

On Timing, Friendship, Loss, and Gratitude

by Margaret D. Bauer, Editor

On occasion, we receive a submission just right for an issue's theme when it is too late to get it ready for inclusion in that issue. For example, journalist/poet Zoe Kincaid Brockman was a suitable subject for the 2018 issue's special feature section, "North Carolina on the Map and in the News," but in spite of deadlines, it really is never too late to submit. Such cases as Rebecca Duncan's essay and Lyn Triplett's remembrance of Brockman are exactly why we created a "Flashbacks" section for *NCLR*. So if you have something that suits an earlier issue's theme, don't hesitate to send it for our consideration.

Earlier in the week that I sat down to draft this introduction, I was exchanging emails with one of *NCLR*'s regular contributors, and I noted to him that one of the gifts *NCLR* continues to give me is friendship. Relationships that begin as I engage with writers to prepare their works for publication in our pages develop over the years into genuine friendships, though most of these people I see in person very rarely, if we've met face to face at all.

I assure you all, however, that submissions are screened anonymously – and creative writing submitted for our competitions is both screened and selected for publication without my input, since I can see behind the curtain. I am likely no longer objective, for I do appreciate so much when writers from our past pages show up again among our submissions. And when they win, I am happy for them and pleased to have the opportunity to work with them again. Though not part of the selection process, I do insist upon the privilege of sending the notices to the prize winners. I've noted before how much I like finding out it's someone's very first publication that has won the prize. I equally relish the times I am sharing the news with an *NCLR* "veteran." Congratulations again, Catherine Carter, on your Applewhite Prize. And thank you for continuing both to share your poetry with our

readers and to take on book review assignments for our writers.

Congratulations also to repeat finalists J.S. (Stan) Absher and Nilla Larsen, whose poems are in this section too. To all of our finalists, I remind you to send us your books for review consideration as you publish them. Once you've been in our pages, we really do consider you one of our writers and thus find particular pleasure in supporting your work. You'll find a review of a collection of Stan's poetry, for example, in *NCLR Online* 2017.

One of *NCLR*'s most beloved writers has suffered a terrible loss since we published the 2019 online issue, which included one of his poems. In February, James Applewhite lost his dear wife Jan after over sixty years together. Those who never met Jan in person may know her from her husband's poems. At her memorial service David Cecelski reported that among her final instructions to her family members was telling Jim to continue to "write beautiful poems." She may have been biased, but we feel certain readers will agree with her characterization of his poetry. We have been so fortunate that he continues to send *NCLR* new work each year. And since we've always known him to follow Jan's advice, we believe we will have more for you next year. In the meantime, we send our deepest condolences to Jim and to their three children, as well as to others who mourn this beautiful soul who will, we know, continue to inspire all who knew her – and her husband's poetry.

I am grateful to have had the opportunity to know Jan, to know Jim, and for my many other *NCLR* friends. Grateful too for the wonderful people I work with on staff like longtime Assistant Editor Christy Hallberg, promoted this year to Senior Associate Editor in acknowledgement of her many years of excellent work on behalf of *NCLR* and its writers, as well as the sheer amount of her voluntary service. Besides screening submissions along with the other assistant editors and editorial board members, Christy continues reading

and editing after acceptance, and her astute feedback is invaluable. Her western North Carolina location also helps us to attend more events, and I appreciate her service this spring as moderator of some of our bookstore events in celebration of our writers.

Congratulations and gratitude too to Meredith College Professor Dana Ezzell Lovelace, who, with this issue, begins a second decade serving as *NCLR* Art Director. We unveiled Dana's prize-winning redesign of *NCLR* with the 2009 issue. Her stunning designs set a high bar for our other graphic designers, Karen Baltimore and Stephanie Whitlock Dicken, who rise to the challenge. It is always, a pleasure to work with them. Read more about all three of these talented women with their designs within this issue.

Continuing on the subject of staff, two ECU colleagues new to the staff are Sean Morris, serving as Managing Editor thanks to the support of the ECU Provost, and Helen Stead, who volunteers her time and expertise as an Assistant Editor. Back in a new capacity is Max Herbert. Max was an *NCLR* intern for two semesters, the second one working with Art Editor Diane Rodman. So some time after Diane went on hiatus for six months after her retirement, I asked Max if she could step in to help the interns with some art-related tasks. Like the many people who volunteer their time for *NCLR*, Max accepted the moniker and duties of Assistant Art Editor, and Diane and I are both grateful. Max and I happily welcomed Diane back in March. You can enjoy Diane's selections with the poetry throughout this issue, and appreciate Max's guidance on art selections featured with other content in the previous section of the issue.

Read more about new staff members in the introduction to the last section of the issue. But first, enjoy the next several pages of "Flashbacks" to past themes and new work by *familiar* (with an emphasis on *family*) writers. ■

FLASHBACKS:
Echoes of Past Issues

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Lyrical Journalism, Investigative Poetry
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Remembering Grandmother Zoe
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two poems by J.S. Absher
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OPPOSITE RIGHT
James and Jan
Applewhite with
NCLR Editor
Margaret Bauer
at the 2011
Eastern North
Carolina Literary
Homecoming,
Greenville, NC



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