Stories, Identities, Memories

> 'A barren land': that is how a charter described the land bestowed
> forever upon the chosen people (*vocati*), a land where they would be
> their own masters, a desolate land without people, a land unspoilt and
> untouched by the plough, with forests growing unchecked and water
> flowing unfettered. This was the scene the wanderers encountered.[1]

At some point in the twelfth century, a group of people went in search of
a new homeland 'beyond the forest'. On their journey, they encountered
aurochs still roaming freely and bears looking for honey. Eventually, they
reached the land they were looking for: Transylvania. On arrival, two of
the men drew their swords and rammed them into the ground, swearing
allegiance to their new homeland. They then separated, each taking their
sword to a different place: one to Broos/Orăştie in western Transylvania,
and the other to Draas/Drăuşeni in eastern Transylvania, where the swords
would remain as symbols of their attachment to the wondrous new land.
The new settlers worked the land, enduring hardship and wars in the
centuries that followed. The union with their land was finally broken in
1944, when the sword in Draas disappeared as the local Germans were
evacuated with the retreating Wehrmacht.[2]

   This canonical foundation narrative is told by the Romanian German
historian and folklorist Carl Göllner (1911–95) in his *Heimatbuch*, pub-
lished in Romania in 1973, *Am Rande der Geschichte* (*On the Edge of
History*). Göllner's story recounts one of most prominent episodes in the
foundation story which Romanian Germans in the twentieth century told
about the origins and ending of their community, a story that combined

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[1] Original: 'Eine Öde – so nennt eine Urkunde das den "Gerufenen" (*vocati*) für ewig verliehene Land,
auf dem sie ihre eigenen Herren sein sollten, eine Öde ohne Menschen, ein urhaftes Land, noch nie
von der Pflugschar aufgerissen, wild wuchernder Wald und Gewässer, die fluteten, wie sie wollten. In
eine solche Wüste traten die Wanderer.' See Heinrich Zillich, 'Achthundert Jahre', in Hans Bergel
and Walter Myß (eds.), *Wir Siebenbürger* (Innsbruck: Wort und Welt Verlag, 1986), p. 60.
[2] Carl Göllner, *Am Rande der Geschichte* (Bucharest: Kriterion, 1973), p. 12.

and embellished different phases in the community's past. Reportedly following the call of King Géza II of Hungary (1130–62), Germans – or Saxons as they were more commonly known – first arrived in Transylvania in the twelfth century, bolstering the frontier zone with fortified churches. Later, throughout the eighteenth century, Swabians settled in the Banat, which at the time was a war-torn and depopulated borderland. Both German groups arrived in the area in the hope of a better life, land, and opportunities. By the beginning of the twentieth century, the two groups had fused into the Romanian German minority in the Romanian state, newly enlarged after 1918. Their combined experiences of the upheavals of the twentieth century spurred them on to another exodus, to a new 'Promised Land' in Germany.

This book is about Romanian Germans making sense of modern Europe through their stories and memories. As a group, they experienced major developments and events in Europe in the twentieth century: the reordering of the European map after the First World War, inclusion in the Romanian state, National Socialism, the Second World War, deportation, Cold War division, post-communist uncertainty, and migration. Their exposure to many of the major currents of modern European history forced them continually to reconsider and refashion their identity as a group, processing and reprocessing their collective identity in response to the shifting socio-political pressures that encroached on their community. As this book argues, the greatest challenge Romanian Germans faced throughout the twentieth century was to justify their existence vis-á-vis Germans in Germany and Romanians, as well as other groups and institutions. Defensive 'people's stories' were flexibly remoulded as offensive tactics in their embrace of and commitment to National Socialism. After 1945, Romanian Germans were constantly in search of explanations for their role in National Socialism and communism, as well as their place in Europe more broadly as the Cold War drew to a close.

Romanian Germans came to exist as a group under the pressure of political circumstances: following the end of the First World War, the Romanian state increased its territory and incorporated the former Habsburg regions of Transylvania, Bukovina, and parts of the Banat. In the east, it gained Bessarabia and consolidated its claim on the Dobruja region in the south. Distinct German groups became compatriots almost overnight. The two main groups of greatest interest to us are Transylvanian Saxons (*Siebenbürger Sachsen*) and Banat Swabians (*Banater Schwaben*), as well as the Landler from southern Transylvania. Although the German minority in Romania after 1918 also included Bukovina Germans,

Bessarabian Germans, the Germans in Bucharest, and Sathmar Swabians, this book focuses mainly on Banat Swabians and Transylvanian Saxons for a number of reasons. By sheer strength of numbers – 250,000 and 230,000 respectively in the 1930 census in Romania – they dominated Romanian German politics.[3] At the same time, Swabians, and particularly Saxons, were also the most prolific writers in all areas: from personal correspondence to newspaper publishing to literary work. After 1945, they were neither expelled, nor was their territory incorporated into a new state, as was the case for the Bessarabian Germans and most Bukovina Germans. Instead, a sizeable Romanian German community remained in Romania during the Cold War, and Romania would play a key role in debates on identity both before and after 1989. In practice, then, Romanian Germans were mainly defined by Banat Swabians and Transylvanian Saxons, and it is among these two groups that Romanian German history was constructed.

The term 'Romanian German' has been a contested one. It has been argued that regional identities prevailed over any sense of Romanian German identity, or that their different confessional identities – Banat Swabian Catholics and Transylvanian Saxon Protestants – undermined adherence to a 'Romanian German' group. Much of the resistance to the term has come from Romanian German writers for whom it evokes the minorities policies of the Romanian state in the twentieth century, and Romanian German literature conventionally rejected the term 'Romanian German' as 'artificial'.[4] For Romanian German writers and intellectuals, the label Romanian German has frequently been viewed as a threat to what many feel are the 'authentic' regional identities of Transylvanian Saxons and Banat Swabians. This book does not contest the importance of other kinds of constellations of group identities; rather, it operates on the premise that identities exist on different levels and thus coexist even when they appear to be mutually exclusive. Though Swabians and Saxons (and other German groups in Romania) each made attempts to defend their 'unique' identity, almost in spite of this a shared sense of community emerged very quickly, and myths of origin and identity were

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[3] For an overview of interwar Romanian demographics, see Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania: Regionalism, Nation Building, and Ethnic Struggle, 1918–1930* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1995), pp. 8–11. A more detailed history of Transylvanian Saxons and Banat Swabians follows in Chapter 1.

[4] See, for instance, Annemarie Weber, *Rumäniendeutsche? Diskurse zur Gruppenidentität einer Minderheit (1944–1971)* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2010), and Mathias Beer, Dietrich Beyrau and Cornelia Rauh (eds.), *Deutschsein als Grenzerfahrung: Minderheitenpolitik in Europa zwischen 1914 und 1950* (Essen: Klartext, 2009).

fused, giving voice to a common experience of Romanian Germans through the twentieth century and beyond.

A sense of a shared Romanian German identity was nascent at the very outset of the enlarged Kingdom of Romania at the end of the First World War. Faced with shared challenges as a minority in interwar Romania, Germans learned to use a common language as a way of making sense of the new political situation. Radicalisation and alignment with Nazi Germany firmly cemented the idea of them being first and foremost Germans in Romania. The language of belonging to a *Schicksalsgemeinschaft* – a so-called community of fate – gave Saxons and Swabians a grammar with which to explain their shared experiences in Romania, which had the effect of beginning to level out regional particularities.

What set Romanian Germans apart from most other German and other east-central European minorities are their experiences at the end of the Second World War and during the Cold War. While it is true that many Germans from Romania were dispersed across Europe during the 1930s and 1940s, a majority of Romanian Germans ended up 'back' in Romania by the early communist period. They were the only German group in east-central Europe to suffer repercussions against Germans at the end of the war without facing large-scale expulsions.[5] Even Germans in Hungary, some of whom remained in Hungary after 1945, experienced serious dislocation by various forms of flight and expulsion as the war ended.[6] Others, like Silesian Germans, faced a sudden and violent end to their hybrid identity by comprehensive expulsion as the Second World War drew to a close.[7] The Romanian German community thus gives a unique insight into life under communism as a previously victimised German group. Their experiences after the war and during communism defined them as outsiders, as they were associated with National Socialism despite their official rehabilitation in the 1950s. This meant that Romanian Germans simultaneously had to re-examine their previous links with Nazi Germany and think about how to live in a state that had defined them, temporarily at least, as untrustworthy.

[5] See Georg Weber et al. (eds.), *Die Deportation der Siebenbürger Sachsen in die Sowjetunion 1945–1949: 3 Volumes* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1996).

[6] See John C. Swanson, *Tangible Belonging: Negotiating Germanness in Twentieth-Century Hungary* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2017), pp. 228–344. For a historical overview of Germans in Hungary, see Gerhard Seewann, *Geschichte der Deutschen in Ungarn, Vol. II, 1860 bis 2006* (Marburg: Verlag Herder-Institut, 2011).

[7] See Gregor Thum, *Uprooted: How Breslau Became Wrocław* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011).

Yet the communist period was not only framed by Romanian German memories of fascism and their subsequent victimisation. Romanian Germans were part of a transnational network in which they were torn between isolation within Romania, association with Romania, and the increasing drive to leave Romania for (West) Germany. Further afield, trans-Atlantic connections would also play an important role. Unlike most other German speakers in east-central Europe, Romanian Germans remained part of their homeland on a scale unparalleled elsewhere, and as a result they developed a complicated relationship with their imagined homeland, Germany.[8] Yet a growing number of Romanian Germans continued to disassociate themselves from Romania by leaving for Germany with increasing urgency during the Cold War. Very little work has been done on the link between earlier experiences in twentieth-century Romania and the subsequent decision to emigrate. While prominent Romanian German authors of prose fiction such as the Nobel Prize laureate Herta Müller (1953–) have found Romanian German experiences a fascinating subject for literature, studies have largely steered clear of explaining the evolution of a minority identity over the course of a century, which resulted in the virtual dissolution of the community by the 1990s.[9]

At the end of a fraught century, most of the Romanian German community had migrated to Germany. But far from being the end of Romanian German history, the processes of Europeanisation – political and cultural – exposed Romanian Germans to developments that confronted them yet again with the need to make sense of their transnational existence. The dwindling community in Romania and émigrés in Germany responded differently to the late Cold War and post-communist period; yet, more recent developments within the Romanian German community show a convergence of identity towards a more confident Romanian German self-understanding, embodied most clearly in the figure of Klaus Iohannis (1959–), the Romanian German who was elected president of Romania in 2014.

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[8] Germans in Hungary are the closest parallel to Romanian Germans, though their numbers dwindled considerably after the Second World War, leaving behind a splintered and rump community that does not compare to the lively German community in Romania. See Swanson, *Tangible Belonging*, and Sebastian Sparwasser, *Identität im Spannungsfeld von Zwangsmigration und Heimkehr: Ungarndeutsche Vertriebene und die Remigration* (Vienna: New Academic Press, 2018).

[9] Herta Müller, *Hetztier* (Munich: Carl Hanser Verlag, 2007); Dieter Schlesak, *Visa: Ost–West Lektionen* (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1970).

6   Stories, Identities, Memories

Framing Identities and Memories

The growing body of literature on German diasporas, comprehensive in many areas, has opened up avenues for studying identity formation, 'transnational Germans', and memory, but it has only begun to take Romanian Germans seriously.[10] Much of the focus has been on Poland, Bohemia, and the Baltic region, as well as the burgeoning interest in Germans overseas in the Americas.[11] In scholarship from east-central Europe, there has been a tendency to focus on 'their' minorities: Romanian-language scholarship on Germans and Jews in Romania, Hungarian scholarship on Hungarians abroad, Polish scholarship on Silesian diversity, and so on.[12] Specifically, work on Romanian Germans has often focused on circumscribed periods in Romanian German history,

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[10] See, for instance, Andrew Demshuk, *The Lost German East: Forced Migration and the Politics of Memory, 1945–1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), R. M. Douglas, *Orderly and Humane: The Expulsion of the Germans after the Second World War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), Ulrich Merten, *Forgotten Voices: The Expulsion of the Germans from Eastern Europe after World War II* (New Brunswick: Transaction, 2012), Winson Chu, *The German Minority in Interwar Poland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), Bill Niven (ed.), *Germans as Victims: Remembering the Past in Contemporary Germany* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), Panikos Panayi (ed.), *Germans as Minorities during the First World War: A Global Comparative Perspective* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), and Peter Polak-Springer, *Recovered Territory: A German–Polish Conflict over Land and Culture, 1919–1989* (New York: Berghahn, 2015). Much of the focus has tended to be directed at German groups that *de facto* ceased to exist after 1945. In this way, Germans from Poland and Czechoslovakia have received much attention. For a refreshing attempt to break the view that 1945 represents a cut-off point for studies on German minorities in east-central Europe, see Bill Niven, 'On a Supposed Taboo: Flight and Refugees from the East in GDR Film and Television', *German Life and Letters* 65/2 (2012), pp. 216–36. Another exception to this is Cristian Cercel's work on the afterlives of Romanian Germans in post-communist Romania. See Cristian Cercel, *Romania and the Quest for European Identity: Philo-Germanism without Germans* (London: Routledge, 2018); see also Gaëlle Fisher, *Resettlers and Survivors: Bukovina and the Politics of Belonging in West Germany and Israel, 1945–1989* (New York: Berghahn, 2020).

[11] Alongside the work mentioned in n. 10, there are a growing number of works on German migrants to the Americas, including H. Glenn Penny, 'From Migrant Knowledge to Fugitive Knowledge? German Migrants and Knowledge Production in Guatemala, 1880s–1945', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 43/3 (2017), pp. 381–412, Tammy Proctor, 'Patriotic Enemies: Germans in the Americas, 1914–1920', in Panayi (ed.), *Germans as Minorities*, pp. 213–34, Alexander Freund, *Aufbrüche nach dem Zusammenbruch: Die deutsche Nordamerika-Auswanderung nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004).

[12] For Czechoslovakia, see Jiří Pešek, *Německé menšiny v právních normách 1938–1948: Československo ve srovnání s vybranými evropskými zeměmi, Vol. I* (Brno: Doplněk, 2006); for Hungary see Ágnes Tóth, *Rückkehr nach Ungarn 1946–1950* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2012), and Tibor Zinner, *A magyarországi németek kitelepítése* (Budapest: Magyar Hivatalos Közlönykiadó, 2004); and for Romania see, for instance, Corneliu Pintilescu, 'Problema "Naţionalişti Germani" în activitatea Securităţii (1948–1964)', in Cosmin Budeancă and Florentin Olteanu (eds.), *Identităţi sociale, culturale, etnice şi religioase în comunism* (Iaşi: Polirom, 2015), pp. 269–83, as well as Mathias Beer, Sorin Radu and Florian Kührer-Wielach (eds.), *Germanii din România: migraţie şi patrimoniu cultural după 1945* (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Româna, 2020).

and most of this has been done in German.[13] As in much of the work on German diasporas and migrant communities, the Second World War has figured as a dividing line between scholars where German diasporas before the rise of fascism are dealt with in migration history, while German diasporic communities after 1945 have tended to be included in the history of flight and expulsion.[14] As a result, much of the scholarship on east-central European German minorities, including Banat Swabians and Transylvanian Saxons, implicitly distinguishes between Germans as 'doers' before the Second World War and Germans as victims after. Work in east-central European languages on Germans in east-central Europe, and Romania specifically, has been more focused on the topic of expulsion, victimisation, and emigration.[15] German 'doers' as migrants, by contrast, have often coalesced around German history as global history.[16] This book addresses that tension between a parochial post-1945 and a global history of German migration by explaining how these themes are in fact connected.

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[13] Such studies are hugely valuable for our understanding of Romanian German history, though they are limited in their scope. See, for instance, Hannelore Baier, 'Arbeitslager für die deutsche Bevölkerung im Innern Rumäniens nach 1945', *Südostdeutsche Vierteljahreshefte* 54/4 (2005), pp. 379–87, and Weber et al. (eds.), *Die Deportation der Siebenbürger Sachsen*, vols. I–III. Annemarie Weber has attempted to conceptualise the question of Romanian German identity in the Cold War period, although her study falls somewhat short of offering a comprehensive picture due to its chronological focus. See Annemarie Weber, *Rumäniendeutsche?*. Other illuminating studies on Romanian Germans include Cristan Cercel, 'The Relationship between Religious and National Identity in the Case of Transylvanian Saxons, 1933–1944', *Nationalities Papers* 39/2 (2011), pp. 161–80, Cercel, *Romania and the Quest for European Identity*, and Tudor Georgescu, 'Ethnic Minorities and the Eugenic Promise: The Transylvanian Saxon Experiment with National Renewal in Interwar Romania', *European Review of History/Revue Européenne d'Histoire* 17/6 (2010), pp. 861–80.

[14] More broadly, there are some exceptions to this, most notably Panayi (ed.), *Germans as Minorities*. For examples of this divide for Romanian Germans and other east-central European German minorities, see, for instance, Mathias Beer and Dittmar Dahlmann (eds.), *Migration nach Ost- und Südosteuropa vom 18. bis zum Beginn des 19. Jahrhunderts: Ursachen, Formen, Verlauf, Ergebnis* (Munich: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1999), Mathias Beer (ed.), *Krieg und Zwangsmigration in Südosteuropa 1940–1950: Pläne, Umsetzung, Folgen* (Munich: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2019), Stefan Manz, *Constructing a German Diaspora: The 'Greater German Empire', 1871–1914* (New York: Routledge, 2014), and John Eicher, *Exiled among Nations: German and Mennonite Mythologies in a Transnational Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), which also only goes up to 1945.

[15] See, for instance, Dan Popa, *Naționalitatea ca vină: deportara etnicilor germani din România în URSS* (Bucharest: Editura Mica Valahia, 2015), and Lavinia Betea et al. (eds.), *Lungul drum spre nicăieri: Germanii din România deportați în URSS* (Bucharest: Cetatea de Scaun, 2012); on the Bărăgan deportations in 1951, see Smaranda Vultur, *Istorie trăită – istorie povestită: deportarea în Bărăgan (1951–1956)* (Timișoara: Amarcord, 1997).

[16] See, for instance, Sebastian Conrad, *Globalisation and the Nation in Imperial Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), and Werner Abelhauser et al., *German Industry and Global Enterprise. BASF: The History of a Company* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

8   Stories, Identities, Memories

In scholarship on Romanian Germans, there have been some important studies on specific topics, often with 1944/5 as the pivot on which they turn.[17] Other work in the field, though fundamental for comprehending the Romanian German community and how they have constructed their history, has had a distinct parochial edge.[18] A holistic approach, which deals with the wider developments throughout the twentieth century up until the present, has been largely absent.[19] While much existing work remains invaluable, it has not been transferred into an international arena. The larger implications of that work for modern European identity debates are often marginalised by an absence of international dialogue.[20] This book positions Romanian German identities and narratives in a broader framework by interrogating scholarship on minorities, identity, nationalism, and myth, while also situating itself in what is now a vibrant body of literature concerned with memory and groups with multiple identity layers, including its transnational dimension.[21]

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[17] The excellent series of edited volumes published by the publishing house IKGS (Institut für deutsche Kultur und Geschichte Südosteuropas) is a good example of this. See, for instance, Mariana Hausleitner and Harald Roth (eds.), *Der Einfluss von Faschismus und Nationalsozialismus auf Minderheiten in Ostmittel- und Südosteuropa* (Munich: IKGS Verlag, 2006), Mariana Hausleitner (ed.), *Deutsche und Juden in Bessarabien: 1814–1941* (Munich: IKGS Verlag, 2005), and Krista Zach and Cornelius Zach (eds.), *Deutsche und Rumänen in der Erinnerungsliteratur: Memorialistik als Geschichtsquelle* (Munich: IKGS Verlag, 2005). The latter book is a unique exception that cuts across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

[18] See, for instance, Georg Hromadka, *Kleine Chronik des Banater Berglands* (Munich: Südostdeutsches Kulturwerk, 1993).

[19] A good example of a study on a minority group in the region is the book by Gaby Coldewey et al. on the life stories of Jewish émigrés from Chernivtsi/Czernowitz in the Bukovina; see Gaby Coldewey et al. (eds.), *Zwischen Pruth und Jordan: Lebenserinnerungen Czernowitzer Juden* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2003). The same applies to studies that try to tell a longer story of the identity of a place; see Thum, *Uprooted.* A recent edited volume tried to cover the twentieth century more holistically, but there are lacunae in its coverage. See Ottmar Traşcă and Remus Gabriel Anghel (eds.), *Un veac frământat: Germanii din România după 1918* (Cluj-Napoca: Institutului pentru Studierea Problemelor Minorităților Naționale, 2018). For an excellent study on Transylvanian Saxon self-image as shaped in the diaspora, see Sacha E. Davis, 'Reflecting on the Diaspora: The Transylvanian Saxon Self-Image and the Saxons Abroad', *Siebenbürgische Landeskunde* 35/2 (2012), pp. 150–70.

[20] Two recent studies incorporate Romanian Germans into broader studies on Transylvania as a European problem and on population transfers of minorities in Europe, even though Romanian Germans are not the subject of these two books; see Holly Case, *Between States: The Transylvanian Question and the European Idea during World War II* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), and Matthew Frank, *Making Minorities History: Population Transfer in Twentieth-Century Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

[21] This book fits with broader studies on diaspora; see, for instance, Vijay Agnew, *Diaspora, Memory, and Identity: A Search for Home* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), Claire Sutherland and Elena Barabantseva (eds.), *Diaspora and Citizenship* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), and a study on Romanian migrant diasporas by Ruxandra Trandafoiu, *Diaspora Online: Identity Politics and Romanian Migrants* (New York: Berghahn, 2013).

Rogers Brubaker's work has played a crucial role for understanding minorities in east-central Europe.[22] His concept of 'groupness' and his model of the 'triadic nexus' have deeply influenced east-central European studies on minorities to such an extent that they have almost become gospel in the field.[23] Brubaker's model of a 'triadic nexus', which allowed him to differentiate between 'nationalising nationalisms' and 'transborder nationalisms',[24] has been applied to Slovak–Hungarian relations, to Hungarian migrants to Hungary, to Ceauşescu's 'Nationality Policy' in 1970s Romania, and to local identities in Transylvania.[25] Applied to Romanian Germans, this model would connect the minority group (in our case Romanian Germans), its actual homeland (Romania after 1918), and its external homeland (varieties of Germany). Yet if, as Brubaker argues, 'groupness' is something that is 'unstable' and can be mobilised only at particular moments, Romanian Germans present an exceptionally rich and challenging case study.[26] One way to account for that richness has been explored by Cristian Cercel, whose work on the post-war Romanian German community expands Brubaker's model to a 'quadratic nexus' by seeing the émigré community as a fourth component.[27] While the idea of the émigré community acting as a fourth component is appealing, it does not fully do justice to the complex case that Romanian Germans pose. The

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[22] See, for instance, Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004), Rogers Brubaker et al., *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), and Rogers Brubaker, *Grounds for Difference* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2015), esp. chapter 5.

[23] See, for instance among many, László Kürti, *The Remote Borderland: Transylvania in the Hungarian Imagination* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2001), esp. p. 185, and Vello Pettai, 'Explaining Ethnic Politics in the Baltic States: Reviewing the Triadic Nexus Model', *Journal of Baltic Studies* 37/1 (2006), pp. 124–36.

[24] Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed*, pp. 4, 5; see also Brubaker et al., *Nationalist Politics*.

[25] See Katarína Lezová, 'The Notion of Kosovo as a Precedent and the Impact of the Hungarian Minority Issue on Slovakia's Policy towards Kosovo's Independence', *Europe–Asia Studies* 65/5 (2013), pp. 965–91, Jon E. Fox, 'From National Inclusion to Economic Exclusion: Transylvanian Hungarian Ethnic Return Migration to Hungary', in Tsuda Takeyuki (ed.), *Diasporic Homecomings: Ethnic Return Migration in Comparative Perspective* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), pp. 186–207, Monica Andriescu, 'Identity Politics under National Communist Rule: The Rhetoric Manifestations of Nicolae Ceauşescu's Nationality Policy in 1970s Romania', *Studia Politica: The Romanian Political Science Review* 9/1 (2009), pp. 105–17, and Brubaker et al., *Nationalist Politics*.

[26] Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups*, pp. 3, 4.

[27] Cristian Cercel, 'Postwar (West) German–Romanian Relations: Expanding Brubaker's Analytical Triad', *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 23/3 (2017), pp. 297–317. This is also true of other studies that have played with the idea of a 'quadratic nexus'; see David J. Smith, 'Framing the National Question in Central and Eastern Europe: A Quadratic Nexus?', *Global Review of Ethnopolitics* 2/1 (2002), pp. 3–16.

Romanian German émigré community was too diverse to fit the categories of 'entrepreneurs' and 'enactors' or even to present a uniform relationship to their 'home' in Germany.[28] But Brubaker's work is indispensable to the understanding of how the Romanian German community functioned. Crucially, it allows us to take terms such as 'diaspora', 'group', and 'identity' not as fixed analytical categories, but as categories of *practice*.[29] In the sources this book draws on – essays, newspaper articles, interviews, adverts, letters, poems, visual material – we see, in practice, what it meant to be Romanian German at certain moments in history.

How then might we understand Romanian German identity? This book places the vernacular articulation and understanding of identity by Romanian Germans at the centre of its analysis. Drawing on Brubaker's model of 'ethnopolitical entrepreneurs', who evoke a group when invoking the stories around that group, this book focuses on episodes when Romanian German identities were contested and reshaped by 'entrepreneurs'. These entrepreneurs are visible in this book: cultural activists, National Socialist enthusiasts, emigration advocates, and homeland associations in Germany, as well as writers and intellectuals.[30] Then there are those Romanian Germans – 'ordinary' Romanian Germans – who practised a performative identity, but were not necessarily 'entrepreneurs'. What united these two categories is their experiences as a group – or 'groupness' using Brubaker's term – at certain moments in time. For Romanian Germans, this meant performing Germanness after the political contours shifted in 1918 or responding to rapid political and ideological realignments from the 1930s through to the end of communism. And, while Romanian German ethnopolitical entrepreneurs have an important role to play in this book, the distinction between them and 'ordinary people' is fuzzy.

Studies of 'banal nationalism' and heritage culture can help to further clarify the ways in which identities have been mobilised in politically charged and uncertain settings.[31] Concerned with the agency of 'ordinary people' in the construction of their own narratives, 'banal nationalism' has stood accused of lacking evidential backing.[32] But this book addresses that

[28] See Smith, 'Framing the National Question', and Cercel, 'Postwar (West) German–Romanian Relations'.

[29] See Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups*, and Brubaker, *Grounds for Difference*, pp. 128, 129.

[30] Rogers Brubaker, 'Ethnicity without Groups', *Journal of European Sociology* 43/2 (2002), pp. 163–89.

[31] The idea of 'banal nationalism' dates back to Michael Billig's book from 1995; see Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage, 1995).

[32] A special issue of *Nations and Nationalism* from 2018 tried to tackle the methodological issues around banal nationalism. See Jon Fox and Maarten van Ginderachter, 'Introduction: Everyday