



SOCIETY FOR GERMAN-AMERICAN STUDIES NEWSLETTER

Volume 42, Number 2

Summer 2021

IN THIS ISSUE

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

LAUDATIO FOR
WERNER SOLLORS

NEW EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE MEMBERS

SAVE THE DATE:
SYMPOSIUM 2022

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Greetings, SGAS Members!

I hope your summer is proceeding well and that you can see some light at the end of the pandemic tunnel we have all been in this past year and a half!

As of July 1, I have officially succeeded my friend and colleague Cora Lee Kluge as SGAS President. I am deeply grateful to Cora Lee for all the hard work she has done for our Society during her term—and for many years before that. Through her service, as well as her research and teaching, she has advanced the frontiers of the field of German-American studies considerably. And I know I will continue to rely on her help and counsel as I move into my new role. Thank you, Cora Lee!

Heartfelt thanks also to Achim Kopp, Treasurer, and Karen Roesch, Secretary, who have rotated off the Executive Committee after many years of service, . *Vielen Dank*, Achim and Karen! And congratulations and welcome to three new colleagues who have been elected officers: Myka Burke (Secretary), Timothy Anderson (Treasurer), and Marcel Rotter (Vice President). Profiles of our new officers are on pages 5 and 6 of this newsletter.

LEARN. JOIN. DONATE.

[SGAS.org](https://www.sgas.org)

Rounding out my expressions of gratitude, I want to thank Josh Brown (Newsletter Editor), Katja Hartmann (Membership Coordinator for Europe), Bill Keel (Yearbook Editor), and Antje Petty (Membership Coordinator for North America and Webmaster) for all the important work they continue to do on behalf our Society.

One of my primary responsibilities has been to plan the program for the Annual Symposium for this year and next year. This year's symposium took place virtually, April 21-24, 2021, and was hosted by the Max Kade Institute at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. In line with the theme "In Real Time: German-American Studies Around the Globe," presenters and attendees came together from across North America and Europe.

The event kicked off with the presentation of the SGAS Outstanding Achievement Award to Werner Sollors, Henry B. and Anne M. Cabot Professor of English and of African American Studies, Emeritus, Harvard University. Cora Lee Kluge introduced Professor Sollors and then led a fascinating conversation with him on the topic of America's immigrant literature and specifically how he, as a scholar of literature, came to engage with German-American works. You can read Cora Lee's laudatio for Professor Sollors on pages 3-5.

Over the next three days of the symposium we heard thirty-five presentations spread across fifteen sessions on historical and contemporary topics related to commerce, journalism, linguistics, literature, material culture, politics, religion, social history, science, and more. Talks addressed topics from the colonial era to the present and broadened the "American" in "German-American" to include regions beyond the United States, especially Latin America.

Recognizing the challenges involved with keeping attendees engaged in the virtual modality, we limited each presentation to just ten minutes, with the remaining half-hour or so of each session devoted to an open discussion among presenters and attendees. It was a new experience for many SGAS presenters to deliver "lightning talks," which are common at scientific conferences, but the feedback we received afterward was positive. The lively discussions that took place in the sessions were continued in virtual *Kaffeerunden* in the mornings and cocktail hours at the end of each day.

Next year's symposium will be held in person on April 21-23, 2022, on the beautiful University of Iowa campus in Iowa City. More details will be forthcoming via email, on the SGAS website, and in the next issue of this newsletter. Many colleagues have expressed a desire to incorporate a virtual component. There are many different opportunities and challenges that come with holding a hybrid event, which we are currently exploring.

As someone whose research has been grounded in German-American studies since the start of my career over three decades ago, I am excited by the transdisciplinary core of our field, which is demonstrated every year at the SGAS Annual Symposium. I value the "big tent" spirit of our society, which brings together researchers affiliated with a range of institutions and independent scholars. I encourage SGAS members to join me in helping to raise the profile of our organization among researchers who work on German-American topics. By no means does a person have to be focused exclusively or even mostly in German-American studies to be affiliated with our organization.

In closing, I want to thank you for your support of the Society. I am looking forward to serving as President these next two years and hope to see many of you in Iowa City!

Mit freundlichen Grüßen,

Mark

LAUDATIO FOR WERNER SOLLORS

CORA LEE KLUGE

The Outstanding Achievement Award of the Society for German-American Studies is being presented this year to Professor Werner Sollors. Born in Silesia, he grew up after World War II in West Germany and received his doctorate *summa cum laude* from the Freie Universität in Berlin before first coming to the United States. In 1983 he joined the faculty at Harvard University and taught there for more than 30 years in the Departments of English and African American Studies, the American Studies Program, and the concentrations known as History of American Civilization and Ethnic Studies until his retirement in 2015. The notion that he has retired, however, is somewhat inaccurate. Since then he spent five years teaching in Abu Dhabi as a New York University Global Professor of Literature, and then, returning home from that assignment, he was caught in the travel difficulties associated with the Covid pandemic. He detoured to Venice to wait for things to improve; and while there, he has been busy with “amusements” (his word), which include a series of online “Venetian bagatelles,” as well as a YouTube lecture on images in Venice of the Annunciation to the Virgin Mary, which he prepared to honor the city’s 1600th anniversary. In addition, the publication in 2020 of his most recent monograph, *Schrift in bildender Kunst* (in English perhaps “Writing in the Visual Arts”), must also have helped to entertain him.

In his long and distinguished career Professor Sollors has received many honors. I will not read the entire list, but it includes a Guggenheim Memorial Fellowship, the Constance Rourke Prize in 1990 for the best essay in the *American Quarterly*; a National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship; membership in the American Academy of Arts and Sciences; a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Society for the Study of Multiethnic Literature of the United States; an honorary doctorate from the University of Regensburg; and the Everett Mendelsohn Excellence in Mentoring Award at Harvard University.

Professor Sollors’ curriculum vitae reveals him to be an outstanding mentor and teacher whose work has had and will continue—through his students—to have an immense impact on academic studies in a number of fields for years to come. In his online c.v., even ahead of his

own scholarly publications, one finds a category “Doctoral Dissertation Advised.” Here is the one typographical error I find in the entire document, for what follows is not *one* dissertation, but rather a list of 76, most but not all of which were completed by candidates at Harvard. Of these 76 dissertations, 43 have been published by or are under contract with a variety of publishers; and a quick search of the names of those students whose work he supervised shows that an astonishing number of them, by my count nearly 65 percent, now hold teaching positions at colleges or universities in the United States or abroad, in English, history, Jewish Studies, American Studies, African-American Studies Departments, and more. Others among his students are writers or work in publishing, in museums, or in similar fields. Of course, Harvard is Harvard; but this record is nonetheless awe-inspiring.

Among Professor Sollors’ 39 monographs and edited books, I would like to mention only three that I find especially significant: first, there is his ground-breaking *Beyond Ethnicity: Consent and Descent in American Culture*, published in 1986, which also appeared as a paperback in 1987, and which was published in Italian in 1990; secondly, a collection of essays he edited entitled *Multilingual America: Transnationalism, Ethnicity, and the Languages of America* (1998); and third, *Ethnic Modernism*, published in 2008, which argues that ethnicity was a central stimulus to American modernism, that this movement’s influential leaders were ethnic individuals and immigrants. As one reviewer states: “Evidently Werner Sollors has read everything that was written in the US in the first half of the 20th century. As he did so he paid special attention to issues of ethnicity, class, and race...[and] the result is an important new literary history of the period.” Beyond these, there are numerous contributions to books, articles in periodicals, digital publications, and lectures on a broad range of topics.

So what is Professor Sollors’ special area of interest? In short, it is modern American literature. Furthermore, he is also known as one of the world’s specialists in ethnicity and ethnic studies. I hope that in the “conversation”

that follows the presentation of his award, he will explain to us how he came to this field and to America and found here (as I imagine) a treasure trove of the material he needed because of this country's immigrant history and the ever-changing ethnic, cultural, and racial diversity of its population. His studies have included work on the Native Americans, African Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanic and Latino Americans, and others, the "white but beyond white," the "English plus" group, this country's original, old, and new inhabitants. Our own more narrow area of interest German-American studies is a part of the huge project he has laid out for himself and through his contributions he has given a large and overarching framework to our undertakings. We claim interest in what the German Americans did in

their homeland, what they did after their migration to America, and how they contributed to this country's development. But they were not the only group who made an impact here, and their contributions must be viewed as part of the broad diversity of America's multicultural environment. This larger picture is what Professor Sollors' work helps bring into focus. Simply speaking, his work puts German-American studies in a larger context.

Of course, Professor Sollors' publications also include specifically German-American topics, and here I would again like to name just a few: his monograph entitled *The Temptation of Despair: Tales of the 1940s*, which describes the mood, the despondency, of those



in Allied-occupied Germany in the years following World War II; the volume entitled *German? American? Literature?*, which he co-edited together with Winfried Fluck; and articles and book chapters on: Ferdinand Kürnberger; Emil Klauprecht; the travels of Americans and others to Poland and to Silesia; German-American encounters in Bavaria in the 1940s; the Holocaust on West German television; and W.E.B. Du Bois in Nazi Germany. Beyond this, he is the editor of Peter Lang's series *New Directions in German-American Studies*, and co-editor of both the Johns Hopkins University Press series entitled *The Longfellow Series of Multilingual American Literature* and the New York University Press series entitled

Nation of Newcomers: Immigrant History as American History.

We in German-American studies encounter Professor Sollors' work nearly everywhere. And now today, we have the high honor of encountering Professor Sollors himself. In presenting to him this award, which comes to him together with a lifetime membership in the Society for German-American Studies, we are aware that his presence among us gives us a greater distinction than we can give to him. Indeed, it would surprise me if he can find a place on the wall in his Cambridge home where he can hang his plaque! Congratulations to you, Professor Sollors, and our best wishes!

NEW OFFICERS ELECTED

VICE PRESIDENT



Marcel P. Rotter was born in Poland, but grew up in Gotha, Thuringia. He studied German and Russian Literature at the Teachers College Erfurt (today University of Erfurt) and received his M.A. in 1985 with a thesis on influences of world literature on the poetry of Lithuanian author Eduardas Miezeleites. From 1985 to 1989 he worked as a German and Russian teacher in Frankfurt an der Oder. In the 1990s, he was instructor for German as a Second Language in various private language schools and at the University in Cologne. After moving to the U.S., he pursued a Ph.D. at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, something he could not do in East Germany for political reasons. His doctoral dissertation in German literature focused on text-image relationships in German propaganda posters from 1917 to 1971. At the University of Mary Washington, his research continues to concentrate on visual political communication and he teaches German courses at all levels, including courses on German-American immigration. He has served as president of the Virginia Chapter of the AATG, as founding president of the German sister city association in Fredericksburg, VA, and as board member of the Foreign Language Association of Virginia.

TREASURER



Timothy G. Anderson is associate professor and graduate chair in the Department of Geography at Ohio University, where he has taught courses in cultural and historical geography since 1996. He received his B.A. and M.A. in Geography from the University of Oklahoma and his Ph.D. in Geography from Texas A&M University. His research interests focus on the historical settlement geography of the United States, especially the production of regional and ethnic cultural landscapes, and the production of cultural landscapes associated with Germanic diasporic movements and communities. His most recent research involves German settlements in western Romania in the eighteenth century, within the context of Habsburg cameralist discourse.

SECRETARY



Myka Burke is an officer in the Department of Culture and Communications in the German Embassy in Ottawa, Canada. She studied German at Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada, and the University of Vienna, and is completing a Ph.D. in the Herder Institute at the University of Leipzig with a dissertation on Canadian literature in German. As a journalist, she twice received the Canadian Ethnic Media Association Award for Radio Excellence and was a nominee for the Peabody Award in the documentary category in Canada. In 2017, she coordinated the German voices for the New Education Centre, a Canadian Museum at Vimy Ridge in France. Her research interests focus on cultural identity and the language and literature of German speakers in Canada and North America. She is president of the DAAD Alumni Association of Canada, vice president of the German-Canadian Historical Association, and a board member of the Schiller Foundation of Canada.

46th Annual Symposium

April 21-23, 2022

Iowa City, Iowa



More details to come in the fall newsletter and online (sgas.org)



Image courtesy of Alan Light (Flickr) under a CC 2.0 license.

102-02-064002

University of Wisconsin
Eau Claire

DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGES

CENTENNIAL HALL 4508

105 GARFIELD AVENUE

EAU CLAIRE, WISCONSIN 54702-4004

munsalvaesche@t-online.de

Katja Hartmann

MEMBERSHIP, Europe

apetty@wisc.edu

Antje Petty

MEMBERSHIP



**SOCIETY FOR
GERMAN-AMERICAN STUDIES**

mlouden@wisc.edu

Mark Louden

PRESIDENT

brownjo@uwec.edu

Josh Brown

NEWSLETTER EDITOR