

## A LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Readers,

For years, Assistant Editor Randall Martocchia has suggested that we do “a humor issue,” and in 2004, after hearing Michael Parker read a short story at the first Eastern North Carolina Literary Homecoming, I came out of the room, wiping my eyes from having laughed so hard I cried, and told Randall, let’s get that humor issue on the schedule, and let’s include an audio component with it. The year before, at *NCLR*’s flight issue “launch,” Clyde Edgerton read an excerpt from his novel *Lunch at the Piccadilly* with the same “tearful” results. A few years before that, I’d heard Jill McCorkle read one of her stories at several events – and laughed heartily every time. And I never have forgotten the hilarious birth story that Allan Gurganus read during his visit to ECU my first year here. Thanks to the generosity of some of our funniest favorites here in North Carolina, all of these wonderful readings and more can be heard on the CDs supplementing this issue. We also thank our parent organization, the North Carolina Literary and Historical Association, for funding the production of these CDs.

Good timing for our “Humor” issue, some of our colleagues here at ECU decided to put on a “Humorfest” last fall. We sent out a call for submissions for a conference panel on North Carolina Humor as a means of prompting submissions for this special feature section of the 2008 issue, and we received so many good proposals that we ended up having two panels. In fact, imagine our surprise when we received enough submissions on Hardin Taliaferro for a whole panel devoted to this early North Carolina humorist. Two of the papers from that panel, which Randall titled (quoting from Taliaferro) “a purty set uv ill-begotten, turkey-trottin’ pukes,” are in this issue, and perhaps we’ll see the third, as well as some of the papers from our other panel, “The Old Mirth State,” in the Flashbacks section of future issues. We had so many good submissions to our call for papers that we moved Gary Richards’s essay on Gurganus’s *Plays Well with Others*, which you’ll find in this issue, to another panel I was moderating at the conference – on “Taboo Humor in Southern Literature.” As Randall had suspected, humor is a popular topic, and we thank these literary critics and the creative writers who responded to our call for contributions, and we know you’ll enjoy reading the issue content as much as you do listening to the CDs.

I am fortunate to have the help of colleagues like Randall as we put each issue together, as well as handle the business of incoming submissions, outgoing responses, sales, and subscriptions. New to

the staff and now handling the managerial matters are Kristi Southern and Stephanie West-Puckett. We also have a new Art Acquisitions Editor, Diane Rodman, and I know this issue’s writers will be thrilled to see the selections she has made of art and photography to complement their words. Among the new members of the Editorial Board this year is my new colleague, fiction writer Liza Wieland. When Liza interviewed here at ECU last year, we invited her to submit a story to *NCLR*, which you’ll find in our Flashbacks section. After having Liza help with the 2008 Doris Betts Fiction Prize competition this spring, I’ve asked her to join the staff as Fiction Editor, which she has agreed to do for us, starting next year. For more information about Liza, see the 2007 issue’s installment of the “Dictionary of North Carolina Writers.”

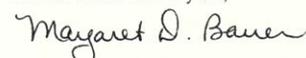
Speaking of which, Associate Editor Lorraine Robinson did not take a year off after finishing up that serialized favorite feature of *NCLR* in our 2007 issue. See inside this issue for information about what she’s up to with that project, which, when I expressed excitement last year about reaching the letter Z, founding Editor Alex Albright noted to me, is a project that will always need to be supplemented.

And speaking of Alex, I was thrilled to have the opportunity at the 2007 Eastern North Carolina Literary Homecoming to present him and the other *NCLR* founders with the Roberts Award for Literary Inspiration. More information about that inside, too. All the new staff members I mentioned earlier helped out at this event, and we sold a record number of issues and subscriptions after people were reminded of the story of how *NCLR* came about and the various literary coups inside our pages over the years.

Among this issue’s coups you will find art by Dwane Powell on the cover and, inside, art by A.R. Ammons and Doug Marlette; an interview with North Carolina’s poet laureate, Kathryn Stripling Byer; poems by Byer, Catherine Carter, Susan Meyers, and Michael McFee, among others; fiction by such writers as Lawrence Naumoff and Michael Chitwood, as well as the 2007 Betts Prize winners, selected last year by Linda Beatrice Brown; and essays by Michael Parker and Bland Simpson.

Enjoy all this and more, and don’t forget, between laughs, to —

Let us hear from you,



Margaret D. Bauer, Editor