



Yehudi Lindeman, ed. *Shards of Memory: Narratives of Holocaust Survival*. Westport: Praeger, 2007. xxvii + 222 pp. \$49.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-275-99423-5.

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A Glimpse into the Holocaust: Narrated Testimonies by Canadian Holocaust Survivors

Shards of Memory follows the pattern of several other Holocaust oral or video history collections that have appeared in the past two decades by giving an edited presentation of the more significant testimonies from their archive in a narrative format. Yehudi Lindeman, the director of Living Testimonies Video Archive at McGill University in Montreal, compliments these oral history compilations by providing narratives of twenty-five Canadian Holocaust survivors from his Holocaust archive. Rabbi Ayla Grafstein founded this archive with Lindeman in 1998. It focuses mainly on Holocaust survivors from the Montreal area and other regions in Canada. Besides the multiple Jewish survivor testimonies, the archive also contains twenty hours of interviews with Sinti Holocaust survivors.[1] The eventual twenty-five testimonies selected for publication here offer individual glimpses while attempting to represent a cumulative view of the Holocaust survivor.

The work begins with a foreword by Elie Wiesel. His short but eloquent opening sets the emotional tone for the book. However, it reads more like a general endorsement than a foreword to these specific narratives. The most valuable introduction to the testimonies comes from Lindeman. In the introduction, he explains the need for survivors to communicate their stories. As a child survivor of the Dutch Holocaust, he explains the decades it took for him to open up about the events and the willingness of others to listen. Some events and works in the 1960s, such as the Auschwitz trials and publication of Wiesel's *Night* in English (1960), initiated the demand for testimonies. The need to overcome the silence was really

expanded in the 1980s with the founding of several oral history projects, such as this one. Lindeman stresses that as the years go by these endeavors become more urgent since the world will need to document the experiences of survivors before they die.

Lindeman points out that as he listened to the different survivors, they all told a unique story. As a result, he attempted to reflect their distinctive experiences in the narrated testimonies provided in this volume. Despite relative conformity in the interviews to North American norms of dress and expression, the witnesses differ by age, gender, socioeconomic background, native language, and national origin. The testimonies are based on experiences in the Netherlands, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Germany, and France. These divergences give rise to differences both in the narrators' historical experiences and their attempts to process them. Lindeman groups the narratives into six chapters that each adopts a specific theme: survivors who passed as gentiles; women in camps; men in camps; child survivors, survivors continuously in flight from the Nazis; and a Danish survivor. Each survivor account commences with an introductory paragraph that explains the survivor's reason for providing his or her story, offers background on the survivor's life before the events of the testimony, or briefly summarizes the testimony. Within the testimonies the narrative follows a chronological pattern beginning with childhood and family to ultimate escape from the Nazis and life afterwards. Although the testimonies are grouped thematically according to the survivors' backgrounds, some subjects appear in several tes-

timonies. The narratives are drawn predominantly from eastern Europeans; only four of twenty-five accounts concern western Europe. Most of these survivors were born in Poland and remained there during most of their Holocaust experiences.

One of these repeated topics is the large movement of the Jewish population from their original hometowns throughout Europe and the world. In "Hiding on the Run: Perspectives of Child Survivors," Leah K. describes the death marches she and her family were forced to make from Romania across the Soviet border. From there she traveled through the Soviet Union back to Romania, where she survived the war to return to her brother in the Soviet Union. Problems with her brother caused her to depart for Austria; from there she emigrated to Canada. Today, she lives with her husband in Jerusalem. Like Leah's story, almost every account includes extensive travels before arrival in Canada. Overall, Lindeman offers a representative sample of the diverse experiences of Holocaust survivors. Gender and age comparisons of these accounts allow the reader to discover patterns in survival strategies and experiences. However, many of the obvious patterns have been elucidated in earlier edited collections. For example, Nechama Tec tackled the gender issue in *Resilience and Courage: Women, Men, and the Holocaust* (2003). Lindeman has little new material to offer in this sense.

Edited testimonies always raise questions about the extent of editing and the questions the interviewer originally asked during the interview. This collection addresses this issue in the conclusion, which was written by Anita Slominska. In it, she describes the difficulties Lindeman faced in the development of the interviewing and

editing process. One of the interesting elements of this explanation was the decision to record interviews with video and not only audio devices. Lindeman claims that video recordings are superior since they allow the viewer to watch the emotional expression and movement by the interviewee: "Video is able to bestow individuality on each interviewed survivor" (p. 184). The editing process as described in the book does not, however, address the topic of questions asked. Since several themes crop up continuously, it might be possible that certain questions were asked to highlight these topics. Scholarly readers will miss an appendix that recorded the basic questions asked of each interviewee. Other oral history projects have adopted this technique to facilitate use of narrative testimonies for other research projects.

Not only does it explain the different process that lead to the narratives presented in this collection, the conclusion also gives a small glimpse into the lives of the main founding interviewers, Lindeman and Renata Skotnicka-Zajdman. Both child survivors of the Holocaust, they insert subjectivity into the interviews. In this case, however, such subjectivity creates an obvious bond between the interviewer and the interviewee. Slominska stresses the difficulty survivors experience in telling their stories. The book, in sum, is about reconnecting with the past in order to leave historical proof for the future.

Note

[1]. More information on the archive can be found on its website at <http://www.arts.mcgill.ca/programs/livingt/intro.htm>. Excerpts of interviews by three survivors also discussed in the book are available on the website.

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at:

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