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Y. Michal Bodemann. *A Jewish Family in Germany Today: An Intimate Portrait.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2005. 280 pp. $84.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8223-3410-1; $23.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8223-3421-7.

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Three Generations of Jews in Post-Holocaust Germany

As a result of immigration from the former Soviet Union, the Jewish population of Germany has more than doubled in fifteen years. Increasingly, the Jewish community of Germany has a Russian character to it. Despite this transformation, many Jewish families are in their third generation in Germany (and some are entering a fourth). Few of these families are descendants of pre-1933 German Jews, making their situation all the more fascinating. The progeny of Eastern European Holocaust survivors, they have balanced their Jewish identity with an increasingly German identity. In an interesting study, Y. Michal Bodemann examines one such family. The family, whom he calls the Kalmans, originated in Poland but has resided in Germany since 1945. Many members of the family have moved to Israel or America, but they still form a part of the Kalmans' German-Jewish nexus.

Bodemann begins his examination with an introductory social history of German Jewish life since 1945, and he periodizes the post-Holocaust Jewish experience in Germany very sharply. The years 1946 to 1951 formed a transitional or introductory phase as the Jewish community's size and composition remained unsettled. Bodemann claims that the community reached a stasis by 1951, and for the next eighteen years, it was marked by bureaucratic patronage. It was a period of administrative consolidation as the community's leaders developed close ties to German administrative and governmental elites, and the community's members romanticized life in Israel. The 1970s were an era of representationism. Jewish communal institutions stagnated or atrophied while increasing demands were made for Jewish representation at public and state functions. Finally, beginning in the 1980s, increased Jewish immigration led to a renaissance of Jewish life in Germany. At the same time, a new cadre of German Jewish intellectuals became embedded in German culture while retaining a Jewish identity.

The Kalmans, like so many Jewish families, remained in Germany despite themselves, and four of the nine members of the second generation in Germany emigrated to Israel ("made aliyah"), at least temporarily. The Israeli Kalmans, personally and professionally successful, can barely conceal their disdain for the Jews they left behind. Meanwhile, the cousins remaining in Germany were less likely to get married. On the one hand, they were ab-

sorbing German social values regarding marriage, and on the other hand, they were reluctant to marry non-Jewish Germans. They also persisted in their identity crises. The Kalmans, like so many other Jews living in the old Federal Republic, had only a loose connection to the organized Jewish community and its religious life. The relatives in America were closer to the Jewish community and feel truly at home where they live, while many of the German Kalmans never felt at home in Germany. At the same time, Zionist groups, rather than the synagogue, served as the primary Jewish affiliation for them. While aiding some in emigrating to Israel, it left others alienated from the official Jewish community and its support networks. As one cousin remarked, "If you do not live here as a Jew in a relatively traditional manner and at peace with the Jewish environment, if you don't do that, you find yourself pretty quickly at the margins" (p. 274).

The core narrative is organized around four branches of the family: three brothers who survived the Holocaust and settled in Germany and one daughter who survived and emigrated to America. Addressing themes such as German Jewish identity, intermarriage, and the Holocaust, Bodemann interviewed the survivors and their children to yield a picture of the family and its Jewish experience in post-Holocaust Germany. It is a story of financial success coupled with social failure. The family's self-imposed isolation, both from non-Jewish Germans and from Jewish institutions, has created a complex of troubled relationships and identity crises. In the unnamed city of F. and its close neighbor N., the brothers, Albert, Ignaz, and Jurek, achieved business success and prominence as appliance retailers before in-fighting and personal rivalries destroyed their business. It is interesting to note that the brothers did not wish to involve the German courts in their disputes. Instead they called upon their fathers-in-law to adjudicate their disputes, which ultimately tore the family apart.

Of the four families, Albert's proved to be the most complex. After his experience with the Jewish Council (*Judenrat*) during the Holocaust, Albert developed a mistrust of formal Jewish institutions. He could not relate to Christians, but he did not want to relate to other Jews, at least not on the terms set by the Jewish community. His five children (Berthold, Ronnie, Salek, Esther, and Gabriel) deal with their identity in differing ways. Berthold has proven to be his father's true heir. He entered the family business in its final years, and his life is curiously non-German, yet only moderately Jewish. Ronnie repudiated the particular Jewish existence bequeathed to him by his parents. He has a child with his Christian girlfriend, rejects the Jewish community's clannishness, and has few Jewish friends. This stands in strong contrast to his emigrated brother Salek, who responded to perceived antisemitism by becoming Max Nordau's "muscle Jew"–a weight-lifter. Ultimately, he made aliyah in 1989, and he continues to look down on Jews who remain in Germany. Esther provides an even more extreme case. As early as 1973, at the age of twenty, she made aliyah to flee life in the small city of F. and her identity problems. She, too, looks down upon the Jews still in Germany, calling them "second rate" and deriding their rationalizations for remaining. The youngest son, Gabriel, seems the most comfortable with who he is and where he lives. He wears the mantel of his Jewishness lightly, but with pride. He has Jewish and non-Jewish friends and colleagues. Still, his self-parodying antics (such as telling Jewish jokes on his radio program) grate on his sister in Israel and on politically sensitive German radio listeners.

Albert's brother Ignaz is, to a large degree, the broken man in the family. He is unable to communicate his past coherently, yet he fondly remembers his days as a displaced person smuggler/blackmarketeer. However, his own fractured life has severely affected Dina, his sole child. At an early age she was drawn to Israel and successfully integrated into a working-class, native Israeli milieu. After marriage to an Israeli, a return to Germany, and a divorce, she found herself as mentally dislocated as ever. Despite a desire to return permanently to Israel, she no longer feels at home there. She has remained in the north German city of H., where things are not quite right for her either.

Jurek, only seventeen at the time of liberation and the youngest brother of the survivors' generation, is able to discuss the past with openness and a fair degree of accuracy. His son Jonny made aliyah and cannot stand Germany. Daughter Lilian is fairly comfortable living a Jewish life in Germany, but she does not feel German. Rather than looking to Israel, however, she has oriented herself to America.

A study such as this begs this question of representativeness. Bodemann overtly claims that representativeness is not relevant, preferring to call his study "a guide, in this case, to the German and Jewish worlds" (p. 31). In fact, the Kalmans' experience is informative of German Jewish life since 1945. Many Jews, like the Kalmans, did not have close ties to the official Jewish community. Stagnating Jewish institutions often had unimpressive and authoritarian leadership (a factor in the Kalmans'

alienation from the community in F.). Many young Jews chose to leave Germany for Israel or America in the 1960s and 1970s. Extremely small communities provided the second generation with few options in terms of potential Jewish spouses or intellectual and religious enrichment (a factor in the decisions of the younger Kalmans). Those who remained or returned from abroad faced increasing difficulties as they wished to marry or start families, as they made decisions about schooling their children, and as they were confronted with defining their own identities.

For the presentation of his material, Bodemann, a sociologist, has made a somewhat curious methodological choice. First-person narratives on any given theme are often interspersed with comments on the same topic by other family members. While this technique provides for thematic continuity and brings the story together, it gives the impression that the separate speakers were interviewed at the same time, which can be confusing. Bodemann does an excellent job dealing with questions related to the Jewish experience in Germany in the 1970s and 1980s. It would have been interesting, however, to learn how the German Kalmans have dealt with the growth of the Jewish community in the 1990s and their relations with their newly arrived Russian coreligionists. While less Judaically educated than western Jews, the Russians have breathed new life into the communities and caused an expansion in the number of Jewish institutions (from which established pre-1990 Jews in Germany benefit).

Bodemann provides no conclusion to his study of Jewish life in Germany since 1945, and, indeed, his "guide" ends rather abruptly. How do Jews who have grown up in Germany regard their situation? How should the second generation reconcile its Jewish heritage and German life? Perhaps the best summation comes from Jurek's son Motti, an architect in H. At one point, he reflects, "Jewish life in Germany is very much determined and defined by the Holocaust. In Germany, you have to find a way within this particular constraint. You have to find a way where you can say, okay, I am a Jew, that is how it is. It is defined by and coming from my history, but I am living with my Jewishness for myself, in a form in which I want to live it. That form should not be defined by the traumas suffered by my parents and by the assumption that in Germany you can be Jewish in only one very particular manner" (p. 275).

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