. de Rúa en "Cerro de Chico Palón", a las orillas del entonces pequeño Managua. En aquella Quinta estaba el sabio Dr. José Leonard, impedido de sus miembros inferiores, pero por obra de Dios, doblemente activo de brazos y cerebro prodigiosamente hábil y de gran producción. Leonard, había sido maestro de Rubén en el Instituto de León, y desde entonces, aunque algo diferentes en edad, se fusionaron los genios. Cuando Darío supo que Leonard estaba en Managua, lo buscó con la excusa de acompañarlo unos días de descanso y retiro de las festividades que lo tenían aprisionado. Así, pasaron unos días tranquilos Leonard y Darío en "La Palacina". Leonard era completamente apático.

La Logia Progreso de Managua, le tenía recomendado a este su amigo, que visitara a Leonard, con la mayor frecuencia posible, pues, este sabio doctor se puede llamar el padre de la Masonería Centroamericana. Así, yo llegaba todas las tardes a "La Palacina". Allí nos juntábamos Darío, Leonard, Maldonado, R. y éste que ellos llamaban el "benjamín", el menor de

An apparatus consisting of interrelated parts, which is used in the performance of some kind of work, is called a machine. The word "machine" is used in a very general sense, and is applied to any device which is used to convert energy into work. The word "machine" is also used to describe a system of interrelated parts, which is used to perform a specific function. The word "machine" is also used to describe a system of interrelated parts, which is used to perform a specific function.

MARSHALL MCLUHAN AND THE APPEARANCE OF A NEW REALITY

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AFTER THREE thousand years of explosion, by means of fragmentary and mechanical technologies, the Western world is imploding. During the mechanical ages we had extended our bodies in space. Today, after more than a century of electric technology, we have extended our central nervous system itself in a global embrace, abolishing both space and time as far as our planet is concerned.¹

It is my belief that this statement should remain as an achievement in the perception of a new era as it has unfolded before us in the tangible world of art. In order to set a basis from which I will draw concepts to account for Faulkner's pattern of narration in *As I Lay Dying*, the comprehension of the twentieth century concepts of time and space are necessary. I believe that the observations of Dr. Marshall McLuhan about the boundaries of a "mechanical age" —as he names a period of time that has an uncertain genesis three thousand years ago and a definite end— with and "electric age", exemplify the change in the conceptualization of time and space which is so basic for our perception of reality. In the quote above, the key words are "mechanical" and "electric". The first term points to the description of the behavior of an object commonly called "the machine". The dictionary definition of machine is:

¹ McLuhan, pp. 19-21.

An apparatus consisting of interrelated parts with separate functions, which is used in the performance of some kind of work.²

The invention of the machine, as the discovery of fire, marks the beginning of a new era in the development of mankind. The appearance of a technological civilization could hardly have taken place without the use of any of the mechanical devices that provided an acceleration of man's input of effort in his work. Lewis Mumford, in his book *Técnica y Civilización* states that "technique" is a translation of nature to practical forms—that have developed from scientific theories—which have been implicit or formulated, anticipated or discovered, by science.³ Science itself, is the study of the pattern of behavior of nature as it functions based on natural laws. Technique, became a translation of that natural behavior into practical forms. These so called "practical forms" were, in other words, "machines" that substituted all that was alive and organic in nature. Science provided the analysis and the control of nature in the form of laws which were translated to machines that repeated natural behavior; this simple trick is in itself the key of all technology.

Dr. McLuhan echos Mumford's ideas when he says that:

... technologies are ways of translating one kind of knowledge into another mode...

he then adds,

Translation is thus a "spelling-out" of forms of knowing. What we call "mechanization" is a translation of nature, and of own natures, into amplified and specialized forms.⁴

Mumford believes that the centuries that preceded the early Renaissance had prepared the technological appearance of the machine, for he does not believe in the element of chance as a responsible agent for such an event.⁵ We must then conceive of a civilization in a state of evolution partially based on a technological process of translations of natural forms into practical ones. When McLuhan states that our civilization has suffered "three thousand

² The American College Dictionary (New York: Random House, 1966)

³ MUMFORD, p. 66.

⁴ McLUHAN, p. 63

⁵ MUMFORD, p. 78.

years of explosion", what he is implying is that technology involves a lineal movement of expansion that advances from the center of space toward the edge of space. As used by McLuhan, the term "explosion" becomes a metaphor for the evolution of civilizations as it has sequentially linked period after period of historical development technologically as well as intellectually. I would like to make clear that what should be understood by "the center of space to the edge of space" is simply the spatial and geographical conquest of our planet. Man has managed to cover every mile of our earth with his presence taking with him his technological and intellectual civilization. He has exhausted the spatial limits of his own world and he has nowhere else to go yet.⁶

This mechanical "explosion" of our civilization has implied an specific perception of reality in terms of time and space. If we trace our understanding of these two concepts back in history, we will all agree that western man has always thought of time and space as lineal, with a definite beginning and a definite end—although this one might not have been at times too definite. Our technology, a translation of nature, implied the very same conceptualization; but whether technology had become a mirror of our own thoughts on the subject or we had adopted those ideas from our technological evolution, the answer is not easy. Philosophy and, in a certain manner, psychology have devoted endless treatises to the matter and it would be impossible for me to attempt an analysis on the subject. For the purposes of my discussion, I will take advantage of the fact the "mechanical age" did in fact partake of the lineal concepts of time and space.

The machine, a practical form, as it translates nature, has had to include the time and space continua in its operative process. But in the translation of these two concepts of reality, the machine has fragmented each, turning lineal time and space from an organic and natural state into a mechanical one. The natural laws of "cause and effect" were seen as if in "slow motion" exemplified in any machine in operation.

Dr. McLuhan thinks of the Gutenberg press as the most important happening of modern mechanical times. The invention of moveable types in the press mirrored a psychological conceptualization of fragmentation, and the output, the production of identical books, implied the birth of mass production in series. This meant the mechanical repetition of form in space and time. This repetitive process created the concept of a fragmented

⁶ I am not considering explosion into outer space for.

reality where time was a sequence of moments that took place in fragments of space. The common denominator here is the element of fragmentation, a concept that appears with the machine itself.

Psychologically, human behavior had been judged by the laws of cause and effect which had subjected man to an external time and space. Man became the sum of all his actions in the outer reality. It was not until Locke came up with his ideas of time that the psychological aspect of it was actually considered.⁷ In literature, for example, the concept of time was lineal and mechanical which meant that the author could only record one idea at a time and that only one fragment of space could actually be during any given moment of time in the life of a character. The development of the novel up to the end of the XIX century is a literary history of the mechanical concepts of time and space.

The appearance of the machine serves to point out the theory of Dr. McLuhan that "the medium is the message". The preceding discussion of the creation of a mechanical time and space and of the concept of fragmentation are logical consequences of a medium as it modifies human behavior. Dr. McLuhan states that,

...the "message" of any medium or technology is the change of scale or pace of pattern that it introduces into human affairs.⁸

The machine, as a medium, gives as its message a new concept of reality that will have social, political, economical, religious, psychological and intellectual modifications. The advent of the Industrial Revolution becomes a historical landmark of the effects of the machine as a medium in our civilization. Socially, the message is read as the end of a feudal age based on a hierarchycal structure and the beginning of a uniform society where the idea of masses predominates. This is followed politically by the French Revolution where the ideas of equality and fraternity mirror the uniformity of repetitive fragmentation. Economically the appearance of a middle class produces a uniform morality and the popularization of culture. In religion, human behavior becomes rational and cold, dominated by the mechanical concept of the universe. Psychologically, man can hardly conceive of the ultimate effects of his actions for the fragmentary concept of reality avoids a sythetical grasp of interrelationships. And finally, on the in-

⁷ STERNE, Laurence, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*, (A Penguin Book (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1967), pp. 616-617.

⁸ MCLUHAN, p. 24.

tellectual aspect, the arts show a mechanization achieved, first, through laws and precepts that must be observed so that the product—the work of art—is maintained within a certain range of uniformity; and second, through the mechanical conceptualization of time and space in reality.

After these explanations, I believe that it is possible to understand the nature of the "mechanical age". In human experience, this way of life brought a side effect known as "specialization", specialization of any kind in any kind of activity. It is within this concept that the idea of fragmentation is better seen. Specialization broke all possibilities of interrelationship between the different aspects of concentration. The idea of a wholeness was substituted by sequential and fragmented forms, by a series of specializations which were not necessarily related. This mechanized form becomes another message of that media that media that was soon to be devoured by the new age.

Electricity was introduced by technology and with it, according to Dr. McLuhan, the "electric age" was installed in history. Technology was responsible for the appearance of such a phenomenon. As a matter of fact, science was behind it all. It provided the necessary physical laws by which a source of energy could be repeated mechanically. The atmospheric conditions necessary to produce a lightning were translated into other forms of technology, into practical forms. The machine provided the means to generate electricity and, in that fashion, to copy nature. Nevertheless, even if the "mechanical age" had produced the "electric age", the key factor that made a difference was "speed". One of the several manifestations of electricity was light, and this element implies, to our knowledge, the fastest speed at which any element can move within our universe before it become pure energy. This element of speed or velocity was a new concept, a new message, derived from the medium of electricity. The machine itself, when it was adapted to electricity was transformed from a mechanical device to an electronic one. The fragmented sequential pattern of operation observed in its functioning was accelerated to a point where an organic interrelationship was established between the separate parts. The independent nature of every aspect of its functioning was miraculously linked as the speed of the machine's output increased. Electricity was a term that brought with it the concept of "simultaneity." With electricity all things became instant, as light seems to our poor senses. The concept of simultaneity was not necessarily invented, but we became aware of it through the new media. Dr. McLuhan conceived of the great potential of electricity through its side effects.

The greatest of all reversals occurred with electricity, that ended sequence by making things instant.⁹

Soon mankind was facing another kind of reality. The mechanical nature of our world was becoming a dynamic one. But the speed of change introduced by the "electric age" was beyond the grasp of our perception.

In the mechanical age now receding, many actions could be taken without too much concern. Slow movement insured that the reactions were delayed for considerable periods of time. Today, the action and the reaction occur almost at the same time. We actually live mythically and integrally, as it were, but we continue to think in the old fragmented space and time patterns of the pre-electric age.¹⁰

Western man became astonished by the dynamic reality now involving him, and he had little time to make a shift on his perception. Mechanical time and space continued to operate in an age of simultaneity. But what were the new concepts of time and space in this new age? Dr. McLuhan tells us that,

The message of the electric light is like the message of electric power in industry, totally radical, pervasive, and decentralized. For electric light and power are separate from their uses, yet they eliminate time and space factors in human association exactly as do radio, telegraph, telephone, and T. V., creating involvement in depth.¹¹

Seldom had any form of technology erased a psychological behavior set to a traditional space and time continua as the electric technology did. Time and space were not changed, they were simply abolished. When a person uses a telephone he is instantly speaking to another person without moving one inch away from his space and time coordinates. The speed of electricity, through the telephone wires, erases the space between any two points in space in a question of seconds. When a child turned on his T. V. set and he saw the man landing on the moon, he became an astronaut in his own livingroom. The amount of time that it took the mechanical technology to achieve the climax of its explosion was achieved in a matter of seconds with electricity. The world ceased to be an enormous sphere

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

where man prolonged himself mechanically in space, and it became a "global village" as Dr. McLuhan has repeatedly stated. Our instant world was no longer fragmented, but it became a whole, a unit that existed continually in time and space.

The aspiration of our time for wholeness, empathy and depth of awareness is a natural adjunct of electric technology.¹²

It is this new concept of wholeness that forces us to become aware of the world around us. Any socio-political-economical change in any part of the world simultaneously affects everyone of us everywhere else in it. Electric technology puts information and knowledge that was previously beyond the range of our senses right into our own consciousness. So the movement observed in the electric era is no longer one of explosion, as it was in the "mechanical age." It has become a movement of "implosion" as Dr. McLuhan states in the first quote of this chapter. By implosion he understands a movement from the edge of space and time to the center of it. Through the speed of all electric technology the world is growing smaller. Therefore, the new dimension of the evolution of civilization is a movement of total awareness of all things past, present and future. This implosion requires interrelationships, and to achieve it one must think in a different way.

The restructuring of human work and associations was shaped by the technique of fragmentation that is the essence of machine technology. The essence of automation technology is the opposite. It is integral and decentralist in depth, just as the machine was fragmentary, centralist, and superficial in its patterning of human relationships.¹³

The "global village" required a scientific analysis not in each of the different aspects that formed anything, as in the "mechanical age", but in the simultaneous perception of the thing itself. All aspects of human life acquired a different perspective when viewed in relationship with each other. This very same thesis tends to obey the same kind of awareness of interrelationships among different forms of human expression in a kind of interrelated whole.

This new technology affected all existing art forms and created some new ones. It is with the appearance of electricity that the birth of the cinema

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 21.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

takes place. It was to become the art form that would absorb most of the new patterns of change in perception that took place in the twentieth century. As Dr. McLuhan states it in his book, for him the movies exemplify every concept of the new era in its very essence of being.

*Mechanization was never so vividly fragmented or sequential as in the birth of the movies, the moment that translated us beyond mechanism into the world of growth and organic interrelation. The message of the movie medium is that of transition from lineal connections to configurations.*¹⁴

The movies became a clear example of the end of an age and the birth of a new one. This medium, derived from all the messages of the electric technology, met the demands of the new space and time concepts. The machine was drastically changed when electricity was added to it, for the movies are only possible if there is a certain speed applied to the film. This medium is not the only example of the new patterns introduced into human affairs. Literature and painting, for example, had to suffer parallel changes in the perception of reality as they had previously experienced in the age of the machine. In painting, the change in the "electric age" was radical and it is directly responsible for the contemporary situation in the plastic arts. Dr. McLuhan accounts for this change when he says,

*It was at this moment of the movie that cubism occurred, and it has been described by E. H. Gombrich (Art and Illusion) as "the most radical attempt to stamp out ambiguity and to enforce one reading of the picture—that of a man-made construction, a coloured canvas." For cubism substitutes all facets of an object simultaneously for the "point of view" or facet of perspective illusion.*¹⁵

Cubism did not appear by chance on the twentieth century canvas. The "age of electricity", abolishing all mechanical perceptions of space, made it possible to abandon the fragmentary "point of view" of impressionism and to adopt a simultaneous representation of reality.

In literature, the psychological novel had made it possible for us to observe the mechanical fragmentation of reality through the different points of view an author could adopt from within his narration. But the compromise with the new age demanded a different attitude from the writer.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 27-28.

*This is the Age of Anxiety for the reason of the electric implosion that compels commitment and participation, quite regardless of any "point of view." The partial and specialized character of the viewpoint, however noble, will not serve at all in the electric age.*¹⁶

With the publication of Marcel Proust's *In Remembrance of Things Past*, and with James Joyce's *Ulysses*, literature absorbed all electric technology as a medium and championed the total awareness that its simultaneous concept of reality—now outer and inner reality—demanded.

It is rather peculiar that the effect of the electric medium were acknowledged in the field of art before they were ever recognized anywhere else. Dr. McLuhan says that common man still perceives the world through the mechanical time and space continua. Reality is for him fragmented and specialized. The common man, we should add, is still living in the pre-electric age. Today, he still hasn't been able to understand the achievements in art and literature that took place during the first thirty years of this century. He mechanically frowns to simultaneous time and space; he demands a fragmented "point of view" unaware of the great changes operated in those first three decades. This is perhaps due to the basic characteristic of the electric medium. Maybe all the changes have happened too fast for him to grasp and be aware of their presence. But on the other hand, his pattern of perception has not been adjusted to the element of speed. The artist has always been aware of the change in his world, regardless of how fast they take place. Dr. McLuhan has as corollary to all of his theories that of the role of the artist in the "electric age." For him, the artist or intellectual is the only one with the special kind of sensibility needed to adopt all changes in reality.

*The effects of technology do not occur at the level of opinions of concepts, but alter sense ratios or patterns of perception steadily and without any resistance. The serious artist is the only person able to encounter technology with impunity, just because he is an expert aware of the changes in sense of perception.*¹⁷

The artist, an expert of awareness, has been the only one capable of shifting modes of perception as the media demanded it. When the "electric age" was installed he was able to detect the change in messages and was

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

able to incorporate them to his own art. Such is the case that I intend to analyze in the following chapters.

I would like to point out the fact that Dr. McLuhan, like any other intellectual, was able to detect the shift in patterns of perception a fully as the painters and the writers did at the beginning of this century. By making us aware of such event, he has made it possible for me to set a common basis from which an interrelation between a novel by Faulkner and a movement in painting is relevant and justified. As I have previously pointed out in this chapter, this pattern of analysis obeys the same pattern of perception that electric technology has manifested everywhere else. My purpose in this chapter was merely to explain some basic concepts as stated by Dr. Marshall McLuhan in his book *Understanding Media* so that the following material would be as interrelated as possible by them as in any organic whole. I have not intended to exhaust the possibilities of explanation of the theories in that book. I just focused on some that will be recurrent in the following chapters.

The effects of technology do not occur at the level of opinions of the concepts but after their nature or pattern of perception steadily and without any resistance. The reason why is the only person able to encounter technology with impatience, just because he is an expert aware of the changes in terms of perception. A man maintains a hope of his

The artist, an expert of awareness, has been the only one capable of shifting modes of perception as the media demanded it. When the electric age was installed he was able to detect the change in messages and was the first to understand it. The writer

"Ibid., p. 27.

"Ibid., pp. 27-28.

"Ibid., p. 20.

"Ibid., p. 22.

NOTAS Y COMENTARIOS A LA "RELACION" DE LAS PERSONAS
NOMBRADAS POR LUIS DE CARVAJAL Y DE LA CUEVA PARA
LLEVAR AL DESCUBRIMIENTO, PACIFICACION Y POBLACION
DEL N.º Sección Tercera

HISTORIA

El día 2 de mayo de 1545, el piloto de Sanlúcar de Barrameda, en la desembocadura del río de San Pedro, una pequeña nao, llamada la Santa Catalina, flota de la Cueva para traer a tierras de la Nueva España a los señores de ella labradores casados, con sus mujeres e hijos, y oficiales (artesanos), para el descubrimiento de las provincias que han de ser intituladas el Nuevo Reino de Granada, sobre que habemos mandado tomar posesión, sin pedir a ninguno de todos ellos información alguna, por el Real Cédula del Rey Don Felipe II, fecha en Madrid a 20 de mayo de 1545, encargamos al dicho capitán Luis de Cueva, que sea con personas limpias, y no de los pueblos de Indias, principalmente que ningún casado deje a su mujer, y que sea el día domingo 29 de mayo, de 1545, a las 12 de la tarde se habia embarcado por el río de San Pedro, y se habia salido rumbo a las Indias, la nao Santa Catalina, con el piloto Agreca barra de Sanlúcar, y el piloto de la nao de Cueva, que se habia quedado en Sanlúcar de Barrameda.

Así se iniciaba aquel viaje por el océano Atlántico, de un mundo que se estaba descubriendo en busca de la tierra prometida.