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Review: Joan I. Roberts (ed.), Beyond Intellectual Sexism (NY, 1976), and Dorothy McGuigan (ed.), New Research on Women (Michigan, 1976)

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The millennium issue grows out of a request from the White House Millennium Council for the MLA to join in the national commemorations. MLA members were invited to contribute brief comments in general response to the questions listed below. Over two hundred members reflect on the changes of the past hundred—or more—years and speculate about the new century. The responses on the following pages are grouped loosely according to the themes and issues they address.

The Field of Study

1. Did your field exist in 1900? What is the most important change since 1900? What do you predict will be the biggest change in the next century?
2. Name the three most influential scholarly or critical books in your field since 1900.
3. What major changes have you seen in the canon in this century, and how do you think the canon will change in the next?

Teaching

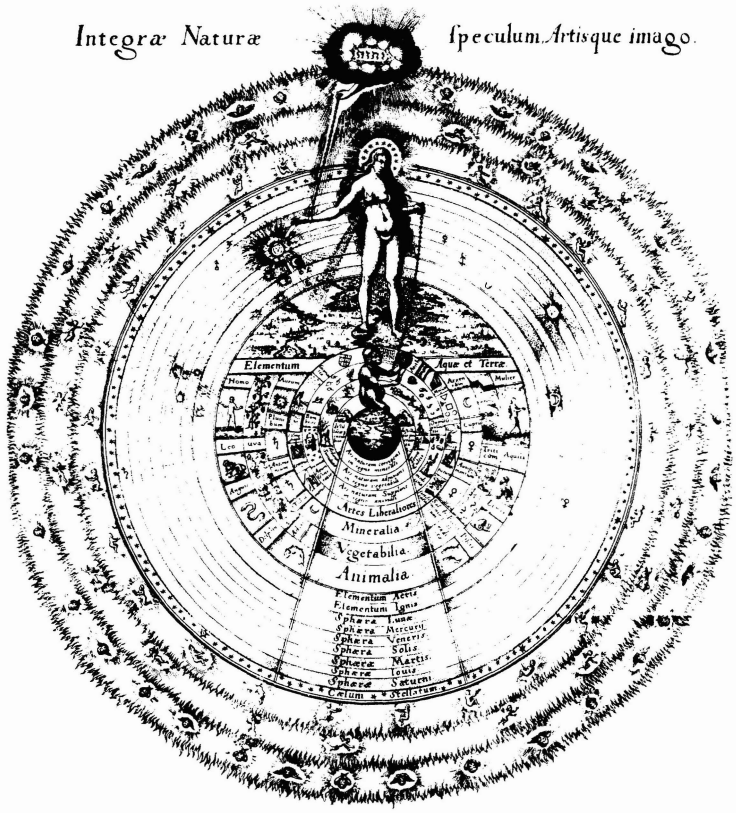
1. How would you characterize the shifts in teaching philosophy that have occurred during the past hundred years? What major changes do you foresee?
2. What has been your most important teaching experience?
3. Which works have most influenced your teaching?
4. What will be the most significant impact that recent technology will have on teaching?

General Issues in Literature and Language

1. What are the three most significant works of literature published during the last century in your field of study?
2. How will language study change in the new millennium?

Departmental Life

1. How has life in a department changed in the past century?
2. How will departments change in the next century?



Sign of the macrocosm, from Robert Fludd's *Historia*. Printed with "The Presence of the Sign in Goethe's *Faust*," by Neil M. Flax (*PMLA* 98 [1983]: 186).

look back on the second half of the twentieth century as particularly significant, for in our professional lives we have experienced three simultaneous upheavals: a technological revolution, a social revolution, and a revolution in literary criticism.

The technological revolution has had a radical impact on the efficiency with which we dispatch our business as teachers and scholars. Our struggles with leaky fountain pens, slippery carbons, and messy stencils have taken on a hue of nostalgia while typewriter erasers, correction fluid, mimeograph machines, and dittos have become archaeological curiosities. As a whole paragraph of our prose vanishes at the punch of a key, a revised dissertation comes back in a matter of days, and e-mail brings long-lost colleagues out of the rafters, we wonder how we ever managed in the preelectronic age.

The social revolution that exploded in the sixties changed not only the way we eat and dress and love and play but the way we teach and relate to our students. As teachers we have gained a fuller awareness of the objectives of our task, and the classroom has become a more interactive, humane environment. Meanwhile, literary theory and a breathtaking succession of approaches have led us into methodological and ideological allegiances and commitments and to fresh uses of old wares. It is hard to imagine a more dynamic, more challenging, and more rewarding moment in the history of our profession and just as hard to imagine any slackening of that rhythm.

John W. Kronik
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With the increasing use of the World Wide Web, there will be unprecedented opportunities for geographically dispersed literary scholars to work in teams. Their collaborative efforts will produce Web sites far more complex than today's scholarly publications, which are almost always linear and textual. In addition to traditional analytic and critical research expertise, these Web sites will demand skills in a range of areas, including graphic design, nonlinear rhetorical structures, audience interaction, and community building. These Web sites will create opportunities for contributions from many disciplines. For example, an early American Web site might include narratives interwoven with time lines, historical analysis, annotated bibliographies, maps, landscape paintings, portraits, music, dramatic reenactment, and so forth. In addition, there could be commentaries by visitors to the site as well as a calendar of current events relevant to the topics presented, such as national and international conferences, lectures and related publications, which could all be cross-referenced. Drawing on the knowledge and skills of literary critics, historians, philosophers, artists, musicians, dramatists, and others, these interdisciplinary Web sites will have the potential to transform intellectual and scholarly discourse.

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Technology, even more than theory, has shaped the development of film studies in the final decades of film's first century. The marriage of the movie theater and the personal computer permits one to view a film on a laptop anywhere, at any time, and to analyze a shot with the care a literary scholar might devote to a single word in a poem. What does this bode for the future? Movies are more like Gothic cathedrals than sonnets, and such detailed analysis will only serve to highlight the contributions of writers, producers, camera operators, and countless others who participate in the making of a film. It will also underscore film's relation to other art forms—fiction, music, drama, art, architecture, and dance. Home viewing screens will grow in size and quality, vast libraries of films will become accessible on demand over television and cable, and video stores will vanish from the landscape—but nothing will ever replace the special pleasures of sitting in a darkened theater, watch-