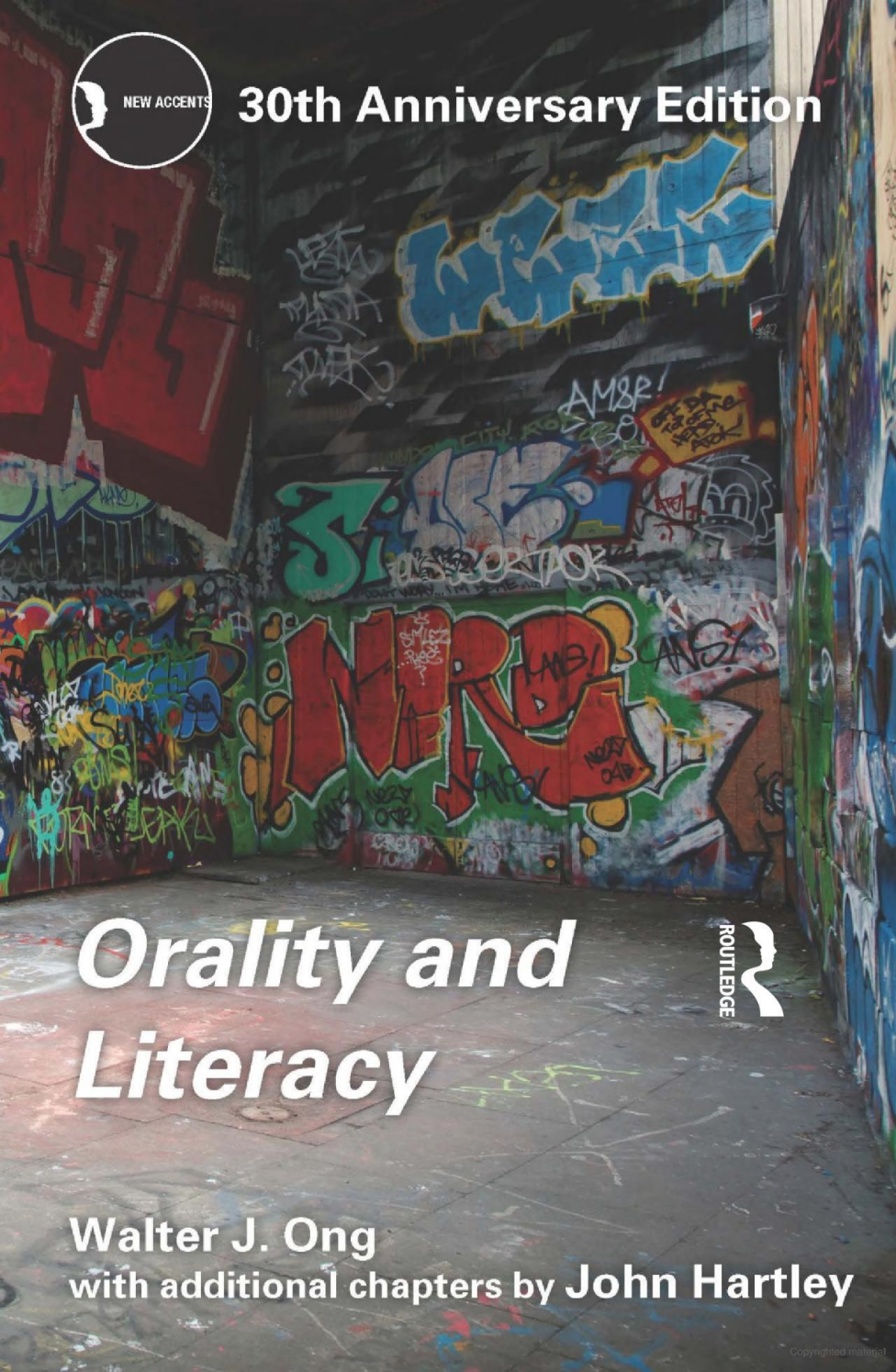

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General Editor's Preface

No doubt a third General Editor's Preface to *New Accents* seems hard to justify. What is there left to say? Twenty-five years ago, the series began with a very clear purpose. Its major concern was the newly perplexed world of academic literary studies, where hectic monsters called 'Theory', 'Linguistics' and 'Politics' ranged. In particular, it aimed itself at those undergraduates or beginning postgraduate students who were either learning to come to terms with the new developments or were being sternly warned against them.

New Accents deliberately took sides. Thus the first Preface spoke darkly, in 1977, of 'a time of rapid and radical social change', of the 'erosion of the assumptions and presuppositions' central to the study of literature. 'Modes and categories inherited from the past' it announced, 'no longer seem to fit the reality experienced by a new generation'. The aim of each volume would be to 'encourage rather than resist the process of change' by combining nuts-and-bolts exposition of new ideas with clear and detailed explanation of related conceptual developments. If mystification (or downright demonization) was the enemy, lucidity (with a nod to the compromises inevitably at stake there) became a friend. If a 'distinctive discourse of the future' beckoned, we wanted at least to be able to understand it.

With the apocalypse duly noted, the second Preface proceeded

piously to fret over the nature of whatever rough beast might stagger portentously from the rubble. 'How can we recognise or deal with the new?', it complained, reporting nevertheless the dismaying advance of 'a host of barely respectable activities for which we have no reassuring names' and promising a programme of wary surveillance at 'the boundaries of the precedented and at the limit of the thinkable'. Its conclusion, 'the unthinkable, after all, is that which covertly shapes our thoughts' may rank as a truism. But in so far as it offered some sort of useable purchase on a world of crumbling certainties, it is not to be blushed for.

In the circumstances, any subsequent, and surely final, effort can only modestly look back, marvelling that the series is still here, and not unreasonably congratulating itself on having provided an initial outlet for what turned, over the years, into some of the distinctive voices and topics in literary studies. But the volumes now re-presented have more than a mere historical interest. As their authors indicate, the issues they raised are still potent, the arguments with which they engaged are still disturbing. In short, we weren't wrong. Academic study did change rapidly and radically to match, even to help to generate, wide reaching social changes. A new set of discourses was developed to negotiate those upheavals. Nor has the process ceased. In our deliquescent world, what was unthinkable inside and outside the academy all those years ago now seems regularly to come to pass.

Whether the *New Accents* volumes provided adequate warning of, maps for, guides to, or nudges in the direction of this new terrain is scarcely for me to say. Perhaps our best achievement lay in cultivating the sense that it was there. The only justification for a reluctant third attempt at a Preface is the belief that it still is.

TERENCE HAWKES

Before Ongism

"To become what we want to be, we have to decide what we were."[1]

John Hartley

"Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears"[2]

2012 marks the centenary of the birth of Walter J. Ong, SJ (November 30), but he is still read and regarded as a contemporary scholar. Something that he wrote about his own one-time teacher, Marshall McLuhan, resonates for Ong's own scholarly time travels: His "voice is always the voice of the present calling into the past, a past that he teases into reacting ebulliently and tellingly with present actuality in his readers' minds" (Ong 2002: 307). Walter Ong's own publications spanned 70 years, continuing to 2003, the year of his death.[3] His interests ranged from ancient Sumerian writing systems to modern computers – both using digital code, he noted (2002: 527–49). He was immersed in historical scholarship, but remained forward-looking throughout. His last book (Ong 2002), published as he approached his 90th birthday, is jauntily subtitled "*Challenges for Further Inquiry*."

This is not the place for an appraisal of Ong's life and works. For the enthusiast and the specialist, there are good accounts readily to hand, including Thomas Farrell's Introduction to the collection already mentioned (Ong 2002: 1–68; and see Soukup 2007). In bringing to your attention a new edition of Ong's best-known book, *Orality and Literacy*, I

seek neither to bury nor to praise him. Instead, I want to address the non-specialist *reader* of his book, for whom – judging by customer reviews on Amazon.com – the coherence underlying his historical and intellectual trajectories may not be immediately evident.[4] For newly minted "readers' minds," perhaps, there's a need to reconnect that "ebullient and telling" link between present actuality and past ideas, a connection I'm going to call "Ongism."[5]

Given his free-ranging time travels, it may be helpful to trace a line that connects Ongism with various historical periods in the broader history of ideas; the history of *systems of thought* and concomitant media of expression through which ideas have been organised, as follows:

- *Ancient and medieval rhetoric* (roughly 500 bce to 1500 ce),
  - because it was rhetoric – an oral art – that "ultimately took all knowledge as its province" (Ong 1971: vii); via
- the European *Reformation* (1500–1700),
  - where print-based Ramism (Ong 1958) reformed knowledge as well as religion; a move that linked religion with the rise of capitalism (Tawney 1998), and created a path-dependency for (Protestant) Methodism and (scientific) method alike (Ong 1953); and
- the ensuing *Enlightenment* (1700–1900),
  - both scientific and Scottish (see Berry 1997; Phillipson 2010);
- as these impacted the growth of the *American Republic*,
  - directly through Benjamin Franklin (Atiyah 2006) and indirectly though Thomas Jefferson (McLean 2011); thence to
- the technological determinations of *modern knowledge* (1900–date),
  - where, according to the Ong line of thought, writing and print-literacy have "transformed" *human consciousness* as a whole, while a "secondary orality" has emerged with digital media.

Orality and Literacy, the summation of 30 years of his work, brought Ong's thought to wide attention, striking a chord with those who were

curious about the impact of communication technologies – speech, writing, print, screen, computer – on how humans think and know. That curiosity was not always benignly motivated, because some feared that contemporary technologies, especially the most popular broadcast and screen media (television in particular), were destroyers rather than creators of knowledge, especially in comparison to the empire of print, which was the unchallenged medium of communication for all of the great realist knowledge systems of modernity – science (the paper), journalism (the press) and imaginative fiction (the novel).

This tripartite division of the real corresponded with much older classifications. These emerged at the very time when print's ascendancy as a medium began to be asserted in late sixteenth and early seventeenth-century Europe: very much Ong's preferred stamping ground. It was Sir Francis Bacon (1605), founding philosopher of modern empirical science (dubbed by some the "father of inductive reasoning"),[6] and urgent advocate of the "advancement of learning," who tried to classify knowledge on the basis of the relationship between forms of communication and human faculties. As Diana Altegoer writes: "Bacon claimed that all human learning flows from the three fountains of *memory, imagination and reason*, from which emanate *history, poesy, and philosophy*; there can be no others" (Altegoer 2000: 22). Bacon saw what he called "the faculties of the mind of man" as of two kinds: "the one respecting his *understanding and reason*, and the other his *will, appetite, and affection*"; and it was *imagination* that acted as an "agent or nuntius" [messenger] between the two (Bacon 1605: Book II, section XII). Thus, "poesy, aligned with the imagination, held a pivotal place in Bacon's scheme to advance learning; by linking reason with the will and appetite" (Altegoer 2000: 22).

Bacon's schema was inherited from earlier, oral traditions of rhetoric and logic, not least via Peter Ramus, the central figure in Ong's scholarship. Perhaps unselfconsciously or unwittingly,[7] it has continued to serve as the underlying epistemology of modern print culture's three realist textual systems, which we might spatialise as follows:

	Human Faculty (Bacon)			
	Memory	imagination	Reason	} Truth
	Will	Appetite	Understanding	} Truth
	Form of Knowledge			
Pre-modern	History	Poesy	Philosophy	} Learning
Modern	Journalism	Fiction	Science	} Realism
	Medium of Communication (Ong)			
Pre-modern	Rhetoric	Song	Dialogue/ Lecture	} Oral/ Chirographic
Modern	The Press	The Novel	The Paper	} Print-Literate

Be it noted that Bacon's schema saw truth as the prize of all three of these forms of knowledge, history, poesy and philosophy, working together. Later specialisation forced "science" and "fiction" ever further apart, at least in principle, but Bacon wanted to broker a "symbiotic relationship between scientific understanding and affective poetics" (Altegoer: 23) – an aspiration to which contemporary science is slowly returning, as for instance in E.O. Wilson's call for "consilience" (1998) between the creative humanities and natural sciences.

Ong's expertise lay in using the skills of literary-historical research and textual criticism to tease out the way that the pre-modern arts of knowledge – logic, rhetoric, and dialectics – were transformed following the emergence of print. These arts (which don't quite map onto the schema above, tempting though it may be to assign them to the respective columns), were deployed in the medieval period for the serious business of organising and distributing knowledge. Ong's work was an early example of what is now called the "science of science" – an investigation not into *what* but *how* we know. Along with his contemporary, Marshall McLuhan,[8] who coined the slogan "the medium is the message," Ong popularised the idea that knowledge is a product of language, and that the medium in which language is communicated – by voice, writing, print – makes us think along certain path-dependent lines. Ong went further: he contended that "writing *restructures consciousness*" (*Orality and Literacy*: Chapter 4).

Thus "Ongism" is the place where mind is determined by medium. Methodologically, it uses *linguistic analysis* – something that "from the

time of the medieval scholastics, the Anglo-Saxon world has been generating a good deal of thought around" (Ong 1958: 4). Such analysis reconnects rhetoric with science (knowledge). Further, although he was interested in the invention of writing, going back several millennia, Ong's own scholarship was chiefly preoccupied with the Renaissance and Reformation periods, during which European culture was convulsed with religious conflict internally, and accelerating expansionism externally. At such a time, "linguistic analysis" connects with the great themes of religion and empire (power) in the modernising West. Ongism used the seemingly arcane past to cast unexpected light on the long present, "ebulliently and tellingly" using textual studies to link power and knowledge, across "historical continuities (which are also psychological continuities)," far exceeding those theorised by Foucault (*Orality and Literacy*: 162), certainly in Ong's own estimation.

This is the context for *Orality and Literacy*'s extraordinary contemporary reach and for Ong's influence across many interdisciplinary domains. The latter are listed by Lance Strate as: "rhetoric, communication, education, media studies, English, literary criticism, classics, biblical studies, theology, philosophy, psychology, anthropology, cultural studies, history, medieval studies, Renaissance studies, American studies, gender studies, biology, and computer science" (foreword to Ong 2002: ix). Strate puts that range of influence down to Ong's mastery of "noetics, of knowledge and our ways of knowing," a scholarly pursuit where "expertise encompasses expertise itself." That's a canny observation, but there are at least two further reasons for Ong's influence. The first, *historical*, is less often commented on – although it may tell us more – than the second, *disciplinary*.

Intellectual origins of Americanism

Historically, Ong's scholarship emerged in an era when the USA reached for and achieved world leadership; explicitly after World War II with the so called *pax americana*. US global hegemonic status was assumed (in both senses – taken on and taken for granted) not directly through imperial conquest, but through ideas, on the presumption of those ideas' moral and democratic superiority, which only had to be promulgated to be binding on all, whether you were American or . . .

say . . . Vietnamese. Thus, the "ways of knowing" and the "expertise" that Ong investigated were not just of historical interest; they were newly important because they had become *American*.

Americanists sought the intellectual origins of US superiority in what Ong's own academic mentor, Perry Miller (1939; 1953), called "the New England Mind" – a Protestant, "downright," democratic, "plain-style" mind. Inspired by Miller, Ong traced that way of thinking directly back to the sixteenth-century French dialectician Peter Ramus (Ong 1958: 4–7). His work on Ramism is a major achievement, but it might not have escaped the seminar – or seminary – had it not been for the context of its composition at Harvard, the American Republic's first university.

Perry Miller returned to Harvard after secret wartime service in Britain, thought to be connected with developing American capabilities in the new art of psychological warfare.[9] He supervised Ong's doctorate (1948–54), which was published by Harvard University Press. Ong acknowledges Miller there (1958: x), and makes the connections between Harvard, Americanism, and Ramism:

> The present [1958] wave of interest [in Ramus] dates from 1935 and 1936, when Professor Samuel Eliot Morison published his tercentennial Harvard volumes, *The Founding of Harvard College* and *Harvard in the Seventeenth Century*. Morison . . . traced New England's first fruits back to branches on the tree of knowledge long forgotten in the traditional accounts of America's heritage.
>
> (1958: 3)

Within a page or so, this "American heritage" has become universal: "Before Morison's and Miller's works, there was not much written concerning the fuller implications of Ramism in *the history of the human mind*" (1958: 5, my emphasis). Thus, for Ong, "Present-day interest in Ramism in the English-speaking world is . . . communal; it tends to regard Ramism . . . as a phenomenon or symptom which . . . may yield helpful and even startling information concerning intellectual history and the formation of *the modern mind*" (1958: 6 my emphasis).

Harvard is not just the oldest institution of higher education in the USA (founded in 1636 at the height of Ramist method); it is also

the richest and has almost routinely been rated as the top-ranking university in the world.[10] It was and remains a kind of megaphone for Americanism, not least through Harvard Business Publishing, whose mission is "to influence real-world change by maximizing the reach and impact of its essential offering – ideas."[11] Among the latter was the idea that the "formation of the modern mind" occurs in the crucible of language – a crucible heated by literature and drama even as it is cooled by "plain style" and "downrightness."

For instance, working for many years at Harvard, contemporaneously with Ong, was Alfred Harbage (1941; 1947). A notable literary historian, Harbage saw *Shakespeare's audience* as the precursor and model of modern American democracy, because his plays addressed all sections of society, from courtier to courtesan to cobbler.[12] Over time, the Globe and other theatres attracted a sizable proportion of the entire population. Andrew Gurr (2004: 50) estimates 25,000 visitors a week, totalling 50 million admissions from 1580 to 1640. The popular audience in the "wooden O" was literally enacting a modern polity forming itself – in the minds of apprentices and artisans – even as the plays onstage wrestled with the pains and tensions of emergent modernity, to which American democracy is the heir.

Without wanting to overstate it (as American supremacism, for instance), there is a vein of *political philosophy* running through the literary-historical scholarship of mid-century America. The mood extended well beyond Harvard. Across the country, literary scholarship seemed determined to give substance to Walt Whitman's post-Civil War vision for America's "democratic vistas";[13] a vision newly urgent in a post-World War II world. Richard Altick at Ohio (*The English Common Reader*, 1957) and R. F. Jones at Stanford (*The Triumph of the English Language*, 1953) come to mind.[14] Most notable, perhaps, was Yale, where American Studies was established in the same period, not least for political reasons. American Studies was:

> an enterprise that would be, among other things, an instrument for ideological struggle in what some among them termed the American crusade in the Cold War, and what others among them saw as virtually a second civil war.
>
> (Holzman 1999: 71)

A leading figure in this enterprise was Norman Holmes Pearson, who, like Perry Miller at Harvard, was a secret agent for the OSS (Office of Strategic Services) – precursor of the CIA – during World War II. Where Perry's protégés at Harvard included the Jesuit priest Walter Ong, Pearson's at Yale included James Jesus Angleton, who learnt there the craft of practical criticism of decontextualised documents. Angleton went on to apply it as chief of counter-intelligence at the CIA, where he remained for a generation (Holzman 2008). While at Yale, as Terence Hawkes has pointed out, Angleton was much influenced by the New Criticism, especially as practised by William Empson (1930), whose theory of the irreducible ambiguity of expression served Angleton well in his search for double meanings as evidence of Soviet "double agents," within the CIA itself. His obsessive search for spies turned to domestic suspects during the Johnson and Nixon presidencies, among them the liberal and countercultural elite of American society, including Martin Luther King and Edward Kennedy. Hawkes draws the parallel between literary criticism and counter-intelligence:

> When agents may be recognized as "turned" . . . they themselves become "texts" which demand complex analysis. A sensitivity to ambiguity then becomes a crucial weapon. The improbable but undeniable impact of modern literary criticism on practical politics has no better model, and Angleton later described his work in counter-intelligence as "the practical criticism of ambiguity."
>
> (Hawkes 2009)

Strangely, it seems, the study of rhetoric, of literary theory, and the practical criticism of arcane texts at Ivy-league colleges, intersected both personally and institutionally with the career of high-stakes political Americanism during the crucial period of its global ascendancy. As a Jesuit, presumably Ong was not involved in the counter-espionage shenanigans of active spy-masters like Perry, Pearson and Angleton, but he was brought to prominence in an intellectual environment where literary history, linguistic analysis and an expanded doctrine of the USA's "manifest destiny" were brought into alignment.

This was a philosophy that sought to revive or maintain (i.e. to construct) a bond between Classical Ciceronian rhetoric, modern mass

democracy, and the American Republic, much as US ex-President John Quincy Adams had done in the early nineteenth century – as the occupant of Harvard's first chair in Rhetoric (Rathbun 2000).[15] Ong himself yoked the literary and rhetorical traditions of Harvard scholarship together, and perhaps learnt the habit of universalising and Americanising pre-modern European cultural forms, by following the work of Milman Parry and Albert Lord, both extensively cited in *Orality and Literacy*. As Thomas Farrell has noted:

> Parry was a classicist at Harvard University who undertook field studies of Yugoslavian singers of tales in the 1930s. Lord was a graduate student who worked with Parry and later wrote his doctoral dissertation on the findings of their field studies . . . subsequently published in 1960 as *The Singer of Tales*, a landmark study.
>
> (Farrell, in Ong 2002: 2)

Seeking to answer the question "what is new in our understanding of orality?" (where "orality" should be understood as a human characteristic, not one belonging to a given culture, time or place), Ong writes that: "More than any earlier scholar, the American classicist Milman Parry . . . succeeded in undercutting . . . cultural chauvinism so as to get into the 'primitive' Homeric poetry on this poetry's own terms. . ." (*Orality and Literacy*: 18). As for Albert Lord, he "carried through and extended Parry's work with convincing finesse"; moreover, "those who studied with him [Milman Parry] and Lord at Harvard . . . were already applying Parry's ideas to the study of Old English Poetry" (*Orality and Literacy*: 27). Ong thus places his own work in a *Harvard* tradition of scholarship, where the *American* discovery of an "oral-aural cast of mind" (Ong 2002: 301) among preliterate poets, both ancient (Homer) and modern (Serbo-Croat), is rapidly applied to Anglophone canonical literature and thence to culture and civilisation in general; and to rhetoric and thence to philosophy and knowledge in general. The presumption is that the "American mind, although a many-faceted thing" (Ong 2002: 294) can be equated with the human mind. This logic is clear in *Orality and Literacy*, where Ong concludes his chapter on "The modern discovery of primary oral cultures" (Chapter 2). He extrapolates directly from Milman Parry's discovery of oral methods of

composition in Homer (*Orality and Literacy*: 21), via Lord, Havelock and others (27–8), to McLuhan and Ong's own work (28–9), thence in turn to the study of human consciousness in general through the work of the psychologist Julian Jaynes (29–30). Jaynes, of course, had studied as an undergraduate at Harvard before taking his doctorate in psychology at Yale.[16]

This tradition, however occluded by changing circumstance and academic fashion, was institutionalised not just in American Studies, but more fundamentally in the uniquely American (Ong 2002: 74) schools of "Speech," "Rhetoric" and "Communications" that spread literary criticism along with the "plain style" of protestant, scientific and persuasive prose across the campuses of the expanding West, to places like St. Louis, for instance, where Walter Ong studied for his MA and subsequently taught.[17] Rhetoric was valued in order to prepare citizens for public life as lawyers, clergy or politicians, and to underpin the general education of a commercial and scientific population (Bedford 1984). How to pervade the polity with both *democratic* principles and the ability to marshal and deploy *knowledge* effectively, for civic as well as private purposes? In a society increasingly organised through knowledge and dependent on the technologisation of the communications media, this question was never far from the surface; and for Ong's generation the answer was never far away either: the "informed citizen" (Schudson 1998) must understand *rhetoric*. As Ong wrote in 1970, "To this day most of the work on the history of rhetoric is still done by Americans, who in their extreme commitment to literacy have been far enough removed from the old rhetorical or oratorical culture underlying European education to find its phenomena intriguing" (Ong 2002: 74; and see Ong 2002: 294).

For the World Wide Web generation, as opposed to the World War II one, some of this intellectual provenance needs to be reconstructed. "Freedom" – the "American way" – was built on the capability of *winning an argument*. The science of noetics, then, of "knowing how we know," was at the top of the Cold War agenda, in both its paranoid forms (counter-intelligence) and its optimistic forms, which included knowing how to demonstrate the superiority of Americanism over, say, Khrushchev's Russia.[18]

At the macro level, American hegemony was founded as much on the power of its media, culture and science as on its military might. As the Cold War heated up, hearts and minds across the world were wooed with mediated visions of Americanism, in the convincing – the Shakespearean – disguise of mass entertainment. This is now called "soft power"; and the Chinese Communist Party not only espouses it, at the highest level of diplomacy and statecraft, but also reckons that the Americans are still up to it too:

> In the latest issue of the ruling Communist Party's top theoretical journal, "Qiushi," which means "Seeking Truth," President Hu [Jintao] warned that the country must promote its own culture over "westernization" promoted by hostile forces. "We must clearly be aware that international enemy forces are stepping up their strategic plots to westernize and split our country," he wrote. "The fields of thought and culture are important sectors they are using for this long-term infiltration. We must clearly recognize the seriousness and difficulty of this struggle, sound the alarm bell . . . and take effective measures to deal with it."
>
> (Reuters 2012)

This is China's (ostensible) rationale for imposing strict import quotas on Hollywood films. Harmless entertainment to some is hostile infiltration to others. "Democratic vistas" are "strategic plots," precisely because, as Walt Whitman had put it back in 1871, "I shall use the words America and democracy as convertible terms."[19]

At the micro level, the individual citizen needed mental software to engage in an increasingly textualised world; one where knowing relied on technologically transported information that was abstracted from its contextual roots, just as writing and print are abstracted from the situated immediacy of speech. Perhaps such abstraction suited the migrant and settler society of the Americas more comfortably than it did the autochthonous cultures of Old Europe. Certainly, it wasn't only lawyers and leaders who required rhetorical skills to manipulate ideas and knowledge, and skills in "the practical criticism of ambiguity" to resist manipulation in the messages of others. To be successful citizens and consumers, to sustain an enterprising economy, and to know how to

tell our entertaining and enlightening social media from their hostile and invasive spam, *everyone* must exercise the "soft power" of knowledge.

Contemporary communication and cultural studies

Turning from historical to disciplinary reasons for the influence of Ongism, this same "noetic" tradition was, of course, one of the great taproots of contemporary communication studies. Here, the germinal figure is not Ong's *doctoral* supervisor at Harvard but his *master's* supervisor at St Louis – a Canadian professor of English, much the same age as Ong,[20] who came to St Louis, hotfoot from Cambridge, to teach Shakespeare. His name was Herbert Marshall McLuhan. McLuhan provided a different rationale for taking an interest in rhetoric; one that extended its influence from the historical and political "New England mind" to the mind *in general*, linking the study of technologies of communication to individual (and universal) cognitive psychology, without abandoning the progressivist grand narrative of "manifest destiny", but simply projecting it backward in time and outward to humanity as a whole.

This even more abstract and ambitious agenda suited the sixties very well, as the subsequent career of Marshall McLuhan demonstrated (Wolfe 2000). Indeed, because military triumphalism was decisively defeated in Vietnam, it was only in the realm of ideas, knowledge, media and culture that Americanism could prevail. In the era of Vietnam, Americanism shifted across from patriotism to protest; from "the American way" to critique of "Amerika"[21] – and *this* conquered the world, through popular music, subcultures, and the "new social movements" of the 1960s. Recasting the human mind as a product of media took medieval rhetoric out of the seminary and put it in the world of what are now known as "*Mad Men*" (advertisers from Madison Avenue).[22] It is in this context that the idea of a *medium* being able to shape and transform consciousness took popular hold, just as Vietnam, sex and drugs and rock'n'roll were setting campuses alight with the idea that consciousness *ought* to be changed in various ways, as soon as possible and with whatever semiotic or chemical assistance was to hand.

It's hard to see Walter Ong, SJ, as a prophet of what is now summed

up in the term "the sixties" (Gitlin 1987). Nonetheless, his closing statement in *Orality and Literacy* is that "orality-literacy dynamics enter integrally into the modern evolution of consciousness toward both greater interiorization and greater openness" (*Orality and Literacy*: 176). This might be heard as intensely meaningful equally by the Haight-Ashbury generation (Timothy Leary, *Playpower* and Yoko Ono with a stiffening of Illich) and the entrepreneurs of global media expansion (Wolfe 2000). Philosophy, protest, mind-expansion and commercial popular culture were all of a piece at this time, which partly accounts for the topic of orality being seen as "cool" (not quite as McLuhan might have put it). It was Ong himself who accused Derrida's logic of being "psychedelic," its effects being "due to sensory distortions" (*Orality and Literacy*: 76), in a chapter on "psychodynamics." But his real influence wasn't on Derrida; it was on the youth of the day:

> At the same time that the electronic stage is extending man's exploration outside the body, it is creating a desire for exploration of the individual's inner world. One example is the widespread interest in psychedelic substances. Many Americans, having ingested these chemicals, echo McLuhan's and Ong's theories. They state that their psychedelic episodes bring about "a sense of simultaneity in time and space," and "a sense of solidarity with all the people in the world." Others gather into drug or "hippie" subcultures, in which tribal rites are enacted, in which bright Indian clothes and primitive body markings are worn, and in which an intense sense of community often develops.
>
> (Krippner 1970)

In *Orality and Literacy* Ong deals with some of the other cool theory of the time – cool theory being the raison d'être of the New Accents series in which the book appeared – by seeking to negotiate his own position in relation to formalism, structuralism, deconstruction, etc., as well as certain approaches from linguistics and the social sciences. These positions, debates, and theoretical approaches form a significant part of the intellectual provenance of contemporary media and communication studies.

Ong's reach and impact are at least partly explicable by his ability to navigate contemporary currents of literary theory and postmodern philosophy (without drowning in "Theory"). He managed this by calling on his own unrivalled expertise in the history of knowledge, while maintaining a course that seemed to lead directly from these scholarly heights into the midst of the noisy melee of contemporary popular media. His insights provided both explanation and alibi for the immediate sensory experience of the tuned in, turned on, dropped out student, whose intellectual landmarks were more likely to come from music, movies, media and medications than from Latinate literature or intellectual traditions. Without a whiff of psychedelia in his own writings, Ong presided over a mind-altering moment in modern media studies. Perhaps this is what made his theory seem so cool at the time – it messed enlighteningly with *readers' minds*. Whether it explained the transformation of the *human mind* – in general – is another question, to which I shall return in my second additional chapter below, following Ong's *Orality and Literacy*.

Notes

1 Quotation from Neil MacGregor, Director of the British Museum (MacGregor 2010: 409).

2 William Shakespeare (1599) *Julius Caesar*, III.ii.52. Online: shakespeare.mit.edu/julius_caesar/julius_caesar.3.2.html; and see note 12, p. 221, below.

3 From 1929 till after his death in 2003: see a full bibliography at: academic.slu.edu/ong/Full_Ong_bib_complete_Oct2008.pdf.

4 Amazon.com customer reviews range from one to five stars: "Read this book only if you are forced to do so by someone. Even that didn't do it for me . . . If you want an expensive fire starter or something to stop the teetering of some annoying table then buy this" (one star); "As a reader or literate I never considered the differences inherent in a primarily oral world. This book explains them. What a wonderful new way to see things" (five stars): www.amazon.com/Orality-Literacy-New-Accents-Walter/dp/0415027969 (accessed Jan 2012).

5 "Ongism" is not my neologism. It may have been coined by Dell Hymes (1996: 34), who used it to refer to technological determinism

in communication theory. See also: lulu101.typepad.com/theory_i_f08/2008/09/walter-ongism-w.html, where it backs the claim that "Words are things, typography as alive" (Design Theory at CalArts).

6 See for instance this classic entry in the *Short Biographical Dictionary of English Literature* (Cousins 1910): "The intellect of Bacon was one of the most powerful and searching ever possessed by man, and his developments of the inductive philosophy revolutionised the future thought of the human race." This habit of extrapolating from the known (Bacon's publications) to the unknown ("the future thought of the human race") is an old problem, from which Walter Ong was not exempt: see new chapter "After Ongism".

7 The word I'm looking for here is "insensibly," as used frequently by Edward Gibbon throughout *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* to describe historical change that occurs slowly, beneath the threshold of conscious will; for instance where he writes how the "natives of [different parts of] Italy . . . *insensibly coalesced* into one great nation. . ." (1910: Vol 1, Ch II, p. 41).

8 Ong (1958: x) credited McLuhan with inspiring his interest in Ramus; and Farrell (Ong 2002: 12) claims that Ong's book prompted McLuhan to write *The Gutenberg Galaxy* (1962). Thus although Ong was formally McLuhan's MA student, their mutual influence was that of peers.

9 "In 1942 Miller resigned his post at Harvard to join the U.S. Army; he was stationed in Great Britain for the duration of the war, where he worked for the Office of Strategic Services. Miller may have been instrumental in creating the Psychological Warfare Branch of the O.S.S.; certainly he worked for the PWB for the duration of the war. (Precisely what he did and how he spent his time has never been disclosed; it may have been regarded in the postwar world by government officials as a matter of national security.) After 1945 Miller returned to teaching at Harvard." (*Wikipedia*: "Perry Miller".)

10 Harvard is only newsworthy when it *loses* the #1 spot. See, e.g.: www.bloomberg.com/news/2011–10–06/harvard-loses-top-world-ranking-to-caltech.html.

11 See: harvardbusiness.org/about.

12 Harbage clearly felt the need to press this point home for American readers, adding a foreword to the US edition of *As They Liked It*: "Shakespeare's audience was large and heterogeneous, drawn from

the general public, but a selective principle was at work. There were other theatres than the Globe, and other writers for the Globe itself. Shakespeare and his audience found each other, in a measure created each other. He was a quality writer for a quality audience. It is difficult to see how we can reach any other conclusion. The great Shakespearean discovery was that quality extended vertically through the social scale, not horizontally at the upper genteel, economic, and academic levels. . . . To a greater extent than we are aware, Shakespeare and his audience created the humane climate of subsequent generations, including, one hopes, our own" (Harbage 1947; foreword to the 1961 US edition).

13 See xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/whitman/vistas/vistas.html.

14 See: histsoc.stanford.edu/pdfmem/JonesRF.pdf; and: www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/1584760/Richard-D-Altick.html.

15 See also: www.shakespeareinamericanlife.org/identity/politicians/presidents/pick/jqadams.cfm; and note that Joseph Quincy Adams Jr., a scion of the Presidential family, was founding director of the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington: www.folger.edu/template.cfm?cid=795.

16 See: www.julianjaynes.org/about-jaynes.php.

17 SLU still offers a master's program in "Communication Studies + Speech Communication & Rhetoric": "A program that focuses on the scientific, humanistic, and critical study of human communication in a variety of formats, media, and contexts. Includes instruction in the theory and practice of interpersonal, group, organizational, professional, and intercultural communication; speaking and listening; verbal and nonverbal interaction; rhetorical theory and criticism; performance studies; argumentation and persuasion; technologically mediated communication; popular culture; and various contextual applications" (www.universities.com/edu/Masters_degree_in_Communication_Studies_Speech_Communication_and_Rhetoric_at_Saint_Louis_University_Main_Campus.html).

18 Most notoriously perhaps in the "Kitchen Debate" between US Vice-President Nixon and Soviet Premier Khrushchev, in July 1959. See: watergate.info/nixon/1959_nixon-khrushchev-kitchen-debate.shtml.

19 See: http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/whitman/vistas/vistas.html.

20 McLuhan was born in 1911, Ong in 1912.

21 A coinage associated with Jerry Rubin, Abbie Hoffman and the Yippies (Youth International Party): see for instance: www1.american.edu/bgriff/H207web/sixties/rubinchildofAmerika.htm.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years certain basic differences have been discovered between the ways of managing knowledge and verbalization in primary oral cultures (cultures with no knowledge at all of writing) and in cultures deeply affected by the use of writing. The implications of the new discoveries have been startling. Many of the features we have taken for granted in thought and expression in literature, philosophy and science, and even in oral discourse among literates, are not directly native to human existence as such but have come into being because of the resources which the technology of writing makes available to human consciousness. We have had to revise our understanding of human identity.

The subject of this book is the differences between orality and literacy. Or, rather, since readers of this or any book by definition are acquainted with literate culture from the inside, the subject is, first, thought and its verbal expression in oral culture, which is strange and at times bizarre to us, and, second, literate thought and expression in terms of their emergence from and relation to orality.

The subject of this book is not any 'school' of interpretation. There is no 'school' of orality and literacy, nothing that would be the equivalent of Formalism or New Criticism or Structuralism or Deconstructionism, although awareness of the interrelationship of orality and literacy can affect what is done in these as well as various other 'schools' or 'movements' all through the humanities and social sciences. Knowledge of orality-literacy contrasts and relationships does