

Steiger, Shawne. Games We Played. Garner, NC: Red Adept Publishing, 2020

David J. Zucker

Volume 19, Number 1, 2022

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1101375ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33137/wij.v19i1.41330>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

Women in Judaism, Inc.

ISSN

1209-9392 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

Zucker, D. (2022). Review of [Steiger, Shawne. Games We Played. Garner, NC: Red Adept Publishing, 2020]. *Women in Judaism*, 19(1), 1–2.
<https://doi.org/10.33137/wij.v19i1.41330>

Steiger, Shawne. *Games We Played*. Garner, NC: Red Adept Publishing, 2020.

Reviewed by David J. Zucker, Aurora, CO, USA.

Set in upstate New York and in southern California, *Games We Played* is a form of psychological thriller that focuses primarily on thirty-year old Jewish Rachel Goldberg, a high school teacher with a strong interest in acting, and a non-Jewish friend from her youth, Stephen, a year or so older. Stephen is the son of a dysfunctional mother, and the grandson of a man who claims to be a former Nazi soldier while he actually was a felon sent to prison for a sex crime in the United States. Stephen has psychological problems in his own right. The storyline of this 320+ page book is somewhat contrived. There are several subplots involving Rachel's lesbian love life; her being targeted by some White Nationalist/skinhead type characters; Stephen's dishonorable discharge from the Armed Services (he killed a civilian in Iraq), and the "games played" back some fifteen and more years ago when Stephen and Rachel were teens and preteens. Some of the games deal with control/power/victim issues, which pit Stephen as a Nazi soldier and Rachel as the Jewish girl/victim.

The themes of anti-Semitism, and the trauma of the Holocaust experienced by Rachel's grandmother Gladys who was born in Germany, and whose sister was murdered during the Shoah, are interwoven throughout the book. Gladys comes to live with Rachel's family, and along with her own problems and her old-world-Orthodoxy/superstitions form part and parcel of the background that contributes to the issues that Rachel faces.

When her home in Pineville, New York is vandalized with a swastika, Rachel decides to leave temporarily and return home to California, in part to make her farewells to her grandmother who is on the edge of death. Somewhat improbably the anti-Semitic skinheads from Pineville purport to be on the lookout for Rachel; they trace her to her parents' home in Carlsbad California, a small town north of San Diego. The skinheads report their plans on Rachel's Facebook account and Reddit and explain how they plan to find her and punish her. In an unlikely scenario one of the louts actually travels to California and at one point accosts Rachel when she is outside of her grandmother's nursing home ... and just in time Stephen is able to intervene.

The book explores several themes: anti-Semitism, White Supremacy culture, LGBT issues, adultery, the misuse of psychological power differentials, guilt, family secrets, and what it can mean to be Jewish. *Games We Played* is readable, fast-paced, the plot is gripping, and the story line is largely believable. The author of *Games We Played*, Shawne Ellen Steiger is a Clinical Social Work/Therapist, LCSW who lives in New York state.