

## EDITORIAL

GEORGE ORWELL FAMOUSLY OBSERVED that a man wears a mask and his face grows to fit it. He was talking about how working in the maintenance of the British Raj in India affected the British men charged with keeping the natives under control. However, this observation carries with it obviously much wider application and has an intuitive sense about it, as a caution and as a reminder that if we are not careful and aware, we cannot help but become what we appear to be. This advice seems especially pertinent to politicians and others in public life. It may even serve as an explanation why so many people appear to revel in the public failures of people who spend a lot of their time judging the failings of others, for instance. The moment when someone's face has obviously grown to fit a mask is especially suggestive when we get a look behind that mask.

Orwell's words have been on my mind recently because of the increasing role websites, Facebook, Twitter, etc. play in our public space. Certainly *The Dalhousie Review* is no exception in this regard. We have recently updated our website, as our regular readers know, and are considering what role Facebook or some other social medium might play in our public profile going forward. There must be some distinction to be drawn, however, between social media for their own sake, and social media that make some sort of legitimate contribution to the sorts of discussions in which a journal might take part. Just because it can be said in 250 characters or less, does that mean it needs saying? I have not personally been convinced that many of the conference papers I have heard in the last five years have been improved noticeably by the inclusion of video clips or Powerpoint slides, for instance. While these are technologies that have the ability to add to the overall effect of a presentation, the inevitable delays and moments of tension that occur while computers warm up or technical adjustments are made (not to mention the prospect of having to call a technician to help out with some problem) detract from the flow of a conversation and can sometimes be the most memorable parts of a conference panel: "Remember when the sound didn't work on that video clip from *Reservoir Dogs*?"

The obvious accusation that I'm a luddite is probably not misplaced. I am writing this editorial on a Lenovo Thinkpad T500, though, so at least I'm not sticking to my old manual typewriter (I don't actually own a manual typewriter, but you get my point). And there is no doubt that technology is inevitable. I swear by my iPhone 4, for example, and don't really do much (from keeping track of how far I walk my dog to keeping track of phone numbers, addresses, and appointments) without it. I even text, from time to time! My thought, though, is that we need to be aware of the ways various technologies add to our lives and our work as opposed to merely being included simply because they exist. The bigger concern is that social media that thrive on very brief snippets of text encourage us to think in those snippets and not any more deeply than that. It would be a shame if as individuals we became more and more masks of shallow observation without any substantial reflection, and then our culture as a whole grew to fit that mask.

A.S.