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[Hantzaroula, Pothiti. Child survivors of the Holocaust in Greece : memory, testimony and subjectivity]

Neograeca Bohemica. 2023, vol. 23, iss. [1], pp. 161-163

ISSN 1803-6414 (print); ISSN 2694-913x (online)

Stable URL (DOI): <https://doi.org/10.5817/NGB2023-23-10>

Stable URL (handle): <https://hdl.handle.net/11222.digilib/digilib.79637>

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Access Date: 05. 03. 2024

Version: 20240228

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δύσκολα πλέον μπορεί να παραμείνει στην αφάνεια. Από αυτή την άποψη το μελέτημα του Τάσου Αγγελόπουλου μπορεί να θεωρηθεί από σήμερα κομβικό ως προς την εξέλιξη του πεδίου που το ίδιο θεραπεύει.

Pothiti Hantzaroula. *Child Survivors of the Holocaust in Greece. Memory, Testimony and Subjectivity.* London and New York: Routledge, 2021, 278 pp. ISBN 978-0-429-50798-4 (e-Book).

Julia Fröhlich | <https://doi.org/10.5817/NGB2023-23-10>

Pain inflicted on children represents one of the most horrid aspects of violent human interaction throughout history and often serves as a prism through which horrors are perceived: a child crying of hunger, toys scattered on the ground with their little owners gone, a corpse far too small to require a regular-sized grave – these pictures haunt our memories, they shape public discourse and turn into dreadful symbols for human catastrophe. As they serve as signifiers for whole events and seemingly impalpable atrocities, these symbols, however, are bare of subjectivity as the suffering child is stripped of its individuality in public discourse: it is not about *the one specific* child but about the general horror epitomised by its pain. This reduction of children to symbols of suffering is seen as much in today’s discourse on contemporary events as in discourse and memory evolving around past human-made catastrophes, most notably war and genocide. Trying to counter what Pothiti Hantzaroula terms the “iconicity of the Holocaust photographs of children” that “emptied children of their particularity, specificity and subjectivity” (p. 5), the author seeks to zoom in on children, their traumata and memories, as well as individual and collective identity formation in the postwar period. Using the “lens of children as a frame of analysis (...) to understand the traumatic legacies of the Shoah in postwar society” (p. 4), Hantzaroula traces children’s subjectivity and identity construction within the given social framework of postwar Greece by drawing on emotions as a prime category of her historical analysis through which public, collective, and individual Holocaust memory construction is explored.

Drawing on 61 partly semi-structured interviews with child survivors, which were conducted between 2012 and 2017, the study “follows the process of formation of an identity grounded on concealment and shame” (p. 20) and reveals the specificities of the different Jewish communities in Greece and their

impact on postwar identity construction. The term ‘child survivor’ comprises three age-related categories: adolescents, in 1945 under the age of 16, the so-called ‘1.5 generation’, children that lacked an ‘adult understanding’ of events but nonetheless were more aware of them than the third group – children born during the war. All these children survived both the war and the Holocaust either in hiding or in concentration camps and were part of communities in Athens, Salonika [Thessaloniki], and Volos. Embarking from the experience of these children, the author seeks to shed light on the dynamics of memory and the traumatic legacy of the Holocaust – by exploring various forms of generational memory transmission and aspects of embodiment of trauma.

Divided into eight chapters that are preceded by a comprehensive introduction, the book gives a well-structured view on the dynamics of traumata and their continued existence in individual, collective, and transgenerational memory. Methodologically well-informed, the study combines trauma and memory studies with historiographic analysis – a combination that provides a highly rewarding view on Holocaust memory embedded in individual, collective and public memory and situated within social structures. Individual stories, skilfully intertwined with a factual account of the respective contexts and interpreted through the lens of well-conceptualised analysis, provide the reader with a clear picture of individual children’s experiences and later memory. Fitting to this generally upheld balance between individual accounts and external structures, the author succeeds at shifting between factual-theoretical and narrative modes of storytelling.

In the first chapter, Hantzaroula discusses the fundamental concepts of her study and critically engages with what she terms “crisis of testimony” (p. 33) and the difficulties that fact-driven historiography faces when archives become unreliable or inexistent. Consequently, testimonies rose in importance as they satisfied the need for a sound, reliable basis for scientific analysis. Exploring the development of the testimonial genre in Greece, the author describes the emergence of audiovisual material and its impact on public discourse. Having thus prepared the ground for her analysis, Hantzaroula then shifts to the question of how children handled the traumata inflicted on them and how these shaped their identities.

In Chapter 2, she thus traces the effect of persecution, and life in either hiding or concentration camps on children’s subjectivity and “the embodied folding of trauma” (p. 56). Rightly addressing the broad variety of experiences and traumata, the following chapter traces individual trajectories of hiding, escape, and survival in dependence on external factors and individual characteristics that shaped the individual’s agency. Additionally, the author shows how Jewishness

was integrated into an individual's identity – ranging from shameful suppression, a strong sense of responsibility and duty towards the Jewish community, to pride. While this third chapter concentrates on Jewish children of Athens and Salonika, Chapter 4 shifts the focus to the Jewish community of Volos, and identity formation in relation to both rampant antisemitism and strong Jewish involvement in local resistance activities. Shifting the gaze from children in hiding to children surviving the ordeal of concentration camp 'life', Chapter 5 zooms in on child survivors of Bergen-Belsen, the impact of imprisonment on their psyche, and the pain inflicted on them after the war when they were commonly perceived as survivors of an allegedly 'privileged' camp.

Once more masterfully evoking heart-rendering stories of unsuccessful evasion and hiding, and interlacing these with factual knowledge, Hantzaroula convincingly portrays emotions as the key to insightful historiographic analysis. While Chapter 5 definitely deals with shame – albeit mostly anchored inside the Jewish community – Chapter 6 elaborates on that by discussing shame as the unconscious reaction of children who were persecuted on the basis of their Jewishness and had incorporated antisemitic discourse themselves. As shown with reference to the postwar reconstruction of Jewish community life (Chapter 7), this form of antisemitism – ingrained not only in Greek society but in the self of young Jewish children – was only slowly overcome. Concluding with Chapter 8 that addresses memory, postmemory, and transgenerational haunting through the lens of family legacies and trauma, Hantzaroula has brought forth an insightful book – a book whose minor limitations (e.g. temporary distance between events and recall in some interviews) do not do any harm to the general impression. Above all, this study successfully gives voice to witnesses that have often been denied 'real' (linguistic) space in historiography and public discourse – and thus constitutes an important step forward.

Πέτρος Μαραζόπουλος. Τα Βαλκάνια στη Νεοελληνική Κουλτούρα: Όψεις της Διαχείρισης ενός όρου. Θεσσαλονίκη: Εκδόσεις Επίκεντρο, 2023, 353 σελ. ISBN 978-618-204-302-8.

Κωνσταντίνος Τσίβος | <https://doi.org/10.5817/NGB2023-23-11>

Το βιβλίο του Πέτρου Μαραζόπουλου αποτελεί μια ενδελεχή, μοναδική στο είδος της, μελέτη του τρόπου πρόσληψης των Βαλκάνιων γειτόνων στη νεοελληνική