

# Introduction

## Matters of Testimony



### Discoveries

In February 1945, in the weeks after the liberation of Oświęcim by the 60th Army of the First Ukrainian Front, the massive complex of Auschwitz-Birkenau was proving difficult to manage. The Red Army, preoccupied with securing its position against German attempts to recapture the valuable industrial zone of Silesia, had few resources to spread across the camp's multiple sites. The grounds of Birkenau were littered with debris and rubbish. Luggage lay in the cars of a train left on the unloading ramp, and was also strewn over the ground nearby. The departing SS had set fire to storehouses, and blown up the crematoria. The snow was beginning to melt, leaving everything in a sea of mud, and revealing more of what had been left behind: mass graves and burnt human remains. Around six hundred corpses had been found inside blocks or lying in the snow, and needed to be buried. Of the seven thousand prisoners who had been liberated on 27 January, nearly five thousand were in need of some kind of treatment. Soviet medical officers and Polish Red Cross volunteers came to the camp to care for them.<sup>1</sup>

Andrzej Zaorski, a 21-year-old doctor stationed in Kraków, was one of these volunteers. He arrived at Auschwitz a week or two after its liberation, where, as he recalled twenty-five years later, he was lodged in the commandant's house. He found a richly illustrated book among the papers left behind. The author, an SS-man, described the birdlife in

the vicinity of the camp, and thanked the commandant for permission to carry out observations. In the trees round the camp, Zaorski noticed, there were lots of bird boxes. Preoccupied as he was with the business of treating former inmates, he remained in the grounds of Auschwitz I, the Stammlager, at first. By the time he had arrived, all of the ex-prisoners had been moved there and housed in its barracks, leaving Birkenau and Monowitz deserted. They were clearly having difficulty adjusting to their new status as patients, as they would hide their bread under their mattresses and would try to escape if told they were being taken for a bath.

After a few days, Zaorski and some fellow volunteers found time to visit the Birkenau site three miles away. He caught sight of heaps of ashes behind the ruins of Crematoria II and III, with groups of people rooting through them. They ran off as the doctors approached. On top of one heap, Zaorski found a sealed half-litre glass bottle containing a bundle of papers.

I opened the bottle and took out from it some sheets of graph paper, superbly preserved. They were folded up in the form of a letter. On the outermost sheet of paper, out of which a makeshift envelope had been made, could be seen the address of the Polish Red Cross. On an inner part of the letter was written another address, this time to the actual addressee in France ... Because the letter was folded and rolled up in paper, and was not in a sealed envelope, I unrolled a few sheets of paper written in French. It was a personal letter to a wife ... The author of the letter described the terrible fate and experiences which had befallen him as one of the workers in the crematoria, forced by the Germans to be in the crematorium team. He stated clearly that he would certainly die, just like all his colleagues and predecessors forced to do the same work. He gave her a set of instructions about life after the war along with some bank details. He asked her never to return, never to travel to Poland.<sup>2</sup>

The team which the letter's author, Chaim Herman, described was mostly known by the name *Sonderkommando* (the 'special squad').<sup>3</sup> Zaorski may have been the first to discover one of many documents hidden by its members in the grounds of the crematoria. As his testimony indicates, locals were desperate enough to consider digging around in human remains looking for valuables in this unguarded site, and so other discoveries may simply have been thrown away.<sup>4</sup> But more documents were found and preserved during the course of 1945, albeit in a rather haphazard fashion, with discoverers free to treat them according to their own lights. Zaorski thought of his find as a letter that should be sent on to its destination, and gave it to the French embassy in Warsaw. In contrast, representatives of the Soviet Extraordinary Commission for the Investigation of German Fascist Crimes were interested in finding evidence. On 5 March 1945,

Shlomo Dragon, a former member of the Sonderkommando who had escaped from the death march from Auschwitz, provided them with a notebook and letter he had dug up near Crematorium II. The letter was signed by Zalman Gradowski. The commissioners ignored Gradowski's plea to contact his relatives in New York, and took the documents back to the Soviet Union.<sup>5</sup>

Amateur hunters also preserved some of the documents they found, seeing in them either the potential to turn a profit, or perhaps simply interesting junk worth hoarding. A young Polish man found another manuscript in early 1945, and sold it to Chaim Wolnerman, a Polish Jew who was preparing to leave his home town of Oświęcim for Palestine. Wolnerman worked out from a simple number code in the text that the author's name was Zalman Gradowski. This manuscript also asked its finder to contact relatives in America, which Wolnerman did.<sup>6</sup> In April 1945, Gustaw Borowczyk, another native of Oświęcim, returned from Germany where he had been working as a forced labourer, and while 'visiting' Birkenau disinterred a ledger containing an account in Yiddish, a language he could not read. He put it in the family attic, where it stayed until 1970.<sup>7</sup>

By the time other documents were unearthed, a museum had been set up on the site of the camp, but only gradually did it take control of the process of discovery. In 1952, Franciszek Ledwoń unearthed an exercise book while he was cutting the grass around Crematorium III. After passing through several different hands with several claims to ownership made upon it from competing interests, it probably ended up in the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw.<sup>8</sup> In the early 1960s, a more systematic search was made, again in the grounds of Crematorium III, with two finds carefully logged and their situations recorded. On 28 July 1961, a bracelet and two manuscripts were found together, one a diary from the Łódź ghetto, and the other a commentary signed by Zalman Lewental; on 17 October 1962, an exercise book also signed by Lewental, some unsigned loose sheets of paper, and a list. In 1970, Gustaw Borowczyk's brother Wojciech brought in the notebook that he had found in the attic, and both brothers completed reports about how they had discovered it.<sup>9</sup> The following year, Andrzej Zaorski also gave testimony about how he had found Chaim Herman's letter. Efforts were also made in the early 1970s to find the manuscript discovered in 1952, but it had gone missing.<sup>10</sup> When a group of students cutting the grass around Crematorium III stumbled across a manuscript in Greek, on 24 October 1980, that mistake was not repeated: the museum was the undisputed place to which to take it. A reader of Greek was found who identified the author as Marcel Nadjary.<sup>11</sup>

'Out of all these recovered items, the most noteworthy that a cultural history could have overall, to the shame and misfortune of all of us,

only tiny fragments have been published so far', Nachman Blumental lamented in 1966.<sup>12</sup> Although he named no one, one of the figures at whom Blumental was directing his ire may have been Ber Mark, who had replaced Blumental as director of the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw. Mark had been given the post as a more reliable communist, although he combined being a loyal party member with attempting to rebuild Jewish life in Poland and maintain ties with Jewish communities elsewhere. By the later 1960s such a balancing act was becoming increasingly hard to pull off: Jewish communists were subject to public and aggressive criticism, and Mark had begun to fantasise at least about immigrating to Israel. Mark devoted much of his post-war life to the history of the Shoah, in particular obsessively producing account after account of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.<sup>13</sup> By 1966, the year of his death, he was close to completing a work he had entitled *Megiles Oyshvits*, the Scroll of Auschwitz, which was to include one text by Zalman Gradowski, both of those by Zalman Lewental and the anonymous manuscript found in 1952. His widow Esther was supposed to see the book through to publication in Poland, but the 'anti-Zionist' campaign beginning in March 1968 made that impossible.<sup>14</sup> Esther Mark, like many of the staff at the Jewish Historical Institute, was forced to leave Poland for Israel, where she undertook more research and identified the 'unknown author' as Leyb Langfus.<sup>15</sup> Also in Israel, Chaim Wolnerman, having had great difficulty finding a publisher for his manuscript, eventually decided to bring it out himself. Wolnerman's book and the Marks' book both appeared in 1977, making no reference to each other.<sup>16</sup>

In the meantime, the Auschwitz museum had published two editions of the Sonderkommando writings in quick succession: 1971 and 1973. The first edition provided Polish translations of the same set of texts as the Marks' edition, as well as of Chaim Herman's letter. All of the 1962 find was attributed to Zalman Lewental, and no author was ascribed to the 'anonymous' manuscript. The 1973 edition also included the notebook brought in by the Borowczyks.<sup>17</sup> With the increasing absence of Yiddish specialists in Poland, the museum drew upon the talents of Roman Pytel, a philologist whose primary expertise was in Aramaic, to decipher the text. The author had not signed his notebook, which he had entitled *The Deportation*, but was named 'Leyb' in the story. The museum concluded that he was Leyb Langfus, although they have not taken any notice of Esther Mark's attribution of other texts to him.

By 1977, then, all the writings discovered up to that point had been published in some form, but translations into other languages happened quite patchily, often at one remove. Apart from a direct translation of selections from Gradowski's writings, the only English translations of

the Scrolls are of the first Polish Auschwitz edition, and of the Hebrew version of the Marks' book.<sup>18</sup> Only Polish and German versions exist of *The Deportation*. No English translation of Nadjary's letter has been published. Although interest in the writings, especially those of Zalman Gradowski, has increased in the twenty-first century in other countries, knowledge of them is still quite limited in the anglophone world.<sup>19</sup> Accounts of these documents are often little more than descriptions. We know of no account published before 2013 that even mentions that the authorship of some texts is disputed.<sup>20</sup> Our book is the first in any language to provide a detailed engagement with all of the Scrolls of Auschwitz, something scholars seem to have been reluctant to do before. Such reticence is consonant with widespread uneasiness about the status of the Sonderkommando themselves.

## The Sonderkommando

The 'Special Squad' was a Nazi euphemism for the group of prisoners tasked with processing the bodies of those gassed in the Auschwitz main camp and in Birkenau. Different tasks were given to different specialists. 'Schleppers' or 'Leichenträger' pulled bodies from the gas chambers. 'Dentists' extracted gold teeth. 'Barbers' cut hair from the dead women's heads. 'Heizer' ('stokers') were responsible for burning the corpses, either in the ovens or in pits. What many saw as the worst task, which may have been called the 'Aschenkommando' ('ash squad'), involved grinding up the ashes into dust and disposing of them.<sup>21</sup> Other general duties included sorting clothes and effects before they were sent to the nearby warehouses of 'Kanada', and general upkeep of the crematoria. When it was discovered that their presence helped to keep victims calmer, they also had to stay with them while they undressed.<sup>22</sup>

The role and composition of the Sonderkommando changed a great deal over time, but there is one clear cut-off point falling at the beginning of December 1942. Almost no one who was in the SK before this time seems to have survived. Before it, groups of mainly Slovak Jews were recruited on an ad hoc and then somewhat longer-term basis to dispose of freshly gassed bodies, and to dig up and burn corpses of those buried when the ovens had broken down. The ad hoc groups were probably eliminated after carrying out their tasks. The final group seems to have been liquidated in its entirety in early December 1942.<sup>23</sup> The group who replaced them included Leyb Langfus and Zalman Gradowski, as well as a number of other men from central and north-eastern Poland. Like Langfus and Gradowski, most members were recruited within days of arrival, when

they were disoriented and least likely to resist, but some spent time in the camp before joining them. Zalman Lewental, for example, arrived in Auschwitz in early December 1942, but was only transferred to the Sonderkommando in January 1943.

Up to the spring of this year, the SK had mainly been working in the two 'Bunkers', farm cottages converted into gas chambers, with the bodies burnt in pits nearby. In March, the crematoria started to come into use, bespoke buildings combining undressing rooms, gas chambers and ovens. By this time, the squad had taken on a relatively settled form. In July 1943 they were moved from Block 2 of camp BIb to Block 13 of camp BIId, which, along with Block 11 for the penal group, was surrounded by a wall. Although they were supposed to be kept isolated from the rest of the camp, there are enough accounts of contact between them and other prisoners to indicate that it was sometimes possible, if risky, to cross that boundary.<sup>24</sup> Members of the Sonderkommando wore civilian clothes with a red stripe on them, and had their hair closely cropped. They had far fewer people to a block than the Birkenau standard, and much better access to washing facilities. There are plenty of reports of them being beaten, but sometimes the SS saw the wisdom of letting them get on with their jobs. Some SS men seem to have called their Kapos, and perhaps others of them too, by their first names.<sup>25</sup> The Sonderkommando were much better fed than other prisoners, largely because they could scavenge what was left by the groups who were murdered in the crematoria.<sup>26</sup>

As transports from different countries came to Birkenau, new members were recruited. French Jews were brought in during the spring of 1943, and a number were impressed into the SK. One of them was Chaim Herman. After transports from Greece started to arrive, a large contingent of Greek Jews was drafted in April 1944, strong and fit but mostly with no understanding of German. They were often given the most arduous tasks. Marcel Nadjary was among them. While periodic selections and expansions did take place, these were not the four-monthly liquidations of legend. The skills acquired by experienced members of the SK were too valuable for that.<sup>27</sup> All of the authors named above survived into the autumn of 1944. When nearly half a million Hungarian Jews were brought in and killed at Birkenau over the summer of 1944, all of them had to take part.<sup>28</sup>

All of the writers also seem to have been involved in some way in the plans for an uprising, a convoluted and difficult process that never managed to realise its aims, often stymied by events, and suspected by the camp administration. In July 1944, most of the SK were brought to live as well as work in the crematoria to prevent contact with other parts of the camp. When a revolt did break out, it was more of a desperate, divided

scramble from men about to be killed than the coordinated action that had been discussed.<sup>29</sup> They had managed to acquire some weapons, but it is not clear that any of them were actually used. The squad of each crematorium acted differently. The men of Crematoria IV and V who had been picked to be liquidated attacked the SS. Some attempted to run away; others ran into Crematorium IV and set it on fire. The SS were able to maintain control in the courtyard and in Crematorium V. The men in Crematorium II killed a Kapo, ran out of their building, cut the wire and escaped. They were tracked down and killed in the countryside nearby. All of the writers (with the possible exception of Gradowski) were part of the squad for Crematorium III, who, unclear what was happening, tried to stick to the plan to revolt later that day.<sup>30</sup> About 450 members of the SK were killed in the uprising or in retaliation for it, Gradowski among them. All the other writers survived, still working within the remaining crematoria that were operational, but also eventually responsible for dismantling them after the order had come to stop the gassings. 160, probably including Herman, Langfus and Lewental, were killed at the end of November.<sup>31</sup> About one hundred members, one of them Marcel Nadjary, managed to mingle with the group evacuated from Auschwitz and force-marched towards Mauthausen. Around two thousand men are thought to have worked in the Sonderkommando at one time or another. Eighty or so survived.

The Sonderkommando have been objects of fascination for many people for a long time, but more often as part of myths and fantasies of collaboration, or revenge, or both. Early portrayals of them were often of wretchedly self-interested individuals who sold their souls for an extra few weeks of life.<sup>32</sup> Although survivors of the Sonderkommando produced testimony from early on, this was often mixed with other legends about them, or indeed contributed to legends. Two early examples are Ota Kraus and Erich Kulka's compilation of evidence *The Death Factory* and Miklós Nyiszli's memoir of the time he had spent in Auschwitz. Kraus and Kulka's *Death Factory* included first-hand testimony from Filip Müller, but also described the SK as 'apathetic and insensitive'. The 'expression on their faces changed radically until they all appeared brutalized'.<sup>33</sup> Nyiszli had assisted Mengele with autopsies as well as acting as doctor to the SK, and generalised from his four months' experience to assert, for example, that there had been twelve squads of Sonderkommando dating back to 1941. His descriptions of the SK's luxurious lifestyle may also be something of an exaggeration.<sup>34</sup>

Primo Levi's 'The Grey Zone' (1986) relies heavily on Nyiszli's testimony to consider the moral status of the Sonderkommando.<sup>35</sup> In this essay, the Special Squads provide a major example of ethical ambiguities and challenges generated by Jewish actions during the Holocaust. For



Levi, they formed a moral quandary to be discussed alongside Chaim Rumkowski, the head of the *Judenrat* in the Łódź ghetto.<sup>36</sup> The members of the Sonderkommando were used as forced labour by the Germans and were consequently not straightforward collaborators. Levi recognised that the use of Jewish prisoners to maintain the gas chambers and to man the ovens enabled the Nazis to economise their workforce and to distance themselves from the ‘most atrocious tasks’ that accompanied their crimes.<sup>37</sup> He also perceived the creation of the Special Squads to form another means by which the Nazis could humiliate and degrade their Jewish victims.

For Levi the squads were abject, forced to act out the Nazi belief that the Jewish people would bow to ‘any and all humiliation’.<sup>38</sup> The members, as representative of the Jews as a whole, are therefore figured as submissive, as forming obedient servants to their Nazi masters. Levi appears to judge the squads negatively yet also affirms that judgment falters when assessing their actions. There is therefore a telling tension within the essay. Levi at once condemns the Sonderkommando, finds them repellent, and betrays a sombre compassion for them. The acts of squad members prompt what he describes as ‘convulsed questions’ (*domande convulse*).<sup>39</sup> There is, for him, therefore something gut-wrenching about the SK. At least initially, they generate a visceral rather than cognised response. In this context, his sustained engagement with their experiences can be understood as a remarkable effort to overcome this instinctive repulsion and guardedly reflect on them.

Levi’s equivocal meditation regarding the status of squad members is powerful and thoughtful, yet also, we would suggest, limited in scope. He refused to judge the squad members as collaborators, or to use them as an excuse to erase differences between victim and perpetrator, but his sense of who they were and what they felt was restricted. He was obviously familiar with the existence of writings by the Sonderkommando, describing ‘diary pages written feverishly for future memory and buried with extreme care near the crematoria’, yet he does not appear to have read them.<sup>40</sup> His account seems to be based in large part on the partial descriptions given in Miklós Nyiszli’s book. For Levi the only testimony that the Sonderkommando were therefore capable of producing would be ‘a lament, a curse, an expiation, and an attempt to justify and rehabilitate themselves’.<sup>41</sup> They could not, he implies, reflect on their situation, or serve as witnesses. They lived ‘in a permanent state of complete debasement’.<sup>42</sup> At the same time, however, he acknowledges the squads composed testimony intended for a future audience and recognises that they were assiduous in concealing it.

Gideon Greif’s collection of interviews with survivors of the Sonderkommando, *We Wept without Tears*, is a vital resource for moving



beyond the understanding that Levi exemplifies. Greif's primary concern is to humanise the Sonderkommando and defend them from the attacks made upon them in earlier accounts, even those of Levi. He often stresses his personal relationships with the surviving members, including direct addresses to them and expressing a desire to make his words their memorial. He includes pen portraits of each of them, emphasising their human qualities, their virtues, and the ways that they were able to form and build relationships after the war.<sup>43</sup> Greif's readings of the Scrolls are equally informed by this concern, making use of them to show how the SK were not unfeeling automata, or, in the more difficult parts, at times even apologising for what is written there.<sup>44</sup> He fails to give sufficient consideration to the fact that the writings are not simply records of the SK's souls, but are consciously formed works that are made with a purpose – to reach the outside world. His sensitivity and sympathy have been vital to his work interviewing former members, and his book provides a wealth of information about the SK based on those interviews. Nonetheless, his approach may be too defensive and apologetic, still too much of a reaction to early misrepresentations of the SK.

Gideon Greif's book was published in Hebrew in 1999, but only translated in 2005. That same year saw the publication of Eric Friedler, Barbara Siebert and Andreas Kilian's *Zeugen aus der Todeszone*. This, the only full-length historical study of the Sonderkommando, has also helped to establish the facts and dispel some myths, but shows little interest in reflecting on ways in which greater knowledge of the SK and their writings might enable us to better address Primo Levi's moral questions, or affect our approaches to testimony, or even enhance our general understanding of the extermination camps and how they operated.<sup>45</sup> The fact that this book remains untranslated into English, and the length of time taken to translate Greif's collection of interviews, indicate the reluctance there has been, especially in anglophone scholarship, to probe further into these crucial questions.

As some of the few survivors to have been present at gassings, the Sonderkommando have at times been granted a chance to recount what they saw. Members of the SK bore witness at major trials in Poland and Germany.<sup>46</sup> In accounts which see the gas chambers as absolutely central to the Final Solution, the Sonderkommando's testimony has been particularly significant, not least in Claude Lanzmann's film *Shoah* (1985). As Adam Brown has argued, however, even here the ambiguous position of the SK comes out in Lanzmann's expectation that they should re-enact harrowing moments of their past, in a kind of expiation for their actions.<sup>47</sup> Filip Müller is a key witness for Lanzmann, as one of those who saw and indeed entered the gas chambers. But his witnessing has to take place

retrospectively, produced and guided by his interviewer. For Lanzmann, breaking through consciously relayed narratives is what leads to true moments of witnessing, of incarnation. Indeed, even Müller's voice is taken out of his own conscious control, slowed down to match the images Lanzmann has filmed.<sup>48</sup>

Lanzmann's unwillingness to grant the Sonderkommando the capacity to represent and reflect on their conditions has been even more evident in the controversies over the four photographs taken by one member of the SK, identified only by the first name Alex. Images that recurred again and again in different contexts, these photographs remained more or less unanalysed until the beginning of the twenty-first century, with essays by Dan Stone and Georges Didi-Huberman. Didi-Huberman's expansion of his essay into a book, *Images malgré tout*, was as a response to attacks on his analysis by Lanzmann and his followers, who argued that the photographs failed to represent the Final Solution, and were 'images without imagination'.<sup>49</sup>

What recurs in discussions of the SK, therefore, is the idea that they could not reflect on their situation, or serve independently as witnesses. In this book, we want to argue that that is exactly what they could do. We will argue that the Scrolls are an important, and under-read, archive of Holocaust writing.

## Holocaust Writing

Some aspects of the Scrolls are unique, and much of this uniqueness stems from the status of the Sonderkommando: the better conditions under which they lived and the relatively higher standing that they enjoyed probably helped them in some way to maintain a sense of identity. They had the energy to produce testimony. At the same time, the tasks that they were given, and the fact that they had no expectation of coming out alive, took a massive psychic toll on them. This latter factor comes out in their writings, in ways close to Primo Levi's expectations. But simply to focus on these two aspects is to ignore many of the ways in which they can be compared to other kinds of Holocaust writing. Firstly, the Sonderkommando operated like other prisoners in the camp, and their writing was only possible because of the elaborate networks of exchange by which products could be obtained, the system of *organising*. Prisoners from the Kanada Kommando had to provide them with paper, pen and ink.<sup>50</sup> Even light was a scarce resource: their *Stubedienst* had to arrange a bunk for writers that was near a window. The task of finding materials that would preserve the texts once buried was given to a number of members of the Sonderkommando, who searched constantly for wax to seal them in packages.<sup>51</sup>

Secondly, the Sonderkommando were only one group attempting to attest to what was happening in Birkenau. Even scratching one's name into a surface was an attempt to bear some kind of witness. But prisoners did much more than this. Famously, some prisoners escaped with reports on what was taking place in the camp.<sup>52</sup> Others kept secret lists, or hid or copied official records and photos.<sup>53</sup> Drawings and art representing camp life were concealed on site, or in some cases smuggled to the outside world.<sup>54</sup> Songs were sung, adapted, or written from scratch.<sup>55</sup> Yisroel Levental's song 'Fun Oshvientshim' has a chorus which asks 'Why did I come to Auschwitz?' and proclaims it better to die than to eat 'Auschwitz bread'. It does give some elements of information: what happened on arrival, the violence and threats of the Kapos, even mentioning the crematoria. But its tenor is to place experiences in the camp in a form which helps to make them bearable, to offer perhaps a modicum of rueful humour. The chorus especially would suggest that it was there to be sung communally.<sup>56</sup> Some prisoners even wrote poetry in Auschwitz, not usually to make a record of events, but rather to escape from its environment. Ruth Klüger's poetry, some of which was composed mentally and memorised in Auschwitz before being written down afterwards, 'constituted for her a mode of keeping her sanity in the camps', putting her experiences into some regular form, and expunging from them the presence of the perpetrators.<sup>57</sup> Three poems, written by an unknown woman in the Czech family camp, were given just before its liquidation to a Kapo, and then passed on to Erich Kulka. Here, using profoundly Christian imagery, the writer pours scorn on her tormenters and stares her future death in the face, while also asserting her ability to keep up some cultural life within the family camp.<sup>58</sup>

Each of these kinds of writing and recording took a different form, a result of the variety of positions occupied by different groups in the camp. The specificities need to be noted, but comparisons can be drawn too. This extends to writing produced at different sites. Alan Rosen notes that in earlier scholarship, the emphasis on the camp experience and the great, usually insurmountable, difficulties of writing there meant that for a long time Holocaust writing was only seen as beginning after the war had ended.<sup>59</sup> Much work has now recognised the significance of writings produced in the ghettos and in hiding. Recent scholarship has also noted continuities between pre-war historical practice and the work done in the ghettos, and continuities between that and the work of survivor-historians in the immediate aftermath.<sup>60</sup> It is also possible to see some continuity between ghetto and concentration camp, even with the sites of extermination. Many of the feelings associated with the camps – of powerlessness, of absolute vulnerability to arbitrary acts of violence, of

squalor, hunger, dirt – were part of the ghetto experience. Analogies can be drawn between writing projects in the ghettos and in the camps. The compilation and archiving of documents by Oyneg Shabes in Warsaw was massively more extensive than what prisoners in Auschwitz were able to carry out, but the impulse to collect and record had much in common. The archivists of the Białystok Ghetto, working somewhat more chaotically than in Warsaw, were not professional historians, but rather were directly involved in armed resistance. For the Sonderkommando too, writing and resistance were inextricably intertwined. The chronicles of the Łódź ghetto were ‘compiled in one of the offices of the ghetto administration’, although without the knowledge of the Germans.<sup>61</sup> Being able to testify in Auschwitz was also often the result of being in a ‘privileged’ position.

Diaries written in ghettos or in hiding vastly outnumber those written in the camps. But some do exist. In concentration camps in Germany and Holland, diaries were occasionally kept, usually by prisoners higher up in a camp’s social order.<sup>62</sup> Fela Szeps wrote in the Grünberg camp, and was even able to try out and assess different modes of writing.<sup>63</sup> Leon Weliczker Wells’s book *Death Brigade* is adapted from a diary he seems to have kept in the Janowska Road camp.<sup>64</sup> Ghettos were also places where the process of extermination was recorded. Escapees from Treblinka and Chełmno came to Warsaw and bore witness there.<sup>65</sup> An escapee from Ponar testified to the archivists of Białystok.<sup>66</sup> Such testimony was not exclusively produced in the ghettos. Kazimierz Sakowicz, a bystander rather than a victim, but at great personal risk nonetheless, kept a diary of the shootings in the Ponar forests. He too buried it.<sup>67</sup> Prisoners in Chełmno managed to write letters in Yiddish and Polish recording what happened there. Some of them also produced a lengthier document describing what happened at the site, and calling for revenge.<sup>68</sup>

Poets in ghettos wrote about extermination. Władysław Szlengel’s Skamandrite lightness of touch extended even to ‘The Little Station of Treblinka’ and its final image of an advertisement urging: ‘cook with gas’.<sup>69</sup> And some poems were found in extermination camps. In his investigations for the Central Committee for Jewish History, Nachman Blumental discovered a bundle of paper in the ruins of Chełmno, a strange cycle of poems that he interpreted as a satire on the Germans. He also noted down songs that were associated with death camps, such as a version of ‘*Mayn shtetele Belz*’ which was adapted to refer to Bełżec.<sup>70</sup> Two poems given to the commission had been found in the pocket of an M. Shenker (first name not given) in Treblinka. He may have written them within the camp itself. ‘I am ashamed’ (‘*Kh shem zikh*’) expresses the shame he feels to be alive when his wife and child are dead. Shenker’s ‘Sleep my child’ (‘*Shlof mayn kind*’), another poem mourning the death of his child, and

Aron Liebeskind's 'A lullaby for my little boy in the crematorium' (*A viglid far mayn yingele in krematoryum*), also possibly written in Treblinka, have similarities with the ghetto lullabies which Frieda Aaron discusses.<sup>71</sup>

None of this is to argue that making distinctions in time and space is meaningless. Zoë Waxman's differentiation between the literature of the ghettos and that produced in camps still stands,<sup>72</sup> as does the gulf in experience noted by Alexandra Garbarini between someone writing at the beginning of 1942 and someone in 1943.<sup>73</sup> But it is to say that thin, fragile continuities did exist, that enabled some testimony, perhaps only in rare and bizarre circumstances, to continue to be written. This testimony needs to be read.

Currently, as we have said, there seems to be a reluctance to provide readings of the Scrolls of Auschwitz. Such a position is understandable. Tom Lawson notes his own feeling of shame in talking of the Sonderkommando,<sup>74</sup> and subjecting their writings to literary analysis might seem perverse. George Steiner says of Chaim Kaplan's *Warsaw Diary* ('Scroll of Agony') that 'the only decent "review" ... would be to re-copy the book, line by line'.<sup>75</sup> Gideon Greif's lengthy quotations from the Sonderkommando's writings in the introduction to his book, some of them extending over a page, often with barely any commentary at all, seem to enact what Steiner recommends. Other scholars such as Saul Friedländer might also be said to follow him. There are a number of useful introductions to and summaries of the writings of the Sonderkommando available, especially those by Nathan Cohen and Susan Pentlin.<sup>76</sup> But they usually do not have the space (and perhaps the inclination?) to say anything more about them. Even creative responses to the Scrolls often take a documentary-collage approach, quoting from them directly without comment.<sup>77</sup> This situation is beginning to change. Philippe Mesnard and Pavel Polian have shown the value of considering Gradowski's writing as literature.<sup>78</sup> David Roskies too has recognised Gradowski's literary ambitions.<sup>79</sup> Tom Lawson makes brief but thoughtful comments on some of the SK writings.<sup>80</sup> Dan Stone has credited the Sonderkommando with the agency to write works of history rather than simply record their experiences.<sup>81</sup> Alexandre Prstojevic writes powerfully and persuasively that the Sonderkommando writings are 'varied in their form and style, but all marked by the desire to go beyond bare facts'.<sup>82</sup> This book will follow these examples, and those provided by scholars of other texts from camps and ghettos.<sup>83</sup> We provide complex readings of the Scrolls, ones which show that they require, and repay, careful attention. The fact that they can be placed in a network of writings – not the same, but nonetheless comparable – suggests to us that they do have a wider significance, that they can be read in dialogue both with other primary texts and with other

modes of reading Holocaust testimony. That does not mean that they simply sit comfortably within these modes of reading, however.

### Being inside the Event

The existence of the Sonderkommando writings has major implications for arguments concerning the Holocaust's unsayability or unrepresentability. The Holocaust or Auschwitz, Dominick LaCapra affirms, has, until recently, 'been a privileged term for the unnameable'.<sup>84</sup> LaCapra's qualifier indicates this view has come under increasing pressure.<sup>85</sup> The Sonderkommando writings challenge the idea of unrepresentability, both through their context of production and through their form and content. Ways in which these writings call into question Dori Laub's assertion that during the Holocaust '*the event produced no witnesses*' have already been explored.<sup>86</sup> Laub argues that the Holocaust could not be attested to from within as 'the very circumstance of *being inside the event*' made it unthinkable that someone 'could step outside of the coercively totalitarian and dehumanizing frame of reference in which the event was taking place, and provide an independent frame of reference through which the event could be observed'.<sup>87</sup> Laub has recently been criticised for failing to display the independence, the retrospective objectivity, he perceives as necessary for witnessing to take place.<sup>88</sup>

The Sonderkommando writings, as will become clear in subsequent chapters, are certainly partial. They are written in unconcealed hatred of Nazi perpetrators. Calls for vengeance are a common theme. They are also fragmentary in terms of their overview of events. They provide no direct account, for example, of the atrocities committed by the *Einsatzgruppen* against the Jews from 1941 onwards. The writings also do not *observe* events, Laub's use of the term implying passive detachment. The authors of the 'Scrolls of Auschwitz' were active, if unwilling, in the smooth running of the crematoria. Their accounts were clagged by mass death. This is possibly one of the reasons why Laub, while acknowledging the existence of the manuscripts (he writes of diaries written and buried in the ground), dismisses them.<sup>89</sup> His main rationale for ignoring them, however, is because:

the degree to which bearing witness was required, entailed such an outstanding measure of awareness and of comprehension of the event – of its dimensions, consequences, and above all, of its radical *otherness* to all known frames of reference – that it was beyond the limits of human ability (and willingness) to grasp, to transmit, or to imagine.<sup>90</sup>



The terms Laub employs here, describing experiences beyond the human capacity to comprehend or communicate, evoke psychological trauma. In Cathy Caruth's well-known definition, trauma is a missed experience. The traumatic event 'is experienced too soon, too unexpectedly, to be fully known and is therefore not available to consciousness until it imposes itself again, repeatedly, in the nightmares and repetitive actions of the survivor'.<sup>91</sup> Trauma is therefore an experience that waits to be claimed.<sup>92</sup> Laub describes it as 'an event that could not and did not proceed through to its completion, has no editing, attained no closure, and therefore, as far as its survivors are concerned, continues into the present and is current in every respect'.<sup>93</sup> It is only through the work of the analyst, the listener, that a traumatic event can finally be accessed and articulated. The hearer acts as 'the blank screen on which the event comes to be inscribed for the first time'.<sup>94</sup>

Laub's thinking in relation to the way trauma can be alleviated emerges from his experiences working as a psychoanalyst and also as an interviewer for the Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies at Yale. The witness accounts he discusses are those of the (then) living. Only a survivor has the occasion, the opportunity, to speak about, and thereby partially overcome, the traumatic experiences they have been subject to. There was no scope within the Holocaust for any comparable psychotherapy to take place. Psychiatrists, such as Viktor Frankl, who were caught up in the destruction of Europe's Jews were preoccupied with surviving rather than attending to the psychic needs of fellow inmates.<sup>95</sup> In the chapters that follow, however, we will argue that the plain pages used by the authors of the 'Scrolls' occasionally provided a 'blank screen' comparable to the analyst. Writing, we will show, became a space through which traumatic experiences could be articulated and, to a degree, managed. Sheets of paper 'listened'. The words committed to them provided a source of psychic sustenance to each author. They helped to prevent the kind of loss of subjectivity that Laub has claimed rendered attesting from within impossible.<sup>96</sup>

Oral and written testimonies are usually differentiated. Comparing video and literary testimony, Lawrence Langer contends that reading a retrospective account of events which seeks 'to carry us "back there" is an order of experience entirely different' from video testimony.<sup>97</sup> Video testimony fosters situations in which, through a 'complex immediacy', the voice reaches us 'simultaneously from the secure present and the devastating past'.<sup>98</sup> Langer provides the example of the video witness Barbara T., who vanishes 'from contact with us even as she speaks, momentarily returning to the world she is trying to evoke instead of recreating it for us in the present'.<sup>99</sup> This description is reminiscent of Laub's example of a woman being interviewed for the Yale Video Archive who, while relating her



memories of Auschwitz, was suddenly 'fully there'.<sup>100</sup> Video testimonies therefore generate situations in which something akin to what Claude Lanzmann describes as 'incarnation' occurs.<sup>101</sup> They produce instances in which the past is relived rather than simply recounted. The past ceases to be past, is presented in the present. In our Conclusion we examine the Sonderkommando writings in relation to Lanzmann's ideas about incarnation and the archive.

For Langer, written testimony is too staged, too thought through, to compare with accounts as raw as those produced in interview situations. Writing always portrays rather than embodies the past.<sup>102</sup> The Sonderkommando manuscripts are no different from the retrospective written accounts Langer has in mind in that they employ style, imagery, chronology. They are representational and narratological. The writings produced at Birkenau, however, are also of their moment. They speak from the world of the death factory. They can therefore be said to carry that world within them in ways retrospectively produced accounts cannot. The literary techniques they exhibit were designed not to carry a reader back (or not solely to do that) but also to carry experiences forward. The authors strove to convey a past lived as their present to another present, a future present they would not live to see. The understanding of temporality employed by Langer to make sense of oral testimony is therefore difficult to reconcile with these writings.

We are not suggesting that because of the context of their production the Sonderkommando writings are somehow superior to video testimony. The kind of hierarchy imposed by Langer is questionable in its usefulness, and reversing it serves no worthwhile purpose. The chapters that follow nevertheless make clear that qualities ascribed to oral accounts are also present in the writing. There is a comparably complex immediacy in the manuscripts. Although they were not instant responses to specific events, occasionally the time of writing comes close to collapsing into the times it is describing. This occurs in a particularly poignant way in the last notations made by Langfus, which are discussed in Chapter 3. It is also markedly present in Lewental's history of the Sonderkommando uprising, written in haste shortly after the failed revolt, which we examine in Chapter 4. During moments such as these, re-presentation comes close to presentation *tout court*. In his discussion of Holocaust representation, Berel Lang suggests that if we assume in any representation 'a construct that substitutes the representation for an original, then since no representation can ever *be* that original, representations will also never quite be adequate'.<sup>103</sup> There is always a gap between event and account, and between word and thing. Lang, however, does acknowledge that diaries come near to bridging this gap. He suggests that 'the diary comes as close as representation can to

performing the events it cites rather than to describing them; it is an act in, if not fully of, the history it relates'.<sup>104</sup>

The Sonderkommando writings are not diaries but they do come close to performing rather than representing occurrences.<sup>105</sup> To suggest that like the diaries they are in but not fully of the history that they relate would, however, be wrong. Several of the writings openly look to be history or to shape how history will be written. All the writings display a degree of historical awareness. The letter by Herman discussed in Chapter 5, for instance, shows concern with how the actions of the Sonderkommando will be perceived and interpreted in the future. In Chapter 1 we also consider how the materiality of the manuscripts additionally renders these documents 'of' the history they relate (although not in a way Lang would necessarily recognise). The extant manuscripts literally have traces of the events that occurred at Birkenau embodied in them. Lang suggests the literal rather than the abstract is the opposite of the representational.<sup>106</sup> The Sonderkommando writings therefore form representations yet possess additional qualities that are not representational. In this context, the chapter on Langfus identifies a strong affective register at work in some of his accounts. He gives a feel for events as well as relaying facts about them. This leads his account to possess an urgent affective intensity, which although incited by the representational dimensions to his writings cannot be equated with them.

## Finding the Words

Crucial to working through trauma is finding words for feelings or words able to transmit feelings. Judith Herman describes the difficulty of those who have experienced trauma finding 'a language that conveys fully and persuasively what one has seen'.<sup>107</sup> She might also have added 'what one has felt'. LaCapra proposes that 'trauma brings about a dissociation of affect and representation: one disconcertingly feels what one cannot represent; one numbingly represents what one cannot feel'.<sup>108</sup> Langfus, however, is able to use representation, the figurative powers of language, to realise a kind of reconciliation between words and affects. He therefore engages in working through of the kind recommended by LaCapra, who suggests that:

when the past becomes accessible to recall in memory, and when language functions to provide some measure of conscious control, critical distance and perspective, one has begun the arduous process of working over and through the trauma in a fashion that may never bring full transcendence

of acting out (or being haunted by revenants and reliving the past in its shattering intensity) but which may enable processes of judgment and at least limited liability and ethically responsible agency.<sup>109</sup>

From within the crematoria, Langfus begins this gruelling process. LaCapra has suggested that denying the Holocaust's representability and, consequently, the idea that the experience of it can be worked through, leads to foreclosure regarding issues of moral agency in contemporary and historical testimonies.<sup>110</sup> This is no doubt why no scholarship has so far examined how some of the authors of the Sonderkommando documents exhibited 'ethically responsible behavior, including consideration for others' in their accounts.<sup>111</sup> In Chapter 3, Langfus's efforts to formulate an ethically considered response to the nightmare situation he found himself in, his striving to perfect a suitable style to express events, are analysed, and his approach to witnessing in this context is compared with that of Gradowski. The ethical quandary Gradowski wrestles with in his account of the murder of a group of women is examined in Chapter 2. Gradowski struggles to do justice to the women's experiences. Agency of the kind identified by LaCapra can therefore be detected in several of the writings. It can also be located in the four photographs taken by Alex of the cremation pits and a group of women on their way to the gas chamber, which are analysed in Chapter 6. Alex displays a similar sense of responsibility coupled with discomfort to Gradowski.

The last photograph Alex took, one of treetops obscured by bright sunshine is almost abstract in appearance. It is close to non-representational and may signal a refusal to index aspects of the killing process. Doubts in the capacity of representation or in its appropriateness feature repeatedly in the Sonderkommando testimonies examined here. Retrospective debates surrounding the Holocaust's representability are therefore prefigured in accounts from within the event. Nadjary, for example, states that '<the dramas that> my eyes have seen are indescribable'.<sup>112</sup> His sentiments anticipate those of Lang, who has argued in the context of Holocaust representation that for some subjects or contents 'no artistic form may be adequate'.<sup>113</sup> Despite his assertion, however, Nadjary continued to search for words to describe what he had experienced. The authors in the Sonderkommando may have questioned representation's capabilities, yet they never abandoned it altogether as their varied efforts at witnessing powerfully demonstrate. Some of their endeavours, such as Gradowski's startling address to the moon discussed in Chapter 2, are remarkably audacious works of literature.

The implications of many of these writings for long-standing beliefs about representability are therefore considerable. A degree of caution

nevertheless needs to be exercised. The Sonderkommando were in a unique position within Auschwitz-Birkenau and, as subsequent chapters show, their accounts attest to this. Too often debates about representation are grounded in a homogenous sense of the event. The Sonderkommando, however, specifically bear witness to the horrors of the 'exterminatory universe'. Although some comparisons are possible, it is vital that we make them with a clear sense of the difference between their writings and those of '*l'univers concentrationnaire*' – the 'concentrationary universe' (to use David Rousset's term for the concentration camps).<sup>114</sup> Many theorisations of Holocaust testimony focus on the latter rather than the former. Giorgio Agamben's discussion in *Remnants of Auschwitz* of the figure of the *Muselman*, 'that to which no one has borne witness', forms a major recent example of this general tendency.<sup>115</sup>

In his preface to *Remnants of Auschwitz*, Agamben does reference the Sonderkommando manuscripts. He draws attention to Lewental's remarks in the Łódź addendum about how unimaginable the horrors he has witnessed are, as a means to demonstrate how Auschwitz generated circumstances in which 'a reality that necessarily exceeds its factual elements' came into being.<sup>116</sup> In a passage not cited by Agamben, Lewental makes a similar observation to his readers about the historical situation at Auschwitz: 'You do not want to <be>lieve in the truth and later you will not believe the true fac<ts> and la<ter> you will probably look for> various excuses'.<sup>117</sup> Agamben's focus on the bio-political dimension of the concentrationary universe means that he ignores the importance of language as resistance in the death factory. Philippe Mesnard and Claudine Kahan have examined Agamben's unscrupulous use of Lewental's addendum, detailing how he fails to properly contextualise it and makes loose use of quotations.<sup>118</sup> For Mesnard and Kahan he is also at fault for neglecting the specific horrors of the extermination camp and collapsing the two discrete, if interrelated, camp universes together.<sup>119</sup> The Sonderkommando worked not to attest to the *Muselmänner*, emaciated, near lifeless inmates of the concentration camps, hopelessly subsisting rather than actively staying alive. The writers from the death factory attested instead to victims who were frequently 'overflowing with ardour for life'.<sup>120</sup> They therefore challenge the stereotype of the lethargic, emaciated victim of which the *Muselman* forms the extreme.

The Sonderkommando regularly witnessed the deaths of these alert, spirited victims, assisting in the destruction of all traces of them. In this environment, each word the Sonderkommando authors committed to paper, each character, as a sign of life, life writing, resisted Nazi efforts at destruction. At times these efforts were designed to preserve self-identity. In Chapter 2, we examine how, through his elaborate description of the

process of incineration of bodies, which he links with the extinguishing of the future creative potentials of individuals, Gradowski bears witness to a crucial dimension of the death factory while simultaneously attesting to his powers as a writer, expressing, preserving his own creativity. In Chapter 4, we trace how Lewental, by contrast, was more focused on the lives of others. His account of the Sonderkommando uprising uses words to provide memorials to specific individuals, to safeguard their memories.

The power that even rudimentary writings can possess in this context is brought to the fore in Chapter 5 in which the letters of Chaim Herman and Marcel Nadjary are briefly compared with testimony produced by the last working party of Jews at the extermination camp of Chełmno. All the Sonderkommando writings were composed in fear of dying. Each author knowingly exploited language's capacity for maintaining something of their life after their death. Writing as representation, for them, therefore promised posthumous escape and a substantial victory over Nazi efforts to erase all traces of their crimes. It also provided a means by which to record those crimes. The documents were predominantly composed as deliberate testimony. The chapters that follow seek to explore all these aspects of the 'Scrolls of Auschwitz' and to demonstrate various ways in which they provide a compelling argument for refusing to regard the event as beyond representation.

Having discussed the circumstances in which they were found in this Introduction, we begin with a consideration of the material state of these documents as an aspect of their status as testimony. We move on to consider the most striking of the writers from a literary perspective, Zalman Gradowski. We then show that the other Yiddish writers in the SK also repay close reading: Langfus for affective and ethical dimensions, Lewental for historical and memorial. Next we consider the letters of Herman and Nadjary, which add an extra dimension in relation to understanding the group dynamics of the SK and considering issues related to masculinity. The theme of resistance, and of the power of writing to contribute to it, runs through all these chapters. Finally, we draw upon all of our previous readings to revisit the SK photographs and show that a greater familiarity with the Scrolls reveals aspects that have not been covered by the debate set up by Didi-Huberman.

## Notes

1. Andrzej Strzelecki, *The Evacuation, Dismantling and Liberation of Auschwitz* (Oświęcim: Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, 2001). The footage taken immediately after liberation by Alexander Vorontsov is included in the film *The Liberation of Auschwitz* (dir. Irmgard von zur Mühlen, 1986). Jacek Lechandro, 'From Liberation to the Opening of the Memorial', <[http://en.auschwitz.org/m/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=227&Itemid=13&limit=1&limitstart=1](http://en.auschwitz.org/m/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=227&Itemid=13&limit=1&limitstart=1)>.
2. Andrzej Zaorski, 'Relacja', AŻIH 301/7182. The 'book' that Zaorski found was almost certainly a journal article, perhaps put into a format to present to Rudolf Höss. Günther Niethammer, 'Beobachtungen über die Vogelwelt von Auschwitz/Ost-Oberschlesien', *Annalen des Naturhistorischen Museums in Wien* 52 (1942): 164–99. Niethammer's activities in Auschwitz have inspired a recent novel, Arno Surminski, *Die Vogelwelt von Auschwitz* (Munich, Langen Müller Verlag, 2008).
3. Because we use the word Sonderkommando so much in this book, we will not italicise it. We will also use 'special squad' and 'SK' to refer to them. Although SK was sometimes used to refer to the *Strafkompanie*, the penal work group, it does seem to have also been used for the Sonderkommando.
4. Chaim Wolnerman recalls attending a town meeting in Oświęcim which discussed trying to stop children robbing graves. Those present argued that assistance to the poorest families would help to reduce it. 'Araynfir', in Zalman Gradowski, *In harts fun gehenem* (Jerusalem: Wolnerman, n.d. [c.1977]), 2–3. Andrzej Zaorski expressed considerably more disgust, calling them 'human hyenas' (AŻIH 301/7182). A recent treatment of these sorts of incidents is in Jan Tomasz Gross and Irena Grudzińska Gross, *Golden Harvest: Events on the Margin of the Holocaust* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).
5. Gideon Greif, *We Wept without Tears: Testimonies of the Jewish Sonderkommando in Auschwitz*, trans. Naftali Greenwood (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005), 165. Ber Mark, *Megiles Oysbivits* (Tel Aviv: Yisroel-Bukh, 1977), 260–61.
6. Wolnerman, 'Araynfir', 3–4.
7. Wojciech Borowczyk and Gustaw Borowczyk, reports of 5 Nov and 14 Nov 1970, APMO Wspomnienia Tom 78A. Another document found in the grounds of the crematoria in this early phase was not written by the SK, but was rather a diary of a teenage girl in the Łódź ghetto. It was discovered by Zinaida Berezovskaya, a Red Army doctor, in spring 1945, and kept in her family until 2008. Rywka Lipszyc, *The Diary of Rywka Lipszyc*, ed. Alexandra Zaprunder (San Francisco, CA: Jewish Family and Children's Services Holocaust Center, 2014). See also <<http://www.rywkadiary.org>> and <<http://jfcsholocaustcenter.org/diary-rywka-lipszyc/>>. We briefly discuss the significance of how this diary was hidden in Chapter 3, endnote 2.
8. Jan Kucia, 'Relacja', 2 April 1974, APMO Wspomnienia Tom 73, 156644/420. There was no consistent policy of keeping manuscripts in the archive at Auschwitz itself until the mid-1950s at the earliest. Jonathan Huener, *Auschwitz, Poland, and the Politics of Commemoration, 1945–1979* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2003), 142.
9. Wojciech Borowczyk and Gustaw Borowczyk, reports of Nov 1970.
10. The location of it is still unknown (Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, personal communication).
11. Franciszek Piper, 'Protokoł', Nov 1980, APMO, Wspomnienia Tom 135.
12. Nachman Blumental, *Shmuesn vegn der Yidisher Literatur unter der Daytsber Okupatsye* (Buenos Aires: Tsentral Farband far Poylishe Yidn in Argentine, 1966),



178. At the time he was writing, only two shorter texts had been published: the anonymous author's manuscript in 'W otchłani zbrodni', *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego* 9–10 (1954), and Zalman Lewental's commentary on the Łódź ghetto diary in Janusz Gumkowski and Adam Rutkowski (eds), *Szukajcie w popiołach*, trans. Szymon Datner (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Łódzkie, n.d. [1965]).
13. Joanna Nalewajko-Kulikow, 'Trzy kolory: szary: Szkic do portretu Bernarda Marka', *Zagłada Żydów* 4 (2008): 263–84. Bernard Mark, 'Dziennik (grudzień 1965 – luty 1966)', trans. Joanna Nalewajko-Kulikow, *Kwartalnik Historii Żydów* 226(2) (2008): 156–92. Dovid Sfard, 'Prof. B. Mark', *Mit zikh un mit andere: Oytobiografishe un literarishe eseyen* (Yerushalyim: Farlag 'Yesushalayim Almanakh', 1984), 375–79.
  14. Joanna Nalewajko-Kulikow, 'The Last Yiddish Books Printed in Poland: Outline of the Activities of Yidish Bukh Publishing House', in *Under the Red Banner: Yiddish Culture in the Communist Countries in the Postwar Era*, ed. Elvira Grözinger and Magdalena Ruta (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2008), 133. On the anti-Zionist campaign, see Leszek Głuchowski and Antony Polonsky (eds), *1968: Forty Years After*, *POLIN: Studies in Polish Jewry* 21 (2008). In addition to Esther Mark, a number of other people mentioned in this book were forced out of Poland at this time: Dovid Sfard and Yehoshua Wygodzki (Chapter 2) and Adam Rutkowski and Adam Wein (Chapter 4).
  15. On the basis that Esther Mark contributed research to this project and may indeed have been involved with it all along, we will sometimes refer to the book as the Marks' edition.
  16. This is a little surprising, as Dovid Sfard, who was a long-time friend of Ber Mark, wrote a short foreword to the Wolnerman edition. 'Eynike zikhroynes vegn Zalman Gradowski', in Gradowski, *In harts fun gehenem*, 6–8.
  17. Jadwiga Bezwińska and Danuta Czech (eds), *Wśród koszarnej zbrodni: Notatki więźniów z Sonderkommando w Oświęcimiu* (Oświęcim: Wydawnictwo Państwowego Muzeum w Oświęcimiu, 1st edn 1971; 2nd edn 1973).
  18. Zalman Gradowski, 'The Czech Transport: A Chronicle of the Auschwitz Sonderkommando', trans. Robert Wolf, in *The Literature of Destruction: Jewish Responses to Catastrophe*, ed. David Roskies (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 548–64; Ber Mark, *The Scrolls of Auschwitz*, trans. Sharon Neemani (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1985); Jadwiga Bezwińska and Danuta Czech (eds), *Amidst a Nightmare of Crime: Manuscripts of Members of Sonderkommando*, 2nd edn, trans. Krystyna Michalik (Oświęcim: State Museum at Oświęcim, 1973).
  19. See for example: Carlo Saletti (ed.), *La voce dei sommersi: Manoscritti ritrovati di membri del Sonderkommando di Auschwitz* (Venice: Marsilio, 1999); Georges Bensoussan, Philippe Mesnard and Carlo Saletti (eds), *Des voix sous la cendre: Manuscrits des Sonderkommandos d'Auschwitz-Birkenau* (Paris: Calmann Lévy/Mémorial de la Shoah, 2005); Zalmen Gradowski, *Au coeur de l'enfer: Témoignage d'un Sonderkommando d'Auschwitz, 1944*, trans. Batia Baum (Paris: Kimé, 2001); Teresa Świebocka, Franciszek Piper and Martin Mayr (eds), *Inmitten des grauenvollen Verbrechens: Handschriften von Mitgliedern des Sonderkommandos*, trans. Herta Henschel and Jochen August (Oświęcim: Verlag des Staatlichen Auschwitz-Birkenau Museums, 1996); Zalman Gradowski, *V serdtsevine Ada: Zapiski, naidennie v peple vozle pechei Osventsima*, trans. Aleksandra Polian (Moscow: Gamma Press, 2011). This last Russian edition is the only one to revisit the original manuscripts after the Marks and the Auschwitz museum. Translations of Gradowski's writings have also appeared in Czech, Dutch, Hebrew and Spanish.



20. Dan Stone, 'The Harmony of Barbarism: Locating the Scrolls of Auschwitz in Holocaust Historiography', in *Representing Auschwitz: At the Margins of Testimony*, ed. Nicholas Chare and Dominic Williams (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 27 n. 3.
21. Filip Müller uses the term 'Aschenkommando', but we have not seen it elsewhere. *Sonderbehandlung: Drei Jahre in den Krematorien und Gaskammern von Auschwitz*, literary collaboration with Helmut Freitag (Munich: Steinhausen, 1979), 222.
22. The most comprehensive history of the Sonderkommando is given by Eric Friedler, Barbara Siebert and Andreas Kilian, *Zeugen aus der Todeszone: Das Jüdische Sonderkommando in Auschwitz* (Munich: Deutsche Taschenbuch Verlag, 2005). Useful summaries are given by Angelika Königseder, 'Das Sonderkommando', *Der Ort des Terrors: Geschichte der nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslager*, ed. Wolfgang Benz and Barbara Distel, vol. 5: *Hinzert, Auschwitz, Neuengamme*, ed. Königseder (Munich: Verlag C.H. Beck, 2007), 152–53; Franciszek Piper, 'Sonderkommando Prisoners: Details of their Living Condition and Work', in *Auschwitz 1940–1945: Central Issues in the History of the Camp*, ed. Waclaw Długoborski and Franciszek Piper, trans. William Brand, 5 vols (Oswiecim: Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, 2000), vol. 3, 180–97. Aside from Gideon Greif's book of interviews *We Wept without Tears*, testimony from Sonderkommando appears in: Miklós Nyiszli, *Auschwitz: A Doctor's Eyewitness Report*, trans. Tibère Kremer and Richard Seaver (London: Penguin, 2012), trans. of *Dr Mengele boncolóorvasa voltam az Auschwitz-i krematóriumban*, 1946; Filip Müller, *Eyewitness Auschwitz: Three Years in the Gas Chambers*, trans. Susan Flatauer (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1999), trans. of *Sonderbehandlung: Drei Jahre in den Krematorien und Gaskammern von Auschwitz*, 1979; Marcel Nadjary, *Khroniko, 1941–1945* (Thessaloniki: Etz Khaim, 1991) (no English version available); Leon Cohen, *From Greece to Birkenau: The Crematoria Workers' Uprising*, trans. Jose-Maurice Gormezano (Tel Aviv: Salonika Jewry Research Centre, 1996) (original French manuscript unpublished); Rebecca Camhi Fromer, *The Holocaust Odyssey of Daniel Bennahmias, Sonderkommando* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1993); Jan Południak, *Sonder: An Interview with Sonderkommando Member Henryk Mandelbaum*, trans. Witold Zbirohowski-Kościa (Oświęcim: Frap-Books, 2009), trans. of *Zonder: Rozmowa z członkiem Sonderkommando Henrykiem Mandelbaumem*, 1994; Shlomo Venezia, *Inside the Gas Chambers: Eight Months in the Sonderkommando of Auschwitz*, trans. Andrew Brown (Cambridge: Polity, 2009), trans. of *Sonderkommando: Dans l'enfer des chambers de gaz*, 2007.
23. Piper, 'Sonderkommando Prisoners', 180–83.
24. Yehuda Bacon, Mordechai Ciechanower, Sam Itskowitz and Shmuel Taub were all able to make some contact with the SK. USC VHF 26983 Yehuda Bacon (esp. segs. 218, 228–29); Mordechai Ciechanower, *Der Dachdecker von Auschwitz-Birkenau*, trans. Christina Mulolli (Berlin: Metropol Verlag, 2007), 164–67; USC VHF 15815 Sam Itskowitz (segs. 25–26); Shmuel Taub, 'A bintl troyerike zikhroynes', *Maków Yizker Book*, 289–90. See also: Gideon Greif, 'Between Sanity and Insanity: Spheres of Everyday Life in the Auschwitz-Birkenau Sonderkommando', in *Gray Zones: Ambiguity and Compromise in the Holocaust and its Aftermath*, ed. Jonathan Petropoulos and John K. Roth (New York: Berghahn Books, 2005), 57.
25. Greif, 'Between Sanity and Insanity', 52. See also: USC VHF 1770 Leon Welbel (seg. 80).

26. Although Miklós Nyiszli writes of the SK feasting on what victims had brought with them (*Auschwitz* 23–24), some members also give accounts of times when they were hungry and thought obsessively about food. USC VHF 1770 Leon Welbel (seg. 74).
27. A number of historians, including Sybille Steinbacher, still repeat this myth. Sybille Steinbacher, *Auschwitz: A History*, trans. Shaun Whiteside (London: Penguin, 2005), 103. Gideon Greif lists seven selections in the history of the SK; in only one of these were they liquidated in their entirety. *We Wept without Tears*, 347 n. 34. The origin of the story has been attributed to Miklós Nyiszli – Nyiszli, *Im Jenseits der Menschlichkeit: Ein Gerichtsmediziner in Auschwitz*, trans. Angelika Bihari, ed. Andreas Kilian and Friedrich Herber (Berlin: Karl Dietz, 2005), 167 n. 39 – but it may also have been a rumour that circulated in the camp, perhaps inspired by the early history of the SK. Leon Cohen recalled being warned not to join as he would be eliminated after three or four months. Cohen, *From Greece to Birkenau*, 29. Rudolf Höss also claimed that he had been given instructions by Adolf Eichmann to regularly eliminate groups. Rudolf Höß, *Kommandant in Auschwitz: Autobiographische Aufzeichnungen*, ed. Martin Broszat (Munich: Deutsche Taschenbuch Verlag, 2013), 242. However, as Claude Lanzmann put it, they were actually ‘skilled workers’ (*Facharbeiter*), and so it was to the camp administration’s advantage not to keep killing them. Transcript of interview with Filip Müller, 107 (PDF downloadable from <[http://www.ushmm.org/online/film/display/detail.php?file\\_num=4745](http://www.ushmm.org/online/film/display/detail.php?file_num=4745)>).
28. Rudolph L. Brahm, ‘Hungarian Jews’, in *Anatomy of the Auschwitz Death Camp*, ed. Gutman and Berenbaum, 463–66.
29. Henryk Świebicki categorises it as a ‘mutiny in the face of imminent danger’. *Auschwitz 1940–1945*, vol. 4, 245–49.
30. Danuta Czech, *Auschwitz Chronicle*, trans. Barbara Harshav, Martha Humphreys and Stephen Shearier (New York: Henry Holt, 1990), 725–26; Friedler, Siebert and Kilian, *Zeugen aus der Todeszone*, 270–80; Igor Bartosik, *Bunt Sonderkommando: 7 października 1944 roku* (Oświęcim: Państwowe Muzeum Auschwitz–Birkenau, 2014), 15–33. Leon Welbel was close to Crematorium V. USC VHF 1770 Leon Welbel (segs. 124–25). Filip Müller was close to Crematorium IV. *Sonderbehandlung*, 250–53. Zalman Lewental and Marcel Nadjary were in Crematorium III. Zalman Lewental, ‘Fartseykhenungen’, in Ber Mark, *Megiles Oyshevits*, 411–16; Marcel Nadjary, *Khroniko, 1941–1945*, 58–60.
31. Langfus is often listed as among the dead of 7 October, but see Chapter 3 for our reasons for not accepting this claim.
32. Gideon Greif has provided an exhaustive account of the historiography of the Sonderkommando. *We Wept without Tears*, 75–83. There is also a cultural history of their representations. We simply do not have the space to discuss this aspect here, but see: Adam Brown, *Judging ‘Privileged’ Jews: Holocaust Ethics, Representation, and the ‘Grey Zone’* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2013); Dominic Williams, ‘The Dead Are My Teachers: The Scrolls of Auschwitz in Jerome Rothenberg’s *Khurbn*’, in *Representing Auschwitz: At the Margin of Testimony*, ed. Nicholas Chare and Dominic Williams (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 58–84; Dominic Williams, ‘Figuring the Grey Zone: The Auschwitz Sonderkommando in Contemporary Culture’, (forthcoming). We will also engage with this history of representations at greater length in a further book, provisionally entitled *Figuring the Grey Zone: Representations of the Auschwitz Sonderkommando 1944–Present*.
33. Ota Kraus and Erich Kulka, *The Death Factory: Document on Auschwitz*, trans. Stephen Jolly (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1966), 152.

34. Nyiszli, *Auschwitz*, 23–25, 144.
35. Primo Levi, 'The Grey Zone,' *The Drowned and the Saved*, trans. Raymond Rosenthal (London: Abacus, 1989), 22–51.
36. On this subject, it is noteworthy that as well as the considerable emphasis placed upon testimonies by the Sonderkommando in *Shoah*, Claude Lanzmann also originally intended to include footage of his extensive interviews with Benjamin Murelstein (a member of the *Judenrat* at Theresienstadt) in the film. These interviews were subsequently used in the standalone film *The Last of the Unjust* (dir. Claude Lanzmann, 2013).
37. Levi, 'The Grey Zone', 37.
38. *Ibid.*
39. *Ibid.*, 41. For the Italian original see Levi, *I sommersi e i salvati* (Torino: Einaudi, 1986), 43.
40. *Ibid.*, 35.
41. *Ibid.*, 36–37.
42. *Ibid.*, 36.
43. E.g. Greif, *We Wept without Tears*, 87–88, 122–24, 286–87.
44. *Ibid.*, 22–32, esp. 30–31.
45. Levi, for example, is only referred to in passing because of his suicide (321). Their eagerness to establish the facts may lead them to too great a confidence about what can be known about the SK. For instance, attributing the four photographs to Alberto Errera has less of a firm basis than they seem to believe (see our discussion in Chapter 6). Their narrative of the Sonderkommando revolt is also rather too keen to smooth out any discrepancies between sources: Greeks and Poles give very different accounts of who played prominent roles in the uprising. Compare Zalman Lewental's list of the leaders with those given by Leon Cohen and Marcel Nadjary. Cohen, *From Greece to Birkenau*, 51–53. Nadjary, *Khroniko*, 58.
46. Most notably, the trial of Rudolf Höss in Kraków in 1947 and the Frankfurt Auschwitz Trial of 1963–65.
47. Adam Brown, *Judging 'Privileged' Jews*, 124–30.
48. Ziva Postec, 'Editing *Shoah*', <[www.zivapostec.com/Shoah.php](http://www.zivapostec.com/Shoah.php)> (accessed 6 Feb 2014). See our Conclusion for a more detailed discussion.
49. See Chapter 6 for a detailed discussion of this controversy.
50. Friedler, Siebert and Kilian, *Zeugen aus der Todeszone*, 265.
51. Greif, *We Wept without Tears*, 165, 247, 361 n. 62.
52. Most famously the Vrba-Wetzler report, but also the Rosin-Mordowicz Report. Miroslav Karny, 'The Vrba and Wetzler Report', in *Anatomy of the Auschwitz Death Camp*, ed. Yisrael Gutman and Michael Berenbaum (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 553–68.
53. Clandestine lists of various kinds were kept by Otto Wolken, Jan Olszewski, Izydor Łuszczek and Vlasta Kladvivová. Tadeusz Joachimowski buried the record books of the 'gypsy camp' in a bucket in its grounds. They were dug up in 1949. Ludwik Lawin and Tadeusz Kubiak made copies of official photos, which were buried near one of the Construction Board buildings, and retrieved in 1946. *Auschwitz 1940–1945*, vol. 3, 260–65.
54. See, for example: Jürgen Kaumkötter et al. (eds), *Kunst in Auschwitz/Sztuka w Auschwitz* (Bramsche: Rasch Verlag, 2005); David Mickenberg, Corinne Granoff and Peter Hayes (eds), *The Last Expression: Art and Auschwitz* (Evanston, IL: Mary and Leigh Block Museum of Art, Northwestern University, 2003); Agnieszka Sieradzka

- (ed.), *Szkicownik z Auschwitz/The Sketchbook from Auschwitz* (Oświęcim: Państwowe Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau, 2011).
55. Alan Rosen, *The Wonder of their Voices* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 110–19.
  56. AŻIH 226/326. This poem or song, along with a Polish translation by Marek Tuszewicki, is published in Agnieszka Żółkiewska (ed.), *Słowa pośród nocy: Poetyckie dokumenty Holokaustu* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, 2012), 186–89.
  57. Andrés Nader, *Traumatic Verses: On Poetry in German from the Concentration Camps, 1933–1945* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2007), 33, 67.
  58. Otto Dov Kulka, *Landscapes of the Metropolis of Death*, trans. Ralph Mandel (London: Penguin, 2013), 52–55. The poems are translated by Gerald Turner.
  59. Alan Rosen, 'Introduction', in *Literature of the Holocaust*, ed. Rosen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 15–16. Rosen only refers to the Sonderkommando writings and songs as exceptions.
  60. Samuel Kassow, *Who Will Write Our History?: Rediscovering a Hidden Archive from the Warsaw Ghetto* (London: Penguin, 2007); Laura Jockusch, *Collect and Record!: Jewish Holocaust Documentation in Early Postwar Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). Kassow sees a clear continuity between Emmanuel Ringelblum's pre-war historical work and his activity in the Warsaw Ghetto. Laura Jockusch traces the continuities between Ringelblum and post-war survivor historians (see esp. 34–36).
  61. Lucjan Dobroszycki, 'Introduction', *The Chronicle of the Łódź Ghetto 1941–1944*, ed. Dobroszycki, trans. Richard Lourie, Joachim Neugroschel et al. (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 1984), xvii.
  62. Renata Laqueur, *Schreiben im KZ* (Bremen: Donat Verlag, 1991).
  63. Alexandra Garbarini, *Numbered Days: Diaries in the Holocaust* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 2006), 149–57.
  64. Leon W. Wells, *The Death Brigade (The Janowska Road)* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1978).
  65. Kassow, *Who Will Write Our History?* 287–93, 309–10.
  66. <[http://www.jhi.pl/en/resistance\\_and\\_the\\_holocaust/international\\_academic\\_conference\\_being\\_a\\_witness\\_to\\_the\\_holocaust/75](http://www.jhi.pl/en/resistance_and_the_holocaust/international_academic_conference_being_a_witness_to_the_holocaust/75)>.
  67. Kazimierz Sakowicz, *Ponary Diary 1941–1943: A Bystander's Account of a Mass Murder*, trans. uncredited (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 2005).
  68. Reuven Dafni and Yehudit Kleiman (eds), *Final Letters: From the Yad Vashem Archive* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1991), 119–22; Shmuel Krakowski and Ilya Altman, 'The Testament of the Last Prisoners of the Chelmno Death Camp', *Yad Vashem Studies* 21 (1991): 105–24.
  69. Władysław Szlengel, *Poeta Nieznany*, ed. Magdalena Stańczuk (Warsaw: Bellona Spółka Akcyjna, 2013), 218–19. For readings of Szlengel see: Bożena Shallcross, *The Holocaust Object in Polish and Polish Jewish Culture* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2011), 17–35; Frieda W. Aaron, *Bearing the Unbearable: Yiddish and Polish Poetry of the Ghettos and Concentration Camps* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1990), 20–27, 39–53.
  70. Blumental's work is discussed in some detail in Jockusch, *Collect and Record!*, 84–120. See also: Mark L. Smith, 'No Silence in Yiddish: Popular and Scholarly Writing about the Holocaust in the Early Post-War Years', in David Cesarani and Eric J. Sundquist (eds), *After the Holocaust: Challenging the Myths of Silence* (London: Routledge, 2012), esp. 58–59.

71. Blumental, *Shmuesn*, 148–65. Aaron, *Bearing the Unbearable*, 119–30. Liebeskind seems to have been moved from Treblinka to Sachsenhausen, where he gave the song to Aleksander Kulisiewicz. Shirli Gilbert, *Music during the Holocaust: Confronting Life in the Nazi Ghettos and Camps* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2005), 151 n. 17. It should be noted that ‘*Kh shem zikh*’ has also been listed as a poem written in the Warsaw ghetto. Żółkiewska, *Słowa pośród nocy*, 335. No explanation is given, however, as to why this edition does not accept Blumental’s account of the provenance.
72. Zoe Waxman, *Writing the Holocaust: Identity, Testimony, Representation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 7–87.
73. Garbarini, *Numbered Days*, 93.
74. Tom Lawson, *Debates on the Holocaust* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), 243–44.
75. George Steiner, *Language and Silence: Essays on Language, Literature and the Inhuman* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 168.
76. Nathan Cohen, ‘Diaries of the Sonderkommando’, in *Anatomy of the Auschwitz Death Camp*, ed. Yisrael Gutman and Michael Berenbaum (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 522–34; Susan L. Pentlin, ‘Testimony from the Ashes: Final Words from Auschwitz-Birkenau Sonderkommando’, in *The Genocidal Mind*, ed. Dennis B. Klein et al. (St Paul, MN: Paragon House, 2005), 245–62. See also: Waxman, *Writing the Holocaust*, 81–84. David Patterson makes a number of references to Gradowski in *Along the Edge of Annihilation: The Collapse and Recovery of Life in the Holocaust Diary* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1999). These are often useful observations but, as Waxman points out, Patterson gives no real consideration to the different circumstances in which Gradowski was writing compared with the other diarists he cites (*Writing the Holocaust*, 54–55).
77. Jerome Rothenberg, *Khurbn and Other Poems* (New York: New Directions, 1989); Dieter Schlesak, *Capesius, der Auschwitzapotheker* (Bonn: Dietz, 2006); Elliot Perlman, *The Street Sweeper* (London: Faber, 2012). Pierre Cholley’s oratorio *Le Chant des rouleaux* (2005) includes extracts from Gradowski that are spoken rather than sung. Michael M. Lustigman, *The Kindness of Truth and the Art of Reading Ashes* (New York and Bern: Peter Lang, 1988) might be best grouped with these sorts of responses.
78. Philippe Mesnard, ‘Ecrire au dehors de soi’, *Des voix sous la cendre*, 215–43. Pavel Polian, ‘I v kontse tozhe bilo slovo ... (vmesto predisloviya)’, in Gradowski, *V serdtsevine Ada*, 47–53.
79. David Roskies, ‘Wartime Victim Writing in Eastern Europe’, in *Literature of the Holocaust*, ed. Alan Rosen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 29–31.
80. Lawson, *Debates on the Holocaust*, 244–45. Lawson focuses almost exclusively on the texts included in the Marks’ edition, and this causes him to insist too heavily on their saying little about the process of extermination. However, his point that they are providing interpretations and not simply records is an important one.
81. Stone, ‘The Harmony of Barbarism’, esp. 23–26.
82. Alexandre Prstojevic, ‘L’indicible et la fiction configuratrice’, *Protée*, 37(2) (2009): 35.
83. See especially David Roskies, *Against the Apocalypse* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 196–224, as well as the texts cited above by Frieda Aaron, Nachman Blumental, Alexandra Garbarini, Samuel Kassow, Andrés Nader and Božena Shallcross.
84. Dominick LaCapra, *History, Literature, Critical Theory* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013), 19.



85. Giorgio Agamben's *Remnants of Auschwitz*, for example, argues strongly for refusing the logic of the Holocaust's unsayability as it unintentionally repeats Nazi biopolitics by paring an aspect of human life, bare life, from language. Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (New York: Zone, 1999), 157. See also Karyn Ball, *Disciplining the Holocaust* (New York: SUNY, 2008) and Naomi Mandel, *Against the Unspeakable: Complicity, the Holocaust and Slavery in America* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007).
86. See Nicholas Chare, 'The Gap in Context: Giorgio Agamben's *Remnants of Auschwitz*', *Cultural Critique* 64 (2006): 62, Nicholas Chare, *Auschwitz and Afterimages* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011), 86–87, and Dan Stone, 'The Harmony of Barbarism', 22–23.
87. Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 80–81.
88. See Thomas Trezise, *Witnessing Witnessing: On the Reception of Holocaust Survivor Testimony* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 8–39.
89. Felman and Laub, *Testimony*, 84. The Sonderkommando manuscripts have frequently been referred to as diaries (see Chapter 5).
90. *Ibid.*
91. Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 4.
92. For useful summaries and critiques of Caruth's conception of trauma, see Ruth Leys, *Trauma: A Genealogy* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2000), 266–97; and Trezise, *Witnessing Witnessing*, 40–62.
93. Felman and Laub, *Testimony*, 69.
94. *Ibid.*, 57.
95. For an account of Frankl's time at Auschwitz and Dachau, see Viktor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning: An Introduction to Logotherapy*, 3rd edn (New York: Touchstone, 1984).
96. Felman and Laub, *Testimony*, 82.
97. Lawrence Langer, *Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1991), 20.
98. *Ibid.*, 21.
99. *Ibid.*, 20.
100. Felman and Laub, *Testimony*, 59.
101. For Lanzmann's views on incarnation as truth to traumatic experience, see Claude Lanzmann, 'Le lieu et la parole', in *Au sujet de 'Shoah': Le film de Claude Lanzmann*, ed. Michel Deguy (Paris: Belin, 1990), 414.
102. Langer, *Holocaust Testimonies*, 19.
103. Berel Lang, *Holocaust Representation: Art within the Limits of History and Ethics* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 19.
104. *Ibid.*, 22.
105. See our discussion of diaries in Chapter 5.
106. Lang, *Holocaust Representation*, 51. See also Lang, 'The Representation of Limits', in *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the 'Final Solution'*, ed. Saul Friedländer (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 300.
107. Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery: From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (London: Pandora, 1994), 2.
108. Dominick LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 42.
109. *Ibid.*, 90.

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110. Ibid., 93.
  111. Ibid., 91.
  112. MS page 5. A Greek transcription of this manuscript is published in Nadjary, *Khroniko, 1941–1945*, 11–23. We use the numbering given to the manuscript pages by the Auschwitz museum. This mistakenly jumps from page 9 to page 11, without a page 10. All translations of Nadjary's letter are courtesy of Nikos Papastergiadis and Chrisoula Stamoulis.
  113. Lang, *Holocaust Representation*, 123–24.
  114. David Rousset, *L'univers concentrationnaire* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, [1946] 1981). For a discussion of the potential limits of the usefulness of the term 'concentrationary universe' in relation to Holocaust representation, see Michael Rothberg, *Traumatic Realism: The Demands of Holocaust Representation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 115–16. See also the analysis of Rousset's term in Griselda Pollock and Max Silverman, 'Introduction. The Politics of Memory: From Concentrationary Memory to Concentrationary Memories', in Pollock and Silverman (eds), *Concentrationary Memories: Totalitarian Terror and Cultural Resistance* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013), 2–5.
  115. Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz*, 41.
  116. Ibid., 12.
  117. Zalman Lewental, 'Hesofe tsum Lodzher ksav-yad', in Ber Mark, *Megiles Oysbvits*, 433.
  118. Philippe Mesnard and Claudine Kahan, *Giorgio Agamben: À l'épreuve d'Auschwitz* (Paris: Éditions Kimé, 2001), 23–27.
  119. Ibid., 30.
  120. Ibid.