

THE GERMAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION AT 25: INTERVIEWS WITH GERALD R. KLEINFELD, MARY NOLAN, AND FRANK TROMMLER

The year 2001 marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of the German Studies Association (GSA). Besides celebrating and looking toward the future, it is also an occasion for going back in time and reflecting on the beginnings of the association, how it developed over the decades, and what it has meant to scholars. GHI Research Fellows Raimund Lammersdorf and Vera Lind discussed these questions with two scholars long active in the GSA, Professor Mary Nolan, chair of the history department at New York University (NYU) and a specialist in modern German history, and Professor Frank Trommler, who teaches German literature at the University of Pennsylvania and served as President of the GSA in 1991–92. Professor Gerald R. Kleinfeld (Arizona State), the Executive Director of the GSA since its founding in 1976 and editor of the *German Studies Review* from 1978 to 2001, spoke with Lammersdorf and Lind about the GSA's beginnings and development and shared his thoughts about its future.

Nolan, Trommler, and Kleinfeld were interviewed separately last fall. Their comments have been organized around six broad topics that emerged from all three interviews: the development of the GSA; the GSA as an interdisciplinary forum; gender issues within the GSA and as a topic of research in German studies; trends in teaching and student interest in German studies; and German and American approaches to German studies.

1. Looking Back at Twenty-Five Years of the German Studies Association

What was the driving force behind the founding of the association? What were its original goals? How did people become involved with the GSA? How did the membership develop? How was the GSA financed? How have the different scholarly disciplines within the GSA worked together in the last twenty-five years? What has the GSA meant for each discipline?

Kleinfeld: When the GSA was founded we were founded as an organization of scholars in German literature and German history. My idea was that we had more in common with one another than German historians have in common with, say, historians of Latin American history or Germanists with professors of English literature. What we had in common

was Germany, Austria, the German-speaking world of Europe to which we brought different perspectives, approaches, and methodologies. We also had in common that the major organizations in the field did not offer us a sufficient opportunity to develop our interests. In the Modern Language Association (MLA) and the American Historical Association (AHA) the space in their conferences and journals devoted to Germany was very small and so, in order to develop ourselves, to talk, to have a community of scholars, we needed to meet as scholars on our own and in our own way. So the Western Association of German Studies was founded. It started as a Western Association because the universities here are more distant from one another. Yet, within a year, we found that we had members from the East Coast who soon constituted the majority. Obviously, there was a real need felt all over the country for such an organization. So we became a national organization, except in name, very quickly. At the beginning of the 1980's we added political scientists to the mix, and also recognized that we are a national association, and changed our name to the GSA. And the association has gone on from there.

The GSA has from the very beginning encouraged young people. Along with senior scholars, we also have a very high participation of assistant professors and the lower ranks of the academic enterprise. This participation is not only passive, but active. There are no cliques in this organization and you can very easily be noticed and certainly be tapped for something within the organization and suddenly find yourself on a committee. We have had assistant professors who have been on the Executive Committee and on the Program Committee and in various other ways, so that it is an extremely democratic and open institution. This is one of the things that I wanted to ensure, that the association remains open. If you ask about anything that I'm proud of it's the openness of the association, a lack of feeling that it is an insider group.

The *German Studies Review* is an open journal too. When I founded the *GSR* the only journal in German history was five years late in getting articles published. If you submitted a manuscript it was falling into a black hole. I was able to organize our journal in such a way that a scholar could get an article in print in the *GSR* in six months. Even if an article took a long time to review it could be published within three or four months after that. This is very rapid publication, and it gives an opportunity for people to have their research in front of their colleagues very quickly. Peer review was important, blind review was essential, then the breadth of what we offer plus 60 or 70 book reviews per issue—that's 180 book reviews each year, 18 to 20 manuscripts a year—and the *bunte Mischung*, the fact that we could offer everything from something on the study of the body to something on the body politic, meant that the journal could make a real contribution.

The GSA has always been both multi- and interdisciplinary. This means that people research and present papers on topics that reflect their own disciplines, and also on interdisciplinary topics. The association has encouraged both. We have to recognize disciplinary methodologies as well as the role of departments within traditional university structures. However, we have much in common, and many themes lend themselves to interdisciplinary study. Professionally, too, we find interests across disciplines. Some people would like the interdisciplinary nature to be strengthened. Others are comfortable with separate research.

There are at least three or four different concepts of German studies represented in the United States and Canada today. The GSA does not attempt to impose a single concept, but it has developed guidelines to encourage working together. It was German Departments that initially encouraged interdisciplinarity. But, historians have also been interested in cooperation in research. Gender studies is an example of that.

The finances of the GSA are based upon membership dues, and there are also about 25 institutions that pay about \$ 150 (it varies according to the type of institution) a year to the GSA for an "Institutional Membership." For a very long period of time we did receive financial support from what was called *StADaF*, *Ständiger Ausschuss Deutsch als Fremdsprache*, through the embassy. This was designed for three things: first, to pay for the travel of some Germans to our conference; second, to pay a small subsidy of a few thousand dollars to the journal; third, to pay for a teachers' workshop for public school teachers in whatever region we met that would take place on the Thursday before our annual conference.

That was going on for a long time until about six years ago when the money ran out. We then applied for a substantial sum in the form of a Marshall Plan *Dank* grant from European Recovery Program (ERP) funds to support our conferences over a three year period.

I suggested that we ask our members and the people who attended our conferences to make voluntary donations to the GSA as a *Dank* for the *Dank*. Well, they did, and donated over \$ 200,000. We put that money together with money that I had saved in administration costs of the Association over the years into an Endowment Fund. Out of the earnings we have since funded the travel of Germans and participants from third countries to the annual conference. We now have no financial support other than our own income. On occasion, we receive grants like the DM 30,000 25th anniversary gift from the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) to support East European attendance.

Our cooperation with various institutions and other scholarly organizations is excellent. We are a member of the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS), where we represent the German-language region of Europe. In the ACLS we are able to represent the spectrum of

interest of our members in a broad group of 62 organizations that ranges from the American Political Science Association (APSA) to the American Economic Society to the American Historical Association. In this organization there are 62 executive directors, and we meet twice a year to network, and we also exchange practical and scholarly information. Through the ACLS we are talking with the National Humanities Alliance, which is a major arm for working together with the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Endowment for the Arts. Thus the GSA exerts influence on behalf of German studies across the spectrum of the scholarly community. This has been important, and useful. Jennifer Michaels, our present Delegate, is a member of the Delegate's Steering Committee. The GSA has also provided advisory support to the German Historical Institute and advised R. Gerald Livingston when he founded the American Institute for Contemporary German Studies at the Johns Hopkins University. The GSA is affiliated with the Association for the Study of German Politics of the United Kingdom, has been represented at conferences at the Center for German Studies at the University of Birmingham, England, and pursued contact with specialists in the study of Germany in Eastern Europe. The GSA also supported the continuation of the Max Planck Institute for History in Germany. After German unification, there was a major involvement of the GSA in integrating the universities of the eastern Länder into the international academic scene, and numerous scholars, students, and university administrators were invited to GSA conferences.

Trommler: I have been with the GSA since 1982. My impression was that the first intellectual impulse to meet in an interdisciplinary association came from historians. I had the feeling that historians of German history in their large departments and organizations looked for a more hospitable organizational environment so they were particularly forceful and inventive members of the GSA. I remember that in the mid-80's it became avant-garde for Germanists to go to the GSA because it was something that was to be discovered and used. We Germanists were also not too pleased with our organizational support. The MLA is a huge organization that didn't give us enough outlets and attention and the American Association of Teachers of German (AATG) was geared primarily toward high school and college teachers of the German language. We wanted interdisciplinary outlets.

The intensity with which interdisciplinarity was thought about in the 1980's came also from the need of German departments to make friends in other departments and to branch out and to remodel the field in connection with other methodologies and other departments. The best contribution at that time were the curricular guidelines that the GSA

produced in the mid-1980's according to which undergraduate curricula could be revamped in German departments. I think that the German studies movement helped save a substantial number of usually small German departments in the late 80's and early 90's. They learned to interconnect with other colleagues and currents in the academy and did not have to rely solely on the teaching of literature and language, though this is still the basic function, the bread and butter of German departments. Gerry Kleinfeld and his colleagues built this great structure of annual conferences and the GSR. For many of the younger people in training and in the faculties in the 80's, the GSA was the organization through which they could pursue their interests beyond German literature in a national frame of reference.

In the late 80's when I became Vice President and then President, we spoke about the ideal composition of 40% historians, 40% Germanists, 10% political science, and 10% art historians and colleagues of other fields. This balance between historians and Germanists was something we tried to maintain. It probably still exists.

The GSA is also trying to have a constant balance between what we call democratic and elitist currents. We want the prominent colleagues to lecture, talk, be part of this, but we also always want to be open to younger people. There is at times discomfort among the younger ones if too much weight is given to the more prominent colleagues and vice versa. This is something that Gerry Kleinfeld has been able to combine and balance—aside from many other credits I give him. He has been stern in steering the democratic course.

2. Networking

When we asked about the role of the GSA within the field of German Studies, all three interviewees said networking was central. Its annual conference, they suggested, is the most important occasion for networking.

Kleinfeld: The GSA offers networking within disciplines and among the disciplines, which I think is really very good. We have grown in this way and this continues to the present time. The annual GSA Conference is a significant opportunity for networking. People meet, often across the disciplines, and develop projects together, make new contacts for a variety of purposes. The Conferences have become large enough, and have so many foreign scholars present, that networking is a significant feature.

An example of the networking nature of the GSA and the breadth of the GSA is that the British Association for the Study of German Politics has asked to be affiliated with us and they want to have an annual representation at our conference. They literally say that this is *the* confer-

ence on German politics. We've had about forty sessions that had in one way or another something to do with German politics at our conference. This is enormous, and there aren't conferences like that in Germany. The conference is unbureaucratic and it offers the opportunity for a free exchange of ideas. The format of the panels calls for a moderator, presenters, and then a commentator, plus discussion which makes for a critical format. But we also have no theme for our conferences. We've had some trouble with some older senior colleagues in Germany who wonder: Shouldn't the conference have a theme? There is no one theme for 800 people, what kind of theme are you going to have for 800 people? The objective of this really is to give a forum for ongoing research on the German-speaking region of Europe. And I think that is very, very significant.

The aftermath of September 11 has shown that there is a greater need for a dialogue. I think the GSA has an opportunity to foster that dialogue. We are the only transatlantic network. When you think that there are 90 German professors and more than a dozen Austrians and occasionally also Swiss who come to our conference and that from the very beginning German has been an equal language to English at the conferences—German is in fact the first language because everybody is expected to know German but not everybody is expected to speak English—you can have discussions going on in either language. When you talk about the decline of an academic exchange the GSA stands out as the major transatlantic venue and certainly our British colleagues have also seen it as such.

3. Interdisciplinarity, or: From *Germanistik* to German Studies

Each of the interviewees stressed the importance of the GSA's interdisciplinary orientation. The association has been instrumental in transforming traditional Germanistik into the much broader, multidisciplinary field of German studies, which has expanded scholarly horizons in each associated discipline.

Trommler: Interdisciplinarity is at the core of what the GSA should facilitate. The particular impulse to make the organization a catalyst originated from organized panels with an interdisciplinary approach so that historians and Germanists actually learned from each other. I was and am much engaged in this. I know how hard it is to bring people from different disciplines together, yet what is not organized doesn't function. This is always the big problem in the GSA that it is seen as an interdisciplinary organization, but if it is not thoughtfully pursued, interdisciplinarity does not deliver.

At the same time the claim for interdisciplinarity has opened the door for a lot of dilettantism. Some people thought they could base a talk or an

article about the mood of East and West Germans after the fall of the Wall on six weeks' reading of *Die Zeit* or the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. The issue of quality has to be constantly addressed in the GSA as well as in departments. We have to be more rigid in our selection. Historians have a strong and admirable measure of good work according to archival sources. Literary critics have other criteria. Their sources are the texts. The two disciplines in their different views of texts can compliment each other and this is something that should also be used as quality control.

Nolan: It's not always clear what interdisciplinary work means. Do you learn a lot? I think absolutely. At the annual weekend meetings of the German Women's History Study Group with women in German language and literature, (which the DAAD has generously supported) we jointly pick a topic and then historians propose some articles and the Germanists propose other articles and we read and discuss them. I think that we learn a lot that each of us separately will take back to our teaching and our own work.

I tend to suspect that if people say you can only do interdisciplinary work fruitfully if you have expertise in each discipline it is a way of preventing any kind of collaboration that will go beyond the disciplines. It seems to me the purpose is not to have each side replicate what the other knows but to engage in a conversation that asks how far can we go thinking from one perspective, how far from another, how do we need to think in new ways to get beyond the limits of both, even as we build on their strengths. In my experience it works best if there's some sort of substantive problem, some sort of theme, rather than a more abstract focus on methodology or theory.

Trommler: The field in general has undergone significant developments. The traditional *Germanistik* as far as I experienced it in the late 60's and early 70's in the United States was strongly influenced by the German model. Not least because of the political developments in the twentieth century, the wars between the United States and Germany, German departments had been marginalized and isolated in the academy. This is one of the reasons why the close connection with Germany made sense because this is the country where Germanists were published, where visiting professors could be invited, where American students were supposed to spend some time.

Since the mid-80's an Americanization of *Germanistik* has taken shape, promoted by a younger generation of American-born scholars who realized how big the ocean is between the two continents and that in order to keep *Germanistik* and German as a field of study interesting for young Americans they would have to open it towards different methodologies and a different identity. Americanization means a genuine ap-

proach to the foreign country that encompasses more connections and methodological reflections, in particular from feminism, cultural anthropology, postcolonialism, and new historicism. Traditional *Germanistik* would not have been able to accommodate these influences. Not to forget, however, that the impulses which have transformed American *Germanistik* didn't come from Americanization alone. The first step was taken by younger Germanists, sometimes German-born, in the late 60's and early 70's who turned towards a social history of literature. The drive in the 80's towards German studies was a way of reintegrating the somewhat isolated field of *Germanistik* within the academy. These developments have created concern especially among the older generation of colleagues who have maintained a German-oriented *Germanistik*. Some colleagues from Germany who attended GSA conferences have said this is not our *Germanistik* anymore. I wouldn't say that all younger colleagues followed this trajectory, but as a development it became ubiquitous because it is intellectually stimulating and helps integrate German studies in the intellectual discourse in the academy which itself underwent a great transformation from the older pattern in the 70's and 80's.

Nolan: The identification of many historians who went to graduate school in the late 1960's and early 1970's was less with one geographic area than with themes and approaches, such as the new labor history or new social history. When people thought about National Socialism they were using the paradigm of fascism and trying to draw on various Marxist theories and both critique and use them. It was also a time when being interdisciplinary tended to mean that if you did labor history or if you were concerned with the state and capitalist development you were talking to political scientists and sociologists who were very historically oriented. You wouldn't be talking to people in literature. There was a real bifurcation between people doing German literature then and people doing German history. And you'd go to social science history rather than German studies. I used to visit both the Social Science History Association and the GSA. At some point I switched as the more interesting conversations were going on in German studies.

Kleinfeld: One fundamental difference between history and literature was that by the 1960's and 1970's textbooks on German history would stop at 1945 while Germanists were talking about authors like Günter Grass or Stephan Heym. Historians would say, oh well, you know there aren't any archives open and the only thing after that is political science and we don't want to do that kind of research. The GSA put the study of Germany since 1945 on the map. Historians are now also interested in this period. The GSA enabled, encouraged, and helped historians to teach and do research about post-1945 Germany for the first time and provided a

venue for political scientists who worked on current Germany when it was difficult to find space at the American Political Science Association.

But the GSA also encouraged the study of the GDR because from the very beginning we knew that the Germanists in the association were very interested in the literature of the GDR. And by offering research on the GDR very early on we were able to focus historians and political scientists as well on the study of the GDR. We even invited people from the GDR to the GSA. They came from all walks of life. We had SED people, members of the *Ehrenkommission*, and all sorts of individuals. And after the fall of the Wall we continued with an examination of the integration process. I invited student representatives from the East, people from the university administrations, even people from the state governments to come over and speak about what was going on in the East. As a result, during the first summer after the collapse of SED rule I conservatively estimate that 800 GSA members were in the East. This is an enormous number. And the amount of research that came out of that was quite substantial.

Certainly, historians, Germanists, and political scientists have all become more interdisciplinary over the past two decades, and the GSA has played a role in this. Sometimes, the advocates of interdisciplinarity are surprised at the successes they have achieved. While some German departments have only renamed themselves, others have truly striven for a broader concept of German studies. Even the renaming is an effort to say that they are a part of this new trend.

4. Women and Gender

Feminism, issues of gender equality, and gender as a focus of research have come to play a major role within the field of German studies in the twenty-five years since the GSA was founded. The inclusion of women within academia has also been an important concern.

Nolan: When I went to graduate school, nobody worked on women and gender. There was only one full-time woman on the faculty at Columbia, and she was in African history. As I was writing my dissertation, the women's movement began to get going and have a visible presence, but I never took a course on women and gender. When I got to Harvard, I was one of two women, and this was in a department of about 55. Again nobody did women and gender. There was an adjunct who taught an American women's history course, and then in my last year there, which was 1980, I taught an undergraduate European women's history course. That was really a taste of the bad old days, of what it was like to really be a token woman.

NYU has been a much better situation. For reasons that were never quite clear, when I got there in 1980 my department had hired four new women and they already had two and they found themselves suddenly with six women, all of whom had had some involvement with either teaching or themselves researching on issues of women (one didn't use the term gender then). Some men were a little bewildered, but others were interested in exploring women's history as well. We were able to do a lot with that in the department, more so outside of European history than within European history. But I think that for most women of my generation in this country, you could fall into one of these relatively happy situations by sometime in the 1980's. You were not likely to be the token woman and there was a critical mass of women working on issues of women and gender somewhere in the institution. At NYU, it happened to be my department. NYU was totally retrograde about any kind of women's studies program, but within the department, it worked well.

One of the things that made it much easier for historians of women in Germany was the German Women's History Study Group that has now been going for about twenty-two years. It meets about once a month in New York City, and mostly we read one another's work. It has been both a real intellectual stimulus and support network for my generation. About fifteen years ago we were able to get money to run a big conference on gender and German history and then to run some workshops for graduate students. Some of those graduate students have now finished up and gotten jobs and tenure and are now part of the study group. So that's been a very interesting inter-generational support network. And about ten years ago, we started meeting one weekend a year with a group of women from German literature and German studies.

Today, I think women have a good chance of getting jobs, although some institutions take diversity more seriously than others and it really depends on the complexion of particular departments. It still tends to be women rather than men who work on women and gender with some notable exceptions. In an undergraduate class on women's history, only five of forty or fifty students will be men. I'm teaching a graduate class with Linda Gordon, who's an American Women's historian, and we have nineteen students, of whom two are men. This is pretty typical. I don't know how it is in literature, I don't think it's much better. More men are involved among those working on queer theory and sexuality.

Kleinfeld: When I wrote the GSA By-Laws in 1976 they were gender-neutral. Which national organization was gender-neutral in the early 1970's? This was not by accident but had been my intention. So we have always been an organization in which women and men play active roles. This is not an organization dominated by men, it has never been. We've

had many times a majority of women on the executive committee, once we had an executive committee made up almost entirely of women. We have also been very active in promoting this, we have made several representations to the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft about the lack of women recipients of their grants.

Gender studies is a very active field within the GSA, as you can see by the number of sessions at our conferences and articles in the *GSR*. In this, as well as other areas, the GSA has been able to promote the cutting edge of research. I should stress that our conference program committees change in membership each year, and that no one person is responsible for conference development. The democratic nature of the association ensures that we have the variety and openness that exists.

5. Germany and American German Studies

German studies in the U.S. will always have a special relationship to the work being done in Germany. What are the differences between German and American approaches to German studies?

Trommler: I found that the interest in other methodologies was and is strong among a certain group of German *Germanisten*. However, the institutional setup in Germany is still adverse to interdisciplinarity as it is practiced here. In the German university, each discipline has a sort of *telos*, its history is set in a particular way, *Germanistik* is set in a particular way, while in the United States you are more or less a member of the faculty or of the academy and you have a label on your forehead: I am talking to you as a member of the German department, or I am talking to you as a member of the English department. If people have the right interdisciplinary interest, practicing it as a sort of intellectual stance or *Haltung*, they can cross disciplinary boundaries easier than in the German context. The openness is there in Germany but the institutional setup makes it harder to talk to the other and make it part of your research and your career.

I don't know whether the American setup can serve as a model for German *Germanistik*. I doubt it because the American distinction between graduate and undergraduate studies infuses the overall setup with a lot of institutional reflection on different forms of mediating the foreign culture. This mediation has become a genuine part of the study, also graduate study. And it is an intellectually and pedagogically exciting part that radiates beyond the traditional parameters of research. These traditional parameters have shaped, in their German form, the self-understanding of the whole discipline yet tend to disregard matters of mediation. The movement of multiculturalism which became part of the

internal cultural wars in the United States has given younger Americans the feeling that if they concern themselves with a foreign culture intellectually they find new and different tools for defining themselves as Americans. In former decades the study of German culture meant something different since European culture generally had a higher standing. Nowadays the American component is conceptually more weighty. After cultural anthropology established itself, the anthropological approach to the other culture became a crucial tool. You can use it towards your own culture but also towards the other and this, I think, doesn't come through the established German *Germanistik*. In Germany, it's a *Lehrfach*, German is the language of communication. If the look from the outside—from German studies in the U.S.—has inspired German *Germanisten* to reflect on what they are doing within Germany it might have done its job. I doubt whether it has.

Nolan: The most obvious thing one can say is that the history of women and gender is still much more marginalized in Germany than it is here and women are much more marginal to the historical profession. There are the token full professor (C 4) women among the historians, some of them very recent. But there's never been the sort of critical mass of women, and in some cases men, in individual departments and in various associations doing gender topics to create a culture in which it is not only acceptable to do that kind of work but considered essential so that whether you do it or not, you read it, you know about it, you take it seriously. I think that the most fruitful exchanges between Americans working on German history and Germans have taken place in the areas of labor and social history, *Alltagsgeschichte*, where there's probably been more divergence and much more interest on the American side than perhaps the German side or on questions of memory, identity, and German-Jewish relations. The bulk of that scholarship has come from this country and, to a lesser extent, from Israel.

6. Trends in German Studies at American Universities

In spite of its modernization German studies has to work consistently to maintain its standing at American universities. What are the current trends in German studies departments? Which topics attract students' attention?

Kleinfeld: There are trends that go in waves but people need to have a focus on something, we can't all be generalists or globalists. Who in a department is a globalist? I think that the study of Germany in universities is naturally important in order to be able to understand Europe. The problem on American campuses can be seen in three different ways since we have three different disciplines. Departments of German or German

studies face a particular problem in the decline of student interest in the study of literature. There is now more interest in cultural studies or German studies within German departments. History departments face a problem in the multiplicity of different things that history departments want to do, whether you still do Germany, as a country study, or whether you want to have cross-country subjects, such as social movements, economic developments, and such. The same thing is true for political science, where country studies are declining, and more interest is shown in theory, international relations, comparative studies, and so on. But, there is still a significant place for the study of Germany, and a considerable student interest across disciplines.

It will never parallel the awful state of American studies in Germany. There are only about six chairs of United States history in Germany, and fewer specialists on American politics. There are a number of scholars in Germany who teach American studies, but the lack in history and politics is unfortunate. In the United States we have a lot more German history, almost every institution has a German historian, almost every institution teaches the German language and has a German studies component. There will continue to be room for this. But there should be more American history and politics at German universities.

Nolan: I've moved toward trying to think about various transnational and global connections for a range of reasons. One is simply very pragmatic. We have a very small graduate program with very few people who are doing European history. I'm interested in training all my students to think about how to situate the particular area in which they work in larger contexts. I think it's the only way they're going to get jobs and it's a way to make people who are working on other regions and nation-states attend to Europe. And I think they don't as much anymore. European history was absolutely central when I was in graduate school and started teaching, and now it's not, for a number of complicated reasons. I also have been trying to think about transnational, global histories because I think in fact the emphasis on the nation-state has blinded people to all sorts of connections and exchanges—of people, of goods, of culture—that one misses when one focuses on the nation-state. That said, I don't think we are moving toward a global world in which the nation-state is going to disappear in favor of multinationals, non-governmental organizations, the International Monetary Fund, hybridity or whatever. The nation-state is still a key mediator and one has to find a way to both look at the nation-state but in new ways and to look at the forces that shaped it in new ways. I think there were some very interesting panels at the recent GSA meeting, some coming more from the literary side and some from the historical side, that were trying to do that through discus-

sions of Americanization, complex debates about consumption and advertising, or through looking at empire.

Political scientists and sociologists, particularly the ones who now do game theory, have a tendency to think you don't need to know much about particular places. You can just spin theories or elaborate equations. But people who do literature, cultural studies, and history put a great deal of emphasis on knowing the language, knowing the culture, knowing about particular places. I believe that one thinks better about transnational, regional, global inter-connections and exchanges if one actually knows about concrete places. One needs to move in different milieus, one needs one sort of regional or national area and at the same time to be part of other kinds of conversations with people who are not looking just at that area.

In this country, while interest in Third-World and Asian studies has risen, American history still remains the dominant field almost everywhere and, insofar as fields have shrunk, it's been at the expense of Europe, just as history departments in Germany are even more unbalanced in favor of German history. And if there were changes, it would probably come at the expense of *Amerikanistik* and not German history. That said, Germany remains a country in which Americans are very interested, German history will remain important but it's not going to occupy the center stage it did in the 1960's and 70's.

Particularly undergraduates are still interested in the Nazi period. When you teach twentieth-century German history or comparative fascism, you can count on getting a really good enrollment. Some of these students will be young men interested in military history, but a lot have much broader interests. Among the graduate students, I think the interests are becoming much broader in theme and period. If there is a hot field or overlapping set of fields, that students at least in modern German history are doing, it would be post-1945 and usually comparative with a lot of work being done on consumption and the economy. Other topics include women and gender going back to the late nineteenth century, fascism, insofar as it's a question of memory or displaced persons in the immediate post-war period, and German-Jewish history.

Trommler: The Holocaust is definitely part of German studies. I found in the 80's that this was also one of the impulses for me to work more interdisciplinarily. Concentrating on the Nazi phenomenon as an experience within German culture necessitated a look at the literary reflection in the post-war period. This is where literary historians had something to offer. It was not until the archives were opened in the late 80's that historians moved into the post-war era which had been part of literary curricula for some time.

The enormous success of Bernhard Schlink's *The Reader* shows how important the topic is. This best-seller was certainly a phenomenon that has helped us. Nazism was seen through the eyes of a person decades after World War II. That's what was accessible to American students. I still use it.

At the same time the young German literature, the new generation of writers especially in Berlin and Vienna helps build bridges. For many younger American professors and teachers contemporary German literature has a strong interest. They know the authors, they invite them. I would also single out the new Jewish-German literature that receives at times more attention in the United States, where a sizable contingent of Jewish Americans teach German. The development of Jewish communities in Germany, especially in Berlin, are observed with much interest here. Some people still do Baroque poetry but less in the framework of German studies. It is one of the more delicate points of German studies that it has been conceived as focusing mainly on the twentieth century. Over the course of twenty-five years we have always included earlier periods as part of the interdisciplinary venture. It succeeded for the nineteenth century but less so for the eighteenth and earlier centuries, because there is a rather small audience.

Kleinfeld: We developed very early a set of curriculum guidelines that would be useful for German studies in the broad sense. What we wanted to do was to allow for the possibility of different concepts of German studies and to encourage interdisciplinarity. But we also wanted to encourage the study of the German language. Historians especially were interested in this because you can't write history without going to the archives. So the Germanists found that the historians were an ally for the study of the language. But, some German departments were often renamed into German Studies departments, without significant changes in content or curriculum. Frank Trommler has always encouraged interdisciplinarity and contacts among those who use different methodologies.

The GSA can do a lot to support young professors in their careers. We also have our conferences move from city to city and in doing so we can highlight what is going on in that region. This is one reason why we don't meet only in Washington, D.C. The establishment of Centers for Excellence that were started with German funding at Harvard, Berkeley, Georgetown, and other universities has been beneficial, but you really have to have something more than that. Each institution has its role. Graduate programs need undergraduate institutions as well, to receive students, and to have places for their graduates to teach. Suppose you are going to graduate somebody from Harvard. Where are they going to teach? They are not going to teach at Harvard. And, you cannot just have

German studies at a few graduate institutions or even a small number of undergraduate institutions. Some very excellent research is done by scholars at undergraduate institutions, and the GSA brings them together.

7. The U.S. Job Market in German Studies

The precarious standing of German studies in American academia is most strongly felt on the job market. How can one encourage graduate students to choose German studies? What are the responsibilities and strategies in teaching marketable skills? How will German studies be taught in the future?

Trommler: In order to entice Americans to invest their life and career in the study of a foreign language, literature, and culture, one has to offer as much as possible. Therefore German organizations like the DAAD, Goethe Institute, or Humboldt Foundation have been very, very important. Within the career itself, for instance when you are an assistant professor in a German department, you are on your own yet you can still rely on the network of supporting institutions in Germany. The so-called *Mittlerorganisationen* have provided structural underpinnings of careers here. And as most Germanists usually work within small departments, very often by themselves, organizational networks like the GSA and the American Association of Teachers of German play a crucial role.

When we compare notes with the French or Italians or with other European languages, they say that the German foreign language contingent is well organized. We owe this both to professional organizations and to support from the Federal Republic, from Austria, and at times from Switzerland. When American Germanists get professionally excited, it might come from the beauty of a Rilke poem. But it might also come from the beauty of a DAAD fellowship.

Nolan: You have to be both anchored in a particular geographic area and then do the regional to try to keep young Ph.D.'s from falling through the cracks. That said, I think it is always a problem to move beyond the traditional definitions of both regions and disciplinary boundaries. There are some programs that offer interdisciplinary Ph.D.'s, and I think those people have a lot of trouble. You are better off doing interdisciplinary work from within a discipline. The academic world changes very, very slowly. That's the downside of tenure—you can't shake it up all at once. But I think as Europe, and not just Germany, gets displaced in history departments our students will be better positioned in the job market if they are looking more broadly and think about empire or about Atlantic connections.

Trommler: In the early 90's we thought we only had to put up a picture of the Brandenburg Gate with young people on the Wall and students

would come to our courses. In the early twenty-first century we know that this doesn't suffice anymore. It became apparent that while we immersed ourselves in German studies, we neglected the language dimension. If German survives in the academy it is based on combining good language teaching with cultural and political content already in first and second year. We also have to provide access to the Central European and German-speaking countries in courses. One of the most important tools are internships and junior years abroad. In this way the German contingent fulfills its share in the internationalization of American universities. The pedagogical reforms in language teaching have been intensive. There was also an Americanization but it went much beyond German. For a younger person looking for a career in the early twenty-first century, what counts is a combination of excellent language pedagogy and a strong knowledge of literature and culture. This is something that I have tried to push in recent years. In other words, the German studies paradigm should not be seen as a guarantee for careers. It is increasingly important that people can show that they have been part of the professionalization of language teaching.

At the same time more courses are nowadays taught in English. In many departments it has been the only way to convince the deans that the German departments can generate enough enrollment. I teach a course on Kafka, Thomas Mann, and Hesse in English which has quite a large enrollment. I can expect that 10% of the students will go on to take German and will actually read Kafka in German. The student interest in Germany is often not so much based on the love of German language and literature but rather a matter of heritage which is very important and much underrated. Of those undergraduate students who go beyond the first two years and undertake serious studies of language and literature, I would say one third is heritage. Many people from German-American families, also Jewish-German-American families, think that the grandfather has spoken German, well, why shouldn't I. We have to do more to solicit these students.

Also, many students want German as a language for their business. We have found that in the last five to eight years American business communities and business schools have at times been more supportive concerning foreign languages than deans because deans looked only at the enrollments while business schools looked also at the applicability of the language.

The ease with which younger people take up technological tools, networks, and outlets is most helpful in teaching another culture. At this moment I plead for even more attention for media and film. The German field is small and marginal within the academy and individual colleges. If there is a small department which often has only one or two standing

faculty and some lecturers, the media nowadays provide so much more of an intellectual environment through TV conferencing and through the internet that, if well-wired, the smallness can be overcome. Obviously language is taught best in a classroom and also in the personal encounter with the foreign culture. We always have to see to it that teachers use computers and the internet in an ancillary function and that we don't lose the personal exchange of the classroom. When I teach a course I have a listserv, course material is on the web, but I make sure that the students have to show in their papers that they have gone to the library and used the traditional printed tools. Yet I am also convinced that students can expand their interest in German studies on their own through the creative use of the internet.

7. Excellence in Leadership: Gerald R. Kleinfeld and the GSA

Gerald R. Kleinfeld has been at the center of the GSA from its founding. He has been so closely identified with the GSA, many have a hard time imagining the GSA without him. Although Kleinfeld plans to step down eventually as the GSA's executive director, he will continue working for the Association for a while yet.

Kleinfeld: Of course, I will retire. I don't want to overstay my welcome, but I am not yet rushing out the door. I asked the executive committee to plan, and we all understood that we would need some kind of reorganization, both to reflect the growth and development of the association, and to provide for a smooth operation after I am gone. For example, it no longer makes sense that the executive director is also the editor of the journal, and we are large enough to support the idea of two people for those two jobs. And, with two people for those jobs, it was clear that the secretary-treasurer had to control membership functions. We now have so many committees, that the president had to generate committee memberships. The program committee needed to report to someone throughout its process. In other words, there were real organizational grounds for the structural development of the association. Some of these changes had already been introduced gradually, but we needed to institutionalize them, and put them in the By-Laws four years ago. They now provide for a shared leadership, what I like to call a quadriga, which fits the GSA very well. And in this quadriga the role of the various offices is very clearly defined. By giving up a good deal of what I previously was doing the next executive director can do a number of different organizational things. In other words, we have four key positions: president, editor, executive director, and secretary-treasurer. By dividing the functions, we make each position manageable, and encourage cooperation. The By-Laws provide for an executive council with the president, vice president (really

president-elect), executive director, secretary-treasurer, and past president. The executive committee continues to have the major policy-setting role. There are more than 45 individuals serving each year on quite a few different committees, all with clear responsibilities. In other words, the GSA is a well-structured organization, in which the executive director plays an important role, but we are so democratic that a successor can fit in. It is designed that way. Often, I will walk into the executive committee, and greet new members whom I have never met. I did this year, for example. It is definitely not an insider organization. On the other hand, I have not yet resigned and, although I have survived a heart attack, I am hoping that nobody is rushing to write an obituary. In the meantime, it is important to emphasize that we are democratic, and I am happy to work with other people who have decision-making authority and exercise it. The challenges in a sense are to maintain and to support the study of the German-speaking parts of Europe in universities where it is under threat. For example we are looking very seriously at the State University at Albany which eliminated the department of German five years ago. And we would like to encourage SUNY Albany to have a German Studies department in the future. This is one of the things that I'd like to do.

We will continue to represent various interests and needs of our members and research on Germany at large. We want to keep the journal going, we want to keep the conference at a high level of quality, we want to keep our dues reasonably priced, and we want to provide our services. Our web page will be developed. We are going to use it for instant news. The web site has had 1,500 hits within four months. We have less than 2,000 members so the web page is going to be a major element in our future planning.

I've very much enjoyed doing my own research, I have enjoyed trying to help the membership, provide a venue for them and it's been fun. But I will also turn this over, as I've turned over the editorship already to a successor.

We know that the GSA will go on. We don't have a huge endowment but we have an endowment that can do some of the things we want. It's not earning very much money now because of the interest rate and so we need more contributions to be able to do what we hope to do. I have regarded my role in the association as that of a servant of the profession and I haven't sought to gain anything for myself out of it. I've stayed at Arizona State all these years. I look at the whole GSA as a success from the journal to the conferences, a success built by the members. I've just tried to be a facilitator. The articles made the journal a success, and the papers make the conference. I arrange for the rooms.