Editor’s Introduction: The Triple Crown

PHILIP C. KOLIN

Since the early 1980s, the *Southern Quarterly* has been praised for its special, or themed, issues, and in fact several of them have turned into books. Some of these issues were suggested by previous editors of the journal, while others were ably proposed by a host of guest editors. Over the next year to 16 months, the *Southern Quarterly* hopes to break previous records relating to special issues by releasing three of them which, if I may use a gambling metaphor, should earn the journal the triple crown in publishing on arts and letters in the South. You are holding the first of these three special issues—devoted to Natasha Trethewey.

The Poet Laureate of Mississippi and now in her second term as the Poet Laureate of the United States, Trethewey joins other distinguished Southern writers—Tennessee Williams, Cormac McCarthy, Ellen Douglas, Zora Neale Hurston, and Eudora Welty—whose life and works we have celebrated through special issues. But at 47, Trethewey can claim the singular honor of being the youngest writer to have a special issue focused on her achievements. She has already received a Pulitzer Prize and numerous other awards for her poems, prose, and other contributions to what Joan Wylie Hall terms “Southern Poetics.” This special issue boasts eight articles, an in-depth interview with her, and poems by and/or about Trethewey’s intensely autobiographical canon. A daughter of a mixed-race marriage, she confronts the historical conflicts and paradoxes that have energized her canon. From her early collection of poems, *Domestic Work*, to *Native Guard* (for which she garnered the Pulitzer Prize), to *Thrall*, her most recent collection, Trethewey has demonstrated she is a major voice in contemporary poetry.
The second special issue will be a double one (Fall 2013/Winter 2014). Coming out in February, it will commemorate the silver anniversary of the Natchez Literary and Cinema Celebration (NLCC) that Carolyn Vance Smith inaugurated in 1991 and which over the years has powerfully shaped the way we view the South. Each year the NLCC has focused on a theme that embraces Southern history, art, politics, religion, literature, music, food, etc., ranging from the Civil War to the bicentennial of the Louisiana Purchase to the 100th birthday of Richard Wright. The Southern Quarterly cherishes its close relationship with the NLCC, and we are honored to celebrate this milestone in the history of this major conference. Over its lively history, the NLCC has hosted such luminaries as Eudora Welty, Maya Angelou, Beth Henley, Margaret Walker Alexander, John Grisham, and Gerald McRaney, as well as scores of musicians, and numerous senators and governors. (Gov. William Winter [1980-1984], for instance, has been the Master of Ceremonies since the NLCC’s inception.) The special issue will feature a history of the NLCC, articles based upon presentations given at the Celebration, interviews with Carolyn Vance Smith and with Charles Wright (Richard Wright’s cousin), essays that continue to elucidate the topics relevant to the NLCC, new poems, and original art.

The theme for our third special issue, to be published in Summer 2014, is entitled “And We Are Still Here,” highlighting the history, archaeology, and artistic achievements of the indigenous communities that inhabited the South at the time of European colonization and whose cultural heritage is still vibrantly evidenced in the twenty-seven different communities that populate the Gulf South today. Guest-edited by Jeanne Gillespie, Associate Dean of the College of Arts and Letters at Southern Miss, this special issue will feature research on early Choctaw maps, women and power in Spanish Florida, visual imagery used by Franciscan missionaries to spread Christianity, leadership and cultural survival in the United Houma Nation of South Louisiana, Choctaw pottery techniques, and other ethnographic texts.

Let the trio of special issues begin!

The University of Southern Mississippi