INTRODUCTION

Old/New/Post/Real/Global/No South
Paradigms and Scales

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This book explores how an eclectic range of narratives and images of the American South have been created and consumed—indeed, often created for consumption. However, the contributors also seek to move beyond both traditional southernist and more recent postmodernist understandings of how, when, where, and why the American South has been created and consumed. The thirteen essays in this volume reorient our attention to the ways in which ideas and stories about “the South” and “southernness” have social and material effects that register on various local, regional, national, and transnational scales.

As an academic field in which even constituent disciplines like history and literary studies have often remained separate, U.S. southern studies traditionally has cohered around and returned to certain well-worn themes like “southern distinctiveness.” This has involved recurring debates over whether said distinctiveness (usually assumed to have existed, even if its sources are contested) has survived or has succumbed to social and economic forces (usually perceived to be external and pernicious). This seemingly endless and often anxious discourse around distinctiveness—a prime example of what Scott Romine sees as southern studies’ “overdeveloped eschatological sense”—has also permeated popular media: in 2013 journalist Tracy Thompson lamented that the South “has been
urbanized, suburbanized, strip-malled, and land-formed to a point that at times I hardly recognize it anymore.” Conversely, southern partisans continue to insist on the endurance of regional difference: when Apple’s iPhone voice recognition software struggles with the dialect and accent of “we Southerners,” such corporate malfeasance serves to validate the subcultural (or neonational) persistence of “a distinct people with our own culture.”

Such contemporary responses to the suburbanization, modernization, or homogenization of Dixie are fairly consistent with those narratives of decline and endurance, invasion and resistance, that have shaped discussions of southern identity for decades. Commentators on the right and left alike have long complained that “industrialism,” “Americanism,” and the postmodern “cultural logic of late capitalism” have rendered the region less and less real, more and more indistinct and simulated. For decades, both conservative and liberal elegies for the loss—as well as paeans to the survival—of a putatively authentic “southern way of life” have carried the whiff of warmed-over outtakes from the Nashville Agrarians’ manifesto I’ll Take My Stand (1930). If this testifies to the legacy of the conservative neo-Agrarian ideology that so thoroughly informed the institutionalization of southern literary studies in the 1950s, it is also now fully four decades since the appearance of the most prominent liberal version of the end-of-southern-distinctiveness jeremiad: John Egerton’s The Americanization of Dixie (1972), which worried out loud and at length that “the South is just about over as a separate and distinct place,” due to “an obsession with growth and acquisition and consumption” combined with “a steady erosion of the sense of place, of community.”

Since the 1970s, however, and especially in the early twenty-first century, scholars have emphasized that “the South” is a discursive, ideological, or commercial construct rather than a material, geographical site (Egerton’s “separate and distinct place”). In their introduction to South to a New Place (2002), Suzanne Jones and Sharon Monteith remark that the South’s “mythic properties have traditionally exceeded its realities.” Tara McPherson’s Reconstructing Dixie: Race, Gender, and Nostalgia in the Imagined South (2003) opens by asserting, “The South today is as much a fiction, a story we tell and are told, as it is a fixed geographic space below the Mason-Dixon line.” Jennifer Greeson states on the first page of Our South: Geographic Fantasy and the Rise of National Literature (2010), “This South that we hold collectively in our minds is not—could not possibly
be—a fixed or real place . . . it is a term of the imagination, a site of national fantasy.” Anthony Stanonis, in his introduction to *Dixie Emporium: Tourism, Foodways, and Consumer Culture in the American South* (2008), remarks, “As mass-produced goods and travelers unfamiliar with local customs increasingly penetrated the region beginning in the antebellum period, the South became as much an evolving set of images as an actual place.”

Though this more recent emphasis on the imagined South has offered a way around decline-and-death narratives about the tragic erasure or heroic endurance of southern distinctiveness, it has itself become rather rote, congealing into a kind of postmodern-constructionist consensus. One aim of the present volume, then, is to explore more nuanced ways of understanding the region as both a circulating discourse and a social, material locus—in Romine’s terms, as both “the real South” and “the South-under-no-description”—at conceptual and geographical scales ranging from the local to global.

Around half of the chapters in *Creating and Consuming the American South* focus partly or wholly on the twenty-first century, and not without reason. If *The Americanization of Dixie* is now over forty years old, it is also more than a decade since Jon Smith interrogated and inverted Egerton’s Americanization thesis by suggesting that “as the South becomes more ‘Americanized’—as identity becomes more and more structured as a lack to be filled by consumption—the paradoxical result may be the increasing commodity-fetishization of southernness itself.” Both Smith in 2002 and historian James Cobb in 2005 saw this trend expressed in the promotion by southernness.com of a perfume that supposedly bottled “the celebrated Southern ‘sense of place.’” Almost a decade later, it is one more irony of southern cultural history that Romine’s chapter in the present volume identifies a similar process and result in the fetishization of “southern foodways” by the Southern Foodways Alliance, a semi-academic organization cofounded by Egerton. Yet in the contemporary era of economic globalization, and especially after the global financial crisis that began in 2007, scholarly musings on a brand of perfume or form of foodway can themselves seem kitschy or quaint (especially when, as Smith remarks in his chapter for this volume, that perfume is no longer produced). While for some southern(ist) partisans globalization simply supersedes Americanization as the latest external leviathan threatening Dixie, the perceived danger may also intensify emotional and economic investment in “south-
ernness” through what Smith identifies as a combined narrative- and commodity-fetishism. Cobb observes further contradictions and ironies arising from the Globalization of Dixie: “Paradoxically enough, by threatening to take our national, regional, or ethnic identities away from us, the global economy first stimulates our desire to preserve them, and then through a combination of commodification and clever marketing, it proceeds to sell them back to us.” But there is another twist, for as Smith stresses in Finding Purple America (2013), southernness is not simply being commodified and sold by “them” to “us.” In the twenty-first-century arena of “Southern civic brand identities,” where “the civic brand Dixie and its logo the Confederate battle flag” compete with Birmingham’s attempt to “alter its brand image” on the back of a native son’s American Idol victory, the creation and consumption of “the South” is a process in which “we Southerners”—including academic southernists—are active participants.

But as Stanonis reminds us, the creation, commodification, and consumption of the South as “an evolving set of images” is nothing new either: like ideas of southern distinctiveness, such images date back to at least the antebellum period. For this and other reasons, Creating and Consuming the American South can hardly confine itself to the twenty-first century. Even when focused on the recent past, many of the chapters also range back through the history of the region in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and attend to the uncanny recurrence of images and narratives of older Souths—from the plantation and the Lost Cause to “folk” cultures and the civil rights movement.

It is worth adumbrating some of the ways in which “the idea of the American South” has always been subject to invention and reinvention by, among other things, political ideologies and market forces. Greeson insists that narratives of “our South” as the United States’ “internal other” began with the birth of the nation during the War of Independence, and that these northern and national narratives of the “Plantation South” and the “Slave South” intensified during the early nineteenth century. James Peacock suggests that below the Mason-Dixon line (white) southern self-fashioning took on fuller form after 1830: following two centuries in which “the South was a node in a network stretching from Europe through the Caribbean . . . around 1830 the South as a region was invented, as people migrated inland and formed a regional identity that turned inward, in opposition to the nation.” Both politicians like James Henry Hammond
and novelists like William Gilmore Simms contributed to this process of inventing “the South,” culminating in what Drew Gilpin Faust calls “the creation of Confederate nationalism.”

Daniel Aaron has observed that once the Union army defeated the Confederate army, “[t]he ideal of the Old South—order, beauty, freedom—remained.” As I have noted elsewhere, this detachment of an idealized South from the defeated nation-state proved rather convenient to authors like Thomas Nelson Page, who produced romantic neo-Con federate narratives that elided the CSA’s true lost cause: the maintenance of racial slavery. Such narratives were wildly popular, and not only in the South: by 1888 they were so prevalent nationwide that war veteran and novelist Albion Tourgée observed in exasperation, “Our literature has become not only Southern in type, but distinctly Confederate in sympathy.” As Ted Ownby notes, such “Southern” literature was successful because “white northerners literally bought into the romance of reunion [with white southerners] at the expense of any concern for the injustices African Americans faced.” David Blight emphasizes that the creation and consumption of this romantic Old South often had an economic as well as ideological base: “Sectional reconciliation was . . . staged in part as a means of cementing commercial ties between Northern money and Southern economic development.” As part of the “southern mythmaking” process that Paul Gaston termed the “New South Creed,” boosters like Henry Grady and plantation fiction authors like Page and Joel Chandler Harris advocated southern economic progress empowered by northern capital even while extolling a deeply nostalgic vision of the Old South that appealed to, and extracted profit from, a receptive national audience anxious about the dislocating dimensions of modern, urban, industrial capitalism.

In the late nineteenth century, the burgeoning southern tourist industry began to capitalize on northerners’ attraction to the increasingly accessible (by railroad) southern states: Civil War battlegrounds were marketed as historic sites; east Florida towns such as Saint Augustine and Palm Beach promoted themselves to northerners as winter retreats; and numerous southern cities organized expositions. Images of the South as simultaneously nostalgic, exotic, and authentic permeated other nascent forms of popular culture: as Karen Cox notes in her analysis of early-twentieth-century sheet music (the MP3 file of its time), “‘Dixie’ was not simply a reference to a region: it was a brand purposefully linked to the
nation’s nostalgia for the antebellum South.” Cox’s study reminds us that Smith’s “civic brand called Dixie” is what marketers would call a “mature brand.” The maturation process continued between the two world wars, the period that W. Fitzhugh Brundage terms “a watershed in the self-conscious commercialization of the southern past.” During the 1920s and 1930s, Savannah and Charleston, “America’s Most Historic City,” embarked on programs of “historic preservation” that became inextricable from the emergence of heritage tourism valorizing plantation culture and colonial gentility—the “Old and Historic Charleston District” was established in 1931—while downplaying slavery and Denmark Vesey. As J. Mark Souther has observed, New Orleans followed suit as its political and business elite “gradually recognized the value of cultivating the image of their Old South legacy, albeit one that erased slavery and cleaned up the messiness of the auction block.” Cotton, sugar, shipping, and the slave trade had made New Orleans the nation’s third-largest city by 1840; however, by 1940 New Orleans was being superseded by “more economically dynamic southern cities,” like Atlanta, Houston, and Miami. Hence, New Orleans “constructed a tourist image that showcased the heritage embodied in its architecture,” and began marketing its supposedly exceptional status as “America’s Most Interesting City.”

One can also trace today’s ongoing debates and anxieties about the commodification of “authentic” southern culture to the 1920s and 1930s. Not unlike Marxists (and later southern liberals like Egerton), the Nashvillle Agrarians critiqued the creation of consumer culture by capitalism for generating a kind of false consciousness. In the introduction to I’ll Take My Stand, John Crowe Ransom claimed that because industrial “production greatly outruns the rate of natural consumption,” “modern advertising” sought “to persuade the consumers to want exactly what the applied sciences are able to furnish them.” By contrast, Ransom claimed, the traditional “agrarian life of the Old South” was “deeply founded” on a material culture and social forms that were part of “the way of life” itself, rather than commodities that their owners had been duped into buying as consumers. But even as Ransom’s Agrarian fellow traveler Donald Davidson articulated an “autochthonous ideal” in which (white) southerners supposedly existed in unselfconscious harmony with the land, Charleston’s “memory theaters . . . provided settings in which southerners performed their ‘southernness’ before eager audiences.” While it is doubtful that Davidson’s ideal was ever a social and cultural reality, capi-
talist modernity—not least the rise of a tourist economy—contributed to a growing sense that southernness was performative and self-conscious, rather than inherently authentic and autochthonous.

Yet for population groups almost entirely ignored by the Agrarians and rather less invested in their image of “the South and the Agrarian Tradition,” the rise of consumer culture provided opportunities to re-create and even repudiate “southern” identities. In *American Dreams in Mississippi* (1999), Ownby explores how blacks “could reject old Mississippi identities as subservient workers by embracing and reshaping American identities as consumption.” 25 Poor whites too gave the lie to the Agrarians’ fantasy of southern agricultural antipathy for consumer culture: author Harry Crews recalled how during his pre–World War II youth in Bacon County, Georgia, white tenant farmers “loved things the way only the very poor can. They would have thrown away their kerosene lamps for light bulbs in a second. . . . For a refrigerator they would have broken their safes and burned them in the fireplace.” 26

The interwar years also saw the rise of what Jack Temple Kirby termed “media-made Dixie” through the new conduits of mass communication: radio, film, and television. 27 Yet despite their formal modernity, radio and film reiterated and disseminated nationwide decidedly familiar nostalgic narratives about the South. 28 Furthermore, if literary fiction sometimes seemed to be ceding cultural clout to these new aural and visual media—even as critics hailed a “Renascence” in southern writing—the success of cinematic adaptations of novels like Stark Young’s *So Red the Rose* and Margaret Mitchell’s *Gone With the Wind* strengthened the persistence of Old South romance in the national imaginary. As with plantation fiction in the late nineteenth century, the success of such fiction and films also brought tourists southward in search of the “real” Old South. Even today, scholars in the vanguard of the New Southern Studies keep turning to Tara: McPherson identifies Mitchell’s 1936 novel with “the instrumental role that the plantation home and the southern lady play in the selling of the South,” especially heritage tourism, while Romine’s *The Real South* (2008) deems Tara the “ground zero of southern cultural reproduction.” 29

By the early 1960s tourism had become the second- or third-largest employer and wealth generator throughout the southern states. 30 This growth was not significantly hindered by the recurring images of white southern racism playing out in the national and global media at the zenith of the civil rights movement. Founded in 1966, *Southern Living* magazine
pitched a highly stylized “positive image of the South,” which, according to Amy Elias, “turns all of history into romance: in this South, there is no Civil War anguish, only Civil War memorials . . . no slavery or racial strife, only quaint bed-and-breakfast plantations with golf courses and four-star accommodations.”

31 Historians have argued that the movement itself became fodder for the “commercialization of the southern past” as public-private partnerships from Montgomery to Memphis created a “civil rights industry” no less “manufactured” and “ahistorical” than Southern Living. 32 These historians’ insistence that remembrance and representation of the movement matters, and cannot be left to heritage tourism, resonates with McPherson’s argument that “[t]ourist zones are political combat zones, terrains of struggles over the contemporary meanings of history”—especially when “[t]he South receives more than one-third of all American tourists, more than any other region.” 33 Though marketers have become savvy about promoting black southern heritage tourism to an affluent African American middle class, the region’s tourist sites remain racially inflected in ways that are consistent with a larger history of segregation and spatial inequality. Moreover, the kind of revisionist history that the movement seemed to compel was trumped during the 1970s by the expansion of antebellum heritage tourism in smaller cities like Richmond (“Down Where the South Begins”), Baton Rouge (“Plantation Country”), and Natchez (“Where the Old South Still Lives”). 34 Heated disputes over the redevelopment of New Orleans following the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina in 2005 offered a salient recent reminder of how and why “tourist zones” continue to be “political combat zones” for the future, as well as history, of southern places. Witness, for example, the controversy in 2012 when mayor Moon Landrieu sought state approval to direct substantial tax revenues into the establishment of a “formal hospitality zone” centered on the French Quarter. The costly proposal contrasted with the notorious absence of financial and infrastructural support for those many black New Orleanians “pushed into apartments beyond the city’s fringes” or relocated (initially as Katrina refugees, then as more permanent settlers) to other southern cities from Baton Rouge to Houston. 35

Though necessarily selective, this brief overview reminds us that there is a considerable history of creating and consuming the South, and of inventing and performing southern distinctiveness, that predates Rome’s “artificial Taratoriality” or McPherson’s “neo-Confederates in cyberspace.” 36 Contra Davidson’s autochthonous ideal, Faust writes that “the
‘creation’ of culture has almost always been a necessary and self-conscious process,” and that “[t]he study of Confederate nationalism must abandon the notions of ‘genuine’ or ‘spurious,’ of ‘myth’ or ‘reality.’”\textsuperscript{37} Faust’s thinking about the short-lived Confederacy resonates with Romine’s insistence that scholars should abandon their stubborn tendency today to seek out and valorize “real” or “authentic” Souths; indeed, Romine opens \textit{The Real South} by proposing that perhaps “a mechanically reproduced South is preferable to an authentic one” and concludes “Better a cyber-Confederacy than a real one.”\textsuperscript{38}

Still, narratives, images, and fantasies of the South also have real social, political, and economic origins and effects, whether they emanate from Chambers of Commerce, neo-Confederate websites, or forces outside the region. McPherson insists, “The emergence of a new ‘Old South’ coincides both with the political agendas of the Reagan–Bush years and with the economic pressures of late capitalism, re-inscribing the region as a site of authenticity and the local at the very moment that globalization blurs the boundaries of the nation.” The transnational turn in the South—the intensification of economic globalization and influx of immigrant labor—requires us to think more about how the region is created and consumed at global as well as national scales. Several chapters in this book are devoted to such thinking, from considerations of how Vietnamese immigrants and their descendants complicate the South’s established black–white racial binary, to the circulation of “southern” expressive forms (theater, film, music, and literature) in various “foreign markets.” Of course, such global processes have historical antecedents too, from the transatlantic slave trade, via the agricultural-industrial nexus between southern plantations and Manchester cotton mills, to the avid consumption and recreation of black southern blues by British rock and roll bands. In \textit{Circling Dixie} (2001), Helen Taylor considered how various “southern cultural industries” have circulated in Europe (especially Britain) and concluded: “Rather than seek an authentic ‘southernness,’ we should recognize that southern culture is itself hybrid, the product of black and white Atlantic or transatlantic intercultural influences and movements—a living process of ‘call and response.’”\textsuperscript{39}

However, beneath such hopeful visions of hybridity and mobility, transatlantic “circling” has often had an exploitative economic base. New Southern Studies scholarship has been increasingly attentive to how, as Leigh Anne Duck puts it, “previous phases of globalization—including
imperialism and the transatlantic slave trade—influence present-day forms of immiseration.”

In recent years, even the poorest Deep South states, Mississippi and Alabama, have attracted Japanese car manufacturers as well as African, Asian, and Latin American workers. Yet even as those manufacturers receive massive tax breaks, their employees eke out nonunionized salaries. Meanwhile, illegal immigrants encounter draconian legislation—Alabama’s HB-56 law, passed in 2011, is so stringent it outstrips even Arizona’s notorious SB 1070—and agricultural working conditions so coercive that Justice Department officials have categorized rural Florida as “ground zero for modern slavery.” Furthermore, “recent decades have seen the widespread migration of manufacturing jobs from the U.S. South to the global ‘South’ of Latin America and southern Asia.”

As McPherson and Bethany Moreton demonstrate, southern companies like Wal-Mart play a significant role in this process by outsourcing manufacturing across the global South and exporting “the South’s long-standing, business-friendly, antilabor policies.”

For these and other reasons, “prevailing images of the American South [that] have been framed in relationship to the nation” are being superseded by an “understanding of the U.S. South [that] must be broader . . . to take in the perspective of the world.” Recent fiction like Cynthia Shearer’s novel The Celestial Jukebox (2005), with its global-southern emphasis on the role of African and Latin American immigrant labor in rural Mississippi, helps drive home McPherson’s point that the notion of “a self-contained and authentic South is simply an isolationist fantasy, albeit one with powerful material effects.” Precisely because “[t]here is no pure South now—indeed, there never was—specific understandings of how the South is represented, commodified, and packaged become key.” The “worldly” perspectives provided in this volume, especially its third and final section, seek to extend such understandings.

Like the two previously published volumes in this series, Creating Citizenship in the Nineteenth-Century South and The American South and the Atlantic World (both 2013), Creating and Consuming the American South brings southern historians into dialogue with literary and cultural studies colleagues associated with the New Southern Studies. However, this collection also pointedly includes scholars who do not identify as “southernists,” and who approach the subject from a variety of other disciplin-
ary perspectives, including American studies, performance studies, jazz studies, and queer studies.

The book is organized into three parts. Part I features three wide-ranging chapters by leading scholars in southern history and the New Southern Studies. W. Fitzhugh Brundage’s opening chapter assesses more than a century of national interest in southern culture as a site and source of “authenticity.” Brundage demonstrates how, in the first half of the twentieth century, fascination with Appalachian folk music and Mississippi Delta blues was bound up with ideas of racial purity and premodern life. White and black music alike was conceived of and consumed as sourced from a South that was simultaneously the nation’s primitive internal other and the last, best hope of authentic American values. By contrast, more recent southern musicians such as the Allman Brothers have been celebrated as authentic for their syncretic fusion of musical forms across racial and social divides. Brundage identifies the rise of “southern foodways” as another striking example of how the authentic has become associated with the syncretic, especially in images of the southern kitchen as a site of multicultural fusion and harmony. Scott Romine’s chapter explores how this most literal act of consumption, eating “southern food,” has become freighted with semiotic significance, from bestselling cookbooks to the semischolarly publications of the Southern Foodways Alliance (SFA). Romine is more skeptical than Brundage about the SFA’s “irrepressibly up-beat” cross-racial vision of southern culture. However, Romine remains equally suspicious of the decline narratives that, as we have seen in this introduction, so often determine discussions of southern identity. Boldly stating that “the idea of the South has mostly been a bad idea,” he argues that the thin gruel of southernness served up by “foodways” discourse is at least relatively benign, and as such preferable to the thick identitarian politics that coagulated around the Lost Cause.

The chapter closing Part I challenges both Romine and the very premise of this volume. Jon Smith begins by suggesting that the “creating and consuming paradigm” mires the field of southern studies in an outmoded postmodern emphasis on constructions of the region. For Smith, the very concept of “the South” no longer has any political or academic use-value; he has little patience either for the “postsouthern,” which he sees as enmeshed with the traditional southern studies it claims to disavow. Smith insists on the need to look beyond symbolic or discursive ideas of southern identity to a kind of “real”: the ways in which “real bodies” in
the region continue to be subjected to the inequities of global capitalism, the rollback of the civil rights movement, and environmental degradation. Smith repudiates prominent criticism of the New Southern Studies—most notably by Michael O’Brien, in a keynote lecture later reworked for *Creating Citizenship in the Nineteenth-Century South*—as too invested in postmodernism and too dazzled by globalization to discern its discontents. But Smith also critiques Romine’s “postmodern relativism,” which he sees as insufficiently suspicious of neoliberal capitalism. Smith’s chapter concludes with a clarion call for a “post-postpolitical” southern studies: scholarship that moves beyond postmodernism’s politically neutered focus on signification, marketing, and branding to reengage with the real world shaped by economic neoliberalism.

Part II of the book is made up of five chapters that offer innovative case studies of how aspects of the South have been created and consumed, in an array of expressive forms and economic contexts. All five contributors focus on the recent past, while situating their case studies in longer southern histories. In the opening chapter, E. Patrick Johnson, author of *Sweet Tea: Black Gay Men in the South—An Oral History* (2008), returns to that book’s source material to consider how his interviewees re-created a variety of southern loci—New Orleans, black colleges, golf courses, and country clubs—in ways that facilitated homosexual identity formation while challenging established binaries between gay and straight, black and white, and work and play.

Michael Bibler’s chapter offers a sobering check on postmodern deconstructions of “the South” by looking at the looming threat of climate change. Echoing Smith, Bibler notes the limitations of postsouthern literary criticism which figures the South as only and always a textual or ideological construct; he argues that both postsouthern and environmental criticism must confront the ways in which “the physical, economic, and material actualities of the southern landscape” are threatened by devastation. Bibler then offers a postsouthern-environmentalist reading of Scott Elliott’s novel *Coiled in the Heart* (2003), which depicts the economic and ecological transformation of rural landscapes in dystopian, even apocalyptic terms. The chapter proceeds to stress the political urgency of confronting the prospect of ecological catastrophe; Bibler warns that a grimly deterministic form of southern distinctiveness may yet emerge if climate change makes all too real the burden of living in a landscape already wracked by hurricanes, floods, and droughts.
The next two chapters can be read together as related case studies in the creation and consumption of (black) southern music. Anne Dvinge’s chapter examines the dialectic between tradition and commercialization so common to New Orleans, but especially the city’s celebrated jazz culture. Dvinge begins by exploring the low-class, creolized origins of jazz—origins that excluded it from the early branding of New Orleans as a European city—before tracing the music’s incorporation into discourses of cultural authenticity, where it has served as a signifier of local, regional, and even national identity (“America’s Classical Music”). The chapter then homes in on Preservation Hall in the French Quarter. Rather than dismissing Preservation Hall as either a musical museum that preserves traditional New Orleans jazz in amber, or a tourist trap that sells out the true spirit of jazz, Dvinge argues that the ongoing process of “musicking” at the Hall—a process that involves both the Hall’s musicians and its sometimes maligned tourist audiences—sustains a dynamic art form.

Adam Gussow’s chapter reflects on his own involvement in Hill Country Harmonica (HCH), an annual blues event established in 2010. Gussow considers the complex nexus of subject positions he occupied during the planning of HCH: academic; amateur entrepreneur; blues harmonica player; and the white northern husband of a black southern woman with whom he has a son. He also explores the mixed motives behind HCH: a wish to showcase local black blues performers excluded from similar events; a commitment to racial justice and reconciliation; a desire for profit; and the opportunity to employ and even exploit his expert understanding of Mississippi blues mythology, which extended to inventing a blues tradition of his own. At first glance, both Dvinge’s analysis of Preservation Hall and Gussow’s account of creating HCH may seem to prove Romine’s point that “the South is increasingly sustained as a virtual, commodified, built, themed, invented or otherwise artificial territoriality.” Yet Dvinge’s emphasis on a quotidian process of performance that involves inexpert audiences as well as skilled musicians, and Gussow’s complicated but rewarding collaboration with his black southern business partners, proves Romine’s corollary point: that the South and its cultural forms, however commercialized, are not “removed . . . from the domain of everyday use.”

Dvinge’s microscale analysis of Preservation Hall also serves as a prelude to the final chapter in Part II: Helen Taylor’s broader assessment of New Orleans’ attempt to re-create itself as a cultural economy before and
after the devastation wrought by Hurricane Katrina in August 2005. Like Dvinge, Taylor attends to the role of music as part of the commodity culture of New Orleans tourism; however, she situates it in the context of a wider attempt to brand the city’s cultural forms as part of a postindustrial economy. Referencing Richard Florida’s influential argument that cities should strive to attract the “creative class,” Taylor shows how New Orleans has followed other global cities by rebranding itself as a city of culture. One might note here too the similarity with other regional cities, and that Taylor’s timely take on the Crescent City’s “creative” turn should be read not as another narrative of or about “New Orleans exceptionalism,” but rather as a case study of contemporary southern urbanism. Indeed, her analysis invites comparison with sociologist Wanda Rushing’s account of the creative class’s courting by another southern city in *Memphis and the Paradox of Place: Globalization in the American South* (2009). Taylor proceeds to discuss how, after the deluge, Louisiana boosters redoubled their attempts to exploit an—in the words of an official report—“economic asset that other states can only dream of: a deeply rooted, authentic culture.” However, she also considers creative responses that offered a more critical, oppositional take on post-Katrina New Orleans. These responses ranged from the local (brass band marches through the French Quarter, theater productions in the devastated Ninth Ward) to the transatlantic (graffiti art by Bristol-born Bansky, a play about Katrina staged in London).

The five chapters that make up Part III share Taylor’s interest in the transnational routes through which the South has been circulated, (re)created, and consumed. Frank Cha’s chapter also focuses on New Orleans but diverges from Dvinge’s and Taylor’s contributions by exploring the simultaneously local- and global-scale experience of a particular ethnic populace: the Vietnamese Americans of New Orleans East (and, along the Gulf Coast, in East Biloxi). Cha addresses the larger history of Vietnamese immigrants to the Gulf South and their attempts since the 1970s to fashion a southern identity beyond the “partly colored” status of “racial interstitiality” that Leslie Bow has identified with the wider Asian American immigrant experience of the segregated South. Cha then analyzes the community’s political and cultural imperilment in the wake of Katrina. He reveals how Vietnamese immigrants and their descendants not only forged a newly visible and cross-racial activism but also re-created New Orleans East as a (multi)cultural destination for tourists and locals alike.
In a presentation at the August 2010 “Creating and Consuming the U.S. South” conference in Copenhagen, Brian Ward discussed three “southern operas”: Koanga (1904), by the British classical composer Frederick Delius; Singin’ Billy (1953), a folk-opera collaboration between Donald Davidson and Charles Bryan; and the double-LP Southern Rock Opera (2001) by Alabama rock band Drive-By Truckers. Ward demonstrated how these “very different artists, working in different idioms at quite different historical moments, all tried to evoke aspects of the South in musical form.”

Paige McGinley’s chapter here unpacks what may be an even more unlikely southern opera: Four Saints in Three Acts (1934) by Gertrude Stein. Like Koanga, Four Saints conflates southernness with blackness. McGinley shows how Stein’s ostensibly highbrow modernist opera responded to the massively successful musical Green Pastures (1930), which shaped New York audiences’ conception and consumption of black southern culture. But Four Saints also superimposed a racialized American South onto a southern European country, Spain, which Stein and other modernists figured in primitivist terms as black. Stein’s opera thus imagines a “transitive blackness” that, while problematic, moves through a transnational matrix of regional and global southern relations. In doing so, McGinley suggests, Four Saints reminds us that we need to revise the periodization of current scholarship on the regional South vis-à-vis the global South, which tends to privilege the recent past, so that it can also account for modernism.

Deborah Cohn, whose previous work on “the two Souths” (the U.S. South and Spanish-speaking Latin America) heralded the hemispheric turn of New Southern Studies, maintains McGinley’s emphasis on literary modernism in regional, national, and global matrices. Cohn is concerned with the ways in which William Faulkner’s post–Nobel Prize status as a major U.S. writer became enmeshed with the global politics of the Cold War. Discussing Faulkner’s world tours as a cultural ambassador for the State Department, Cohn explores Faulkner’s creation of his public persona as southerner and farmer, as well as the circulation and consumption during Faulkner’s official travels of competing images of the U.S. South—most notably, the racist murder of Emmett Till in Faulkner’s home state of Mississippi. Focusing on Faulkner’s 1955 tour of Asia and Europe, Cohn shows how the author drew specific historical analogies between the South and Japan as sites of military defeat and subsumed regional and national identities into a universalizing vision of freedom that accorded with anti-communist U.S. policy.
The penultimate chapter brings us back to music: in this case, the transatlantic relationship between black southern blues and white British rock. Rather than rehashing hackneyed debates about the adoption or appropriation of the blues by earlier British rock groups like the Rolling Stones and Led Zeppelin, Andrew Warnes turns to the post-punk period of the late 1970s and early 1980s. Against the hardening critical consensus that British post-punk bands deliberately rejected blues modes and motifs, Warnes argues that songs by Gang of Four and Wire subtly exhibit, on the lower frequencies, a “blues epistemology” and “oppositionality.” Warnes links this subterranean post-punk blues back to black southern expressive culture more broadly, from Frederick Douglass’s 1845 slave narrative to jitterbugging at a juke joint in 1930s Clarksdale.

Finally, John Howard analyzes British director Moby Longinotto’s documentary short *The Joneses* (2009), which depicts the everyday life in rural Mississippi of a sixty-nine-year-old transsexual mother and her two adult sons. Like E. Patrick Johnson’s contribution to Part II, Howard’s chapter reveals how the rural South emerges as a site in which non-normative sexual identities can be created against the odds. Like both Johnson and Gussow, Howard foregrounds his own subject position vis-à-vis his subject matter: he was an executive producer of *The Joneses*, and the film’s central figure, J Jones, is an old acquaintance who featured in Howard’s acclaimed book *Men Like That: A Southern Queer History* (1999). However, this does not preclude Howard critiquing *The Joneses’* failure to depict non-normative sexual activity, even as he powerfully evokes the transnational routes through which J’s ostensibly rooted rural-southern life has circulated, beginning with J’s sex-reassignment surgery in Brussels and including the documentary’s screening at numerous international film festivals.

Taken together, then, these thirteen chapters move beyond not only shopworn debates over the death or survival of southern distinctiveness, but also the consensus that has solidified since 2000 or so that “the South” is first and foremost a discursive or ideological construction. But what if Jon Smith is correct that the “creating and consuming paradigm” mires us in the southern (studies) past, rather than advancing the New Southern Studies or another paradigm shift toward Duck’s “Southern studies without ‘the South’”? Ultimately that is something for each reader of this book to decide, but Smith’s provocative analysis raises some questions.
of its own. Would or should post-postpolitical southern studies become the “mainstream” mode of New Southern Studies? If work done a decade or so ago is in Smith’s view now a kind of old New Southern Studies, hoist with its own postmodern petard, at what point might New Southern Studies per se become obsolete, as out-of-touch to emerging scholars as most boomers seem to Smith? How long can a movement that marks itself with tenth-anniversary conference panels remain “new” and cutting-edge? And finally, if we can do “without ‘the South,’” should we then renounce the idea and institutional apparatus of any kind of “southern studies”?

It is always a perilous business to hazard predictions, but I suspect that the New Southern Studies will be with us for a while yet, not least because it has itself become a brand with considerable academic-cultural capital. Smith himself has been its foremost promoter, most notably as the founding coeditor of the important New Southern Studies book series—complete with its own brand logo. Whatever the current state of southern studies, it and related disciplines surely do need to engage in vigorous debates (what Smith frankly calls arguments) about the interpretative use-value of terms like “the South,” “southernness,” and “southern studies.” One of Smith’s most compelling claims is that “the South increasingly appears to be an unhelpful scalar unit: far better to work at a larger scale (the nation, conservatism, plantation America) or a smaller one (consumer culture in Mississippi, desegregation in Atlanta or Milwaukee).” Not only do Smith’s examples here reflect much of what “we southernists” actually do, but his larger point dovetails with current discussions about “scale” across a range of disciplines, from human geography to comparative literature. For southern studies too, globalization poses what Nirvana Tanoukhi terms “the challenge of describing ‘world-scale’ phenomena” in ways that move beyond familiar “metaphorical deployments of ‘space’” (to cite some examples from traditional southern studies, “Dixie,” “the former Confederacy,” “the Bible Belt”) and “toward concrete discussions about the materiality of literary landscapes” (or, one might add, any other Souths-under-description). Yet it does not necessarily follow that “the world-system” or “the global South” is a more “scale-sensitive” unit of analysis than “the American South”; as Smith’s examples suggest, the appropriate scalar units might be more local and/or more (trans)national.

In this book’s companion volume *The American South and the Atlantic*...
World, Brian Ward employs a different metaphor—poet William Blake’s claim to “see a world in a grain of sand”—to suggest that “those studying the American South can benefit from a granular approach” in which global scales like the Atlantic World “are revealed by close attention to a particular southern locale.”

In an afterword to this volume, McPherson posits that the next paradigm shift for scholars working on the South may be away from the analyses of “authenticity” that resound throughout this volume to a more thoroughgoing engagement with the impact of globalization, especially neoliberal capitalism. Smith’s chapter makes similar noises. If this does represent the next move beyond “the creating and consuming paradigm,” some of those historians and social scientists seemingly marginalized by the New Southern Studies may prove to have been more “progressive” all along. Still, Smith and McPherson are surely right that we need to pay more heed to how discursive and imagined Souths interact with and impact social and material realities, and at a variety of scales. My own modest proposal is that Creating and Consuming the American South marks a start in that direction.

Notes

2. Two contributors to this book have seen traces of this tendency in my own work: see Romine, Real South, 7, and Smith, review of Postsouthern, 373.
3. Egerton, Americanization of Dixie, xxi, xx.
4. Jones and Monteith, “Introduction,” 2; McPherson, Reconstructing Dixie, 1; Greeson, Our South, 1; Stanonis, “Introduction,” 5.
5. See Romine, Real South, and “God and the MoonPie” in this volume.
9. Smith, Finding Purple America, 107, 109. Sharon Monteith observes that “there is a disconcerting return to the autochthonous” whenever scholars who were born and/or work in the U.S. South continue to express puzzlement that “the mapping of Southern studies is already—and has always been to some extent—a global process” (“Southern like US?” 67–68). Smith notes that such residual southern(ist) nativism includes identifying as “we Southerners” taking a stand against “tourists and carpetbaggers . . . historians and theorists” (Finding Purple America, 143n8, quoting the call for papers from the 2010 Society for the Study of Southern Literature conference). See also my own critique of southern studies’ “Quentissential fallacy” (“Transnational Turn,” 192).
13. See Faust, *Creation of Confederate Nationalism*.
15. See Bone, “Neo-Confederate Narrative,” especially 87–89.
27. See Kirby, *Media-Made Dixie*.
38. Romine, *Real South*, 2, 236.
41. Bowe, “Nobodies.”
47. See Rushing, *Memphis and the Paradox of Place*, especially 78–79, 85, 113. What I term the “timely” nature of Taylor’s chapter also meant that its author faced “the perils
of trying to write about the contemporary and the fast-moving!” (personal communication, May 28, 2014). Taylor presented an initial version of this chapter as a keynote lecture at the third “Understanding the South” conference, at the University of Cambridge, in May 2010—less than five years after Hurricane Katrina. The final version of the chapter appears another five years on; in the meantime, much has changed on the ground in New Orleans. For timely recent accounts of “New Orleans exceptionalism,” see Campanella, “New Fuel for an Old Disaster,” which argues that “the BP oil disaster, like Katrina, breathed new life into the area’s oldest historical impression: that something different happens here. Call it the exceptionalism narrative”; and Lightweiss-Goff, “Peculiar and Characteristic,” which offers a literary-critical history of New Orleans exceptionalism from Frederick Law Olmsted to Katrina.


49. Ward, “Delius, Davidson, and the Drive-By Truckers.”

50. Perhaps including Smith’s own earlier work: in his 2002 essay for South to a New Place, Smith concluded that “punk may—for those young white southerners alert to the implications—have freed white southern identity from its long, narcissistic gaze at its own ancestral navel” (“Southern Culture on the Skids,” 95). In 2013 Smith chided his younger self for exhibiting “too much faith . . . in the redemptive functions of subcultures” defined by “the heroic school of subcultural studies” (Finding Purple America, 15, 73).


53. See especially the two collections, published in 2005, The American South in a Global World and Globalization and the American South—though I would qualify that both conspicuously fail to engage with relevant scholarship in literary and cultural studies.

Works Cited


