

**SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY
OF THE AMERICAN SHORT STORY**

NEWSLETTER

MAY, 2017

Jim Nagel, President

This edition of the society newsletter contains information about our activities at the ALA convention in Boston, a call for papers from Oliver Scheiding for our German conference in October, a report on the success of the Savannah symposium last October, and some final thoughts on the challenges ahead for a growing organization. Please make an effort to attend as many society activities as possible in Boston, and feel free to participate in all panel discussions as well as the business meeting. Remember that warm fellowship among scholars and teachers devoted to the short story is one of the important objectives of the organization.

SSASS at the American Literature Association Convention, Boston

This year SSASS will sponsor two panels and a business meeting. Please make every effort to attend all of these events and participate in the activities of the society.

Friday, May 26, 2017

**12:40-2:00 Session 10-I (Empire, 7th floor)
Lost American Short Stories**

Organized by the Society for the Study of the American Short Story
Chair: James Nagel, University of Georgia

1. "Revisiting Lyle Saxon's Long Lost 'Cane River'," James W. Thomas,
Pepperdine University

2. "Story Power: John Edgar Wideman's Microstories," Oliver Scheiding, University of Mainz (Germany)
3. "'Aproned Reporters': Maeve Brennan and Domestic Servants at the New Yorker in the 1950s," Sinéad Moynihan, University of Exeter (United Kingdom)

2:10-3:30 Session 11-I (Empire, 7th floor)
Classic American Stories

Organized by the Society for the Study of the American Short Story
 Chair: James Nagel, University of Georgia

1. "'The Luck of Roaring Camp' as National Allegory: Bret Harte's Grim Revision of a Civil War Comedy," Tara Penry, Boise State University
2. "Folk Practices in Thomas Bangs Thorpe's 'Big Bear of Arkansas'," Lisa Abney, Northwestern State University of Louisiana
3. "Parallels between 'Hansel and Gretel' and 'Young Goodman Brown'," Clara Reiring, University of Cologne (Germany)

3:40-5:00 Session 12-Q (Empire, 7th floor)
Society for the Study of the American Short Story

Business Meeting
 Chair: James Nagel, University of Georgia

Topics: The Savannah Symposium: A Report
 The German Conference: New Horizons (Oliver Scheiding)
 The society website
 A possible 2019 symposium
 Planning for a Society annual
 The Society website (Dustin Anderson)
 Publications by members
 ALA 2018

The German Conference (Directed by Oliver Scheiding)

CALL FOR PAPERS

**In cooperation with
 the Society for the Study of the American Short Story,
 the American Literature Association, and the Obama Institute**

The American Short Story: New Horizons

**Johannes Gutenberg-University, Mainz, Germany
October 5-7, 2017**

Program coordinator: Oliver Scheiding

Organizing Committee:

**James Nagel, Olivia Edenfield, Elke D'hoker,
Jochen Achilles, Dustin Anderson, Damien Schlarb**

Throughout its history, the American short story has been praised either as a highly polished gem or condemned as literary fast food. Despite such rise-and-fall predictions, the short story has always been a demanding form. Its narrative economy in terms of time and space records decisive, intimate moments of life that give the American Short Story a broad social resonance. As such, the short story offers a vibrant field of research. There is a renaissance in progress not only in terms of the short story's productivity but also in terms of innovative theoretical questions. The current state of research is, however, probably best described as "ripening."

The conference "The American Short Story: New Horizons" invites both panels and papers that address fresh and original questions relevant to studying the American short story: how the genre works as performance in itself; how it conveys a theory of culture in which aesthetic structures and the presentation of cultural problematics interrelate; how the short story and the practices of text-making are related to the cultures of print in which textual circulation and economic exchange are homologues; how we can read the short story as an expressive form alongside its material dimensions, its vitality of forms (i.e., short-short fiction, flash fiction), and the multiple meanings of such concepts as authorship and genre; how we can reassess the short story as a field to map out exchanges not just among authors, but also among editors, publishers, reviewers, readers, and the physical text, with its advertisements, illustrations, and editorial changes. The conference thus seeks to explore the American short story as a coming together of the enduring narrative practice of compression and concision in American literature, presently culminating in a digital culture in which brevity rules.

Suggested Topics:

- History of the American Short Story
- American Short Story and Ethnicity
- Gender/Sexuality Studies and the American Short Story
- American Short Story and Literary/Cultural Theory
- American Short Story and Linguistics
- American Short Story and Psychology
- American Short Story and Religion
- Early Short Narratives prior to 1800
- American Short Story and Periodicals
- American Short Story and Graphic Narratives
- American Short Story and Print Culture/Material Culture
- American Short Story and Translation/Translators
- American Short Story and Storytelling

- New and old Forms: Short and Short-Short Stories
- American Short Story Cycles
- The American Short Story and Life Writing
- American Short Stories and Authors
- Flash Fiction and Microfiction
- American Short Story and Visual Arts/Film
- American Short Story and Digital Research
- American Short Story and the Digital Age
- American Short Stories and Globalization
- American Short Stories and Transnationalism
- American Short Stories and Medical Humanities
- American Short Story and Literary Periodization/Movements
- American Short Story and MFA Programs
- American Short Story and Music/Theater
- Editing and Anthologizing the American Short Story
- Publishing and Reception of the American Short Story
- American Short Story and Pedagogy
- American Short Story and Genres (Novel, Novella, Essay etc.)
- New Literary Histories on American Short Stories (1980s to the Present)

Proposals:

Panels and roundtables have three presenters, although some may have more. Proposals for pre-arranged panels should include a 250-300-word description of the topic and full contact information for all members of the group. The person submitting the proposal is the chair of the session. He or she may also be a presenter, but need not be.

All persons wishing to give a paper at the conference, including all members of pre-arranged panels, should give a one-paragraph abstract of the paper to be presented along with a biographical paragraph giving the credentials of the presenter to address this topic. Individual papers should be scheduled for 20 minutes.

The organizing committee screens all proposals and abstracts, issues acceptances, and arranges the presentations on the program. It will form panels to accommodate papers not included in pre-arranged groups.

Please submit all proposals and abstracts to Oliver Scheiding (scheidung@uni-mainz.de) by June 30, 2017.

The American Short Story: An Expansion of the Genre (Savannah)

This symposium, the first such international meeting for the Society, was held in Savannah on October 20-22, 2016. Thanks to the cooperation of a great number of members, we had a very successful meeting with over 140 people in attendance from ten countries as well as every section of the United States.

The meeting was directed by Jim Nagel, president of the Society, who was generously assisted by a score of members, especially Olivia Edenfield, who, as Site Director, organized all local events, dealt with the hotel, and forced a hurricane out to sea just in time for the conference to begin. The symposium would not have been possible without the cooperation of Alfred Bendixen, Executive Director of the American Literature Association, who lent his experience and wise counsel to the development of the program. Oliver Scheiding served as International Coordinator and was largely responsible for the excellent European participation on the panels. Dustin Anderson, who understands the mysteries of computers and the internet, was responsible for the website and many technical details, and we all owe him our heartfelt gratitude. Many other people pitched in and covered duties large and small, including Molly Donehoo, Robert Clark, Gloria Cronin, Victoria Aarons, Maryemma Graham, Richard Kopley, Kirk Curnutt, Donna Campbell, and a score of other people who devoted time and energy to constructing an interesting and challenging convention.

In addition to the standard presentation of scholarly papers and a few discussion sessions, there were several special events. J. Gerald Kennedy delivered a memorable keynote address on "National Strangeness in the Antebellum Tale" as well as participating in other ways. His stature in the profession lent a dimension of serious scholarship to the symposium. Film producer Dante James presented his celebrated film "The Doll" based on a short story by Charles Chesnutt. Gloria Cronin invited members of the Saul Bellow family to join her panel discussing two of the author's best known works. Publisher Richard Layman outlined consulting opportunities for a series of volumes on American short stories that his firm is developing. As a final event for a busy conference, society members Kirk Curnutt, Richard Kopley, and Jennifer Memolo read original short stories of their own to an immensely entertained audience. Kirk's clever satire of modern writers was a welcome conclusion to three days of interesting and challenging presentations.

On a sad note, Puerto Rican writer Judith Ortiz Cofer was scheduled to read a new short story at the Friday luncheon for the symposium, but at the last minute her cancer worsened and she was rushed to the hospital, where she died shortly thereafter. The University of Georgia, where she was a colleague of mine, organized a fitting memorial in her honor.

In her absence, I gave an extemporaneous address on four of the major subjects that interest me in early American stories, those published at the time of the Revolutionary War. The major themes of those stories concern the abolition of slavery, the role of Native Americans in the new society, the status of women as citizens of the nation, and a definition of the new culture of the United States.

Final Comments:

SSASS is a young society in many respects, inchoate in its role in the profession, but we have come a long way together in the last four years. We are now established as a group worthy of two panels and a business meeting at the annual ALA convention, and we have just demonstrated that we can organize an international symposium that will draw more than 140 people. Through the masterful executive abilities of Oliver Scheiding, we will have our first foreign conference in October of 2017. We are hoping to hold another symposium on the American short story in 2019 or 2020, and we will need everyone to support that effort. Remember that Dustin Anderson manages our society website, and there are always important announcements and membership information available there. Our negotiations for initiating a journal or annual continue, and a number of logistical issues remain to be resolved, mostly having to do with the handling of funding and a legal entity to hold copyright. I hope to have more to say on that matter at the business meeting. We need to continue to increase our membership, attracting not only established scholars but young assistant professors and graduate students as well. They will surely be the long-range future of the organization.

Thank you for your continuing support of the society.

Jim Nagel, President