These thirteen novels for junior readers are all concerned with children finding their place or space in the world, as the social structures of families and friendships undergo changes that cause uncertainty and instability. The majority of these characters, for example, are dealing with an absent parent, often due to such events as death, desertion, illness, and job loss. In order to find a comfortable space, the young characters often turn to a physical and geographical region that seems more stable, reliable, and permanent than the fickle human world. Surprising among this particular collection of books is the preponderance of wilderness settings in a society in which most readers call a city home. Other than the city streets explored in Victoria and Halifax in the first and last books reviewed and the glance at Moose Jaw in Slade's novel, the city homes of the majority of the readers of these books do not make prolonged appearances in the novels. As well, the multicultural elements of contemporary Canadian society play a role in *The Reunion*, *Summer of Adventures*, and *Royal Ransom*, reflecting to some extent the cultural diversity of the reader's social experience and world.

Without a clear portrayal of place, there is no way to probe the physical region in order to locate the historical, emotional, and imaginary realms that radiate the stability and continuity sought by characters and readers who may be experiencing an uncertain period of growth and transition within a very tenuous world. The globalization of that world can make it smaller and more accessible, but there is still a longing for an immersion in the local place that is designated "home." The settings of these particular children's books for junior readers remain central, the place and time being at least as important as the characters and plot and often providing the basis of the force that moves the action forward toward a resolution. Waterston argues that "good children's books can empower children and free them to accept growth and the limits of growth" (11). Such empowerment and freedom are often sought and found in the exploration and transcendence of the specific place and time inhabited by the characters and, by extension, by the reader.

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Holocaust Stories: Telling, Retelling, Revealing / *Marjorie Gann*

The Sunflower Diary. Lillian Boraks-Nemetz. Roussan, 1999. 208 pp. $8.95 paper. ISBN 1-896184-58-8.

Castles Burning: A Child's Life in War. Magda Denes. Norton, 1997. 384 pp. $29.99 cloth. ISBN 0-393-03966-8.

After the Smoke Cleared. Jack Kuper. Stoddart, 1994. 298 pp. $14.95 paper. ISBN 0-7737-5792-9.

Open Your Hearts: The Story of the Jewish War Orphans in Canada. Fraidie Martz. Véhicule, 1996. 189 pp. $16.95 paper. ISBN 1-55065-078-5.

In My Enemy's House. Carol Matas. Scholastic Canada, 1999. 167 pp. $18.99 paper. ISBN 0-59051570-5.

Tapestry of Hope: Holocaust Writing for Young People. Ed. Lillian Boraks-Nemetz and Irene N. Watts. Tundra, 2003. 237 pp. $24.99 cloth. ISBN 0-88776-638-2.

> For memory itself proved to be the enemy of my writing. After I placed it in writing, my childhood experience of the Holocaust . . . sounded unreliable to me, more like fictional material. . . . The turning point occurred when, in a feeling of despair, . . . I started to write not about myself and about what had happened to me during the Holocaust, but about a Jewish girl wandering in the woods and villages. . . . Miraculously, as though with a magic wand, my compulsive memory was removed, and in its place, or alongside it, came . . . the sense of alternatives, of proportion, the choice of words — all the devices that the artist needs for writing.
>
> — Aharon Appelfeld, *Beyond Despair* (xi-xii)

How should the Holocaust story be told? Some survivors visit schools or commit testimony to video archives. Others write memoirs, or, like Israeli author Aharon Appelfeld, prefer the distance that fiction provides. Still others who have not experienced the events themselves trust that a combination of research, literary skill, and imagination can evoke a history they are committed to retelling. Yet, as Appelfeld explains in the epigraph above, there is a difference between merely telling your story and making it real. Writing specifically for young readers presents additional problems. The sheer horror of the events puts some stories beyond the bounds of literature appropriate for a young audience. And many survivors led nomadic lives during and after the war — from hiding place to hiding place, from DP camp to DP camp, in villages, towns and cities with strange Polish, German, and Hungarian names, making their stories hard for present-day children to follow.

It is therefore helpful when a thorough researcher like Carol Matas, whose many young adult Holocaust novels cover everything from the death camps to the Danish resistance, chronicles the events of the war for a younger audience. Her most recent Holocaust novel, *In My Enemy's House*, focuses on the use of false identity to survive in Nazi-occupied Poland. Passing as a Polish girl, fair-haired Marisa is employed as a mother's helper with the family of a top-ranking Nazi. Shocking details open the young reader's eyes to the perverted values of the Nazi universe, as when the Reymann children play board games like "Jews Out" ("the first one to get the most Jews out of town wins" [91]).

Unfortunately, Matas is more concerned with instructing than with recreating. Escaping Zloczow by train, Marisa hastily discards a photograph of her Jewish-looking mother. When the picture is discovered by an inspector, a girl improbably whispers to Marisa, "I saw you take that photo out of your pocket. . . . Don't worry. I won't give you away. . . . For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? St. Mark said that. . . . The Germans have lost their

souls. I pity them" (73). The lesson? There were good Poles, too. But the scene strains credibility. And when Matas tackles extreme horror — the shooting of the Jewish population of Zloczow into a pit — she reduces the event to a conventional cliff-hanger, rescuing her heroine with a last-minute thunderstorm that sends the SS murderers into shelter.

In *The Sunflower Diary*, Lillian Boraks-Nemetz, a child survivor, chooses to write of her wartime experiences through the voice of sixteen-year-old Slava, whose family moves to Canada after the war. Sent by her mother and loathed stepfather to St. Anne's School for Girls on Vancouver Island, Slava confides her anguish over schoolmates' torments, feelings of rejection by mother and stepfather, and recurring wartime memories to her diary. In this awkward hybrid between a boarding school story and a Holocaust memoir, Slava's adolescent obsessions (fitting in at school, meeting boys, losing her Montreal boyfriend to her best friend) eclipse the disturbing wartime memories of hiding in barns or trudging through the snow for a jug of milk. In a past issue of *Canadian Children's Literature* titled "Children of the Shoah: Holocaust Literature and Education," Boraks-Nemetz writes eloquently in her own voice about her childhood Holocaust experiences:

> I feel it intensely, this enclosure made of brick, barbed wire and pieces of jagged glass stuck into the mortar. My sense of light is eclipsed; no sunbeams touch us there, nor the scent of flowers or daily bread. There seem to be no birds singing, and no spring. (161-62)

Regrettably, the teenage voice she appropriates in *Sunflower* trivializes her own story: "Joshua and I had spent some really precious times together. We were very close and kissed a lot, but never more than that. I was always aware of my mother's warnings lest I get pregnant!" (114)

Jack Kuper's *After the Smoke Cleared* differs in purpose and tone from his *Child of the Holocaust* (1967), which focused on the intense war years when Kuper was in hiding. The sequel covers a lot more ground: the chaotic post-war days in a Jewish orphanage in Poland, his reunion with his two uncles, his arrival in Canada with a group of Jewish orphans, and his eventual success in this country, where he became a successful advertising executive and was reunited with his father, who had survived the war in Russia. The intense inwardness of the first book gives way in this more plodding sequel to social satire, as the greenhorn immigrant casts an ironic eye at parochial 1950s Toronto: the skimpy olive-topped white bread sandwiches his adoptive family gives him for lunch, the CBC editor who rejects his playscript on Poland with a curt "This is 1954. It's time to forget" (94). And Kuper's style, so poetic in his first book, often reads like a high school writing exercise:

> My body tanned, muscles toned, a few pounds added to my slight frame, I returned to Toronto in time to enrol in the commercial art course at Central Technical School. With no primary school diploma, I was placed in a special class. A ragtag band of rejects, we were treated with disdain by teachers and students alike. . . . Riding the streetcar with an art portfolio under my arm, I felt at least a foot taller. (67)

Like Kuper, the orphans whose story is told in Fraidie Martz's *Open Your Hearts: The Story of the Jewish War Orphans in Canada* brought a surprising amount of energy and optimism to this country, despite their shattered childhoods. Many bri-

dled under the control of their foster parents. "After what they had been through, these controls and restrictions made no sense to the war orphans. They had become used to the kind of life which required open space, the ability to get away, to move quickly and to outwit" (132). What was often hardest was telling their stories. "I talked about starvation, lost relatives, and told stories about months in slave labour and the underground," one survivor confided to Martz. "My hosts told about *their* wartime hardships—sugar and fuel rationing, and washing machines being idle for lack of parts" (148). In his own book, Kuper adds, "I sensed my story was not believed, and those who did not question its veracity made me feel I should apologize for having survived. But most simply didn't ask, didn't want to know" (60).

Story is the core metaphor of Magda Denes's *Castles Burning: A Child's Life in War* — the poems and tales that bound her forever to her beloved older brother Ivan, killed in Budapest near the war's end. Evoking the precariousness of her family's life in wartime Hungary, Denes's memoir opens with the fairy tale catch her brother used to recite to her: "Once there was / where there wasn't / there was once a Castle / that twirled on the foot of a duck." It ends with a dream — "We can't play," says Ivan. "From now on you are on your own" — and with a vision of a castle in flames, "twirling on the foot of a duck."

"Literature never fails its friends," Denes quote Heine. And, indeed, literature stood by her during the war, as she recited Heine to herself while recovering from tuberculosis or read *The Prince and the Pauper* to her grandmother as Budapest stood in ruins. Her childhood immersion in classic Hungarian literature can be felt in the mastery with which she captures her once affluent family's tragic losses: desertion by her rich and selfish father, impoverishment and near-starvation, and the constant flight from Nazi collaborators. At once sardonic and mournful, she conveys the impact of tragic events, like the death of her young cousin Ervin, with restraint: "None of us screamed. Not my family. In times of catastrophe, we break inside. We bleed inside. We turn black inside. The veins in our eyes pop. Our tongues swell and we stay silent" (246). A metaphor captures the diminution of her once domineering, hypercritical grandmother:

> Grandmother sat facing the stove, turned away from us, reading her prayer book with a magnifying glass. Her lips moved, but no sound surfaced. When I crouched down close to her and looked through the wrong end of her magnifier, I could count her eyelashes. They reminded me of withered stalks of autumn grass. (316)

In oral testimony, memoirs, and fiction, stories of the Holocaust are passed down to our children. Writers like Denes, whose voices go beyond retelling to revealing, are rare — and to be treasured.

While the five books discussed so far in this review indicate that the library of Canadian Holocaust literature for young people is growing, there has been, until now, no anthology. *Tapestry of Hope: Holocaust Writing for Young People*, compiled by Boraks-Nemetz and Irene N. Watts, both survivors of World War II and children's authors in Canada, will be welcomed by teachers of Holocaust studies. The selections comprise a range of genres — survivor statements, play scenes, poetry, excerpts from novels, and essays — and introduce some fresh Canadian material. Robbie Waisman's "Buchenwald," for example, informs the reader of the continu-

ing threat to Jews in post-war Poland, "where returning Jews had been killed in pogroms" (137). Judith Kalman's "Channel Crossing" brings the reader forward a decade to the Hungarian Uprising, when a Holocaust survivor, fleeing Hungary, carries the burden of his haunting memories with him to Canada.

Most Holocaust anthologies are organized chronologically, tracing Jewish life in Europe from pre-war normality through the Nazi period, the liberation, and the war's aftermath. The selections in *Tapestry of Hope* are instead grouped thematically, sometimes confusingly. The "Identity — Family Secrets" section, for example, merges stories of Jewish identity uncovered after the war with a scene from the play *Goodbye Marianne* about hiding in Berlin in 1938. Meanwhile, two survivors' accounts of post-war Jewish identity crises are placed earlier in the book, in the unfocused "Loss and Exile" section.

Although some of the survivor statements are too fragmentary to satisfy the reader's curiosity, together they bear witness to the horror of the Shoah. In the book's most powerful testimony, from the opening chapter of Kuper's *Child of the Holocaust*, eight-year-old Jakob has been sent to the country to live with a Polish farm woman. When he returns home to find the Jewish houses in shambles and the village emptied of its Jews, the theme of loss and death is underscored by the slow progression from a pastoral landscape to gradually encroaching images of death:

> The mist settled, and a slow-rising sun appeared. . . . [H]ere and there a cowhand taking his herd to pasture, a cock waking the village.
>
> In a meadow an old farmer was ploughing. By the roadside an angry dog barked, and over the road hung a huge dead tree. (31)

Survivors' memoirs, even those without literary pretentions, generally communicate an authenticity missing in other Holocaust fiction. Reading René Goldman's account of his near-deportation at a French train station, we feel a child's anguish and relief:

> [The commissar] grabbed me by the hair and the seat of my trousers and, tugging at my hair till I screamed, ran to throw me into the train, into which my unfortunate companions were being hurled in an indescribable atmosphere of chaos and terror. . . . Just as that black-uniformed brute held me in front of the train, a miracle happened. Two gendarmes in khaki uniforms appeared on the platform and said something to the commissar, who, without a word, handed me over to them. (53)

In Kathy Kacer's fictional "Gabi's Dresser," on the other hand, the writer's interventions — the mounting interrogatives, the clichéd "Each minute felt like a lifetime" — attenuate the impact of the terror:

> as I heard voices moving closer to the dresser, I panicked and thought they had found me. What would the soldiers do once they got their hands on me? I knew I would be taken away, but where? Would I be harmed? Would I ever see mamma again? Each minute felt like a lifetime. (42)

Tapestry of Hope is full of Canadian resonances: "The first Allied soldier I saw was an Aboriginal Canadian" (3); "We landed at Halifax in February 1948. I was one of 1,123 Jewish War Orphans to be admitted from Europe" (211). Yet ironically,

two pieces by Canadian literary giants Mordecai Richler and Leonard Cohen may be lost on unsophisticated young readers. Cohen's "All There is to Know About Adolph [sic] Eichmann" ("Eyes: Medium. . . . / Distinguishing Features: None. . . . / What did you expect? / Talons? / Oversize incisors? / Green saliva? / Madness?" [149]) alludes to Eichmann's notorious ordinariness. Like Richler's acerbic account of a conversation with Canadian teenagers at a Canadian army base in Germany, it begs for context and interpretation:

> I asked if they had found Dachau a chilling place.
> "It's not used any more, but."
> "Yeah, it was only during the war. They used to torture guys there."
> "Why?"
> "Um, there were too many prisoners so they had to kill some off."
> "Jews were against Hitler so they had to exterminate them." (213)

The message of Claudia Cornwall's *Letter From Vienna* is clearer. Enclosed in a Christmas card from her Uncle Günther in Vienna is an old photograph of her father between two women, with the note, "The lady standing up was our mother, who died in concentration camp." (183). Cornwall, who had grown up in a nominally Anglican Vancouver home, writes that "I had never heard about this. Ever" (183). Her non-Jewish mother had kept her father's secret. The family's loss is captured in Cornwall's description of her drive home on the day her father finally opens up:

> The storm sewers are plugged with half-melted snow, and near the curbs the puddles are deep. Water smacks against the doors of my car. I am thinking about that spring, over half a century ago, when it started, when Austria became part of the Reich. Were the early flowers blooming along the Danube River? Were the leaves on the trees small and bright green? Was my father able to take any pleasure in such things? (187)

Coming as it does near the end of the book, Cornwall's story packs a powerful punch. The Holocaust, it seems to say, will not leave us alone. Even as we drive along Vancouver's slushy streets, it will intrude.

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