

Exploring North Carolina's Native American Literature

by Kirstin L. Squint, Guest Editor

I am delighted to present the special feature section of the 2023 *North Carolina Literary Review*, the first issue celebrating the state's Indigenous voices. North Carolina is home to one federally recognized tribe, the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI) and eight state-recognized tribes. When we put out the call for this issue, we received work by and about Cherokee, Lumbee, and Catawba writers; however, *NCLR* continues to welcome North Carolina Native American literature, criticism, and interviews for future consideration. In this issue, we are honored to include writing by Annette Saunooke Clapsaddle (EBCI), Mary Leana Christenson (EBCI), and Tonya Holy Elk Locklear (Oglala Lakota/Lumbee descent).

Clapsaddle's award-winning 2020 novel, *Even As We Breathe*, the first published by an Eastern Band citizen, is a noteworthy addition to Native Southern literature. Her essay here, "Postcards from Cherokee," exploring the ideas of diversity in Appalachian literature, ecological disaster, and how we are all connected, introduces the content devoted to Cherokee writing. Two scholars of Southern and Appalachian literature, Mae Miller Claxton and Erica Abrams Locklear, write about Clapsaddle's work, providing important new scholarship on the writer. Claxton's essay considers the ways Clapsaddle's nonfiction exemplifies traditional Cherokee leadership theory, while Abrams Locklear's essay demonstrates how Clapsaddle's novel is an intersection of Cherokee and Appalachian literature and offers a new perspective on a mountain writing tradition that has long been viewed one-dimensionally. Another scholar of Southern literature, Jill Goad, contributes an essay on Eastern Band citizen Gladys Cardiff's work, using the lenses of contemporary Indigenous poetics and the New American Baroque to spotlight an under-analyzed voice in contemporary Cherokee literature. This section also includes a conversation with the Cherokee Nation author, Blake M. Hausman, co-interviewed by Native studies scholar Miriam Brown Spiers and me, discussing his acclaimed 2011 debut novel, *Riding the Trail of Tears*, a work of Indigenous futurism. Punctuating the scholarship is Christenson's poignant poem, "Fermenting," which juxtaposes the pain of loss with the familiarity of family tradition.

Holy Elk's poem "Harvest Time," depicting the beauty of Southeastern Indigenous cultural practices, begins the Lumbee content in this issue. Ecocritic and Native literary scholar Jessica Cory draws attention to questions around belonging and recognition in writing by Lumbee women poets. Jane Haladay, a professor of American Indian Studies at UNC Pembroke, writes about how her service-learning classes engage with local elementary schools using the Lumbee-authored children's books, *Whoz Ya People?* and *It's Lumbee Homecoming, Y'all! Nakoma's Greatest Tradition*. Haladay's essay is this year's winner of the Randall Kenan Prize for best essay on a new North Carolina writer.

The final essay in our special feature section is a stunning revision of our understanding of the relationship between Southeastern Native peoples and European colonials by Latin American and Indigenous studies scholars Paul M. Worley and Melissa D. Birkhofer. This winner of the John Ehle Prize for an essay on a forgotten writer of North Carolina analyzes the testimony of Teresa Martín, the first Indigenous woman to speak into the colonial record, the Méndez Cancio *Account of La Tama*, in 1600. Martín was from the Catawba town of Joara, near present-day Morganton.

We are also honored to share the work of several contemporary Native American artists as accompaniment to the writing in this issue. Eastern Band citizen Rhiannon Skye Tafoya's gorgeous, screen-printed paper-weaving, "Rhythmic," adorns our cover, and we showcase more visual creations by Cherokee and Lumbee painters and Catawba potters.

Finally, I would like to thank *NCLR* Editor Margaret Bauer for her guidance on the two-year journey of collecting and preparing work for this special feature section. In addition, I am grateful for the tremendous efforts and cheery assistance of the *NCLR* editorial staff who have made this vision a reality. It has been my great privilege to serve as Guest Editor and work with the writers, scholars, and artists herein. ■

