

Y. Michal Bodemann, ed.. *The New German Jewry and the European Context: The Return of the European Jewish Diaspora*. New Perspectives in German Studies. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008. x + 201 pp. \$85.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-230-52107-0.



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The sentence that summarizes the overarching theme of the volume is the final one of Y. Michal Bodemann's and Olena Bagno's contribution: "[s]tatistics such as '150,000 or 190,000 Jews in Germany today' hide far more than they reveal" (p. 174). To tackle what is hiding behind the numbers, editor Y. Michal Bodemann brought together a wide range of scholars dealing with different aspects of the Jewish presence in Germany. This approach allows for coverage of issues such as Jewish-Turkish relationships, the relationships of different minorities to one another, the problematic intra-ethnic cleavages of the heterogeneous Jewish populations in Germany, the relationship to the wider European diaspora, and Jewish studies as a subject of study in Germany. Each of the eleven contributions takes a different angle on specific issues that concern Jews in Germany today. The wide range of subject areas allows the volume to cover topics in depth, yet it offers enough overview material to appeal to readerships with different knowledge bases. The high-

quality contributions inspire questions and hint at emerging areas of research.

In the introduction, Bodemann lays out the agenda of the volume. He argues that the European Jewish diaspora, and as a part of it the Jewish diaspora in Germany, takes an active role among the three Jewish "pillars" (America, Europe, and Israel), a point initially made by Diana Pinto.[1] Bodemann moves beyond Pinto's work to claim that not only the relationships between those pillars, but those of these pillars to other groups as well, affect the European/German diaspora. Bodemann claims that through increased and multilayered dynamics, the European diaspora has gained new momentum and has begun to develop into a "positive Jewish Diaspora" with new religious and secular forms (p. 2).

In order to show these dynamics coherently, the first part of the volume gives an insight into the historical European Jewish space. In her contribution, Pinto argues for a European-Jewish reconciliation (p. 19). This reconciliation, she argues,

must be non-territorial, and include Jewries from various European countries and non-Jews from the respective nation-states (p. 22). At the same time, it must involve an internal Jewish facet as well, and reconcile the American and Israeli Jewries with the fact that Jews continue to live in Europe. Indeed, she believes, reappraising the European diaspora could help to reconcile injustices in American and Israeli society. Pinto states that reconciliation between Jews and non-Jews in Europe and between different Jewries is direly needed by all parties. Consequently, all of them would thrive on universalism, and will suffer from a further exacerbation of particularisms.

The second essay of this section of the book comes from Dan Diner. His chapter is concerned with imperial history at its fringes; that is, a history of Jews who are seen as simultaneously bound and not bound to the developing nation-state. Jews, Diner argues, were trans-territorial people, and by this token, harbingers of postmodern cosmopolitanism, even as they were bound together by a tribal logic. This particular condition was tenable during the era of the porous empire. It became increasingly untenable with the strengthening of the nation-state, which divided European Jewry into mutually exclusive groups of citizens of particular states and, with time, deprived them of the gelling effect that a shared language had had for them for generations. The main issue that runs through Diner's chapter is the degree to which nation-states are modern, and with them the national European Jewries, or if this modernity is rather relative.

The second section of the book begins with an essay by Sander Gilman, who poses the question of whether diaspora Judaism can serve as a model for Islam. Gilman begins his chapter with a historically inspired overview of Jews and Muslims in Europe, and moves on to analyze the idea of multiculturalism. He draws readers' attention to its problematic nature, for multiculturalism is itself embedded in different discourses and changes in

its meaning over time and for different groups of people. Gilman elaborates his argument on the shifting meanings of multiculturalism regarding Jews and Muslims in the German context by using examples of hybrid writers and characters (German-Turkish-Jewish) to highlight the notions of each of these categories and their relationship to one another. Gilman concludes that a collaboration between scholars engaging with German-Jewish history and those focusing on Muslims in Germany would be very fruitful for the content of further studies on "the ever changing nature of Diaspora identities" (p. 70).

The next chapter, by Bodemann and Gökçe Yurdakul, complements Gilman's theoretical contribution. Bodemann and Yurdakul look at how German Turks, who comprise the majority of Muslims in Germany, engage with the narrative and experiences of Jews in Germany. Their contribution examines triangulations between Jews, Turks, and Germans, and elaborates in detail on how Turks operationalize aspects of the Jewish experience of the past and present to deal with their German surroundings. The authors engage with a field as yet underresearched: the relationship of minorities to each other and to the German majority.[2] It is interesting to learn how the Jewish diaspora model that Gilman refers to is actualized by Turks in Germany, where and how Jews and Turks diverge, and how discourses on antisemitism are incorporated in a wider discourse against racism.[3]

The third section of the volume begins with a chapter by Liliane Weissberg. Weissberg examines Jewish studies in Germany, a subject, she claims, in search of its subject. She begins with a historic account of the foundation of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* and emphasizes that it was dominated by Jewish scholars until 1933. In the aftermath of the Shoah, the field changed irreversibly: the majority of Jewish scholars were either dead or remained abroad, and the same went for their prospective Jewish student body. In this void,

three distinct streams of studies concerning Jews emerged: *Judaistik*, which mostly concentrates on Jewish history and texts; Jewish studies, which "prefers to concentrate on Jewish culture" (p. 107); and the focus of the Hochschule für Jüdische Studien, which concentrates on "higher Jewish learning" (p. 107). The latter, set up by the Zentralrat der Juden in Deutschland, is the only continuation of pre-Shoah institutions, according to Weissberg, and the only one to attract Jewish students and scholars. Departments of Jewish studies and *Judaistik* are dominated by non-Jews. Weissberg claims that Jews are not desired as scholars and students in these departments, but only as subjects of historical study. Thus, she concludes that the Jewish space postulated by Pinto,[4] where Jews and non-Jews can meet and encounter each others' opinions, has not yet become a reality in academic departments in Germany, but that it is likely to emerge with a growing Jewish population.

While focusing on W. G. Sebald in her chapter, Leslie Morris examines the idea of Jewish writing. The reception of Sebald, a non-Jewish German, in the English-speaking world reflects the cornerstones of perception of Jewish writing. "Jewish" themes like memory, movement, displacement, and transnationalism run through Sebald's texts; in all of them the "structure of narrative and translation" (p. 118) is central. This issue opens up the possibility of looking at Sebald through an assertion Pinto mentions early in the volume: that "Jewish people were people of Memory and not of History" (p. 23). This idea goes hand in hand with the issue of translation, or transmission, or the passing on of (Jewish) texts or traditions through generations, and the narrativity of life stories. Through the mixture of topics in his writing and his autobiography, Sebald engages with Jewish topics, even when he does not explicitly engage with Jews, which is what makes him appear Jewish. According to Morris, this apparent de-essentialization of the Jewish condition

opens up a new space to discuss what being Jewish means.

The final section of the volume engages with the largest segment of Jews in current Germany: Jews from the former Soviet Union. The first chapter in this section comes from Judith Kessler, who has been conducting long-term research on members of this group in Berlin. Kessler highlights the various problems of their integration into the existing community: first, the strong attachment of the incomers to the former Soviet Union; then, the issue that "the typical Jewish Soviet immigrant of the 1990s is apolitical, secularized, and Western orientated" (p. 133). Furthermore, incomers place specific expectations on the Jewish community in Germany, and maintain particular ways of going about business. Members of the former German-Polish majority also deal with specific problems: questions about why Jews would immigrate to the country of the former murderers; the failure of the newcomers to relate to their memories of the Shoah; and the matter of how this comparatively tiny group, already uneasy about being in Germany, should integrate the vast numbers of the newcomers. Kessler concludes that time is the decisive factor for the two groups to become active assets in Pinto's European Jewish space and constitute a new German Jewry.

The chapter by Julius Schoeps and Olaf Glöckner echoes Kessler's findings. They too speak of "integration issues" (p. 147) among post-Soviet Jews in Germany. Unlike Kessler, Schoeps and Glöckner use national data, which highlight that problems with the integration of the newcomers are not restricted to a single community. The immigrants suffer overarching problems such as high unemployment, low identification with their host country, and limited contact with native-born Germans. Yet, the authors suggest that not all is doom and gloom. These problems are primarily prevalent among the middle-aged and elderly, while the younger generation shows high levels of integration and the willingness to achieve an ad-

vanced education. Schopes and Glöckner conclude that, in the long run, the Russian-speaking Jews will integrate successfully into German society, and take over leading positions in increasingly heterogeneous Jewish communities and organizations, too.

In the final chapter of this section of the volume, Bodemann and Bagno demonstrate with some examples the specificities of Russian Jewish identities, identities not reflected in the Jewish organizations in Germany so far. These identities and experiences, which are specific to them and different from those of the German-Polish majority, cause the problems the previous chapters describe. "Jewssians," as Bodemann and Bagno call "Russian-Germans with a Jewish tinge" (p. 165), live outside of established communities, in milieus that are neither "'Russian' nor 'Jewish'" (p. 165). This milieu cuts across ethnic boundaries and categories; it reflects hybrid identities. Examples include writers Wladimer Kaminer, Anna Sokhrina, Vladimir Vertlib, and Lena Gorelik. All four engage in their work with different aspects of Russian-Jewish identities. Kaminer barely mentions his Jewishness or Russianness; for Gorelik, these terms are significant primarily in reference to her family; Sokhrina remains anchored in St. Petersburg; and Vertlib finds himself defined by a non-identification with the existing Jewish community. The prominent "Jewssians" are exemplary for the new Jewish majority in Germany: a heterogeneous group with different identifications and identities.

The volume concludes with an afterword by Jeffrey M. Peck. Peck sums up the issues covered in the book before hinting at areas as yet underresearched but which already have, or will have, a strong influence on Jews in Germany. These emerging areas include the relationship of Jewish life in Germany to the German government, the significance of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and its repercussions, the relationship of Jewish life in Germany to pan-national organizations, and Is-

rael-diaspora relationships. In other words, while some segments of the increasingly heterogeneous Jewish population in Germany, especially the post-Soviet Jews, are well researched, little is known about the real-life influences of pan-national organizations on the Jewish population in Germany, or about the sentiments of Jews in Germany toward Israel. Existing data concerning relationships to Israel, for example, is scant,[5] and with the vast changes in the Jewish population and an increasing temporal distance to the Shoah, it will probably be subject to equally strong changes.

By this token, the volume raises important issues, yet it can only cover some areas. Ethnographic micro-studies or mixed qualitative and quantitative data, like that presented by Kessler for Berlin, offer one way to learn more about Jewish life-worlds in Germany. Yet, even such research would be unlikely to take into account the lives of non-prominent "Jewssians" (or non-affiliated Jews, for that matter). Kessler also mentions that American and Israeli Jews who come to Germany do not pose a counterweight to Soviet Jews. Numerically speaking, this is certainly the case. Israeli and American Jews, much like the prominent "Jewssians," do not feel the need for an institutionalized Jewish community, and tend to set up their own gatherings, or partake in (pan-national) networks, which in turn exert an influence beyond the impression created by their numbers. Peck states rightly that the area of pan-national networks is underresearched.

In light of the problem of numbers, Weissberg's point that academic study of Jewish studies and *Judaistik* will change to cater to the changing Jewish population highlights the necessity of more quantitative data. How many Jews are teaching and studying in Jewish studies or *Judaistik* departments currently, and furthermore, how many Jews in the country are interested in this academic subject area? Numbers, as Bodemann and Bagno warn, conceal as much as they reveal,

but they do offer interesting insights. While all of the essays offer grounded descriptions of Jewish life in Germany, more representative quantitative and qualitative research on Jews in Germany would enhance our understanding of emerging Jewish life-worlds there as well as of the new dynamics Bodemann mentions in the introduction and Peck outlines in the afterword. For example, Bodemann and Bagno state that Jewssians live in a neither Russian nor Jewish life-world and use examples of prominent Russian Jews to further their claim; Gilman uses examples from literature to elaborate on his argument; Schoeps and Glöckner rely on macro-structural data; but none connects the separate spheres of representative examples to larger, more prevalent experiences. Seen in this light, the volume raises as many questions as it answers.

The new German Jewry (in as much as it identifies as German or with Germany) is composed of the former German-Polish majority and the current post-Soviet majority, as well as of Israelis, Americans, and other incomers who hold power beyond their numbers. This Jewry is unique in its dynamics, and its constitution raises multiple questions, calls for innovative methods, and will make for challenging research in various areas for years to come.

#### Notes

[1]. Diana Pinto, "A New Role for Jews in Europe: Challenges and Responsibilities," in *Turning the Kaleidoscope: Perspectives on European Jewry*, ed. Sandra Lustig and Ian Leveson (New York: Berghahn, 2006), 27-40.

[2]. Ruth Mandel's monograph, *Cosmopolitan Anxieties: Turkish Challenges to Citizenship and Belonging in Germany* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008) analyzes the triangulations between Germans, Turks, and Jews in Germany in depth. Based on multi-sited long-term ethnographic fieldwork, it is so far the only contribution to look at the multilayered dynamic between those three groups in Germany.

[3]. In literature concerning the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom, the issue of a narrow (colonially informed, related to immigration) vs. broad definition of racism (which includes anti-Semitism) is stressed. See, for example, Philip Cohen, "Reason, Racism and the Popular Monster," in *Crisis of the Self*, ed. B. Richards (London: Free Association Books, 1989), 245-257; Carole Ann Reed, "The Omission of Anti-Semitism in Anti-Racism," *Canadian Woman Studies/Le Cahier De La Femme* 14 (2004): 68-71; and Barry Troyna, *Racial Inequality in Education* (London: Routledge, 1987).

[4]. Diana Pinto, "The Jewish Challenge in the New Europe," in *Challenging Ethnic Citizenship: German and Israeli Perspectives on Immigration*, ed. Daniel Levy and Yfaat Weiss (New York: Berghahn, 2002), 239-252.

[5.] Micha Brumlik engages with the idea of *Heimat* among Jews of the third post-Shoah generation in *Zuhause, keine Heimat? Junge Juden und ihre Zukunft in Deutschland* (Gerlingen: Bleicher Verlag, 1998).

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