Christopher Bigsby, Remembering and Imagining the Holocaust: The Chain of Memory

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Main content

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Remembering and Imagining the Holocaust deals with memory, integrity, and the difficulty of remembering trauma whether in autobiography, novel, or drama.

Christopher Bigsby’s study deals with an eclectic group of authors remembering the Holocaust in their quest of Vergangenheitsbewältigung and starts with W.G. Sebald, Bigsby’s colleague and friend, to whom the author dedicates the volume. Sebald serves as a springboard to some of the other authors. Some were writers whom Sebald valued highly such as Arthur Miller, Rolf Hochhuth, Peter Weiss and Jean Amery. Miller, Weiss and Amery are also connected to Sebald by their shared attendance of the 1963 Auschwitz trials in Frankfurt. The remainder of the writers who complete the "chain of memory" were camp survivors (Amery, Primo Levi, Elie Wiesel, Tadeusz Borowsky) except for aspiring writer Anne Frank, who perished as a young teenager in Auschwitz.

Despite its definitive merits and display of great sensitivity--Bigsby provides us with thoughtful insight into the lives and ideas of his chosen writers and is a superb narrator--his study is quite reader-unfriendly. Unfortunately, he repeatedly interrupts his "chain of arguments" with reflections and comments having very little connection with those very arguments. The interrupted discourse however is not conducive to helping the reader grasp his...

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Bigsby incorporates his interest in the literature of twentieth-century America in his teaching and in the books he writes and edits. Calling Bigsby "one of the most supportive academic critics of American theatre" in Modern Drama, Melanie Blood added that in Contemporary American Playwrights in particular the author advocates a greater appreciation of a number of lesser-known authors, among them Lanford Wilson, Tony Kushner, and Wendy Wasserstein. Christopher Bigsby, a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature and the Royal Society of Arts, is an award winning academic, novelist and biographer. Educated at the Universities of Sheffield and Nottingham, he is Professor of American Studies at the University of East Anglia in Norwich, United Kingdom. He is also an occasional contributor to BBC Radio, and presented Kaleidoscope (Radio 4) for eight years in the 1980s. During this time, he collaborated with the writer Malcolm Bradbury on the 8-part situation comedy serial Patterson. The Cambridge Companion To August Wilson, 2007. Remembering And Imagining The Holocaust: The Chain Of Memory, 2006. The Cambridge Companion To Modern American Culture (Ed.), 2006. Remembering Arthur Miller, 2005. Christopher William Edgar Bigsby FRSA FRSL (born 27 June 1941) is a British literary analyst and novelist, with more than forty books to his credit. Earlier in his writing career, his books were published under the name C. W. E. Bigsby. Educated at the Universities of Sheffield and Nottingham, he is Professor of American Studies at the University of East Anglia in Norwich, United Kingdom. In 2006 Bigsby published Remembering and Imagining the Holocaust: The Chain of Memory, a meditative study on memory and on the ways in which memory has operated in the work of writers for whom the Holocaust was a defining event. The book includes essays on Jean Améry, Tadeusz Borowski, Anne Frank, Rolf Hochhuth, Primo Levi, Arthur Miller, W.G. Sebald, Elie Wiesel and Peter Weiss.