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# Germanness beyond Germany: Collective Identity in German Diaspora Communities

Alexander Maxwell and Sacha E. Davis

In this special issue of *German Studies Review*, we examine how communities in the so called “German diaspora” have imagined and maintained a sense of Germanness in their various host communities. The experience of Germanness in any given immigrant community has followed a different historical trajectory from Germanness in the core German ethnoterritory in Central Europe, a region roughly coterminous with the territory presently administered by the Federal Republic of Germany and the Republic of Austria, but which also encompasses much of Switzerland and various lands directly adjacent to Germany and Austria.

Speaking of “collective identity” or “German identity” poses terminological problems. Inga Scharf argued that “German national identity appears to be too impossibly contradictory or paradoxical to be spoken of with any ease,”<sup>1</sup> and the problem lies not only with the complexities of Germanness, but also with the word “identity.” In an influential article, Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper have shown that some scholars use the term to discuss both individuals and collectives; to discuss both something claimed for oneself and something externally attributed; and to discuss both something fluid, contextual, and contingent, and something solid, immutable, and enduring.<sup>2</sup> Confusion results from the use of the same word for both halves of so many mutually exclusive binaries, though some scholars apparently underestimate the danger. Hans-Jochen Gamm’s study of “German identities,” for example, declared that “collective identities are apparently natural and for this reason require no further explanation,” though Gamm also offered several “clarifications.”<sup>3</sup> While we have used the term “identity,” we take Brubaker and Cooper’s criticism seriously. We treat Germanness as something collective rather than individual. While we and our contributors examine Germanness both as something self-proclaimed and as something externally ascribed, we mostly emphasize self-understandings. Finally, we see Germanness as neither immutable nor ephemeral, but durably constructed within a given social and historical context. Informed by Brubaker’s analysis of “groupism,”<sup>4</sup>

we place our emphasis on “Germanness” as a “category of practice,” that is, as historical actors imagined and experienced it.

The content and significance of Germanness gradually evolves over the decades as historical actors contest its meanings, but its flexibility in a specific time and place remains limited. Our ambition is to examine how social practices and institutions help construct or maintain a given understanding of Germanness in particular contexts. Since the putative meaning of Germanness varies over historical time, from place to place, from historical actor to historical actor, and from scholarly observer to scholarly observer, what phenomena should scholars examine to explore the changing meaning of Germanness?

Several scholars analyze Germanness with reference to the state or states governing the core German ethnoterritory. Françoise Knopper and Alain Ruiz, for example, argued that the cold war division of Europe, and particularly the creation of the German Democratic Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany, illustrate “significant difficulties in defining the German identity.”<sup>5</sup> Louis Snyder thought Bismarck responsible for the “subservience, discipline, and respect for authority” that “when added to other characteristics, gave the German national character in the late nineteenth century a special quality of its own.” He also declared that postwar West Germany embodied “the new German character.”<sup>6</sup> James Sperling similarly suggested that “American, British, and West German policy makers cooperated in forging a new German national identity that was liberal, democratic, irrevocably tied to the West and anti-Communist.”<sup>7</sup> Mark Blacksell even claimed that the *Kaiserreich* (imperial Germany), the Weimar Republic, the Third Reich, the Federal Republic of Germany, and the German Democratic Republic all “purported to represent all Germany and embrace a single national identity,” and thus that all these states “fostered German identity.”<sup>8</sup> Others, including Friedrich Meinicke, Jürgen Habermas, and Rogers Brubaker, have explored Germanness in studies of legal citizenship.<sup>9</sup>

The last few decades have seen a profusion of approaches decentering the German state and problematizing the high political approach. As Geoff Eley has noted, the German state, its territory, citizenship law, and traditions, have experienced a series of ruptures in 1864–1871, 1914–1918, 1918–1923, 1936–1945, 1945–1949 and 1989–1992.<sup>10</sup> The plurality of German political structures has diversified the German experience. Germanness followed different trajectories on either side of the Berlin wall,<sup>11</sup> for example, and scholars have examined diverging East and West German experiences from a range of perspectives, studying for example attitudes to consumerism or to “American” influences in music.<sup>12</sup> The impact of a political structure on German identity concepts may also outlast the political structure itself. East Germany forms an obvious example,<sup>13</sup> but Abigail Green has studied how loyalties to Saxony, Bavaria, Württemberg and so forth lingered after the 1871 foundation of the *Kaiserreich*.<sup>14</sup>

Germanness also interacts with regional loyalties and other local particularisms. Alon Confino, Matthew Levinger, and Celia Applegate, in well received studies of Württemberg, Prussia, and the Palatinate, have emphasized the importance of local patriotism within a broader Germanness.<sup>15</sup> The study of Germanness in the territories of what is now the Republic of Austria raises further questions: Austrian patriotism once implied Germanness, much as loyalty to Bavaria, Mecklenburg, or the Rhineland still do. Yet Austrianness and Germanness have increasingly parted ways since the Second World War.<sup>16</sup> And what of Germans in Habsburg provinces beyond the core German lands, Germans in Russia, or Germans in the world beyond?

Cultural history and *Alltagsgeschichte* approaches have decentered the German state further. Scholars have emphasized that notions of “Germanness” also influence everyday habits and customs, even in the most banal and apparently apolitical situations. German patriots have, for example, pondered how eating and drinking, surely among the most universal human activities, might be done in a “German” way.<sup>17</sup> Albert Rimmer, writing about “the art of cooking in Germany,” argued in 1844 that “there is no reason why palates and bellies should be any less national than human heads and education.”<sup>18</sup> Such ideas ultimately had political consequences. In the final years of the Habsburg monarchy, Austrian German journals were nationalizing Bohemia’s German breweries so that patriotic readers would know which beers were truly German.<sup>19</sup> During the First World War, Hans Liemert even sought to Germanize the courtesies of the table by suggesting that Germans respond to “Bon Appetit” with a quotation from Goethe: “*Hab Appetit auch ohne das!* (I have an appetite even without that!)”<sup>20</sup> Robert Chickering similarly found in his study of the Pan-German League that some German patriots came to prefer certain consumer products, including not only food but soap: “patriotic obligation extended to what Pan-Germans ate, smoked and smeared on their bodies.”<sup>21</sup> Nor did the Germanization of everyday life confine itself to patriot men: Nancy Reagin noted that middle-class Germans ascribed “German” qualities to women’s work, such as housekeeping.<sup>22</sup> Bryan Ganaway also found that attitudes to Germanness shaped the consumption of children’s toys, at least among Germany’s middle classes.<sup>23</sup>

The proliferation of approaches to Germanness led Neil Gregor, Nils Roemer, and Mark Roseman, in their edited collection, to approach Germanness “from the margins” of the state, both social and geographical. They argued that “the margins were less dominated by the center and more constitutive of German identity than the conventional paradigm allows.”<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, most scholarship addressing Germanness continues to focus on the German state. For example, Volker Berghahn warned that the profusion of histories from below must not be allowed to obscure the central questions of German history, by which he means the German state and its power structures, and particularly Germany’s role in the First World War.<sup>25</sup> Geoff Eley even argued that the proliferation of histories from below have been of value

precisely because of the light they have shed on the “center,” which he defines in historical terms as the bureaucracy, the army, Prussia and citizenship, and in historiographical terms as the “big questions” of German historiography, especially National Socialism.<sup>26</sup> Evidently, both Eley and Berghahn insist on placing the state at the center of German history.

Surprisingly, several studies of Germans outside of Germany also place the German state at the center of analysis. In their edited volume *The Heimat Abroad*, Krista O’Donnell, Renate Bridenthal, and Nancy Reagin examine the ties between German communities overseas and the German state.<sup>27</sup> Stefan Manz’s volume *Constructing a German Diaspora* acknowledges the local significance of Germanness, but focuses primarily on connections between diaspora and metropole.<sup>28</sup> While not ignoring relations to the host country, contributors to *The Heimat Abroad* primarily consider how Germans abroad responded to German irredentism, German citizenship law, German domestic politics, and so forth, with the German state remaining at the center.

Yet no German state has ever encompassed all Germans: German settlement is both transnational and transcontinental in scope. During the past millennium, many successive migrations from the core German ethnoterritory have resulted in several different communities. A profusion of local understandings of Germanness has resulted. Instead of focusing on the nation-state, H. Glenn Penny has suggested that historians “both respatialize German history and embrace it as a conglomerate of stories rather than a unitary thing that is always already heading toward some point of culmination (usually World War II and its impact on the following decades).”<sup>29</sup> Rethinking German history in this fashion, Penny hopes, will lead scholars to conclude that the “big questions,” while still important, are not be the only questions worth studying.<sup>30</sup> The contributors to this special issue present just such a polycentric collection, contributing case studies from the Middle East, North America, East Asia, and Europe, both to the east and to the west of the core German-speaking lands.

An extensive body of literature examines all the communities examined here. Even restricting our attention to the Anglophone world, we find significant literature on German immigrants in Great Britain,<sup>31</sup> Ireland,<sup>32</sup> Australia,<sup>33</sup> New Zealand,<sup>34</sup> Canada,<sup>35</sup> the United States,<sup>36</sup> or even in regions within the United States.<sup>37</sup> Nevertheless, most of this literature has situated German diasporic communities either in the context of German out-migration,<sup>38</sup> or as a case study of national immigration. Local studies, by definition, lack a comparative focus, and tend to focus how immigrants influenced the host society. Jürgen Tampke, for example, ended his book on the Germans of Australia with the question: “how then is one to assess the German contribution to Australian history?”<sup>39</sup> A genealogical study of Texas Germans similarly exclaimed: “one would be hard pressed to fully explain the impact German immigrants have had on Texas.”<sup>40</sup> Rather than examine German immigrants

as contributors to the host society, we seek to examine how the host society affected immigrants' sense of Germanness.

One may question the coherence of the "German diaspora" as a single object of study. Scholars have developed the term "diaspora" to describe far-flung communities with sometimes tenuous ties to their putative homeland. Scholars might disagree whether the term applies to the various German communities around the world. In the introduction to their volume *The Heimat Abroad*, O'Donnell, Bridenthal, and Reagin felt comfortable speaking of "a tenacious diasporic network,"<sup>41</sup> yet Pieter Judson's contribution to the same volume concluded that the various German communities in the Habsburg Empire had little sense of connection with each other. While subscribing to Germanness as a marker of cultural superiority, their expressions of Germanness were strongly particularist; and while these German communities developed connections to both Germany and each other after the First World War, Habsburg German communities rarely expressed interest in, or formed institutional ties with, either Germany or among each other before 1918. Judson therefore concluded that Habsburg Germans did not constitute a diaspora.<sup>42</sup>

Whether German communities beyond Germany qualify as a "diaspora" obviously depends on definitions. Several scholars have recently subjected the term "diaspora" to contentious scrutiny,<sup>43</sup> and as the term has gained popularity, its meaning has become increasingly diffuse.<sup>44</sup> In the inaugural issue of the journal *Diaspora*, William Safran proposed a six-point definition based closely upon the paradigmatic Jewish diaspora. Safran's diasporas are (1) dispersed from an original "center" to at least two different places, (2) maintain some memory, vision, or myth of their original homeland, (3) feel some inevitable alienation from their host countries, (4) imagine an inevitable return to the ancestral homeland, (5) maintain some relationship to it, and (6) define group solidarity through their loyalty to it.<sup>45</sup> Subsequent scholars, however, have softened Safran's definition. Robin Cohen, for example, suggested that "not every diaspora will exhibit every feature listed, nor will they be present to the same degree over time and in all settings."<sup>46</sup> James Clifford similarly argued that "no community can be expected to qualify on all counts, throughout its history,"<sup>47</sup> specifically downplaying the centrality of the imagined homeland:

the transnational connections linking diasporas need not be articulated primarily through a real or symbolic homeland . . . Decentered, lateral connections may be as important as those formed around a teleology of origin/return.<sup>48</sup>

Other scholars have contrasted "diasporas" with the related concept of "transnationalism." Thomas Faist, for example, differentiates "diasporas" from "transnational communities," suggesting that "transnational communities encompass diasporas;

however not all transnational communities are diasporas.”<sup>49</sup> Peggy Levitt concurred, suggesting that “diasporas form out of the transnational communities.”<sup>50</sup> José Itzigssohn and Silvia Giorguli Saucedo, meanwhile, distinguished between “broad” and “narrow” transnationalism.<sup>51</sup> The blizzard of definitions has driven some recent scholars to emphasize the discursive nature of the term “diaspora” itself.<sup>52</sup> Clifford, for example, suggested that diasporas be studied as “identifications, not identities, acts of relationship rather than pre-given forms.”<sup>53</sup> In diaspora studies, as in the study of “identity,” analytical terminology has evidently become an object of study in its own right. We use the term “diaspora” without defending any particular definition. Some German communities beyond the core German ethnoterritory may qualify as a diaspora according to some definitions; others may fail to qualify according to others, and since German communities evolve over time, they therefore theoretically acquire or lose the status of a “true” diaspora over time, according to any particular definition. Either way, our primary concern is Germanness: this project highlights the varied, polycentric nature of communities in what can, even if only as a shorthand, be called the German diaspora.

German diaspora communities generally share certain common characteristics. While state-centric studies of Germanness emphasize the relationship between individual Germans and the German state, Safran’s emphasis on a diaspora’s relationship with the host society emphasizes that reconciling their local understandings of Germanness with the nation-state became a defining challenge for Germans outside Germany during the age of nationalism. Citizenship and the state, two of the “big questions” highlighted by Eley, thus informed the history of Germans outside Germany. Nevertheless, we find that the citizenship of the state in which they lived, rather than German citizenship, most profoundly influenced German diaspora communities.

While the diversity of German communities, and particularly the diversity of various host societies, problematizes generalizations across the German diaspora, migration studies reveal that various waves of migration, occurring at different times and different places, encouraged members of German diaspora communities to reconcile their Germanness with their state loyalties in different ways. A historical overview proves helpful.

From the eleventh century CE to the fifteenth century, the primary destinations of immigrants from the core lands were the predominantly Slav- and Magyar-inhabited lands of eastern and southeastern Europe. Eastward migration mostly took the form of peaceful group migration. The rulers of dynastic states sought economically productive settlers and offered privileges to entice them.<sup>54</sup> For example, in the medieval period German settlement in Hungary began during the early eleventh century, and expanded with the settlement of so called Transylvanian Saxons and Zips Saxons in the Carpathians in the twelfth. Privileged eastern migration contributed to the spread of German City Law (*Deutsches Stadtrecht*), which shaped the history of urban life

in eastern Europe.<sup>55</sup> The eleventh-century migration of Ashkenazi Jews to Poland-Lithuania, though conventionally treated as a separate field of study, also involved a mass migration from the core German lands. The Baltic Germans had a different history: during the twelfth century, the Teutonic and Livonian knights conquered the eastern Baltic coast during the Northern Crusades.<sup>56</sup> As the Swedish and Russian Empires incorporated the Baltic German states, Baltic German aristocrats retained their elite privileges in return for dynastic loyalty.<sup>57</sup> While ethnicity did not legitimize the privileges of German communities in eastern Europe, Germanness nevertheless served as a marker of estate status, whether bourgeois or aristocratic.

The Thirty Years War (1618–1648) depopulated large sections of the core German lands, interrupting the outflow of emigrants. Subsequent population growth, particularly in the German Southwest, led to further peasant out-migration.<sup>58</sup> As with the medieval eastern migration, dynastic states enticed German settlers with land, economic privileges, and cultural concessions. From the eighteenth century, peasants from upper Swabia and Baden established communities along the Danube in Habsburg Hungary.<sup>59</sup> During the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, Russia encouraged mass German migration to settle in the southern plains, recently conquered from the Ottoman Empire. Russia offered groups of German immigrants legal privileges, land, tax free years, immunity from military service, and autonomous local administration. Germans settled on the Volga, the Black Sea coast, and the Caucasus, and remigrated to Volhynia and Siberia.<sup>60</sup>

Prenational group migration to dynastic states shaped how Germans in eastern Europe later reconciled their Germanness with their state loyalties as nationalist ideas spread. The transformation of formerly dynastic empires into nation-states undermined corporate privileges and reframed loyalty in ethnic terms. At the same time, Germanness acquired a new national significance for members of German minority communities. Germans in eastern and southeastern Europe often saw themselves as *Kulturträger* (carriers of culture) bringing civilization and prosperity to societies lacking either, and deriving a sense of belonging and entitlement from this flattering self-image.<sup>61</sup>

If privileged group status characterized migration to eastern Europe, migration to the New World, which exceeded migration to eastern Europe by the 1830s, eventually acquired a less corporatist character. German transatlantic migration, conventionally dated as beginning in 1681,<sup>62</sup> initially involved large groups migrating for religious motives, such as the “Old Lutherans” who settled in the United States and in southern Australia in the 1830s.<sup>63</sup> After 1840, however, German immigrants consisted predominantly of single families or even individuals.<sup>64</sup> Furthermore, even group immigrants were increasingly treated as individual citizens. Germans went to Latin America, as well as to the British colonies of Canada, Australia, South Africa, and New Zealand, but the overwhelming majority went to the United States of



America, particularly between 1846 and 1893.<sup>65</sup> From the 1880s, immigrants from the core lands were increasingly joined by Germans from communities in eastern and southeastern Europe, since such Germans increasingly found their corporate privileges threatened as formerly dynastic states transformed into nation-states.<sup>66</sup>

During the age of nationalism, Germans in the New World faced different challenges than Germans in eastern Europe. New World Germans mostly settled in urban industrial centers where they formed a minority.<sup>67</sup> To maintain Germanness across generations in a multicultural context, they sought to construct institutions capable of uniting German immigrants from diverse regional backgrounds into a common community. Like Germans in eastern Europe, they sought to reconcile their Germanness with the nationalist claims expressed by the settler states in which they lived, but they generally justified their contributions as individual citizens, rather than as a collective.

Germans also migrated to German overseas colonies. As early as 1848, advocates of German overseas imperialism justified their program with the argument that Germans migrating to German colonies would better maintain their Germanness. Such aspirations atrophied after the failure of the Frankfurt Assembly in 1849, but were revived after the 1871 establishment of the *Kaiserreich*.<sup>68</sup> After the 1884 Congress of Berlin, German emigrants had a choice of German overseas colonies in Africa (German Southwest Africa, Togo, German Cameroons, and German East Africa), and the Pacific (northeastern New Guinea, German Samoa, Jiaozhou, and the Bismarck, Marshall, Caroline and Mariana Islands). The *Kaiserreich's* colonies, admittedly, attracted few settlers: German out-migration, whether to Germany's colonial possessions or elsewhere, slowed as internal migration increasingly expanded burgeoning industrial centers. In 1913, there were only 14,830 white settlers in Germany's largest settler colony, German Southwest Africa; the white population of Germany's colonial possessions as a whole peaked at around 25,000.<sup>69</sup> Germans who chose to settle in German overseas possessions, however, experienced fewer difficulties maintaining their Germanness in their new surroundings. Colonial Germans, like colonists in other settler societies, sought to reconstruct the culture of the metropole in the imperial periphery. Germans in the German overseas Empire had a far freer hand pursuing an ideal vision of Germanness than those who settled elsewhere.

Not all Germans migrated to such distances from the core lands. The nineteenth century witnessed a significant migration to western Europe, particularly to Britain, Holland, Belgium, France, and Switzerland, often overlapping with seasonal migration.<sup>70</sup> western European immigrants included skilled artisans, professionals, and merchants.<sup>71</sup> The resulting communities were predominantly urban and lacked strong corporate institutions. Germans in western Europe had greater access to German cultural materials, and thus could freely choose the extent to which they maintained their Germanness or embraced the host culture: they could become "transcultural" without the pressing threat of acculturation. In times of peace, at least, German

communities in western Europe found ways to reconcile their Germanness with state loyalties.

Not all migration from the core German lands was voluntary. Religious persecution has often created refugees, as shown by Ashkenazi Jewish migration during the Middle Ages, the dispersal of Mennonites after the Reformation, and so forth. German liberals migrated to escape the 1819 Karlsbad Decrees, and, more dramatically, the counterrevolution after the failed 1848–1849 Revolutions. Political oppression also encouraged migration from overseas communities: German Mennonites, for example, left Russia in the 1880s to escape conscription.<sup>72</sup>

The largest recent wave of involuntary emigrants from the core German lands consisted of predominantly Jewish refugees from National Socialism: 330,000 from Germany, 150,000 from Austria, and 25,000 from the Sudetenland. Jewish and non-Jewish Germans fled National Socialism in two waves, firstly in 1933 and then in 1938–1939. Most went to countries bordering Germany, hoping for an early return, but many migrated further overseas, especially to America, when threatened by further Nazi expansion during the Second World War.<sup>73</sup> Once again, different patterns of migration shaped efforts to reconcile Germanness with other loyalties. German refugees and their descendants faced a distinct challenge: reconciling their attachment to Germanness with memories and experiences of persecution, yet yearning nevertheless for the lost German homeland, could inhibit the sense of belonging in the new land.

Contributors to this special issue examine communities from very different waves of migration; each case study thus hopefully represents a broader experience reconciling Germanness with a host community. Alexander Maxwell and Sacha E. Davis respectively examine longstanding eastern European German communities in Hungary and Romania, and their responses to nationalizing states. Germans in Budapest, confronted with revolutionary nationalism during the 1848–1849 Hungarian revolution, sought to combine German and Hungarian loyalties. Budapest changed hands several times during the tumultuous year; revolutionary and counterrevolutionary armies took opposing attitudes toward imperial Austria. Nevertheless, Maxwell argues that Germans in Budapest, regardless of the political context, consistently imagined themselves as simultaneously German and Hungarian, and most particularly as Hungarian rather than Austrian or Habsburg. They rooted their claims to good citizenship in their Germanness. Such claims to “dual nationality” drew on local roots in Hungarian nationality politics to express German aspirations, underlining that German nationalism could exist without reference to a German nation-state.

While German nationalism did not require reference to a German state, German nationalists in Transylvania after the First World War looked to build ties with other Germans in Romania, eastern Europe more broadly understood, and in Germany itself under the rubric of a greater German *Volksgemeinschaft* (national community).

The transformed political environment after the War invalidated a longstanding strategy of conciliation toward the Hungarian government, and Transylvanian Saxons struggled to accommodate themselves to the new Romanian authorities, who were not responsive to arguments about Germanness indicating good citizenship. Davis finds that Transylvanian Saxon nationalists embraced other Germans in eastern Europe and Germany not as a rejection of local understandings of Saxanness, but to shore up their position in Romania. Lacking the instruments of state and formal citizenship to impose definitions of Germanness, Saxon nationalists imagined the *Volksgemeinschaft* as an extension of their own historical “civilizing mission” in eastern Europe; a perception which functioned unevenly as a means of building links to other Germans, but which reinforced Germanness in Transylvania.

Sabina Groeneveld looks at Jiaozhou, one of the *Kaiserreich’s* overseas colonies, and its inhabitants, who never left the embrace of the German state. Colonial institutions forcefully preserved and promoted Germanness in northern China. Groeneveld’s paper describes how notions of Germanness informed a variety of colonial policies governing architectural standards, hygienic regulations, reforestation schemes, and so forth. The racial privileges of European colonization affected how German inhabitants of Tsingtau, the colonial capital, experienced their Germanness: Tsingtau Germans strove to create a sense of Germanness in China itself. Groeneveld finds that Germanness permeated everyday habits and practices, including cooking and housework. Yet notions of Germanness were no less uniform within individual German communities than they were between them. By playing on racial hierarchies, even German domestic servants were able to claim a status unavailable to them in Germany by asserting their Germanness, and thus their superiority to the Chinese.

Christian Wilbers provides a case study of individual German migration to the established United States. Germans in a diaspora community often maintained separate links to their particular regional homelands. During the 1930s, Saxons in the interwar United States struggled to balance overlapping loyalties to Saxony, Germanness, and America. Wilbers, analyzing Saxon American letters to newspapers in Saxony, finds that while Nazi ideas influenced Germans in the United States, they barely affected German-American dual loyalties. Racialist thinking even helped “white” Germans find a place in the United States. Saxons in America articulated their Germanness through food and popular celebrations, such as “German day,” and did so primarily because of homesickness and nostalgia. They sought to integrate into American society while retaining their Germanness, despite vigorous anti-German feeling both during and after the First World War. German sympathizers with National Socialism in interwar America saw National Socialism as bringing them closer to America and offering models for reform.

Dani Kranz, finally, studies German Jewish refugees and their descendants in Israel. Israelis of German heritage, like Hungarians or Americans of German heritage,

express their Germanness through food choices, distinctive customs, and other aspects of material culture. Indeed, the local term for Israeli Germans, *Yekkes*, derives from an article of clothing. Kranz traces *Yekke* institutions through several decades of Israeli history, showing that they resemble German institutions in Romania and the United States. Having maintained or “rediscovered” their Germanness despite some measure of public disapproval in Israel, *Yekkes* increasingly embraced the right to citizenship of the Bonn and Berlin Republics. Given the traumatic character of German-Jewish relations during the twentieth century, the Germanness of Israeli Germans seems strikingly similar to the Germanness in other emigrant communities.

Over all, we find that, when adopting a polycentric viewpoint, the “big questions” of German history, of citizenship and belonging, of defining Germanness, and the impact of National Socialism, do not lose their significance. Instead, they take on very different dynamics when placed in their various contexts outside the German state. We hope that the contributions to this special issue will deepen scholarly understandings of Germanness both in the German diaspora and in Central Europe itself.

#### Notes

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19. Rudolf Heine, “Der Kampf gegen das Teschechentum in Niederösterreich,” *Mittheilung des Vereins Südmark* 4, no. 9 (1909): 390; see also “Von unseren Gegnern,” 5, no. 4 (1909): 240.
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