

# Introduction

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**W**hat is it “to engage with that which is alive *and* dead, a living-dead”? The question is posed in the first essay of this *Mosaic* issue, where Kas Saghafi engages the “living-dead” by way of Jean-Luc Nancy’s reading in *La Déclosion* of Maurice Blanchot’s *Thomas the Obscure* and other texts, particularly *L’Espace littéraire* and *L’Écriture du désastre*, on death, dying, and resurrection. Here, “resurrection” has to do not with a supernatural or revelatory operation, but with the “miraculous” undecidability that inheres in the act of reading (writing, speaking), an act that involves a logic of “the both and,” therefore that “combines transparency and opacity, clarity and obscurity, gravity and levity.” According to this logic, “what walks is alive and dead.”

“For Nancy,” Saghafi writes, “resurrection is not a reanimation, but a prolongation, a deepening of death, death emptied and hollowed out.” In Hsiu-chuan Lee’s “The Remains of Empire and the ‘Purloined’ Philippines: Jessica Hagedorn’s *Dream Jungle*,” the word *prolongation* appears again, significantly with reference to literary work that *purloins*, that is, does not “steal”—possess, or render transparent—but rather extends and exceeds either/or (hegemonic or counter-hegemonic) forms of political agency; work that proceeds through “lateral” (not clearly visible or translatable) approaches. Citing Judith Butler from her book *Excitable Speech*, to the effect that “language can be a violent means of expression in ‘its effort to capture the ineffable and, hence, to

destroy it, to seize hold of that which must remain elusive for language to operate as a living thing,” Asbjørn Grønstad, in “Ekphrasis Refigured: Writing Seeing in Siri Hustvedt’s *What I Loved*,” is drawn to such “laterality,” to non-violent, non-oppositional ways to approach the ineffable, or to “dialogue with the elusive.” What Christopher Langlois in “‘cease to exist in order to be’: *Worstward Ho* between Badiou and Deleuze” calls “a poetics of stuttering” is relevant here, particularly since his essay concerns the “ekphrastic” encounter between philosophy and art. And consider Debrah Raschke’s “Framed Identity: Finding Lucy in Atwood’s ‘Death by Landscape,’” with its “lateral” interest (not in translation or transparency, but in transformation), as providing an example of what Grønstad calls “refigured ekphrasis.” So, I think, does Allan C. Christensen’s “Creating/Vanishing: The Gypsy Muse in Works by Arnold, Kalda, Janáček, and Vaughan Williams,” where works perform “vanishing acts” and attest to the absence of origin.

From Chien-Hung Chen’s “*Weltgeschichte als Weltgericht: Le corps hétérotopique dans Une tempête*” to Michael Wainwright’s “Sherlock Holmes and Game Theory,” this is a highly diverse issue. Yet it is marked by common threads: the logic of both-and, lateral thinking, purloining, prolonging, and, not the least, what Gene Washington in “Poetry, Polyvocal, Philosophy: A Thought Experiment” calls polyvocality. Some of the essays deal with memory: for one, Vikki Visvis’s “Spatial Consciousness in Dionne Brand’s *In Another Place, Not Here*,” resisting reductive either/or diametrically opposed poles, approaches Brand’s novel as interrogating the notion of traumatic forgetting, particularly as a deliberate act, suggesting that, for Brand, such forgetting has “both its productive and problematic dimensions.” And perhaps for all of the essays collected here, the question of representation is at stake. As befits this *Mosaic* issue overall, Kylie Cardell and Victoria Kuttainen suggest in “The Ethics of Laughter: David Sedaris and Humour Memoir” that there is an ethical dimension to Sedaris’s use of humour in life-writing, for it is through humour that he “reflects on and performs the ethical problems and paradoxes involved in representing a life story,” encouraging us to laugh at ourselves, and at the project of autobiography as transparent truth-telling.