

International alumni

Düsseldorf will always have a place in Helen Nurse's heart

Why did you choose to study at HHU?

HELEN NURSE After completing my degree at the partner university in Reading, I wanted to continue with German Studies. Back then, as now, there was very little support for the humanities in England. A part-time position as a translator for the sociologists at HHU was advertised at my university and it sounded great: a salary, the chance to continue studying and the opportunity to discover a new city – the perfect adventure for me.

You were already interested in German at school. Was it popular in England at the time?

HN Unfortunately not. At the time, only three people in the entire city wanted to do German at A level (school-leaving qualification permitting university admission) – a special class made up of students from three different schools had to be created and I was taken to another school in a mini-bus for these lessons. Fortunately, all that didn't put me off!

What do you have particularly fond memories of from your time at HHU? Do you have an anecdote for us?

HN Most of all I enjoyed the freedom within the framework of my studies. There were so many more opportunities than at my university. I thought it was wonderful to be able to just grab a copy of the course catalogue and pick out all the courses in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities that interested me. You can't do that in England. I gradually got into American literature and started learning Japanese. Later on, I even spent some time working at the Japanese International School in Düsseldorf. Shortly after arriving from England, I came across my first "false friend" in German: My professor at HHU told me he was "*irritiert*",

which doesn't actually mean "irritated" like I thought it did! I was ashamed that I had annoyed him but it turned out that I had just managed to confuse him. I will never forget that shock!

Alone at home in peace and quiet or in a group: How and where did you prefer to study?

HN I found the university library to be the best place for learning – both for my degree and for my job. I had to do a lot of research for my translation work. The librarians were always very helpful and supported me with the really tricky research. I spent a great deal of time there and enjoyed the peace and quiet, as well as the productive environment. As a resource, I still miss it today.

Which content or knowledge from your studies is most important to your profession today?

HN I still use a lot of what I learnt during my studies in my job today, particularly language-related things. However, having the opportunity to study and work in a major, open European city was much more important. That's something that has now become significantly more difficult for many English people as a result of Brexit. It's such a shame!

Are you still in touch with the university or fellow students/colleagues today?

HN Yes, I am still in touch with my former colleagues and worked with them on a freelance basis for a long time after I left the university. I've just noticed that a former colleague now holds the Chair of Sociology II at HHU – congratulations! Two of my fellow students have become my closest friends and I still count them as part of my family today.

As a German Studies graduate, you have taken on a wide variety of jobs. Do you find this diversity inspiring or challenging?

HN Although my career has hardly progressed in a straight line, I wouldn't miss my wide variety of jobs for the world! I always found it inspiring to learn about new fields and gain new knowledge and experiences. It was always very important to me to keep advancing my knowledge of German. Holding your own as a German expert in Britain is hard work – every school student I can inspire to study German is a bonus for me.

"I am still in touch with my former colleagues and worked with them on a freelance basis for a long time after I left the university."

Helen Nurse – translator and teacher

Did you enjoy living in Düsseldorf?

HN I lived in Düsseldorf for almost 14 years and would go back again like a shot. The city made a great impression on me and accompanied me through many phases of my life – from my studies to being a young mother. I love the Rhine, the beaches in the north of the city, the galleries, the outdoor swimming pools and the many parks! I would like to do the Literary Translation master's degree programme at HHU. Unfortunately, I've only just heard about the summer school, but I'll definitely be there next year.

In addition to your teaching position, you also support German authors in England...

HN This year I worked at the organisation "New Books in German" as an intern, which gave me the opportunity to really live out my passion for German literature. www.new-books-in-german.com is supported by the Goethe Institute, Pro Helvetia and the Austrian Cultural Forum. Twice a year, German-language publishing companies send suggestions from their programme and a jury comprising renowned literary translators, agents, publishers and bookshop operators selects roughly 30 works in each round. The corresponding cultural institute then funds the translation of these works into English. Without the support of New Books in German, the works of many authors such as Nino Haratischwili, Ulrike Almut Sandig, Raphaela Edelbauer and HHU graduate Mithu Sanyal from Düsseldorf would not be available in English. It's great that they exist!



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Helen Nurse

Helen Nurse lives in Bath, England, with her two Düsseldorf-loving, German-English children. She works as a German/French teacher and freelance translator. From 1991 – 1995 she studied German Studies, English Studies and Sinology and worked as a research assistant/research associate at the Chair of Sociology I at HHU. After gaining translation qualifications at the Chartered Institute of Linguists (UK) and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Düsseldorf (*Industrie- und Handelskammer – IHK*), she held various positions in industry and worked as a freelance translator for a period of time. She then re-trained as a secondary school teacher in the United Kingdom.

2022 Guest Professorship Brandauer allowed Heine to speak



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Alumna Klaudia Hoffmann met a friendly and approachable Klaus Maria Brandauer at the reception at *Schloss Mickeln*.

In the second lecture of his Heinrich Heine Guest Professorship, Klaus Maria Brandauer explored Heine's works further. On 27 April, he demonstrated to guests in the packed lecture theatre 3A just how relevant the namesake of our university is today. Together with the pianist Arno Waschk, the renowned Austrian actor enthralled the audience.

Anyone who had hoped to experience Brandauer's interpretation of well-known texts by Heinrich Heine again at the second event may have been disappointed as this time he had in fact brought with him Heine's text "French Affairs", which appeared the newspaper "Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung" in the 19th century, and his essay "Shakespeare's Maidens and Women". The "French Affairs" text reports on the outbreak of cholera in Paris in 1832 and offers shocking parallels to our present time during the coronavirus pandemic. Brandauer's reading of the almost 200-year-old text gave it a contemporary feel.

Accompanied by Arno Waschk on the piano, Brandauer then sailed to England to focus on Shakespeare and the European perspective. "Heine fills me with wonder," admitted Brandauer at the end of the event, which ran for more than 90 minutes. He expressed his warmest thanks for the opportunity to read from Heine's works in Düsseldorf.

After the event, several HHU alumni and their guests had the opportunity to round out the evening at a reception with the President, members and affiliates of the university and city society. A sunny spring evening with a festive atmosphere, buffet and drinks awaited them at *Schloss Mickeln*. Klaus Maria Brandauer was of course the guest of honour and happily posed for photos with the guests.