



## North American Heine Society

January 25, 2026

Dear Members,

If I started last year's newsletter with the fact that it was not easy to write given the anticipated turmoil that lay ahead of us, guess how I feel this time around. How deeply the current of politics will affect us down to the activities not just of society at large but our Heine Society, has become clear in the onslaught of defunding of academia and in particular the Humanities. Language and literature programs are under more severe pressure than just a year ago. The University of North Carolina, for example, has just decided to close its area studies centers, among them the Center for European Studies. This is the new era of the Donroe Moctrine.

Despite and because of the current developments, our Society might involuntarily have become more important and relevant than ever though I would happily trade it in for some utter insignificance given what we face and most likely will have to continue to face for some time.

A time in which just simply quoting Heine – in English – might get you in trouble because the humor that makes

life livable has become a matter of the first amendment under attack might make us sigh back to the good old days of censorship when Heine, in *Germany, A Winter's Tale*, would run into his censor who for one would appreciate his art:

*Auch meinen alten Censor sah  
Ich wieder. Im Nebel, gebücket,  
Begegnet' er mir auf dem Gänsemarkt,  
Schien sehr darnieder gedrückt.*

*Wir schüttelten uns die Hände, es schwamm  
Im Auge des Manns eine Thräne.  
Wie freute er sich mich wieder zu sehn!  
Es war eine rührende Scene. –*

Things have changed and so many scenes of Heine's poetry like the entrance of "the clowns and graciosos" in a passage in *Ideen. Das Buch Le Grand* remind us of what Marx will analyze in *The 18. Brumaire* but Heine already described with the accuracy of an astute historian when picturing the scene of them as they enter

*mit ihren Narrenkapppen und Pritschen, nach  
den blutigen Revolutionsszenen und Kasieraktio-  
nen kommen wieder herangewatschelt die dicken  
Bourbonen mit ihren alten abgestandenen  
Späßchen und zartlegitimen Bonmots, und  
graziöse hüpf die alte Noblesse mit ihrem*

*verhungerten Lächeln, und hintendrein wallen die frommen Kapuzinen mit Lichtern, Kreuzen und Kirchenfahnen; –*

Indeed, Heine's sharp gaze is remarkable and his writing's eye-opening qualities provide a strangely reassuring solace precisely because his observations are so to the point punctuated by the hard-hitting beat of precision.

If we might need Heine more than ever, I also mean this quite literally: we are in need to populate panels with organizers and speakers willing to do the work and connect the dots. As for Heine, it remains exhilarating how he seems already to have made sure of remaining more contemporary than we might wish. What's left for us is to show how and why.

If you wonder whether my remarks amount to just a well-intended appeal to mobilize Heine scholarship you are not wrong: we do need to involve members more in order to awake a practically dormant discussion on Heine from its slumber. Continual attempts of resuscitation are however only as successful as they inspire a renewed engagement with Heine – our Society's mission after all.

To conclude, let me share with you my experience of organizing this year's MLA Heine panel. Following the cue of this year's presidential theme of family resemblances, it became quickly clear that this motif arguably runs through Heine and that it would be promising to organize a panel around this theme. What started as an exercise to come up with a panel became quickly an exhilarating experience to track a connection I would not have otherwise considered between

Heine and Wittgenstein where it not for the occasion to reflect on the suggestion to which the presidential theme extended an invitation. What appeared at first glance to be merely an arbitrary pick of a theme turned out to lead to a central theme in Heine resonating in unexpected ways with Wittgenstein. When I then learnt exploring this connection that Heine Wittgenstein is a character in an anime I realized it was all worth it.



Heine Wittgenstein

After all, the commitment to present a paper led me to a connection that seemed all along waiting to be made: family resemblance, as it turned out, serves as a poetic device with critical epistemic implications functioning in such a way that it informs Heine's work all the way through. Upon closer examination, Heine's work became legible as anticipating a remarkably productive notion embraced by Wittgenstein in a way that suggests Heine as its source and inspiration.

I mention this surprise excursion into the world of manga to highlight that the organization of, and participation in,

panels can go well beyond the maintenance of the institutionalized performs of professional habits. Beyond service to our Society, the profession, and intellectual conviviality, such work offers the opportunity to ever more deeply appreciate the legacy Heine left behind and with it to gain an ever-better grasp of what we do and who we are.

In a deep sense, planning, convening, and populating panels with lively talks creates the space for the kind of intellectual engagement and exchange that belongs to the most invigorating moments and not just in our professional experience.

If I took the time to make my point it is simply because I wish that more of us will get involved in what is not just a necessity for the survival of our Society but also the most enjoyable aspect of what we do.

### **GSA panel Arlington, VA 2025**

At the GSA in September 2025 the NAHS featured the panel “Current Refractions of Heine” Thanks to Sebastian Wogenstein for organizing. Here is the program:

Moderator: Agnes Mueller, University of South Carolina

Commentator: Jonathan Skolnik, University of Massachusetts Amherst

Azade Seyhan (Bryn Mawr), Negotiating Oratory and Poetry in Heine’s Aesthetic

Sebastian Wogenstein (U of Connecticut), Back to the Future: Heine in the Twenty-First Century

Tracie Matysik (U Texas, Austin), Yoko Tawada and Heinrich Heine on Nonhuman Animals, Rights, and Translation

Roughly a dozen people were in the audience and they joined in for a lively conversation. While the topic was “Current Refractions of Heine,” just by chance all three authors addressed the issue of human rights in Heine’s work (Wogenstein), in translations of his work (Seyhan), and in allusions to his work by other authors (Matysik). It was a fortuitous convergence that brought home the actuality of Heine’s work in an era when issues of migration, translation, and precarity are so pressing.

### **MLA Panel Toronto 2026**

At the MLA in January 2026 the topic of the Society’s panel was “Heine’s Bestiary of Family Resemblances.” The panel was again included as part of the presidential theme of ‘Family Resemblances.’ Due to illness Susan Bernstein was unable to attend. Her talk would have been “Heine and Börne: Family Resemblance as Uncanny Doubling.” As a result, the panel consisted of the following two talks:

Willi Goetschel (Toronto), Heine’s Bestiary of Family Resemblances

Andrew Warren (Toronto), Unwanted Relations: Heine’s Influence on Wagner’s Die Meistersinger

The panel was well attended with 11 or so attendees mirroring in size the panels of other German Studies sessions. The papers were followed by a great discussion taking up the full 75 minutes allotted for the panel, or to be precise with 15 seconds left before the time ran out.

### **Upcoming GSA and MLA**

Deadlines for submitting Call for Papers for both the GSA and the MLA are coming up and I ask you to please contact me in the next two weeks or so with

suggestions for organizing or contributing to a panel. The next GSA will take place in Phoenix, the MLA in Los Angeles.

### **Jeffrey L. Sammons Prize**

The deadline for nominations and self-nominations is February 15, 2026. Please send suggestions for nominations or self-nominations as soon as possible. Here is the information which is also posted on our website. Here is the link: <https://heine.research.uconn.edu/>

“The prize is awarded biannually for the best essay published or accepted for publication by a graduate student or emerging scholar (pre-tenure) in North America that contributes to advancing research in any of the aspects of the life, work, and times of Heinrich Heine.”

### **Free Graduate Student Membership**

This is a reminder that we continue to offer free membership to graduate students. I would like to encourage all members to direct students interested in becoming members to the Secretary-Treasurer for registration: [wogenstein@uconn.edu](mailto:wogenstein@uconn.edu)

### **Dissertation Mentoring Program**

Please direct any students writing their dissertation on Heine or a Heine-related subject and interested in mentoring support to me so we can match them with an experienced colleague for support and mentoring.

### **Research opportunities at the Heinrich-Heine-Institut**

The Heinrich-Heine-Institut offers a fellowship for students conducting research for their dissertations. This is a great opportunity to receive not just a nice stipend but also benefit from the generous expertise of the knowledgeable scholars

working at the institute. Candidates should contact me for further information.

### **NAHS Website**

If you have recently published a book, article, or another contribution on, or relevant to, Heine, please send the information to Sebastian Wogenstein for posting on the NAHS website.

### **Finally**

We exist only thanks to your contributions: intellectually as well as monetarily. This is the annual appeal to please pay the annual membership fees.

Most importantly, however, I would like to invite you to support our activities by contributing with your work. While this comes now with the promise of the Jeffrey L. Sammons Prize for younger colleagues, we all appreciate your work and support as participants and organizers of panels, and suggestions for other initiatives.

With best regards and wishes,

Willi Goetschel