

New review keeps track of Tar Heel writers

NORTH CAROLINA LITERARY REVIEW

Volume 1, No. 2

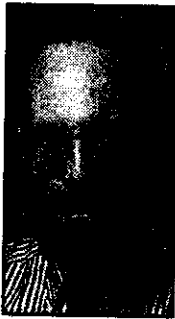
East Carolina University
and N.C. Literary & Historical Association

The first cover boasts a blackbird; the second, a cow.

Make no mistake, North Carolina's latest magazine is no new outdoor journal or nature guide, only a review of that increasingly common creature — the writer.

For everyone who thinks the Tar Heel state's contribution to letters began and ended with Thomas Wolfe, look again. The North Carolina Literary Review, published at East Carolina University, searches out and reports on all aspects of the literary life that thrives statewide.

Most literary magazines focus on short stories or poetry, but the NCLR mostly sticks to non-fiction, focusing on writers



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themselves. In its second issue, NCLR offers a hefty 228 pages from personal essays to a tribute to a professional historian and pulp writer, to reports on black writers, an Asheville book store, and a continuing listing of North Carolina writers A to Z, past to present.

Canton's own native poet, Fred Chappell, opens the second volume with "Raising the Curtain," a poignant reflection of the two movie houses he attended as a boy growing up in the Haywood County mill town. Once he ventured upstairs into the balcony where the Negroes were allowed to sit, and realized their view of the movie was distinctly different from a white boy's. "At 14, I had almost begun to understand that the reality other people endured was different from the reality I endured. Now I found that the unreality they enjoyed was different from my unreality... Now I felt differently about movies than I had before. It would take another two decades before I could see them differently. But without realizing exactly what had happened to me, I knew my life had absorbed a change, minor but indelible."

In his engaging essay "I Know 8,000 Lunatics: Confessions of an Apple-stealing SOB," novelist Michael Parker explains why he could never pronounce his hometown

Clinton properly as natives, even though he's never shed his Coastal Plains accents. That relationship to word and place informs his first novel "Hello Down There." "When, in low-slung and slightly benumbed sentences timed to the beat of that back-alley soul, I return to Clinton — to what it felt like to live there, to what it felt like to want to leave — I am always slightly shocked, for as far as subject matter is concerned, I have never consciously considered Clinton my Dublin."

Asheville writers abound in this issue, from science fiction writer Ralph Roberts' inclusion in a list of Tar Heel fantasy writers to Rick Boyer, author of the "Doc Adams" thrillers, in the ongoing dictionary of N.C. writers. Wilma Dykeman's recognition at the N.C. Writers Conference last summer is duly noted.

That granddaddy of mountain writers, Thomas Wolfe, casts his long shadow over this issue too with reviews of the recently published novella "The Lost Boy," and the correspondence of his agent Elizabeth Nowell and editor Maxwell Perkins to Julia Wolfe, in search of any publishable material after the literary giant's early death.

Emoke B'Racz of Malaprop's Bookstore/Cafe talks of her love of books since her childhood in Hungary. Together

with partner Pickett Huffines, B'Racz founded the independent Malaprop's on Haywood Street in 1982.

Survivor of Communist rule and the Hungarian Uprising, B'Racz does not take lightly this privilege of selling books, of exchanging words, thoughts and ideas. Even when her bookstore comes under attack for some of the titles it stocks, B'Racz keeps on. "Malaprop's has survived indirect bannings and has been called unchristian; yet, we come and open the door every day because we know that words are gifts. We believe that the mightiest power is in words, in books, and that the freedom to read is as essential as life. They did not win in Hungary; they will not win in Asheville."

Words are gifts, and the North Carolina Literary Review is a bonus to readers statewide. With its next issue scheduled on Black Mountain College, NCLR looks like a welcome addition to the state's burgeoning literary community.

North Carolina Literary Review, Spring 1993 is on sale at Downtown Books on Lexington Avenue in Asheville. Subscriptions are available for \$15 a year (two issues) from NCLR, English Department, East Carolina University, Greenville, NC 27858.