



goethesociety.org

GOETHE NEWS AND NOTES

XLI.1, Spring 2021

Burkhard Henke, Editor
Davidson College

FROM THE EDITOR

Goethezeit scholars are resilient! That is but one of the conclusions one may reach from perusing this number of the *Goethe News and Notes*. Despite the ongoing pandemic, we have been busy reading and writing, meeting and presenting, and generally keeping our spirits high. Read more below about the essay awards, book publications, and conferences that are on the horizon. Some important dates to remember for 2021 include the Atkins Goethe Conference at the University of Chicago, November 5-7; the May 1 deadline for graduate students working on their dissertations to apply for the 2021 *Goethezeit* dissertation workshop; and, finally, April 30, the deadline for submitting a copy of your essay for the GSNA Essay and Sussman awards. There is no deadline for registering with the *Goethe-Lexicon of Philosophical Concepts* (whose first installment is now available) but we encourage you to be a part of this exciting project now and create a profile at <https://goethe-lexicon.pitt.edu/GL>.

“Bessere Tage/Sammlen uns wieder”!

Burkhard Henke
Davidson College

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Goethe Society members,

We have all experienced, now, a difficult one-year anniversary. My own last in-person conference, at the beginning of March 2020, was at eikones in Basel, and despite the intellectual pleasure of the meeting, it was already overshadowed by tense conversations about what might lie ahead, and by strangely modified forms of social interaction (will we ever shake hands again?). No comfort to be found at the Kunstmuseum whose large Böcklin collection features the apocalyptic *Die Pest*, painted more than 150 years after the Black Death had died out in Europe. Still, after this incredibly hard year, at last we can begin to see the first vernal signs of hope. “Ich bin sehr in der Luft. Schlafen Essen Trincken Baden Reiten Fahren, war so ein Paar Tage her der seelige inhalt meines Lebens,” Goethe wrote in the early summer of 1775, an exuberant expression of vitality that I can relate to: as vaccines get closer.

We can be confident and energized about the continued successes of the Goethe Society. Under the leadership of Patricia Simpson and Birgit Tautz, the *Yearbook* is thriving. Bucknell’s New Studies in the Age of Goethe, under series editor Karin

Schutjer, is going from strength to strength, and just published the excellent volume *Play in the Age of Goethe* (ed. Edgar Landgraf and Elliott Schreiber)—which we fêted via Zoom. Graduate student members are active and engaged, a feature, indeed, of the Society. Vice President Heather Sullivan has written a brief report about the virtual dissertation workshop that she convened in the fall of 2020. In the newsletter you can read much more about the many achievements of GSNA and its members. Clark Muenzer, John H. Smith, and Bryan Klausmeyer are due a huge round of applause on their publication of the inaugural installment of the *Goethe-Lexicon of Philosophical Concepts*, see goethe-lexicon.pitt.edu/GL/section/view/entries.

On November 5-6, we plan to come together in Chicago for the Atkins Conference. We have an exciting array of panels and speakers, many patiently holding over from last year; you will hear more soon from the organizing committee. I am thrilled to let you know that our two keynote speakers for this conference on *Goethe's Things* will be Prof. Ernst Osterkamp (Humboldt Universität), known to us all as the foremost expert on Goethe, classicism, and art, and Prof. Carlos Spoerhase (Universität Bielefeld), the author of groundbreaking scholarship on the material text and literary format in the *Goethezeit*. Above all, I am hopeful that the fall will open up the opportunity we've been looking forward to for so long to gather again in person. I am indebted to the GSNA board for their support and seamless collegiality, and in anticipation of drawing on their time and wisdom as we mount the November conference.

Finally, I acknowledge with sadness the passing of a longtime friend and member of the Goethe Society, Prof. Jeffrey Sammons (Leavenworth Professor Emeritus, Yale) on February 15, 2021. Jeff served for many years as secretary-treasurer of the North American Heine Society, and in that capacity worked to foster collaborations with GSNA as well as with the Lessing Society. His dedication, wit, and erudition will be greatly missed.

Catriona MacLeod
University of Chicago

FROM THE VICE PRESIDENT

Dissertation Workshops 2020 and 2021

In 2020, the Atkins dissertation committee decided to carry on with the workshop despite the delay of the conference. Having received an impressive array of applications—more than we could include—we decided to hold our sessions on Zoom in support of the graduate students' work. Seven outstanding graduate student recipients of the Gloria Flaherty Scholarship participated: Matthew Childs from the University of Washington, Ashley Clark from the University of Chicago, Veronica Curren from the University of Toronto, John Jolly from Duke, Maryann Piel from the University of Illinois, Chicago, Benjamin Schluter from NYU, and Jason Yonover from Johns Hopkins.

In 2021, we will again offer the Dissertation Workshop at the Atkins

Conference in November. The call for *Goethezeit* dissertation chapter applications is included in this newsletter. We hope to offer the workshop in person but will plan to accommodate Zoom participation if necessary/as well.

Heather Sullivan
Trinity University

FROM THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

There is exciting news to report even in these dark times. The GSNA business meeting, conducted on October 9, 2020, on Zoom, attracted the participation of many members, as did the virtual launch of the first edited volume in the GSNA-sponsored book series that followed directly on its heels. It was especially nice to welcome Suzanne Guidod, the new director of Bucknell University Press, and to co-host a lively roundtable discussion with contributors to the volume as well as other attendees.

Though I, for one, very much miss face-to-face interaction with fellow members, it has been heartening to see how committed you all have been to fostering conversation and collegiality in virtual forums. Of the handful of reading, discussion, and writing groups that convened in Summer 2020, two of these (an archival research group co-organized by Vance Byrd and Catriona Macleod, and an accountability group co-organized by Vance and by Mary Helen Dupree) merged in the Fall, and they have continued to meet regularly. In addition, beginning in January 2021, Michael

Saman has convened an online discussion group around the topics of race and imperialism. It also bears noting that the email forum of the GSNA Google Group has been alive with exchanges on a wide variety of topics, showcasing the collective curiosity, intelligence, and collegiality of our members. Online exchange has also included more formal forums such as the well-attended GSNA-sponsored panel at the 2021 Modern Language Association Convention on the topic of “Age and Aging in Texts by Goethe and His Contemporaries” (organized by Christine Lehleiter and Elisa Leonzio).

We have many more opportunities for intellectual exchange to look forward to in the Fall—hopefully at least in part in person. There is, of course, the Atkins Goethe Conference scheduled to take place at the University of Chicago in November. And in October, the GSNA is sponsoring three fascinating panels at the German Studies Association Convention in Indianapolis (all of them were originally scheduled to take place at last year’s GSA): “The Schlegel Brothers and their Romantic Constellations” (organized by Jan Jost-Fitz); “Dimensions of Goethe’s Sexism” (organized by Horst Lange); “Natural / Unnatural Crises in the Early Anthropocene” (organized by Heather Sullivan).

In the meantime, please be in touch with me if you would like to consider hosting a virtual reading or discussion group in Summer 2021. As our virtual forums over the past several months have shown, online exchanges, different though they might be from in-person ones, provide unique opportunities for bringing

together members across the globe for rewarding interactions.

Elliot Schreiber
Vassar College

2019 GSNA ESSAY PRIZE

The following awards for essays published in 2019 were presented by Heather I. Sullivan at the October 2020 GSNA business meeting, with thanks to fellow committee members and readers, Sue Gustafson and Joe O'Neill.

The top awards come with a cash prize. Please join us in celebrating these four authors and their wonderful essays!

RICHARD SUSSMAN ESSAY PRIZE IN SCIENCE

Andrea Meyertholen, “Zum ersten Mal sah ich ein Bild” Goethe’s Cognitive Viewing Subject as Scientist and Artist” in *Seminar* 55.3 (2019), 203-228.

Meyertholen’s essay cogently illuminates Goethe’s theories of perception in his essay, “Versuch als Vermittler von Objekt und Subjekt.” Building on a wide array of the existing scholarship on this famous essay, she opens—with panache—a new horizon outlining Goethe’s focus on the importance of spectators’ cognitive and subjective viewing, which, she claims, allows later artists like Kandinsky to develop startling ideas in abstract art. Reinterpreting Goethe’s essay, Meyertholen

demonstrates how Goethe’s call for viewers to allow objects to appear in their own apparently “natural order” actually opens up a gap of subjective and abstract connections that can also describe Kandinsky’s encounter with Monet’s work. Indeed, Meyertholen adds rich nuance to our study of the importance of perception in Goethe’s scientific works and how his focus on the creative cognitive process of the viewing subject was crucial for the emergence of abstract art. In our era of grappling with scientific perception and its radical reshaping of the world alongside debates on the role of aesthetic thinking, we are much enriched by Meyertholen’s insights into human subjects, subjectivity, and aesthetic possibilities in cognition.

GSNA ESSAY PRIZE

Daniel Nolan, “I too am Naked’: Kleist, Habermas, and the Epigrammatic Exposure of Literary Honesty” in the *German Studies Review* 42.1 (2019): 19-36

In his luminous essay, Nolan describes the epigrams of Goethe and Kleist as stylized confessions presenting claims of sincerity and textual honesty. According to Nolan, “the author’s relation to truth and their capacity for penetrating insight appears as a moment of privacy” that occurs in the very public form of epigrams in the newly developing literary marketplace. Importantly, Nolan posits that Kleist’s epigrams “point to a corrective response to Habermas’s broader claims that aesthetic thinking can be characterized primarily in terms of its reliance on *stable forms of truthfulness*” (my emphasis). Nolan thereby revisits and reshapes Habermas’s theory of the

emerging “public authorship” showing us that Goethe plays with honesty and self-performance, while Kleist “undermines the notion that truthfulness provides a stable frame for evaluating aesthetic works.” Such insights are invaluable today as our experiences with confessional forms of “public truths and sincerity” yet again are in wild transition in the media and marketplace.

Anna-Lisa Baumeister, “‘Sie scheint auch mehr zu donnern und blitzen, als zu reden.’ Zur Meteorologisierung der Sprache im Drama der 1770er Jahre” in *The Germanic Review* 94.3 (2019): 209-227.

Baumeister brilliantly reshapes readings of aesthetic thinking, in this case with her close study of the idea of “wettern” in German drama of the 1770s by Goethe, Klingler, Lenz, and Herder. Instead of following traditional readings of weather and storms in dramas that look to religious and rhetorical origins or allegorical function of individual events, Baumeister takes the newly more scientific discourse of weather in the era seriously in relation to the power of words. She reads “wettern” literally in terms of the “then-emerging meteorological science, whose hallmark is the synthesis of formerly separate phenomena (e.g., lightning, clouds, sunlight, storms) into a continuous process with a unified internal dynamic.” This united dynamic, when enacted on the stage, translates into greater potential for the power of poetic and aesthetic language (a la Herder). Aided by technological theatrics incorporating the formally divine power to drive thunder and lightning into a systematic, semi-natural unity, poetic language and

aesthetic performance are themselves transformed into a newly dynamic kind of power.

Honorable Mention:

W. Daniel Wilson, “‘Global Mission’: The Goethe Society of Weimar in the Third Reich” in the *Goethe Yearbook* 26 (2019): 21-37.

Wilson’s impressively-researched exploration of the Goethe Society of Weimar’s archives provides a detailed outline of the Society’s concessions to the Third Reich and its antidemocratic and antisemitic leadership during that time. While attempting to maintain status, the Weimar group sought National Socialist support while also hoping to keep, at least initially, international participation of wealthy Jewish members especially in the United States. Wilson demonstrates clearly “that the Goethe Society had a privileged place in the Third Reich,” due to its “reinterpretation of Goethe as a precursor to the Third Reich.” Able to maintain an illusion of autonomy based on the cultural capital of Goethe and its “global mission,” the Weimar Goethe Society “performed a sort of *Selbstgleichschaltung*” by incorporating National Socialist ideology in its publications. Wilson’s documentation of this dark era provides new insights into academic power struggles in times of dire political chaos.

*NOMINATIONS FOR THE 2020
GSNA ESSAY AND SUSSMAN
PRIZES*

The executive committee seeks nominations or self-nominations for two annual GSNA Essay Prizes that honor the best essays on Goethe, his times, and/or contemporary figures, published in the year 2020. Each prize carries an award of \$500.

Additionally, the executive committee seeks nominations or self-nominations for the annual Richard Sussman Essay Prize for the best essay published in 2020 on Goethe's contributions to the sciences and on Goethe in the history of science. The Sussman Prize also carries an award of \$500.

Please submit a copy of your essay (electronic version preferred) by April 30, 2021 to the Society's Vice President,

Professor Heather Sullivan
Department of Modern Languages and
Literatures
Trinity University
One Trinity Place
San Antonio, TX 78212
hsulliva@trinity.edu

The following articles are eligible:

- I. articles written by a North American scholar (defined by institutional affiliation at the time of publication); or
- II. articles written by a current member of the GSNA; or
- III. articles published in the *Goethe Yearbook*.

NB: Articles by current GSNA board members are not eligible. GSNA

members are encouraged to submit their own articles for consideration.

*CALL FOR GOETHEZEIT
DISSERTATION CHAPTERS*

**Atkins Goethe Conference at the
University of Chicago, November 5-7,
2021**

To encourage and support research in the Age of Goethe, the Goethe Society of North America organizes dissertation workshops at its international Atkins conferences, held every three years (but in this rare instance, two years in a row). Participating students are selected based on their dissertation prospectus and a letter from their adviser. They will participate in panel discussions, where they are engaged in conversation by senior scholars in their field who direct comments and questions to their projects.

We are delighted to invite interested graduate students working on their dissertations to apply for the 2021 *Goethezeit* dissertation workshop that will take place on Sunday, November 8, after the conference. We hope it will be in person but will seek accommodations for a ZOOM format if necessary. Those who are accepted also receive a Gloria Flaherty Scholarship in the amount of \$650 (to help cover travel costs to the conference) plus a waiver of the conference fee.

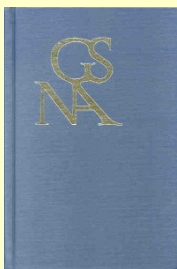
By May 1, 2021, all applicants (graduate students working on the dissertation) should:

- 1) submit the following documents:
 - a. curriculum vitae
 - b. one dissertation chapter
 - c. a prospectus
 - d. a letter from the dissertation advisor briefly evaluating the student's project and describing its progress.

- 2) join the GSNA (for just \$10!). Membership includes the Society's newsletter twice each year, as well as a copy of the *Yearbook of the Goethe Society of North America*.

Submit proposals (and send all questions) to Heather I. Sullivan, Vice President of the GSNA, hsulliva@trinity.edu, by **May 1, 2021**.

FROM THE YEARBOOK EDITORS



With volume 28 in production, volume 29 of the *Goethe Yearbook* is underway—despite pandemic and professional turbulence. This volume will contain two special sections: one with a focus on recent scholarship about Friedrich Hölderlin; and a second, based on the lively and generative MLA panels on the topic of “Movement.” Essays on K.P. Moritz, Goethe's morphology and visual thinking, *Handelsverkehr* between Weimar and China, and the 1932 Goethe Year in Argentina will also be featured,

along with a report on “Goethe at Play” and the regular book review section.

Patricia Anne Simpson
University of Nebraska

Birgit Tautz
Bowdoin College

FROM THE BOOK REVIEW EDITOR

I encourage you to let me know if there are particular areas of research that you are interested in reviewing for the *Goethe Yearbook*. Please send books for review and suggestions for books for review to:

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FROM THE EDITOR OF THE BOOK SERIES

We don't have any major news or announcements this spring, but, as always, if you have a monograph in the works or are interested in proposing an edited volume of essays, reach out to Karin Schutjer at kschutjer@ou.edu.

One of the many advantages of publishing in our series is that your book will appear in simultaneous cloth and paperback editions. After the 40% member discount, your GSNA friends and colleagues can purchase and read your book for only \$24!

Another advantage is that your name will be added to an impressive list of authors in the series including Benjamin Bennet, Vance Byrd, Mary Helen Dupree, Edgar Landgraf. Christine Lehleiter, Elliott Schreiber, Peter Schwarz, Brian Tucker, Ellwood Wiggins, and Sean Williams!

Karin Schutjer
University of Oklahoma

*FROM THE SECRETARY-
TREASURER*

If you have not paid your 2021 dues and would like a copy of the forthcoming *Goethe Yearbook*, please renew your membership by April 15!

In addition to updating our PayPal account so members have no additional fees for renewing online, we have added discounted three-year membership options in all categories as well as Lifetime (\$500) and Lifetime Patron (\$1,500) memberships. To pay for the membership level that's right for you, we encourage you to visit our web site at www.goethesociety.org/membership. Use the drop-down menu to select a membership category, then click the Pay Now button. You do not need a PayPal

account. You may use the secure PayPal Guest Checkout and enter your credit card information there. If you would like your *Goethe Yearbook* shipped to an address other than the one used for PayPal, please send me an email: wcarter@iastate.edu. Also, should you have a change of address, please let me know. Of course, we still accept checks, payable to "Goethe Society of North America." They can be mailed to William Carter, Department of World Languages and Cultures, Iowa State University, 3102 Pearson Hall, Ames, IA 50011.

William Carter
Iowa State University

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