Romanian Germans, mainly from the Banat and Transylvania, have occupied a place at the very heart of major events in Europe in the twentieth century, yet their history is largely unknown. This east-central European minority negotiated their standing in a difficult new European order after 1918, changing from uneasy supporters of Romania, to zealous Nazis, tepid Communists, and conciliatory Europeans. *Migrating Memories* is the first comprehensive study in English of Romanian Germans and follows their stories as they move across borders and between regimes, revealing a very European experience of migration, minorities, and memories in modern Europe. After 1945, Romanian Germans struggled to make sense of their lives during the Cold War at a time when the community began to fracture and fragment. The revolutions of 1989 seemed to mark the end of the German community in Romania, but instead Romanian Germans repositioned themselves as transnational European bridge-builders, staking out new claims in a fast-changing world.

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MIGRATING MEMORIES

Romanian Germans in Modern Europe

JAMES KORANYI

University of Durham
To Nora, Clara, and Nina
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This book has been a long time in the making. What started as a naïve enterprise in oral history went through various migrations of its own before becoming *Migrating Memories*. First and foremost, I owe thanks to all the Romanian Germans I have encountered along the way. Those encounters began much earlier than any research on my thesis. Growing up in suburban Munich, I had a number of teachers with ‘funny accents’ in German at my grey, functionalist Gymnasium. One was a Sudetendeutscher, Günter Elgner, who really captured my enthusiasm for history. The other was Margot Seiler, a middle-class Transylvanian Saxon whose family, according to her stories, had lost their fortune thanks to the Communists. One of my friends at school (and still a close friend today), also a German from Transylvania, sided with the Communists on that matter, in a way that only self-important teenagers could. I had no idea back then that Hans Bergel, a big name for Romanian German literature and politics who features throughout this book, lived in a neighbouring Munich suburb, nor did I know who he was. Perhaps, then, it was in the *Münchner Umland* that this book project began.

*Migrating Memories* was never trapped in Munich’s suburbia, though I returned there time and again to interview Romanian Germans, to conduct research at the IKGS (Institut für deutsche Kultur und Geschichte Südosteuropas), and to spend time at the *Landsmannschaften*, the homeland societies, of both the Transylvanian Saxons and the Banat Swabians. The *Landsmannschaften*, though dealt with critically here in this book, were nothing but supportive and helpful. The archivists, librarians, editors, and historians who helped me in archives and institutes, often tucked away from the glamorous international spotlight that big, well-known archives enjoy, deserve a particular mention. The Siebenbürgen Institut, in Gundelsheim in the south-west of Germany, formed one such important focal point for this book despite all the financial difficulties it has had to navigate over the past decade. Christian Rother, Ingrid Schiel,
Michaela Adam (for her patience with my payments), Harald Roth, and Jutta Fabritius (for pointing me to surprising archival finds) made my research at the institute pleasant and smooth. Though I often darted in for just a day or two, they were always welcoming and prepared to help in the short space of time I had. Siegbert Bruss at the Landsmannschaft der Siebenbürger Sachsen in Munich was also a great ally for my research, as were friends and colleagues at the IKGS in Munich. Input from them – Florian Kührer-Wielach, Mariana Hausleitner, Enikő Dácz, Peter Morzan – was invaluable. Hannelore Baier, a journalist and historian based in Sibiu, has been a constant source of feedback on my work, as have Cristian Cercel, Gaëlle Fisher, Michaela Nowotnik, and Thomas Ţindiliariu in their own supportive and critical ways. I remain indebted to: Herwig Horn, who helped with the sourcing of images; Sergiu Dema, the director of the Casa de Cultură in Jimbolia; Camelia Boca, from the Biblioteca Centrală Universitară Mihai Eminescu in Iaşi; Florin Popa, from the Romanian Academy Library in Bucharest; Lucian Popa, from the National Library of Romania; and Nina May, the editor-in-chief of the Allgemeine Deutsche Zeitung für Rumänien.

Migrating Memories has been read, seen, and heard by so many people. My thanks go to Jonathan Kwan for reading an earlier (and perhaps unrecognisable) draft of sections of this book. James Mark, Martin Thomas, Bill Niven, and Richard Overy also read, commented on, and dissected early attempts. Special thanks go to Nora Goldschmidt, who constantly challenged the text beyond its content. I would also like to thank my colleagues at Durham, not just in general for the supportive environment in my department, but also specifically for reading earlier versions of this work: Sarah Davies, Rachel Johnson, Len Scales, and Jo Fox as well as Kay Schiller and Christian Liddy for super advice on packaging this book. Ruth Wittlinger was also a huge pillar of support, and I am deeply sorry that she will not get the opportunity to see the final version of Migrating Memories. The north-east of England has been a fantastic hub of academic solidarity, and I am very grateful to colleagues for allowing to introduce my work in different settings in the region: André Keil, Tom Stammers, Daniel Laqua, Charlotte Alston, Delphine Doucet, and many others. Beyond my world at Durham and in the north-east of England, the Society for Romanian Studies provided a wonderful forum for presenting and exchanging views on my work. Margaret Beissinger, Alex Drace-Francis, Roland Clark, and Irina Livezeanu have all helped me along the way.
This book would not have been possible without some very serious support and architecture around it. I owe special gratitude to the two anonymous reviewers of my manuscript. Their detailed, insightful comments – the product of an unstinting effort – helped to shape this book in very significant ways. I would also like to thank Liz Friend-Smith for her guidance and encouragement throughout the entire process of publication and my wonderful copy-editor, Karen Anderson. But, most importantly, I would like to thank my family for propping me up and, occasionally, putting everything into perspective: this book is for you, Nora, Clara, and Nina.

A final word on my research encounters: in Romania I became immersed in a world of stories, heritage, and claims on German traces. Alina Hughes and Tom Hughes accompanied me around the villages of central Transylvania on a very instructive research trip. Staff at archives in Sibiu, Timișoara, Arad, and elsewhere guided me throughout my research, as did the people working in the German Democratic Forum in Sibiu and the members of staff at the Colegiul Național ‘Samuel von Brukenthal’ in Sibiu. Anca Fleseru helped me map out Sibiu in ways that crucially informed some of the granular material in *Migrating Memories*. While on research trips in Romania and Germany, I encountered a great deal of generosity, interest, and hospitality. And, in a curious way, my Munich suburb never seemed that far away. While waiting for a night train at Mediaș station in Transylvania, I struck up a conversation with a German-speaking family. We quickly established that we were from neighbouring Munich suburbs and that the family’s best friend was a teacher at my former school. I knew that teacher, Melitta Dörner, although she never taught me. But she was another one of those Germans with ‘funny accents’, a German from central Transylvania who, like many others in this book, made up the tapestry of Romanian Germans and their stories.
Note on the Text

Names are political. In east-central Europe, the choice of language and name can trigger intense discussions about place and belonging. In *Migrating Memories*, I have not been able to dodge that issue. I have tried to use place names according to their context. I have, for instance, insisted on Sibiu – and not Hermannstadt or Nagyszeben – when referring to the city after 1918. There are, however, additional complexities. If the city’s name appeared in the original source as Hermannstadt, I have still used Sibiu unless there was an important cultural and political significance attached to the German (or other) name. When first mentioning a place in the book, I have included its name in its other dominant languages in brackets. Throughout the book, where they have appeared in German or Romanian, I have provided translations of names of organisations and institutions, ideas, and concepts. In only a very few instances have I left a word or expression in its original language. Any inconsistencies in language politics in this book are not intended as political statements.