

Personal document literature as a source for Holocaust research (Methodological reconnaissance)

In this article I focus on two areas: first – the genre typology of texts that belong to the sphere of the so-called personal document, their specific character as a historical source for Holocaust studies; second – the methodological challenge this type of sources posits for the historiography (not only) of the Holocaust. I raise the following questions: what is the value of personal documents for Holocaust historians, being a formally diverse record of experiences; how are they used in their research; how do they read those personal narratives? A more general context for these considerations is the debate on the conditions for Holocaust historiography going on among contemporary theoreticians of history. One form of this debate could be described as a conflict between “historical discourse” and “memory discourse”.