Shattered Spaces: Encountering Jewish Ruins in Postwar Germany and Poland. By Michael Meng. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011. xiv, 351 pp. Notes. Index. Illustrations. Photographs. Maps. $35.00, hard bound.

In the 1990s, when the eminent historian Saul Friedländer was lecturing in Germany about the Nazi-era persecution of the Jews, he recounted the story of a Jewish butcher by the name of Marx. On the morning after Kristallnacht, on 10 November 1938, Marx had been rounded up, and his wife cried out to express her dismay. "Why are you tormenting us?" she demanded of her neighbors, "Have we ever wronged you?" After the lecture, a young man approached the older historian, explaining that his grandmother had lived next door to the Marxes and after they had been deported, in all likelihood in 1941 or 1942, she had acquired a pillow that had belonged to the family. For over fifty years she had kept it, but now, with a troubled conscience, she had no idea what to do with the pillow. Related by Jan T. Gross, the anecdote neatly introduces both the strengths and limitations of Michael Meng's original study (*Fear: Antisemitism in Poland after Auschwitz*, 2007, 248–49). Meng asks, "What happened to Jewish sites after the Holocaust?" and "How have Germans, Poles, and Jews encountered them since 1945?" (xii). As the story of the Marx family and their neighbors suggests, Germans and Jews, as well as Poles and Jews, lived together in familiar, even intimate, if uneasy terms. Not only did Germans and Poles witness the persecution of the Jews, they were often complicit in the removal of Jewish life when they expropriated the property of their former neighbors. Meng picks up this story in 1945 by tracing the fate of former Jewish property. Neglected or destroyed, the "goods of genocide" (59) were, for the most part, not returned, either to cover up the crimes or to fortify the legitimacy of postwar states. This "discomforting, polluted, and disdained part of the self" (26), however, a condition of abjectness, in the words Meng borrows from Julia Kristeva, nagged at the collective conscience. By the 1970s, Germans and Poles showed a new interest in, as well as a new sensitivity to, the Jewish past they had once shared, which made it possible for Friedländer to lecture in Germany and for the young man to approach him. Meng astutely traces the origins of the erosion of the abject or absent nature of the Jewish past, while being careful to point out the limitations of the "redemptive cosmopolitanism" (10) that it came to embroider. He paints a broad picture of the politics and aesthetics of post-1945 memory in an impressive comparative framework.

Friedländer's anecdote, however, also indicates some of the limitations of Meng's investigation. Meng rightly underscores the intimate spaces that Germans, Poles, and Jews shared before the deportations and murders, for this prior intimacy explains the subsequent abject quality of Jewish history and of the Holocaust in the first decades after the war. Unfortunately, however, he describes this intimacy from a distance. Readers will not learn, for example, about the Jewish households that neighbors moved into, the shops they acquired, or the furniture and linens they purchased in the public auctions that followed the deportation of the Jews. Furthermore, Meng does not even hint that thousands upon thousands of "goods of genocide" moved into German and Polish homes, which is why Friedländer eventually heard about Mrs. Marx's pillow. In Oldenburg, close to the border with the Netherlands, the stuff was called "Dutch furniture." Archival documents detail the back-and-forth negotiations among Württemberg's

civil servants eager to get their hands on "Schmal's easy chair" or "Wolff's plush chair" or "Ebert's chaise lounge" (Franziska Becker, *Gewalt und Gedächtnis: Erinnerungen an die nationalsozialistische Verfolgung einer jüdischen Landgemeinde*, 1994, 78). In Dresden, Victor Klemperer had to keep the door to his room in the "Jew house" locked because so many people were inspecting the possessions of the Jacobys, who had already been deported. The flimsiness of our knowledge about auctions in 1941, 1942, and 1943 and about the circulation of Jewish goods in German homes in later years registers the continuing abject nature of this terrible past.

The great strength of Meng's study lies in its crisp conceptualization of the changing encounters with the shared Jewish past in Germany and Poland. He very convincingly argues that an "ethnically exclusive notion of the nation" (57) was mobilized by both Polish and East German communists desperate to prop up their fragile legitimacy. In both East and West Germany, as well as in Poland, postwar preservationists also eschewed contact with a multiethnic past when they restricted their reconstruction efforts to pre-1800 buildings. In the search for a good or useful past, Germans and Poles conjured up the supposedly peaceful environs of an old history but along the way gutted the newer histories that encompassed persecution and murder. For example, "Warsaw's old town appeared as a great national loss that must be restored, its rubble carefully sorted through for the tiniest architectural piece," whereas the nearby Jewish neighborhood of Muranow, the site of the ghetto, "was seen as scattered debris, rubble that could be shoveled up for the building of the socialist future" (81–82). In West Germany, the newly forged political intimacies with the Allies precluded total forgetfulness, but here too Jewish synagogues were hastily cleared away or converted to new uses.

Meng is also concerned with showing that the absence of Jewish history was not permanent. In particular, the Soviet bloc witnessed considerable change well before the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. "Communism produced noise, not just more years of silence" (157), argues Meng. To introduce the point about the nagging presence of absence, Meng cites Toni Morrison, who, in her novel *Beloved* (1987), writes that "If a house burns down, it's gone, but the place—the picture of it—stays, and not just in my memory, but out there, in the world." Meng concludes, "Jewish sites in Poland and Germany—destroyed, broken, neglected, and forgotten for years—remained, waiting for someone to go there" (153). I am not sure that a destroyed site still remains, unless, as Morrison points out, a picture of it exists. The broken place itself is mute, unless someone exists to preserve the memory. Meng also nicely analyzes how this new will to preserve memory manifested itself, first in Poland, when the proponents of a more humanist socialism recoiled from the crude antisemitism of communist authorities in 1967–68, and then in West Germany, where the newly refurbished Jewish past provided a confirmation of democratic values, especially at a time when more and more foreign tourists arrived to take a look at that past. Multiethnicity became one aesthetic of alternative politics for which a static, ethnically homogenous idea of culture did not present a very suitable form. Meng champions the "redemptive cosmopolitanism" of the last thirty years: "Embracing Jewishness in Germany and Poland can motivate self-reflexive, historically conscious thinking that disrupts rigid ways of categorizing human difference and that actively challenges exclusive, hermetic ideas and practices in the present" (268). But Meng also helpfully points out that the recognition of a German-Polish-Jewish past can also transmogrify into "Judeo-Christian tradition" designed to distinguish "us" from "foreigners." In other words, "redemptive cosmopolitanism" (265) sets limits to the difference of difference.

Of course, the list of protagonists in revising the terms of the encounter with the Jewish past can be lengthened, as future work, building on Meng, will surely attest. The author has little to say about Pope John Paul II's visit to Poland in 1979; about the international pressure on the Polish stewards of Auschwitz; on the Solidarity movement; or on the woefully neglected "Schülerwettbewerb deutsche Geschichte um den Preis des Bundespräsidenten" in West Germany, a national secondary school contest under the aegis of the German president, which in 1982–83 took as its subject "Everyday Life in National Socialism, 1933–1945." Thanks to thousands of grass-roots projects initiated by high school students and their teachers, the history of German towns will never look the same. The acclaimed film, *Nasty Girl* (1991), shows the high drama of this excavation of twentieth-century history from below, in this case in the city of Passau. Readers will appreciate Meng's sturdy conceptual framework but will miss the voices that would bring to life both the abject nature of the shared Jewish past, as well as the registers of "curiosity, nostalgia, memory, intrigue, melancholia, and critique" (9) that accompanied its reexamination.

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Portrait of a Russian Province: Economy, Society, and Civilization in Nineteenth-Century Nizhnii Novgorod. By Catherine Evtuhov. Pitt Series in Russian and East European Studies. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011. xiv, 320 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Illustrations. Plates. Photographs. Figures. Tables. Maps. $34.95, paper.

Over the past several decades, monographs on late imperial Russian culture, economics, politics, and society have filled the shelves of libraries. From a recent collection on spatial history (Marc Bassin, Christopher Ely, and Melissa Stockdale, eds.), to histories of empire (Jane Burbank, Robert Geraci, and William Sunderland, for example), to the turn toward provincial social and cultural histories (Mary Cavendar and John Randolph), to name but a few, the history of Russia's nineteenth century no longer suffers under Cold War assumptions. Historians of modern Russia are freed, to a large degree, from many narratives and tropes so defined by a politics now obsolete. Even as the weight of the twentieth century has been lifted from the narratives of the nineteenth, historians—generally speaking—maintain a healthy skepticism about Russia's place within western European frameworks and categories. If the Russian nineteenth century is no longer simply "backstory" to the twentieth, then what is it? Is it part of a European narrative? Scholars of Russia, naturally, have no single answer to these questions, but they have begun both to explain the Russian nineteenth century on its own terms and to use the Russian "example" to shed light on long held truisms in the context of European history. These paradigms or frameworks include areas of investigation imagined to be part of a general European story: for example, the relationship between public and private life; the birth of civil society; or assumptions about the nature of urban versus rural life.

In this monograph, Catherine Evtuhov, like many scholars of imperial Russia, makes no simple assumptions regarding Russia's place within the European story. Her deeply researched and cogently argued account of postreform Nizhnii Novgorod is an excellent example of this new day in imperial Russian history.