

Farewell

EVELYN J. HINZ

As the 20th century comes to an end, so does my 20th year as Editor of *Mosaic*, making the time doubly right for me to announce my retirement.

During my two decades as Editor, the journal has undergone many changes, one of which was implemented in 1979, the first year of my editorship, when *Mosaic* changed its subtitle from “A Journal for the Study of Literature and Ideas” to “A Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature.” While the crossing of disciplines had been the intent of *Mosaic* from the outset, it seemed imperative to make this mandate clearer, not merely nominally to distinguish the journal from general humanities forums but also to emphasize the pioneering role that *Mosaic* wished to play in fostering a new kind of scholarship and methodology. For what must be remembered here is that back in 1979 “interdisciplinary” was not the common term that it is today; at that time, only a very few journals identified themselves in this way, and exactly what “interdisciplinary” scholarship needed to involve was still very much in the formative stages.

Over the years, *Mosaic* has also made numerous changes in the general format of essays, including shifting both from foot-notes to end-notes and from the use of the note-form for providing bibliographical information to the use of Works Cited. Similarly, in 1994 the journal began to include abstracts of essays and shifted from placing information about authors in a general “Notes on Contributors” section at the end of the issue to providing an “About the Author” entry at the conclusion of each individual essay.

Relatedly, while *Mosaic* has always featured unique covers for its special issues, the journal also explored ways of making the covers of general issues more effective and enticing—moving, for example, from featuring the names of authors and key quotes to a stylized background listing of the spectrum of disciplines

that the journal embraced. The cover of the current issue, in turn, reflects the latest innovation, as well as *Mosaic's* increasing attention to the aesthetics of design, for which the present office staff deserve a great deal of credit, especially since this attention extends to the recent design of *Mosaic's* web site.

In terms of editorial policies per se, throughout my career my slogan has been “free speech ain’t loose speech,” and it has always been my firm conviction that editing a scholarly journal needs to entail attention to “prose style.” As I see it, the motto of an editor who would rightly take pride in the journal he/she edits must be a version of the Vidal Sassoon formula: “If you don’t look good, we don’t look good.” Of course, such a dynamic is greatly dependent upon the understanding and cooperation of contributors, which in the case of the more than 600 scholars whose essays I have seen into print has been very great indeed—even if my rigourousness did occasion one contributor playfully to dub me “The General Patton of Scholarly Editors.”

What has also made editing *Mosaic* such a rewarding experience has been the way that the journal’s policy of using external evaluators of submissions enabled me to establish contact with a wide range of specialists drawn from the academic community at large and from a variety of disciplines. Their “behind-the-scenes” assistance provided a truly professional example of Winston Churchill’s conclusion: “We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give.”

I have been extremely fortunate, too, in having a very supportive Editorial Board. Not only did the members provide continual suggestions and encouragement but the Chair made meetings of the Board an opportunity for delightful collegiality. It would also seem that in contrast to many editors I have been advantaged in having an Administration that recognized the publicity that funding a scholarly journal can afford a university.

There is, however, I will admit finally, one feature of scholarly publishing that I have long thought would be a good idea but never implemented—i.e., including photos of the contributors. So as a way of now saying “Farewell” I will try to set a good example by visually revealing my own identity—but leaving it up to readers/viewers to guess at what time during my editorship this photo was taken.



Introduction

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On the eve of the new millennium, it is difficult to say whether more emphasis is placed on the passing of the old or on the beginning of the new era. For skeptics and cynics, of course, the entire notion of the millennium is fatuous, since it is based on a culture-specific, and hence arbitrary, dating system. Still, if constructivism has taught us one thing, it is that as much as “nothing is either good or bad but thinking makes it so,” so also what makes something “real” is communal consensus, and certainly these days millennial thinking is ubiquitous. From fears about Y2K problems to plans for celebrating midnight on 31 December 1999, millennium has become part of the air that we breathe.

There are, however, two ways to think of time and our relationship to it; as cognitive psychologists George Lakoff and Mark Johnson have explained in *Metaphors We live By* (1980), one way is to conceptualize time as stationary and ourselves as mobile—as in the expression “We’re approaching the end of 1999”; the other way is to conceptualize time as mobile and ourselves as stationary—as in the expression “We’re looking forward to the arrival of January 2000.” What complicates matters further are the contradictory directions in which we locate the past and future: thus on the one hand we speak of the future as “ahead” of us and

the past as “behind”—“Before us lies a new age...so turn your back on the old ways”; but on the other hand we use expressions which locate the past in a frontal position and the future in the rear—“In the following days...in the preceding weeks”; and in some cases we even conflate the two usages—“We’re looking ahead to the following weeks.”

Closely related to these concepts, in turn, are two views of identity; as Wendy Steiner, citing Mikhail Bakhtin’s notion of the “chronotope,” has noted in her *Pictures of Romance* (1988), one way is to view the self as something unchanging throughout the passage of time, with time itself having a spatial quality and progress taking the form of a change in location; the other way is to view personal identity as continually changing, whereby time serves merely or essentially as our way of registering these changes in our selves.

Where these respective theories of time and identity come firmly together in the context of millennial thinking, accordingly, is with respect to the question of agency—that is, whether we regard the millennium and all that it entails as something that will happen to us, or whether we regard it as an event or turning point in which we participate and whose consequences indeed we have somehow generated. Significantly, while none of the essays in the present issue is specifically concerned with the millennium, each affords valuable insights for thinking through such matters.

The opening essay (Hodges), for example, focuses on Henry James, a turn-of-the-19th-century novelist, and shows how he emphasized a rhetoric of music in revising *The Portrait of a Lady* for the final edition with a view to clarifying the development of the heroine and her acceptance of responsibility for her future. Another (Gerstel) explores the way that Shostakovich played with and against the constraints and expectations of his times, providing a classic case of the way that irony can function as a survival tactic and a strategy for preserving one’s integrity. Also, but more specifically exemplifying an interarts approach is another essay (Jessar), which explores the way that Richard Wilbur enlists the time-bound aspects of narrative or the verbal medium in his attempt to remind us that the world of now is our reality and that it is a world of “becoming,” howsoever much we might like to aspire to an ideal condition of “being” or a pictorial realm of eternity.

Two other essays, in turn, deal with what are undoubtedly the most devastating events of this century and perhaps of the entire past millennium, with both explicitly addressing questions of agency and responsibility. Thus one (Jacobs) focuses on the seemingly unprecedented and

hence unrepresentable horrors of the Holocaust, and discusses the ethical implications of the attempts to do so by American poet Adrienne Rich and German artist Gerhard Richter. Similarly, another essay (Hender-shot) focuses on the traumatic effects of the discovery and use of nuclear weaponry, and discusses the way that science-fiction films of the 1950s sought to contain the threat of total and apocalyptic destruction even as they evidenced the inability to envision such a future. While such epoch-making events might at first seem remote from pedagogical innovations within academic circles, that there is an uncanny connection is the import of another essay (Jones) which focuses on the charismatic career of Paul de Man and explores the shock-waves generated by the discovery of what may have truly informed his concept of “aesthetic ideology.”

Evidencing a much more positive view of the past century, however, are two other essays, which also in some ways span the era. Thus one (Monk) focuses on the sense of new beginnings that characterized the modernist period, specifically exploring the way that Eugene Jolas aspired to an international literature and through his editorial policies for *transition* attempted to move beyond translation back to the “original” language and forward to a radically neologicistic one. At the other end of the spectrum, the concluding essay in this issue (Wood) focuses on the happy marriage of the oral tradition and electronic communication technology which has given birth to the most popular art form of the past two decades and whose performers might well be called the new poets of the future—Rap artists.

As it happens, and admittedly by deliberate choice, the contributors to this issue in themselves suggest grounds for optimism as we enter the new millennium, insofar as they are either young scholars at the beginning of their careers or academics who are clearly on their way up.