

Introduction

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In “Loving Ourselves Best of All: Ecocriticism and the Adapted Mind,” the essay that opens this *Mosaic* issue, Nancy Easterlin tells us that teaching and research in literature and ecology began developing only thirty years ago, and that, while “ecocriticism has expanded considerably since 1996 (and especially since 1999),” the field has enjoyed only “desultory acceptance” within English departments. It is interesting, then, that in the essay that closes this issue, “Aesthetic Consolation and the Genius of the Place in Stoppard’s *Arcadia*,” Alison E. Wheatley remarks on the playwright’s preoccupation with landscape, and this as an “interplay of past and present”: Stoppard, “the literary architect, using aesthetic strategies in the same way as does his character Noakes, the landscape architect from 1809.” Through a focus on “ecocriticism,” or at least on (theories of) human interaction with the natural world, Stoppard’s play enacts an “interleaving of past and present.” We could read the first and last essays in this issue as inducing a similar “before” and “after” interplay: such unintended “interleaving” of two essays—of any two or more essays in a given *Mosaic* issue—surprises me every time. It is the stuff of which interdisciplinarity is made. While I would hesitate, after Walter Benjamin, to call *Mosaic* a montage, I do read this and other issues of the journal as layered in multiple ways and as performing a complex movement *between* sketches or strata. I read this issue, like Stoppard’s play, as saying a good deal about writing, and about the kind of writing that comes out of interdisciplinary concerns: “*Arcadia* is a metaphor in action, demonstrating thematically and dramatically the link between this aesthetic strategy [of superimposition] and the process of loss and recovery.”

You will find eleven essays in the following pages: explorations and dramatizations of the thematics of loss and of the ego’s attempts at recovery—and control; the subject severed, if not split; the subject and object in opposition; “retrieval” and repetition; crises in representation; juxtapositions (of Auster and Hitchcock, Kafka and

Levinas, evolution and extinction, poetry and theory, sculpture and poetry) and collaborations; folklore in fabulist fiction—and fairy tales.

As I write this introduction, on a wintry late-June day in Winnipeg, I am reminded, by this lingering chill, of the frigid weather endured by participants in *Mosaic's* international, interdisciplinary, March 11–13, 2004 conference, *The Photograph*. Cold winds could not give pause: *The Photograph* was an overwhelming success; *Mosaic* Editorial Board Chair Herb Enns referred to it as “a premonition of the very fabric of the new university as a place of blurred boundaries, and of diversity in thought and action,” three days of “unmistakable optimism and confidence in brushing up against new languages, new ideas, and new cultures.” The next publication of *Mosaic* comes out of this event. Look for it: *The Photograph*: a special issue, December 2004.