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Danielle Bailly, ed., *The Hidden Children of France, 1940–1945. Stories of Survival*. Albany: Excelsior Editions, State University of New York Press, 2010. \$19.95 U.S. (pb). ISBN: 978-4384-3196-3.

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The testimonies of Holocaust survivors have proliferated in recent years. Various factors explain this profusion. The centrality of the Shoah in Western awareness and moral conscience, going back to the early 1980s, was based initially on research about the successive stages of the persecution itself and about those who perpetrated or facilitated it. The complicity of collaborationist governments, especially that of Vichy, which had largely been glossed over by historians of the period, was first exposed in all its enormity. It was only in that era that the survivors, who had spent decades rebuilding their lives and had been discouraged when their first attempts ran into general indifference, began to speak up and later to publish their memoirs. The result was the fracturing of the memory of the Shoah into hundreds of thousands of individual narratives. As time passed and the survivors found themselves approaching the end of their lives and increasingly apprehensive that the extermination of the Jews would be relegated to an oubliette from which there would no longer be any living testimony to rescue it, they felt a greater urgency to pass on their experiences. In recent years, it has been the turn of the youngest survivors, those who were children during the Shoah, to speak up and say their piece.

In this book, Danielle Bailly has collected eighteen accounts by survivors who, as children in France, were sent into hiding when the Vichy police and then the Milice, complying with the Germans' orders, hunted down Jews. They were seventy or older at the time of the interviews (2002–2003) that are the basis for this collection. Most of them had grandchildren and were no doubt thinking about them as they answered Bailly's questions. Some have died since. The author seeks to present comprehensive narratives of family life. Although the war years are central, they are not presented in isolation from a reconstruction of what came earlier (when possible) and from their consequences for the protagonists' life since then. The fact that considerable time has passed allows them to take a reflective attitude that reinforces the ever-present emotional dimension. We must be humble when facing these individuals' destinies, brought back to life in their most painful aspects, and the evocation of their "stolen childhood," an idea that recurs in several of these testimonies.

The various narratives have many points in common. These are due, no doubt, to the choice of the corpus, as Bailly admits in her introduction: "This collection of testimonies doesn't claim to be a scientific or exhaustive representation. ... It is completely Ashkenazi, mostly Parisian, often politically connected" (p. xx). This choice explains "the commitment to the left and sometimes the extreme left" that characterizes some of them, as underlined by Pierre Vidal-Naquet in his preface. It also explains why most of them draw universal conclusions from their ordeal, in addition to their strong attachment to the history of the Jews through the ages. But the subjectivity of the choice of witnesses is not the only source of commonality. In practice, Jewish families, pursued and threatened, had to adopt similar survival strategies. Nevertheless, a collection of individual voices expresses inevitably a diversity of fates, therefore there is both uniformity and variety in this collection.

Most of the stories begin in Eastern Europe, focused on the grandparents or parents of these "children." Some had left Poland to attend university in France. Others had fled Russia to avoid conscription in the Czar's army, or had run away from an eastern European country because of their political activity. Still others were pushed to emigrate by poverty or local antisemitism. All of these journeys, by individuals or by families, ended in France, which was a destination of choice for some,

but intended by others as no more than a way station en route to the United States or Australia. Most of them had left family behind in the old country. France secularized the vast majority, even those who came from extremely devout families. Some had only an extremely vague idea of what it meant to be a Jew. "To me the Jews were doubtless a variety of Poles with family members in Palestine and friends in the Comintern and a Christmas tree," as Gaby Netchine Grynberg writes (p. 318). What strikes us when we read these tales of origin is the large number of brothers, sister, uncles, aunts--in short, that these "children" came from very large prewar families--an abundance that stands in stark contrast to the post-war narratives, which mention only the remnants of decimated families.

The occupation of France, the pursuit of Jewish families, the camps (including the notorious Drancy), the deportations to an "unknown destination" from which so few returned--all left their mark. This is the core of these interviews: the persecution and the threat of the worst that dislocated the families. Some parents were quick to understand that they had to protect their children by handing them over to non-Jewish families; for others this realization and decision came much later. For all of these children, some of them quite young, it was the start of months and sometimes years without their parents. Some never saw them again. Many of these stories underscore the capital importance of the Vel d'Hiv roundup in Paris in July 1942. We see it in the memories of Charles Zelwer, scarcely more than an infant at the time. He remembers the knocks on the door, his parents' refusal to answer, unlike their custom, and how his mother took him in her arms and put him in her own bed, which she had never done in the past, in what was, for him, "a moment of supreme happiness" (p. 24); but also the separation that ensued immediately, when he was handed over to a Catholic nanny outside the capital.

We also witness the tragedy of the arrest of Odette Kozuch's parents and siblings, who did not have the good fortune to possess French nationality (p. 288). Overnight, this child of twelve, the spoiled child of the family, as she tells us, found herself responsible for herself and her younger brother. "It seems to me that my childhood ended there....I never again played with a doll," she writes (p. 289). During this roundup, as in all of them, the attitude of the building concierge was crucial. Some of them kept silent, while others informed on Jews who were trying to hide. Some took the families or their children under their protection, did their shopping for them, or hid them among their own family. Others plundered the apartments that had been emptied of their occupants. Thus the Jews encountered the best and the worst during this period when, pursued by the law and the agents of the French state, they could rely only on the civilian population for assistance.

For all of these young city-dwellers, the discovery of the countryside was an important part of the experience. Some quickly caught on to their peril and lived in constant insecurity. Others were shielded by the innocence of their extreme youth. But almost all had to get used to a new identity, to be inconspicuous: Danielle Bailly (p. 127) "drew a lot of pictures with pencils and very little paper" and some even practised Catholic rites (for example, Éliane Séravalle, p. 181). It is impossible to retrace all of these paths, all of these survival strategies, that all ended in shattered lives and dislocated families. Their destinies could be and were very different. Some were shuttled about from place to place (like Rachel Jeliniak, p. 196), while others remained hidden in a village, more or less providing all their own needs, as if cut off from the rest of the world (like Daniel Krakowski, p. 218). Some found a small bit of warmth in the families who had taken them in, while others faced a hostile environment (like Nelly Scharapan, pp. 164-165). Here we have it all over again: the best and the worst.

Ultimately this is one of these key questions that emerges from all of these testimonies. What was the attitude of the French population as a whole? Danielle Bailly dedicates her book "to those who saved us." "Our heartfelt thanks to all those--known and unknown--who put themselves in danger that we might survive: individuals or institutions, rural residents or city dwellers," she writes in the dedication of her book. In her own testimony she writes, "today I know the figures. However, if there were fewer deported from France than from other countries, it is because, overall, people there contributed to protecting us. But my family met more people who were 'not nice' than 'nice'" (p. 122). Here she is echoing a dominant theme of the French discourse, even though it is contradicted

by her own experience: the assertion that the Vichy state contributed to the extermination of one quarter of the Jewish population of France, whereas civil society, the French people, saved the 75 percent who survived the war. This conclusion is much too hasty. If the Germans had decided to make a serious effort to round up the 30,000 Jews who were living legally in Paris at the time of the Liberation, wearing the yellow star, the figures would have quite different. If the Italians had not protected the Jews in the districts they occupied between November 1942 and September 1943, the number of victims would have been greater. If the war in France had lasted past the summer of 1944, the proportion of survivors would have been smaller. Of course, history is not written on the basis of "ifs," but these examples show that it is going somewhat too far to assign the righteous of France sole credit for the survival rate of Jews in that country.

These testimonies do not end with the Liberation. They also tell of the return, the hope, and their vigil at the Hotel Lutétia, the first stop for those who returned home from the camps, followed by the gradual discovery of the void that the genocide had left in their families: the shattered lives, even when their parents did come back; the empty (and often emptied) flats to which they returned; the families back together, the heavy silences, the lives that had to be rebuilt from all of this debris.

It might be argued that, with so many testimonies available, this collection offers nothing really new. But that is not the case. Each additional narrative adds a different voice that illuminates an aspect one might not have thought about previously. Consider Rachel Jeliniak, returning at the age of ten to a bare apartment: "This empty apartment—without furniture, without belongings, without photos that would have allowed us to remember those who were gone, to reconnect us to our parents—made us cry," she writes. "The loss of our memorabilia was even more painful than the loss of our material goods" (p. 199). Compared to other tragedies of that period, her empty apartment may seem rather banal; but nevertheless it makes us feel, suddenly and concretely, the deep void felt by this young child, most of whose relatives had been deported and did not return. One could multiply these examples of such tiny details that are so full of meaning; they are to be found throughout these interviews.

Ultimately we can understand why it has been easier to write the history of the persecution than that of the persecuted. In the former case, the narrative can be linear; in the latter, there are many stories that cannot be reduced to a single narrative. There is a vast gulf between analysis of a policy and studies of the consequences of that same policy, which take us back to the complexity of the human situation.

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