CONVINCED THAT THIS PERIOD in history would be judged one day, I knew that I must bear witness. I also knew that, while I had many things to say, I did not have the words to say them. Painfully aware of my limitations, I watched helplessly as language became an obstacle. It became clear that it would be necessary to invent a new language. But how was one to rehabilitate and transform words betrayed and perverted by the enemy? Hunger—thirst—fear—transport—selection—fire—chimney: these words all have intrinsic meaning, but in those times, they meant something else. Writing in my mother tongue—at that point close to extinction—I would pause at every sentence, and start over and over again. I would conjure up other verbs, other images, other silent cries. It still was not right. But what exactly was “it”? “It” was something elusive, darkly shrouded for fear of being usurped, profaned. All the dictionary had to offer seemed meager, pale, lifeless. Was there a way to describe the last jour- ney in sealed cattle cars, the last voyage toward the unknown? Or the discovery of a demented and glacial universe where to be in- human was human, where disciplined, educated men in uniform came to kill, and innocent children and weary old men came to die? Or the countless separations on a single fiery night, the tearing apart of entire families, entire communities? Or, incredibly, the vanishing of a beautiful, well-behaved little Jewish girl with golden hair and a sad smile, murdered with her mother the very night of their arrival? How was one to speak of them without trembling and a heart broken for all eternity? Deep down, the witness knew then, as he does now, that his testimony would not be received. After all, it deals with an event that sprang from the darkest zone of man. Only those who experienced Auschwitz know what it was. Others will never know. But would they at least understand? Could men and women who consider it normal to assist the weak, to heal the sick, to protect small children, and to respect the wisdom of their elders understand what happened there? Would they be able to comprehend how, within that cursed universe, the masters tortured the weak and massacred the children, the sick, and the old? And yet, having lived through this experience, one could not keep silent no matter how difficult, if not impossible, it was to speak.