

# THE SOUTHERN REGISTER

A Publication of the Center for the Study of Southern Culture

The University of Mississippi

NEWSLETTER

OXFORD, MISSISSIPPI, U.S.A.

FALL 2019







I am writing this column at the beginning of my seventh week as Center director, and I can say one thing for sure: moving down the hall to a bigger office doesn't make Monday any less Monday. But I can also say that I am grateful to be spending my Mondays in Barnard Observatory surrounded by the thoughtful and creative people who make up the Center for the Study of Southern Culture. We have had excellent leadership over the more than forty years of our existence, and I am humbled by the opportunity to continue that legacy.

All of the Center's former directors are men—Bill Ferris, Charles Wilson, and Ted Ownby—and a favorite question that well-wishers pair with their congratulations is “How do you think life at the Center will be different with a woman at the helm?” I have at least two answers to that question. First, programming here may be different, not because I'm a woman, but because I am by training a professor of literature. Two of our past directors are historians, and the founding director is a folklorist. These are not radically different disciplines from my own, but as an English professor I am primarily interested in broad definitions of “texts” and “readers,” and I have faith in the human imagination to navigate in fiction and poetry emotional truths that are sometimes more true than verifiable facts. I hope that my occupying the director's seat will mean that literature becomes even more prominent in and vital to our interdisciplinary mission.

But the best answer to questions about female leadership is this: women have always been at the center of the Center. The vision for the Center for the Study of Southern Culture that longtime associate director Ann Abadie lovingly crafted is still everywhere in our building, in our programming, and in our sense of who we are. In 1974 she helped plan the first Faulkner & Yoknapatawpha Conference. In 1978 she wrote an NEH grant to launch the Center; later she wrote the challenge grant that secured funding to renovate our current home in Barnard Observatory; still later she wrote the initial proposal for what became the *Encyclopedia of Southern*

*Culture*. In fact, Ann was the acting director from October 1976 to June 1978, and again from July 1989 to July 1990.

She wasn't alone. English instructor Virginia Morgan helped to organize the Center's home and activities in its first two years. Jan Hawks, UM Dean of Women who later became the inaugural director of the Sarah Isom Center for Women and Gender Studies, taught early courses about women in the South. Sue Hart came from Yale to help compile and edit the *Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*; we will celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of its publication on November 13 of this year. Sarah Dixon Pegues was the Center's first (and only, until her retirement a few years ago) business manager, ensuring financial stability through times flush and lean. Dorothy Abbott collaborated with the Center on a variety of projects, including helping to secure a Hardin Foundation grant that continues to undergird several Center projects. The future may be female, but so was the past.

And so is the present. Today the Center continues to be powered in no small part by the creativity of women. Afton Thomas, associate director for programs, who recently took over from Becca Walton, significantly shapes Center activities, both inside and outside our walls. Rebecca Lauck Cleary, communications specialist, spreads the word about what we do here. Donna Crenshaw expertly manages the money; Margaret Gaffney expertly manages the building, following in the footsteps of a line of women, most recently Mary Hartwell Howorth. Cheryl Armstrong keeps Barnard tidy. The Southern Foodways Alliance operates day to day largely through the labor of talented women: Melissa Booth Hall, Mary Beth Lasseter, Sara Camp Milam, Annemarie Anderson, and Jenna Mason. *Living Blues* magazine could not function without its regular staff of one, Melanie Young, and Susan Bauer Lee, who has been its art director for twenty-five years. No one in SouthDocs would dispute that their offices run because Karen Tuttle knows the ins and outs of the university or that Andrea Morales meaningfully boosts their creative output. Numerous women have taught Southern Studies courses over the years. Of our eleven current faculty members, four, besides me, are women: Simone Delorme, Catarina Passidomo, Jodi Skipper, and Jessie Wilkerson. Each is a model of dedication to scholarship, teaching, and service in both her tenure-granting department and in Southern Studies. And we all depend upon the successful fundraising efforts of Nikki Neely Davis and Claire Moss.

All of that to say: I am honored to be the first woman in this position, but I am not the first or only woman to join her male colleagues in caring deeply about what we do at the Center. We're excited for this new chapter and already hard at work. Stay tuned!

Katie McKee

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Fall 2019

On the cover: A detail from *Memories and Time*, by KC.

### REGISTER STAFF

Editor: James G. Thomas, Jr.  
Editorial assistants: Rebecca Lauck Cleary and Margaret Gaffney  
Graphic Designer: Susan Bauer Lee

26th Annual Living Blues Awards Winners Inside!

# Living Blues

Issue #362  
Vol. 50, #4

*Women*  
**OF THE BLUES II**

**TRUDY  
LYNN**

**MILLIE  
JACKSON**

**ANNIKA CHAMBERS**

**CRYSTAL THOMAS**

**MARY LANE**

**MEMPHIS MINNIE**

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Kiah (age twenty-two) and Mary

The sad truth is that the role of women has often been downplayed in the male-dominated blues world. I even had an *LB* colleague once tell me we should never put a woman on the cover—women don't sell on the newsstands. I didn't buy it then, and I don't buy it now.

From our first issue, women have played a vital role at *LB*. Starting with cofounding editor Amy van Singel, women have written, photographed, and covered the blues for us for fifty years. What many may not realize is that other than me, the

entire staff of *LB* is made up of women—art director Susan Bauer Lee, publication manager Melanie Young, associate editor Robin C. Dietrick, and, as of July 1, our publisher is Kathryn McKee (the new director of the Center for the Study of Southern Culture at the University of Mississippi). I extend a heartfelt thank you to this very special staff and to all of the many, many women who have contributed to the story of *Living Blues* over the last fifty years.

Congratulations to all of the 2019 *Living Blues* Awards winners. Perennial winner Buddy Guy takes home the most awards, with Shemekia Copeland also winning big. Check out the full list of winners in the issue.

We will celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of *Living Blues* in 2020. In preparation for that milestone, I would like to ask our long-term readers to submit any interesting photos or memorabilia related to the early days of *Living Blues*. Or, share with us stories of discovering *LB* and how it impacted your relationship with the blues. We look forward to hearing from you.

Brett J. Bonner





SEPTEMBER 4  
(Wednesday, 6:00 p.m.)

Malco Oxford Commons Cinema  
206 Commonwealth Blvd.

**Marco Williams, visiting  
documentarian, filmmaker**

*Two Towns of Jasper*

In 1998 in Jasper, Texas, James Byrd Jr., a black man, was chained to a pick-up truck and dragged to his death by three white men. The town was forever altered, and the nation woke up to the horror of a modern-day lynching. Two film crews, one black and one white, set out to document the aftermath of the murder by following the subsequent trials of the local men charged with the crime. The result is an explicit and troubling portrait of race in America, one that asks how and why a crime like this could have occurred. *Two Towns of Jasper* was the catalyst for a live town hall meeting, "America in Black and White," anchored by Ted Koppel.

Marco Williams is a documentary filmmaker and professor at Northwestern School of Communication. Prior to joining the faculty at Northwestern, Williams taught at the Tisch School of the Arts at New York University for twenty years.



SEPTEMBER 11  
(Wednesday, noon)

**Carrie Barske Crawford and  
Brian Dempsey**

**"Hidden Spaces"**

A collaboration between the University of North Alabama Public History Center, the Muscle Shoals National Heritage Area, and photographer Abraham Rowe, the photo-historical project *Hidden Spaces* identifies, displays, and interprets cultural landscapes,

# southtalks

— SERIES —

CENTER FOR THE STUDY  
OF SOUTHERN CULTURE

Fall 2019

*SouthTalks is a series of events (including lectures, performances, film screenings, and panel discussions) that explores the interdisciplinary nature of Southern Studies. This series is free and open to the public, and takes place in the Tupelo Room of Barnard Observatory unless otherwise noted. Visit the Center's website for up-to-date information about all Center events.*

built environments, and natural features that highlight the inherent uniqueness and diversity of the greater Shoals region. This project uses oral histories, photography, archival documentation, and mapping to tell the story of important places not often associated with the weight of a site's history.

Carrie Barske Crawford received her PhD in history from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, her MA in history/public history from Northeastern University, and her BA in history from Sewanee:



The University of the South. As the director of the Muscle Shoals National Heritage Area, Crawford works on projects that aim to document the rich culture and history of northwest Alabama, as well as projects that protect natural resources and encourage the use of recreational facilities. Brian Dempsey received his PhD in public history at Middle Tennessee State University and his MA in history at James Madison University. Originally from the Mississippi Delta, his work focuses on the relationship between landscape and cultural identity, the connections between the arts and



historical interpretation, and the process of helping communities tell their stories. An assistant professor of history at

University of North Alabama since 2017, Dempsey also serves as director of the UNA Public History Center.

SEPTEMBER 12  
(Thursday, 4:00 p.m.)

**Edmund T. Gordon and  
Celeste Henery**

**"Exploring the Racial Geography  
of UT Austin"**

Over the past twenty years, Edmund T. Gordon has researched and led a tour of the racial and gendered geography of the University of Texas at Austin's campus. This talk will discuss the origins of the tour and its recent digitization. It also will address the university's shifting representations in light of past and more recent changes in its commemorative landscape.

Edmund T. Gordon is the University of Texas at Austin's Vice Provost for Diversity and the founding chairman emeritus of the African and African Diaspora

department. His teaching and research interests include culture and power in the African diaspora, gender studies, critical race theory, race education, and the racial economy of space and resources.



Celeste Henery is a cultural anthropologist working at the intersections of race, gender, and health. Henery currently works as a research

associate in the Department of African and African Diaspora Studies at the University of Texas at Austin. Her writing on black life across



the diaspora has been published in various academic journals and appears monthly in *Black Perspectives*.

## SEPTEMBER 18 (Wednesday, noon)

**Richard Howorth, Lyn Roberts, and Lisa Howorth**

**Jimmy Thomas, moderator**

### “Square Books at Forty: A Conversation”

Dating back to the 1970s, Square Books and the Center for the Study of Southern Culture have enjoyed a close relationship, with the bookstore bringing writers from all regions to Oxford, including a number of authors whose works are taught across the Southern Studies curriculum. The fortieth anniversary of Square Books provides an opportunity



to reflect on the store’s contributions to both the Oxford community and to the University of Mississippi.

Square Books is a general independent bookstore in three separate buildings on the historic town square of Oxford, Mississippi, home of the University of Mississippi. The main store, Square Books, is in a two-story building with a cafe and balcony on the second floor; Off Square Books is a few doors down from the main store and has lifestyle sections, such as gardening and cookbooks; and Square Books, Jr., the children’s bookstore, is in a building on the east side of the square. Jimmy Thomas is the Center’s associate director for publications and the director of the Oxford Conference for the Book.

## SEPTEMBER 26 (Thursday, 4:00)

**Adam Gussow**

### “*Satan & Adam: A Conversation and Film Screening*”

Sterling Magee, a Mississippi-born blues guitarist and singer, had experienced firsthand the music industry’s exploitation of black musicians. When his wife died of cancer, he gave up guitar and gave into despair. Several years later, reborn as “Mr. Satan,” he was busking the streets of Harlem, spreading his gospel of joy, when a young white harmonica player wandered along and asked if he could sit in. Adam Gussow, a Columbia grad school dropout, had turned to the streets to deal with his own heartbreak. The result was an epic jam and a lifetime partnership, one that took them, as the duo Satan & Adam, from Harlem’s 125th Street to clubs and festival stages around the world—before a nervous breakdown and a heart attack tore them



apart, paving the way for one more miraculous rebirth. *Satan & Adam* is a celebration of the transformative power of music and the triumph of two soul survivors. Director V. Scott Balcerek pulls together more than two decades of documentary footage to chart the duo’s unlikely, unforgettable friendship, one forged on New York’s mean streets during the racial turmoil of the 1980s.

Adam Gussow is a professor of English and Southern Studies at the University of Mississippi and a blues harmonica player and teacher. He has published a number of books on the blues.

## OCTOBER 2 (Wednesday, noon)

**Turkey M. Flucker**

### “Art and Activism at Tougaloo College”

The focus of this talk will highlight significant works by modern visual artists from the Tougaloo College Art Collections as the college celebrates its sesquicentennial year. During the turbulent 1960s, a group of New York art activists involved in the struggle for civil rights formed the New York Art Committee for Tougaloo College. In the spring of 1963, the committee shipped works by important modern American and European artists to Tougaloo College, marking the first collection of modern art in Mississippi. This was a watershed moment for the state that brought modernism to Mississippi during a time of profound social change in America.

Turkey M. Flucker currently serves as the art collections administrator for the Tougaloo College Art Collections. Before becoming the collections administrator at Tougaloo, Flucker served as the arts industry director at the Mississippi Arts Commission (MAC), as the branch director at



the Louisiana State Museum, and as the chief curator at Smith Robertson Museum in Jackson, Mississippi. Flucker, a native of Houston, Texas, earned a BA in history with an emphasis in African American studies from Tougaloo College and an MA in Southern Studies from the University of Mississippi.

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## OCTOBER 8 (Tuesday, 4:00 p.m.)

### Paolo Battaglia “Italian American Country”

Following the route taken in 1905 by Italian ambassador Edmondo Mayor des Planches, Italian author Paolo Battaglia met the descendants of immigrants who came from his country and traveled to the four corners of the United States. *Italian American Country* is an illustrated book and a three-episode documentary chronicling the travels and encounters Battaglia had across the country, from Barre, Vermont, to Greenville, Mississippi, to Pittsburg, California—all places that, in many different ways, show us what it means and what it meant to be Italian in America. During this presentation, the author along with two actors will re-enact stories from the book as well as share a few scenes from the documentary.

Paolo Battaglia is the coauthor of *Explorers Emigrants Citizens: A Visual History of the Italian American Experience* published in 2013 with the Library of Congress. He is a photo historian and author of visual history books such as *Un Italiano nella Cina dei Boxer* (2000), a photographic account of the 1900 Boxer rebellion in China; *Frammenti di Guerra* (2005), a visual history of World War II in northern Italy; and *New York In & Out* (2008), a portrait of New York City taken by an Italian tourist and photographer in the early twentieth century.



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## OCTOBER 9 (Wednesday, noon)

### Kate Kenwright, Lolly Rash, and Jodi Skipper

#### “Historic Preservation in Mississippi from an Advocacy and Local Government Perspective”

Ever wonder what makes a building historic? Who tells the story of the place? What role do governments and neighborhood groups play in preservation? Jodi Skipper, associate professor of anthropology and Southern Studies, will moderate a discussion between Kate Kenwright, historic preservationist for the City of Oxford, and Lolly Rash, executive director for the Mississippi Heritage Trust, on what it takes to become an effective advocate for Mississippi’s architectural legacy at a local and state level.

Kate Kenwright provides technical expertise and support to the City Preservation Commissions as well as the Burns Belfry, the L. Q. C. Lamar House, and Cedar Oaks. Kenwright has a BA in Southern Studies and is



a graduate of the Tulane Master of Preservation Studies program. Lolly Rash has been fighting for Mississippi’s historic places for twenty-five years. She has served as historical administrator for the City of Biloxi, vice president of White House Properties, and as a consultant for the Land Trust for the Mississippi Coastal Plain, the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, and the Mississippi Main Street Association.



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## OCTOBER 11 (Friday, noon)

### Brannon Costello

#### “Superhero Comics and the US South”

Swinging, flying, and leaping through the canyons between skyscrapers, superheroes have long been understood as emblems of urban American modernity. In garish red, white, and blue costumes, characters such as Captain America, Patriot, and even Superman are read as icons of American nationalism. But what happens, then, when superheroes go South, to the region so often imagined as the nation’s antimodern, abject other? Brannon Costello’s talk will examine the history of the representation of the South in superhero comics, both well-known and obscure, taking a look both at the tendency to portray the South as a place of degradation, contamination, and horror, and also illuminating a handful of provocative comics that have productively employed the superhero genre to generate new ways of imagining the relationship between the nation and the region, between the region and the world.

Brannon Costello is James F. Cassidy Professor of English at Louisiana State University, where he also serves as director of undergraduate studies for the English department. His primary research interests are in Southern Studies and comics studies, and he is particularly interested in finding and forging connections between those fields. He is most recently the author of *Neon Visions: The Comics of Howard Chaykin*. Among his other publications are *Comics and the US South*, a collection which he coedited with Qiana Whitted; *Conversations with Michael Chabon*; and *Plantation Airst: Racial Paternalism and the Transformations of Class in Southern Fiction*.





Costello will also present on Saturday, October 12, during the Graphic Novels and Comics across the Humanities Conference (October 7–12), which is free and open to the public.

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## OCTOBER 22 (Tuesday, 6:00 p.m.)

Malco Oxford Commons Cinema  
206 Commonwealth Blvd.

**Sophia Nahli Allison, visiting  
documentarian, filmmaker**

**“Radical Reimaginings in  
Documentary Filmmaking”**

Sophia Nahli Allison will screen her short hybrid documentary, *A Love Song for Latasha*, as well as a few shorter documentary works. The evening’s discussion will center on reimagining documentary and archives, finding one’s style and voice, and the utilization of experimental methods within film.

Sophia Nahli Allison is an experimental documentary filmmaker, photographer + dreamer born and raised in South Central LA. She disrupts conventional documentary methods by reimagining the archives and excavating hidden truths.

She conjures ancestral memories to explore the intersection of fiction and nonfiction storytelling. Her film *A Love Song for Latasha* premiered at the 2019 Tribeca Film Festival. She holds an MA in visual communication from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and a BA in photojournalism from Columbia College Chicago.



From *A Love  
Song for Latasha*

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## NOVEMBER 1 (Friday, 3:00 p.m.)

**Anne Lewis, visiting  
documentarian, filmmaker**

***A Strike and an Uprising (in Texas)***

*A Strike and an Uprising (in Texas)* is an experimental documentary film based on two events: the San Antonio pecan shellers’ strike of 1938, which was led by Emma Tenayuca, and the Jobs with Justice march, led by Nacogdoches cafeteria workers, groundskeepers, and housekeepers in 1987.

Anne Lewis is a documentary filmmaker whose films include *On Our Own Land*, *Fast Food Women*, *Justice in the Coalfields*, and *Morristown: In the Air and Sun*, a film about factory job loss and the rights of immigrants.

Lewis serves on the executive board of the Texas State Employees Union TSEU-CWA 6186 and teaches at the University of Texas at Austin.



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## NOVEMBER 6 (Wednesday, noon)

**Mikaëla M. Adams**

**“The Positive Duty to Aid  
Them’: Segregated Health,  
Federal Responsibility, and the  
Mississippi Choctaws during the  
1918–1919 Influenza Pandemic”**

After ignoring the Mississippi Choctaws for decades, Congress finally established an agency for them in 1918. This effort came none too soon: within months a deadly new strain of influenza struck. Yet, finding medical help for the Choctaws in segregated Mississippi proved difficult, and 61 out of 1,253 Choctaws ultimately died in the outbreak. The pandemic reinforced the need for a federal presence in the segregated South and, in the years that followed, the Choctaws

marshaled that federal-tribal relationship to rebuild their land base and restore their sovereignty.

Mikaëla M. Adams is an associate professor of Native American history at the University of Mississippi. Her first book, *Who Belongs? Race, Resources, and Tribal Citizenship in the Native South*, explored themes of Indigenous identity, citizenship, and sovereignty in the Jim Crow South. Her current work examines the influenza pandemic of 1918–20 in Indian country.



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## NOVEMBER 13 (Wednesday, noon)

**Josh Parshall**

**“Jewish Radicals in New South  
Cities: The Southern District of  
the Workmen’s Circle”**

From 1908 until after World War II, small groups of Eastern European Jewish immigrants operated branches of the Workmen’s Circle (Arbeter Ring) in more than fifteen southern cities. These local branches of the national fraternal organization organized themselves on a regional basis, promoted secular Yiddish culture, participated in mutual aid, and contributed to left-wing politics and local labor movements. This presentation will examine these activities in relation to the New South settings in which they took place and explore the meanings and legacies of the Workmen’s Circle in the South.

Josh Parshall is the director of the history department at the Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life, based in Jackson, Mississippi.



# Gilder-Jordan Lecture in Southern Cultural History Set for September 17

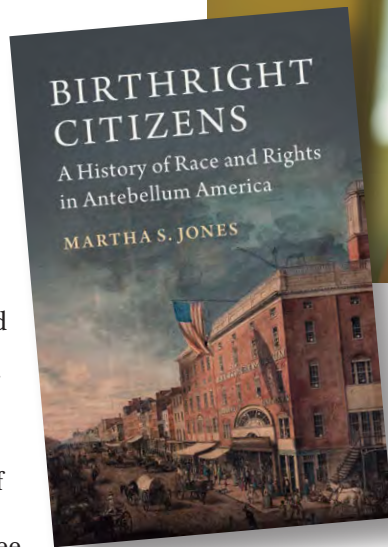
## *Legal and Cultural Historian Martha S. Jones Speaks about “Birthright Citizens”*

Citizenship is a hot topic today, and historian Martha S. Jones connects lessons and information from the past that can shed light on the current landscape. Jones will give the 2019 Gilder-Jordan Lecture in Southern Cultural History at 7:00 p.m. on Tuesday, September 17, in Nutt Auditorium on the University of Mississippi campus.

Jones, Society of Black Alumni Presidential Professor and professor of history at Johns Hopkins University, is a legal and cultural historian whose work examines how black Americans have shaped the story of American democracy. The title of her talk is “Birthright Citizens: Winners and Losers in the History of American Belonging.” Her lecture, which is free and open to the public, will focus on the first chapter of her book, *Birthright Citizens: A History of Race and Rights in Antebellum America*.

“It begins with how black Americans—former slaves—claimed to be birthright citizens before the Civil War, only to have that claim affirmed in 1868 with the ratification of the 14th Amendment’s birthright citizenship clause,” Jones said. “It ends in the post-Civil War period with the case of Chinese Americans—people who, though born in the US, were said to be noncitizens. The 14th Amendment transformed the US citizenship regime, but it did not extinguish struggles over who

Martha S. Jones



does and does not belong, a struggle that continues until today.”

Ted Ownby says *Birthright Citizens* is an important book for many reasons,

since it is an exciting, original volume helping readers to think about multiple issues of race and the law, as well as citizenship status of immigrants and their children. “Jones’s book studies citizenship not just through the courts, but through public gatherings and activist groups, newspapers, churches, and groups of working people to figure out where they stood,” said Ownby, University of Mississippi William Winter Professor of History and professor of Southern Studies. “It’s a study of the law from the perspective of people—free people of color in pre-Civil War Baltimore—whose claims to citizenship weren’t clear,

so they were always working, always negotiating to improve and clarify their claims on the legal and political system. Baltimore is an especially important subject both because of its place on the edge of slavery and as an important port city but also as the home of Roger Taney, the Supreme Court justice who wrote the *Dred Scott* decision in 1857, arguing that black Americans could not be citizens of the US.”

Organized through the Center for the Study of Southern Culture, the African American studies program, Center for Civil War Research, and the Arch Dalrymple III Department of History, the Gilder-Jordan Speaker Series is made possible through the generosity of the Gilder Foundation. The series honors Richard Gilder of New York and his family, as well as his friends Dan and Lou Jordan of Virginia.

Rebecca Lauck Cleary



# New SFA Artwork on Display in Oxford in October

The following words were excerpted (and edited lightly for context) from the art installation proposal submitted earlier this year by Travis Somerville, an Atlanta-born and San Francisco-based artist. Somerville will serve as the 21c Museum Hotels Artist-in-Residence at the SFA Fall Symposium in Oxford, set for October 24–26. His artwork will be on display at the Powerhouse in Oxford and will be open to the public for the month of October.

Each year, the SFA commissions one work of visual art and one work of performance. (Support from the Cockayne Fund makes the performance possible. This year's performance commission went to Robert Gipe and Higher Ground, a community arts organization based in Harlan County, Kentucky.) Combined, these creative works amplify programming themes and extend conversations beyond spoken presentations, films, and

other traditional ways to think about humanities ideas.

Over the last decade, these art initiatives have become defining parts of the SFA ethos. To make them even more accessible, SFA records each performance and makes a film about each visual artist. If you're not able to join us in Oxford for the twenty-third Southern Foodways Symposium, or visit the Powerhouse, look for that media on the SFA website in early November.

*In June of 1861 Harriet Tubman, working with the Union Army, helped to devise and conduct the Combahee Ferry Raid in South Carolina. Tubman's reconnaissance work laid the foundation for the mission, which ultimately freed over 750 slaves. During the raid, plantations and crops were burned to the ground.*

*The overall piece speaks to the labor history of food cultivation. The centerpiece will be a small, reclaimed grain silo, preferably locally sourced. The silo, approximately 16' x 18', will be vinyl wrapped with the background image of a rice or cotton field, burned during the raid, and an image of Harriet Tubman superimposed on top. During the Southern Foodways Symposium, a performative action will run concurrently. I will operate a vintage hand-cranked canning device, sealing as-yet-to-be-determined contents, which will be offered as gifts to the participants.*

*Video footage of flames will project onto the silo from three or four different vantage points to give the illusion of the crops burning. Around the periphery of the exhibition space will hang various cotton-picking and feed sacks with images of field laborers hand drawn on them. The faces of these workers underscore how black laborers have long served as the foundation of the agricultural economy in the South.*

**Travis Somerville, Untitled, 44" x 38" graphite and charcoal on feed sack**



**Travis Somerville, Untitled, 44" x 38" graphite and charcoal on feed sack**

IMAGES COURTESY OF TRAVIS SOMERVILLE AND MAUS CONTEMPORARY

IMAGES COURTESY OF TRAVIS SOMERVILLE AND MAUS CONTEMPORARY

# Have Camera, Will Travel

## *Gammill Gallery Exhibition Highlights Individual Students' Visions of Mississippi*

The photographs in this exhibition are from David Wharton's Spring 2019 Southern Studies Seminar in Documentary Photography. The semester-long assignment allowed for students to envision and construct an individual documentary photography project based in North Mississippi.

There were three students in the class: Elliot Grime, Katherine Aberle, and Madison Aman. Each contributed a significant number of photographs to the exhibition, along with project descriptions or artist's statement. Here they are:



*Little League, Oxford, Mississippi, by Madison Aman*

### **Elliot Grime**

This collection is a challenge to normative understandings of the state of poverty in Mississippi. Only tiny drops in the ocean, these photographs show how poverty affects the individual, the family, the mom and pop. It is easy to think of the impoverished as a collective, a statistic of a much larger population, and that makes it easier to drive past abandoned homes, stores, and cotton gins, forgetting that someone once made a living on that property or someone once lived in that house.

I became interested in these locations because they are something I'd never experienced before. I'm an outsider to Mississippi, and I'm an outsider to the United States. I never expected to come here and see how unaffected most people are by these constant reminders of poverty that litter the Mississippi roadside. And as much as those in poverty so often become just another part of the state's statistics, the physical reminders of those people and their loss have become a part of the state's landscape.

### **Katherine Aberle**

Katherine Aberle spent much of the Spring 2019 semester exploring the community of Marks, Mississippi, about forty-five miles west of Oxford. Marks is the county seat of Quitman County, one the most economically challenged counties in the Mississippi Delta. She made many photographs there, both of people and the physical environment. Some of those images are included in this exhibit.

### **Madison Aman**

There are currently no professional sports teams in the state of Mississippi. However, that does not mean that athletes are not active and thriving throughout the state. This series features several different "below-the-radar" sports, including Little League baseball, high school tennis, collegiate women's basketball, English horse riding (otherwise known as equestrian), powderpuff football, and barrel racing.

In these images, I hope you are able to recognize the hard work people of all genders, ages, and races throughout the state of Mississippi display through their athletic talents, skills, and competitive spirits.

*To view the entire exhibition, visit the Gammill Gallery in Barnard Observatory, open weekdays from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.*





*Tallahatchie County, Mississippi, by Elliot Grime*



*Quitman County Courthouse, Marks, Mississippi, by Katherine Aberle*

# Changes in Southern Studies Curriculum Offer Exciting New Opportunities

## *Major Requirements Adjusted, 100-level Courses Restructured*

For ordinary University of Mississippi students considering a major that will make them extraordinary, Southern Studies could be the one to help them stand out.

Southern Studies seeks to investigate, interpret, and document the American South in all of its complexity by examining topics such as the historical meaning of being a southerner and the role of the South in a global world. This unique program provides training in research, interpretation, and communication skills that can be applied to a wide array of future occupations.

A committee of Southern Studies faculty realized the requirements for the major needed to be more closely aligned with others in the College of Liberal Arts. “One outcome of our program assessment, which included both internal and external evaluations, was a consensus that the undergraduate curriculum could use some more thorough examination,” said Catarina Passidomo, assistant professor of Southern Studies and anthropology. “We’re offering some of these new courses this year and will offer more in the future. I’m hopeful that the new courses can draw more and diverse students to the Center and that some of these students will major or minor in Southern Studies.”

In addition to adding new classes, recent changes include lowering the number of hours required for the major. The BA degree now consists of thirty hours of courses, including SST 101, 401, 402, two courses from SST 103–110, and one SST course at the 500 level. Students must also take twelve hours of electives from two additional departments, including African American studies, art, English, gender studies, history, journalism, music, sociology, anthropology, and political science.



Jodi Skipper in the classroom

KEVIN BAIN

The minor now consists of eighteen hours, including SST 101, 401, 402, one course from SST 103–110, and two more courses from outside departments.

Also new this fall, Darren Grem, associate professor of Southern Studies and history, takes over as the undergraduate student advisor. Grem will help students navigate their schedules and become aware of the possibilities the major can provide.

“We want students to gain an awareness of the program and create a sensible 100-level experience,” Grem said. “This is a major that sends you around campus, so you aren’t just in one or two buildings, you are learning to be a jack of all trades learning from professors in multiple departments and fields.”

The 100-level courses are revamped to make 101 a comprehensive survey of the history and culture of the South over time, eliminate 102, and create a series of topical courses for 103–110 that are taught in smaller classroom settings about clearly announced topics. For Fall 2019, Jodi Skipper, associate professor of Southern Studies and anthropology, is teaching a South

and Race course; Passidomo is teaching a South and Food course, while Grem teaches the 101 survey.

Other future 100-level courses could include Music and Southern Society, Gender and Sexuality in the South, and Rights and Southern Activism. “I’m hoping that the student body as a whole gets a broader sense of what Southern Studies is, and how compatible it is with so many other majors,” said Katie McKee, director of the Center for the Study of Southern Culture. “I hope students will have more opportunities to write about and discuss their experiences, and I hope the faculty will feel energized by the chance to teach more frequently in their specialties.”

Another change clearly delineated the sequence of SST 401 and 402, so that 401 became a methodology class and 402 a seminar that would be a student’s concluding experience as a major.

For more information about the Southern Studies program and the new major requirements, visit [southernstudies.olemiss.edu/academics](http://southernstudies.olemiss.edu/academics).

Rebecca Lauck Cleary



# The Center Welcomes the Incoming First-Year Southern Studies MA and MFA Classes

The graduate programs in Southern Studies offer intense interdisciplinary curricula. Both the Master of Arts program and the Master of Fine Arts in Documentary Expression program touch on many facets of southern life, history, and culture.

In 1986 the University established the Master of Arts program in Southern Studies. The Master of Fine Arts in Documentary Expression program began in the fall of 2017. Both the MA and the MFA are two-year graduate programs.

Reflecting the programs' interdisciplinary study of the South, students enroll in seminars on southern history, literature, music, religion, and other topics; take independent study courses that enable them to work closely with faculty; and participate in documentary methods workshops, such as oral history, photography, and filmmaking. Some students pursue internships that provide supervised work experience in cultural institutions.

The Center for the Study of Southern Culture welcomes this year's first-year MA and MFA classes to Barnard Observatory and the University of Mississippi Campus.

Want to join us in Barnard? Deadline for next year's graduate school applications is February 1, 2020.



The new MFA in Documentary Expression class is (*left to right*) Andrea Morales (University of Florida, Ohio University), Hooper Schultz (University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, University of Mississippi), and Tyler Keith (University of Mississippi).



The new MA class is (*left to right, first row*) Keon Burns (University of Mississippi) Christina Huff (University of Mississippi); (*second row*) Alan Munshower (Goucher College, University of Maryland), Rhondalyn Peairs (Tougaloo College), Christian Leus (Hendrix College); (*third row*) Taylor Haberle (Wake Forest University), and Brittany Brown (University of Mississippi). Not pictured, Shea Stewart (University of Mississippi).



# A Bookseller Looks at Forty

*Richard Howorth Shares Memories of the Early Days of Square Books and the Center for the Study of Southern Culture*

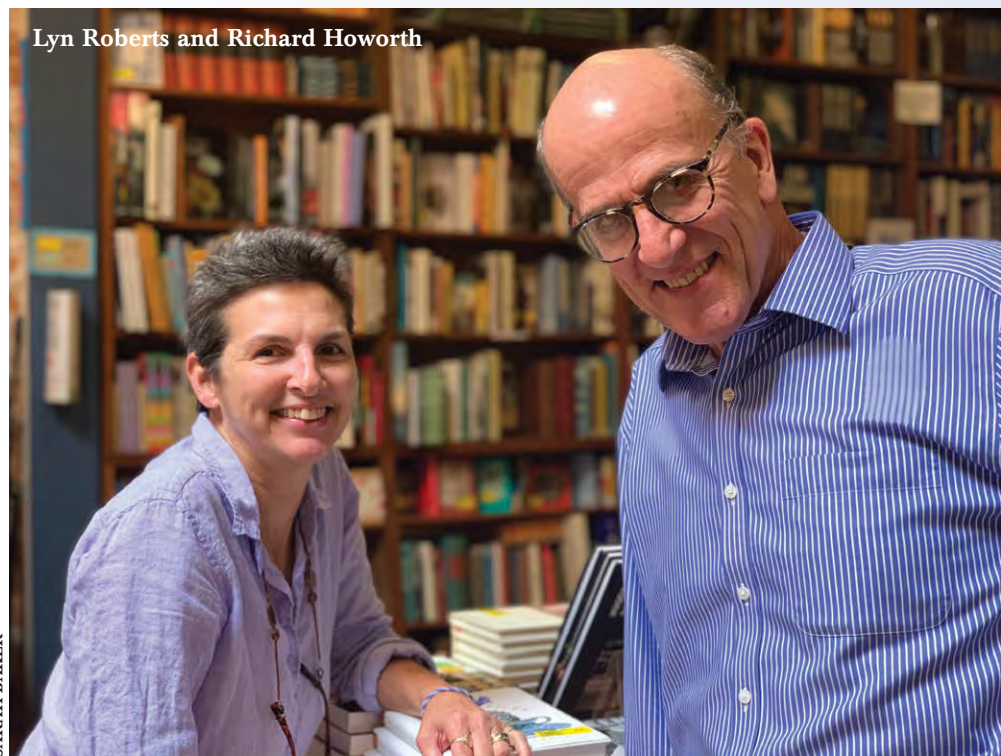
Four decades ago, in a senator's office in Washington, DC, a future bookstore owner learned more than just strategy and skill in a friendly poker game. It was during this card game that Richard Howorth met Bill Ferris, who would soon be the director of the Center for the Study of Southern Culture in Oxford.

But let's back up a bit.

In 1977 Richard and Lisa Howorth were working at Savile Bookshop in Georgetown, gaining practical experience in order to open their own bookstore.

Bill Ferris, who then worked at the Center for Southern Folklore in Memphis, gave a presentation in the Senate, which Howorth and his card buddies attended. "We saw Bill's film *Hush Hoggies Hush* and you can't see that film and not love Bill Ferris," Howorth said.

When they moved back to Oxford to open Square Books in 1979, Ferris had been named Center director, and they reignited their camaraderie. "From the very beginning, we had a lot of support from all these great people, many of whom were connected to the university, including Bill and Ann Abadie," Howorth said. "Bill has such magnetism and he's so brilliant; he is the kind of person



who if you were a writer from the West Coast or Greece or China for that matter, Bill explained to you why you might want to come to Mississippi or to Oxford, and you would want to come."

Attracting authors for events and book signings was an early aspiration for Square Books. The inaugural

event took place in October 1979 for Ellen Douglas's novel *The Rock Cried Out*. The second event was with Etheridge Knight, the African American poet originally from Corinth, Mississippi, who had taught himself how to write while he was in prison. Etheridge read at the Center and signed books at the store. Toni



Morrison and Allen Ginsberg were also early visitors thanks to the Center and Square Books.

As both entities flourished, students played a critically important role on campus and in town. “The Center has attracted a lot of bright students from diverse backgrounds and from different places who are interested in books,” Howorth said. “I think the bottom line is, the mission of the Center and the mission of Square Books are pretty closely related. Since the day we opened we’ve had a core focus on books by southerners and books about the South and that remains true today.”

Avid readers Jimmy Thomas and Margaret Gaffney are two former Square Books employees who

Richard Howorth (right) welcomes attendees to the 2018 Oxford Conference for the Book closing party at Off Square Books.



JAMES G. THOMAS, JR.

*“I think the bottom line is, the mission of the Center and the mission of Square Books are pretty closely related.”*  
—Richard Howorth

currently work at the Center. “The students and the faculty and all of the many people, individually and as a whole at the Center, have contributed so much, and Square Books always benefits from that,” Howorth said.

In 1997 Southern Studies graduate student and songwriter Caroline Herring, along with fellow local musician Bryan Ledford, came up with the idea to have a radio show, and Howorth suggested they could pair the musical component of the show with visiting authors. That turned into *Thacker Mountain Radio*, a weekly show featuring an author reading and music by a visiting band, as well as songs by the house band—a format that continues today.

“*Thacker* was another effort that involved the purpose of the Center, and we knew we would have southern musicians and writers

and be a Mississippi thing, and it just took off from the beginning,” Howorth said. “I think it helped that we combined forces. Caroline and Bryan already had the people they knew who were interested in the music element, and we could publicize it with our mailing list, and it was the sort of thing that people enjoyed as the show grew.”

Lyn Roberts, general manager of Square Books, has watched the bookstore and the Center grow up together throughout the decades. “Over the years, Square Books and the Center have collaborated and supported each other, through serious scholarship and through fun times,” said Roberts, who has worked at Square Books since 1988. “The annual Oxford Conference for the Book being a notable example, but we’ve also held many events

at Square Books for publications sponsored by the Center, such as the *Encyclopedia of Southern Culture* and *The Mississippi Encyclopedia*, as well as for staff and faculty there. We’re friends in an intellectually and culturally curious neighborhood, and our mutual support and appreciation has certainly benefited Square Books and the Center well.”

The Oxford Conference for the Book started in 1993 thanks to the efforts of Howorth and Ann Abadie. Its original idea—one that continues today—was to bring poets, novelists, journalists, and scholars to Oxford and to the university to celebrate the written word. The event is now the primary outreach focus of the spring semester for the Center.

“Thanks to others, Charles Wilson and Ted Ownby and the many people who have worked there, the Center is not simply a thing about the South,” Howorth said. “It is a locus of academic excellence, and that is good for the university and good for the intellectual life of the community.”

*Join Lyn Roberts and Richard and Lisa Howorth at noon September 18 for “Square Books at Forty: A Conversation” in the Tupelo Room of Barnard Observatory.*

Rebecca Lauck Cleary

# A Journey and a Tribute

*Remembering Quentin Compson's Life and Death in Cambridge*

**By Charles Reagan Wilson**

The line between William Faulkner's fictional South of the early twentieth century and the postmodern world of the twenty-first century blurred last summer as a group of Mississippi pilgrims journeyed to Cambridge, Massachusetts, to commemorate the anniversary of the suicide of Faulkner's character, Quentin Compson III, which took place on June 2, 1910. I recount the tale of our travels—for I was one of the pilgrims—as a reminder of Faulkner's continuing appeal to people who appreciate his genius, well beyond the academic world.

Getting ready for the trip immersed us in reading and pondering Faulkner's works, especially those where Quentin is a central character, *The Sound and the Fury* (1929) and *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936). Quentin was a singular achievement in Faulkner's canon, an engaging but troubled young man. The son of a once distinguished family, he inherited high expectations but grew up in a dysfunctional family—a mother who was an unnurturing whiner, an ineffectual father, one brother who was mentally challenged and another who was morally challenged and obsessed with materialism, and a sister who was, to say the least, a disappointment to him. For he was an idealist, an image that southern culture at the time had given him, a figure who had cherished the hope of restoring his family's lost

virtue. Quentin knew of honor and nurtured especially a gallant southern image of women, of ladies, but he was also a modern lad, one exposed to the latest knowledge when his family sacrificed to send him to Harvard University, where he was in school when he took his life, tying flatirons to his feet and jumping off the Anderson Memorial Bridge, into the dark waters of the Charles River.

This gothic story caused the pilgrims to want to delve deeper into trying to understand its meaning by going to the site where Quentin

faced his mortality. The trip was a high-octane one because of big personalities who went. It came about out of the conversations between two long-time friends, federal judge Michael P. Mills and Jimmy Robertson, former University of Mississippi law professor and retired justice on the Mississippi Supreme Court. Both are erudite attorneys by training, well published in not only legal works but literary imaginings and steeped in Faulkner. Both had life-threatening health issues recently, and they seem to



Charles Reagan Wilson (left) and the group of literary pilgrims on the Anderson Memorial Bridge in Cambridge, Massachusetts, commemorating the anniversary of the death of Faulkner's Quentin Compson.



have decided the time is right to engage with passion projects that are of interest to them—with this Faulknerian adventure at the top of the list. Mills explained that Quentin's appeal was that of a "lost boy," representing "a sense of loss and maybe regret, among other feelings, that many southerners feel."

Quentin went to New England by train, and a few of us erstwhile travelers did the same. Mills and I, and Mississippi state senator Hob Bryan from Amory, rode in Mills's pickup truck to Birmingham, then boarded the *Crescent* for the twenty-three-hour trip to New York City. The train was a revelation—clean, great service, good dining car, roomettes to catch some sleep at night, and only a few stops, as we cruised through the Deep South, along the Piedmont and through the eastern South, finally passing through the great cities of Baltimore, Washington, DC, and Philadelphia, putting ourselves back into Quentin's time when he journeyed out of the South. Mills and Bryan have been friends since their early days in the Mississippi state legislature, and I enjoyed getting to know these storytellers. Bryan is well known for his mastery of the legislative process, but on the rail car he revealed his love of theater, sharp wit, and sardonic style.

We spent one night in New York City, and the next morning we went from Penn Station to Boston, spending two nights there in a lovely four-room suite in an old building just around the corner from Little Italy. That neighborhood was a delight, as we heard Italian voices and smelled the aromas of women baking cannoli and other sweet treats. Little Italy was especially relevant to our quest, as Quentin, on the last day of his life, spent much of it wandering around the neighborhood trying to find the family of a lost little girl.

Others by now had joined us, including Judge Mills's wife, Mona, and their two daughters, Alysson and Rebekah, both University of Mississippi graduates, who brought much enthusiasm and some needed youthful perspective to the whole

endeavor; Peyton Prospere, former Mississippi state treasurer and current German consulate to the state; Krystal Walker and Lynn Parker Dupree, both University of Mississippi Law School graduates working in the nation's capital; Philip Meredith, renowned Jackson psychiatrist who teaches at the University of Mississippi Medical Center; Jimmy Robertson and Linda Thompson Robertson (an administrative law judge and artist); and United States senator Roger Wicker.

One pilgrim deserves special mention. Jay Wiener, a Jackson attorney and frequent book reviewer for Mississippi publications, and his family are long-time supporters of the Center, and Jay engaged the Quentin project with both thoughtfulness and enthusiasm. He put together a playlist of train songs to accompany the pilgrim rail travelers and investigated the role of southerners at Harvard in Quentin's time—he found they were not, as Quentin felt, unrepresented at the Ivy League school, whose alumni had long connections to the South, going back to slavery. He also helped oversee the sartorial side of the trip, encouraging us to dress in appropriate Edwardian attire, appropriate to the 1910 date of Quentin's tragedy, with Jay's own suit a spectacular example. Mills added to this aspect of the trip, appointing each of us to wear particular hats, including a classic bowler for one traveler, a newsboy cap for another, a Sherlock Holmesian deerstalker cap for another, and a tweed "pancake" hat for the professors.

The day of the commemoration was a Sunday, and many of us attended services at the Old North Church, glorying in the age of the building, the beauty of the Episcopal service, and the hospitality of the parishioners for a band of Mississippians far from home. That night we had a fine dinner at Commander Hotel in Cambridge and a symposium, in which several of us delivered papers on Faulkner and Quentin, including several Faulkner scholars from the Boston area—John Matthews, Jenna Grace Sciuto, and Thomas Underwood.

We then adjourned to the nearby Charles River Bridge, where I conducted a solemn ceremony, which included readings from the Book of *Absalom, Absalom!* (Roger Wicker) and the Book of *The Sound and the Fury* (Hob Bryan), a pouring of sacramental whiskey shots by Judge Mills, and the sprinkling of rose petals into the Charles River. We had a moment of silence for those people we had known who had taken their lives. I called out a beloved friend of the Center, Ella King Torrey, who had made a memorable impression at Barnard in the early 1980s working on research among Mississippi quilting women.

In 1963 a small plaque had been placed on the Anderson Memorial Bridge over the Charles River, which included the observation that Quentin drowned "in the fading of honeysuckle." The plaque vanished in 1983, but southern-born Harvard students put up another that same year, reading now "Quentin Compson drowned in the odour of honeysuckle. 1891–1910." Our evening ended at that spot, taking photos, thinking of Quentin and the unfortunate college students anywhere who have suffered from the plague of suicide.

Reflecting on this adventure, I think our group was summoning the spirits of Quentin and his Canadian-born college roommate, Shreve McCannon, who, in *Absalom, Absalom!*, tried to recreate and understand the story of antebellum Mississippi planter, Thomas Sutpen. We tried in our conversations and readings in preparations for the trip, and in our ceremonies at Cambridge, to evoke Quentin's story of feeling displaced in time and space, to probe it and keep it alive for us and for any who hear about our journey.

Judge Mills has named our group the Junebug Society, and we continue in conversation, even speculating about another event next June that might touch on issues of life and death, as did Quentin's story. Who knows? But remember, "The third of June, another sleepy, dusty, Delta day. . . ."

# Spreading the Good News

## Mary Amelia Taylor's Return Home and to Alma Mater

Telling the stories of young women who want to improve society is SST MA grad Mary Amelia Taylor's job as associate vice president of marketing and communications at Judson College in Marion, Alabama.

Taylor has been spreading the word about her undergraduate alma mater since 2011, shortly after she graduated with her master's degree in Southern Studies. She started as marketing and web communications specialist, and in 2015 she was named director of marketing and communications. She usually has a camera or pencil in hand, capturing moments and searching for just the right words to show her "love for Judson."

She works closely with all of the college's divisions, especially enrollment, to manage communications and marketing efforts for the college, creates recruitment materials for the college's admissions office, directs an advertising and marketing strategy, and functions as the college's public relations officer, as well as manager of the college's website and official social media accounts. She also supervises two staff members—a graphic designer and a marketing specialist—as they



Mary Amelia Taylor (MA 2011) on the campus of Judson College, where she works today as the college's associate vice president of marketing and communications



create printed materials and digital communications campaigns that support the college's recruitment marketing efforts.

She said Judson is special because of its close-knit community, where faculty and staff actually know their students, not just their names or ID numbers. Judson is a private Baptist women's college and is the fifth-oldest women's college in the United States, founded by members of Siloam Baptist Church in 1838. At that time, formal education for women was rare. Judson was named after Ann Hasseltine Judson, the first female foreign missionary from the United States to Burma.

"Judson is also unique in its mission to equip young women—not just for a career or graduate school, but for purposeful lives, both before and after they graduate," Taylor said. "Through Judson's faith-based service-learning program, students get to know their neighbors in Marion, and they employ their skills or what they're learning in class to meet the needs of those neighbors. I also think Judson is uniquely situated to do that because of its location in the heart of the Alabama Black Belt, a region both rich in complex history and marked by systemic poverty."

Students regularly partner with local entities working to ameliorate the effects and address the root causes of poverty in Perry County, Taylor said.

She earned a BA in English and history from Judson in 2009, and what attracted her then is what attracts students still today. "In addition to strong academics, Judson offered me countless student leadership opportunities and an environment that encouraged me to find a faith that was my own," Taylor said. "It was such a transformative experience for me to be educated in a place that cared about me as a whole person, not just as a warm body in a classroom."

Likewise, the experience she gained in storytelling while a master's student at the Center for the Study of Southern Culture has been

invaluable to her current position. "Daily I'm documenting and sharing what's happening at Judson, and, when I strive to express Judson's brand, I'm constantly exploring legacy, memory, community, and how the present relates to Judson's past," Taylor said.

Those skills were honed while she was writing her 2011 master's thesis "Can't You See the Sun's Settin' Down on Our Town?": Decline, Space, and Community in Frisco City, Alabama." Taylor grew up hearing stories about her hometown of Frisco City, Alabama, and of businesses that used to occupy its now mostly vacant downtown stretch along Alabama's Highway 21. "My dad, family friends, and older relatives would entertain me with stories of things that happened in those spaces, and the 'aftertaste' of almost every story would be a feeling of loss—of the community that once existed downtown, of 'the way things used to be,' of the connections people once felt to those places, which is probably a familiar story for many people who grew up in small towns," Taylor said. "In my thesis I wanted to explore the decline of the downtown area and what I perceived to be a corresponding decline in residents' feelings of connection to their community. I conducted oral history interviews with residents and used rephotography to show the visual changes of the area. Rephotography captures a current scene by copying the perspective of an old photograph. It can be really powerful in showing change over time."

She then collected all of those interviews, photographs, and information about the downtown area on a website organized by building and storefront spaces. Her thesis used all of that information, and some ideas about place and memory, to construct a community history of the downtown area, as well as to explore residents' feelings of disconnection as the spaces where they could create shared memories disappeared.

"Almost every time I go home to Frisco City, I encounter someone

who wants to tell me more stories, so I'm still thinking about my thesis," Taylor said. "This project may never be entirely done, but I don't know that it can or should be! There are lots of old places that are just spots in the road now, and I think it's important to remember them and what happened there."

That's another lesson the field of Southern Studies continues to teach Taylor: no place, recipe, photograph, or musical style is too small or insignificant to study. "I think that even the smallest places can teach us so much about who 'we' are," Taylor said. "I continue to be fascinated by place and all things local, and I'm surrounded by communities in my new home in west-central Alabama that are begging to be studied and shared."

During her time at the University of Mississippi, she came to know the faculty and staff of the Center well. "In addition to allowing you to do important work in almost any area you're passionate about, a Southern Studies degree provides you with a really practical interdisciplinary framework that applies no matter what you do after you graduate," Taylor said. "It's so natural in Southern Studies to explore ideas from multiple angles, but, since I've been away, I've increasingly come to appreciate what a valuable—and rare—perspective an interdisciplinary one is."

How she spends her spare time is also credited to her time in Oxford. "I spend many weekends each year participating in Sacred Harp shape-note singings, a pastime to which I was actually introduced during my tenure in the Southern Studies program," Taylor said. "And as regularly as I can, I also shoot black powder muzzle loading rifles competitively. Otherwise, I might be found reading, sewing, antiquing, gardening, or going on historic home tours."

She will return in October for the tenth anniversary of the first Sacred Harp singing she attended in Taylor, Mississippi.

Rebecca Lauck Cleary

# OUTLAWS AND ARMADILLOS

## *Liam Nieman Spends the Summer at the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum*

If you want to learn about country music, what better way to do that than to spend the summer in Music City, USA? For Liam Nieman, who worked as an intern at the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum in Nashville this past June and July, being immersed in what's known as the "Smithsonian of country music" provided invaluable insight.

Nieman, a senior Southern Studies and English double major in the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College, is planning on writing his honors thesis about country music. As the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum collects, preserves, and interprets the evolving history and traditions of country music through exhibits, publications, and educational programs, and teaches its diverse audiences about the enduring beauty and cultural importance of country music, it was the perfect place for him.

In particular, Nieman is intrigued by how country

Liam Nieman (*third from left, back row*) during his internship at the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum



COURTESY LIAM NIEMAN



## The Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum in Nashville



entertainment cropped up within the context of the suburbs, commercial culture, and the rise of the Christian Right. “I was especially interested in the outlaw country movement in the 1970s and, right now, the museum’s biggest temporary exhibit is ‘Outlaws & Armadillos: Country’s Roaring ’70s,’ so I knew that they had materials on display and cataloged,” said Nieman, who is also Arts and Culture editor of the *Daily Mississippian*.

“Second, I wanted to get some experience in a public history setting and see if that’s something I would be interested in pursuing after graduation. I’ve taught, landscaped, and written for money before, but figured it might be a good idea to see what a desk job is like.”

Luckily, his tasks were not simply to sit at a desk all day. He worked in the school programs department, which is part of the museum’s education department. “The first few weeks there, I studied up on tour materials and shadowed several tours, so that I could give my own tour to students. I also helped with running our other programs, like Dazzling Designs, in which young students design their own guitars/boots, and Songwriting 101, in which students of all ages work with a

professional songwriter/musician to write a song,” Nieman said. “My research was all aimed at improving the experience and expanding the knowledge of our volunteers.”

Additionally, he wrote guides about the Kacey Musgraves and Keith Whitley exhibits, and planned a series of informational articles about important topics in country music to give to volunteers.”

One of the requirements for Honors College students is a senior thesis, so Neiman relished the opportunity to expand his knowledge of country music. He is working on the period from the 1970s to the 1990s, and his research in the archives helped him find many helpful materials. The internship directly affected his studies and gave him a strong foundation in the history of country music.

Being in Tennessee’s capital city was an enlightening experience for the Gretna, Pennsylvania, native. “This was my first time living in a big city,” Nieman said. “I enjoyed how unpredictable routine things like trips to the library and grocery shopping could be.” But the people he met were the true highlight of the summer. “The best parts were the folks I worked with in the school programs department, who were

supportive and trusted me to just run with my curiosity throughout the summer,” Nieman said.

Ella Marie Sullivan, school programs manager at the Country Music Hall of Fame, said museum education is a compelling field because it shares the historical narrative of a specific art form and its relationship with popular culture.

She said Nieman condensed his knowledge clearly and coherently for younger students, and he researched and reframed topics to make them relevant and accessible for the tour guides. Additionally, thanks to that research, she was then able to critically examine the broader strokes of their tour narrative and create more concrete plans about how to make it more inclusive and truthful.

“Liam contributed essential, entertaining content, both directly by delivering gallery tours to summer school groups and indirectly by preparing thorough but appropriate materials for future tour guide training and development,” said Sullivan, an American history graduate of the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill who has worked at the Hall of Fame for two years.

“Specifically, his research about things like black cowboys, Mexican border radio, and Jimmie Rodgers working with Louis and Lillian Armstrong will help us provide diverse students and teachers with a more diverse story of country music. He took feedback well and participated in team activities with germane gusto. We will miss him but know he will find success, professional and patient and persistent as he is.”

*Kathryn Wiener, a Center advisory committee member and resident of Jackson, established the Julian and Kathryn Wiener Endowment to help Southern Studies students who need to travel as part of their internships. This grant funded Nieman’s internship at the Country Music Hall of Fame.*

Rebecca Lauck Cleary



# The Call of Home

## *Jodi Skipper Travels to Ghana to Research Roots Tourism*

Early this year, I received a call from a cousin who wanted to talk to me about traveling to Ghana. He saw a Facebook post announcing my participation in the 2019 Year of Return Trip and Conference in Accra, and thought that I might be able to offer some suggestions. He had already spoken to another cousin who was also planning to go to Ghana this year.

I was intrigued by his choice for Ghana as a first-time trip outside of the US but, at the same time, not surprised. Ghanaian president Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo called for African diasporans to “return” to Ghana. This return commemorates what many mark as the 400th anniversary of the beginning of slavery in what’s now the US, sparked by the landing of twenty or more Africans in Virginia after the British pirated the captives from a Portuguese slave

ship. They arrived at Old Point Comfort (at present-day Hampton Roads) in late August of 1619. Although slavery was not yet institutionalized in Virginia, those who landed were captives and their lives came to manifest the British colony’s transition from indentured servitude to colonial slavery. The roots of Africans in what’s now the US run deeper, yet those details might be less significant to those who see this anniversary as an opportunity to return to a place they imagine as home, a place more welcoming than the one in which they live.

The president’s call is the most explicit contemporary attempt by an African nation to project itself as a safer space for diasporic Africans. As a sign of its commitment, Ghana even grants a right to abode to persons of African descent in the diaspora. The commemoration’s goal

is to get diasporic Africans to return to Ghana and have a transformative experience of connecting with the continent from which they were taken. Events surrounding Ghana’s Year of 2019 included the “Bra Fie” Concert hosted by Damien Marley, son of celebrated reggae artist Bob Marley, in January; a Homecoming and Investment Summit in June; Panafest and Emancipation in July; and an upcoming Ghana Carnival in November and Afrochella in December.

My research is on roots tourism, more specifically African American tourists seeking to connect to ancestral homelands. For many diasporans, that homeland is an imagined, or essentialized idea of Africa; for others, it is a connection to a specific group newly realized through DNA evidence from genetic genealogy companies like African Ancestry,





COURTESY JODI SKIPPER

Bamileke DNA cousins uniting at the One Africa Health Resort

designed to trace ancestry back to a specific present-day African country and ethnic group of origin. I study African diasporans as roots tourists to sites of slavery in the US and, for the past several years have traveled to West and Central Africa to get a better sense of what roots tourism looks like on the continental side. This commemoration year was a rare opportunity for me

to participate in and observe this phenomenon on a magnified scale.

I wanted to tell my cousin how complicated that I think this return is, but knew that it would not solve his need to find a place in which he felt like he belonged. As a Black American, I know all too well what it means to be in and of a place, but not loved by it. I met several folks on my own trip who found that love,

and some healing from the trauma of slavery, on the African continent. The conference co-chairs, Drs. Lisa Aubrey (Arizona State University) and George Agbango (Bloomsburg University), not only wanted us to share our research but to experience Sankofa, an Akan-derived process of return. Sankofa teaches that we must go back to our roots in order to move forward. That is, we should reach back and gather the best of what our past has to teach us, so that we can achieve our full potential. It is expressed as a mythic bird that flies forward while looking backward with an egg in its mouth, symbolizing the future. To stress that significance, an altar with a yellow Sankofa bird with a black egg in its mouth fronted the main conference hall. Those colors, in addition to red and green, signify Pan-Africanist ideologies. We were each asked to take a stone from that altar, literally taking something back with us, with an expectation that we would take what we learned to help us, and Africa, move forward.

We lived Sankofa through the experiences of diasporans who settled in Ghana, like Jerry Johnson, an ex-pat from the US who created the African Ancestral Wall to aid local Ghanaian students in learning world African history. The wall includes over ninety large, painted portraits of freedom fighters, intellectuals, states people, and entertainers across Africa and its Black diaspora. It includes three Mississippians: Ida B. Wells-Barnett, Fannie Lou Hamer, and B. B. King. It was nice to see them honored in a space where I spent some time convincing folks that Mississippi is much more complicated than they know.

We traveled to African diasporic sites including Cape Coast castle and dungeons, where we honored those once enslaved there. We packed our fifty and some odd selves into rooms on floors of accumulated human waste, packed solid. Some



DELBERT RICHARDSON

Jodi Skipper (*third from right*) at a Cape Coast dungeon ceremony with a local priest

*continued on page 24*

dungeons were reserved for enslaved people who physically fought back; rooms with no windows and no air circulation. They were sent there to die. I pondered the sheer horror of separate holding cells for enslaved women who refused to be raped by their enslavers.

I'd been to Gorée Island in Senegal, but not with forty-nine other descendants of enslaved people. I don't yet have the words to describe the energy in those spaces, but I now see the value in being there in concert with other descendants of enslaved Africans, searching for healing, comradeship, and a better understanding of something too horrific to be understood. We renewed our minds and spirits with a liberation and cleansing ritual at the One Africa Health Resort in Elmina, led by Seestah IMAHKÜS Njinga Okofu Ababio, an African American activist who repatriated to Ghana with her husband Nana Okofo Iture Kwaku I Ababio in the 1990s.

At the conference, I heard a wealth of talks, ranging from the African domestic and transatlantic slave trades, to Belizean maroon communities, to Afrofuturism. I shared my research on slavery and the culture of tourism in Mississippi. I visited Kwame Nkrumah's mausoleum and W. E. B. Du Bois's former home. I took in the calm and busyness of the countryside on my trip to Kumasi, the cultural capital of the Asante people. I listened. I learned. I plan to take what I've learned, and that lived experience of Sankofa, into the classroom and into my research. I also hope that what I've shared here inspires others to travel to Africa, our human home, literally or in spirit, and gather what it can teach us about ourselves, and move forward.

Jodi Skipper



# *Study the South* Publishes New Essay on Food Power in Mississippi by Bobby J. Smith II

Most studies of Mississippi during the American civil rights era focus almost exclusively on the strategies and tactics of proponents of the movement in response to white resistance and violence. Lunch counter sit-ins in Jackson, marches in the Delta, demonstrations in Oxford, and boycotts in the southwest and southeast regions of the state are often rehearsed when people learn about the Mississippi movement. While these studies extend our understanding of the struggle for civil rights in the state, they simultaneously limit our understanding of white resistance to the movement.

MISSISSIPPI'S WAR AGAINST THE WAR ON POVERTY



FOOD POWER, HUNGER, AND WHITE SUPREMACY

This resistance took many forms, and local, state, and national actors in Mississippi used “food power”—the use of food as a weapon or an element of power—to maintain white supremacy and undermine the civil rights movement. In this new *Study the South* essay, “Mississippi’s War against the War on Poverty: Food Power, Hunger, and White Supremacy,” Bobby J. Smith II transposes the concept of food power into the context of local politics and inequality in the Mississippi civil rights era to interrogate how these actors converged to use food as a weapon to stabilize what they saw as a civil rights crisis.

Bobby J. Smith II is a sociologist and currently a Chancellor’s Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department of African American Studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He has a Bachelor of Science degree in agriculture, with a focus on agricultural economics from Prairie View A&M University (2011), and he earned a Master of Science degree in agricultural economics in 2013 and a PhD in development sociology in 2018 from Cornell University. His research focuses on the relationship between food justice, agriculture, race, and inequality in historical and contemporary contexts. He was the 2018 recipient of the *Study the South* Fellowship sponsored by the Center for the Study of Southern Culture and the Department of Archives and Special Collections at the University of Mississippi. Research for this essay was supported in part by the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, and the Medgar and Myrlie Evers Institute.

Visit [www.studythesouth.com](http://www.studythesouth.com) to read Smith’s and other essay in the journal.



# Making and Unmaking Mass Incarceration Conference

Thanks to the work of the previous Rethinking Mass Incarceration in the South Conferences of 2014 and 2016, and the innovative Prison-to-College-Pipeline Program, the University of Mississippi is becoming a leader in critical prison studies and higher education in prisons. The Making and Unmaking Mass Incarceration Conference will bring together nationally recognized scholars, activists, policymakers, lawyers, and students at the University of Mississippi on December 4–6, 2019, to better understand the history of mass incarceration and current efforts to reduce our society's reliance on prisons. Attendees will be able to learn from leading scholars and activists, connect with others doing similar work in the state and across the country, and build bridges to their own communities.

The guiding principle of the conference is constructive collaboration across various disciplinary, regional, and institutional divides to help create a future in which prisons are not our society's answer to social and economic problems. This effort will connect the growing work around higher education in prisons, legal advocacy, documentary storytelling, and the humanities while deepening extant partnerships and creating new ones. The conference calls for a collaborative approach to decarceration in which scholarship and activism directly inform one another.

The conference will create a generative space for scholars and activists who are working to end the crisis of mass incarceration to share strategies, build networks, and imagine new forms of struggle. These exchanges will be made public through live streaming. The conference will bring student and faculty delegations from universities and colleges around the country while providing financial assistance for activists, graduate students, and formerly incarcerated people to attend.

A component of the conference is the traveling art exhibition *Art on the Inside*, which will be on display during the month of December in the Gammill Gallery in Barnard Observatory. The works were produced by students who have taken pre-college art classes in the Alabama Prison Arts + Education Project. *Art on the Inside* is the result of the Moreau College Initiative, a collaboration between students at Westville Correctional Facility the University of Notre Dame and Holy Cross College. The collection consists of drawings, photographs, and poems, which tangibly represent ideas such as memory, identity, abstraction, representation, and personhood.

The Making and Unmaking Mass Incarceration Conference is organized by the University of Mississippi's



***Memories and Time* (9.75" x 14.75"), by KC, will be in the *Art on the Inside* exhibition in Gammill Gallery during the month of December.**

Arch Dalrymple III Department of History with support from the Center for the Study of Southern Culture.

*Please check the Center's website, [southernstudies.olemiss.edu](http://southernstudies.olemiss.edu), for more information and the full schedule. All events will be held at the University of Mississippi's Overby Center for Southern Journalism unless otherwise specified.*

# Twenty-Seventh Oxford Conference for the Book

University of Mississippi • Oxford, Mississippi

April 1–3, 2020

The Twenty-Seventh Oxford Conference for the Book (OCB) is set for April 1–3, 2020, to bring together fiction and nonfiction writers, journalists, poets, publishers, teachers, and students for three days of readings, lectures, panels, workshops, and social events that celebrate the written word.

The schedule has not been released, but the complete program will soon be posted on the Center's website. The conference is open



to the public without charge.  
Reservations and advance payment

will be required for the opening-night reception, however.

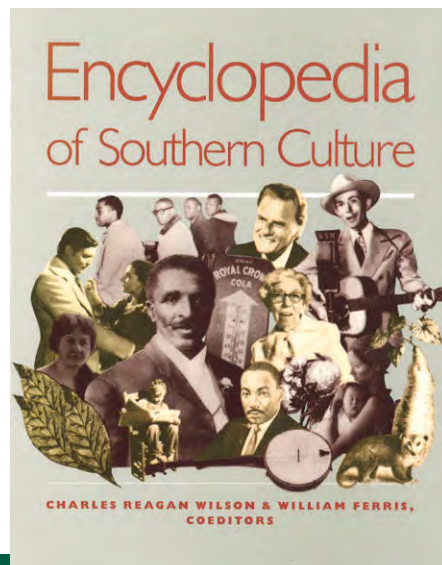
The next *Southern Register* will have a detailed schedule, a complete list of authors, and more information about programs. For up-to-the-minute information, call 662-915-3374, visit [www.oxfordconferenceforthebook.com](http://www.oxfordconferenceforthebook.com), “like” the OCB on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/OxfordConferencefortheBook](http://www.facebook.com/OxfordConferencefortheBook), or email conference director James G. Thomas, Jr. at [jgthomas@olemiss.edu](mailto:jgthomas@olemiss.edu).

## Come celebrate the 30th anniversary of the *Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*!

On November 13, 2019, the Center and UNC Press are teaming up to throw a party in celebration of the thirtieth anniversary of the original *Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*. There will be a premier of a short documentary on the encyclopedia, produced by the Center's Southern Documentary Project, along with music, food, and merriment!

**This event will be free and open to the public.**

To receive the invitation, please email Afton Thomas at [amthoma4@olemiss.edu](mailto:amthoma4@olemiss.edu), and visit the Center's website, [southernstudies.olemiss.edu](http://southernstudies.olemiss.edu), for updates and information.





# Southern Studies Filmmakers Share Works at Memphis Film Event

Southern Documentary Project filmmakers Rex Jones, Andrea Morales, and John Rash were joined by recent Southern Studies MFA graduate Mary Stanton Knight for a panel presentation entitled “Shoot & Splice: Southern Music Documentaries” in June.

Presented by Indie Memphis, Shoot & Splice is a monthly event held at the Crosstown Arts Concourse that connects filmmakers and arts to community members. The Southern Music Documentaries panelists discussed various aspects of producing music documentaries, from building relationships with



musicians to representing diversity in music in the South.

Photographer and producer

Morales moderated the panel that featured clips from films by Jones (*Beautiful Jim*), Knight (*Singing Out*), and Rash (*Negro Terror*). Each panel member discussed the themes of sexuality, gender equality, and community activism that appear in each of the three films.

Audience members were able to interact with the filmmakers and pose questions during the Q&A offered at the end of the panel. The event offered the panelists the ability to showcase their own work in addition to talking about SouthDocs and the Center’s MFA in Documentary Expression program.



ANDY HARPER

(Left to right): Rex Jones, Mary Stanton Knight, John Rash, and Andrea Morales talk about making southern music documentaries at Indie Memphis’s monthly Shoot & Splice event.

# Next Volume in Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha Series Published

## *Faulkner and Money*

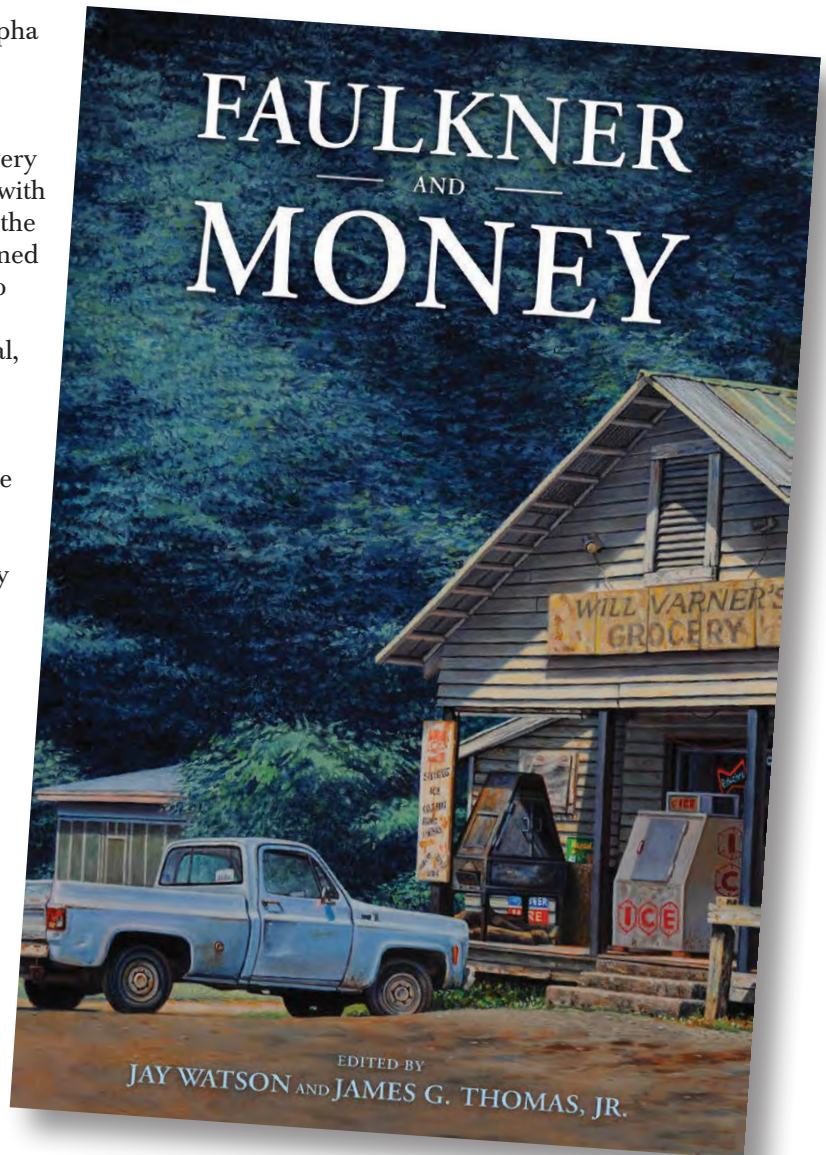
Edited by Jay Watson and James G. Thomas, Jr.

The new volume in the Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha Series, *Faulkner and Money* (University Press of Mississippi, June 2019), is a thorough assay of the Nobel Laureate through the lens of lucre.

The matter of money touches a writer's life at every point—in the need to make ends meet; in dealings with agents, editors, publishers, and bookstores; and in the choice of subject matter and the minutiae of imagined worlds. William Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha was no exception. The people and communities he wrote about stayed deeply entangled in personal, national, and even global networks of industry, commerce, and finance, as did the author himself. Faulkner's economic biography often followed—but occasionally bucked—the tumultuous economic trends of the twentieth century. The Faulkner met within these pages is among modern literature's most incisive and encyclopedic critics of what one contemporary theorist calls “the madness of economic reason.”

*Faulkner and Money* brings together a distinguished group of scholars to explore the economic contexts of Faulkner's life and work, to follow the proverbial money toward new insights into the Nobel Laureate and new questions about his art. Essays in this collection address economies of debt and gift giving in *Intruder in the Dust*; the legacies of commodity fetishism in *Sanctuary* and of twentieth-century capitalism's financial turn in *The Town*; the pegging of self-esteem to financial acumen in the career of *The Sound and the Fury*'s Jason Compson; the representational challenges posed by poverty and failure in Faulkner's Frenchman's Bend tales; the economics of regional readership and the Depression-era literary market; the aesthetic, monetary, and psychological rewards of writing for Hollywood; and the author's role as benefactor to an aspiring African American college student in the 1950s.

UM English Department Howry Professor of Faulkner Studies and professor of English Jay Watson and Center associate director for publications James G. Thomas, Jr. edited the volume, and included in this book are contributions by Ted Atkinson, Gloria J. Burgess, David A. Davis, Sarah E. Gardner,



Richard Godden, Ryan Heryford, Robert Jackson, Gavin Jones, Mary A. Knighton, Peter Lurie, John T. Matthews, Myka Tucker-Abramson, Michael Wainwright, Jay Watson, and Michael Zeitlin. Watson directs the annual Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha Conference, from which the volume draws its scholarship. “Faulkner and Money” was the subject of the 2017 conference.



# Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha 2020

“Faulkner’s Modernisms” • July 19–23, 2020

Could anything be more uncontroversial than to identify William Faulkner as a modernist writer? And yet—in a contemporary moment characterized by the renewal, expansion, diversification, and general flourishing of modernist studies scholarship, we can no longer take for granted what that modernism was, is, or might have been, or in what it might have inherited. *Where* was Faulkner’s modernism—amidst what competing or nested geographies of modernity should we locate it? *When* was that modernism—how should we periodize it? Within or against what temporal scales? Were there specific periods or texts when Faulkner *wasn’t* a modernist, or when he was *no longer* one, and if so, what exactly was he then, how can we tell, and what might that mean for a better understanding of his work? Which literary, artistic, or intellectual contemporaries, precursors, or successors best illuminate what Faulkner’s modernism was, and wasn’t? And what new approaches to modernist aesthetics might be generated by taking Faulkner as Exhibit A? What did the modernization process, the modernizing of his various worlds, look like to Faulkner? Sound like? Feel like? And how might the new questions raised, conceptual tools employed, and cultural contexts highlighted by “new modernist studies” scholarship help shed light on these and other issues? The forty-seventh annual Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha conference will take up the venerable but also excitingly new question of Faulkner’s literary and other modernism(s). Topics might include but are not limited to:

- Faulkner’s place and achievement amidst “high,” “middlebrow,” “pop,” “pulp,” “mass,” or other print modernisms
- racial and ethnic modernisms/modernities in, against, or around Faulkner
- Faulkner’s writings as a window onto the modernity of chattel slavery, Jim Crow segregation, mass incarceration, and their concomitant modernisms
- Faulkner’s Hollywood work in the context of aesthetic and/or cinematic modernisms
- Faulkner’s creative life and work in the context of “media-made” modernisms
- Faulkner in light of other material modernities or modernisms
- modernist perception, the modernized sensorium, and Faulkner
- epistemologies or ontologies of Faulknerian modernism
- “melancholy,” “sensational,” or other affective modernisms in Faulkner
- the modernization of gender in/and Faulkner; the gender of Faulknerian modernity
- the modern/modernized/modernist family in Faulkner; modern/ist childhood, the modern/ist child
- rural modernization in Faulkner’s life and writings; the modernity of Yoknapatawpha County
- regional, national, transnational, global, or planetary scales of modernity in and around Faulkner’s work
- environmental modernization or “ecological” modernism as a Faulknerian problematic
- Faulkner’s modernism from/in Anthropocene perspective
- the modernization of politics in Faulkner’s life and world

The program committee especially encourages full panel proposals for 60-minute conference sessions. Such proposals should include a one-page overview of the session topic or theme, followed by 400-500-word abstracts for each of the panel papers to be included. We also welcome individually submitted 400-500-word abstracts for 15-20-minute panel papers. Panel papers consist of approximately 2,500 words and will be considered by the conference program committee for possible expansion and inclusion in the conference volume published by the University Press of Mississippi.

Session proposals and panel paper abstracts must be submitted by January 31, 2020, preferably through email attachment. All manuscripts, proposals, abstracts, and inquiries should be addressed to Jay Watson, Department of English, C-135 Bondurant Hall, University of Mississippi, PO Box 1848, University, MS 38677-1848. Email: [jwatson@olemiss.edu](mailto:jwatson@olemiss.edu). Decisions for all submissions will be made by March 15, 2020.

# Eudora Welty Awards Presented at Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha Conference

Each year the Center for the Study of Southern Culture presents the Eudora Welty Awards in Creative Writing to Mississippi high school students during the Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha Conference. Established and endowed by the late Frances Patterson of Tupelo, the awards are given for creative writing in either prose or poem form. In addition to a cash prize, each winner also receives a copy of *The Mississippi Encyclopedia*.

This year's first-place winner is Helen Peng from the Mississippi School for Math and Science in Columbus for the poem "China Man." The judges enjoyed her vivid color imagery and felt she was quite sophisticated in the way she told the story in an abbreviated manner.

This year's second-place winner is Chloe Russell from the Mississippi School for the Arts in Brookhaven for her short story "Tell Me I'm Pretty." The judges felt her story showed exceptional maturity and conveyed her message in a restrained manner. They also enjoyed the unusual use of the narrator speaking directly to the subject, showing an innovative use of structure and voice.

The Center for the Study of Southern Culture congratulates this year's winners on their success and encourages them to continue writing.

Chloe Russell



REBECCA LAUCK CLEARY

## CONTRIBUTORS

**Brett J. Bonner** is editor of *Living Blues*.

**Steve Cheseborough** is an independent scholar, blues musician, and Southern Studies MA graduate. His work has been published in *Living Blues*, *Blues Access*, *Mississippi*, and the *Southern Register*.

**Rebecca Lauck Cleary** is the Center's communications specialist.

**Joan Wylie Hall** is a lecturer in the English Department at the University of Mississippi. She is the author of *Shirley Jackson: Studies in Short Fiction* and the editor of *Conversations with Audre Lorde* and *Conversations with Natasha Trethewey*. Her work has also

been published in numerous journals such as *Legacy: A Journal of American Women Writers*, *Mississippi Quarterly*, *Faulkner Journal*, and the *Eudora Welty Review*.

**Katie McKee** is the director of the Center for the Study of Southern Culture and McMullan Professor of Southern Studies and English.

**Jodi Skipper** is associate professor of anthropology and Southern Studies at the University of Mississippi.

**Charles Reagan Wilson** was the Kelly Gene Cook Sr. Chair of History and Professor of Southern Studies at the University of Mississippi, and director of the Center for the Study of Southern Culture from 1998 to 2007.



# READING THE SOUTH

Book Reviews and Notes by Faculty, Staff, Students, and Friends of the Center for the Study of Southern Culture

## *Charley Patton: Voice of the Mississippi Delta*

Edited by Robert Sacré, with foreword by William Ferris. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2018. 256 pages. \$90.00 cloth, \$30.00 paperback.

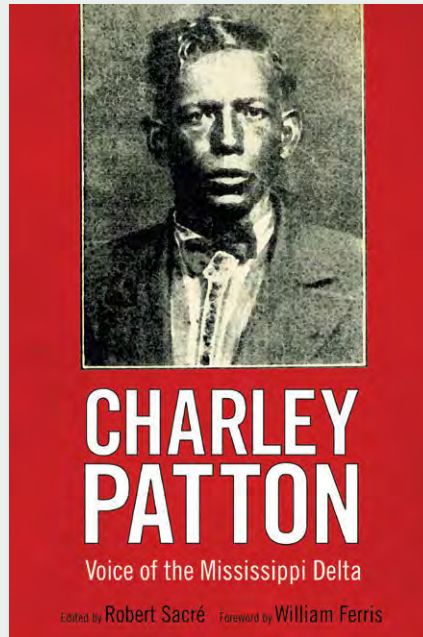
## *Up Jumped the Devil: The Real Life of Robert Johnson*

By Bruce Conforth and Gayle Dean Wardlow. Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2019. 336 pages. \$30.00 cloth, \$19.99 ebook.

Charley Patton was the dominant figure of Mississippi Delta blues in the 1920s and '30s. Robert Johnson was a promising younger musician who came along later and died young. From the 1960s on, though, their statures reversed in the popular mind: Johnson became celebrated as the "King of the Delta Blues" and even "Father of Rock 'n' Roll" with a suggestion of devil worship mixed in. His legend got into movies and his face onto postage stamps while rock stars covered his songs. Meanwhile, Patton was ignored or acknowledged only as some primitive forefather to Johnson and other blues artists.

Two new books shed light on the lives and music of these two fascinating and brilliant figures.

The new Patton book is an expanded and updated version of one originally published in 1987, in French, by a Belgian university



press. It was a compilation of the papers and talks from an academic conference on Patton held in 1984, the fiftieth anniversary of his death.

The book's centerpiece is "Charley Patton: The Conscience of the Delta," a 116-page article by David Evans. Evans, an ethnomusicologist and musician, denies that his article is a biography, although it does include pretty much all the known information about Patton's life, drawn from interviews, public records, and earlier research. And quite a life it was—Patton was a star with terrific musical-sexual power. An overseer ran Patton off Dockery Plantation for breaking up families—women would leave their husbands and follow Patton wherever he went.

Another striking aspect of Patton is that he mentioned individual white people in song, and not always favorably, while living in the rigid Jim Crow South.

Of mixed black/white/Native American ethnicity, Patton's family was considered black, yet was fairly well off. Charley's father, Bill Patton,

rented land and sublet it to other sharecroppers, and also ran a timber business and sandwich shop on the plantation. Charley may have worked timber in his youth, which would have helped him develop a touring circuit. He played jook joints, as well as parties for blacks and whites. Patton made fifty to a hundred dollars a week, while sharecroppers around him were lucky to clear \$200 a year. He dressed well and drove late-model cars.

The book also provides clues to his personality—Patton was probably not the argumentative, self-centered drunk other writers have made him out to be, but was well liked and respected.

The "conscience of the Delta" concept comes from the content of Patton's songs, which Evans analyzes in detail. Several of them describe and interpret community issues: "Mean Black Moan" is about a Chicago railroad strike. "Dry Well Blues" is about a drought that affected Lula and especially its black community. The epic "High Water Everywhere" parts 1 and 2, generally assumed to be a continuation of the same story, actually refer to two different floods: the great Mississippi River flood of 1927 and a January 1930 flood in Arkansas that was deemed minor in news reports but that Patton shows us otherwise.

The Evans essay fills in much detail and gives us a pretty good picture of what life was like for this bluesman. At one point Patton was living in Memphis and advertising himself as a guitar teacher! The only major unexplained thing about Patton is where his remarkable guitar technique comes from—even though Evans is an accomplished guitarist, he does not tackle that question.

Evans's shorter essay at the end of the book, "Mississippi Blues Today

and Its Future,” is a great update and explanation of Mississippi blues as distinct from mainstream blues.

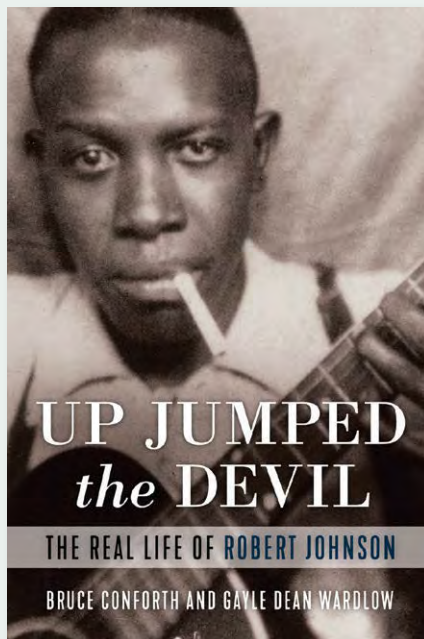
Of the other articles in the Patton book: Mike Rowe’s “The Influence of the Mississippi Delta Style on Chicago’s Postwar Blues” is interesting but really has nothing to do with Patton. He delineates how Mississippi Delta blues was a strong influence in Chicago for only a brief period, and Chicago blues extends before and after that without the Delta styling.

Part of Jim O’Neal’s “Modern Chicago Blues: Delta Retentions” does deal with Patton. He explains why Johnson’s star has risen higher: the crossroads myth, the movie based on it, the re-releases of his work, the covers by other artists, and his musical style, which adapts easily to electric bands while “Patton’s music, on the other hand, was all but inimitable.”

For all the mythology and hype connected with Robert Johnson in recent decades, there had been no full-length biography until now. And this book, by two veteran blues researchers, purports to be the ultimate—they admit in the introduction that it is unlikely to be the last book on Johnson, but they say it is also unlikely that any new information will come to light. It draws from everything else written about this elusive artist, along with original research through public documents and interviews.

After the introduction, though, the book starts off with a sensational scene that suggests the authors might be looking for a screenplay contract: a woman who recalls Johnson coming to town and she and other decent young women being ordered to stay inside. Sure, Johnson was a womanizer, but really? Hide your daughters? Instead of a devil worshipper he’s a different kind of demon now?

The book gets better as it details Johnson’s childhood with its changing cast of adults and locales. It emphasizes the importance of Memphis, which had good schools



even for black children, and a diverse music scene. Even though Johnson lived in Memphis only until age nine, that background may have distinguished him from his peers when he moved to the Delta.

Johnson gets credit for being more accomplished than usually depicted before his humiliation in a Robinsonville jook joint. He was somewhat of a pro before that, already studying and gigging. But after that experience (the crowd booed him out when he played during the regular musicians’ break) is when nineteen-year-old Johnson began studying and practicing much more earnestly. He traveled back to his hometown, Hazlehurst, and apprenticed with an accomplished older guitarist, Ike Zimmerman. Johnson also married for the second time during this period, to an older woman who apparently financed his musical education. And, with a different woman, he fathered Claude Johnson, who would become the heir to his estate many years later. Conforth and Wardlow cover this crucial period of Johnson’s life well. But then—another part of the movie pitch?—they have Zimmerman accompanying Johnson back to the Delta, pushing him to compete with his old rivals at the jook joint and saying, “I taught you.” Would

Zimmerman, with his family, day job, and local music practice, really follow his young student to the Delta? And would he not say something more gracious than “I taught you” even if he did?

Even to casual fans, Robert Johnson’s death at age twenty-seven has long been fascinating. Murdered by a jealous husband while playing at a jook joint, via a poisoned drink of moonshine—it’s almost a stereotype of a bluesman’s death. In this book, however, it’s an “accidental murder.” The man who caught Johnson having an affair with his wife only meant to give Robert some tummy trouble by dosing his liquor—with mothballs, these authors say. But Johnson had an underlying medical condition that led to the lethal reaction to that little prank.

There is also some nonsense about Johnson being the first blues guitarist to move out of first position and use the whole fretboard—surely the authors have heard Patton, whose hands moved all over the guitar, as well as Blind Lemon Jefferson, Blind Blake, Bo Carter, and Lonnie Johnson, all of whom preceded Robert Johnson on record as virtuoso blues guitarists?

They also won’t let go of the crossroads myth. The authors don’t say Johnson believed in or claimed any connection to the devil, but they spend several pages going into the myth and other blues artists’ connections to it.

The book is at its best when it avoids the sensational and describes ordinary details of the great artist’s life: his relationship with teacher Zimmerman, with girlfriend Virgie Smith, and with his family. There is a touching message Johnson wrote on a postcard, sounding literate and normal, not like a crazed bluesman: “My dear sister, Hope you are okay. I will be home soon. Tell all hello. I haven’t wrote Louis. Sorry, but haven’t had time. Tell mother I wrote you. Yours truly, Robert Johnson.”

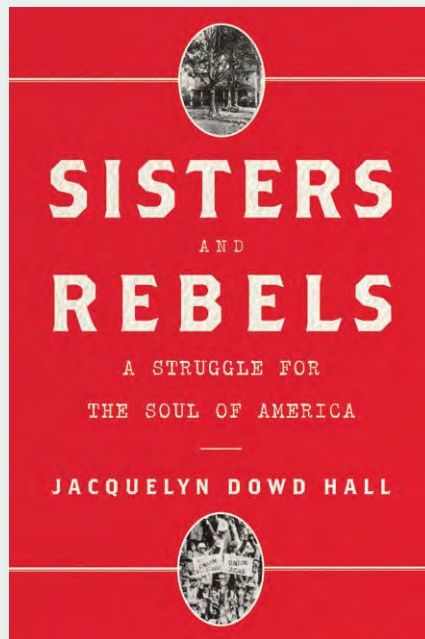
Steve Cheseborough



## *Sisters and Rebels: A Struggle for the Soul of America.*

By Jacquelyn Dowd Hall. New York: W. W. Norton, 2019. 690 pages. \$39.95 cloth.

Born in Georgia between 1881 and 1897, the three Lumpkin “sisters and rebels” were affected for life by their parents’ Confederate patriotism and Old South nostalgia. A descendent of slave owners, William Wallace Lumpkin had volunteered as a fifteen-year-old courier near the end of the Civil War; a decade later, he married Annette Morris, a nineteen-year-old schoolteacher whose father apparently died in the Confederate Intelligence Service early in the conflict. William became active in the United Confederate Veterans and the Ku Klux Klan; Annette joined the United Daughters



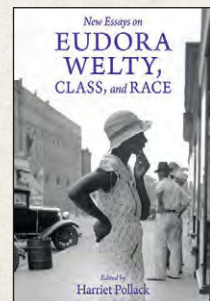
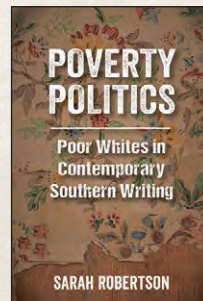
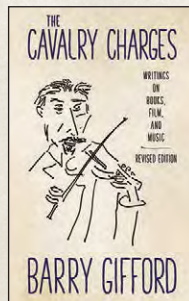
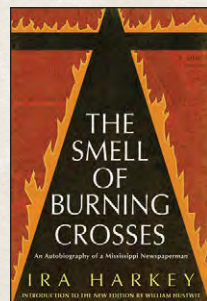
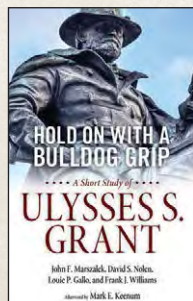
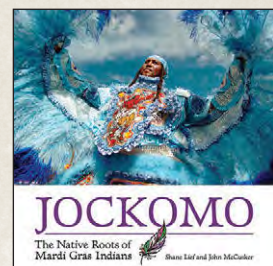
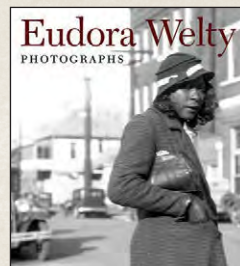
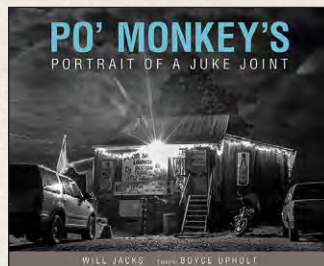
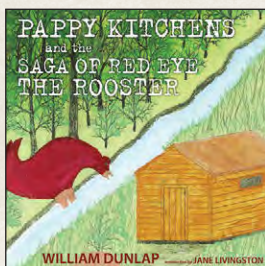
of the Confederacy. Historian Jacquelyn Dowd Hall quotes William Lumpkin on the domestic education of his three daughters and their four brothers: “Their mother teaches them their prayers; I teach

them to love the Lost Cause.” Hall notes the “equation of private religious instruction with Civil War commemoration,” characterizing the Lost Cause as “a patriarchal as well as a white supremacist project.” She cites the autobiographical *The Making of a Southerner* (1946), by the youngest daughter, Katharine Du Pre Lumpkin, to emphasize William Lumpkin’s forcefulness in “impregnating our lives with some of his sense of strong mission.” Not all of the siblings, however, accepted their father’s mission as their own.

The culmination of decades of research in special collections from the Consumers Union Archive in Yonkers, New York, to the Archives of the Episcopal Church in Austin, Texas, *Sisters and Rebels* traces the fascinating development of female resistance to the lessons of the Confederate home. With almost two hundred pages of notes and bibliography grouped at the back, the narrative is streamlined; at the same



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time, some readers will be frustrated by the challenge of identifying a source when a single note might list multiple primary and secondary entries. Hall's story is worth this frustration. The drama expressed by the subtitle, the "struggle for the soul of America," did not end with the Civil War, Reconstruction, or even the Jim Crow era. Through the twentieth century, the struggle continued in the lives of the Lumpkin sisters and the nation. By the end of the volume, Jacquelyn Dowd Hall introduces so many defiant women that the phrase "sisters and rebels" finally applies to a host of female teachers and scholars, laborers in factories and mills, journalists, and philanthropists. These include Ella May Wiggins, who wrote stirring strike ballads, organized both black and white textile workers, and was shot to death at the age of twenty-nine; Dorothy Wolff Douglas, a professor and labor historian who lived with Katharine Lumpkin for several years and protested the House Un-American Activities Committee on the Capitol steps; Juliette Derricotte, an African American debater and Talladega College valedictorian who challenged racial inequities in the Young Women's Christian Association; and Myra Page, whose memoir describes her work in the Soviet Union for "the worldwide underground movement against the fascists."

Drawn to liberal politics and leftist feminism, Katharine Lumpkin and her middle sister Grace answered the call to activism during such crises as the Sacco and Vanzetti trial; labor strikes in Passaic, New Jersey, and Gastonia, North Carolina; the Scottsboro case; the Depression and the New Deal; the Spanish Civil War; the two "Red Scares"; and the civil rights movement. Although Grace Lumpkin later repudiated her socialistic sympathies, she moved to New York in the 1920s, married and divorced a Jewish man, and wrote proletarian fiction. Her best-known novel, *To Make My Bread*, won the Maxim Gorky Prize for Literature in 1932 and was inspired by Ella May

Wiggins and the Gastonia textile strikes. Katharine Lumpkin earned a doctorate in sociology from the University of Wisconsin, moved to New England, and published studies on child labor, family roles, delinquency, and workers' displacement. Hall compares Katharine Lumpkin's memoir *The Making of a Southerner* to her final book, *The Emancipation of Angelina Grimke* (1974), an early biography of the abolitionist and women's rights activist who—with her sister Sarah—became estranged from their prosperous Charleston, South Carolina, family and led very public lives in the North. The last photograph in *Sisters and Rebels* pictures Katharine Lumpkin in conversation with Jacquelyn Hall in the early 1980s. Like Hall's extensive work with archives and oral histories, her personal interviews with Grace and especially with Katharine were crucial resources for this study.

The domestic education of the Lumpkin children included daily oral readings from John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* and the Bible, as well as books by Dickens and Zola that Hall links to Grace Lumpkin's career as a class-conscious journalist and novelist. William Lumpkin's influence seems likely for the siblings' recitations from Thomas Nelson Page's Robert E. Lee biography and from Thomas Dixon's racist Reconstruction fiction. Elizabeth, the oldest Lumpkin sister, remained most faithful to her Confederate rebel training. Second in fame only to Jefferson Davis's daughter Varina Ann as the belle of Confederate reunions, Elizabeth was married in 1905 at an extravagant "Confederate wedding" with an honor guard of elderly veterans, much like the ceremony Grace Lumpkin scathingly depicts in her novel *The Wedding* (1939). Yet, the oratorically gifted Elizabeth held a college professorship in speech in her early twenties, and she opened a law practice in her fifties. Like her mother Annette, Elizabeth was also a generous volunteer for many civic causes; but Hall emphasizes that

these efforts—such as canteens for white soldiers in World War I and a small library for black residents of Asheville, North Carolina—were "premised on segregation."

When Hall asked Katharine Lumpkin why she rejected this fundamental principle of her Confederate upbringing, Lumpkin commented on her 1920s collaborations with other YWCA reformers. She agreed that Social Christianity supplied a "basic motivation and justification for our rebellion against the gross inhumanities we saw in ourselves and those around us." But, Lumpkin placed a greater emphasis on the racial violence she witnessed years earlier in her childhood home, when she overheard the family cook cry out at William Lumpkin's beating. As the 690 pages of *Sisters and Rebels* reveal, many other factors were at work in the emancipation of Grace and Katharine Lumpkin, including their early education at Brenau, a Georgia women's college where both sisters took leadership roles. Like their sister Elizabeth, Grace and Katharine became skillful speakers. When Katharine discussed her autobiography with northern audiences in the late 1940s, says Hall, she emphasized that "the white supremacy system" is "not merely a Southern phenomenon" but a national one. Yet, several postwar social developments, including black militancy, gave Lumpkin hope for the future. Appropriately, Hall's first epigraph for *Sisters and Rebels* comes from Toni Morrison's *Beloved*: "Me and you, we got more yesterdays than anybody. We need some kind of tomorrow."

Joan Wylie Hall





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# Toni Morrison

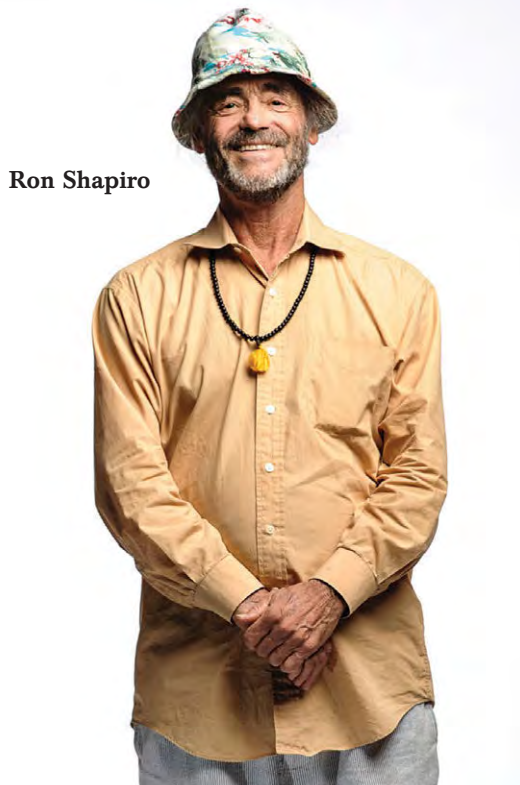
1931–2019

In William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*, Quentin Compson explains the South to his puzzled Canadian roommate by telling him "you would have to be born there." No American writer more clearly disproves that place-bound theory than Toni Morrison. Born in Ohio, Morrison wrote expansively about the experiences of black Americans, but she couldn't do that without writing, over and over again, about the US South. In class, I use the example of Morrison's fiction to challenge students' ideas about who counts as a southern author and what constitutes southern fiction, encouraging them to see "the South" as a moving piece of the American puzzle that matters beyond questions of simple geography. Morrison's slim volume of criticism, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*, undergirds every conversation we have in class about race and literature. Her work pushes us all to see more clearly how fiction reflects and intercedes in the world around it, and the varied body of writing she produced substantially enriches what we understand about "the South."

Katie McKee



Toni Morrison



Ron Shapiro

BRUCE NEWMAN

# Ron Shapiro

1943–2019

This August 19, the Center for the Study of Southern Culture, the city of Oxford, and the state of Mississippi lost one of its dearest friends, Ron Shapiro, an eternal ambassador of Mississippi's arts and culture. In the 1970s, '80s, and '90s, "Ronzo," as he was known to his many friends, owned and operated Oxford's first and funkiest arthouse movie theater/café, the Hoka, and he was a perennial attendee of the Center's lectures, our music conferences and performances, and the Oxford Conference for the Book. He possessed an unmatched kindness of spirit and a welcoming nature that drew people not only to him, but to Oxford and to the university. He will be missed in immeasurable ways by all who knew him. A celebration of his life is planned for November 1 in Oxford.



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