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From the General Editor

This issue completes Arkansas Review’s second year as “A Journal of Delta Studies.” Our original intent was to explore the seven-state Mississippi River Delta from an interdisciplinary perspective, drawing upon a variety of fields in the social sciences and humanities: anthropology, art history, folklore studies, geography, history, literature, music history, political science, and sociology—to name those that come most readily to mind.

We have achieved that interdisciplinary focus in some respects, but some fields have appeared more prominently in our pages than others. A special issue on the blues (April 1998) tended to foreground folklore studies and music history, while the Hemingway issue, which appeared in July 1999, placed literature in a central position. While we have heard from anthropologists, historians, and political scientists in our book review pages and with this issue geography joins geology and history as a contributor to our “What Is the Delta?” series, we would like to see those disciplines and others represented more often.

We also began with a commitment to maintain the practice of our predecessors, Kansas Quarterly and Arkansas Review (under the editorship of Norman Lavers), of publishing first-rate creative material—our only stipulation being that poetry, fiction, personal essays, and visual art should in some way respond to or evoke the Delta. We have been very successful in this respect due to the efforts of Creative Materials Editor Norman E. Stafford and Art Editor Steven L. Mayes.

This issue represents the sort of mix between scholarly and creative material that we aspire to. Short stories and a poem join a visual essay as well as individual photographs and watercolors in complementing the more academic pieces: two interviews, an annotated manuscript collection of folksongs, a geographer’s look at the Delta, an entry in our “Delta Sources and Resources” series, and a number of book reviews, representing our intended range of disciplinary coverage.