

fend her new home, to survive and rebuild her garden. The open-ended narrative is thoughtful and sombre, leaving questions and issues unanswered and probing the reader's conscience and heart.

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And Peace Never Came

And Peace Never Came. Elisabeth M. Raab. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 1997. 196 pp. \$24.95 paper. ISBN 0-88920-292-3.

Told in hauntingly simple prose, this autobiographical novel describes Elisabeth "Boske" Raab's experiences in Auschwitz and afterwards with what sometimes seems like detachment — the reader only fully realizes the depth of Raab's pain by listening to her silences.

A young married woman with a daughter, Kati, in 1944, Raab, like so many other Jewish Europeans, did not believe that the Nazis posed any danger for her family. Raab's story is told without hindsight; we are given no more knowledge about the implications of events than she herself had as she was led into Auschwitz. Like Raab, we know her family's fate was almost certainly death in the gas chambers only because history has told us. Raab herself cannot.

In every silence and behind every word, are faces, voices, and unspoken memories. Little Kati disappears from the story, as she disappeared from her mother's life; we long to hear that she has survived, that Raab has found her, or even that she has learned of her death; but Raab, unwilling and unable to offer conjecture, remains silent, caught in the unspoken pain that would come to define her.

While I had always believed that 1945 brought a sense of closure, an ending or a new beginning to the survivors of the Nazi death camps, Raab's story is not even halfway over at the end of the European war. She writes of her "liberation" much as she must have experienced it — it is chaotic, uncertain, deeply painful, and impossibly difficult to face. For years, Elisabeth Raab did not speak to any one of the experience that almost destroyed her.

At almost seventy years of age, Boske, on a trip home, is made aware that she has spent decades in silent and unrelenting mourning for the people and places that she has not allowed herself to remember — that her

“liberation” can only be achieved with her words. Thus this novel. Of course, Raab cannot fully heal; some of her sorrow will remain unspoken. But *And Peace Never Came* allows her to establish a memorial, to give voice to her pain, to remember the people from the place that she once thought was safe, and the experience that forever destroyed her concept of safety.

As an educational tool, this novel is most suitable for older students; there is too much left unsaid and too little clarity to allow a younger, elementary school age child to identify the depth of this novel. Although the narrative is both lyrical and moving, it lacks the cohesive kind of intrigue demanded by younger readers. As Raab finds her voice and the words to tell her story, the plot is necessarily related slowly and painfully; it often reflects Raab’s own disorientation as she struggles to identify her place in a new world — something younger children may not be able to fully understand or appreciate. High school or university students can learn much, however, especially if they make use of the historical notes provided by Marlene Kadar (something I suggest most students do before attempting to tackle the novel itself).

And Peace Never Came teaches the student and the interested reader that it is too easy, over fifty years later, to rest comfortably in the image of the Holocaust as a story with a beginning and an ending — the ultimate triumph of good over evil. It is too easy to look for the few uplifting stories that emerged from that time and take comfort from them. It is too easy to believe that the pain ended in 1945. Raab’s novel insists that we recognize, as children and grandchildren of survivors and persecutors and spectators, that the Holocaust is not simply a “story”; it does not hold a singular ultimately redeeming “message” for humanity. The painful legacy left by the Holocaust asks that we listen, that we resist, and that we remain aware. *And Peace Never Came* allows us that opportunity.

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A Place Not Home

A Place Not Home. Eva Wiseman. Illus. Don Kelby. Stoddart, 1996. 177 pp. \$6.95 paper. ISBN 0-7737-5834-8.

A Place Not Home explores a Jewish family’s escape from communist Hungary in the 1950s. The Adlers have survived the Holocaust; they have managed to rebuild a kind of life; but Nazi hatred rears its ugly head once more and this Jewish family, fearing a pogrom, decides to leave Hungary and begin life anew in Canada.