

# Introduction

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**A** fortieth birthday can come as a shock, not only to the celebrant but also to his or her parents. *Mosaic* turned forty this year. So far at least, the anniversary has not occasioned a mid-life crisis, although it has encouraged us at *Mosaic* to reflect on the journal's past four decades, to marvel at the changes it has made over these years, to take pride in its accomplishments, and to acknowledge the enormous opportunities, and challenges, that face the journal in the decades ahead.

*Mosaic* was founded in the year of Canada's centennial, taking its name and its cosmopolitan format from the country's multicultural mosaic. It set out to provide wide-ranging humanities scholarship with an international forum, adopting the original subtitle, *a journal for the comparative study of literature and ideas*. The journal was ahead of its time when, in 1980, it changed its subtitle to the present one, *a journal for the interdisciplinary study of literature*, and announced that its mandate would henceforth be an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary one. This mandate readied the journal for many of the changes brought to humanities disciplines and methodologies by developments in such areas as literary and critical theory, feminism, ecology, and ethics, and by academic movements that called traditional boundaries into question. These boundaries were not simply institutional and disciplinary ones. They stemmed from ways of thinking national, sexual, racial, species, and other sites of difference through dual polarities, through a knot of oppositions that will require a very long time to untie. Recent *Mosaic* special issues—on medicine, architecture, spectrality, the garden, the photograph, the animal, and the many legacies of Jacques Derrida—suggest the extent of boundary crossing that is involved in current explorations of difference.

Always at the heart of these explorations is the question of technology. In today's world, it is no longer possible for humanities disciplines to position themselves in a place apart from telecommunications and techno-scientific rationality. Here is one of

Derrida's legacies to us: his thinking of what he called the "logic of autoimmunity," whereby what would be banished to the outside has been working all along from within, as both promise and threat. Along with other print journals, *Mosaic* has undergone a major transition in this respect. It was founded before the computer, and when I joined the journal as editor some eight years ago, it still belonged to the era of paper, running its submissions review process as a card-file operation. The complex database architecture in which *Mosaic* is now based, as sophisticated as that in place at any journal, not only enhances efficiency beyond what we could have imagined, but also enables *Mosaic* to facilitate international interaction among scholars. For example, the journal's submissions review process now operates through its database and is supported by over 10,000 scholars around the world, who generously lend their expertise to the evaluation of manuscripts, and who constitute an ever-growing international and interdisciplinary learning community. At *Mosaic*, we are learning more and more about the promise of such technology. We are also struggling, as are others, to come to terms with the challenges posed to print journals by the move to online access and by widespread conversion to electronic publishing formats.

*Mosaic* intends, in the years ahead, to embrace these challenges creatively. We are in the business of anticipating key questions and of fostering collaborative, international, and interdisciplinary innovation. Of course, the journal remains particularly interested in the "essay," the discursive entity it is given to publishing. We continue, through our authors, reviewers, and readers, to explore the essay's parameters and possibilities for crossing the critical/creative divide, to ask what might be the future of this form.

Together, the ten essays in this issue are a good indicator of what *Mosaic* is about. This is an international, interdisciplinary, boundary-crossing collection. Read and enjoy its exploration of such topics as: the Argentine novel, film, sculpture, Poe, the philosophy and politics of the nation-state, deviant sexuality in gothic fiction, trauma theory, theorizing of vision and visibility, ecology, AIDS, wilderness, male incest, the Hottentot Venus, the Ogoni Nine, and neuronarrativity.