The city of Atlanta is often nestled in layers of American and southern exceptionalism. The refrain that "once you leave Atlanta, you’re in Georgia" locates the city outside the imaginary of the U.S. South, a space often overdetermined by the rural. And still, as an American city and as a locus for literary production, Atlanta is overshadowed by its peers to the north (New York, Chicago, and Boston) and west (Los Angeles, San Francisco, and New Orleans). At the same time, the city has become a hub for film and television production in the twenty-first century, and it sits profoundly at the center of the hip hop industry now more than ever.

Where do these contradictory cultural framings leave the city’s literature? This special issue of Studies in the Literary Imagination examines the literary texts of a city that W.E.B. Du Bois characterized as “peering out from the shadows of the past into the promise of the future.” We seek essays that consider Atlanta’s literary past, present, and future that move beyond the most familiar characterizations of the city in literature, treating texts that radically shift the narrative landscapes established by Gone with the Wind (1936) or that return to those landscapes with new eyes.

We welcome a wide range of methodologies to understanding Atlanta’s literature, particularly those that focus on emerging wings of southern literary studies related to critical race theory, ecocriticism, queer studies, and Indigenous studies. The following prompts offers possible topics, and it is not meant to be exhaustive:

- Literary attempts to redirect the most familiar representations of the city, such as those by Alice Randall, Percival Everett, and others
- Literature exploring the status of Atlanta as a city driven by colonizing and globalizing forces related to Removal, migration, capital—such as those by Nella Larsen, Ha Jin, Janet McAdams, Dave Eggers, Tom Wolfe, Omar El Akkad, and others
- Literary treatments of the city that move beyond the novel, such as those by Natasha Trethewey, Kevin Young, ZZ Packer, Pearl Cleage, Jericho Brown, Topher Payne, Alfred Uhry, Horton Foote, Joel Chandler Harris, and others
- Literary treatments of Atlanta’s urban development—including those by Nathan McCall, Anthony Grooms, Anne Rivers Siddons, Hannah Palmer, and others—and that development’s relationship to outlying areas surrounding the city, including those by James Dickey, Flannery O’Connor, Devi Laskar, and others
- Literary examinations of Atlanta’s complex position as a Black city, including those by James Weldon Johnson, W.E.B. Du Bois, Oscar Micheaux, many of the authors listed elsewhere, and others
- Literary representations of Atlanta that complement and anticipate broader cultural (re)investigations of the Atlanta Child Murders (1979-1981), including those by James Baldwin, Toni Cade Bambara, Tayari Jones, and others
- Literary treatments of Atlanta as a queer city, including those by Donald Windham, Benjamin Smoke, many of the aforementioned writers, and others
- Examinations of Atlanta in genre fiction, including those by Stephen King, the stories in Atlanta Noir (2016), and others
• Work driven by archival investigations of Atlanta’s literature, writers, and print culture

We welcome work on the topics above and any others that focus on Atlanta’s literary landscapes, helping readers shift focus away from the familiar scales of analysis in southern studies—the region, the nation, the hemisphere, the globe—in order to explore how Atlanta reconfigures these and other scales.

*Studies in the Literary Imagination* is a biannual scholarly journal focusing on special topics in literature and enjoys a worldwide audience. *SLI* delivers topic-driven issues on a range of literary texts; in this sense, *SLI* serves more as a monograph series than as a typical journal.

Proposals from established, emerging, and independent scholars are welcomed. Please send 500-word abstracts as well as a short author bio (~100 words) to the editors of this special issue, Matthew Dischinger (mdischinger@gsu.edu) and Gina Caison (gcaison@gsu.edu) by December 15, 2020. Inquiries can be directed to Dr. Dischinger. For those asked to contribute essays to the special issue, we anticipate that completed essays will be due in August 2021. Contributors will also be invited to present conference-length versions of their work as part of a featured panel at the Society for the Study of Southern Literature’s Biennial Conference in spring of 2022 in Atlanta.