

Fluid Identities in Central European Borderlands

The debate about the nature of national identity has been passionate and complex, and it has not led to convincing, generally applicable models. In this article, the manner in which this identity expresses itself at its margins provides a new perspective on the broader theoretical issue. The sense-of-self of historical Central European border populations highlights the subjective component of group identities.

In the countries of Central Europe, the conceptual dichotomy of *Staatsnation* and *Kulturnation*, introduced into the scholarly debate by Friedrich Meinecke, continues to dominate academic discourse — notwithstanding its theoretical expansion and critical revision.¹ The *Staatsnation*, which signifies the political or civic nation, is constructed around the citizenry of a politically organized territory, in other words, a state, regardless of the ethnic and cultural composition of this citizenry and of possible ethnocultural continuities beyond the existing political borders. It is sometimes defined as a constitutional nation when it demarcates the nation by the reach of a liberal constitution; this reach will normally correspond to the political frontiers of a state. Its dependence on a specific constitutional content gives this conceptual variation a normative rather than an empirical character, since even internal revisions of the political structure would terminate the existing constitutional nation. The concept resembles the comparably ideology-based, if politically diametrically opposed, class nation, which periodically provided the theoretical foundation of the German Democratic Republic and was envisioned to create a structure of coherence for *Soviet Man*. National community was tied to the (premised) identity of class interest, which would create a common consciousness. Both

the constitutional nation and the class nation can be viewed as ideologically superstructured political nations.

By contrast, the typology of the *Kulturnation*, the cultural or ethnic nation, has personal rather than institutional foundations. According to this conception, the nation is a community of people who share cultural attributes, the most prominent of which is a common language. These cultural and linguistic criteria can be supplemented with images of a common ancestry or of shared historical experiences.² The proponents of the *Kulturnation* stress non-institutional criteria — political frontiers do not universally create or disjoin nations.

In the contemporary international debate, the juxtaposition of civic/political and cultural conceptions of nationhood is echoed in the juxtaposition of instrumentalist and ethnocultural interpretations. The proponents of instrumentalism merged an essentially Marxian focus on socio-economic interests with a more subjective intellectual tradition that criticized the nationalist paradigm from a standpoint of conservative universalism.³ Focusing on the mythical superstructure that frequently surrounds the national self-image, these authors developed and refined modernist theories of nationalism, arguing that nations are social constructs rooted in the self-interest of nationalist elites.

One of the pioneers of the new concept was Ernest Gellner, who explained the emergence of nationalism in terms of the need for homogeneity arising in modern industrial societies.⁴ Whereas different social groups in feudal agrarian societies were separated by too deep a gulf to permit the development of national community, the industrial state required interchangeable, culturally standardized populations that could be transferred according to economic needs. Nations are not inherent or natural institutions, and they did not engender the age of nationalism; instead, it was nationalism that gave rise to nations. In these new nations, unified high cultures take the place formerly held by established local cultures. Although nationalism relies on the symbolism of traditional community, it ultimately erodes this community by building up an industrial mass society.

Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* expands further the concept of constructed identity.⁵ Anderson attributes primary importance for the rise of nationalism to the professional needs and experiences of local elites. In Spanish America, the local-born European — also called Creole — elites who dominated the

mid-levels of colonial bureaucracy initiated the struggle for political independence. Their realm of experience — the administrative colonial sub-division — became the new nation-state. Because of the relative underdevelopment of Spanish America, no encompassing Spanish-American nationalism was viable. In Europe, nationalism was carried by the bourgeoisie, which, contrary to the cosmopolitan nobility, based its professional and social coherence on linguistic communality. Both Creole functionaries and the European educated classes created nations along the lines of their professional universe.

This instrumentalist theory of nationalism, which bases nationhood on constructed traditions that serve the particular interests of the elites who generate them, found its most comprehensive expression in the work of Eric Hobsbawm. In his contributions to *The Invention of Tradition*, which he co-edited with Terence Ranger, and in his study *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*, Hobsbawm documents the adaptations and innovations that surround national symbols such as folk dances, national dress and ethnic festivals.⁶ Hobsbawm deconstructs such tradition-carrying symbols by pointing to their conscious creation or transformation and applies the implicit lesson to the concept of the nation in general. Much of the subjective content of national identity is the outcome of careful social engineering. The underlying motivation of this invention of tradition lies in the political and economic interests of ruling elites.

While dominant in the contemporary debate, this instrumentalist interpretation has also encountered criticism. Anthony D. Smith is the pre-eminent representative of a school that stresses the necessity of ethnic roots for the subsequent development of national identity.⁷ Not only were most nations built upon pre-existing ethnic foundations, but the absence of such foundations would constitute a serious impediment to the intended creation of a nation. While acknowledging the modernity of the nation-state and nationalism in their contemporary meanings, Smith underscores the continuity of cultural communitarianism.⁸ In this focus, he echoes John Armstrong's allusion to the existence of 'nations before nationalism', which tries to disengage the concepts of modern nationalism and culture-based group cohesion.⁹

In the sophisticated form represented by Smith and his closest associates, ethnist theory does not ignore the differences between traditional ethnicities and modern nations. John Hutchinson sees

modern cultural nationalists as moral innovators who stake out a median path between universalist modernizers and isolationist conservatives by embracing development but insisting on following an autonomous path.¹⁰ And Smith himself acknowledges the pivotal role of ethnic intellectuals, who turn a largely unreflected cultural affiliation into a conscious political reality.¹¹ In pursuing this objective, these ethnic intellectuals might indeed instrumentalize traditional symbols to gain legitimacy for their reformist agenda. Smith insists, however, that this selective reading of an ethnic past could only function within the limits set by living traditions.¹²

One aspect of national identity that does not fit easily into either theoretical framework has not always received the scholarly attention it deserves: the national sense-of-self among transitional populations. In much of the scholarly debate, nations have been understood as clearly defined social entities. Although subjective definitions of this entity have by no means been rare, they have largely been introduced to permit a choice between two or more predetermined group identities.¹³ Thus, Ernest Renan's often cited definition of the nation as a daily plebiscite aimed at integrating non-native speakers of French into the French nation and at reminding all French citizens of the need for continuously affirming the French national tradition.¹⁴ By the same token, the right to national self-determination, which strongly influenced the formulation of war aims and peace treaties in the era of the First World War, tended to entail primarily the choice of which larger political unit to join.

The subjectivity of national identity can also express itself in a more fundamental manner, however. In a number of European border regions, any final determination of national identity proved to be challenging. In such cases, local identities did not conform to the national paradigm, be it based on political or linguistic standards. It is this specific border environment with its ambiguities and interdependencies that forms the focal point of this article. In particular, I will explore the nature of border identities along the historical divide between the German-speaking world and its Slavic and Baltic neighbours to the east. For this purpose, I will examine four pre-1945 border environments stretching from the Klaipėda region of contemporary Lithuania via the now Polish provinces of Poznania and Silesia to the South Styrian hill country in today's Republic of Slovenia. The terri-

tories examined have undergone highly divergent political histories; all the more significant are the many similarities in their national experience. The analysis of Central Europe's historical borderlands alerts us to the potential fluidity of national identity.

Polish-speaking Germans, German-born Poles — Shifting Identities in Silesia, Masuria and Poznań

Historical relations between Germans and Poles are widely seen as tense and confrontational. Considerably less is known about the many peaceful interactions between these two peoples. Along the German–Polish language divide from southern Silesia to eastern Masuria, there traditionally extended a zone of ethnic contact and passage, which could be situated in historically German (e.g. Upper Silesia) or Polish (e.g. the Poznań region) territory. Ethnic interaction could occur in different forms. In many towns and villages, Germans and Poles were living side by side, and numerous families straddled the ethnic divide. In some instances, the fluidity of national identity resulted from a process of homogenization in which isolated linguistic splinters were assimilated into their larger environment, but there also existed a more enduring aspect of ambivalence, which expressed itself in transitional populations with ties to both larger communities.

The Cassubians along the lower Vistula exemplify such a Slavic-speaking population shaped by long-term interaction with both Poles and Germans. The Cassubians are the remnants of the historic West-Slavic people called Pomeranians, who were largely Germanized after their duchy was incorporated into the Holy Roman Empire during the middle ages. Alternately under German and Polish rule, some Cassubians adopted a Polish or a German identity, but others insisted on remaining uniquely Cassubian. At the beginning of the twentieth century, between 100,000 and 200,000 Cassubians populated the districts surrounding the important Baltic port city of Danzig/Gdańsk, and their descendants continue to live there today, even though the removal of the German population in the aftermath of the Second World War and the subsequent influx of ethnic Poles has led to their accelerated assimilation into Polish culture.¹⁵

Even more interesting for the question of fluid identities than the interdependent but distinct ethnicity of the Cassubians are the

intermediary identities that used to typify the cultural landscape of Upper Silesia and the south-eastern quadrant of East Prussia. In these territories, German- and Polish-speakers lived alongside each other for centuries under German, or German-dominated transnational, governance. While the two settings resembled each other, there were also visible differences, which modified the otherwise similar response of the local populations to the challenges of modern political nationalism and thus allow us to weigh the relative importance of individual social and cultural characteristics in the formation of national identity.

The village of Gwozdzice/Gwosdczütz lies in the Opole/Oppeln district of Upper Silesia. In Silesia, the Germanic population had been replaced by Slavs in the early middle ages, but by the twelfth century new German settlers began to move into the region. After Silesia had been incorporated into the Holy Roman Empire in the early 1300s, much of Silesia became monolingually German, while Upper Silesia, the south-eastern part of the province, remained predominantly Polish-speaking. After the First World War, the Allies allowed the local population to decide its political future. The area was divided after 707,554 Upper Silesians had voted for Germany and 478,820 for Poland. Gwosdczütz remained in Germany until 1945, at which time the Allies awarded all of Silesia to Poland.

In the mid-1920s, a clear majority of 71.5 per cent in the community of Rogau/Rogow, to which Gwosdczütz belongs, declared Polish *and* German as their native languages; 15.66 per cent indicated Polish, and 12.82 German.¹⁶ An examination of the Gwosdczütz war memorials of the First and Second World Wars reveals more than 75 per cent Slavic surnames, which in the fairly stable European surname environment confirms the substantial Slavic contribution to the local ethnogenesis. But in the 1921 plebiscite, 87.2 per cent of the population of Rogau expressed its German sentiments by voting for Germany. The population of Rogau predominantly bore Slavic last names, was bilingual, and defined itself politically as German, which indicates that a large percentage of the declared Germans in this traditional border region had strong Slavic family ties.¹⁷

Upper Silesia demonstrated that a substantial number of Slavophones in this part of East-Central Europe identified with the German political sphere, but it also showed that this orientation was not shared by all Slavic-speakers under German rule.

Although Silesia had not been Polish since the middle ages, the Polish national movement had made substantial inroads. Forty per cent of the overall electorate in the plebiscite zone, and, thus, a majority of the Slavophones, did opt for Polish political control. In Upper Silesia, sentiments were divided, and the rift cut through villages and families. In East Prussia, by contrast, national identity was more uniform, yet no less interesting to the researcher.

Beginning in the fourteenth and expanding in the fifteenth century, the Order of Teutonic Knights that ruled what later became East Prussia allowed settlers from the neighbouring Polish territory of Masovia into their south-eastern borderlands. These Masovian settlers merged with the local Balto-Prussian and German inhabitants and became the dominant population in a region subsequently named Masuria after them.¹⁸ The Masurians came to share the political destiny and the Lutheran faith of their German-speaking neighbours, but long retained their Slavic speech; it was in the course of the nineteenth century that a growing number of Masurians first gave up their ancestral dialect in favour of German.

Even those Masurians who retained the dialect were nearly impossible to reach by the Polish national movement, as was consistently demonstrated by their Prussian-Conservative voting pattern. Throughout most of the Wilhelmine era, the governmental district of Gumbinnen, which included the bulk of Masuria and Prussian Lithuania, had one of the most Conservative electoral records of the country.¹⁹ From 1878 to 1907, Conservative candidates consistently won between 55 and 80 per cent of the vote; only in 1912 did National Liberal competition push the Conservative share somewhat below the 50 per cent mark.²⁰ Polish-oriented candidates only reached the 10 per cent mark with the approximately 6000 votes gained by the ambiguously named Masurian People's Party in 1898; their support dwindled to 4699 votes in 1903 and to 1451 in 1907 and recovered slightly to 2698 of approximately 70,000 votes in the last pre-war elections in 1912.²¹

In classic Masurian election districts, the results tended to be even more pronounced. With its 97 per cent Protestant and over 55 per cent Slavophone population, the electoral district of Oletzko-Lyck-Johannisburg constituted one of those archetypical Masurian districts.²² Apart from 1877, when it went to a

Liberal, the seat was always won by a Conservative in the first round, and usually by large majorities.²³ For Polish candidates, the district was hopeless, as can be seen in the election results of 1903 and 1907.

Table 1
Election results in the electoral district of
Oletzko-Lyck-Johannisburg in 1903 and 1907

<i>Party affiliation</i>	<i>Percentage of vote in 1903</i>	<i>Percentage of vote in 1907</i>
Conservative	89	94.6
Social Democratic	6.3	2.9
Liberal	3.9	3.8
Polish	0.7	0.2

Source: Kaiserliches Statistisches Amt, ed., *Statistik der Reichstagswahlen von 1907* (Berlin 1907), 4ff.

The Masurians retained their political orientation in the face of the German defeat of 1918. In the district of Sensburg (now Mrągowo), German-speakers amounted to less than half of the population at the beginning of the twentieth century. In the census of 1900, 20,447 inhabitants of the district declared German to be their mother tongue, whereas 14,704 listed Masurian, 9784 Polish, and 3010 a combination of German and one of the two Slavic idioms.²⁴ Of an overall population of 48,403, 42 per cent listed German alone as their native tongue. As a consequence, the Polish government vigorously claimed Sensburg and other Masurian districts for its re-emerged state as the new German borders were debated at the peace conference at Versailles. When the Allies decided to solve the dispute through an internationally monitored plebiscite, they were surprised to find that in a predominantly Slavic-speaking district such as Sensburg, a mere 25 votes were cast for Poland as opposed to 34,334 in favour of continuous inclusion in Germany.²⁵

The results in Sensburg were echoed in the overall outcome of the 1920 plebiscite, where 363,209 votes were cast for German East Prussia versus 7980 for Poland. If one examines these numbers more closely, one finds that most of the Polish vote did not originate in Masuria but in the Catholic region of Warmia/Ermland, whose southern tip contained a consciously Polish segment of the population. Of the not quite 8000 votes in favour

of Poland, 6002, that is, three-quarters, accrued in the Warmian plebiscite districts, where they amounted to 6.7 per cent of the overall tally of 89,482. In Protestant Masuria, by contrast, the 1984 Polish votes represented a mere 0.7 per cent of the total. Their largely Slavophone origins notwithstanding, the Masurians clearly identified with the German political sphere.

During the same period, cultural and political sentiments developed quite differently in another sector of the German–Polish borderlands. In the early 1700s, the city of Poznań in Western Poland, which had suffered gravely from the ravages of the Nordic War and the epidemics that ensued, invited German Catholic farmers to settle on city-owned agricultural lands in its environs. Since many of the early settlers, of whom the Poznanians expected a rejuvenation and modernization of their ailing farm economy, hailed from communities in the vicinity of Bamberg in Franconia, the Polish inhabitants began to address these German Catholic farmers generically as ‘Bambergers’. The arrivals from the West thrived in their new environment and became a familiar facet of Poznanian life.

As a consequence of Poland’s dismemberment in the late 1700s, the Poznań area was incorporated into the Kingdom of Prussia. At that time, the immigration of the Bambergers was only a few generations removed, and their communities had remained German in customs and speech. For another half century, this basic cultural environment was preserved, but then a surprising development took shape. Under the influence of their predominantly Polish-speaking neighbours and especially of the consciously Polish clergy, the Catholic Bambergers were drawn into the Polish national sphere. The equation of Polish and Catholic, which formed a central aspect of contemporary Polish national ideology, put into question the Germanness of the Bambergers, who indeed encountered Germans primarily as Protestants in this part of Central Europe. The Bambergers began to support Polish candidates in the highly ethnicized political elections in Poznanian and increasingly defined themselves as Poles. As can be seen from the language statistics in two Poznanian communities, the cultural parameters of the Bamberger settlements were fundamentally transformed.²⁶

At a time when their region formed part of Prussia, many of the Catholic German settlers in the vicinity of Poznań became Poles. They were assimilated by their Polish coreligionists

Table 2
Linguistic affiliation in two Poznanian communities in 1861 and 1880

	1861		1880	
	<i>German</i>	<i>Polish</i>	<i>German</i>	<i>Polish</i>
Dębiec/Demsen	219	22	56	273
Luboń/Luban	175	25	9	246

Source: Max Bär, *Die 'Bamberger' bei Posen* (Posen 1882), 74.

although they were governed by Germans. As many contemporary sources from the early settlement period document, the Bambergers had been unequivocally German when the Masurian population still centred largely in itself: one hundred years later the socio-psychological environments had changed considerably.²⁷ In Central Europe's borderlands, it was not uncommon to encounter people whose group identification did not correlate with that of their parents or even with their own linguistic background.

The People Between: Prussian Lithuania and an Old Wives' Tale

Lena Grigoleit was born in 1910 in the village of Bittehnen not far from the regional centre of Tilsit in northern East Prussia.²⁸ Like most inhabitants of her area, she was Protestant and had ties to both German and Lithuanian culture. At the beginning of the twentieth century just over half the community's inhabitants declared Lithuanian to be their mother tongue, and the percentages had been higher in previous decades.²⁹ The Grigoleits were bilingual, with the grandparents more attached to their Lithuanian heritage and the parents increasingly integrated into the wider German societal sphere.

Located on the north shore of the Nyeman/Memel/Nemunas river, East Prussia's Bittehnen became Lithuania's Bitėnai in 1923. A number of Catholic Lithuanians from Lithuania proper moved into the area, but in general, life continued as before, since the international Memel Convention of 1924 had guaranteed the indigenous population basic cultural rights.³⁰ Lena Grigoleit's marriage to one of the Catholic newcomers tied her more closely to Lithuanian society than was common among her peers. This

caused hardships during the Second World War, when the area was reattached to Germany, but proved helpful thereafter, when most of the local families fled or were deported from Bittehnen. Beginning in the mid-1950s, another wave of emigration to Germany took further autochthons, including all of Lena's remaining fellow Bittehners and a number of her family members, to a Germany that had become far removed from the Memel river and its historic German–Lithuanian coexistence.³¹ Lena Grigoleit, now Kondratavičiene, remained the only local Little Lithuanian in Bitėnai, where she became something of a window into the past for the new settlers and a vestige of home to the old Bittehners, who were able to visit the area more freely after the collapse of Communism. She died in the provincial capital of Klaipėda in 1995.

In a scholarly analysis that focuses on data and numbers, the individual human experience can easily fade into the background. Lena Grigoleit's biography, on the other hand, offers us an opportunity to take a glimpse into the historic border environment from the perspective of the individuals who lived in it. Her life story was unique, but her cultural background was not. At about the same time as Masovian Poles migrated to the southeastern sector of the later East Prussia, Lithuanian settlement expanded in the underdeveloped woodlands of the north-east.³² The long historical association and intermarriage with Germans and the religious divide created by Reformation and Counter-Reformation separated them from the Lithuanians in the Grand Duchy, but they long preserved their unique Prusso-Lithuanian identity. During the time of increased Russian cultural pressure in the Grand Duchy, Prussian Lithuania even became a cultural beacon for the budding Lithuanian national movement on the other side of the border. Throughout the 1800s, however, the impact of modernization, mass education and occupational mobility drew the Prussian Lithuanians ever closer into the German cultural sphere, and by 1900 no more than 100,000 East Prussians declared their mother tongue to be Lithuanian.³³

In the districts to the north of the river Nyeman, the Lithuanian language had stood its ground the best. The 25,000 Lithuanian-speakers in the district of Memel amounted to 43 per cent of the local population in 1900; the 24,000 Lithuanian-speakers of the district of Heydekrug even constituted a majority of 57 per cent.³⁴ Altogether, the 140,000 East Prussians who

lived to the north of the river were divided about equally between German- and Lithuanian-speakers on the eve of the First World War.³⁵ This strong Lithuanian presence induced the Allies to separate the area from Germany after the war and to put up only token resistance when Lithuania annexed it in 1923.³⁶ Since the region had not formed an administrative unit but contained the former East Prussian district of Memel as well as parts of the districts of Heydekrug, Niederung, Tilsit and Ragnit, there was no established name for it. In the inter-war period, it came to be known as Memel territory in English (Memelland in German), whereas the Lithuanians tended to call it the Klaipėda littoral (Klaipėdos kraštas) or Little Lithuania (Mažoji Lietuva) as opposed to the Greater Lithuania represented by the former Grand Duchy.³⁷

To the outside observer, the national dilemma in the Memel territory might arise from the presence of two equally numerous linguistic groups and the ensuing difficulty in assigning the region to either of the larger national communities. Upon closer inspection, however, the issue reveals a deeper complexity that displays little similarity with the initial appearance of national bipolarity. On the one hand, the rural inhabitants of the area undoubtedly were of predominantly Lithuanian descent. This basic fact can be seen in the larger share of Lithuanian surnames and in the historical dominance of Lithuanian as the language of the rural population in this part of East Prussia. Greater Lithuanian nationalists took these factors as evidence of the purely Lithuanian character of the region and utilized them to buttress Lithuania's political claim to it.

Next to such arguments that resolve the national impasse of the Memel territory in favour of the Lithuanian side, there were, however, potentially more significant ones that pointed in the opposite direction. Among the local population there never arose much enthusiasm for the Lithuanian national movement, and Lithuanian parties gained only limited support in the parliamentary elections. In 1898, the Lithuanians won their first seat in a run-off election due to an alliance with the Liberals; on their own, they never managed to win a seat even in the most Lithuanian-speaking electoral districts.³⁸ The difference between the German-Lithuanian electoral landscape in northern East Prussia and its German-Polish equivalent in Poznania was palpable.

Based on the census of 1900, the electoral district Posen Two,

consisting in essence of the Poznanian political districts of Obornik, Samter, Birnbaum and Schwerin, contained 69,562 native-speakers of German and 90,143 native-speakers of Polish.³⁹ Thus, Polish-speakers accounted for approximately 56.5 per cent of the population versus 43.5 per cent German-speakers. This relative distribution of German and minority population was roughly comparable to the conditions found in the electoral district of Memel-Heydekrug, which was split evenly between native speakers of German and Lithuanian. Of the district's 102,622 inhabitants, 50,390 declared German as their mother tongue, 50,139 Lithuanian, and 1760 both.⁴⁰ In spite of these cultural similarities, the parliamentary elections of 1903 and 1907 produced noticeably different outcomes.

Table 3
Support for minority candidates in two electoral districts in the Reichstag elections of 1903 and 1907 (1st round)

<i>Electoral district</i>	<i>Non-German-speakers</i>	<i>Minority candidate</i>	
		<i>1903</i>	<i>1907</i>
Obornik-Samter-Birnbaum-Schwerin	56.5% Polish-speaking	53.8%	52.3%
Memel-Heydekrug	50% Lithuanian-speaking	25.1%	23.2%

Source: Vierteljahreshefte zur Statistik des Deutschen Reichs, various issues; Preußische Statistik, various issues.

Although the Lithuanian-speaking population of Memel-Heydekrug was almost as strong as the Polish-speaking population of Obornik-Samter-Birnbaum-Schwerin, Lithuanian candidates obtained only half the electoral share of their Polish counterparts. These divergent voting patterns alert us to the different self-images of Prussia's non-German-speaking minorities.⁴¹ Whereas consciously Polish populations rallied around ethnic candidates, Lithuanian-speaking East Prussians did so to a much smaller extent, and Masurians hardly at all. In order to ascertain the full significance of such electoral differences, it seems advisable to rule out the influence of other variables. The most logical outside factor would be government interference. Even though one would expect such influence to have been felt universally and not just among the Prusso-Lithuanians, it seems worthwhile to follow the continuation of electoral trends in the

inter-war era, when the tables had been turned and the central government was Lithuanian instead of German.

The census of 1925 confirms that Lithuanian linguistic background, not to mention Lithuanian ancestry, did not translate directly into a Lithuanian national identity. Whereas the German census of 1910 had shown 71,000 German speakers and 67,000 Lithuanian speakers in the Memel region, the first census in the Lithuanian period, which contained a question for nationality, found 59,337 Germans, 37,625 Lithuanians and 38,404 'Memelites'.⁴² If one considers that a number of Germans had left the area after its separation from Germany and that Lithuanians from the Grand Duchy had begun to move there, it becomes clear that most local German-speakers subscribed to German nationality, whereas many Lithuanian-speakers did not identify with the Lithuanian nation and chose the local Memel identity instead.

A look at the inter-war voting pattern in the Memel territory further accentuates this national environment. In the six elections to the Memel diet between 1925 and 1938, German-oriented parties consistently gained more than 80 per cent of the votes; in 1925, they even exceeded the 90 per cent mark.⁴³

Table 4
Elections to the inter-war Memel Diet

	<i>Percentage for German parties</i>	<i>Percentage for Lithuanian parties</i>
1925	94	6
1927	84	16
1930	82	18
1932	81	19
1935	81	19
1938	87	13

Source: Alfred Bohmann, *Menschen und Grenzen* (Cologne 1970), III: 202.⁴⁴

Compared to the pre-war, German period, Lithuanian parties lost further ground, particularly if one focuses on the indigenous population. Under German rule, a considerable share of Lithuanian-speakers had supported Lithuanian candidates as an expression of regional cultural identity, without thereby expressing any desire for union with Lithuania. In the inter-war era, such apolitical cultural identification with Prusso-Lithuanian tradi-

tions no longer seemed possible. Forced to choose between Germany and Lithuania, most Klaipėda Lithuanians opted for the former.

The final chapter of the German–Lithuanian symbiosis along the Nyeman river is no longer fully within the scope of this study. From 1939 to 1945, the territory was ruled by Germany once more, and at the end of the Second World War most of its inhabitants found themselves transplanted westward along with the other inhabitants of Prussia's historic eastern provinces. Today the estimated 10,000–15,000 autochthons of the Klaipėda district form a much smaller share of the population not only than the Lithuanians proper, but also than the Russians.⁴⁵ Most of the original inhabitants of this region, Germans and Lithuanians alike, live in the smaller post-war Germany, and to their offspring, Lithuania is no less exotic a country than the various other former Soviet republics. In the pulsating western cities of Bremen and Hamburg, the story of Lena Grigoleit's life at the intersection of German and Lithuanian identity is merely an echo of a distant past.

Their Fathers' God: Religion and National Identity in Upper Silesia

The link between national and religious identity has surfaced repeatedly in this examination of historical Central European borderlands.⁴⁶ Their Protestant heritage limited the receptiveness of Masurians to Polish nationalism, whereas German Catholics in central Poznania proved susceptible to gradual Polonization. It is important to note that this religious identity did not necessarily correlate with active participation in religious life, but can be seen as a cultural phenomenon even more than a theological one. Even in an era of increasing secularization, traditional denominational affiliations continued to influence ethnic and national identity.⁴⁷

Such cultural landscapes as Masuria and Prussian Lithuania, in which compact regional populations shared history and religion with their German fellow citizens, whereas their linguistic background tied them to the dominant nationalities of neighbouring countries, represented multidimensional macro-environments that alert the researcher to the underlying phenomenon but are not sufficiently differentiated to prove it. In essence,

these regions contained populations that were large enough to be self-sufficient and whose distinction from potential co-ethnics was not denominational alone. The political response to this multi-layered cultural environment is instructive, but the presence of additional variables invites questions as to the true significance of the religious factor. Thus, it is vital to filter out the religious component in a more narrowly circumscribed regional environment, in which religion constitutes the only independent variable. The district of Kreuzburg/Kluczbork provides the ideal setting for such an investigation.

Kreuzburg used to form the northernmost district of German Upper Silesia; today Kluczbork lies at the northern tip of the Polish voivodeship of Opole. Historical Kreuzburg bordered on Polish territory to the north, on Lower Silesia to the west, and on the Upper Silesian districts of Oppeln and Rosenberg (now Opole and Olesno) to the south and east. Its somewhat peripheral location helps explain its idiosyncrasy within the historical Upper Silesian cultural environment: unlike most of the province, Kreuzburg was predominantly Protestant. In 1900, 31,627 of Kreuzburg's 46,827 inhabitants were Protestant; the resulting percentage of 67.5 per cent Protestants was unusual in a province more than 90 per cent Catholic.⁴⁸

In itself, this religious distinction would not add much to the analysis, which has already shown the perceptual differences between, for example, the Protestant Masurians and the Catholic Poles. What made Kreuzburg unique, however, was the fact that its distinctiveness was almost exclusively denominational. Whereas the historical experience of Protestant Little Lithuanians and Masurians had been different from that of their linguistic brethren of Catholic faith for hundreds of years, the inhabitants of Kreuzburg had partaken in the broader trends of Upper Silesian history. As a consequence, they also shared in a central Upper Silesian characteristic: the interpenetration of German and Polish ethnicity. In turn, the combination of religious idiosyncrasy and cultural normality resulted in another regional specificity: a sizeable Polish Protestant population.⁴⁹

In 1900, the district of Kreuzburg was 40 per cent German- and 60 per cent Polish-speaking.⁵⁰ It contained 13,000 German Protestants next to not quite 5000 German Catholics as well as 18,000 Polish Protestants next to not quite 10,000 Polish Catholics. The 18,000 Polish Protestants constituted almost

40 per cent of the district's overall population and formed its single strongest cultural element. As emphasized above, their overall numbers were too small and their historical development too interwoven with the rest of Upper Silesia to have given the Polish Protestants of Kreuzburg a distinctiveness comparable to the separate ethnicity of the Masurians. Nonetheless, they demarcated themselves noticeably from other Polish-speaking Silesians.

Firstly, the Polish Protestants of Kreuzburg showed an uncommon tendency towards Germanization. A considerable share of the 13,000 German Protestants of 1900 were the result of fairly recent assimilation. The district's proportion of declared German-speakers had grown from 31 to 40 per cent during the last decade of the nineteenth century. This development distinguished itself markedly from the linguistic trend in the adjacent, Catholic districts. In Rosenberg, the German share of the population had only grown from 13.5 to 15.3 per cent over the same time period, and in the district of Oppeln it had actually decreased from 18.7 to 18.3 per cent.

Table 5
Protestants in the district of Kreuzburg by mother tongue

	<i>Polish</i>	<i>German</i>
1900	18,258	13,360
1905	18,077	14,869
1910	14,936	17,073

Source: R. Baumgarten, 'Evangelische Polen in Posen und Schlesien', *Die Grenzboten*, 73:30 (1914), 192.

The Germanization of Kreuzburg's Polish-speaking Protestants continued in the new century and eventually tipped the balance between German and Polish Protestants. By the time of the First World War, German-speakers had surpassed in number Polish-speakers among the district's Protestants; this shift was not caused by migration but by an ongoing assimilation process. This outright Germanization of many Protestant Polish-speakers in Kreuzburg only completed their identification with the Prussian state, however. In addition to — and interconnected with — their religious idiosyncrasy, the inhabitants of Kreuzburg

had long demarcated themselves from the rest of Upper Silesia in another important respect: they had a very distinct electoral record.

The largely Catholic province of Upper Silesia constituted a bastion of Germany's Centre Party, which claimed the allegiance of much of the country's actively Catholic population. The nationality conflict challenged the sectoral dominance of this party in the Prussian east, where a large proportion of Catholics was Polish-speaking. The Polish electoral movement reached Upper Silesia comparatively late, and the fluid boundaries between Germans and Poles introduced some of the national conflict *into* the Centre Party, whereas it tended to be fought between *opposing* parties in the more polarized Poznanian environment. Nonetheless, Polish candidates won four and five of Upper Silesia's twelve seats in the two final pre-war elections to the German Reichstag. All but one of the remaining seats went to the Centre Party; the exception was Kreuzburg-Rosenberg, also referred to as Oppeln One.

Although Rosenberg was heavily Polish Catholic, the electoral district of Kreuzburg-Rosenberg contained a strong Protestant minority of almost 40 per cent. About half of the electorate was Polish Catholic, somewhat less than a quarter Polish Protestant; the remaining quarter was German-speaking, predominantly but not exclusively Protestant.⁵¹ Alone among the Upper Silesian districts, Kreuzburg-Rosenberg consistently sent a Conservative to the parliament in Berlin. Only in 1881 did the Centre Party manage to secure the seat, which was held by the Free Conservatives before and by the Conservatives in all the elections thereafter.⁵² To be sure, the unique dominance of the Conservatives, who almost always won an outright majority in the first round of voting and did not depend on a run-off election, was reinforced by an agreement with the Centre Party, which — in exchange for a Conservative withdrawal from unattainable Catholic districts in the area — commonly did not file candidates in the difficult terrain of Kreuzburg.⁵³ The Centre Party's willingness to give up Kreuzburg-Rosenberg merely reflected its appreciation of the district's distinctiveness, however, and the failure of Polish candidates to ever win a majority within the more than 70 per cent Polish-speaking electorate demonstrates that the local Polish Protestants almost universally sided with the Conservatives, who were effectively the Prussian governmental party.

In the plebiscite of 1921, Kreuzburg demonstrated its special character one more time. Although still 47 per cent Polish-speaking in the last pre-war census of 1910, the district voted 96 per cent in favour of remaining part of Germany.⁵⁴ This virtual unanimity confirmed that most Polish votes in the combined electoral district of Kreuzburg-Rosenberg had not originated in Kreuzburg but in predominantly Polish-Catholic Rosenberg, where over 30 per cent voted for Poland in 1921. Moreover, it put Kreuzburg into a category more reminiscent of Masuria than of the rest of bicultural Upper Silesia. Although the fact that one-third of Upper Silesia's Polish-speakers preferred Germany over Poland alerts us to the subjective nature of national identity in this border region, a majority did support Polish sovereignty. Among the Protestant Polish-speakers of Upper Silesia, by contrast, hardly anyone did. Against the forces of history *and* religion, the Polish national movement could not succeed.

Where the Self Meets the Other: A Southern Styrian Town in the Late Habsburg Period

The transitional identities examined so far were situated in the Prusso-Polish and Prusso-Lithuanian borderlands. The competition between the German and other Central European national movements was not restricted to the Prussian sphere of influence, however. In fact, the history of the late Habsburg Empire has become the classic image of national strife, and a number of important theorists of nationalism and national identity have taken the Habsburg experience as a starting point for their analysis and model-building.⁵⁵

Next to the lands of the Bohemian Crown with their protracted competition between Germans and Czechs, the Alpine provinces of Styria, Carinthia and Carniola formed the second focal point of German-Slavic conflict in the Habsburg Monarchy. Since the relationship between Germans and Slovenes was not fully as crucial to the viability of the Habsburg state as were German-Czech relations in the rich and populous province of Bohemia, it has not attracted the same amount of international scholarly attention as the latter.⁵⁶ For the populations involved, however, this conflict was no less significant, and it offers intriguing

insights into the nature of national identity among culturally or politically ambivalent border populations.

The cultural environment in the south-eastern Alps was characterized by a gradual movement toward homogenization. Thus, the share of Slovenian-speakers fell from 32.74 per cent in 1880 to 29.38 per cent in 1910 in predominantly German-speaking Styria and, even more noticeably, from 29.72 to 21.24 per cent in neighbouring Carinthia. In Carniola, by contrast, the share of Slovenian-speakers rose from 93.67 to 94.36 per cent, with a corresponding reduction of the German presence from 6.15 to 5.36 per cent and an even more pronounced decrease in the capital city of Ljubljana, where the German share dropped from approximately 23 per cent in 1880 to less than 15 per cent in 1910.⁵⁷

Below the level of this larger trend, however, there were local idiosyncrasies that underscore the potential instability of national sentiment in border regions. What makes this instability particularly interesting is the nature of the measurement in which it expressed itself. The Austrian censuses of the late Habsburg period did not ask people to identify with a cultural or political entity. Instead, they contained a question about an individual's *Umgangssprache*, a term best translated as that person's language of (predominant) daily use, or primary language. Although this question appears to be directed at an objectively defined characteristic, it soon took on distinctly political overtones, and activists on all sides attempted to turn the answer to the linguistic question into a national plebiscite. The consequences of this politicization can be seen in Styrian census results of the late Habsburg period.

The territory of the modern province of Styria had a long history of German-Slavic coexistence. The Alpine Slavs, who had moved into the area soon after the withdrawal of the Romans, had been subjugated by the Bavarians in the early middle ages, and the territory was integrated into the Frankish kingdom and the Holy Roman Empire that succeeded it. The Babenberg dukes of Austria and their Habsburg successors tied the region ever closer to the Austrian sphere. In the census of 1880, 794,841 Styrians listed their primary language as German and 388,419 as Slovenian, which made the province two-thirds German- and one-third Slovenian-speaking. This linguistic ratio resulted from an overall compilation and did not reflect local conditions, which tended to be more homogeneous, with an

almost exclusively German-speaking north and a predominantly Slovenian-speaking south.

Many towns and cities in southern Styria had German majorities, however, and much of the region's ethnic strife revolved around these German-speaking urban centres surrounded by rural Slovenes. The specific demographics of southern Styria introduced an element of volatility, which constituted the most noteworthy aspect of the local nationality conflict. In the language statistics of the small town of Šoštanj/Schönstein, this volatility demarcates itself particularly well. In the final four censuses held under Habsburg auspices, the local distribution of German- and Slovenian-speakers was as shown in Table 6.

Table 6
Primary language in Šoštanj/Schönstein 1880–1910

	<i>German</i>	<i>Slovenian</i>	<i>Total</i>
1880	118	615	734
1890	410	421	835
1900	179	908	1096
1910	874	368	1257

Even if one considers the substantial in-migration expressed in the overall population growth, the inconsistency of the results is striking. The citizens of Šoštanj/Schönstein clearly treated the question regarding their language of predominant daily use as directed at their national identification, because their language use could not have vacillated as forcefully as suggested by the census data. They were sufficiently well-versed in both German and Slovenian to see either one as a potential primary language and turned their census replies into conscious political statements. Moreover, many local citizens felt close enough to both national communities to alternate between them. Thus, at a time of protracted conflict between Germans and Slovenes in Austria's Alpine provinces, the inhabitants of Šoštanj/Schönstein would at times be found on the German side, at times on the Slovenian. They would be the self, but they would also be the other.

Conclusion

This article has examined transitional identities in historical Central European borderlands on both an individual and a collective level. Regions as far apart both geographically and politically as northern East Prussia and southern Styria displayed intriguing socio-cultural similarities, which illuminate the nature of national identity as it expressed itself at its margins.

In the political and scholarly debate, the special cultural parameters of border regions have often been seen in a context of public policy. During the final decades of imperial Germany, to take one important historical setting, one will indeed notice governmental attempts to strengthen the position of German culture and language in the eastern borderlands. The measurable impact of these policies remained small, however, especially *vis-à-vis* the primarily affected Polish Catholics; when Poznania reverted to Poland after the First World War, the region had changed little in overall ethnic composition since Poland's partition in the late 1700s.⁵⁸ Instead, the divergent reactions of different minority populations to their political environment highlight the primary importance of broader socio-cultural factors. Catholic Polish-speakers in a historically Polish territory such as Poznania fully retained a Polish identity under Prussian rule. The Catholic Polish-speakers of historically German Upper Silesia were divided by the impact of modern nationalism: one segment of the population adopted a Polish national identity, another segment rejected it. And among the Polish-speaking Protestants in historically German Masuria, the Polish national movement made few inroads.

In some cases, the national development counter-caricatured the political setting. The Prussian government had no interest in the assimilation of its German-speakers into a different linguistic community, but the Bambergers of central Poznania adopted a Polish identity nonetheless. Similarly, the inter-war Lithuanian authorities proved unable to turn the Lithuanian-speakers of the Memel territory into conscious members of the Lithuanian nation. Instead, the personal confrontation with Greater Lithuanian authorities and the nationalization policies they pursued seem to have estranged most Memel Lithuanians even further from the Lithuanian political sphere and to have completed their emotional integration into that of Germany.

Rather than reinforcing the role of short-term public policy measures in the creation of social identity, the history of the German–Slavic and German–Baltic borderlands points to a more gradual process of cultural confluence. The border environment reveals that culture does not consist of language alone but encompasses a wide array of mores, traditions and attitudes, among which religion and historical experience prove especially significant. It demonstrates furthermore that people can be members of a linguistically defined minority population within one nation-state without therefore representing an offshoot or extension of the co-lingual national community beyond the border.⁵⁹

On a theoretical plane, the historical border regions between the German-speaking world and its eastern neighbours illuminate the complexity of national identity on the crossroads of language, religion and history. On a more practical plane, they also alert us to the value of transitional regions as links between larger national communities. The borderlands traditionally contained a zone of contact and passage. Numerous nerve lines tied together different cultural groups, and group identification visibly became a matter of personal choice. Environments such as these created zones of fluid identity. The border populations *understood* their neighbours; they learned from them, transmitted this knowledge on to other members of their respective cultural communities, and thus contributed to a constant flow of information between larger cultural spheres.

The border regions were no peaceful multicultural paradise. They were frequently marked by tension and antagonism, but at the same time they constituted a natural zone of transition from one cultural realm to another. There were families with both German and Slavic or Baltic branches; sometimes even siblings chose different sides. Such accumulated knowledge and familiarity across ethnic lines helped to create a border environment in which numerous ties bridged the divide.

There are echoes of such transitional identities in contemporary Upper Silesia — whose regional culture has survived the vicissitudes of twentieth-century European politics better than many comparable border cultures — and arguably along the Austro-Slovenian frontier.⁶⁰ On an even smaller scale, isolated remnants of a Masurian and Little Lithuanian cultural sphere have weathered the storm, although their political surroundings

have been transformed to the point of irrerecognizability.⁶¹ But for the most part, the intriguing national ambivalence in the heart of Europe is a thing of the past. The removal of the German population from large tracts of East-Central Europe has also discontinued the ethnic symbiosis that used to characterize these regions.

The history of these border populations continues to be significant to the scholarly community, however, because it draws attention to a more fluid side of national identity. Not that these findings can be transferred indiscriminately to other political environments. The analysis of border identities supplements and refines the broader literature on nationalism and national identity rather than invalidates it. The renewed strength of ethnicity and nationalism in the Eastern Europe of the late twentieth century has rekindled interpretations that focus on the persistence and resilience of these social sentiments. Before the eyes of history, however, the sharp edges of national boundaries begin to blur, and smaller regional as well as overarching transnational identities tie together seemingly very disparate political entities. By drawing attention to ambivalence, malleability and fluidity, the history of Central European borderlands adds an important facet to the interpretation of national identity.

Notes

1. Friedrich Meinecke, *Weltbürgertum und Nationalstaat* (Munich 1907).
2. Otto Bauer stressed the historical experience; Walker Connor delineated the importance of ancestry myths. See Otto Bauer, *Die Nationalitätenfrage und die Sozialdemokratie* (Vienna 1907), and Walker Connor, *Ethnonationalism* (Princeton 1994).
3. This conservative interpretation found its most eloquent modern expression in Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism* (London 1960).
4. Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford 1983). Gellner refined his argument subsequent to the publication of his seminal work and allowed more room for genuine traditions that predate modern nationalism. He remained adamant about his central argument, however, which links nationhood and industrialization. See his thoughts in 'From Kinship to Ethnicity', in *Encounters with Nationalism* (Oxford 1994), 34–46, and in 'Nationalism and Marxism', *ibid.*, 1–19.
5. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London 1983).
6. Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780* (Cambridge 1990);

and Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge 1983).

7. See his studies *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford 1986) and *National Identity* (London 1991).

8. Smith develops this approach most explicitly in his essay 'The Problem of National Identity: Ancient, Medieval and Modern?', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (July 1994), 375–95.

9. John Armstrong formulated his views in a study with the programmatic title *Nations before Nationalism* (Chapel Hill, NC 1982).

10. See John Hutchinson's study *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism* (London 1977).

11. See Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (Reno, NV 1991), 64.

12. Anthony D. Smith, 'The Origins of Nations', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 3 (1989), 356.

13. Frequently, such voluntaristic definitions are explicitly conceived as sub-categories of the *Staatsnation*, and the nation-creating will of this concept is tied to the population of a pre-existing territorial unit.

14. Ernest Renan, *Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?* (Paris 1882).

15. For an introduction to the Cassubians, see Friedrich Lorentz, Adam Fischer and Tadeusz Lehr-Splawiński, *The Cassubian Civilization* (London 1935); Brunon Synak, *Kaszubska tożsamość* (Gdańsk 1998); and Heinz Lingenberg, 'Die Kaschuben', *Westpreußenjahrbuch*, Vol. 35 (1985), 123–50.

16. In absolute numbers: 167 German; 204 Polish; 931 German and Polish. In earlier decades, there had been more Polish monolingualism.

17. Although some observers have tried to ascribe the results of the plebiscites to larger international issues such as Poland's military conflict with the Soviet Union, the diversity of the results, which varied from 0.3 per cent Polish votes in Leobschütz/Głubczyce to 74 per cent in Pless/Pszczyna, and the similarities with the voting patterns in the parliamentary elections advise against primarily external explanations. A good discussion of the issues involved in Upper Silesia can be found in T. Hunt Tooley, *National Identity and Weimar Germany: Upper Silesia and the Eastern Border, 1918–1922* (Lincoln, NE 1997).

18. The original Prussians were a Baltic people related to Lithuanians and Latvians. After their subjugation by the Teutonic Order, they merged with the new German settlers, creating the German-speaking (East) Prussians; the Prussian language disappeared in the 1600s. The German distinction between the Baltic *Prussen* and the later *Preußen* has no generally understood English equivalent. Earlier attempts by Polish scholars such as Wojciech Kętrzyński to declare the Poles the original inhabitants of Masuria could not be maintained and have largely been abandoned. See Wojciech Kętrzyński, *O Mazurach* (Posen 1872).

19. In this essay, the German terms *Kreis*, *Wahlkreis* and *Regierungsbezirk* are translated as district, electoral district and governmental district, respectively. The governmental district was the largest of these units; all of East Prussia was divided into two, subsequently three, governmental districts. At the same time, the province contained seventeen electoral districts and thirty-seven districts.

20. For the election results, see Gerhard A. Ritter, *Wahlgeschichtliches Arbeitsbuch: Materialien zur Statistik des Kaiserreiches, 1871–1918* (Munich 1980), 67. In the interest of comparison, the inclusion of parts of the *Regierungsbezirk* Gumbinnen into the newly created *Regierungsbezirk* Allenstein by the time of the

elections of 1912 has been ignored. The National Liberals were, of course, no less German oriented than the Conservatives.

21. Hans-Ulrich Wehler, 'Zur neueren Geschichte der Masuren', *Zeitschrift für Ostforschung*, Vol. 11 (1962), 159–60. Since candidates were usually not filed in the most marginal districts, not all Polish-leaning voters had the opportunity to support an ethnic candidate. At the same time, it should be noted that the Masurian districts also included a small Polish Catholic element. These voters will have largely supported the Polish candidates and would have to be deducted from the total to establish the strictly Masurian contribution. In 1900, the district of Ortelsburg alone contained approximately 4500 Catholics with Polish or Masurian mother tongue. See Königliches statistisches Bureau, ed., *Preußische Statistik* 177:3 (Berlin 1902), 358–9. For the difficulties faced by the Polish national movement in Masuria, see also Grzegorz Jasiński, *Mazury w drugiej połowie XIX wieku* (Olsztyn 1994) and Heinrich Mrowka, 'Die Anfänge einer polnischen nationalen Bewegung in Masuren', in Hans Hecker and Silke Spiller, eds, *Deutsche, Slawen und Balten* (Lüneburg 1989), 128–40.

22. The data on religion and language are based on the census of 1900. The electoral district was also known as Gumbinnen Six.

23. Wilhelmine Germany was divided into 397 electoral districts. Candidates had to gain an absolute majority of the ballots cast. If none of the candidates achieved this majority in the first (or main) round of the elections, the two leading candidates competed in a run-off election.

24. Königliches statistisches Bureau, ed., *Preußische Statistik* 177:3, 177. The distinction made between Masurian and Polish not only by the German authorities, but also by many Masurians points to their reluctance to identify with matters Polish. Although Masurian contained many German words and had not undergone the homogenization process of standard Polish, it clearly had its roots in a Polish dialectal tradition, and other Masurians did acknowledge the Polish character of their dialect.

25. All the numbers about the East Prussian plebiscite are taken from Sarah Wambaugh, *Plebiscites since the World War* (Washington, DC 1933), I:134. The Allies were less surprised about the basic outcome of the plebiscite than about the crass disparity in the numbers.

26. Max Bär refers to division by nationality, but since the Prussian statistics examined language identification, the table has been titled accordingly.

27. For the cultural orientation of the Bambergers in the early 1800s, see Max Bär, *Die 'Bamberger' bei Posen* (Posen 1882), 35–6.

28. Tilsit is now the city of Sovetsk in Russia's Kaliningrad oblast. Most of the information on Lena Grigoleit is taken from Ulla Lachauer, *Paradiesstraße: Lebenserinnerungen der ostpreußischen Bäuerin Lena Grigoleit* (Reinbek 1996), which combines aspects of an oral history project with a personal memoir.

29. According to Vincas Vileišis, *Tautiniai santykiai Maž. Lietuvoje* (Kaunas 1935), 237, the community of Bitėnai was home to 427 Lithuanian-speakers and 337 German-speakers in 1905.

30. For the Memel Convention and Statute, whose regulations formed a frequent topic of debate before the League of Nations, see Thorsten Kalijarvi, *The Memel Statute* (London 1937).

31. Between 1956 and 1969, another 8000 Memelites arrived in Germany. See Alfred Bohmann, *Menschen und Grenzen* (Cologne 1970), III, 215.

32. The exact nature of Lithuanian settlement in north-eastern East Prussia used to be an issue hotly debated between German and Lithuanian historians. At the heart of the issue lay questions about the ethnic affiliation of the original Nadrovian, Scalovian and Sudovian inhabitants of the region (i.e. if they were Prussians or Lithuanians) and about the role of these earlier tribes in the later expansion of Lithuanian settlement. At the least, there seems to be increasing agreement about a sizeable population movement from Lithuania proper, if not about the question as to what kind of and how many inhabitants they encountered upon their arrival. For some of the major arguments, see Hans and Gertrud Mortensen, *Die Besiedlung des nordöstlichen Ostpreußens bis zum Beginn des 17. Jahrhunderts*, 2 vols (Leipzig 1937–8), and Vileišis, *Tautiniai santykiai*.

33. Königliches Statistisches Bureau, *Preußische Statistik* 177:3, viii.

34. *Ibid.* The districts were named for the cities of Memel (now Klaipėda) and Heydekrug (now Šilutė).

35. See the numbers in Ernst-Albrecht Pflieg, *Das Memelland 1920–1939* (Würzburg 1962), 16 and 244.

36. Strictly speaking, the territory ceded was not demarcated only by the Memel river. Article 28 of the Treaty of Versailles described the relevant stretch of the border as follows: ‘. . . thence the old frontier of Russia to a point east of Schmalleningken, then the principal channel of navigation of the Niemen (Memel) downstream, then the Skierweth arm of the delta to the Kurisches Haff; thence a straight line to the point where the eastern shore of the Kurische Nehrung meets the administrative boundary about 4 kilometres south-west of Nidden; thence this administrative boundary to the western shore of the Kurische Nehrung’ (Fred Israel, ed., *Major Peace Treaties in History, 1638–1967* [New York 1967], II:1291–2). For all practical purposes, the Memel river constituted the decisive geographical feature of the boundary.

37. The Lithuanian national movement had traditionally applied the term Little Lithuania/Lithuania Minor to all the Prussian territories that contained a Lithuanian-speaking population. After the First World War, however, the term was also used more narrowly for the Memel territory. The term Klaipėdos kraštas — after the name of the provincial capital Klaipėda — has become the dominant designation.

38. In 1898, the Lithuanian candidate Jonas Smalakys won the run-off election in the electoral district of Memel-Heydekrug against the Conservative candidate Count Waldersee with almost 60 per cent of the vote. This victory was only achieved because of an agreement with the Liberals, however; in the first round of the elections, Smalakys came in second with 23 per cent of the vote. See also Vytautas Žalys, *Kova dėl identiteto/Ringen um Identität* (Lüneburg 1993), 13–14.

39. The Polish names of these towns/districts are Oborniki, Szamotuły, Międzychód and Skwierzyna.

40. Königliches Statistisches Bureau, *Preußische Statistik* 177:3, 166 and 173. The electoral district was also known as Königsberg One.

41. It is these differences in voting pattern that truly confirm the relevance of voting behaviour for the assessment of national identity. Initially, one is, of course, inclined to see voting behaviour in a broader economic and ideological context and not primarily in a national one. But the fact that candidates who consciously run as minority candidates consistently receive almost the full potential minority vote in Poznan, whereas they consistently receive much less in Prussian Lithuania

and in Masuria, regardless of economic similarities, must be seen as an expression of group identity.

42. Walter Hubatsch, 'Das Memelland und das Problem der Minderheiten', in Hermann Conrad, ed., *Die deutschen Ostgebiete zur Zeit der Weimarer Republik* (Cologne 1966), 52.

43. Pflieg, *Das Memelland*, 218.

44. The Polish scholar Władysław Wielhorski computed the distribution of German and Lithuanian votes slightly differently. He counted 91 per cent German versus 6 per cent Lithuanian votes in 1925; 76.7 per cent German versus 13.3 per cent Lithuanian in 1927; and 75.5 per cent German versus 20.5 per cent Lithuanian in 1930 (Władysław Wielhorski, 'Die Entwicklung der Nationalitätenfrage in Ostpreussen', *Kulturwehr*, Vol. 11 [1935], 682). These minor differences, which arise mainly from Wielhorski's separation of the Communist vote, barely change the overall picture, however.

45. By 1970, Russians accounted for 30 per cent of the then 140,000 inhabitants of the city of Klaipėda. See Wilfried Schlau, 'Der Wandel in der sozialen Struktur der baltischen Länder', in Boris Meissner, ed., *Die baltischen Nationen* (Cologne 1991), 374.

46. This connection between religion and nationality is, of course, not restricted to the borderlands examined in this article. The lines between Croats, Serbs and Bosniaks are essentially drawn along religious lines, and religion competed with history and dialectal tradition in the national distinction between Poles and Ukrainians.

47. This observation does not imply that active religious participation was absent or irrelevant, but that religious identity also had a strong cultural component that continued to influence those who no longer identified as strongly with the theology of their respective religious bodies. At the same time, religion did play an important spiritual role in many of the communities investigated, not least of all the Polish Catholics of Poznań.

48. Königliches Statistisches Bureau, *Preußische Statistik* 177:3, 386–7.

49. The term Polish Protestant serves here as a synonym for Polish-speaking Protestant. It does not imply a Polish national consciousness, as will emerge from the subsequent analysis.

50. *Ibid.*, xix.

51. In the census of 1900, the electoral district contained 47,845 Polish-speaking Catholics, 21,804 Polish-speaking Protestants, 15,581 German-speaking Protestants, and 9331 German-speaking Catholics.

52. The Free Conservatives, or Reich party, were an offshoot of the Conservative party. Its founders had left the Conservatives to support Bismarck's imperial policy when the Conservatives remained more focused on specifically Prussian traditions. After the Conservatives had been integrated more deeply into the Wilhelmine empire, there were few ideological differences between the two Conservative parties.

53. See Jürgen Schmäddecke, *Wählerbewegung im Wilhelminischen Deutschland* (Berlin 1995), 1:588.

54. Sigmund Karski, *Albert (Wojciech) Korfanty* (Dülmen 1990), 314.

55. Notable examples would be Otto Bauer's *Die Nationalitätenfrage und die Sozialdemokratie* (Vienna 1907) and Karl Renner's *Das Selbstbestimmungsrecht der Nationen* (Vienna 1918). But a number of theorists of nationalism who do not

focus primarily on Austria are also deeply influenced by this country's experience; one might mention Hans Kohn and Eric Hobsbawm in that context.

56. The overall number of Slovenian-speakers in the Austrian half of the empire in the census of 1880 was approximately 1.1 million, whereas there were 5.1 million speakers of Czech and Slovak (the latter were not counted separately, but were of little numerical significance). For all the census numbers in this section, see the *Österreichische Statistik* for the years of 1882, 1892, 1902 and 1912, published by the Statistische Zentralkommission in Vienna, and the overviews in Emil Brix, *Die Umgangssprachen in Altösterreich zwischen Agitation und Assimilation* (Vienna 1982), 436–89; Gerhard Werner, *Sprache und Volkstum in der Untersteiermark* (Stuttgart 1935), 204–5; and Richard Pfaundler, 'Die nationalen Verhältnisse in Steiermark am Ausgange des 19. Jahrhunderts', *Statistische Monatschrift*, Vol. 9 (1906), 401–30.

57. Emil Brix, *Die Umgangssprachen in Altösterreich*, 181. Although much of the reduction of the German share derived from the influx of Slovenian-speakers into the capital, the absolute number of Germans stagnated at a time of general population growth and even contained periods of absolute population decline.

58. W.W. Hagen estimated that the percentage of Poles in Poznania rose from 62.9 per cent in 1825 to 64.7 per cent in 1910. See William W. Hagen, *Germans, Poles, and Jews* (Chicago 1980), 324. For additional data and interpretation, see also Eugen von Bergmann, *Zur Geschichte der Entwicklung deutscher, polnischer und jüdischer Bevölkerung in der Provinz Posen* (Tübingen 1883); Friedrich Neumann, 'Germanisierung oder Polonisierung', *Jahrbücher für Nationalökonomie und Statistik*, n.s., Vol. 7 (1883), 457–63; Richard Blanke, *Prussian Poland in the German Empire, 1871–1900* (Boulder, CO 1981); and Lech Trzeciakowski, *Kulturkampf w zaborze pruskim* (Poznań 1970).

59. This environment gives credence to Rogers Brubaker's triangular model, in which national minorities, nationalizing states, and external national homelands function as interconnected but separate players. See Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (Cambridge 1996).

60. For a comparative look at contemporary Upper Silesian and Masurian conditions, see Wojciech Lukowski and Tomasz Nawrocki, 'Upper Silesia and Masuria in Search of Identity', in Marek S. Szczepański, ed., *Ethnic Minorities and Ethnic Majority: Sociological Studies of Ethnic Relations in Poland* (Katowice 1997), 107–17. For an introduction to the historical setting in southern Carinthia, see Andreas Moritsch, ed., *Vom Ethnos zur Nationalität: der nationale Differenzierungsprozeß am Beispiel ausgewählter Orte in Kärnten und im Burgenland* (Vienna 1991), and Janko Pleterski, *Narodna in politična zavest na Koroškem* (Ljubljana 1965).

61. For an introduction to the post-war history of the Masurians, see Andrzej Sakson, *Mazury: Społeczność pogranicza* (Poznań 1990); Leszek Belzyt, 'Problem weryfikacji polskiej ludności rodzimej na Warmii, Mazurach i Powiślu' (PhD dissertation, University of Toruń 1987); and idem, 'Zur Frage des nationalen Bewußtseins der Masuren im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert', *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropaforschung*, Vol. 45, No. 1 (1996), 35–71.

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