

EDITOR'S NOTE

Drafting the introduction to a literary journal is akin to writing an obituary. The creation phase is done, nothing new is going to happen, I know how the journal turned out. The hard part is figuring out what to include. When the journal is also the 30th anniversary issue, this task is even harder.

Some content is obvious: my gratitude for the vision of *The Northern Virginia Review's* founders, the generosity of its supporters, and the dedication of the legions of faculty and staff who have served on the journal's editorial board over the years. Then there are the transformative events in the *Review's* life, notably former editor Dorothy Seyler winning approval to open submissions to the region. Since then we've published work from Pennsylvania to North Carolina, from the Eastern Shore to the Shenandoah Valley. Our readers have enjoyed the work of Virginia Poet Laureates and previously unpublished writers whose careers we've launched.

Yet the region's talented writers and artists are not so much "outside" contributors but partakers of the *Review's* large heart—of NOVA's heart really, the legacy of the journal's first twenty years as the voice of faculty and staff. Through contributing to the *Review*, we've come to trust each other not only with our passion for our field, and our moments of wonder, but also with our fears and anguish and confusion. It's one thing to reveal our vulnerability in a journal whose readers we don't know and are unlikely to meet, quite another when our readers greet us in the hall everyday. The *Review* has brought us closer as a family, which, even when we square off on an issue, is how we feel about each other deep down.

In reflecting on the current volume's poetry, prose, and art, I considered pointing to the universal themes of death and rebirth, of the search for identity. Those themes are certainly there. But when I think of Vol. 30, I'm not thinking of universal themes. Instead I see trees and faces, a slant of light, reflections on water; I hear the rhythms of voices in a small Southern town, and I gaze out on Lake Geneva from the heights of Chateau de Chillon, thinking of how the ancient stone walls and the impossibly blue water worked its magic on Lord Byron. These images are now a part of me, part of my own story, and I love them. I love choking up every time I get to the end of "I AM the Tule Tree." I love feeling my arms ache to hold a child after reading "A Baptism and Hired Hand." I love caring about people and places and flowers and roads I didn't know before. I love the company.

"Our story is finally all any of us owns," writes novelist Frank Delaney. I invite you to read, and in the reading, and the faces and voices and vistas you take with you, enrich your own story.

Ruth Stewart, editor