

Editor's Note

In the spring of 1995, I was asked by Patricia Brady of the Tennessee Williams / New Orleans Literary Festival Board if I would be interested in organizing a yearly conference that would in effect serve as the “academic anchor” to the festival. Since the festival was expanding well beyond the scope of Williams and his writing, festival organizers felt that a yearly conference devoted solely to Williams’s life and works, with participants drawn principally from the academic community, would provide a needed focus to gather and discuss the great writer. The Tennessee Williams Scholars Conference thus began in 1996, and this year celebrates its twentieth anniversary.

After the inaugural conference concluded, Nancy Tischler, one of the earliest and most respected of Williams scholars, approached me with a simple but career-changing question: “Robert, since we’ve had all these terrific papers presented here, why don’t you collect them and begin a Williams journal?” The idea appealed to me, and the premiere issue of the *Tennessee Williams Annual Review* was launched in 1998 with a grant provided by the University of the South, the principal recipient of the playwright’s estate. This funding lasted only a few years, and in 2004 the journal began its long and fruitful partnership with The Historic New Orleans Collection. My Collection colleagues may be embarrassed by my praise below, but anyone who attends the scholars conference or reads *TWAR* in print or online needs to know just how much Williams studies have been advanced by this organization.

During the nascent years of the scholars conference, when the event had yet to find a permanent home, Alfred Lemmon, The Collection's head of the Williams Research Center (no relation to Tennessee), was absolutely instrumental in supporting the conference's mission by helping me source venues and equipment. Priscilla Lawrence, the director of THNOC, suggested that a partnership be formed between The Collection and the journal, and she worked with me to implement the arrangement so that we could begin publishing *TWAR* the following year (2005). The Collection continues to sustain this partnership—as well as the scholars conference—with funding, venue, and in-kind support. In short, there would be no *TWAR* or conference without the time, energy, and resources provided by The Collection and its staff, and I will remain eternally grateful for their generosity and good will. My thanks also go to Middle Tennessee State University, which has supported my work with the conference and journal by providing released time from teaching duties.

The publications staff of THNOC deserves enormous credit for the quality and consistency of the journal. Margit Longbrake, Mary M. Garsaud, Dorothy Ball, Anne M. Robichaux, Teresa Devlin, and Molly Reid all have worked diligently to help edit, design, and market the contents each year—work that goes largely unheralded by those who enjoy the yearly journal. My utmost gratitude and respect go to Jessica Dorman, the associate editor of the journal and the director of publications for THNOC. Over twelve years she and I have engaged in hundreds of emails, phone calls, and meetings without ever exchanging an unkind word or having substantial disagreements, and I believe that kind of felicity is rare in any collaborative arrangement. Jessica's keen intellect, rigorous standards, and sound judgment have proved an invaluable resource for me both personally and professionally, and I will forever be indebted to her friendship and professionalism.

The editorial board of *TWAR* has appraised dozens and dozens of essays since the journal's inception and has done so without remuneration or released time or even proper recognition, providing insightful and thoughtful estimations of every submission. Nancy Tischler, Tom Adler, Jessica Dorman, George Crandell, Philip Kolin, John Bak, Annette Saddik, Barton Palmer, and the late Allean Hale have served admirably and selflessly while making my job of editor much less complicated. The journal is also indebted to the time, energy, and expertise of Chip Barham, print and web designer, whose collegiality and friendship have meant so much to me and the journal over the years. As I have told him many times, "Chip, we could not do this without you."

To all the contributors whose work has appeared in the journal, always without compensation: you have my highest regard for your creative and original scholarship, as well as my thanks for enduring the rigors of our myriad suggestions and innumerable bubble comments!

Although I will continue to direct the scholars conference, this will be my final issue as editor of the journal. After some forty years in the university classroom and twenty years as founding editor of *TWAR*, I am soon retiring from both enterprises. In turning over the editorial reins to my friend and colleague Barton Palmer, we feel that we have found someone who will move the journal forward with dedication and verve. In the words of our great muse, Tennessee Williams, "*En avant!*"

Robert Bray