

# Girls' Diaries As Historical Sources: : Documents Between History and Fiction

---

**Zima, Dubravka**

*Source / Izvornik:* **Central European cultures, 2023, 2, 37 - 51**

**Journal article, Published version**

**Rad u časopisu, Objavljena verzija rada (izdavačev PDF)**

<https://doi.org/10.47075/CEC.2022-2.03>

*Permanent link / Trajna poveznica:* <https://urn.nsk.hr/urn:nbn:hr:111:236334>

*Rights / Prava:* [In copyright](#) / [Zaštićeno autorskim pravom.](#)

*Download date / Datum preuzimanja:* **2025-03-28**



*Repository / Repozitorij:*

[Repository of University of Zagreb, Centre for Croatian Studies](#)



## Girls' Diaries as Historical Sources

### Documents between History and Fiction

Dubravka Zima 

Faculty of Croatian Studies, University of Zagreb, HR-10000 Zagreb, Borongajska cesta 83d;  
[dzima@hrstud.hr](mailto:dzima@hrstud.hr)

Received 19 October 2022 | Accepted 17 November 2022 | Published online 8 March 2023

**Abstract.** The paper interprets two different versions of the girl's diary of the Croatian author Zora Ruklić, published in 1938 and 1983. In the repeated, supplemented version of the diary, the diarist articulates herself as a member of a radical youth group that in 1911 and 1912 not only participated in student demonstrations in Zagreb but also organized the (unsuccessful) assassination of commissar and ban Slavko Cuvaj in June 1912, the first political assassination in Croatia. As a fifteen-year-old girl, the author directly documented the political events in which she participated, and the two versions of her diary are interpreted in parallel with the help of theories about the genre of the diary of Irina Paperno, Rebecca Hogan, and Philippe Lejeune.

**Keywords:** female adolescence, girl's diary, document, documentary literature

The diary occupies a separate place in the grid of literary genres; permanently on the border between faction and fiction, personal and historical, (un)reliable and documentary, representing a complex theoretical challenge, especially about its potential documentary value. The documentary value of diaries, as emphasized by Irina Paperno,<sup>1</sup> in specific research (historiographical) procedures is always contaminated by the presumption of privacy inherent to the genre and the simultaneous potential reception.<sup>2</sup> The “authenticity” and “immediacy” of diary entries are only an illusion, Paperno argues, defining the reception situation she calls “as if”, which points to the reader's acceptance of the illusion of the diary's authenticity and the awareness—the author's and the readers'—of the indirectness of the very act of recording or translating reality in written words. The diary is not and cannot be exclusively a documentary text, that is, in the words of Paperno, “diaries are not

---

1 Paperno, “What Can Be Done with Diaries.”

2 Paperno, “What Can Be Done with Diaries,” 564.

to be treated as if they provide an unmediated access to either experience or fact”.<sup>3</sup> On the contrary, Paperno sees the functionality of diary discourse in the process of self-production, which refers to both the author’s and the reception’s level. She cites several examples of the analysis of different diary corpora, where the central function of diary recording is articulated precisely as the effort to produce the self, either in new social relations or in one’s own religious or spiritual processes. In this sense, as Paperno states, if we want to use diaries as sources for researching the history of everyday life, we should treat them “not so much as repositories of the »quotidian« or »intimate«, but as practices of daily life that create the private as a sphere of individual self-consciousness or intimacy”.<sup>4</sup> Diaries that are potentially attractive for research as documents are inevitably characterized, on the one hand, by caution regarding authenticity and credibility and, on the other, by the discourse of the production of everyday life—a discourse that is in principle non-fictional, but also fundamentally unverifiable.

Paperno’s theory is consistent with Suzanne Juhasz’s interpretation of the diary as the “classic verbal articulation of dailiness,”<sup>5</sup> as well as the theory of Rebecca Hogan<sup>6</sup> about diary discourse, which is marked by the dialectic of ornamental (with connotations of femininity and decadence) and everyday life (which is constituted in the sphere of domicile and within the traditionally female domain). In diary discourse, as Hogan shows, this dialectic is transposed into incompleteness, and incomprehensibility. As opposed to a completed, rounded autobiography that relies equally on documentary and narrative, diary entries are “fragmentary, constructed by associative rather than logical connections, concentrating on the everyday (for which to some extent read »trivial« and »ephemeral«), lacking a sense of the architectonics of shape or plot, non-teleological”.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, the potential documentary value of diary entries is distorted on several levels—in the first place by the impossibility of unmediated expression in the diary, and secondly by its non-linearity, incoherence, and non-narrative nature, and because of its principled, but not completely rejectable nature, non-fiction. Writing about the documentary in literature, Milka Car warns of the difference between the documentary in fictional literature and the documentary in non-fictional corpora. Literature, Car claims, contains indicators of fiction, i.e., “privileges that are not activated in non-fictional literature”,<sup>8</sup> but although in the diary fictionality is in principle suspended, the textual characteristics of the genre fix a

3 Paperno, “What Can Be Done with Diaries,” 565.

4 Paperno, “What Can Be Done with Diaries,” 565.

5 Juhasz, as cited in Hogan “Engendered autobiographies,” 95.

6 Hogan “Engendered autobiographies.”

7 Hogan “Engendered autobiographies,” 96.

8 Car, *Uvod u dokumentarnu književnost*, 25.

specific type of diary (pseudo)fictionality, for example, in the domain of constructing everyday life and in the dimension of self-articulation. As Paperno points out, diaries incorporate an implicit reader into the discourse—whether the diary is explicitly addressed to a possible or desirable reader or not—to actualize the inherent narrative situation of the diarist. To write a diary means to write, and that, as elaborated by Paperno, is impossible without accepting the basic mechanisms of writing—establishing a narrative instance and embedding an implicit reader in the text.

Diaries kept by women provoke a special kind of research interest; this literary corpus has been studied for decades as a separate sub-unit in the theory and research of diaries, whereby the theoretical starting point is articulated within the author's gender distinction, but also at the textual level. Rebecca Hogan interprets the textuality of the diary as an inherent favoring of details over the whole. Diary writing focused on part, detail, and incompleteness, according to Hogan, forms a specific discourse that she calls "feminine." The femininity of diaries is primarily historically established, and Hogan sees the connection between the historical attractiveness of diary discourse and the imagology and ideology of femininity in the 19th century, at the time of the sudden increase in the number of women's diaries.

"The establishment of »privacy« as one of the generic features of the diary form coincided with the increasing consignment of women and their work to the private domestic realm by industrial civilization. Over the nineteenth century, those aspects of culture associated with the private became the domain of women."<sup>9</sup>

But this is not the only argument for reading diaries as a "feminine genre": Hogan refers to the tradition of feminist philosophy (Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray, and Julia Kristeva) which develops the theory of feminine writing (*l'écriture féminine*) as potentially subversive about standard male language, at the level of structure, logic, and syntax. In this sense, the non-linearity, openness, and unstructured nature of diary writing are characteristics of *l'écriture féminine* regardless of the author's gender. Philippe Lejeune, in his interpretation of the discursive and rhetorical strategies of 19th-century French girl diarists,<sup>10</sup> supports the idea of diary discourse as *l'écriture féminine*: Lejeune sees a girl's diary as a space for self-articulation, with an essential emphasis on the strategy of implying, thus indirect expression, despite the author's rhetorical emphasis on honesty and openness. "Self-censorship," as Lejeune calls it, is the key structure of the diary "code," specific to each diary, within which contents related to the body and physical and mental changes in adolescence are self-censored. Silence and implication in this context are not characteristics of

9 Hogan "Engendered autobiographies," 99.

10 Lejeune, "The »Journal De Jeune Fille«."

the subversion of masculine language but can better be understood as compliance and an effort to circumvent the dominant language.

Valerie Raoul, studying French women's diaries at the turn of the century, points out the discourse of the girl's diary as a paradigmatic intimate diary: "The young girl adjusting to the role of woman and wife was in fact perceived as the stereotypical »*intimiste*«".<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, Jane H. Hunter, who carefully read diaries of American girls at the turn of the century, in a book with the significant title *How Young Ladies Became Girls* studies the processes by which Victorian British culture transgresses to America, i.e., American girlhood. Hunter reads girls' diaries by examining the articulation of the girl's self in the production of everyday life, but she goes a step further, trying to discern the relationship between the dailiness and the documentary within the theme of creating and articulating a separate culture of girlhood at the turn of the century. An extensive research corpus—some ten to fifteen girls' diaries that Hunter carefully studied—enables a conclusion about girl culture that was produced, on the one hand, by the articulation of the writer's self through diaries, and on the other hand, by the production of everyday life at a certain historical moment. The conclusion coincides with the research of Margo Culley, who, based on the study of the history of women's diary writing, considers that diary literature became the province of women writers in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries because of the "emergence of the self as the subject of the diary".<sup>12</sup> Girls at the turn of the century will constitute themselves as new girls' selves by writing—thus discursively—and creating a new girls' everyday life with their lives, from which girlhood will emerge as a new social fact. The production of girlhood is crucially connected with girls' diary keeping, especially considering Irina Paperno's warning that "identity between the speaker and actor" is "presumed" and not fixed,<sup>13</sup> i.e., that the essence of the genre is that it is "built around basic epistemological categories applied to the human experience: subjectivity, temporality, and private-public",<sup>14</sup> and that "diary is an instrument of self-transformation in the service of shared beliefs".<sup>15</sup> These shared beliefs, in the case of girls' diaries and the *fin de siècle* period, refer to performances of girlhood, i.e., efforts—fixed in diary discourses—to articulate one's own identity as a girl in the direction of new social demands and to adapt to a set of desirable culturally defined characteristics of girls.

Hunter studies these performances of girlhood in three large semantic fields: work, geographies, and endings, where geographies refer to the mental spaces of girlhood as much as to the actual spatial circumstances of girls' lives, and endings

11 Raoul, "Women and Diaries," 59.

12 Culley, "Introduction," 3.

13 Paperno, "What Can Be Done with Diaries," 571.

14 Paperno, "What Can Be Done with Diaries," 571.

15 Paperno, "What Can Be Done with Diaries," 567.

follow life thresholds that mark their achievements (completion of schooling, graduation, growing up, marriage, etc.). Reading their records, in these semantic fields, Hunter comes to several interesting conclusions about the ideas that will shape girls' culture after the turn of the century: first, Hunter sees diary writing, among other things, similarly to Lejeune and Paperno, as a method of the self-discipline, as well as the production of the self (Hunter uses Foucault's term *techniques of the self*).<sup>16</sup> However, unlike Lejeune, she also emphasizes the essential element of parental supervision, i.e., parental encouragement of diary writing as a form of self-discipline and religious questioning. To produce oneself as a girl in the diary, in contrast to the diary discourse of an adult woman diarist, is impossible without awareness of the connection between the adult (parent) and the non-adult (girl); girlhood, in the diary discourse and outside it, is created in interpersonal and intergenerational relations. In these relationships, however, negotiation takes place in the domain of "disciplining the self" and "techniques of the self," since adults will demand the former and defend or even deny the latter, while the girls taking notes will balance between their parents' and their own ideas about themselves. Which of these two opposing paradigms will we see as relevant in the context of the documentary: the view (and discourse) of an adult or the view (and discourse) of a girl? My topic refers to exactly this opposition of the two realms: an analysis of the relationship between documentary, fictional, non-fictional, and girls' discursive and lived paradigms using the example of the girl's diary of the Croatian writer Zora Ruklić.

Unfortunately, in Croatian literature, the girl's diary is extremely underrepresented both as a research template and in terms of production. In comparison with the hundred or so French girl's diaries written in the 19th century that Lejeune studied and with the several hundred that Jane H. Hunter had the opportunity to read, and also considering several isolated, but culturally referential examples of girl's diaries such as, for example, the 1919 diary of an unnamed girl from Vienna with a foreword by Sigmund Freud,<sup>17</sup> or the globally popular girl's diary of the Russian–French painter Marie Bashkirtseff, who grew up in Paris in the 1870s and died at the age of 25 in 1884, published three years after her early death according to her express wishes, the Croatian girl's diary is almost non-existent in any period: there is a total of less than ten published and unpublished girl's diaries from all periods.<sup>18</sup>

16 Hunter, "How Young Ladies Became Girls," 46.

17 It is the diary that a girl, named Rita in the text, keeps from the age of 11 to 14, but the circumstances of its publication, as well as the textual emphasis on girls' sexuality and a particularly emphatic foreword by Sigmund Freud, call into question the authenticity of the discourse; more about it in Swindells, "»What's the use of books?«."

18 The diaries of Dragojla Jarnević (1812–1875), Ivana Mažuranić (1874–1938), and Zora Ruklić (1897–1982) are published. In recent years, a few papers have been written on unpublished girl diaries, for example on the diary of Vladimira Jelovšek, kept from 1915 to 1919.

Nevertheless, considering the potency of the theme of historical girlhood in the contemporary study of culture, I choose this literary form to present consideration of the relationship between documentary and fiction, a decision that I will try to justify below.

Zora Ruklić's diary is an interesting and complex case study of a girl's diary in which the limitations and transformations of the discourse are clearly articulated. As already mentioned, the girl's diary discourse is burdened with the simultaneous task of creating privacy in the sphere of self-identification and everyday life, on the one hand, and adapting the primary diary model—associativity, fragmentariness, and incompleteness—in the verbal establishment of everyday life. In my example, this ambivalence is pronounced and extremely visible: namely, we are talking about a double discourse, that is, two versions of the diary, which are functionalized in quite diverse ways and have markedly different performative reaches. Consequently, they influence the politics of identity in the context of girlhood. Furthermore, in the parallel reading of the two versions that can be at least tentatively identified as the fictionalized and the non-fictionalized self, the distinction Valerie Raoul pointed out between women's writing and rewriting appears to be extremely resonant. Raoul quotes Linda Anderson on the nature of diary-writing:

“The woman who attempts to write herself is engaged by the nature of the activity itself in re-writing the stories that already exist about her since by seeking to publicize herself she is violating an important cultural construction of her femininity as passive or hidden.”<sup>19</sup>

This remark makes special sense in Ruklić's case, considering the obvious silencing and concealment of sensitive or subversive themes and motives in the older text and the rewriting of what was hushed up in the younger version. Moreover, a girl's femininity is even more passive or hidden since the girl is still learning to articulate her feminine qualities.

Little is known about the author: Zora Ruklić was born in 1897 in Zagreb, where she lived and worked as a teacher and principal in elementary schools, writing children's literature, among other things. She published her first children's book, a collection of short stories *A Castle on the Hill and Other Stories*, in 1934, and in 1938, *Naklada školskih knjiga i tiskovina Savske Banovine* published her adolescent novel entitled *Diary of a Girl*. Paratextual and mystifyingly designated as an authentic diary of an unknown author, named Darka in the diary discourse, the novel received minimal reception attention, and rightly so. In the literary-historical context, the novel is marginally apostrophized and, in a rare critical mention, it is compared to the simultaneously published adolescent novel *Seventh Graders* by Josip

---

19 As cited in Raoul, “Women and Diaries,” 60.



Horvat (1939), also structured in the form of a diary, but from a gender monolithic, male perspective and without documentary pretensions, i.e., as a fictional novel.

Zora Ruklić's novel, which is relatively unambitious and mostly weak on a rhetorical and thematic level, would not have been interesting within the theme of diaries and documentaries if it had not been updated fifty years later by a text from the same author under the title *Diary of a Girl* in a completely different paratextual framework—published by the Yugoslav Academy of Sciences and Arts, in a volume of memoir-autobiographical texts, edited by one of the most important Croatian writers in the second half of the 20th century, Marijan Matković, and with very clear paratextual signaling that it is an autobiographical, i.e., authentic diary.

At the time of the second publication, however, the author is already deceased and can no longer influence the reception of the text. Thus, the reader is left with two reception strategies: to accept the paratextual suggestions and the author's authority, and to read the published second version of the text as authentic diary entries, or else to reject such a reading, not only because of the previously published text in the form of an adolescent novel but also because of the impossibility of the author's authentication. In this paper, I will opt for the first strategy, and on the example of a comparative reading of both published texts, I will try to examine the relationship of the girl's diary to the assumed or implied documentary nature. The key moment, in this case, is precisely girlhood, since one of the central motifs in the diary discourse is the question of girlhood and the challenging questioning and negotiation with the imagological and ideological articulations of girlhood at the time of the creation of the diary—in the second decade of the 20th century. Two different versions of the diary text will approach the motifs of girls' articulations in a diametrically opposite manner and will, consequently, produce diametrically opposite ideas about girlhood.

The primary text from which I am starting is the one published later, that is, the second known version of the diary.<sup>20</sup> It is a 98-page text, covering the period from July 1911 to October 1912, and is mainly focused on the daily life of a girl diarist in approximately one school year. However, to legitimize my reading from a documentary perspective, it is inevitable to analyze the primary text—i.e., the second, later published version—in comparison with the first, the adolescent novel published in 1938, or, in my interpretation, with the fictionalized version of the text. Their comparative reading is crucial for the study of documents in the context of the corpus of girls' diaries, considering the different methods of embedding the implicit reader in the diary textuality.

20 It should be mentioned here that during the author's lifetime another version of the diary was published in sequels in the newspaper *Vjesnik* (1973 and 1974), see Zima, "Nevidljiva adolescentica."



As already stated, the identity of a girl in the diary discourse can be discerned based on the macro-semantic fields in whose intersections the idea of girlhood is created. In the 1938 novel-diary, Ruklić pours extraneous realities into the diary discourse in an unambitious, even monotonous way. She begins her entries on her 14th birthday and ends about a year later, but the time frame with the dates and years is unspecified, which suggests the idea of a universal, temporally unfixed girlhood or girlhood as a phenomenon independent of social circumstances. Individual textual signals, with some research effort, can be dated with partial precision to events in the first half of the 20th century.<sup>21</sup> The girls' universe is constructed as a documentary—we will, however, discover the semblance only after the publication of the second version in which the girls' universe is articulated separately. The diarist Darka or Darinka lives in the city (Zagreb, which is not explicitly named, but some localities in Zagreb are), in a craftsman's family, with a carpenter father, a stay-at-home mother, her father's apprentice, and her father's ten-year-old boy servant from a poor family. Darka attends a girls' high school and moves in a narrow circle of close friends, with some of whom she shares the ambition to continue her education as a teacher after high school. Their days are monotonous and determined by spatially impoverished coordinates, whereby the school and the school space seem to be emptied of emotional and intellectual engagement, while the intimate first space of the home is partially constituted in the domain of emotional stability. This, however, gradually varies towards the end of the text with the motif of the father's serious illness followed by his death, after which the home becomes an emphasized place of emotional instability, with a dysfunctional mother and the girl's decision to reject her educational ambitions and, instead, continue her father's work together with the apprentice. In addition to the first place (family home) and the second place (school), the diary also reconstructs a third place—a place of leisure and summer vacation, which she spends with her father's family in the countryside. This spatial arrangement structures the conventional binary opposition of urban versus rural space, where the latter is described as free, happy, physically and mentally healthy, and full of life, while the urban space, although necessarily emotionally closer to the girl, is characterized by modesty, simplicity, illness and even narrowness, both literally and figuratively.<sup>22</sup>

21 The theater play *Death of Jugović's Mother* is mentioned in the diary, which the diarist visits with her friends. Actress Marija Ružička-Strozzi performs in the play as well as in the theatrical matinee held in honor of Bishop Dobrila at the Zagreb Music Center, cp. Ruklić, *Dnevnik jedne djevojčice*, 57–60. According to Senker "Ružička-Strozzi, Marija." Marija Ružička-Strozzi played the role in Vojnović's *Death of Jugović's Mother* for the first time in 1907.

22 The episode of the girl's escape from school is telling: instead of going to school, the diarist goes outside the city by tram and spends the morning in nature, feeling free and happy compared to her misery and the lack of freedom in the city.

The educational and cultural circumstances that we understand from the text are, to a considerable extent, historically confirmed—high school education for girls in that part of Croatia under the authority of Austria has only been possible since the last decade of the 19th century. The teaching profession, which the girl sees as her most desirable career choice, at the time of writing is one of the few possible career paths for a girl from a craftsman family. It is indicative that none of the friends seem to have any other ambitions or desires—they are all united in their intention to become teachers. I read this motif as conscious ideological support for her weaker ambition: given that she has almost no other options, the text will support and ideologize what is available, idealizing the teaching as a noble, fulfilling, and valuable profession. Furthermore, after her father's death, the girl must put aside her ambitions and take over her father's business, which would have been impossible just two decades before, given the legal regulations that prevented a girl, especially a minor, from owning and running a business or managing her own life choices, moreover vocational training was not available for girls before the beginning of the 20th century.

The social class system is present in the mapping of the girl's relationship to two male characters—her father's apprentice and the boy servant in her father's workshop. Both are characterized by their lower social status, whereby the optics of philanthropy, girlish sympathy, and individual efforts to improve living conditions are favored, and the socio-political aspect of the situation presented is annulled. In this detail, the discourse of girlhood is articulated most clearly, that is, the definition of girlhood as philanthropic, empathetic, and altruistic, rather than socially engaged and political.

In a documentary sense, girlhood at the beginning of the 20th century is presented in this novel as immersed in a family environment, limited not only by educational and social opportunities in general but also integrated and without an effort to articulate oneself outside of desirable social contours. In the context of emotional identity, girlhood is shown as a period of establishing stronger, but not deep, interpersonal relationships, especially in a peer environment. The girl demonstrates no erotic interest. The diary does not represent emotional support, but we see it as a kind of register in which everyday events are recorded. At the level of creating a girl's everyday life, the discourse can be characterized as *disciplining the self* rather than as *techniques of the self*. The only episode of undisciplined behavior depicts the already mentioned short-term escape from school, which the diarist will try to articulate in terms of *techniques of the self*, but without an echo in the further text.

The rhetorical level of the text is also important, pushing the imagological girlhood even more intensively towards the conventional and expectedly emphatic: girlish affective accents in the text are realized in emphatic excursions of pleasantness,

loveliness, and occasional mild delight, without excursions into peculiarities or unexpected linguistic solutions. Sympathy is expressed with the epithets “nice,” “good,” “dear” or “beautiful,” while antipathy does not enter the discourse. In short, the older—fictionalized—diary text proves to be boring, conventional on the imago-logical level, and uninventive as expected on the ideological level.

Therefore, the publication of the integral diary text in 1983—which is my primary research example—can have a truly surprising effect on the researcher: the insertion or tightening of the text within the documentary boundaries strongly, even shockingly, deviates from the older version on the motive, thematic, imago-logical, ideological, and rhetorical levels. In the second version, the diary discourse is restored by temporal contextualization, i.e., by establishing a documentary time dimension: the entries are marked with dates from June 1911 to October 1912. The most pronounced difference between the two versions is visible in the shift from self-discipline to self-management, i.e., *techniques of the self*—in the diary published in 1983, the girl discursively structures both girlhood identity and everyday life in the direction of self-transformation to accept newly-emerging shared concepts of girlhood. I will show this on two levels of girls’ self-articulation and self-transformation: on the political and sexual levels.

In the newer version of Zora Ruklić’s diary, politics is present as a central identity pattern for the girl. In contrast to the apolitical, only mildly socially conscious teenage girl in the fictionalized first diary, the integral diary discourse shapes her primarily as a political being. Political refers to the tense historical-political moment in which she writes the diary: the period of political dissatisfaction in the years 1911 and 1912, which will escalate into the so-called Student Strike in the spring of 1912 and culminates in the shocking attempt of the political assassination of commissioner Slavko Cuvaj in June 1912.<sup>23</sup> Not only does the diarist actively record and interpret all these political events, but also directly participates in them. According to the entries, it was the diarist who “opened” the mass student meeting that started the strike on Zagreb’s Theater Square, and her close connection with the central

---

23 There was a wave of high school demonstrations that swept through several Croatian cities at the beginning of March 1912, fueled by political dissatisfaction with the absolutist rule of Ban/Commissar Cuvaj. The immediate reason for the strike was the wounding of a high school student during demonstrations in Sarajevo, after which students in several Croatian cities took to the streets and refused to return to schools while the political repression continued. The strike lasted several weeks, and classes were not re-established until April 10. Peace, however, lasted only until June of the same year, when on June 12, Luka Jukić, a student from Bosnia, shot ban Cuvaj with a revolver in Zagreb’s Mesnička Street, going down in history as the first political assassin in Croatia. Cuvaj’s adjutant was killed in the assassination, as well as the guard who ran after Jukić. On the run, Jukić shot and killed the guard. See more about this in Zima “Nevidljiva adolescentica.”

figures of the student rebellion—August Cesarec, Luka Jukić, who would commit the unsuccessful assassination of Cuvaj, Đuka Cvijić, and others—is described in detail. The girl, with her close female friends, participates wholeheartedly in the student movement and in the political conspiracy that resulted in the failed attempt of the assassination. She is the exact opposite of the calm, non-political, philanthropic, lovely patriotic protagonist of the first text. Politics is translated into patriotism in the diary, and it manifests itself in a series of explicit public statements, but on the semantic level it seems somewhat empty—the rhetoric of loftiness and emphatic hides the girl’s ignorance of political processes. This is particularly visible in the preparation for the assassination, in which female participation is rhetorically confused: the code name of the youth group—the Stenjevec Republic—the young conspirators call themselves based on the location of the family cottage of one of the girls involved, the diarist’s best friend Milica, who will enter into a relationship with the assassin Luka Jukić, even declaring herself to be his fiancée. Milica’s family property in Stenjevec near Zagreb inspires the code name, which points to the girl’s significant role in the planning of the assassination. But the diary entries record that at the key meeting in the cottage in Stenjevec where the assassination was agreed upon, the girls’ society was still excluded and that the agreement on the assassination was only made by men. Later, the diarist writes that they found out about the assassination from Milica, to whom her “fiancé” Jukić confessed what he was planning, and that the girls sealed the final assassination plan with their intervention.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, girls’ involvement in political issues—participation in demonstrations, planning assassinations, reading, and keeping incriminated and banned political literature, and the like—takes place without parental knowledge and beyond parental reach, which points to *techniques of the self*. On the rhetorical-semantic level, the motif of the girl’s first participation in the demonstrations, which she attends with a friend of the same age, is extremely interesting, and she writes the following about it:

“I was alone in the house. My adventurous (as my family members say) and patriotic (as I say) heart beat violently, and in no time, I changed into my father’s old suit, pushed my hair under my hat and pulled it deep over my eyes, and let’s go out into the world. Milica was walking behind me. I blended in among the workers, to be less conspicuous. Milica followed

24 The diary notes that the young men planned for Jukić to shoot Ban Cuvaj with a revolver (which he could not use well) at the procession on the occasion of the Catholic Feast of Corpus Christi, which is traditionally celebrated in the city with a procession of very young girls in formal dresses. The horrified diarist and her female friends nevertheless managed to dissuade the young men from this plan, fearing possible child victims in such circumstances. The assassination was carried out on another occasion, at a ceremony celebrating the work jubilee of the ban’s brother Antun Cuvaj.

me from the side of the sidewalk. (...) I turned around. My mother was standing next to her, deathly pale. I was indecisive. I left the procession. I headed home. Mom and Milica followed me. I was sad to leave my people. (...) But I felt very sorry for my mother.”<sup>25</sup>

The excerpt is particularly interesting in the context of the relationship between the girl's and her parents' perspective: the rhetorical divergence that the girl characterizes her behavior as “patriotic” while her parents consider it “adventurous” refers to the adult's effort to remove the adolescent from the sphere of political, radical, or threatening and that they interpret her action as an adventure or entertainment, thereby denying her responsibility. This micro situation plastically illustrates the process of girls' self-articulation that takes place within the limits set by adults but it expands and even negates those limits. Nevertheless, by the end of the diary, after Luka Jukić has carried out the assassination attempt and after all the diarist's male friends and some of her female friends have been arrested, and after Luka Jukić has been sentenced to death in the court process, parental supervision and authority over the girls are very concretely, even brutally, re-established. Since that is also the end of the diary, the process of negotiation regarding the scope and content of parental authority can no longer be followed. During the school year, the diarist and her friends successfully evaded parental authority and, without their parents' knowledge, participated in a political conspiracy aimed at overthrowing the political order; we are talking about girls aged 15 and 16, high school students. On the textual level, this fact—evading parental supervision—is not particularly thematized, which points to the dialectic of girls' self-discipline and self-articulation.

An important part of the girls' self-articulation is the distinction between patriotism and politics: although the youth movement is undoubtedly political and the young men involved are ready for political murder to achieve a political goal (to remove Commissioner Slavko Cuvaj from the post of Ban, i.e., ruler), the girls see their participation as an expression of patriotism. It is also interesting that the diary reflects a greater interest in meetings where political activity is contaminated with cultural content such as the reading of patriotic poetry. On the other hand, the girls' discourse records other political contents besides patriotic ones, of which it is interesting to mention the girls' indignation due to their unequal position considering the boys, i.e., the deprivation of both authority and the right to self-articulation in public activities and activities at meetings. This displeasure, however, is expressed only in diary entries and not in public. The diarist will not recognize her private indignation as political.

In short, the girl's self-articulation and self-definition in the diary entries published in 1983 gathers around politics, which is also a point of controversy in the

---

25 Ruklić, “Iz dnevnika jedne djevojčice,” 367.

perspectives of adults/parents and the girl. The adults/parents will refuse to see the girl as a political being and, the parental perspective will dominate to the end of the diary—the girl's political activation is dismissed, with the arrest of the young men involved in planning the assassination, but also with parental intervention (by sending the girls out of town and interrupting peer connection). Politics is the central moment of self-articulation, at the same time, the central moment of conflict between parental and girl's perspectives; the girl's *techniques of the self* will try to overcome the disciplining of the self, with variable and temporary effects.

Another interesting level of girls' self-articulation is sexual; girls' sexuality is one of the most ideologically severe points of public perceptions and public policies of girlhood. The first, older version of the diary, as noted, consistently bypasses or keeps silent about girls' sexuality. The discourse is carefully purged of any hints of girlish erotic interest. In contrast, in the younger published version, the girl's self-articulation is also linked to the erotic: the diarist records a strong affective and even erotic interest in a slightly older young man, a member of the peer group, who is attractive to the recorder not only on a physical level but also because of his political involvement. It is extremely interesting that in the 1983 version, the erotic interest in the young man develops in a kind of parallelism with the erotic interest of Milica, the diarist's best friend, who enters a love relationship with Luka Jukić, and even becomes informally engaged to him. At the same time as the development of Milica's affectionate interest in the young man, the diarist also records a growing affection for the man. Affection is realized in several passionate kisses and the girl will record this relationship in the domain of passion and affectivity. There is also an interesting motive of maturity or immaturity considering the love relationship. In the diary, girlhood is articulated, among other things, in the informal social codes that regulate girls' clothing. It is signaled by clothes and hairstyles: a short skirt, short socks and braids are considered signals of immaturity or childhood, and adolescence is signaled by wearing long socks and a longer skirt, as well as untangling the hair and discarding the children's hat. In her first meetings with a young man who stirs her erotic interest, the diarist tries to appear older, that is, to hide the symbols of childhood that she still carries at the age of 15, which points to an awareness of the age (in)appropriateness of erotic interest in a young man:

"People were passing by, and I curled my legs under the bench so that the sandals and white short socks could not be seen, I took off my sailor's cap, I might still look older! (...) Oh, why am I still a girl—if I had already grown up, I wouldn't be unattainable! While I was thinking like that, I pushed my legs deeper under the bench, so that those terrible short socks could not be seen, and crumpled my sailor's cap, which I found so cute until now."<sup>26</sup>

26 Ruklić, "Iz dnevnika jedne djevojčice," 393.

This topic develops in a melodramatic direction, given that the young man, who exchanged several kisses with the diarist, suddenly has to leave due to the alleged illness of his mother. However, a few months later, the diarist learns from a friend that the young man has married an Austrian woman (which is an important moment of the girl's feeling of betrayal on a political-national level, considering their joint struggle against Austrian authorities) with whom he was expecting a child, but after his wife gives birth to a stillborn child, he cannot obtain a divorce and remains married. The diarist took the news extremely hard and was severely traumatized, even sick for several weeks. Compared to the completely erotically unconscious protagonist of the older fictionalized diary, this depiction of girlish sexuality in the younger version of the diary seems radical, even subversive. And in this context, the girl successfully escapes parental supervision, until the final love crash, after which her trauma manifests itself as a physical illness. That's how the parents find out about their daughter's failed love affair. Obviously, the parental perspective is not realized in the diary, nor do the diary notes mention the parental reaction. In this way, the girl's affective relationship remains in her possession, i.e., the discourse of a broken heart is privileged over other perspectives. Nevertheless, girls' sexuality forms an essential identity element in the girl's self-formation discourse.

The girl's diary of Zora Ruklić, although a solitary example, is a suitable platform for studying the relationship between the documentary and private in diary discourse. Two versions of the girl's diary, separated by the ideological and imagological functionalization of two different diary texts, can be represented as the face and the reverse of the girl's self. The washed, disciplined, lovely, and rhetorically tamed face of the girl in the older version has its reverse in the younger version from 1983 as a rebellious, undisciplined, and wild girl. The document about the average, integrated urban girlhood as presented in the fictionalized 1938 diary, in the younger version, turns out to be a document about the radical, political urban girlhood that escapes the framework of what is desirable and appropriate. The dialectic of the document is carried out in duality and doubling: two versions of the same girl in two versions of the same diary offer a paradigmatic example of the document's unreliability and its mystifying potential, no matter which version, if any, we choose to believe.

## Literature

- Car, Milka. *Uvod u dokumentarnu književnost* [Introduction to Documentary Literature]. Zagreb: Leykam International, 2016.
- Culley, Margo. "Introduction." In *A Day at a Time: The Diary Literature of American Women from 1764 to the present*, edited by Margo Culley, 3–26. New York: The Feminist Press of the New York City University, 1985.



- Hogan, Rebecca. "Engendered Autobiographies: The Diary as a Feminine Form." *Prose Studies: History, Theory, Criticism* 14, no. 2 (1991): 95–107. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01440359108586434>
- Hunter, Jane H. *How Young Ladies Became Girls: The Victorian Origins of American Girlhood*. New Haven–London: Yale University Press, 2002.
- Lejeune, Philippe. "The »Journal De Jeune Fille« In Nineteenth-Century France." In *On Diary*, edited by Jeremy D. Popkin and Julie Rak, 129–143. Manoa: University of Hawaii, 2009.
- Paperno, Irina. "What Can Be Done with Diaries?" *The Russian Review* 63, no. 4 (2004): 561–573. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9434.2004.00332.x>
- Raoul, Valerie. "Women and Diaries: Gender and Genre." *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal*, 22, no. 3 (1989): 57–65.
- Ruklić, Zora. *Dnevnik jedne djevojčice* [Diary of a Young Girl]. Zagreb: Naklada školskih knjiga i tiskarnica Savske Banovine, 1938.
- Ruklić, Zora. "Iz dnevnika jedne djevojčice. Zagreb, srpanj 1911-listopad 1912" [From the Diary of a Young Girl. Zagreb, from July 1911 to October 1912]. In *Rad Jugoslavenske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti, book 400* [Works of Yugoslav Academy of Sciences and Arts], edited by Marijan Matković, 341–433. Zagreb: JAZU, 1983.
- Senker, Boris. 2016. "Ružička-Strozzi, Marija." *Lexicon entry*. Accessed 10 October 2022. <https://hbl.lzmk.hr/clanak.aspx?id=11917>
- Swindells, Julia. "»What's the Use of books?« Knowledge, Authenticity and a Young Girl's Diary." *Women's History Review* 5, no. 1 (1996): 55–66. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09612029600200105>
- Zima, Dubravka. "Nevidljiva adolescentica: ušutkani diskurs otpora u adolescentskoj književnosti. Slučaj Zore Ruklić" [Invisible Adolescent Girl: The Silenced Resistance in Adolescent Literature. The Case of Zora Ruklić]. In *Crveni ocean: prakse, taktike i strategije rodnog otpora* [The Red Ocean: Practices, Tactics and Strategies of Gender Resistance], edited by Lada Čale Feldman et al., 118–137. Zagreb: Centar za ženske studije, 2016.

