Dear Readers,

We are delighted to share with you our look back on a fall semester full of international and close-to-home connections! From an interview with a guest from Potsdam, to welcoming a new professor, to reaching out to present and former students about their work, this is an issue focused on how we talk about our work, ourselves, and each other. We hope you enjoy this look into Carolina-Duke German.

Editors Amy Jones and Michael Malloy
WELCOME, DR. SARAH POURCIAU!

Interview by Amy Jones

We are excited to announce that Dr. Sarah Pourciau joins the CDG faculty at Duke in Spring 2020! Coming to us from the Leibniz-Zentrum für Literatur- und Kulturforschung Berlin, where she worked on the book project “The Broken Medium. An Austrian Modernist Theory of the Event,” Dr. Pourciau has previously held positions at the Technische Universität Berlin, Princeton University, and Stanford University. Her first book, *The Writing of Spirit: Soul, System, and the Roots of Language Science* (Fordham, 2017), tells a story spanning two centuries and five countries, from Jakob Grimm to Roman Jakobson, about how language became a scientific object, and about the consequences of this development for theories of poetry, system, the psyche, and time.

Is there anything which you are especially looking forward to doing at Duke?

Yes, teaching! I’ve held research positions for the past few years now, which has meant relatively little interaction with students, so I’m extremely excited to get back into the classroom. There is a form of communal thinking that can only happen in a seminar context, and I have missed that dynamic very much.

Do you watch any German series? Do you have a favorite German band or composer?

I am currently waiting not-so-patiently for the return of *Babylon Berlin*. I also watch the occasional Tatort (I used to be more devoted, I feel like it’s gotten less creative over the last few years). Music-wise: I’m a classically trained musician (piano) and I work on the history of opera, so the great German composers are very much a part of my everyday life, but I’d be hard-pressed to pick a favorite. I wish I were cool enough to have a favorite German band, but I am not.
Share a favorite memory with us from your time in graduate school!
My favorite memory from grad school is meeting my husband, but I'm guessing that's not the kind of memory you mean. My favorite academic memory from grad school is my first year of seminar work, when I encountered huge swaths of the German literary and philosophical tradition at one fell swoop. I didn't major in German in college, so almost everything was new to me (I had never even heard of Novalis!), and it was an amazing experience to have my mind blown wide open every time I sat down to read.

Do you have any advice for current graduate students about the academic life?
On the one hand, it's a glorious thing to get paid to read and think and write. On the other hand, academia can be brutal. Don't be afraid to ask for help or solicit advice as often as necessary, from as many people as necessary. And don't shy away from criticism. Even when it's wrong, it will still make you better.

How did you get into studying German?
I tossed a coin! It was October of my sophomore year in college. I had been planning to major in philosophy or English, but I wasn't enjoying the prerequisite classes in either department, so I figured I would switch to Comparative Literature, where I was enjoying my coursework. The only problem was that I didn't have any languages beyond my rudimentary high school Spanish. I knew I needed to learn another one, fast, and I knew I was interested in philosophy, but I was undecided between French and German. Heads was French, tails was German; it came up tails, and the following Monday I joined a beginner German class. Now I have two children with German passports.

Favorite German word:
I do a lot of philosophy, so of course I have a philosopher's soft spot for all the big, untranslatable German concept words, like Aufhebung, Dasein, Bildung, and Geist. But I also really like Nervensäge. I use it not infrequently on the aforementioned children.
Prof. Dr. Iwan D’Aprile, literary historian and chair of the professorship “Kulturen der Aufklärung” at the Universität Potsdam, visited us at Duke for a week in late September. He presented his latest book, *Fontane. Ein Jahrhundert in Bewegung*, talking about his goal of describing Fontane in the context of his cultural-historical background as well as the specific challenges and pleasures of writing in the genre of biography for a general audience. Prof. Dr. D’Aprile was also generous enough to guest lecture in Dr. Engelstein’s graduate seminar on Kleist as well as Dr. Gellen’s graduate survey on the history of German literature (nineteenth century to present). After that considerable intellectual engagement, he then traveled to Portland to present the paper “Mimesis of Media: Journalistic Practices and Realist Poetics in Theodor Fontane” at the German Studies Association annual conference. The faculty and graduate students were delighted to have the chance to engage with one of our European colleagues, to hear about his book, and to speak some German!

**What did you especially enjoy doing during your visit at Duke?**

I had an exciting and inspiring time at Duke. I received an incredibly warm welcome and lots of support by the German Department’s staff Margy and Dorothy. Heidi Madden gave me an insight into the rare books collection of Duke’s library, including fascinating copies from the Baroque era. 24-hour opening hours at the library was a new experience to me, as I have never seen this at German universities. I also had many interesting and fruitful conversations with my colleagues Stefani, Jakob, Kata, and Thomas, in which we shared lots of ideas for an intensified co-operation between our institutions. Last but not least, I
enjoyed very much the seminars with the CDG graduate students. I was impressed by the students’ intense preparations, thorough and thoughtful readings, surprising observations, and insightful questions. All in all, my stay at Duke was much too short and I was sad to leave.

**How did you get into studying German?**

Already during my graduate studies in Germany, my interest in German literature was quite broad, also comprising history and philosophy – much more in the sense of American German Studies. Taking the period of the Enlightenment as an example, which was my first field of specialization, one cannot understand Lessing’s works without knowing Spinoza or Leibniz, nor Schiller’s without Immanuel Kant. I was always interested in the social, political, medial, and discursive historical contexts of literary texts. Or take an author like Theodor Fontane, on whom I wrote my last book. During his entire life, Fontane moved between journalism and literature, internalized the conditions of 19th-century literary production in the context of new mass media such as newspapers and photography, and published historical works as well as fictitious ones. You need cultural history, history of the press, as well as knowledge of the literary developments of that period to comprehend such a phenomenon.

**One of your interests is the history of journalism. What are your thoughts on contemporary journalism – the attempt to revive long-form journalism, the use of Twitter/Facebook, and so on? Do you have any favorite magazines, newspapers, or journalists?**

Not only Fontane, but in fact many prominent authors must be seen as “literary journalists,” from Ludwig Börne and Heinrich Heine to Georg Hermann, Siegfried Kracauer, Georg Roth, Vicky Baum and Gabriele Tergit. Karl Marx published almost only newspaper articles throughout his life time – whereas his canonical works such as *Das Kapital* are posthumous publications. Of course, the medial change from paper to digital publishing will bear new literary forms. But as I have tried to show with Fontane, already some of his novels can be understood as a literary adaptation or “duplication” of the medial public discourse of his times encompassing and transforming political world news, local stories, and advertisements, or “Reklame” as it was called in the 19th century. I still read paper journals and I love long-form journalism in the Anglo-American tradition of the *London Review of Books, The Guardian*, the *New Left Review*, or the *New Yorker*.

**Tell us about an item on your bucket list!**

This year is still fully occupied by Fontane. I am working on my contribution to the new Fontane handbook, which will appear in 2020, as well as on some research articles coming
out from the manifold interesting conferences of the Bicentennary – including the GSA. Next year I will think about a new project. In this regard, coming back to the US for a more extensive research stay is definitely on my bucket list.

Anything else to say about the visit to Duke/the GSA, writing in general, or German literature?

I was impressed by the new generation of Germanists emerging at US universities. The long and strong 20th century tradition of German Studies in the US is owed very much to exiled, mainly German-Jewish intellectuals and their immediate academic disciples – among them the big names of German intellectual history. Currently, German Studies has to face the challenge of building upon their heritage, in terms of intellectual horizons and critical thinking, and at the same time of developing innovative new ways to keep it an attractive and relevant field of study. Both at Duke as well as at the GSA, I was very glad to learn that there is still a vivid and most fruitful interest in German literature.

Dr. Ingeborg Walther is pleased to announce her retirement from a very satisfying and rewarding career teaching German language, literature, and culture in various contexts over the past 40+ years. For the past 25 years, she has felt privileged to serve at Duke University as Professor of the Practice of Germanic Languages and Literature, and Associate Dean of Curriculum and Course Development for Trinity College of Arts & Sciences. Professor Walther also served the German department at various times as Language Program Director, Director of Undergraduate Studies, and Chair, and is grateful for the opportunity to work with so many gifted students, colleagues, and staff. In retirement she looks forward to teaching the occasional class, and having more time to read, play piano and make music with friends.

Dr. Richard Langston, Leonie Wilms, Nick Jones, and our colleague Dr. Leslie Adelson at Cornell University co-edited the sixth volume of the Alexander Kluge yearbook, entitled *The Poetic Power of Theory*, which appeared from Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht Verlage in November 2019. In addition, CDG students Andrea Larson, Stephen Zaksewicz, and Leonie Wilms all served as translators, and Christoph Schmitz wrote a book review. Some true teamwork! Dr. Langston also published an Alexander Kluge Reader, *Difference and Orientation*, which appeared with Cornell University Press.
**CELEBRATING SUCCESS: FELLOWSHIPS AND RECENT GRADUATES**

We asked Jeff Hertel and Josh Shelly, both PhD Candidates, to tell us about the fellowships they received, and checked in with Dr. Claire Scott, a CDG graduate, about her new position at Grinnell College.

**Jeff Hertel:** It's a tremendous honor to have won the Katherine Goodman Stern Fellowship. I am currently in the final stages of my dissertation, entitled “Liberating Laughter: German Satire and the Dramatic Public Sphere, 1790-1848.” In the project, I focus on early nineteenth-century dramatic satire as the site of an alternative public sphere. Due to censorship of traditional print media and the comparatively backward state of the political institutions of the German confederation, liberal dramatists such as Georg Büchner and Karl Gutzkow had to get creative in communicating a message for change to their target audiences, and so resorted to a variety of clandestine strategies to turn a night of raucous laughter at the theatre into a chance for the dissemination of radical political messages.

**Josh Shelly:** This academic year, I have been fortunate to be awarded a Leo Baeck Institute Fellowship under the auspices of the Studienstiftung des deutschen Volkes. This fellowship will allow me to begin researching and writing my dissertation in which I examine the manner in which German Jewish literature, especially early Zionist utopias, such as Theodor Herzl's *Altneuland*, played a pivotal role in imagining a future Jewish state. The fellowship support will allow me to spend the year writing and researching in several libraries and archives, including in the Staatsbibliothek in Berlin and the Arnold Zweig archive in the Akademie der Künste, also in Berlin.
Dr. Claire Scott: This academic year I am working as an Assistant Professor of German Studies at Grinnell College in Iowa. The students here are wonderful and I am particularly excited to teach a course on melodrama next semester. It will also be a pleasure to see CDG graduate student Lea Greenberg on campus for a talk in February, because Grinnell is her undergraduate alma mater. In other news, I was recently elected to serve as a member of the steering committee for the Coalition of Women in German, so I am quite busy getting used to my two new positions.

Das Mauerprojekt

Designed by Dr. Cori Crane and set up with help from graduate students, the "Mauerprojekt" is a recreation of a small stretch of the Berlin Wall, on which German language students and anyone passing by was able to write thoughts -- in any language! -- or draw images about what walls mean to them.