

The New German Jewry and the European Context



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The politics of Israeli governments in recent years and a drift to neo-conservatism among segments of Diaspora Jewry have substantially polarised the Jewish community abroad. Among many other Jews however, we observe a new insistence on the centrality of Diaspora life and we see re-inventions of Diaspora. These re-inventions are coming from the Jewish periphery: new visibility of women in Jewish affairs with new creative energy regarding religious services and community work at large; a rise of egalitarian religious services, Gay-Lesbian Jewish life, acceptance of intermarried couples, non-halachic (patrilineal) Jews and converts to Judaism who are seeking full acceptance via Reform Judaism or other, local, frameworks. These developments are especially pronounced in Germany, and this book addresses some of its characteristics: the transnational character of German Jewry, its relationship to the state and to other minorities, particularly Moslems, the astonishing revival of Jewish studies and Jewish culture especially also among non-Jews, and most of all, the massive influx of Russian speaking Jews after 1989 who are often at the forefront of redefining Jewish life in Germany. In these respects, Germany has become a laboratory

of the ways in which Jewish life in Europe might develop in the future.

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