

[CFP Deadline Extended: Southern Cultures The Imaginary South Issue](#)

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Call for Papers

Southern Cultures: The Imaginary South

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Southern Cultures, the award-winning, peer-reviewed quarterly from UNC's Center for the Study of the American South, encourages submissions from scholars, writers, and artists for a special issue, *The Imaginary South*, to be published Winter 2020. We will accept submissions for this issue through April 6, 2020, at <https://southerncultures.submittable.com/Submit>

In *The Imaginary South*, we seek work about an unbounded South, one that explores from all possible vantage points—above and below, back, middle, side, and inside—to share Souths unseen (by some), unknown (to some), or unmade (according to some). Souths unseen are those deliberately ignored by those in power that flash in the recesses of the southern psyche, like the multi-generational violence at the US-Mexican border, or the symbolism of a severed goat head left in the backseat of Alabama singer-songwriter Brittany Howard's father's car. They are also those deliberately hidden, by rivers, behind eyes, and where High John the Conqueror root grows, those Souths of traditional African religion that keep the score and the balance. These Souths unknown exist behind our various curtains of segregation, where the black and Latinx Texarkana cowboys and Mississippi cockfighters who prefigure Lil' Nas X reign, or in the raves and clubs and homes-turned-clubs where queer southerners organize. Souths un-made include these Souths that exist and are dismantled, maliciously or carefully, their absences marked by the outlines they leave behind.

We aim to examine the South's shadows, high and low, as they populate a robust and fantastical space where the material and the speculative vibrate and collide. By speculative, we mean any work that speculates about the alternative (not this, but that), probable (if this, then that), and the possible (it could be this). We call upon science fiction work, like southern other-worlds where power arrangements are differently connected to ancestry than they are now; engagements with the dystopian present, like the realities of climate change in the region; Afrofuturism, including work on Black presents, pasts, and futures in

the South in the tradition of the Black imaginary and conjuring; and work on virtual, gaming, streaming, and play spaces, from world-making in games to new ways to entertain ourselves and mark and interrogate ideas about the region.

It is through the imagination—Africans in bondage imagining freedom in the face of enslavement or their descendants imagining the equal right to public space in the context of segregation—that new possibilities for our lives together in this region and on this earth are tested, contested, formed, and deployed.

What is being imagined here now, and through what means, so that we might mobilize artistic, spiritual, emotional, archival, and material practices toward a free future in which we are responsible to one another and the earth?

How might the imaginary South—its spatial, visual, sonic, and corporeal recesses—help us outline future possibilities for a place where we can engender balance and subvert and overthrow systems that inhibit rigorous care of people and planet? How can space be organized, in cities, in our cognitive maps, in unincorporated towns, to facilitate freedom? What visual practices would need to come to the fore to help us see the South from all sides? What new ways can bodies move in the South we conjure? And what might that South sound like?

Southerners have imagined the region's best and worst, and in our art, music, and literature, we are familiar with both the grotesque and the beautiful. In the realm of the southern grotesque, we are variously haunted, hunted, and hunting each other, violent specters of repression against expansive legacies of living, marked in signs, flags, laws, songs, and words. In this special issue, we are interested in work that conjures, imagines, and locates this and other imaginary Souths, illuminating the ephemeral, the moving, and the purposely obscured. We'll share the imaginary South as it breathes in this moment, breaking up the power of traditional narrative and organizational structures by which the region has been understood in the past.

Submissions can explore any topic or theme related to the imaginary South, and we welcome explorations of the region in the forms *Southern Cultures* publishes: scholarly articles, memoir, interviews, surveys, photo essays, and shorter feature essays. We hope that submitters will interpret the idea of the imaginary South broadly.

Possible topics and questions to explore might include (but are not limited to):

- The blurry boundaries between the “real” and “imagined,” the “material” and “speculative”
- Methodologies and processes of imagination and speculation, and what they say about our values, desires, and fears
- Historical moments/processes in the South in which imagination pushed the outcomes toward freedom, or such moments/processes where limited imagination kept us trapped
- Imagining ways out of intersecting systems of oppression through our southern inheritances
- The worship, ritual, and religious practices hidden under or in plain sight alongside dominant traditions
- Imaginary/speculative Souths as spaces of liberation for particular groups
- The intersection of the social South and the natural South, i.e., climate, plant life, weather, animals, water
- Continued recovery and re-purposing of southern mythologies and legends
- Regional (and national and global) psychoanalysis of the subconscious, shadow South
- Distinctly southern uses of the imagination in art or traditional research practice
- Re-imaginings of our conceptions of time, or imagined southern time(s)

As we also publish a digital edition, we are able to supplement print materials with video, audio, and interactive visual content. We encourage creativity in coordinating print and digital materials in submissions and ask that authors submit any potential digital materials with their essay or introduction/artist’s statement.

We encourage authors to gain familiarity with the tone, scope, and style of our journal before submitting. Those whose institutions subscribe to Project Muse can read past issues for free via http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/southern_cultures/ . To read our current issue, access our submission guidelines, or browse our content, please visit us online at SouthernCultures.org.