

# EDITOR'S NOTE

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JASON KYLE HOWARD

**W**hen this magazine was founded nearly fifty years ago by the poet Albert Stewart, readers would have been hard-pressed to find quality literature about contemporary Appalachia that was both widely available and consistently published. Such writing existed, to be sure, in the work of writers including Lisa Alther,

Harriette Simpson Arnow, Annie Dillard, Wilma Dykeman, Nikki Giovanni, Jim Wayne Miller, Gurney Norman, Lee Smith, James Still, and others. But the gaps of time between releases was lengthy. Black writers, writers of color, indigenous writers, queer writers, and women writers were all woefully underrepresented.

A few weeks ago, as I was thumbing through a list of new releases and upcoming books focused on Appalachia, I had one of those moments. You know the kind I'm talking about—when the past seems both distant and near, when an epiphany arrives with a shiver. As editor of *Appalachian Review*, I am especially conscious of the editors who preceded me. I think of what the job must have been like for the magazine's earliest editors, Al Stewart and Sidney Saylor Farr. Sometimes, it feels like I have invited them into my office. I wonder how they might have approached a particular situation; I muse about the problems and concerns they would have encountered in their respective work days. An abundance of voices would not have been one of them.

Consider: this summer, and in the months ahead, there will be dozens of literary works published from and about Appalachia—a statistic that would surely have made the eyes of both Stewart and Farr widen, perhaps in disbelief, but certainly in delight. On the fiction horizon, recently published or forthcoming novels and story collections include *When the Ghosts Come Home* by Wiley Cash, *Flight Risk* by Joy Castro, *The Blue Line Down* by Maris Lawyer, *Perpetual West* by Mesha Maren, *Allegiance* by Gurney Norman, *In the Valley* by Ron Rash, *Mother Country* by Jacinda Townsend, and *Drowned Town* by Jayne Moore Waldrop. In creative nonfiction, there is *Southbound* by Anjali Enjeti, *Perfect Dirt* by Keegan Lester, *Voice Lessons* by Karen Salyer McElmurray,

*Fierce and Delicate: Essays on Dance and Illness* by Renée K. Nicholson, *Kin* by Shawna Kay Rodenberg, and *Paper Concert: A Conversation in the Round* by Amy Wright. Poetry titles include *English Lit* by Bernard Clay, *World as Sacred Burning Heart* by Jeremy Paden, *Perfect Black* by Crystal Wilkinson, *What We Take With Us* by Sylvia Woods, and *The Girl Singer* by Marianne Worthington.

This is an impressive (albeit non-exhaustive) list, and I'm especially proud to have published the work of many of these authors. But more than that, my heart swells to know that the region's literature is in such good hands. That these writers are introducing and reminding readers about all the identities and languages and dialects and ways of being that exist in this complicated, frustrating, beautiful place. We have more, necessary work to do in terms of representation and diversity. But instead of scarcity, there is starting to be bounty.

(On a related note: if you or someone you know is interested in being a book reviewer, please do not hesitate to reach out. Our book reviews editor, Emily Masters, welcomes queries, and we are eager to continue beefing up this section of the magazine.)

In the meantime, may you enjoy the abundance of Appalachian literature accessible in your local bookshop, as well as the harvest that awaits you in these pages. ■

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