



This edition of *Glimpse* collects almost all the papers presented at the Fourth Annual Conference of the Society for Phenomenology and Media, held in February 2002 in Puebla, Mexico. Although the theme of the conference was globalization, it may seem that few of these papers explicitly pursue (or even mention) globalization. But I am not sure this means that few of the papers concerned or involved globalization because I am not sure there is an unequivocal sense of globalization. Frequently the term prompts political dispute, consternation, a tumultuous, angry, discordant din. Globalization also appears as a utopian ideal of social order and peace to be achieved through the common understanding that would supposedly result from a common medium of communication. Often enough globalization appears to be an incoherent idea, attempting to name an impossible geopolitical or ideological dream of a worldwide embrace—by capital, by communications media, or by something yet to become manifest, but in any case a universal phenomenon retaining all particulars in their particularity.

Taken less literally and more seriously, globalization calls for an articulation of the *otherness* that confronts us in any endeavor to reach across worldly boundaries, whether our purpose be to understand or to dominate. The threat of Babel looms, and those seeking quiet contemplation may enforce compulsory silence, a totalitarian globalization of one language, one thought.

I am happy to report that there was no place for such silence in Puebla. We met in the heart of the old city (the colonial city, marked everywhere by otherness—of Spanish basilicas, of Moorish designs, of Dutch colors, of French cuisine, all carried through their indigenous counterparts), in the city raucous with the bang and clash of its life. In nearly every session, we heard the blares of car horns, the shouts of pedestrians, and the thousand unidentified busy sounds of all of those outside our room. In nearly every session, within our room we heard two voices speaking two texts—the author’s own and the (often simultaneous) translation. Our room was filled completely with this concatenation produced by all of these othernesses. There could not have been a better place to engage the theme of globalization than that full, noisy room in Puebla. For whatever else one may say of globalization, it’s hard to imagine it as anything but noisy.

Considered in this way, I would argue that there is a performative sense of globalization that our conference papers unavoidably involved. On the one hand, many of them echoed (some quietly) the geopolitical tumult of the common sense of globalization. But more profoundly, the conference—especially this conference—enacted a performance of the question of globalization.

My own reaction to the papers in Puebla involved

more than a little confusion. One element of my confusion, particularly significant to the question of globalization, involved translation between my native English and the Spanish I learned in school, from my sister-in-law, and from living in California. Having just a little more Spanish than is needed to get arrested, it was difficult for me to listen to the translations without hearing enough of the Spanish to be brought into its flow. After the first day, enough Spanish returned to me that the English translations were harder to hear than the Spanish, and soon I was only able to follow papers presented in Spanish without the translation. Nevertheless, the translation was still an audible whisper in the room. I couldn't help but wonder how this sounded to some of our European colleagues, having no Spanish, for whom English is a second (*zweite*) language. Amid the din of the center of the old colonial city, I imagined, this layering of otherness upon otherness must have required a strenuous effort to assimilate.

Another element of my confusion resulted, I now believe, from my desire to make these experiences native to me. I was engrossed in the tasks of finding my way through the city, finding my way through the translations, finding my way through the arguments, finding my way into understanding. I sought to penetrate through the ambient sound, through the double-voiced translation, through the author's position, to whatever position I could take in response. This was a difficult task particularly when the author's position was outside what I typically considered "phenomenological." What kind of language were these others speaking? Was it phenomenological? Was it language at all?

In short, I wondered how phenomenology could find or become a global language, and how, if it could, it would adopt and translate all that is native and indigenous. I wondered from what position the project of phenomenology could adopt these disparate reports of lived media experience, native and naïve, forming with them an embracing understanding.

These thoughts would engage me while I pursued my *mole poblano*. Classic *mole* is itself a performance of globalization. Among the dozen or more ingredients are roughly equal parts indigenous and exogenous herbs and spices, brought together through cooking techniques drawn in part from French and Spanish cuisine. Yet it could only have come into being (and thankfully did) in Puebla, because only in Puebla would these various elements be translated and transformed by means of the native tongue and palate precisely thus. Much as my ear had heard layers of sense in English, Spanish, city noise and human noise, my palate tasted these layers of savor. Despite myself, I couldn't help noticing what Puebla owed to its foreign conquistadors. I do not deny the political and moral significance of the violence that has most often carried out globalization. But I cannot deny that in certain instances, when the native survives in and through the invading, that something beautiful results. Nothing else

in the world does or could compare with *mole*. My palate's adoption of this taste enacts a global embrace that irredeemably embraces violence of otherness against otherness.

Some may see elements of the phenomenological movement as similarly violent conquistadors, natives nowhere, vanquishing otherness and imposing a singular, oracular, universal interpretation. Others may see the core of the phenomenological movement as natives everywhere, universal translators compounding othernesses to form unique, authentic understandings. As for me, I pursue my *mole poblano*, that magic potion that always tastes just slightly of blood, since it comes no other way.

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