Wir Unsichtbaren. Geschichte der Polen in Deutschland by Peter Oliver Loew (review)

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As Huerta's conversations with Hintze reveal, the Mexicans recognized that the superpowers were scrambling for Mexico's resources. President Wilson and US imperial policies were heavily criticized. Hintze remarked that the US primarily wanted to annex the country (148) and, despite occupation, refused to call their presence in Mexico an act of war, as the US preferred its foreign policy to appear "moral" (128). Huerta, previously a tool of US Ambassador Wilson and later discarded by the US (149), emerges in these pages both as a tyrannical president unwilling to step down, as well as an observer of Europe at the brink of war. In one conversation between Hintze and Huerta, Huerta states: "Germany is suffocating in its borders; it must consume Austria and Denmark; Germany's most natural enemies are Great Britain and Russia. Germany wants to be a colonial [power] and needs oil" (165). Here, Huerta was hoping to negotiate with imperial Germany to support him in exchange for 150,000 km of land and Tampico's oil fields (165).

Historians, scholars of colonial and postcolonial studies, Americanists, Germanists, and Latin Americanists will all find a treasure of information regarding diplomatic procedure, a detailed day-by-day account of the parties involved in the Mexican Revolution, and archival photographs of the many figures involved. Prospective readers may wish to look at other volumes on the Mexican Revolution suggested by Schuler (273) for a more general account, however. All in all, it provides great source material for those interested in imperial Germany's US and Latin American interests at the beginning of the twentieth century.

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Wir Unsichtbaren. Geschichte der Polen in Deutschland. By Peter Oliver Loew. Munich: C.H. Beck, 2014. Pp. 336. Paper €18.95. ISBN 978-3406667084.

In a recent review essay, Michał Nowosielski pointed out that no monograph has been written so far on the history of the Polish minority in Germany ("Polacy w Niemczech. Stan i Perspektywy Badań," *Przegląd Zachodni* 3 [2012]: 26). The existing scholarship in his estimation is fragmented, descriptive, narrowly focused, gender blind, or framed by the national history. Nowosielski called for a comprehensive history of the Polish minority in Germany from a transnational perspective (26–27). Peter Oliver Loew's book is just that. For Loew, however, the reason why scholars have yet to write such a monograph derives from the difficulties with its terms: Germany, Poland, and minority (11). All three components of this topic resist easy or agreeable definition.

Loew's pioneering work intends to make the "invisible" visible. Poles in Germany have been marginalized, silenced, erased, and deprived of agency. As subalterns, they have spoken discreetly, but were hardly heard. Or worse, their voices were hijacked for the purposes of national histories: for instance, when historians try to determine

whether they were really "Polish Prussians" or "Prussian Poles." Such an interrogation simplifies and singularizes their fluid, multiple, and often interchangeable identities in an ahistorical effort to fix them. Even today, "Poles in Poznań and Pomorze are jokingly called 'Prussian Poles' for their Prussian virtues" (122–123). Such self-identification defies national categorization. Indeed, people in borderlands often adhere to these fluctuating, multiple, elusive, and joking identities.

Keenly conscious of these methodological dilemmas, Loew sees identity both as a "pragmatic concept" and a "working concept." Pragmatically Loew frames historical Germany encompassing both German territorial states and German-speaking states where Poles lived. The large part of East Prussia, Silesia, Pomorze, the Habsburg monarchy, and so on, were parts of Germany in this sense. As a working concept, he defines Poles in terms of both a subjective and an objective nation (12). In this way, Loew can count Marcel Reich-Ranicki—the Polish Jewish German "literary pope" (*Literaturpapst*)—as a Pole. Though Reich-Ranicki did not regard himself even as half Polish, he maintained a strong bond to Polish language and poetry (206). Yet this approach leaves open the question of where to place the "Polonized Germans" who had belonged to "group 4" in the Deutsche Volksliste (171), the Nazi institution that classified the peoples of Occupied Europe according to racial desirability. In Loew's schema, they seem to be subjective Poles but objective Germans—which would make them ultimately Germans.

Loew ends up defining Poles, minorities, and Germany either too broadly or too narrowly because he still tends to reify identity. To be sure, he sees identity flexibly as multiple, fluid, and fragmented; but he often uses a mix of constructivist language and essentialist argumentation. The term itself seems responsible for that reification. Referring to identity still allows readers to imagine that it exists independent of the actions that create it and the norms that legitimize it. An alternative might be to use the concept of identification as it draws attention to the agency of historical actors in dialectical interplay with power institutions and thus the tension between relational and categorical modes of identification.

Nonetheless, Loew's panoramic description of the Polish minority in Germany is colorful, dynamic, wide-ranging, and transnational. His illustrations, postcards, and photos are fabulous. In the place of the stereotyped clichés of Poles as migrant workers, forced laborers, and seasonal workers, he explores the broad spectrum of their diverse historical traces. They include itinerant merchants at the *Messe*, the intelligentsia in exile, revolutionaries in the socialist movement, students at universities, artists in performance, inmates in concentration camps, prisoners of war in German POW camps, volunteers and conscripts in the German army during the two world wars, war expellees, postwar settlers, displaced persons, commuters, peddlers, marriage emigrants, and athletic stars, among others. That much diversity "makes it impossible to speak sweepingly of 'Poles in Germany'" (278–279). The virtue of Loew's

comprehensive monograph lies in the way that it captures this stunning heterogeneity of Polish lives in Germany.

The latest trends in transmigration make this story even more complicated, especially when historical actors appropriate the politics of identity. The case of Donald Tusk's grandfather shows that, for Prussian Poles/Polish Prussians, serving in the Wehrmacht could also be a viable exit strategy from the concentration camp (177–178). The liminal position of these groups along the borderlands explains why Polish volunteers for forced labor or even for the Wehrmacht cannot be stigmatized simply as collaborators. Viewed from the lens of self-identification, this mercurial minority ceases to be passive victims and returns to the stage as historical actors. Two other groups deserve more consideration. One is Polish entrepreneurs in Germany. In 2004, there were some 27,000 Polish firms in Germany—many of them individual enterprises resulting from the high barrier to entering the German job market. The other is Polish-Jewish returnees to Germany from Israel, which represents another possible locus of identification.

Loew's book deserves recognition as the first book of transnational history focusing on the Polish minority in Germany. Interestingly, the first transnational history of the Korean minority in Japan was also published recently.

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Durchhalten und Überleben an der Westfront. Raum und Körper im Ersten Weltkrieg. By Christoph Nübel. Paderborn: Schöningh, 2014. Pp. ix + 484. Cloth €44.90. ISBN 978-3506780836.

Over one hundred years have passed since the outbreak of World War I, a conflict that marked the beginning of "the short twentieth century" (Hobsbawm) and "the modern age" (Eksteins). Unprecedented in its scope and destructiveness, the Great War has occupied scholars for decades. Classic works have addressed a variety of topics, including the sequence of diplomatic exchanges, the motives of the protagonists, and the escalation of the arms race, while more recent scholarship has directed our attention to propaganda and public opinion, the experience of the home front, and the profound cultural impact of four years of war. New research continues to illuminate previously underappreciated dimensions of the conflict, demonstrating a lingering fascination with World War I while also telling us something about the historian's craft. With the right sources and analytical framework, a skillful historian can still say something new about even the most well-trodden topics.

Christoph Nübel demonstrates exactly that with his new book about the German experience on the western front. In this rich and extensively researched monograph (featuring a bibliography of no less than 70 pages), Nübel demonstrates how the