

# Introduction

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**M**osaic issue 53.2 emerges from out of the depths of the COVID-19 pandemic—whether the tail-end, the beginning, or somewhere in the middle, no one knows. With our journal’s office closed since late March and staff and interns working from home, delays in publication were inevitable. Nevertheless, this issue inaugurates a series of periodic collaborations with scholars and artists from around the world—perhaps marking the end of our largely eremitic lives, perhaps not.

The pandemic has affected many deadlines and altered many boundaries, just as much as it has exacerbated and entrenched established divisions. Life has never seemed more changeable, fragile, and uncertain. The tenuous boundaries between species, which is the subject of this special issue and whose troubled history marks a whole range of hierarchies and inequalities closely policed by our culture, have especially blurred. Now it is clearer than ever that the longstanding tension between the human and the animal must be read off the backdrop of metaphysics, as well as a far larger tapestry that is inclusive of the biological, microbiological, technological, and political. Thus the coronavirus has brought whole economies to a halt, and with this it is even tempting to think our impending ecological crisis has been averted instead of literalized as one more symptom or morbidity that draws us closer to utter collapse. But fewer cars, less production, better air quality in Lombardy, Catalonia,

Wuhan, Shandong, or Delhi, etc., does not equal more nature anymore. The simple binary is broken, has long been corrupted, and is irreversible. Further, the ongoing flurry of crises in the world has contracted the neat flow of time, snipping off the past and future from the present and turning the latter into a strangely intolerable waiting game, where life goes on—whether in suffering, near death, relative contentment, as per usual—nevertheless. Yet all of these slippages in our unique relationships with time, social life, racial inequality, animals, or the environment pale in comparison to the absolute magnitude, complexity, and interrelationships between these specific questions.

In this special edition of *Mosaic*, guest edited by Nicole Anderson and longtime friend of *Mosaic* H. Peter Steeves, we present a collection of essays titled *Political Animal(s)*. The issue builds on two prior special issues on *The Animal* from 2006-2007, and contributes to the increasingly important field of human-animal relationships. Thinking this complicated network of interdisciplinary problems that now constitutes the political in its expanded sense and which blurs with a range of pressing ecological issues is now more important than ever.