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Review of

***The White Space Between* by Ami Sands Brodoff**

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Are our youth forgetting the Holocaust?

by Scott French

The White Space Between, a new book by Montreal author Ami Sands Brodoff explores a mother's difficulty coping with memories of the Holocaust, and the effect her suffering has on her daughter. A presentation by Brodoff at Cegep Champlain St. Lawrence last Thursday provided an opportunity to speak with the author, students and staff about an event in history that is seemingly fading from the collective memory.

"The Holocaust is a tragedy of such an enormous scale it's hard to wrap one's head around it...I am really drawn to fiction which can draw people in with vivid emotions," Brodoff stated.

Brodoff acknowledges that keeping the memory of the Holocaust relevant to future generations will be a challenging task. "In a decade, all of the witnesses will have passed on," she indicated.

Champlain St. Lawrence English teacher Bob McBryde admitted from his own observations that students' knowledge about the Holocaust is "hit and miss."

"My experience of teaching Schindler's Ark" – the novel that inspired Steven Spielberg's Holocaust film Schindler's List – "was that some kids were sick of hearing about the Holocaust, while others hadn't heard about it at all."

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While all the students interviewed at the English Cegep had a good knowledge of the history of the event itself, many couldn't see the relevance of the event to their own lives in Quebec City. "it was a really horrible thing to do but I don't think we really have a chance of it happening again. It may be a threat elsewhere, but not here," said William McBain, a psychology student at the college.

McBain was not alone in this view. Shane Gruel, a business student, indicated that although he was exposed to movies and books about the event in high school, "It wasn't my thing; It was also that way with a lot of my friends."

People who are unlikely to read history books can be drawn in by novels, Brodoff said. The author provides background details about the event by using the chilling memories of her protagonist, Jana Ivanova, who passes through a network of Jewish concentration camps throughout Eastern Europe. "We lined up. A chain we made, from the ladder to the door where the trucks waited. The urns we passed from hand to hand. A terrible clattering! Bones. Naked bones. Esther was hysterical, laughter burst from her body like a scream. Rebecca fainted again."

Some women at the college are more moved by the Holocaust than their male counterparts. Erica Plante had read another novel dealing with the tragedy, *The Pianist*, during her own free time.

"It was one of the most horrible things to have happened in the 20th century. It was due to a lack of knowledge and empathy," Diane Karine-Navarro stated.

Brodoff's own family, the majority of whom hail from Eastern Europe, were spared the horrors of World War II, having immigrated to the United States well before the outbreak of war in Europe.

The inspiration for her novel comes from her husband's late mother, a woman Brodoff said she knows, although they have never met. "She made a cassette tape about her childhood. She had a deep, soft voice with a Czech accent. It was so haunting and intimate," she said, adding "Voices, narratives and stories have an enduring life beyond the corporeal."

Ami Sands Brodoff's novel *The White Space Between* is available at La Maison Anglaise bookstore.

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