

From the Editor

“For the times, they are a-changin’”—as true today as fifty years ago when Bob Dylan recorded his popular ballad about youth and social change. His message to that generation’s parents and public officials, to “start swimmin’ or you’ll sink like a stone,” sounds harsher to me now than it did in 1964, when I began graduate study while also participating in that era’s civil rights and anti-war demonstrations. The change that is coming to *RoMES* and its readers in *MESA*, heralded by this issue, is also a sign of the times. Along with much of the rest of the publishing world, particularly academic journals, *RoMES* is switching to a digital-only format. Let me explain why I, wearing my editor’s hat, decided I could “start swimmin’” after my first two years as editor of *RoMES*, and why I was reluctant at first—and still am—but why I nevertheless believe that the new digital format is a necessary and even desirable next step in the progressive development of *MESA’s Review*.

In her “Retrospective Appreciation” in this issue of the birth and coming of age of the *MESA Bulletin cum Review of Middle East Studies*, Executive Director Amy Newhall celebrates the large cast of mentors and colleagues who, at one time or another, labored to produce this journal since 1967. The decision to put *RoMES* on a more solid footing came after several months of negotiating a new contract with Cambridge University Press (CUP), which until now has only printed and distributed *RoMES* in a package deal linked to the publication of *IJMES*. Heretofore, the editor of *RoMES*, his/her part-time assistant editor, and a volunteer editorial board sought articles and reviews, copyedited them, arranged for typesetting, and proofread the PDF pages that were sent to CUP for printing and distribution. It was mostly a labor of dedication and love, with a small budget and modest subventions from host universities to keep the enterprise running. As Amy’s retrospective demonstrates, it has been a highly successful venture. So why mess with success?

To borrow a cliché, the new digital edition will save many trees. It will also now be less expensive to deliver *RoMES* to readers, and those savings can help to cover better the actual production costs. In my own discussions with a senior editor and her staff at Cambridge, I have stressed that the scholarly and professional interests of the MESA membership are the highest purpose of *RoMES*. Beginning with volume 49.1 (Winter 2015), *RoMES* will retain much of the same basic format and look on your computer screen that it has had the past few years in print format. That will slowly evolve as electronic publishing technology presents new possibilities. In future issues we will be able to add color, with full audio and video support, to enhance the “intertextual” reach of essays and articles. As soon as individual articles and reviews are accepted, vetted, copyedited, and typeset, MESA members and other subscribers will have access to “Early View” postings on Cambridge Journals Online in advance of the published semiannual issues. Table of Contents alerts will advise readers of the articles and reviews coming in the next issue.

The greater partnership with CUP will have the effect of enlarging the editorial staff of *RoMES*. The Press will provide full production support, which will include a production editor, copyediting, and typesetting. A production editor has been assigned to liaise with authors and the editorial office, and this will help the *RoMES* editorial office bring each issue to readers on time (February and August) and maintain the highest scholarly quality. In addition, we will work with the Marketing Department at Cambridge to help *RoMES* editors better advertise the *Review* and its contents and aid us in attracting articles and reviews. *RoMES* will be better equipped to compete in the current age of dramatic growth of new academic journals, most of them online. Expect to see attractive posters and cards inviting you to share with us your papers, essays, and thoughts about titles of films, books, and other media that should be reviewed in these pages.

The staff and offices at Virginia Tech have also experienced changes recently. This past summer our headquarters at Virginia Tech moved from a third-floor walk-up in a historic but rickety century-old building (stifling in the summer and drafty in the winter) to more modern surroundings on the first floor of a building that also houses Philosophy, History, Political Science, and Religion and Culture—neighbors we are more familiar with. Thankfully, the university hired movers to haul the several hundred books and some furniture to Major Williams Hall, our new residence. On a more somber note, Amanda Wright Cron recently left *RoMES* as assistant editor in order to devote more time to her dissertation. Mandy was in large measure the reason I was able to “hit the ground running” during the transition from UNC Charlotte to Virginia Tech over two years ago. In addition to her competent help, she

kept a lively correspondence with many of the contributors to the *Review*. I am happy to say that Mandy has agreed to help us out on an occasional consulting basis, and the word around here is that she has become addicted to MESA Annual Meetings.

What could have been a disastrous moment turned into another gift for RoMES. Christine Calorusso began working as assistant editor in August, and a smoother transition is hard to imagine. Chris and Mandy worked together during August, and by September Chris knew more about the workings of some aspects of RoMES than I. She brings relevant editing experience and other skills to her new job. She worked in the editorial office of the American Psychological Association before starting graduate work at Virginia Tech in Landscape Architecture. She has an analytical mind that has already created more order in some of our office operations. She has also undertaken a special project to adapt Open Journal System journal management software to RoMES.

Finally, for the past several years RoMES has been typeset by the former MESA Annual Meeting Film Festival director, Nadia Hlibka, who also until recently served as associate editor for film on the RoMES editorial board. In addition to the many hats she wears Nadia runs a small firm called Icarus Design. Under MESA's new contract with CUP, responsibility for typesetting will now shift from the RoMES editorial office to the Cambridge Press offices in New York. Nadia brought a keen professional and artistic sense to the production of the journal. And she somehow made it fun during long-distance phone calls to hunt down typos and other howlers that I didn't catch. Thank you for great work, Nadia.

All of these changes mean that the editor will have more time to concentrate on finding and making available quality articles and reviews for MESA members and other subscribers to RoMES. The times indeed have been "a-changin'" in ways that suggest a brighter future for MESA's *Review of Middle East Studies*. ✨

Richard C. Martin
Editor