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Bergerson's oral history of Hildesheimers fascinates the reader, because of the author's subtle ethnographic reconstruction of the culture of everyday life and individuals' mentalities during the National Socialist period. He conducted interviews with 36 individuals, half men, half women, over two hundred hours' worth. To be sure, Bergerson does not want to explain the Holocaust in its last stages; instead, he focuses on the earlier stages of exclusion, the processes of isolating and discriminating against Jews in the midst of a cultivated urban society.

The author takes the primary approach of reconstructing the atmosphere of Hildesheim through examination of its neighborhoods, although (unfortunately) interviewees had moved more often than he had hoped. He examines the role of "symbolic uniformity" (p. 139) and the ways ordinary Hildesheimers "coordinated their costumes of conviviality to fit the principles of the Nazi movement" (p. 132). The main focus of the book is the transformation and continuities of conviviality and communication in Hildesheim neighborhoods. Within the structures that expressed social status, civility and communication were habitually expressed by mutual greetings. These "kinds of naturalized customs of everyday life" were maintained among non-Jews under the Third Reich, regardless of whether one supported the Nazis or not (p. 64). The *Hitler-Gruß* eliminated the status-greetings of previous times; it polarized Jews and Gentiles. To be sure, before 1933, Jews never had had the same closeness to "Aryan" Germans as "Aryans" enjoyed among each other. They had been integrated into the neighborhoods primarily in their functions as butchers or other shopkeepers, but they had remained aliens. It was this kind of "negative integration" that changed after Hitler came to power. Bergerson is right to interpret the *Hitler-Gruß* as a means of ironing out social differences and replacing them with symbols of approval from a new government that excluded those who did not greet others in this way, especially Jews. The practice of flagging had similar effects of inclusion and exclusion. Flagging and non-flagging with National Socialist symbols visibly demonstrated who belonged or wanted to belong to the *Volksgemeinschaft* and who did not. By reporting those who did not display
the appropriate flags, flaggers gained power over these neighbors. According to the author, failure to display a flag was also a visible sign of the Jews' self-exclusion and of "social aryization" (p. 163). The same procedures of in- and exclusion happened via other activities, such as support of the Winterhilfe.

Furthermore, as Bergerson shows, communication in the neighborhoods occurred within the frame of a moral order centralized around cleanliness, which is analytically associated with the concept of modern "social engineering." Although the author neglected some important secondary literature on this topic, he is right to emphasize just this point. After 1933, Nazis incorporated their policies of racial order into pre-existing images of order. They succeeded in compelling complicity by linking street cleaning with the cleaning of neighborhoods. Bergerson argues that people adapted themselves to the principles of the National Socialist dictatorship because the Nazis promised to reinstall the endangered moral order of urban life by purifying neighborhoods from all that did not belong to them. Ordinary Hildesheimers "tried to preserve their normalcy by framing this expanding state into the pre-existing cultural framework of neighborliness" (p. 213).

Bergerson captures the modernization of urban culture and the opening of social space in Weimar Hildesheim by recording his interlocutors' narratives on strolls in the business district. The interviewees exaggeratedly imagined this modernity-breathing district as an area of shops possessed by (well-to-do) Jews. After 1933, such pre-existing assessments made Nazi antisemitic claims "plausible" (p. 96). Despite the attractiveness of the city's business district, conviviality was mainly concentrated in its neighborhoods before 1933. The Nazis challenged this state of affairs by offering additional conviviality in their organizations, which were no longer related to people's neighborhoods. Nevertheless the relevance of neighborhoods for people's daily life was weakened but not eliminated--neither for Nazi supporters nor for illegal agents whose activism was also mediated by conviviality in neighborhoods.

The crucial point of Bergerson's study neither lies in the biographies it presents nor in its reconstruction of special neighborhoods and milieus, but in the analysis of the reasons why discriminatory measures mandated from above against Jews could easily succeed. According to the author, the key to the answer to this question lies in the way conviviality was patterned. In its stress on habits of everyday life, especially in people's neighborhoods, Bergerson's explanation differs from other research that interprets Germans' indifference towards crimes against humanity as the consequence of Nazi totalitarianism or of ordinary Germans' commitment to Nazi ideology.

In the last chapter on epistemologies, Bergerson searched for mental linkages between his interviewees' attitudes in the Nazi period and their memories of such attitudes. As a result, he states, "ordinary Germans still denied their knowledge of Nazi crimes against humanity in the present because they first denied their knowledge of it in the past" (p. 238). In this context, Bergerson stresses habits of self-cultivation in order to "preserve a coherent sense of self" (p. 247), whereby "strong desires for upward social mobility" demanded strong tactics of self-cultivation" (p. 66).

In most recollections, "the" Jews had simply "disappeared." After more than sixty years, interviewees described that event only by using this term, without any sympathetic commentaries. Moreover, Bergerson discovered in the interviewees' narratives again and again the social construction of men and women as ordinary Germans in an ordinary city where nothing serious had happened during the National Socialist regime. Finally he distills from the interviews information about trends of self-victimization by the Germans, which typically happened (for ex-
ample) via the gross misrepresentation of cause and effect.

Despite the high value of this book, however, some points should be critically mentioned or called into question. The author uses the term *Eigensinn* extremely frequently, while simultaneously narrowing its definition. The reason for this contraction may lie in difficulties with the German language, a suspicion that is nourished for the reader by several inaccurately used German terms (as on pp. 133-136, 199, 220, 234). Bergerson defines *Eigensinn* only as "persistent habits of everyday life through which ordinary people expressed themselves publicly in revolt against established authorities," such as jokes, parodies and so on (p. 264). *Eigensinn*, however, is not always a revolt against established authorities, but also happens when people load events, facts, and activities with an individually related (*eigen*) sense (*Sinn*) and meaning with respect to their own lives that clearly are not identical with the social logic of the authorities' activities. Because of the intense linkages between *Eigensinn* and *Herrschaft*, moreover, it is not clear why the first part of the book, in which the pre-fascist phases are discussed, was given the title *Eigensinn*, while the second part on later periods under the fascist state is entitled *Herrschaft*.

Another critical point is that Bergerson neglected much of the secondary literature on some of the main topics of his study, especially studies on social milieus, living conditions, neighborhoods, gender, "asocial" persons, *Judenräucher*, and so on. While his list of secondary literature is not small, it does not sufficiently represent the status of research on these questions in Germany. Moreover, lack of comparisons with other cities led some questions unanswered: For instance, when exactly did the Hildesheim local authorities forbid Jews to use public baths, benches, parks, and so on, and how were these changes remembered? When did restaurants, cinemas, and bars bar Jews from entrance? What role did block war-
dens play in Hildesheim's neighborhoods? Why are they absent from interviewees' narratives? What are the narratives of the dubious history of the Landeskrankenhaus, whose inmates were said to be mentally ill? And what does the study say about the often-discussed issue of whether Nazi leaders and the SA in Hildesheim and other cities were interpreted primarily as social outsiders and strange invaders or as indigenous Hildesheimers? The last question is relevant for the analysis of the role of local elites, especially for the issue whether they were the main models for ordinary people to adopt National Socialist norms in their daily lives.

Such critical remarks and open questions do not, however, lessen the value of the book. Indeed, Bergerson's study is an excellent example of how oral history, the history of everyday life and the exclusion of Jews and other groups can be linked. The author sustains the reader's fascination with his precise interpretations of small facts and apparently harmless statements made by interviewees. Even in cases when readers tend to other interpretations (which is inevitable) the author's excellent capability to provide inspiring, deep-reaching, and theoretically well-based interpretations cannot be questioned. In sum, the book is a real milestone in the history of people's perception and memories and a "must" for all historians whose research is based on oral history of everyday life in the National Socialist period.
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