Letter from the Editor

Welcome to the first issue of *Rivanna Review*! We exist for your reading pleasure, but we also want to hear from you. Letters to the editor will be a regular feature. Tell us where you found the magazine, what interested you, and what you wish to read. Correct us if the facts are wrong, but no diatribes, please.

Each issue will have several stories and essays, a profile of an author or artist, a half dozen book reviews, and notices about readings, bookstores, and literary events. Book reviews will feature small press titles and authors who are not yet bestsellers. Photographs, drawings, and classic poems will relieve pages of text. Of necessity, there will be advertisements. And like a caboose at the end of the train, a news report from Hapsburg, Virginia.

*Rivanna Review* takes its name from the river that flows through town. Charlottesville is a small city, the home of the University of Virginia. Monticello, the hilltop mansion of Thomas Jefferson, is nearby, as are homes of James Madison and James Monroe. History, tourism, vineyards, and music are big. As a publication, we share these interests and a wide range of others. We hope to reach an American audience, and anyone who speaks English.

Independent of schools and trends in fiction, we favor the organic story. The organic story grows out of the soil and takes shape according to its nature. Like a home-grown tomato, it is lumpy, pungent, and full of information. No artificial colors, flavors, or preservatives.

People in an organic story behave like people you know. They have names, bodies, and a social position. They trade goods and services. They see each other clearly. They have blind spots. They use whatever skills they possess to get what they want. Results vary. They tell their own story in recognizable speech, with distinctive turns of phrase. They don’t listen.

You are apt to forget it is a story. Surely, this happened to a friend or a neighbor. Yet the person telling the story has a motive. The story may be a ruse, a cry for help, a pathetic attempt to fix a mistake. Lies, pretense, and mixed messages are the story as much as what the people do. You see through them, eventually.

Even a fable, a satire, or a tall tale springs from a real situation. If supernatural events occur, they express a state of mind. People are bundles of reason and emotion. Symbols and ritual permeate their lives.

The writer has ideas, opinions, and an attitude toward life, but the only way you know is to read the story and chew on it. Where it takes place, the time of year, what people say, and how it ends—these are what the story means.

Labels matter, and an essay is not a story. An essay argues a premise, recounts an experience, explores an idea, suggests an alternative to the conventional wisdom, or asks a question which so far has no answer. It provides food for thought.