

Editors' Preface

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In its first few years, *Expositions* had one subscriber. A few of us at the Center for Liberal Education at Villanova University decided to launch a print journal just as academic publishing was making the transition to online-preferred (if not online-only). Libraries informed us that they were not accepting any more print journals and were digitizing their archives. Our colleagues at the Association for Core Texts and Courses were happy to take a complimentary copy but were less interested in subscribing (or convincing their home institutions to subscribe). Sometimes we felt we were producing the journal just for ourselves. And for our one lonely reader.

Our Fall 2010-Spring 2011 double-issue was our first to be online-only, and we quickly noticed the difference. Or rather, the world quickly noticed: we were able to track how many times our articles were opened (a better indicator than mere site visits) and we were happy to see numbers in the 50,000 range. That may not be much compared to the daily visits of popular newspapers and magazines, but it's a fine number for an academic journal that publishes twice a year. We were happy to put our past issues online as well, so now all that content can be downloaded by anyone with the means and interest to do so.

For our Spring 2012 issue, we are happy to simply live up to our mission and provide Interdisciplinary Studies in the Humanities. In several of our past issues, we offered conversations about the academic profession, versions of the conversations we have in the hallways and at conferences with our colleagues. [What is a Humanities education good for? Should scholarship focus more on contemporary problems than on antiquated questions? Are professors managers or laborers, and what does that mean for their relationships to administrators, as well as for contingent and continuing faculty? What's in store for Classical Studies?](#) Posing and answering such questions was always part of *Expositions*. We hope that our current issue, however, presents the work of scholars without being about the jobs of scholars.

What is our relationship to the world around us? This perennial question runs throughout our issue. David R. Sweet explores the origins of creation in his explication of Hesiod's *Theogony*, while our Academic Roundtable addresses the moral, political, and methodological implications of Holmes Rolston, III's *A New Environmental Ethics*. Meanwhile, Michael Barnes Norton's review of Levi R. Bryant's *The Democracy of Objects* shows that the hard metaphysical questions – with their political dimensions – are alive and well. These pieces demonstrate the many and varied sites of contention and modes of inquiry open to any who pose the question.

The relationship between abstract ideas and everyday human experience animates our Rolston roundtable no less than it does our other features in this issue. Alan Pichanick's interview with Jonathan Lear covers this very question on the occasion of Lear's recent work on irony. Our Symposium on "The Search for the Spiritual in Saul Bellow" examines an intensely profound and wide-reaching (and underappreciated) element of the work of one of the great novelists of the twentieth century. Bellow's work is generally interpreted in the context of his Jewish background, but our contributors attend to the myriad strains and traditions from which Bellow drew inspiration, from Kierkegaard's existential Christianity to Wilhelm Reich's psychology of sexual liberation. Likewise, Julian Barnes' recent *The Sense of an Ending* borrows its title and preoccupations from literary theory, and we are delighted that our colleague Mary Beth Simmons could review the novel and catalogue its pleasures for us.

Many hands assisted in the production of this volume. Christian Diehm organized the Academic Roundtable and Lee Trepanier oversaw the Symposium and to them we owe our deepest gratitude. Jonathan Lear was gracious to speak to us despite a busy schedule and Alan Pichanick somehow found a way to have a serious conversation about irony. Eliza Serocki transcribed the interview and provided other editorial support. And lastly, Craig B. Carpenter provided some crucial assistance with the Hesiod essay.