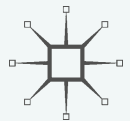




The Auschwitz Sonderkommando

Testimonies, Histories, Representations

Nicholas Chare and Dominic Williams



The Holocaust and its Contexts

Series Editors
Claus-Christian W. Szejnmann
Loughborough University
Loughborough, UK

Ben Barkow
The Wiener Library
London, UK

More than sixty years on, the Holocaust remains a subject of intense debate with ever-widening ramifications. This series aims to demonstrate the continuing relevance of the Holocaust and related issues in contemporary society, politics and culture; studying the Holocaust and its history broadens our understanding not only of the events themselves but also of their present-day significance. The series acknowledges and responds to the continuing gaps in our knowledge about the events that constituted the Holocaust, the various forms in which the Holocaust has been remembered, interpreted and discussed, and the increasing importance of the Holocaust today to many individuals and communities.

More information about this series at
<http://www.palgrave.com/gp/series/14433>

Nicholas Chare · Dominic Williams

The Auschwitz Sonderkommando

Testimonies, Histories, Representations

palgrave
macmillan

Nicholas Chare
Université de Montréal
Montreal, QC, Canada

Dominic Williams
University of Leeds
Leeds, UK

The Holocaust and its Contexts

ISBN 978-3-030-11490-9

ISBN 978-3-030-11491-6 (eBook)

<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-11491-6>

Library of Congress Control Number: 2018967212

© The Editor(s) (if applicable) and The Author(s), under exclusive license to Springer Nature Switzerland AG, part of Springer Nature 2019

This work is subject to copyright. All rights are solely and exclusively licensed by the Publisher, whether the whole or part of the material is concerned, specifically the rights of translation, reprinting, reuse of illustrations, recitation, broadcasting, reproduction on microfilms or in any other physical way, and transmission or information storage and retrieval, electronic adaptation, computer software, or by similar or dissimilar methodology now known or hereafter developed.

The use of general descriptive names, registered names, trademarks, service marks, etc. in this publication does not imply, even in the absence of a specific statement, that such names are exempt from the relevant protective laws and regulations and therefore free for general use. The publisher, the authors and the editors are safe to assume that the advice and information in this book are believed to be true and accurate at the date of publication. Neither the publisher nor the authors or the editors give a warranty, express or implied, with respect to the material contained herein or for any errors or omissions that may have been made. The publisher remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

Cover illustration: Detail of the scale model of crematorium II at Auschwitz-Birkenau on display in the permanent exhibition of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. The model was sculpted by Mieczyslaw Stobierski based on contemporary documents and the trial testimonies of SS guards. © United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Arnold Kramer.

This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Switzerland AG

The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We wish to thank Doris Bergen, Valérie Bienvenue, Marta Boni, Ersy Contogouris, Patricia Correa-Romero, Michelle Gewurtz, Samantha Hinckley, Aurélia Kalisky, Anne Karpf, Andreas Kilian, Peter Kilroy, Michael Kraus, Peter Krausz, András Lénárt, Ben Lee, Sébastien Lévesque, Bruce Levy, Silvestra Mariniello, Walter Manoschek, Marie-Ève Ménard, Philippe Mesnard, Suzanne Paquet, Bernard Perron, Griselda Pollock, Helene Sinnreich, Dan Stone, Marcel Swiboda, Carl Therrien, Sue Vice, Louise Vigneault, Monika Vrzgulová, Emma Wilson, Carol Zemel, Esther Chare, Julie Chare, Peter Chare, Sara Chare, Milena Marinkova and Angela Mortimer for their intellectual and, sometimes, practical support during the preparation of this volume. For sharing her thoughts and memories related to her experiences working in the Kanada commando at Auschwitz-Birkenau, we are particularly grateful to Irene Weiss. We would also like to thank Serena Neumann and Lesley Weiss for furnishing us with further information on Kanada.

We received advice and help on language and translation from numerous sources. We are very grateful to the following for sharing their time and linguistic expertise: Ersy Contogouris (French and Greek), András Lénárt (Hungarian) and Zsombor Hunyadi (Hungarian and Yiddish), Krzysztof Majer, Jacek Nowakowski, Alicja Podbielska and Vincent Slatt (Polish), Liviu Carare (Romanian), Alina Bothe, Steven Feldman, Emil Kerenji, Monika Polit and Hannah Pollin-Galay (Yiddish).

We are also indebted to our students at Leeds and Montréal for their thought-provoking discussions related to many of the case studies treated in

this book, particularly for the courses ‘From Trauma to Cultural Memory’ (Leeds) and ‘L’art du témoignage’ (Montréal).

For part of the writing of this book, Nicholas Chare was the Diane and Howard Wohl Fellow in the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and thanks are therefore due to the excellent staff at the Library and Archives Reference Desk there for their help in locating relevant references and sources. We are particularly beholden to Liviu Carare, Megan Lewis, Larissa Reed, Vincent Slatt and Elliott Wrenn. Additionally, we are indebted to Jeffrey Carter at the Institutional Archives of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. We are also grateful to Stephen Naron of the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies and the Visual Archive of the USC Shoah Foundation for granting access to specific video testimonies. Thanks to Stephanie Hirsch of the *Ludwigsburger Kreiszeitung* archive, and to Wojciech Płosa at the Auschwitz Museum, as well as staff at the National Archives in Kew, the Wiener Library and the British Library. Some of Dominic Williams’s research was funded by the University of Leeds.

Finally, we are indebted to the anonymous reviewers of the manuscript for their helpful comments and criticisms and to the commissioning and production team at Palgrave, including Emily Russell, Sooryadeepth Jayakrishnan, Goutham Kamaraj and Oliver Dyer, who were a pleasure to work with throughout.

CONTENTS

1	Introduction: Figuring the Sonderkommando in History	1
2	Acts of Deposition: Gender and Testimony in the Scrolls of Auschwitz	25
3	Tragic Pictures: The Sonderkommando and Their Photographs	71
4	The Trials of Witnessing: Legal Testimony and the Sonderkommando	101
5	Figure Studies from the Grey Zone: David Olère	129
6	Matters of Video Testimony	171
7	The Voice of Bronze: Filip Müller and <i>Shoah</i>	219
	Bibliography	249
	Index	269



Introduction: Figuring the Sonderkommando in History

Between March and April 1951, *Les Temps modernes* carried a report by the Auschwitz survivor Miklós Nyiszli.¹ Originally written and published in Hungarian, Nyiszli's account testified to his work performing autopsies in the crematoria of Auschwitz-Birkenau to support Josef Mengele's pseudo-scientific experiments. Along with this primary role, he also tended to the Sonderkommando (SK) or Special Squad who worked in the same buildings.² Through the SK, Nyiszli provided eyewitness descriptions of the workings of the gas chambers and the ovens of the crematoria: How squad members were tasked with pulling the dead out of gas chambers, removing anything of value left on or of their bodies (mainly hair and gold teeth), and then eliminating all trace of their existence. His testimony provided stories of how the SK were murdered and replaced in their entirety every three or four months, how members of the SK had at times played football with the SS guards, and how, on one occasion, a teenage girl had survived the gas chambers and they had made a desperate but unsuccessful attempt to save her. He told of the Sonderkommando's doomed uprising in October 1944 as well as his own survival.

Nyiszli's writing was certainly not the first to explain the role of the Sonderkommando. Post-war testimonies had been gathered in judicial procedures of investigation into Nazi crimes almost immediately after the liberation of the camps.³ These investigations had also uncovered one manuscript written by a member of the Sonderkommando, dug up in the

grounds of the crematoria. The SK's testimony was used as part of court cases against personnel of the Birkenau camp, most notably in a British military court in Lüneburg and in Polish trials in Warsaw and Kraków, and both had received some coverage in the press. Early post-war memoirs also referred to the SK. But Nyiszli provided the first sustained piece of writing from within the Sonderkommando that was published for a wide audience, and the translation into French made it available in the West.

The context of publication is significant. As Yannick Malgouzeou documents, Nyiszli's memoir was published in a year when disputes among French intellectuals about the legacy of the camps were raging. In a flurry of books, libel cases and editorials, Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, Maurice Merleau-Ponty and David Rousset fought over whether concentration camps could be compared to gulags, and why the political crimes of Communism trumped those of colonialism or the other way round. In 1951, Sartre broke with Camus over his book *The Rebel*. David Rousset won a court case against Pierre Daix in January of that year.⁴ What a camp was had come to be a central concern of French intellectuals. Nyiszli provided evidence that a 'concentration camp' had something that a gulag never had: a gas chamber, and so could be offered in support of the case that Sartre and Merleau-Ponty made against those trying to compare the two.⁵ At the same time, the American Richard Seaver and the Scottish writer Alexander Trocchi were editing an avant-garde English-language magazine in Paris: *Merlin*. They negotiated with Sartre the right to use some material from his magazine. Nyiszli's writing, it turned out, was the only text that *Les Temps modernes* shared with them.⁶

Nyiszli's testimony was thus used and reused within different contexts in the early 1950s: judicial examination, political dispute and what might be called an 'aesthetic' environment (*Merlin* also published pieces by Samuel Beckett, Jean Genet, Eugene Ionesco and Italo Svevo). But it was also repurposed at other times. Ten years later, Bruno Bettelheim wrote a preface to Nyiszli's memoirs criticizing him and the Sonderkommando for their failure to resist. Nyiszli and the SK, were thus archetypal of the way he conceived Jews in general as simply allowing themselves to succumb to Nazi persecution. Bettelheim made this accusation in tandem with those of Raul Hilberg and Hannah Arendt, who also fitted the SK to their ideas of Jewish passivity. Two decades after that, Primo Levi made heavy use of Nyiszli in 'The Grey Zone'

(1986), which might be called an essay into moral philosophy. And fifteen years later, Tim Blake Nelson took Nyzisli's memoirs (albeit clearly mediated by Levi's own essay) as the main basis of his film *The Grey Zone* (2001).

What these constant returns to Nyzisli show is that there has always been an interest in the Sonderkommando of Auschwitz-Birkenau. They were crucial to conceptualizing key aspects of the Shoah. The SK provided some of the first evidence of the gas chambers, testimony that was central to several of the trials immediately post-war. They were vital for an understanding of the concentrationary universe, at least in the version of it that Sartre and Merleau-Ponty defended against the concept's originator, Rousset.⁷ And they seemed to speak (in Seaver and Trocchi's judgement, at any rate) to something of the post-war condition, to say something on a par with the works being produced by Beckett and Ionesco. In later versions, they raised the central moral questions for Levi about what the Nazis had done to their victims. And at the turn of the millennium, the SK, in Nyzisli's version, provided a way for Blake Nelson to claim to be cutting through five decades of accreted representations and getting back to the reality of the Holocaust.

The fact that Nyzisli was the go-to informant on the condition of the SK was also indicative that the SK were surrounded by myths, that people were fascinated yet troubled by them. Testimony from actual members was neglected, and that of someone who had been associated with the squad but not part of it, became the guide to their existence. Many members of the SK lived longer than the four months Nyzisli attributed to them.⁸ The incident of the girl surviving the gas chamber was not at all unique but happened so much that there was a routine of how to deal with it.⁹ And other football matches than just those between SS and SK took place—indeed, any match between the latter two groups would at most have been a kick-about, as there were not enough members of the SS present at the crematorium to form a team.¹⁰ These 'facts' that Nyzisli conveyed were all taken up by Primo Levi's essay 'The Grey Zone' (1985), one of the most formidable attempts to understand the SK. For Levi these pieces of information were key elements in his picture of the Sonderkommando and therefore of the grey zone that permeated the world of the camps: the SK submitted even though they knew how long they had allotted to them; their 'work' gave the SS a false sense of brotherhood with them, and they only returned to human normality when prompted by extraordinary events. The SK's own words, which

Levi quotes once, came from men who were too emotionally and psychologically damaged and tainted by their work and could not ‘be taken literally’.¹¹ But it is worth examining the source of these words that Levi quotes, because they come, via a collection of testimony made by Hermann Langbein, from an early piece of survivor testimony, a memoir by Krystyna Żywulska.

A prisoner in Birkenau between 1943 and 1945, Żywulska gave an extraordinary account of her dialogue with a member of the SK in her memoir of 1946. Seeing a team of SK below her window, Żywulska feels contempt for these men who are prepared to ‘burn human corpses’, especially one ‘who seemed quite intelligent’. When he challenges her gaze, argues that he has no choice and that he is waiting for his chance for revenge, she asks him why he does not rebel. ‘Why don’t you?’ he replies. ‘You think that the *Sonderkommando* are awful people. I assure you that they are like other people everywhere, only much more unhappy’.¹² These words were more or less replicated by Langbein and then Levi. But Żywulska’s astonished reaction to this speech was not and is very different from that of Levi himself: ‘those guys over there in the crematorium—they feel, they reflect, they are emotional?’ Her fellow prisoners chastise her for judging the SK so harshly and seeing them as different from her: ‘You are always afraid to evaluate yourself [...] And the most convenient way is always to put yourself in a better light at the expense of others’.¹³

Here, right at the beginning of a history of troubled thought over the SK, we see a different way of approaching them. Like Levi, Żywulska is horrified by the work carried out by the SK and considers them morally tainted. But unlike him, she is prepared to listen to their words, which shock her into reconsidering her repulsion. And her fellow prisoners blame that repulsion on a need to find someone more abject than herself.

The discourse of the grey zone, of anguished moral judgement mixed with unwillingness to judge, of failures of imagination and empathy and realizations that they still must be attempted, was, according to Żywulska, taking place in Birkenau itself. But we would argue further that its fixating on the SK was the result of the environment of Birkenau. Troubled moral discourse has been far more prevalent about this group than about their equivalents in camps such as Treblinka or Sobibór.¹⁴ The Auschwitz *Sonderkommando* were forced to carry out their work not just isolated from other prisoners, but under their gaze, a gaze

that often seems to have judged them. It is Auschwitz's hybrid nature, as extermination site and concentration camp, that caused it to contain enough of a society of prisoners for there to be a moral hierarchy, and for the SK to be placed at its bottom. The idea of the SK as denizens of the grey zone is therefore a product of the specific nature of Auschwitz-Birkenau, both in its operation as a camp and in the contingencies of its history that left many more survivors, from among the SK as well as from among those who had witnessed them.

But as shown by the process of restaging this encounter with the SK from Żywulka to Langbein to Levi, in which a dialogue was reworked into a monologue, this insight that they could be conceived as part of the society of prisoners and victims is often lost in attempts to think them through. There seems to be a difficulty in integrating the Sonderkommando into historical interpretations of the Holocaust.¹⁵ It is telling, for example, that out of the single-volume general histories of the Holocaust, it is Martin Gilbert's that makes the most extensive use of the testimonies written by the SK. With his framework based on chronology rather than explanation or interpretation, and an emphasis on hearing victims' voices, Gilbert was able to quote extensively from some of their stories, particularly those of Leyb Langfus, without having to give them any meaning.¹⁶ Saul Friedländer too found a place for Zalman Gradowski as one of the key witnesses whose voice comes into the historical text. But he functions mostly as a point where the horror reaches its worst, when it cannot be commented upon, but rather collaged with or cut to an entirely different strand of the narrative.¹⁷

Historians of the SK have frequently worked in isolation from the mainstream of Holocaust historiography, their projects often unpublished and incomplete. Erich Kulka and Ber Mark both died before their histories of the SK could be published. Gideon Greif still has an archive of interviews that have not been made public. Here, we see a fear of or difficulty in finding a wider audience for these men's stories. Perhaps this is not just the difficulty of finding people willing to listen to them, but the dangers of why they might be interested. Kulka had to threaten another Auschwitz survivor, Hermann Langbein, with a libel suit on behalf of the SK to make him withdraw some of the more lurid and implausible stories about them from his book *People in Auschwitz*.¹⁸

GENDER IN THE ARCHIVE

Another of these survivor historians, alongside Kulka and Mark, was Tzipora Hager Halivni, a former classmate of Miklós Nyiszli's daughter Susanna.¹⁹ Halivni makes reference to Susanna (who she refers to as Zsuzsi) as well as to Miklós Nyiszli in drafts for a book she was planning about the Sonderkommando revolt.²⁰ Halivni was deported to Auschwitz from Romania in May 1944. She was there for three months before being transferred to the slave labour camp at Fallersleben in Germany where she worked in an armaments factory. At the armaments factory, Halivni engaged in acts of sabotage, a covert resistance.²¹ Her own engagement in rebellion may explain the deep sensibility with which she writes of the SK revolt. Halivni published an article about the revolt in 1979.²² Her interest in the topic, however, clearly continued. The archive of her papers held at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum includes drafts for this article but also much other material including computer printouts that describe a 'book [that is] in progress'.²³ She should be credited as one of the pioneer scholars of the SK alongside Kulka, Mark and Greif.²⁴

The archive comprises hundreds of pages of handwritten and typed notes and drafts of articles and papers, many of which relate to the SK. These pages, clearly composed over a considerable period of time, are now in some disorder. The handwritten pages in the folders in the boxes of the Halivni archive are often organized backwards so that in multiple accounts of the revolt the researcher must read in reverse from the achievements and the aftermath of the revolt, to its unfolding and, finally, to methodological issues concerning how to approach the event as history. Even if they were carefully filed and ordered, the mess of thought that lies behind Halivni's published, more polished, academic writings would be apparent.²⁵ There are fragments from early drafts of articles and chapters that have been cut out and subsequently taped or stapled to newer versions. The taped fragments have occasionally become unmoored, free-floating. The loose fragments—scraps that initially formed part of a whole somewhere, were then deliberately detached and re-attached, and have now become detached again—reveal something about the process of Halivni's history writing, about what might be called its collagistic character. They also figure something of the nature of writing history more generally, of the task of imposing order upon, and finding sense in, past events which are often chaotic and of which the extant accounts are confused and contradictory.

Some of the continual ‘trying on for size’ of phrases in varied contexts seems linked with Halivni reflecting upon the appropriate modes of expression for communicating the histories she wished to tell. There is considerable labour dedicated to finding the ‘right words’ in material about the SK and also about Halivni’s personal experiences at Auschwitz. This labour is far less obvious in, for instance, her writings about the friar Maximilian Kolbe. The clear efforts she went to in order to find the right phrase to describe a specific person or a particular event linked with the Sonderkommando is, in itself, revealing. Repeatedly Halivni describes how the Sonderkommando have been wrongly labelled as collaborators or as all being callous and uncaring. Her attentiveness to her language (an attentiveness we will go on to provide some examples of), her assiduousness regarding words—which to choose and which to reject—bespeak a sense of responsibility towards her object of study. This is a theme to which we will return in several of the chapters to come. Halivni’s crossings out, her reformulating, embody an ethical outlook. She does not want to commit an injustice by way of acts of misrepresentation (although, of course, gauging any representation requires the formulation of a benchmark).

Often Halivni’s excisions and reformulations relate to language that is emotive. Her desire to reduce evidence of feeling is likely linked with her wish, as a historian, to appear as objective as possible. There are, however, multiple examples of her not disavowing emotion but rather striving to find a way of bringing the ‘right’ feelings to her account. She is not a positivist and views emotion in history as unavoidable, necessary even. She is often highly disparaging of the Polish resistance and makes scant effort to conceal her disdain for them. Halivni will sometimes tone down her prose, paring feeling but not entirely excising it. These feelings are usually related to the SK or to the Polish resistance or to herself. Halivni, like a number of survivors who would subsequently become historians, has an unusual relationship to the history that she studies. There is an occasional assertion that ‘I’ saw this, a reminder that Halivni lived within, was a part of, the past she now looks back upon and writes about. She differs, however, from a historian from within the SK such as Zalman Lewental, one of her major interlocutors, in that she can reflect on events sometime after they occurred. Lewental lived through the events that he relates in his history of the SK revolt but he did not survive to liberation.

When she writes of Auschwitz, Halivni looks back upon where she was, on her past. Occasionally, she writes of that past, of what she herself witnessed. These moments are unintentionally revealing about the practice of writing history:

I recall being led into the barracks together with some 600 women. As we stood bewildered in a sun drenched room a [illegible] standing in the centre ordered 'Remove all clothes! Place them on the floor!' The SS guards were ubiquitous but silent.

This handwritten fragment was clearly intended to form part of an article or of the book that Halivni was working on. It is in a folder that mainly contains preparatory research and writing for an article on Kolbe but does not seem linked with that. The event Halivni recounts, which probably occurred upon her arrival at Auschwitz, was likely highly distressing. Something of the violence accompanying this undressing is disclosed by the words (now crossed out) she originally ascribed to what must be the blockova.²⁶ The words were 'Strip your clothes!' The change to 'remove all' may be because Halivni came to feel that she had initially misremembered the order she was given. It may also be linked to her efforts to faithfully translate a command such as '*alles ausziehen*'. Another factor is, however, likely a desire to soften the aggression of the event. The violence is mitigated in the second version. 'Remove all clothes!' places this forced stripping at more of a distance. Her rewording of the command, as a linguistic change, may index the humiliation of the forced undressing. Her desire to cover up the humiliation registers something of the violence and of her enduring shame at what happened. This is a shame which she does not wish to fully share with her putative reader here. Elsewhere, by contrast, she writes 'we undressed as we proceeded to the *Haarschneideraum*' but then crosses out 'undressed' and replaces it with 'stripped'.²⁷ It is possible that in this other moment she felt she was being too reticent, obviating the violence of the event.

In another fragment of text about a selection, Halivni writes '[...] when I was ordered to strip naked' but crosses it out.²⁸ She then rewrites 'ordered to strip naked' further down the page and leaves this in place. Later in her account of this forced undressing, she writes 'I desperately fight to maintain my inner balance' followed by 'It was a degrading moment'. She then crosses out this last sentence. Here, there is a strong sense of Halivni's feeling of mortification, a sense articulated through the struggle to write, through hesitancy coupled with determination. The degradation is here potentially affirmed through a wish to ultimately conceal it, to efface a direct reference to it. The effects of this event upon Halivni also register through her making multiple attempts to relate it. The violent disrobing hugely affected her, leaving her feeling '...as though I was losing ground [*sic*] under my feet, my world was crumbling...'

The trauma experienced by women at the hands of the SS impacted the Sonderkommando greatly. As we will explore frequently in the chapters that follow, the way the SS treated women and children caused the men of the SK intense distress. It is evident that gender influenced their experiences and has also subsequently informed representations of them. Women and girls appear repeatedly in stories of the SK. In later chapters, we will consider how depictions of men's and women's experiences at the extermination camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau have been structured by preconceived gender roles and how this has impacted the forms taken by testimony produced contemporaneously and retrospectively.

When Halivni studied the SK, she brought a first-hand knowledge of SS aggression and of their tactics of humiliation to her scholarship. She was attuned to gender issues as they intersected with violence at Birkenau. Halivni merits significant credit for her efforts to draw attention to the importance of women in the resistance movement at the camp.²⁹ She dedicated her article 'The Birkenau Revolt' to Róża Robota: 'Dedicated to Roza Robota (1921–1945) Died on the gallows on 6th January for procuring explosives'.³⁰ In an earlier, unpublished draft of the inscription she writes 'Dedicated to a Woman of Valor – Rosa [*sic*] Robota 1921–1944'.³¹ This previous dedication places greater emphasis on the importance of gender. Róża Robota, a worker in Kanada, persuaded around twenty women detailed to the Union munitions factory, including Ella Gärtner, Ester Wajcblum, Hanka Wajcblum and Regina Safirsztajn, to smuggle out gunpowder.³²

In drafts for the article, Halivni discusses in more detail how these women smuggled material to make explosives to the SK. She draws attention to how both racial and gender stereotypes influenced the way the Nazi men perceived Jewish women, informing their decision to employ women inmates in the factory. The Nazis hoped to exploit Jewish and feminine 'fragility' to their advantage. Halivni writes that: '[t]he SS assigned Jewish girls, the weaker sex of the weakest race, to work in the explosives pavilion of the Union munitions factory'. Drawing on the testimony of David Szmulewski, Halivni suggests that the young women 'carried explosives in the knots of their kerchiefs and in matchboxes betwixt their breasts'. The 'inferior' body was here used as a mode of smuggling, with key signifiers of sexual difference, breasts, consciously exploited. To some soldiers, although clearly not all, the hollow between the breasts may have been perceived as off-limits in a search.³³

Although she possesses insider knowledge of some of the occurrences she refers to and was privy at the time to anecdotes and hearsay about others, Halivni seems well aware her perspective is partial rather than total, limited if not limiting. She openly views survivor testimony as suspect, writing: ‘only too often eyewitnesses subject to human frailty have interspersed their testimony with fiction’.³⁴ For her, however, this tendency to embellish does not form an insurmountable obstacle because of ‘the large volume of testimonies’ and also ‘the disinterred wartime manuscripts’.³⁵ Here, the Scrolls of Auschwitz are implicitly ascribed significant historical accuracy. Halivni makes use of all of the manuscripts of which she was aware (there is no mention of Nadjary or, seemingly, of Gradowski’s *In the Heart of Hell*) but is particularly drawn to Lewental’s history of the SK revolt and to Leib Langfus’s *The Deportation*. For her, Lewental’s history, in ‘its authenticity and comprehensiveness make[s] it a yardstick for measuring the reliability of other available data’.³⁶

It may be because of her faith in this document that Halivni’s own accounts of the revolt so often echo Lewental’s in terms of their condemnation of the Polish Resistance. Halivni makes no attempt to hide her contempt for most Poles who participated in resistance activities. Halivni’s interest in Lewental’s history of the SK revolt is complex. It seems he provided her with a means to articulate some of her own anger and frustration at the failure to prevent the Hungarian Aktion. The fate of Hungary’s Jews is very much bound up with Halivni’s personal history. Her childhood hometown of Vişeu de Sus was located in Northern Transylvania and was ceded by Romania to Hungary in 1940. After the autumn of 1940, the town became known by the Hungarian name of Felsővisó. Halivni’s mother was able to flee to Romania from Felsővisó but the rest of the family were not. They were all deported to Auschwitz. Halivni recounts: ‘[my] youngest brother Menachem, two and a half years old, went with his fifty four year old grandmother to the crematorium. The time I saw in camp read 11am May 26, 1944’.³⁷ Halivni’s father worked at Buna for a period of time. He died on a train journey from Poland to Slovakia in late 1944. The SK revolt was initially planned to prevent, or at least disrupt, the Hungarian Aktion. It is conceivable that in Halivni’s mind had the uprising occurred earlier, in May 1944 for instance, it could have saved members of her own family.

Lewental’s despair at the prevarication of the Poles provides a scaffold for Halivni to examine her own despair at the lack of resistance to the Nazis and their policy of extermination. Similarly, given the repeated

drafts by Halivni that engage with Langfus's distress at the probable future loss of his son, it seems that 'The Deportation' also offered an indirect way for Halivni to explore her feelings regarding the murder of her younger brother. She uses the life histories of others both to write history and to process her life history. Her reception of the testimonies of Lewental and Langfus provides, if not a working through, at least a means of articulating her own traumatic experiences. In this context, her almost interminable drafting of her writing, her frequent repetitions, manifest not merely a desire for precision or clarity but can also be understood as a symptom of Halivni's reluctance to let go of what these events have become interwoven with: her own personal pain and loss. The scholarship is more than simply research. It does not solely offer an account or interpretation of events. There is a powerful performative dimension to Halivni's work. In this sense, her writing is on a continuum with the SK manuscripts which we discuss in Chapter 2.

Halivni is not, however, conscious of this aspect of her historiography, even though she writes in the context of a discussion of oral history that 'people [distort] facts to suit their political outlook, aesthetic taste, and personal needs', comments that could, partly, refer to her own practice as a historian. It would be unfair to describe Halivni's working methods as distortion, although her history does seem to be born, in part, of her own suffering and structured by that suffering. This makes her history writing also a powerful form of testimony. Additionally, there is a politics to her work, a pride in her Jewish identity, which emerges through her particular focus on resistance but also, unconsciously, through the rare moments when she doodles in her drafts. These doodles invariably represent the Star of David or Shield of David. The doodles in the margins of Halivni's work speak to how the events she studies and describes contribute to an ongoing process of shaping Jewish identity in the aftermath of the Shoah. This identity was, for Halivni, one bound up with acts of heroic resistance by Jews such as the men of the SK who revolted. Halivni felt that the revolt made sense only in the context of all the planning documented by Zalman Lewental. Lewental thus provided an answer to Arendt, Hilberg and Bettelheim, who criticized Jewish passivity and incarnated it in the SK.

Halivni's article on the SK revolt is threaded through with references in the first person, using her own experience to explain the difference in living conditions between Poles and Jews in Auschwitz, or expressing her

own trust or admiration for other prisoners. Of Nyiszli himself she says: ‘Indirectly, he saved my life’.³⁸ This method of seeking a connection with other prisoners, deciding whether or not they could be trusted, was a way of gaining information about the camp, both from within and from the outside afterwards.³⁹ Halivni uses the same method in her assessments of Langbein and Borowski. It is also a way of paying respect and tribute to them. She even writes herself into Lewental’s narrative:

I was in a transport which, I suspect, was placed as a human roadblock, on the thoroughfare in front of Sauna on the night that the SS preempted the revolt. On Saturday 26 August 1944, late in the afternoon, in an unusual move, the SS placed 1,000 Hungarian Jewish women on the thoroughfare ‘in the zone’ where we remained until about 11 A.M. the next day. That section of the road (see Plate) was precisely the projected theater of the battle. [...] 1,000 women on the thoroughfare, an unprecedented move to my knowledge, prevented these commandos from staging a united fight!⁴⁰

The Plate to which she refers places an X on the road outside the ‘Sauna’, between the two pairs of crematoria. This interpretation is certainly open to the criticism that Halivni’s identification with Lewental and his narrative has gone too far. She blends together her own experience of Auschwitz and that which she sees recorded in Lewental’s document. As with many survivor historians her research does not always adhere to commonly accepted academic historical standards.⁴¹ As a survivor of the Shoah, she lived through a past that would subsequently become the subject of many histories. Perversely, however, her insider knowledge of historical events renders any account she provides suspect because she is not sufficiently detached from her object of study. She is too much *of* the past. Her life experiences render her categorically distinct from historians who have not lived through the events they study. In *History*, Siegfried Kracauer wrote of the historian as ‘the son [*sic*] of at least two times – his own time and the time he is investigating’ rendering the historian’s mind unlocalizable, perambulating ‘without a fixed abode’.⁴² Halivni the historian demonstrates that this characterization does not readily apply to survivor historians. She is bound by the trauma of her experiences to the time she investigates, never able to fully detach herself from Auschwitz and its violence, to see it as in the past.

We want to suggest here that meaning is not exhausted by considering its plausibility or adherence to specific historical methodologies. Halivni's failure as a survivor historian to conform to common perceptions of what constitutes good historical practice is what permits her to provide important insights. In general, it is through this ability (or willingness) to bring Lewental's and her own experiences together that Halivni offers an account of the SK. She sees them not as separate from all the rest of camp life, but as a piece that can be laid alongside others to create a wider picture. The method is risky, but it shows an appreciation for what can be shared, what can be imagined and understood. Trying to understand them, one risks overwriting their story with one's own. Not to try to make sense of the SK is to abandon them.

Placing herself—placing a women's transport—into the middle of the picture is to assert that women too have a place in the story of the SK. Some practicalities make this obvious: the women's camp (BI) was right next to Crematoria 1 (II) and 2 (III). Kanada was staffed in part by women and right next to Crematoria 3 (IV) and 4 (V).⁴³ Women were witnesses to the daily life of the crematoria—and the extraordinary break from routine that was the revolt—in ways that men found much less easy to be (some skilled workers did enter the crematoria compounds, but they did not live next to them). Women bore witness to the SK. The SK bore witness to women: key accounts that they decided to record were about the last words and actions of women before they entered the gas chambers. Halivni also asserts that her experiences as a women are close enough to the SK for her to draw upon them. What we have previously called an implausible explanation of the revolt is therefore more than that. It is a misunderstanding that takes on some meaning, one that allows a different form of understanding.

THE USES OF TESTIMONY

What the examples of both Nyzisli and Halivni show is that the uses of testimony often take complex forms, beyond simply establishing or failing to establish facts, and also attempt to make meaning, to make ethical choices.⁴⁴ They show how people who were endeavouring to understand the SK were trying both to engage with them as a specific group and to see them as part of a greater whole. That is the aim of this book too. We will consider a range of testimony from the Sonderkommando, moving from that produced in Birkenau itself to that which was part of

post-war projects, such as Holocaust trials, video archives and the films of Claude Lanzmann.

By considering the ways in which the Sonderkommando gave testimony and were represented over the post-war period, this book will give new insights into the history of the SK. But it will go beyond that, showing how the SK were central to many ideas of the Shoah and that examining their testimony in depth speaks to and revises some of these conceptions. We argued in *Matters of Testimony* that the conception of testimony provided by Dori Laub has no place for (and thus is challenged by) the writings of the Sonderkommando.⁴⁵ Even so, Dominic Williams has noted that Laub and Cathy Caruth's readings of testimony and trauma take forms for which the SK are archetypal examples, especially in Laub's referring to survivors as *Geheimnisträger* (bearers of secrets)—an epithet which, when used in English, is often applied specifically to the SK.⁴⁶ Here, we go further, to show how the SK play a key part in Laub's discussion of history and testimony.

As we discuss in Chapter 3, we can see something very much like Marianne Hirsch's concept of postmemory at work in the Sonderkommando's efforts to document and photograph what they were witnessing: a sense that they needed to find means to transmit what they witnessed, to allow others to assume the role of surrogates of memory that Hirsch (and Anne Karpf) have described.⁴⁷ This sense, we would contend, carries on into the post-war witnessing of the SK. Concepts that have been coined to theorize the relation to the past of non-witnesses have real bearing on the witnessing that the SK themselves provided. Ideas of 'travelling memory' (Astrid Erll) that consider memory not being constrained within national contexts but crossing boundaries are clearly applicable to the SK's testimony that takes place in different locations and different languages.⁴⁸ The court cases of the immediate post-war that we discuss in Chapter 4, even when carried out by national governments, were international affairs. What Alison Landsberg calls 'prosthetic memory',⁴⁹ memory that is mediated and supported by notes, documents or photographs, describes not simply the means used by surrogates to call up the past, but also the means used by members of the SK as witnesses in trials, in video testimony and even in *Shoah*, which purports to eliminate the difference between past and present.

The Sonderkommando were not simply witnessing for themselves, but witnessing on behalf of others, especially the victims of the gas chamber, including Jewish women from what were clearly a variety of

backgrounds. The discussions of complicity and resistance, and of the difficulties of representing the Shoah, are ones that the SK have a central part in. And, as we show, those questions are also bound up inextricably with questions of gender: How could the SK relate to the women who were about to enter the gas chamber, how could they speak for, to and about them, how could they discuss the crimes that the SS carried out against them? As we will see in Chapters 2 and 5 especially, this was a task that they were considering contemporaneously and that survivors worked on long afterwards, with sometimes disturbing results, but ones that speak powerfully to recent work on gender and the Holocaust.

Joan Ringelheim, one of the pioneering researchers of gender issues in relation to Nazi genocide, titled an unpublished book manuscript on women and the Holocaust *Double Jeopardy*. The name *Double Jeopardy* is clearly intended to draw attention to how Jewish women during the Shoah were doubly imperilled because of their Jewishness and also their gender. Additionally, it is hard not to also hear echoes of Ringelheim's own trials as scholar, a tacit acknowledgement of the risks that accompany engaging with gender issues in this context. As she was laying the groundwork for what was to become the major event *Conference on Women Surviving the Holocaust* of 1983, Ringelheim was famously excoriated in a letter by Cynthia Ozick for appropriating the Holocaust for feminist ends to the detriment of Jewish victims.⁵⁰ This chastisement, however, would also have to be extended to the Sonderkommando working in the crematoria at Birkenau as they too sometimes clearly registered and reflected upon differences in the treatment of male and female victims. In this context, the importance accorded to women in their clandestine writings and photographs is deeply significant.

Our consideration of the SK writings through the prism of contemporary debates regarding gender and the Holocaust highlights ways in which the authors, Zalmen Gradowski and Leyb Langfus in particular, were already reflecting on some issues—such as the nature of sexual violence (as it is now usually referred to)—in the Holocaust that have assumed considerable importance in recent years. Gradowski's views on sadism and its relation to the male gaze and on how this relation came to intersect with the genocidal policies of the Nazis in Birkenau are especially relevant in this regard. It needs foregrounding that the reflections he offers are not only his but that he also shares the thoughts of specific victims. Through their own words, we are permitted a glimpse of how Jewish women experienced their final moments. The sexual

dimension to Nazi sadism that Gradowski relates renders his understanding qualitatively different to that of Langfus, who also thinks about sadism but ultimately seems to find deliberate cruelty by the Nazis to be an end in itself rather than a means to sexually gratifying ends. Close readings of the SK manuscripts therefore provide crucial insights both into how men and women experienced violence in the death camp and into differing SK perspectives on that violence.

Ringelheim's decision to use a legal term for a book on the Holocaust and gender also implies some kind of shared terrain between the practice of history and of law. The judiciary and history as a discipline do operate with common frames of reference in terms of evidence, testimony and witnessing. These links, left implicit in Ringelheim, are alluded to more directly by Marc Bloch who writes of the artistry of the historian:

The historian is not – indeed, he [*sic*] is less and less – that rather grumpy examining magistrate whose unflattering portrait is easily imposed upon the unwary by certain introductory manuals. To be sure, he has not turned credulous. He knows that his witnesses can lie or be mistaken. But he is primarily interested in making them speak so he may understand them.⁵¹

In this book, witnessing in the legal and historical senses of the term overlap in our consideration of the roles of the SK in post-war trials. The impact of trial testimony cannot be underestimated as it circulates beyond the courtroom through media reportage. It was not until he heard Adolf Eichmann's testimony at his trial, for instance, that Terrence des Pres came to a horrifying awareness of how victims died in the crematoria, reduced to 'a human pyramid of death'.⁵² Including an analysis of trial testimonies enables us simultaneously to signal ways in which other modes of bearing witness permit different facets of the SK's experiences to register and emerge. Our analyses of video testimonies, for example, show how these enable more of the emotions that accompanied the horrors of labouring in the crematoria to be communicated. In a letter to Hadassah Rosensaft, Geoffrey Hartman emphasizes how the Yale approach to eliciting video testimony is one which employs questions that 'are meant not so much to elicit precise historical information as to draw out personal feelings, accounts of relationships, patterns of experience'.⁵³

The following two chapters of *The Auschwitz Sonderkommando* consider the testimony that the SK produced from within the event: the

writings known as the Scrolls of Auschwitz and the photographs taken by ‘Alex’ (possibly Alberto Errera). Our previous readings of these texts and images have tended to look at them in isolation, providing accounts of them that highlight their unique qualities. In these chapters, we take a different approach, considering them in comparison with other kinds of testimony, and with other ways of making sense of them. As previously noted, Chapter 2 reflects on gender roles in the Sonderkommando writings, more specifically on the ways in which the testimony from other survivors, including women, can be brought into dialogue with those writings. We argue that attending to the Scrolls provides important insights into sexual violence as it manifested in the extermination camp. This violence was one that members of the SK worked hard to bear witness to and understand.

Chapter 3 examines the SK photographs and how they have been considered alongside words describing them, from the message written by the Polish resistance that accompanied them to the claims of more recent scholars such as Dan Stone that they escape verbalization. We show that they demand a verbal, as well as a visceral, response. We also draw attention to the value photographs more broadly held for members of the SK. The significance they accorded photographs as forms of remembrance resonates in noteworthy ways with the idea of postmemory. Our consideration of the four images taken by ‘Alex’ builds on the readings of the Scrolls we offer in Chapter 2 to consider important ethical considerations linked to writing and to ways of seeing. In the Joan Ringelheim Papers at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, there are photocopies of photographs of women caught up in pogroms, some running, several of them still striving to hide their bodies.⁵⁴ It is clear that Ringelheim recognized how photography sometimes linked with persecution during the Holocaust and, potentially, the persecution of women in particular. The SK were also aware of photography’s capacity for violence yet still chose to employ it as a means of bearing witness.

Chapter 4 offers a reading of the Sonderkommando’s role in a number of post-war trials. We find that the account of a shift in the role given to witnesses between the immediate post-war period and the 1960s is an over-simplified one, which concentrates too much on the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg and the trial of Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem. Other trials of ‘lesser’ criminals—ones at which the SK were called to speak—show much more complex dynamics of witnessing taking place, with responsibility for producing testimony being shared

between survivors of the SK and other members of the court and the court's structures being flexible enough to allow different kinds of witnessing. Viewing these forums as one stage in the process of the SK bearing witness rather than an overall attempt to conceptualize the Shoah allows us to listen to more of the nuances of what they say.

Chapter 5 considers the drawings and paintings of David Olère. Whereas most discussion of his work has tended to mine it for information, we pursue a line pioneered by Carol Zemel to consider the gender dynamics of his artworks. We see a troubled and at times troubling attempt to figure the crime to which Olère bore witness, an attempt which often employs depictions of women's bodies. Those bodies are represented both as objects of beauty and as testaments to something of the horror of the extermination process. We perceive continuity between the authors of the Scrolls of Auschwitz and the artist Olère's post-war corpus in that although employing different media, these members of the SK are each seeking to make some kind of sense of the horrific events they were forced to endure.

Chapter 6 looks at a range of video testimony from and about the SK. Revisiting Dori Laub's famous reading of a section of video testimony about the SK revolt, and the recent re-examination of his arguments and evidence by Thomas Trezise, we show that the Sonderkommando featured much more strongly in the testimony being discussed than either Laub or Trezise credit. The SK form a troubling presence connected to the testimony Laub receives and reflects on, with the women he interviews linked to the SK both by proximity and by familial relations. Having shown that these women, who all worked in the Kanada kommando, have more to say about the SK than had been previously acknowledged, we go on to demonstrate the importance of gender issues in relation to what members of the SK have to say in video testimony. We show that considering the gender dynamics of the interview process and the interviewees' self-image as men provides valuable insights into the nature and possibilities of testimony.

Chapter 7 concludes the volume by offering a close analysis of the place of Filip Müller in the film *Shoah*, building on our previous discussions of the testimony that the SK offered. We read Müller's place in the structure of *Shoah*, showing that he plays quite a different role from that of the equivalents to the SK in the other camps. His speech is much more heavily edited, and his voice is played over camerawork that is much more able to act out what he describes, because so much more

of Auschwitz-Birkenau is extant. This produces a number of strange effects with his voice and its connection with his body, ones that trouble the straightforward sense of masculine embodied presence that some readings of the film have seen in it. This chapter therefore provides a new reading of *Shoah* as well as showing its place in a long history of the Auschwitz SK giving testimony.

Our working across different media—drawing, film, literature, painting, photography, trial testimony and video testimony—enables us to tease out similarities and variations in self-representations of the SK across different forms and modes of expression. As with *Matters of Testimony*, which combined textual and visual analyses, the kind of work we engage in here would be impossible without a transdisciplinary approach to the study of testimony. Analysing testimonies produced by members of the SK from within the death camp of Birkenau alongside retrospective testimonies enables us to trace both continuities and changes in terms of how the Sonderkommando narrated their experiences. We are able to tell a different story from the more common general accounts of the memory of the Shoah that speak of silence until the 1960s (or even work to challenge that account), or ones that show how different national memories of the Holocaust were constructed. With our tighter focus on this one group, we are able to trace the relationships between the testimonies produced in different forums, in different media, in different contexts. It also allows us to see the contingencies of how different testimonies have come into being and had unpredictable effects. In this way, we can show that an examination of the Sonderkommando's testimony, paradoxically central to the memory of the Shoah at the same time as often being excluded from it, brings important new insights to the broader study of Holocaust testimony.

NOTES

1. Miklós Nyiszli, 'Journal d'un médecin déporté d'un crematorium d'Auschwitz,' trans. Tibère Kremer, *Les Temps modernes* 6.65 (March 1951): 1655–1672 and 6.66 (April 1951): 1855–1886. See Marius Turda, 'The Ambiguous Victim: Miklós Nyiszli's Narrative of Medical Experimentation in Auschwitz-Birkenau,' *Historiein* 14.1 (2014): 43–58.
2. 'SK' was an abbreviation that does not seem to have been used in the camps for the Sonderkommando, but was certainly used by Nyiszli

- himself. In using this abbreviation, we follow what is now common practice.
3. E.g. Seweryna Szmaglewska, Krystyna Zywulska, Olga Lengyel.
 4. Emma Kuby, 'In the Shadow of the Concentration Camp: David Rousset and the Limits of Apoliticism in Postwar French Thought,' *Modern Intellectual History* 11.1 (2014): 148.
 5. Yannick Malgouzo, *Les Camps nazis: Réflexions sur la réception littéraire française* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2012), pp. 263–268. Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Jean-Paul Sartre, Editorial, *Les Temps modernes* 6.60 (October 1950): 12–14.
 6. Miklós Nyiszli, 'SS Obersturmführer Doktor Mengele,' *Merlin* 3 (1952–1953): 158–171 and Richard Seaver, *The Tender Hour of Twilight: Paris in the '50s, New York in the '60s—A Memoir of Publishing's Golden Age*, ed. Jeannette Seaver (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2012), pp. 69–73.
 7. See the series of books on the concentrationary produced by Griselda Pollock and Max Silverman, starting with *Concentrationary Cinema: Aesthetics as Political Resistance in Alain Resnais's Night and Fog (1955)* (New York: Berghahn, 2011).
 8. This is most famously true of Filip Müller, who had two phases of working in the SK, from April to July 1942 in the so-called Fischl-Kommando in Auschwitz I and then from July 1943 until January 1945 in the SK in Birkenau. But it is also true of all of the writers of the Scrolls of Auschwitz. Three survived in the SK for a little under two years (1942–1944), one for about eighteen months (1943–1944), and one from April 1944 until after the end of the war. See Nicholas Chare and Dominic Williams, *Matters of Testimony: Interpreting the Scrolls of Auschwitz* (New York: Berghahn, 2016), pp. 5–7. Of the interviewees in Gideon Greif's *We Wept Without Tears*, four (Jews from Poland) were drafted into the SK in late 1942 and four (Jews from Greece) in spring 1944. Greif, *We Wept Without Tears: Testimonies from the Jewish Sonderkommando from Auschwitz*, trans. Naftali Greenwood (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).
 9. At the Frankfurt Auschwitz trial, Dov Paisikovic and Filip Müller, both recalled that people survived the gassing, and that there was a routine for dealing with them: it was reported and the survivor was shot. 98. Verhandlungstag (8 October 1964). *Zeno.org: Der 1. Frankfurter Auschwitz-Prozess*, p. 20678 (cp. AP181.018) (Müller) and p. 20965 (cp. AP184.029) (Paiskovic).
 10. See Andreas Kilian's note in Miklós Nyiszli, *Im Jenseits der Menschlichkeit: Ein Gerichtsmediziner in Auschwitz*, trans. Angelika Bihari, eds. Andreas Kilian and Friedrich Herber (Berlin: Karl Dietz, 2005), p. 171n.60 and Kevin E. Simpson, *Soccer Under the Swastika: Stories of Resistance and Survival* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), pp. 143–145.

11. Levi, 'The Grey Zone,' in *The Drowned and the Saved*, trans. Raymond Rosenthal (London: Abacus, 1988), p. 36.
12. Krystyna Żywulska, *I Survived Auschwitz*, trans. Krystyna Cenkalska (Warsaw: tCHu Publishing House, 2004), pp. 250–252.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 253.
14. See, for example the handful of references to the Aktion Reinhard camps of Bełżec, Sobibór and Treblinka, *Gray Zones: Ambiguity and Compromise in the Holocaust and its Aftermath*, eds. Jonathan Petropoulos and John Roth (New York: Berghahn, 2005).
15. See Dan Stone, 'The Harmony of Barbarism: Locating the Scrolls of Auschwitz in Holocaust Historiography,' in *Representing Auschwitz: At the Margins of Testimony*, eds. Nicholas Chare and Dominic Williams (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 11–32 and Tom Lawson, 'The Sonderkommando and Cultural History,' *Telling, Describing, Representing Extermination: The Auschwitz Sonderkommando, Their Testimony and Their Legacy*, Centre Marc Bloch, Berlin, 12 April 2018 [Video of this paper available at <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x6nlbc1>].
16. Martin Gilbert, *The Holocaust: The Jewish Tragedy* (London: Fontana, 1987), pp. 518, 633, 636–637, 649–653, 667–668, and 730. Although Dan Stone rightly points out that Gilbert often smuggles in some meaning to be wrung from the testimony, especially in his final paragraph (*Constructing the Holocaust: A Study in Historiography* [London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2003], pp. 153–157), at a micro-level the organization is often concerned solely with asserting the chronological relationship of the material. Thus, Gilbert stitches Leyb Langfus's story of the 3000 Naked Women together with other accounts from Madame Vaillant Couturier and Rudolf Vrba to create a continuous whole, but they could equally be read as a collage of different incidents. Gilbert, *The Holocaust*, pp. 648–649.
17. Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews: Years of Extermination, 1939–1945* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), pp. 577–584.
18. Katharina Stengel, *Hermann Langbein: Ein Auschwitz-Überlebender in den erinnerungspolitischen Konflikten der Nachkriegszeit* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2012), p. 558n.254.
19. Erich Kulka was interned at several concentration camps including Auschwitz where he spent 28 months. Ber Mark spent much of the war in exile in Moscow.
20. Halivni writes: 'On May 26 1944, Dr. Miklós Nyiszli arrived in A on a cattle train from the ghetto of Felsővisó, my [illegible] home town, together with his wife Margarita and his 15 year old daughter Zsuzsi, a former class mate of mine'. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (henceforth USHMM), Tzipora Hager Weiss Halivni Papers. Accession