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H-France Review Vol. 15 (November 2015), No. 159

Ivan Jablonka, ed., *L'Enfant-Shoah*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2014. 276 pp. Images, notes, bibliography, and index. 22.00€. (pb). ISBN : 978-2-13-059228-0.

Review by Erin Corber, New Europe College, Bucharest.

Ivan Jablonka's edited volume *L'enfant-Shoah* is a rich and thought-provoking contribution to the historiography of experience and memory of the Holocaust. Drawing on archival research, literary analysis, oral historical testimony, and more personal reflections centered on the case study of France, this collection successfully challenges received ideas of "victim," "survivor," and "trauma." The designation of *enfant caché*, referring to the children of deportees who escaped the fate of their parents through rescue operations involving concealment, is well known in French cultural life and public history, due in large part to the public role of the testimony of *enfants cachés* in war crimes trials in the 1980s and 1990s. More recently, and paralleling a steady wave of scholarly research on history of youth and childhood, children have come to the fore of popular cultural production about the war in France from within and outside the hexagon. However, in spite of broad scholarly and popular consensus that children were implicated and impacted in unique ways during the Holocaust, the topic has not yet been treated systematically or in deep detail. This collection addresses this lacuna by bringing together new work on various aspects of children's histories and experiences of genocide and its aftermath, and in doing so, pushes the boundaries of the definition of "*enfant-Shoah*" to include multiple versions of experience and generational memory.

The book opens with Cyrulnik's apt statement that "two great dangers threaten the children of the Holocaust: the first, is to talk about [it], and the second, is not to talk about [it]" (p. 7). This sensitive recognition of the trauma involved in both expression and repression guides the overall project of reframing the Holocaust as a trans-generational event (p. 29). First, young victims were impacted in unique ways by persecution and genocide. Furthermore, in their efforts to live with seen and unseen horrors, presences and absences, young survivors cast long shadows over their offspring. The third generation produced by this particular cohort came of age seeking their roots and histories that were either obliterated by the Holocaust or buried by those who survived it. The book begins to engage this monumental project by assembling scholarship, testimony, and memory-work on diverse national and transnational themes. Fifteen rich essays are organized into three sections covering childhood after the war, mourning and trauma, and the transmission of experience and memory.

The first group of essays, titled "Post-war Childhoods," begins with a piece by Judith Lindenberg and Audrey Kichelewski that explores the complexities of collecting and publishing Jewish children's testimony. Noé Grüss's collection of children's testimony, published twice: first, in Communist Poland in Polish and again in Buenos Aires in Yiddish, performed different commemorative functions for distinct audiences. In the first case, it indicted the Polish community of inaction in the face of Nazi persecution. In the second case, was aimed at the survivors in the diaspora, as a sort of memorial to a Jewish life in Poland that had been obliterated by genocide. While the two different publications had distinct goals and were produced in unique political contexts, both held children's testimony as authentic representations of both experience and history, and demonstrate the importance of the child-

survivor in global Jewish consciousness after the Holocaust. Mary Fraser Kirsch's essay compares a variety of policies employed to greet Jewish children in postwar Palestine and Great Britain, arguing first that they were not so different from one another, and second, that they were not exclusively Zionist. Most interestingly, these programs drew on child care aid and philanthropy strategies developed in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These practices reveal a great deal about these two contexts, including the lack of viable Jewish families for individual placements, the postwar political power of Zionist discourses of communal living, and the array of strategies for dealing with enormous numbers of children experiencing emotional and behavioral trauma.

The section's next four articles all delve deeply into the reintegration of Jewish children into postwar French society. Katy Hazan's piece examines a group of communal living spaces for Jewish children, their approaches to individual recovery, their pedagogical methods, and their ideas about Jewish identity. In their attempt to keep Jewish children out of the hands of public assistance, Jewish institutions had to accomplish their goal of reintegrating Jewish children while reviving their Jewish identities in a postwar environment in which "silence [was] the rule." The child thus emerged as a site of Jewish cultural reconstruction amidst the struggles of French national and political reconstruction. Laura Hobson Faure's contribution reminds us that French Jewish organisations were not the only groups working to reintegrate Jewish children into French society after the war. In the decade following the war's end, the American Joint Distribution Committee devoted millions of dollars to centralizing French Jewish organisations. However, the Joint took a different approach to its assistance aimed at childhood services, favoring plurality in approaches to Jewish organizational life and culture. One interesting example of this "progressive" style was the Joint's support of the communist UJRE (*Union des Juifs pour la résistance et l'entraide*), under whose care were many children of communist victims. In an era in which American Jewish organisations strove to dissociate themselves with communism, the Joint's stance on aid reveals the degree to which France acted as a unique testing ground for Jewish communal reconstruction.

Catherine Poujol revisits the dramatic and polarizing Finaly affair of the 1950s in her contribution to the collection. A French couple who had hid two Jewish boys during the war, Gérard and Robert Finaly, baptized them at the war's end rather than return the boys to their Jewish relatives who had survived the Holocaust. The boys were whisked away to Spain as the French press continued to cover the scandal and debates over the conversion of Jewish children raged on in France. On the one hand, the Church did perform many baptisms in the service of saving Jewish children during the Shoah, but could these, would these, and should these be undone after the threat of persecution had lifted? Furthermore, was forced baptism, as many Jews argued, simply another form of antisemitic persecution? For many, children were a symbol of the survival of the Jewish people in postwar Europe, yet Poujol argues that there was radical deviation among the various levels of the Church's "ecclesiastical pyramid" (p. 112). For Catholics, the act of saving Jews' lives often came into conflict with the sacrament of saving their souls, and Poujol deftly demonstrates how the sacrament held different meanings for those administering it, especially since Rome offered bishops "liberty of action" (p. 102) during the war. Likewise, Patrick Cabanel's essay demonstrates the complexities of rescuers' experiences of rescue and return through a discussion of parenting and motherhood. While some children kept close ties with their rescuer-parents, others were quickly whisked away to begin new lives with Jewish families. Cabanel writes about children orphaned twice over, referring to the Jewish children who had lost their birth parents to persecution and deportation, and who, after the war, were taken from their non-Jewish families who had saved them. These ruptures also carved permanent scars into the lives the women who had saved these Jewish youngsters' lives by taking them in as their own children. Poujol and Cabanel's thoughtful essays remind us that important choices and traumatic experiences were also faced by those who hid Jewish children during the war—clergy, laymen, and laywomen.

These two essays segue into the second section of the collection, titled "Mourning and Trauma." Nathalie Zajde reflects on the relationship between history and psychopathology, and argues that

because Nazi anti-Semitism created “a unique subjectivity,” children who were not deported, but were hidden, must still be considered survivors by virtue of their traumas caused by persecution, isolation, and displacement. Marion Feldman’s paper uses children’s testimony to highlight some of these scenarios in greater detail, calling attention to the great diversity of psychological and behavioral responses to such experiences. Zajde and Feldman’s treatment of hidden children as patients, witnesses, and historians is echoed in the next two chapters. Irène Epelbaum writes of her experience interviewing child survivors, either hidden or deported, in Paris in the late nineties. In a context shaped by events which brought the Holocaust into public life in France—the publication of Serge Klarsfeld’s *Memorial de la deportation des Juifs de France* and the creation of the Association for Children of Deportees, the Barbie, Touvier, and Papon trials, as well as Jacques Chirac’s 1995 speech recognizing the French state’s participation in Jewish persecution—these interviews evolved from individually recorded fact-based historical narratives to intimate, emotional testimony and therapeutic exercises undertaken in groups. Epelbaum observes that these group dynamics allowed individuals who had spent their entire lives covering up the missing pieces of their lives to listen to others, to express themselves more clearly, and “to understand and accept” their shared traumas (p. 170).

The last two essays in the section brilliantly bridge the gaps between histories of childhood, psychology, and Holocaust literature. The articles focus on two important Holocaust novelists, Aharon Appelfeld and Danilo Kiš, who survived Nazi persecution in Eastern Europe and the Balkans as children. Appelfeld, born in Bucovina, survived persecution and deportation as a child, and emigrated to Israel after the war, where he learned Hebrew and became a writer. In her article, Masha Itzhaki does a close reading of Appelfeld’s autobiographical novels, written as an adult from a young man’s perspective, and concludes that his work serves the second generation—the children of survivors—by helping them understand what their parents were not able to explain: “with his writing, he makes their mute parents’ tormented silence speak” (p. 184). In her thoughtful essay on the autobiographical writing of Serbo-Croatian writer Kiš, Frosa Pejoska-Bouchereau distinguishes children’s testimony from adult testimony, arguing that a child’s perception of the past “can only materialize in a fictional narrative” (p. 203).

Essays in the third section, “Transmission,” focus more intently on the communication of childhood experiences of genocide in both the private sphere and the public sphere. Sarah Gensburger’s account of her work on the commemoration of Paris’s seventieth anniversary of the Vél d’Hiv roundup is fascinating. Given very little practical direction, Gensburger, a sociologist of the Holocaust, and her team, had to navigate a number of different interests to be able to focus the commemorative event on the deportation and rescue of Jewish children in Paris. Her record of this experience reads as a sort of mini-ethnography of the making of a public history event, revealing all the complexities of archival research and the politics of memory involved in studying children’s experiences of genocide. Aurélie Barjonet examines the recent phenomenon of “third generation” inquiries into family histories/narratives of the Holocaust, the most important of which, Daniel Mendelsohn’s *Lost* and Jonathan Safran Foer’s *Everything is Illuminated* were produced by American writers.[1] These books had an extraordinary impact in France, sparking a flurry of similar “archaeological” works in the hexagon, including Marianne Rubinstein’s *C’est maintenant du passé*, Jérôme Dres’s *Nous n’irons pas voir Auschwitz*, and Ivan Jablonka’s *Histoire des grand-parents que je n’ai pas eus*. [2] This form of writing blends “a genealogical impulse” into the historical project that allows the writer to “cohabit both past and present,” demonstrating the degree to which the Holocaust remains a powerful force in the lives of generations beyond its victims (p. 227).

The final essays in this section restate the broader theme of the Shoah’s trans-generational impact. Ivan Jablonka and Marianne Rubinstein share a conversation about their experiences as grandchildren of Holocaust victims, and as children of parents who suffered in a variety of ways from their own experience as orphans of the Holocaust, or as third-generation survivors. Rubinstein points out that there is a fundamental piece missing from her past and from her identity. Both describe how, as they grew up, their roles came to include “restoring the vertebral column of our families” (p. 244),

recognizing the fissures in between generations caused by the violence of the Shoah experience. Jablonka concludes the section and the book with a moving and thoughtful personal reflection on his identity as a historian, as a Jew, and as a grandson of Holocaust victims.

In delving deeply into a broad array of children's histories, experiences, and memories of the Holocaust and its aftermath—deportees, survivors, orphans, hidden or rescued children, and their offspring—the collection presents a coherent and meaningful argument about the Holocaust's diverse impacts on those who lived through and after it. The book's narrow focus on France also helps highlight the complexities of the genocide's trans-generational reverberations in a country that, as Henry Rousso has argued, has suffered from a chronic memory disorder with regard to its own role in Jewish persecution during the Second World War.[3] Gensburger's mini-ethnography of public history and memory in particular brings the current incarnation of this phenomenon to light. In addition to deftly illuminating a vital theme in Holocaust historiography, this argument and these methods can potentially contribute to global studies of genocide, more broadly conceived. Contemporary policy and assistance-related concerns about the impact of violence, persecution, dislocation, war, and ethnic cleansing on populations must consider not only the experiences and memories of adults, but of children, as well as their children and grandchildren.

In its focus on transgenerationalism, this study also breathes new life into Rousso's Vichy Syndrome, a concept that refers to a collective cultural and political malaise caused by the dark history of France's wartime years. Interdisciplinary approaches combining anthropology, psychology, social psychology, and history have allowed scholars to understand modern combat, home front, and mourning processes in new and interesting ways.[4] Relatively recent social and political attention to defining, treating, and preventing post-traumatic stress disorder has been accompanied by scholarly studies on genetics and stress that have challenged the boundaries between hard sciences and the humanities and social sciences. A 2014 study conducted by American researchers investigating the genetic transmission of stress among Holocaust survivors and their children, concluded Holocaust survivors' children had altered levels of stress hormones.[5] Yet the idea of transgenerational trauma has not yet been fully explored by historians of the Holocaust. Jablonka et al have done a great service to the field by assembling a variety of articles that not only focus on a relatively under-treated topic in French historiography of the twentieth century, but contribute much-needed discussion on a significant theme in studies of modern war and trauma.

## LIST OF ESSAYS

Boris Cyrulnik, "Préface"

Ivan Jablonka, "Introduction"

Audrey Kichelewski and Judith Lindenberg, "Les enfants accusent.' Témoignages d'enfants survivants dans le monde polonais et Yiddish"

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Catherine Poujol, "La restitution des enfants juifs cachés par l'Église de France"

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Aurélie Barjonet, “Les petits-enfants: une génération d’écrivains hantés”

(conversation avec Marianne Rubinstein), “Restaurer la colonne vertébrale de nos familles”

Ivan Jablonka, “Petit-fils, historien, Juif”

#### NOTES

[1] Daniel Mendelsohn, *The Lost: The Search for Six of Six Million* (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 2006) and Jonathan Safran Foer, *Everything is Illuminated* (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 2002).

[2] Marianne Rubinstein, *C’est maintenant du passé* (Paris: Editions Verticales, Gallimard, 2009), Jérémie Dres, *Nous n’irons pas voir Auschwitz* (Paris: Editions Cambourakis, 2011), and Ivan Jablonka, *Histoire des grand-parents que je n’ai pas eus* (Paris: Points, 2013).

[3] Henry Rousso, Trans. Arthur Goldhammer, *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France since 1944* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Press University, 1994).

[4] See V. Duclos, 2013. “When Anthropology meets Science: an Interview with Allan Young,” available from <http://somatosphere.net/2013/10/when-anthropology-meets-science-an-interview-with-allan-young.html> [8 August 2014]. For a recent example of this kind of work, see Irit Keynan, *Psychological War Trauma and Society: Like a hidden wound* (New York: Routledge, 2015).

[5] Rachel Yehuda, et al, “Influences of Maternal and Paternal PTSD on Epigenetic Regulation of the Glucocorticoid Receptor Gene in Holocaust Survivor Offspring,” *American Psychiatry* 171(2014): 872-880.

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ISSN 1553-9172