My Mother's Voice: Children, Literature, and the Holocaust. Adrienne Kertzer. Broadview, 2002. 384 pp. $29.95 paper. ISBN 1-55111-340-6.

Adrienne Kertzer has written a beautiful book, one that emanates from an ambiguous and fleeting personal history of the daughter of a Holocaust survivor and the recounting of the survivor's memory of the trauma of Auschwitz. At the same time, Kertzer is able to focus on the complex relationship between the traumatic events of the Holocaust and the education of (Canadian) children through stories about or based on the Holocaust. Kertzer says that the book's subject "is Holocaust representation in children's books," but that is only half true. Kertzer's subject is also her "mother's voice," inasmuch as it is truncated and sorrowful because of the weight of its remembering. Kertzer's mother, "one of the few Hungarian Jews who survived Auschwitz" in the very last stages of the war, somehow had an "ability to turn the Holocaust into a kind of children's story that did not terrify," or so the author claims. "At least," Kertzer admits, "that is the way that I heard it." For Kertzer, the mother's voice demonstrates her "magic power" precisely because, without understanding what it really meant as a child, her mother was a survivor.

Kertzer is troubled by the ideology of knowledge-construction that underscores stories of / about the Holocaust in children's literature and in distinctly "young adult" titles. With great care, she reads a variety of children's texts (from the "classics" such as Anne Frank's diary to the controversial "team approach" text, *Daniel's Story*) from literary, cinematic, and photographic sources (the film *Life is Beautiful*, for example). Kertzer also uses a vast array of theoretical perspectives having to do with both reading the Holocaust and teaching it. Most impressive is her use of psychoanalytic interpretations of traumatic events in life. Persuaded by Shoshana Felman's and Dori Laub's cautions about "hopeful endings" and first-hand witnessing, Kertzer resists any easy answers to the problem of how to tell about the Holocaust to children. At the same time, she admires her own mother's narrating of the torment without frightening her three children.

Readers interested in thoughtful comparative readings of "Holocaust" stories written for children and young adults will find much of value in this book (the Works Cited provides a full list of novels, diaries, and memoirs for children and young adults). Readers of life writing will also enjoy this book. The narrator moves between a daughter's reluctant story of loss and mourning as she tries to represent her "mother's voice" and a philosophical meditation on what it means to be the child of a survivor whose mission it is to understand complex issues of memory and pedagogy. Kertzer underlines the danger in promising the reader "exciting narratives of choice" where none exists, and she carefully illustrates how this principle vies with the other to protect children from harm.

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