

Global Influence on the Old North State

by Margaret D. Bauer, Editor

Almost two dozen years of *North Carolina Literary Review* content reveal what an inspiration the Old North State is to writers, whether they are born here, move here, or just pass through for a visit. Our twenty-fourth issue explores how North Carolina writers have been inspired by living and traveling beyond the state's borders. The content of this issue crosses the US and the globe, from here to Africa and Vietnam.

It is appropriate that this issue opens with Kathryn Stripling Byer's interview with Elaine Neil Orr. Elaine gave me the idea for the global theme, as I recounted in *NCLR Online* 2015. Even as I flew to Spain for vacation last summer, I traveled in my reader's mind to Nigeria with Elaine's novel *A Different Sun*. I also read her memoir about "a girlhood that might shape a poet," as she describes her Nigerian childhood in the interview; I could relate to a place with "too many trees to climb and brilliant rivers [or in my case, bayous] to swim for me to wish to be indoors." Like Georgia-raised Kay Byer, this Louisianian understands Elaine's recognition of the "challenge that faces us as white women writers whose landscapes are shaped by African presences." Include among those who share Elaine's challenge to "witness" Elizabeth W. Jackson, whose 2014 James Applewhite Poetry Prize-winning poem "East End, West End" features the voices of a black woman and her white employer.

While Elaine's writing has been influenced by her childhood in Nigeria, Laura Herbst, the winner of the 2014 Doris Betts Fiction Prize, is inspired by her experiences in the Peace Corps and as a Fulbright scholar in West Africa. And Vietnam native Monique Truong believes "growing up in Boiling Springs [was] the beginning of becoming an American writer." In her interview, she expresses concern that her novel *Bitter in the Mouth* "missed a lot of [Southern] readers because they didn't know to find it." We hope this issue will help to remedy that possible oversight by bringing this North Carolina-set novel to our readers' attention through both Kirstin Squint's interview with the author and Rachael Price's essay on the Boiling Springs novel. Just as Kay found Elaine's childhood in Africa comparable to her own, Monique finds a similarity between "both Souths that [she has] known," South Vietnam and the American South. And Monique's coming of age novel is both consciously and unconsciously reminiscent of one of the most "Southern" of novels, Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

Also included within this issue is a variety of literary studies with a global perspective. A Turkish scholar's reading of Paul Green's play *The House of Connelly* was particularly exciting to me since I received it about the same time that my new edition of this Green play was published by McFarland. I welcome Tanfer Emin Tunc to the still small but growing "club" of scholars and writers who have rediscovered this play, and I invite readers to join us and realize, as I have argued, that *The House of Connelly* by North Carolina's own Paul Green rivals the plays of Tennessee Williams. British scholar R.J. Ellis's essay is the first article to appear in *NCLR* on *The Colonel's Dream*, a 1905 novel by Charles Chesnutt, who, like so many North Carolina writers, wasn't born here but, once here, was inspired by the place and its people. Most of Chesnutt's fiction is set in North Carolina, and since its early years, *NCLR* has published articles on many of these works, including his novel inspired by the 1898 Wilmington coup d'etat. Delaware native, now UNC Wilmington Professor Philip Gerard, who also wrote a novel based on the Wilmington Race Riot, shares with *NCLR* readers his keynote address for the 2014 North Carolina Literary and Historical Association meeting, in which he talks about exploring historical events through fiction. And the poet James Applewhite sent us an essay that brings together North Carolina poet Randall Jarrell with British Romantic William Wordsworth, the subject of Jim's early scholarship.

As we have done for several years now, we publish here some recent James Applewhite poetry, along with several of the finalists of the 2014 James Applewhite Poetry Prize competition, all, as I noted in my introduction to the online issue, in some way both "North Carolina" and influenced by experiences beyond the state. In the current globalized world, one cannot imagine otherwise. And all of the poetry and fiction in this issue is complemented by the work of North Carolina artists with national and international backgrounds and reputations.

I look forward to promoting the content of this issue, even as we begin work on the twenty-fifth *NCLR*. The variety of talent just within these pages serves to explain how we have reached this milestone, and I look forward to meeting North Carolina's fine writers and discerning readers as I travel across the state in my capacity as the most fortunate of ambassadors, one who promotes the literary talent of this state. ■