

Arkansas Review: A Journal of Delta Studies

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Editor’s Introduction: The Rural Experience

By Marcus Charles Tribbett

Having been General Editor since the December 2013 issue, I guess it’s high time I introduced myself. *Arkansas Review* with this edition begins its third decade as *A Journal of Delta Studies*, and what better way to celebrate its longevity than to return to our roots, the land itself? Accordingly, this issue is subtitled “The Rural Experience” and contains scholarly and creative works that reflect and represent this central component of our regional focus. Anchored around geographer Patrick D. Hagge’s academic article on the changes in the Delta’s rural and (cultural) landscape from 1930 to 1970, the contents feature poetry evocative of farming and fishing by Margaret Jones Bolsterli, Matthew Landrum, and John Belk; fiction by John Mort that crosses the region from Valdosta, Georgia, through Birmingham, Alabama, Memphis, Tennessee, and Jonesboro, Arkansas, and on into the hills of Missouri; three short and interwoven rural narrative sketches by Abigail Allen; another story beginning just outside the region, that shows our interconnectedness along tributaries of the tributaries of the mighty Mississippi, by Benjamin Smart; a memoir about coming home to

Arkansas by Joanna ES Campbell; a non-fictional and experimental blend of prose and poetry that explores what it’s like to be a boy growing up gay in Jonesboro, spending every other court-ordered weekend at his father’s place “on the hill” in the country, by Alston Slatton; and a photo essay centering on the Southern Tenant Farmers Museum with written impressions both by the photographer and folklorist, Gregory Hansen, and by noted labor historian and activist Michael Honey. Even our Delta Sources and Resources section, although featuring a Memphis heritage attraction (Rockabilly Rides), refers us back to a hybrid country, blues, and rock and roll music that rose from the countryside before making its way to the recording studios of the big city. As the fourth general editor of *Arkansas Review* in its incarnation as an interdisciplinary regional studies journal (following in the footsteps of Janelle Collins, Tom Williams, and William Clements), I plan to keep us grounded in the silt and clay even as we cruise the waters, stroll the concrete, and roll over the asphalt of the Delta. I hope you enjoy the latest incarnation of that journey. ▲▼▲