

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

NEWSLETTER

FALL, 2017

Jim Nagel, President

Dear Colleagues:

This Fall edition of the society newsletter contains a call for papers to be presented at the American Literature Association convention in San Francisco, May 24-27, 2018. A second subject is a most sincere expression of gratitude to Oliver Scheiding for the enormous success of our first European conference, one held in Mainz, Germany last October.

SSASS at the American Literature Association Convention, San Francisco

Call for Papers

As in the past, SSASS will sponsor two panels and a business meeting at the ALA convention in San Francisco, May 24-27, 2018. For all of you who are able to attend the conference, please make every effort to attend all SSASS events and participate in the activities of the society. Remember that we do not have dues as an organization, but we do expect that members will support and participate in society programs whenever possible. With that in mind, we are issuing a call for papers for the two panels. Please submit your proposal for either panel by January 15, 2018 by sending an email to the president at jnagel@uga.edu. Your document should contain two paragraphs, the first a brief abstract of your central subject and thesis, the second a biographical statement of your academic position, pertinent publications, and your credentials to present on this subject. You should receive a response before the end of January.

Panel 1 New Readings of Old Stories

This panel will present three papers that bring an innovative approach to an important American short story, one that is often anthologized (or should be) and has been part of literary history for some time. The story might be analyzed on the basis of new biographical or historical information, a new context in which to consider it, or new manuscript evidence or publication history that provides information that has not been part of the traditional reading of the story. Each presentation will be limited to twenty minutes, roughly 8-9 pp. of double-spaced text.

Panel 2 Why American Short Stories are Important: A Roundtable Discussion

This panel will present a discussion of why, in an era of renewed emphasis in higher education on math and the sciences, the reading of American stories continues to be a significant element of an undergraduate education. Short fiction succeeded in the United States on a level unmatched in any other nation. Why was that? Is there something uniquely “American” about the genre? Is there something that remains important about it?

Each member of the panel will make a brief statement (no one will read a standard paper) of 5-10 minutes and then the group will engage in conversation with the audience. As a literary society, about to launch a literary journal following two international conferences, we should be able to justify the inclusion of our field in a general undergraduate curriculum.

Business Meeting

As in past years, we will conduct a business meeting for roughly one hour to discuss the objectives of SSASS for the coming year. We can review, briefly, the events of the last year, but the emphasis will be on future activities. Of special interest will be the founding of a new journal in the field, the possibility of a society symposium in New Orleans in 2019 or 2020, interest in another European conference in the near future, and suggestions for the 2019 ALA conference in Boston. We will also discuss new aspects of the society web page, including a “books by members” section, and links with author-society pages that contain bibliographical resources and other useful information for research.

The First SSASS European Conference

The first international event for SSASS was entitled “The American Short Story: New Horizons,” directed by Oliver Scheiding at the University of Mainz (Germany). The program for the symposium is available on the society website, but the bare titles and schedules do not convey the enthusiasm and energy of the people who attended the event. The setting at a university proved to be an excellent location for formal events and yet it was convenient for lunches and dinners in the vibrant, modern city of

Mainz. Everyone also enjoyed the historic section, including the Gutenberg Museum, and the scores of fine restaurants in the central area.

The society is deeply indebted to Professor Scheiding for hosting this conference at the Obama Institute, part of his very successful program in American Studies. His executive ability in organizing an international professional meeting was evident from even a glance at the program, which contained well over a hundred speakers from a number of countries including

Germany, United States, Egypt, South Korea, India, Algeria, France, England, Canada, Poland, Israel, Belgium, Brazil, The Netherlands, Ireland, Qatar, Austria, Hungary, the Bahamas, Australia, Tunisia, Georgia, Romania, Japan, Portugal, Spain, and China.

The broad appeal of the Mainz conference was impressive indeed, exceeded, perhaps, only by the graciousness and courtesy that greeted everyone in attendance. Not only was Oliver a warm and welcoming host, but his staff and graduate students provided constant assistance to all of us, especially those of us for whom German is a challenging foreign language.

The conference was made possible through the cooperation of the American Literature Association, and we are grateful for the continuing support of both Alfred Bendixen (Princeton University) and Olivia Edenfield (Georgia Southern University) in all of our society activities. There were far too many speakers in Mainz to even begin to thank everyone, but perhaps special recognition is deserved by Lorraine Lopez (Vanderbilt University), a fiction writer who read from her work and presented an inspired talk entitled "Ghosting the South in the Short Story: 'The Landscape,' A Discursive Reading."

The program, posted on the society webpage, conveys something of the intellectual range, variety of approaches, and congenial energy that pervaded the proceedings. Let me say only that we are deeply indebted to Professor Scheiding for his time and extraordinary professionalism in hosting our first European meeting, one that will not soon be forgotten by anyone who was there.

The Mainz convention was a perfect venue for the story society in that it emphasized collegial interchange in a cooperative atmosphere, one that fostered the forming of life-long friendships. Quite beyond its professional mission, that is one of the goals of our organization.

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 have had our first foreign conference. We are hoping to hold another symposium on the American short story in 2019 or 2020, perhaps in New Orleans, and we will need everyone to support that effort. We are also beginning to consider alternative locations for another European symposium a year or two after that, and we are open to suggestions.

I have long thought that SSASS should have a continually updated bibliography of books on the genre by members of the organization, one posted on our website. That concept was underscored when I received an email from Jennifer Smith at Franklin College telling me about her forthcoming book, *The American Short Story Cycle*, to be published by Edinburgh University Press. I was reminded that members of the society should know more about what we have published collectively as a society. Not only would that undergird our sense of pride as an organization, but it would be an invaluable aid in research making sure that we have consulted all of the important work in the field as we write our articles and books. I will have more to say on that idea in a subsequent email.

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 and defend the society in the event of lawsuits. We need to continue to increase our membership, attracting not only established scholars but young assistant professors and graduate students as well, encouraging them to not only attend our meetings but to present papers at them as well. They will surely be the long-range future of the organization, and we need to make them feel welcome.

Thank you, all of you, for your continuing support of the society.

Jim Nagel, President
SSASS