

INTRODUCTION



German Studies and Ethnography

Histories, Similarities, and Intersections

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From Hans Staden's popularization of the term "cannibal" after his captivity by a Brazilian indigenous tribe, to Goethe's famous stroll through the Rome carnival, and from Gerhart Hauptmann's colonial perspective on rural Brandenburg, to films about Turkish immigrants in Germany,¹ ethnographic observations have long inspired German creative works. The number of academic studies that combine an ethnographic outlook with cultural-historical research, elements of literary form, and literary and cultural analysis has grown in German studies in the United States.² And yet, German studies has yet to include ethnography alongside fields it routinely acknowledges as part of its repertoire. Nevertheless, in the last decades, scholarly publications and conference presentations in the United States have increasingly, albeit irregularly, focused on the interactions between the two.

It is the goal of this volume to showcase the intersections between ethnography and German studies. But this volume goes further than simply categorizing certain research themes and work methods as "ethnographic." Making observations at popular festivals or art exhibitions, examining historical accounts of foreign cultures, interviewing participants at cultural events, and then writing about these experiences, may bear traces of ethnographic work but are not always comprehensively ethnographic activities. To deserve this distinction, research must be conducted from a specific conceptual perspective and carried out with rigorous methods of observation, notation, analysis, and writing. Such work has been done in the field of German studies, and this volume's chapters highlight just the kinds of conceptualization, methodology, and writing that make research ethnographic. In showcasing such research, the volume draws attention to ethnography as a core research methodology and writing practice, not least to encourage its conscious and systematic use in research and teaching and its inclusion among other prominent research approaches used in German studies.

To provide more context for the chapters within, this introduction highlights the similarities and affinities between German studies and ethnography, the multidisciplinary features of each, and the transnationalism of the volume's authors and their research. Those who have contributed to this volume have complex migration histories that involve many global locations, though all are connected to the United States in one way or another. The diversity of their cultural and academic backgrounds shapes the conceptual, methodological, and formal textual features of the chapters. The focus of this volume, then, is on the connections between German studies and Anglo-American approaches to ethnography. The reasons for this focus are many. First, considering international approaches would extend the scope of this introduction too much. In addition, though the ethnographic methods described in the following are used internationally, their *reflexive* approach derives from U.S. anthropology and ethnography, and most of the following chapters follow it.

So, what *are* ethnography and German studies, and how are they connected? This introduction uses the term “field” for these two broad, interdisciplinary research areas and “discipline” for research in more specialized areas, like literary studies, history, anthropology, sociology, and so forth. There is no question that “disciplines” are themselves interdisciplinary and cannot be neatly circumscribed. Yet many contribute to the repertoire of German studies and ethnography, whose histories, research methods, and writing practices in turn radiate into numerous humanities disciplines and receive impulses from them. Because the complexity of both German studies and ethnography cannot be captured in only a few pages, the overviews in this chapter are necessarily brief. They nevertheless illustrate the affinities, interactions, and dialogues between these fields as they occur in research practice. This introduction traces the intersections in their historical emergences and methodologies, especially in regard to ethnographic observation and writing, and it theorizes these intersections with the help of *Ähnlichkeitstheorie* (similarity theory). This approach enables us to acknowledge the distinctions between the two fields while carving out their affinities and rhizomatic entanglements. The goal, overall, is to reveal German studies and ethnography as former neighbors who may have lost touch with each other but who can become allies if they recognize their similarities and intersections.

I make the following remarks as a German studies and folklore scholar who was trained in both fields in the United States, where I arrived with a transnational (Romanian-German-British) foundation in *Germanistik*, a European and especially German style of German literary studies that I address later. My academic background, then, informs my ideas about the connections between German studies and ethnography. To date, a substantial part of my research has revolved around ethnographic and cultural

studies of German popular festivals, which I have explored through long-term, multi-site fieldwork and interdisciplinary, performance studies-centered cultural analysis. My other investigations have been in literary and film studies. These interests, and the academic and non-academic experiences they have offered me, have left me analyzing and questioning my position relative to both fields under scrutiny here. Sometimes, this position is uncomfortable because it does not garner much collegial respect. At other times it provokes epiphanies and unexpected sharing with like-minded scholars. This volume attempts to showcase the existing, yet not often thematized, dialogue between ethnography and German studies. The introduction wishes to highlight the breadth and diversity these fields can assume without imposing a conceptual coherence from the outside, or trying to formally streamline them. The result, as I hope, will allow readers to make their own rhizomatic (a term to which I return) connections between the chapters, so as to observe ethnography and German studies in their unencumbered thematic and conceptual dance.

Neighbors and Allies: German Studies and Ethnography

German Studies

German studies as practiced in the last six decades or so is a broad multidisciplinary field that unites a rich history and diversity of research related to all aspects of German-speaking cultures in nation states and diasporas. Literary studies, history, culture, film, performance studies, and art history (all represented in this volume), sociological studies with a cultural edge, archaeology, music, and linguistics (not represented here)—all these disciplines and more constitute German studies today. The field's U.S. origins, however, can be found in *Germanistik*.

A German discipline practiced in Europe before it was imported to the United States, *Germanistik* was the successor of an earlier and broader academic area that had emerged in the German-speaking regions of Central Europe at the turn of the nineteenth century, and which was influenced by Romantic concepts such as (national) feeling, territorial rootedness, and communion with nature. This early *Germanistik* had been multidisciplinary, bringing together literature, linguistics, medieval studies, and (often armchair) folklore studies, the social and political thrust of which were to establish a German national consciousness. In the absence of a national state, this consciousness had to be based on a shared culture and language, and efforts to create it increased after the failed attempts to establish a German democratic nation state during the 1848–49 revolutions.³ In their aftermath,

the earlier interdisciplinarity of *Germanistik* was narrowed to a concentration on philology and literary studies, and this was the form in which *Germanistik* crossed the Atlantic in the latter part of the nineteenth century. The discipline's U.S. practitioners were expected to adopt a German disciplinary identity and outlook, and this as late as among post-World War II refugee Germanists. Meanwhile, post-war West German *Germanistik* remained focused mainly on linguistics and literature. (The specific course of the discipline in the GDR is not under scrutiny here because of its slight reception and minor effect on both West German and U.S. *Germanistik*.) Although the multi- and interdisciplinarity of *Germanistik* practiced in Europe have increased significantly in the last decades, the exploration of German culture, society, and history has been left mainly to other academic disciplines.⁴

In its current multidisciplinary form, U.S. German studies emerged in the United States in the 1960s in conjunction with the Vietnam War and the civil rights movement. At this time, in both the United States and Germany, students organized in response to these historical events, ultimately engendering paradigmatic changes in academia on both sides of the Atlantic. Students in the United States, often joined by faculty, took part in nationwide anti-war and civil rights movements. In West Germany, they began to question the involvement of their parents' generation in Nazi Germany. But both movements protested the Vietnam War and emphasized ideological critique, not least that of national identity.⁵ Moreover, the United States' post-World War II and Cold War self-concept as a global power was requiring a better understanding of world events, an understanding provided by Area Studies—multidisciplinary academic research focused on various aspects of discrete global nations and regions.⁶ The resulting academic interest in the history, society, culture, and politics of West Germany—a partner state shaped by the Allies that directly bordered the Iron Curtain and held economic interests for the United States⁷—played an important role in the North American understanding of Europe. A product of these global interests of the United States, German studies (called *Auslandsgermanistik*, *Germanistik* abroad, in its early stages) started off as an Area Studies field, and thus a direct result of U.S. Cold War politics. (The study of the socialist East in all its facets came into the field's purview only in 1990.) German studies originated mainly in literary scholarship but from the start, the field of history has been a stronghold with a robust connection to literary research. (In fact, most scholars working in German studies today are likely from one of these two disciplines.) German studies scholars embraced a “North American style of knowing,”⁸ that is, an epistemology invested in interdisciplinary research with a cultural and social studies orientation whose foci changed throughout time.⁹ Following

broader trends in the humanities and social sciences, the field took up women's and ethnic studies in the 1970s at a time when the humanities, social sciences, and anthropology started to embrace cultural studies themes and methodologies.¹⁰

German studies' approaches shifted again when U.S. interests changed from regional to global at the end of the Cold War. By that time, the field had de-territorialized its foci to include issues such as globalization, sustainability, and human rights.¹¹ Since then, German studies has continued to diversify, emancipating itself from the dominance of only one *Leitdisziplin*, that is, one single approach for all research (such as psychoanalysis), to embrace a multiplicity of coexisting conceptual paradigms. In the twenty-first century, these range from posthumanism and ecocriticism to environmental humanities. Though this overview of the history of German studies in North America is cursory, ample documentation of the topic exists elsewhere, so a full recapitulation is not necessary here.¹² Moreover, the field's professional organizations and journals testify to the interdisciplinarity and diversity of contemporary German studies.¹³ According to Claudia Breger, new "turns"¹⁴ (such as the affective, cognitive, ethical, evolutionary, neurological, and religious ones) are currently emphasizing the hermeneutic value of experience, which had not been central to previous inquiry in German studies. This opening toward experience can only be strengthened by including the conceptual and methodological tools of ethnography more systematically.

Ethnography

In the most literal sense, ethnography refers to writing (*graphia*) about a certain people (*ethnos*), as several chapters note in this volume. While ethnography, like German studies, is too varied to be described concisely, the following methodological overview sketches out the types of research and reflection that are commonly considered ethnographic. The central method is on-site fieldwork, which consists mainly of observation, interviews, and note-taking in order to "study ... the culture(s) [that] a given group of people more or less share"¹⁵ as they "go about their everyday lives."¹⁶ Fieldwork is thus a means of learning about "sites where cultural expression occurs or where people involved live and do a variety of activities."¹⁷ Typically, the work involves participant observation, a method by which the researcher involves herself, to different extents, in the activities of a culture, while still observing as a non-participant. Other ethnographic methods include interviews, archival research, and media analysis. Fieldwork also extends to the preparation, analysis, note-taking, and writing that is done before, during, and after making observations. The knowledge obtained through fieldwork is understood to construct the field in the first place, because individual research

foci and associated observations generate specific bodies of material that are unique to each ethnographic project.

Especially in the last five decades, a reflexive turn originating mainly from U.S. ethnography and anthropology has occurred. As a result, new ethnographic approaches reject purportedly objective claims about facts and realities divorced from the observer (ethnographic realism) and instead embrace self-conscious, critical methodologies geared to producing nuanced, ethical, and equitable representations of fieldwork material. Fieldwork-oriented disciplines such as social and cultural anthropology, sociology, folklore studies, and ethnomusicology have embraced this approach in the United States and abroad, including in Germany.

A History of Observation

Fieldwork is integral to the identity and historical continuity of ethnography, even if the parameters of such research have changed over time owing to a critical reckoning with ethnography's problematic origins and complicity with Western colonialism, imperialism, and nationalism since the Renaissance, and especially in the last three centuries. Already in antiquity, historians, chroniclers, travelers, explorers, settlers, and missionaries used the observations they made about the foreign cultures they encountered (or merely read or heard about) to critique the decadence of the own culture or to claim its superiority. Such observations were political because they sought to highlight the failings and need for reform of their own society or demonstrate its authority over those labeled barbarians, cannibals, primitives, or savages. When referencing foreign cultures in order to critique their own, observers idealized them—Herodotus' Thracians (440 BC), Tacitus's Germanic tribes (98 AD), or Montaigne's Brazilian "cannibals" (c. 1580) offer telling examples. On the other hand, many observers vilified foreign peoples in order to justify their domination, enslavement, and destruction. Accounts about foreign cultures were written in various genres, from treatises and pamphlets to travel descriptions, diaries, and official accounts. Assessments of unfamiliar groups as "primitive" and foreign could be even extended to the lower classes of the observer's own, European society, as Alyssa Howards' chapter about Gerhart Hauptmann's late nineteenth-century novellas illustrates in this volume.

At the same time, middle-class scholars, teachers, and clerks since the Enlightenment surveyed their own societies in order to salvage the last remnants of what they considered folk or peasant cultures. This urgency was related to their perception that such cultures were vanishing, casualties of the onslaught of civilization and progress embodied by both colonialism and industrialization. Other than in colonial contexts, such study served to

elevate the formerly disregarded rural or lower-class domestic cultures to salt of the earth custodians of the nation with an untainted ancestry. Especially throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, this preoccupation with domestic cultures was initially emancipatory (from aristocratic rule) and later exclusionary (on racial and ethnic grounds) and evolved to various European nationalisms.

Regardless of whether they were made in foreign, colonial, or home contexts, historical accounts about foreign populations can still tell us a great deal about the past of those societies and cultures. Currently scholars are careful, however, to separate useful information from distortions caused by ideology and racism. In this volume, for example, Giovanna Montenegro's chapter engages with one of the most iconic examples of such ideologically distorted yet still valuable observations, Hans Staden's sixteenth-century account of his stay among Brazilian "cannibals." On the one hand, as Montenegro shows, there is no question about Staden's racial, cultural, and religious biases toward the Tupinambá, who kept him prisoner for nine months. On the other, his text is still considered a relevant source of information about the pre-contact Indigenous cultures of the Americas. Staden's account, and those of other, even well-meaning explorers and colonialists, display unquestionable Eurocentrism and misrepresentations based on an us versus them dichotomy. The writings of such observers might nevertheless contain early seeds of what we regard as ethnographic viewpoints and methodologies today, such as careful observation and description, extended stays in the host culture, and learning the local languages.

Ethnographic Methods

The following overview of ethnographic methods aims to highlight for a humanities and German studies readership what ethnography can do—and already does—for their disciplines. Practiced conscientiously, with an awareness of the inescapability of one's own bias, the methods referenced in this section account for what makes contemporary ethnography distinct among humanities disciplines. This distinction is best represented by the use of the related concepts of *observation* and *ethnographic perspective*. Each of this volume's chapters showcases these concepts at work in different historical eras, in individual ways, and with different results. In concert, the chapters call attention to the perspectivism implied in these concepts and invite its conscious use in German studies. But what does a rigorous ethnographic perspective entail?

In anthropology, folklore, and even literature departments today, any manual describing how to conduct ethnographic research emphasizes that *perspective* is key to both the ethnographic research process and the expression

of its results in academic writing.¹⁸ In the 1980s, observation was rethought as a consequence of the Writing Culture debate, so called because of George Marcus and James Clifford's eponymous edited volume that ignited this debate.¹⁹ Alongside other writings, Marcus and Clifford's book was instrumental in initiating the "reflexive turn" in ethnography and the disciplines using it. Briefly summarized, this "turn" introduced self-reflexivity and positionality in ethnographic observation and writing. Its conceptual after-effects mark ethnographic work to this day, even if some anthropologists have been rethinking their approaches meanwhile, for example with a focus on intersubjectivity.²⁰ Post-turn approaches place reflexivity, the researcher's continuous awareness of her perceptions (including those of the self), at the core of ethnographic inquiry, while Clifford Geertz's "thick description," referenced in several chapters of this volume and by now a "classic [of] cultural description,"²¹ emphasizes the relevance of rigorous contextual representation and the inclusion of insider perspectives.²²

Ethnographic observation is an embodied activity that combines observation and writing from the earliest stages of a project.²³ Observation is impossible without a subjectively and epistemologically determined focus, of which ethnographic researchers are expected to be conscious. Researchers who wish to minimize the impact of their subjective processes on their research use techniques that "denaturalize" their own position, such as adopting the role of a stranger—someone who observes something entirely unfamiliar or continually asks "why" as a child might. Distancing methods help create a cognitive state in which the researcher notices cultural phenomena that she might have otherwise taken for granted or assumed to be natural, regardless of her level of familiarity with the society she is investigating.²⁴ Although ethnographic observation can never be neutral or entirely detached from the observer, then, "good ethnographers are reflective of who they are and about what they bring to the field [and] how they might impact upon the field."²⁵

The physical precondition of observation, that is, the researcher's "being there" in the flesh, as well as the need to deliberately adopt certain cognitive and behavioral frames, point to the performative features of ethnographic research. In encounters with another society, group, event, or cultural phenomenon, this performativity is layered in ways that are charged politically and ethically. Thus, a fieldworker might need to adopt certain social identities and roles and suppress others depending on the demands of the research situation. Gaining access to a group, for example, is a difficult and delicate undertaking in which roles must be constructed, and fieldwork accounts are full of stories about epiphanies and infelicities that occur in the course of such encounters. The performative features of the researcher's ethnographic perspective and presence do not end here but continue throughout her study

and determine how she presents herself to the participants. A common recommendation for fieldworkers is to remain approachable but also neutral, especially if tense situations ensue, such as being mocked or involved in disputes. Ethnographers are expected to establish rapport and gain the trust of their hosts and interlocutors but hold back personal opinions and avoid slipping into roles such as adviser, confidant, or therapist.²⁶ Such roles can be deceptive and cause false expectations, and in worst-case scenarios, exploit the participants, such as when, in her research account, the ethnographer discloses a participant's intimate personal information or situates identifiable persons in a bad or embarrassing light. Therefore, throughout the fieldwork, analysis, and writing process, ethnographers must always be guided by "ethical imperatives." This means that they must always respect the participants' decisions, treat them equitably, protect their well-being, and not harm them through research actions or publications.²⁷

Ethnographers use a variety of strategies to minimize their influence on the studied environment, all while remaining aware that they can never observe and access an external reality exhaustively but only "a specific reality generated by [their] intervention."²⁸ In the words of Indigenous literary scholar Arnold Krupat, they should strive to be aware that they "inevitably enter into relation with and have an effect upon whatever it is that [they] observe."²⁹ If acknowledged, this inevitable involvement does not have to be a disadvantage, especially since the reflexive turn has done away with the illusion that fieldwork observations, like other qualitative data, can ever be completely objective. Instead, ethnographers now develop and draw on individual strategies to achieve the best possible understanding of what they observe.³⁰ Self-reflexivity remains the main perspectival method in ethnography although it has been criticized for not being able to escape ideological constraints and even solipsism.³¹ Alternative approaches include, for example, ethnographic projects executed by teams or within a social "system" (a group conducting a shared activity such as a class) that critically analyzes itself.³²

Taken together, the aim of these perspectival methods is to observe events as closely as possible in line with the project's goals (understanding that these goals may shift during fieldwork), while at the same time sampling participants' diverse cognitive perspectives about the events. Thus conceptualized and executed, ethnographic research generates situated, "partial truths" (James Clifford's term³³), even if the observations are complemented by other methods, such as interviews, archival research, supporting texts, or other media. This partiality does not take away from the validity of the resulting insights and does not mean that ethnographic researchers cannot aim for broad analytical insights and generalizations. Yet four decades after ethnographers began to reflect on their observations and writing, "the critical

self-examination of ... thinking and work habits is an almost taken-for-granted epistemological instance” for ethnographic work.³⁴

The critical analysis of ethnographic materials creates one reality, while the fieldworker’s presence creates others, because it affects social relationships and may cause moral evaluations by the researcher and others involved. All these factors can have political and social consequences that the researcher needs to approach ethically. Not all ethnographers are academics who communicate mainly through specialized forums and textual accounts; some might work in public positions that involve social work and activism. It has therefore become customary in ethnographic research that the “critical” intervention is tied to an ethical argument.³⁵ Anthropologist George E. Marcus warns, however, of the backfiring that can occur when the critical edge of ethnography is blunted by excessive liberal indignation or denunciation.³⁶ This volume is invested in the ethical responsibility of scholarly arguments, albeit with an awareness that it can contain ideological perils such as condescendence and bias. Nevertheless, the exploration of social and cultural items, practices, and events involving structural and individual power differentials warrants a moral position that it is nuanced and impartial and not used as the pre-set goal of the inquiry. Several chapters in this volume make this ethical position explicit in arguments about colonial and postcolonial perspectives and migration (Howards, Montenegro, Levent Soysal, and Barbara Wolbert).

Ethnographies belong among the most encompassing works that tap into the depths and complexities of human societies and their cultural phenomena. The most common form remains the textual account based on written material that directly reflects the observer’s position and thus creates the field, that is, fieldnotes. Still the customary mnemonic device and main source of data for any on-site study, fieldnotes are the first noted observations of the researcher, even if they are later revised, expanded, and (at least partially) included in the final text. Interpretation and writing are already at work in the observation stage, accounting for continuity between the ethnographic perspective and final textual analysis.³⁷ The researcher holds the responsibility of interpretation from the very beginning, implying an ethical position that she assumes already when jotting down first observations. Consequently, any ethnographic interpretation must strive to avoid the “usurpation of interpretive authority.”³⁸ Writing the finalized account in a self-reflexive mode or acknowledging it as “partial truth” offer solutions for avoiding such usurpation and framing the ethnographic analysis unambiguously.³⁹ Other such methods are the production of “messy texts” and the “thick descriptions” referenced earlier. The former try, experimentally, to highlight the fieldworker’s interpretive position and the field’s dialogical features and polyphony by including a multitude of voices and perspectives.⁴⁰

The latter offer detailed, in-depth (“thick”) descriptions by the researcher as participant observer that situate new information in rich contexts to allow conclusions about broader social and cultural patterns.⁴¹ Given this multitude of textual possibilities, ethnography’s “reflexive turn” was also a “literary turn”⁴² that revealed affinities between ethnography and literature, to which I will return. These affinities become clearer in light of the shared pasts of ethnography and German studies.

Ethnography and German Studies: Related Histories

The history of German ethnography since the end of World War II is long and complicated. It would be too extensive to circumscribe this “*Vielnamenfach*” (discipline of many names) and its various combinations of ethnology, folklore studies, cultural and social anthropology, and so forth, each approached differently at different German universities, in this introduction. Not only has this historical work already been done,⁴³ but the focus here is primarily on the connections between U.S. approaches to ethnography and German studies. The historical trajectory of German ethnography that I trace in this section nevertheless reveals overlaps between U.S. approaches and scholarship conducted in Germany. Additionally, this section includes U.S. folklore studies, because this discipline shares some of its history and theoretical assumptions with its approximate equivalent, German *Volkskunde*, illustrating that—rather than evolving as nationally and conceptually distinctive disciplines—U.S. and German fieldwork-oriented research in various disciplines emerged from joint origins.

At the beginnings stood Enlightenment ideas: the humanist universalism of Kantian extraction on the one hand, and Herderian particularism and relativism on the other.⁴⁴ For over a century, these philosophical views informed a German history of ideas whose representatives often combined a cosmopolitan outlook, multilingualism, migrant background, and global travels with rigorous observation and literary writing.⁴⁵ Among these representatives are Alexander von Humboldt (1769–1859), one of the founders of the modern sciences, and Adelbert von Chamisso (1781–1838), a member of global expeditions and Romantic writer. Contemporaries and successors such as Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832), Georg Forster (1754–94), and Adolf Bastian (1826–1905) are represented in this volume in the chapters by Christian Weber, Madhuvanti Karyekar, and Andrew Calabro Cavin.

While the interests of these explorer-scholars were international in scope, Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm (1785–1863, 1786–1859), who belonged to the same conceptual tradition and whose names are just as resonant, focused on European and domestic themes in their linguistics and philology research.⁴⁶ Counted among the founders of both *Volkskunde* (the equivalent of U.S.

folklore studies) and *Germanistik*, the Grimms were archival researchers who, other than their wide-traveled contemporaries, did not venture even into their local world.⁴⁷ The brothers nevertheless fictionalized themselves as fieldworkers who collected oral texts from the simple folk, for instance by portraying themselves in the fashion of colonial accounts as explorers peeking through the foliage unseen to observe the *Volk* composing its lore undisturbed.⁴⁸ A large body of their writings (for instance on medieval literature and fairytales) laid the groundwork for German philological and literary studies, *Germanistik*. The Grimms' efforts to learn and write about about their home world offer an example for the fact that, at least since the early 1800s, modern ethnography and its focus on observation and fieldwork were inseparable from literary research and creativity.

Although the term "folk-lore" was coined in 1846 by the British writer William Thoms (1803–1885) to refer to the fragments of oral and rural cultures that had to be salvaged from the onslaught of industrialization—a project pursued in both German-speaking and anglophone regions (including the United States) and elsewhere in the world—folklore research was established as a scholarly pursuit not least owing to the efforts of German scholars such as Jacob Grimm, Wilhelm Mannhardt (1831–1880), and Max Müller (1823–1900). Yet throughout the nineteenth century, *Volkskunde* gradually left behind its relativist and humanist beginnings and acquired increasingly stronger nationalist and discriminatory undertones eventually degenerating into "the historicist study of a superior, Germanic self."⁴⁹ In the twentieth, Nazi *Volkskunde* absorbed the dominant ideology of racial, cultural, and national homogeneity of (mainly invented) "Nordic" and "Germanic" extraction.⁵⁰

In contrast, the study of folklore in the United States did not serve nationalistic goals and was informed by international, albeit originally mostly European scholarship. From a discipline close to literary studies that worked mainly with theories such as diffusionism and structuralism,⁵¹ U.S. folklore studies in the last decades of the twentieth century shifted closer to sociology, anthropology, and performance studies, thus acquiring an own North American academic identity. Currently, U.S. folklore studies focus on the study of vernacular artistic expression and art forms that are investigated with the help of ethnographic methods as sketched above.⁵² Popular literary genres such as folktales and legends remain of prominent interest, but they and the multitude of other cultural items and phenomena explored in this discipline are analyzed using gender, postcolonial, transcultural, ecocritical, creolization, and cultural transmission theories or specifically folkloric theories.⁵³

Völkerkunde, German anthropology, had a different trajectory than folklore studies but, like it, was influenced by German politics. The Wilhelminian

empire's (1871–1918) belated entry in the race for colonies, its acquisitions, and colonial politics contributed to the advancement of racial anthropology and hygiene, which laid the groundwork for the discriminatory racial and antisemitic conceptions of the Nazis.⁵⁴ However, the Wilhelminian empire also encouraged the founding of anthropological-ethnological museums as well as related exhibits that offered their public a certain degree of cosmopolitan self-education. Yet even they catered to exotic curiosity and reinforced the belief in German superiority.⁵⁵ These developments were not homogeneous, however. As Calabro Cavin's chapter shows through the example of Adolf Bastian's work, German anthropology at the turn of the twentieth century could emphasize fragmentary and positioned knowledges about other cultures, further developing the comparative and relativist thinking of the Enlightenment and anticipating that of current ethnographic approaches. In the early decades of the twentieth century, in fact, German ethnology and anthropology even accommodated some left-leaning and women scholars, and supported comparative, economic, and women's studies. The method of rigorous ethnographic fieldwork through "careful description and mastery of local languages" was also developed around this time.⁵⁶

Once they came to power, the Nazis suppressed any and all progressive research. Some German scholars emigrated or fled while their colleagues collaborated, denounced fellow scientists, and legitimized the Nazi colonialist and racist ideology in their work.⁵⁷ When World War II ended, it took a long time for *Volkskunde* and *Völkerkunde* to reform because, as Austrian anthropologist Andre Gingrich notes, anthropologists "who at first [were] banned from academic life after 1945 because of former Nazi involvement and then applied for reentry did receive that permission sooner or later."⁵⁸ Moreover, while disciplines such as German *Germanistik* and U.S. German studies were changing under the impact of the 1968 movements,⁵⁹ *Volkskunde* opened itself to impulses from British and U.S. anthropology and embraced *Alltagsstudien*, the study of (usually) urban domestic cultures, only in the 1970s.⁶⁰ Today, German ethnology reflects continuing global changes in the discipline, as researchers tend to conceptualize (and contextualize) the objects of their study in terms of cultural and historical processes.

For purposes of brevity and simplicity, this overview of the histories of German studies and ethnography (including folklore studies and anthropology) does not engage with the broader international influences on the U.S. and German scholarship scrutinized in this chapter. It also recounts only *one* trajectory of scholarly interest in ethnographic approaches. A cadre of historians, for instance, arrived at a very similar place by exploring histories of the quotidian (*Alltagsgeschichte*), whereas other humanities disciplines have their own historical intersections with ethnography.

The outcome of the histories that I have traced is that, since the 1980s, German studies and ethnography have reoriented themselves to a more self-reflexive approach on both sides of the Atlantic.⁶¹ German handbooks, overviews of, and introductions to ethnographic research contain methodological approaches to fieldwork as I sketched them earlier, ranging from the role play of participant observation to “elaborate variant[s] of voyeurism.”⁶² Like U.S. research, German sources acknowledge the centrality of “untidy [ness],” ambivalence, and contradictoriness in fieldwork experiences and the shift in ethnographic writing from the ostensibly objective stance of ethnographic realism to the reflexive turn.⁶³

Today, ethnography has a primarily methodological identity that it derives from how it conceptualizes observation, fieldwork, and writing. Nevertheless, ethnography is more than that. It also requires a specific type of epistemological interest and engagement, the training of certain psychological and emotional positions, and a conscious and explicit reflexive pose that results in ethically-committed critical arguments.⁶⁴ Ethnography moreover allows for a multitude of writing genres and techniques, many of them creative, and includes the final products of this writing, the ethnographies, that in their turn constitute a specific type of literature whose works may or may not be academic. Finally, ethnographies provide a certain outlook on the world and create realities, an effect that their creators and readers recognize. This excess to the methodological identifies ethnography as a field.

In contrast, German studies are mainly theme oriented as they research all things German with help from a multitude of theories and methods, including ethnography. Yet both German studies and ethnography share humanist and relativist founding principles inherited from, among others, German philosophical thinking, as well as some of their founders and some research foci (for example, the narrative focus). Both also appeared as a result of transatlantic historical developments that reacted to similar global and domestic conditions, especially industrialization and colonialism, new global power structures after World War II, and reckonings with oppressive political pasts in the United States and Germany. Social and cultural alterity were and remain in their scholarly focus. Current scholarship in both German studies and ethnography includes research on migration and transcultural phenomena, performance and gender, ecocriticism and posthumanism, as well as other shared topics.

This outline of the commonalities between German studies and ethnography shows that these fields are historically and conceptually related, even if the primary emphasis of each differs. The ethical argument, for example, is generally expected in ethnography and folklore studies, but customary only in some areas of German studies, such as postcolonial, decolonizing, or migration research. Further, German studies scholars have always been

invested in ethnographic thought, and research conducted in German studies disciplines occasionally reveals affinities with ethnography. This volume, therefore, wishes to recognize these affinities as a constant in German studies research and to encourage the use of ethnography in the teaching and future explorations of German studies.

As early as 1989, Jeffrey M. Peck pointed to similarities in history, anthropology, and literary studies. He urged U.S. Germanists to “acknowledge, as part of interpretation, [their] own implication in an ‘ethnography’ that [they] may write.”⁶⁵ This acknowledgment has existed for a long time but is not yet fully established in German studies. C. Weber’s chapter, for example, outlines Goethe’s poetic and ethnographic construction of the narrator perspective as a deliberate process that anticipates the ethnographic methods outlined above, whereas Barbara Wolbert’s chapter traces the ongoing difficulties of reconceptualizing observer perspectives in interdisciplinary research. Although ethnographic viewpoints have been emphasized only sporadically in German studies in the decades since Peck’s plea, scholars have implicitly used ethnographic insights and methods.⁶⁶ On the one hand, German studies scholars may surreptitiously use these insights and methods (or elements thereof) without an awareness that they are ethnographic or claim the use of ethnographic methods when their methodology is not sufficiently rigorous. On the other, German studies scholars who are trained ethnographically prefer not to emphasize that fact too openly because they can face skepticism and demeaning criticism from German studies colleagues about the all-too-empirical, phenomenological, experiential, and thus somehow “unscientific” nature of their work.⁶⁷ For this reason, these scholars often prefer to engage with the ethnographic dimensions of their research elsewhere than at German studies conferences and in field publications, though exceptions exist. Because the goal of German studies—just as that of ethnography—is to expand knowledge of distinct cultures and social groups by examining their creative products, histories, and lifeways, the issue is not that ethnographically-informed interdisciplinary research is or is not conducted in German studies. It is. The point is that such research should be recognized, promoted, and taught as one of the commonly used methodologies in this field.

People in Motion, Ethnography at Work

The sections above trace the methodological and historical affinities and intersections of German studies and ethnography in a general, abstract way. But such affinities and intersections would not exist without the human agents whose knowledge, practices, and activities generate these affinities and intersections in the first place. “Agents” here refers to people in motion

who take their knowledge with them to new locations where they transmit it by “spoken word and behavioral example.”⁶⁸ Borrowed from folklore studies, this characterization makes explicit the relevance of human movement, interaction, and dialogue to the interdisciplinarity of German studies and ethnography. For both, movement is not only a research theme (as in research on migration or diasporas) but a material factor in the creation and transmission of academic knowledge. In pointing to the historical and current relevance of such agents as liaisons between fields, one finds another element to the puzzle of the commonalities between ethnography and German studies.

An iconic example of such an “agent” is German-born American anthropologist Franz Boas (1858–1942) whose influence on U.S. anthropology is uncontested.⁶⁹ A historical successor to scholars such as von Humboldt and von Chamisso, in the 1880s Boas was the assistant of Adolf Bastian, the director of the Berlin Museum of Ethnology.⁷⁰ (He moved to the United States in 1887.) The mid-1880s were a crucial period for conceptualizations of German and international ethnographic thought, as Calabro Cavin’s chapter illustrates. Boas had a German humanistic education that included Kant’s universalist philosophy and Herder’s cultural relativism. Through his academic positions at New York’s Columbia University (starting in 1896), Boas transmitted these ideas to his students, Ruth Benedict, Zora Neale Hurston, and Margaret Mead among them.⁷¹ Counted among the founders of contemporary U.S. anthropology and folklore studies, these women scholars perpetuated, adapted, and creatively developed, each in her own way, what Boas had taught them. Together with their mentor, they initiated the “intellectual revolution,” which recognized that “mixing is the natural state of the world” and that preconceptions associated with categories like race, sex, and gender are artificial and have no meaning beyond the “mental frameworks and unconscious habits of a given society.”⁷²

Boas thus was a harbinger of the globalized, post-national academic identities that have become commonplace in ethnography and German studies as a result of migrations and diasporas, advances in communication and transportation technologies, and the increasing mobility and participation of individuals with transcultural personal and educational backgrounds. Although the motivations for relocation among contemporary scholars, many of them Germans, usually (but not always) differ from those of economic migrants and political refugees (the intellectual disconnect from German academia may play a role, for instance),⁷³ clashes, dissonances, and misunderstandings still shape their biographies and careers. For example, tensions can ensue between non- or hyphenated German *Germanistik* scholars with German studies in North America and elsewhere and in many other variants of transcultural academic interactions within German studies. At the same time, positive exchanges are fostered by international academic organizations,

institutions, publications, and teaching that allow exchanges of interest areas and research methods.⁷⁴

Although it is not often acknowledged, international mobility thus plays a crucial role in German studies scholarship, where transnational backgrounds are identified less explicitly and routinely than in ethnography as factors affecting research. When scholars do acknowledge this background, however, their accounts draw on the vocabulary of displacement, transition, and in-betweenness,⁷⁵ and even on the ethnographic term “participant observation.”⁷⁶ The scholar of German studies, in other words, often finds herself in an ethnographic position that she should not overlook as unrelated to her research but acknowledge explicitly as part of her investigation. This sort of self-disclosure is expected of ethnographers, who tend to be on the move, tapping into new cultures and treating the irritations and confusions attached to these experiences as research data with the potential to provide valuable insights. What is important here, then, is the explicit recognition that mobility and cross-cultural experiences invariably shape the work of German studies researchers, and that the perspectivism and interdisciplinarity (as well as the irritations) that accompany movement ought to be treated as valuable epistemological resources.

This volume calls attention to the diversity and significance of its authors’ personal and academic backgrounds. Born in India, Germany, Romania, Turkey, the United States, and Venezuela, the contributors were educated there, elsewhere, or both. All are Germanists and ethnologists with international biographies and interdisciplinary academic profiles. Some of them continue to work in teaching positions, others in administration, and one has just completed her doctorate. Several of them reached their current professional positions in either the United States or elsewhere on the globe after biographical, educational, and professional detours, sometimes through several societies and educational systems, some for economic considerations. While few chapters of this volume make their authors’ individual backgrounds explicit, such factors no doubt had an impact on the conceptual and textual forms of their contributions.

Similarities of Discourse: Literary Devices/Writing

Besides the commonalities in their histories and conceptual assumptions, and the mobility of their participants, German studies and ethnography intersect at other crucial points: textual production (that may include image and film) and the use of language. Of these, written texts are central in several ways. As noted earlier, ethnographic explorations start with fieldwork, an activity that involves perspectivism and textual production from the first to the last research moment. As a field that emerged from literary studies, a

large portion of German studies likewise engages with texts, from treating them as study resources to formulating research results.

A historical point of debate that emerges here is the composition and teaching of a literary canon. In German studies, supporters underline its significance for understanding German culture and history,⁷⁷ while detractors question the power structures that determine textual selections.⁷⁸ While the merits and constitution of a canon continue to be debated, the academic reality—at least as I have experienced it—is that *canons* would be a more appropriate term, since the texts a scholar deems essential are determined by her individual research and teaching goals and points of interest. In other words, the texts that scholars choose for research and teaching seem to depend, increasingly, on discrete thematic, hermeneutic, and pedagogical goals that reflect the diversity and multiplicity of the field as a whole. Nevertheless, there is no question that most German studies departments in the United States continue to see themselves, first and foremost, as providers of literature and language study that trains students in the deep reading and interpretation of highly regarded literary texts. Moreover, literature (in the sense of *belles lettres*) remains a major primary resource in numerous disciplines that explore German topics. Combined with film, folklore, and media materials, it can be analyzed from non-literary, for instance historical or anthropological perspectives, even in literature courses.

Despite its focus on literary texts as resources for academic research, the field of German studies does not encourage a wide diversity of writing styles in scholarly production. Textually experimental volumes such as *Ruptures in the Everyday* (2017), which consists of co-authored chapters, are still rare in the humanities, and even this volume uses the conventional, neutral writing perspective. Enhancing the incisiveness of scholarly prose with the help of individual auctorial accounts works best when the research straddles German studies and disciplines such as history, anthropology, or folklore studies.

Moreover, German studies students are expected to somehow learn to write academically by reading, practicing writing, receiving feedback, occasionally taking specialized writing courses, and seeking support from university writing centers. While personally relevant topics and reflections are not excluded from such textual production, research narratives are still expected to be formulated from an apparently neutral, omniscient perspective completely unrelated to the person of the writer. And yet, more often than not, the academic writer analyzes and formulates her findings in certain ways as a result of specific biographic and intellectual trajectories. Personal identities, experiences, and outlooks, and even particular talents and strengths, may have shifted her closer to a certain discipline, topic, or theory. Individual reasons might inspire her assiduous study and cause her to better understand and communicate eloquently about certain issues rather than others and

explain why these issues speak to her. There is no question that personality and cultural background play a role in the scholar's choice and execution of research projects.⁷⁹ Yet individual and subjective strengths and motivations are not often made explicit in German studies, possibly for fear of making the scholar appear too subjectively inclined and self-focused, and thus insufficiently invested in her research. In contrast, ethnographic training pays attention to the continuities between the scholars' subjectivities and research, as already outlined. This training also treats *per se* literary texts as ethnographic material, and ethnographic accounts (including fieldnotes) as literature, thus being sensitive to the literary dimensions of any textual production.

Since the reflexive turn in ethnographic research, many scholars have come to realize that "ethnographic truth is, like any truth (including this one), a rhetorical category whose meaning and shape varies with the contingencies of history and circumstance."⁸⁰ This is to say that ethnographic writing has come to be understood as subjectively inflected textual production related to the literary one whose personal and aesthetic dimensions—insofar as they are relevant to the research—support the validity of the account. Further, an "enormous" number of publications offer guidance for ethnographic writing.⁸¹ Ethnographers increasingly recognize that narrative, fictional, and poetic viewpoints can better reflect and convey their perspectives than neutral academic prose. They organize these viewpoints in various narrative genres, from the "tale of first encounter" that ethnographies rarely dispense with, to confessional, impressionistic, and jointly told narratives.⁸² Today it is acceptable for academic ethnographers to write somewhat messy texts with observations that they are not obliged to simplify for the sake of creating streamlined, coherent accounts; they can use literary writing and forms of defamiliarization such as collage and artwork to undermine naturalizing and homogenizing viewpoints.⁸³ Not least, the novel—to which one might add epic films with ethnographic dimensions such as those by German directors Werner Herzog, Ulrike Ottinger, or Valeska Grisebach—may, on occasion, "prove a better medium than the standard ... ethnography" or scholarly account for the "interpretation and explication of others' lives."⁸⁴ In fact, like German studies and literary scholars, ethnographers have occasionally turned to writers such as James Joyce, Franz Kafka, and Marcel Proust because they put us "in touch with another reality."⁸⁵ Whereas such modernist authors offer examples of a specific subjective perception of reality and the social and political insights it can offer, the works of some of their predecessors, such as the literary realists of the nineteenth century, can also provide instructive glimpses of the social issues and lifestyles of their historical eras.⁸⁶ An imaginative ethnography, as British sociologist Paul Willis has noted, can even reveal the poetic dimensions of experience itself.⁸⁷

Nevertheless, ethnographic writing aims to convey insights about actual, not fictional human experiences by using stylistic methods to represent something as true even when “conditions” are “impossible ... for such generalization” since “all the ‘facts’ never will be in.”⁸⁸ To solve this representational problem, Boas, for example, included an “abysmal[ly]” ironic catachrestic component in his writing (one exacerbating the difference between metaphor and referent) that anticipated later “partial truth” engagements with “cultural and epistemological chaos.”⁸⁹ Biographic and literary elements can also serve this purpose because they reveal the auctorial perspective as situated, finite, balanced by other perspectives, and possible to overcome should new facts and perspectives emerge.

In ethnography, German literature has contributed to theorizing this point. Namely, in his chapter published in the seminal *Writing Culture*, Vincent Crapanzano analyzes the observer perspective using three literary examples, among them Goethe’s “The Roman Carnival” (“Das römische Karneval,” 1789), also discussed in C. Weber’s contribution in this volume. Through his critical reading of Goethe’s perspective on the Rome events, Crapanzano engages with the relevance of *identifiable* perspectives.⁹⁰ No matter how objectionable a perspective may be—for instance in cases of Eurocentrism, patriarchalism, or racism—recognizing it has one advantage: it puts readers in the place of the omniscient Zeus who “understood when Hermes promised to tell no lies but did not promise to tell the whole truth” either.⁹¹ Identifiable perspectives, in other words, point to their own limitations, that is, partial truths, and thus to what is omitted from them. Since a reader might be able to fill in what is missing or critique the omission, this insight is of renewed interest in today’s era of fake news, conspiracy theories, and wars, when communicative distortions have long expanded outside the realm of ethnographic or literary (mis)representation. Integrating an author who is fundamental to German studies in such essential ethnographic insights once again points to the affinities between the two fields and their mutual relevance, not to mention that these considerations identify literature as an area of significant overlap between ethnography and German studies. While ethnographic researchers are attuned to such literary dimensions, however, German studies practitioners could engage more systematically with ethnographic elements in their writing processes.

Specific language knowledge constitutes a further discursive similarity between the two fields. Just as ethnographers are expected to master the languages of their researched groups and cultures (be they foreign languages or domestic vernaculars), German studies requires knowledge of German and its variants, both for research and instruction. Both fields, in other words, demand mastery of at least two spoken languages (not to mention academic jargons), a fact that identifies translation (and the positionality attached to it)

as a fundamental process in their knowledge production. To recognize this situatedness systematically would be advantageous to research conducted in German studies, as Karyekar's contribution to this volume illustrates. Karyekar's chapter engages specifically with how Georg Forster's translations of travel accounts aimed to deliberately orient readers toward more relativistic viewpoints than those of the source texts and thus to a better understanding of the readers' own cultural positions.

Emphasizing the position of the author-cum-translator as the nexus between observation and corresponding text, between the perceptions of the writer and readers, could be of advantage in German studies, where programs could conceivably expand some of their courses—or design courses specifically—to explore the ethnographic dimensions of literary texts (including subjectiveness, emotions, and perspectivism) or read ethnographic texts in view of their literary characteristics. Since ethnographic writing is occasionally taught in English and folklore programs, why not teach it in German ones as well? Moreover, instructors could train their students in diverse styles of academic writing that encourage tapping into individual subjectivities, not as final goals of writing, but as tools in the service of sharpening and nuancing analytical foci. This volume showcases some analytical and writing modes used in ethnographically oriented disciplines.

An Outlook on the Conceptual Advantages of Similarity

This chapter's overview of the affinities and distinctions between German studies and ethnography closes with a suggestion for theorizing the relationships between these fields, beginning with one of their most obvious similarities: the fact that both profess inter-, multi-, and cross-disciplinarity and explore social, cultural, and aesthetic realities that are far from systematic. If considered as a whole, the work done in both appears as aggregative with some thematic and methodological overlaps. So, while this chapter pleads for a more consistent and explicit acknowledgment, use, and teaching of ethnography in German studies, it does not regard either field as cohesive and does not imply that more structuring or standardization would benefit them. Rather, this chapter proposes that precisely this lack of cohesiveness can offer a productive starting point for theorizing the fluid relationships and overlaps between the two fields, as they result from their complex constitutions and the messy realities they address.

Approaching these relationships and overlaps with the help of similarity theory (*Ähnlichkeitstheorie*) can help us conceptualize the common ground between ethnography and German studies, not as a stable entity but as an irregular and flexible intermediary domain. According to *Ähnlichkeit*:

Ein kulturtheoretisches Paradigma (Similarity: A Paradigm of Cultural Theory, 2015), a volume edited by Anil Bhatti and Dorothee Kimmich, an excess of analysis and interpretation can create an excess of difference that is avoidable if the hermeneutic focus is on similarity.⁹² Taking this cue, a theoretical perspective interested in the similarities between ethnography and German studies does not aim to investigate these fields exhaustively but only considers their affinities while not disputing their unquestionable differences—as this chapter has attempted to do. Based in interdisciplinarity, *Ähnlichkeitstheorie* considers that dichotomies—the own and the alien, the self and the alterity, sameness and difference—conceal the multiplicity and fluidity of social communication and movement.⁹³ Differences resulting from such dichotomies can be exacerbated all too easily and, once established, are difficult to dismantle.⁹⁴ In contrast, similarities have the conceptual advantage of remaining fluid and malleable and thus capable of constant reconfiguration. Focusing on similarities instead of differences can therefore help us cultivate “the art of just getting along” and to establish “lines of solidarity across cultural and political formations” in spaces of communication and transition.⁹⁵ As spaces of communication and transition, German studies and ethnography have drifted apart despite their shared beginnings and conceptual common ground. Yet their similarities—some of them obvious, others hidden from view—continue to link them unsystematically in various correlations.

I have searched for a fitting metaphor for these correlations. Ethnography has been variously conceptualized as bricolage, quilt making, or montage; it has been described as a “crystal” whose multiple facets reflect multiple issues and whose epistemological work “crystallizes” in multiple directions.⁹⁶ But these material and mineral metaphors still seem too rigid for my idea of the relationships between ethnography and German studies. An organic metaphor seemed to offer an alternative: that of the “baroque” in the original Portuguese sense of the word meaning a pearl of irregular shape. For Marcus, who created this metaphor, “baroque” illustrates that ethnographic writing is created in “a more complicated situation of production than the one that literary scholars tend to imagine and for which they are nostalgic, despite their own central role in bringing the ethnographic genre to its current baroque moment.”⁹⁷ Marcus derives his metaphor from the analytical, organically evolving writing process as shared ground for ethnography and literature-focused research (to which we can count German studies).

For my own imaginative sensibility, the “baroque” could have been a suitable candidate for visualizing the relationships between the two fields, if the “baroque” pearl’s edges had been less smooth and rounded to facilitate attaching to something outside of them. (As anyone knows about assemblages of pearls, for example in jewelry, they cannot connect on their own but

usually need a fitting or some other method external to themselves to be held in place.) Yet I was looking for a metaphor of intertwining and interaction that *establishes connections*, and it had to be an organic one, since the interactions between ethnography and German studies are determined by mobile, thinking and feeling human beings and therefore do not evolve along the regular or deliberate trajectories of crystal growth, bricolage, or quilt-making, and are more capable to interlock than the roundness of a pearl. (Not to mention that pearls are defense mechanisms: they envelop unwanted intruders, but the connections that I seek to conceptualize are driven by exchange and affinity and not violation or injury.)

This is why the metaphor of the rhizome, introduced by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in the 1970s, seems to best fit the argument made here. Less ethereal and more robust than Georg Forster's spiderweb, referenced in Karyekar's chapter and Andrew Stuart Bergerson's conclusion to this volume, the rhizome offers a metaphor for heterogeneous assemblages in which all components are "conjugated"—as in yoked together—in flexible, organic exchanges, in which no component has primacy, and where each point of the rhizome can connect with any other.⁹⁸ Examples of rhizomes range from the invisible webs of mushrooms⁹⁹ to the difficult-to-trace spread of viruses,¹⁰⁰ with the second an especially apt example during the COVID-19 pandemic, which has accompanied the development of this volume. Since such systems consist of multiplicities, on a theoretical level they lack the power implications of binary, dichotomies-producing logic. In rhizomes, power is balanced locally by "determinations, magnitudes, and dimensions" that change permanently.¹⁰¹ Rhizomes and binary systems do not exclude one another, however; each can adopt the other's features and then change again in a model driven by permanent power flows, changes, and imbalances.¹⁰² The rhizome, in short, can integrate even dichotomies creatively.

Considering ethnography and German studies as affine systems of communication and interaction, where constant yet irregular knowledge flows foster rhizomatic engagements, we are better able to think them as "open-ended gatherings" governed by "patterns of unintentional coordination"¹⁰³ across interstitial conceptual spaces.¹⁰⁴ We can envisage research that integrates both without being forced to imitate or give priority to one or the other—research that "de-dramatize[s]" the differences between the two fields.¹⁰⁵ Adopting an "indifference to difference,"¹⁰⁶ in other words, can reveal the shared interests and academic preparations, theoretical and methodological commonalities, academic networking, and even comparable writing styles that exist between ethnography and German studies, also ensuring that the incontestable distinctions between their academic cultures do not fossilize into conceptual, ideological, and administrative separations.¹⁰⁷ This is the outlook that this volume wishes to convey.

Chapter Overviews

Together, this volume's chapters present the rhizomatic connections between German studies and ethnography in their thematic and theoretical affinities, hermeneutic approaches, and writing styles. All chapters share an ethnographic perspective. In their literary studies analyses of Goethe's and Forster's writings, for example, C. Weber and Karyekar address perspectivism directly. They show us how it emerges from the observational foci and textual features of Goethe's observations in Rome, and from how Forster's German translations of travel accounts challenge the cultural and colonial perspectives of foreign texts to encourage readers to form their own nuanced and critical viewpoints. Weber traces the steps by which the ethnographic perspective emerges throughout successive phases of Goethe's writing. This "poetic genealogy" of the reflective observer requires the conscious recognition and shaping of one's own subjectivity and this subjectivity's being in the world in ways that integrate polyvocality, social roles, and the conscious perception of distinctions. Other than in Crapanzano's reading, Goethe's observer and narrator ultimately become ethnographic in the highly performative environment of the Rome carnival, where Goethe performs his own cultural and social identity (that of a "Northerner") while the Romans disguise their social and individual identities behind fantastical masks. The carnival thus underscores the ethnographic position by offering a "photographic" negative of sorts: the observer uses the incognito in the everyday realm of his Italian travels in order to maintain a reflexive distance toward the visited societies. The same observer can reveal his actual self in the extraordinary, festive, yet also transitory environment of the carnival because everyone else adopts creative, fantastical roles at odds with those they assume in their everyday lives. If performance transports the participants of the carnival (including the person Goethe) to another world, Forster wishes for the reading of travel accounts to do the same, as Karyekar shows in her chapter. Forster, an experienced traveler and cultural observer, anticipates current ethnographic methodologies in other ways than Goethe. For example, Forster's voice is present in the introductions to his translations as he explains the textual processes of translation, relates them to the knowledge of the day, and criticizes armchair scholarship. As Karyekar explains, he thus carves out (unbiased) narration as the primary mode of informing about the world's cultures. For Forster and current ethnographers, in other words, specific viewpoints, cultural and social participation, and narrative cannot be separated. In their hands, narrative serves as the best vehicle for conveying the world not as an objective, material whole that can be controlled and classified, but as an experience perceivable only through "partial truths." Forster's goal in doing so, according to Karyekar, was to show his readers

how information is gathered, analyzed, and presented in order to educate them and heighten their ability to be critical, reflective citizens of the world.

Following the variety of perspectives espoused by Goethe and Forster, Calabro Cavin's chapter highlights how ethnographic perspectives had evolved by the turn of the twentieth century. Calabro Cavin traces their changes via Adolf Bastian's and Walter Benjamin's approaches to collecting and interpreting artifacts and writing about collections. As Calabro Cavin notes, Bastian's collections of cultural fragments were as notorious for their size and apparent disorderliness as his writings were for their labyrinthian prose. Working against the grain of contemporary thought, which aimed to produce coherent (and thus invariably hierarchical) Darwinist and evolutionary narratives, Bastian sought to achieve a suitable, anti-hierarchical representation of human reality, a reality that could not be thought other than fragmentary, disorderly, and messy. In this way, Bastian's collections and writings embody positionalities meant to encourage interdisciplinary and comparative analyses and thus the formation of critical subjects. According to Calabro Cavin, Bastian's epistemology inspired none other than Benjamin's historiographic project of assembling the past from a multitude of cultural materials, textual fragments, and commentary, thus adapting and transmitting the idea of reality as fragmentary—likely inherited from the Romantics—into modernist German thought. Nevertheless, neither Bastian's nor Benjamin's conceptions imply chaos and disjuncture: on the contrary, they open avenues to recognizing and theorizing fluid patterns across human cultures and eras and seek to recognize connectedness. In this approach they coincide with recent historical research in Deep History. Calabro Cavin completes the theoretical grounding of this volume by showing us how German thinkers anticipated its foci: relativist thought, the limits of understanding and representing "reality," and the possibility of perchance assemblages that remain important, beyond historiography, to ethnography and German studies today. Not least, Calabro Cavin himself follows the ethnographic method in disclosing his own disciplinarily determined thought processes and the ways in which they situate his argument between historiography and German studies.

If the first three chapters set the conceptual tone of the volume in regard to ethnographic perspective, the following chapters show this perspective at work. Lacy Gillette's art history analysis of *Trachtenbücher* (books of clothes or attire) shares Calabro Cavin's focus on collecting but takes it to the Renaissance. Gillette offers a careful reading of these European (mostly German) publications that collected and catalogued illustrations representing Germans and non-Germans in an attempt to depict all known people. As she argues, these illustrations showcase how the European perspective on non-European alterity formed under the impact of various goals. On

the one hand, the *Trachtenbücher* claim comprehensiveness, but in reality consist of rather per chance compilations that are held together by how they respond to the new alterities that entered the European/German worldview in the 1500s and 1600s. On the other, these works contrast with Forster's, Bastian's, and Benjamin's later understanding of the fragmentary nature of such collections. They not only attempt to classify what they represent, but also classify by ambiguous categories that oscillate between the cultural-historical and religious-mystical. For instance, they aggregate images of Brazilian Tupis, Ottomans, and German patricians together with illustrations of biblical figures such as Adam and Eve or fantastical ones such as the Cyclops, all of them considered equally "real." The books of clothes' way out of this conceptual conundrum was by self-contradictory appeals to their readers' morality. For example, German patricians are shown properly dressed according to their cities' political and religious regulations, but the Tupi are naked. At the same time, the same images relate to one another to minimize "wonderment" when the German patricians and the Tupis are represented as equally child loving. As Gillette traces these books' oscillation between documentation and marvel, she carves out how European/German perspectives on non-Europeanness and visual and textual classification as method to order the world emerged in early modernity through a process governed by multiple and contradictory epistemological dynamics. This process could have developed in other directions too, had self-reflection and the attention to similarities and affinities prevailed in the interpretation of what essentially was early ethnographic information.

Remaining loosely within the framework of collecting, Levent Soysal's review of cinematographic and textual ethnographies of migration to Germany places us at the center of contemporary ethnographic considerations. Soysal's chapter is unmistakably ethnographic in its self-reflexive, essayistic tone that lets the author's voice resonate; in the pluriperspectivism of its multiplicity of Turkish, German, and other international sources; and in its explicit goal to intervene in how we tell histories of migration—in fact calling for an end to that telling. To achieve this goal, Soysal traces how the history of migration successively generated "Workers," "Turks," and "Muslims" through various media (from cinema and text to social media) and creative and academic works alike. These works' intersections of aesthetic, hermeneutic, and ethnographic dimensions refuse literary or disciplinary classifications yet allow readers to intuit the complexity of a migration that no longer consists, as Soysal reminds us, of one-dimensional movement from "third" to "first world" countries. Eschewing the concepts of "culture" and "identity" because of their hegemonic potential, Soysal instead demonstrates how the ideological categories of "Workers," "Turks," and "Muslims" emerge as a result of economic and political shifts in European history, from West

Germany's reconstruction beckoning "Workers" in the 1960s and multiculturalism's constructing of "Turks" in the 1980s to today's "Muslims" of post-9/11 citizenship, race, and gender disputes. By mobilizing and recontextualizing sources against the grain of conventional identity and culture debates, Soysal's chapter challenges the reader to adopt a radically new perspective on migration, a perspective that benefits from the empathy that aesthetic works such as cinema and poetry can elicit in us. Soysal's chapter thus invites us to embrace the indeterminacies of the ethnographic perspective: to let go of what we think we know (culture, identity), and to approach scholarship and art as equally valuable resources for forming our own perspectives from the varied and often discordant voices of contemporary discourses.

The hegemonic hazards of concepts such as culture and identity unfold in the colonial perspective. Here, ethnographic observations of the lifeways of others are informed by teleological, evolutionist, and hierarchical classifications that result in postulates of differentiation (usually claiming European superiority) instead of recognizing the ambiguities of difference and the many points of empathy and affinity it can offer. Montenegro's and Howards' chapters analyze such colonial perspectives in German literature. Montenegro traces how the colonial view overrules other inputs that could have resulted in more cultural openness and understanding in Hans Staden's notorious *True History* (*Warhaftige Historia*, 1557). This work recounts its author's captivity among the Brazilian Tupi and has popularized the idea of the "cannibal," leaving a lasting influence on how Europeans conceptualize the indigenous inhabitants of the Americas to this day. As Montenegro argues, Staden's perspective was prepared by earlier travel literature mixing fantasy with accurate information but also exhibited an "ethnographic sentiment," a mixture recalling the contradictory epistemological impulses informing the *Trachtenbücher* discussed by Gillette. Yet this sentiment, according to Montenegro, remained subordinate to Staden's unfavorable comparisons of the Tupi culture with his own, both in the text of his book and its suggestive illustrations. Comparisons such as these were prevalent in the travel literature to which *Warhaftige Historia* belonged. On the one hand, observations of unfamiliar cultures were related to knowledge from the own (even if not always as tendentiously as in Staden's case). On the other, authors already used proto-ethnographic methods such as first-person accounts, recounting journeys, and describing the landscapes, nature, and people they had encountered. In this context, as Montenegro contends, Staden wrote two books in one: an ethnographic account that can still be mined for information about sixteenth-century Indigenous Americans and a colonial description torn between "admiration and disdain," sentiments that prevented a deeper, more empathetic—and actually ethnographic—exploration of surface observations. Montenegro's chapter presents to the reader an iconic early example

of the types of works that made themselves accomplices of colonialism and that caused ethnography's eventual reckoning with its historical past. Before that happened, however, European colonial perspectives not only prevailed for centuries but even permeated engagements with the subaltern classes of the own culture. This process is exemplified by Howards' interpretations of Gerhart Hauptmann's novellas "Carnival" ("Fasching," 1887) and "Flagman Thiel" ("Bahnwärter Thiel," 1888). Howards situates her interpretations in the context of the colonial race that Wilhelminian Germany joined in 1884–85, shortly before these texts were published, which enables her to identify their narrative perspective as both ethnographic and colonial. Howards carefully interprets the main characters, sailmaker Kielblock and flagman Thiel, as foils of one another. Both are depicted as primitives: the sailmaker a hedonistic savage who revels in food and money, the flagman an intellectually modest, albeit good-natured noble one. Both have wives and children, and—as Howards shows—the fates of both families follow a course predetermined by Social Darwinism. Kielblock's family drowns after a night of primitive indulgence, and savage wildness eventually wins over Thiel's good-naturedness when he kills his wife and baby. According to Howards, Hauptmann narrates the natural and social environments of these tragedies through thick descriptions. Both families live in rural Brandenburg, far away from the progressive metropolis, on land that had historically been settled to ward off invading Slavic hordes. They live not in villages, but in newly built "colonies" for workers; yet paradoxically in lifestyles frozen in a historical past. As Howards demonstrates, these stories display ethnographically-informed language and writing resulting from Hauptmann's own ethnographic observations in Brandenburg. Yet the colonially inflected perspective of these observations ultimately enforces social otherness at (the imperial) home as foil to the perceived racial otherness and cultural inferiority of the empire's colonies. Alongside Gillette's interpretations of early modern images, Montenegro's and Howards' chapters perform critical readings of colonial distortions that were prominent in German literature and media at specific historical moments (the Renaissance and the nineteenth century), thus contributing to efforts of decolonizing in German studies. While this introduction has not stressed the decolonizing agenda explicitly, it considers it part and parcel of current academic inquiry in German studies, and especially pertinent in projects involving ethnographic inquiries.

The following three chapters complete the volume by reversing the perspective in German-themed ethnographies conducted by domestic scholars in Germany. Wolbert analyzes German art exhibitions, Simone Egger the *dirndl* as current cultural medium, and Raphaela Knipp literary tourism to the real locations of German crime fictions. These chapters bridge ethnography and German studies by incorporating culture studies approaches

to ethnographic work (Wolbert and Egger) and ethnographic methods to literary studies (Knipp). Addressing ethnographic observation directly, Wolbert delineates the “epistemological challenges” of conducting fieldwork in a domain that is still outside the conventional purview of ethnographic research: German art exhibitions. Wolbert first theorizes her fieldwork in the art world, which leads her to engage with this world’s German identity politics, and finally to a conceptual place that blends anthropological and German studies considerations. Along this trajectory, Wolbert shows that not only is German studies slow to acknowledge ethnographic epistemologies, but the reverse is also true, especially in Europeanist contexts. In the world of art exhibitions, she traces these hesitations historically to the early separation between so-called primitive and Western (i.e., mainly European) art, a separation promoted by none other than Boas when he attempted to make indigenous art acceptable to Western sensibilities. This separation, however, pushed both Western creations and modern art made in non-European contexts out of the purview of ethnographic research. According to Wolbert, a consequence of this exclusion are ongoing difficulties with exhibiting modern non-European art to European (here, German) audiences in symmetrical contexts of presentation and reception. Wolbert’s chapter contributes to the emerging ethnographic interest in art exhibitions and resituates research on such events in the shared conceptual spaces between ethnography and German studies. Beyond her theoretical argument, Wolbert showcases her ethnographic perspective through her textual presence and voice.

Following Wolbert’s cue on creativity on display, Egger’s chapter revolves around a vestment item that combines artistic considerations and representation with the characteristics of a medium: the dirndl. Egger emphasizes two main points. She paints the portrait of an object of material culture by framing it historically and contextualizing it within contemporary urban youth cultures. She also teases out how such an object became a contemporary medium that undermines notions of fixity in tradition. Her analysis undermines something else too: the urban-rural divide. Egger shows that, contrary to stereotypes that associate the dirndl with traditional peasant outfits, this garment is, in fact, an urban creation that emerged in the nineteenth century in specific political and economic conditions, international tourism to Bavaria among them. Based on long-term fieldwork and collecting, Egger shows how this vestment served as a medium from the beginning, initially as a fanciful urban interpretation of peasant dress, then broadcasting conservatism, and later folklore revival. Today, Egger contends, the dirndl is a sign of diversity and urbanism. Its cultural and political message transpires precisely from the ambiguous meanings that it transports through its broad use and massive medialization, especially in today’s socially diverse youth cultures. Although Egger is a trained and practicing ethnographer and her argument

is based on *longue durée* cultural observations, her chapter adopts a neutral perspective that keeps with the material nature of her study object.

Knipp takes us back to fieldwork in the volume's final chapter, which also explores an artifact tied to tourism, but one radically different from Egger's *dirndl*: the regional crime thriller as inspiration for literary tourism. Knipp's chapter expands the repertoire of literary reception studies by a practice turn. She engages with how readers perform a specific mode of literary reading when they travel to the locations where their favorite books are set, in this case *Eifelkrimis* (crime novels set in the Eifel region). The methodological expansion she offers is ethnographic. Knipp's own mini ethnography of literary tourism follows the tenets of the genre from describing her preparations, locations, and activities, to interpreting her participant observation and interviews. This method enables Knipp to identify major motors of literary tourism, especially that of authors representing their regions as accurately as possible to attract readers and thus encourage tourism; and of tours performing tangible and interactive literary reception, in which the real and fictional intermingle. Through her chapter, Knipp encourages scholars to leave their desks and armchairs behind in order to explore alternative forms of literary engagement. In doing so, her chapter returns us to the starting point of this volume. Just as writers, authors, travelers, and scholars have left their homes to gain new knowledge, so can German studies researchers find new knowledge when they venture out of the library—or approach the library with an ethnographic mindset. Knipp, Eggers, and Wolbert show us that we do not have to travel far to do so. That we can explore pathways into German studies that are located close to home as long as they lead through ethnographic self-awareness and exploration.

Andrew Stuart Bergerson's conclusion rounds off the volume by offering a synthetic reflection on how the intersections of ethnography and German studies emerge from the chapters. The historian and ethnographer Bergerson reminds us of the difficulties in defining either ethnography or German studies clearly and comprehensibly. He offers an alternative for this dilemma that he develops out of the volume's chapters: Bergerson proposes to approach these fields by what makes them *German*. Following this conceptual inroad, he emphasizes that the research presented in this volume, just as all research conducted in German studies, creates *German* artifacts out of a network of fluid cultural-historical processes, which calls for a conscious methodological reflection of what this creation means. By thinking this process through the original concept of technology as both the tool and the knowledge to use that tool, Bergerson reveals ethnographic perspectives, concepts, and methods as core tools and crafts of creating Germanness. At stake, then, is that we take ourselves seriously as ethnographers in German studies, not only with regard to the awareness of the ethnographic dimensions of what we do, but

also to the responsibility we bear in doing so. Bergerson urges us to remind ourselves that we are not only academics in the ivory tower, but also teachers and public scholars. That we can be as creative in our acts of interpretation as we need to be responsible for them—the field talks back! And that our critically reflected methodologies ought to be transparent and always inspire the improvement of our practices.

To conclude with advice from Bergerson: “craft responsibly.” If Goethe could do it, why can’t we?

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Notes

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1. These examples are taken from the volume’s chapters.
2. A few haphazard examples are: Jonathan Bach, *What Remains: Everyday Encounters with the Socialist Past in Germany* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017); Andrew Stuart Bergerson, *Ordinary Germans in Extraordinary Times: The Nazi Revolution in Hildesheim* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004); Petra Tjitske Kalshoven, *Crafting ‘The Indian’: Knowledge, Desire, and Play in Indianist Reenactment* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012); H. Glenn Penny, *Kindred by Choice: Germans and American Indians since 1800* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013); and A. Dana Weber, *Blood Brothers and Peace Pipes: Performing the Wild West in German Festivals* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2019).
3. Efforts such as these were not specific to the German-speaking regions of Western and Central Europe but extended to German diasporas (for example in Transylvania) and coincided with other European movements of national emancipation in the second half of the nineteenth century.
4. On the differences between *Germanistik* and German studies, see, for example, Frank Trommler, Michael Geyer, and Jeffrey M. Peck, “Germany as the Other:

- Towards an American Agenda for German Studies. A Colloquium," *German Studies Review* 13, no. 1 (1990): 130.
5. Peter U. Hohendahl, "Interdisciplinary German Studies: Tentative Conclusions," *The German Quarterly* 62, no. 2 (1989): 228.
 6. See Frank Trommler, "The Future of German Studies or How to Define Interdisciplinarity in the 1990s," *German Studies Review* 15, no. 2 (1992): 201–17.
 7. Immanuel Wallerstein, "Globalization or the Age of Transition? A Long-Term View of the Trajectory of the World-System," *Asian Perspective* 24, no. 2 (2000): 8.
 8. Vincente L. Rafael, "The Cultures of Area Studies in the United States," *Social Text* 41 (1994): 91.
 9. On German Area Studies during the Cold War, see Ulrich Grothus, "German Studies in Nordamerika: eine Außensicht," *German Studies Review* 39, no. 3 (2016): 645–47; Immanuel Wallerstein, "The Unintended Consequences of Cold War Area Studies," in *The Cold War and the University: Toward an Intellectual History of the Postwar Years*, ed. Noam Chomsky et al. (New York: The New Press, 1997), 205–8, 223; Trommler, Geyer, and Peck, "Germany as the Other," 120–22; Trommler, "The Future of German Studies," 205; Rafael, "The Cultures of Area Studies," 95.
 10. Wallerstein, "The Unintended Consequences," 228.
 11. Guido Franzinetti, "The Strange Death of Area Studies and the Normative Turn," *Quaderni stornici. Nuova Serie* 50, no. 150/3 (2015): 837–38.
 12. On the history and interdisciplinarity of German studies as U.S. discipline, see, among others, Hohendahl, "Interdisciplinary German Studies"; Trommler, "The Future of German Studies"; Celia Applegate and Frank Trommler, "The Project of German Studies: Disciplinary Strategies and Intellectual Practices," *German Studies Review* 39, no. 3 (2016): 471–92; Jeffery M. Peck, "There's No Place Like Home? Remapping the Topography of German Studies," *The German Quarterly* 62, no. 2 (1989): 183.
 13. Academic organizations dedicated to the study of things German have existed in the United States since 1870. The Western Association for German Studies (WAGS, founded in 1976) is the predecessor of the German Studies Association (GSA, renamed in 1984), the current organization for German studies in North America and internationally. See Rachel J. Halverston and Carol Anne Costabile-Heming, "Introduction: Challenges and Opportunities for the Study of German," in *Taking Stock of German Studies in the United States*, ed. Halverston and Costabile-Heming (Rochester, NY: Boydell and Brewer, Camden House, 2015), 6; Trommler, "The Future of German Studies," 212. Additionally, in the last decades, the German Studies Association's journal *German Studies Review* alone has published articles on history, literature studies, political science, cultural history and cultural studies, film, art, and music history, philology, cultural anthropology, minority studies, women and gender studies, GDR studies, ethnic and cultural diversity studies, colonialism, Europeanization, transnational relations, and environmentalism. See Amanda Z. Randall, "From Multidisciplinarity to Transdisciplinarity: On the History of 'German Studies Review' 1978–2015," *German Studies Review* 39, no. 3 (2016): 641–43; also Steven Taubeneck, "Voices in the Debate: German Studies and Germanistik," *The German Quarterly* 62, no. 2 (1989): 226; Hohendahl, "Interdisciplinary German Studies," 233; Peck, "There's No Place Like Home?" 184. Special editions of journals, books, and articles further thematize this interdisciplinarity. See Paul Michael Lützeler, ed., *The German Quarterly* 62,

- no. 2 (1989); Sabine Hake, ed., *German Studies Review* 35, no. 3 (2012); Andreas W. Daum, Sabine Hake, and Brad Prager, eds, "The GSA Fortheith Anniversary Issue," *German Studies Review* 39, no. 3 (2016); Halverston and Costabile-Heming, *Taking Stock of German Studies in the United States*; Paul Michael Lützeler and Peter Höyng, eds, *Transatlantic German Studies: Testimonies to the Profession* (Rochester, NY: Boydell and Brewer, 2018); Marc Silberman, ed., *Back to the Future: Tradition and Innovation in German Studies* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2018); Claire Kramsch, "Whose German? Whose English? German Studies as Cultural Translation," *The German Quarterly* 79, no. 2 (2006): 249–52; and James Rolleston et al., "Is Literature Still Central to German Studies?" *The German Quarterly* 80, no. 3 (2007): 275–78.
14. Claudia Breger, "The Return to Aesthetics in Literary Studies," *German Studies Review* 35, no. 3 (2012): 505–6.
 15. John Van Maanen, "An End to Innocence: The Ethnography of Ethnography," in *Approaches to Qualitative Research: A Reader on Theory and Practice*, ed. Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber and Patricia Leavy (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 428.
 16. Robert M. Emerson, Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw, *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 1.
 17. For an introduction to fieldwork, see, for instance, Lisa Gilman and John Fenn, *Handbook for Folklore and Ethnomusicology Fieldwork* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2019), here 8–10.
 18. See, for example, Amanda Coffey, *Doing Ethnography* (London: Sage Publications, 2018); Giampetro Gobo, "How to Observe," in Gobo, *Doing Ethnography* (London: Sage Publications, 2011); D. Soyini Madison, *Critical Ethnography: Method, Ethics, Performance* (London: Sage Publications, 2005); Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2003); Gilman and Fenn, *Handbook for Folklore and Ethnomusicology Fieldwork*; Nagy Hesse-Biber and Leavy, *Approaches to Qualitative Research*.
 19. See James Clifford and George Marcus, eds, *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).
 20. On how the Writing Culture debate prevails in fieldwork-focused research, see George E. Marcus, "Ethnography Two Decades after Writing Culture: From the Experimental to the Baroque," *Anthropological Quarterly* 80, no. 4 (2007): 1127–45, and "The END(S) OF ETHNOGRAPHY: Social/Cultural Anthropology's Signature Form of Producing Knowledge in Transition," *Cultural Anthropology* 23, no. 1 (2008): 1–14. On new approaches to subjectivity and objectivity—for instance through intersubjectivity—see Peter Pels, "After Objectivity: An Historical Approach to the Intersubjective in Ethnography," *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 4, no. 1 (2014): 211–36, or anthropologist Michael Jackson's work.
 21. Paul Atkinson, *The Ethnographic Imagination: Textual Constructions of Reality* (London: Routledge, 1990), 139.
 22. Clifford Geertz, "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight," *Daedalus* 134, no. 4 (2005): 56–86.
 23. Robert M. Emerson, Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw, "Participant Observation and Fieldnotes," in *Handbook of Ethnography*, ed. Paul Atkinson, Amanda Coffey, Sara Delamont, John Lofland, and Lyn Lofland (London: Sage Publications, 2001), 354.

24. Gobo, *Doing Ethnography*, 148–61.
25. Coffey, *Doing Ethnography*, 4.
26. See Gobo, *Doing Ethnography*, 16.
27. Elizabeth Murphy and Robert Dingwalt, “The Ethics of Ethnography,” in Atkinson et al., *Handbook of Ethnography*, 339. An important mechanism of protection is the approval of the project by Human Subjects institutions and the obligatory use of informed consent forms. In the United States, academic projects involving human participants normally must follow these procedures.
28. Gobo, *Doing Ethnography*, 9.
29. Arnold Krupat, *Ethnocriticism: Ethnography, History, Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 75. Krupat bases this argument on physics findings such as the Heisenberg indeterminacy principle and Einstein’s relativity theory which revealed these interrelations already in the 1920s.
30. Gobo, *Doing Ethnography*, 118–34.
31. Jerry Stinnett, “Resituating Expertise: An Activity Theory Perspective on Representation in Critical Ethnography,” *College English* 75, no. 2 (2012): 134.
32. On the latter, see *ibid.*
33. Clifford, “Introduction: Partial Truths,” in *Writing Culture*, ed. Clifford and Marcus, 1–26.
34. This is Marcello Pissarro’s remark in his interview with George E. Marcus. Marcus, “The END(S) OF ETHNOGRAPHY,” 9.
35. Marcus, “Ethnography Two Decades after Writing Culture,” 1130.
36. Marcus, “The END(S) OF ETHNOGRAPHY,” 4.
37. See, for example, Stinnett, “Resituating Expertise,” 131, and Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw, “Participant Observation and Fieldnotes,” 360.
38. Murphy and Dingwalt, “The Ethics of Ethnography,” 346.
39. *Ibid.*, 346.
40. Marcus, “Ethnography Two Decades after Writing Culture,” 1128.
41. Geertz, “Deep Play.” Although Geertz’s text has been criticized for various reasons (the disjunction between his account and the views of the Balinese among them), “thick description” continues to be a desiderate in fieldwork.
42. Marcus, “The END(S) OF ETHNOGRAPHY,” 10.
43. See, for example, Amanda Ziemba Randall, *Translating the Discipline: On the Institutional Memory of German ‘Volkskunde,’ 1945 to Present*, PhD dissertation (Austin: University of Texas at Austin, 2015).
44. The historical summary in this section is based on the unpublished manuscript by Andrew Stuart Bergerson et al., “Writing the Germans: Why an Ethnographic Attitude Matters to German Studies” (2014) and Andre Gingrich, “The German-Speaking Countries. Ruptures, Schools, and Nontraditions: Reassessing the History of Sociocultural Anthropology in Germany,” in *One Discipline, Four Ways: British, German, French, and American Anthropology*, ed. Fredrik Barth et al. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).
45. Intellectual movements in these directions also existed earlier but cannot be considered here. On how Herder relativized his concept of difference by considering human commonality, see Jan Assmann, “Zum Humanismus der Ähnlichkeit,” in *Ähnlichkeit: Ein kulturtheoretisches Paradigma*, ed. Anil Bhatti, Dorothee Kimmich, and Sara Bangert (Konstanz: Konstanz University Press, 2015), 51.

46. However, what we regard as regional German cultures today were different “peoples” (*Völker*) to the Grimms. See Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, “Vorrede,” in *Brüder Grimm: Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, vol. 1, ed. Heinz Rölleke (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam Jun., 1993), 20.
47. For reasons of brevity, this chapter uses the general distinction of *Volkskunde* (the study of domestic cultures) and *Völkerkunde* (the study of foreign cultures) without expanding on these fields’ detailed distinctions.
48. Jacob Grimm, “Deutsche Sagen. Band 1 (1816). Vorrede,” in *Jacob Grimm und Wilhelm Grimm: Schriften und Reden*, ed. Ludwig Denecke (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1985), 55.
49. Gingrich, “The German-Speaking Countries,” 92.
50. *Ibid.*, 72. See also Bergerson et al., “Writing the Germans.”
51. Américo Paredes, “Foreword,” in *Toward New Perspectives in Folklore*, 2nd ed., ed. Américo Paredes and Richard Bauman (Bloomington, IN: Trickster Press, 2000), xii. German and U.S. folklore studies still collaborate in structuralist research. Thus, the Finnish and U.S. folklorists Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson are best known for founding the *ATU* index which was updated and expanded in 2004 by German folklorist Jörg Uther (hence the “U” in its name). *ATU* classifies the folktale types of several European cultures. It remains a fundamental tool for folklorists internationally and a model for folktale indexes across the globe.
52. Richard Bauman, “Introduction,” in Paredes and Bauman, *Toward New Perspectives in Folklore*, xv.
53. Specific folklore theories are, for example, Dell Hymes’s ethnography of speaking or Richard Bauman’s communicative and semiotic approach to oral folklore performances. See Lee Haring, “Ten Years After,” in *Grand Theory in Folkloristics*, ed. Lee Haring (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016), 149.
54. Gingrich, “The German-Speaking Countries,” 88–89.
55. For the emergence of German anthropological museums, see, for example, H. Glenn Penny, *Objects of Culture: Ethnology and Ethnographic Museums in Imperial Germany* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002). The live counterparts of the museums, *Völkerschauen* (exotic peoples’ shows that included subgenres such as the Wild West show) exhibited foreign performers who demonstrated purported cultural practices and artifacts. For research on such shows, see, for example, Eric Ames, “Seeing the Imaginary: On the Popular Reception of Wild West Shows in Germany, 1885–1910,” in *I Like America: Fictions of the Wild West*, ed. Pamela Kort and Max Hollein (Munich: Prestel, 2006), 212–29, and Carl Hagenbeck’s *Empire of Entertainments* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008); Sierra Anne Bruckner, “Spectacles of (Human) Nature: Commercial Ethnography between Leisure, Learning and ‘Schaulust,’” in *Worldly Provincialism: German Anthropology in the Age of Empire*, ed. H. Glenn Penny and Matti Bunzl (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003), 127–55; Britta Lange, *Echt. Unecht. Lebensecht: Menschenbilder im Umlauf* (Berlin: Kulturverlag Kadmos, 2006); Hilke Thode-Arora, *Für fünfzig Pfennig um die Welt: Die Hagenbeck’schen Völkerschauen* (Frankfurt: Campus, 1989); Andrew Zimmerman, *Anthropology and Antihumanism in Imperial Germany* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); and articles such as Rudolf Conrad, “Mutual Fascination: Indians in Dresden and Leipzig,” and Wolfgang Haberland, “Nine Bella Coolas in Germany,” both in *Indians and Europe: An Interdisciplinary Collection of Essays*, ed. Christian F. Feest (Lincoln: University of

- Nebraska Press, 1989); and A. Dana Weber, "Vivifying the Uncanny: Ethnographic Mannequins and Exotic Performers in Nineteenth-Century German Exhibition Culture," in *Fact and Fiction: Literary and Scientific Cultures in Germany and Britain*, ed. Christine Lehleiter (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), 298–331.
56. Gingrich, "The German-Speaking Countries," 86.
57. *Ibid.*, 116, 127–28.
58. *Ibid.*, 139. For a comprehensive analysis of how the German ethnology reconstituted itself narratively and institutionally after the end of World War II, see Randall, *Translating the Discipline*. For analyses of folklore studies during the Nazi regime, see Hannjost Lixfeld, *Folklore and Fascism: The Reich Institute for German Volkskunde*, ed. and trans. James R. Dow (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994); and James R. Dow and Hannjost Lixfeld, ed. and trans., *The Nazification of an Academic Discipline: Folklore in the Third Reich* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994).
59. *Ibid.*, 149.
60. *Ibid.*, 149. In the GDR, ethnology, the successor of anthropology, stood under political and ideological pressure.
61. See Wolfgang Kaschuba, *Einführung in die europäische Ethnologie*, 4th ed. (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2012), 199, 212. Kaschuba here also notes the influence of French and British scholarship on German ethnological research. See also Ina Dietzsch, Wolfgang Kaschuba, and Leonore Scholze-Irlitz, eds, *Horizonte ethnographischen Wissens: Eine Bestandsaufnahme* (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 2009).
62. Kaschuba, *Einführung in die europäische Ethnologie*, 207, my translation. Other handbooks are centered on the thematic diversity of disciplines comprising ethnology, from ethnodemographics, cognition and gender studies to material and food studies, and from interethnic and intercultural research to folk theater. See Thomas Schweizer, Margarete Schweizer, and Waltraut Kokot, eds, *Handbuch der Ethnologie* (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1993) and Rolf W. Brednich, ed., *Grundriß der Volkskunde: Einführung in die Forschungsfelder der Europäischen Ethnologie*, 3rd ed. (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 2001). Silke Meyer and Armin Owzar, eds, *Disziplinen der Anthropologie* (Münster: Waxmann, 2011) outlines the disciplinary variety of anthropological studies practiced in Germany, including sociobiology and linguistic, philosophical, legal, visual, and theological anthropology.
63. See Christoph Wulf, *Anthropology: A Continental Perspective*, trans. Deirdre Winter et al. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 94–103.
64. These criteria are based on Marcus, "Ethnography Two Decades after Writing Culture," 1130.
65. Peck, "There's No Place Like Home?" 182.
66. The insights in this section are based on Bergerson et al., "Writing the Germans."
67. *Ibid.*, n.p.
68. Galit Hasan-Rokem, "Ecotypes: Theory of the Lived and Narrated Experience," *Narrative Culture* 3, no. 1 (2016): 125. "Ecotypes" or "oicotypes" refer to localized narrative forms that appear because narrators take stories to new social environments where they are received and adapted in line with local factors. A replacement of the term "oicotype," which has been critiqued not least because of the Nazi affiliations of its originator, folklore scholar Carl von Sydow, "ecotype" is currently used in folklore scholarship. See Hasan-Rokem, "Ecotypes," and Marilena Papachristophorou, "Oicotype," in *Folktales and Fairly Tales: Traditions and Texts from around the World*,

- ed. Anne E. Duggan, Donald Haase, and Helen J. Callow (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood, 2016), 735.
69. For Boas's biography, see Rosemary Lévy Zumwalt, *Franz Boas: The Emergence of the Anthropologist* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2019); for his interactions with and effects on his students, see Charles King, *Gods of the Upper Air: How a Circle of Renegade Anthropologists Reinvented Race, Sex, and Gender in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Anchor Books, 2019) and Louis Menand, "How Cultural Anthropologists Redefined Humanity," *The New Yorker*, 26 August 2019. For a literary analysis of Boas's ethnographic writing, see Krupat, *Ethnocriticism*.
 70. See, for example, Ames, "Seeing the Imaginary," 216.
 71. This group also included the Dakota scholar Ella Cara Deloria, Boas's assistant, with whom he co-authored the *Dakota Grammar* that she had compiled. (At that time, Boas's name on the cover apparently helped the visibility of the book.) See King, *Gods of the Upper Air*, 232–44.
 72. *Ibid.*, 7.
 73. Barbara Schmitter Heisler, "Middle-Class German Migrants in the United States: Migrants, Immigrants, Expatriates, Transmigrants, Mobile Citizens, or German Americans?" *German Studies Review* 43, no. 3 (2020): 537–38. Although Schmitter Heisler analyzes German migrants to the United States in non-academic professional positions, her findings fit the academic domain as well.
 74. Academic organizations such as the GSA and the American Folklore Society in the United States as well as the Society of International Ethnography and Folklore (SIEF), International Society of Cultural History (ISCH), or the International Society for Contemporary Legend Research (ISCLR) in Europe are examples of such transatlantic organizations that include scholars from several continents.
 75. See Lützel and Höyng, *Transatlantic German Studies*.
 76. See Hans Adler, "In-between: The Participant as Observer—The Observer as Participant," in Lützel and Höyng, *Transatlantic German Studies*, 23–36.
 77. Brent O. Peterson and Martha Helfer, "Why Goethe Needs German Studies and Why German Studies Needs Goethe," *German Studies Review* 35, no. 3 (2012): 473. First attempts to organize world literature into a canon were made in the late 1600s, but the German canon of national works—as opposed to world literature—dates back to the nineteenth century. This canon has expanded and diversified since then.
 78. See, for example, Hohendahl, "Interdisciplinary German Studies," 230; Trommler, Geyer, and Peck, "Germany as the Other," 116; Amanda Randall, "Habits of Mind, Habits of Heart: Cultivating Humanity through a Decolonized German Studies Curriculum," in *Diversity and Decolonization in German Studies*, ed. Regine Criser and Ervin Malakaj (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 41–62.
 79. Michael H. Agar, *The Professional Stranger: An Informal Introduction to Ethnography*, 2nd ed. (San Diego: Academic Press, Inc., 1996), 92–104.
 80. Van Maanen, "An End to Innocence," 434. See also Krupat, *Ethnocriticism*, 52.
 81. Van Maanen, "An End to Innocence," 430.
 82. The narrative variety of ethnographic styles includes the confessional (about the fieldworker's own trials and tribulations), the dramatic (about events of exceptional relevance for the research), the auto-ethnographic (about the author, in an explicitly subjective manner), and the critical (which contextualize cultures beyond the perceptions of their members) tale. See John Van Maanen, *Tales of the Field: On Writing Ethnography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

83. *Ibid.*, 431–38. For other insights about the variety of ethnographic styles and writing guidelines, see, for instance, Kirin Narayan, *Alive in the Writing: Crafting Ethnography in the Company of Chekhov* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012) and Kristen Ghodsee, *From Notes to Narrative: Writing Ethnographies that Everyone Can Read* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016).
84. L. L. Langness and Geyla Frank, “Fact, Fiction and the Ethnographic Novel,” *Anthropology and Humanism Quarterly* (1978): 21.
85. *Ibid.*, 20. Other exemplary authors listed in this article are Simone de Beauvoir, Truman Capote, and Nikolai W. Gogol.
86. In the German tradition, literary realism (also called poetic realism) only seemingly supports objective, omniscient narratives. More often than not, realist texts include magical, individualistic, and even media viewpoints that disclose the auctorial perspective and create polyphony in order to emphasize or subvert certain aspects of representation. Examples of such writing can be found in, among others, Jeremias Gotthelf’s “Die schwarze Spinne” (The Black Spider, 1842; magic realism, polyphony), Annette von Droste-Hülshoff’s “Die Judenbuche” (The Jews’ Beech Tree, 1842; unreliable narrator, partial truths), or Gottfried Keller’s “Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe” (A Village Romeo and Juliet, 1856; media interventions).
87. Paul Willis, *The Ethnographic Imagination* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2000), 6.
88. Krupat, *Ethnocriticism*, 90–91.
89. *Ibid.*, 99.
90. In Crapanzano’s reading, Goethe describes the carnival only to reduce it to a common cliché that he then uses for his own meditations unrelated to the Romans’ own perceptions and conceptions of the event. Vincent Crapanzano, “Hermes’ Dilemma: The Masking of Subversion in Ethnographic Description,” in Clifford and Marcus, *Writing Culture*, 62–68, 75–76.
91. See *ibid.*
92. “Einleitung,” in *Ähnlichkeit*, ed. Bhatti, Kimmich, and Bangert, 10.
93. Bhatti and Kimmich identify such dichotomies in identity politics, postcolonial politics, and deconstructive thought. See “Einleitung,” 7, 19–21. See also Anil Bhatti, “Culture, Diversity and Similarity: A Reflection on Heterogeneity and Homogeneity,” *Social Scientist* 37, no. 7/ 8 (2009): 42. On their exacerbation to fundamentalism and discrimination, see Albrecht Koschorke, “Ähnlichkeit: Valenzen eines post-kolonialen Konzepts,” in *Ähnlichkeit*, ed. Bhatti, Kimmich, and Bangert, 35.
94. Bhatti and Kimmich, “Einleitung,” 11.
95. Bhatti, “Culture, Diversity and Similarity,” 37. Bhatti does not specify whether the phrasing for this “art” is inspired by Rodney King’s plea during the Los Angeles uprising in 1992. I am grateful to Jonathan Bach for pointing out the similarity.
96. Denzin and Lincoln, *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry*, 5–8.
97. Marcus, “Ethnography Two Decades after Writing Culture,” 1143.
98. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, “Introduction: Rhizome,” in *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 11. See also Bhatti and Kimmich, “Einleitung,” 19, and Bhatti, “Culture, Diversity and Similarity,” 45.
99. Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015); Bhatti, “Culture, Diversity and Similarity,” 45.

100. Deleuze and Guattari, "Introduction: Rhizome," 10.
101. *Ibid.*, 9–16.
102. *Ibid.*, 10.
103. Lowenhaupt Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World*, 23.
104. Vincent Crapanzano, *Imaginative Horizons: An Essay in Literary-Philosophical Anthropology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 6. Crapanzano adopts concepts such as the Sufi "betwixt and between" and the Japanese "energy-space" between objects (as in the areas where two oceans meet) to address the relativity and fluctuation of such spaces.
105. Bhatti and Kimmich, "Einleitung," 15.
106. Koschorke, "Ähnlichkeit," 41.
107. Bhatti and Kimmich, "Einleitung," 26.

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