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Re-narrating trauma in a transnational context: testimonies about Nazi concentration camps by women deported from the region of the Adriatisches

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Availability:

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Publisher:

University of Latvia

Published

DOI:

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Latvijas Universitāte
Humanitāro zinātņu fakultāte

Atmiņa. Identitāte. Kultūra

Zinātnisko rakstu krājums
(1. sējums)

Atbildīgie redaktori:
Tatjana Kuharenoka, Irina Novikova, Ivars Orehovs

Erinnerung. Identität. Kultur

Wissenschaftliche Beiträge
(Band 1)

Herausgeber: Tatjana Kuharenoka, Irina Novikova, Ivars Orehovs

Memory. Identity. Culture

Collection of essays
(Volume 1)

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Natka Badurina

Re-narrating trauma in a transnational context: testimonies about Nazi concentration camps by women deported from the region of the *Adriatisches Küstenland*

The article discusses two frequent assumptions concerning women's testimonies of Nazi concentration camps: a) that there is an emphasis on bodily experience: is it, as some authors would maintain, necessarily characteristic of all women's testimonies? and b) that women's testimonies are of a supposedly more private, less political nature: what exactly is the relation between women's individual memory and the collective? Since the politics and ideologies that influenced the testimonies were in most cases grand *national* narratives, these assumptions are examined using examples of women's testimonies from Italy, Croatia and Slovenia, and in particular their borderlands. The atmosphere of the cold war made women's testifying in Yugoslavia extremely difficult: it was strictly controlled, and survivors of the camps had to be presented as fearless partisans rather than suffering victims. By contrast the political context of Italian women's testimonies in the seventies was that of the feminist movement, which aimed at creating a new, anti-heroic model of active women. Finally, the article examines recent accounts by women survivors belonging to the Slovenian national minority in Italy, paying special attention to the case of Savina Rupel, who testified several times to different media, and in different languages. As her case shows, even when the testimony eschews the dominant national narratives, it is nevertheless inescapably affected by the complex social and political contexts of the acts of remembering and testifying.

Keywords: women's testimonies, Nazi concentration camps, *Adriatisches Küstenland*, transnational identities.

Gender perspective in collecting and analyzing testimonies about Nazi concentration camps has been widely accepted in the field of oral history ever since the Nineties.¹ Retaining its pioneering intent to transform the traditional history, based on written and material documents, by introducing orally transmitted counterstories that would otherwise never come to light, oral history has recently broadened this gender perspective to include wider intersectional insights.² As Selma Leydesdorff affirmed, new subjects in gender and oral history research include, among others, the "embodiment of gender" and the "autobiography as an expression or a site for the reconstruction of both individual and the collective (the cultural)."³ In the present article we will make use of the issue of bodily experience on the one hand, and the relation between individual and collective

memory on the other, in considering women's testimonies in a transnational context, in this case the Italian-Slovenian border area.

In emphasising the specificity of women's accounts of concentration camps, authors usually set out from the fact that the violence the prisoners were exposed to was in large part physical, and that the worst torture consisted in reducing human beings to their physical bodies.⁴ This is often substantiated by the fact that some physical experiences like amenorrhea, violated pregnancy and maternity, or fear of sexual abuse, are characteristics exclusive to women's experience of the camps.⁵ However, the connection such authors make between women's testimonies and bodily experiences is often supported, explicitly or implicitly, by the common belief that corporeality is something closer to women than to men, a belief that is part of an antifeminist, patriarchal tradition as well as of certain currents in modern feminist thought.⁶ Given the women's closeness to the physical, their accounts of internment should therefore be considered as more authentic, informative and true.⁷ The emphasis on women's accounts of physical suffering may also imply that their experience is individual, non-rational, and thus non-social and non-political.⁸ The implication is supported by the assumption that the most frequent theme in relation to women's corporeality – maternity – is linked to the domestic and private sphere as its natural and protective environment.⁹ In addition, the fact that before the Nineties women testified far more rarely than men, and thus their narratives were less exposed to current political and ideological influences, can easily lead to the supposition that women's testimonies preserved the experience in its "original" form, and are therefore "more direct and less conditioned" or even "more alive".¹⁰

While some of these premises in the discussion about women's testimonies are certainly true if taken singly, they may sometimes lead to conclusions that can hardly be generally accepted. Starting from the above-mentioned approach, we will try to question, in the concrete case of women deported from the German occupation zone of the *Adriatisches Küstenland*, the statement that women's testimonies are more universal because they are less political and less influenced by ideologies. Since the politics and ideologies that influenced the testimonies were in most cases grand *national* narratives (even when inspired by internationalism, as we shall see), the statement will be examined using the example of some transnational women's identities.

Deportation from the German Occupation zone of the *Adriatisches Küstenland*

After the capitulation of Italy in September 1943, north-eastern Italy and the territories previously occupied by Italy in Slovenia, Istria and the northern coastal area of Croatia, including the cities (and former provinces) of Udine, Gorizia, Trieste, Pola, Rijeka (Fiume) and Ljubljana, were put under direct German administration as a single occupation zone, an important crossing area between Central Europe, Italy and the Balkans and the outlet of the Third Reich

to the Mediterranean. Immediately there began persecutions and deportations on political and racial grounds, continuing the previous fascist violence. The presence of different nationalities in the area – particularly the Slovene and Croatian minorities within the Italian borders before the war – had led to early forms of fascist discriminatory policies during the Twenties, as well as to the early organisation of antifascist resistance movements.

In most cases, the people deported from this area passed through prisons in Trieste to be then transported by trains to German concentration camps. They were Italians, Slovenians, Croats and Jews. In the camps, however, they did not always declare that they came from Italian occupied territories, thus being, formally, Italians. As in many other cases of multinational or multilingual prisoners from other areas, the possibility of choosing among different national groups in the camps often meant a better chance of survival. Since the Italians were particularly disliked in the camps and considered as fascists by other inmates even when they were political prisoners – while, on the other hand, Yugoslavia was held in high respect thanks to the partisans and the communist leader Josip Broz Tito – the prisoners of the Slovenian and Croatian minorities deported from Italian occupied territories often declared themselves as Yugoslavs.¹¹ Consequently, it is very difficult for the historians to make numerical estimates regarding the nationality of the people deported from this zone.

The return from the camps. Collecting testimonies in Croatia and Slovenia

At the end of the war, those who had been deported from the *Adriatisches Küstenland* returned to their homes, now located either in the new Italian republic or in socialist Yugoslavia (i.e. the socialist republics of Slovenia and Croatia). In Yugoslavia the atmosphere was tense as a result of the political system but newly set up, the unsolved question of the border with Italy (the case of Trieste), and the concomitant feeling of being under permanent threat from both East and West. As often happened in the Soviet Union, the surviving prisoners were suspected of having collaborated with Gestapo and were often discriminated against, expelled from the Communist party, persecuted and arrested. In Slovenia ex-inmates were put on trial: some of them at the Nagode Trial in 1947, others during the so called Dachau trials (1947-1949). Among the accused “collaborationists” at the Nagode trial was Angela Vode, a prewar communist and ex Ravensbrück inmate, expelled from the Communist party in 1939 because of her opposition to the Hitler-Stalin pact.¹² According to her memories of the post-war period, the Yugoslav secret police were also preparing a special trial for Ravensbrück survivors.¹³

In such a climate, the memories of the war were under strict control and could follow only predetermined patterns. The Yugoslav policy for women’s emancipation, implemented through the organisation of the Women’s Antifascist Front (AFŽ), promoted the image of the woman partisan, fearless and politically aware, an image that corresponded only partly to the reality of women soldiers

during the war.¹⁴ The same heroic and politicised narrative genre was imposed on the memoirs of the concentration camps, so descriptions of inmates as victims or suffering individuals were censored.

The recollections by Zora Matijević,¹⁵ a young communist from the Croatian coastland deported via Trieste to Ravensbrück, were published for the first time in 1945, and resemble a political autobiography of her comrades as a whole, who are often recorded with their names and surnames, as if the author wanted to certify their behaviour during their internment in front of the new political authorities. Compassion, mutual encouragement and strong feelings of collectivity temper their terrible stories, but also cover every individual emotion, suffering, fear, moral dilemmas or even merit in helping others; strength could only be the strength of the group. Narrative difficulties coming from the imperative of collectivity are visible, for example, when the strange expression “We were given a small thin shirt...” is changed in the second edition into a more comprehensible “I was given a small thin shirt...”¹⁶ The benchmark status of this kind of published testimony is made evident by the apparently marginal fact that some sentences from Matijević’s book can be found amidst handwritten pages of recollections belonging to another young antifascist from Rijeka, Milojka Mezorana,¹⁷ who inserted them in her own story about Auschwitz. Without quotation marks or any other sign of another’s authorship, Mezorana’s borrowing of (or surrendering to) another’s words is a touching proof of the difficulty of saying – and so betraying – the trauma by putting it into any kind of collective code, which is exactly what language is.

When Slovenian political activists and ex-inmates Erna Muser and Vida Zavrl started to collect, in the Sixties, testimonies from Slovenian Ravensbrück survivors, they were looking for narratives about politically active inmates.¹⁸ Even though their collection has the merit of having preserved women’s memories (the book was published in 1971), their witnesses all seem to be “partisans dressed in inmates clothes”.¹⁹ The already-mentioned Angela Vode wrote her recollections immediately after her return from the camp, but they could not be published owing to her expulsion from the party and because they were considered as “too individualistic” and as promoting a “bourgeois idea of freedom”.²⁰ The editors instructed the witnesses how to write their recollections, avoiding topics that could call into question the absolute homogeneity of the national group in the camp. National consciousness was also very important in selecting the memories: it overbears their antifascist collectivism, as well as communist internationalism, by presenting Nazism and capitalism primarily as enemies of Slovene national preservation. A camp viewed through national and political lenses is the result of a very concrete political expectation during the war, that the antifascist fight would lead to the unification of Slovenian territories; it is also the result of the post-war regret that Trieste was not included in Yugoslavia.²¹

Even before compiling their collection, Erna Muser and Vida Zavrl convinced the author Erika Buchmann from East Germany to introduce, in the second edition of her book about Ravensbrück, more information about the political activity of Slovenian inmates, and in return they eliminated from their collection

testimonies that spoke badly about German prisoners. As the historian Silvija Kavčič supposes, in socialist countries there existed a kind of institutionalized control over the memories,²² which the individual publishers did indeed exercised, but frequently as a means of protecting the women and their fellow inmates.

In the Noughties Silvija Kavčič interviewed Slovenian Ravensbrück survivors, noting that the post-war pattern was still present in their stories, even though since the Nineties, many elements had contributed to creating new and better conditions for testifying about the political violence of past and present times: the end of cold war, the methodological progress of oral history, theoretical reflection on autobiography, academic recognition of Holocaust studies and, in short, the phenomenon we usually call "the era of the Witness". Angela Vode's remembrances were eventually published in the Noughties and were perceived as an important enrichment of national memory.²³ However, the new political context in ex-Yugoslav countries permitted the revaluation of anticommunist movements and even of collaborationists in the past, a revaluation that was felt by survivors as offensive and dangerous.²⁴ Furthermore, the communist treatment of the survivors has often been used in order to criminalise the fallen regime in its totality. A film based on the memories of Angela Vode, produced in 2009 by TV Slovenia, focused on the post-war period of her life, depicting her primarily as a *victim* of the communist regime.²⁵ If during socialism the ex-prisoners of Nazi camps could not be presented as victims without being suspected of having been collaborators, thus forcing women prisoners to present themselves as heroes even when they were not, the post-socialist narrative about the communist regime tends, by contrast, to use women's memories to emphasize the figures of women as *victims* of the communist regime, in order to homogenise the nation and thereby gain political points.

In her retrospective view on the testimonies collected in the post-war period, Silvija Kavčič proposed an illustrative analysis of the political context of the early Slovenian women's memories. At the same time, however, she inherited from her predecessors a strict national perspective. Even though she declares herself to be interested in the destiny of all the Slovenian women deported to Ravensbrück, her analysis takes into account only women who testified in the socialist Yugoslavia. The multinational perspective in her view is a perspective that takes into account only the contacts between groups of women coming from different national states, like friendship between Slovenian and German inmates.²⁶ Complex, multifaceted and "translated" identities of minority communities in neighbouring states, as well as different contexts of witnessing, for example, in the Italian or Austrian borderlands, would have made her material much more heterogeneous.

Witnessing in post-war Italy

The post-war period in Italy, as we know from evocative accounts by Primo Levi, was characterised by a will to forget, to start a new life in peace, and to remove, at least temporarily, the self-examination of the Italian role in the

war by building the new society only on the antifascist memory of the past.²⁷ Furthermore, women's witnessing about deportation was discouraged by several and sometimes contradictory pressures: the dominance of the heroic figure of the victorious partisan; a patriarchal and clerical suspicion of women's leaving home for political activity as the reason for their arrest, on the one hand, and on the other, simultaneously, the shame of not having been activists courageous or able enough to avoid arrest. On top of these intersections of patriarchal and militant dictates, of course, there was the widespread uneasiness about the sexual violence the women might have suffered in the camps. The official and mainly men's memory of the camps, slowly created during the first post-war decades in terms of national fight against Nazism, was primarily a memory of political, not racial, inmates. By contrast, the first *women's* testimonies were written by Italian *Jewish* women, who were "perhaps less misunderstood than their fellow inmates, the political prisoners".²⁸ The first Italian books of women's memoirs published around 1946 (among them, the already-mentioned book by Giuliana Tedeschi), so different from the partisan women's memories in neighbouring Yugoslavia, largely correspond to what we today tend to generalise as women's narratives about deportation trauma: intimate and introspective confessions often focused on bodily experiences and not avoiding irrational or incomprehensible aspects of memory; spiritual force derived from women's solidarity groups; strong metaphorisation of the discourse; and very rare references to the precise place and time, politics or historical events. Some of these authors would later re-write their memoirs. In the Seventies and Eighties their stories are written in a quite different genre that sometimes seems to be "an exegesis"²⁹ of the first traumatic discourse.

The Italian feminist movement in the Seventies promoted a new awareness of women's subjectivity and, together with other emancipatory movements of the time, gave much importance to autobiographies and life stories.³⁰ After her work on the feminist reinterpretation of the memory of the Italian Resistance movement.³¹ The feminist author Anna Maria Bruzzone, together with the ex-Ravensbrück inmate Lidia Beccaria Rolfi, in 1978 edited a collection of four life stories of women who survived Ravensbrück.³² A programmatic Introduction to the collection, written by Bruzzone, explains the intellectual background to this "autobiographical turn" and the political significance of their work: the feminist revision of the past that tries to answer the questions of today and draws strength from the foremothers in order to reinforce the current fight (some formal victories of the Italian feminist movement of those days were still far from being satisfactory). Differently from the memories published immediately after the war, Rolfi and Bruzzone present only *political* inmates, focusing their narratives on women that participated actively in the Resistance. Their story of the Resistance is, however, radically and self-consciously distanced from the official men's history, absolutely devoid of the rhetoric of heroism and the imperative of collectivity, and open to ethical dilemmas, confessions about personal and often non-orthodox ideological paths, stories about rivalry, divisions and failed solidarity

among women, divided into classes also in the camp, criticism of inmates who were fanatic promoters of political ideas etc.

Lidia Beccaria Rolfi remembers her admiration for the high morale and political consciousness of her fellow inmates in the camp, stating at the same time that she simply “didn’t have what it takes to be a hero” (*non ho la stoffa dell’eroe*).³³ The resistance, for the authors of this project, was the resistance of real women and men and not of idealised saints; the glorification of heroes in the post-war memory was encouraged by the new system in order to discourage any potential resistance on the part of real people.³⁴ Probably thanks to this attitude, the authors have an early methodological awareness about the need for the intersectional approach (“the feminist analysis must be accompanied by class analysis, in order to identify the intersection of inequalities”).³⁵

The political context that can be inferred from these methodological statements is that of radical criticism of current capitalism which, according to the authors, in many facets resembles the reality of the concentration camps: an oppressive system that annihilates people’s individuality and controls their lives, from market competition to repressive institutions like factories, prisons, armed forces, mental hospitals (their collection is contemporaneous with the epoch-making Italian anti-psychiatry reform promoted by Franco Basaglia, who drew inspiration from Foucault). Without directly mentioning Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, but with a clear reference to their *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, the feminist authors consider the camps as the culmination of the rational – and still operating – logic of modern society. Their goal is a society whose individuals are liberated, as they say, from the gender binarism of male reason and female emotivity,³⁶ which also means that they were not interested in feminine autobiographical discourse that tends to exclude women from society and politics.

Testimonies from the borderland

The power of the narratives proposed by Bruzzone and Rolfi’s collection was so strong that several years later, in testimonies given by the women from the same Piemonte region, there were visible stylistic indications that they had read the seminal collection before their own testifying.³⁷ But while this pattern still appeared among witnesses coming from the same region, a certain general adaptability of testimonies can be noted in the approach of another collection of oral history about the deportation trauma, *La vita offesa*.³⁸ As the historian Marco Coslovich warns, looking for correspondences and similarities among various testimonies and sorting out only the parts they have in common (an approach that displays a nostalgia for the quantitative method in dealing with oral history), can lead to an excessive generalization of the camp experience, a generalization that removes many specificities that played an important role in the camp, regardless of the total dehumanization of all the inmates. Since Marco Coslovich focused his research on testimonies from the Italian north-east borderland, the specificity he has in mind is first of all the regional one. His own collecting of

testimonies by survivors deported from the *Adriatisches Küstenland* is focused on the intersections between national, political, class and gender specificities of the witnesses that influence their accounts. Particular attention is given to the conflict between national and political aspirations regarding the Italian-Yugoslavian border and the question of Trieste; the antifascist internationalism of the inmates, as Coslovich notes, has given way to the national claims of the different groups.

Marco Coslovich collected testimonies only from the Italian territories of the *Adriatisches Küstenland* and mainly from Italian witnesses.³⁹ However, thanks to the regional specificities, the testimonies of some interviewed members of the Slovenian minority are much closer to Italian testimonies from the same region than to the above-mentioned Slovenian testimonies from the Slovenian national territory. One case in particular stood out from Coslovich's collection and aroused an unexpectedly wide interest.

The reiterated testimony by Savina Rupel

Savina Rupel belonged to the Slovenian national minority from the surroundings of Trieste. As a young girl before the war, she walked every day to the city to sell flowers, having her own stall and licence. During fascism ethnic minorities in the border region suffered severe discrimination, and antifascist activism among them came early on. After the German occupation in 1943, Rupel⁴⁰ exposed herself by asking for the liberation of her brother and fiancé, both arrested by the German police. Soon after that, she herself was arrested and deported to Ravensbrück. At the moment of her arrest she was 5 months pregnant. In the camp she felt close to the group of Slovenian and Yugoslav inmates, but she was close to the Italian inmates as well. Surrounded by the sadistic camp "doctors", she gave birth to a son, but the child died after several days. With the help of a Serbian Roma woman that recognized her as a Slavic compatriot, she managed to pick herself up and survive. On her return, she found her fiancé engaged to another woman, which made Rupel's reintroduction to the life of the community much more difficult. Still, she married another man, had a son and continued to work as a flower seller in Trieste.

Savina Rupel told her story for the first time to Marco Coslovich. She spoke in an Italian regional dialect, which was not her mother tongue, and which was subsequently changed into standard Italian in the tape-script. Impressed by her "narrative vocation", Coslovich later re-elaborated her story in a book.⁴¹ Coslovich considered as very important the fact that she had never spoken before, thus preserving the "authenticity" (in spite of the linguistic alienation, which was inevitable in those circumstances) that had been lost in other testimonies, especially men's, exposed as they were to political and ideological pressures. At the same time, Coslovich considers that Rupel's testimony is strongly conditioned by the patriarchal society and its consequent disapproval for her having been an unmarried mother. It must be said, however, that Slovenian women belonging to

that society were autonomous and often earning the only salary in the family, and that if there is one thread running through Rupel's story, it is that of her pride in her own independence. As the historian Marta Verginella says, Rupel's story about her powerful wish to survive can be explained only by her being used to a hard life, like other women from the same community, to crossing social borders, and to being an autonomous agent.⁴²

After Coslovich's book, Rupel spoke in Slovenian for a documentary film made in 2004 by the Slovene section of the Italian national television,⁴³ and after that for a book written by the Slovenian writer Boris Kobal.⁴⁴ Kobal's setting of the interview is visibly biased in a national and ideological sense: a large part of the conversation is focused on the pre-war period in a kind of folkloristic description of the life of the Slovenian community; his questions about Rupel's participation in antifascist actions are tendentious and want to suggest a political awareness and spirit of collectivity that she clearly refuses to recognize as her own (it seems that Kobal would like to hear a version of her story similar to the testimonies in Muser and Zavrl's collection); finally, he reduces into just a few sentences the post-war difficulties of her reintegration. The climax of her testimonies in the first two versions is the moment when she says that she did not declare the death of her newborn baby the day it happened, in order to avoid being sent to the Appel, because the Appel in her condition would have certainly meant her death. This is clearly the part of the story that can never be worked through; a psychologically complex and irresolvable ethical dilemma, as if she had offended her dead baby even more by using him to save her own life. In Coslovich's version she has to interrupt the narration and to invoke the listener's comprehension and forgiveness; in the documentary film she cries. In Kobal's version, by contrast, it seems that she has never had any ethical dilemma, since the idea of delaying the exit to the Appel has been suggested to her by the nurse, thus annihilating her internal division by externalizing it into two different persons. Another misunderstanding of the complex reality of the camp is represented by the fact that in Kobal's version the Roma woman who saved her life becomes a Slovene. The point of this comparison between different versions of the same testimony is not, of course, to question their truthfulness but, on the contrary, to foster awareness of their discursive nature, of their dependence on the possibilities of language and on the narrative genres available and, finally, of the social and emotional circumstances of the act of witnessing.

The motivation for Kobal's book was to reintegrate Rupel's story into her national language and context in order to obtain a more genuine testimony. Unfortunately, this "naturalization" was done with Kobal's preoccupation with Rupel's primordial femininity being, as he states, close to the "animal instinct"⁴⁵ to survive. Feminine closeness to nature is often part of broad national perspectives, once more distancing women from political life. Even though in Rupel's story there is no strong awareness of the collective fight and neither has she "what it takes to be a hero", it still does not mean that her story is a-political, or is more "natural". Her individual remembering certainly eludes grand national narratives

and their influence on the memories, but it would not have been possible without her being actively and courageously part of the complex transnational borderland society she lived in.⁴⁶

- ¹ As a specific historical event, the Holocaust largely depends on individual testimonies of survivors, thus the oral history has always been a particularly suitable, when not the only possible, approach to it. For the history of discussion on the specificity of women's experience of deportation see Dalia Ofer and Lenore J. Weitzman (eds.), *Women in the Holocaust*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998.
- ² Cfr. Selma Leydesdorff, "Introduction to the Transaction Edition – Gender and Memory, Ten Years On", Selma Leydesdorff, Luisa Passerini, Paul Thompson (eds.) *Gender and memory*, New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2005, pp. vii-xvi.
- ³ Leydesdorff, Passerini, Thompson (eds.) *Gender and memory*, p. vii.
- ⁴ See, for example, the opening words of the chapter dedicated to women in the book by Marco Coslovich, *I percorsi della sopravvivenza. Storia e memoria della deportazione dall'Adriatisches Küstenland*, Milano: Mursia, 1997, p. 276. The same argument can be found in Marta Baiardi, "Aspetti della memorialistica femminile della deportazione", Biblioteca Archivio Vittorio Bobbato, http://www.bobbato.it/fileadmin/grpmnt/1133/baiardi_-_aspetti_memorialisticapdf.pdf
- ⁵ An important contribution to this topic has been given by Joan Ringelheim, "The Split between Gender and the Holocaust", in Dalia Ofer and Lenore J. Weitzman, *op. cit.*, pp. 340-350. For a critical approach to the reduction of women's experience of the camps to the themes connected to their sexuality, see the article by Sara R. Horowitz in the same collection (pp. 364-377, in particular on p. 369), and the introductory warning of the editors of the volume: "it is essential that women's experiences not be discussed exclusively in terms of motherhood or sexuality", *op. cit.*, p. 16.
- ⁶ On the binarism men/women=rationality/corporeality the primary reference is the works by Sherry B. Ortner ("Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture", *Feminist Studies*, vol. 1, 1972, n. 2, pp. 5-31 and "So, is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture" in *Making Gender: The Politics and Erotics of Culture*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1996). A useful comment on the recent feminist discussion about the topic can be found in Lada Čale Feldman, *Euridikini osvrti*, Zagreb: Centar za ženske studije and Naklada MD, 2001, pp. 61-64.
- ⁷ Often quoted as an argument in favor of this hypothesis, one of the first Italian women's testimonies about deportation is significantly entitled *Questo povero corpo* (*This poor body*). Written in 1946 by Giuliana Tedeschi, the work displays all the characteristics that would lately become distinctive of a certain current in women's writing about camps: subjectivity, poetic style and abundance of metaphors (contrary to men's reports that often want only to "certify" the events), atemporality and feminine identity strongly marked by physical experience.
- ⁸ See, for example, Marco Coslovich, *I percorsi della sopravvivenza*, p. 315.
- ⁹ See, for example, Marta Baiardi, "Aspetti della memorialistica femminile della deportazione", p. 13.
- ¹⁰ Marco Coslovich, *I percorsi della sopravvivenza*, pp. 19 and 315.
- ¹¹ Marco Coslovich, *I percorsi della sopravvivenza*, pp. 29, 226, 247.

- ¹² Mirjam Hladnik-Milharčič, "Spol in upor", Mirjam Hladnik-Milharčič (ed.) *Zbrana dela Angele Vode, I. knjiga*, Ljubljana: Krtina, 1998, pp. 9-87, in particular on p. 34.
- ¹³ Silvija Kavčič, *Preživele smo in spominjamo se. Slovenske jetnice v ženskem koncentracijskem taborišču Ravensbrück*, Ljubljana: Društvo za proučevanje zgodovine, antropologije in književnosti, 2008, p. 31.
- ¹⁴ Cfr. Barbara Jancar-Webster, *Women and Revolution in Yugoslavia 1941-1945*, Denver: Arden Press, 1990.
- ¹⁵ Zora Matijević, *Ravensbrück – ženski logor smrti*, Rijeka: Istarska nakladna zadruga, 1945.
- ¹⁶ Zora Matijević, *Ravensbrück – ženski logor smrti*, p. 20; Zora Matijević, *Ravensbrück – ženski logor smrti*, second edition, AFŽH, 1946, p. 46.
- ¹⁷ The notebook is preserved in the City Museum of Rijeka. Cfr. Natka Badurina, "Testimony Between Historiography and Literature", R. Jambrešić Kirin & S. Prlenda (eds.), *Feminisms in a Transnational Perspective: Women Narrating Their Lives and Actions*, Zagreb: Centre for Women's Studies & Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research, 2013, pp. 59-68.
- ¹⁸ Erna Muser and Vida Zavrl, *FKL Žensko koncentracijsko taborišče Ravensbrück*, Ljubljana: Partizanska knjiga, 1971.
- ¹⁹ Silvija Kavčič, *Preživele smo in spominjamo se*, p. 194.
- ²⁰ The refusal has been formulated by Erna Muser. See Silvija Kavčič, *Preživele smo in spominjamo se*, p. 30. Only a short passage by Angela Vode has been published in the collection edited by Muser and Zavrl.
- ²¹ Cfr. Erna Muser and Vida Zavrl, *FKL Žensko koncentracijsko taborišče Ravensbrück*, p. 32. The issue of Trieste divided not only Slovenian and Italian antifascists, but also Italian antifascists among themselves; the latter were arguing whether the city of Trieste, after the war, should become Italian, according to their national preferences, or Yugoslav and communist, a solution that corresponded to their ideological aspirations. Cfr. Marco Coslovich, *op. cit.*, 251. The question of Trieste was solved only in 1954, in the tense atmosphere of the cold war.
- ²² Silvija Kavčič, *Preživele smo in spominjamo se*, p. 190.
- ²³ Angela Vode, *Spomin in pozaba*, (ed. by Mirjam Hladnik Milharčič), Ljubljana: Krtina, 2000.
- ²⁴ Silvija Kavčič, *Preživele smo in spominjamo se*, p. 196.
- ²⁵ *Skriti spomin Angele Vode*, director Maja Weiss, produced by RTV Slovenija. An overview of the post-socialist rehabilitation of Angela Vode and a critical reflection on the film were presented by Mirjam Hladnik Milharčič, the editor of Angela Vode's complete works, during the conference *Do Women Have the Victory Day? Women's traumatic memory and narrations of resistance* organised by the Centre for Women's Studies in Zagreb, May 2009.
- ²⁶ Silvija Kavčič, "'Meine Liebe Titoline' – Mara Čepič in Rosa Jochmann, prijateljstvo v pismih," *Borec*, n. 644-647, LIX/2007, pp. 60-65.
- ²⁷ The Italian post-war memory about deportation is well described by public reactions to the first national exhibition on concentration camps set up in 1955. Cfr. Marzia Luppi and Elisabetta Ruffini (eds.) *Immagini dal silenzio. La prima mostra nazionale dei lager nazisti attraverso l'Italia 1955-1960*, Modena, 2005.
- ²⁸ Marta Baiardi, "Aspetti della memorialistica femminile della deportazione", p. 7
- ²⁹ Marta Baiardi, "Aspetti della memorialistica femminile della deportazione", p. 11.

- ³⁰ One of the most famous books in this field is Luisa Passerini's *Autoritratto di gruppo*, Firenze: Giunti, 1988; English version: *Autobiography of a generation. Italy 1968*, Hanover-London: Wesleyan University Press, 1996.
- ³¹ Anna Maria Bruzzzone and Rachele Farina, *La Resistenza taciuta. Dodici vite di partigiane piemontesi*, Torino: Einaudi, 1976.
- ³² Lidia Beccaria Rolfi and Anna Maria Bruzzzone, *Le donne di Ravensbruck. Testimonianze di deportate politiche italiane*, Torino: Einaudi, 1978.
- ³³ From the remembrances of Lidia Beccaria Rolfi in Lidia Beccaria Rolfi and Anna Maria Bruzzzone, *Le donne di Ravensbruck*, p. 97.
- ³⁴ Rolfi and Bruzzzone, *Le donne di Ravensbruck*, p. XVI.
- ³⁵ Rolfi and Bruzzzone, *Le donne di Ravensbruck*, p. X.
- ³⁶ Rolfi and Bruzzzone, *Le donne di Ravensbruck*, p. IX.
- ³⁷ Alessandra Chiappano, "La specificità della deportazione femminile attraverso l'analisi delle testimonianze raccolte nell'archivio della deportazione piemontese", Alessandra Chiappano (ed.) *Essere donne nel lager*, Firenze: la Giuntina, 2009, pp. 71-134, in particular on p. 90.
- ³⁸ Anna Bravo and Daniele Jalla (eds.) *La vita offesa. Storia e memoria dei lager nazisti nei racconti di duecento sopravvissuti*, Milano: Franco Angeli, 1988.
- ³⁹ Bravo and Jalla (eds.) *La vita offesa*, p. 226.
- ⁴⁰ I don't agree with the tradition of calling women's testimonies by their first names, a tradition that seems to suggest that they are closer to the private than to the public sphere.
- ⁴¹ Marco Coslovich, *Storia di Savina. Testimonia di una madre deportata*, Milano: Mursia, 2000.
- ⁴² Marta Verginella, "Sava v ženskem peklu", in Boris Kobal, *V ženskem peklu. Savina zgodba*, Trieste: ZTT, 2006, pp. 75-84, for the information see p. 83.
- ⁴³ *Spomini*, directed by Mirjam Koren, screenplay by Marta Verginella, Trst: RAI, 2004.
- ⁴⁴ Boris Kobal, *op. cit.*
- ⁴⁵ Boris Kobal, *op. cit.*, p. 7.
- ⁴⁶ While I write this article, Rupel's story has been put on stage, continuing the process of remembering in artistic forms of post-memory. The performance has been promoted by a Slovenian actress and an Italian director who wanted to present Savina's story to Italian audiences in Trieste. For the performance, however, they used Coslovich's interview and not Kobal's, whose exclusiveness would have been completely untranslatable in a cultural sense. The performance is entitled *Savina. Einundneunzigtausend dreihundert neunundzwanzig*, text by Gioirgio Amodeo, with Tatiana Malalan as Savina Rupel, produced by SKD Tabor.