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Article:

Silverman, M (2017) La Littérature en suspens. Écritures de la Shoah: le témoignage et les œuvres. Par Catherine Coquio. French Studies, 71 (1). pp. 149-150. ISSN: 0016-1128

<https://doi.org/10.1093/fs/knw297>

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La Littérature en suspens. Écritures de la Shoah: le témoignage et les oeuvres. By CATHERINE COQUIO. Paris: L'Arachnéen, 2015. 512 pp.

In his acceptance speech in Stockholm in 2002 for the award of the Nobel Prize for literature, the Hungarian Holocaust survivor Imre Kertész stated that 'Auschwitz a mis la littérature en suspens' (p. 9). Kertész is, of course, reworking Theodor Adorno's famous remark that 'to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric' (which Adorno himself later modified). Catherine Coquio makes Kertész's statement the guiding principle of this excellent book on literature's response to Auschwitz. To 'suspend' literature after Auschwitz means to ask fundamental questions of its purpose and nature, 'de sa pertinence, de son contenu, de son *héritage*' (p. 13): what type of literature is now appropriate, what is the relation between literature and experience, who is speaking and to whom, what is the relation between literature, politics, memory and ethics, and so on. Coquio's book is a vast survey of post-war reflections on these questions. The central question that runs through all these debates – that Coquio considers in an extremely balanced and nuanced way – is the relationship between testimony and fiction. How do witnesses remain 'true' to the event (or 'truthful', in Charlotte Delbo's terms) while being, at the same time, acutely aware of the incommensurable gap between words and the real (Antelme) and the dangers of fictionalisation and aestheticisation (Wiesel)? Should the 'false testimony' of Binjamin Wilkomirski (whose 'experience' as a Holocaust survivor was exposed as a fiction) be a warning against all literary versions of the Holocaust? The book is divided into two parts, the first on the theories and paradigms developed in Germany, America, France and the USSR after the Second World War, and the second a series of in-depth analyses of different writers, mostly French (Rousset,

Cayrol, Delbo, Rawicz, Améry and Kertész, amongst others). This is probably the most comprehensive *tour d'horizon* yet produced in French of the different theories of art and the camps (from the post-war period to the present day) and some of the most significant writers of the Holocaust. Although Coquio's approach is occasionally schematic - especially in the first part where the argument takes in philosophy, ethics, politics and history as well as literature – she nevertheless maintains a clear grasp of all the intellectual debates and is very well versed in the American critical literature on trauma, memory and the Holocaust (Caruth, Felman, LaCapra, Friedlander, Langer and so on). She is also a fine critical reader of different types of work - fiction, testimony and everything in between. Coquio has previously made a major contribution to the field of Holocaust and genocide studies in her earlier work on Cayrol, Delbo and others, and in her co-edited book *Parler des camps, penser les génocides* (1999), which was a bold attempt to put discussions of the concentration and extermination camps of the Second World War into dialogue with other camp experiences. *La Littérature en suspens* is a worthy successor to this output and establishes Coquio as one of the major French theorists of art and the extreme.

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494 words