WITNESSING THE HOLOCAUST: SURVIVORS, THE CHURCH, AND LITERATURE

MARION SPIES
University of Wuppertal, Germany


The Jewish studies under discussion here fall into three categories: tales of Holocaust survivors, accounts of Italy and Pope Pius XII, and Jewish American literature. The following essay is divided accordingly.

In Children Writing the Holocaust, Sue Vice, already noted for her excellent analysis of six seminal Holocaust novels in her earlier Holocaust Fiction (Routledge, 2000), considers a body of texts still not well enough known, not even to people otherwise familiar with the canon of Holocaust literature. Vice has selected works for an adult readership, written by or about Jewish children during the Holocaust years. What is intriguing in her approach is that she is interested in mixed generic forms. Because—fortunately—she is not overly concerned about whether a book is a memoir, a diary, or fiction (like Fragments: Memories of a Childhood 1939–1948 [Picador, 1996] by the notorious “Binjamin Wilkomirski”), she divides her book according to the interior structure of her primary sources (split, choral, or fragmentary narration) and according to the fate of the children (hidden or convent children or those who masqueraded as gentiles). In her lucid analyses, she often relies on psychoanalytical theories and on the strategies of interpretation by Gérard Genette and Mikhail Bakhtin. Her body of primary texts is huge and includes a sur-