

# Introduction

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If summer is somehow synonymous with vacation, closely related is the notion of travel, so that descriptions of “how I spent my summer” typically include either some reference to “where I went” or apologies for staying at home. More than bearing out the old adage that “a change is as good as a rest,” this tendency seems to suggest that in order to be a regenerative experience the break from routine must involve mobility of one kind or another.

Travel, of course, was also once regarded as a central component of education, as in the case of the Renaissance gentleman for whom a “continental tour” was as much a prerequisite for cultural sophistication as the ability to speak a number of languages. Nor has this concept disappeared entirely from the current academic scene. One finds it, for example, in the practice of attending scholarly conferences, where “seeing the sites” is for many regarded to be as important as conversing in the halls or listening to presentations. Similarly, the association of moving upward with moving outward is evidenced in the way that students are encouraged to leave their undergraduate schools and obtain graduate degrees from other institutions. In this way, then, it is not merely at the end of summer that “school” begins but anytime that one travels.

There is, however, another form of intellectual travel, one which involves moving from a specific disciplinary orientation into other academic territory, and while such venturing seems to have only a metaphoric resemblance to the real thing, it may be instructive to phrase the problems pertaining to interdisciplinary scholarship in terms of the questions asked about travel in the more conventional sense. Should one, for example, have a definite route and destination or will such planning preclude discovering something new? How much time does one need to spend in a locale to get a real sense of the place? How much equipment is necessary and how frequently should one recheck with one's home base? What kind of hostility or civility can one expect of the native residents? How much can one safely "smuggle" across international borders? To what extent does a certain profile alert the suspicions of customs officials? And, of course, where does the question of cost enter the picture, and does the academic have the equivalent of a credit card?

As interdisciplinary exercises, the essays in this September issue of *Mosaic* well illustrate the value of such intellectual travel but in addition they also face head-on and further delineate the implications of doing so. Thus the opening essay (Dugas) focuses on the Renaissance—where travel went hand-in-hand with colonization—and pointedly discusses both the territorial defensiveness of historians and the need to consider "field" records to appreciate Elizabethan attitudes toward cultural appropriation. Dealing even more directly with disciplinary territoriality, another essay (Brigham) traces the origins of the humanities/science split and in the process of explicating the hybridity that problematizes Shelley's career and famous "elegy" shows how such a split is both unnatural and yet necessary for survival.

Significantly, the transgressive aspect of these two opening essays also involves recourse to a pictorial element, thereby setting the stage for a subsequent pair of essays concerned with the oldest form of territorial disputes—that between word and image. In the first of these interarts essays (Starzyk) the antagonism between the visual and verbal modes that characterizes a poem by Tennyson is discussed in the context of romantic concepts of organicism, on the one hand, and metaphors of property and ownership, on the other. Similarly giving a scientific resonance to aesthetic issues, a second essay (Déchery) focuses on the synesthetic and sensory nature of perception in an attempt to elucidate the philosophy informing Robbe-Grillet's radical undoing of verbal positivism, an exercise that also experiments with using illustrations as a stimulus rather than as documentation.

Another set of essays, in turn, further grounds such issues in the demarcations traditionally established between the sexes, and in doing so both provide a somewhat reverse slant on the word/image dialectic. Thus one (Wesley) focuses on the tyranny of the visual—specifically film—and its alliance with cultural indoctrination, going on to demonstrate the ways that Joyce Carol Oates parodies "stardom" as a means to showing how women can resist the rape that attends their idolization. Another essay (Szadziuk) specifically invokes the concept of "travel" in a discussion of how the acclimatization and resistance experienced by American women of Hispanic descent is registered in spatial terms and linguistic strategies.

A last pair of essays, finally, attempt to traverse what has long seemed to be the ultimate zones of difference, namely imaginative freedom and adherence to constraints, with each of these discussions arriving at the same conclusion but via a different interdisciplinary route. Thus one (Symes) explores the way that a group of French writers sought to increase their verbal facility and inventiveness by paradoxically restricting what was allowable, using mathematics as their model and inspiration. Similarly, another essay (Malcolm) discusses how Ondaatje used the jazz dynamics of improvisation and preset melody as a guiding motif in his attempt to dramatize the synergistic relationship between the individual and the social collective, between fact and fiction.

What all of these essays have in common, one should also note, is not only a focus on works which move between various disciplines or categories but also their own daring to take the study of literature into seemingly foreign territory. In this way, the kind of intellectual travel that they epitomize makes their publication in this September issue doubly appropriate—symbolizing what might be called a summer vacation that has been truly well spent.