

999: The Extraordinary Young Women of the First Official Jewish Transport to Auschwitz

Heather Dune Macadam

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999 Jewish girls who were transported to Auschwitz became the initial victims of the Final Solution, but the girls disappeared from the historical record in the 1990s due to a methodological fillip. Heather Dune Macadam's *999* rights this wrong and reinstates the girls to their proper place in history. A corrective panegyric that lionizes and beatifies the girls of that first transport, the work builds a dogged picture of the atmosphere, politics, and people who participated.

When Germany annexed Slovakia, Jewish councils were used to create regional lists of the local Jewish populations. In 1942, these lists were used to round up 999 young Jewish girls. They were ostensibly conscripted to do government labor; in reality, they were transported to a new Nazi camp, Auschwitz. On March 20th, the girls and their families "convinced themselves that they were doing their duty for their country" and left their homes "without any doubt that they would be back in a few hours."

Macadam investigated the girls' story using USC Shoah Archive testimonies, historical documents, and interviews. Speculative journeys into their lived experiences also arise in which dramatic liberties are taken with a history that's already horrific and dramatic. Because of their sheer number, the women and girls involved sometimes blur together, but three girls from Humenné—Lea and Edith Friedmann and their close friend, Adela Gross—are mainstays, if they are sometimes given a veneer of superhuman virtue as the book works to humanize them more.

"Too often, the Holocaust is described in the generic term of 'six million,'" Macadam says. Each of the girls covered were not just "one of six million, or of one and a half million, or even just one of the 999 on that first transport." They were individuals, youthful and full of dreams. Macadam's evocation makes a devoted appeal to the pathos of their story.

LETITIA MONTGOMERY-RODGERS (January / February 2020)

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