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Helga Embacher et al., *Children and War: Past and Present*. Solihull, UK: Helion & Co., 2013. Pp. x, 297. ISBN 978-1-909384-47-7.

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Children are the smallest and most helpless victims of war. Many lose fathers and brothers to soldiering, or mothers and sisters to the physical and psychological traumas of life in a war zone. Older children may be forced to take on adult responsibilities before they reach adolescence; others may themselves even become part of the fighting forces. Younger children, unable to fully grasp what is happening, have the most direct and visceral feelings of fear, especially when it is magnified by their parents. In an early psychological study of British children evacuated to the countryside to avoid urban bombings during World War II, J.M. Mackintosh noted that

In so far as the child reacts to anxiety and excitement on the part of his parents, he is indirectly affected by the onset of war. In the present war, however, this reaction was intensified by the fact that the child was the central figure of the piece. To millions of children of all ages the outbreak of war meant an uprooting from all the everyday associations of family life and transfer to strange and sometimes terrifying surroundings. The sense of security was abruptly broken.¹

Such experiences have long-lasting effects. Due to their dependence on parents or other adult guardians, children are especially subject to the physical traumas of land mines, aerial bombings, enemy retaliation, and the lethal threat of malnutrition. Psychiatrists, psychologists, sociologists, and epidemiologists are now beginning to understand the effects of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) specifically on the child's psyche. Researchers looking at the long-term physical and mental consequences of war, have found that children may suffer from permanent loss of stature,² inadequate education,³ lower earnings,⁴ and aversion to taking economic risks.⁵ Living in fear during a formative developmental stage may cause children to crave certainty as a means of control⁶ or seek revenge for the suffering of family members.⁷

Children and War collects fifteen papers originally presented at an international conference at the University of Salzburg in 2010. They adopt a range of disciplinary perspectives and span several time periods, though most focus on World War II. Children have always been part of war, but the academic study of their plight is fairly new, inspired by increased media attention to the brutality of modern wars and heart-rending images of children as terrified victims or victimized perpetrators. Popular interest in child soldiers, owing to, for example, the Kony 2012 social media campaign⁸ and other activist projects, has also motivated

1. *The War and Mental Health in England* (NY: Commonwealth Fund, 1944).

2. Richard Akresh et al., "War and Stature: Growing Up during the Nigerian Civil War," Institute for the Study of Labor, Discussion Paper 6194 (Dec 2011).

3. Andrea Ichino and Rudolf Winter-Ebmer, "The Long-Run Educational Cost of World War II," *Journal of Labor Economics* 22.1 (2004) 57-87.

4. Iris Kesternich et al., "The Effects of World War II on Economic and Health Outcomes across Europe," Institute for the Study of Labor, Discussion Paper 6296 (Jan 2012).

5. Albert Young-II Kim and Jungmin Lee, "Long Run Impact of Traumatic Experience on Attitudes toward Risk: Study of Korean War and Its Impact on Risk Aversion," paper delivered at the 4th Annual Meeting on the Economics of Risky Behaviors, Bahçeşehir University, Istanbul (April 2012).

6. Michael Callen et al., "Violence and Risk Preference: Experimental Evidence from Afghanistan," *American Economic Review* 104.1 (2014) 123-48.

7. Barbara L. Cardozo et al., "Mental Health, Social Functioning, and Feelings of Hatred and Revenge of Kosovar Albanians One Year after the War in Kosovo," *Journal of Traumatic Stress* 16.4 (2003) 351-60.

8 *Wikipedia*, s.v. "Social Media Marketing": "[Kony 2012 is] a short film released on March 5, 2012, by humanitarian group Invisible Children, Inc. This 29 minute video aimed at making Joseph Kony, an International Criminal Court fugitive, famous worldwide in order to

initiatives to better understand the needs of children in war. Those who experienced World War II have been more willing as senior citizens to share their stories than in the past. Social scientists have also taken an interest, as better data and support for disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration projects have focused on former child soldiers in order to reveal the motives of armed rebel groups. Finally, the recognition of children's rights under international law has spurred academic attention to the subject of children in war.

In chapter 7, "Fatherless Children of World War II in Germany," Matthias Franz (Heinrich Heine Univ. Düsseldorf), a professor of psychosomatic medicine, provides a compelling essay based on longitudinal psychological assessments of a large population of Germans who lived through the Second World War as children. His analyses of the Mannheim Birth Cohort studies, if sometimes dry, are uniquely illuminating. "The MCS was able to find out psycho-historical traces of the missing father of World War II. They reach into the bodies and minds of the former children of war until today" (121). The cohort comprises persons born in 1935, 1945, and 1955, who underwent psychological assessments every ten years. Franz and his research team discovered that children born in 1935 and 1945 had more significant and long-term psychological problems—including "depression, mistrust, and social phobia anxiety"—compared with other German children. They attribute this to the absence of the father in the traditionally hierarchical German family, pointing out that 25 percent of German children grew up after the war without fathers; divorce rates in their families were also high and their mothers were often traumatized. Franz and his team were reluctant to publish these startling results, which show that German children were also war victims. Due to criticism in Germany, they replicated the study in a different population with the same results. Sixty years after the war, German adults who had lost their fathers continued to suffer. Strong scientific evidence and meticulous research make this one of the book's most compelling essays.

Much of the rest of the volume concerns the short-term effects of war trauma on specific populations or individuals. Children are especially vulnerable, because their closest family members, who would normally care for them, may either go off to fight or die while fighting. Beyond this, social structures like schools, community centers, and churches that protect children in peacetime may be damaged or destroyed during the wartime process of social breakdown.

In his interesting historical essay, "Raising the 'Future of the Nation'" (chapter 12), Loukianos Hassiotis (Aristotle Univ. of Thessaloniki) reviews the development of state structures to care for orphaned children during the civil wars in Spain and Greece. The Auxilio Social in Spain and the Greek *paidopoleis* (child-towns) protected children but also indoctrinated them, Hassiotis argues, to be dependent on the state.

In an eye-opening essay—chapter 13, "Polish Children in Exile"—Janusz Wróbel (Inst. of National Remembrance, Poland) uses archival materials to investigate the lives of Polish children forcibly removed from their homes before and during World War II. At first, most went with their families to Siberia, where conditions were bleak: many saw their parents and other family members suffer and die. The Polish government in exile worked to resettle them elsewhere, and many ended up in orphanages in whatever countries would accept them—New Zealand, Africa, India, Mexico, and Iran, among others. Great Britain gave the Polish children the option of going to its African colonies, and set up many orphanages there. After the war, many Poles were understandably reluctant to return to their now communist-controlled homeland. Some stayed in the communities where their camps were located and eventually assimilated, while others returned to Poland to rejoin their families.

Concentrating on more recent events, Christine Ryan (Univ. of Winchester) offers "An Investigation into the NGOs Who Assist Child Soldiers in Southern Sudan" (chapter 14). Based on thirty-three interviews she conducted with NGO workers in the region, she exposes troubling aspects of their treatment of the children they were supposed to be helping. Some did not (or did not care to) understand why children joined armed groups in the first place. Others simply assumed the child soldiers were mere "followers" or

have support for his arrest The video went viral within the first six days after its launch, reaching 100 million views on both YouTube and Vimeo."

unfortunates forced into the military life. Ryan argues that this discounting of the motivations of the child soldiers themselves hampers the ability of NGO workers to implement proper and effective programs.

There is also a disturbing disconnect between the needs of children and those of the NGOs ostensibly helping them. In chapter 11, “Too Extreme to Be True,” Hideyuki Okano (Univ. of Osaka) suggests that superficial media depictions of the child soldier—a victimized kid with an empty stare and a large automatic weapon—chiefly serve the purposes of humanitarian aid organizations. Jane Rice addresses this bluntly in the book’s most provocative essay—chapter 10, “Girls at War”—maintaining that girl soldiers are often portrayed as helpless victims to suit the fundraising interests of humanitarian groups. In civil conflicts, the state shares this interest, since it makes opponents look bad—and children are caught in the middle.

This sort of publicity effectively disenfranchises children, some of whom deliberately join armed groups to escape oppressive conditions in their homes or to be part of a movement they believe in. “Due to the perception and place of women and girls in western society, the roles that women and girls have in armed groups and in armed conflict can only ever be seen as exploitative and damaging in the eyes of the West.... These representations are beneficial to western states, who are the chief donors to humanitarian organizations, as they can use them to discredit and delegitimize the political goals of these armed groups and further their own political goals” (184). Rice highlights the cases of Mozambique in the 1960s and present-day Sierra Leone and Colombia. She prescribes better educational and other opportunities for girls to alleviate the underlying problems that led them to join armed groups to begin with.

The slowly emerging role of international law in helping war-affected children is discussed by Laurene Graziani (Paul Cézanne Univ. Aix-Marseille III) in chapter 15, “How to Make International Justice a Reality for Children Affected by Armed Conflicts?” Children do not generally enjoy the same means as adults to legally redress human rights violations, and so-called “charity legacies” keep them under the protection or control of NGOs. The UN Security Council Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict produces a yearly report, but the Security Council has been reluctant to act on it, except in the case of Sudan. The only international body focused on children is the Committee on the Rights of the Child, which monitors adherence to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The human rights community worldwide is not principally concerned with the rights of children. Regarding this defect in international law, Graziani concludes that “The actual conceptualization of children affected by armed conflicts reflects very deep problems in the way the international community responds to children’s rights violations. For children’s rights norms to be effectively put into practice and children’s rights violations effectively redressed, it is necessary to take into account the reality in the lives of these children” (285).

Three authors explore the experiences of children in Nazi concentration camps: Sara Di Palma (Univ. of Sienna), in chapter 3, “We Ate Lace and Swallowed Earth”; Hanna Ulatowska (Univ. of Texas at Dallas), in chapter 6, “Polish Child Survivors and Their Path to Legacy”; and Patricia Rice (US Holocaust Memorial Museum), in chapter 4, “Running in Auschwitz.” Each notes how difficult it is for the child survivors to revisit in later life the memories of their horrific time in the camps. Since the Nazis usually selected younger children for immediate execution upon their arrival at the camps, very few survived to tell their stories. Almost no children born in the camps survived, either. Ulatowska mentions that Stanislaw Leszczynska, an Auschwitz midwife, delivered over three thousand babies—only thirty survived. It was as difficult for young people as for everyone else in the camps to produce and preserve writings and drawings to share their experiences and process their feelings.

Patricia Rice relays the story of one of the very few children who survived Auschwitz: Michael Kraus was just thirteen when he arrived, old enough to escape immediate execution, but eligible to be worked to death like adult inmates. He was a witness to the “Theresienstadt family camp” at Auschwitz, where children and families were well fed and allowed to live in order to deceive Red Cross observers, only to be gassed precisely six months later and replaced with new families. After the war, the orphaned Kraus returned to his hometown of Prague. He decided to record everything he could recall as quickly as possible. The result is a haunting volume of writings and drawings chronicling the horrors of Auschwitz from an adolescent’s distinctive point of view.

Unfortunately, most child survivors were discouraged from sharing their experiences and coming to terms with their trauma. As Di Palma notes, “There are even fewer children who in the postwar chaos found the time, calm, force and motivation to write. Asked to forget, to re-enter a normality which often seemed not only impossible but even completely overturned, child survivors hid their torment” (70). Child survivors were often told by people who meant well to forget what happened to them and move on, and so they were largely overlooked. Ulatowska, however, uses interviews with thirty-seven of them to capture their feelings of abandonment, loss of protection, helplessness, and despair. Most of their stories went unpublished until the mid-1990s or later; new memoirs are still being released today.

Memory and recall figure prominently in other essays as well. Nicholas Stargardt (Univ. of Oxford), in chapter 2, “Moments of Rupture,” instead of diagnosing a generalized “collective trauma” (39), differentiates the experiences of children according to their distinct individual experiences of war. He observes, for instance, that air raids can be fascinating for younger children, while terrifying older children and their parents, who know the true potential consequences.

Focusing on Russian youngsters, Irina Rebrova (Kuban State Technological Univ.) argues in chapter 5, “Oral Histories about the Daily Life Experiences of Children during World War II,” that their memories are distinctly more emotional than those of their parents, who were more directly influenced by wartime propaganda. This is not to say children are immune from propaganda, however. Carolyn Kay (Trent Univ.), in chapter 8, “German War Literature for Children, 1914–1918,” reviews children’s books published before and during the First World War. Books were the primary form of entertainment at the time and thus a potentially powerful forum for state storytelling. Naturally, children’s literature sanitized the actual events of the war, showing, for example, a victorious Hindenburg defeating Russian enemies often portrayed as inhuman brutes.

Carl Bouchard and Marie Lefort (both Univ. of Montreal) also focus on World War I in chapter 1, “War and Postwar in Kids’ Words,” using archives of letters that French children sent to President Woodrow Wilson after the war. Not surprisingly, the children express fear but also gratitude that the war is over. The authors acknowledge the limitations of their source material in conveying the range of children’s experiences during a devastating time in France.

Yvonne Kozlovsky Golan (Univ. of Haifa), in chapter 9, “Little Men,” considers the cinematic portrayal of children in war. Early films about the Holocaust did not show or discuss what really happened. Jewish children appear as blonde and blue-eyed, just like “typical” American children. The subjects of films varied according to the national narrative of the country where they were produced. French films, for instance, often featured the exploits of a French resistance movement that basically did not exist, while leaving the fates of children “unknown” to spare viewers the terrible details of what they actually underwent.

Children and War is a valuable anthology chiefly for the variety of the disciplinary perspectives it offers. But the other side of that coin is a lack of integrative vision. The chapters are nominally grouped in three parts: “Experiences of Children in War” (chaps. 1–7), “Representations of Children in War” (chaps. 8–11), and “Children in War: An Institutional Perspective” (chaps. 12–15). But nowhere is there a statement of the book’s common themes or overarching purpose, not even in the introduction by two of the collection’s seven editors, Helga Embacher (Univ. of Salzburg) and Johannes-Dieter Steinert (Univ. of Wolverhampton). The book must, therefore, be read as a compendium of disparate, stand-alone pieces by authors who seem unaware of the essays of their co-contributors.

This is a missed opportunity, for the topic of children in war lends itself well to cross-disciplinary collaboration. To cite one example, Franz’s social scientific findings could have strengthened Graziani’s account of the legal position of those international advocates who must act urgently to protect children before the onset of lasting and harmful social consequences.

The selection of essays is also rather hit-and-miss. Franz writes persuasively from a historical and policy perspective, based on social science evidence from a large population sample. But not represented at all in the collection is the very relevant work being done on war trauma by psychologists, epidemiologists, and

specialists in child development. The more empirical work of an economist like Chulhee Lee⁹ might have counterbalanced the essays by Okano and Christine Ryan, who, quite naturally in treating such an emotional and sensitive subject, write more as advocates than as dispassionate analysts.

Finally, the great majority of the essays concern the world wars or conflicts in Africa. What of child soldiers in the Latin America wars of independence? Over the past two hundred years, leaders like the dictator Victoriano Huerta (Mexico) and the democratically elected Julio Argentino Roca (Argentina) started as child and adolescent soldiers. Looking elsewhere, how did war affect children in Asia, for example, during the large-scale genocide in Cambodia under the vicious Pol Pot regime?

Granting the constraints imposed by editing a miscellany of conference papers, this book would have benefited from a more comprehensive look at children in a wider range of wars. Absent such a volume, we must, however impatiently, be grateful for the insights of the authors of *Children and War*. As Laurene Graziani perceptively notes, “The temporal dimension is an important factor to be taken into account in cases related to children. It is true that, in general, human rights violations have to stop as soon as possible, but children have neither the time nor means to wait” (282).

9. See, e.g., “In Utero Exposure to the Korean War and Its Long-term Effects on Economic and Health Outcomes,” *Journal of Health Economics* 33 (2014) 76–93.