



Writing the Holocaust Today: Critical Perspectives on Jonathan Littell's the Kindly Ones (Faux Titre)

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Originally written in French, *The Kindly Ones* (2006) is the first major work of the Jewish-American author Jonathan Littell. Its extraordinary critical and commercial success, spawning a series of heated debates, has made this publication one of the most significant literary phenomena of recent years. Taking the Holocaust as its central topic, *The Kindly Ones* is a disturbing novel: disturbing in its use of explicit sexual descriptions, in its construction of a perverted psychic world, in its combination of accurate historical descriptions and myths, and in its repeated suggestion that Nazism does not, in fact, lie outside the spectrum of humanness. Due to its striking monumental proportions and the author's provocative choice to recount historical events from the perpetrator's perspective, this opus marks a significant shift within Holocaust literature. In this volume, fourteen leading literary scholars and historians from eight different countries closely study this unsettling work. They examine the disconcerting aspects of the novel including the use of the Nazi viewpoint, analyze the aesthetics of the novel and its contradictions, and explore its relations with several literary traditions. They outline Littell's use of historical details and materials and study the novel's reception. This compilation of essays is essential to anyone intrigued by *The Kindly Ones* or by the Holocaust and who wishes to gain a better understanding of them.

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