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# Review of "Jews in Germany after the Holocaust: Memory, Identity, and Jewish-German Relations" by Lynn Rapaport

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For anyone wishing an in-depth discussion of the key issues relating to the incredibly vast amounts of art and artifacts which were stolen, lost, or damaged, *The Spoils of War* is an essential reference. Based on a ground-breaking, spirited conference sponsored by Bard College in New York City in January 1995, the articles by the key investigators, such as Nicholas, Petropolous, Michael Kurtz, Constance Lowenthal, Willi Korte, Klaus Goldmann, Konstantin Akinsha, and Grigorii Kozlov, contain critical information on museums and art objects throughout Europe. Some of the participants, including former US Army Monuments, Fine Arts, and Archives officers, are no longer alive. Thus it was prescient planning to include such critical players in the postwar restoration and repatriation efforts as Edith Standen and Walter Farmer, head of the Wiesbaden Collection Point.

The volume describes the art removed by Nazis throughout Western and Eastern Europe. It also details the various treaties, legal disputes, and current efforts being made to right the wrongs of this sad period in humanity's history. Unfortunately, some of the issues are so intractable that various countries and individuals within countries refuse to part with war booty. *The Spoils of War* is abundantly illustrated with key photographs, artworks, and documents which are important reference materials for further research. In fact, the volume, ably edited and introduced by Elizabeth Simpson who honestly alluded to the difficulties remaining in art retrieval, will be an important source for anyone wishing to learn of this complicated chapter in the long, dispiriting history of humankind's vandalism.

MARION DESHMUKH, *George Mason University*

Lynn Rapaport. *Jews in Germany after the Holocaust: Memory, Identity, and Jewish-German Relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997. Pp. xi, 325. Cloth \$59.95.

Lynn Rapaport's stimulating work provides a sociological examination of the Holocaust's impact on the relations between Jews and Germans in the postwar Federal Republic. The book distinguishes itself from other studies by shifting the focus away from the workings of memory in the political or institutional realms and concentrating instead on how "the memory of the Holocaust affects everyday interactions between Jews and Germans" (260).

*Jews in Germany after the Holocaust* is largely devoted to exploring how the memory of the Holocaust has shaped the contemporary identity of German Jews. In pursuing this task, Rapaport abandons structuralist models of identity formation, which emphasize the role of objective factors such as language or religion, in favor of an approach that underscores the ways in which ethnic groups subjectively construct their own sense of identity by drawing boundaries and distinctions between "in-groups" and "out-groups." The author provides ample empirical

confirmation of this important theoretical insight through interviews with a large sample of second-generation German Jews in Frankfurt, all of whom in some way define themselves *against* their German neighbors. In separate chapters covering such topics as Jewish self-definition, national identification, and interethnic friendship and intimacy, Rapaport shows that German Jews resist any close identification with Germany and tend to define themselves against negative images of Germans. Significantly, the memory of the Holocaust plays a crucial role in this effort by providing metaphors for German Jews to apply to Germans who, among other things, are regarded as “impure,” “authoritarian,” or “murderers.” This process of defining one’s self against the other has an instrumental function, according to Rapaport, for it helps German Jews avoid the difficult question of positively defining what it means to be Jewish and helps foster a sense of internal cohesion within what is an extremely small and vulnerable community. Ultimately, this practice has produced a paradoxical situation whereby the highly acculturated and religiously ambivalent community of German Jews is structurally integrated into the larger German society around it, but nevertheless chooses to remain fundamentally apart in a self-imposed “invisible ghetto.”

Rapaport makes a convincing case for focusing on collective memory and not merely structural factors as a primary determinant for the formation of German Jewish identity. The importance of the Holocaust for the postwar identity of Jews, of course, is not really a surprising conclusion, as has been shown by a wealth of literature on Jewish history in the postwar period. Rapaport’s main contribution is thus not so much to arrive at startlingly new conclusions but to provide, through numerous in-depth interviews, substantial empirical support for an important and underresearched area of social history. The author’s use of interview data is sound—even if the comments of many of her respondents about the postwar relations of Jews and Germans are somewhat predictable and frequently strewn with clichés and stereotypes (some of which, one wishes, were subjected to more critical scrutiny by the author). Moreover, although Rapaport addresses the matter in her appendix, questions can be raised about the datedness of her data. Since the majority of the interviews were conducted in 1984 (prior to such struggles over memory as the Bitburg affair and the historians’ debate, and prior to such notable political and social upheavals as German reunification and the influx of tens of thousands of Russian Jewish emigrants to Germany), one wonders whether all of the book’s conclusions still ring true. To take one example, is it possible that the posited link between the small size of the German Jewish population and its high intermarriage rate will be affected by the arrival of Russian Jews? These reservations notwithstanding, Rapaport’s study is a welcome addition to the burgeoning literature on Germans and Jews in the wake of the Holocaust.

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