JEFFERSON JOURNAL OF SCIENCE AND CULTURE

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An Editor's Note
FROM
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AND

CONTRIBUTING PAPERS
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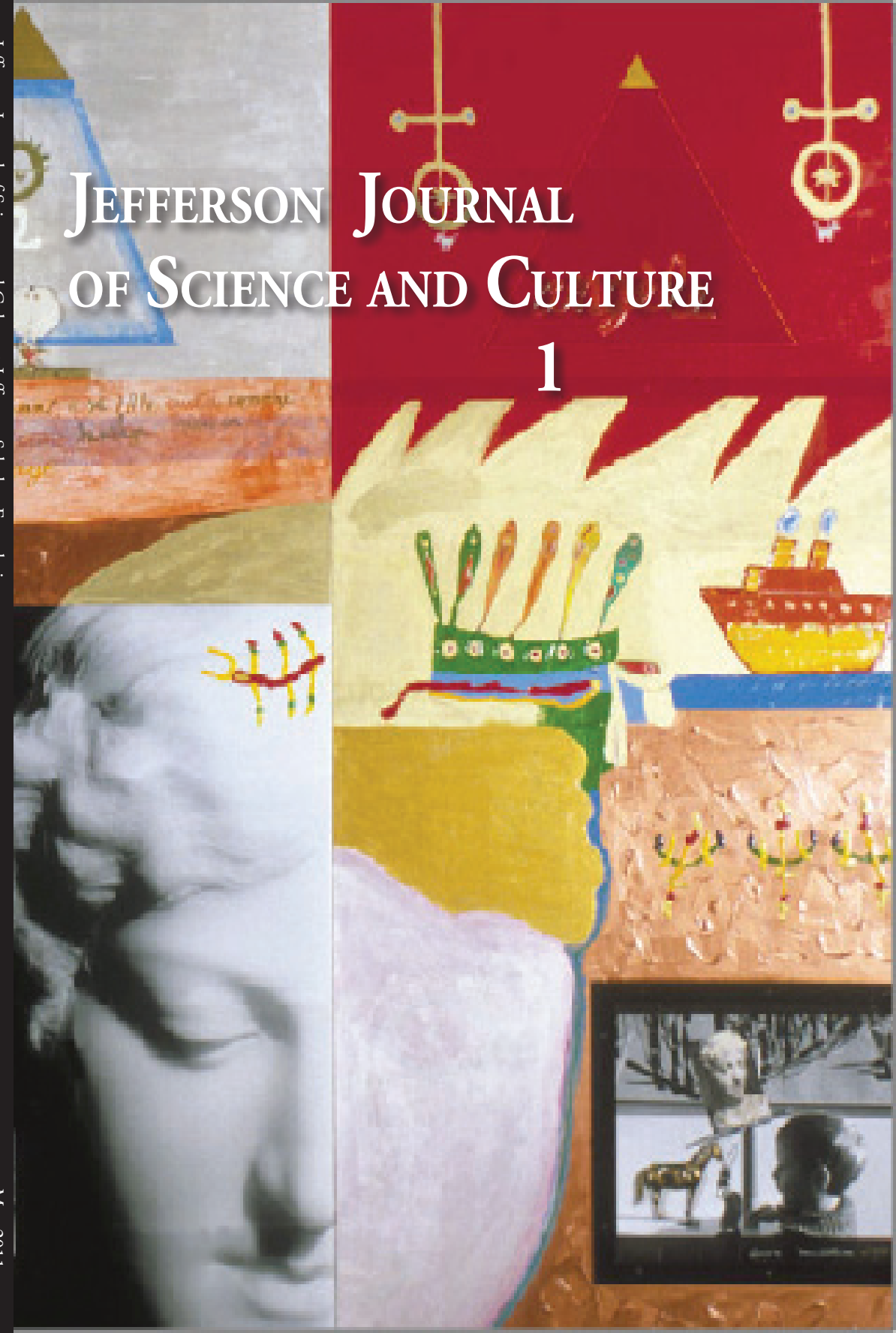University of Virginia

JEFFERSON JOURNAL OF SCIENCE AND CULTURE

"To see differently in this way for once, to want to see differently, is no small discipline."

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Jefferson Journal of Science and Culture was founded on the belief that the cross-pollination of various disciplines will be a crucial factor in the advance of scholarship. To facilitate and focus such exchange, this bi-annual journal is dedicated to publishing articles in each edition, which address a specific topic of broader interest. Scholars from various fields are expected not to dispense with the robes of their specialty but to allow their disciplinary expertise to make an impact beyond its customary bounds.

http://jeffersonjournal.org

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Editor's note

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THE PROCESS OF LEADING AN ACADEMIC LIFE NECESSARILY BREEDS insularity. Steeped in writings of the giants of one's own field, it can be difficult to see to the vast vistas of inquiry that lie beyond. While such an approach may be necessary to achieve great depth of knowledge and expertise, it may also lead to a sacrifice of the *breadth*, *comprehensibility*, and *applicability* that is the quintessence of the life of the mind. While there is no sure cure for academic myopia, a possible salve may lie in the exploration of interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary ideas. It is upon this founding principle – the promotion of true interdisciplinary scholarship – that the *Jefferson Journal of Science and Culture*, and its sponsoring organization, the Jefferson Scholars Foundation, is built. It is, then, my hope and that of the rest of the Editorial Board, that this Journal will foster increased dialogue across areas if inquiry, with the consequent aim of improving scholarship *within* fields.

This inaugural issue, following on the heels of the great success of the Second Biennial Jefferson Forum for Interdisciplinary Dialogue, focuses on the topic of Icons and Iconoclasm. This is, in large measure, quite appropriate: both this Journal and Foundation are named for one of America's greatest historical icons, as well as a man who wielded the icon with razor-like precision in his writings.

Before we proceed, however, it may be good and appropriate to consider the meaning of an icon. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary contains many definitions for the word: an object of uncritical devotion; a pictorial representation; a conventional religious image. However, the broadest definition is, "a sign whose form suggests its meaning." As so

often happens, this definition is almost vertiginously entropic when parsed carefully. How does a form necessarily *suggest* meaning? What is the process by which such suggestion emerges? More essentially, how do icons *work*? In typical Jeffersonian (in both senses of the term) fashion, the launching of this journal aims to explore this question.

In the first paper, Carol Toris explores the question of how we generate such signs in daily language through the use of idioms. Examining speech used in a training group for physicians, she considered the question of *why* individuals might engage in the process of abstraction when conveying information (i.e. why humans do not simply rely on literal language). Based on the results of the lexical analysis, this paper provides further support for the contemporary theory of embodied cognition as a foundation for the use of physicalized, iconic phrases in daily language, and provides a solid foundation for future work examining the concurrence of gesture and language production.

In the second paper, Pierre Dairon considers the iconic literary figure of Evangeline in American and Acadian history. Tracing the use of the character Evangeline through various forms of artistic expression over nearly 200 years, this paper provides a fascinating outline of how a fictional character – through its synthesis with historical truth and its various forms of representation – can *become* an icon, and can be "de-iconized" over time. Interestingly, the process Pierre Dairon describes for the development of the icon of Evangeline is, structurally, not unlike the theory of embodied cognition mentioned by Carol Toris – except applied at the cultural rather than individual level. Perhaps, then, the reification of icons can act as a foundational and connective process across individuals at various levels of organization.

Adding fuel to the fire of iconography, Betsy Chunko, in the final paper, examines the most abstract of icons: the notion of the divine. Through examination of Byzantine art, Ms. Chunko considers the iconography of that which *cannot* be represented: the image of the divine. This incisive inquiry provides evidence of the struggle (both religious

and imagistic) to represent both obscure and culturally-accessible godly icons (such as the Holy Face) in a way that acknowledges the bright yet fuzzy line between what can and cannot be known or seen. It is valuable to consider, then, that this human urge to iconize is truly pervasive, extending beyond the physical and characterological realms to areas that, by definition, defy the process of representation.

However, I stated above that this issue is also about iconoclasm, or the *destruction* of settled beliefs or institutions. In a sense, each of the papers above presents an icon *of* iconoclasm. They do so by challenging conventional understandings of their topic in their given field. More broadly, though, this is the aim of this journal: to shatter the settled belief that fields are best served by their insularity; that they cannot engage in a synthetic aggregative process to the betterment of each; that iconic ideas cannot effectively cross boundaries to serve new masters in different fields.

And so, I welcome you to enjoy the contents of this and future issues of this Journal in the hopes that they will *not* confirm your existing beliefs about your chosen area of study, but will instead challenge you to shatter these beliefs. In doing so, *you* will embody both the iconic Jeffersonian ideal of shared knowledge – while simultaneously liberating yourself from the ancient, well-worn shackles of intellectual insularity. With that: please enjoy this first issue of the *Jefferson Journal of Science & Culture*.

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C O N T R I B U T I N G   P A P E R S