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Alan Rosen, ed. *Approaches to Teaching Wiesel's Night.* New York: Modern Language Association of America, 2007. vii + 169 pp. $37.50 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-87352-589-3; $19.75 (paper), ISBN 978-0-87352-590-9.

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A Sensible Smorgasbord

While Elie Wiesel's *Night* (Yiddish, 1955; French, 1958; English, 1960) retains its rightful place on a pedestal among Holocaust memoirs, those who regularly teach undergraduates may sometimes encounter a "been there, done that" attitude among students. This response is understandable, perhaps, since *Night* is found on many college and AP reading lists and on some middle school syllabi, either as a stand-alone text or in conjunction with other Holocaust literature. Alan Rosen's new collection addresses this state of affairs by offering a variety of intellectual contexts and pedagogical tools to both first-time and veteran educators. To avoid disappointment, most readers will want to approach this anthology selectively, focusing on those essays that complement, rather than replicate, their own disciplinary perspective.

Part 1 consists of a bibliographical essay. Rosen describes the various editions of Wiesel's text, and offers a brief "Instructor's Library" of other resources that provide historical context and literary comparisons. Understandably brief, Rosen's summary of available supplemental materials seems rather dated and ignores the plethora of useful materials available through the internet; I suspect that while perhaps of use to a frantic first-time instructor, a focused electronic search, a perusal of the United States Holocaust Museum's website, or even this volume's own "works cited" list would offer equally useful–and perhaps more current–results.

The remainder of the collection demonstrates how seventeen postsecondary faculties engage *Night* as scholars and educators. Historical and literary approaches dominate, an imbalance that may disappoint instructors seeking a more integrated approach. The essays summarize decades of research and practice in clear, concise prose, so that educators–and students–across disciplines will come away with both greater appreciation for Wiesel's skill and an enriched understanding of Holocaust experience and memory.

Of the four essays contributed by historians, Nehemia Polen's summative overview of prewar Jewish thought in central Europe stands out. Polen opens a door to classroom discussions of the mutually informing nature of theology and collective experience by highlighting how Wiesel and those around him negotiate challenges to their faith. Other contributors take narrower approaches.

Simon Gigliotti and Michael Berenbaum emphasize the mind's inability to conceptualize victims' experience during deportation and imprisonment. Alan Berger suggests that by considering *Night* as the first element of Wiesel's body of work, readers can begin to understand how the author himself processed memories of these very experiences.

Seven essays by literary scholars and linguists follow. Jan Schwarz traces the publication history of Wiesel's writings, while Judith Schaneman uses *Night* to examine the inadequacy of language to convey Jewish experience in Nazi-occupied Europe, challenging readers to ponder what happens to identity when the very experiences that inform it defy articulation. David Patterson and Jonathan Druker teach *Night* in conjunction with other texts, arguing that such contextualization helps students explore broader ethical and moral questions.

The remaining contributions articulate various "Course and Classroom Strategies," drawing examples primarily from upper-level undergraduate classes. Paul Eisenstein and Phyllis Lassner use *Night* to encourage reflection on issues of ethical responsibility, while Christopher Frost and Kevin Lewis integrate the text into courses that explore individual and collective identity. Jan Darsa suggests teaching *Night* in conjunction with videoed testimony as a way to emphasize the historical–not fictional–content, and John Roth's reflective essay sums up the overall tone of this collection, arguing that Wiesel's work can best be used to provoke–not answer–questions.

As noted above, Rosen offers a menu of thoughtful and well-crafted offerings. Yet, while this slim volumes demonstrates a variety of approaches to Wiesel's text, it does not seem to acknowledge the very different world inhabited by twenty-first-century undergraduates, or the ways in which students' own experiences might shape their understanding of this text. Lewis and Roth move in this direction, using Wiesel's existential crisis to engage contemporary ethical issues, while Darsa recognizes that modern media sometimes render boundaries between historical fact and creative fiction all but indistinguishable. There ends, however, any clear attempt to engage the unique challenges of teaching twenty-first-century students. A more provocative collection might have explored pedagogical strategies that intentionally incorporate the reality that today's undergraduates at once live and narrate their own lives; I would argue they are less willing than their predecessors to accept universal ideas of truth, justice, and perhaps even human suffering.

That shortcoming aside, the book offers insights that certainly promote interdisciplinary conversation. The essays demonstrate the range of courses in which *Night* can be taught and offer contextual grounding in many of those fields. Although experienced educators may find some repetition of known themes and techniques, careful readers will find much to enrich their own pedagogical approaches to *Night*, the Holocaust, and humanity's ability to inflict, endure, and respond to evil.

Note

[1]. Although this observation is most narrowly observed in traditionally-aged undergraduates, I would contend that even non-traditional students bring a subjectivity informed, if not by MySpace and Facebook, then certainly by "Survivor"-like television programs and docu-dramas.