Call for Papers: Moral/Economies (deadline extended)

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Deadline for Submissions: January 24, 2022

Southern Cultures encourages submissions from scholars, writers, and artists for a special issue, Moral/Economies, to be published Winter 2022. We will accept submissions for this issue through January 24, 2022.

Implicitly or explicitly, questions of distribution, extraction, care, labor, production, reciprocity, and subsistence rest upon moral assumptions: What is ownable, who owns, who owes, who makes, who takes, what is work, what is worth? What is a fair price, and who pays it? Is a given transaction a theft, a trade, a gift? If the arid abstraction of “economics” relentlessly flattens this complexity into two dimensions, the notion of “moral economy” demands, in the words of historian Nell Irvin Painter, “a fully loaded cost accounting” that considers the true price of any exchange—free, coerced, or somewhere in between.

For this issue, we seek submissions that reveal the moral dimensions of economies and vice versa. What moral logics—sacred or profane, beneficent or perverse, overt or blandly in denial—can we find embedded in getting, giving, making, caring, and spending? What moral imaginaries have animated alternative economic spheres, or are yet to be realized? What is the secret life of property, the implied ethic of work, the unacknowledged parties to a contract, or the moral horizon of a market?

Southern cultural traditions are the indispensable terrain of production for this knowledge. The late Clyde Woods theorized a “Blues political economy” animated by a “Blues ethic of social justice” and elaborated in music, visual art, poetry, fiction, criticism, folklore, and spirituality as well as through formal teaching and learning. In the Blues tradition, wrote Woods, ethics and aesthetics were inextricable from one another. Together, they testified to the great crimes that lurked just behind the South’s great fortunes. Together, they represented a storehouse of alternatives, a development tradition based in redistribution, liberation, and Black affirmation.

The region multiplies this insight across its sites of cultural production, giving voice to visions of abundance, sufficiency, and want with the tools of art. In English, Spanish, Korean, and Tagalog, southern “Prosperity Gospel” Pentecostals claim their
rightful share of God’s bounty with a century-old blending of materialism, meritocracy, and ecstatic worship style. For its model of a “solidarity economy”—worker-owned co-ops, credit unions, sustainable housing, land trusts, participatory budgeting—Cooperation Jackson, a network of worker cooperatives, draws on the intellectual heritage of the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement, Fannie Lou Hamer’s Freedom Farm, and Tanzanian Ujamaa, and claims access to the arts as a human right. Atlanta’s corporate amusement park The World of Coca-Cola imagines one commonwealth, while the Moral Mondays movement envisions quite a different one, and each employs a suite of cultural referents to invoke a particular moral/material logic: a tuneful chorus of “I’d like to buy the world a Coke” expresses a specific moral economy no less than does the call and response “Forward together, not one step back.”

Possible topics and questions to explore as the terrain of the moral might include (but are not limited to):

- Migration and migrant economies
- Sovereignty and self-determination
- Racial capitalism
- Land tenure, land use, land loss
- Subsistence, provisioning, and food production: compensation, recognition, and appropriation of labor from restaurants to the printed page
- Solidarity economies: worker-owned co-ops, credit unions, sustainable housing, land trusts, participatory budgeting
- Cooperatives, mutual aid, and utopian experiments
- Corporate actors and ideologies
- Informal and alternative economies
- Taxation, budgets, subsidies
- Work, workers, workplaces, and workplace organizing
- Wealth and commonwealth
- Extraction, sustainability, and stewardship
- Debt and indebtedness; credit and accumulation
• Gifts and gift economies
• Domestic labor and domestic economies
• Cultural sources and expressions of economic values
• Development, developmentalism, and property regimes
• Sacred economies
• Religious institutions as economic actors
• Economic theologies, imaginaries, and ideologies
• Sex work and care labor; essential workers
• Financial instruments, financial actors, and financialization

As Southern Cultures publishes digital content, we encourage creativity in coordinating print and digital materials in submissions and ask that authors submit any potential video, audio, and interactive visual content 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.