

In memoriam: Susanne Even

Co-founder and co-editor of Scenario Journal and Scenario Book Series

Manfred Schewe

*I live my life in ever-widening circles
that stretch themselves out over all the things.
I won't, perhaps, complete the last one,
but I intend on trying.*
(Rainer Maria Rilke)

It is difficult to sit down at this sad time and write about a trusted friend and colleague whom I have known for almost 35 years, with whom I have collaborated closely, and with whom I have shared so many wonderful moments. However, by combining reflections on her academic work with personal memories, I hope to convey to the Scenario community what a brilliant editor, dedicated university professor and fine human being she was.

Susanne passed away on 22 August 2026, which has left me deeply saddened. She had suffered from multiple sclerosis for many years, which made her everyday life increasingly difficult. Over the last two years, she had to cope with the deaths of both her husband, Michael, and her brother, Herbert. Despite her courage and determination in the face of adversity, she lost her battle with cancer after a relatively short illness.

Susanne studied German, Latin, and Dutch at the Philipps-Universität Marburg (1987–1989), and then continued her studies in German and English language, literature, and culture at the Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg (1991–1995), as she was particularly interested in the innovative teacher training model introduced there.

I first met Susanne in the 1992/93 academic year, when at Oldenburg University she enrolled in my seminar entitled *Dramapädagogische Lehrqualifikation*. Spread over two semesters, the seminar was aimed at student teachers who wanted to explore the potential of drama pedagogy in foreign language education. Susanne participated with great curiosity and enthusiasm. The quality of her creative input during the performative activities and post-performance reflections was exceptional.

In one of her articles from a few years ago, she made special reference to this seminar and commented:

Instead of merely reading about and discussing drama-based teaching, we experienced it first-hand. We created islands and their inhabitants, met as Lady Jane, Frida Kahlo, and Shakespeare's sister, and went down with the Titanic. We acted as fictional characters and experimented with different contexts. We learnt to set boundaries and explore what we brought spontaneously to life before our very eyes. The process of collaborative creation was consistently fascinating in its unpredictability.¹

This fascination seems to have lasted throughout her career. In 2020, for example, she published an article in *Scenario* entitled [Presence and unpredictability in teacher education](#).

During the days following Susanne's death, I recalled that in the final week of that seminar, we had enacted a children's story. The story was about the inevitability of saying goodbye, about grief and profound gratitude. Set in a forest, at one point the fox tells his friends that he has received a short message from their esteemed friend Badger, who was becoming increasingly dependent on his walking stick and was growing frailer:

Gone down the Long Tunnel. Bye bye, Badger.

I remember how all of us were profoundly touched by the improvised scenes, especially by the immense gratitude shown by Badger's forest friends.

To his surprise, Badger was running. Ahead of him was a long tunnel. His legs felt strong and steady as he ran towards it. He no longer needed his walking stick, so he left it lying on the tunnel floor. He moved swiftly, running faster and faster through the long passageway until he was floating above the ground. He felt himself turn head over paws, falling and tumbling, but he wasn't hurt. He felt free. It was as if he had fallen out of his body.²

¹ Even, S. (2019). Doing a Manfred. In S. Even, D. Miladinović & B. Schmenk (Eds), *Lernbewegungen inszenieren: Performative Zugänge in der Sprach-, Literatur- und Kulturdidaktik* (pp. 57-68). Narr Francke Attempto Verlag, p. 58 (English translation based on DeepL draft, MS).

² Varley, S. (2013). *Badger's Parting Gifts*. Andersen Press.



Susanne in 2015, welcoming delegates to a symposium at Bloomington University

Although Susanne's passing through the long tunnel makes me very sad, I am infinitely grateful for the almost 35 years we were able to share, and for the many wonderful moments we had together. Knowing that she is now free from pain and feeling liberated brings me comfort.

After graduating from the University of Oldenburg, Susanne successfully applied for a one-year lecturing post at University College Cork. She then received temporary appointments at other universities in Great Britain and the US, until in 2006 she secured her permanent position at the Department of Germanic Studies, University of Indiana, Bloomington. I would like to highlight in brief three of Susanne's many impressive academic achievements; further details on her formidable career can be accessed via [Susanne's CV](#) on the departmental website.

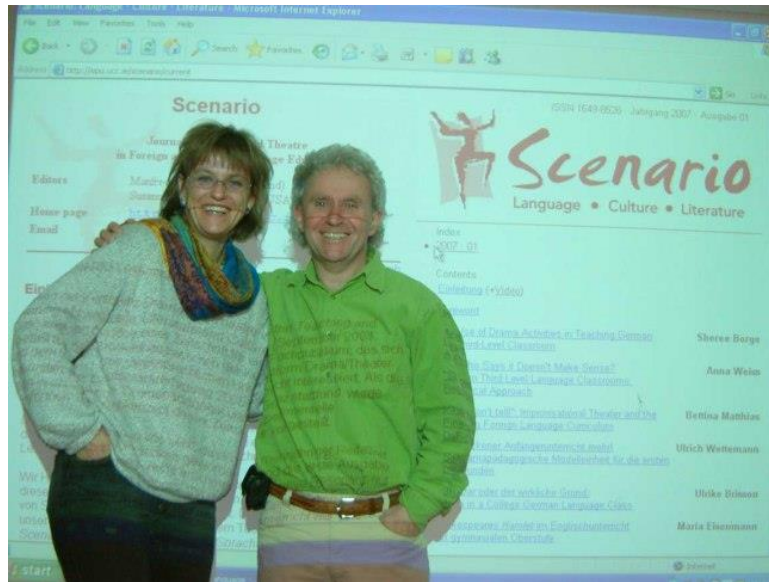
Pioneered a performative approach to teaching and learning grammar

In the late 1990s, Susanne asked me to supervise her PhD project, entitled *Drama Grammatik*. Her thesis was published in 2003 by IUDICIUM, a renowned publisher in the field of German as a foreign language. In her research project she focused on how techniques from dramatic art forms can be utilised in order for grammar to be experienced not only cognitively, but also socially, emotionally and kinaesthetically.

Schewe: In memoriam: Susanne Even

Susanne's research has had a significant impact on the field of second language education, establishing itself as a key reference point for studies focusing on grammar teaching and learning. Her performative approach to grammar continues to be applied by colleagues in different parts of the world in a diverse range of pedagogical contexts.

Co-founded and co-edited **Scenario Journal and Book Series**



With Susanne at launch of SCENARIO at University College Cork in 2007

Launching a journal can perhaps be compared to launching a boat, setting out on a long voyage in unpredictable weather. Without Susanne's extraordinary navigation skills, the Scenario boat could not have stayed on course for almost 20 years.

She enjoyed the editorial work, and always acted professionally in her interactions with members of the Advisory Board, authors and reviewers. She reviewed and proofread hundreds of articles, followed up on missing references, provided honest feedback to authors, and offered helpful advice to authors who were relatively inexperienced. Despite her full workload in her department, she invested innumerable hours of unpaid overtime to realise her vision of a solid, peer-reviewed journal that would pave the way towards a performative teaching, learning and research culture in different parts of the world.

In May 2026, Fiona Dalziel and Erika Piazzoli as co-editors of this current issue, asked Susanne if she could possibly review an article. Despite her increasingly difficult health situation Susanne replied: 'Yes, of course. I will send it to you by the deadline.' And so she did.

In 2012 we launched [Edition Scenario](#), a book series published by the Schibri Verlag. Susanne carefully examined all manuscripts, including the most recent volume 7 (2024).

Schewe: In memoriam: Susanne Even

Soon after the International Scenario Forum Conference 2017 in Cork, celebrating 10 years of the Scenario Journal, Susanne and I began to brainstorm how we could ensure the continued success of Scenario over the next ten years. We both agreed that without additional support, we would not be able to continue with the increasingly complex editorial work for much longer. The time had come to invite younger colleagues to join the editorial team.

The Scenario team now consists of colleagues who are well-established in their academic careers, based in different parts of the world and who, together, have an impressively wide range of experience in the field of performative teaching, learning and research. This has created a new and very exciting editorial dynamic. Everyone on board will do their utmost to carry forward Susanne's legacy.

The full team³ came together at the International Scenario Forum Conference in May 2024, hosted by Trinity College Dublin. It was the last time we met Susanne in person.



Front: Susanne with her beloved dog Oliver.

Back from left to right:

Fionn Woodhouse (Cork), Eucharía Donnery (Tokyo), Fiona Dalziel (Padua), Manfred Schewe (Cork), Erika Piazzoli (Dublin), Dragan Miladinović (Cork)

Established one of the most innovative and successful language programmes in the US

³ More recently Joëlle Aden (Paris) and Jean Rémi Lapaire (Bordeaux) have taken on the editorial responsibility for Scenario contributions published in French.

Schewe: In memoriam: Susanne Even

Susanne has made a very significant contribution to the Department of Germanic Studies, Indiana University, Bloomington, in the last twenty years. In a moving tribute that Johannes Türk, Chair of the Department, recently posted, he highlighted Susanne's achievements as follows:

Over the last two decades, she has shaped our language and pedagogy program and made it what it is today: one of the most innovative and successful language programs in the United States. Frequent invitations to give workshops and lectures made her an inspiring presence at campuses ranging from Duke University and the University of Wisconsin-Madison to the University of Izmir in Turkey.

Susanne's academic achievements deserve the greatest respect, but I would also like to focus on the highly creative and compassionate person she was.

In 2015, when I attended a symposium she had organised at her university, she suggested one day, "Let's go! I'll show you the campus, and perhaps we'll find time to visit the art museum." By that time, she was already dependent on her mobility scooter, but that didn't stop her from going on city excursions and travelling further afield.



Susanne on campus of Indiana University, Bloomington, 2015

Susanne was passionate about the arts, particularly the art forms of theatre, literature, music and visual art. As she had found it increasingly difficult to move around in recent years, she started creating art in her home office.

Then, one day in May 2025, she rang to say that she was thrilled that her digital artwork had been accepted for exhibition in a Bloomington gallery. On the webpage of the gallery, THE VENUE, it read:

Susanne's creative process begins with a captivating image leading her on an exploratory journey through digital manipulations where unplanned ideas transform into vibrant expressions of color and form. Viewers cannot help but be drawn into her creations and move through the bottomless layers of meaning they contain.



*An example of Susanne's digital art works,
as displayed on her Facebook page*

Susanne occasionally also engaged in creative writing, including a piece in which she initially, quite humorously, distances herself from numerous evangelist groups in the US who all claim to know the truth, to then conclude:

Looking for something beyond ourselves is a specific human endeavour. But every religion runs the danger of reducing God to someone we can comprehend, thereby justifying our own judgmental and discriminatory thoughts and deeds. However, the transcendent goes beyond human understanding; it has to. To want to describe it is understandable, yet ultimately impossible. We create God in our own image and miss the opportunity to see Others as fellow humans. What if we were walking towards each other instead - without filters or prejudices, accompanied by curiosity and empathy, knowing that we do not know...?⁴

⁴ Even, S. (2023). Those who know exactly what God wants make God as small as they themselves are. In M. Schewe (Ed.), *On the Softening of Our World – 81 Sayings* (pp. 92-93). Schibri, p. 93.

Schewe: In memoriam: Susanne Even

Four years ago, Susanne and her husband, Michael, spent Christmas with us — my wife, Susanne; our daughters, Louisa and Carla; and our grandson, Leonel — in Ireland. It was a very special and memorable Christmas, playful, light-hearted, spiritual, philosophical, musical and poetic.

We recited poems, including a few by Rilke and the German romantic poets that Susanne particularly liked, and the well-known Irish poem *The Lake Isle of Innisfree* by William Butler Yeats, which begins,

I will arise and go now...

We knew that Susanne had always loved Ireland but we were quite amazed that, a few weeks after Christmas, she and her husband Michael had found a property for sale near us on the internet. Could I perhaps take a look at it and contact the auctioneer on their behalf?

They both seemed to have dreamt of spending more time in Ireland in their retirement. It would have been wonderful to have them as neighbours.

Susanne had an amazing ability to connect with everyone she met and she cared deeply for her family, friends, colleagues and students.

In the last weeks of her life, Susanne's main concerns were her graduate students, to whom she was devoted like few other colleagues, and her ICAN dog Oliver, a faithful companion and an invaluable assistant in her final years. (Johannes Türk, Chair, Department of Germanic Studies, IU Bloomington)

Seamus Heaney's poem *St. Kevin and the Blackbird* seems an appropriate final word, given Susanne's deep concern for others and her love of poetry. It reminds us that, despite enduring physical pain for a long time, she never stopped caring for others.

In the first part of the poem, the focus is on St Kevin who is praying with his arms outstretched in his cramped cell, when a blackbird builds a nest in his open hand. Out of compassion, he remains in this position for weeks until the young birds hatch.

Interestingly, in the second part of the poem, the poet urges readers to put themselves in another person's shoes, just as Susanne often asked her drama workshop students to do. When I tried to follow the poet's suggestion, it felt as though I was not only putting myself in Kevin's shoes, but also in Susanne's. It was as though the two of them were merging in my imagination.

And since the whole thing's imagined anyhow,
Imagine being Kevin. Which is she?
Self-forgetful or in agony all the time

From the neck on out down through his hurting forearms?
Are his fingers sleeping? Does he still feel his knees?
Or has the shut-eyed blank of underearth

Crept up through him? Is there distance in his head?
Alone and mirrored clear in love's deep river,
'To labour and not to seek reward,' he prays,

A prayer his body makes entirely
For he has forgotten self, forgotten bird
And on the riverbank forgotten the river's name.⁵

With deepest affection and profound gratitude, Susanne.

May you rest in peace.

⁵ Heaney, S. (1998). *Die Wasserwaage. Gedichte Englisch-Deutsch*. Aus dem Englischen von Giovanni und Ditte Bandini. Carl Hanser, pp. 44-45.