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REICH, Fred and José Antonio SALAS, 2017, *From Ashes to Naches*, prologue by Salomón Lerner Febres, Lima, Fred Reich Boehm. 178 pp.

Through the journey, whether subtle or dramatic, of a collection of *netsukes* – small Japanese sculptures – Edmund De Waal traces the history of the Ephrussi, a powerful Jewish family of grain merchants from Odessa who, transformed into bankers and settled in Paris and in Vienna, had a powerful influence on European finance from the mid-19th century to WWII. De Waal asks himself about the nature of this journey:

> How objects are handed on is all about story-telling. I am giving you this because I love you. Or because it was given to me. Because I bought it somewhere special. Because you will care for it. Because it will complicate your life. Because it will make someone else envious. There is no easy story in legacy. What is remembered and what is forgotten? There can be a chain of forgetting, the rubbing away of previous ownership as much as the slow accretion of stories. What is being passed on to me with all these small Japanese objects? (De Waal, Edmund, *The Hare with Amber Eyes. A Hidden Inheritance*; 2011, London, Vintage Books, p. 17).

De Waal presents a fascinating history that includes an ancestor who confronted the czar to stop a pogrom; a Proustian – or rather, "Swanian" – great-granduncle who was a contemporary of the Goncourt and a collector of symbolist and impressionist art; and a grandmother who studied under Van Mises and corresponded with Rilke. Part of the charm of De Waal's book is that he shares the untold part of the story, the threads and knots of a hidden or parallel history, telling us how each fragment of information is acquired, the frustrations, the discoveries, the compensations.

The history of the Reichs and the Böhms, reconstructed by Fred Reich and José Antonio Salas, is based on fewer testimonies and, probably, more modest ones – wedding invitations, certificates, newspaper advertisements, photographs, interviews that Kurt Reich and Inge Böhm gave to Steven Spielberg's Shoah Foundation, Kurt Böhm's Iron Cross. In its own way, it is also a story of how history is gradually discovered, with unsuspected twists (such as Stefan Reich's discovery of documentation in a Polish archive). Respecting the difference in proportions, as Salomón Lerner notes in his introduction to Reich's volume, in both books the writing challenges death and oblivion, a kind of ritual of survival (p. 13).

The narrative follows the stories of Reich's four grandparents, his father, Reich himself, and that of his nuclear family and his in-laws. The strategies that Fred's grandparents and parents employed to escape the horror were various: Kurt Böhm, a lawyer and notary educated in Upper Silesia (then part of Germany) and Geneva, never expected to be in danger from the Reich. He fought on the Russian Front in the Great War and the German government awarded him the Iron Cross in recognition of his actions (p. 23). Marta Caspary, his wife, perceived the danger first, but it became obvious on November 9, 1938 – *Kristallnacht* – when, after locking her up with her daughter, the SS soldiers destroyed their comfortable bourgeois home: the shelves of porcelain china, the rugs, the chairs (p. 23). Dr. Böhm was deported to the Buchenwald *Lager* (concentration camp) (p. 25). He was able to leave it thanks to the efforts of his wife, who no doubt made use of the fact that he was a notary and a lawyer during WWI (p. 26). They escaped the horror by way of Marseilles (p. 35). They had to sell almost everything they owned, including a Renoir (p. 36). Bolivia took them in and they prospered in that Andean country.

The history of Fred Reich's paternal grandparents, his aunt, and his father followed a different road. Before the "Final Solution to the Jewish question – the *Endlösung* – the SS tried out various systems to "dejewize" German territories. One of these was deportation. Various Jewish institutions (who were aware of living in a Reich that was progressively radicalizing) collaborated in this effort. Austrian Jew Berthold Storfer, a Zionist, headed an organization that rented boats to carry Jews from Austria, Germany, and parts of Czechoslovakia (probably the Sudetenland). That is how Kurt's sister Herma Reich was saved (p. 44).

On March 12, 1938, a few months after the *Anschluss* – the annexation of Austria by the German Reich – Adolf Reich (Kurt's father and Fred's grandfather) lost his job as a salesman and his family engaged in various survival strategies. After ending his high school studies (racial laws did not permit Jewish students to study with non-Jewish students), Kurt Reich, who was 14, started to work with the Storfer organization. In mid-September 1942, two days before he turned 18 and became an adult, Kurt was notified by the Gestapo that he was to join a deportation group (*Ausheben* groups, Jews charged with capturing other Jews in order to take them to a recruitment center and later to various concentration camps).

Kurt refused to join any of these groups. This refusal did not go unanswered. His whole family was arrested. Adolf Eichmann himself – the main implementer of the *Endlösung* – decided that Kurt Reich was to be sent to an extermination camp in Poland while his parents went to a ghetto in

Czechoslovakia. Storfer's direct intervention with Eichmann (the Central Agency for Jewish Emigration worked out of the office of the Gestapo in Vienna, the Palais Albert Rothschild, and although this was not said out loud, Jewish organizations collaborated with it) resulted in a change of the initial decision: everyone was now to go to the Theresienstadt concentration camp in Czechoslovakia. Kurt's strategies seem to be taken from the same manual used by Primo Levi (pp. 59ff): get the most productive work available (first he worked in a bank – there was one in Theresienstadt that issued currency that circulated in the *Lager*; later he was transferred to the kitchen and finally, to the crematorium), carefully administer food rations (one day he would share with his mother and the next with his father), and become invisible. But the story took more twists.

In cattle cars (p. 65), in mid-1944, the family was transported to Auschwitz (a much harsher *Lager* in comparison to the "relatively civilized" Theresienstadt, maintained to provide a positive image to the International Red Cross). In Auschwitz, the sinister pendulum of Dr. Mengele's forefinger went up and down the rows of men and women and separated them into two groups: those on the right and those on the left. This was a way of dividing those who were suitable and those who were not. Kurt Reich remembers the moment: "It was the last time that I saw my parents" (p. 70).

Later, in July 1944, the younger prisoners were taken to work in Schwartzheide, a satellite camp of the Sachsenhausen concentration camp in Oranienburg, 35km north of Berlin (p. 71). When, in April 1945, the faraway sound of bombs alerted that the Red Army was advancing (p. 72), more than a thousand Schwartzheide prisoners were forced by the SS to march to Theresienstadt, near Prague. Without food or drink, those who did not die of dysentery perished due to hunger. After many days, at twilight, the guards ordered the survivors to move ahead without looking back (p. 72). Everyone obeyed, of course. At dawn, the towers of the *Lager* became visible against the horizon. The unconditional surrender of Germany took place on May 7, 1945. Nevertheless, the German soldiers in Bohemia disobeyed their superiors and continued fighting. The last great battle of the war in Europe was the Battle of Prague, from May 5 to May 14, 1945. Theresienstadt was very close to the Czech capital. Kurt Reich returned to Theresienstadt on May 7, with the prisoners from the death march; the Russians liberated the camp on May 8 (p. 77).

In Theresienstadt, Jewish doctors provided care to the survivors of the death march. At the same time, Russians fed the hungry prisoners. Some died – they were not ready to eat so much (p. 77). Kurt Reich spent twelve days recuperating. Around April 19 or 20th, he traveled to Prague with Ignatz

Mucilic, with whom he had been in Theresienstadt (in different rooms), in Auschwitz (in the same barracks), and in Schwartzheide (under the same blankets) (p. 77). He fully recovered after three months in Vienna. What follows is a story of rebirth, which Fred Reich and José Antonio Salas call the **Other *Reich***, not the Fourth Reich but the construction of a family and the continuation of life and love, continuing into the present with the last generation: the grandchildren of Fred and Alice Reich. Literally, "From Ashes to "Naches," which means pleasure, satisfaction, liking, and pride in Hebrew (p. 17). Or, in Christian symbolism, from the passion and death to resurrection.

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