

The Southern Quarterly

Volume 56
Number 2 *General Issue*

Article 2

November 2019

Editor's Introduction

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Recommended Citation

(2019) "Editor's Introduction," *The Southern Quarterly*. Vol. 56 : No. 2 , Article 2.
Available at: <https://aquila.usm.edu/soq/vol56/iss2/2>

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Editor's Introduction

KATE COCHRAN

This general issue of *The Southern Quarterly* marks my first as solo editor; although I became the journal's editor in January 2018, I have thus far been working with our former editor (Philip C. Kolin, on his special double issue "Replaying *Gone With the Wind*—Novel and Film") and two esteemed guest editors (John Wharton Lowe on "The Caribbean South" and Angela Jill Cooley for "Foodways in the South"). Those three special issues are particularly fine, reflecting the interdisciplinary approach of the journal and our commitment to exploring various aspects of Southern culture in innovative ways. My predecessor Philip Kolin—and those fine scholars who preceded him, like Noel Polk, Peggy Ann Prenshaw, and Douglas Chambers, to name a few—established a strong legacy with *The Southern Quarterly*, published continuously since 1962 from The University of Southern Mississippi, and it is a legacy I am most proud to continue.

Although this issue does not have a specific theme, much of the work here focuses on New Orleans, which accounts for the cover art: Jean-Pierre Lassus's *Veüe et Perspective de la Nouvelle Orleans* (1726). This is supposedly the only known contemporary view of New Orleans from the first French Colonial era, prior to Louisiana's 1763 transfer to Spain. The view is of the very young city from across the Mississippi River at Algiers Point; in the foreground, slaves are downing trees on the West Bank while nearby a man spears an alligator. Trees are shown as cleared only a short distance beyond the town limits, though the view extends at the top to the road to Bayou St. John. This "view" seems particularly poignant now, given the current precarious state of New Orleans' levee system, strained from holding back the Mississippi River swollen to constant flood stage.

In our first article, Eugene Slepov considers one of the novels most closely associated with New Orleans in "'Singularities of Time and Place':

A Study of Nativity as Ethnicity in *A Confederacy of Dunces*.” In identifying the protagonist Ignatius Reilly as a kind of regionalist scapegoat, and incorporating theories of humanist geography, Slepov shows how the novel depicts New Orleans as a fraught habitat for Ignatius. At home, at work, and in the city, Ignatius both fears losing his homeplace and dreads never leaving it, marking his “native” New Orleanian status as the most potent aspect of his identity.

Moving from humanist geography to architectural history, Monica E. Jovanovich looks at the complicated symbology of public space in her “Traveling Through Time: The Art and Architecture of the New Orleans Union Passenger Terminal.” Jovanovich recounts the development of the centralized railway station as part of Mayor deLesseps S. “Chep” Morrison’s strategy for urban renewal in the 1940s and 50s. As with Louisiana Governor Huey P. Long’s sponsorship of the Shushan Airport, the railway station was to embody a spirit of modernity in both design and décor; Jovanovich effectively historicizes the paradox of the terminal building’s innovation during the days of Jim Crow. Focusing specifically on the massive murals created for the terminal by artist Conrad Albrizio, Jovanovich concludes that “Albrizio’s murals attempted to reconcile the harsh realities of Louisiana’s history with a hopefulness about the possibilities of a unified, inclusive future for all.”

Far from that optimistic view of the future, Jennie Lightweis-Goff’s article laments the present state of post-Katrina New Orleans’s food landscape. In “Lean Times in Boom Towns: #FoodGentrification at the Mouth of the Mississippi,” Lightweis-Goff argues that “[t]he threat of gentrification—or the threat of whitening—dawned in those first days after the breached levees, but was not fully realized until nearly a decade after”; she asserts that the gentrifying threat overtook local restaurants rather than residential real estate, leaving a blight of abandoned corner stores and eateries. Writing from her “home-base” of the Treme neighborhood, Lightweis-Goff analyzes how digital media portrays a limited view of the gentrifying impulse, which she connects with much broader political and economic forces.

Our final article in this issue travels from the Crescent City to Hampton, Virginia, to explore the history of the Hampton Institute’s in-house periodical, the *Southern Workman*. A private HBCU (and now called Hampton University), the Hampton Institute identified with the ethic of racial uplift and its periodical was initially created and edited by exclusively white staff. However, as Sidonia Serafina shows in her “Black, White, and Native: The Multiracial Writing Community of Hampton Institute’s *Southern Workman*,” for a period around the turn of the twentieth century the *Workman* provided a venue for a diverse array of writers, including W.E.B. Du Bois, Alice Dunbar-Nelson, and E. Pauline Johnson. During that period, Serafina portrays

the pages of the *Southern Workman* as a true multiracial space, making it a unique periodical in the history of publishing.

Speaking of publishing, we next offer a new interview with author Tayari Jones, whose 2018 novel *An American Marriage* was selected for inclusion in Oprah's Book Club. The interview, conducted by Lili Wang at the end of 2017, focuses on Jones's consistent use of her hometown Atlanta as the setting for her novels, her views on being called a "Southern writer," and the influence of Toni Morrison and other African American women writers on her work and sense of self as an author. As of the writing of this introduction, the world is currently mourning the loss of Toni Morrison; we are grateful that the *Southern Quarterly* can honor her memory in this way.

We return to New Orleans with an excerpt of the hybrid book *Burning Time*, the collaboration between writer Jonathan Alexander and artist Antoinette LaFarge. It tells the story of a young gay man arriving in New Orleans in the late 1950s to start a new life, using both panoramic paintings and poetry to explore the intimacies of imagined memory and sexuality. As yet unpublished, *Burning Time* innovatively weaves together text and image to evoke this particular time and place. Alexander is a previous contributor to the *Southern Quarterly*; his "Outside Within: Growing Up Gay in the South" was an especially valuable contribution to our special double issue on "Children in the South" (54.3/4).

We conclude this general issue with two book reviews. First, Jay Glassie reviews Daniel King's *Cormac McCarthy's Literary Evolution: Editors, Agents, and the Crafting of a Prolific American Author* (U of Tennessee P, 2016). While Glassie appreciates the new ground this monograph's approach affords, he faults the book's traditional argument and completeness of research. Finally, Karlie Herndon reviews *Being Ugly: Southern Women Writers in Social Rebellion*, by Monica Miller (Louisiana State UP, 2017). Part of LSU Press's series on Southern Literary Studies, Herndon points to the book's particular strength in delineating the "ugly plot," which incorporates J. Halberstam's "queer negativity" to show the power inherent in rejecting social mores of beauty and femininity.

As always, the *Quarterly* is grateful for the support of The University of Southern Mississippi, especially from President Rodney Bennett, Provost Steven Moser, and Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences Christopher Winstead. I am further personally indebted to the always patient Senior Associate Dean Eric Tribunella, to my efficient editorial assistant Olivia Shoup, and to the super-talented layout editor Danielle Sypher-Haley for their invaluable help with this issue.