

# F R O M   T H E   E D I T O R



A year ago last June I wrote to Peter Salovey, the university's president, to inform him of my decision to retire as editor of *The Yale Review* the next year. I have been the journal's editor for 27 years now, and served as its poetry editor for another ten years before that. It was time to step aside.

When former Yale president, Benno Schmidt, decided in 1990 to close down the magazine, there was national attention and deep concern. The novelist John Hersey wrote a letter celebrating *The Yale Review* and resigned from the university's Corporation. That turned the tide. Mr. Schmidt appointed a search committee to find a new editor. My name had been proposed and when I met with the committee and was asked what I wanted to change about *The Yale Review*, I replied "Nothing." If, over the decades, their journal's content had settled into a formula, it was a winning one – and had become the model for many journals that started up later. There were astute and challenging essays on a broad range of subjects – it could be Spanish history, economic theory, or the new American novel. Interspersed between these essays and the book reviews at the back, were fiction and poetry of the highest standard, mixing masters with tyros.

When I was told that I would, in fact, be named the new editor, my initial delight was tempered by the fact that I had no publisher and no staff, and was expected to raise the funds necessary to make the journal able to stand on its own. The latter task took several years, but with the help of generous donors was successful. The first business, though, was practical and immediately crucial. I took the time-tested way to delay and decided on an inaugural double issue. It worked. The issue was an exceptional debut and started people talking again about the *Review*. That thick but elegantly designed issue included work by Vladimir Nabokov, Richard Wilbur, John Ashbery, Marilynne Robinson, Harold Bloom, Vincent Scully, Adrienne Rich, Richard Rorty, James Merrill, and a host of other luminaries. Subsequent issues have also been glamorous and incisive. On the occasion of Yale's tercentenary, in 2001, we added to the usual mix of contemporary authors by including material we had published in years past – by Virginia Woolf, André Gide, Leon Trotsky, Maxim Gorky, Edith Wharton, Thomas Mann, and Paul Valéry.

No one undertakes such a project alone. Countless students have committed their time, and some have gone on to careers in the magazine and publishing worlds. And for many years now I have been helped in innumerable ways by the intelligence and kindness of Susan Bianconi, our associate editor. I am pleased as well that Harold Augenbraum has agreed to serve as acting editor while a search committee looks for a new permanent editor. It has been the singular honor of my life to have followed in the footsteps of previous editors of the *Review* like Wilbur Cross, John Palmer, and Kai Erikson. My literary life has literally been bound up with this journal: years ago I published my first poem in these pages, and a little later my first review. Now that I leave it to better, more innovative hands, I am pleased to have cultivated a noble tradition, and extended it; and I look forward to a new editor's ideas and decisions.

*J. D. McClatchy*