

Mediating Memory through Materiality: Trauma Iconography of Flight and
Expulsion in the 21st-Century Museum

by

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Abstract

This thesis examines how German and Polish museums employ the social meanings rooted in flight and expulsion visual trauma iconography in their individual narrative, experiential, and spatial structures through the process of *Inszenierung* (staging). It does so to better understand the ways in which these museums interact with and intervene in national and transnational memory discourses surrounding flight and expulsion. The *Landesmuseen* and travelling exhibitions under analysis work towards the construction of an ethno-regional diasporic identity for the expellee community, rooted in nostalgia and collective victimhood. Trauma iconography is used to underscore flight and expulsion as the ultimate historical cataclysm. The national and transnational museums under examination only nominally include flight and expulsion in their overall structures. Despite this, they interrupt or reinterpret the previously culturalized content of these trauma icons in order to create cognitive dissonance between the visitor and more traditional mnemonic patterns of flight and expulsion.

I. Introduction

I.1 Overview

Over the past two decades, there has been a large breadth of research into the memorialization and identity of the 12-14 million German refugees/expellees from the former Eastern Territories at the end of the Second World War. This area of research has been taken up with a renewed vigour due to the return of German suffering in reunified German memory culture, the resultant revamped exploration of flight and expulsion in literature and film, as well as the controversy surrounding the Federation of Expellees' 2002 proposal to build a *Center Against Expulsions* in Berlin. This proposal ignited large national and transnational memory debates in Germany, Poland, and the Czech Republic, bringing up many longstanding mnemonic tensions and controversies. Much of the existing scholarship falls between four interrelated poles: the first focuses on the postwar political situation regarding European geopolitics, as well as on expellee identity politics and integration in both the GDR and FRG (Bauer, Braun and Kvasnicka 2013; Schulze 2006; Süßner 2004; Demshuk 2014); the second is rooted in the representation of flight and expulsion, as well as concepts of loss and *Heimat* in literature and film (Eigler 2014; Niven 2014); the third focuses on the taboo status of flight and expulsion in German memory culture, considering the tensions between personal and official memory, as well as its relation to intergenerational trauma (Langenbacher 2005; Moeller 2003); the fourth pole examines the commemoration of flight and expulsion in national and transnational public memory through monuments, memorials and museums (Luppés 2014; Troebst 2012). A large proportion of the work on German flight and expulsion in the museum focuses heavily on the memory politics surrounding the *Center Against Expulsions*, and not on the museal representations themselves. When this existing work does examine the representational strategies and structures in individual

exhibitions, it does so either by looking at them in isolation, or by using a narrow comparative framework to look at two or three exhibitions.

Outside of this, existing scholarship has looked little at how memory patterns surrounding flight and expulsion are represented more broadly and relationally in Germany's museum landscape (A. Assmann 2007; Feindt 2017; Troebst 2012; Völkering 2008). To address this problem, the following thesis uses flight and expulsion trauma iconography as a point of comparison between the representative structures of numerous dissimilar German and Polish museums. The term icon is not understood here in Peircian terms as being similar to the object it represents – in this case German flight and expulsion – but rather as motivated by the cultural content and commemorative conventions surrounding the object, effectively rooting social meanings in material form (Eco 1976; Alexander 2010). As such, particular objects and photographs have culturally acquired iconic mnemonic connections to German flight and expulsion, which museums reference and employ in mediating memories of this historical event. These include wooden handcarts, luggage, armbands with the letter “N” worn by expellees, as well as images of refugee columns in winter conditions and fleeing over ice. By examining the social meanings rooted in flight and expulsion trauma iconography, and how museums utilize this iconography in their individual narrative, experiential, and spatial structures, we can better understand how museums discursively interact with and intervene in national and transnational memory surrounding German flight and expulsion.

The staging of this iconography – as evidence to support the truth claim of certain historical narratives in the museum or, conversely, to critically engage visitors with historical subject matter – is not consistent between museums. Some museums reflect more traditional strands of memorial discourse regarding the trauma of flight and expulsion, such as the regional

German *Landesmuseen*, in line with the political aims and rhetoric of their founding expellee groups. Other museums seek to acknowledge and contrast this traditional memory discourse with a larger transnational/multidirectional approach to memory. Given that different museums can stage flight and expulsion visual trauma iconography in support or criticism of historical narratives, and given that this iconography is a product of cultural memory conventions, it follows that the two-way influence of cultural memory on museums and museums on cultural memory is key to understanding the different ways that museums mediate memories of German flight and expulsion.

I.2. Historical Background and Context of Research

At the end of the Second World War, public commemoration of flight and expulsion took divergent paths in East and West Germany. In the FRG, public memory narratives centered on the political goals of the expellees and concepts of collective German victimhood, before being sidelined by a societal mnemonic shift toward Holocaust memory. In the GDR, expellees were called resettlers and public discussions of their experiences quickly became a social and legal taboo. Upon reunification, German cultural memory discourse turned once again to questions of how to commemorate German victimhood, this time, however, with reflections on German perpetration. It is within this context that debates surrounding the memorialization of flight and expulsion have re-emerged. These dominant strands of cultural memory discourse regarding German flight and expulsion explored in the following section will provide a background understanding of the memory formations reflected in the museal representations analyzed in the remainder of this thesis.

In the FRG, political lobby groups representing expellees were hugely influential in shaping cultural memory in the postwar era. The most prominent of these was the umbrella organization, the *Bund der Vertriebenen* (*BdV*, Federation of Expellees), which was formed in 1957 and remains active today (Cordell 110). Refugees and expellees from the former Eastern Territories comprised 16.5% of the West German population by 1950, with around 2.2 million of them joining expellee organizations (Süssner 1). These organizations initially began as lobby groups that advocated for the socioeconomic integration of the newly arrived refugees/expellees. Their large number made expellees a highly coveted voting bloc, which in turn endowed their organizations with political influence. This also led to refugee/expellee identity and experience becoming highly politicized in the public life of the FRG; the goals and platform of the expellee organizations influenced the commemorative practices of the expellee community and nation at large regarding flight and expulsion. In this political milieu, the refugees/expellees from the former Eastern Territories were framed as a uniform group from a singular *Heimat* (Feindt 554). Public memorialization in this era either reflected the territorial revanchist claims of these organizations and their purported *Recht auf Heimat* – namely, the rejection of the border at the Oder-Neisse Line, the return of the lost territories, and compensation for material losses – or else worked towards culturally rebuilding the *Heimat* and expellee ethno-cultural community in the West (Salzborn 88). These revanchist political formations sparked considerable popular anxiety in the Eastern Bloc, specifically in Czechoslovakia and Poland as the countries most involved in the expulsions; anxieties which the Soviet-backed states utilized to illustrate a continuing German menace, this time supported by the West (Ahonen 610).

Monuments and memorials were erected as part of political campaigns run by expellee organizations. These organizations overtly projected their aforementioned foreign policy

ambitions, underscoring the exceptional nature of German victimhood (Luppés, “Aesthetics” 85). The memorials invoked rhetoric centering on the loss of *Heimat* – depicted in some cases as fate worse than death – underscoring the weight of expellee suffering to legitimize their political platform. This victimhood rhetoric also sought to highlight expellee loss in order to draw equivalency between expellees and the victims of Nazi crimes and the Holocaust (Levy and Sznajder 11). A similar *Heimat* rhetoric was used to garner domestic awareness and economic support for the expellee organizations’ efforts to construct the lost *Heimat* and community identity in the FRG. This aligned with the larger “community of suffering” constructed out of West Germans’ self-perception as victims of Nazism as well as Bolshevism in the postwar period (Süssner 5). By highlighting the loss of *Heimat* as part of greater picture of German suffering, expellee organizations were able to secure generous state funding for community building through cultural events, newspapers and other publications, as well as the creation of *Heimatstuben* and *Heimatmuseen* (6). The collective expellee identity constructed by these cultural elements was built on uniting concepts of victimhood, nostalgia for the lost *Heimat*, and the false promise of eventual *Heimkehr* (return home).

However, as the Cold War progressed the expellee organizations’ platform came to be increasingly considered as potentially disruptive to Europe’s peace and stability. With the onset of Willy Brandt’s *Ostpolitik* and the state’s recognition of the Oder-Neisse Line in 1970, many began to regard the expellee lobby’s demands of territorial revisionism as inappropriate (Levy and Sznajder 12). On the back of the student movement in 1968, broad social and political changes throughout the 1960s and 70s also altered the discussion on German suffering: public memory in the FRG turned away from memorializing German victimhood, and instead focused on German guilt and perpetration of the Holocaust (Luppés, “Aesthetics” 88). Contrary to what

many have argued, flight and expulsion during this period did not become a taboo in West German cultural memory discourse. As Ahonen illustrates: “there was no full-scale rupture in public narratives; traditional discourses about the expulsions and their wider setting persisted [...] among the expellee lobby but also in the broader public sphere” (602). Expellee groups did not alter their platforms in tune with the new socio-political atmosphere, and as a result ended up on the margins of the political mainstream. They continued their commemorative and community building activities in a counter-historical manner, seeking societal recognition of collective refugee/expellee experiences of suffering as guiltless victims of the Second World War (Luppés, “Aesthetics” 88). This new political environment influenced, however, the rhetoric of the expellee groups: the societal mnemonic shift towards Holocaust memory caused these organizations to shift their focus from the exceptionalism of collective expellee victimhood towards concepts of individual human suffering under the auspices of newly emerging human rights discourse (Feindt 559).

Meanwhile, in the GDR, memorialization of flight and expulsion was highly controlled by the state, which was hesitant to address the forcible removals supported by the Soviet Union and its other close allies in the Eastern Bloc. The governing SED party recognized the Oder-Neisse Line in 1950, and purported the view that expellee organizations were not needed in the socialist collective in which the newcomers were already integrated (Niven, “Supposed Taboo” 217). If the expellees were addressed officially, they were referred to as ‘resettlers’; they were not allowed to publicly commemorate the expulsion, and were therefore forbidden from creating monuments or museum (Luppés, “Aesthetics” 97). This commemoration taboo remained until reunification.

The question of Germany's borders came once again to the fore during German reunification in 1989-90, and with it, a renewed prominence of the expellee lobby. While Germany's postwar borders were recognized in 1990, this political discourse reignited fears of German revanchism in Poland and Czechoslovakia (Ahonen 610). At this time, expellee organizations failed to attract political support from expellees who had been living in the former GDR; their identity had not been shaped by the ethno-regionalism of the expellee organizations in the FRG, and had instead been subjected to a true taboo (Feindt 558). Holocaust memory remained a cornerstone in the cultural memory of reunified Germany, and became a crucial part of German national identity. However, German victimhood also re-emerged as a dominant strand of public memory discourse, sparking debates around if and how it could be considered in tandem with German guilt and perpetration. Regarding the commemoration of flight and expulsion, competing concepts of suffering reminiscent of postwar West German concepts of German victimhood appeared, albeit in a radically different memory landscape. Generational distance to the Second World War, geopolitical transformations, and the centrality of Holocaust memory has played a role in the shaping of new memory terrain. Levy and Sznajder argue that two competitive tendencies characterize this landscape: the denationalization and Europeanization of collective memory, and the referencing of collective European victimhood in order to renationalize memory (13-14). These tendencies can be seen in one of the most prominent national and transnational memory debates surrounding the commemoration of flight and expulsion after the end of the Cold War: those concerned with the Federation of Expellees' proposed *Center Against Expulsions*.

Erika Steinbach, the chair of the Federation of Expellees and German Member of Parliament, proposed a *Center Against Expulsions* in 2002. The Center was to be situated in

Berlin, and was to memorialize German refugees/expellees as victims of ethnic violence; it sought to commemorate them, alongside the millions of people that had been driven from their homes in the 20th century as part of the attempts of various nation-states toward ethnic homogeneity, from the Armenian Genocide to the Balkan Wars of the 1990's. In doing so, the Center was to further act as a warning and a tool against future human rights abuses (cf. the Center's concept). The Center's narrative employed universalizing values of human rights in the face of state violence, in order to locate the experiences of German expellees among those of other victim groups. In doing so, it reflected rhetorical trends that had been employed by expellee organizations since the late Cold War period. In 2002, the German government backed the proposal for the Center, igniting intense memory debates within Germany, as well as with its neighbours – particularly Poland and the Czech Republic. These debates centered on if and how memories of German flight and expulsion could be denationalized and Europeanized within the Center's universalizing human rights discourse: Despite the center purporting to commemorate all victims in a spirit of solidarity and reconciliation, many vocalized fears that this discourse would privilege national memories of German suffering and therefore renationalize them. The fact that Germans were to be memorialized in a similar vein as other victims of expulsion and genocide sparked anxieties of historical revisionism: namely, that the historical causality linking flight and expulsion and the German war of annihilation would be distorted, and that other victims would be improperly represented.

Another main point of contention in these debates was the Center's proposed location in Berlin. Many academics and politicians in Germany and Eastern-Central Europe felt that this excluded conflicting Eastern European memories and instead gave precedence to German ones. These fears were exacerbated in Germany and abroad by the Federation of Expellees' key role in

developing the Center. Considering the Federation's past and contemporary lobby platforms, many worried they would perpetuate old victimhood discourses and instrumentalize the Center towards their own political ends. In Poland, for example, there were fears of the Federation utilizing the Center to revive old claims of territorial revisionism (Ahonen 611). Additionally, conservative elements in Polish society felt that the Center further interfered with Poland's national identity as victims of the Second World War, and held the danger of featuring cases of Polish perpetration: this controversy came at a time when Poland was having its own internal memory debates over national morality and guilt during the war, following the 2000 publication of Jan T. Gross's book, *Neighbours* (Feindt 560).

The limits of the *Center Against Expulsion's* universalizing framework to denationalize memories of German flight and expulsion are made apparent through the highly emotional nature of the debates surrounding it. Indeed, these memory debates indicate that such a discourse brings competing notions of victimhood to the surface, as different groups attempt to distinguish and gain acknowledgement for their own individual experiences of suffering. Due to the heavy controversies surrounding the Center, it has been reconceptualised as a documentation center of *Stiftung Flucht, Vertreibung, Versöhnung* (Foundation Flight – Expulsion – Reconciliation). The new museum is set to open in Berlin in 2020, and has distanced itself from the Federation of Expellees, in addition to removing Erika Steinbach as its chair. While the mandate of the reconceptualised Foundation makes clear that it will also deal with the theme of expulsion and ethnic violence spanning a large number of victim groups, it appears to take a transnational rather than universalizing approach to doing so. This means that it will recognize the unique characteristics of individual groups' experiences and memory cultures, while placing them into a relational framework. Whether it will succeed in doing so remains to be seen.

I.3. Museums Under Study

As mentioned in the previous sections, there has been much scholarship charting the political and historical-political dimensions of the commemorative tensions around the *Center Against Expulsions*, as well as the consequences they hold for greater German and European memory culture concerning the Second World War. This thesis examines how these memory patterns are expressed across Germany's existing museum landscape beyond this political dimension: specifically, how museums – as both manifestations and influencers of cultural memory discourse – mediate memories of flight and expulsion through their representative structures by employing flight and expulsion trauma iconography. For this purpose, a diverse sampling of German and Polish museums will be surveyed using three main lines of inquiry: First, how do these museums implicitly or explicitly reference the iconic relationship between the iconic signifier and its previously culturalized content? Second, how do these museums reference flight and expulsion iconography with other historical narratives of suffering, such as the Holocaust? Third, in referencing the iconic relationship, as well as other historical narratives of suffering, what are the ways in which these museums exploit, influence, or subvert dominant cultural mnemonical patterns regarding flight and expulsion? Furthermore, how does this correspond with the museums' individual pedagogical, political, and narrative goals? In order to pursue these lines of inquiry, the author performed fieldwork in these museums from September 1 – October 15, 2018. This involved extensive independent site-visits, and is supplemented by background research. I approached this fieldwork with four core questions: how do these exhibitions portray cultural loss in their representative structures, and do they use nostalgia in doing so? How is German suffering represented in relation to that of other victim groups? To

what extent and in which ways do these museums employ human rights discourse in their representation of German refugees/expellees? How do these museums use objects, text, and further digital and analog media in their representations of flight and expulsion?

The museums under examination in this thesis can be characterized under four broad categories, *Landesmuseen*, travelling exhibitions, as well as national and transnational museums. Three *Landesmuseen* are examined: the *Westpreußisches Landesmuseum* in Warendorf, the *Oberschlesisches Landesmuseum* in Ratingen, and the *Schlesisches Landesmuseum* in Görlitz. All three of these institutions have been conceptually developed from postwar West German *Heimatmuseen/Heimatstuben*; they use an ethnographic approach to create experiences of heritage and nostalgia regarding life in Germany's former Eastern Territories, which is juxtaposed with concepts of suffering and cultural loss through the historical cataclysm of flight and expulsion. This approach constructs an idealized lost *Heimat* and illustrates its tragic loss as a basis for a diasporic expellee collective identity rooted in victimhood. The museums in Warendorf and Ratingen were originally formed by expellee organizations in 1975 and 1970, respectively – the museums continue to work in close cooperation with these organizations. The current permanent exhibition in Warendorf was opened in 2014, and the one in Ratingen in 1998. They have since diversified their funding and administrative structures, as well as attempted to target an audience beyond the expellee community; however, the approaches and materials used by their exhibition structures still contain many holdovers from their days as *Heimatmuseen*. The *Schlesisches Landesmuseum* in Görlitz is the only one of these museums to be located in the territory whose history it represents, and whose permanent exhibition was only opened in 2006, after German reunification. Though it was founded by the city of Görlitz and the province of

Saxony, and not an expellee organization, this museum is structurally and conceptually similar to the other *Landesmuseen* analyzed.

This thesis also looks at two travelling exhibition, *Verschwunden – Orte, die es nicht mehr gibt* (Disappeared – Places that don't Exist Anymore), and *Troppau im Jahre Null. Kriegsende 1945 und Neubeginn in Opava* (Troppau in Year Zero. War's End and the New Beginning in Opava). Inaugurated at the Kronprinzenpalais in Berlin in November 2016, *Verschwunden* is one exhibition in a series created by the failed *Center Against Expulsion's* foundation – these travelling exhibitions remain in circulation. Similar to the *Landesmuseen*, it employs restorative nostalgia to emotionally explore the loss of the Eastern *Heimat*, highlighting flight and expulsion as the ultimate historical cataclysm. However, the political mission of this exhibition is much more overt: namely, to reconstruct this lost world as a cornerstone in the diasporic cultural heritage and identity of expellees and their descendants, as well as rectifying what the Federation of Expellees perceives as their “second expulsion” out of German memory culture. In order to do so, the exhibition explores the physical destruction of the lost *Heimat* through nine root causes, of which not all are tied to the Second World War, and illustrates these with contrasting photographs depicting an idealized land “before”, and a neglected and destroyed world “after”. The travelling exhibition *Troppau im Jahre Null* was inaugurated in July 2017 at the *Oberschlesisches Landesmuseen*, and was produced by the museum in cooperation with the Opava Cultural Organization. The exhibition depicts the end days of the war and their aftermath in the city of Troppau (now the Czech city of Opava). Though it takes a more detailed approach to depicting the process of the *Heimat's* physical destruction, the exhibition's beginning point at the end of the war as well as its polarized concept of ‘before’ and ‘after’ present a similarly decontextualized snapshot to the Federation of Expellees' exhibition.

In contrast to the above travelling exhibitions and *Landesmuseen*, the national and transnational museum examined here provide relatively minor space for German flight and expulsion in their exhibitions. They instead locate these events within the wider historical contexts of the Second World War and its aftermath. However, the ways in which these museums have chosen to perform this – in relation to their own pedagogical and narrative strategies – is quite variable. While the national museums included in this thesis are rooted in German or Polish national historical narratives, they have different perspectives on what constitutes a nation. These perspectives can either be used to transcend more traditional narratives of national identity and victimhood, like those seen in the *Landesmuseen*, or underscore them. The *Deutsches Historisches Museum* (German Historical Museum) in Berlin in its permanent exhibition inaugurated in 2005, for instance, highlights the relatively recent conception of the category ‘nation-state’, and stresses that this term cannot be used to examine the 1500 years of German history covered in the exhibition teleologically. Instead, the *Deutsches Historisches Museum* emphasizes fluidity in the movement of borders, peoples, and ideas, while exploring broad historical constellations using a personally detached, object and text-based approach. The *Militärhistorisches Museum der Bundeswehr* (Bundeswehr Military History Museum) in Dresden is another German national museum analyzed, which transcends traditional concepts of the nation in its representation of national military history. The *Militärhistorisches Museum der Bundeswehr* charts more than 1100 years of military history, and its revised permanent exhibition was inaugurated in 2011. It anthropologizes violence by demonstrating that it is a cultural and historical phenomenon. Thus the museum employs object-based and experiential elements to challenge traditional historical approaches and confront visitors with their own potential for violence.

In contrast to the national museums explored in this thesis, the transnational museums do not build outward from the perspective of a singular nation's history. Instead, their representative structures seek to transcend the nation-state as the natural vessel for collective memory, while continuing to acknowledge nations' significance as cultural mnemonic producers. The *Deutsch-Russisches Museum* (German-Russian Museum) in Berlin-Karlshorst is transnational in both its administration and structure: The current permanent exhibition was opened in 2013 in German and Russian cooperation, and seeks to be a place where the two former wartime enemies can jointly reflect on their shared history. The museum charts the Second World War from the German and Russian perspective, underscoring the war's impact on these societies, as well as the war's consequences and aftermath up until today. The national experiences of Germany and Russia are not placed into competition, and nor are they evaluated separately from each other; these perspectives are instead merged to create a structural experience for the visitor that explores the consequences of total war. The *Museum of the Second World War (Muzeum II Wojny Światowej)* in Gdansk was conceived in 2007 as a conceptual response to the Federation of Expellees *Center Against Expulsions* (Clark and Duber 8). To counter what was feared to be a renationalizing of flight and expulsion memory in Germany, the Gdansk museum sought to present a comprehensive account of the Second World War from a civilian perspective, with focus on Eastern European memory, but with a strong Polish framework. The museum's permanent exhibition was inaugurated in 2017, amidst highly controversial and politicized memory debates. Against fierce opposition, the Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, under the influence of the governing Law and Justice party, succeeded in seizing control of the museum, and seeks to orient its concept more towards national narratives of Polish heroism and martyrdom. The exhibition's current iteration remains close to its original

transnational concept, though some mostly minor changes have been made to its representational structure. It charts parallel experiences among civilians, such as occupation, terror, and resistance, and causally roots them in the violence of the era's totalitarian regimes.

I.4. Roadmap of Thesis

The body of this thesis is divided into three parts: the first chapter is devoted to examining the ways in which museums create interpretive reconstructions of history for their visitors by employing aesthetic and material elements in their exhibition strategies. Specifically, it uses the concept of *Inszenierung* (staging) to explore how museums appropriate and foster symbolic meanings from these elements to conduct memory through their material frameworks; it then examines opportunities and downfalls of using objects and photographs as representational media in museal staging, and identifies the specific challenges of their use in depicting flight and expulsion. The *Deutsches Historisches Museum*, the *Militärhistorisches Museum der Bundeswehr*, the travelling exhibition *Troppau im Jahre Null*, and a sampling of exhibitions from the *Landesmuseen* are used to illustrate this. The second chapter applies this theoretical framework to examine how German regional *Landesmuseen* stage objects and photographs as visual trauma icons of flight and expulsion to create experiences of heritage and restorative nostalgia regarding the lost German East. It highlights conceptual and representational continuities that these museums hold with postwar West German *Heimatstuben/Heimatemuseen*; focusing on how these museums juxtapose nostalgia with cultural loss to construct a diasporic cultural expellee identity rooted in victimhood; it also shows how these concepts of victimhood are universalized with the suffering of other groups using human rights discourse. This chapter

then goes on to show how the Federation of Expellees' travelling exhibition, *Verschwunden – Orte, die es nicht mehr gibt*, constructs similar experiences of heritage and restorative nostalgia as a medium with which to assert its political message. The third chapter looks at possibilities for museums to overcome these national and universalizing mnemonic frameworks towards multidirectional/transnational memory, by renegotiating the cultural meanings rooted in flight and expulsion trauma iconography. It does so by evaluating the representational and narrative strategies of two transnational museums: the *Deutsch-Russisches Museum* in Berlin-Karlshorst, and the *Museum of the Second World War* in Gdansk. The conclusion suggests how these transnational strategies could be used in the upcoming *Foundation Flight Expulsion Reconciliation* in Berlin, in order to avoid the pitfalls of the first *Center Against Expulsions*.

II. Visual Trauma Iconography in the Museum: Objects and Photographs

II.1. Museums and *Inszenierung*

This chapter will examine how museums utilize aesthetic and material elements in their exhibition strategies, in order to present an interpretive reconstruction of history to their visitors, specifically with regards to museal representations of flight and expulsion. First, the ways in which museums appropriate and cultivate symbolic meanings of these elements to transmit memory through their material frameworks, as well as how museums' considerations of visitors' perceptions, emotions, and judgements shape these frameworks will be explored through the concept of museal *Inszenierung*. The chapter will then examine the possibilities and challenges associated with the use of objects and photographs as representational media in the staging of museum exhibitions.

Museums mediate memories of German flight and expulsion by utilizing the iconicity of certain objects and photographs in their exhibition structures; this involves referencing and employing the previously culturalized content of these items as iconic signifiers to influence, exploit, or subvert dominant cultural mnemonical patterns surrounding these historical events. The concept of *Inszenierung* ('staging' in English) will be used to examine the ways in which this referencing process works as part of museums' greater curatorial strategies, as well as the different possibilities it holds in shaping visitors' historical perceptions of flight and expulsion. The concept of staging in the museum has been used as an aesthetic process in exhibition curation, as well as an analytic term for the study of exhibition culture since the 1980s (Thiemeyer, "Inszenierung" 207). As such, this concept places emphasis on the constructed and interpretive nature of the historical worlds that history museum exhibitions transmit to their visitors; Aleida Assmann defines it generally as "der Schlüsselbegriff eines konstruktivistischen

Weltverständnisses, demzufolge Wirklichkeit nicht vorfindlich existiert, sondern performativ hergestellt wird”¹ (“Geschichte im Gedächtnis” 162). The use of the concept of staging in the curation and study of history museums marks increasingly critical considerations of museums’ role in not just storing history, but creating and manipulating it (Black 418). This usage of the term follows from the cultural turn in the discipline of history beginning in the 1970’s, which emphasized the constructed nature of culture and the subjective nature of historiography: if history was considered to be subjective, so too was its material representation in the museum. The cultural turn has moved historiography away from a master narrative of history eschewing a singular rational worldview centered on the nation-state. These shifts in historiography have been reflected to a great degree in the structure and aims of history museums, including staging and other curatorial practices, as well as the analysis of these practices. This stands in contrast to 19th century museums, whose primary function was to develop and present new rules for classification based on a scientific and evolutionary model, as well as to preserve, record and pass on the cultural heritage of the nation-state (Black 416; Crane 47). Beier-de-Haan argues that this more traditional museum format “attempted to convey meanings through their spatial organization and arrangement of objects”, which has also been seen in more modern museums employing staging techniques since the 1980’s (“Restaging Histories” 192). However, she finds that the concept of staging in contemporary museum practice distinguishes itself by taking the visitor into account, as “[...] they become part of the ensemble and are challenged to express their own perceptions, judgements, and emotions” (193). This shift in the position of the visitor in exhibition culture mirrors the greater cultural turn in historiography, as well as the changing purpose and goals of the museum in society. In the 20th century, museums have transformed

¹ “the key concept of a constructivist understanding of the world, according to which reality does not exist, but is produced performatively”

from pedantic institutions run by the elite, into public projects shaped to a large degree by visitor expectations and wishes (Crane 47). This means that museums must take individual and cultural expectations into account in their staging practices: If an exhibition attempts to evoke thoughts and emotions that are too far removed from the visitor's personal and cultural contexts, it can result in confusion or even a negative reaction. When played out on a larger scale, this can also result in public controversy.

Contemporary museal staging addresses visitors as an active audience through "material performance", in which museums performatively interpret and emplot historical narratives through the material structures of their exhibitions (A. Assmann, "Geschichte im Gedächtnis" 169). This concept originally stems from the theater, where it was used to describe the setting of a scene through set design, props, costumes, lighting, the position of the actors on stage, etc., resulting in the physical performance of a play; in this performance, external objects and stagecraft are used to interpret and communicate the meaning of an author's written work to a live audience. In bringing a play to the stage, the performance takes on new meanings beyond the original work (Thiemeyer, "Inszenierung" 201). Similarly, exhibition elements, including objects and photographs, are re-contextualized through museum curation in a setting that builds new interrelationships and meanings between them (A. Assmann, "Geschichte im Gedächtnis" 152). The symbolic characteristics of these elements are employed in the creation of a representative historical universe, which interprets but does not replicate the past. The staging process didactically utilizes visitors' cultural preconceptions, knowledge, and emotions in the communication of historical meaning. Thiemeyer argues that in this process, the cognitive and emotional aspects of the visitor's observations of the exhibition cannot be considered as separate:

“weil Erkenntnisse Emotionen hervorrufen oder von ihnen getragen werden”² (“Fortsetzung im Krieg” 240). The visitor’s emotional response has the power to influence their perception of the historical veracity and authenticity of a museum’s representational universe, which can be used didactically. By including the visitor as part of their curation strategies, museums allow for a multiplicity of perspectives. However, museums remain the mediator in this process by controlling historical narrative, and do so in line with their pedagogical and narrative goals. In the remainder of the chapter, the possibilities that staging effects hold in guiding memory and historical perception of German flight and expulsion in the museum through two distinct forms of media – objects and photographs – will be examined.

II.2. Objectification and the Authenticity of Memory

In more traditional museum exhibitions of the 19th and first half of the 20th century, objects were displayed linearly as relics, linked together through detailed textual commentary. This exhibition format gives precedence to text and provides scholars with the monopoly of interpretation over the objects’ meaning (Beier-de-Haan, “Restaging Histories” 192). Through textual means, museum curators sought to control objects’ intrinsic connotations in service of communicating their own message; however, as Sherman points out, this mode of curatorial practice fails to take into account the unpredictable ways in which objects can trigger memories in the visitor, even with heavily narrative exhibition text (52). In the same vein, Beier-de-Haan argues that the process of re-contextualizing objects in a museum exhibition automatically imbues them with an aesthetic-performative dimension, which allows for a multiplicity of historical meanings, produced through the interaction between visitor and object: “Selbst wenn die Absicht einer

² “because knowledge evokes emotions or is carried by them.”

Ausstellung didaktisch eindeutig ist, sind ihre Wirkungen mehrdimensional”³ (“Erinnerte Geschichte” 184). As discussed in the last section, the form and function of the history museum in the latter half of the 20th century have shifted to employ this aesthetic-performative dimension of objects through the use of staging techniques, following transformations in the discipline of history. These shifts have been reflected in how objects are regarded and employed in curatorial practice; in new museology, objects are no longer regarded simply as carrying an implicit truth-value as material fragments of the past, and their meanings are no longer considered static and dictated solely by scholars. Rather, through the material performance of staging, they are made into symbol-bearers for a specific historical context in the museum’s greater representational universe (A. Assmann, “Geschichte im Gedächtnis” 155). This involves a process of re-contextualization, whereby the worth of an object is no longer assessed by its past usage, but instead becomes a mnemonical sign, a fragment of a larger museal interpretation of the past (Thiemeyer, “Fortsetzung im Krieg” 263-4). In this way, the interpretive historical space of the museum constitutes a “[...] plot that weaves together the museum's objects, infusing them with meaning, constituting them as representation” (Sherman 52). While the historical associations carried by objects in the museum setting imbue them with meaning, this meaning stems both from the objects’ presentation, as well as the interactive process between object and visitor.

Handcarts and luggage, often in combination, are dominant icons in German memory culture regarding German flight and expulsion, and are widespread in the majority of museums under examination in this thesis. While handcarts and luggage are extremely pervasive in German museums depicting flight and expulsion, they are staged in different ways to communicate a variety of historical interpretations, in line with individual museums’ pedagogical

³ “Even if the intention of an exhibition is didactically clear, its effects are multi-dimensional.”

goals and representative structures. These items are used to elicit a variety of emotional and empathetic reactions, personal, cultural, and political associations, as well as distancing and critical thought in the visitor. One such approach is the staging of handcarts and luggage as material witnesses. Aleida Assmann argues that these items do not explicitly reference and simultaneously embody flight and expulsion for the visitor in the same way that written documents of the time do, for example, personal letters, train rosters, refugees' identification cards etc. Therefore, she maintains, they should be considered as "[...] *nicht zeichenhaften historischen Relikte*, die erst zu erzählenden Geschichte ihr stummes Zeugnis preisgeben"⁴ ("Geschichte im Gedächtnis" 155). Through the use of multimedia technologies and material performance in curatorial practice, handcarts and pieces of luggage are imbued with an aura of the authentic as objects that have 'lived through' flight and expulsion, and remain as historical traces. Thiemeyer argues that this aura is transmitted experientially to the museum visitor: "Auraerfahrungen sind Wahrnehmungen und deshalb nicht mitteilbar, sondern nur sinnlich erlebbar und einzigartig"⁵ ("Fortsetzung im Krieg" 265). This means that the power of a handcart's or a piece of luggage's aura as a material witness in an exhibition does not only stem from the historicity of its source, but also more importantly, from the fascination and emotions that it awakes in the visitor. The presence of an object perceived by the visitor as authentic, or a representation of the authentic, results in an immediacy of history in the here and now; the tactile qualities of the handcart or suitcase trigger the imagination of the visitor, whereby suggestive bridges are built between subject (flight and expulsion) and the object, between past and present (A. Assmann, "Geschichte im Gedächtnis" 156).

⁴ "[...] *non-symbolic historical relics*, which primarily give their mute testimony to the story being told."

⁵ "Experiences of aura are perceptions and therefore not communicable, only sensually experiential and unique."

As material witnesses handcars and luggage stimulate the visitor to imagine the hardships and suffering of their former owners, provoking empathy and emotional response, as well as facilitating experiential learning. Furthermore, through this process of affective and cognitive engagement between visitor and object differs from visitor to visitor, and leaves visitors with gaps in meaning to fill in through their own interpretation. However, the infinite possibilities of this imaginative interpretation are tempered through the reactions and expectations that the museum anticipates and builds into their exhibition structures. Individual interpretation of a handcart's or suitcase's aura is guided by the contemporary cultural memorial norms of the visitor's community, which can be used didactically by museums to influence how the visitor fills in the gaps of an object's meanings: "there is a consensus within each individual's community, and so the act of interpretation will bear a relationship to this consensus" (Pearce 27). Handcars and luggage are intersubjectively recognizable to visitors as icons of German flight and expulsion in a broader cultural context outside of the museum. When staged in an exhibition, the iconicity of these items can trigger visitors' associations with their previously culturalized content, which can be employed to reinforce dominant strands of cultural memory discourse regarding flight and expulsion; museums can also interrupt or reinterpret an object's previously culturalized content, in order to alter or criticize dominant mnemonic discourses. Both of these strategies can fall flat, however, when the visitor lacks the cultural pre-knowledge to understand an object's iconicity in the first place. As Völkerling outlines, the use of particular object types and properties as material sign-bearers of the trauma of flight and expulsion illustrate that: "greifen Kuratoren häufig auf 'Ikonen' aus dem Haushalt des kollektiven Bildgedächtnisses zurück"⁶ ("Musealisierung" 110). In presenting the familiar motif of the

⁶ "curators often resort back to 'icons' from the household of collective memorial imagery."

handcart or shabby suitcase as a material witness in relation to German refugee/expellee suffering, the museum references dominant cultural memory paradigms. In doing so, the museum guides the imaginative process of interpretation between object and visitor to strengthen their identification with that suffering. The staging of shabby, ramshackle, and makeshift pieces of luggage underlines the urgency and chaos of flight and expulsion; the exhibition of handcarts illustrates the difficulty and peril of the refugees'/expellees' journey.

An example of this can be seen in the *Westpreußisches Landesmuseum* in Warendorf: the final room of the chronological exhibition ends with the depiction of the flight and expulsion of the German population from West Prussia. On the wall of the room, a slideshow plays images of refugee/expellee columns traveling over ice, through the countryside, towns, and railway stations; the people in the photographs ride on horse-drawn wagons, or travel on foot, pulling handcarts overloaded with belongings behind them. The scenes in these photographs are partially reconstructed underneath the slideshow: there rests a handcart carrying two shabby suitcases, and rests on top of a jutting out piece of pale blue plastic on the floor, with under-lighting to simulate an ice float. The aura of authenticity surrounding these objects is rooted in how they are staged in imitation of the photographs; the past events depicted in the black and white pictures become present in the objects' material form. The familiarity of the handcart and suitcases as a motif for flight and expulsion also enhances these items' credibility and presence as historical objects. This bridging of the past and present brings an historical immediacy to the viewer, stimulating them to imagine the long perilous trek over ice. These items are not held in a display case or labeled, nor do they have any accompanying text. The slideshow also holds very little textual information. This means that the visitor is left ill informed to think critically about these visual displays, including the sources of the objects, and is instead lead toward an emotional narrowing

towards German victimhood. The scenes of flight and hardship in the exhibition remove the distance between object and visitor and provoke an emotional response, which results in identification with the suffering refugees/expellees. This identification through affective engagement is underlined by the three porcelain dolls, a mother and two infants, in a display case resting on the ice float beside the handcart; the dolls are labeled “Drei Puppen aus dem Fluchtgepäck”(Three dolls out of the Rucksack), and dated from the eighteenth century. The text and the positioning of the dolls in the exhibition stages them as personal possessions out of the shabby suitcases also on display; this staging technique also creates “die Aura kollektiver Unschuld, die durch Feminisierung, Maternisierung und Infantilisierung der Vertriebenen erzeugt wird, dient innerhalb des deutschen Viktimisierungsdiskurses”⁷ (Scholz 190). This staging suggests to the visitor that the identities of the refugees/expellees are mothers and children, which references traditional memory tropes of German victimhood. This further strengthens emotional identification in the visitor with refugee/expellee suffering, while avoiding questions of guilt, causality, and responsibility.

The use of luggage and handcarts as material witnesses can also be seen in the temporary exhibition *Troppau im Jahre Null*, displayed in the *Oberschlesischen Landesmuseum* in Ratingen. This exhibition focuses on the last days of the Second World War in the city of Troppau, in Lower Silesia (now Opava, the Czech Republic), including the fighting between German and Soviet forces, as well as the flight and expulsion of the German population. The war’s final days are represented through a text- and photo-based exhibition, with the use of some video and objects. There is one text panel entitled *Vertreibungstransporte*, which describes the phases of expulsion of the region’s German population by the post-war Czech administration. On

⁷ “the aura of collective innocence generated by the feminization, maternization, and infantilization of displaced persons serves within the discourse of German victimization”

this panel there is also a copy of the order from Troppau's city administration telling all people of German nationality to report for registration, , as well as a photograph of a German expellee on a bicycle in the middle of the bombed-out city center. Beside this text panel on the wall, are three smaller panels with texts containing eyewitness accounts of the cruelty faced by the German population from the Russians, as well as their neighbours, at the end of the war; for example, the transport of expellees west, in open cattle cars and without belongings. These first-hand accounts personalize the historical processes described in the first text panel, and highlight the suffering of the expellees. Underneath these text panels a handcart is staged, loaded with rucksacks and pair of shoes, as well as being surrounded by four beaten-up suitcases. While the sources of these objects are not authentic, the handcart and luggage are still imbued with an historical aura using staging techniques: working together with the texts, the aesthetic properties of the objects performatively trigger an interpretive imagining process in the visitor regarding the expellee experience in the here and now: "The object only takes on life or significance when the viewer carries out his realization, and this is dependent partly upon his disposition and experience, and partly upon the content of the object which works upon him" (Pearce 26). Additionally, it is the larger scene of stimulated authenticity of which these icons are a part that enhances the objects' aura and sparks fascination in the visitor. The aura of these objects is further underlined by their iconicity, whereby the visitor still associates them with the historical events of flight and expulsion via their cultural connotations, despite their inauthenticity and lack of caption describing their relevance to the exhibition. As in the last example, the exhibition elements work to reduce the distance between the visitor and the expellee experience through affective engagement.

Another way that museums employ handcars and pieces of luggage in their exhibitions is by using these items' iconicity to create historical distance with the visitor. Rather than using these objects as material witnesses, whose aura of authenticity provokes affective engagement with the visitor and reinforces traditional cultural memory discourses surrounding flight and expulsion, handcars and luggage are displayed in a way that highlights their iconic status. This staging technique signals to the viewer that these objects are not only sign-bearers for flight and expulsion, but also for cultural memory discourse surrounding flight and expulsion. This interrupts the visitor's viewing process of imagining the past in the present, and instead causes them to examine their own cultural associations with the objects. This distancing effect reduces easy identification with historical figures through emotional response, and can also lead to an expansion or critical renegotiation of the objects' historical meanings. This distancing approach can be seen in the *Deutsch-Russisches Museum*, in Berlin-Karlshorst. In the basement of this museum, there is a room entitled "Kriegsfolgen und Erinnerung"(Consequences of War and Remembrance): this room does not just deal with the political, physical, and economic consequences of war, but also the consequences of discrepancies between cultural memory discourse and individual memories of the war. Some of the themes in this room include "Tote", "Rückkehr", "Teilung", "Erinnerung an den Sieg", and "Heimatverlust" (Return, Division, Remembering Victory, and Loss of Home). A short text and a small number of representative objects accompany each of these titles; on this display case entitled "Heimatverlust", there is a description detailing that, due to flight, expulsion, and resettlement, 20 million Germans, Poles, Czechs, and Slovaks, Ukrainians, Belarusians, Hungarians, and other ethnic minorities were exiled from their homes at the end of the war. In the display case rests an old wooden handcart, with the caption "Handwagen von Flüchtlingen, Ort unbekannt, o. Datierung" (Refugee's

handcart, place and date unknown). Though the handcart is an authentic object, the way that it is staged does not attach it to any specific historical date or group; there are also no further photographs or other objects to suggest the identity of the handcart's owner. Many visitors will recognize the handcart as a symbol of flight and expulsion, however, the exhibition provides them with no detailed historical context with which to extrapolate its meaning. In this way, distance is maintained between the visitor and the object as an icon. There is no danger of over-identification with German refugee/expellee suffering through emotional response. This emotional distance also allows the visitor to transfer and cross-reference their perceptions of German flight and expulsion to other groups of forcibly relocated people. On the other hand, if a visitor is not familiar with the handcart's iconicity, they may miss some of the display's message.

Another example of historical distancing through the employment of the iconicity of handcarts and luggage can be seen in the *Deutsches Historisches Museum*, in Berlin. There is a wooden handcart with in a display case on the floor, also containing two suitcases and personal items and documents, including a spoon, a sewing kit, and a refugee's passport. The caption on the display case indicates the iconic status of this staged scene: "Mit einem Handwagen zum Transport ihrer Habe verließen zahlreiche Flüchtlinge und Vertriebene ihre Heimat. Handwagen in Deutschland waren über lange Zeit der Inbegriff von Flucht und Vertreibung".^{8/9} The handcart is identified as an original historical object, belonging to a German refugee family in 1945, and the visitor can still experience its aura of authenticity; the personal memorabilia in the display

⁸ "Numerous refugees and displaced persons left their homes with a handcart to transport their belongings. Handcart have long been regarded as the epitome of flight and expulsion in Germany."

⁹ All longer quotations from museums have been translated into English by the author; all quotations that have been left in English have a corresponding English inscription in the museum.

case work with the handcart and suitcases to give an impression of the daily life of a refugee. However, at the same time, the affective engagement of the visitor with these items is tempered by the caption highlighting the handcart's iconicity. This creates distance by drawing the visitor's attention to the staged and representative nature of the display, as well as inviting critical reflection on the previously culturalized content of the handcart as iconic signifier. In the *Militärhistorisches Museum der Bundeswehr* in Dresden, the iconicity of the handcart is employed as an illustrated picture icon on the door of a cabinet, inside of which contains an interactive activity for the visitor: "Flucht und Vertreibung; was kommt in den Koffer?"¹⁰ The cabinet holds twenty-four cubes with pictures and descriptions of household things, such as food, sewing machine, cutlery, china, clothing, and pets; there is also a suitcase with eight spots, and the visitor must select which items they would take with them if they were in the position of a refugee. The handcart and the suitcase in this exhibit are presented not as authentic historical objects, but as part of a game. This activity uses the iconic status of the handcart and suitcase to provoke empathy with the situation of the German expellee/refugee. At the same time, the decision making process that this activity provides insight into is applied to refugees in general, avoiding over-identification or emotionalization of specifically German flight and expulsion.

II.3. Photography and Historical Authenticity

Photographs, like objects, have been considered objective windows to the past, and as such, regarded as authentic and credible historical sources. However, photographs are not simply snapshots of reality, but always present a mediated version of the past: "Just as museum professionals and academics make complex choices on what to include and exclude from an

¹⁰ "Flight and Expulsion; what gets packed in the suitcase?"

exhibition, photographers make similar decisions on what to include or exclude from their photographic frame” (Bonia and Stylianou-Lambert 155). Therefore, photographs carry their own narratives, which are created by the photographer’s decisions and the circumstances surrounding the taking of the photograph. Photographs appropriate their subject matter, making it consumable beyond their original context (Hoffmann 335). Museum curators select photographs based upon the narratives, semiotic information, light, colour and mood they contain, and how these elements can be further appropriated in the material performance of museum exhibitions to reinforce historical meaning. This process involves curatorial interpretation of what underlying emotions, meanings, and associations a photograph could signal to the viewer, how this fits into the museum’s greater historical narrative and representational strategies, as well as which staging techniques should be used to guide the visitor towards a similar perception; these include resizing of photographs, the making of photo-collages, and the use of photographs in multimedia displays. Thiemeyer argues, that photographs in the museum can be used either as historical sources, or as a didactical medium, whereby they act to substantiate narratives already put forward by exhibition text and objects (“Fortsetzung des Krieges” 299). Thiemeyer bases this distinction upon whether a museum historically contextualizes photographs and follows proper source criticism: without doing so, he maintains that exhibition photographs “[...] erzeugen sinnliche Evidenz, weil sie Vergangenheit szenisch und detailliert vor Augen führen” (300). This sensory experience instils a sense of immediacy in the viewer, which confirms the narrative put forward by the other exhibition elements, and enhances the photograph’s aura of authenticity. Similarly, Bonia and Stylianou argue that exhibition photographs can function didactically in a “more symbolic and emotional manner than an intellectual and critical one” (167). When the museum does not make the mediated nature of the photographic gaze, or what it omits, apparent

to the visitor, the visitor can become overwhelmed by the emotional and realistic qualities of the photograph. Through emotional guidance and lack of distance, the visitor is left with little room for active engagement with or imaginative interpretation of the historical source material being presented. When used in this way, the photographic medium “[...] seduces the visitor into following a pre-described path to understand the past” (Jaeger, “Visualizing War” 166).

In museal representations of German flight and expulsion, such pre-described paths that museums lay out for the visitor by using photographs as a didactical medium, can be further underscored by employing the iconicity of certain photographs: images of mothers and children in flight, refugee columns fleeing in icy conditions through towns and countryside, over frozen lakes, and boarding freight trains and ocean liners, have become inextricably culturally linked with traditional conceptions of refugee/expellee suffering. The previously culturalized content of these photographs as trauma icons can influence the visitor’s sensory and emotional experience of an exhibition towards dominant mnemonic narratives of flight and expulsion. This is exemplified in the *Westpreußisches Landesmuseum* in Warendorf: in the room depicting the German flight and expulsion from West Prussia at the end of World War II (mentioned in the previous section), there is a text panel on the wall. This panel details the dangers and hardships that German refugee/expellees faced, including the sinking of the *Wilhelm Gustloff*, as well as the inhumane character of the expulsions following the war; it also mentions the forced migration of Eastern Poles to Germany’s former Eastern Territories, though in much less detail. Below this text, there is a display case holding a photo album. At the top of this album, the title “Abfahrt von Bromberg: 21.1.1945” is handwritten, with various photographs of refugees with horses and carts in the snow. While it is staged as a personal photo album, the accompanying text simply tells the viewer that these photos were taken in Bromberg, 1945, in order to document the

German flight from the region: there is no further elaboration on the conditions surrounding the taking of the photographs, a more detailed description of their subjects, or any further information on the photographs' sources. In this way, the visitor is presented with a personalized and emotional narrative of German suffering, without being provided with the photographic sources' contexts; without which, the visitor is given little interpretive space beyond the display's didactic message. In the case beside the album, there are a bundle of keys, whose caption tells the visitor that they belonged to a German family named Neumann fleeing Marienburg (Malbork) in January 1945, who "[...] locked all the drawers and doors of their house. Like many refugees, they assumed they would be able to return home again after the war." The presence of these keys implicitly suggests that the photo album is also a personal or family possession, when in fact the visitor is given no such information in the exhibition. Indeed, the lack of information on the photographs' sources further guides the visitor towards this possibility. In this way, the exhibition implies that the photographs intimately represent the experiences of or similar to the keys' owners. Here, the photographs are used in a personalizing and illustrative capacity, although the museum provides no direct empirical linkages between these exhibition elements. These items work in concert to create a simulated experience of familiarity for the visitor, which Hirsch argues, works to "diminish distance, bridge separation, and facilitate identification and affiliation" (116). In this multimedia display, photographic trauma icons of flight and expulsion are used as a didactic medium, whereby they emotionally and illustratively augment narratives of refugee/expellee victimhood put forth by the remaining exhibition elements.

Similarly, photographic trauma icons are used as a didactic medium in the permanent exhibition of the *Oberschlesisches Landesmuseum* in Ratingen: three enlarged photos of German

flight and expulsion mark the end of the war in the chronological exhibition on the second floor. The first image depicts three refugees walking with their belongings, entitled *3 Flüchtlinge* (3 refugees); the second shows a stove in a small room, with two women knitting surrounded by many children, entitled *Flucht* (flight); and the third foregrounds two women doing laundry in a field, with what looks like barracks and additional women behind them, entitled *Vertreibung* (expulsion). These photographs are among the largest in the exhibition, and the only ones that are equal in size depict the beginning of the Second World War with the invasion of Poland in 1939. The exhibition's representation of the war is bookended by these large-scale photographs, which highlights the German flight and expulsion as the war's main consequence. A text panel underneath the photos, *Flucht-Vertreibung-Aussiedlung*, further underscores German refugees/expellees as exceptional victims of ethnic violence: "In den Wirren der Nachkriegszeit litten die Oberschlesier durch Plünderung, Brandschatzung, Mord, Lagerhaft und durch die Deportation von Arbeitskräften in die Sowjetunion."¹¹ In addition to the titles given to the three aforementioned photos, they are all captioned on text panels below with the date 1945, as well as the archival collection where their original copies reside. There are no names of the people, locations, exact dates, or descriptions of what is occurring in each of the photos. Instead of historical sources, these photographs are employed for their illustrative power in depicting the exceptional character of German expellee/refugee suffering. As Thiemeyer argues that such images function as "[...] Abbild, nicht als Deutung der Wirklichkeit, weil sie ihre Botschaft eindeutig formulieren und nicht mehrdeutig sind" ("Fortsetzung des Krieges" 305). The message in these photographs constructed through sensory and emotional experience, leading to a sense of historical authenticity for the viewer. Creating historical authenticity in the museum means

¹¹ "In the turmoil of the postwar period, the Upper Silesians were subjected to looting, arson, murder, internment in camps, and deported as labourers to the Soviet Union."

immersing the visitor in the past, which Pirker and Rüdiger argue, can be performed through two dominant modes of museal representation: “derjenige des authentischen Zeugnisses und derjenige des authentischen Erlebens”¹² (17). In this case, the *Oberschlesisches Landesmuseum* tends towards the second mode of creating authenticity through felt history. A pair of staged objects on the ground beneath the photos, furthers this sense of authenticity simulated from the emotional and realistic qualities of these photos: the boots that are carried by a refugee in the first photograph, and the stove in the second, have been replicated and put on display. Though these objects are replicas, they work with the rest of the display to emit an aura of authenticity; from the interaction between these objects and photographs, the visitor’s interpretive freedom is highly reduced, as the photographic imagery fills the gaps of the objects’ meanings for the visitor.

In the previous two examples, photographic trauma icons of flight and expulsion have been employed as a didactic medium to lead the visitor towards singularized narratives of German refugee/expellee victimhood vis-à-vis constructed experiences of passive viewership. The next example will explore possibilities for museums to employ photographic trauma icons in their exhibitions, while working to offset the didacticism of their medium through proper source criticism and historical contextualization. In the *Deutsches Historisches Museum* in Berlin, photographs of German flight and expulsion are displayed in the section following the end of the Second World War. They are placed in a cluster together with other experiences of German suffering and rebuilding in the direct post-war period, including those of returning POWs, concentration camp survivors, *Trümmerfrauen*, and more. There are six originally sized photos placed in a frame on the wall: each illustrates different aspects of the flight and expulsion,

¹² “that of authentic testimony and that of authentic experience.”

including the trek of refugee convoys, their makeshift accommodations, and transit camps. Underneath this frame, there is a text panel, which first describes the displacement of Germans, even following the Potsdam Conference, to be “anything but *humane*.” The museum creates distance between visitor and the photographs’ subject matter through its sourcing of the photographs: it provides years and locations for each of the photos, but most importantly, the name of the photographer that took them. Four out of six of the photos are listed as being taken by Gerhard Gronefeld, the German propaganda company photographer whose work has also been featured in the controversial German exhibition *Vernichtungskrieg. Verbrechen der Wehrmacht 1941-1944* (War of Annihilation, Crimes of the Wehrmacht 1941-1944), which ran from 1995-1999 (Keilbach, 32). While Gronefeld’s wartime profession is not made explicit to the visitor, through these captions the museum does interrupt the emotional and realistic qualities of the images to those who are aware: with knowledge of the potential propagandistic framing by the photographer, the viewer can question the historical truth and underlying message of the photographs. This also causes the attentive viewer with the appropriate pre-knowledge to question the dominant memory tropes of refugee/expellee victimhood communicated by these iconic photos’ previously culturalized content. This does not fully offset the didactic qualities of the photographs, but does complicate them. In doing so, the visitor is provided with historical context and greater interpretive freedom.

This chapter has explored how the staging of objects and photographs as flight and expulsion trauma iconography in the museum can appropriate these items’ aura of authenticity and previously culturalized content towards a didactic historical representation rooted in affective visitor engagement; or conversely, create cognitive dissonance through proper source criticism, the explicit acknowledgement of an items iconicity, and the productive-cross

referencing of German expellee/refugee experiences with those of other victim groups. In the following chapters, the theoretical framework and staging techniques examined here will be explored within the broader context of individual museums' pedagogical missions, curatorial strategies, and representational structures.

III. Heritage and Nostalgia

III.1. Introduction

This chapter will examine the ways in which museums construct displays of heritage and experiences of nostalgia in juxtaposition with cultural loss, in order to depict German refugee/expellee cultural identity and victimhood. It will first analyze three German *Landesmuseen*: the *Oberschlesisches Landesmuseum* in Ratingen, the *Westpreußisches Landesmuseum* in Warendorf, and the *Schlesisches Landesmuseum* in Görlitz. It then looks at the Federation of Expellees' photograph- and text-based travelling exhibition *Verschwunden – Orte, die es nicht mehr gibt*. The *Landesmuseen* chart the history and culture of the respective former German Eastern territories they are named after, from the middle ages up until the flight and expulsion. They have been both physically and conceptually developed from the West German *Heimattmuseen* or *Heimatstuben*, which were given 'guardianship' (*Patenschaften*) over the cultural heritage of specific regions in Germany's former Eastern Territories in the 1950s/60s (Eckersley 102). *Heimattmuseen* were tasked with preserving the culture of the 'lost German East', and in the act of doing so, they constructed their own vision of it. Eisler argues that the concept of the 'verlorene Heimat im Osten' became a collective point of reference upon which to build a collective refugee/expellee cultural identity (137). She further details refugee/expellee political groups' close involvement in the development of these *Heimattmuseen*, and underscores the active political character of their collections by describing their function "als identitätsstiftende Einrichtung der Flüchtlinge und Vertriebenen"¹³ (139). While these three *Landesmuseen* have attempted to evolve their concepts past those of a typical *Heimattmuseen* to appeal to a broader public, beyond expellee communities and their relatives, they retain many of

¹³ "as the identity-creating institutions for refugees and expellees."

the *Heimatmuseen*'s representational characteristics, tendencies, and exhibition elements. These include the staging of refugees'/expellees' personal objects, along side photographs and artwork showing scenes of 'everyday' life and landscapes, maps, and flags. In this way, they reconstruct a nostalgic lost world of the German east – one that is subject to erasure after the Second World War. Refugee/expellee cultural identity is rooted in idealized constructions of heritage and tradition in juxtaposition with cultural loss, which is delineated with the employment of flight and expulsion trauma iconography. Indeed, the narratives of these *Landesmuseen* depict flight and expulsion as a defining historical cataclysm: instead of continuing to follow the regional history of these territories through their transitions in the post-war period onwards, these museums focus on the resettlement, integration, and political organization of the German refugees/expellees in the GDR and FRG.

The chapter goes on to examine the Federation of Expellees' travelling exhibition *Verschwunden – Orte, die es nicht mehr gibt*. This exhibition was developed by the foundation *Zentrum gegen Vertreibung*, and inaugurated in 2016. It underscores the connection between German expellee/refugee identity and the "verlorene Heimat im Osten" (lost eastern homeland), by first illustrating their cultural and historical ties to the land through photographs of landscapes and villages, as well as 'everyday' life and cultural events. Although this exhibition moves beyond the materiality of the *Heimatmuseen*, many of these reconstructive images do come from archives of *Patenschaftsmuseen*; their usage in constructing the world of the lost German East also demonstrates conceptual continuities with the *Heimatmuseen*. These images are then juxtaposed with the physical destruction that occurred to this cultural landscape at the end of the Second World War, highlighting the before and after: this once again marks the German flight and expulsion as a crucial historical fissure, underlining the destruction of *Heimat* as a physical

cultural reference point. Instead, this cultural loss becomes the foundation for collective refugee/expellee identity, transforming those from the former Eastern Territories into an ethno-cultural diaspora. Süßner describes this process of refugee/expellee identity construction: “German expellees maintained an ethno-regional identity and solidarity by ‘reinventing’ their community as diasporic” (19). In this way, reconstructing an idealized cultural heritage of the lost German east and illustrating its traumatic erasure creates a basis for a collective refugee/expellee identity rooted in victimhood and cultural loss.

III.2. *Landesmuseen* and the “verlorene Heimat im Osten”

The three *Landesmuseen* analyzed in this section possess conceptual continuities with the West German *Heimatmuseen* of the 1950s/60s in how they narratively construct the “verlorene Heimat im Osten” in their exhibition spaces. Demshuk, drawing on Eric Hobsbawm’s concept of invented tradition, argues that *Heimatmuseen* attempted to establish links to a suitable past by developing “supposedly ancient rituals and practices [...] in the context of the *Patenschaft* to perpetuate what expellees wanted to remember about their lost *Heimat* in the East” (227). These conceptions of heritage have been, in part, carried forth in the *Landesmuseen*. All three of these museums chart larger historical processes from the middle ages until World War II, including the reformation, geopolitics, as well as developments in trade, commerce, and industrialization. These larger processes stand in contrast to depictions of regional folk tradition and everyday life in the *Heimat*, facets of which are arranged thematically, in groups such as religion and piety, life in the countryside, and work in the agrarian economy. These depictions of folk tradition are evocative of an early modern understanding of *Heimat* rooted in community life, family harmony, domesticity, and closeness to nature (Applegate 9). Furthermore, they use what Boym

calls ‘restorative nostalgia’, which wants to reconstruct the lost home and frames itself as tradition. She argues: “The past for the restorative nostalgic is a value for the present; the past is not a duration but a perfect snapshot” (49). The lost German East is presented as static and harmonious, up until the rupture that is flight and expulsion. An example of how these museums reconstruct displays of heritage through experiences of restorative nostalgia can be seen in the *Westpreußisches Landesmuseum* in Warendorf. Here there is a display named “Leben auf dem Lande,” with a text panel describing the agricultural development of West Prussia in the 19th century, the feudal character of society, as well as the multicultural harmony of Poles, Germans, and Kashubians in the region. On the wall beside this, there are four lithographic prints of Prussian aristocratic estates, scenically depicted surrounded by lakes and forests; as well as two oil paintings showing an agrarian setting. These images evoke an atmosphere of pastoral idealism. The same corner of the exhibition contains several backlit photographs illustrating further pastoral scenes, this time of fields and farmhouses: the people in these images are shown as part of a community, small and close to nature, denoting a simpler way of life. The social hierarchies of this community, or the realities and hardships of everyday life, are not described. On either side of these photographs are two mannequins, one wearing the white wedding dress of an aristocrat from the mid 19th century, and the other wearing a black party dress of another aristocrat of the same era. The dresses work with the images to further stage an idyllic historical atmosphere. However, the exhibition does not communicate how these elements historically relate to each other beyond this to the visitor. Instead, they are employed to represent an ahistorical snapshot of the ‘verlorene Heimat im Osten’.

Restorative nostalgia is also used to construct heritage displays in the *Oberschlesisches Landesmuseum* in Ratingen. Paintings, maps, photographs, items of handicrafts, tools, and other

items are used to build a specific historical atmosphere. In the section of the exhibition charting everyday life in Upper Silesia in the 19th and early 20th century, there is a display case entitled “Oberschlesische Trachten: Arbeit-Markt-Fest,” holding mannequins wearing a variety of folk costumes. The text panel informs the visitor that these traditional costumes were worn for all occasions, including farm work, market days, weddings, and church celebrations; it also highlights that the region was well known for the embroidery featured on the clothing. The display does not specify which individual costumes were used for what purpose, differentiate between eras and fashions, or provide any further insight into the cultural meanings denoted by the different style of dress. Instead, the wearing of these costumes is presented as a static tradition, once again denoting an idyllic historical atmosphere. A 19th century oil painting to the right of the display visually underscores the eternal truth-value of this tradition: it depicts Silesian peasants attending a village celebration clothed in similar costumes to the ones on display, surrounded by nature. To the left of the mannequins, is a second display case holding a variety of embroidered items, such as collars, belts and handbags, further illustrating traditional folk dress. There are no dates or locations attributed to these items – instead they are presented ahistorically as markers of tradition, alongside the painting and mannequins. Above this display case, an embroidered quilt is hung, with a caption entitled “Der Weg eines Ehrentuchs”: it informs the visitor that the quilt was made in 1945 by a group of seamstresses in thanks and recognition of their manager for 25 years of service. This demonstrates a continuity of folk tradition through the Second World War, which is only broken by the German flight and expulsion. The text panel goes on to describe the fate of the quilt’s recipient: “Anfang 1945

flohen Frieda Kaisig und viele weitere Schönwälder in den Westen. Bei minus 20 Grad nahmen die Menschen enorme Strapazen auf sich.”¹⁴

Indeed, the museal narratives of these *Landesmuseen* depict the German flight and expulsion at the end of the Second World War, rather than the war itself, as the historical cataclysm that irreparably ruptures the “verlorene Heimat im Osten.” While Germany’s responsibility for the war and wartime atrocities is never brought into question, the ways in which these historical events interacted with the social and cultural world of the lost eastern homeland are not examined. This demonstrates what Süßner terms “dual consciousness,” prevalent in 21st century expellee memorial discourse, in which expellee groups refuse “[...] to see the expulsion in connection with their community’s role prior to and during World War II [...]” (17). From this context of dual consciousness, these exhibitions represent the repression of various groups, the Holocaust, and the Nazi war of annihilation in Eastern Europe, as cases of state-sanctioned ethnic cleansing within a universalizing human rights framework. This universalizing framework perceives the ethnic nation state “[...] as the quintessential evil in history,” of which the Third Reich represents an extreme but fitting iteration (Levy and Sznajder 24). In utilizing such a discursive framework, these museal displays fail to link cases of ethnically targeted wartime violence to the war’s greater timeline or socio-historical processes. This has the effect of flattening the experiences of different victim groups and removing historical specificity. In doing so, these *Landesmuseen* set the stage for the loss of Eastern German Homeland via ethnic cleansing sanctioned at the end of the war by the Allied Powers in cooperation with the burgeoning Czech and Polish governments.

¹⁴ “At the beginning of 1945, Freida Kaisig and many other Schönwälder fled to the West. With minus 20 degrees, these and other people like them endured enormous hardships.”

In representing the Second World War in its exhibition, the *Westpreußisches Landesmuseum* employs this dual consciousness regarding the Eastern German community, paired with a narrative of universal human rights concerning wartime violence and atrocity. The room in the museum's permanent exhibition charting West Prussia during the war is introduced with a text panel entitled "Das Ende der Freien Stadt Danzig und der nationalsozialistische Vernichtungskrieg" (The end of the Free City of Danzig and the National Socialist War of Annihilation). This panel describes the Nazi takeover of the Free City of Danzig's parliament, the beginning of Germany's invasion of Poland at Westerplatte, and the NS regime's atrocities against the Jewish and Polish populations – including the burning of synagogues on the *Reichspogromnacht*, as well as the expulsion of 500,000 Polish citizens, and their replacement with ethnic Germans during the *Heim ins Reich* program. The ways in which this violent power structure or these population transfers affected the social and cultural life of the German East is not examined. Instead, the visitor is given a generalized impression of National Socialism from above. The room only contains one photograph depicting societal Nazism, located beside the introductory panel. This image shows a German panzer rolling into a West Prussian city in 1939, being greeted by a street full of people with raised right arms. The involvement and experiences of the population of the German East in National Socialism and the war is otherwise not charted. The remainder of the room is not chronological and does not provide the visitor with any sort of historical timeline concerning the war's events.

Rather, this room presents a highly emotionalized representation of three instances of wartime violence towards three separate victim groups: Jews, Poles/Kashubians, and Germans. The suffering of these groups is universalized as human rights abuses by means of ethnic cleansing, occurring within the war's greater atmosphere of violence and civil unrest. The end of

the war is not marked by the downfall of National Socialism or the liberation of Europe: instead it is depicted solely through the German flight and expulsion as a further case of ethnic violence. In the first corner of the room sits a replica of a three-tiered bunk bed from the Stuthoff concentration camp, upon which a video screen playing a slideshow of images from the camp is affixed, along with a letter from a Jewish inmate to his family. The personal nature of the letter is used to emotionalize the visitor, however the visitor does not receive further information around his internment or fate in the camp, nor the greater context of the Holocaust. Located in the corner to the right of the entrance, the visitor is confronted with a number of life sized birch trees protruding from the floor in imitation of a forest; affixed to these trees are seven portraits of victims of the 1939 Piasnitz massacre, in which the SS murdered 10,000 members of the Polish and Kashubian elites and intelligentsia. These photos serve to reduce the viewer's emotional distance to the display, while again, little further information is provided about the lives and experiences of the individuals that they depict, or the circumstances surrounding their murder. An enlarged photograph of the massacre itself, staged behind the imitation forest, underscores this emotional effect.

In the final corner, there is a pair of large photographs showing the aftermath of the 1939 'Bloody Sunday' killings in Bromberg, where 379 ethnic Germans were murdered by the area's Polish population. The first photograph shows foreign journalists and German soldiers standing over a number of bodies from the massacre; the second image is in full colour from 1940, depicting 110 coffins containing exhumed bodies draped in Nazi flags, standing in the middle of a town square. The captions on both of these images tell the viewer that the emotional scenes that they portray were used in Nazi propaganda to illustrate "Polish atrocities." However, this knowledge does not go far in mitigating the viewer's emotional distance to these photographs or

historically contextualizing their subject matter: the surrounding text also uses vocabulary associated with Jewish victims and the Holocaust to describe this episode of German suffering. For example, it informs the visitor that Germans were sent on “so-called death marches,” and describes the killings as “pogromartigen Gewaltakten.”¹⁵ This emotionally overwhelms visitors, while leading them to identify with German victimhood. Additionally, the relationship between these Jewish, Polish/Kashubian, and German experiences of suffering is not made clear, as this exhibition room does not contextualize these cases of victimhood within the war’s larger historical processes. Rather, the experiences of these three victim groups become subsumed into a universalizing narrative of individual human suffering, which is communicated through strong affective engagement of the visitor. In using this universalizing narrative in tandem with dual consciousness concerning the Eastern German population in its representation of the Second World War, this museum presents the German flight and expulsion as the ultimate historical fissure of the lost eastern homeland; it also allows German refugee/expellee victimhood to be viewed through the lens of the suffering of other victim groups, removed from a historically causal context.

Through these examples, we can see how exhibitions structurally create experiences of reconstructive nostalgia to depict a historical cultural heritage of the “verlorene Heimat im Osten” (lost eastern homeland). The flight and expulsion acts as the collective reference point for the refugee/expellee cultural identity constructed in these museal narratives: it becomes a defining historical cataclysm through which the idealized heritage of the German East is subject to erasure, only living on through the refugees/expellees in their efforts to reinvent their community as a diasporic entity (Süssner 20). In these *Landesmuseen*, visual trauma iconography

¹⁵ “pogrom-like acts of violence”.

of flight and expulsion is employed to communicate the depth of this historical fissure, as well as to highlight refugee/expellee victimhood through further experiences of nostalgia. This is exemplified in the *Schlesisches Landesmuseum* in Görlitz, in which the museum's narrative shifts its historical focus away from the region of Silesia towards the fates of the German refugees/expellees after World War II. The final section of the permanent exhibition, entitled "Untergang und Neubeginn" (Downfall and New Beginning), charts the end of the war by focusing almost exclusively on the flight and expulsion, and ends in the process of settlement and integration of the refugees/expellees. Along the wall of this section is a long display case labeled "Erinnerungsstücke" (Memorabilia), containing a number of personal objects from German refugees, including bundles of keys and suitcases. Here, the identity of the refugees/expellees becomes defined through their collective cultural loss. The introductory caption describes how the owners held on dearly to these objects during the post-war years as fragments of the lost homeland, and as hopes of return faded, the objects were repurposed as memorial items in the museum. The keys are labeled with the addresses of the buildings they unlock, as well as the names of their former owners. The visitor receives no further information about the lives of these owners. Nevertheless, these keys inspire the visitor to imagine locking up one's house for the last time, and empathize with the owners carrying around their keys as heavy reminder of what they lost. In this way, a nostalgic experience is created for the visitor through lack of emotional distance and historical context; they become affectively engaged in feelings of yearning for a lost world. The remainder of the exhibition details the struggles of the refugees/expellees to memorialize their lost culture and rebuild their lost heritage through the formation of cultural and political groups during postwar settlement and integration. In this way, the idea of the refugees/expellees as a cultural diaspora is underlined. A text panel with the

heading Tradition und Identität (Tradition and Identity) reads: “Für die meisten vertriebenen Schlesier verbindet sich die Erinnerung an die Heimat mit Bildern der Kindheit und Jugend, zu gleich mit der Erfahrung von Leid und Verlust.”¹⁶ The museum’s narrative structure certainly highlights this association between memories of home and its loss as a basis for collective identity.

If we look once more at the *Oberschlesisches Landesmuseum*, we can see that the final sections of the permanent exhibition similarly employ trauma iconography to underscore the flight and expulsion as a defining historical cataclysm, which becomes the basis for a collective diasporic refugee/expellee identity. As discussed in the last chapter, in the section marking the end of the museum’s chronological exhibition three large photographs depicting German refugees in flight, as well as expellees in barracks; staged objects that mirror elements of the photos, such as boots and a stove, accompany these images. The rest of this section contains display cases holding further photographs of refugees and destroyed buildings and cities, as well as documents illustrating various parts of the refugees/expellees journey, such as passports, train rosters, and resettlement orders. An overarching narrative, or individual stories does not link or further define the items and photographs in these displays cases: they remain a milieu of generalized trauma iconography. On the one hand, this provokes strong emotions in the visitor towards the refugee/expellee experience. On the other, the lack of structure may cause confusion and cause the visitor to pass over some of the items. The museum’s narrative presents flight and expulsion as the defining event at the end of the war, and does not chart the process of denazification or regime change in Upper Silesia in the direct post-war period, further than the expulsion. This is also the point in the exhibition where the regional history of Upper Silesia

¹⁶ “Most Silesians’ memories of home are a mixture of images from their youth and childhoods, combined with experiences of suffering and loss.”

ends: the next section examines integration, as well as the political and cultural activities of the refugees/expellees in West and East Germany from the postwar years until the present. In doing so, it signals the existence of an Eastern German diaspora community, and highlights their ethno-regional identity rooted in the idealized notion *Heimat* put forward by the rest of the exhibition. This section contains posters advertising expellee groups and cultural events; photographs of rallies in their new towns; and newspaper clippings from the papers of various expellee groups describing the state of their communities. There are also many items in display cases with crests from the former Eastern territories on them, such as plates and glasses, and books discussing the “Ostdeutsche Heimat” (Eastern German Homeland). These items underscore the continuity of heritage from the lost ancestral homeland in the East into the present. Once again, there is a lack of overall structure governing the display of these items. The iconicity of the objects and photographs seen here is left to speak for itself, instead of being contextualized within a personal or historical narrative. This leads the visitor with the pre-knowledge to understand the meaning behind these items towards emotional identification; however, for the visitors for which this is a new topic, this would likely elicit a sense of confusion or lack of interest. In this way, the museum remains geared towards expellees and their families as it was in the past, rather than a broader public.

III.3. Restorative Nostalgia in *Verschwunden – Orte, die es nicht mehr gibt*

The travelling exhibition *Verschwunden – Orte, die es nicht mehr gibt*, from the Federation of Expellees, also bases collective refugee/expellee identity in an idealized conception of the Eastern *Heimat*, in juxtaposition with its cultural loss. In the introduction to the exhibition catalogue, Erika Steinbach, the former president of the Federation of Expellees, highlights the

connection between expellee identity and the ‘verlorene Heimat im Osten’: “Mit Heimat verbinden die meisten Menschen eine vertraute Landschaft, Kindheitserinnerungen, Gerüche, Familie und Freunde [...] Heimat ist Teil unserer Identität”¹⁷ (7). She goes on in this introduction, to invite visitors to enter the world of remembrance of the beloved people, landscapes, and localities in the exhibition. This statement from Steinbach captures the restorative nostalgic tone of the exhibition, in which conceptions of the lost homeland are reconstructed through heavy emotionalization. The introductory panel of the exhibition describes that with the loss of *Heimat* following the flight and expulsion, “verschwand auch die Möglichkeit, ein Heimatgefühl zu verorten.”¹⁸ It goes on to describe the comforting function of remembrance and idealization of the lost homeland as a device to overcome trauma and an attempt to fill the “Leerstellen der Familienidentität”¹⁹; the exhibition goes on to perform this function in the following section, entitled “Verlorenes,” where it presents undated photographs of ‘lost’ landscapes, towns, and cities from a variety of regions, as well as private family and school photographs. These images present a subjective picture of the *Heimat*, and emotionally engage the visitor in longing for a lost world. Indeed, the world these photographs present is transhistorical, therefore free from the trauma of history. The visitor is surrounded on all sides by these images, which are blown up beyond their original size, layered over each other, and set against a background of enlarged handwritten letters: the visitor is made to feel as if they are walking through a family album. A sensory and emotional experience is structurally created in the exhibition using the familiarity of the pictures, which presents both a universalizing and personal image of cultural erasure. As Hirsch argues: “The idiom of family can become an

¹⁷ “Most people associate ‘home’ with a familiar landscape, childhood memories, smells, family and friends [...] home is a part of our identity.”

¹⁸ “also lost the possibility to locate a sense of home.”

¹⁹ “Gaps in family identity.”

accessible lingua franca easing identification and projection across distance and difference” (115). Hirsch also highlights the potential danger of using this form of identification in historical representations, namely that the familial narrative can become too easily detached from the greater historical context (115). This can be seen in the Federation of Expellees’ travelling exhibition: the intimacy of the family scenes combined with the idyllic scenery has the effect of blending all of the different places and experiences pictured into a homogenous ideal of a collective Eastern *Heimat*, as well as creating a sense of immediacy with the viewer. A nostalgic sense of place and a historical atmosphere are created through this universalizing emotional experience, in a way that leaves the visitor with little interpretive freedom.

It is with these nostalgic images in mind, that the visitor approaches the following and main section of the exhibition, “Ursachen des Verschwindens” (Causes of Disappearance) It examines the destruction of the physical *Heimat* at the end of the Second World War, by presenting nine causal clusters exploring reasons for this cultural loss. These include results of the war, such as *Vertreibung und Entvölkerung* (Expulsion and Depopulation) and *Kriegszerstörungen* (Destruction in War); targeted ideological reasons like *Entfernen von Symbolen* (Removal of Symbols) and *Preußenhass und Klassenkampf* (Hate of Prussia and Class Struggle); as well as socio-economic reasons like *Entneigung und Planwirtschaft* (Expropriation and Planned-Economy) and *Selektiver Wiederaufbau* (Selective Rebuilding). Each of these causes is detailed on a colour-coded set of text panels with photographs, depicting the before and after of their effects. More than the *Landesmuseen*, this exhibition instrumentalizes this memorial discourse towards a politicized message – one that seeks to break the causal link between Nazi Germany’s war of annihilation and the German flight and expulsion, and in doing so highlights the universality of refugee/expellee victimhood under the

banner of global human rights. The destruction of the physical *Heimat* is located in Allied postwar geopolitics and Soviet Occupation policies, in which the refugees/expellees become victims of state sanctioned ethnic violence via cultural erasure. Germany's responsibility for the Second World War and Holocaust are not called into question. However, these events are seen as merely setting the conditions for the flight and expulsion, and not the cause. This argument is part of the Federation of Expellee's larger political discourse, and is reflected for example in Erika Steinbach's 2011 book, "Die Macht der Erinnerung" (The Power of Commemoration), written during her time as the organization's President (Luppens, "Mission Accomplished?" 83). Levy and Sznajder suggest that this universalizing memory discourse concerning expellee victimhood feeds into a larger pattern of universalizing the Holocaust, whereby: "Genocide, ethnic cleansing and the Holocaust are becoming blurred into an apolitical and ahistorical event circumscribed by human rights as the positive force, and nationalism, as the negative one" (6). While this universalizing human rights discourse on the surface appears to subsume nationalist memory patterns, it tends towards a blurring of historical specificity. This allows for a flattening of experiences between different victim groups, and for German suffering to be considered without a sense of historical causality. Feindt argues, that such a process of decontextualization occurs by omitting the place of flight and expulsion "[...] within the Second World War and on the background of German war crimes" (567).

The trauma of losing the Eastern *Heimat* is represented in the exhibition as a cataclysmic human rights violation leading to the creation of a diasporic expellee community united through victimhood – one that infers solidarity not just among German expellees, but also with other victims of state sponsored ethnic violence. This narrative can be seen throughout the causal clusters in the exhibition space, for example, in the first set of panels entitled *Vertreibung und*

Entvölkerung (Expulsion and Depopulation). On the first panel, there is an enlarged iconic photograph of a retreating refugee column, shot from behind captioned “Deutsche Flüchtlinge auf dem Weg nach Westen, 1945” (German Refugees Heading West, 1945); over top of this image is a text that first highlights that 12-14 million Germans lost their home in 1945, along with “nur’ 1,53 Millionen zwangsumgesiedelte Polen”²⁰. The two groups of expellees are described as having similar experiences, differing only in number and place of origin. The paralleling of the two groups’ experiences universalizes their status as targets of nationalistic ethnic violence, while the numerical comparison and the iconic photograph prioritize memories of German suffering. The exhibition’s focus solely on the lost German *Heimat* also serves to underscore this. In this way, the exhibition’s narrative of universal suffering is renationalized. The circumstances surrounding the German flight and expulsion are not explored, such as National Socialism and Germany’s war of annihilation in Eastern Europe. Instead, the failure of the newly formed Polish and Czechoslovakian states to repopulate Germany’s former Eastern Territories is the focus of the remainder of the text panel; this is depicted as political ineffectiveness and in some cases neglect. The remainder of the panels in this cluster attempt to scale the enormity of the loss stemming from these ill political decisions. Three rural districts are shown, which have been greatly impacted by postwar depopulation: Goldap and Heiligenbeil in East Prussia, and Tachau in the Sudetenland.

The exhibition uses restorative nostalgia to illustrate German life in these areas prior to 1945. In many ways the exhibition’s use of nostalgia is similar to that seen in the *Landesmuseen* discussed earlier in this chapter. However, its narrative structure does not work to simply rebuild the “verlorene Heimat im Osten” as a cultural point of origin for a diasporic community and its

²⁰ “only’ 1.53 million forcibly relocated Poles.”

descendants, or as a sign of national victimhood. Instead it works to construct a refugee/expellee collective identity rooted in universal human suffering, by emphasizing the violence involved in their cultural loss. In doing so, the exhibition starkly juxtaposes cultural harmony through the lens of its erasure, which heightens the affective response elicited from the visitor and overwhelms them emotionally. The panels in this cluster display a number of postcards and photographs mainly from the interwar period, depicting community life, as well as town- and landscapes from each region. These photographs are situated on a background of hand drawn maps, personalizing the viewer's encounter; they are also accompanied with texts describing short regional histories, which end in their physical destruction through depopulation and neglect. The smiling faces of people in these photographs attending community events, such as balls, weddings, and confirmations, as well as going about their daily lives farming, shopping at the market, or sitting on the beach once again extends a universalizing sense of familiarity to the viewer. The intercultural life in these places prior to the Second World War, for example, interaction between the ethnic German community and the region's Jewish, Polish, and Kashubian populations is not detailed – these populations are hardly mentioned at all. Furthermore, the diversity of these German communities, as well as the fluidity of the term 'ethnic German' is also not touched upon. Instead, Eastern German heritage is presented as collectively uniform. Additionally, any trace of war or National Socialist ideology is absent from these images of the ethnic German community, further reducing the visitor's emotional distance with them. Hirsch argues that displaying familial photographs of a community that has been subjected to violent erasure creates a strong sense of retrospective irony: "The retrospective irony of every photograph, made more poignant if violent death separates its two presents, consists precisely in the simultaneity of this effort and the consciousness of its impossibility"

(115). The exhibition employs this sense of irony to help visitors identify the lost German East as a symbol of expellee victimhood, stemming from ethnic violence, and not a consequence of National Socialism or the German war of annihilation in Eastern Europe.

Another example of the use of retrospective irony towards emotional identification can be seen in the exhibition's next cluster, *Kriegszerstörungen*. Photographs of cities and villages before their destruction at the end of the war are juxtaposed with images of the same locations lying in rubble, or as overgrown ruins today. While the images in this cluster do not illustrate people, as in the last example, this stark juxtaposition denotes the violent death of a culture for the viewer. The introductory panel informs the visitor "Manche Orte, in den Kämpfen zwischen der deutschen Wehrmacht und der Roten Armee in der Endphase des Zweiten Weltkriegs zerstört wurden, sind nach 1945 nicht wieder aufgebaut worden."²¹ The section goes on to describe some of the battles that led to the destruction of these locations. However, these battles are not placed in the greater context of the war, and the destruction they caused is not examined on the level of damage sustained on a European scale. Again, the involvement of the local population in National Socialism, war crimes, or the war effort is not explored. Without this historical context, the dramatic transformation of these cityscapes into rubble is presented as an unprovoked act of violence, and acts to prioritize German victimhood. The 'before' pictures of this display illustrate the former grandeur, history, and beauty of these locales, while the 'after' images show the ruins of a great lost civilization. For instance, one panel is entitled "Küstrin – das 'Pompeji an der Oder'", and contrasts postcards of its former architectural landmarks, with photographs of their ruins today; it also shows two aerial photos of the city's old town – one from before 1945 filled with great buildings, and one from 2016 of an empty field – highlighting

²¹ "Some places that were destroyed in the fighting between the German and Soviet armies during the last phase of the war were never rebuilt after 1945."

the extent of its erasure. Through the combination of retrospective irony communicated in these photographic comparisons, with their lack of historical contextualization, the viewer is led towards strong emotional identification with German refugee/expellee trauma and suffering.

The ways in which the exhibition works to present German expellees as victims of state-led ethnic violence while dissolving the causal link between the flight and expulsion and the Second World War, can further be seen in the cluster *Entfernen von Symbolen* (Removal of Symbols). This section describes the act of transforming the ethnic character of the lost German East through the renaming of places and streets, as well as the destruction or repurposing of public monuments: “Dies lässt sich nachweisen am Prozess der ‘Entdeutschung’ bzw. Polonisierung, Russifizierung und Tschechisierung ehemals deutscher Orts- und Straßennamen und topografischer Begriffe.”²² On the following panel, there is list containing place and street names in the lost *Heimat* that were renamed in Polish, Czech, or Russian during the postwar period. There is also a text describing the renaming process, which also mentions that many of these historical place names had been previously changed under National Socialism to make them more German: “In manchen Landkreisen betraf bis zu 70 Prozent der Ortschaften. Die historischen Ortsnamen sollten verschwinden, wenn sie auf slawische oder litauische Ursprünge hindeuteten”²³. Indeed, this text similarly considers this process of Germanization with the postwar processes of Russification or Polonization, as acts cultural erasure visited upon the land’s historic ethnic character. The historical specificities of this Germanization process as part of Nazi efforts towards violent ethno-nationalism, or the local population’s involvement in and

²² “This can be demonstrated through the process of de-Germanization, or rather, the processes of either Russification, Polonization, or Czechization of former German street, town, and place names.”

²³ “In some regions, up to 70% of place names were changed. The historical place names should’ve been changed if they had Slavic or Lithuanian origins.”

attitudes towards this process are not explored. Instead, the population of the ‘verlorene Heimat im Osten’ is presented as universalized victims of both National Socialist ethno-nationalism and postwar state-sanctioned ethnic violence.

This travelling exhibition from the Federation of Expellees employs restorative nostalgia together with flight and expulsion trauma iconography to construct polarizing scenes of ‘before’ and ‘after’. This is performed in order for the Federation to assert their political agenda, one that is strongly rooted in expellee victimhood. The next chapter examines how museums can move away from these more traditional mnemonic discourses by interrupting or reinterpreting the previously culturalized content of flight and expulsion trauma icons, therefore creating cognitive dissonance in the visitor.

IV. Distancing and Cognitive Dissonance in German and Polish National and Transnational Museums

IV.1. Introduction

This chapter examines possibilities for museums to overcome the national and universalizing frames of commemoration seen in the previous chapter, and move towards transnational/multidirectional memory by renegotiating the cultural meanings rooted in visual trauma icons of German flight and expulsion. A transnational approach to memory seeks to transcend the idea of the nation-state as the “[...] natural container, curator, and telos of collective memory” (De Cesari and Rigney 1). Memory is no longer a zero sum game, with various national frameworks being placed in competition with each other. However, unlike in the universalizing human rights approach discussed above, national memories are not subsumed or flattened into a collective discourse. Instead, national frameworks remain significant in transnationalism, while the ways in which cultural production moves beyond or works to underpin these frameworks is also taken into account (4). Aleida Assmann describes the interaction of these processes as “‘translations’, the cultural work of reconfiguring established national themes, references, representations, images and concepts” (“Transnational Memories” 547). When museums interrupt dominant mnemonic patterns communicated by the previously culturalized content of flight and expulsion trauma iconography, it can be considered as one of these ‘translations’: museums can foster cognitive dissonance in the visitor by productively cross-referencing flight and expulsion trauma iconography with other narratives of historical suffering, as well as considering nationally specific dimensions of memory while employing this iconography in their narrative structures. This results in the creation of a more relational and multilayered understanding of German refugee/expellee suffering. To illustrate this, the ways in

which the narrative strategies of two transnational museums utilize this iconography in their representations of German refugee/expellee experiences will be juxtaposed: *The Deutsch-Russisches Museum* (Berlin-Karlshorst), and *the Museum of the Second World War* (Gdansk). While the German flight and expulsion are not the main focus of either of these museums, their techniques present alternative possibilities for the staging of German expellee victimhood beyond nostalgic or universalizing memorial discourses.

IV.2. The Deutsch-Russisches Museum in Berlin-Karlshorst

The first museum I will examine is the *Deutsch-Russisches Museum* in Berlin Karlshorst, located in the building where the High Command of the German Wehrmacht signed the unconditional surrender of the German forces before representatives of the four Allied powers on May 8, 1945. On the 50th anniversary of the war's end in 1995, the *Deutsch-Russisches Museum* was opened, and its current permanent exhibition was inaugurated in 2013. The first floor of the museum is dedicated to the events surrounding the May 8th surrender, and the second floor and basement document the Second World War thematically, from both German and Soviet perspective, sequenced in historical time: this includes topics such as the German occupation and war of annihilation in the Soviet Union, the Holocaust, the Soviet and German home front, the experiences of German and Soviet POWs, as well as the Soviet invasion of Germany. The basement contains a room mentioned in the second chapter of this thesis, entitled "Kriegsfolgen und Erinnerung" (Consequences of War and Remembrance). This room deals with the war's far-reaching impacts on a transnational level, as well as the consequences held in the discrepancies between individual and cultural memory regarding the war. To better understand the interaction between German and Russian memory in this museum we can use Michael Rothberg's concept

of multidirectional memory “[...] as subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing and borrowing; as productive and not privative” (3). While the exhibition focuses on the two opposing national groups at war, it does not place their experiences separate from, or in competition with each other. Instead, as Jaeger maintains: “The exhibition uses the national in a historical sense [...] to express an abstract simulated experience of the impact of war”; and he argues further, that this is achieved through the merging of German and Soviet perspectives in structural experiences that examine the consequences of total war through the constructed collective perspectives of certain groups (“Between the National and the Transnational” 33). This strategy can be seen in the ways in which the German flight and expulsion is charted in the museum.

The first usage of German flight and expulsion iconography in the museum comes towards the end of the exhibition, and is found in the eighth room entitled “The war in the East and German society”, which illustrates the socio-economic effects of “Total War” against the Soviet Union on the German home front: The perspective of the German populace is used to chart the use of Soviet forced labourers, the bombing of German cities by the Western Allies, the Eastward deportation of German Jewish and Romani peoples, as well as the population’s awareness of and participation in National Socialist ideology and German crimes. German losses and suffering are detailed with a firm sense of historical causality, in which the population’s resolve towards Nazism until the end of the war remains unquestionable. This is exemplified under the heading “Total War”: here, a photograph of German refugees fleeing over ice on foot and in horse-drawn carriages is displayed as the last in a series of three images: the first is a photograph of the Mass Rally at the Berlin Sport Palace on February 18, 1943, held as reaction to demoralization following German defeat at Stalingrad. At this rally Goebbels made a speech

calling for “Total War”, the “frenetic endorsement” of which, the caption on the photograph tell us, has become a defining picture of those times. The second photograph in this sequence is of two dead men, a woman, and a child sprawled around a park bench, entitled “Suicide of a Nazi and his family, Vienna, early 1945”. The photo’s caption informs us that many in Germany and Austria committed suicide in fear of revenge from the advancing Red Army. The extreme fear depicted here once again reminds the viewer of the general population’s knowledge of and participation in German crimes and racial hatred. The aforementioned third photo in this sequence is entitled “Refugees on the Frozen Vistula Lagoon, East Prussia, January/February 1945”. Its caption details that 1.5 million German refugees fled East Prussia in front of the advancing Red Army, of which 200,000 perished from starvation, violence, exposure and illness. The previously culturalized content of this image as an iconic signifier of flight and expulsion is interrupted by its staging in this sequence of photographs: German refugee experiences are neither over-emotionalized, nor universalized with that of other victim groups. Rather, this series of images highlights the fact that the effects of the Germany’s total war on the Soviet Union, in which hatred, violence, and annihilation of the civilian populace were central, also held broad consequences for the German population once the war reached German soil. The juxtaposition of these photos, as well as the exhibition room’s further subject matter, presents a collective German perspective in which their status as both victims and perpetrators becomes intertwined.

The following, ninth room, entitled “Victory over Germany”, details the Soviet invasion and occupation of Germany from the Soviet perspective. This includes descriptions of escalating violence of the Red Army against German civilians, the Battle of Berlin, the Soviet liberation of concentration camps, as well as attempts to re-establish German civilian life following victory. The display under the heading “War on German Territory”, charts German flight and expulsion

from the point of view of invading Red Army soldiers. This has the effect of merging the German and the Soviet experiences of these events, therefore preventing easy identification with either group. Instead, the visitor is presented with a narrative in which nations are considered transnationally, and therefore “[...] inherently and externally relational, embedded and contextualised, always implicated in and partaking of larger processes and changes” (Assmann, “Transnational Memories” 547). A pair of photographs exemplifies the multiplicity of perspectives in this display: the first showing Soviet troops riding on a tank in January 1945, with a conquered East Prussian town burning behind them; the second image is a visual trauma icon, and depicts a German refugee column fleeing Silesia through the Spreewald near Berlin, also in January 1945. The violence and hardships faced by the German refugees is made clear through the presentation of these two photographs depicting the destruction of their homes in East Prussia and their flight with meagre supplies through winter conditions. However, distance between the viewer and Germans as victims is established through the added perspective of Soviet soldiers, highlighted by three quotations displayed above the photographs: the first is taken from a letter to a soldier’s parents “[...] Hello my dear parents! [...] I’m sitting now in the manor house of a rich German; everywhere there are divans, armchairs, silk... Just imagine, the soldier who never saw anything like that now feels as if he can do what he wants with it. That’s not surprising, because he’s had a tough time up to now”; another quotation, taken from a lieutenant’s orders to his troops, declares “In the vast regions of our great homeland there are no Germans any longer [...] Death to the German invaders!” The third quotation, taken from orders given by a Red Army marshal, is a reaction to the drinking, looting, destruction, and violence towards German civilians by his troops in East Prussia. He declares that this behaviour will not be tolerated by the Soviet leadership and will be “[...] subject to the highest punishment, up to

getting shot”. These personal quotations provide context and insight into the motivations behind the violence and destruction by Red Army soldiers during the invasion. They illustrate the justification that many soldiers felt to pillage and commit acts of violence, as the German’s had done the same in their homeland, underlining German perpetration. Such insight into the Soviet point of view is rarely provided from such a personal level in the presentation of German flight and expulsion narratives: in doing so, the exhibition goes beyond national identification. As Jaeger argues: ““The museum simulates total war and here it can supersede any national interests in displaying the repercussions of war, despite being based on the display of two opposing states” (“Between the National and the Transnational” 35).

Furthermore, the structural experience created for the visitor in these displays mirrors those in earlier rooms of the exhibition dealing with German violence on Soviet soil, including the third room charting the atrocities committed against the 5.7 million Soviet POWs in German captivity. The staging techniques used in this room once again merge the victim and perpetrator perspective: photographs of atrocities are displayed on backlit panels in sequences of two to four, showing the progression of violence and highlighting linkages between images; personal quotations from military reports, administrative orders, and personal correspondence, voicing individual perspectives from the perpetrator’s viewpoint; as well as objects, and other documentary materials providing an aura of authenticity. Unlike in the exhibition’s eighth and ninth rooms, the collective Soviet perspective here is constructed largely through the lens of German perpetration. The visitor is taken through the capture, mass starvation, abuse, forced labour, death marches, and internment camps of the Soviet POWs via the structural experiences created by these staging techniques. For example, under the heading “Deliberate Murders”, there is a sequence of four portrait group of Red Army officers upon capture; a prisoner with Asian

features, which the caption tells us, fell under the propaganda stereotype of “invading Asian hordes”; a prisoner wearing a Star of David, marked out as Jewish; and a female POW surrounded by a circle of German soldiers, with a text describing the stereotype of women soldiers among the Germans as particularly fanatical “armed hellcats”. The fear and despair of these subjects, as well as their unwillingness to be photographed is reflected in their faces, illustrating both their suffering and the photographers’ interest in it. Above this sequence of images is a 1941 quotation from Reinhard Heydrich, the chief of the SD and Security Police, from an operational order he gave regarding the treatment of Soviet POWs: “Vor allem gilt es ausfindig zu machen: allen bedeutenden Funktionäre des Staats und der Partei, ...alle ehemaligen Polit-Kommissare in der Roten Armee, ...die führenden Persönlichkeiten des Wirtschaftslebens, die sowjetrussischen Intelligenzler, alle Juden, alle Personen, die als Aufwiegler oder fanatische Kommunisten festgestellt werden”²⁴. This Heydrich quotation highlights the threatening nature of the photos in the sequence below, as the subjects on display are singled out for treatment as dangerous elements among the Soviet POWs. At the same time, the presence of the photographs gives the abstract victims identified by Heydrich a face, personalizing their fates.

The ways in which these exhibition elements are staged intertwines the Soviet and German perspective. In mirroring this technique in the eighth and ninth rooms featuring the war on German territory, the museum helps the visitor to draw connections between displays of German perpetration and German victimhood. In doing so, the German flight and expulsion is placed in a relational context echoing the suffering of victim groups represented in the earlier

²⁴ “Above all, it is necessary to find: all important party and state officials, ...all former political commissars in the Red Army, ...the leading figures of economic life, the Soviet intelligentsia, all Jews, all people that communist agitators and fanatics, they must be found.”

rooms. This further serves to interrupt the previously culturalized content of the aforementioned flight and expulsion trauma iconography on display, and create emotional distance with the visitor. The structural experiences created through these staging techniques can also be found in the fourth room of the exhibition charting the suffering of Soviet civilians under German occupation, including forced labour, mass murder, plundering, and rape, as well as the persecution of specific groups, such as the Sinti and Roma peoples, Jews, and partisans. This is exemplified in a display entitled “Crimes committed during the retreat”, detailing Hitler’s scorched earth policy during the German Army’s westward retreat. A sequence of three photographs underneath illustrates this: the first two captured by Soviet military correspondents, depicting a mother and her three children in winter conditions following their 1944 liberation from the Ozarichi concentration camp for civilians in Belarus, with a column of further refugees in the background; as well as a small child standing over the corpse of its mother in the same camp. The third photo, captured from the German gaze, shows a column of forced evacuees from the Ukraine in 1943, laden with luggage and handcart as a city burns in the background. The alternating photographic perspective in this sequence underscores the impression of Soviet civilians completely caught up in the fighting between two warring armies using the tactics of total war. The staging of these images, as well as their subject matter holds parallels with the depictions of German refugees/expellees found in the museum’s later displays: there are visual elements here that strongly resemble German flight and expulsion trauma iconography. In this way, the experiences of the two victim groups are productively cross-referenced: they are linked by their status as civilian refugees, while at the same time being viewed with a sense of historical causality. This avoids both the prioritization and universalization of German refugee/expellee victimhood.

While the German-Russian Museum succeeds in representing German refugee/expellee victimhood through a transnational lens, flight and expulsion only plays a minor role in its overall narrative. As the museum moves through the effects wrought by total war, flight and expulsion becomes one among many atrocities depicted. An attentive visitor, especially one with an interest in flight and expulsion, could draw the aforementioned connections between German refugee/expellee suffering and the experience of other victim groups that the museum creates through its staging techniques. However, as German flight and expulsion is not the focus of the exhibition, there is also a chance that the visitor could miss the displays dealing with these events entirely. This also holds true for the museum's final room, located in the basement. This room is entitled "Consequences of War and War Memories", and was previously discussed in the second chapter in this thesis. Unlike the *Landesmuseen* discussed in the previous chapter, this museal narrative does not use its representation of postwar Europe as a platform for the assertion of identity politics. Instead, it attempts to chart the long-lasting physical, political and socio-economic ramifications of total war, as well as the consequent tensions between cultural memory discourse and individual wartime memories. Furthermore, this is performed once again by going beyond the nation-state, as the universal effects of war are highlighted through categories such as "Disabled Veterans", "Graves", and "Punishment". These categories do not flatten national specificity into a universalizing narrative, but rather draw linkages that go beyond it. This can be seen in the category "Exile": a wooden handcart rests in a glass display case, with the caption informing the visitor that 20 million people lost their homes in the redrawing of Europe's borders, due to flight, expulsion, and resettlement. While this handcart carries culturalized connotations as an iconic signifier for German flight and expulsion when viewed by a specific audience, they are not made explicit in the display. For those visitors who do recognize the

handcart as a trauma icon, its staging eliminates the possibility for emotionalized over-identification with German suffering, and allows them to cross-reference it with that of other victim groups. For those that do not recognize the handcart's iconic significance, the display does not further their understandings of memorial tensions surrounding the flight and expulsion.

IV.3. The Museum of the Second World War in Gdansk

The first idea for the Museum of the Second World War in Gdansk was conceived in 2007, by the Polish president Donald Tusk in response to the Federation of Expellees' proposal for a *Center against Expulsions* in Berlin. The proposed center had ignited fears in Poland that it would prioritize German suffering, present a revanchist version of history, and even be used to contest the border along Oder-Neisse line (Jarzabek 34, Kopp and Niżyńska 7). As a counterpoint, the Gdansk museum's aim was to provide a comprehensive account of World War II from the civilian perspective, centering on everyday wartime experiences; it was also to take a pro-European and transnational lens while providing focus on Polish and Eastern European memory (Troebst 397). In doing so, German flight and expulsion was to be firmly located within the context of German perpetration. The museum was also to challenge the hegemony of Western European memory regarding the Second World War within Europe and more globally, in which "[...] this war as ultimately a 'good war' where the Allied Coalition was supposedly acting on the common ground of anti-Nazism" (Mälksoo 654). Instead, the concept of the Gdansk museum emphasized Eastern European experiences and Soviet occupation policies alongside those of Nazi Germany, as the former director Pawel Machcewicz underlines in the museum's 2017 catalogue: "Our museum's [...] goal is to insert the experiences of Poland and east-Central Europe into Europe's and the world's historical memory" (8). The permanent

exhibition was inaugurated in March 2017, surrounded by highly politicized memory debates and court battles in Poland: the federal governing Law and Justice Party pushed for a museal narrative that moved away from transnationalism and centered more heavily on Polish national victimhood and martyrdom. In April 2017, in spite of protests from the city of Gdansk, as well as many Polish and international historians, the Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage succeeded in their legal proceedings to remove the museum's director, Machcewicz, and assume control of the museum. These debates illustrate the tensions in Polish post-Soviet memory culture surrounding the Second World War, between nationalistic-heroic and pro-European transnational discourses.

Indeed, nationalistic-heroic strands of memory discourse regarding flight and expulsion can be seen across Poland's museal landscape, for example in the *Emigration Museum Gdynia*, whose permanent exhibition opened in 2014. This museum seeks to understand and memorialize the mass emigration of Poles throughout history, as a key phenomenon in Polish history and an integral part of national identity. In this museal narrative, the roots of the nation transcend borders through the diaspora; one, which brings 'Polishness' to the wider world and on the same coin, reflects international experience back into the Polish national community. Located in a marine station that saw the departure of thousands of Poles, the museum uses the significance of place to underscore the importance of the emigration experience. Individual stories of emigration supplement the museum's main narrative, told through quotations, personal objects, and photographs, which build a sense of familiarity for the visitor. The Gdynia museum represents the Second World War through the lens of Polish flight and expulsion, including the transportation and murder of Polish officers in the Katyn Forest, the exile of the Polish state, as well as deportations of Poles to Siberia and Germany to be used as forced labour. Polish

victimhood stands at the center of this representation, in between German and Soviet perpetration. The museum continues to use this narrative framework to depict postwar population movements: it charts the border shifts decided by the Allies at the 1945 Yalta Conference as a further instance of Polish expulsion and victimhood. The museum's narrative structure does not leave room for the consideration of a larger historical context beyond the Polish experience, and within this the experiences of other groups. For example, the expulsions of Germans and Ukrainians as a result of these postwar border shifts are not mentioned. In this way, the museum nationalizes memory and leaves little room for competing notions of victimhood.

Since the removal of Machcewicz as the director, the *Museum of the Second World War* has seen some mostly minor changes to its original exhibition and maintains its transnational and civilian-centric perspective. As of April 2018, the rooms charting German flight and expulsion remain unchanged. The museum's main narrative underlines the effects that the totalitarian regimes of the 1920's and 30's, particularly Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, had on shaping the criminal character of the war (Machcewicz, "Das Museum des Zweiten Weltkriegs" 168). Throughout the museum, the contexts for civilian suffering and wartime atrocity are causally attributed to either the German or Soviet occupation policies, as the museum takes the visitor through sections such as "Occupation and Collaboration", "Terror", "Ethnic Purges", and "Resistance". On the one hand, this narrative structure can be seen as having similarities with that of the *Emigration Museum* in Gdynia; however, on the other, it allows for the exploration of parallel experiences between many different groups, while realizing the specificities of national identity and circumstance. Machcewicz highlights this transnational lens: "Our museum shows the terror and genocide that targeted various categories of victims alongside each other, but of

course understands the differences between their scale and character” (“Catalogue”, 9). The museum stages German flight and expulsion within this framework, alongside the suffering of other victim groups, productively cross-referencing their experiences. This allows the visitor to draw connections between the experiences of these groups, and avoids exceptionalizing or universalizing them.

This can be seen in the section of the museum “The War is Over”. In its second room, entitled “Fall of the ‘Thousand-Year Reich’: German Crimes and Population Flights”, German flight and expulsion at the end of the war are represented together with death marches from concentration camps, and rapes committed by the advancing Red Army. In the left hand corner of the room, there are two visual trauma icons on display: first, the bell of the infamous luxury ocean liner, the Wilhelm Gustloff, sunk on January 30, 1945 by a Soviet torpedo while evacuating refugees and soldiers over the Baltic Sea – the museum’s caption places the death toll at around 7,000. The sinking of the Gustloff has become an emotional symbol for German wartime victimhood, brought into prominence in German public memory discourse by Günter Grass’s 2002 novella, *Im Krebsgang* (Kraft & Wallach 25). Behind the ship’s bell, there is a blown-up photograph on the wall of a refugee mother and child bundled up in winter clothing. Its caption informs us that they are boarding the General von Steuben, a hospital ship that was also torpedoed on the Baltic on February 10th of the same year, resulting in around 3,000 deaths. In isolation, this display does not renegotiate the previously culturalized content of these trauma icons. The mother and child motif in the photograph follows a trend in flight and expulsion trauma iconography towards underscoring collective German refugee innocence through the feminization and maternalization of refugee identity. As Luppés argues: “the female experience of forced migration – in particular, women’s perilous flights westward in the face of the invading

Soviets – has become one of the signature experiences of the expulsion, and depictions of these flights have become a central motif in representing it” (“Aesthetics” 89). Indeed, this representative trope regarding German refugees/expellees can be seen in the German museums discussed in the previous chapters. The fact that this is a Polish museum, tailored for a largely Polish audience, means that the visitor will likely interpret the cultural connotations carried by these icons in a different manner or not pick up on them at all. For example, it is unlikely that in the Polish context, the female figure would be perceived as a symbol of German national collective innocence. Nevertheless, this display in the museum uses the previously culturalized content of these icons to further the depiction of German victimhood as female/maternal, and in doing so presents an image of: “Defenseless women and children [...] presumed a priori to be innocent” (95). The majority of the museal narrative up to this point has featured both German and Soviet perpetration as dominantly male and there are no male German victims represented in this room; German men remain strictly in the role of perpetrator. In feminizing German suffering, these exhibition elements work to ease the Polish audience’s identification with German victimhood, albeit in a limited capacity.

However, the cultural meanings rooted in these trauma icons are interrupted through their staging in concert with the room’s next display, which uses the same theme of icy death on the Baltic to detail the plight of female concentration camp inmates on a death march. This display simultaneously highlights German perpetration and draws parallels with the German victims in the previous display. On the wall is a large abstract image resembling cracked ice, with a text panel beside it informing us that on January 31st, one day after the sinking of the Wilhelm Gustloff, 5,000 inmates of the Stutthof concentration camp were murdered on the Baltic coast near Palmnicken, during a death march. Under this, a computer animation plays, accompanied by

moving text, describing this event from the perspective of a Polish woman with her sister who are shot at by SS guards and driven into the frozen sea; women are falling into the water around them, and they are surrounded by corpses. The juxtaposition of these events illustrates the suffering and death that occurred in the war's final phase, including that of Germans. The similarities in the fates of the two victim groups are highlighted through the overarching theme, icy death on the Baltic Sea. In doing so, the visitor is led to think about German suffering in a relational context; specifically, what its connection to the suffering of other victim groups denotes. Through its narrative framework basing the causality of atrocity in totalitarian occupation policies, the museum suggests a possible divide between German and other types (Polish/Jewish) of victimhood. However, it is ultimately left down to the visitor, whether to make this distinction or to view the German suffering presented here from a similar human perspective as other groups. This narrative ambiguity allows the museum to avoid universalizing the experiences of these groups, or exceptionalizing Polish suffering; though depending on visitor understanding, these interpretative possibilities are also not completely denied by this framework.

Another display in this room, which represents the rapes of German women by the advancing Red Army, depicts German victimhood in a much less ambiguous light: a moveable metal toy made by a Soviet soldier in imitation of a man raping a woman is mounted on the wall in a display case; on the wall beside this is an identity document of a woman in Gdansk from 1945, confirming her Polish origins to protect her from Soviet rape; underneath this there is a multimedia station. On this media station a video is playing the same type computer animation as the death-march display, interspersed with photographs of a bombed out Gdansk, and a video testimony of an anonymous German woman, charting the Soviet mass rape and plundering of the

city when the Red Army invaded. The woman describes the mass rape of her friends and relatives, as well as the extreme measures she took to avoid the same fate, such as hiding up a chimney for hours at a time. This video and additional exhibition elements tell of the scale, but also of the utterly personal nature of this sexual violence in a graphic and emotional manner. Nothing in the room or the display itself suggests any grey areas concerning the full victim status of these women to the visitor; nor are their experiences cross-referenced with those of any other victim group. This illustration of unequivocal German suffering fits into the museum's larger narrative structure, as it is causally tied to Soviet perpetration. On the one hand, the video's juxtaposition of Gdansk in rubble with imagery of sexual violence falls into the trap of imbuing "[...] the victims' stories with an overt national meaning [...]" through linking the destroyed buildings with women's mutilated bodies, thereby alluding that Germany was raped and humiliated in defeat (Sokolowska-Paryz 229). On the other hand, the individual, personal nature of the video's testimony segments allows the visitor to identify with German rape victims on a human level: one that supersedes their national identity.

Further flight and expulsion trauma iconography can be found in the section "After the War". The room entitled, "Great Transformation: Migration and Borders – The Great Powers Assign New Borders", places the German flight and expulsion within the context of population movements caused by border shifts mandated by the Allies. The floor is covered in a map, with arrows charting the migration of various population groups. To the left there are three doorways, staged to look like front doors of houses. These doorways lead to huts detailing the experiences of three migrant groups: those expelled from Eastern Poland by the Soviet Union and resettled in the former German east; those expelled from Germany's Eastern Territories by the local population, as well as the Soviet Union; and those expelled from the Baltic States and the

Ukraine by the Soviets in an attempt to crush resistance to their annexation. These huts allow the visitor to engage with the specificities of each group's experiences, while also placing them into a transnational framework of post-war migratory patterns, using eyewitness video testimonies, photographs, text panels, and objects, charting the experiences of each specific group. As pieces of trauma iconography in the German hut, there is a yellow armband with a patch with letter "N" that expellees were forced to wear. The accompanying caption highlights these items' similarity to the armbands the Nazis had made others to wear: "They were intended to make them stand out in a crowd and to stigmatize them by recalling the armbands the Germans had forced Jews, concentration camp inmates, and forced labourers to wear during the war". Here, the museum draws parallels between German expellee experiences of state identification and social exclusion with those of other groups victimized under German occupation. However, in doing so it avoids universalizing these experiences: in staging this trauma icon relationally, German suffering is placed firmly in a causal context rooted in German perpetration following the narrative framework of the museum. This leads the visitor to consider whether German victimhood is different than that of others based upon this context of violence, and once again leaves this question open to individual visitor interpretation. A video testimony plays in this hut as well, featuring the same woman from Gdansk found in the display station dealing with Red Army mass rapes of German women: she describes her experience of hardship during expulsion and forced resettlement. Many of the elements of this woman's story are reflected in the videos from the other huts, such as forced removal, a difficult journey, and loss of home. This personal, emotional account eases the audience's identification with German expellee suffering by providing a human perspective of this violence, calling further into question the line between victim and perpetrator and deepening the sense of narrative ambiguity.

The format of this room with the huts is also mirrored in a room located in the “Terror” section of the museum, entitled “Resettlements, Deportations, Expulsions: Hitler’s and Stalin’s Social Engineering”. This draws further parallels between German postwar expellees and other groups’ experiences of expulsion and deportation orchestrated under German and Soviet wartime occupation. There is once again a black and white map on the floor, with four doorways leading to four different memory huts: the first details German deportations of Poles and Polish Jews in their quest for *Lebensraum* and ethnic cleansing; the second charts German colonialism under the *Heim ins Reich* program, in which ethnic Germans were resettled on conquered lands to Germanize the population; the third details the brutal German colonization of Zamość Province, including the expulsion of 100,000 Poles, mass murder, and the placement of 30,000 “ethnically pure” Polish children with German families; the fourth hut looks at the implementation of Germany’s General Plan East in 1942, including the exile of 30 million people to Siberia as enemy aliens. This room once again underscores the museum’s narrative causal structure rooted in German and Soviet perpetration. By mirroring the room of huts found later in the exhibition, it highlights this context of violence regarding the German flight and expulsion, once again begging the question of whether there are different types of victimhood from the visitor. At the same time, the museum takes a transnational lens by cross-referencing the experiences of other victim groups with German expellee suffering, allowing the visitor to look at victimhood from a human perspective beyond national identity.

V. Conclusion

This thesis addresses the lack of scholarship regarding museal representations of German flight and expulsion and in doing so demonstrates that these representations are key elements in both the creation and transmission of cultural memory. To do so, it examines memory patterns in the 21st century German and Polish museal landscape using flight and expulsion visual trauma iconography as a point of comparison between a number of dissimilar museums. While iconic photographs and objects are identifiable across this museal landscape, the ways in which museums employ them as exhibition elements align with their individual pedagogical, curatorial, and political goals and strategies. These museums use the process of staging for the emplotment of historical narratives of flight and expulsion in their material exhibition structures, using iconic objects and photographs to help simulate historical scenes. They employ these trauma icons in either support or criticism of certain historical narratives.

V.1. Expellee Identity – Heritage through Victimhood

Through the process of staging visual trauma iconography, the *Landesmuseen* under analysis in Chapters II and III espouse a cultural memory discourse that ties in closely with strands of that from the postwar FRG. These *Landesmuseen* express the will to reach a broader audience than the German expellee community and their descendants through their mission statements and the diversification of their governance beyond expellee organizations. However, this is not well reflected in their representational structures, which hold conceptual continuities with the earlier West German *Heimtmuseen/Heimatstuben*. They continue working towards the construction and dissemination of an ethno-regional diasporic cultural identity for the expellee community – one rooted in nostalgia, collective victimhood, and loss of *Heimat*. The lost world of the German

East is reconstructed through restorative nostalgia, whereby these museums use objects' aura of authenticity to simulate a historical atmosphere in order to present an ahistorical snapshot of heritage and tradition. Visual trauma iconography is then employed to demarcate flight and expulsion, portrayed as the ultimate historical cataclysm. The staging of these trauma icons in these exhibitions emotionally leads the visitor towards identification with German victimhood, without giving them space to consider questions of guilt and causality. This is the turning point, in which the collective Eastern German ethno-regional identity becomes a cultural diasporic one. The narratives of these *Landesmuseen* then shift their focus onto the postwar integration of the expellees in the FRG, as well as transfer their political and cultural activities towards the preservation of their cultural heritage thereafter. This narrative directly locates expellee identity once again under the auspices of the expellee organizations, echoing traditional West German memory discourse and expellee community building. In order for these museums to attract new kinds of visitors and inspire further bilateral cooperation, they could reconsider their approach to ethnic German identity in the former Eastern Territories: namely, by highlighting the diversity and fluidity of the category 'ethnic German' beginning in the Middle Ages. They could also strive to more strongly incorporate the experiences of other ethnicities living in these regions, such as Poles, Jewish people, and Kashubians. Additionally, they could consider shifting their focus charting the postwar period onwards away from the expellee experience in Germany, and instead turn it toward the history of the regions themselves up until today.

As mentioned, alongside heritage and identity building, these *Landesmuseen* also reflect a more traditional flight and expulsion memory discourse in their representations of German refugee/expellee victimhood. As we have seen, they deal with National Socialism and the Second World War in a limited way, which disconnects these events from the constructed social

and cultural world of the “verlorene Heimat im Osten”: this distorts the causal link between the suffering of the expellee community and their involvement in the greater context of the war. Lacking this greater causal framework, German refugees/expellees are instead presented as victims of state-sanctioned ethnic violence using a universalizing human rights discourse. This mirrors the mnemonic shift away from the victimhood discourse in the postwar FRG, which was rooted in exceptionalizing German suffering. However, the emphasis on individual suffering under the auspices of human rights can be problematic, as it enables German narratives of suffering to subsume those of other victim groups, and flattens their experiences; it also fails to consider the expellee community’s guilt and responsibility regarding the events of the war and has the potential to blur historical causality. The two travelling exhibitions examined, *Troppau im Jahre Null* and *Verschwunden – Orte, die es nicht mehr gibt*, take a similar universalizing approach to expellee victimhood. While it echoes some of the memory discourse seen in the *Landesmuseen*, the Federation of Expellee’s exhibition in particular employs trauma iconography to express a much more overt and direct political statement: it highlights expellee suffering as the foundation of expellee identity and rectify their perceived “second expulsion” out of German cultural memory. In photographs, the exhibition dramatically contrasts cultural harmony in the idyllic *Heimat* with its violent loss. The *Center Against Expulsions* was never realized, however, *Verschwunden* continues in a similar memorial vein – as a travelling, and therefore more temporary exhibition, there is more room for it to express a controversial and politicized narrative.

V.2. Cognitive Dissonance and Transnationalism

The national and transnational museums examined in Chapters II and IV only nominally incorporate the topic of German flight and expulsion into their exhibition structures, with all of them having a much greater scope beyond the expellee/refugee experience. Despite their limited exploration of flight and expulsion, these museums manage to interrupt or reinterpret the previously culturalized content of flight and expulsion trauma iconography in important ways; in doing so they succeed in creating cognitive dissonance between the visitor and more traditional mnemonic patterns regarding expellee identity and victimhood. Going beyond traditional flight and expulsion memory discourse creates new possibilities for the exploration of the expellee experience; it also holds the potential to reach greater audiences that have been alienated by older mnemonic patterns, or that do not have the cultural background or pre-knowledge to pick up on them. The ways in which these museums have chosen to perform this is quite variable. However, what the majority of them hold in common is a reconceptualization of the concept 'nation', and its relation to memory and identity in their overall museal structures. While they still consider the nation-state an important cultural mnemonic producer, they acknowledge that it is not the sole container of collective memory. Such a transnational approach allows for a diversification of historical perspectives, as well as a distancing from the emotions attached to them. Some of the main methods that we have seen, which are employed by the national and transnational museums to perform this in their representations of flight and expulsion, are the complication or explicit identification of an item's iconicity, locating flight and expulsion within a greater historical context, as well as the productive cross-referencing of expellee experiences with those of different victim groups towards a multidirectional understanding of victimhood.

The *Deutsches Historisches Museum*, the *Deutsch-Russisches Museum*, and the *Militärhistorisches Museum der Bundeswehr* all use the strategy of explicitly identifying or interrupting the iconicity of pieces of flight and expulsion trauma iconography for the visitor. This includes drawing the visitor's attention to the iconic meaning of certain objects in cultural memory discourse, as well as interrupting the emotional didacticism of iconic photographs through proper source criticism and historical contextualization – as strategies used by the former two museums. In doing so, they signal to the visitor that these icons are symbol-bearers for the cultural memory discourse surrounding flight and expulsion, in addition to the historical events themselves. This gives space to the visitor who recognizes the iconicity of these objects to consider the memory discourse they are communicating – instead of leading them into an emotional identification with German victimhood through the type of affective engagement that we can see, for example in the *Landesmuseen*. The staging techniques found in the *Deutsches Historisches* and *Deutsch-Russisches Museen* using this strategy are useful when it comes to German audiences, however, their effects are limited when it comes to visitors that do not comprehend these objects' and photographs' previously culturalized content. In contrast, the *Militärhistorisches Museum der Bundeswehr* highlights iconicity as part of a game that enables the visitor to empathize with the experiences of German refugees. This lesson is more broadly applicable to the experiences of refugees in general, allowing the visitor to draw connections between different groups without employing a universalizing human rights narrative.

The structures of the *Deutsch-Russisches Museum* and the *Museum of the Second World War* also allow the visitor to draw connections and cross-reference the experiences of different victim groups while avoiding the prioritization or universalization of German suffering. The *Deutsch-Russisches Museum* merges constructed Russian and German national, as well as

victim-perpetrator perspectives to present a structural experience of total war for the visitor. This narrative strategy does not simply place the perspectives of both groups in competition with each other or blend them together, but instead works to show the effects of war in a multi-perspectival manner. The staging techniques employed to illustrate flight and expulsion in this way are mirrored throughout the permanent exhibition, guiding the visitor to make connections and find similarities between the victimhood and perpetration of different groups without being overly didactic. The *Museum of the Second World War* focuses on the civilian experiences of war, while causally attributing them to German or Soviet occupation policies. This narrative framework examines the parallel experiences of many different groups, while acknowledging the specificities of identity and circumstance between them. On the one hand, this transnational framework eases visitor identification with German victimhood from a human perspective. On the other, the museum's causal structure at times suggests a divide between German (and Soviet) victimhood and that of other groups. Ultimately, however, the museum leaves this up to the visitor to decide.

V.3. Stiftung Flucht, Vertreibung, Versöhnung

The new documentation centre of the *Stiftung Flucht, Vertreibung, Versöhnung* (Foundation Flight – Expulsion – Reconciliation) is set to open in 2020, and it remains to be seen whether it will fall into traditional mnemonic patterns or succeed in its reconceptualization of the Federation of Expellees' *Center Against Expulsions*. The new foundation will open in Berlin, despite all of the previous controversy surrounding this location based on fears of the prioritization of German victimhood. The mission statement on the Foundation's website outlines its five main pillars: first, that a permanent exhibition be created commemorating flight

and expulsion in the 20th century, with emphasis on the Central and Eastern European historical context and the German dimension within it; second, to develop specialized exhibitions on specific aspects of the museum's main topic; third, the dissemination of research and academic findings; fourth, that relevant records and materials be documented and evaluated in a scholarly fashion; and the last pillar is that it will operate in cooperation with German and international museums and research institutions. The Foundation's declared commitment to bilateral scholarly cooperation and academic rigour, as well as exploring the historical context and European dimensions of German flight and expulsion represents a rhetorical shift away from the failed *Center Against Expulsions*. Similarly to the Center, the Foundation also expresses one of its purposes as acting as a warning against further cases of expulsion today under the banner of human rights. However, the Foundation purports to approach this task through a framework of historical causality and reconciliation; though the details about what this entails remain to be seen.

In order to avoid similar pitfalls of the Center – the over-emotionalization and prioritization of German victimhood under the auspices of universal human rights discourse, as well as the lack of historical causality – the Foundation could benefit from adapting some of the transnational/multidirectional museal approaches analyzed in this thesis, and rejecting some of the more traditional ones. For instance, it should rethink representing the German expellees as having a collective heritage rooted in victimhood. This could be avoided by going against the memorial museum format: namely, one that “[...] is dedicated to a historic event commemorating mass suffering of some kind” (Williams 8). By focusing its museal narrative on the memorialization of suffering, the *Center Against Expulsions* was not able to adequately incorporate German guilt and responsibility into its representational structure, nor was it able to

step outside of entrenched mnemonic discourses of German flight and expulsion – this quickly stirred up highly emotional national and transnational memory debates. In order to circumvent this, the Foundation could take a more documentary historical approach to its theme of 20th century expulsions and their root causes. To do so, it could employ the technique of explicitly identifying trauma iconography, as discussed in the last section, and other similar methods aimed at creating emotional distance with the visitor. Furthermore, to avoid competing concepts of victimhood and the renationalization of flight and expulsion memory, the Foundation could utilize some of the transnational approaches highlighted in this thesis: By rethinking the definition of nation and productively cross-referencing the experiences of different groups, this museum would be better poised to explore the relationship between victimhood and perpetration, as well as examine broad themes within the topic of expulsion. In order to perform this, the Foundation could partially take on an ideas museum mission: this would allow it to send a strong pedagogical message against future expulsions, while overcoming the traditional memory dynamics expounded in the memorial museum framework. By taking queues from representations of flight and expulsion in Germany and Poland's 21st century museal landscape, the Foundation can conceptually shift away from the *Center Against Expulsions*.

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