Note from the Editor

Dear Friends of the German Department,

Greetings once again from Charlottesville, where an exciting academic year is in full swing.

The German Department and Center for German Studies collaborated on a series of events celebrating the 30th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. Our faculty continues to publish, win awards, and teach courses new and old. And our students put their German studies to work in new and innovative ways, at home and abroad.

We hope you enjoy reading our stories. And please feel free to send us your German-related news.

Mit freundlichen Grüßen,

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Department Chair **Jeff Grossman** writes that in 2018 and 2019, he published or submitted for publication essays on such topics as “spiritual/elective homelands/Wahlheimat,” Yiddish Literature and its German translations, and Jewish Self-Fashioning in early twentieth-century central Europe, as well as papers dealing with German writers Heinrich Heine and Walter Benjamin; the Yiddish writers Sholem Asch and Dovid Bergelson, and the British writer Martin Amis. In the spring of 2019, he gave a talk at a conference at the University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill titled “Moments of Enlightenment: German-Jewish Interactions from the Eighteenth Century to the Present.” This conference was held in memory of the late Jonathan Hess, Professor of German and Distinguished Professor of Jewish History and Culture at the University of North Carolina, whom Jeff considered a “brilliant scholar, a kind person with a mischievous, ironic wit, a generous colleague, teacher, mentor, and, to me and many others,” and a very good friend.

In December 2018, **Volker Kaiser** retired from U.Va. Volker joined the German Department in 1987, after completing his Ph.D. in German Literature at Johns Hopkins University. His research and teaching interests included literary theory and cultural studies; semiotics; the epistemology of tropes; German literary and intellectual history; the Frankfurt School; and Lyric Poetry. He published two monographs featuring close readings of texts by Rilke, Benn, Celan, Brecht and Benjamin, and he is currently preparing a manuscript on “The Poetics of the Name” for publication. Along with his teaching and research, Volker served the German Department as Director of Undergraduate Studies (1994-1996), Director of Graduate Studies (2001-05), and Chair (2006-09; 2010-13). Other significant contributions included the establishment of the Max Kade Visiting Professorship, the co-founding of the Center for German Studies (in 2008; Director 2008-09; 2010-13), and the participation in faculty exchange (Mannheim, 1996) and research cooperation with German universities (LMU 2003; RUB 2010, 2013 and 2017).

Manuela Achilles is the Director of the Center for German Studies and of U.Va.’s European Studies MA Program. After the white supremacist attacks on U.Va. and Charlottesville two years ago, she co-chaired the Collective Response: Moving Forward Committee of the College of Arts and Sciences, and organized or co-organized a number of events on related topics, including a conversation with Nicholas Kristof of the New York Times on inclusive community building, and public lectures by prominent historians Tim Snyder (Yale) and Geoff Eley (UMich). She gave a keynote lecture at Virginia Tech about the White Rose resistance movement, interviewed with Apropos of Something Radio Show on the topic of German History, and participated in various events, including the Teach-In on the Fascist threat, organized by a group of history professors; the Yom HaShoah Round Table of the Jewish Education Initiative, and in the Discussion on Antisemitism in the Wake of Pittsburg, organized by the Darden Jewish Student Association. Together with Asher Biemann of the Religious Studies Department, she led a multi-year long series of events on Migration, Sanctuary and Belonging.

In her capacity as the Director of the Center for German Studies, Manuela also built a multi-year partnership with the Heinrich Böll Foundation North America (a progressive German think tank), revolving around the facilitation of transatlantic research and teaching collaborations on Memory, Democracy, and Transformation. This ongoing initiative invites UVA faculty and students to work with visiting scholars, artists, and activists from Germany to consider how societies teach and memorialize difficult chapters of history, from slavery and segregation in the United States to colonialism, genocide, and dictatorship in Germany. This transnational partnership also provides the wider Charlottesville community an opportunity to engage in constructive dialogue on the topic of historical inequality, injustice, and responsibility.

Last but not least, Manuela pursued an active research agenda. Together with Kyill Kunakhovich (UVa History) and Nicole Shea (CES), she co-edited a special issue of Europe Now, the online journal of the European Studies Council. The special issue includes, in addition to articles on Nationalism, Nativism, and the Revolt Against Globalization, a Spotlight on UVa. Manuela is currently completing her manuscript, Invisible Fatherland: Constitutional Patriotism and the Fascist Threat in Weimar Germany. The book-length study investigates the Weimar republic as the birthplace of a legally-coded, democratic sense of national belonging. She was an invited participant in last year's GSA seminar on Weimar Culture Revisited in Pittsburgh, and looks forward to participating in this year's GSA seminar on "The Nazi Legacy for Today's America" in Portland.
Last year, **Paul Dobryden** received a Mellon Humanities Fellowship from the UVa Institute for the Humanities and Global Cultures for his research project carrying the title “Energetic Media: Thermodynamics and the German Avant-garde.” During 2018-19, Paul presented a paper titled “Hygiene on Screen: The Visual Rhetoric of Health in Weimar Cinema.” He also presented papers at the Annual Conferences of the American Comparative Literature Association and the German Studies Association’s Interdisciplinary Seminar “Feeling Beyond the Human” (Emotion Studies Network). In the fall of 2018, Paul taught a new course on Weimar Cinema.

**Stefanie Parker** continues to serve as the director for the German Summer Language Institute. Highlights this past summer include cooking nights at the Lorna Sundburg International Center as well as field trips to the Fralin Museum and the Berlin Wall panels on grounds. In the Spring of 2019, Stefanie was the recipient of the Language Commons Language Instructor Activity Award, which promotes language learning and intercultural communication outside the classroom contexts. Together with **Kate Schroeder**, she has been working on a draft for a German Business Minor. Stefanie and Kate also planned the Campus Week events entitled “Wunderbar together,” which broadly focuses on German-American friendship.

**Julia Gutterman**, in collaboration with her colleague Anna Henke of the University of Illinois, published a selection of poems from Gertrud Kolmar’s “Animal Dreams” in the Spring 2019 issue of the *Asymptote Journal of Translation*. The poems may be read here: [https://www.asymptotejournal.com](https://www.asymptotejournal.com). Julia currently serves as the German Department’s Language Coordinator and Director of Undergraduate Studies. She is completing her dissertation at Yale, titled "Aus den Augen setzen: Poetiken des Heimlichen bei Annette von Droste-Hülshoff."

In January 2019, **Christina Neuhaus** taught a J-term course in Berlin and Weimar titled “Germany Past and Present.” The course addressed questions such as “What does it mean for a country to confront its past, define its present and imagine its future?” While exploring Berlin and Weimar, the 17 enrolled students learned to view the two cities “not just as a collection of streets and buildings, but as multi-layered cultural and historical texts.” Highlights included visits to museums, government buildings and the Stasi archives. The course will be offered again in January 2020.
Marcel Schmid, who joined our faculty in the fall of 2018, gave several talks in the past academic year. He delivered a public lecture titled “Dream Cars” at the Taubman Museum of Art in Roanoke VA, January 2019. In November 2018, he spoke on “The Esoteric Roots of Seriality. Kammerer, Jung, and Koestler,” at U.Va. and delivered a public lecture on “The German Life Reform Movement” as part of a workshop titled “A Stronger Body for a Healthier Mind” at the IUPUI Max Kade German-American Center & IUPUI Arts and Humanities Institute, Indianapolis IN. Marcel is the author of a book titled *Autopoiesis und Literatur* and co-editor of the anthology *Die Literatur der Lebensreform. Kulturkritik und Aufbruchstimmung um 1900*, which includes his article bearing the title “Zauberbergischer Prototyp – Davos, der Roman und die Lebensreform.”

This year, the Department is delighted to welcome Ruth Trice as an instructor. Ruth is no stranger to U.Va.’s German Department, having taught here from 1981-1983 while earning her master's degree. She studied for a year in Tübingen as an exchange student and then accepted a German position at Albemarle High School here in Charlottesville, where she has taught for the past thirty-five years. She is very excited to be teaching German again at the University of Virginia!

We are sad to report the death of our colleague Berniel "Beth" Bjorklund, age 75, on January 19, 2018. Beth received her Ph.D. from Indiana University and taught at U.Va. for over three decades before retiring in 2012. Her long publication list includes *A Study in Comparative Prosody: English and German Iambic Pentameter* (author), *Night Train*, by Friederike Mayrocker (Translator), and *Contemporary Austrian Poetry: An Anthology* (Editor and Translator). Along with her highly-regarded academic work, Beth had a personal commitment to assisting immigrants in adapting to and engaging in their civic responsibilities. It was her goal to support new citizens in becoming prosperous and responsible members of the Greater Charlottesville area. Beth knew and loved the Latino community centered around the Catholic Church of the Incarnation. Along with her local friends, Beth is mourned by her brother, Leland R. "Lee" Bjorklund and his wife, Antoinette "Toni" of Minneapolis, Minn.; her cousin, Leona Linn of Montana; nieces and nephews, dear neighbors and friends; and her beloved dog, Leo.
Gabriel (Gaby) Finder has received a promotion to Full Professor on the general faculty. Gaby is head of the Holocaust Studies Division of the Association for Jewish Studies and, since September 2019, associate editor of the scholarly journal Holocaust and Genocide Studies. He delivered the keynote address, entitled “Jewish Witnesses and Postwar Justice in Communist Poland,” at the international DFG-Workshop, “Juridical Testimonies after 1945—Expectations, Contexts and Comparisons,” which was held at the Simon Dubnow Institute in Leipzig in April 2019. His latest book, co-authored with Alexander V. Prusin, is Justice Behind the Iron Curtain: Nazis on Trial in Communist Poland.

Together with a team of colleagues from universities in the U.S., Canada, and the U.K., Chad Wellmon has co-authored a book titled Interacting with Print: Elements of Reading in the Era of Print Saturation. In a May 18 story published on the American Historical Association website, Allison Miller writes that this work arose out of four Montreal scholars’ common interest in “book history, print culture, and European intellectual history.” Later, the group was expanded to include a total of twenty-two scholars, including Chad; their collective work, termed not a monograph, but a multigraph, was published earlier this year by the University of Chicago Press. In Miller’s words, “there is no one narrative framing Interacting with Print; each of the 18 chapters is an essay focusing on a keyword that reflects one aspect of the experience of reading, from ‘Advertising’ to ‘Thickening’… Within each essay lie not only scholarly citations but also bracketed cross-references to other chapters, somewhat like hyperlinks.”
Rebekah Slodounik, who earned her Ph.D. in Germanic Languages and Literatures from U.Va. in 2016, has joined the faculty of Bucknell University as a tenure-track Assistant Professor of German Studies in the Department of Languages, Cultures & Linguistics. In the posting for this position, Bucknell specified its search for someone “with a focus on German-Jewish literature and culture post-1800.” U.Va. German Department Chair Jeff Grossman says that “with her other excellent skills and range of interests, Rebekah will no doubt make an excellent contribution to Bucknell’s program. Beyond showing expertise in German Jewish literature and culture and literary responses to the Holocaust, Rebekah has taught for us very well-received courses that include, among others, a seminar on ‘Fairy Tales’ and a J-term course in Berlin; she is also well versed in Narrative Theory, which she has presented on—with great success—conferences and draws upon extensively in her dissertation.”

Sophie Schaffeld is serving as this year’s graduate exchange student from Dortmund. Enrolled in Dortmund’s teaching program for Art and English, Sophie works as a Teaching Assistant in the German Department, while taking art history courses here at U.Va. Sophie writes, “I like to play soccer and I am interested in literature, art and photography.” She invites anyone interested in the Dortmund exchange program to contact her ss8kq@virginia.edu.

In the spring of 2019, Geraldine Suter defended her dissertation titled “‘Almost Poetic’: Alfred Döblin’s Subversive Theater,” directed by Ben Bennett. Geraldine currently teaches at Bridgewater College.
Molly Magoffin graduated in May as a German Studies major and Foreign Affairs minor. She has stayed on at U.Va. to complete a Master of Public Policy in the Frank Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy. While an undergrad, she completed two summer internships in humanitarian aid work in Germany. In the summer of 2017, she worked in a refugee camp with Caritas Friedland teaching beginner German classes and helping with a variety of other duties in the camp. In the summer of 2018, she, together with Cameron Bertron and Simranjit (Simmy) Bhatia, received a Davis Projects for Peace grant to work with Pink Door Berlin and the German Integration Program for Survivors of Trafficking. The students used this award to help survivors develop computer and other skills to prepare them for the workplace. According to U.Va. Today, the prize was the vision of philanthropist Kathryn W. Davis, who was “intent on advancing the cause of peace and sought to motivate tomorrow’s leaders by challenging them to find ways to ‘prepare for peace.’” Also during her undergraduate years, Molly served as the Outreach Chair for the German Studies Student Council, the co-President of the German Society, the German Language Assistant at the Shea House, and an assistant to the German Department to help with updating the website. Under her leadership, the GSSC started offering free tutoring in German on a trial basis. Molly hopes that this year’s GSSC will continue to offer and improve the program!

Right to left: Molly Magoffin, Sammy Bhatia, and Cameron Bertron

In May 2018, Courtney Cox completed a Distinguished Majors Project thesis titled "Universities Coming to Terms with Their Dark Pasts: A Comparative Study of the University of Virginia and the University of Vienna." Courtney’s thesis was awarded Highest Distinction and the 2018 Levin Family Prize for best written work concerning Jewish Studies at UVA.
In commemoration of the thirtieth anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, Jeffrey Grossman (German Department) and Manuela Achilles (Center for German Studies) received a grant from the German Embassy to hold a semester-long series of public lectures, panels, film screenings, and theater and public history projects revolving around the fall of the Berlin Wall, as well as a look at walls that remained and new walls in the process of being built. Highlights included an evening of interactive theater performances titled “In an East German Living Room”; a lecture titled “A Wall of our Own: An American History of the Berlin Wall,” by Paul Farber, Artistic Director and Co-Founder of Monument Lab and Senior Research Scholar at the Center for Public Art and Space at the University of Pennsylvania Stuart Weitzman School of Design; and a panel on the Fall of the Berlin Wall with Philip Zelikow, Penny von Eschen, and Kyrill Kunakhovich. The event culminated on November 11, with a talk by Her Excellency, German Ambassador to the U.S. Dr. Emily Haber. Co-sponsors of the event were the Vice Provosts of the Arts, the Vice Provost of Global Affairs; the European Studies Program; the Center for Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies, the Corcoran Department of History, the Frank Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy, the Center for Politics, and the UVa Ambassador Series, as well as the #WunderbarTogether Initiative of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Her Excellency Dr. Emily Haber speaking in the Dome Room of the Rotunda, after touring the campus with U.Va. students Jessica Peck and Molly Magoffin.