If it's hardly surprising that a girl who utters the quintessentially 1990s "I mean ... you know" would import a trendy contemporary issue to a 1940s detention camp, it's no less surprising that *Higher than Angels* is not as convincing as the best of these three novels, *Good-bye Marianne.*

In the light of the recent mass murders in Rwanda and Burundi, Bosnia and Kosovo, the value of Holocaust education is indisputable. The Holocaust is the ultimate argument against intolerance and tribalism. In my own classroom, I find literature an indispensable tool for teaching about history. Nothing, for example, gave my class a better understanding of the experience of Japanese Canadians in World War II than *Naomi's Road.* And nothing will engage students more powerfully in the Holocaust period than a well-written novel. If, however, the story becomes a mere *device* for teaching the facts, if the novel is *didactic* rather than *evocative,* it will not ring true.

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Beyond Imagination

Beyond Imagination. Ed. Jerry Grafstein. McClelland and Stewart, 1995. 265 pp. $29.99 cloth. ISBN 0-7710-3506.

While it is imperative that we continue to explore the Holocaust, both historically and philosophically, writers who seek to express their thoughts

must do so responsibly. *Beyond Imagination*, an anthology of Canadian writers edited by Jerry Grafstein, is a responsible work in the sense that no author attempts to describe or to dramatize what they do not know and what they cannot possibly comprehend. Each contributor grapples with the Holocaust and struggles to arrive at some level of personal understanding by recounting anecdotes, reflections and short stories that are often profound and moving. From Barbara Kingstone's memoirs of her voyage to numerous concentration camps to Norman Doidge's award-winning story "The Suit," Canadian authors confront their own histories as Jews removed from the atrocities committed against their co-religionists.

Despite some thoughtful insights, however, the anthology is problematic. Not only do I feel the need to challenge individual arguments in this work, but I also question the exclusion of important voices, a notion to which I will return shortly. Erna Paris discusses the evolution of her personal quest into the facts of the Holocaust with eloquence and honesty. However, her argument about the futility of focusing upon the uniqueness of the Holocaust is quite troubling. "I must ask," writes Paris, "whether it is useful for Jews to distance themselves so strenuously from other victims of ethnic hatred? If we are to understand the complex issues that lead people to undermine, dehumanize, and coldly murder one another by race or birth, should we not be making common cause with others where the situation warrants?" (56). Rick Salutin advances a similar argument: "Growing up as a Jewish kid I learned about the Holocaust as a unique event to which nothing could or should be compared. But I've come to feel differently; it was unique in powerful ways, but all too typical in others" (212). Paris and Salutin's reasoning implies that by remembering the Holocaust as a unique event and distinguishing it as the largest, most systematic genocide in history, Jews are unable or unwilling to sympathize with the suffering of other victims of ethnic cleansing, and are thus somehow belittling or mitigating the deaths of these victims. The massacres of more than a million Armenians in Turkey is a tragic event in history, a genocide also motivated by philosophies of racial purity. The mass murders of Muslims in Bosnia has resulted in the resurfacing of the term "Holocaust." However, these events need not be compared with the Holocaust, but regarded as tragedies within their own contexts. To lump every genocide fuelled by racial hatred together is to do injustice to the victims. All tragic events should be remembered as unique. As Lorne Rubenstein writes, "This is not a contest in which one tragedy vies for public attention with another" (89).

Contributing to the problems in this anthology are Larry Zolf's humorous story "The Great Yiddish Mouthpiece" and Morley Torgov's "An Evening with the Holocaust and Other Entertainment Notes." Zolf's piece seems almost inappropriate, discussing the Jewish immigrant survivors who laugh and play poker by adding up the numbers tattooed on their arms. Although this story may be true, what does Zolf's focusing on this event tell

us about survivors? That in the aftermath of the Holocaust, they remained relatively unaffected, laughing and making jokes? Try as I may, I simply cannot reconcile humour and the Holocaust. Similarly, Morley Torgov's anecdotal recounting of a dinner party interrupted by the nightly viewing of the TV mini-series, *Holocaust*, advances little of importance, the (unoriginal) message overshadowed by cleverly-narrated dinner conversation.

What is equally problematic in this collection is the gratitude expressed by certain authors toward Canada. As Michael Marrus reminds us in his important contribution, the job of any historian is to "get it right." Some writers in this anthology should perhaps have referred to Marrus's slogan before they began their reflections. Geraldine Freeman, for example, writes that "I am free to tell this story because my grandfather refused to be bullied and fled to Canada, where Jews freely walk the streets and no one is punished for the sins of their grandfather" (17). Larry Zolf adds that "Canada, Britain, and the United States, their consciences finally pricked, offered sanctuary for the Holocaust survivors" (39). The statements are accurate but perhaps misleading to those unfamiliar with Canada's anti-Semitic wartime policies. From 1933 to 1948 Canada closed its doors to Jewish refugees fleeing from the increasingly dangerous situation in Europe. As Shirley Sharzer correctly remembers, "It was not until 1948 that Canada opened its doors to the survivors of Hitler's evil. Among the Western nations, it was Canada, my country, that had the worst record, where compassion was a dirty word and the Christian ethic took on a new meaning" (101). Ellie Tesher also "gets it right," commenting on the prevalent anti-Semitism in Toronto in the forties, where signs in windows read "No Jews or Dogs Allowed" (192). These, however, are passing remarks, somewhat lost in the pages.

Beyond Imagination is in great need of a piece by Irving Abella, either a summary of Canada's shameful past or an excerpt from his seminal work *None is Too Many*. Most importantly, however, *Beyond Imagination* needs the voice of a witness. Many contributors begin their essays with an apology: they were not there, so they feel they should not have a voice. Peter C. Newman writes: "When I was asked to contribute to this volume, I felt I hadn't earned the right to have a voice in it" (1). Lorne Rubenstein comments, "When asked to write an essay on what the Holocaust means to me, my first reaction was that I could not do so. After all, I was born in 1948" (79). Howard Engel advances a similar notion, "I have no first-hand recollection of the Holocaust" (213). One contribution, a letter to the editor (Jerry Grafstein) from Roy Faibish, explains why he is refusing the task: "it is beyond expression for me" (18). Why was the testimony of survivors now living in Canada, the most important voice, not included in this anthology? How unfortunate that Grafstein felt it necessary to omit the one voice that really matters. Works about the Holocaust may seem countless these days, but it is essential that we continue to research, discuss and educate young adults on the facts and implications of this event. *Beyond Imagination*, however, should be consid-

ered only as a secondary text. Before turning to this anthology, young adults must explore the Holocaust testimony and fiction of survivors, such as Primo Levi, Elie Wiesel, Charlotte Delbo and a myriad of others.

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The Birth of a Nation

The Garden. Carol Matas. Scholastic Canada, 1997. 102 pp. $16.99 cloth. ISBN 0-590-12381-5.

The Garden is Carol Matas's sequel to *After the War,* which told the story of the dangerous and illegal odyssey of a group of young Jewish concentration-camp survivors to Palestine at the close of the Second World War. The sequel covers the volatile period between November 1947 and May 1948, the time of the United Nations partition of Palestine, the preparations for British withdrawal, and the increasingly violent hostilities between Arabs and Jews which led ultimately to war upon the establishment of a Jewish state.

As in *After the War,* the point of view belongs to Ruth Mendenberg, whose teenage life has witnessed the horrors of the camps, the loss of most of her family, and the beginnings of hope for a new life and home in Israel. Ruth recovers from her despair through her tending of a symbolic garden whose beauty, sense of peace and renewal, are shattered and trampled as she and her companions struggle through a complex maze of conscience. Escalating violence and death lead to hard ethical decisions. The large questions here explore the moral dilemmas facing the Jews, the choices along the spectrum from passive nonviolence, to defensive or aggressive action, through to terrorism. While the moral stances are articulated by Jewish characters, who are mostly teenage soldiers of the Palmach and survivors of Nazi victimization, it is unfortunate that the Arab experience is given no voice. The possibility of Arab-Israeli harmony, however, is reflected in characters' interactions.

The writing is fast-paced and suspenseful and the images of violence, fear, and death are not cartoon-like; they have weight, reality, and presence. There is no false heroism here and much remorse and uncertainty of what forms a just action in a confused world. The emotional intensity and gravity of the story give the characters more substance than they are drawn with. As in Matas's science fiction, her characters are not as real as her ideas. The moral and ethical uncertainties are never resolved, reflecting the present day state of Arab-Israeli conflict, although Ruth makes a final choice to de-