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What? Another Journal?

Paul Archambault

From livingroom floor to staircase to kitchen and coffee table, weeklies and monthlies yet unread point accusing colophons at me. They are weekend guests left unattended: here's a recent *PMLA*, blue-white and well starched, an English nanny still waiting for her orders; there's a stray *Speculum*, with that subacid, forbidding look; there, off in a corner, *Le Monde*, a weekly visitor, austere and dyspeptic. . . .

I find conversing with these guests like dining with my dowager aunts. They are insufferable but well-heeled. Better not neglect them for too long.

Friends have talked to me about the Scholar over the past few months. Some have wondered about its stodgy title, its Addison-and-Steele tone. Others have asked openly whether we really need a university review when so many events, ideas, issues, are already in the air.

I have wondered myself. But I wonder even more about ideas that are allegedly in the air. I can easily imagine a large container filled with the air I manage not to breathe every day, even in a middle-sized house of intellect like Syracuse University. T. S. Eliot once thought he was revealing a shameful secret when he confided to a critic, "You would be amazed were I to tell you the number of important books I have never read." But we are neither amazed nor amused, Eliot notwithstanding. It's not just the books; it's the lectures, the concerts, the movies, the remarkably varied ways of the mind, at Syracuse and elsewhere, that so easily manage to slip through the nets of our supposedly omnivorous curiosities. In this inner city of distinguished minds alone, it has occurred to me to lunch or dine or play squash with people who wear their international reputations lightly: distinguished figures from the worlds of law and letters, medieval institutions, Greek medicine or climatology, cochlear mechanics, aerodynamics, metal resistance, psychic aggression, black holes

or elementary particles. While there have been moments for pleasant exchanges with them, there has been understandably little time for any serious discussion of their work. It seems easier to rub elbows than minds with friends.

One thing the Scholar would like to do is allow time and place for those chats that seem never to take place. Another is to rescue arresting but fleeting moments of virtuosity which but for our attention could easily go unrecorded. I would have liked to be present at the Albert Einstein Centennial Symposium in Jerusalem last March to hear Peter Bergmann talk about general relativity and unitary field theories. I would have liked to hear Senator Moynihan talk about technology and human freedom at the January 1979 Honors Convocation. Their talks have been rescued by this first issue. Samuel Eddy has delighted and enraged me for years over witty luncheons, but I had never until now had the chance to read his work. Most of us have admired Frederick Marvin's performances at Crouse College yet are dimly aware of his original contributions to musicology and musical editing. And so it goes. The task of *recording* (in the root sense: taking more to heart) the best of what is being said, argued, researched, written, performed, printed, or designed at Syracuse University is by no means the least of the purposes that *Syracuse Scholar* hopes to serve.

But it would be a mistake to conclude that the journal means merely to serve commemorative, consecrational, or antiquarian ends. It does not intend merely to repeat things that are already well done by other Syracuse University organs: recording events, listing publications and performances, publishing "representative" pieces; nor, I think, does its Board of Editors want it to be considered a faculty showroom, demonstrating pieces of scholarship that are safe, glossy, polychromatic, and inconsequential.

The Scholar does welcome things jarring, controversial, arguable, in process. Of the various pieces featured in this first issue, some may appear more tentative, others more definitive pronouncements. Jerome Witkin's drawings on the theme of violence are taken from notebook sketches. Senator Moynihan's paper is the edited version of a carefully prepared lecture. Each piece illustrates areas of research that are filled with discussion, alternate theories, controversial issues. May it continue to be so, even more so, in the coming issues. We invite your submissions, both verbal and graphic, and hope that the Scholar will continue to be a meeting place where it is as easy to rub minds as elbows.

How did the Scholar come to be in the first place? That story is for one of its founders, William Wasserstrom, to tell.