

## Counterpointing of Memory: The Image of World War II in the Diaries of Lea Salcberger and Ervin Salcberger\*

### Abstract

The chapter analyzes personal documents: diaries and memoirs written mostly during World War II by Lea Abinun Salcberger and Ervin Salcberger. These texts, edited by Danilo Šarenac and Ivana Pantelić, were published almost 70 years after their creation – in 2013, as the book *Dve polovine sećanja. Partizanski dnevnik kao izvor za istoriju Drugog svetskog rata* [*Two Halves of Memory: Partisan Diaries as a Source for the History of World War II*]. Both Lea, a Sephardic Jew from Sarajevo, and Ervin, an Ashkenazi Jew born in Pale, joined the partisan movement in which, although separated, they were active participants. Although they both lost most of their family during the Holocaust (in Jasenovac and Staro Sajmište concentration camps), they survived the war, got married and lived together in Belgrade. Their autobiographical texts document the sociopolitical situation of the war in Yugoslavia, the everyday life of partisans, and the private microhistory of the protagonists. The gender approach used in the analysis of the image of WWII aims to confront the two culturally determined visions – male and female – organizing the structure and semantic layer of texts. As a result, we can see that history is a type of narrative, a cultural construct that is not gender neutral (Ubertowska 2015). Written in these “inconspicuous texts” (Jerzy Strzelczyk, Inga Iwasiów), the images of memory counterbalance one another, but they also complement each other in an interesting way.

**Key words:** World War II, Yugoslavia, personal documents, counterpointing, gender historiography.

### Introduction

Svetlana Slapšak has pointed out that one of the fields of research concerning the Balkans in which significant gaps and omissions can still be seen is the history of women, insufficiently

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studied and barely included in historical education (Slapšak 2009: 290). Daško Milinović and Zoran Petakov describe this important absence as “a striking shortage of authentic female historiography” as the history of women not only has not been sufficiently examined and analyzed but is also only marginally presented to the public (Milinović, Petakov 2010: 9). In turn, as Svetlana Tomić notes, even among female researchers of the past of Serbian women’s literary culture, archival research is sometimes underestimated or overlooked or plays too minor a role. It is often wrong to assume that archival stories were told long ago and do not contain cognitive potential (Tomić 2016: 72). However, as it turns out, many source texts of a memorable nature written by women are still waiting to be discovered, and archival research, not only conducted in official national collections but also taking into account private records, plays a significant role in the process of recovering women’s memory. Let us mention at least two examples of “invisible testimonies” – using Aleksandra Ubertowska’s phrase (Ubertowska 2009) referring to the times of World War II, which have not been published to this day. These are personal documents (a diary, a poem and a letter) from 1943 by photographer Elvira Kohn, presenting her stay in the concentration camp on Rab island;<sup>1</sup> and a diary by Milojka Mezorana, a girl arrested for partisan activity. Part one of the latter text, dated 1943, describes the reality of war during the occupation of Rijeka, first by the Italians and later by the Germans, and part two from 1945 recounts her arrest on August 14, 1944, interrogations in the Via Roma prison in Rijeka and her stay in the Auschwitz camp, followed by imprisonment in Chemnitz and Welboth.<sup>2</sup> As Sandra Prlenda aptly underlines, following the lead of Joan Wallach Scott, the inclusion of the history of women in historical narrative cannot involve only creating an annex or tacking a short note about the participation of women and children at the end of the lesson, but it should at least partly serve as a basis for analyzing major social, political, economic and cultural events (Prlenda 2009: 11-12). Although, as Natka Badurina rightly points out, in Croatia (especially after 2000) the perspective of women is clearly present in historiography, the role of women in the past still remains a challenge for contemporary humanities considerations (Badurina 2009: 40). Therefore, the publication of sources should be accompanied by critical texts that form an interpretive grid, containing a gender perspective and helping to organize hidden meanings, read senses, or (re)define values – because, as Sylwia Karolak and others show, the act of publication or even the placement of a cultural text in the literary canon does not guarantee in-

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<sup>1</sup> Personal documents by Kohn are kept in the archive of Hrvatski povijesni muzej (Croatian History Museum) in Zagreb.

<sup>2</sup> Mezorana’s diary is kept in the archive of Muzej grada Rijeke (Rijeka City Museum).

depth reading, as the reading may be limited only to the dominant and socially acceptable interpretation (Karolak 2015: 404). A very important element of the process of transforming the uncontested participation of women in the past into actual participation in history as a discipline, on which Renata Jambrešić-Kirin puts particular emphasis, is “counterpointing diverse female voices” by having research include private histories contradicting the notions that in the past female roles were homogeneous and that there is no homogeneous experience of war (Jambrešić-Kirin 1999-2000: 78, 83-84).

Within the little known female history of the Balkans, as Harriet Freidenreich notes, the past of Jewish women represents its least known element (Pass Freidenreich 2009). As a reminder, both the Sephardic community, who after their exile from the Iberian Peninsula settled in the Balkans in the 16th century, and the Ashkenazi Jewish group were an important element of the Balkan cultural reality. However, as Dina Katan Ben Zion writes, the manuscripts of Laura Papo Bohoreta and Paulina Lebl Albala (both born in 1891) were only published in 2005, and it was with them that Jewish women’s literature in the countries of the former Yugoslavia began. These books are respectively *Sefardska žena u Bosni* (Sephardic Women in Bosnia) and *Tako je nekad bilo* (It Used To Be Like That) (Katan Ben Zion 2014: 188).

The main goal of the present chapter is a comparative analysis of two diaries and personal documents written mostly during World War II by Lea Abinun Salcberger and Ervin Salcberger. These texts, edited by Danilo Šarenac and Ivana Pantelić (who also wrote the introduction), were published almost 70 years after their creation (Šarenac, Pantelić 2013), as the book *Dve polovine sećanja. Partizanski dnevници kao izvor za istoriju Drugog svetskog rata* (Two Halves of Memory: Partisan Diaries as a Source for the History of World War II). The manuscripts together with war documentation and photographs were kept in the Salcberger family archive. After the death of their parents, the daughters handed over the source materials to historians. Lea Salcberger was a Sephardic Jew from Sarajevo, born in 1913. Ervin Salcberger was an Ashkenazi Jew born in Pale in 1912.<sup>3</sup> They met before the war, and their wedding was planned for April 6, 1941, the day the Third Reich attacked Yugoslavia. As a result of the war they were separated. Both joined the partisan movement, in which they were active participants, though each of them in a different unit. Although they both lost most of their family during the Holocaust (mostly in Jasenovac and Staro sajmište concentration camps – Jajinci), they survived the war, got married in 1946 and lived together

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<sup>3</sup> Jaša Romano gives the year 1916 as the year of Ervin Salcberger’s birth (Romano 1980: 475).

in Belgrade. Ervin died in 1995, Lea in 2006. Their autobiographical texts document the sociopolitical situation of the war in Yugoslavia, the everyday life of partisans and the private microhistory of the protagonists. During the analysis, both voices will be of interest to me as cultural constructs: 1) because of the structure of the texts, and 2) from the point of view of the content that can be seen as a manifestation of the social, gender-based roles of the authors.

### **In Dialogic Tension**

Already the first part of the book's title, "two halves of memory," suggests that in this publication we are dealing with a particular kind of counterpoint. Šarenac and Pantelić put together two different voices – male, originally recorded in Cyrillic, and female, written using the Latin alphabet – which are included as two forms of recording the same experience. The editors published the manuscripts in their entirety; thanks to this, the recorded experiences can be presented fully and the emerging tensions and visible differences between the diaries are treated as manifestations of a textual dialogue. Memory in this case is treated not only as a product of the individual's work or the expression of cultural/social identity, but also as a relational phenomenon, which by being presented in an account makes it possible to reveal specific differences (Wolf 2014: 41). The manuscripts were integrated into one complete form and placed in a common context. The tangent points, which build a multidimensional relationship between the texts, are not only the authors' experience of war and participation in the guerrilla movement but also a close, intimate bond between the loving couple.

Both texts follow the Biblical-Talmudic tradition of giving testimony. They were created at a similar time: Ervin kept his diary from April 28, 1944 to September 12, 1944, while Lea wrote her notes between October 19, 1943 and July 2, 1945, although regular entries began to appear – as is apparent from the published manuscript – from July 17, 1944. Relatively short memories written down by Lea in 2003 (some of them bear this date), added at the end as attachments, concern the time of imprisonment in the camps on Hvar and Rab islands and describe Lea's activity in the Rab Battalion after the liberation of the Rab camp. In Ervin's case, it is presumed that he might have also kept a diary earlier, but unfortunately no traces have been found. Let us focus on the diaries first.

The choice of a diary as a literary form to describe events seems to be particularly appropriate for recording what is currently happening in chronological order (Głowiński 2002: 118). Both of the diaries in question record a specific point in their authors' biographies, namely underground activity. Reading these biographical materials allows us to immerse ourselves in the world of meanings given by both authors, as well as to see the

mechanisms by which these two people participated in reality. They were constant, though sometimes unconscious, interpreters and exponents of what was happening to them (Nikliborc 2011: 75). At the time covered by the diary, Ervin Salcberger was the chief of staff of the 16th Muslim Brigade. As Šarenac and Pantelić point out in the introduction, it is noteworthy that a Jew occupied such a high position in a unit designated for Bosnian Muslims (Šarenac, Pantelić 2013: 24). The form of the notes seems to be directly dictated by the author's military function. The editors of the publication suggest that the text was probably created as a "replacement for the classical operational diary" of Ervin's military unit (Šarenac, Pantelić 2013: 26). As a consequence, the text is primarily a record of the brigade's military operations, which allows readers to discover a map of unit moves, clashes with the enemy, the status of group equipment, information on contacts with other units, and an overview of daily activities. The reader's attention is drawn to the author's language, the characteristic jargon of professional soldiers. At the time of writing, Ervin already had a wealth of experience as a military officer; during the war his career developed considerably in this direction, and he was already distinguished for his merits. The text of the diary is characterized by formalized vocabulary dominated by geographical names of landmarks on the route of the unit (reconstructed on the map attached to the publication) and a military lexicon of abbreviations, where ranks replace people's names. The purpose of writing is to record the activities of the unit step by step. As Šarenac and Pantelić rightly point out, there are no reports, analyses or conclusions from the events described in the diary (Šarenac, Pantelić 2013: 27). The text is also lacking any private notes which would offer an insight into the impressions and emotions of the author. When Ervin presents events in which he was involved, he uses the neutral phrase "chief of staff" for himself.

Lea's diary is a contrast to Ervin's notes. She had her first contact with the communists even before the war, when she was working in a knitwear factory. However, she became politically involved in earnest during her stay in the camp on Hvar island in November 1942. In September 1943, after the liberation of the camp on Rab island, where she continued her underground activity, she naturally joined the guerrilla movement. The diary covers the time of her involvement in the activities of the 7th Strike Division of Banija, where she served, in turn, as a delegate in the communications company, as a clerk on the staff of the 2nd Brigade, and then as head of the encryption department. Like Ervin's, Lea's notes are also arranged in daily chronological order, which allows us to trace the movements and operations of the unit. The editors emphasize the precision of the diary, in which the author notes even the smallest towns not included in earlier historical works on the operational

activities of the 7th Strike Division of Banija (Šarenac, Pantelić 2013: 43). For this reason, the diary is a valuable historical source. Yet besides military and tactical activities, Lea also mentions less official aspects of group cohabitation, such as attending dance parties or going to theater performances or concerts. What seems particularly interesting, in contrast to the diary of her future husband, this text also contains a number of passages of a private nature. Lea's narrative does not support the guerrilla myth of female partisans who maintain stoic calm at all costs and in every sphere, and hide their fear, sorrow and personal tragedy to present a political tale of strength, courage and victory (Jambrešić-Kirin 1999-2000: 79). Writing, which is an intellectual activity, plays not only a reporting role in this case, but also creates an area of intimacy, a kind of springboard that allows Lea to catch her breath. Writing, for her, becomes a form of support thanks to which she does not give up and fall into despair. In wartime conditions in which everyday life was subordinated to functioning within a military unit, a diary guaranteed a certain measure of privacy (Душанић, Шаренац 2016: 10). On the one hand, we find sentences in the text in which Lea expresses concern about the fate of her family and whether they will ever be able to meet again. On the other hand – and these moments definitely dominate in the diary – she constantly returns to her fiancé. There are words of longing for the loved one from whom she has been separated by the reality of war: “To pišem na položaju, gde granate fraju. To su mjesta gdje sam sama i gdje se prepuštam osjećanima. Uvijek u najtežim časovima mislim na njega ... .”<sup>4</sup> (Abinun Salcberger 2013a: 125). There are also moments of doubt as to the strength of Ervin's feelings. When there is no message from him for a long time, she begins to doubt if he still loves her, whether he is faithful to her or maybe has met someone else. In these moments she turns to identification schemes that follow the model of traditional femininity. The protagonist evaluates herself from the perspective of an external, masculine look. The hardships of war were clearly reflected in Lea's appearance, and thus significantly diminished her “Znači završiće se rat i ja ću se naći s Ervinom. Da li će se razočarati kad me vidi ostarjelu, napaćenu i iscrpljenu.”<sup>5</sup> (Abinun Salcberger 2013a: 116). The bodily sphere, despite the experience of war, remains important to Lea and becomes a manifestation of stereotypical cultural patterns that model her thinking about herself and her physicality. The gender-feminine body raises the question whether “it is possible to return and restore the earlier territories of the body” (Karwowska 2009: 57). In these fragments the culturally constructed image of femininity is intersected

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<sup>4</sup> I'm writing this in a place where grenades explode. These are places where I am alone and where I give in to my feelings. In the worst moments I always think of him ...” (Translated by Katarzyna Taczyńska- KT)

<sup>5</sup> “That means when the war is over, Ervin and I will find each other again. Will he be disappointed when he sees me old, tired and exhausted?” (KT)

with the biology of the body which is subordinated to this image, dependent on it and has specific functions to fulfill.

### **Towards Gender Historiography**

Although Lea's narrative does not make spectacular cultural transgressions, we can find in it fragments that testify to its uniqueness and breaking of the conventional framework. For this reason, Šarenac and Pantelić define the diary as "an exclusive phenomenon" (Šarenac, Pantelić 2013: 43). Though Lea is swept by a sudden tide of history which changes her life irreversibly, her small gestures let us see her as a peculiar (unconscious) rebel. However, it is not the heroic events of an openly revisionist character but scrambled inscriptions in the text that reveal the hidden mechanisms of exclusion. The historical moment put the "anonymous" protagonist in a role which let her notice the conventionality of social roles and put her own gender position to the test (Ubertowska 2015: 19). On the one hand, writing a diary is a breakthrough activity. It should be remembered that in the history of Serbian literature, the diary as a literary form is one of the dominant genres in women's prose (Koch 2007: 158) and is considered to be characteristic of a female author's expression (Ritz 2000: 49). However, the number of published autobiographical documents by women grew during World War II and the post-war period. This was an effect of the degradation of egocentrism as a feature of autobiographical writing. The tragedy of war and the resulting internal compulsion to write down testimonies forced women to break the cultural prohibition against exposing one's "I" as a feature of autobiographical writing (Ubertowska 2009: 224). Lea's personal narrative, the text of her diary (although unpublished during her life), in which the author documents the actions of her military unit and her own reflections, could be seen as proof of the emancipatory social transformations of that period and as an example of overcoming existing cultural paradigms.

On the other hand, an argument for such a perspective of interpreting the diary which would make it possible to place the text in the area of gender historiography is provided by fragments in which Lea depicts the relationship between men and women within the underground movement in a way that is different from previously recorded guerrilla memoirs. The authors of the introduction remind readers at this point about a scholarly project managed by Pantelić. Its results became the basis for a monograph published in 2011, entitled *Partizanke kao građanke. Društvena emancipacija partizanki u Srbiji 1945-1953* (Female

Partisans as Citizens: Social Emancipation of Female Partisans in Serbia, 1945-1953).<sup>6</sup> When interviewed by the researcher about their participation in the war, the social consequences, the changes it caused, and also about their post-war professional and private histories, former female partisans concordantly confirmed the equal status of male and female participants of the war, which was respected by both sexes. The picture emerging from the conversations presents an apologetic vision of the relationships in the guerilla movement, upholding the dominant historical discourse. The emancipation of women is an integral part of this politically correct and superior myth of the national liberation struggle uniting the inhabitants of Yugoslavia.<sup>7</sup> Lea's diary dynamizes the process of reconstruction and analysis of women's participation in the guerilla movement. The author goes beyond the idealized, dominant narrative of equality and does not glorify male-female contacts. Several times, she mentions an attitude towards women which is "inappropriate"/"nepravilan" or "incorrect"/"neispravan" (Abinun Salcberger 2013a: 119, 120), although there is only one place where she voices her displeasure at the behavior of partisans who dismissed her report in a disrespectful manner. Lea describes that emotion as "a big disappointment" (Abinun Salcberger 2013a: 121). Although it is difficult to talk about paradigm modification in the case of Lea's diary due to the modest nature of the descriptions, in the words-signals that verbalize the feelings and perceptions of the protagonist we can notice her sensitivity to actions incompatible with the valid ideal pattern of the partisan. Moments of happiness are intertwined with moments of doubt and criticism, which consequently give rise to thoughts about leaving the unit (ibidem: 120). Going beyond schematic descriptions of the war, the author discreetly draws attention to the gender mechanisms functioning in the partisan community.

## War Memoirs

In the last part of this chapter I would like to take a closer look at the memoir texts written by Lea that have been placed at the end of the book in the section *Prilozi (Attachments)*. They were written many years after the diaries, not from a *hic et nunc* perspective but from a distance to war events, but they still have interesting cognitive value

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<sup>6</sup> Other initiatives that – using interviews with male and female participants of World War II in Yugoslavia – cover, among other things, issues of equality in the guerrilla movement, include the women-oriented study by Milinović and Petakov 2010, and the Belgrade project of Savez antifašista Srbije (Association of Antifascists of Serbia) which, using the oral history method, records interviews with former partisans. More on the subject of historiographic research on the issue of the emancipation of women in Yugoslavia can be found in Pantelić 2011: 15-17.

<sup>7</sup> The problem of changing the image of a female partisan in the cultural imaginary of the former Yugoslavia is analyzed, for example, in works by Renata Jambrešić-Kirin and by Marijana Stojčić and Nađa Duhaček (Jambrešić-Kirin 2008; Stojčić, Duhaček 2017).



for the scholar of narratives on World War II and the experience of Jews in Yugoslavia. The first two documents document Lea's stay in the camp on Rab island and bear the date 2003. As a reminder, in July 1942 on this island the Italian authorities established the Kampor concentration camp, which existed until September 8, 1943, i.e. until the capitulation of Italy<sup>8</sup>. In the introduction to the publication the editors do not mention any reasons for these texts having been written, nor does the author herself explicitly explain why she decided to do this after many years, although the reader could expect such an introduction. As Božena Karwowska writes, in the case of camp memoirs we can even consider it a rule that authors explain their reasons for writing at the beginning (Karwowska 2016b: 125). Some hints regarding motivation may be intuited from reading Lea's memoirs. As a matter of fact, she does not write explicitly and directly on this subject, but in one of the texts she mentions the commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the creation of the Rab Battalion after the liberation of the Rab camp in 1943 (Abinun Salcberger 2013b: 154). Perhaps it was these observances that became the inspiration for writing, restored the memory of events from the past, and awakened a dimming moment of private history. It is also worth noting that in the second volume of the five-volume series *Mi smo preživeli: Jevreji o holokaustu (We Survived: Yugoslav Jews on the Holocaust)* published in 2003 there is a written record of a conversation with Lea conducted by Jaša Amuli (Salcberger 2003: 57-68). It seems likely that an interview about the wartime past could also trigger the need to write down memoirs.

The memoir texts contained in *Two Halves of the Memory...* differ significantly from the diaries chronologically recording the activities of the guerilla movement day by day. They are short, closed forms that do not create a linear story but represent some fragments of events. Each of the stories paints a separate picture oriented around the events of World War II. Apart from her imprisonment in a concentration camp, the author also writes about the last meeting with her mother (the text entitled *Hvala [Thank You]*) and about her participation in Rab Battalion operations. As can be guessed from the reading, the editors did not decide to interfere with the content or selection of entries. This is evidenced by sentences which return several times in a similar form and are all left as an inseparable part of the whole text.

With regard to the narrator-author text structure, the memoirs can be divided into two parts. When Lea evokes her own experiences, i.e. individual events that played an important role for her at that stage of life, she retains the first-person identity form of "I". But when she describes the life inside the battalion community and presents the characteristics of the group,

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<sup>8</sup> On the history of the camp, see Kovačić 1998.

she speaks in the plural, choosing the form of “we”, which may also indicate strong identification with the military unit being described. On the one hand, from these memoirs there emerges an image of a politically engaged woman who during her isolation participated in meetings devoted to the activities of the guerrilla resistance movement. She also took part in a hospital orderly course organized by prisoners and taught classes to a group of children. The work with young children, despite difficult conditions – a lack of school materials, the need to use the ground as a blackboard or a notebook – effectively distracted her from darker thoughts and gave her happiness and satisfaction in the difficult situation of isolation. As long as weather conditions allowed, meaning there was a shaded place that would let them spend the time planned for a lesson in a tolerable atmosphere, Lea was involved in organizing meetings for children. On the other hand, there is a repeated metaphor in the notes which is characteristic also for the diary of the earlier-mentioned Elvira Kohn, with a dominant, suggestive image of barbed wire, which formed the fence and separated the sectors of the camp. These fragments at the same time allow us to observe clear signs of the artistic potential of the author, who managed to transform the dramatic memories creatively. When Lea saw the camp, she wrote: “Tada sam u sebi rekla tu mi kraj.”<sup>9</sup> and “Ulazeći kroz kapiju bodljikavih žica imala sam utisak da svaka bodlja dodiruje moju kožu i zaranja se u nju.”<sup>10</sup> (Abinun Salcberger 2013b: 143). The wire literally separated the prisoners and also symbolically split their lives into the time before the camp and the time of internment. Here they felt like caged wild animals at whom orders are shouted. The theme of the wire fence which divides the camp returns several times in these terse records.

The reader’s attention is also attracted to the unique and very personal nature of the memories contained in the section *Thank You*. Here Lea recreates her own journey as a patient from the concentration camp in Hvar to a hospital in Split, in which town her mother went into hiding at her brother’s home after escaping from Sarajevo. The expression of gratitude from the title is directed at the doctor who gave Lea a chance to meet her mother. This meeting gains a special dimension due to the fact that – as it turned out – it was the last time the women saw each other. The protagonist’s mother was finally sent to Belgrade in 1943, to the Staro sajmište concentration camp, from where she and other prisoners were transported to Jajinci and then murdered there (Salcberger 2003: 57). On the one hand, this emotionally charged meeting was commemorated in the form of a separate picture in the context of a farewell and personal loss. On the other hand, it appears as an interpretation of events from

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<sup>9</sup> “Then I said to myself that this is my end”(KT)

<sup>10</sup> “Going through the barbed wire gate, I felt every spike touch my skin and sink into it”(KT)

the past, a reference to what was an authentic experience, and in the invoked form it becomes – as the title emphasizes – an expression of gratitude towards the doctor who gave her help. It is also the memoirs invoking the Rab Battalion that express the importance of family in Lea's life. The author, initially experiencing deep loneliness, with time begins to perceive her comrades as a new family, a kind of foster family, and that is why she directs a lot of positive words at them in her account (Abinun Salcberger 2013b: 158).

## Conclusion

It seems that the texts of Ervin and Lea Salcberger have two different stories to tell, not because what they survived was different, but because they understood their experiences in different ways. As Aleksandra Ubertowska underlines, history exists primarily as a narrative, as a cultural and textual construct that is not gender neutral (Ubertowska 2015: 7). Written in these “inconspicuous texts” (Strzelczyk 2007, 2009; Iwasiów 2015), the images of memory counterbalance one another, but they also complement each other, and the resulting tension of this confrontation creates a textual dialogue in which an important role is played by the point of view, the variation of tones, the strategy and the poetics of storytelling (Wolf 2014: 36). The publication of manuscripts can be seen as the voice of historians examining the past of the former Yugoslavia, demanding “a transformation in a symbolic representation” (Karwowska 2016a: 9) and a different perspective on historical and literary research directed at the periphery, which also requires additional in-depth studies. The perspective of viewing history presented here, including gender conditions, enriches the iconography of women's roles in the past and shows the shifts taking place in the field of interest of researchers of the history of the former Yugoslavia. At the same time, the publication of diaries can be considered an important step towards reflection on the Jewish history of Yugoslavia's inhabitants, a step sensitive to “microevents” and everyday life that are important elements of the great tradition (Ubertowska 2015: 19-20).

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## **Kontrapunkty pamięci: obraz drugiej wojny światowej w dziennikach Lei Salcberger i Ervina Salcbergera**

W niniejszym rozdziale analizuję powstałe głównie w czasie drugiej wojny światowej dokumenty osobiste: dzienniki i wspomnienia autorstwa Lei Abinun Salcberger i Ervina Salcbergera. Teksty te w opracowaniu Danilo Šarenaca i Ivany Pantelić zostały opublikowane prawie 70 lat po powstaniu, w 2013 r. w książce *Dve polovine sećanja. Partizanski dnevnici kao izvor za istoriju Drugog svetskog rata*. Lea, pochodząca z Sarajewa Sefardyjka, i Ervin, urodzony w Pale Żyd aszkenazyjski, byli uczestnikami ruchu partyzanckiego, w którym, choć rozdzieleni, aktywnie działali. Choć oboje stracili większość rodziny w czasie Holokaustu (obóz Jasenovac i Staro Sajmište), oni sami wojnę przeżyli, pobrali się i żyli razem w Belgradzie. Ich autobiograficzne teksty dokumentują zarówno społeczno-polityczną sytuację wojny w Jugosławii, codzienne życie partyzantów, jak i prywatną mikrohistorię swoich bohaterów. Wykorzystywane w analizie obrazu drugiej wojny światowej podejście genderowe ma na celu konfrontację dwóch zdeterminowanych kulturowo wizji – męskiej i żeńskiej, organizujących strukturę oraz warstwę semantyczną tekstów. W rezultacie widzimy, że historia to przede wszystkim narracja, kulturowy konstrukt, który nie jest neutralny genderowo (Ubertowska 2015). Zapisane w tych „tekstach niepozornych” (Jerzy Strzelczyk, Inga Iwasiów) obrazy pamięci stanowią dla siebie przeciwwagę, ale również w ciekawy sposób dopełniają się.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Druga wojna światowa, Jugosławia, dokumenty osobiste, kontrapunktowanie, historiografia genderowa.