In *Childhood and Youth in Danzig, 1920-1945*, Wolfgang Gippert attempts an ambitious project of linking three levels of analysis: international and regional politics, the urban environment and social milieus, and the development of identity of individual children and youths.

The first half of the book provides a macro-level overview of the political history of Danzig in the wake of the Paris Peace Treaty through the end of the Second World War, connecting regional developments to the international framework. Gippert argues that the majority of Danzigers represented the settlement terms and that, regardless of orientation, almost all political parties advocated a policy of "Home to the Reich." Danzigers felt both culturally isolated and economically disadvantaged by a settlement that, in their view, flooded them with cheap Polish imports and left them without a dynamic hinterland for exports. Poland's increasing investment in the Gdynia harbor and stationing of troops at the garrison on the Westerplatte peninsula exacerbated tensions. Despite the weakness of statistical evidence, many politicians invoked the specter of "polonization." Gippert suggests that these conditions made Danzig susceptible to the Nazi Party, especially to the notion of a *Volksgemeinschaft*. Most interestingly, the rise of the Nazi Party in Danzig mirrored German politics but at a slight delay: in May 1933 the party received a narrow majority of 50.1 percent, and by 1937 the Danzig parliament had been "coordinated." The first half concludes with a description of the "Germanization" of Danzig after Poland's defeat, with the mass shootings of the Polish intelligentsia and deportation and extermination of the Jewish population.

The second half of the book shifts frame to the micro level of city districts and then to the biographies of individual children and youths. Gippert aims to bridge the gap from the international context to urban space and then to the development of youth identities by using the concept of "social milieu." He focuses on two districts as representative of particular milieus, the social-democratic district Schidlitz, and the conservative, petty-bourgeois district of Neufahrwasser. As evi-
dence that these districts also represent social milieus, he cites voting patterns and demographic statistics. From these districts, he then selects biographies of children and youth to analyze: for Schidlitz, Lisa Barendt (born 1916), and for Neufahrwasser, Hedwig Friedrich (1922), Gerhard-Wolfgang Ellerhold (1926), Bodo Vorbusch (1928), and Erhard Bekusch (1931). The section on the three boys from Neufahrwasser is most successful at connecting the three levels of analysis—the international-regional political context to the specific urban environment of Danzig and then to the development of personal identity. Residents of this harbor district felt the postwar economic disruptions acutely. From the perspective of the male youths, international politics could be visually perceived in the traffic of commercial and military ships and the cordonning off of Westerplatte peninsula, a favorite destination for adventures. The setting inspired a passion for all things military that expressed itself in neighborhood war games and, as Gippert argues, later in an enthusiasm for the Hitler Youth.

These results are provocative, but suggestive rather than definitive; the reasons why this is the case become clear when we consider two points about Gippert’s methodology. Firstly, social milieus do not necessarily correspond to geographical place. Urban neighborhoods in particular contain diverse class, political, and ethnic backgrounds. The sharp fault lines between Polish-speaking and German-speaking neighbors demonstrate this. The two biographies in this study of working-class girls from different districts correspond better to each other (early exit from school, unstable family relations) than to the examples of male youth from the same district of a slightly higher class status (this issue might also stem from gender and the nearness in age). Some of most compelling scenes, in fact, involve neighborhood clashes, such as the insults exchanged between the young socialist, Lisa Barendt, and the girls from National Socialist households. One of the most interesting questions raised by this work is why Danzig, though separated by borders and international law, demonstrated voting patterns so similar to Germany that it could be described as a “microcosm” of the Weimar Republic.

Secondly, readers will wonder whether it is possible to make generalizations about social milieus, the typical development of identity, and “dominant mentalities” (p. 538) based upon the limited number of sources cited in this study. Can these autobiographical sources be analyzed as representative? In the methodology section of the introduction, Gippert explains that he conducted fifteen interviews and read many autobiographies during the investigation process because he conceived of a broader project that included other parts of the city and Catholic and liberal-bourgeois milieus. He discarded all but one interview and four autobiographies during the writing process because “the fullness of recollection” threatened to overwhelm the “individual biographies” as well as explode the framework of the project (p. 46).

Frankly, this decision seems like a significant loss for the project. As sources oral histories certainly can frustrate because they lack coherence or objectivity and they deviate from expected patterns. Scarcity makes them more difficult to exploit for hard, quantitative analysis, a problem that will worsen as the number of historical eyewitnesses dwindles. Even so, these weaknesses make oral sources all the more valuable as they provide rich descriptions and anecdotes that challenge assumptions, generalizations, and the claims of statistics and other textual sources. In this case, such oral histories might have helped expand and diversify the image of childhood and youth in the unique setting of Danzig and raised questions for future research agendas.
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