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## Democratism of Dragojla Jarnević on the Example of her *Diary*

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The paper analyses, in the context of Dragojla Jarnević's *Diary*, the concept of democratism from the authoress' viewpoint of the world regarding the liberal values that represent foundation of democracy. Considering the problems related to the issue of contemporary democracies eminent intellectuals of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century have expressed a line of doubts and objections, thereby threatening the concept of democracy, or twisting democracy in its own contradictions. In retrospect, during Dragojla Jarnević's lifetime and work, there was an evident complexity and ambivalence of disseminating liberal ideas in the area of today's Croatia. Shaping and expressing of Dragojla Jarnević's democratic views shows that it is possible to interpret democracy from different points of view – on the one hand, it is the best social model, on the other hand, it sometimes transforms in its contradiction. Certain contradictions are observed in Jarnević's personality, however, her personality eventually reveals a brave and democratic (literature) subject.

KEYWORDS: democracy; liberal values; *Diary* of Dragojla Jarnević

### 1. Introduction

Dragojla Jarnević lived in the time of significant social movements when liberal ideas and the awakening of the national spirit penetrated the former Croatian territory, and those ideas were accepted and further developed by the cultural and intellectual elites. Dragojla Jarnević is the most remarkable authoresses of the Croatian National Revival. She wrote patriotic poetry, plays and one of the first Croatian novels but her literary work is not characterised by particular originality, which is why she blends well with the poetic matrix of the time. She assumed a very important position in the national literature with her *Diary* composed in German and Croatian

from 1833 to 1874, as recorded in almost all historical chronicles of Croatian literature.<sup>1</sup> Jarnević's lifelong search on the road to discovering her own personality is in line with her firmly set ideals based on strict, often unexplainable moral principles, which reflect democratism, since they are based on liberal ideas, reflecting the ideal of contemporary democracies, which are founded in liberal values of personal freedom of choice. This is the highest achievement of modern-day democracy. The democratism of Jarnević, which stems from her awareness of the freedom of choice and the power to enforce it, encompasses a whole range of democratic values – freedom of expression, freedom of declaring one's patriotism, freedom of work-related self-actualisation and financial independence, social activism, faith in the power of an individual in the overall progress.

This paper tends to examine the ways in which democratism is manifested in Dragojla Jarnević's *Diary* within the context of her time, with a reflection on repercussions in terms of achievements and issues of contemporary democracies.

## 2. Democracy – now and then

By elaborating on the history and critique of democracy, Dahl offered a clear insight into modern-day democracies, however in the first part of his book he warned about the important deceptions of modern-day democracies with respect to their Greek origins and a “substantial number of problems without apparent solutions” (Dahl, 1999, 12). The reply to the question of whether democracy is yet another historical deception or a field of immense opportunities is in no way unequivocal: the real issue is whether it is even entirely possible.

It is well-known that modern manifestations of democracy best intensify the other side of democracy, which is the true root of the continuous doubt in democracy. Dahrendorf's optimism on democracy as a system with the best array of possibilities, the “active freedom” which enables

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<sup>1</sup> It suffices to consult any historical chronicle of Croatian literature, from Ježić, to Franješ, Jelčić and Novak. All of them listed the *Diary* as the author's most interesting work. It is worth noting that the *Diary* was published as an integral work no sooner than in 2000.

the achievement of lifelong opportunities (Dahrendorf, 2001, 8), is dispersed in the Rancière's analysis of *doubts* and *fears* of democracy in the introduction of his book. He particularly emphasised the consequences of the freedom of choice which are manifested as the fear of the unknown and a potential assault on identity values (Rancière, 2008, 7). Even though such introductory line does not reflect his personal viewpoint, but rather functions as an ironic view on the negative perception of democracy, it clearly indicates the formation of a new democratic reality. Rancière's *hatters of democracy* perceive freedom of choice, which Dahrendorf views as the field of opportunities, as an ominous vision of future whose realisation of desires generates aloof and socially inactive democracy-opposing individuals. Regardless of their viewpoint and their optimism with respect to the purpose and significance of democracy, both theoreticians undoubtedly indicate the existence of *the trembling ground beneath our feet*. Chomsky is more pessimistic, but he, as well as Rancière, also pointed to democracy as an opportunity for activism, in nurturing common values he recognizes the opportunity to change democratic anomalies (Chomsky, 2018, 31, 34, 35, 61).

Whereas the solutions offered by the democracy as a social system do not always benefit the people, who often become susceptible to the influences of power centres, democratism implies the ideal of democracy and the values which suit everyone. These values imply the general benefit achievable on the principles of equality and freedom. This approach to the notion of democratism generally corresponds with the first chapter of Rawls's book *Political Liberalism* (Rawls, 2000, 1–41). Speaking of political justice in the democratic society, Rawls emphasises several points resembling a democratic ideal: "societal cooperation between the citizens perceived as free and equal and integrally cooperative members of the society throughout their lifetime, from one generation to the next one" (Rawls, 2000, 1). He, furthermore, claims that despite the inevitable differences in religious and moral doctrines, such societal organisation of free and equal citizens is indeed possible. He explained it with the development of general principles of constitutional government (see Rawls, 2000, 8), which provide the possibility of forming the values acceptable to all citizens. Rawls referred to them as *political values* (Rawls, 2000, 9) stemming from the tradition of democratic thinking, the system of values

on which the majority agrees, regardless of different religious or moral doctrines. Ramet mentioned the principles of a *general mind* (Ramet, 2001, 17) which, in her view, is a better equivalent to the term *natural law* implying the fact that “the mind is capable of grasping the most important moral issues without anyone’s help.” Despite the possibility of raising new issues from such an idea of democratism, we decided to accept this definition of democratism as a(n) (ideal) starting point. Democracy would, then, be perceived as the enforcement of democratism or democratism in action, therefore, we can envisage democratism as *actual* democracy aimed at correcting the mistakes of *formal* democracy. Views on democracy, including the views on its origins, are united in certain segments by the doubt in its absolute benefit, democratism may be observed as the right to question democracy, its values and drawbacks which violate its validity, and this is precisely where Jarnević made some bold assumptions.

The mature civil awareness, which is a prerequisite for this way of conceptualizing democracy, did not only exist at the time when Dragojla Jarnević lived, but it just slowly started to be formed in the true sense of the word. Thus, Dragoje Jarnević’s time can be considered as the time of the formation of civil democratic consciousness, and democratism expressed in her *Diary* should be considered in a somewhat different cultural context, which also enables the clarification of apparent illogicality. The comprehensive monograph of Gross and Szabo provides an extensive insight into the time of general European modernisation from 1850s to 1870s which enabled the establishment of civil society, and the occurrences in peripheral areas of the Habsburg Monarchy. Even though all of these changes had a certain flair of dynamics, they nevertheless evolved slowly and unsystematically. In the final part of the book, the authors defined these changes as “an utterly unfavourable string of conditioned occurrences for the rhythm of social transformations in all spheres of life” but also adamantly stated that “despite the hardship of the seventies, reforms and the strengthening of modern civil norms created the preconditions for accelerated development of civil society” (Gross, Szabo, 1992, 536, 573).

Later studies indicated the ambivalent breakthrough of liberal ideas in Croatia (Fleck, 2000, V) and, even though it is nominally possible to accept the conclusions stated by Gross and Szabo, later views show that the breakthrough of liberal ideas, as a foundation of contemporary democracy,

should be perceived in a more complex paradigm (Feldman, 2000, IX). This more complex paradigm tends to observe the contribution of marginal and peripheral European countries, and the extent to which they were influenced by liberalism, deriving from the hypothesis “that liberal idea as the core part of the European spiritual history touched even the “marginal areas” of Europe” and that “this fact has not been sufficiently considered nor valued in the examination of liberalism of the past decades” (Fleck, 2000, III).

Considering the context of time of Dragojla Jarnević’s life and work, who actively participated in the cultural and political events and whose literary work is subject to analysis in this paper, carrying both a literary and a considerable cultural value as some sort of a “testimony of time,” there are several key developmental points/guidelines which are relevant for shaping the future democratic pattern of thinking and acting. Here, we will list several of these guidelines which are relevant for structuring the hypotheses stated in this paper: even though count Mažuranić did not manage to ensure the expected financial support intended for cultural purposes, JAZU (Yugoslavian Academy of Arts and Sciences) was still very active, which led to the increase of possibilities and cognitive development of educated people. This activity also had a positive impact on the level of university teaching, emergence of literary and cultural liaisons between Southern Slavic peoples, but also on the strengthening Croatian urge for national autonomy (Gross, Szabo, 1992, 527–562). It should be noted that nationalism and liberal ideas were not always mutually exclusive; after the First World War, nationalism was perceived as a retrograde ideology, and in the 19<sup>th</sup> century it implied the progressive ideology “which supports progress and liberates oppressed peoples; its radical humanism is revived in the battle against autocracy” (Feldman, 2000, XI). The right to national sovereignty implied liberal ideas which were broadly understood as a form of personal freedom (of expression, creation, trade), and religious tolerance at the institutional level (which did not always imply equality towards minorities), secular constitution, responsible government, rule of law (Feldman, 2000, XI, XIII). However, “the 19<sup>th</sup> century liberals were mostly unprepared when it came to anticipating and accepting radical democratic ideas, such as a request for general and equal voting right and equality. The liberals are, therefore, not democrats” (Feldman,

2000, XIII). This basically referred to the importance of the process which merely represented a path towards actual democratism and the occasional laying foundations which are reflected, according to Zenko, in the influence of duke Janko Drašković (Zenko, 2000, XLII), a person who had a significant impact on the cultural engagement of women, as evident from Dragojla Jarnević's *Diary*.

August Šenoa, the key person of that time whose critical writing largely contributed the civil society development, emerged from the literary circles. Šenoa's critique of the civil society which could have accepted new ideas only if they had not been intellectually deprived and imitated stereotypical primitive patterns of the "Western" lifestyle (Gross, Szabo, 1992, 545), is perhaps the best illustrator of obstacles which prevented the implementation of modern ideas. In such circumstances, democratism may be observed merely as the strengthening (nominal and developing) awareness of equality of all people but also as the seed of democratic values which presented the basis of ideological cornerstone of civil society, the backbone of democratic values and the precursor of highly-developed contemporary democracy. Equality raises the important issue of general education which was in particular focus of Dragojla Jarnević.

The breakthrough of liberal ideas entailed novelty, therefore it comes as no surprise that the democratism of Dragojla Jarnević shows a lack of systematism and occasional contradiction, while some other novelties, such as the issue of women's position, are so distant from the civil mindset of the time that only certain individuals managed to grasp and implement it in a wider context. One of the main issues of modernisation refers to the attempt to include women into the social and political events as males' equals. This evolved in two directions – on the one hand, we are faced with "the effort to raise rural women, [...] with moral instructions for virgins so they can become worthy wives and acquire the minimum of education as skilful housewives on rural farms, or the sermons of priests directed at making rural women the guardians of catholic morals", whereas "the main problem of the urban elite was to spark patriotic feelings in women so that they can raise their children in the same spirit and provide moral support to their husbands, without referring to their political activism in any way" (Grosz, Szabo, 1992, 553).

Jarnević linked the notion of “transition”, volatility and re-examining the conflict between the existing and the new patterns in these turmoil times with the contemporary and highly-developed democracies. The transition into something new, such as the issue of forming a middle class at that time, just as the present-day perception of danger and imminence of globalism, raises a series of open questions whose prospective solutions instil fear. It seems as though similar questions were raised in a different form and were shaped by the discourse of the newly emerged times and left unanswered. The notion of contemporary democratic achievements always stems from the democratic past, therefore the theoreticians analyse the issue of contemporary democracies either from the perspective of democratic beginnings (Greek origins) or from the perspective of French Revolution, which is the precursor of contemporary civil society. Dragojla Jarnević belonged to the enlightened civil society; with her own literary and pedagogical work she partook in the dominant occurrences of the time, as evident from her diary notes. In fact, if we go back to aforementioned basic guidelines of the Croatian society of the time, it becomes clear that her main concerns rested on the postulates of civil society in terms of the person’s right and ability for self-determination, “freedom is imminently reflected in the person’s disposal of themselves and their personal property” (Gross, Szabo, 1992, 553). All areas which help us identify the extent of Jarnević’s democratism concern such personal liberty and indicate, in the example of a single literary subject, the process of conceptual development which touches also on problems of contemporary democracies.

### 3. Democratism of Dragojla Jarnević

We could, perhaps, say that Jarnević is an acclaimed authoress of the Croatian National Revival, even though Lukšić insisted that the evaluation of her literary endeavour has not encompassed all segments of her endeavour and that it often refers more to her personality than to her work (Lukšić, 2013). Her *Diary* had to fight for the democratism of its position within the acclaimed literature (v. Zečević, 1985); considering its predominantly documentary character, the diary’s literary authenticity was contested. We will analyse Dragojla Jarnević’s *Diary* through the phenomenon of

democratism of author's thoughts and actions. The authoress' democratism is best observed in the emancipation she practised in her personal life. Despite numerous marriage proposals, Jarnević never married; she remained faithful to her own criteria and not to societal expectations. She renounced marriage even at a more mature age (when the difficulties in her personal life pressured her into seriously considering marriage); she was consistent in refusing to succumb to civil norms. The foundations of liberalism are rooted in the concept of personal liberty. Although, it is evident from Dragojla Jarnević's records regarding the reactions of the environment to her life choices that liberal ideas are not self-explanatory, on the contrary, they are in the process of social acquirement. The unquestionable perseverance in atypical decisions of a woman of that time conflicted with her public share in the sparks of female emancipation, especially within the scope of activities of scholars of the time, including teachers as herself. In that sense, Jarnević remained faithful to the traditional heritage she acquired as a child and firmly upheld for the rest of her life. This heritage mandated privacy to women; they could socially engage only to the extent permitted by their familial and maternal duties. It also mandated social engagement if the woman was single. The issues that Jarnević advocated as a feminist are labelled as important *female* issues today, more as a reflection of politically correct speech than true tendencies of societal reality. One of these issues is the stereotype of female corporeality functioning as the mechanism of female inferiority or rather a tool in the fight for a dignified societal position. Jarnević explained her sense of superiority with respect to other women through the power to contain her own physical urges, and her personal views advocated spiritual strength as opposed to *debauchery* considered by the majority of women as their lifelong purpose:

Ja se neprecenijavam, ali znam, da sam bolja od tisuće njih ostalih, jer upotrebljavam darove naravne za uzavršiti duh, za uzdržati tielo bez moralnoga grieha. Ja neidem za tim tjelesne i duševne prednosti upotriebiti u prilog tjelu – razkalašenosti se prepustjati, misleć, da je to jedina svrha žene<sup>2</sup> (Jarnević, 2000, 114).

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<sup>2</sup>I do not overestimate myself, but I know that I am better than many of them, because I use the natural gifts to uplift my spirit and upkeep my body without any moral sins. I do not use my physical or moral advantages to benefit my bodily urges – nor do I succumb to debauchery by justifying it as the sole purpose of a woman's existence.

Jarnević emphasised the lack of literacy among women, which is why she could realise her intellectual capacities only through men. She also criticised the unsubstantiated male superiority. Regardless of the paradox of feminist views, she criticised women and warned them about the need for their integral development, their integrity beyond their exterior appearance. If we return to the crucial motif of female emancipation, we will see a prominent contrast between her emancipated personal life and declarative outrage at the attempts of female emancipation enforced by her female contemporaries, usually teachers. Feminism in that sense is unknown to Jarnević; she loathes any attempt to equalise women with men through their participation in the parliamentary work, and she is particularly judgemental towards *falsely* progressive women who, in her opinion, use societal engagement for their own promotion. This is, according to the diarist, the majority of teachers at that time, and for that reason she – in the first attempts to form their professional unions – can hardly see these who are able to rise above their own pride. She was self-taught, which also testifies to the systematic nature of her conceptual world; she built her societal reputation exclusively through her own engagement only slightly supported by the intervention of good people who recognised her worth. The accomplishment made by women an entire century after her death – employment and financial independence – was considered a natural course of events by Jarnević. The issue of female employment is not exclusively the issue of intellectual realisation; Jarnević deemed financial independence as equally important privilege. Her life was an unsuccessful search for employment in line with her interests and competences; “the search for permanent employment as a leitmotif of this diary raises the question in the recent Croatian literature of the outsider societal position of a woman” (Zečević, 1985, 24). The *Diary* depicts a woman who pays for sexual services, where Zečević recognised a model of personal life based on the ideal of intimate freedom (Zečević, 1985, 60).

It would be unfair to characterise Jarnević’s personal issues, which were occasionally unrelatable with openness and democratism of the authoress’ character as a whole, exclusively as consequences of her Christian heritage from which she assumed some rigid limitations, especially in terms of sexuality. The contemporaries of Dragojla Jarnević were often flabbergasted by her moral dilemmas and chastity, but they also used them to fabricate false rumours, which often referred to Jarnević’s relationship with men and

her spinster status. Science also resorted to such labelling.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, the most democratic layer of her personality, namely yearning for justice and equality, can be extracted from the foundations of her Christian heritage which she upheld for the rest of her life. A detailed analysis of her contemporaries and dignitaries also testified to her democratism, although it may sometimes seem as a consequence of personal frustrations and dissatisfaction. However, her systematic nature dissuaded us from such conclusions – in addition to criticising, she also praised expertise and moral of people she observed. She acknowledged Adolf Veber Tkalčević's expert credibility but she criticised his lack of gratitude towards his benefactors, *priestly greed*, referring to the clergy in general. Jarnević used a similar tone when she referred to Croatian scholars, the selective editorial policy of literary magazines, the issue of nepotism evident from the employment of teachers – she was very vocal about it in public. The observation of the love of her life, Ivan Trnski, is also complex – Jarnević neglected his lack of literary talent and certain weaknesses of character by emphasising his patriotism and philanthropy: “Ja poznajem sve mane i slabosti priatelja moga, a opet mi negine izprieda očuih niti krieposti njegove, koje ga kao čovikea rese”<sup>4</sup> (Jarnević, 2000, 374).

When she described the people who visited her, as her home was frequently the centre of the social life, Jarnević almost always referred to their education (which is obviously an important criterion in the selection of people worthy of her company), and their religious views. In such relations, her understanding sometimes narrowed its democratism. It is

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<sup>3</sup>The contemporary approach to Jarnević's work and life does not readily accept the wording of the “greatest Croatian spinster” (Milan Marjanović). This is justified, because the spinster status has never really had positive connotations. Even though women and their different lifestyles were often subject to scrutiny with respect to men in the same domain (Paternai Andrić, Žužul, 2018, 24), hence making a spinster more interesting than a bachelor, it is worth noting that the patriarchal tradition approached a single male in the similar way as a single woman by referring to him as overage bachelor which is equivalent to a spinster. This indicates that the position of a single male, although less analysed and questioned, “more neutral” (Paternai Andrić, Žužul, 2018, 24) but still not enviable, which is why we can hardly call it “complimentary” (Paternai Andrić, Žužul, 2018, 24), however, we generally agree with the author's claim that “the notion of a spinster cannot be separated from its underlying ideology” (Paternai Andrić, Žužul, 2018, 35).

<sup>4</sup>I am acquainted with all flaws and weaknesses of my friend but I still see all his virtues as a man.

discernible that Jarnević cannot be completely liberated from the prejudice against others who are different from her (“vlaške nabiguzice, njihova neviera i bezdušnost” [Wallachian infidel and callous free loaders], Jarnević, 2000, 352) but she also stood up for them if they showed basic humanity. Therefore, we are not surprised at her statements such as “once a Wallachian, always a Wallachian”, “once a Jew, always a Jew”, and on the other hand the admiration towards Ivan Trnski’s attempts to overcome the lagging behind of the Serbian people in Croatia (Jarnević, 2000, 21).

Such Jarnević’s approaches indicate complexity and require a wider perspective of her views which appear to be democratic, especially if we consider her criticism of dignitaries and her own fellow citizens, and particularly taking into account the fact she lived at the dawn of our democratic society. Numerous pages of her *Diary* confirm her unquestionable patriotism, from the infatuation with the Croatian landscapes, through the analysis of all European achievements of the time and a strong desire to implement them into Croatian reality, to her endeavours to improve Croatian society and defend Croatian identity. The uncompromising criticism of her fellow citizens is imminent to strong patriotism in Jarnević. Jarnević noted that women greeted Count Jelačić in “sērbskoj odieći” (Serbian clothing) and one of them gave a speech in a German tone (Jarnević, 2000, 345); she criticised greed, exploiting mentality of border guards (Jarnević, 2000, 347), and she stated that injustice, even when it contradicts her personal views, “razpali kērv sviuh mojih žilah” ([Makes my blood boil] Jarnević, 2000, 348). The area of the authoress’ democratism and her contradictory personality point to the non-uniformity of democratic ideas, the impossibility to observe democratism through unique and simple patterns.

#### 4. Conclusion

Viewing the content of Jarnević’s *Diary* as democratic or undemocratic is possible only after explaining the notion of democracy and democratism, during Dragojla Jarnević’s life, as well as today, which raises many issues. Speaking of democratism, the closest explanation to our perception of the term was found in Rawls and his concept of political values, which has a certain dose of idealism questioning the possibility of its realisation.

Jarnević's democratism is evident from her lifestyle which in certain segments contradicts with her publicly stated views such as, for instance, her view of feminist tendencies of the time or the attitude towards other ethnic groups. At the same time, her democratism reflects in her uncompromising expression of opinion, whether it refers to emphasised patriotism visible in her personal fight for the people's right to sovereignty or her consistent enforcement of personal life choices. The formal resistance to feminist tendencies was upstaged by her fight for the female right to education and employment, her entrepreneurial ventures (attempts to establish schools and work in such disorganised institutions), and critical spirit oriented towards the vanity of her contemporaries, nepotism, selfishness and egotism of the Croatian scholars at the time.

Looking backwards to the life and legacy of Dragojla Jarnević, it reflects the process of forming our democracy, based on liberal ideas of freedom of the individual and the nation. That concept of liberalism somewhat differ from today's interpretation and conceptualization of liberalism, since the individual and the nation were at a different historical moment. However, its fundamental principles contained the concept of general freedom. Considering the question of Jarnević's democracy within the scope of such concept, the contradictions that can refer to the conclusion about authoress' selective democratism seem acceptable, thus, we can state that Jarnević in her Diary sufficiently shows democratic patterns.

*Translation Ana Mršić Zdilar*

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