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A Letter from the Editor

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A Letter from the Editor

THIS IS THE FOURTEENTH ISSUE of the *Syracuse Scholar*. It is the first that I have edited, however, and I am rather proud to be associated with the works of scholarship and the *belles lettres* that it contains. You will shortly discover in this issue something that would have been described in old-fashioned cookery books as a Russian menu, an array of delicacies laid out to please the eye and the palate, for the gourmet to sample at his or her discretion.

With this menu in front of us, let me say a few words about how I see the *Scholar* today and in the future. My vision does not contradict in any way that of the late Bill Wasserstrom, the founder of the magazine, or of Paul Archambault, its first editor, as described in their letters in the first number, in 1979. I am merely adding a few ideas of my own, stimulated in part by that first issue and by all the equally notable ones that have followed it.

(We cannot, incidentally, mention the names of Bill Wasserstrom and Paul Archambault without calling to mind Volker Weiss, who was also one of the founders of the *Scholar*, and indeed continued his role as godfather until the summer of 1986. We send him our thanks.)

The *Syracuse Scholar* has five characteristics, and I intend to maintain these, ensuring that its future issues continue to ornament the university as well as every one of its past issues has done.

The first and most important characteristic of the *Scholar* is that every single contribution has something to say. Each piece chosen must be *sinewy*. This is not a perfect metaphor; in particular, it inadequately describes those articles that are mainly artistic in content, but even here I think that the adjective *sinewy* describes at least partly the quality we look for. I hope I shall be able to persuade the Board of Editors that my view of this has a meaning—and the right meaning.

The second characteristic of *Scholar* contributions is that they are—and will continue to be—well written. This does not mean that we shall

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eschew abstract or difficult subject matter; rather, it means that we recognize that tough concepts require extra effort to make them intellectually accessible to nonspecialists. I was taught long ago that the reader of any essay is providing the author with the most generous gift at his or her disposal: the time needed for personal engagement with what the author has to say. To repay this gift, an author must ensure that the process of communication calls for as little effort by the reader as possible; the effort should be reserved for the content. And if the content of the *Scholar* continues to be as significant as it has been in the past, the result will be much enlightenment and enjoyment for you all.

The third characteristic of the *Scholar* concerns the balance of features in individual issues. Past numbers have almost invariably offered a mixture of contributions from a variety of disciplines. This policy will continue for most issues, and we shall make a real effort to maintain a balance between the arts and sciences. But I should like to make a couple of additional remarks. First, we are not going to shy away from controversy, indeed we are going to encourage it. As a specific example, we hope to publish in the Spring 1987 issue of the *Syracuse Scholar*, two trenchant papers which will take opposite positions on the subject of deconstruction, a major and most disputatious subject in the field of literary criticism today. Second, while overall balance will be maintained, I hope that certain issues in the future will be devoted virtually exclusively to specific themes. The Editorial Board is considering some possibilities at the moment, and I am pretty sure that if any of these ideas materialize most of you will respond enthusiastically.

The fourth and fifth characteristics of the *Scholar* are important but can be disposed of briefly. The *Syracuse Scholar* will continue to look good. Previous issues have been notable for art direction of a dazzling quality. We will all do our best to maintain this standard. You will notice that in this present issue we are—virtually for the first time—producing the magazine with full color printing. We are pleased with the results. Finally, we shall in the future, as we have in the past, be publishing the work of Syracuse scholars. The magazine will continue to offer a platform for some of the most interesting and innovative voices on the campus.

I hope you will find as much enlightenment, insight, intellectual and imaginative stimulation, and sheer fun in reading this issue of the *Scholar* as I have had in putting it together.

JOHN PHILIP JONES