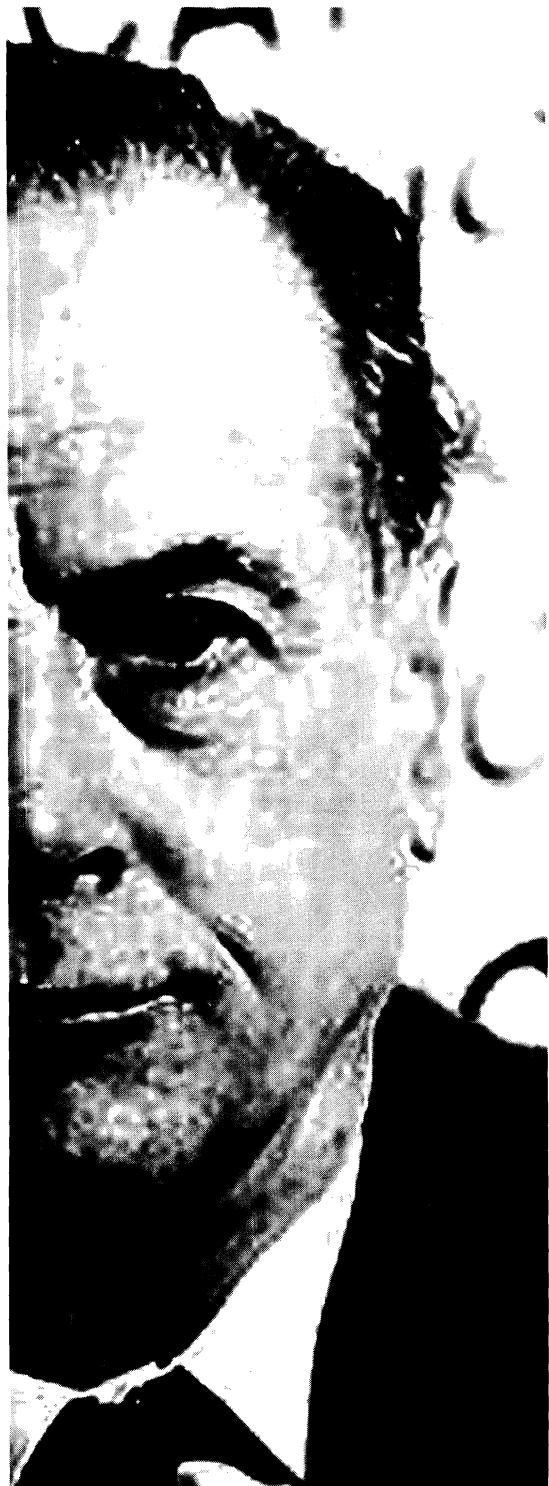# introduction

Marshall McCluhan's face appears on the cover of this combined issue of *Glimpse*. "McLuhan and Beyond" was the theme of the Society conference in Puebla, Mexico (February 21 – 23, 2008) from which most of the 16 papers in this issue came. This edition also comprises outstanding papers presented the previous year at National University in La Jolla, California, where, in addition to media, international scholars discussed issues of deception – and self-deception – as part of the Society's Outis Project, a five-year running invitation and challenge to members and other scholars to address those themes in creative and cross-disciplinary ways.

The McLuhan meeting in Puebla marked the 10th anniversary of The Society for Phenomenology and Media. What better way, many of us thought, than to hold a conference linked to McLuhan's project – a project captured in the title of his pivotal 1964 work, *Understanding Media*. I say "project" rather than "influence" or "work" because the intent was not to pour over McLuhan's writings with exegetical intent or discuss his reputation and legacy, but rather, to do as McLuhn did: to investigate media, old and new, in order to understand how each in its distinctive way mediates our relationship to the world and to each other. The concluding three papers of this *Glimpse*, part of the Outis project, complement the McLuhan-related investigations carried out in Puebla. In these papers, as in the others, the effort is to understand our mediated relationship to the world and others, specifically, how deception operates to occlude and falsify these relationships.

The first two papers, by Dennis Skocz ("Understanding *Understanding Media* Phenomenologically") and Chris Nagel ("Exposure, Absorption, Subjection – Being-in-Media"), tackle the issue of mediation as such, more than the work of any specific medium, although Dr. Nagel specifically illustrates his concept of "being-in-media" with concrete reflections on television and advertising. Dennis Skocz endeavors to ground McLuhan's insights phenomenologically, suggesting that this approach clarifies McLuhan's ideas and advances phenomenological research. The two papers draw on "classical" phenomenological notions and methods in Husserl and Merleau Ponty to illuminate and deepen how one might, for example, think of media as "extensions of man" (a principal leitmotif of McLuhan's work).

Victor Biceaga and Alberto Carrillo-Canan with May Zindel address still photography and movies respectively – "old" media now 40-plus years after McLuhan's rise to prominence. Victor Biceaga's contribution ("Picturing Phenomena: A Phenomenology of Photography) masterfully analyzes the photographic image beginning with Husserl's sophisticated and nuanced examination of image and image-consciousness but extends and enriches the analysis with insights from Roland Barthes and others outside phenomenology. In a collaborative work" ("The Poetics of Digital Cinema"), scholars Carrillo and Zindel show how an "old" medium, cinema – one that put the still photographic image in motion – undergoes a transformation with digital imaging technology and how this transformation of the medium, in turn, transforms the movie-goer's cinematic experience.

Monica Alarcon ("Marshall McLuhan and Merce Cunningham's Dance Art") links the oldest medium of all, the human body itself, with the revolutionary choreography of Merce Cunningham. Dr. Alarcon explains how – in the art of the dance as transformed by Cunningham – the performer shows, through movement and repose, the multifarious ways that embodied beings inhabit a world together.

"New" media are the focus of analyses by scholars Garza and Landrum, Alberto Lopez Cuenca, Hung-Chang Liao, and Michael Brownstein. "Meanings of Self, Place, and Others in the Wireless World," by Gilbert Garza and Brittany Landrum, explores the virtual space of the internet and wireless information technologies to assess the impact of these media on our contemporary "being-in-the-world." This last expression invokes philosopher Martin Heidegger's analytic of *Dasein*, "being-there" or human existence; Garza and Landrum suggest that our present-day way of "being-in" and "being-there" is radically changed by the media they examine. Alberto Lopez Cuenca's contribution, "Digital Communities of Representation: From Wittgenstein to Brazilian Motoboys," begins with the astute observation that in representing the world – through digital photography, for example – one is engaged in a practice or performance that Wittgenstein would call a "language game" or "form of life." When a group of Brazilian delivery boys (motoboys) are given digital cameras and invited to represent their "world" and share their images of it, they engage in a collective practice that results in their constituting themselves as

a [digital] community. Hung-Chan Liao ("The Virtual Power in Blogs") guides us readers into the blogosphere. Dr. Liao sets the stage for this with a concise and useful primer on blog jargon and technology; he then proceeds to trace the impact of blogging on personal expression and identity, gender relations, and the discussion of political and economic issues. Michael Brownstein provides a thought-provoking comparison of the Wikipedia of our time and the Encyclopedia as envisioned and realized in the Enlightenment. The comparison serves to raise issues about information as such; hence the title, "Changing and Unchanging Conceptions of Information." Brownstein urges his readers to go beyond the idea of information as a representation of the world and see it within the context of a "practice of knowledge," i.e., in relation to its "deployment" to broader purposes, both social and ideological.

Kevin Gray, Gwen Stowers, and Kathryn Egan focus on the import of media in the political and social domain, as does Gerardo de la Fuente Lora. Kevin Gray ("Habermas, McLuhan, and the Public Sphere") shows the role of the coffee house and newspaper in shaping political and social discourse in the bourgeois world of the 18th century. Gray considers whether the present-day public sphere, sustained by mass media and the internet, meets the conditions necessary to make it vibrant and influential. Gwen Stowers offers a wide-ranging critique of education and the media as fostering racism or the "social construction of race." Dr. Stowers, an educator, draws on social theory (Bourdieu), historical ethnography (Takaki), empirical studies, and her own professional experience in her indictment of current practice. Kathry Egan ("Searching for Warmth in Common Data Links: A McLuhanesque Study of Military Target Acquistion") discusses the role of information technology in Cold War and post-Cold War politics and warfare. McLuhan's distinction between hot and cold media informs Dr. Egan's analysis of network-centric warfare in a "new Cold War." Gerardo de la Fuente Lora ("Complex Systems and the Rebellion of the Machines") uses the cinema to construct a narrative of alienation in a techno-mediated world. Drawing on stories of machine rebellion in contemporary films, de la Fuente concludes his reflection with the vision of a world "saturated with things" leaving no place of "last refuge" from the "proliferation" and "government of things."

The concluding three contributions address issues of deception and self deception. Kurt

Cline traces the career of the legendary Houdini ("Unmasking the Simulacrum"), revealing for readers a public practice as much devoted to exposing the fraud and deception of bogus spiritualists as to staging incredible escapes and illusions. Tracy Dalke examines the case of self deception in relation to false memory syndrome. Psycho-therapeutic practice comes in for scrutiny in a multi-layered reflection on the relationship of the self to its past and present and to others in its history, including psycho-therapists who may be implicated in the creation of false memories of abuse. The paper, presented in the context of the Outis project, reflects as much on mediations, viz., those carried out by the self, with and in relation to others. Michaela Ott gives global scope to the phenomenon of deception in "Out of Global Deception." Attentive to the meaning of affect, particularly in the philosophy of Spinoza, Dr. Ott links the "the violent images" of globalization to a condition of "living outside [the globe]." Alienation and disaffection acquire a new depth of meaning in Ott's penetrating and far-reaching essay.

The preparation of an edition of *Glimpse* invites an editor to seek common threads in a diversity of voices with a view to summary and synopsis. The challenge this year was greater since the Society decided to combine papers from two conferences, one of which, the ninth annual conference at National University in La Jolla, included papers presented under the aegis of the Outis project (on deception) as well as papers on media and mediation. This Introduction offers a navigation tool for exploring the domain comprised by the contributions included in this issue of *Glimpse*. My expectation is that readers will find their own ways amid the diverse reflections offered in this edition but that they will find, as this editor has, striking resonances within the ensemble.

Let me congratulate and thank the contributors to this edition of *Glimpse*, as I commend their work to our readers.

Dennis E. Skocz
President
The Society for Phenomenology and Media