# Andrew Lytle at The Sewanee Review

## Atop Monteagle Mountain at the University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee, is the office of *The Sewanee Review*. Founded in 1892, the *Sewanee Review* (*SR*)has never missed an issue, distinguishing it as the oldest continuously published quarterly review in the United States. For its first half-century, the magazine existed as a general journal of the Humanities, featuring articles on literature, art, politics, and the South. In the early 1940s its focus became purely literary, and the *SR* now regularly publishes superb essays, literary criticism, fiction, poetry and, of course, reviews of current books. This shift in tone was facilitated expressly by the editors of the time. Indeed, a great deal of the magazine’s continued excellence has depended on its editors, without whom the *SR* would not have been able to solicit and select the excellent writers that have graced their pages during these past decades. For the last seventy-six years, the office of the *SR* has housed only five, with the most recent editor, George Core, beginning his run in 1973. Andrew Nelson Lytle, one of the South’s more distinguished (and underappreciated) men of letters, edited the *Sewanee Review* twice in his career, once in 1942 to 44 and then again from 1961 to 1973. During his tenure as editor, Lytle helped to resurrect the magazine from academic stagnation, financial straits and a dwindling readership while presenting some of the twentieth century’s finest critics, writers and poets.

Lytle’s career prior to his position was certainly not what one might expect from an editor. He attended Vanderbilt University in the early 1920’s, making connections with several members of the Agrarian movement, an assortment of influential professors and new writers collaborating under the banner of Southern idealism. He left Vanderbilt in 1927 after studying literature and history to attend the Yale School of Drama. Lytle’s interests remained primarily Southern, however, and in 1930 he contributed his first major essay to the   
Agrarian symposium *I’ll Take My Stand*, which also included pieces written by Allen Tate, Robert Penn Warren, Donald Davidson and John Crowe Ransom—Lytle’s friends and teachers from Vanderbilt. Tate became acquainted with Lytle through Ransom. They first met in New York City, and over time developed a strong, almost kindred relationship, often referring to each other as “brother.” Their relationship is carefully documented in *The Lytle-Tate Letters*, as edited by Thomas Daniel Young, which provides their selected correspondence from the 1920s through the late 1960s. After a short stint on the Broadway circuit, Lytle published his first book, *Bedford Forrest and his Critter Company*, a biography of the Confederate general, in 1931.

Throughout the early thirties, as throughout his career, Lytle maintained a relatively Agrarian outlook. His first published work of fiction, “Old Scratch in the Valley,” which appeared in the *Virginia Quarterly Review* in 1932, is more distinctly a work of Agrarian sentimentalism than it is fiction, as Mark Lucas argues in *The Southern Vision of Andrew Lytle*: “No one would make great claims for the story as art….Point of view is clumsily handled; the content is self-consciously provincial in the manner of local-color writing; and there is an evasion at the climax” (52). Such essays as “The Backwoods Progression” and “The Small Farm Secures the State” follow the direction of Lytle’s earlier Agrarian writing. Lytle certainly recognized the weakness in this kind of writing when applied to literature, since he declared much later in career: “When a novel obviously makes an appeal other than its proper aesthetic one, you may be sure it has been written with the left hand” (Lytle, Forward 194).

The late thirties saw a noticeable shift in Lytle’s writing—his most famous short story, “Jericho, Jericho, Jericho,” was published by *The Southern Review* in 1936. While the piece loosely resembles “Old Scratch in the Valley” in design, it is devoid of any direct political attitude, replaced by a purely literary one. As Lucas notes, “ ‘Jericho, Jericho, Jericho,’ skillfully renders what is merely argued in ‘Old Scratch,” (53). He reasons that “Jericho, Jericho, Jericho” represents Lytle’s transition from Southern Agrarianism to Southern fiction. Lytle’s first novel, *The Long Night*, was released later that year. While its setting, dialogue and story were distinctly Southern in style, Lytle successfully portrayed the South with a sole literary intent. Lytle continued to develop his literary career in the next few years, earning a Guggenheim fellowship in 1940 and publishing his second novel, *At The Moon’s Inn*, in late 1941. In an effort to support his family, including his first daughter, Pamela, Lytle accepted an invitation to teach at the Sewanee Military Academy later that year.

In early 1942, Alexander Guerry, the vice-chancellor at the University of the South (at Sewanee the vice-chancellor holds the authority of chancellor while the titular chancellor is the regional bishop of the Episcopalian Church) hired Lytle to teach history at the University level. In their conversations Guerry complained frequently to Lytle about then editor, W.S. Knickerbocker, hoping the *SR* could become as successful as the other university quarterlies of its day. Before the early 1940’s there would have been neither sense nor purpose in the *SR* assigning itself purely to literature—several quarterlies were already devoted to the subject, including *The Dial*, *Hound & Horn*, *The Symposium*, and, most notably, the *Southern Review*, edited by the Fugitive-Agrarians Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren at LSU from 1935-42. Despite their successes, all of these magazines eventually folded under serious financial strain, and wartime budget cuts. George Core notes that the *Southern Review* was “declared superfluous by the narrow-minded and autocratic general then running Louisiana State University” (Core Editorial History 72) being the last of these quarterlies to shut down in 1942. The implications of the collapse of the *Southern Review* were intimately discussed in correspondence between Lytle and Allen Tate. The pair would soon collaborate to manage the *SR* to unparalleled success at a time when other literary magazines were being discontinued across the nation owing to the financial constraints of the war. Lytle and Tate directed the magazine to new heights both ideologically and financially, and Lytle’s contribution stands as his significant contribution to the longstanding legacy of the *SR*.

With the *Southern Review* out of the picture, Lytle sensed that the time was ripe for Tate to lead the *SR* into a new era, inciting Tate in a letter on January 30, 1942, to “tell him [Guerry] that now is the time for the *Sewanee Review* to take the place of the *Southern Review*, and that you might take the Academy job until Knickerbocker's contract expired, when you would be made editor of that and do more or less what you have been doing at Princeton” (Young and Sarcone 181). Tate’s time a Princeton is notable, since he served as a poet-in-residence and helped found the university’s creative writing program. Lytle knew that Tate possessed both the drive and the ability to transform the *SR* from what Tate would call “a graveyard for second-rate professors” (Young and Sarcone 186) into a leading national literary review.

As early as 1936, Allen Tate, a fellow Agrarian and one of the founders of *The Fugitive*—a magazine at Vanderbilt publishing some of the Agrarians’ best poems—had formed his own opinions about the management of literary quarterlies and a program for their continued success. Tate outlines his argument in “The Function of the Critical Quarterly,” published in the *Southern Review.* His argument is formed on the notion that a quarterly review is the most appropriate forum for continued critical discussion, but also the most vulnerable to financial pressure. Unlike weekly or even monthly magazines, “our best quarterlies have readers but not enough readers to pay the ‘cost of production’” (63). Moreover, many quarterlies of Tate’s era did not pay their contributors, including the *SR*, which led more prominent writers to more affluent magazines. These magazines “can pay better rates for manuscripts than the most flourishing quarterly can ever pay. The monthly can command first choice of the work of writers who would otherwise put their best effort into the more considered . . . performance demanded by the more critical journal” (67). In Tate’s mind, the reader of these weekly magazines is presented with nothing but a middling buffet of critical attitudes assembled by the highest bidder. Tate’s solutions are rather straightforward: the critical quarterly cannot function without a subsidy, its contributors must be paid, and the editor must work with those contributors to develop a substantial and autonomous critical program. As Tate states toward the end of his article, the “ideal task of the critical quarterly is not the give the public what it wants, or what it thinks it wants, but what—through the medium of its most intelligent members—it ought to have” (72). It is reasonable to assert that Lytle was undoubtedly conscious and supportive of Tate’s ideas given the closeness of their relationship and Lytle’s work at the *SR*.

Tate was also keenly aware of the opportunity Guerry held if he was willing to act. In a letter to Lytle on February 6, 1942, he notes “If Guerry has any gumption at all, he ought to see that the collapse of the SR [Southern Review]. . . gives him the whole field for the Sewanee Review. A subsidy of about $3,000 to pay contributors would be all that is needed” (Young and Sarcone 183-4). Guerry was also aware that he could hope to establish the *SR* as a real literary quarterly with a wide spread readership, lending respect to the University. Guerry was also in need of a new editor at the *SR* after the psychological collapse of W.S. Knickerbocker, the editor and head of the Sewanee English Department. Of course, $3,000 was hard to come by in early 1942, especially since the U.S. had just entered WWII a few months earlier. Despite Lytle’s advice to hire Tate, and a letter of recommendation from John Crowe Ransom, the editor of the rising *Kenyon Review*, Guerry was simply unable to raise the money necessary to pay contributors as Tate stipulated. Consequently, Tate refused Guerry’s offer. Guerry’s desire to create a magazine to equal the *Southern Review* no doubt influenced his decision to solicit Cleanth Brooks. Brooks declined, perhaps fearing that the *SR* would be subject to the same financial abandonment he had endured at LSU. With Guerry’s options running low, Lytle, under heavy pressure from Guerry, reluctantly agreed to fill the role of managing editor in addition to teaching history. As Core explains, Lytle was only managing editor because it was the custom at the time for the head of the English Department to also edit the magazine. Thus, while Tudor S. Long held the title of acting editor, Lytle fulfilled the role completely, beginning with the fall 1942 issue (Core, Editorial History 5). Meanwhile, Allen Tate was living only a few miles away from Lytle’s office working on a novel. Due to their proximity and personal relationship, “Tate decided (with Lytle’s concurrence) that the best thing he could do for himself and for the community of letters was to become an unusually active advisory editor” (Core Remaking 73). In fact, Tate became so involved with editing that he began to fear some resentment on Lytle’s part, despite Lytle’s assurance that this was not the case: “Of course I wanted you to help on the Review or I wouldn't have let you” (Young and Sarcone, 196). This tension may have played some role in Tate’s decision to take up a position at the Library of Congress after a year, leaving Lytle to edit on his own.

Despite these lingering issues, the shift in quality between Knickerbocker’s last issue and those published by Lytle and Tate is tremendous. As Core notes, the first issue still contains traces of Knickerbocker’s presence in articles from his backlog, including one piece by Mrs. Knickerbocker. However, the pair chose to use as their leading article a piece on Shakespeare, which probably would have placed further back into the magazine. As G.A.M. Janssens notes in *The American Literary Review*, Lytle drew heavily from his (and Tate’s) literary connections to solicit poems by Wallace Stevens, George Marion O’Donnell and William Meredith and essays by Arthur Mizener and Cleanth Brooks (Janssens 278). Despite his thorough account, Janssens glosses over much, describing the further development of the magazine during Lytle’s first brief editorship, claiming “the rest of the issue was not different from the earlier *Sewanee Review*. Lytle made an important start, but it was Tate who made this magazine” (Janssens, 278). While there is some truth in this statement, Janssens fails to recognize the further achievements made under Lytle. As Core explains, in the winter 1943 issue Lytle’s most significant change in the *SR*’s contents was revealed: fiction (Editorial History 7).

The addition of fiction was strongly supported by Tate. As he suggests, “good creative work is a criticism of the second rate; and the critical department ought to be run for the protection of that which in itself is the end of criticism” (Tate 64). Fiction has been a mainstay of the *SR* since its introduction, and it would follow that its first appearance would be especially strong. The honor was given to Leroy Leatherman’s “The Enchanted Bull.” Establishing a pattern that he would follow throughout his editorships, Lytle developed a strong and lasting professional relationship with Leatherman. The beginnings of their friendship appear to be most firmly grounded in Leatherman’s submission to the magazine. A series of letters between the two can be found in the Lytle Papers at Vanderbilt’s Andrew Nelson Lytle Collection in the Jean and Alexander Heard Library. The first of these from June 1943 from Leatherman to Lytle begins simply “Dear Sir,” and concludes by saying “Thank you for the kind words,” presumably early praise of Leatherman’s story on Lytle’s part (Lytle Papers 6/15/1943). Tate also felt the story was worth publishing as the magazine’s first. After editing “The Enchanted Bull” himself, he wrote to Leatherman in a letter housed in the Sewanee Archives: “I have decided not to send back ‘The Enchanted Bull’ for revision. I think it is good enough as it stands” (Sewanee Archives 12/16/1942). The note stands as high praise from Tate, who had a reputation as a demanding editor. Tate cemented his view in another letter to Leatherman, telling him that the story was “first-rate,” and, agreeing with Lytle, saying, “it is the quality of your tone which principally distinguishes the work at hand” (Sewanee Archives 11/30/1942). Leatherman himself remembered in another letter that “once you wrote me that *tone* was at the basis of my style; you didn’t know whether that was good or bad but I ought to be aware of it” (Lytle Papers 5/12/1957).

Lytle’s interest in Leatherman is clear, given the similarity of themes and style in their fiction. Lytle discusses one of his concurrent themes in his foreword to *A Novel, A Novella, and Four Stories*: “the loss of innocence or the initiation of youth into manhood is an archetypal experience . . . but young men of differing societies will respond in various ways. Unlike Sparta we do not formally instruct our young men. What there is of it is private and accidental” (Foreword 196). This theme is firmly developed in Leatherman’s story, which centers on young Jim Daigre, his loss of innocence and his meandering initiation into manhood. Jim’s older and worldly cousin, Corely, exposes the boy’s inexperience by asking him about his small bottle of wine: “‘Bet you don’t know what this is’ ”(SR 105 V 51) Corely tells him absolutely. Jim confirms Corley’s assertion by guessing that the bottle holds ink. As Corley laughs, Jim throws the bottle against a rock in a burst of immature anger about his own ignorance. As the narrative builds, Jim and Corley spend evenings deep in the woods searching for the bull, a mysterious and frightening beast, even to the adults of their world. Nearing the bull’s sanctuary in the forest, Jim finds himself alone against a hardened grove of trees, trembling with fear. “He walked up to the wall of the forest. Slowly the fear grew, slowly as the trees grew higher over him, formed in his head and became a human, living thing. And, slowly, that was all there was; this fear as real as any human being. It destroyed all his memory, all his knowledge” (SR 111 V 51). Jim’s entrance into the forest may be interpreted as a step toward his own initiation into society, while the bull itself represents the primal impetus toward knowledge. Immediately after Jim’s revelation he finds himself swimming with Corely. Pushing water off his body, Jim notices that “[w]here his hand had been, a new feeling came. He did not remember such a feeling at all. When Corley came and was standing, white, above him, he felt ashamed but did not know why” (SR 111 V 51). The bull elicits Jim’s new sensations of physical awareness, the same modesty produced by original sin. Unaware or perhaps unwilling to allow their boys to reach natural level of maturity, the adults of the story slaughter the bull. As the story closes Jim overhears “something about the bad old bull being gone out of the wood and how little children don’t have to be afraid anymore” (SR 120 V 51). The adults in the story ultimately cannot allow their son to begin his own growth and suspend him in a state of safe and complacent childhood. Removed from his natural rights of initiation, Jim languishes in immaturity.

Leatherman returned to the *SR* the next year with “The Sportsman,” a story about Jim Daigre’s first try at fishing. With his father unwilling to teach him how to fish on his own, Jim is pushed into learning by Corley. While he manages to hook an impressive catch, he is incapable of accepting his father’s pride as Corley and then his father retell the story over and again. Jim will naturally come by some experience of his own, but without a guide he fails to realize any deeper significance behind his actions, thus misunderstanding the importance of the “fish-story” in relation to the act of fishing. Lytle outlines a strikingly similar scene in his short story “The Mahogany Frame” (first published as “The Guide” in the *SR* in 1945) centered on a young boy’s first duck hunt with his uncle. Hunting is an accidental sort of initiation in Lytle’s estimation, especially as it is revealed in the story. Paralleling one another in their writing, Lytle and Leatherman’s relationship grew and continued well beyond their early correspondence on Leatherman’s stories. Their relationship is also further indicative of Lytle’s style as an editor, as he would continue to forge new literary relationships throughout his career.

Janssens also fails to take notice of Lytle’s further selections during his first editorial position. The spring 1944 issue, for example, includes a long section of Robert Penn Warren’s forthcoming novel *At Heaven’s Gate*, “The Statement of Ashby Wyndham.” Lytle wrote a positive review of the novel himself for the fall issue when the novel was released. The spring issue also included an essay from Randall Jarrell on Archibald McLeish. Tate was certainly pleased, telling Lytle that “P.S. Your spring issue is even better than its predecessor, even though it lacks anything as brilliant as the [Wallace] Stevens poems” (Young and Sarcone 197). If anything, Lytle’s issues continued to increase in quality, presenting poetry by Lowell and John Berryman, and other essays from Cleanth Brooks, Donald Davidson and Allen Tate. His essay on Dostoyevsky, “The Hovering Fly,” led the magazine in the summer issue. Perhaps most important, as Core notes, a “critical program is taking shape” (Editorial History 8), in accordance with Tate’s standards. Janssens does record, rather begrudgingly, Richard Croom Beatty’s comments on Lytle’s two years at the *SR*: “Lytle transformed the old and distinguished *Sewanee Review* from the condition into which it had sunk for more than a decade—a haphazard receptacle of second-rate academic-literary exercises—into a publication with character and difficult standards of excellence” (Janssens 278).

Lytle’s accomplishment becomes even more remarkable when we remember that his strongest interest was always his own writing. He was never fully grounded in editing a magazine, particularly for eight issues over two years when he had expected to edit none. To Lytle’s relief, on October 13, 1943, the Regents of the university unanimously agreed to invite Allen Tate once again to edit the magazine (Janssens 279). This time Tate accepted the offer and was able to combine friendly donations along with a government grant secured by Guerry in an effort to pay contributors at a competitive rate. Tate also held the editorship for only eight issues, but in his brief tenure he more than tripled the circulation of the *SR* and further cemented its critical program, even featuring contributions from W.H. Auden and T.S. Eliot. Leatherman published another story in the *SR* in 1946, and, in another letter in the Sewanee Archives, actually requested that his third story be printed in the *SR* as the connective middle “Jim Daigre” story, “two of which Mr. Lytle published in the *SR*…I hope you will publish it” (8/22/1945). Tate obliged his request. As Core argues, the *SR* would have neither survived nor been worth remembering without the substantial contributions from Tate and Lytle. He notes that “Lytle and Tate had not only saved the *Sewanee Review* but completely remade it….the new *Sewanee Review* became an incomparably greater force in the world at large and in the Republic of Letters by at once making and interpreting literary history” (Editorial History 9-10).

From 1946, when Tate resigned, to 1961 the editorship changed hands only once, from John Palmer to Monroe Spears. Palmer might well have held the position longer had he not been recalled to service by the U.S. Navy. Spears took over most effectively, assuring readers, as Palmer had, that he would continue to maintain the high standards created by Tate in his few years. Giving credibility to his words, Spears named both Lytle and Tate to the position of advisory editors at the *SR*, a role that Lytle would use effectively during Spears’s editorship. He was even able to secure Leatherman a *SR* fellowship (a by-product of the magazine’s increased popularity and endowment) that allowed him to work on a novel that Lytle would eventually edit. “I had a letter from Mr. Spears about the Fellowship. I am very grateful to you” (Lytle Papers 4/11/1957) Leatherman wrote to Lytle years afterward. In the meantime, Lytle published his third novel, *A Name for Evil*, in 1947.

In the late 1940’s Lytle took up a position teaching creative writing with Paul Engle at the Iowa Writers’ Workshop. Perhaps more than any of Lytle’s former vocations, teaching fiction writing may have been his most successful, and it was certainly his most rewarding. Throughout Lytle’s career he held a tendency to serve as a mentor with fellow writers (as many members of the Agrarian circle did). His relationship with Leatherman fits the model accordingly. Even after leaving the *SR*, Lytle was more than willing to look over Leatherman’s work, editing the third Jim Daigre story for Tate’s issue. Leatherman wrote to Lytle in June of 1946: “I am well pleased that you think the story has merit. It has pulled me out of the well-known state of thinking that the whole thing is just so much fodder and better used as such” (Lytle Papers 6/10/1946). Even many years later Lytle comforted Leatherman after he had expressed concern about the state of his novel: “Don’t worry about your novel. . . I will put my brutal eye on the manuscript” (Sewanee Archives 11/1/1961). During his time at Iowa, Lytle became acquainted with another young writer in one of his classes with whom he would develop and maintain a relationship throughout her life. Lytle explains his first impression of her work in *Southerners and Europeans*:

Years ago at Iowa City in a rather informal class meeting I read aloud a story by one of the students. I was told later that it was understood that I would know how to pronounce in good country idiom the word *chitling*, which appeared in the story. At once it was obvious that the author of the story was herself not only Southern but exceptionally gifted. The idiom for her characters rang with all the truth of the real thing, but the real thing heightened. It resembled in tone and choice of words all the country speech I had ever heard, but I couldn’t quite place it. And then I realized that she had done what any first-rate artist always does—she had made something more essential than life but resembling it. . . .

This, of course, was Flannery O’ Connor (Literary Portraits 187).

While Lytle began to oversee O’Connor’s first novel, *Wise Blood*, in 1948, his attention to O’Connor’s work in its most formative stages not only aided her writing but helped her to find a publisher. While her first published story, “The Geranium” appeared in a small magazine, *Accent*, her second, “The Train,” found its way into the *SR*, then edited by Palmer. O’Connor noted in a letter at the Sewanee Archives to him that “I have been working here [at the Iowa Writers’ Workshop] under Paul Engle . . . and more recently Andrew Lytle” (Sewanee Archives 10/7/1947). While O’Connor’s work was undoubtedly strong enough to speak for itself, Lytle’s presence may have fortified Palmer’s faith in her work. In his response Palmer informed O’Connor that he would be overjoyed to publish her story, though he was displeased that the *SR* would not be the first magazine to publish her work. He also asked O’Connor to “please give my best regards to the Lytles” (Sewanee Archives 10/9/1947).

O’Connor’s introduction to Lytle and the *SR* also implied her introduction to Lytle’s literary circle. With old Agrarians behind the helms of the major literary quarterlies, such as John Crowe Ransom at *The Kenyon Review*, Lytle had provided an outlet for O’Connor’s tremendous talent. As Charlotte Beck explains in *The Fugitive Legacy: A Critical History*, “It would be difficult to exaggerate Lytle’s role in O’Connor’s literary career. Had she not become his protégé before sending her fiction to Ransom, she might have been another writer whose stories Ransom did not ‘like quite enough’….Cognizant of her debt to these editors, O’Connor continued to send them her best efforts” (Beck 238). Four out of nine stories from her first collection, *A Good Man is Hard to Find*, appeared in either the *Kenyon* or *SR*. Other men in Lytle’s or Palmer’s positions may well have tried to keep O’Connor’s talents hidden from Ransom, whose *Kenyon Review* stood as the only literary quarterly competing against the *SR*. It was not in Lytle’s nature to squander good talent through selfishness, however. Ransom felt much the same way about O’Connor’s talent. Responding to Monroe Spears’s request for a recommendation for O’Connor to a *Sewanee Review* fellowship, Ransom replied: “I think mighty well of O’Connor, and I’m told she *needs* the [financial] help…I’m a little bit jealous on behalf of the democratic principle of scattering our benefits; but in this case I’m sure I’d be tempted” (Young and Core 370). Though O’Connor eventually wound up receiving a *Kenyon* Fellowship, she continued to publish stories with the *SR*, “The River” in 1953 and “The Displaced Person” in 1954. Her strongest contributions to the magazine were yet to be made, however, appearing a few years later under Lytle’s second editorship.

It is worth mentioning that Leatherman was also keenly aware of O’Connor’s ability and Lytle’s influence on her career. In another letter to Lytle, Leatherman expressed frustration over O’Connor’s recent critical reception: “There is so much *besides* Catholicism in her work… [people] ought to read her” (Lytle Papers 5/12/1957). It must be difficult to recall, and for members of my generation even more difficult to imagine, a time when Flannery O’Connor’s work was not widely appreciated outside of certain literary circles such as Lytle’s. In another letter, Leatherman muses that “hers is a wise, wicked and gleaning eye looking straight out of a real humanity and that accounts, or goes toward…the balance….I hope you’ll continue to exert pressure toward the comedy in her; who else quite does it?” (Lytle Papers 4/11/1957). It is impossible to know whether or not Leatherman’s words inspired Lytle to do so, but Leatherman’s request stands as further testament to Lytle’s ability as a mentor to O’Connor and by extension over Leatherman.

After O’Connor graduated from Iowa, having accepted an invitation to the then fledgling artists’ colony Yaddo, Lytle accepted another creative writing position in 1948, this time at the University of Florida, which he held until 1961. During this time, Lytle established new relationships with students who he would eventually publish in the *SR*, including Smith Kirkpatrick and Madison Jones. In was through his position as advisory editor to the *SR* under Spears, however, that Lytle became acquainted with yet another of his young charges, James Dickey. Dickey had early connections to the *SR*, which was the first major magazine to publish his poetry in 1947. Dickey applied for and was awarded a *SR* fellowship in 1954—both Allen Tate and Lytle had served on the panel judging Dickey’s poetry submissions. Like so many others, Dickey quickly became another one of Lytle’s vested interests, despite being focused on poetry, not fiction. The two began a correspondence shortly after Dickey had been awarded the *SR* fellowship and Lytle’s influence immediately affected Dickey’s life and literary career. Gordon Van Ness makes considerable noise over their relationship in *The One Voice of James Dickey*. Van Ness notes that Lytle served as Dickey’s first extended correspondent who could offer strong direction of Dickey’s literary voice and mind. “Moreover,” Van Ness explains, “Lytle’s erudition and literary reputation provided his protégé with what he had previously lacked—validation of his own self-worth” (138).

Lytle was able to encourage Dickey’s, despite having no poetic ambitions of his own. After their first meeting Lytle wrote persuasively to Dickey’s father, Eugene, in an attempt to justify Dickey’s literary ambitions from the perspective of a reasonably successful writer. “He’s going to make literary history, if he has luck” (Van Ness 139). Lytle’s inclinations were proven correct within a decade, when Dickey won the National Book Award for his collection *Buckdancer’s Choice* in 1965. Dickey’s admiration for Lytle transcended a traditional friendship, and in his complex psychology Dickey may have viewed Lytle as something like a father figure or role model. Writing unabashedly to Lytle, Dickey stated that “the fact that we were once together for a few hours would suffice itself to justify my life, but for the fact that I may do something to bear out the trust and confidence you have in me” (Van Ness 217). While Dickey’s words may seem excessive, there is no trace of hyperbole—more than any of his other students, Dickey may have been the most profoundly affected by Lytle’s presence. Dickey held Lytle’s fiction in the highest regard, telling Lytle: “*The Long Night* has always seemed to me the best novel ever to come out of the South, Faulkner’s not excluded” (Van Ness 203). After traveling through Europe and writing poems with his money from the *SR* Fellowship, Dickey continued to see Lytle as a guiding force. Lytle lived up to his position, securing Dickey a post on the creative-writing faculty at Florida for Dickey. He did not hold the professorship more that year, disgracefully leaving the college mired in scandal and disgrace after reading and (supposedly) coarsely explicating one of his more obscene poems, “The Father’s Body,” in a public reading. Dickey took a leave of absence from academia afterwards to work in advertising. Despite his imprudence, which was by no means limited to this single episode, his relationship with Lytle endured for the time being, and he would also be called upon when Lytle returned to the editorship of the *SR*.

A relationship existed at one point between Dickey and O’Connor, though it was likely minor in a broader significance. In a letter, reprinted in *Flannery O’Connor: The Habit of Being*, to the Fitzgeralds, Robert and Sally, O’Connor noted that “Last Sunday I was visited by a poet named James Dickey who is an admirer of Robert” (272). In a letter to Fitzgerald eleven years later Dickey recalls “talking to Flannery O’Connor about you” (Van Ness 453). In another letter to John Hawkes, O’Connor remarks that “I have a friend, James Dickey, a poet…He described a passage in one of your [Hawkes’s] books…in admiration” (Fitzgerald 292). While Dickey and O’Connor appear to be more directly connected due to Fitzgerald and Hawkes, it is important to remember that both of these men were mutual correspondents of Lytle’s as well and that all of these individuals would be published by Lytle in the *SR*. Lytle remains a common thread, linking new students and old friends.

Lytle’s time at Florida also proved to be one the most fruitful periods of his own literary career. He contributed several essays to various magazines on a variety of subjects, including a strong essay on Faulkner, “The Son of Man—He Will Prevail,” which appeared in the *SR* in 1955. With the publication of his last novel, *The Velvet Horn*, in 1957, Lytle had written his greatest contribution to the art of fiction. Lytle spent nearly eight years writing, relying heavily on Tate throughout the process for editorial advice and guidance. Lytle had published a section from the story, “What Quarter of the Night,” later to be called “The Water Witch,” in the *SR* in 1956. The book was also a National Book Award finalist and dedicated to John Crowe Ransom. In an effort to explain the story, which is a tremendously complex tale revolving around themes on the loss of innocence and the quest for spiritual wholeness, Lytle published “The Working Novelist and the Myth-Making Process,” in the magazine *Daedalus* in 1959. Any deserving commentary of the novel is entirely beyond the scope of this essay. It is more worthwhile to note for our purposes that Lytle’s friends and students were impressed with his achievement. Flannery O’Connor remarked to John Hawkes, who would eventually publish an article on O’Connor for Lytle, that “I read *The Velvet Horn* and I was entirely taken with it” (Fitzgerald 350). With another correspondent a few weeks later she states that “[Hawkes] is very much taken with *The Velvet Horn*. With Andrew I have the sense always of a very brilliant artificiality, but *The Velvet Horn* was very readable for me. I usually can’t read a book that long” (Fitzgerald 357). Leatherman also held Lytle’s novel in the highest regard. After reading *The Velvet Horn*, Leatherman wrote to Lytle with urgency: “I really need to converse with you about all these points. About innocence, Paradise and the division of being” (Lytle Papers 5/12/1957), three of the main issues in Lytle’s novel. Later in the same letter Leatherman criticizes Faulkner’s new novel *The Town*, saying that “it is less and less poetry, farther and farther from *The Velvet Horn*.” Despite the novel’s critical success, it has been suggested that the complexity of the novel, both in style and content, typically precludes a universal public appeal or understanding. As with Leatherman’s comparison of Lytle’s prose to poetry, O’Connor noted in her letter to Hawkes, “I didn’t follow all the intricacies of the symbolism but it had its effect without working it all out” (Fitzgerald 350-1). To recognize that even an accomplished artist like O’Connor, who used allegory throughout her fiction, was incapable of fully unraveling Lytle’s symbolism is to explain the intricacy of his craft. While O’Connor was able still able to derive its meaning, the same might not be said for the casual reader, which no doubt hindered the commercial success of the novel.

In 1961 Lytle was invited to resume work at the *SR*, this time as editor in name and fact, replacing Spears. In his editorial statement, following the lead made by Palmer in succeeding Tate and Spears, Lytle pledged that the *SR* would continue on its current course while also promising to pursue and develop young writers, one of Lytle’s goals. Speaking to these young writers, Lytle asked “that what they send in is truly finished; in fiction particularly that the *one* story be done, not just a story but the only action which the circumstances and the author’s post allows” (SR 711 V 69). Lytle confronts this same issue in his foreword to *A Novel, A Novella, and* *Four Stories*, stating that fiction “is an action then, and an action which tells the only story which makes of the form and subject a single whole” (Foreword 197). As Core reaffirms (Editorial History 17), fiction was Lytle’s primary concern, as it had always been, and during his editorship he would publish an average of ten stories per year—Spears, by most immediate contrast, went through one year publishing only one story in its four issues. Despite this prejudice, Lytle did make equally serious efforts to publish verse and criticism of high quality. In the mid-1960’s Lytle wrote an informal guide to editing at the *SR*, possibly fearing his own failing health, entitled “Some of the Steps Necessary in Publishing a Quarterly Literary Magazine.” While much of the memo is focused on pure logistical problems—i.e. what to do with the hundreds of books sent by publishers to be reviewed, how best to copyedit the final proof of an issue, how to advertise effectively—Lytle clearly establishes his plan for an appropriate distribution of material. “1. Fiction—10-12 stories per year. 2. Essays— 10-12 per year, up to 14 some times. 3. Verse—the work of 25-30 poets” (Lytle, Steps 1). Lytle followed these guidelines, mostly, throughout his time at the *SR*, always making room for fiction and publishing such notable poets as Dickey, Warren and Ted Hughes, and essays by Caroline Gordon, Arthur Mizener, Brainerd Cheney and Austin Warren

While Lytle’s first issue may have been backlogged from pieces selected by Spears, Lytle’s issues from 1962 clearly illustrate his dedication to and dependence upon his former students. The winter issue saw Leatherman’s name return to the *SR* after nearly two decades with “The Artist as Southerner,” which stands for, among other things, the defense of Lytle and his need for critical understanding. Leatherman is responding to the recent publication of *Modern Southern Literature in its Cultural Setting*. Dickey had contributed an essay to the anthology on Southern race relations, which to Leatherman felt slightly out of place for a collection on literature. “Whether Mr. Dickey’s essay belongs or not, I am glad it is there; the problem [racism] is there, everywhere, but you almost never find other poets writing about it, let alone writing with such integrity” (SR 166 V 70). Leatherman becomes even more vocal over Lytle’s lack of recognition in the anthology and the poor handling of the one essay included about Lytle’s work: “I thought it would no longer be possible to neglect Andrew Lytle in any discussion of modern literature, but I was wrong. . . . Carter contributes an essay about him which, though full of respect and admiration, does not come near doing him justice” (SR 167-8 V 70). Lytle did write to Leatherman after receiving the review, praising him for his effort: “The review is just what I wanted” (Sewanee Archives 1/14/1962). Lytle’s motives in this instance are certainly far from noble—despite the many accomplishments of his editorship it is clear that he was prone to fits of vanity and self-promotion, having already used the magazine as a venue for his own creative work under Tate and Spears

The summer issue saw Dickey gave a typically dualistic review of the poet John Logan, full of elegant praise and urbane criticism: “he stands, in my opinion, an exciting chance of being one of the finest poet we have ever had . . . (It might help, also, if he could find a less prosaic way of writing, and if he would explore a little among the dynamics of language)” (SR 260 V70). Dickey often received and responded to criticism over his reviews, and the *SR* often published both of these paired letters, once heatedly from Wendell Berry (who still contributes to the *SR*) in 1964: “it’s hard to imagine how any reader could benefit from a reviewer who apparently can’t tell the difference between common snottiness and criticism” (SR 552 V72).

The summer 1962 issue also saw Lytle’s first real editorial effort toward a cohesive issues come to fruition, led by O’Connor’s novella “The Lame Shall Enter First,” two critical pieces on O’Connor’s work from Robert Fitzgerald and John Hawkes, and poetry and reviews from Dickey. Lytle’s relationship with O’Connor is further revealed by their existing correspondence about the story. Lytle proposed the idea of an issue devoted to O’Connor that would feature her contribution and critical analysis of her fiction. In a letter written to O’Connor on 2 September 1961, Lytle pushed her: “After all, the *Sewanee Review* is the place for this to happen” (Sewanee Archives 9/2/1961). Lytle’s determination to construct issues of this scope indicates his commitment to building upon the established critical program at the *SR*. O’Connor had already published three stories for the *SR* over the past ten years, and thus she herself was part of the established trend. As O’Connor developed more and more into a writer of serious stature her work deserved more appropriate critical commentary in addition to the publication of her new fiction. There was a slight snag, however—O’Connor was beginning to doubt her own work. Lytle was quick to point out the problems in O’Connor’s piece in the hope of allowing her to correct the story to her own satisfaction. “I have just read through the novella and I am going to read over it again…I feel the flaw in this is the point of view. It is the flaw of omniscience” (Sewanee Archives 12/7/1961) Lytle wrote on 7 December 1961. There is little doubt that O’Connor would have regarded Lytle’s comments with utmost attention. Just a year before O’Connor mentioned to Lytle, “I feel better about the book [*The Violent Bear it Away*] knowing you think it works….There are not many people whose opinion on this I set store by” (Fitzgerald 373). Despite his confidence in the novella O’Connor continued to dread its printing: “It’s the worst thing I’ve ever written . . . it just doesn’t come off,” (Sewanee Archives 5/28/1962). Lytle continued to assure her that the piece was worth the space to publish, which O’Connor eventually came to see after the summer issue had been released. “I liked the issue and want to thank you for devoting so much of it to me. I liked Robert’s piece considerably” (Sewanee Archives 8/8/1962). O’Connor’s tone is markedly more content than her earlier fretting, with Lytle’s intuition again proven correct. Lytle would build upon this familiar outline in his fall issue, centering on Peter Taylor, another friend of his, and his story “At the Drugstore,” with three pieces of accompanying criticism on Taylor.

1963 saw two pieces from Lytle’s former students, Madison Jones and Smith Kirkpatrick, verse from Dickey, and another piece on O’Connor, this time from Brainerd Cheney. Late in the year Lytle solicited another story from O’Connor, telling her that her contribution would be essential: “I think it’s important to get together, once a year, the best fiction I can. Too often magazines such as ours have turned it over to the poets” (Sewanee Archives 11/8/1963). Lytle’s request here also further cements his clear preference for fiction throughout his editorial tenure. O’Connor did not disappoint him: “I have a story I’ll send you. . . .I think it’s a right good story” (Sewanee Archives 12/12/1963). The story, which would be published in the spring 1964 issue, turned out to be “Revelation,” which Core has dubbed not only the best of O’Connor’s work but the finest work of fiction ever published in the *SR*. A great loss to Lytle and the literary community, O’Connor passed away before the story was published. Even her unfortunate death could not keep her name from continuing to appear the pages of the *SR*, however, with Lytle publishing six essays on her achievement during the next five years. As Core estimates, “With Flannery O’Connor—her fiction and the criticism of it—Lytle performed best as editor” (Editorial History18).

Leroy Leatherman presented a review in 1964, but it would also be his final contribution to the magazine. While their relationship remained firm, Leatherman may have simply stopped writing. Having become the stage manager of the Martha Graham Dance Company in New York in the early 1960’s, Leatherman did not appear interested in writing much more for Lytle, despite his persistent requests. In an unrealized plan to devote an issue largely to the theater, Lytle wrote to Leatherman with a request for the occasion: “I expect your piece on Martha to be the center of it” (Sewanee Archives 11/1/1961). Leatherman had, in fact, once attempted to persuade John Palmer for a piece on the theater for the *SR*. Palmer responded most negatively: “I’m afraid I don’t think too much of your suggestion of a theater [issue]. . . .I have no way of knowing what your qualifications for doing the thing with more than a sort of private authority” (Sewanee Archives 4/26/1950). Despite Lytle’s renewed confidence in the topic, Leatherman’s “piece,” *Martha Graham: Portrait of the Lady as an Artist*, was ultimately released as a book in 1966, which was to be Leatherman’s last published work. A letter from Leatherman lends some explanation to his sudden difficulty in writing: “I wrote the whole first draft of ‘The Enchanted Bull’ in a single afternoon. Now the words come one at a time, little dribbles of muddy water” (Lytle Papers 5/12/1957). Lytle would continue to solicit Leatherman as a reviewer, once in 1968 with a mark of miscommunication between the two for several years: “Dear Leroy: Which circle of purgatory are you now inhabiting? . . . If it has postal service please let me know where you are. Would you have any time to do any reviewing for the summer issue?” (Sewanee Archives 10/8/1968). Lytle’s commitment to Leatherman at such an extent reveals a microcosm of Lytle’s *modus operandi* at the *SR*—he had first established his relationship with Leatherman nearly three decades earlier and yet still viewed him as a necessary contributor to the magazine. Dickey’s last appearance under Lytle came soon after Leatherman’s, in 1965 with yet another defense letter for his harsh criticism. Lytle’s struggle with cancer in the mid-sixties may have led Dickey to think himself the heir-apparent at the *SR*, writing to his wife, Maxine: “I have a feeling that I will be asked to edit the *Review*, but we can cross that bridge when we come to it” (Van Ness 395). Lytle’s recovery and Dickey’s renewed success on the national scene with *Buckdancer’s Choice* and his immensely popular novel *Deliverance* (1970), of later Hollywood fame, ended such discussions. Lytle did publish criticism on Dickey from H.L. Weatherby the next year (and, in due time, a flattering review of *Deliverance*) but Dickey’s own contributions to the magazine abruptly ceased.

Within five years of Lytle’s first issue three of his most accomplished contributors and friends had either shifted their interests elsewhere or passed away. Even with their absence Lytle was by no means incapable of producing a magazine, relying upon the countless writers he had known and taught throughout his many years, such as Caroline Gordon—Allen Tate’s first wife—Peter Taylor, Madison Jones, Smith Kirkpatrick, Wyatt Prunty, William Ralston (his assistant editor), Kathleen Raine, whose essay on Blake ran for more than half of an entire issue, and his Fugitive-Agrarian brothers, Brooks, Warren, Ransom and Tate. If anything, Lytle was perhaps too reliant on his small circle of literary acquaintances in the general production of the magazine. Tate himself promoted the concept in his essay on the management of literary quarterlies, declaring that a strong core of regular contributors were vital to a developing critical program. While the notion is theoretically sound and a necessity in practice, in reflecting on the history of the *SR* we cannot help but wonder if Lytle would have been able to succeed at all as an editor without being able to depend on his cultivated group of writers.

As he had promised, however, Lytle was still capable of finding young new authors and in 1965 published Cormac McCarthy’s first short story, “The Dark Waters.” Like Leatherman, McCarthy’s story harbors themes of misguided initiation through hunting. Out on a cold night with older men, a young boy foolishly jumps into a half-frozen river to save a hunting dog, forgetting the dog’s kill and his own mortality. The *SR* would publish a positive review of McCarthy’s first novel, *The Orchard Keeper* later that year: “Every time I begin to think that the Southern renaissance is truly over and that Southern authors are going to have to face the world on the same terms as everybody else, another novel appears to prove that the old tradition is still alive” (SR 719 V 73). While McCarthy never returned to the *SR*, it is still a notable stopgap in his literary career and a reminder of Lytle’s keen eye for promising talent. Lytle would turn again to Tate’s watchful eye in 1966, inviting Tate to guest edit the memorial issues dedicated to commemorate T.S. Eliot. The issue was led by Eliot’s last contribution to the *SR* and also included pieces from Lytle’s oldest friends and contributors—Tate, Brooks, Ransom and even a piece from Ezra Pound.

During the later years of his editorship Lytle was even inclined to fill pages with his own work, including two sections from his memoir, *A Wake for the Living*, and his criticism on Joyce, Flaubert, Agee and Hemingway. His last contribution to the magazine, “The State of Letters in a Time of Disorder,” bears witness to Lytle’s own views on the necessity of art and his own hopes for the magazine’s contributions when he became editor, stating in his introductory editorial that he would continue “the *Review’s* vigilance for language and language’s finest expression . . . literature” (SR 1961 V 69). Nearing the end of his tenure as editor, Lytle still rose to the defense of the tenets laid out by Tate in 1936, arguing for the careful consideration of the quarterlies to showcase literature and criticism outside the constraints of mainstream magazines: “A poet of great reputation asked me not long ago if I didn’t think literary quarterlies were out of fashion…. I told him I didn’t think so….the quarterlies’ care for language and style and the protection of what is eternal in letters makes them a kind of supreme court of literary judgment” (State of Letters 3-4). Lytle’s unwavering commitment to the very idea of the literary quarterly undoubtedly played some part in the magazine’s continued success; the *Kenyon Review* had ceased publication only a few years earlier in 1969, a decade after Ransom retired from the post. Whereas the *Kenyon* relied solely on a great editor, the editors of the *SR* have been able to maintain the momentum of their predecessors. In this sense, Lytle may indeed have finished what he started, despite the fact that he had no desire for it in the first place. Had Lytle been truly unwilling to bear the burden of editing his first two volumes in the early 1940’s the *SR* might well have been discontinued and sunk deep into the well of history. Without Lytle’s own outstanding effort in the task there would have been no magazine for Tate to vivify or for Lytle himself to edit. However coincidentally, Lytle managed to create a position that suited him quite well. While he tested many different fields as a writer throughout his life, working as a historian, essayist, critic, teacher, editor and novelist, he always held a clear sense of his role as an artist and a teacher— perhaps nowhere else was Lytle so capable of demonstrating the tremendous breadth of his ability in each of these roles than in his time at the *SR*. His ability to develop talent in young writers like O’Connor and Dickey compounded by his ability to provide them with an immediate public and critical venue afforded him the opportunity to place the magazine on the forefront of the national literary scene. While his preference toward a tight-knit circle of standard contributors and the inclusion of his own writing certainly led to biases, the standardized quality of the work set a clear bar for which the *SR* could continue to strive. To this day, the magazine has yet to miss an issue in its one hundred and sixteen years, the last thirty-five under the unprecedentedly tenured editor George Core since Lytle’s retirement in 1973. While Core is due the most recent portion of praise in this regard, the largest share of credit must surely rest with Lytle.

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