

**THE UNBEARABLE WHOLENESS OF BEING: MEMORY, NOSTALGIA, AND  
GERMAN EXPELLEES IN THE POST-WAR ARCHIVE**

by

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## Abstract

In 1949, Paul Jendrike, former Chairman of the National Association of German Teachers in Poland (1922-1939) sent a questionnaire to each of the Association's former members. Cognizant that living memory would soon disappear, Jendrike sought to document the experiences of German teachers in interwar Poland. Most of these teachers who received questionnaires were now living in West Germany, kicked out of their former homelands in Poland after the Second World War, joining approximately eleven million other expellees from the former German east. As citizens of Poland but members of an ethnic German minority, the Germanness of these so-called *Volksdeutsche* had often been a source of debate. Now, in Germany, and relabelled *Vertriebene*, or expellees, they were made into a bounded group, still distinct from the rest of the German-speaking population. The questionnaire was set up in such a way as to show a clear distinction between "Germans" and "Poles," in addition to showing that Poland had blatantly defied the terms of the Minority Protection Treaty, signed in 1919. Respondents, however, defied Jendrike's intentions by using the undisciplined spaces of the questionnaire to exercise their nostalgic longing. The nostalgia in these undisciplined spaces shows not only that many of the respondents were persistently non-national, but that they had no political or revanchist aims, in contrast to what most works on the expellees have shown. This essay demonstrates that taking nostalgia seriously exposes a surprising story about expellees, one that reveals that there was no real sense of groupness, either before the war or after. Attending to nostalgia in this way illustrates the need to reconsider *Vertriebene* and *Volksdeutsche* historiographies and break down these temporally delimited definitions of groupness.

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*For my mom*

## Reconsidering Nostalgia

In 1949, Paul Jendrike, former Chairman of the National Association of German Teachers in Poland (1922-1939) sent a questionnaire to each of the Association's former members. Cognizant that living memory would soon disappear, Jendrike sought to document the experiences of German teachers in interwar Poland. Most of these teachers who received questionnaires were now living in West Germany, kicked out of their former homelands in Poland after the Second World War, joining approximately eleven million other expellees from the former German east.<sup>1</sup> As citizens of Poland but members of the diminishing ethnic German minority, numbering approximately 1.4 million in 1922 and 700,000 in 1945,<sup>2</sup> the Germanness of these so-called *Volksdeutsche* had often been a source of debate.<sup>3</sup> Now, in Germany, and relabelled *Vertriebene*, or expellees, they were made into a bounded group, still distinct from the rest of the German-speaking population.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Robert Magocsi, *Historical Atlas of East Central Europe* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1993), 165. While seven million German-speaking people were expelled from the territories ceded to Poland after the Second World War, approximately 700,000 German-speakers, or *Volksdeutsche*, who had been living in Poland during the interwar years, were forced to leave. Tomasz Kamusella, "The Expulsion of the Population Categorized as 'Germans' from the Post-War Poland," in *The Expulsion of the 'German' Communities from Eastern Europe at the End of the Second World War*, ed. Steffen Prauser and Afron Rees (Florence: European University Institute, 2004), 21.

<sup>2</sup> The number of "ethnic Germans" in Poland during the interwar years is difficult to ascertain, as Polish numbers tend to minimize the size of the minority, while German numbers exaggerate them. In 1921, the official Polish census recorded 1,059,154 Germans in Poland; by July 1922, with the inclusion of the eastern Upper Silesian territories, German-speakers numbered approximately 1.4 million. By 1939, the total German population in Poland was 1,022,000. Winson Chu, *The German Minority in Interwar Poland* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 203-204.

<sup>3</sup> What to call these Germans is a perennial issue for scholars, but generally speaking the term "ethnic Germans" refers to those that identified with the German nation and/or were identified by others with the German nation. Doris Bergen notes that the term "Volksdeutsche" was first coined by Hitler in 1938. Doris Bergen, "The Nazi Concept of 'Volksdeutsche' and the Exacerbation of Anti-Semitism in Eastern Europe, 1939-45," *Journal of Contemporary History* 29, no. 4 (1994): 569.

<sup>4</sup> In 1953, a law defined "'Vertriebene' broadly to include not only persons who were actually driven out (or who had fled before the advancing Red Army in the last months of the war) but also persons leaving Eastern Europe or the Soviet Union 'as' ethnic Germans 'after the end of the general expulsion measures.'" Rogers Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 170-171.

The Jendrike Collection, located at the Herder-Institute in Marburg, is comprised of two sections.<sup>5</sup> The first section holds the questionnaires, while the second section contains detailed correspondence between Jendrike, the teachers, and other witnesses from the years 1949 to 1966, the year of Jendrike's death. Before opening the many boxes of questionnaires in the Jendrike Collection, I expected to find overwhelming evidence of grief, anger, and claims to victimhood: grief for the loss of their former *Heimat* (homeland), anger at their Polish neighbours and those who expelled them, and claims that they, the *Volksdeutsche*, were one of the many groups of people that were victims of brutal war and ethnic cleansing.<sup>6</sup> Such assumptions were grounded in and sustained by the larger historiography of the expellees. Both the form and content of the Jendrike Collection, however, tell a different story.

Pasted to, or stuck between, many of the pages of the Jendrike Collection are photographs of weddings, gymnastic teams, and local churches. School yearbooks, employment contracts, and class pictures are attached to many of the questionnaires. Most intriguing is the large number of schematic illustrations present in the collection – drawings of school classrooms, local villages, or entire school districts. What did these things really have to do with grief, anger, or victimhood? One does not get a sense of the pain of the expulsion or anger over the loss of a homeland while reading these documents. The contents

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<sup>5</sup> The Herder Institute in Marburg was founded in 1950 as a centre for historical research on East Central Europe, and a depository for a large collection of materials related to former German homelands in the East. These homelands include Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and the region of Kaliningrad. Herder Institute website, <http://www.herder-institut.de/>, accessed April 15, 2013.

<sup>6</sup> *Heimat* is translated roughly as “home” or “homeland,” but it also is a “versatile term with connection to soil, people, landmarks.” Andrew Demshuk, *The Lost German East: Forced Migration and the Politics of Memory, 1945-1970* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), xi. There is a whole literature that examines and utilizes the concept of *Heimat*. For the purposes of this essay, I will not be engaging with it here. To read more on *Heimat*, see Alon Confino, *The Nation As a Local Metaphor Württemberg, Imperial Germany, and National Memory, 1871-1918* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997) and Celia Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials: The German Idea of Heimat* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

of the Jendrike Collection are disarmingly ordinary: evidence of ordinary life, ordinary concerns, and ordinary memories. There is, further, evidence of non-national identifications, apolitical aims, and the absence of language, imposed or taken up, that would label these teachers as either *Vertriebene* or *Volksdeutsche*.

The Jendrike Collection provides another conundrum as it does not easily fit within any particular historiographical field. Unfortunately, histories of the interwar *Volksdeutsche* and postwar *Vertriebene* have largely failed to engage with each other. The war's end in 1945 has been treated as a watershed, a "zero hour" in German history, a moment of fundamental discontinuity. Thus, postwar historiography has tended to emphasize change, focusing on the restorative political aims of the *Vertriebene*, who are taken for granted as a homogenous group. Conversely, historiography about the interwar German minority has seen a boom in works that call into question the groupness of the *Volksdeutsche* and highlight enduring non-national identifications. This split in the historiography has served to reify a distinction between *Volksdeutsche* and *Vertriebene*, which is not only an oversight, but it contradicts, in part, the archival record of ethnic German expellees themselves. A study of the Jendrike Collection offers an opportunity to write a history that acknowledges the periodizations and self-understandings of these school teachers – historically categorized as both *Volksdeutsche* and *Vertriebene* – in order to bridge the gap between these two fields of inquiry.

Recent works on the German minority in interwar Poland have provided new directions for historical analysis of the *Volksdeutsche* and other groups in interwar east central Europe. In particular, James Bjork's *Neither Pole nor German* (2010) and Winson Chu's *The German Minority in Interwar Poland* (2012) have been especially insightful in



calling into question the groupness of the *Volksdeutsche*. Together, these works suggest not only the continued significance of historical analysis of interwar east central Europe, but also the increasing importance of applying two particular interventions to the analysis of interwar Poland: the use of non-nationals as a category of analysis, and the increasing disparateness between German-speaking groups in interwar Poland.

In *Neither Pole nor German*, Bjork argues that Upper Silesia was a zone of “mixed, fluid, and ambivalent national identification.”<sup>7</sup> Bjork blurs the “seductive, but deceptive, clarity of those self-contained [nationalist] narratives,” by following the story of the Catholic clergy in the deanery of Myslovitz in Upper Silesia between 1890 and 1922 and focusing on the ways in which Polish and German nationalist groups fought over the loyalty of the Catholic clergy.<sup>8</sup> For Bjork, there was nothing “inextricably fused” about Polishness and Catholicism, despite the claims of scholars preceding him. Rather, Bjork complicates the picture, arguing that many of the policies of the Catholic Center Party, as the political organization of the Catholic clergy, were attempts to escape the polarization of nationalization attempts. The Catholic Center Party saw nationalization as a force that was dangerous to the religious community, and thus, they sought out methods that would allow supporters to remain non-national, indifferent, or even opposed to the national cause.<sup>9</sup>

While Bjork’s work highlights the persistence of national indifference in the German-Polish borderlands, Winson Chu’s *The German Minority in Interwar Poland* exposes the predominant regionalism and divided nature of the German minority between the two world

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<sup>7</sup> James Bjork, *Neither German nor Pole: Catholicism and National Indifference in a Central European Borderland* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008), 4.

<sup>8</sup> Bjork, 18.

<sup>9</sup> This conclusion is similar to the findings of works on the borderlands of Habsburg Bohemia. Jeremy King’s *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans: A Local History of Bohemian Politics, 1848-1948* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002) and Eagle Glassheim’s *Noble Nationalists: The Transformation of the Bohemian Aristocracy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), in particular, note the intention of certain groups to remain “non-national” for personal gain.

wars. Chu's work stands in opposition to the standard narrative which tells the tale of how the "three minorities" became "one over time."<sup>10</sup> Charting the multiple attempts made by German nationalist organizations to "forge these heterogeneous elements politically," Chu concludes that rather than becoming gradually homogenous, the Germans in interwar Poland became "increasingly splintered" by nationalization attempts.<sup>11</sup>

At the heart of Chu's argument is the Polish city of Lodz and the "*lodzermensch*" stereotype, which had existed since the late 1800s. Originating first in Yiddish, the *Lodzer Mensch/lodzermensch*<sup>12</sup> was a term that "stood for the businessman of German, Jewish, or Polish heritage."<sup>13</sup> It characterized someone who was "economically liberal but politically conservative."<sup>14</sup> The *lodzermensch* followed a "rational and individual way of life, and his work was dictated by the principles of the market economy. He remained loyal under any given political circumstances in order not to endanger his business dealings."<sup>15</sup> In other words, the term stood for a form of "inter-ethnic accommodation that was commonplace in East Central Europe."<sup>16</sup>

The 'rootless' and "accommodating" Lodz Germans, Chu shows, were pushed to the periphery of 'Germanness' by western Polish German activists. Using the *lodzermensch* as

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<sup>10</sup> Three minorities refers to the German minorities created in the aftermath of Poland's (re)creation in 1918. Since the late eighteenth century, Poland had been partitioned among the Kingdom of Prussia, and the Habsburg and Romanov Empires. Each of the three partitions had German populations; "Germans" from Germany, Austria, and Russia all resided in the new state of Poland. Chu refers to this narrative as the "Volksgruppe paradigm," which argues that "the uniform experience of repression, the struggle for minority rights, and a National Socialist renewal had transformed the loose and heterogeneous German minority into a tightly bound and homogenous Volksgruppe." Chu, 4.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> German/Polish term for *lodzermensch*. Chu, 118.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Pietrow-Ennker, "Ein Klischee lernt das Zwinkern," as translated in Chu, 118.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. See also Tara Zahra's *Kidnapped Souls: National Indifference and the Battle for Children in the Bohemian Lands, 1900-1948* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008) and Pieter M. Judson's *Guardians of the Nation: Activists on the Language Frontiers of Imperial Austria* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006) for excellent studies on "national amphibians" in Bohemia.

an example of cultural contamination, German nationalist activists emphasized the “negative Other of what a good German should be.”<sup>17</sup> Although it was assumed that the *lodzermensch* were somehow “German,” they were seen as ‘crossbreeds,’ ‘amphibians,’ and worse, a danger to the German *Volk* itself. Endangered and dangerous, the *lodzermensch* not only were pushed to the margins of the *Volksgemeinschaft* (national community), but represented the “dark side within.”<sup>18</sup>

Chu’s study is both thoroughly researched and insightful, but his focus on political leaders means that the self-understandings and self-representations of “ordinary people” on the ground remain obscure. Although Chu briefly touches on *Volksdeutsche* self-understandings through an examination of the terms by which Germans in Poland suddenly self-identified – “Poznanian-Pomerelians,” “Galician Germans,” or “Germans in Central Poland” – Chu is clear that his study is more about identity politics than identities themselves.<sup>19</sup>

Chu’s and Bjork’s works have challenged the previous scholarship in fundamental ways, both conceptually and methodologically. They have called into question the basic assumptions of the historiography by challenging the stability or cohesiveness of its subject-matter. Chu and Bjork have exposed that the Germanness of the *Volksdeutsche* was highly contentious, and that much of the historiography has taken up a category originally deployed in the attempts to nationalize these individuals during the interwar period. By problematizing national(ist) categories, they have opened up a space for historians to approach the interwar period in a way that will fundamentally rewrite previous narratives.

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<sup>17</sup> Chu, 156-157.

<sup>18</sup> *Volksgemeinschaft* refers to the German people or German community. It is a term that especially has racial connotations in the Hitler-era. Chu, 158.

<sup>19</sup> These terms started appearing post-1919, suggesting that regional cleavages were indeed deepening or being created. Chu, 15.

Given the recent nature of these interventions and the division between interwar and postwar historiography, historians of expellees have yet to integrate these challenges into their own work. Much of the postwar scholarship focused on the political aims of expellees - specifically, expellee leaders - in Germany. Until recently, the bulk of scholarly works on the *Vertriebene* has argued that the active remembering practices of the *Vertriebene*, such as those of the school teachers in the Jendrike Collection, were evidence of “reactionary dreams of empire,”<sup>20</sup> and that expellees were largely preoccupied with the restoration of their former homeland. Yet the most current work on the post-war memories of *Vertriebene* questions the degree to which most expellees were interested in revanchist or restorative aims. Rather, scholars have begun to suggest that expellees were more concerned with healing from the trauma of ethnic cleansing than the return of their *Heimat*.<sup>21</sup>

Andrew Demshuk, in *The Lost German East: Forced Migration and the Politics of Memory, 1945-1970* (2012), emphasizes the lack of revanchist aims among expellees. He argues that the expellees “embraced a diverse and apolitical understanding of the Lost German East.”<sup>22</sup> Demshuk’s work challenges most previous histories that have over-emphasized the influence of expellee political leaders and the extent to which expellees saw themselves as victims. Instead of relying on the widely published tracts by politically motivated leaders, Demshuk looks at sources closer to the ground – diaries, letters, *Heimat* books and newspapers, pastoral circulars, travel reports, and documentation from surviving *Heimat* archives – in order to show what expellees chose to remember and consider why.<sup>23</sup> Demshuk proposes that these forms of remembering were not about the return of former

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<sup>20</sup> Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe’s Twentieth Century* (New York: Random House, 1998), 400.

<sup>21</sup> Demshuk, 9.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

territories, but rather a way of dealing with the trauma of being uprooted and forcibly moved to a foreign land.

Demshuk argues that the “process of coping” for each expellee was contingent on the ability of the expellee to recognize the “fundamental incompatibility between two images of *Heimat*.”<sup>24</sup> The first image of *Heimat*, the *Heimat of memory*, was “an idealized vision of what they had lost,” which evoked images of the village with its fields, forests, and mountains, or, for those who had inhabited urban sites, the old neighbourhood or prominent architectural monuments.<sup>25</sup> This *Heimat* was decidedly apolitical, and of little use to expellee leaders in their political aims. The second image of *Heimat*, the *Heimat transformed*, was the contemporary physical world that once held their “real environments of memory.”<sup>26</sup> From the first few months after the expulsion to the end of Stalinism in 1956, negative reports from those who had remained in Western Poland permeated West German newspapers, *Heimat* periodicals, *Heimat* books, and private reflections.<sup>27</sup> These negative reports held evidence that what the *Heimat* expellees were remembering had now fallen prey to the forces of destruction, and was deeply imbued with “foreignness.”<sup>28</sup> Former ‘German’ landmarks were rebuilt, but the new Polish inhabitants transfigured them with Polish meanings. The disparity between these two images of *Heimat* grew over the years, and it was precisely this growing disparity, according to Demshuk, that enabled the expellees to “overcome the past” and accept that they were never going home again, as ‘home’ no longer existed.

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Memoire*,” *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989): 7. For a fuller exploration of the relationship between memory and history, see the entirety of Nora’s article.

<sup>27</sup> Demshuk, 21.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 22.

Demshuk's work is heavily influenced by theories of nostalgia, most specifically those of Peter Fritzsche and Svetlana Boym. For Demshuk, nostalgia is what narrates the *Heimat of memory* for expellees. Bemoaned as "schmaltzy kitsch" or "false" by some, it was the active attempt to reside "in an idealized aesthetic" of what had once existed that enabled expellees to "continue on without losing a sense of their own identity."<sup>29</sup> Demshuk shows that, eventually, expellees came to accept their new fate through four main avenues: reports from remaining indigenous Germans in Poland, private reflections, group gatherings, and travels back to Poland. It was the group gatherings, Demshuk argues, and their collective nostalgia, that allowed expellees to construct a new "rootedness" in the "surrogate Heimat spaces in the West."<sup>30</sup>

Nostalgia has often been treated as a false form of memory, a misrepresentation of the facts and akin to kitsch, which Milan Kundera defines as the "absolute denial of shit, in both the literal and figurative sense of the word."<sup>31</sup> Charles Maier claims that "nostalgia is to memory as kitsch is to art." It is "essentially history without guilt...[an] abdication of personal responsibility, a guilt-free homecoming, an ethical and aesthetic future."<sup>32</sup> It allows those who invoke it to see the past through rose-coloured glasses, deconstructing all unacceptable events from one's history and recasting them in a bearable way. Nostalgia has thus not only been labelled insidious and self-indulgent, but also largely unusable for serious scholarship.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 124.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 95.

<sup>31</sup> Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* (New York: Harper & Row, 1984), 248.

<sup>32</sup> Charles Maier, "The End of Longing? Notes towards a History of Postwar German National Longing," paper presented at the Berkeley Center for German and European Studies, December 1995, Berkeley, CA, cited in Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), xiv.

<sup>33</sup> Boym, xiv.

Recent scholarship suggests that the ground is ripe for a new theoretical approach to memory; integrating nostalgia may be an entry point into a more rigorous treatment of memory studies in general. Alon Confino has been particularly vociferous in his dissatisfaction with existing studies of memory, suggesting that current work on memory fail not only to connect individual case studies to the collective, but they are also theoretically weak, leaving them isolated in certain historiographical fields and less useful than they could be.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, greater emphasis on how memory functions and on how it narrates experience – both individual and collective - is necessary when examining sources of memory. Nostalgia, as a form of memory, can provide the analytical and conceptual rigour Confino demands.

Boym and Fritzsche have shown the potential of analyses of nostalgia to connect these micro and macro levels of experience, and thus provide not only more precision to memory studies, but offer a critique of “official” or “national” memories. Nostalgia is both an historical emotion, and also a trope that narrates lives (and therefore sources). Both Boym and Fritzsche contend that nostalgia is “about the relationship between individual biography and the biography of groups or nations, between personal and collective memory.”<sup>35</sup> It distinguishes itself in this way from personal melancholy, which “confines itself to the planes of individual consciousness.”<sup>36</sup> Nostalgic writings actively seek to connect collective meanings to individual losses.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Alon Confino, “Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method,” *American Historical Review*, 102, December 1997, 1389-90.

<sup>35</sup> Boym, xvi.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Peter Fritzsche, *Stranded in the Present: Modern Time and the Melancholy of History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 209.

The use of nostalgia as a concept can be made even more useful by distinguishing between two kinds of nostalgia: restorative and reflective. Restorative nostalgia is the stuff nations are made of. It puts its emphasis on the *nostos* of nostalgia, literally meaning “homecoming” or “to return.” Restorative nostalgia underlies the formation of national myths. It is about a hard truth, and it proposes a literal rebuilding of the lost home in order to “patch up the memory gaps.”<sup>38</sup> Thus, restorative nostalgia focuses on the loss of space. In contrast, reflective nostalgia stresses a lost time, cherishing “shattered fragments of memory and temporaliz[ing] space.”<sup>39</sup> It resides in the *algia*, the ache or longing of loss. It focuses on “individual narrative that savors details and memorial signs.”<sup>40</sup>

Restorative and reflective nostalgia are not necessarily mutually exclusive, but their implications are significantly distinct. Svetlana Boym writes that “the two may overlap in their frames of reference, but they do not coincide in their narratives and plots of identity...they can use the same triggers of memory and symbols, the same Proustian madelaine pastry, but tell different stories about it.”<sup>41</sup> The difference is in typologies of emplotment. Restorative nostalgia creates a tragic narrative, one that highlights the loss of a certain space, while the narrative of reflective nostalgia is romantic, and emphasizes the pleasure in repossessing the past through memory.<sup>42</sup>

While Boym sees nostalgia as being able to connect individual and collective memory, she is careful to make the distinction between collective memory and national

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<sup>38</sup> Boym, 41.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> To read more about the idea of emplotment and tropes, see the introduction of Hayden White’s *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in 19th-century Europe* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University, 1973). This paper admittedly does not do justice to the idea, but the way in which a story is emplotted is bound up with its political aims. Restorative nostalgia seeks retribution and acknowledgment of victimhood, while reflective nostalgia wants the opportunity to reside in or possess memory.



memory. Collective memory, according to Boym, constitutes “shared social frameworks of individual recollections,” while national memory seeks to fix “the gaps and discontinuities...through a coherent and inspiring tale of recovered identity.”<sup>43</sup> Thus collective remembrances, such as the expellees’ remembrances, can potentially fly in the face of a national narrative. The “shared everyday frameworks of collective or cultural memory offer us mere signposts for individual reminiscences that could suggest multiple narratives.”<sup>44</sup>

Analyses that treat nostalgic memories not solely as ‘false’ but rather as a specific way of narrating experiences can challenge not only national narratives, but historical narratives, as exemplified by Demshuk’s excellent study. In the case of the German expellees, both national and historical descriptions tell the tale of a group of people unable to cope with the present and paralyzed by their ‘victimhood.’ Demshuk’s work usefully shows how nostalgia functioned as a positive force, one that guided a process through which expellees came to deal with their lost homeland. Yet Demshuk’s study also, perhaps inadvertently, reaffirms certain assumptions and categories, such as the existence of a coherent expellee group, and assumes that nostalgia functions solely to recreate the past, rather than the present. He also fails to consider how these expellee nostalgic narratives functioned to (re)create an understanding “about themselves,” what “their past” was, and what exactly they “thought about themselves” after their migration from the East.<sup>45</sup> How did the *Volksdeutsche* become *Vertriebene*? Was this a self-understood category, or a label

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<sup>43</sup> Boym, 53.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Demshuk poses the question early on in his book: “Just how and why did expellees reach such an understanding about themselves, their past, and their future?” Demshuk, 5.

imposed from the top-down?<sup>46</sup> How did these nostalgic remembrances play a role in the self-fashioning efforts of expellees? Leaving these questions unasked and unanswered continues to give power to those categories and narratives which see the *Vertriebene* both as political revisionists and a nationally homogenous group.

Allowing nostalgia to guide our reading of the sources, rather than fighting against it, can help to expose not only the difficult and often failed work of making individuals national in the interwar period, but also the failure of most historians to acknowledge the overwhelmingly apolitical nature of expellee memories in the archives. Most historians of the *Vertriebene* have perpetuated the myth of a homogenous expellee group by ignoring what expellees were actually writing, bringing their own lenses of assumed national belonging, repatriation, and identification to their projects. The myth of the existence of the *Volksdeutsche/Vertriebene* as a homogenous national group can be undone through a close examination of their nostalgic remembrances. Using nostalgia as an analytical tool can also alter conventional periodizations and bridge the scholarship of interwar *Volksdeutsche* and postwar *Vertriebene*. Seeing these two historiographies together can show how these same people have been recategorized by politicians and historians alike in two distinct periods. Bridging the gap between these two periods and seeing the continuity between them – namely, the subjects themselves and their enduring lack of groupness – will expose the shortcomings of these categories, and the need to critically re-examine their validity.

Instead of determining the scope of my project by discrete “events” such as the expulsion or the Second World War, the nostalgic logic of the sources in the Jendrike

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<sup>46</sup> Although no real work has been done on this question, Jutta Faehndrich, in her examination of expellee *Heimat* books, claims that “the expellees did not exist and never existed. To speak here of a unified group is to reproduce a merely expedient, but hardly substantial construct of the media, political circles, and interest groups.” Jutta Faehndrich, *Eine endliche Geschichte. Die Heimatbuecher der deutschen Vertriebenen* (Cologne: Boehlau, 2011), 238-239, as cited in Demshuk, 9.

Collection suggests different, more ambiguous, periodizations. I examine the categories used in the Jendrike Collection, and consider who is imposing them. By beginning to look “down to the material itself, to the paper, ink, and inkblots that seem to disclose things,” we are better able to understand the self-fashioning and self-understandings of those who filled out Jendrike’s questionnaire.<sup>47</sup> In particular, I consider the disciplined and undisciplined spaces of the text; how did specific questions condition certain answers, how did respondents resist within and beyond the margins? Looking for the patterns behind the construction of documents gives us a deeper look at “the conditions of possibility that shaped what could be written... what stories could be told, and what could not be said.”<sup>48</sup>

An alternative reading of the memories in the Jendrike Collection has the potential to further pry apart the narrative of expellee revanchism, to learn more about how nostalgia works, and to understand how these *Volksdeutsche/Vertriebene* took up or rejected categories imposed by expellee political figures like Jendrike. Using a nostalgic lens to look at expellee remembrances also holds multiple possibilities for alternative histories. It allows us not only to bridge the gap between interwar and postwar histories of *Volksdeutsche/Vertriebene* and transcend conventional periodizations, but also to illuminate continuities in *Volksdeutsche/Vertriebene* self-understandings, to reveal an enduring disparateness between members of an imposed category, and to expose persistent non-national identifications, which up to now have been largely ignored in post-war historiography.

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<sup>47</sup> Kathryn Burns, *Into the Archive: Writing and Power in Colonial Peru* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 12.

<sup>48</sup> Ann Stoler, “Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance: On the Content in the Form,” *Archival Science* 2 (2002), 91. See also Ann Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and the Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

## The Questionnaire

At first glance, Jendrike's questionnaire seems to be largely concerned with basic logistical details of schooling in interwar Poland. It asks when the school was established, how many classrooms the school held, the grades and subjects taught by the respondent, and how many children went on to higher education. The overall narrative of the questionnaire, however, is much more political, seeking to establish not only a clear-cut differentiation between "Polish" and "German," but also to expose the kind of power dynamics that existed between these two groups. Additionally, the questions are set up in such a way that the only power dynamic that can be addressed is that of Poles oppressing Germans.

Born in 1888, Paul Jendrike was the chairman of the Association of German Teachers in Poland from 1922-1939, as well as a principal in Bromberg/Bydgoszcz during most of that time. With the end of the Second World War and his subsequent flight to Germany, Jendrike began to document the history of German schools in interwar Poland, which he did first from Hanover and subsequently from Cologne. The questionnaires were collected from 1949 until Jendrike's death in 1966, when they became the core of the Jendrike Collection. The Jendrike Collection, which documents the history of German schools in interwar Poland, was a deposit for the Commission for the History of Germans in Poland at the *Herder Institut*, Marburg. The questionnaire he developed was sent to those colleagues whom he knew personally or whose addresses he was able to acquire. While it seems this would only reach a small number of teachers, Jendrike's former position as chairman of the Association of German Teachers in Poland meant that his personal connections were wide, a fact that is clear from the amount of questionnaires in the collection.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Ingo Eser, "*Volk, Staat, Gott!*" *die deutsche Minderheit in Polen und ihr Schulwesen 1918 - 1939* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2010), 57.

Every teacher was sent an identical six-page form, which was broken up into sections A and B. Taking up the entire first page, section A sought “Information on the Particulars.” It asked for the name of the teacher, as well as the place, district, and province within which the teacher taught. It then left approximately three quarters of the page for “Resume and Career Service,” which provided space for teachers to fully outline their teaching careers. Room was also left at the top right of the page for teachers to include photographs of themselves.

Section B comprises the remaining five pages of the questionnaire, and tells us much more about why the questionnaire was produced. This section first requested that the respondents note the “reporting period” within which they are writing about, with the explicit note that they do not report beyond September 1, 1939, as this date marked the invasion of Poland, and thus the beginning of the Second World War. This request is interesting for a number of reasons, one of which is that most teachers did not stop teaching in September 1939. Indeed, their “career service” section and subsequent comments in the open sections of the questionnaire indicate where many of them taught during and after the war. Yet after the invasion of Poland, when Germans gained control of schools in Poland, the narrative changed from one of Polish discrimination to German oppression, a story Jendrike evidently was not keen to tell. Jendrike’s decision to end the questioning period in 1939 thus provides us with the first clue as to why the collection was being commissioned.

The teachers were asked to note not only the name, province, district, and county they were reporting on, but also to circle “German” or “Polish” after their answer. This indicates not only that these places may have had more than one name, but also that the questionnaire

was designed to distinguish “German” and “Polish” as separate categories, with seemingly no space for ambiguity.

The distinction between German and Polish preoccupies a large proportion of the questionnaire. For example, when participants are asked to report on the “character of the place,” they are prompted to specifically comment on the “economic and social structure of the population, especially in terms of proportion of nationalities.” They are asked to comment on who were the “majority of commercial users,” and if there were “important farms in German hands.” In addition, teachers are requested to comment on the “breakdown of nationalities, perhaps through an explanation of professional cultural organizations of the German population,” including how many “local German representatives” were on the town council. The questionnaire also asked respondents to report on the ways the “Polish population” changed “during the late reporting period, as well as the causes.” These are questions that certainly fall out of the jurisdiction of a teacher’s expertise, but they make one of Jendrike’s goals immediately clear: to establish a clear distinction between German and Polish, and to emphasize a significant ‘German’ presence in these places.

While the majority of the latter half of the questionnaire is more directly related to schooling, the questionnaire becomes increasingly pointed regarding difficulties German schools may have faced. Respondents are requested to note whether their respective schools were public or private, which subjects were taught in German/Polish, when Polish language instruction began, and how many students were Protestant or Catholic. They are also asked to comment on when private schools joined the German School Association, and for what purposes.<sup>50</sup> At one point, in reference to “other notable information concerning the schooling

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<sup>50</sup> Private schools were run by the *Deutscher Schulverein* (German School Association) which had been established in Bromberg/Bydgoszcz in 1921. Supported financially by the Reich, the DSV was able to provide

of German children,” respondents are prompted to note “futile or difficult efforts in establishing a private school” or “other disabilities.” While these questions are straightforward, their answers are inevitably political.

During the interwar years, Polish officials began serious Polonization efforts, and minority schools became a prime target.<sup>51</sup> In the name of reclaiming nationally ambivalent Polish children for the nation, the number of public minority schools in Poland declined quickly, resulting in an increase in private German schools.<sup>52</sup> While these private schools initially enjoyed some autonomy, new laws and continual inspections by Polish officials resulted in several private German institutions being shut down.<sup>53</sup> Jendrike, as the former Chairman of the Association of German teachers, would have been intricately involved in dealing with these challenges; Jendrike’s questions thus sought answers that would establish

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“money for teachers’ salaries and pensions, below-cost books, and scholarship aid for poor students and for those who agreed to become teachers in Poland.” While private German schools were not “exempt from official requirements and restrictions” of minority schools in Poland, the DSV was able to use its annual budget, four million zloty, to “assert its control at the expense of local school boards.” Richard Blanke, *Orphans of Versailles: The Germans in Western Poland, 1918-1939* (Louisville: Univeristy Press of Kentucky, 1993), 106.

<sup>51</sup> According to Brubaker, the Polonization efforts directed towards Germans were “dissimilationist,” rather than “assimilationist.” Dissimilationist nationalization efforts “prescribes differential treatment on the basis of...presumed fundamental difference.” Thus, instead of trying to turn “Germans” into “Poles,” there was an attempt to actually *replace* Germans with Poles in “key economic and political positions,” such as the “civil service, the professions, the industrial base of Upper Silesia, the school system,” in addition to encouraging emigration. Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 86-93.

<sup>52</sup> In order to “reclaim” these “nationally ambivalent Poles,” Polish officials were forced to circumvent both the letter of the Geneva Convention and the rights of parents. Nationalist organizations began to do background checks on parents who persisted in trying to enroll children in German schools, and mothers with illegitimate children were “added to the category of those not considered qualified to select their children’s schools.” Incentives and bribery were also used to lure parents, and children, away from German schools. These incentives included free lunches, cheap trips to Poland or Germany, and Christmas gifts. Blanke, 105. For more on the tactics of Polish officials in interwar Poland, see Blanke, 102-111.

<sup>53</sup> A 1927 law created easier ways for officials to reject the applications of new private German schools or shut down a pre-existing one if, for example, “ulterior motives” were suspected behind its founding. Blanke, 107. The number of German-language schools in Western Poland continued to drop during the interwar years, from 1250 in 1921-22 to 254 in 1926-27 to a mere 60 in 1937-38. Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed*, 92-93.

proof that Poland had blatantly ignored its obligations under the Minority Protection Treaty.<sup>54</sup>

The most actively political section of the questionnaire arrives on the second to last page, where respondents who stopped teaching before 1939 are asked to explain why they did so. Immediately following this question is a parenthetical list of possible answers to this question. The potential responses, according to the questionnaire, could include a “violation of the provisions of the minority protection act,” “special measures by the Polish authorities,” “leaving the teaching profession, after which the site was not occupied by a German teacher,” or a general casualty of Polonization efforts. Teachers who noted that their German school was shut down due to the repeal in 1932<sup>55</sup> are asked to comment on “what happened to the German children after the abolition of the German school (class)? If they were transferred to the Polish school: What was the relation of the German children to the Polish? Did the German children in the Polish school learn German lessons (to what extent)?” On the last page of the questionnaire, the respondents are given approximately half a page for “Room for addition to certain points,” after which they are asked to declare that they derived the information solely from memory and to sign and date the questionnaire.

Jendrike’s involvement in the collection did not end after sending out the questionnaire. Traces of his red pen can be found running throughout the returned questionnaires, underlining and marking details of interest. Interestingly, but perhaps not surprisingly, Jendrike’s red pen is almost exclusively confined to evidence of abuses by the Polish authorities, or difficulties that Germans faced due to their ‘nationality.’ The trail left

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<sup>54</sup> Signed on June 1919, the Minority Protection Treaty “obliged Poland. . .to provide elementary education in minority languages where minorities formed a ‘considerable proportion’ of the populations.” Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed*, 92.

<sup>55</sup> Another law in 1932 “established special loyalty tests, unusually strict building codes, and other obstacles for groups wanting to operate private schools.” Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed*, 92.



by the red pen more often than not leads to the letters also found in the collection. Written by the respondents at the request of Jendrike, these letters contained information pertaining to those sections marked in red. These traces not only explain the provenance of many extra letters and addendums in the collection, but they help to expose Jendrike's interests and motives.<sup>56</sup>

It is not unexpected that the questionnaire reveals Jendrike's intentions. Often, when examining questionnaires, we find that the questions reveal more than the answers themselves. They allow us to get at the motives and values of the designers, to understand the intended outcome, and to speak about their motive with more authority. After all, they are the creators of the conceptual framework; designers are able to carefully craft questions in a way that not only influences the mental context of the respondent, but also places limitations on the prospective answers. The Jendrike Collection is no exception to this tendency. Hidden within the wording of the questions, the structure of the questionnaire, and the traces of the red pen is evidence of Jendrike's expectations and his intended outcome. Questionnaires are thus valuable sources of information, but it is often difficult to get beyond design to find the authentic voices of those who fill them out.

Up until now, the Jendrike Collection has been treated with suspicion for this very reason. Ingo Eser, who is the only scholar to use this collection in any great capacity, drew on it in his most recent work, *Volk, Staat, Gott!: Die deutsche Minderheit in Polen und ihr Schulwesen 1918-1939* (2010) which examines minority schools in interwar Poland.<sup>57</sup> For

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<sup>56</sup> There is also evidence in the collection that Jendrike was looking to discipline those teachers who had cooperated with the Polish authorities, a practice that had been established during the interwar period by Otto Schönbeck, the former director of the German School Association in Poland. According to one former teacher, Schönbeck not only "demanded an anti-Polish position" but "kept a 'black list' of anti-nationalist classroom comments reported by pupils." Blanke, 106.

<sup>57</sup> Eser, 58.

Eser, however, the collection is highly unreliable, as most of the respondents' contributions are based on memory and formulated in the post-war, post-expulsion context. He also notes correctly that Jendrike himself may have affected the truthfulness of the answers; some of his red notations suggest that he was looking to discipline members of the association who had cooperated with the Polish authorities.<sup>58</sup>

Eser's concerns about the Jendrike Collection seem fair - but what if we change the questions we are asking of the questionnaires? By altering our historical questions and using a different analytical lens, the Jendrike Collection becomes infinitely more revealing. In an overwhelming number of reports, respondents stepped into the margins and undisciplined spaces, creating narratives unframed and unprompted by Jendrike's questions. Thus, the contents of the Jendrike Collection offer us a rare glimpse into the motives and values of the respondents. By actively looking for ways in which respondents evaded Jendrike's narrative, an entirely surprising story unfolds regarding national indifference, self-understandings, and nostalgic longing.

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 58.

## The Teachers Respond

In May 1957, Gerhard Bernecker completed his questionnaire for the Jendrike Collection. Born on March 1, 1913, Bernecker grew up in Zduny, in the province of Posen/Poznań . Raised by his parents Wilhelm, a builder, and Anna, who had both grown up in Breslau/Wrocław, Bernecker went to a German elementary school, followed by high school in Krotoschin/Krotoszyński county and teacher's college in Bielitz/Bielsko, officially passing his first teacher's exam on June 27, 1933.<sup>59</sup> Bernecker writes on the first page of the questionnaire that his "mother died in Zduny in 1935" and his "father was imprisoned and killed by the Poles for alleged espionage for Germany."<sup>60</sup>

Trouble for Bernecker started early in 1939, when he began to receive multiple visits from the Polish school inspector. During these visits the inspector would interrogate Bernecker on his political views, as well as search the students' backpacks and test them on their Polish language skills. The interrogations became even more heated after Bernecker's father was arrested in March 1939.<sup>61</sup> The school eventually received a letter from the school board announcing that Bernecker's school was only approved for operation until August 31, 1939. The school came under further scrutiny when another school inspector came to visit in May. While the school was not immediately closed, it was demanded that a 'real' Polish teacher be brought in to teach Polish language classes to the students. Eventually, the beginning of the Second World War brought a different set of challenges to Bernecker's school.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Gerhard Bernecker, "Fragebogen," DSHI 100 Jendrike 5.

<sup>60</sup> "Meine Mutter starb 1935 in Zduny, mein Vater wurde 1939 von den Polen im Gefängnis zu Sieradz wegen angeblicher Spionage zugunsten Deutschlands erschlagen." Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

Bernecker's difficulties and narrative do not end in September 1939. He writes that he married Emilie Baum and had three children: one son, and two daughters. From 1941 to 1946 he "was a soldier in a marine unit in the Netherlands and in Africa, and in captivity starting from 1943 in: Africa, USA, Belgium and England."<sup>63</sup> He also managed to complete his second teacher's exam during leave from the German army in February 1942.<sup>64</sup>

Bernecker's story takes us all the way to 1955. He reports that, from 1947-1954, he and his family were forced to live in shelters. It was only in 1955 that Bernecker was finally able to build them a home.<sup>65</sup>

A melancholic and tough tale, there is nothing particularly surprising about Bernecker's narrative. Historiography, national narratives, and the questions in the Jendrike questionnaire would have us assume that Bernecker's story is a typical one, where clashes with and abuses by Polish authorities, unjust imprisonment and murder, and destitution in the aftermath of the expulsion are the norm. What is surprising, however, is that Bernecker's story is anything but representative of the reports found in the Jendrike Collection. While there are some individuals who echo Bernecker's sentiments, many respondents tell a vastly different story, where national belonging was either of minor importance or non-existent, where Germans and Poles lived peacefully together, and where diversity was celebrated.

There is also an unexpected distinction to be found between questionnaires like Bernecker's and the rest of the reports. In most questionnaires where individuals responded solely to the questions themselves, existing within the disciplined spaces of the collection, a narrative emerges that tells a tale of inequity, hardship, and national discrimination. Like Bernecker, other respondents to Jendrike's questionnaire reported conflicts over national

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

belonging. William Boettcher used the questionnaire to report the many and constant protests over nationality that occurred in schools, whether public or private, German or Polish.

Boettcher describes how, after 1932, the Polish authorities began forcibly assigning Polish nationality to students who were studying at German schools. “In 1932 the children with Polish names were forced to attend Polish schools. The parents protested this with a two-week strike.”<sup>66</sup> Boettcher also remembers how “The children of poor parents went to the Polish schools in the localities. They received religious teaching in German. The children of wealthy parents attended private or secondary school in the district town or in Danzig.”<sup>67</sup>

Yet although the reports of Bernecker and Boettcher suggest that conflict and national belonging dictated their lives during the interwar period, these reports also exist exclusively in the disciplined spaces of the questionnaire. For those respondents who stepped outside of the questionnaire, utilizing the undisciplined spaces to determine the shape of their own story, a very different picture appears. Some individuals escaped the inevitable narrative of the questionnaire by refusing to fill it out, instead attaching a multi-page written account remembering what they deem significant. Others filled out the questionnaire but also included precious photographs that gave faces to names, creating a deeply intimate story that emphasized nostalgic mourning and melancholy. But regardless of how respondents evaded or subverted the questionnaire, their unbound narratives seriously complicate our understanding of national boundaries and of nostalgia. By stepping outside of those bounds and reading along narratives in the undisciplined spaces, it becomes increasingly clear that while the Polish authorities were often a source of conflict, narratives outside of the

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<sup>66</sup> “1932 wurden die Kinder mit polnischen Namen (-ski) zwangsweise in poln. Schulen überführt. Ein 2-wochiger Schulstreik war der Protest der Eltern.” William Boettcher, “Fragebogen,” DSHI 100 Jendrike 1.

<sup>67</sup> “...die Kinder armer Eltern gingen in die polnischen Schulder der Orte. Sie erhielten ledig Religious unterricht in dtisch. Sprache. Die Kinder vermoegender Eltern besuchten die Privat oder hoehere schule in der Kreisstadt oder in Danzig.” Ibid.

questionnaire are framed in a way that highlights cooperation, good relations between “Germans” and “Poles,” and vastly different conceptions of what it meant to be a “German” in interwar Poland.

Unlike Bernecker and Boettcher, Richard Schmelzer explicitly remembers both the positive relationships and spirit of cooperation that existed between Germans and Poles during his time as a teacher in Posen. Ignoring the questionnaire altogether, Schmelzer compiles his own, three-page report on life as a school teacher in Jankendorf/Sokolowo Budzyskie, in the administrative district of Kolmar/Chodzież. He reports that he shared teaching duties in his one-classroom school with a Polish teacher, Lehrer Kijora. Schmelzer makes sure to express his high opinion of Kijora, who “was a very tolerant and loyal individual” and also very hard-working.<sup>68</sup> While Schmelzer taught only the necessary 40 students, Kijora was responsible for over 60 students. Eventually, another Polish teacher was brought in, who shared duties with Kijora.<sup>69</sup>

Schmelzer’s narrative continues with examples of the harmonious and intellectually-stimulating relationships that were cultivated between him and his colleagues. He notes that

Together with Max Hauffe and Max Maertel I founded a German club, Polish language courses, lectures – and organized reading nights and celebrations. All events were always well attended. Poles also frequently took part in them, especially the teacher Kijora, the landowner Laube and the postmaster Murzynski. The coexistence of Germans and Poles was good.<sup>70</sup>

Schmelzer’s choice to evade the confines of the questionnaire not only enables him to write a much more personal narrative, but it also exposes those memories that Schmelzer felt

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<sup>68</sup> “Der polnische Lehrer Kijora war ein sehr toleranter und loyaler Mensch.” Richard Schmelzer, “Lebenslauf,” DSHI 100 Jendrike 9.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> “Mit Max Hauffe und Max Maertel gründete ich einen deutschen Club, der polnische Sprachkurse, Vortrags – und Lesabende und Feiern veranstaltete. Alle Veranstaltungen waren immer sehr gut besucht. Häufig nahmen auch Polen daran teil, insbesondere der Lehrer Kijora, der Gutsbesitzer Laube und der Postvorsteher Murzynski. Das Zusammenleben der Deutschen und Polen war gut.” Ibid.

the most strongly about; Boym's work on nostalgia reminds us that one "remembers best what is colored by emotion."<sup>71</sup> Furthermore, Schmelzer's questionnaire allows us to understand what Schmelzer *chooses* to remember about his time in Poland. Even if relationships between Germans and Poles were much more strained than Schmelzer admitted in his report, his choice to emphasize the amiable nature of his interactions reveals that his purpose for participating in the survey was in contrast to Jendrike's intentions. Jendrike's lack of interaction with Schmelzer's narrative corroborates this claim. While Bernecker's and Boetcher's responses include significant amounts of red pen, Schmelzer's pages remain clean and clear, useful, it appears, only to Schmelzer himself.

Schmelzer's narrative, like the others found in the undisciplined spaces of the collection, is dictated by the romantic lens of reflective nostalgia, emphasizing longing to be whole again, rather than a return to a former homeland. These narratives are romantic, recording stories of struggle and triumph, adventure, and most importantly, loss. The loss felt is decidedly individual and personal; it is unrelated to one's national identity, or in this case, one's 'Germanness,' and is not restricted to a particular time or place. The reflective nostalgia evident in the respondents' reports is thus unconcerned with collective loss, and is instead used to retrieve or recreate the lost self through memory. It is a momentary return, not to the land itself, but to the experiences of being whole.<sup>72</sup>

While Schmelzer goes outside of the questionnaire to show that Germans and Poles were on congenial terms, Marie Tourbie's response works from within the framework of the questionnaire itself to subvert its intentions, blatantly pointing out that the questions are not

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<sup>71</sup> Boym, 52.

<sup>72</sup> Nostalgia, according to Peter Fritzsche, is used by individuals in an attempt to recover a lost sense of wholeness that they feel had existed in the past. See "How Nostalgia Narrates Modernity," in *The Work of Memory*, ed. Alon Confino and Peter Fritzsche (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 62-85.

relevant to her experience. Tourbie was unable to fill out the report herself, having died a few years before the questionnaire was sent to her; a close friend, Herman Textor, filled it out on her behalf, which may account for the bold quality of his answers. Many of the respondents who emphasized Polish discrimination were still employed, or hoping to be employed, as teachers in Germany; thus these respondents may have felt pressure to appease Jendrike, who, as the former chairman of the Association, still held a position of power. Textor, as a non-teacher, had no need to appease Jendrike, and this lack of concern perhaps freed him to provide more honest responses.

National indifference is the biggest theme dominating Tourbie/Textor's report, and his report thus undermines Jendrike's aim to expose conflict between nationalities. In response to a question about the "German population" in the area, Textor writes "Here, in the lake district, it was to our advantage that the Polish presence was as good as non-existent. The Kashubians were ethnically/nationally indifferent."<sup>73</sup> National indifference, as well as a history of cooperation and integration, is highlighted again further along in the questionnaire. Reporting on the "character of the place," Textor writes that the "only thing Polish about the city Wejherowo is its patronymic ending – owo."<sup>74</sup> He goes on to outline the long history of German-Polish cooperation in the city, beginning with the relationship established in 1640 between Jakob Weiher and the Polish King Stefan Batory.<sup>75</sup> Working within the parameters of the questionnaire, Textor manages to emphasize the extent to which Polish/German relations were cooperative and the extent to which such national identifications did not exist.

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<sup>73</sup> "Hier im Seekreis fällt zu unsern Gunsten noch die Tatsache ins Gewicht, dass es ein nationals Polentum so gut wie gar nicht gegeben hat. Die Kaschuben waren völkisch indifferent." Marie Tourbie, "Fragebogen," DSHI 100 Jendrike 4.

<sup>74</sup> "An dem polnischen Ortsnamen Wejherowo ist nichts weiter polnisch als die patronyme Endung – owo." Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.



While Textor worked within the structure of the questionnaire to construct a narrative which ran against the logic of the questionnaire, others chose to step outside the questions altogether. Heinz Eckert filled out only the first page of the questionnaire, on which he handwrote some sparse biographical details. Inserted into his response, like many of the others', is a multi-page personal story. Entitled "Memories of Luzk, 1936-1937," it recounts the difficulties, and joys, he faced during that single year.<sup>76</sup> Although he lists his district as Bromberg/ Bydgoszcz on the first page of the questionnaire, Eckert mentions Western Poland only once; the entirety of his recollections are focused on his adventures in Luzk/Łuck, a small city in Wolhynien/Wołyń, Eastern Poland, where he found his greatest personal fulfillment.

Beginning in Graudenz/Grudziądz , a city located on the Vistula river in northern Poland, Eckert starts his narrative with the announcement he was forced to face at the beginning of the school year in 1936: "Your teaching permit is revoked; you can possibly go to Germany or, if you feel like having a hussar ride, go to a Russian high school in Luzk/Łuck, where there will be no difficulty."<sup>77</sup> Forced to choose between leaving for Germany or staying in Poland, Eckert opted to stay.<sup>78</sup> After contacting the Protestant pastor in Luzk/Łuck and receiving the help of some of his Mennonite friends who had Volhynian relatives, Eckert made the journey to Luzk/Łuck, where he was posted as a teacher in a Russian high school.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> At the time, Luzk/Łuck was located within Polish borders, but it was annexed by the Soviet Union after the Second World War. It now exists as Lutsk within northern Ukraine.

<sup>77</sup> "Die Unterrichtserlaubnis ist Ihnen endgültig entzogen; Sie können eventuell ins Reich oder, falls Sie Lust zu einem Husarenritt haben, an ein russisches Gymnasium nach Luzk gehen, dort wird es keine Schwierigkeiten geben." Heinz Eckert, "Erinnerung an Luzk, 1936-1937," DSHI 100 Jendrike 1.

<sup>78</sup> The revocation of German teaching certificates became increasingly common in interwar Poland. Official certification was only provided for one year at a time, and "approval to teach could be denied for vague or arbitrary reasons." Blanke, 106-107.

<sup>79</sup> Eckert, "Erringerung an Luzk, 1936-1937" DSHI 100 Jendrike 1.

The following pages in Eckert's narrative detail both his own living situation and the poor conditions of the Russian minority school in Luzk/Łuck. It was his first time teaching German as a second language, and only a few students had any grasp of German at all. The school itself was in complete disrepair, and it was short on both supplies and money; students were unable to acquire the books necessary to complete their work, and Eckert himself failed to receive all of his salary. Luckily for Eckert, the Bromberg School Association was able to send him enough money to get by during the first few months.

The school had not always been so destitute. According to Eckert's narrative, in the 1920s it had been "a thriving undertaking with Russian, Ukrainian, Jewish, and Polish students."<sup>80</sup> As the years went by, however, and the Polish government began to implement serious Polonization efforts, minority schools all across Poland began to feel the effects. Eckert notes that "the economic strength of the school authorities [in Luzk/Łuck] was far smaller than that of the German minority," and no one "advocated for the interests of the Russian minority."<sup>81</sup>

It's clear from Eckert's narrative that he did not see the Polish authorities as "anti-German," but rather, as enforcers of Polonization in general. His position in Luzk/Łuck gave him a unique perspective of this "cultural battle on the edge of Europe," which entailed the "denial of public rights, increased focus on examination regulations, and the withdrawal of all subsidies."<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> "...ein blühendes Unternehmen mit russischen, ukrainischen, jüdischen, ja polnischen Schülern gewesen." Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> "...die Wirtschaftskraft der Schulträger war ungleich geringer als die der deutschen Volksgruppe, und kein stammverwandter Staat setzte sich für die Belange der russischen Minderheit ein." Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> "Die einzelnen Stationen eines solchen "Kulturkampfes" am Rande Europas in einem Staate mit einer dem Wortlaut nach äusserst freiheitlichen Verfassung: Verbot, nichtrussische Kinder aufzunehmen, Verweigerung der Öffentlichkeitsrechte, Verschärfung der Reifeprüfungsordnung und Entzug jeder Subventionen." Ibid.

Despite the “chauvinistic Polish authorities,” language barriers, financial issues, and poor school conditions, Eckert’s year in Luzk/Łuck was deeply fulfilling, as evidenced by his plethora of friends and colleagues, as well as his profound relationship with the land itself. He enjoyed a rich social life with a “colourful” group of colleagues, which included “Poles, Russians, Belarussians, Ukrainians, Jews, polonized Germans, and even the ‘real Germans’ (which I was called) from the West. It was a pleasant collegiality; we encountered each other with that warm politeness that characterizes the old eastern lifestyle.”<sup>83</sup> His experiences with his colleagues and the Russian high school were so satisfying that, even after his financial situation got worse, and the Bromberg School Association was unable to send any more money, he decided to teach for free.<sup>84</sup>

Throughout Eckert’s narrative, it is clear he came to form a deep bond with the land itself and the life that came with it. He writes, “I experienced the most cordial hospitality. There was always a horse at my disposal, and on my rides through the quiet, great country, which is similar in its contours to the frozen waves of an ocean, I realized that never in my life would I be as free as I was here.”<sup>85</sup> Remembering his final moments in Luzk/Łuck, Eckert seems to have gained a deep respect for the people he had come to know: “The wagon rolled up the hill, and one more time the eye embraced the brave people and their island.”<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> “Sie hielt auch mit bemerkenswertem Geschick das sehr bunte Kollegium zusammen: Polen, Russen, Weissrussen, Ukrainer, Juden, polonisierte Deutsche, dazu nun noch den ‘echten Deutschen’ (wie ich bezeichnet wurde) aus dem Westen. Es herrschte eine angenehme Kollegialitaet, man begegnete einander mit jener warmherzigen Höflichkeit, die den alten östlichen Lebensstil kennzeichnet.” Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> This isn’t quite as altruistic as it initially sounds. Although Eckert was interested in continuing to teach in Luzk and “persevere,” he was also looking to recover his teaching permit in Posen - West Prussia, which he could only do by completing the year in Luzk.

<sup>85</sup> “Selbstverstaendlich ist es fast schon zu sagen, dass ich hier die herzlichste Gastfreundschaft erfuhr. Immer stand mir ein Pferd zur Verfügung und bei den Ritten durch dies ruhige, grosse Land, das in seinen Konturen dem erstarrten Wellengang eines Meeres gleicht, wurde mir bewusst, dass ich nie mehr in meinem Leben so frei sein wuerde wie hier, wo man voellig auf sich gestellt, die Bindung etwa an einen Staat und seine Ordnung weder vermisste noch ersehnte.” Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> “Der Wagon rollte die Anhöhe hinauf, noch einmal umfasste das Auge diese tapferen Menschen und ihre Insel.” Ibid. Something particularly interesting about Eckert’s testimony is his recollection of what happened to

Eckert's story is filled with harsh realities, yet his tale begins and ends with a fond remembrance of that year in Luzk/Łuck; he frames his narrative with attachment not for life amongst his fellow 'Germans,' but rather for the opportunity to live amongst so many different people. Towards the end of his narrative, Eckert reveals that, upon his return to Bromberg, he was still denied his teaching permit, despite the promises that had been made. For Eckert, however, this unsavoury experience with the Polish authorities in Posen had no bearing on his satisfying year in Luzk/Łuck, and his final words expose why: "Apparently the year in Luzk was pointless for me, as my attempt to regain my teaching permit failed due to the persistence of the chauvinistic Posen authorities. But what are plans! How insignificant they seem, when the real meaning lies in the encounter with other people and recognizing the colourful diversity in the world."<sup>87</sup>

Eckert's narrative paints us a vivid picture of life in Eastern Poland, and he himself often fades to the background of the narrative, allowing the land to take center stage. Colour bursts from his pages, whether it be the descriptions of the beautiful landscape, the bright clothing worn by field workers, or the "colourful diversity" he experienced through his interactions with other people. The picture he paints borders on exotic, reminding us that his time in Luzk/Łuck was an adventure, and a successful one. It was successful not because Eckert regained his teaching credentials, or that he was able to avoid the disaster that would soon follow, but rather, that it was a time of great personal fulfillment. He never would have

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the family that he had lived after he left. According to Eckert, the father sent his wife and children away upon hearing that the Russians were invading. Once the Russians invaded and began finding his Polish neighbours "guilty," the father killed himself. For more on the Soviet invasion of Poland from September 1939 – June 1941, see Jan Gross, *Revolution from Abroad: The Soviet Conquest of Poland's Western Ukraine and Western Belorussia Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).

<sup>87</sup> "Scheinbar war das Jahr in Luzk für mich sinnlos, der Versuch, wieder die Unterrichtserlaubnis zu erlangen, scheiterte an der chauvinistischen Hartnäckigkeit der Posener Behörden. Aber was zählen Pläne! Wie bedeutungslos erscheinen sie gegenüber dem, was man wirklich erlebt in der Begegnung mit Menschen und was erfasst von der bunten Vielfalt der Welt." Eckert, "Erinnerung an Luzk, 1936-1937," DSHI 100 Jendrike 1.

experienced this “colourful diversity” had he not been forced to overcome a personal hardship and make the trek to Luzk/Łuck. We can also infer, based on the pointedness of Jendrike’s questionnaire, that Eckert did not see ‘difference’ as negative; his emphasis of this point serves to counteract most of the central assumptions in the questionnaire.

Eckert’s emphasis on diversity also reveals an unexpected presence haunting the Jendrike Collection: Jews. Embedded in Eckert’s narrative is evidence that he not only interacted regularly with Jews, but that they were one of the only connections he had to his former ‘home’ in Western Poland. Eckert reports that he had never before taught in a place where German was not the students’ first language; luckily, he was able to speak German with his Jewish students, who spoke Yiddish at home.<sup>88</sup> While Eckert does not explicitly state why this experience was important, it seems probable that these Jewish students, and their ability to speak his mother tongue, were integral in helping him feel a sense of belonging amongst ‘others.’ Although still considered ‘different,’ Jewish students provided Eckert with a connection to home that enabled him to be ‘rooted’ in diversity.<sup>89</sup> This is Eckert’s only explicit mention of Jews, but its presence seems all the more significant in a questionnaire designed to set up the respondents as the ‘victims.’

References to Jews are by no means found in the majority of the reports, but they are brought up enough to be considered a meaningful presence. Alfred Schroeder, for example, writes almost exclusively about Jews in his questionnaire. A teacher from Gollub/Golub, Schroeder leaves almost every question blank, writing either “unknown,” “omitted,” or “see Appendix.”<sup>90</sup> The only section of the entire questionnaire where he actually provides a substantial answer is on the last page, under “Room for addition to certain points,” where he

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Schroeder, “Fragebogen,” DSHI 100 Jendrike 4.

expands on the history of the district under discussion. Here, Schroeder discusses how Gollub/Golub has remained a “small, sleepy country town of traders, small merchants and craftsmen.”<sup>91</sup> He writes that the town will continue to stay this way, even “after its German population was expelled.”<sup>92</sup> According to Schroeder, Gollub was shaped in many ways by its existence as a border town; it stood between Germany and Russia after the Second Partition of Poland, and thus was constantly the subject of much dispute.

The most substantial part of Schroeder’s report is in reference to the Jewish population in the area, where he writes:

In Gollub there has always been a lot of Jews. Trade was almost exclusively in their hands. Some also operated in crafts; in addition, there were Jewish doctors, lawyers, and teachers. I do not know of even a single Jew belonging to the working class. All of the Jews living in Gollub thought of themselves as German. For the most part, they were considered some of the most respected citizens in town.<sup>93</sup>

Although it is not clear exactly why Schroeder ignored most of the questionnaire and then devoted the greatest amount of space to discussing the Jewish population in Gollub/Golub, an emphasis on belonging and loss resonates. Any mention of Jews in this context almost certainly brings one’s attention to the fact that most of the Jews remembered by respondents were most likely dead by the time these questionnaires were created. Like Eckert’s memories, Schroeder’s memories emphasizes the Germanness of Jews, creating an unspoken connection with his own Germanness. In connecting Jewish Germanness to his own, Schroeder complicates/compounds his own loss, and deepens the sense of change and

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<sup>91</sup> “...kleines, verträumtes Landstädtchen geblieben, das von Gewerbetreibenden, kleinen Kaufleuten und Handwerkern.” Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> “...nachdem seine deutsche Bevölkerung vertrieben wurde.” Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> “In Gollub hat es seit jeher viele Juden gegeben. In ihren Haenden lag fast ausschliesslich der Handel. Einige betrieben auch ein Handwerk; daneben gab es jüdische Aerzte, Rechtsanwälte und Lehrer. Es ist mir nicht bekannt, dass auch nur ein einziger Jude dem Arbeiterstand angehörte. Alle in Gollub wohnenden Juden bekannten sich zum Deutschtum. Sie waren gehörten zum größten Teil zu den angesehensten Bürgern der Stadt.” Ibid.

disturbance occurring in Gollub. His testimony, like that of the others, is also untouched by Jendrike's red pen that runs throughout the collection.

Like Eckert and the others, Willi Damaschke creates his own narrative, ignoring Jendrike's questions, but leaving a nine-page *Lebenslauf* (curriculum vitae) inserted inside the questionnaire. Yet his story – both in form and content – is perhaps the most surprising, as Damaschke was heavily involved in the *Deutscher Schulverein* (German School Association). In addition to producing pedagogical materials and school newspapers for the DSV, Damaschke was personally familiar with both Paul Jendrike and the former director of the German School Association in Poland, Otto Schönbeck, before receiving the questionnaire. In other words, Damaschke was not only intricately connected with the “German” community in Poland, but was also considered a leader.<sup>94</sup> Despite Damaschke's prominent role in the German community, and thus his knowledge of the difficulties facing minority schools, Damaschke's *Lebenslauf* has not a whiff of bitterness. There is no mention of any conflict with Polish authorities or any description of the difficult life of a German school teacher.<sup>95</sup> In fact, Damaschke's narrative is void of any substantial national identification as a German/Pole. Instead, Damaschke's narrative exposes that he saw himself as having two ‘identities’: teacher and actor. Trying to balance these two roles for which he had so much zeal would continue to be the great “question of [his] life...How may I serve both the school and the stage at the same time?”<sup>96</sup>

Damaschke's narrative begins from his birth and continues into the present. Born in 1892 in Prussia, he notes that from a young age he knew it was his destiny to become a

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<sup>94</sup> Willi Damaschke, “Lebenslauf,” DSHI 100 Jendrike 1.

<sup>95</sup> There is also no red pen marking Damaschke's *Lebenslauf*, a trend in keeping with the rest of the reports discussed in this essay.

<sup>96</sup> “Wie kann ich beiden zugleich dienen, der Schule und der Bühne? Das war und ist die Frage meines Lebens.” Ibid.

teacher. According to Damaschke, when his father was asked by his friends “What should the boy become?” he answered briefly, “Teacher! Teacher!”<sup>97</sup> After many years of a distinguished education, Damaschke had not only fulfilled his father’s prediction, but had become a prominent member of the teaching community. His *Lebenslauf* lists the various pedagogical materials he created, including two “Pedagogical Yearbooks” in 1923 and 1928, as well as a documentation entitled “The German Teachers in Poland” in 1930.<sup>98</sup> He even makes mention of Paul Jendrike when he notes that “From 1920 to 1939 I served the ‘Land Association of German Teachers in Poland,’ whose chairman Paul Jendrike acts today as a senior civil servant in Hanover.”<sup>99</sup>

Damaschke makes clear his passion for teaching, but he saw his role as a teacher extending beyond the classroom into the realm of “higher culture.” “The teacher is not just an instructor of students but of people as well. He has to go over and above the ‘school’ itself and participate in everything that moves the people; he is an appointed leader amongst his fellow people on the way to higher culture.”<sup>100</sup> One of the ways in which Damaschke helped cultivate an understanding of “higher culture” was through the “German Evenings” in Bromberg that he helped organize.<sup>101</sup> Celebrating not only German themes but world-wide cultures, according to Damaschke, these evenings made a special effort to highlight Polish culture. By bringing together men and women of science, speakers, singers, and

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<sup>97</sup> “Der alte Kator Lehmann im branenburgischen Groß Schmöllen gab der Frage meines Vates “Was soll der Junge werden” die kurze, bestimmte Antwort: “Lehrer, Lehrer!” Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> “Von 1920 bis 1939 diente ich dem ‘Landesverband deutscher Lehrer und Lehrerinnen in Polen,’ dessen Vorsitzender Paul Jendrike heute als Regierungsrat in Hannover wirkt.” Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> “Der Lehrer ist nicht nur Schullehrer; er ist auch Volkslehrer. Der muss über die Schule hinaus tätigen Anteil nehmen an allem, was sein Volk bewegt; er ist ein berufener Führer seiner Volksgenossen auf dem Wege zu höher Kultur.” Apparently Damaschke wrote this in the *Deutschen Schulzeitung in Polen*. Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.



instrumentalists, these evenings always attracted a “full house.”<sup>102</sup> Damaschke’s interest in teaching cultural activities extended into another, perhaps even greater love: acting.

Dominating the majority of Damaschke’s narrative is a detailed account of his attempts to break into the theater scene in Bromberg/ Bydgoszcz, and the joy he experienced on finally realizing his dream. For Damaschke, acting, like teaching, was in “his nature;” it was something that he was unable to stop doing. He writes that he had the “highest respect” for teaching, “because I was ‘called’ to it. But I am an actor by nature, like a poet or painter.”<sup>103</sup>

Damaschke’s big break comes when he was given the chance to realize his ‘destiny’ in 1920, when the *Deutsche Bühne Bromberg* (German Theater of Bromberg) became a Polish institution, and the German actors that had previously beat out Damaschke for roles decided to leave for another city. He quickly realized his “chance,”

sought and found merry, talented players and stood with them as a merry foursome of Hans Sachs – Assembled before the theater-orphaned fellow to say: ‘Here we are! And you know now that we are here and will remain here for as long as you will allow us. We have orders within us to portray men on stage, and we obey. Here we play, we cannot do otherwise. Help us!’ And they helped.<sup>104</sup>

The final pages of Damaschke’s story detail the plays he and his fellow actors put on, the roles he was able to play, and the melancholic despair that came with losing the opportunity to live out his passion on the stage and in the classroom. His final words sum his sentiments up poetically: “I am 56 years old, and so I am still too ‘young to be without desire.’ And so I wish for myself a place where I can once again be whole, where I may

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> “Weil ich den höchsten Respekt vor diesem Berufe habe. Weil ich zu ihm ‘gerufen’ ward. Aber ich bin Schauspieler wie eben ein anderer ‘von Natur’ Dichter oder Maler.” Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> “...suchte und fand begabte volkstumsfrohe Mitspieler und stellte mich mit ihnen in vier Hans Sachs – Stücken vor die Theaterverweisten Volksgenossen, um damit zu sagen: ‘Da sind wir! Und dass ihr es gleich wisst, solange wir hier sind und bleiben dürfen, so lange werdet ihr uns nicht los. Wir haben den Befehl in uns, Menschen auf der Bühne darzustellen, und wir gehorchen ihm. Hier spielen wir, wir können nicht anders. Helft uns!’” Und sie halfen.” Ibid.

again be what I am and always was: primary school man, public education man, and a theatre man.”<sup>105</sup> It seems that, for Damaschke, the loss he experienced most greatly is not that of place or time, but the loss of his own whole self. He is stranded in the present, only able to “be whole again” by gazing nostalgically into the past, by returning to a place where he was able to fulfill his “destiny.”

While the experiences of respondents differed greatly, which calls into question their existence as a homogenous group, either before the expulsion or after, each of these reports have three things in common: Firstly, with exception of Marie Tourbie, whose questionnaire quite overtly suggests that the questions are irrelevant, they all constructed their responses in the undisciplined spaces of the questionnaire. Secondly, every one of these narratives is highly personalized, impossible to use as representative of an entire group’s experience. And finally, each of these questionnaires emphasizes pleasure over pain, cooperation over conflict, and a lingering nostalgia for their lives in interwar Poland. The nostalgia found in these reports, both reflective and romantic, also exposes a surprising object of longing: the return respondents yearn for is neither to a place nor time, but rather to being whole again, a journey that can only be taken through nostalgic remembrance.

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<sup>105</sup> “56 Jahre bin ich alt, also noch zu ‘jung, ohne Wunsch zu sein.’ Und so wünsche ich mir einen Ort, wo ich wieder das ganz sein darf, was ich bin und immer war: Volksschulmann, Volksbildungsmann und Volksbühnemann.” Ibid.

## Recapturing Wholeness

A thorough examination of the Jendrike Collection shows that many respondents went beyond the confines of the questionnaire to craft a personal response that does not easily fit within the framework created by Jendrike. Ironically, many of these responses actively counteract the apparent purpose of the questionnaire. And although respondents were not told explicitly what Jendrike was looking for, they did understand that there was an anticipated outcome and that their answers might have consequences. This is evident not only from the way individuals chose to fill out the reports, utilizing undisciplined and disciplined spaces in imaginative ways, but also from explicit questions the respondents raise. At least twice in the midst of her 33-page contribution, Anna Koebernick asks Jendrike why he is sending out the questionnaires. The first question appears on the last page of a questionnaire, immediately above her signature. She asks,

One question...what is the purpose of these documents – does one commit themselves negatively with them? – Will they be evaluated? – or is it just an accumulation of various fates, which are in principle, the same. The struggle of a minority group to sustain itself and to get along peacefully in a foreign state.<sup>106</sup>

It appears she did not receive an answer, as she asks the question again in a letter she later wrote to Jendrike after sending him extra materials: “To make you happy, I have fulfilled your request quickly. But one question, what are all these forms completed for? Life lived in a foreign country, yet at home?”<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> “Eine Frage, wozu dienen diese Bogen ---legt man sich damit irgendwie nachteilig fest?---Werden sie ausgewertet?, ---oder ist es nur eine Anhäufung verschiedener Schicksale, die im Grunde doch die gleichen waren. Der Kampf einer Volksgruppe sich zu erhalten und friedlich im fremden Staat auszukommen.” Koebernick, “Fragebogen” DSHI 100 Jendrike 7.

<sup>107</sup> “Um Ihnen eine Freude zu machen, habe ich Ihren Wunsch schnell erfüllt. Doch eine Frage? - - Wozu dienen diese ausgefüllten Bogen ---gelebtes Leben in einem fremden Staat und dennoch in der Heimat.” Koebernick, “Letter to Jendrike,” DSHI 100 Jendrike 7.

Yet while Jendrike's purpose in sending out the questionnaire is comprehensible, the respondents' purposes are less obvious. Devoid of complaints against their Polish neighbours, and excluding almost all talk of politics, many of the answers in the Jendrike Collection diverge not only from Jendrike's intended narrative but the dominant historiography, which has emphasized revanchist attitudes that accompany a kind of restorative nostalgia, a nostalgia bent on establishing 'truth' and national(ist) narratives. It is also not immediately visible whether the answers have anything in common, as respondents chose different years, places, and experiences to write about.

At the most basic level, there appears to be a connection between participating in the collection and commemoration. Many of the teachers named in this collection had already died, and thus it was up to relatives or close friends to fill out the report on their behalf. There is a lot of space taken up doling out details about the teacher's death, space not originally planned for by Jendrike. Dr. Phillip Rudolf, who filled out the report on Dr. Moritz Landwehr, a teacher from Bromberg, West Prussia who died in 1952, writes that during the hour of Landwehr's death, his "beloved wife played him a piece of Mozart, which he had wished would be the sound to ring him into another world."<sup>108</sup>

Marie Tourbié's report, submitted in 1958, was filled out by Hermann Textor given that "She herself could not do it anymore, as she is no longer with the living."<sup>109</sup> Textor takes time to explain the "infinite humility and absolute selflessness" with which Marie lived her life.<sup>110</sup> He also spends a large portion of the "personal details" section discussing the details of Marie's death. Quoting from a letter he received from Marie's niece, Emmi Schmidt,

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<sup>108</sup> "...spielte ihm in seiner Todesstunde im Jahre 1952 das Stück von Mozart, das er sich gewünscht hatt um bei seinem Klang in eine andere Welt hinüberzugehen." Moritz Landwehr, "Fragebogen," DSHI 100 Jendrike 3.

<sup>109</sup> "Sie selbst konnte es nicht mehr tun, den sie weilt nicht mehr unter den Lebenden." Tourbie, "Fragebogen," DSHI 100 Jendrike 4.

<sup>110</sup> "...unendlich bescheiden und absolute selbstlos" Ibid.

upon Marie's death, he writes how "Her homecoming came very suddenly."<sup>111</sup> On the day of her death, Tourbie called her niece "because she was nauseous, and in a very short time her life was over."<sup>112</sup> Textor then explains that he chose to include a picture of Marie from his own private collection, which was taken two years before her death. For Textor, the inclusion of the picture was a way of keeping Marie's legacy alive: "it is more important that an image of such a deserving personality continues on after the death of the private owner, and is at the disposal of future researchers."<sup>113</sup>

Yet while commemoration and mourning are evident in the sources, they alone do not fully encapsulate what exists in the undisciplined spaces, where satisfying memories of the past are often shadowed by the melancholic realities of the present. Mourning is a temporary measure; it "passes with the elapsing time needed for the 'work of grief.'"<sup>114</sup> Yet almost twenty years after the expulsion, the individuals in the Jendrike Collection continue to report that they feel unrooted, aching for their former homeland and selves. This kind of persistent melancholia goes beyond the work of grief, and is best encapsulated by the idea of reflective nostalgia, which has "elements of both mourning and melancholia."<sup>115</sup> Alternatively gazing backwards and forwards, respondents combat the uncertainty of the present with a return to the past, where they can once again recapture a sense of wholeness.<sup>116</sup>

The pages from Anna Koebernick's contribution, all 33 of them, including questionnaires and letters, capture not only this commemorative and melancholic tone

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<sup>111</sup> "Thr Heimgang kam ganz plötzlich," Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> "Später rief sie mich, da ihr übel war, und in ganz kurzer Zeit war ihr Leben beendet." Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> "Es ist wichtiger, dass ein Bild von solcher verdienten Persönlichkeit in spätern Jahren der Forschung zur Verfügung steht, als dass es nachher mit dem Tode des Privatbesitzers untergeht." Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Boym, 55.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

symptomatic of a reflective nostalgia, but also the rhythm, which is defined by repetition.<sup>117</sup> The entirety of Koebernick's section is reminiscent of the ballad of reflective nostalgia; at once both romantic and tragic, it cycles between the past and present with ease. The verses, played *animato* (animatedly), are romantic stories of Koebernick's past life in Poland, a life which was "the most beautiful time."<sup>118</sup> It is a narrative of a robust life, shown especially by personal photographs. The wedding of Anna's youngest sister, Hannchen, Koebernick's gymnastic team, and the classrooms full of students expose a life full of friendship, community, and purpose; "One idealized it, and thought it would last forever. The joyful, happy times of our youth, the time of soulful delight."<sup>119</sup> The chorus of her ballad, however, transitions into *malinconico* (melancholic), reminding us that life is no longer idyllic. "It sounds like a fairy tale, but it was once a reality. Here you will not hear it. The escape, the foreign rule that binds us. One can never understand us. These experiences are missing. I am alone among the German people, only the children understand this, they sense it. Our roots lie far, far away."<sup>120</sup> She repeats this verse-chorus form four times,<sup>121</sup> and ends on a tragic note that extends beyond Koebernick's own experiences, pointing out that the little girl

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<sup>117</sup> It might be useful to think about nostalgia as a kind of musical ballad, which, like narratives, can be either romantic, ironic, tragic, or comical. Ballads have the ability to trigger strong memories and emotions, and they also are highly structured, cycling back and forth between *versus* and *refrain*.

<sup>118</sup> "Diese 10 Jahre in Polen waren für mich die schönste Zeit. Man wurde umschwärmt und dachte, es müsste immer so bleiben." Koebernick, "Fragebogen," DSHI 100 Jendrike 7.

<sup>119</sup> "Man wurde um schwärmt und dachte, es müsste immer so bleiben. Die fröhlich, glückliche Jugendzeit, die Zeit der seeligsten Wonne!" Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> "Es klingt wie ein Märchen, es war einmal doch Wirklichkeit. Hier will man es nicht hören. Die Flucht, die Fremdherrschaft bindet uns. Man kann uns nie verstehen. Diese Erlebnisse fehlen. Ich bin einsam unter den deutschen Menschen, nur die Kinder verstehen dies, sie ahnen es. Unsere Wurzeln liegen fern, fern." Koebernick, "Letter to Jendrike," DSHI 100 Jendrike 7.

<sup>121</sup> Anna Koebernick's section included four separate questionnaires that she filled out simultaneously. It also includes multiple letters she sent to Jendrike after sending in the questionnaires.

in the photograph “who is sitting to my left and leaning in was a Jewess, Rosalie Rosinski, a nice little chatterbox.”<sup>122</sup>

Like the others who made a special point of mentioning Jews, Koebernick’s reasons for mentioning Rosalie Rosinski are not clear. While it may function as a kind of commemorative act, her note about “the nice little chatterbox” may also serve to connect the loss of the Jews to Koebernick’s own loss, amplifying it in the process, and reiterating its permanence. Yet whatever the reason, the act of writing about her past, and the repetition of this act, seem to function as a kind of soothing salve for Koebernick; it is a way for her to reside ‘at home’ again, even if just in memory, as well as a necessary respite from her ever-present melancholia.

The multiple memories found in the Jendrike Collection complicate questions of how reflective nostalgia works and why people choose to reside in it. Richard Schmelzer’s narrative focuses on the camaraderie he experienced with his fellow colleagues. Heinz Eckert commits pages to reflect on the incredible adventure he had and the colourful people he met in eastern Poland during the course of a single year. Willi Damaschke revisits the great love of his life – the theater. And Anna Koebernick remembers the names and faces of the family, friends, and students who remind her of her life as a teacher. It is clear from the various responses that teachers did not have a specific experience in common, or even a particular place. What draws these nostalgic recollections of the teachers together is thus not a specific experience, or even a particular place or time, but rather the feeling of having lost the “potential space” of cultural experience.<sup>123</sup> Culture, in this case, did not act as a “homogenizing force,” but rather as a space within which these individuals were able to act

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<sup>122</sup> “Das Mädchen, das mir zur linken Seite sitzt und sich etwas anlehnt war eine Jüdin Rosalie Rosinski, ein nettes Plappermäulchen.” Koebernick, “Fragebogen,” DSHI 100 Jendrike 7.

<sup>123</sup> Boym, 53.

on their passions, to pursue what desires they had in life, without the shackles of nationality or other affinities.<sup>124</sup> Even Eckert, who arguably felt bound by nationality, found a space in Luzk/Luck where he felt liberated and invigorated by diversity and difference, life beyond the confines of nation. This may be why he chose to ignore all other aspects of his career and focus solely on that one year in eastern Poland. It seems that what the nostalgic bemoans here is the *potential space* within which one could share experiences that were *not* based on nationality or other constructed categories.<sup>125</sup>

By reassessing the kind of loss that nostalgia mourns, as well as taking into account the varied narratives in the undisciplined spaces of the Jendrike Collection, it becomes clear that the responses challenge and call into question two assumptions of the existing scholarship of the expellees in fundamental ways. The first is the assumption that most expellees had revanchist aims and sought to reverse the territorial losses that forced them to leave their cherished *Heimat*. Not only did many respondents ignore the prompts in Jendrike's questionnaire to discuss the unlawful actions of the Polish authorities and therefore create evidence that may have provided political leverage, but many of them also used the reports as an opportunity to remember all the wonderful people they had encountered and the positive experiences that came from living in such a "colourful" place.

The second assumption, that the *Vertriebene* exist as unified group, is more difficult to dismantle, yet the variety of narratives present in the Jendrike Collection suggest that we must acknowledge a continued lack of homogeneity in the postwar era. The diversity in responses highlights the persistent heterogeneity of the *Volksdeutsche/Vertriebene* and the persistence of different national and political loyalties. And while the responses in the

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.



Jendrike Collection cannot perhaps tell us much about how things ‘really were’ in interwar Poland, they can tell us what matters most to the respondents when they constructed their reports, as “one remembers best what is colored by emotion.”<sup>126</sup> Based on the recollections in the Jendrike Collection, the *Vertriebene* are no more a group than the *Volksdeutsche*, united only by their lingering nostalgia which functions to do no more than to ease the pain of the present.

This essay has proposed two potentially fruitful ways of dismantling the *Vertriebene* as a group and reassessing how victimhood was understood by individuals on the ground. Firstly, we need to resist conventional periodizations which have separated the “Volksdeutsche” from the “Vertriebene,” and, as a result, have emphasized change over continuity. By uniting interwar and postwar historiographies of these individuals, we are better equipped to avoid assuming certain self-understandings that political figures such as Jendrike have imposed, or that most historians have taken for granted.

A second, related way to avoid taking up these self-understandings uncritically requires that we start focusing on the undisciplined spaces of archival material, and consider the ways in which they align, or fail to align, with the intention of the collection’s designer. By preventing the questionnaire from dictating our own historical questions and narratives, and thinking instead about the ways in which individuals defy enforced narratives and questions, we are more likely to hear individuals speak for themselves, and better understand their own values, motives, and self-understandings.<sup>127</sup> I have tried to show that approaching the archive with an openness to people’s nostalgic memories offers one way of overcoming

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<sup>126</sup> Boym, 52.

<sup>127</sup> See Tara Zahra, “Imagined Noncommunities,” *Slavic Review* 69, no. 1 (2010): 93-119, for some excellent suggestions as to ways in which we can escape assuming national identifications.

the tendency to read the narratives of individual archival documents in light of the intentions and goals of those who create the archive.

Using these tactics to challenge assumptions about the *Volksdeutsche/Vertriebene* not only complicates historical narratives, but has the potential to shape a historiography of reconciliation between Germans and Poles. This history would no longer privilege the narratives of conflict and resentment offered by Jendrike and others like him. Instead, we need to rethink this history, drawing on the multiple and often open perspectives that litter the archives. Only by attending to this multiplicity of narratives can a historiography that supports reconciliation emerge.<sup>128</sup> The Jendrike Collection demonstrates both the need for, and the possibility of, undertaking this task. We have seen how personal histories often emphasized nostalgic memory over conflict, how diversity and otherness inspired as often as alienated, and how ordinary people often defied the political ill will of politicians and historians alike. When we look closely enough at the archives, we find their stories, hidden in plain sight, where no one else has cared to look.

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<sup>128</sup> An attempt by the German-Polish Textbook Commission, which has been trying to jointly write a high school history textbook for students on both sides of the border since 1972, speaks to this need. Critics, however, have deemed this effort doomed to fail. Jan Friedmann, "Controversial Chapters: Can a Jointly Written History Erase Centuries of German-Polish Strife?," *Spiegel Online*, June 20, 2011. <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/controversial-chapters-can-a-jointly-written-history-erase-centuries-of-german-polish-strife-a-759740.html>. Accessed, April 13, 2013.

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