

BEYOND THE NATION?

Immigrants' Local Lives in Transnational Cultures

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*Immigrants' Local Lives in
Transnational Cultures*

EDITED BY ALEXANDER FREUND

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In memory of Christiane Harzig

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Contents

Introduction 3

ALEXANDER FREUND

Part I: Approaches: Transculturalism and Gender

- 1 Local, Continental, Global Migration Contexts: Projecting Life Courses in the Frame of Family Economies and Emotional Networks 21

DIRK HOERDER

- 2 Gender in German-Canadian Studies: Challenges from across the Borders 44

CHRISTIANE HARZIG

Part II: Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries: Religion, Politics, and Culture

- 3 Success through Persistence: The Beginnings of the Moravian Mission in Labrador, 1771–5 63

KERSTIN BOELKOW

- 4 Model Farmers, Dubious Citizens: Reconsidering the Pennsylvania Germans of Upper Canada, 1786–1834 79

ROSS D. FAIR

- 5 *Germania* in Canada – Nation and Ethnicity at the German Peace Jubilees of 1871 107

BARBARA LORENZKOWSKI

- 6 A Weak Woman Standing Alone: Home, Nation, and Gender in the Work of German-Canadian Immigration Agent Elise von Koerber, 1872–84 137

ANGELIKA SAUER

Part III: Twentieth Century: Ethnicity and Nationalism

- 7 German-Quebecers, 'German-Québécois,' German-Canadians? The Double Integration of People of German Descent in Quebec in the 1990s 165

MANUEL MEUNE

- 8 'What Church Do You Go To?' The Difficult Acculturation of German-Jewish Refugees in Canada, 1933–2004 187

PATRICK FARGES

- 9 'German Only in Their Hearts': Making and Breaking the Ethnic German Diaspora in the Twentieth Century 211

HANS WERNER

- 10 Germans into Europeans: Expellees in Postwar Canada 227

PASCAL MAEDER

Part IV: Language and Literature

- 11 Language Acculturation: German Speakers in Kitchener-Waterloo 249

GRIT LIEBSCHER AND MATHIAS SCHULZE

- 12 Reimagining German-Canadians: Reflections on Past Deconstructions and Literary Evidence 268

MYKA BURKE

List of Contributors 289

Index 293

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Introduction

ALEXANDER FREUND

Migration scholars have argued for transnational perspectives in migration studies since the 1960s,¹ but they have nevertheless found it difficult to go beyond the national paradigm. Canada, immigration scholars have insisted, is 'a nation of immigrants,' and immigrants have made and shaped 'Canadian' history.² They have taken this tack in order to demonstrate 'that Canadian immigrant history is Canadian history.'³ This is an important goal. Such a framework, however, makes it difficult to talk about immigrants' agency. Certainly, Canadian nation building structured immigrants' lives. They experienced both prejudice and privilege while participating – wittingly or unwittingly – in this state project. But this is not why they had come to Canada, and this was not the frame within which they saw themselves and the world around them. Rather, they acted both locally and transnationally.

Comparative and transnational studies from a Canadian perspective can demystify the national view from above by focusing on the migrants' local actions and following them along the paths of their transnational networks. Such studies, however, are rare.⁴ This collection makes such an attempt. It is a story about an ethnic group's experiences of integration and incorporation within the larger national history that sees them outside a national master narrative. The authors of the chapters use post-national paradigms to tell comparative, transnational, transcultural, and diasporic stories. Their gendered narratives explore the realms beyond historians' narratives of the nation, but they also show how immigrants invented ethnicity under the conditions of Canadian nation building.⁵ And they investigate migrants' collective memories and 'imagined communities' in their attempts to take immigration studies beyond the cultural turn.⁶

'German-Canadians' make for a compelling case study to probe the constraints and contingencies of the nation, national identity, and nationalism. Indeed, to speak of 'Germans in Canada' or 'German-Canadians' tells us less about the migrants themselves and more about researchers trying to make sense.⁷ To think in national terms often seems 'natural' – which is exactly why nationalism has become a successful ideology. And certainly, throughout the modern period, the nation-state and national ideologies have shaped people's lives in powerful ways. Germans in particular, whether in Germany or abroad, have had a troubled and troubling relationship with various nationalisms;⁸ migrations – theirs and others' – have often been a direct result of this complicated relationship.⁹

For the migrants, 'German' and 'Canadian,' or 'Germany' and 'Canada,' held little meaning. This was true for the time before the last third of the nineteenth century, when the two nation-states did not yet exist, and it is true for the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Throughout, 'German' migrants came to Canada from all over the world, and only from the 1950s to the 1980s did the majority come from the (West) German nation-state. Until the First World War, nearly 90 per cent of 'German' immigrants came from Eastern Europe and the United States. They had migrated to these countries since the eighteenth century (and sometimes as early as the twelfth century) and lived in German religious-ethnic enclaves, where they continued to speak the language (or rather, one of its many dialects) while maintaining some of the traditions of their homelands in Central Europe. They formed regional identities, for example, as Sudeten Germans, Transylvania Saxons, and Danube Swabians. Catholics, Lutherans, Mennonites, Moravians, and other religious groups migrated and settled in groups, not only in Eastern Europe but also in the United States. German-Americans with various, distinct religio-ethnic identities settled in Canada after the American Revolution and especially after land in Canada's West became more attractive at the turn to the twentieth century. In the interwar period, about 20 per cent of German immigrants to Canada came from Germany. Among the immigrants of the 1930s were Jewish Germans and Sudeten German Social Democrats fleeing Nazi persecution. After the Second World War, ethnic German refugees and expellees from Eastern Europe were among the first immigrants to Canada, but about two-thirds of the Germans who arrived in the 1950s were from West Germany. Since the 1990s, many of the German immigrants have been ethnic Germans from Kazakhstan who came to Germany

after the disintegration of the Soviet Union and decided to move on to Canada.¹⁰ Thus, for most of the time, religions, political convictions, cultural regions, and 'imagined communities' rather than nation-states have been the homelands of these diverse migrants.

German-Canadians make for a compelling case study also because their long and diverse migrations help us understand how men and women created local lives in transcultural and transnational settings. The immigrants came from diverse origins, and their destinations were similarly complex. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Europeans migrated to 'America' rather than Canada, to a 'story' rather than a reality. But they were, of course, not simply dreamers. The men, women, and children migrated to their brothers in Vancouver, their aunts in Winnipeg, and their friends in Halifax, who promised them initial housing, employment, and social and emotional networks; they migrated to prospective employers in Montreal, on church-organized schemes to households in Saskatchewan and sugar beet farms in Alberta, and on government schemes to mining towns across the country.¹¹

The authors of this collection thus revisit core themes that migration scholars have explored over the past two decades. Within the framework of heterogeneous migrations over three centuries, they explore the concepts of transnationalism, transculturalism, and diaspora. They revisit the concepts of gender, ethnicity, and race as social constructions and cultural inventions. And they link the more recent work on collective memory and imagined communities to the study of migrants.

Over the last century, immigration scholars have used a variety of nation-centric concepts to understand how immigrants find and make their home in their 'new worlds.' 'Assimilation' dominated explanations until the 1960s, when academics began to reject the model's prescriptive assumptions, which depicted immigrants as social problems. Acculturation, integration, and incorporation seemed to be models to better explain that adaptation was a two-way street and that the receiving societies were changed by the new arrivals as much as they changed the immigrants.¹² More recently, migration scholars have pushed this idea of immigrants' agency further by describing not only immigrants' relationship with their new *host* society but also their ongoing relationship with their *home* society. In the late twentieth century, affordable and easy means of transportation and communication have made migrants' 'transnational' lifestyles more likely. Historians have pointed to pre-paid tickets, shipping lines' price wars, and a stable and efficient

international mail system as the means of living transnationally even in the nineteenth century. Dirk Hoerder, at the forefront of critiquing the 'national' in 'transnational,' has pointed to the long nineteenth century: migrants did not move from one nation to another but from one *locale* or *region* to another, depending on their networks as well as on their dreams and imaginations. Thus it makes more sense to speak of 'trans-cultural' lives: of living in different cultures simultaneously and merging these cultures within oneself, one's family, and one's community. Several of the other contributors engage with this concept. Some also suggest the usefulness of transnationalism, even in the nineteenth century, when national borders were not yet as restrictive as they would become in the twentieth. Others find value in the concept of the nation from a diasporic and comparative perspective that connects experiences in Canada, the United States, and Europe.

Feminist scholars have been at the forefront of transnationalizing migration history, because it goes hand in glove with the goal of gendering the nation, which also means critiquing the nation as a public, political male sphere.¹³ Several authors in this volume pay significant attention to women's experiences, and a few set out to gender German-Canadian Studies and thus transform the field in a fundamental way.

Unlike a decade ago, when scholars debated ethnicity from both positivist and constructivist perspectives,¹⁴ the authors in this volume understand ethnicity as a construction and invention that changes over time and that is dependent upon political and economic contexts. Moving beyond the debates of who should be considered German or German-Canadian, they explore how migrants and their descendants reworked private and public identities, individual and collective images, in local as well as cross-border and transatlantic settings.

Similarly, Benedict Anderson's concept of nations as 'imagined communities' is adapted here to describe how ethnic German migrants thought of themselves in relation to a Germany they had never seen. This concept helps us understand how the migrants made sense of their experiences once they had immigrated to Germany and Canada respectively. Another form of 'imagined community' is the one we find in official histories and other forms of dominant collective memories. Several authors explore from historical and literary perspectives how migrants wrote themselves, and were written by others, into or out of such dominant national narratives. They document the mental and material consequences of migrants' inability to find themselves in master narratives or even smaller group stories. In all of this, the authors explore and

document the migrants' agency in shaping their own lives and those of others in local and transnational settings.

The Chapters

The authors of the first two chapters in this collection suggest two major concepts for the study of migrants and ethnic groups: transculturalism and gender. Dirk Hoerder juxtaposes the nation-centred and at times nationalistic historiographies on both sides of the Atlantic with the many-cultured lives that migrants (and non-migrants) lived and crafted. He surveys the multiple cultural connections of sending and receiving societies and individual migrants and families. While the ideology of nationalism was powerful in imposing homogenizing pressure, scholars have not done enough to get out from under this national paradigm. Transculturalism offers a path away from this nation-centred investigation; it brings to light the diverse life strategies that migrants devised beyond and sometimes in opposition to the monocultural homogenization of nationalism. According to Hoerder, 'transculturalism denotes the competence to live in two or more differing cultures and, in the process, create a personal transcultural space.' Transculturalism also offers a new way of illuminating migrants' agency. Although their lives were shaped by national borders and ideas, they nevertheless based their decisions and actions on what they believed was best for themselves and their families. Often, this included an implicit (and sometimes explicit) rejection of the nation and its ideology. Migrants' life stories document that even in the heyday of monocultural nationalism, lives were lived transculturally – in, with, and across different cultures. We therefore need to study more carefully how people adapted, adopted, and mixed cultures in order to survive and create meaningful lives. Germans, coming from many cultural regions in the world, brought these experiences of transcultural lives with them to Canada.

Gender is a similarly powerful concept, as Christiane Harzig shows in her article on the gendering of migration history. She investigates how the prism of gender can decentre the nation and argues for a fundamental and systematic inclusion of gender in German-Canadian Studies. A mere inclusion of women won't do. How can German-Canadian Studies begin this transformation in research? Harzig casts a global historiographical net for answers. Canadian women's studies can guide us to understand how gender has created historically changing hierarchies and relationships of power. Parallel to this has

emerged a constructivist interpretation of ethnicity that has gained much of its force from feminist theory. While most of the chapters in this collection embrace and sometimes even study ethnicity as a social and historical construct, many do not investigate gender. This must change, because gender allows for a fundamental unsettling of the national paradigm – a paradigm that has worked not only against the inclusion of women in Canadian stories about the past, but also against the inclusion of German and other immigrants. Feminist research has been a trailblazer in developing post-national conceptions of history, and scholars of German-Canadians are well advised to follow this lead. Studies of ‘German women in the diaspora of North America,’ and especially the United States, have shown the diversity of rural and urban experiences, especially in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Similar research into the experiences of German women in Canada is needed for comparative and transnational studies. German-Canadian Studies should also enter the discourse on race through critical whiteness studies. ‘Race’ as a category applies to everyone, including whites; they, too, are racialized. As studies of the Italians and the Irish in the United States have demonstrated, their ‘whitening’ could be a drawn-out, conflicted process. Research is needed to understand whether and how German men and women were ascribed whiteness and positioned in racial hierarchies. This would further complicate the multiple relations of power within which German migrants were historically positioned.

The authors in Part II look at the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and the ways in which religion and politics shaped immigrant experiences. Kerstin Boelkow, using German-language documents previously neglected by historians of the Moravian mission to Labrador, examines the beginnings of this mission of German-language Protestants to the Inuit in the mid-eighteenth century. She carefully describes the lives of the female and male missionaries and their attempts to Christianize the Inuit. Although their duties were prescribed by the Church headquarters in Germany, infrequent communication forced the missionaries to rely on themselves to survive, thrive, and develop fruitful relations with Inuit men and women. Boelkow resists the pressure of previous German-Canadian historiography to press these people into an ethnic German-Canadian mould by postulating them as early German contributors to Canadian history and culture. It was religion, not any sense of Germanness, that guided the missionaries’ thoughts

and actions. This case study is a good example of Hoerder's concept of transatlantic connectedness. It exemplifies the experience of transculturalism, in which migrants – and those the missionaries were – crafted lives by using their transcultural knowledge. Similarly, the Church and its transnational networks allowed for fruitful if not always easy cooperation with institutions of the British Empire and the colony of Newfoundland.

Ross D. Fair re-examines the experience of the Pennsylvania Germans (Mennonites and Tunkers), who came to Ontario in the late eighteenth century, within a political rather than ethnic framework in order to show that the story of Loyalist migration from the United States to Upper Canada was not the simplistic narrative of refugees fleeing from American persecution to a British safe haven. It was their religious pacifism, rather than their German roots, that made them suspect in the eyes of Canadian officials, who placed many hurdles in their way to successful integration. Using the case of American Quakers for comparison, Fair effectively deconstructs the myth that Upper Canada's lieutenant governor, John Graves Simcoe, extended a special invitation to the 'Germans' and that they became his successful and loyal subjects. Rather, Simcoe invited everyone in the United States to settle in Upper Canada. Indeed, the Pennsylvania Germans' path to integration was more difficult than previously claimed. They migrated not because of a special invitation or the promise of military exemption in Canada, but rather because of high taxes and the threat of losing military exemption in the United States. For a long time, Simcoe was alone in proposing an open door policy; most British administrators were not eager to bring religious sects to Upper Canada or to exempt them from paying taxes. Especially when it came to paying militia fines and showing up for militia muster, there existed tensions between the three sects and the British administrators for several decades. This was particularly true in anticipation of and during the War of 1812. And it was only after 1828 that the pacifist immigrants were allowed to apply to become British subjects. Only in 1834 were the militia fines statutes relaxed, to be finally abandoned only in 1855. Barriers to civic integration were similarly high. All political participation required the swearing of oaths; Tunkers, Mennonites, and Quakers, however, by their religion, were not allowed to swear oaths. As long as they could not substitute an affirmation, they could not be elected to office, serve on juries, testify in criminal cases, or participate in many other aspects of civic life. Citizen-

ship was similarly difficult to achieve. Indeed, 'for a time following the War of 1812, the future existence of the growing Mennonite and Tunker communities in the province had been in jeopardy.'

Barbara Lorenzkowski picks up the story of Pennsylvania Germans in dramatically changed circumstances. By 1871, they had been joined by a wide variety of other German immigrants, who had established Berlin (Kitchener) as their centre of business and culture. Setting out to answer why the German middle class in Berlin and elsewhere in North America turned to nationalism in the 1870s, she focuses on the transatlantic celebrations of Prussia's victory over France and the founding of a Prussian-led German empire in 1871. Through her carefully crafted analysis of discourses about ethnicity, nation, class, and gender, we follow middle-class ethnic leaders in Berlin and Buffalo, New York, in their attempts to stage Peace Jubilees that served their own purposes. They were fired not by ethnic and national solidarity (as implied by a *peace* jubilee) but by chauvinistic ethnic pride: the *German victory* over France. Although conscious of the need to show loyalty to Canada or the United States, they were unable to constrain themselves. Feelings of national triumph dominated the speeches and symbolism, which together strove to paint a picture of a homogenous German culture in North America. Gender was paramount in this construction of nation and ethnicity. According to contemporary commentators, 'masculine' Germany had defeated 'feminine' France. At the celebrations, this resulted in women's marginalization and relegation to the status of caretakers and icons. Like Catholics, Germans from Alsace-Lorraine, and much of the working class, women played extras in the celebrations of German unity, which were directed and performed by Protestant, middle-class men from the core lands of Germany. Despite all references to national pride, the ethnic elites nevertheless also depicted a transnational identity, in which Germans could also be American or Canadian. While ethnic elites in the United States were defensive about their loyalty to their new homeland, the Berlin elites were self-assured in their claims: they pointed to their contributions to Canada and attached a list of entitlements. Lorenzkowski's chapter is an excellent example of what Hoerder calls 'an analysis of the many-cultured connections of local societies.'

Angelika Sauer concludes Part II of this collection with an exemplary study that combines the conceptual interventions of Hoerder and Harzig. She explores the life of the German-born Canadian immigration agent Elise von Koerber, a pioneer for women's profes-

sionalization and participation in the migration business and a foremost example of transcultural working and living. Von Koerber, who remains a mystery on many levels, set herself the goal to establish a transatlantic migration network for female migrants and thereby, as Sauer writes, 'to create a new transnational gendered space, where women helped women migrate from one place to another.' Like the other authors, Sauer shows that people were often less interested in ethnicity than scholars of migration are. Class and gender shaped von Koerber's professional and private life more than a sense of national belonging. She moved transnationally among Canada, the United States, Germany, Great Britain, Switzerland, and other countries. She conversed transculturally in French, German, and English. Home was anchored not by geopolitical borders but by social relationships, and especially relations with women of all classes. Sauer's writing von Koerber into history also makes clear that we need to pay more attention to how history is produced: What we forget is as important as what we do remember. Why has von Koerber vanished from the national histories of Germany, Canada, and the United Kingdom? While pointing to an ethnic silencing is a useful approach, others must be considered as well: gendered silencing, class silencing, and national silencing. When historians pay attention only to those who are always there – in one nation – they exclude migrants. As such, they participate in the perpetuation of nationalism and the myths of social homogeneity. Von Koerber's story shows that people's lives sometimes contradict national historiographies. They present alert historians with challenges. Rather than making women and men fit national myths, migration scholars increasingly use life stories to expose the hegemonic claims of national stories. Elise von Koerber's 'unbound life' – a life spent not at home in one country, but on ships and in trains and carriages with brief stops at friends, partners, acquaintances, and relatives across North America and Europe – may have been exceptional in its intensity, but not in its underlying challenge to national(ist) historiography.

In Part III of this collection, we turn to the twentieth century and the experiences of German-Canadians as these were profoundly shaped by imperialist nationalism and two world wars. As is true for much historical research in Canada, immigrants' experiences in Quebec are researched separately from those in English Canada and are rarely integrated into a larger Canadian context. Manuel Meune's work on Germans in Quebec therefore is path-breaking. While his major work

still awaits translation into English, in his chapter in this collection he not only gives an overview of German migrants' 'double integration' into Canadian and Quebec societies, but also develops a set of intriguing questions about German migrants' relationship to Canadian and Quebec nationalisms vis-à-vis German and especially Nazi nationalisms. In these complex negotiations of identity, Meune argues, German speakers in Quebec have developed multifaceted identities that have responded to their situations as Germans in Quebec and in Canada. Thus, he does at last for research on Germans in Quebec what the research of the 1990s did for Germans in English Canada – that is, raise critical questions about migrant identity vis-à-vis the concept of the nation.¹⁵ But he takes this earlier set of questions into the twenty-first century, in which identity is seen as political and as critically linked to nationalism and cultural imperialism. Thus, multiculturalism from this perspective became not a simple vehicle of integration, but rather was used in multiple ways by Germans in Quebec to maintain views that ranged from right-wing, nationalistic, and even racist celebrations of multiculturalism as means of avoiding integration to left-wing, anti-nationalist, and anti-liberal (or anti-Liberal) critiques of multiculturalism as a policy hindering integration. Meune also moves the field into more recent studies of collective memory by investigating the German-Canadian historical consciousness of Germans in Quebec.

Patrick Farges addresses another 'blind spot' of German-Canadian Studies, namely, the experiences of the Jewish refugees from Germany who fled Nazi persecution in the 1930s. While Canada's abysmal record of barring most refugees from entering Canada is well known, we know little about the experiences of those who made it to Canada. Like several other contributors, Farges takes migration studies through a cultural turn that asks questions about the role of individual and collective memory in the process of acculturation. His thickly described case studies demonstrate that for the refugees, settlement became an unsettling experience, a process that required adjustments on different levels of identity. Family members tackled them in diverse ways. Adjustment was both complex and tragic, as it was shaped by multiple misunderstandings. Canadian Jews could not comprehend the refugees' nostalgia for Germany, and the refugees could not find a home in the Jewish communities of Canada, for they were religiously, socially, and culturally too different. They were in exile but knew there was no return. The non-Jewish German-Canadian communities failed to serve as a home for the refugees as well, for many reasons that are mostly

unexplored. Anti-Semitism certainly was one major obstacle, but how widespread this was among German-Canadians is unclear. Although the German-Jewish symbiosis may have been more illusion than reality, there was no attempt to re-create it in Canada. After Auschwitz, the refugees' existence became nearly impossible and they were written out of the master narratives and out of everyday life. The refugees could not deal with their traumas because they had neither the narrative means nor the narrative stage to tell their stories. So acculturation and integration became more difficult, because the refugees believed – and Canadian Jewry concurred – that they could not speak of their own fates, especially after Auschwitz.

Exploring, like Farges, refugees' attempts of making a new home, Hans Werner's study of German migrants from the Soviet Union continues the focus on the cultural history of memory, narrative, and identity that illuminates, as he states, 'the contours of the Soviet German diaspora.' In his comparative study of Soviet Germans in postwar Canada and 1970s West Germany, Werner explores the concept of an 'imagined homeland' and asks how it shaped the migrants' experiences of integration. Werner's detailed look at homeland experiences and his comparative approach establish an important context for the study of migrants in the twentieth century. What appears unique when focusing on only one group and only the country of destination is shown to be a common experience across time, geography, and ethnicity. Thus, Soviet Germans experienced hostility in the Soviet Union, in Canada, and in Germany. The comparative approach also shows, however, that people made sense of such experiences in different ways, and that these ways of making sense were shaped by the place and time in which they lived. Soviet Germans in Canada found different answers to their questions about identity than their cousins in Germany. Thus, Werner fruitfully applies Hoerder's model of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century transculturalism with Sauer's call for a transnational perspective on the late twentieth century. His carefully crafted gender analysis of three women's and one man's narratives further reinforces the importance of Harzig's call for a gender analysis in German-Canadian Studies.

The phenomenon of trying to find oneself in various groups of potential allegiance without ever fully finding oneself at home is further explored by Pascal Maeder in his study of German expellees in Canada. At the end of the Second World War, twelve million Germans from across Eastern Europe as well as from Germany's eastern territories fled or were expelled to Germany. Some came to Canada. Although

nearly half the expellees who came to Canada were from the eastern German provinces of East Prussia, Silesia, and Pomerania, they did not found any organizations. The so-called ethnic German refugees who had lived in Romania, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and other places, however, established institutions that were based on their regional cultures of belonging. At the same time, they positioned themselves within a larger group of postwar European immigrants with shared experiences in Europe and Canada. Although expellees continued to protest against their expulsion, in Canada they never united in this struggle. Indeed, even within such small subgroups as the Sudeten-German refugees, internal divisions developed. Instead, the groups developed transnational connections with their parent organizations in West Germany and sometimes with sister organizations in the United States. This micro-study of the diversity of German-speaking postwar immigrants once again undermines the myth of a cohesive group of German-Canadians. At the same time, Maeder shows the development of shared experiences among postwar European immigrants, the development of a shared Euro-Canadian identity, and the potential if not the reality of cross-cultural solidarity. This raises questions about a multiculturalism policy that seems to undermine such solidarity by emphasizing the differences rather than the shared experiences of discrimination and exploitation as well as of discovery and excitement that many immigrants share.

In Part IV of this collection, we turn to spoken and written language. Grit Liebscher and Mathias Schulze continue Werner's exploration of language, but from a linguistic rather than a narrative perspective. Using examples of speech by German immigrants in the Kitchener-Waterloo region, they show how migrants acculturated through spoken language. Although linguistic analysis can seem abstract to readers unfamiliar with this scholarly discourse, the examples that Liebscher and Schulze quote make the diversity of acculturation immediately visible. The complex ways in which German and English are merged, morphed into each other, combined, confused, or creatively reinvented are apparent even to readers without knowledge of German. Rejecting nation-centred concepts such as 'language loss' and 'language death,' the authors instead propose the concept of language acculturation, which allows us insight into processes of acculturation and into migrants' constructions of identity. Thus, when immigrants mix up – intentionally and unintentionally – two or more languages, they create something new, which becomes part of and facilitates their new life

and identity. Historians, literary critics, sociologists, and other scholars of German and other migrants would be well advised to use Liebscher and Schulze's analysis to uncover new meanings in the written and oral sources they use for their own research.

Finally, Myka Burke brings a literary perspective to German-Canadian Studies and takes the field through the discursive turn. She explores the meanings of identity by placing German-Canadian literature in the context of immigrant literature in Canada. As in Werner's and other authors' studies, Burke effectively uses comparison to dispel myths of German-Canadian uniqueness and thus again undermines the national paradigm. She takes the exploration of identity further by asking whether scholars' obsession with the question of who is German-Canadian may not be the wrong one to ask. Literature, Burke argues, should be seen not as a subfield within German-Canadian Studies, but rather as a practice that can inform the study of German immigrants and their descendants in Canada from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. Novelists and poets do not produce self-contained artefacts, but rather comment on the social worlds in which they live. At the same time, Burke emphasizes that literary studies must look beyond their discipline for insights, and she draws on Hoerder's and Harzig's theoretical models as well as the collection's other authors to weave a tapestry of meaning that pulls these essays together.

The chapters in this collection suggest the following for immigration and ethnic studies. First, a move beyond the nation as the major framework of research – the comparative, migratory, and transcultural aspects make immigration and ethnic studies an ideal field for the study of supra- and international, postnational, transnational, transcultural, and global phenomena. As such, the study of migration can serve as a critique of the national model. Second, the study of 'old' immigrant groups of white Europeans allows scholars insights into the subtleties of discrimination as well as into immigrants' negotiations of privilege and their participation in discrimination against others. While the study of immigrants' participation in colonization and the oppression of indigenous populations has begun, further research is needed and should be extended to the dynamics of power relations among various ethnic groups. Third, as both Harzig and Sauer make clear, gender should not be an optional category of historical analysis, but an integral one. Scholars of German-Canadians need to further investigate the experiences of women and men and the ways in which gender shaped their

experiences of immigration and acculturation. Similarly, scholars will find an ideal case in German-Canadians for white race studies. Here, in particular, German-Canadians' long, complex, and ongoing relationships with Canada's indigenous peoples calls for more research.

In a volume about German-Canadians from 1998, the editors 'hope[d] to create a starting point for a new discussion and initiate dialogue with other areas of ethnic studies by opening up the boundaries of a closely guarded field.'¹⁶ This collection attempts to connect to this discussion, which has been ongoing for over a decade in a rather scattered and disconnected fashion, and to create another vantage point in this discourse from which to survey past research and stake out future research. This transnational and transcultural vantage point promises to give us a better understanding of German migrants' experiences in Canada and their relationships with other ethnic groups; more than that, however, it promises to position those experiences within the larger transnational experiences of migrants worldwide.

NOTES

- 1 Frank Thistlethwaite, 'Migration from Europe Overseas in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries,' *XIe Congrès International des Sciences Historiques Stockholm: Rapports*, vol. 5 (Göteborg: 1960), repr. with a new 'Postscript' in *A Century of European Migrations: 1830–1930*, ed. Rudolph J. Vecoli and Suzanne M. Sinke (Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 17–49, 50–7.
- 2 Franca Iacovetta et al., eds., *A Nation of Immigrants: Women, Workers, and Communities in Canadian History, 1840s–1960s* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998); Marlene Epp et al., eds., *Sisters or Strangers? Immigrants, Ethnic and Racialized Women in Canadian History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004); Gerald Tulchinsky, ed., *Immigration in Canada: Historical Perspectives* (Toronto: Copp Clark Longman, 1994); Elspeth Cameron, ed., *Multiculturalism and Immigration in Canada: An Introductory Reader* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 2004).
- 3 Iacovetta et al., 'Introduction,' in *A Nation of Immigrants*, xi.
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 - 12 Donna Gabaccia, 'Do We Still Need Immigration History?' *Polish American Studies* 55, no. 1 (Spring 1998): 45–68.
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 - 16 Ibid., x.

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PART I

Approaches: Transculturalism and Gender

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1 Local, Continental, Global Migration Contexts: Projecting Life Courses in the Frame of Family Economies and Emotional Networks

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‘Germans,’ like all ethnocultural groups, develop self-images and at the same time are imaged, imagined, and labelled by neighbouring cultural groups: Germans are stolid and rooted in the soil; Germans have migrated afar and are superior to the host societies; Germany is not an immigration country – Germany needs guest workers. Such imaginings reflect predispositions, and in German public discourse, emigration and immigration have been particularly distorted. What little memory of emigration there is with few exceptions considers Germans abroad as a positive cultural influence. In contrast, migrants in Germany – whether Poles in the nineteenth century or Turks in the twentieth – are denigrated as culturally inferior. In this chapter, I begin by confronting the assumption that German-language men and women stuck to local roots and essentialist Germanness; I do so by analysing the many-cultured connections of local societies and by discussing the worldwide migrations of German speakers as well as the in-migrations of cultural Others. Then I turn to a discussion of the homogenization of diversity in the age of nationalism. After this, I discuss the many origins of German-language immigrants in Canada. Finally, I discuss the strategic competence of migrants to pursue their life projects in trans-cultural settings.

Local Lives as Part of Transcontinental Networks

Scholars, like public opinion, often juxtapose non-migrants – locals, persisters – with people moving to distant societies. But in fact, both may be part of transcontinental networks. Auguste Michaelis, daughter of a small Hamburg merchant couple, in the 1850s had two sisters who

earned their living in England and a brother working with a French trading company in Saigon. As a widow in a small North German town in the 1890s, she had emigrant relatives in South Africa, and – through kin, neighbours, and friends – acquaintances in Nicaragua, Jamaica, Chile, Peru, Mexico, Switzerland, Sweden, the Tyrol, Paris, London, Kiautschou, Russia, Kattowice, Madeira, and America. She was well educated, but her interest in national politics was limited; occasionally she mentioned some European empress, but only with regard to her role as a mother. Still, her life was one of global connectedness. The Boer War affected her emigrant kin, and she cared for one of her South African-born nephews. She knew whether her acquaintances were succeeding in Kansas or died of an undiagnosed illness in Mexico. Would men and women of the lower classes be less transculturally connected? In these years, the newspaper *Der Sozialdemokrat* carried regular good-bye notices from working men departing for 'Amerika.'¹ Non-migrating female florists in Erfurt produced for export to metropolises around the world, and non-migrating male workers in Osterholz-Scharmbeck built boats for river trading on other continents or milled rice imported from Southeast Asia. From the founding of the Second German Reich in 1871 to the end of German mass migration from its territories in 1893, 2.4 million men and women emigrated out of a population of 40.8 million in 1870 – or one out of seventeen. Thus, in the era said to be the apogee of national belonging, the empirical data show high mobility. In rural and urban neighbourhoods, positioned in worldwide contexts, men and women lived locally as well as globally.²

To such local neighbourhoods, in-migrating men and women added their cultures. To North Germany came working men and women from many parts of Scandinavia, Swedes in particular. Hamburg's trade with South America was developed by Sephardic Jews, who, having been expelled from Iberia, had established a flourishing community in Amsterdam. Migrants from this community, excluded from Hamburg by the city's rigidly Protestant elite, had settled in the neighbouring but Danish-ruled, religiously liberal Altona. Through the Danish-Caribbean connection, manumitted slaves reached Hamburg via Copenhagen. They accepted baptism and married locally. The many Central European social spaces in which some dialect of the German language was the means of communication had always been social spaces of immigration and emigration at the same time.³

Such empirical data about people's lives in global contexts have not entered historical memory in *the Germanies*. Yet the essentialized

'Germany' has passed through many political forms and territorial extensions: the Central European (or Roman) Holy (or First) Reich, the hundreds of dwarf principalities, the northern cantons of Switzerland, the federations of the nineteenth century, the Second or Hohenzollern Reich of Prussian hegemony and (as its competitor) the Habsburg state of many peoples and of Austrian-German hegemony; then the Weimar Republic, the Third Reich, and the divided Federal and Democratic republics. The historians of (what they considered) the nation emphasized *missions to the East*, which was a twisting of the data, and *departures for the West* to an undifferentiated construct 'Amerika'; they pointed to achievements of settler colonies in South Africa and Australia and to grandiose schemes to populate the Reich's colonies in Africa. Such historian-ideologues decried the loss of 'blood' or *Volkskraft*, labelling emigrants 'fellows without a fatherland' and overlooking independently migrating women. Emigrant merchants, in contrast, were described as bridgeheads of German culture and economic expansion. Beginning in the 1880s and especially after 1918, nationalist ideologues conceptualized generic emigrants, who supposedly clung to their Germanness, as *Auslandsdeutsche* – and then instrumentalized them to increase the power of the German state. In early 1950s Germany-in-ruins, government labour bureaux (*Arbeitsämter*) were instructed to discourage able-bodied men from pursuing emigration but to encourage able-bodied women to go. The gender-stereotyped nationalist rationale implied a unitary German masculine *Volk*, which had to rebuild the economy and the nation; and it implied women who would remain deficient without husbands and who, after the mass destruction of German men on the battlefields of the war, would indeed often have had to remain single.⁴

Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, politicians, bureaucrats, and conservative voters were hostile to migration between cultures. The body of the people, *der Volkskörper*, was to remain intact. No Polish workers, no long-resident Germans of Judaic faith, no immigrant Ashkenazim ('Eastern Jews') speaking the Yiddish dialect of the German-language family, no Italian migrant workers were to penetrate or infect it. However, in contrast to the gatekeepers from the intellectual elites – that is, those with the power to define what would be retained in national memory – popular culture did take note of migration: *Hänschen klein* leaves for the wide world and, finally, returns from *Amerika* to his waiting and loving mother. Internal migrations of *Handwerksgesellen*, journeyman artisans, were the theme of 'Muss I denn zum Städtele hinaus und Du mein Schatz bleibst hier' and of many other popular songs.

Were rural populations less mobile? Did peasants cling to their land over generations? Each and every family with more than two children depended on selective emigration of some of their offspring to keep the family plot viable. Where landholdings were divided among children, as in the southern Germanies, the next generations might stay on ever more marginal plots, only to be forced to join the late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century mass emigrations. Inheritances had become too small to provide subsistence for the family – and ideologues of the soil could have understood this by a little arithmetic. Peasants must work the soil, so they experience its limitations: one emigrant expressed this by saying, ‘take the soil in your hands.’ People who must negotiate their lives are often far more sophisticated than intellectual elites in pursuit of such abstractions as nation, superiority, or masculine warfare.⁵

Memory, whether collective, familial, or individual, is central to the construction of identity. Thus societies that refuse the memory of emigration and immigration lack the competence to come to terms both with their history and with their future. Collective memory has long been found wanting in the Austrian, German, and Swiss education systems. In this regard, neither political nor educational strategies were developed to react (or ‘pro-act’) to the in-migration of ‘foreign’ workers around 1900 and of ‘guest’ workers beginning in the mid-1950s. Similarly undifferentiated is the memory of out-migration, of emigrants and their descendants.

Migrations in the History of German-Speaking Men and Women⁶

From the medieval and early modern period to the twentieth century, men and women speaking one of the many dialects of the German language were involved in artisanal, in rural–urban, and in interurban migrations as well as in circular moves that brought them back to their place of origin after working and experiencing other societies elsewhere. Even when migrants planned to establish a cultural enclave, as was the practice in dynastic states, they interacted with the surrounding society, whether as ‘Germans’ in the Slavic lands or as Huguenots in one of the German states. A survey reveals complex patterns of mobility and settlement. In the Middle Ages, a *rural* Balto-Slavic-German-Flemish mixed population emerged and the Transylvania ‘Saxons’ established themselves. Later, migrants established an East Central European and East European *urban* German-language culture based not on some generic German law, *ius teutonicum*, as nationalist historiography once