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Anne Freadman, *Holding On and Holding Out: Jewish Diaries from Wartime France*. Toronto, Buffalo, and London: University of Toronto Press, 2020. xi + 262pp. Notes, bibliography, and index. \$85.00 U.S. (hb). ISBN 9781487507534; \$34.95 U.S. (pb). ISBN 9781487525194.

Response by Anne Freadman, The University of Melbourne.

Dr. Vastenhout gives a generous and attentive account of my book, and I am grateful for the opportunity to enter into dialogue with a fellow scholar of the issues I discuss in it. She raises some questions to which I shall respond serially below. However, I start with some more general matters. They pertain to method and to the corpus of materials studied.

The first of these is raised by her pointing out a careless claim I make in my introduction. This is, that this “small number of Jews...can be taken to speak for the large number” who did not write about their experience of Vichy and German persecution. I agree with Dr. Vastenhout that this contradicts my concluding remark that no generalisation of individual experience can be drawn from this material. I should have written that *we are constrained* to take these diarists as speaking for the silent majority of Jews. This is because of the paucity of French diary material from this period that has come to light thus far.

This paucity answers the second question: why were these diaries chosen? Briefly, because there are very few others. Those available not used in this book can be counted on the fingers of one hand. Notable amongst them are the diaries of Jacques Samuel and Vladimir Rabinovitch, which I have studied in another publication.[1] That of Lucien Dreyfus has been studied in detail by Alexandra Gabarini.[2] To my very great regret, I failed to find that of Christian Lazare in time to integrate it into the structure of the book. When I can return to France (from Australia) I intend to find some way of repairing this omission. My corpus consists primarily of diaries that have not been studied previously (with the exception of the editorial apparatus provided in several of the publications).

Dr. Vastenhout’s question regarding the corpus goes, however, to a more substantial issue than to that of availability or opportunity. She is concerned that I have chosen writing by “well-educated (naturalized) French citizens,” while neglecting those of “the thousands of immigrants (in France) from Eastern Europe.” Several of the diarists in my corpus (Castro, Grunberg) were indeed immigrants from the 1920s and 1930s; Bielinky and Schatzman from earlier in the century. I am not aware of the existence of other diaries written by members of this latter group.

For reasons germane to her criticism on this point, Dr. Vastenhoust thinks that a more appropriate subtitle would have been “Diaries of French Jews.” Perhaps she means “French speaking Jews.” Among those I have studied, Castro’s French is patently non-native, and Schatzman’s, though far more educated, also betrays its non-native foundations, and may have been edited. There is a great deal of work to be done on the manuscript sources, but this was not my project here. The expression “French Jews,” as distinct from “foreign Jews,” is historically contentious. It was used by the authorities of the Consistory to oppose supporting the immigrant Jews in the 1930s as a means of proving their own national allegiance. This was the issue on which Raymond-Raoul Lambert found himself in conflict with that organisation. This conflict is studied in detail in Vicky Caron’s authoritative work, on which I draw for my discussion of Lambert’s diary.^[3] It was commonly used by some French-born Jews who refused to be identified with the ‘foreign Jews.’ This is a nativist discourse. A brutal example of this refusal is recounted in Jean-Jacques Bernard’s memoir, which I discuss in my book (pp.19-26). The “foreign Jews” were often designated by the adjective *juif*, as distinct from *israélite*, reserving the latter term for an exclusively confessional identification.^[4] However, the point of the Vichy laws was to eradicate this distinction, treating the whole Jewish population as *juif*. In these terms, all Jews were “foreign,” none were “French.” Part of the identity crisis for the assimilated population was the difficulty of situating themselves in these terms. The diary of Jacqueline Mesnil-Amar is exemplary in tracing her own trajectory.

Dr. Vastenhoust rightly emphasises my focus on the diary itself as object of study, rather than merely as a source of historical details. However, I am a little puzzled by the fact that she omits from her discussion the theme of the experience of time. This is the focus of the second part of the book. As I point out, the diary as a process of writing is uniquely fitted to tracing both the time of experience, and the experience of time. It is in this context that her question regarding continuity can be answered. Much of the experience recorded in the diaries shows the individuals locked into a present without past or future, into a “now” constantly re-actualised by the very act of writing. Castro, for example, uses his diary to keep track of the passing of the days in the camp where they were ever repeated, and ever the same. Schatzman, too, records changes in his physical state by using it to locate a yesterday and a tomorrow. His decline is carefully recorded over time, and cannot be understood *as* experience by referring to it as a punctual event or as a statistic.

Dr. Vastenhoust finds the postmodernist theories on which I rely “complex and challenging.” I rely on William James’s phenomenological account of the experience of time to gloss the concept of “now,” and add to it the grammar of deixis, which explicates what it is to say, or to write, “now.” There is no “now” without an act of language, which anchors time and allows us to construct past and future in relation to the present. We cannot narrate change without it. This is dramatically illustrated by the impossibility for Castro of locating himself in time as he lapses further into physical and mental collapse and loses the capacity to keep his diary. This understanding of the present is vital to understanding “experience” recounted in the first person. The Vichy and the Occupation years, indeed, effected a break in the life story of anyone affected intimately by their regimes. Hence the problem of continuity. It is not good enough to rely on an under-theorised notion of memory, on which many accounts of identity rely. Memory, I maintain, is an effect of material practices, a fact amply illustrated by the requirements Stern had to meet both in the military and the civil administrations, the latter both humiliating and arduous. Dr. Vastenhoust asks if such practices are evident beyond the case of Jean-Claude Stern. This would have to be examined, but few of the diarists I study survived to tell the tale. However, it

is clear from many of the diaries that the very practice of keeping a diary serves this purpose. Grunberg, Schatzman, and Lambert all make this explicit.

Regarding my account of Schatzman's reaction to the thousands of people temporarily interned at Drancy before deportation, Dr. Vastenhout points out that the "knowledge people had" of the mass extermination of Jews is a subject of debate in Holocaust historiography. Did Schatzman "know" is her implied question. In the Coda, I have written that Schatzman "could not know" (p.218). I believe that the terms of the historical debate need some modification: which particular people, under what circumstances, "knew," what exactly did they know, and how did they know? In an era in which there was no mass media and in which the regimes practised stringent censorship, the sources of knowledge have to be sought elsewhere. Members of the Communist resistance in France (and no doubt elsewhere) got wind very early of the killing machines because they had networks reaching into eastern Europe; members of the nationalist resistance(s) did not. The few people who had access to short-wave radio (banned in Germany and the other occupied countries), also "knew" something. Grunberg, who was multi-lingual, is one of both groups; he listened frequently to the BBC as well as to Russian broadcasts. It was from the BBC that he learnt of Jan Karski's report to the British government. In 1943, he used the expression "extermination" for the fate of the Jews. Jacqueline Mesnil-Amar knew, both through her resistance networks, and because many of her and her husband's family had been killed. Her postwar activities gave her intimate knowledge of what had happened long before the numbers came out. H el ene Berr had wind of the gassing trucks, used prior to the use of purpose-built extermination camps, and she knew that many deportees died on a regular basis because her work at the UGIF included receiving bundles of clothing sent back from the East and returning them to the families.

With respect to the specific level of knowledge of Schatzman and his fellow internees in Drancy in the summer of 1942, I think it is useful to modify our understanding of the verb "to know." There is cognitive knowledge, and there is affective knowledge. Schatzman "could not know" of the methods, the material infrastructure, and the number of killings. Knowing, for him, was a matter of foreboding. He knew that there were regular deaths in Drancy and in Compi egne because of the conditions, and it was a fair bet that those conditions would not be alleviated at the destination of the deportations. He knew, because he watched them, that these deportations were massive, involving thousands of people. He believed that those deportations were destined for labour camps, but it was difficult to go on believing this when he saw women and children lining up to be put on the buses. This kind of knowledge, based on inference from experience and the fear of an anticipated outcome, is like the kind of knowledge expressed in the adverb "already" as used by Bielinky, in such sentences as "there have already been seven suicides in Paris" and "there have already been deaths at the Vel d'Hiv" (pp. 158 and 168). Foreboding blocks H el ene Berr's sense of a future, and incites her, along with other diarists, to bear witness. Reading diaries requires us to recognise this kind of experiential knowledge. It is, needless to say, very different from the documented facts historiography seeks to establish. Historiography is retrospective; foreboding is prospective. In October 1942, Raymond-Raoul Lambert has no doubt as to the fate of deportees from Les Milles as he records their "last will and testament" (p. 96).

Dr. Vastenhout complains that I do not provide enough background information for non-specialist readers. I presume she assumes that a reader should be able to do without the detailed references which I provide. In particular, she thinks I should have explained the "Nazi [presumably she means the French government's] definition of what constituted a Jew."

However, the passage of Feldman's diary where this is discussed makes it abundantly clear that these criteria were constantly changing. She is mistaken to claim that I do not introduce Jacques Helbronner: his position is stated on p. 67, and the note references research by Simon Schwarzfuss concerning him. I complain in my turn that she glosses Lambert's position as "chairman of the controversial 'Jewish council' of the unoccupied zone." This is misleading. The UGIF was not a "Jewish council"—a *Judenrat*—like those of Poland and elsewhere. I point this out on p. 68, and refer to Michael Marrus's argument that "identification of the UGIF as a *Judenrat* is inaccurate (my note 16)".^[5] The ghettos of Poland and other Eastern countries provided the conditions under which the *Judenräte* could control all aspects of the daily life of their populations, including the organisation of the round-ups. France had no ghettos. Instead, the UGIF was a confederation of the secular organisations of French Jewry. In practice, it operated charitable agencies. It was controversial because it was seen to be collaborating with the occupiers and with the Vichy government, having been set up under a directive from the Nazis. Although these authorities were hoping it would work on the model of the *Judenräte*, it never did. Lambert's diary records his efforts towards circumscribing its powers.

Dr. Vastenhout laments that my book "does not have a concluding chapter." The book does, however, have a Coda in which I "zoom out" to consider "The Self in History." In it, I focus on two of the diarists indicatively, then make connections with many of the others. Both raise the question of continuity with some acuity, but not, in contrast with Stern, as an analysis of the material practices of identity formation over time. Schatzman's reflections bear on Nazism and what he sees to be its causes and remedies. As a preventative measure against any repetition, he recommends breaking entirely with the bad habits of society in the interwar years. Jacqueline Mesnil-Amar's concern French Jewry since the Dreyfus affair. She too recommends—and adopts—a form of discontinuity with the habits of the assimilated life and recommends a renewal of continuity with a longer Jewish history.

Dr. Vastenhout's focus is on the history and historiography of the Holocaust. I am very gratified by her assessment that my book contributes to developments in this area and that it serves as a reminder of the value of "personal testimonies" in historical research. It is for another reviewer in a different publication to judge whether the second of my methodological aims has been met, which is to contribute to understanding the diary as a genre. I have sought to add to the research of Gabarini, Leociak and Camarade (among others) to show how this genre is used in conditions of collective trauma.^[6] She has chosen to privilege the issue of identity over that of time. Like the first person of the writing, the issue of time arises from a formal feature of the diary as a genre, its fragmentary composition over a period and the significance the "now" of writing acquires accordingly. These two issues are mutually intricately. Time is constitutive of experience, and it is through this focus that I have hoped to show that experience is not limited to the events experienced. The diarist is situated in time—not just at a point, but in a complex texture of processes that cannot be captured by chronology. The question motivating my book is to discover indicatively, in the writing of "a handful of individuals" in France, what it was to experience the Shoah on a daily basis.

NOTES

[1] Anne Freadman, "From Assimilation to Jewish Identity: The Dilemmas of French Jewry under the Occupation," *French Cultural Studies*, 28/1 (2017): 54-66.

[2] Alexandra Gabarini, *Numbered Days: Diaries and the Holocaust* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006).

[3] Vicky Caron, *Uneasy Asylum: France and the Jewish Refugee Crisis, 1933-1942* (Stanford C.A.: Stanford University Press, 1999).

[4] Renée Poznanski, *Être juif en France pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale* (Paris: Hachette, 1994), pp. 23-46.

[5] Michael Marrus, "Jewish Leadership and the Holocaust: The Case of France," in Yehuda Reinharz, ed., *Living with Anti-Semitism* (Hanover NH: University Press of New England, 1987), pp. 380-396.

[6] H el ene Camarade, * critures de la r sistance: Le journal intime sous le Troisi me Reich* (Toulouse, Presses universitaires du Mirail, 2007); Gabarini, *Numbered Days*; Janek Leociak, *Text in the Face of Destruction: Accounts from the Warsaw Ghetto Reconsidered*, tr. Emma Harris (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, 2004).

Anne Freadman
The University of Melbourne
freadman@unimelb.edu.au

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