

# Mosaic

a journal for the interdisciplinary study of literature

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# Introduction

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DAWNE McCANCE

I am pleased, with this issue, to welcome W.J.T. Mitchell back to *Mosaic*. In the interview that opened Volume 33, Number 2, Mitchell talked about—theorized about—the relation between image and text; he opens this *Mosaic* issue with an essay on the relation between image and value. Perhaps we can speak of the value of images as evolutionary, Mitchell suggests. Indeed, why not speak of images as “quasi-life forms (like viruses) that depend on host organisms (ourselves) and cannot reproduce themselves without human participation”? Picturing images as living things and analyzing their life processes leads Mitchell to a provocative discussion of totemism as a distinct form of surplus value, of “The Surplus Value of Images.” His essay concludes with a meditation on a pair of images, both of which exhibit a surplus of value and display many features of totemism.

With Florianne Wild’s “Rewriting Allegory with a Vengeance: Textual Strategies in Fritz Lang’s *Rancho Notorious*,” we move to a discussion of the film-image as a rebus. “Seeing a film as a rebus serves to break down the apparent rationality of cinematographic continuity and to alert us to what may be working in the film beyond narrative and producing other, quasi-unconscious, shapes of order for the viewer.” In Roland A. Champagne’s

"Lyotard's Mosaic Art of Biography," as in Wild's and Mitchell's essays, there is a concern to overcome conventional binary oppositions, and not the least those that characterize our thinking of the image. Jean-François Lyotard's biography of André Malraux is a "mosaic," Champagne suggests: it combines various visual and verbal artistic techniques and crosses various genre lines to stage life as a "musical modification" of linear time. Peter Schwenger's "Red Cannas, Sardine Cans, and the Gaze of the Object" continues this issue's discussion of images and pictures, in this case by way of reading Jacques Lacan's Seminar XI and its concept of the gaze. Biography is again the subject in Alejandro Herrero-Olaizola's "Writing Lives, Writing Lies: The Pursuit of Apocryphal Biographies," although in this essay the biography under discussion is apocryphal. "Why is it so fascinating to read about an invented writer and about his or her literary and/or academic production? What is entailed in the pursuit of creating fictional authors?" To answer these questions, Herrero-Olaizola turns to the "master of apocryphal writing," Jorge Luis Borges.

Three essays in this issue deal, in very different ways, with forms of discursive control, with a text's encoded colonizing impulses, as well as with its potential for unsettling structures of domination: Kathleen Venema's "'He Never Harmed an Indian': Ethnographic Consequences of Alexander Mackenzie's Heroic Narrative," David Stymeist's "'Strange Wives': Pocahontas in Early Modern Colonial Advertisement," and Carolyn L. Mathews's "Fashioning the Hybrid Woman in Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*." Jennifer Gillan, in "Plotting Political Personhood: Literary Self-Making and Contract-Breaking," examines the relation between contract theory and the construction of sexual and corporeal difference. The issue concludes with Tzachi Zamir's "Doing Nothing," where the acoustic, rather than the visual, is under discussion. Shakespeare's Hamlet "plays many games with ear, hearing, and audibility," Zamir writes. His essay examines the significance of this image for, among other things, philosophy-literature relations.

Enjoy this issue of *Mosaic*. With our next issue, a special issue, in colour, entitled *Literature and Architecture*, we will introduce a new format. Look forward to that.