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Foreword

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The Spring 2010 issue of the *Journal of the Short Story in English* is a general issue which features articles about short-story writings ranging in time from the very beginning of the twentieth century to the very beginning of the twenty-first. The articles are arranged chronologically in this issue, but present some similarities in approach. Michael Tritt, Rim Makni-Béjar and Adrienne Akins, in the articles which open and close the issue, deal with racial identity in short stories by Alice Dunbar-Nelson, Nadine Gordimer and James Baldwin respectively, a reminder that the question spans the century.

2Michael Tritt proposes a detailed study of the "impressive literary technique" engaged in the composition of Alice Dunbar-Nelson's story about a black Creole entitled "The Stones of the Village", written between 1900 and 1910 and set in Louisiana. In the story, Tritt argues, "the author masterfully foregrounds decisive and, at least to a degree, deterministic incidents in Victor Grabert's childhood, orchestrating point of view and other particulars, in the process of counterpointing the protagonist's accomplishment with his tormenting doubt. Dunbar-Nelson additionally employs notable characterization, imagery, symbolism and especially allusion, to create an impressive portrait of the way emotional conflict determines the tragic course of life for a black Creole in search of a viable identity."

3In Rim Makni-Béjar's article entitled "The Resurgence of Hidden Identities: The Burden of Ancestry in Nadine Gordimer's 'Beethoven Was One-Sixteenth Black'", she also deals with the identity quest of the story's protagonist. "Seeking racial validation in the 'New' South Africa", says Makni-Béjar, "the protagonist of the story, a white academic and former anti-apartheid activist, undertakes a futile search to establish his potential partially black lineage. This identity quest imagined by Gordimer hints at the revival of racial sensitivities in a country supposed to have come to terms with its racial and racist past thirteen years after the free elections of 1994."

4Adrienne Akins examines how James Baldwin's story "This Morning, This Evening, So Soon" explores the "complex interaction between racial and national identity within an international context. For the story's unnamed narrator, an African American living in Paris, the United States is the oppressive country that he had to leave in order to find the freedom to be himself. Despite the narrator's self-realization abroad, however, Baldwin implies throughout the story that it may be impossible to ever truly escape American identity."

5Stories from mid-century are dealt with by Ben Forkner and Claude Maisonnat as they investigate religious influences in works by Flannery O'Connor, in the American South, and B.S. Johnson, in Ireland, and how these religious elements participate in the dramatic structure of the stories.

6"Readers of Flannery O'Connor's short stories will not have failed to notice the many references to the Holy Ghost, in one form or another," says Ben Forkner. "In my readings of Flannery O'Connor's stories", he continues, "I have come to believe that the presence of the Holy Ghost plays an essential role in the full meaning of her satire. At the same time, however, I need to insist that my

interest in the function of the Holy Ghost in the three stories I examine is much more dramatic than doctrinal."

7Claude Maisonnat studies B.S. Johnson's 1964 little-known story "Sheela-Na-Gig" whose "somewhat enigmatic title with its Gaelic overtones in fact refers to medieval stone carvings found in churches, representing the Celtic avatar of the famous mythical figure of Baubô. In the course of the story the unidentified first person narrator briefly discusses the anthropological character of the figure, but", argues Maisonnat "what makes that figure so central to the story is that its discovery alters the life of the protagonist in a radical way."

8Terry Thompson proposes a reading of Elizabeth Bowen's story "The Demon Lover" which is complementary to its more frequent interpretation as "a traditional English ghost story in which a middle-aged socialite is abducted by the phantom of her first love, a handsome soldier who was killed in World War I" or as "a conventional murder mystery with no supernatural elements." Thompson argues that "perhaps the woman is spirited away in the night not by a ghost or a murderer but by her own *doppelgänger*."

9Three articles in the issue explicitly situate the authors studied in the context of or in relation to postmodernism: Momaday in his use of the oral tradition, Carter in her challenges to the reader and Millhauser, though chronologically later than the first two, paradoxically more a modernist writer than a postmodernist one.

10Anne-Garrait Bourrier argues that N. Scott Momaday's works "all insist on the perplexing character of ancestral oral tradition", and that his collection *The Way to Rainy Mountain* is Momaday's "most postmodern creation as it is mainly built on oral tradition." Yet, she proposes, "it is also a magnificent demonstration of how Native American literatures can actually bypass the postmodern *substratum* when the gaps and fragments of memory are bridged by imagination."

11In her article "Revisiting the 'Intentional Fallacy' as a Political Mechanism in Angela Carter's 'The Loves of Lady Purple'", Michelle Ryan-Sautour argues that in the story, Carter "invites the reader to a metatextual reading, that is a reading that positions the reader at the crossroads of the authorial figure and the illusion of the story." Indeed, Ryan-Sautour says, "Carter's titillating style is revelatory of an underlying agenda that teases the reader to seek out the intentions, however fleeting, of the author." She suggests that "it is through this political pull, this invitation to ascribe reflections to an authorial, didactic figure that other subtle and impalpable forms of political power are brought to light in Carter's stories."

12Earl Ingersoll, in his article entitled "Steven Millhauser, a *Very Late Modernist*", argues that over the past four decades Steven Millhauser "has defied the conventional notion that once a literary movement such as Modernism has ended, writers have little choice but to adapt to the dominant style of their time, such as Postmodernism". Ingersoll studies the collection of short fiction entitled *In the Penny Arcade* (1986) and determines that Millhauser "demonstrates the continuing viability of modernist values established earlier in the twentieth century by writers as different from each other in their cultural milieux as James Joyce and Franz Kafka."

13Finally, the articles by Ange Pambou and Neta Gordon explore formal aspects of stories by Grace Paley and Canadian writer John Gould respectively: metaphors in Paley's stories and the characteristics of closure and pre-closure in the short story cycle by Gould.

14In his article on the "literalizing' of the metaphor in Grace Paley's stories", Ange Pambou argues that "a host of formal processes of de-metaphorisation take place in the stories, right at the core of the space between the author's stated intent not to produce narratives with meaning beyond meaning and the constraints of a two-level order of significance proper to any metaphorical utterance, two incompatible demands at the intersection of which stands the text."

15Neta Gordon looks at John Gould's recent collection of short short stories entitled *Kilter: 55 fictions*, examining both the structure of the stories themselves and the structure of the whole they make up as a short story cycle. Using Susan Lohafer's theories of closure and pre-closure as a framework, this article "considers the cognitive challenge to comprehending the shortness of Gould's stories as related to the unique turn-of-the-millennium *gestalt* his collection seeks to interrogate."

16It is a pleasure to present this issue, to note once again that the short story is a thriving genre as is academic research dedicated to it and to thank all of those involved in the composition of this issue of the *Journal of the Short Story in English*.



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