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Vesela Tutavac & Ilse Korotin (Hg.)

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Gerechtigkeit und
Menschenliebe dienen...“**

**Frauenbildung und Emanzipation in
der Habsburger Monarchie – der
südslawische Raum und
seine Wechselwirkung mit
Wien, Prag und Budapest**

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Herausgegeben von Ilse Korotin

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Vesela Tutavac
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The Depiction of Women's Education and
Emancipation at the Periphery of the Austro-
Hungarian Empire: *A Novel of a Young Girl* by
Draga Gavrilović (1889)

Abstract: This paper deals with the depiction of women's education and emancipation in *A Novel of a Young Girl* (1889) written by Draga Gavrilović, one of the first Serbian female and feminist writers. By explaining the cultural and socio-political context of the work of Draga Gavrilović, with some references to the auto/biographical aspects of her writing, the author shows how Gavrilović's work is representative of both women's literature and their socio-cultural status at the end of the 19th century in the (South-Eastern part of) Austro-Hungarian Empire. The problem is at the same time further elaborated in terms of the dichotomy between centre and periphery. The novel itself is read within the theoretical frame of the public sphere and feminist counter-public, and generic intersections between journalism and literature. Viewed from this perspective, the discussion on education, emancipation, gender, family, marriage and love emerges as the central narrative of the novel.

Centre and Periphery

The question of the historical and cultural legacy of the Habsburg Monarchy has drawn particular attention of researchers in the past fifteen years, especially in Austria. Following global theoretical changes in the field of humanities, this growing interest resulted in numerous research projects on social power relations, construction of collective identities, cultural memory, and imagology.¹ The aim

1 Stijn Vervaet: *Centar i periferija u Austro-Ugarskoj*, Zagreb/Sarajevo 2013, p. 12.

of this undertaking has been to call into question hegemonic ideas and stereotypes about the Habsburg Monarchy formed in the centre of the empire (for example, the Habsburg Monarchy as harmonious multicultural community), simultaneously including the perspective of the periphery or of non-hegemonic cultures, as well as to deconstruct the very notion of the centre-periphery dichotomy.² The periphery had also maintained its own myths, mostly contrary to those of the centre (one such example is „the prison of nations”), and which partly belong to „post-monarchistic ‘victim-narratives’ of respective nationalisms”.³

When it comes to the South-Slavic geopolitical space, recent studies have shown that Bosnia and Herzegovina (1878–1918) had a *semi-colonial status* within the borders of the Monarchy⁴, while the positions of Slovenian, Croatian and Serbian communities in the Monarchy were much different and much more complex.

Religious and educational privileges and autonomy that the Serbian population gained under the rule of the Habsburg Monarchy, as well as the standards of living, improved significantly in comparison with the ones they will have had within the Ottoman Empire, and this ultimately led to the emergence of a new class – Serbian bourgeois class, in the 18th and 19th centuries. In the still very useful study from 1911, entitled „Historical review of Serbian press 1791–1911“, Jovan Skerlić emphasizes: „At the end of 18th century, while the rest of the Serbian people lived in absolute spiritual darkness,

2 See: Müller-Funk, Wolfgang/Plener, Peter/Ruthner, Clemens (Hrsg.): *Kakanien revisited: das Eigene und das Fremde* (in) *der österreichisch-ungarischen Monarchie*. Tübingen 2002; and: Hárs, Endre/ Müller-Funk, Wolfgang/Reber, Ursula/Ruthner, Clemens (Hrsg.): *Zentren, Peripherien und kollektive Identitäten in Österreich-Ungarn*. Tübingen 2006.

3 „So manövriert zur Zeit jede Forschung, die sich auf diesem Gebiet bewegt, gleichsam zwischen Skylla und Charybdis: zwischen nostalgischen Habsburgmythen einer ‚glücklichen Welt von Gestern‘ und den postmonarchistischen ‚Opfernarrativen‘ der jeweiligen Nationalismen“. In: Müller-Funk, Wolfgang/Plener, Peter/Ruthner, Clemens (Hrsg.): *Vorwort*. In: *Kakanien revisited: das Eigene und das Fremde* (in) *der österreichisch-ungarischen Monarchie*. Tübingen 2002. (Ohne Seite.)

4 S. Vervaet reminds that the terms *colony* and *colonial* had been exploited in Yugoslav historiography for a long time, as well as in international historiography, but more as rhetorical figures. Vervaet considers that only postcolonial studies provided appropriate instrumentation for interdisciplinary research of the Austro-Hungarian period in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and, in that sense, the most successful description of the BH position within the Habsburg Monarchy is the one supplied by Robert Donia (2007), who characterizes Bosnia and Herzegovina as ‚the proximate colony‘ – a colony which is geographically close to the colonizer country. Stijn Vervaet: *Centar i periferija u Austro-Ugarskoj*. Zagreb/Sarajevo 2013, pp. 480–481.

Serbs in Hungary represented a progressive and cultivated element, which had in every way, continually, been developing itself.”⁵ Contemporary literary historian Dušan Ivanić argues that „the foundation of the new Serbian literature and Serbian press as a whole, is situated in the lands of the Habsburg Monarchy. This primacy continued even in times of the civil war and the revolutionary riots 1848–1849, and after the deadlock during Bach’s absolutism it was reconfirmed in the 1860s [...]“⁶

Therefore, largely due to gaining the aforementioned new privileges, the Serbian population was able to develop a network of bourgeois (liberal) institutions in the public sphere, as defined by Jürgen Habermas’ theory. Part of this sphere consisted of numerous daily newspapers, monthly journals and almanacs, where Serbian intellectuals discussed and shaped their political ideas and aspirations. This public sphere and its periodicals were also one of the main domains within which Serbian literature of the period was published and developed. Skerlić even notes that „in the cultural life of the Serbian people during almost the entire 19th century one particular thing is noteworthy: not only the political but also literary activities are concentrated around political press, and journalists direct not only the public opinion regards political and national issues, but determine the tone of literature as well, which is clearly put at the service of the people’s interests.”⁷

Although in the course of time some privileges were neglected or completely revoked, and the state censorship was used to seriously stifle the freedom of the press (as during the aforementioned Bach’s absolutism), fully-developed Serbian bourgeois public sphere endured to symbolise the heritage of the better times.

The dynamics of geographical shifting of Serbian cultural centres is also an important part of this topic. The main centres of Serbian press and, in that sense, of culture became chronologically Vienna, Budapest (mostly Pest), Novi Sad and finally Belgrade. Several pertinent facts should be mentioned and brought to mind to illustrate

5 Skerlić, Јован: Историјски преглед српске штампе 1791–1911. In: Сабрана дела, књ. 8. Београд 1966, р. 11.

6 Иванић, Душан: Књижевна периодика српског реализма. Београд 2008, р. 380.

7 Skerlić, Јован: Историјски преглед српске штампе 1791–1911. In: Сабрана дела, књ. 8. Београд 1966, р. 22.

this sequence of geographical displacement: the first Serbian newspapers emerged in Vienna at the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th centuries (1791; 1792; 1813). During the 19th century a wide range of periodicals emerged in Budapest and in Serb-dominated towns in Vojvodina (Novi Sad, Kikinda, Sombor, Vršac, Pančevo, Zemun, Sremska Mitrovica, Bečkerek); these periodicals covered all kinds of subjects (literature, science, politics, family life, children's world, etc., or a mixture of them) and political orientations.⁸

If Vojvodina and the town of Novi Sad in the second half of 19th century were still the *periphery* of the Dual Monarchy in terms of political and military power and economic development, they represented a cultural *centre* for Serbian population on the both sides of the Sava and Danube rivers.⁹ The editors of the collection of papers *Zentren, Peripherien und kollektive Identitäten in Österreich-Ungarn* (2006) remind their readers at the very beginning of the book that the same place/town/city/region can represent the centre and the periphery at the same time: „A location, or in effect a position within a system can simultaneously function as centre as well as periphery, depending on how one approaches it; likewise certain systemic statuses can be historically and symbolically transformed multiple times.”¹⁰

If the criterion for centre-periphery determination is applied to *education*, then Vojvodina confirms its dual status. Being the periphery,

- 8 Only in Novi Sad, from 1824 until 1918, as the bibliography of periodical press of this town documented, 152 periodical titles emerged. See: Бицици, Милана & Каћански, Ана: Библиографија новосадске штампе 1824–1918, Нови Сад 1977. In his study of Serbian newspapers and little magazines in the Habsburg Monarchy (not including journals and almanacs) Vasilije Krestić counted and analyzed 200 periodicals just of this kind in the period of 1791–1914. See: Крестић, Василије Ђ.: Историја српске штампе у Угарској 1791–1914. Београд 2003.
- 9 See also the study which examines the role of women in the public sphere in Vojvodina during this period: Stojaković, Gordana and Snežana Bogdanović: „Women's World (1886–1914): Serbian Women's Laboratory as an Entrance into the Public Sphere”. In: *Serbian Studies: Journal of the North American Society for the Serbian Studies*, Volume 25, No. 1, 2011, pp. 21–58.
- 10 „Ein Ort bzw. eine Position innerhalb eines Systems kann also sowohl Zentrum als auch Peripherie sein, wie man sich ihm/ihr nähert; ebenso kann sich der eingenommene systemische Stellenwert historisch und symbolisch mehrfach ändern.” In: Hárs, Endre/Müller-Funk, Wolfgang/Reber, Ursula/Ruthner, Clemens (Hrsg.): *Zentren, Peripherien und kollektive Identitäten in Österreich-Ungarn*. Tübingen 2006. S. 2. These researchers further insist, of course, on the fact that this dichotomy is a product of social constructivism: „Wichtig ist hier unseres Erachtens, dass sich die Dichotomie von ‚Zentrum‘ und ‚Peripherie‘ sinnvollerweise nur im Rahmen eines sozialen bzw. kulturellen Konstruktivismus – also nicht essenziellistisch – behaupten lässt, mit anderen Worten: der Gegensatz ist gemacht und existiert nicht äußerlich der sozialen Praxis.” Ibid.

in comparison with Vienna and Budapest, it obviously had its own periphery embodied in the young Serbian state. To further clarify this position it seems useful to refer to some conclusions of a researcher of Serbian educational history, Radmilo Dostanić, who argues that the education of Serbs in Austria during the 18th and the 19th centuries directly influenced the same activity in Serbia.¹¹ He describes the huge difference between the life conditions of Serbian people in Austria and those in Serbia on the example of primary schools: at the beginning of the 19th century the network of primary schools in Vojvodina was almost complete, while at the same time in Serbia, as Vuk Stefanović Karadžić wrote, the area of 100 villages had hardly one primary school. „That is why it was not unusual that a great number of teachers from Vojvodina also worked in Serbia“.¹² Perhaps the case of Đorđe Natošević, who carried out the crucial reform of Serbian primary schools in Austria (1857–1867), should also be mentioned as significant. As a result of his work, Natošević was invited by the officials of the Principality of Serbia to help schools in Serbia, and he spent a year in the Ministry of Education in Belgrade. Unfortunately, his advice was not accepted, and he was forced to return to Vojvodina.¹³

Although far from being the locus of political power in the Monarchy, Novi Sad became a kind of *political centre* for both the Serbian people in Austria-Hungary and Serbia when in 1866 the emancipatory organization and movement United Serbian Youth (Ujedinjena omladina srpska) was officially established. The organization, of course, developed its activity through periodicals and within periodicals (at least the journals *Danica*, *Javor*, *Slovenka*, *Matica*, *Vila*, *Mlada Srbadija* have to be mentioned).¹⁴ The main characteristic of its ideology was the hybridization of the ideas of national liberation and of socialist ideas. Thanks to the socialist ideology of Chernyshevsky, the ideas of gender equality and women's emancipation also found their way into the consciousness of young Serbian intellectuals. Draga Gavrilović was one of them.

11 Достанић, Радмило: „Педагошко наслеђе Срба у Војводини“. In: *Педагошка стварност*, бр. 1–2. Нови Сад 1997, pp. 116–117.

12 *Ibid.*, 117.

13 *Ibid.*, 124.

14 Јован Скерлић: *Омладина и њена књижевност (1848–1971): изучавања о националном и књижевном романтизму код Срба*. Београд 1966, pp. 263–273.

Draga Gavrilović: Teacher, Writer and Journalist

Although stepping out on the public scene at the end of the Organization's era, and besides having predecessors in women like Draga Dejanović¹⁵, Gavrilović is nonetheless a true child of this movement. Gavrilović was able to become familiarized with United Serbian Youth ideas at the Teacher's School in Sombor, in which she enrolled in 1875. However, historically speaking, it was not an insignificant fact that she could enter the higher school at all. Until 1871 only male students had access to higher education. Things changed in 1871 with the Education Act on Higher Serbian Schools for Young Girls. Draga Gavrilović finally got the opportunity to enrol at the Teacher's School and seized it although she was considered old: she was 21 at the time.¹⁶ The School was one of the centres of the movement, and from 1866 to 1872 there was a students' association called *Venac*. It is important to note that together with the 'awakening' of the Serbian national 'consciousness', the association also cultivated ideas of Yugoslavism. Its members used to read, among others, the *Pančevac paper* which, for example, in 1871 was the first to translate the *Communist Manifesto* into Serbian.¹⁷ Even more significantly in the same year (1871), two other works were also translated into Serbian language: Chernyshevsky's novel *What is to be done?* (1863) and John Stuart Mill's essay *The Subjection of Women* (1869). Both of them – as Aleksandra Ugrenović showed¹⁸ – directly influenced *A Novel of a Young Girl*.

The foundations of teachers' education in the Habsburg Monarchy were the progressive ideas of the Swiss educational reformer Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, who postulated individual approach

15 Draga Dejanović (1840–1871) is considered to be the first Serbian feminist. She was born and spent her life in Vojvodina. She was an actress (member of the Serbian National Theatre in Novi Sad), poet and activist.

16 It was usual for these schools that the scale of age difference in the same grade was up to 15 years. Vasiljević, Stevan: „Učitelji i srpske narodne škole u Ugarskoj sredinom XIX veka“. In: *Seoske i salašarske škole u Vojvodini*, Novi Sad 1991, p. 6.

17 Миланков, Владимир: Драга Гавриловић: живот и дело. Кикинда 1989. С. 67–68.

18 Угреновић, Александра: „Девојачки роман Драгиње Драге Гавриловић у свету феминистичких назора Николаја Г. Чернишевског“. In: *Хуманизација универзитета: тематски зборник радова*. Крагујевац 2013, pp. 625–636.

and self-activity in the process of learning¹⁹. At the very beginning of her short story *From a Teachers' life* (1884) Draga Gavrilović invokes her educational idol by depicting the heroine, a student in a teacher's school, dreaming about Pestalozzi.

During her school days in Sombor Draga Gavrilović was able to read the pedagogical journal *New School* (*Nova škola*, 1875–1879), which was the promoter of modern pedagogical science. It was simultaneously the promoter of socialist ideas, which altogether makes this journal, according to the opinion of Gavrilović's biographer Vladimir Milankov, highly likely to be attractive to the author.²⁰

After finishing school and gaining some experience in the teaching profession, Draga Gavrilović became one of the first Serbian female fiction writers to emerge in the last two decades of the 19th century. Svetlana Tomić, the prominent researcher of Draga Gavrilović's work, emphasizes the fact that these writers „were the first generation of Serbian women who graduated from the first public high schools for Serbian girls in the Hungarian part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and all of whom focused on the perspectives of female literary characters.”²¹ Besides Gavrilović, the first Serbian female and, mostly, *feminist* fiction writers were Mileva Simić, Danica Bandić, Kosara Cvetković and Milka Grgurova²². It is obvious that there was a direct influence of the establishing of these high schools on the emergence of Serbian female writers, on their increasing number and even the topics of their work and attitudes towards the ‚women's question’.

In other words, these teachers/writers had their beliefs and a need to fight for them. They considered literature to be the field where the struggle for beliefs should take place, as the movement of the United Serbian Youth had taught their members. The only

19 Стојаковић, Гордана П. „Драга Гавриловић: прилог за историју стварања нових родних улога у српском друштву 19. века”. In: Валоризација разлика: зборник радова са научног скупа о Драги Гавриловић (1854–1917). Београд 2013, p. 61.

20 Миланков, Владимир: Драга Гавриловић: живот и дело. Кикинда 1989, p. 68.

21 Tomić, Svetlana: „Draga Gavrilović (1854–1917), the First Serbian Female Novelist: Old and New Interpretations”. In: *Serbian Studies: Journal of the North American Society for Serbian Studies* 22(2), (2008), pp. 169–170.

22 Among them, only Milka Grgurova did not attend any teachers' schools. She was a famous actress of the Serbian National Theatre in Novi Sad and of the National Theatre in Belgrade.

question was where precisely or in which periodical they should publish these 'female oriented' literary works.

A characteristic of the period was that the fiction containing feminist ideas was sometimes more welcome in liberal, 'feminophile' journals than in the women's press, which was programmatically oriented towards the female reading public. Namely, the *feminist counter-public* in Serbian and Yugoslav contexts was fully developed as a 'parallel discursive arena' as Nancy Fraser defines it, only when a new state, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes was formed. This 'subaltern counter-public' created a public space of its own, and that was the only way for those 'subalterns' to discuss and shape their interests and identities as true social subjects.²³ The first feminist journals after World War I were a part of this feminist counter-public. However, before being shaped in its 'mature' form (after World War I), the feminist counter-public in the Serbian society had been developing slowly and gradually since the 1860s. The first feminist writers or feminist activists did not seek a space of their own, but acted within the already developed bourgeois public sphere.

Until 1914, Serbian women's societies and associations preserved the humanitarian, educational and charity character, as did the corresponding periodicals. Their aim was to advance women in their traditional roles of mother, housekeeper and wife, advocating mostly educational rights but not political and personal rights and freedoms. Some of the aforementioned writers contributed to this kind of women's press: Milka Grgurova published her works in *Domaćica* and together with Danica Bandić in the almanac (calendar) *Srpkinja* (*Serbian Woman*), Mileva Simić, Kosara Cvetković and Danica Bandić published in *Women's World*, established in 1886. Draga Gavrilović did not become contributor to any women's magazines of the time. She did not even become contributor to *Women's World*, which lent its pages to openly engaged topics. It was 'natural' for her to continue cooperating with liberal, 'all-male' but 'feminophile'

23 See: Fraser, Nancy: „Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy”. In: *Social Text*, no. 25/26 (1990): 56–80. See also: Бараћ, Станислава: „Рађање феминистичке контрајавности у Девојачком роману Драге Гавриловић”. In: *Књиженство*, годиште II, бр. 2. <http://www.knjizenstvo.rs/magazine.php>

periodicals she had already been writing for (*Sadašnjost*, *Orao* and *Javor*). The true fact was that these journals, starting with the above mentioned Youth's early journal *Danica*²⁴, were indeed programmatically already oriented towards the female reading public, but this could not be deduced from their title or their official program articles.

A Novel of a Young Girl

A Novel of a Young Girl is Draga Gavrilović's most representative artistic work. It sums up and sublimates the main concerns and ideas of all her other works, integrated here into a complete and coherent system. It is a serial novel which was, at the time of its publishing and long after that, accessible only in this periodical and serialized form. It was published chapter by chapter in the journal *Javor* during 1889. The conception of *Javor*, *the journal for entertainment, enlightenment and literature*, partly shaped the very meaning of *A Novel of a Young Girl*. Since the periodical is a mass medium, it makes the novel an immediate and active part of the (bourgeois) public sphere. Given that the work takes a form which most of the 19th century novels took before being published as separate editions, this fact meant that (most of these) novels could be read as artistic works as well as a journalistic texts. Today, the feminist approach describes *A Novel of a Young Girl* as *Bildungsroman*, or more precisely as its subgenre: *female Bildungsroman*.²⁵

With this novel, Draga Gavrilović introduces women's emancipation as the main subject directly into the public sphere. More specifically, together with her short stories and *feminist essays*²⁶ pub-

24 Јован Скерлић: Омладина и њена књижевност (1848–1971): изучавања о националном и књижевном романтизму код Срба. Београд 1966, р. 264.

25 Милинковић, Јелена: „Девојачки роман као *Bildungsroman*“. In: *Књижевна историја*, год. XLV, No. 149 (2013), pp. 75–94.

26 Magdalena Koch, researcher of women's literary traditions in Serbian, recognizes and identifies the genre of *women's or feminist essay* as one of the specific genres of this tradition. Some articles by Draga Gavrilović Koch defines as important 'link' in this tradition, which starts with some texts of Eustahija Arsić and Milica Stojadinović Srpkinja, though its consistent form fully develops in articles by Draga Dejanović and Draga Gavrilović. See: Koch, Magdalena: „Projekat: Emancipacija. Draga Gavrilović i srpski feministički esej“. In: Валоризација разлика: зборник радова са научног скупа

lished in *Javor* and other periodicals (*Sadašnjost*, *Orao*) Gavrilović's emancipatory discourse in *A Novel of a Young Girl* is beginning to shape the previously mentioned opposing public sphere, *feminist public sphere* or *feminist counter-public*.

A Novel of a Young Girl is structurally defined by complex composition and varied use of narrative techniques. Provisionally, it can be divided into two narrative streams: the framing story is written in third person singular: it is a bitter-sweet tale about a teacher, Darinka, and her two sisters. This story-line utilizes romantic, sentimental and enlightenment motifs as well as those of an entertaining nature. The entertaining aspect of the plot is developed through the sequence of marriage proposal episodes. One by one, through witty dialogue with the heroine and through comic turnovers all Darinka's suitors reveal their hidden intentions – materialistic motives for marriage – which results in the heroine's refusals. Within the novel's structure the reader clearly recognizes a second narrative stream in epistolary form (Darinka's letters to her sisters written from the Teacher's School), expressed in a different tone – without the entertaining elements. In her confession, the heroine depicts the situation in the Teacher's School during the second half of 19th century, somewhere in the Hungarian part of the Empire. The realistic and documentary style of this part sharply differentiates itself from the framing sentimental narrative.

One of the most important and striking qualities of Gavrilović's novel is its multi-coded poetics. It gave the readers of *Javor* an opportunity to choose: whether to enjoy the romantic story with its happy-ending or give priority to didactical elements, to read the novel as a document based on autobiographical moments or to respond to the author's advocacy of women's emancipation. The ideal case would be, of course, for the reader to recognize all these aspects of the novel and respond to the complexity of them.

However, the critical debate on the subject of women's emancipation is predominant in the textual body of *A Novel of a Young Girl*, and it occupies both story-lines. In fact, the whole narrative is

о Драги Гавриловић (1854–1917). Београд 2014. С. 43–55. From my point of view, this tradition reaches its peak in the Kingdom SHS/Yugoslavia, being one of the genres which shape the mature form of Serbian and Yugoslav feminist counter-public.

structured around the discussion on the issue of emancipation. Or, as Jelena Milinković noted, the dominant discourse of the novel is the speech which is awakened in the feminist and gender sense.²⁷ The questions of women's education and the position of Serbian female teachers are closely related to the author's ideas about women's emancipation and especially to the idea of marriage as the core issue of that emancipation.

Where do, in the world of the novel and, more widely, in the ideology of Draga Gavrilović, questions of women's education and emancipation meet?

The marriage is the main imperative imposed on women in patriarchal (bourgeois) societies. On the basis of this fact, Draga Gavrilović develops argumentation and dialectics to explore woman-centred gender relations, which could be summed up in the following way: In order to be respected, a woman has to be married. If a woman ages and remains unmarried, she will be abandoned by society and become a subject of mockery and jokes.²⁸ The only way to be respected if not married, especially as an elderly woman, is to have her own profession, which also means education. But, why should a woman not marry? How could it happen at all?

As a result of being emancipated a woman would refuse to get into an arranged marriage. She would only accept marriage based on love. Therefore, the motto of Gavrilović's heroine is: „(I would) Rather die than give the first kiss (and marry) without love“. The ‚thinking woman‘, a new kind of character in Serbian fiction designed by Draga Gavrilović²⁹, rejects arranged marriages and looks for the soul-mate and a man who will love and respect her. If this is not to happen, thinking women would rather stay old-maids

27 Милинковић, Јелена: „Девојачки роман као *Bildungsroman*“. In: *Књижевна историја*, год. XLV, No. 149, 2013, p. 81.

28 Among other things, she would be mocked by being pejoratively named *babadevojka*, which means old-maid, spinster, or literally translated ‚granny-girl‘; before she wrote her *novel*, Gavrilović had already published a short story with this title in 1887. See: Гавриловић, Драга (а): „Бабадевојка“. In: *Сабрана дела, прва књига*, Кикинда 1990, pp. 136–172.

29 Svetlana Tomić stressed the fact that Draga Gavrilović introduced a whole new literary type into Serbian fiction writing. This type is embodied in intelligent young girls, sisters, daughters, female friends, female students, female teachers, an actress, and women writers. Tomić, Svetlana: „Draga Gavrilović (1854–1917), the First Serbian Female Novelist: Old and New Interpretations“. In: *Serbian Studies: Journal of the North American Society for Serbian Studies* 22(2), (2008), pp. 176–177.

than become marked by ‚marriage-trafficking‘. But at the same time these characters refuse to bear the pejorative ‚old-maid‘ name. At this point Gavrilović’s dialectics closes the circle with a conclusion that a *thinking girl* has to become a woman with a profession. It is the only way for girls in the modern but still patriarchal society to ensure both the respect of others and their independence, or in plain words, to be emancipated.

The nature of the debate on women’s emancipation, seen as the central narrative of the novel in the context of Habermas’ public sphere theory, needs additional explanation. The very scenes of discussions and ‚reasoning‘ in most cases are built as comedic and entertaining, as mentioned above. Those scenes serve not only as entertainment for the reading public, but through them the novel shows that those intellectual ‚fights‘ are also entertainment for the heroine herself. We have to bear in mind Immanuel Kant’s statement from *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* that ‚reasoning‘ in bourgeois mixed societies represented a kind of entertainment. This statement has also found its echo in Habermas’ notion of public sphere. While explaining that the term ‚world‘ in Kant’s writing means (reading) public, Habermas quotes this Kant’s sentence:

(The) „world“ here pointed to humanity as species, but in that guise in which its unity presented itself in appearance: the world of a critically debating reading public that at the time was just evolving within the broader bourgeois strata. It was the world of the men of letters but also that of the salons in which „mixed companies“ engaged in critical discussions; here, in the bourgeois homes, the public sphere was established. „If we attend to the course of conversation in mixed companies consisting not merely of scholars and subtle reasoners but also of business people or women, we notice that besides storytelling and jesting they have another entertainment, namely, arguing.“³⁰

30 Habermas, Jürgen, *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. Translated by Thomas Burger with the assistance of Frederick Lawrence. Cambridge, Massachusetts 1991, p. 106. In the original: „Diese ‚Welt‘ verweist vielmehr auf die Menschheit als Gattung, aber so, wie sich deren Einheit in der Erscheinung darstellt: die Welt jenes rasonierenden Lesepublikums, das sich damals in den breiten bürgerlichen Schichten eben entwickelt. Es ist die Welt der Literaten, aber auch die Salons, in denen sich ‚die gemischten Gesellschaften‘ diskutierend austauschen; hier in den Bürgerhäusern etabliert sich das Publikum. ‚Wenn man auf den Gang der Gespräche in gemischten Gesellschaften, die nicht bloß aus Gelehrten und Vernünftlern, sondern auch aus Leuten von Geschäften oder Frauenzimmern bestehen, acht hat, so bemerkt man, daß außer dem Erzählen und Scherzen noch eine Unterhaltung, nämlich

This aspect of Kantian-Habermasian public sphere concept seems as if literally transferred into the scenes, images, motifs and the way of their narrative shaping in *A Novel of a Young Girl*. Draga Gavrilović describes *mixed societies* in private houses, entertaining themselves through discussions. However, in the world of this novel, it seems that the heroine is the only one who is having fun and enjoying her own powerful *common sense*, at least much more than other characters do. Male characters are, namely, represented as intellectually inferior to Darinka.

Such instances can be briefly illustrated with a few marriage proposal scenes where the narrator explicitly mentions the entertaining aspect of reasoning. In one of them Darinka, her parents, sisters, her suitor and his mother are sitting at the dinner table, when guests ask Darinka to play something on the piano. The young suitor, who sees Darinka for the first time in his life, comes to the piano:

„I love you”, he whispered, stooping down to turn over the music sheet.
„May one even doubt that in this situation? You came to ask for my hand...” said Darinka with a voice and a glance which were too ironic for seriousness, and too serious to be a jest.³¹

In another characteristic scene, the one with the young count, the question of social inequality, or social engagement is incorporated into the discussion about gender inequality:

„My angel, lend my soul rest, hand me the flower!” exclaimed the Count in ardour, and then fell to his knees with his hands clasped together.

Darinka took a startled step backwards, and cried with exasperation: „Count, leave off with such jest; it is vile and unworthy of your name!” [...]

„What do I care of myself and of my pride?” said he in a choked voice. „Yes, that is true,” continued Darinka. „Who can see you here? Poor people. Why would you mind! If some lady of high breeding was here, a baroness or a countess or some such, you would not kneel before me. Then it would be below your Count’s pride to even glance at a common and poor girl like me.”

das Rasonieren darin Platz findet.” In: Habermas, Jürgen: *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit: Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft*. Frankfurt am Main 1990. S. 183.

31 Gavrilović, Draga (b): *Devojčaki roman*. In: *Sabrana dela, druga knjiga*, Kikinda 1990, p.131.

„You are heartless,” he stuttered, and shamefacedly got to his feet. „Perhaps, but you might be mistaken,” she laughed. „I do feel sorry you have soiled your beautiful trousers. They are all green. And I know they were expensive; two months’ worth of a teacher’s pay. Is not that correct? They are fine, all a-glisten. But you are to blame, none other; you should not have needlessly kneeled. Or if you already felt like imitating heroes from novels, you should have borne it in mind that this was not a stage but a meadow of plentiful grass, so you should have spread a scarf for your knees...”³²

Among all these ridiculed male characters there is only one exception, only one man who proves equal to Darinka – Nenad, an accidental acquaintance from her childhood. The discussion (*das Rasonieren*) on marriage and love could represent entertainment for all the interlocutors only when dialogue develops between intellectually equal individuals. This male character is of special importance for the novel’s motivation in general as well as for the implicit understanding of the public sphere. The character of Nenad represents the ideal of a man that the heroine builds in her childhood. The first ‘public’ discussion Darinka ever took part in happened in a forest near her home, where she as a young girl went for a walk, seeking solitude. There she meets a stranger – later to become a friend – Nenad. He is the one who formulates the advice „Rather die than give the first kiss without love”³³, which will become the heroine’s life *credo*. At the

32 Гавриловић, Драга (b): Девојачки роман. In: Сабрана дела, друга књига. Кикинда 1990, р. 160. In the original: „ – Анђелу, дај ми души мира, дај ми тај цвет! – кликну гроф у заносу, па се склопљеним рукама спусти на колена.

Даринка упрепашћено уступи један корак, па узрујано викне:

- Грофе, маните се комедије; то је гадно и вашег имена недостојно! [...]
- Шта је стало до мене и поноса мога? – рече он загушеним гласом.
- Да, тако је, настави Даринка – Ко вас овде може видети? Сироти људи. Е, па шта вас је брига! Да је овде каква висока дама, грофица, бароница или тако што не бисте клекли преда ме. Тада би било испод грофовског достојанства и погледати овакву простакињу и сироту девојку.
- Ви сте без срца, промуца он, па посрамљено устаде.
- Можда, но биће да се варате, смејала се она. Ето ми је жао и ваших лепих чакшира. Све сте их озеленели. А знам да су биле скупе; два месеца учитељске плате. Је л’ те, да је тако? Фине су, све се сијају. Ал’ ко вам је крив; нисте требали без нужде клечати. Или кад вам се већ прохтело да се угледате на јунаке у роману, требали сте имати на уму, да ово није позорница, већ пољана са бујном травом, па сте требали под колена прострти мараму...”

33 Гавриловић, Драга (b): Сабрана дела. Друга књига. Приповетке. Девојачки роман. Преводи. Кикинда 1990, р. 119.

same time this *credo* functions as plot agent. On the other hand, this unusual message addressed to a small girl seems to be a bad artistic solution from the aspect of realistic psychological motivation. However, its legitimacy lies on the other side: the unusual sentence and the inadequate dialogue achieve their full meaning only in the context of Habermasian conception of the public sphere. The dialogue of an adult man and a small girl, strangers to each other and so unequal within the system of society, is in fact the depiction of the (liberal) public sphere itself: they become temporarily equal when discussing matters using arguments, or: such well-argued discussion makes them temporarily equal. Draga Gavrilović needed strikingly socially unequal characters to persuasively depict this fact.

Once the heroine grew up, Nenad becomes her friend and, as mentioned, the only one who appreciates the entertaining aspect of the reasoning.

Although Draga Gavrilović did not and could not build her work on the basis of Habermasian theoretical concept, she probably could and did experience something of the described ‚Kantian situations‘ in bourgeois houses. From this point of view, it is significant that Gavrilović’s novel is not analysed here only within the frame of the public sphere theory because of its periodical context which makes this serial novel an active part of the (feminist) public sphere, but for another reason as well. In this work Draga Gavrilović depicts the bourgeois public sphere, and she depicts the moment of ‚birth‘ of the feminist counter-public.³⁴ In other words, this work fictionalises the feminist activism itself and exercises it at the same time. This unusual concept for fiction of the time will become a kind of genre rule for feminist fiction in general. Svetlana Tomić stressed the pioneering role of *A Novel of a Young Girl* in this sense. She noted the fact that „from the formal point of view, Draga Gavrilović’s *A Novel of a Young Girl* gifts Serbian culture with a new genre of feminist novel, and consequently with new types of literary characters and plots, as well as new kinds of confessions.“³⁵

34 Бараћ, Станислава: „Рађање феминистичке контрајавности у Двојачком роману Драге Гавриловић“. In: *Књижевство*, годиште II, бр. 2. <http://www.knjizenstvo.rs/magazine.php>

35 Tomić, Svetlana: *Realizam i stvarnost: nova tumačenja proze srpskog realizma iz rodne perspektive*. Beograd 2014, p. 26.

The described dialectics or philosophy of women's emancipation builds an ideological context for the author's thoughts on women's education and the position of female teachers. Earlier critics have stressed the fact that the main topic in Gavrilović's novel is women's emancipation.³⁶ What is strikingly noticeable is the fact that Gavrilović could not fit the 'educational' storyline and debate into the entertaining discourse.

First, we have to start with some similarities and differences between the life and narrative facts. Earlier researchers noted that „unlike many other young girls growing up at the time, Gavrilović had the opportunity to be educated“.³⁷ While her own father was engaged in matters of educational progress in their hometown of Srpska Crnja³⁸ and encouraged her to study, Gavrilović depicts the character of the father in the novel as a typical patriarchal father.

As Draga Gavrilović's biographer Vladimir Milankov discovered, Milan Gavrilović, the author's father, was a subscriber for many journals and books of his time. It is noteworthy to mention a document from 1858, which testifies that he subscribed for the book *Cveće srpskih pesama*, with a remark that the book was ordered for his daughter *Draginja*. Milankov emphasized that Draga Gavrilović was only 4 years old at this time.³⁹ The fictional father is angry with his wife because she has allowed their daughter to spend her leisure time reading and walking through the nearby forest, which results in her abandonment of these activities. The implication of the father's argument is that young girls should not read and should not think. The father is blaming the mother for the wrong upbringing of their daughter: her task was to prepare their daughter for marriage, to teach her to love nice clothes and pleasant company.⁴⁰

Since the wife subjects her own will to her husband's, Draga Gavrilović had to „kill off“ the characters of the parents in order

36 Besides Tomić, see: Mirkov, Nada: Draga Gavrilović, In: *ProFemina*, 1999, No. 17–20, p. 139.

37 Tomić, Svetlana: „Draga Gavrilović (1854–1917), the First Serbian Female Novelist: Old and New Interpretations“. In: *Serbian Studies: Journal of the North American Society for Serbian Studies* 22(2), (2008), p. 176.

38 Миланков, Владимир: Драга Гавриловић: живот и дело. Кикинда 1989, p. 64.

39 Миланков, Владимир: Драга Гавриловић: живот и дело. Кикинда 1989, p. 63.

40 Гавриловић, Драга (b): Сабрана дела. Друга књига. Приповетке. Девојачки роман. Преводи. Кикинда 1990, p. 112.

to „enrol” her heroine in high school. Indeed, after her parents' premature demise, Darinka is able to enter the school, which is additionally motivated in the plot of the novel with the „sudden” establishing of the school for girls in the Town of P. It is described as a state school for female teachers, which is not exclusively based on religion or nation. The Town of P. is represented as a big town, expensive for living, so that the reader could associate it with one of the centres of the Monarchy – Pest (Budapest).

As in most of the works of Draga Gavrilović, a teacher is the representation of women's professions in general. The novel suggests that it is not easy to become a teacher. Education could not be attained without struggle and painful experiences. The idealistic young girl confronts malicious colleagues, unfair teachers and unfair school marks. Teachers appraise these female students based on their physical appearance and assessment of their ideological orientation. Socialist, communist and feminist activism or even a small sign of leaning towards these ideas are reasons for discrimination against a young girl and feminism as well. Darinka's black dress and short hair are reasons to suspect her of being a supporter of the so-called liberal ideas. Draga Gavrilović does not put these issues in the same context by accident. Feminist and socialist ideas came from the same source, as mentioned above: the ideology of The United Serbian Youth. As it is argued in the novel, Hungarian or Austrian professors in such mixed schools used to tolerate even liberation ideas of subordinated nations, but did not tolerate the ideas of women's and class emancipation.⁴¹

Moreover, the teachers positively appraise learning by heart because they are glad to hear their own words repeated in their students' answers. Darinka, who is used to thinking independently since her childhood, is misunderstood when telling lessons in her own way and through independent interpretation. All these things result in average or even low marks at the end of the school year. This produces a new circle of passion for the heroine, as it did for any Serbian female teacher. The wrong school marks prevent the girl from finding a good post at the beginning of her career. When

41 Гавриловић, Драга (b): Сабрана дела. Друга књига. Приповетке. Девојачки роман. Преводи. Кикинда 1990, р. 170.

she finally manages to find a job, the young teacher confronts the backwardness of people in Serbian villages. She has to perform enlightenment work, to teach pupils and parents the basic knowledge on health and everyday life instead of the official educational programme. As time passes, in these peripheral places „where one cannot live nor work“⁴² enthusiastic young teachers lose their enthusiasm and sink into defeatism. On the other hand, bad teachers with good marks get jobs in towns where a teacher can work with children properly. Unfortunately, they do not use this opportunity to promote but to tarnish their own reputation.⁴³

The depiction of women's education and teachers' life has its recognizable auto/biographical sources. The Serbian People's Elementary Schools, as they were called, were not unified when Draga Gavrilović had been making first steps in her profession; in fact there were several types of them. At the final teachers' exam in the Teacher's School in Sombor a candidate used to obtain, on the basis of their final mark, diplomas adequate for corresponding types of people's school.⁴⁴ Thus, the school marks and the final exam decided on the quality of a teachers' life until the end of their career.

The heroine Darinka „graduates“ from the Teacher's School with average success (*dobar*), while Draga Gavrilović herself finished the same school with even lower mark (*dovoljan*). Preserved documents testify that this Serbian writer had never got the highest mark in any of the school courses.⁴⁵ It seems that some facts are just transferred from (documented) life to the (literary) text.

Poor salaries in villages and the attitude of village and parish officials towards teachers additionally amplified the teachers' defeatism. The job ads in *School Paper* (*Školski list*) from 1876, for example, are a clear testimony of unenviable position the teachers had in Vojvodina. As compensation for an inadequate amount of money teachers' wages would usually include firewood, hay, straw, grains,

42 Гавриловић, Драга (b): Сабрана дела. Друга књига. Приповетке. Девојачки роман. Преводи. Кикинда 1990.

43 Гавриловић, Драга (b): Сабрана дела. Друга књига. Приповетке. Девојачки роман. Преводи. Кикинда 1990, p. 176.

44 Vasiljević, Stevan: „Učitelji i srpske narodne škole u Ugarskoj sredinom XIX veka“. In: Seoske i salašarske škole u Vojvodini, Novi Sad 199, p. 6.

45 Миланков, Владимир: Драга Гавриловић: живот и дело. Кикинда 1989, p. 96.

sometimes meat, salt or corn and, in special cases – accommodation, in which case the amount of money was doubly reduced.⁴⁶ In one of the ads the school obliges the teacher even to clean and stoke the fire because the wages include a huge amount of firewood. It also seems that officials expected from teachers to do agricultural work. To illustrate things more precisely, in Srpska Crnja, where Draga Gavrilović was born and where she worked, the job ad from 1867 offered a future teacher the following goods: 149 forints of salary, 40 measures of grain, 20 measures of corn, 4 measures of firewood and straw, apartment, and 4 lines of arable land.⁴⁷

Continuing in the same manner of autobiographical writing, at the end of the novel, Draga Gavrilović depicts the heroine as a favourite teacher among her pupils. Later discovered documents from the School board meetings in Srpska Crnja in 1900 show that Draga Gavrilović finally received an official recognition of sorts for her teaching efforts: namely, there were three teachers in Srpska Crnja, and only Gavrilović's work was labelled with the comment of *very good*, while other two got the marks *good* and *sufficient*, respectively.⁴⁸

While the pessimistic depiction of a teachers's life is limited to the heroine's letters, the framing story continues in a manner usual for the sentimental genre: after many rejections and many years Darinka finally finds a proper job as well as the ideal husband, called Mr. Unknown. However, Tomić noted that this character „rather represents an ironic image of a double reality. Mr. Unknown is more desire than reality, more ‚deus ex machina‘ than a literary personality. Otherwise, Gavrilović would not have written an ending by praising Darinka's deceased aunt, but by lauding the married couple and the power of their bond in the future.”⁴⁹ Indeed, after the sentimental happy-ending of Darinka's story, the novel ends with one separated passage. This passage is something of a public appeal to the readers because it shows a good example of charity: a

46 Vasiljević, Stevan: „Učitelji i srpske narodne škole u Ugarskoj sredinom XIX veka“. In: *Seoske i salašarske škole u Vojvodini*, Novi Sad 1991, p. 7.

47 Ibid.

48 Миланков, Владимир: Драга Гавриловић: живот и дело. Кикинда 1989, p. 96.

49 Tomić, Svetlana: „Draga Gavrilović (1854–1917), the First Serbian Female Novelist: Old and New Interpretations“. In: *Serbian Studies: Journal of the North American Society for Serbian Studies* 22(2), (2008), p. 180.

side character in the novel, an unmarried aunt, leaves all her wealth to Serbian Schools in Vojvodina and to Serbian teachers.⁵⁰ In the last sentences of the novel, the narrator quotes who else among the Serbian people deserves help too, which sounds like an appeal to potential donators. On the one hand, this nonfictional ending of *A novel of a Young Girl* also has an auto/biographical and documentary importance: Serbian parish-school's municipalities were very poor at the time, and teachers used to wait on their salaries for months, falling gradually into deeper and deeper poverty themselves.

On the other hand, this unusual ending of the novel brings it closer to the journalistic genre. It reminds every reader, as well as researcher, of the multiple meanings of this text which is simultaneously an advocacy for the change of gender relations, and especially for the new attitude towards marriage, a tract on women's education and a document about the hard life of the first Serbian female teachers, but, nonetheless, it is an exciting and entertaining story to read. While being entertained, the wider public audience 'swallowed' the 'uninteresting' subject of women's emancipation, as well as the bitter story of the first Serbian female teachers. At the same time, such texts influenced the awakening of the new female reading public and its transformation from passive to active social agency. Thus, Draga Gavrilović affected the slow transformation of the Serbian bourgeois public sphere and laid the foundations of the confronting feminist counter public which would develop in the years to come. If one is to speak in centre-periphery terms, the conclusion could be reached that emancipatory processes which were central to Serbian public sphere took place on the periphery of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire. With the break-down of the Monarchy and constitution of new state configurations, these processes lost their peripheral meaning.

50 Truth is that „in reality” many significant Serbian educational institutions in Habsburg Monarchy have been established and functioned only thanks to donations of individuals, huge as well as small ones. Достанић, Радмило: „Педагошко наслеђе Срба у Војводини”. In: *Педагошка стварност*, бр. 1-2. Нови Сад 1997, p. 126.

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Die in diesem Sammelband präsentierten Beiträge sind Forschungsergebnisse, in deren Focus viele Formen des kreativen Schaffens stehen, die dem Bestreben intellektueller Frauen Ausdruck verleihen, durch Bildung Gleichberechtigung und Anerkennung zu erlangen. Im Bereich der Literatur, aber auch im vielfältigen politischen und sozialen Engagement spiegelt sich der immantent interdisziplinäre Charakter des Forschungsvorhabens wider, dessen angestrebtes Ziel war, die Lebenswege und Karrieren herausragender Frauen im südslawischen Raum zu untersuchen und deren Leistungen zu würdigen.

Das Entstehen des feministischen Bewusstseins erfolgte in einem von unterschiedlichen Kulturen und Sprachen gekennzeichneten Raum, was von den Autorinnen keinesfalls als hinderlich wahrgenommen wurde. Vielmehr unterstützten Frauenrechtlerinnen und Autorinnen einander, korrespondierten und verfassten Artikel zur Verteidigung ihrer Freundinnen und Kommilitoninnen. Journalismus spielte eine wichtige Rolle bei den Bestrebungen, die Frauenproblematik zum ernsthaften Gesprächsthema in der Öffentlichkeit zu machen und somit die aufkeimende Emanzipation im Südosten Europas schrittweise in eine organisierte Frauenbewegung zu transformieren. Zahlreiche Beiträge über die journalistische Tätigkeit engagierter Frauen weisen auf diese Entwicklung hin.

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