

# Introduction

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This special *Mosaic* issue, the second of three conference proceedings issues, collects papers presented at the *A matter of life death* conference held at the University of Manitoba from October 1-4, 2014. Most of the papers have been revised, some lengthened, into publishable essay form and, as always, we are grateful to contributors for their cooperation and more than a little proud to print their fine work.

The issue opens with Dr. Françoise Dastur's conference Keynote Address, "Mourning as the Origin of Humanity." Against still prevalent modes of thinking that elevate humans above animals, usually by focusing on something animals "lack," Dastur, with particularly rich references to the Western philosophical tradition, approaches humans as "strange animals who bury their dead." Although Dastur states that "There is indeed no experience of death as such," other essays question whether Heidegger attributed such an experience to *Dasein* alone and, by so doing, reinstated the tradition's man/animal binary. Ryan C.P. Fics, in "Our Sovereign Others: Phantasms, Heidegger, Animality," examines the "presumption that human *Dasein* lives death as death," and in the course of his essay considers the notions of "phantasm," and "dying alive," as these emerge from Derrida's *The Beast & the Sovereign* seminars. "Sovereignty," "phantasm," and "death" are taken up as well in Gwynne Fulton's "Phantasmatics: Sovereignty and the Image of Death in Derrida's First *Death Penalty* Seminar." And

Kas Saghafi in “Dying Alive,” engaging Derrida’s second seminar on *The Beast & the Sovereign*, argues that “phantasm,” “dying alive,” and “survival” need to be thought in relation to, and with, each other. Again, “survival” is a title word in “Love, Life, Death, and Survival,” where Diane Enns, reading Derrida’s *Learning to Live Finally* alongside Gillian Rose’s memoir, *Love’s Work*, develops a poignant, poetic, and critical reflection on the death of a love.

The importance of Derrida’s work for many presenters at the October conference is evident in this issue, as are the different ways in which writers draw insights from his treatments of *life death*. A remarkable example is Matthias Fritsch’s “Democracy, Climate Change, and Environmental Justice,” which draws from a number of Derrida’s texts to develop the argument that democracy should be rethought as a matter of “taking turns,” and that such rethinking can lead to an environmentally responsible politics. James Martell in “The Animal Mirrors: The Human/Animal Divide in Derrida and Deleuze,” by way of Derrida’s critique of Deleuze, proposes a way of moving the question of human-animal relations “beyond the traps of narcissism.”

The remaining six essays offer striking and diverse contributions to this issue. Antonio Calcagno, in “Individuated Embodiment and Action: Interrogating Roberto Esposito’s Negative Self,” offers a well-informed, timely, and critical evaluation of Esposito’s biopolitics. Kara Wentworth takes readers into today’s abattoir in “Sensing Sentience and Managing Microbes: Lifedeath in the Slaughterhouse.” In “Adapting Venice: Intermedial Relations in Visconti, Sebald, and Kafka,” Russell J.A. Kilbourn takes us to Venice through Luchino Visconti’s *Death in Venice* and *Vertigo* and W.G. Sebald’s first prose narrative, which adapts texts by Kafka. Dominique Hétu, in “Of Wonder and Encounter: Textures of Human and Nonhuman Relationality,” reads the novels *Sous Béton* and *Room* “as attempts to surpass the traditional and conventional life/death dichotomy by telling stories of trauma and near-death experiences through moments of wonder in meaningful encounters that bring to attention the vitality of the dead.” And last, but by no means least, are two compelling essays, Sung-Ae Lee’s “Lost in Liminal Space: Amnesiac and Incognizant Ghosts in Korean Drama” and Sarah Bezan’s “Necro-Eco: The Ecology of Death in Jim Crace’s *Being Dead*.”

The issue reminds me of the wonder I experienced, as *Mosaic* Editor, at the range and quality of submissions we received from our conference Call for Papers.