

Upbringing and early education in the selected 19th Century Croatian memoirs*

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ABSTRACT: The idea that the memoirs and autobiographies provide us with a specific point of view and therefore present unique types of historical sources has long been debated. As they present first-person narratives on someone's past, investigating them can clarify and fill in the often colourless variety of historical data. The basis for the research at hand are five narratives dealing with this subject, namely by Imbro Tkalac, Juraj Matija Šporer, Mijat Stojanović, Ljudevit Gaj and Dragojla Jarnević. Although the accounts here investigated should be handled with great care, since they are almost always intertwined with the authors' ideals, aspirations and other characteristic first-person data, a sound comparative approach can yield important results and provide a closer perspective of the life of children and youth in the first half of the 19th century.

EET/TEE ABSTRACT: History of education; Memoirs; Comparative approach; Croatia; XIXth Century.

Introduction. Reading the Memoirs

Human memory is not a narrative. The events we live through and experience remain in our self-consciousness only in disconnected traces. Evoking these is a process of shaping a story based on individual pieces of memory, which need to be rearranged in a logical temporal order and located precisely in space. As it is often impossible to reconstruct what happened a day ago, or even pinpoint the exact time the rain started today, so it is even harder to describe one's life in form of a memoir. The form of narrations, which we will encounter in this paper, are «first-person life accounts in letters, diaries, personal journals, memoirs and

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autobiographies which report and comment on experience, ventilate feeling, and express self-knowledge»¹. In terms of autobiographical accounts, early life seems particularly difficult to convey to the listeners or readers of the narrative. However, story-telling about one's own childhood and youth is not as problematic as understanding what was modified, embellished and invented. Even more, these alterations in the self-narratives often occur unconsciously, implying layers of truthful, partially truthful and false information.

Our interest in memoirs here, those of Croatian intellectuals who lived through their childhood in the first half of the 19th century, lays primarily in extracting those individual experiences and, somewhat similar to memoir-writing process itself, reorder them; compare and evaluate information in an attempt to create a clearer picture of children's life and education of the period. Each of the memoirs here investigated presents us with a variety of recollections dealing with children's everyday activities and early education, often sharing similar descriptions and comments on these *topoi*. This fact stems from the common environment which the authors shared and which constitutes the basis of these narratives. On the other hand, the aesthetic (genre conventions) or ethical (social norms) reasons, apart from actual differences in the authors' childhoods, condition the manner in which they conveyed their experience to the audience². Furthermore, the visual and emotional character of childhood memories necessarily stands somewhat in tension with language, which works as a barrier for transmitting these early individual experiences³. Yet another notion needs introduction here, as memories necessarily stem from personal experience, making them susceptible to psychological processes which filter and alter what the individual perceives as his own memory. This is especially true of memories of childhood. These alterations happen usually in adolescence, and are connected to prevailing cultural norms, and, more importantly, to popular knowledge of the period in which the childhood was set⁴. In other words, historical events are often present in one's memory as a guiding narrative, although the political situation, economic or cultural developments mattered little for the young person, whose life we are reading or listening about.

¹ G.J. Clifford, *Home and School in 19th Century America: Some Personal-History Reports from the United States*, «History of Education Quarterly», vol. 18, n. 1, 1978, p. 4.

² F. Hameršak, *Tamna strana Marsa. Hrvatska autobiografija i Prvi svjetski rat*, Zagreb, Naklada Ljevak, 2013, p. 100. Although Hameršak focuses on the autobiographical accounts of the First World War, his theoretical basis covers most of the literary theory, making his work interdisciplinary in full sense, and practically unavoidable when dealing with this form of literature.

³ M. Hernández, *A Childhood Memory: Time, Place and Subjective Experience*, «MLN», vol. 105, n. 2, 1990, pp. 321-322.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 321, 323-324. The author aims (quite successfully) to incorporate Freud's psychoanalytical approach into historiographical research. Although of importance for this paper and reading of memoirs, such interdisciplinary approach falls out of scope, and should only be taken into consideration.

After these basic remarks on the character of memory and autobiographic accounts, and before we endeavour to read the memoirs at hand as historical sources, a historian's view on the subject should be outlined. Writing of his own childhood and youth, a historian remarked:

It is impossible to collect the scattered memories. Many of them have slipped into invisible hideouts of brain's 'corner of memory', escaping forever from uncomfortable and merciless reality. Some have drowned in a swamp of forgetfulness, some evaporated in the mist of life. Death of memories is one of numerous *deaths/disappearances* which affect a man before he disappears himself⁵.

The elusive character of memory and the writings based on it, should by no means discourage historiographical research. On the contrary, some attempts have been made in Croatian historiographic community at utilizing them in order to further our understanding of the school system and child's experience of it. This practice is particularly necessary in cases like the Croatian one, since informal and individual education played a major role in early schooling until the second half of the 19th century⁶. As we shall see, these autobiographic accounts can elucidate aspects of human life, particularly education and private life of young individuals, which, as a rule, take up virtually no space in official administrative documentation.

In autobiographical accounts, which will be our focus, the authors deliver their childhood experiences and views on early education. The common denominator for these accounts is the period in which they occurred, namely the first three decades of the 19th century, and a common milieu and educational framework. Although still a preindustrial environment, Croatian lands within the Habsburg Monarchy experienced implementation of compulsory schooling already in the second half of the 18th century, making it an unavoidable part of memoir content. Formal schooling, as envisioned through the educational policies of the Habsburg Monarchy, was obligatory for all children⁷. This

⁵ M. Bertoša, *Kruh, mašta & mast: prizori i memorabilije o staroj Puli 1947-1957*, Zagreb, Durieux, 2007, p. 11.

⁶ The poor economic conditions of the educational staff and an underdeveloped school system were the prime reasons for the intense presence of various forms of private education. An example of research on this topic with focus on autobiographical accounts is: V. Švoger, *On the role of informal education in 19th century Croatia*, «Review of Croatian History», vol. 13, n. 1, 2017, pp. 79-102.

⁷ See: I. Horbec, V. Švoger, *Školstvo kao politicum: Opći školski red iz 1774.*, «Anali za povijest odgoja», vol. 9, 2010, pp. 5-47. The authors emphasise the secular character which compulsory education takes in this period, rather than ecclesiastical, although the state aimed to provide an elementary school for each parish – an ecclesiastical administrative unit. As a result, education was focused on practical knowledge, rather than moral philosophy; instead of Latin, living languages were preferred as subjects. This topic is also covered by: M. Ivanković, *O obrazovanju i odgoju na području Banske Hrvatske na temelju narativnih izvora iz druge polovine XVIII. i početkom XIX. stoljeća*, «Anali za povijest odgoja», vol. 10, 2011, pp. 71-81. See also: J. Van Horn Melton, *Absolutism and the Eighteenth-Century Origins of Compulsory Schooling in Prussia and Austria*,

educational system highly varied in quality and depended on many factors, primarily of a material nature. For instance, many children in – still prevailing – rural areas, were engaged in seasonal agricultural works, rather than attending school. Nevertheless, the school system provided the pupils with a certain sense of common belonging, identity and values, which often harmonized their view on experiences from the earliest days of school.

Imbro Ignjatijević Tkalac (1824-1912) is the author of probably the most elaborate autobiography among those we will here investigate. Titled *Youth Reminiscences from Croatia*⁸, it covers the period before his birth, which presents a family history of sorts. Then he covers his early days as a school boy and the years he spent in Croatia thereafter. By the time he finished his autobiography in 1894 (originally in the German language and entitled *Jugenderinnerungen aus Kroatien*), Tkalac was renowned as a polyglot, publisher, and a liberal. In this last sense he experienced first-hand frictions with the Habsburg regime. Once he had taught himself to read, Tkalac spent his early days mostly in the company of books; «Self-confident Tkalac never fails to remind us that his knowledge was a product of his own talents, interests and efforts»⁹ – already showing the loose character of education and, more importantly, a strong hint to what he may have added to his childhood experiences afterwards.

Perhaps the most interesting and sincere personal accounts are those of Dragojla Jarnević (1812-1875), contained in her *Diary*¹⁰. Jarnević had industriously kept record of her everyday activities, emotions and thoughts for over four decades, and decided to keep them away from public eyes for ten years after her death¹¹. The diary itself is not in focus of our interest, but the foreword by the author is, since it is a form of memoir, dealing primarily with her adolescence; i.e. a time prior to the writing of diary. The fact that the *Diary* was confidential, makes the memories in it untainted by any forms of censorship or satisfaction of social norms. The reader is presented with the first-hand experience of an emotionally sophisticated and intellectually capable

Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988, p. XIII. The author argues that Central European educational practices (in the Habsburg Monarchy and Prussia) predated those in Western Europe in terms of compulsory education being implemented long before industrialization processes. For the legislative and administrative sources see: A. Cuvaj, *Grada za povijest školstva*, Zagreb, Tisak Kraljevske zemaljske tiskare, 1910, Vol. 2; I. Horbec, M. Matasović, V. Švoger (edd.), *Zakonodavni okvir stvaranja modernog školstva u Hrvatskoj (18. i 19. stoljeće)*, Zagreb, Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2017. For elementary schools of the period of interest see: Cuvaj, *Grada za povijest školstva*, cit., pp. 160-192, 212-315.

⁸ I. Ignjatijević Tkalac, *Uspomene iz Hrvatske (1749.-1823., 1824.-1843.)*, Zagreb, Matica hrvatska, 1945.

⁹ A. Feldman, *Imbro Ignjatijević Tkalac: Europsko iskustvo hrvatskog liberala 1824-1912*, Zagreb, Antibarbarus, 2012, p. 35.

¹⁰ D. Jarnević, *Dnevnik*, Karlovac, Matica hrvatska, 2000.

¹¹ D. Detoni-Dujmić, *Dragojla Jarnević ili diskurs o tuzi*, «Radovi Leksikografskog zavoda "Miroslav Krleža"». Razdio za društvene i humanističke znanosti», vol. 4, 1995, pp. 152-153.

woman – certainly scandalous literature for the conservative, patriarchal males of the Croatian 19th century!

*Adventures and Troubles of My Life*¹², an autobiography by Mijat Stojanović (1818-1881), was written in the 1860's, and was published as a monograph with critical introduction and historical commentary in 2015. His background is of importance for understanding the character of his writings, since he was born to a poor family, unlike the other four authors in our focus. In this sense it will provide us with a perspective from the lower strata of the society, which will allow us to compare his childhood experience with those of the other authors, through which we will get a sense of the manner in which social differences reflected on education and upbringing. His autobiography presents «material usable by historians investigating oral history, educational history, history of literature, [...] history of reading, history of family, childhood history, history of emotions, history of remembering»¹³.

The remaining two memoirs which will be analysed in this paper, were published in a monograph by Vinko Brešić, *The Autobiographies of Croatian Writers*¹⁴. The first of these I will address is by Ljudevit Gaj (1809-1872), under the title *My Historical Abstract*, and written in 1851-1852¹⁵. Being the father of the Illyrian movement, a prolific writer and reformer of the Croatian alphabetic system, Gaj was a public and political person of great influence. This, however, only hindered his capability to think and write of his own past, especially as he was often thought to be both a narcissistic and very charismatic person. Antun Mažuranić, Croatian linguist, writer, grammarian and Gaj's contemporary, attributed him with «unspeakable desire for glory and greatness»¹⁶. Therefore, his autobiography should be treated with particular caution.

Finally, Juraj Matija Šporer's (1795-1884) autobiography, *Echo from the Past*, was written in 1863¹⁷, and to a larger extent deals with his youth reminiscences. As a physician in his later life, he abstained from political activity, although he acted in the line of Croatian national awakening in his earlier life, aiming to publish the first newspaper in the national language in 1818, under the title *Oglasnik Ilirski* (Illyrian Herald)¹⁸. Apart from being valuable for our analysis in terms of covering the topic at hand, his autobiography contains a self-conscious commentary on the character of memoirs, providing us with a sense of contemporary view on this literary form. At the beginning of his writing, Šporer states that «Autobiographies are mirrors, so we can reflect on

¹² M. Stojanović, *Sgode i nesgode moga života*, Slavonski Brod, Hrvatski institut za povijest – Podružnica za povijest Slavonije, Srijema i Baranje, 2015.

¹³ D. Župan, *Stojanovićeve „Zgode i nezgode“*, in Stojanović, *Sgode i nesgode moga života*, cit., p. XI.

¹⁴ V. Brešić, *Autobiografije hrvatskih pisaca*, Zagreb, AGM, 1997.

¹⁵ Lj. Gaj, *Vjekopisni moj nacrtak*, in Brešić, *Autobiografije hrvatskih pisaca*, cit., pp. 130-141.

¹⁶ M. Šicel, *Ljudevit Gaj, književnik: da ili ne?*, «Hrvatsko Zagorje», vol. 5, n. 2, 1999, p. 26.

¹⁷ J.M. Šporer, *Odziv iz prošlosti*, in Brešić, *Autobiografije hrvatskih pisaca*, cit., pp. 25-128.

¹⁸ Z. Črnja, *Kulturna povijest Hrvatske*, Opatija, Otokar Krešovani, 1988, p. 60.

ourselves, and make sure that something is improved and adorned, or that some stains are mopped»¹⁹. This individual understanding of self-reflecting accounts is a unique acknowledgement of one's limits and intentional or unintentional interventions in the memoir-writing process.

1. *Images of Childhood and Early Education*

The authors of the above-introduced memoirs belonged to the same – loosely defined – generation, growing up and gaining their first educational experiences in the continental parts of the Croatian lands. The geographical and chronological key here should serve to provide us with a basis for a comparative approach to these autobiographies, but, more importantly, the *topoi* they touch upon are frequent confirmation of their shared cultural and social environment. Far from being uniform, the educational system sometimes produced contradictory commentary. Nevertheless it is more common that we witness synchronized negative attitudes towards certain elements of the system. Such is the case with school teachers and educational staff.

As we have seen earlier, living languages became an important part of modernizing the school system; a pupil was expected to learn primarily the German language in order to become a functioning link in the state apparatus. However, the situation in schools and among the teaching staff, and this was the case especially in the periphery, left a lot to be desired. Perhaps the most obvious example of this issue comes from Tkalac's memory of his early education, which was, fortunately for him, mostly private. He was taught German by an army officer at first, and later by an educated private gardener, who took to teaching Tkalac irregular verbs even before the child had experienced his first days of school. Tkalac however, always eager to emphasize his thirst for knowledge, did not regret this early education. On the contrary, he ironically recollects upon the German language teachers in school, whose knowledge of the language did not include what he had already grasped: «All these are things [German grammar] I would have never learned later in school, because my teachers knew virtually nothing on the subject»²⁰.

Not everyone was so fortunate as to have private teachers. Stojanović, for instance, was of poor descent, and his pre-school days were not enriched by strivings for early education. As he started attending school, he felt the full weight of the teachers' incompetence and unenviable knowledge of pedagogical methods. Apart from the poor state of the school building and classrooms themselves, a fact which is a recurring trope in these autobiographies, teachers

¹⁹ Šporer, *Odziv iz prošlosti*, cit., p. 25.

²⁰ Tkalac, *Uspomene iz Hrvatske*, cit., pp. 87-89.

were «foreigners, real punishers. The youth was raised and educated by a rod and fist»²¹. As the teaching staff often refused to communicate in the mother tongue of the children, we can only assume the effectiveness of the curriculum. Jarnević confirms these notions almost to the letter: «The state of classrooms was at the time still poor, and what was taught, was in German language»²². All of the curriculum materials were left unexplained and, what was the usual case among those who could afford it or find the time, were covered in private environment or self-education. As his teacher treated Stojanović particularly badly, which caused young Mijat to tremble with fear in his presence, he again felt the worst aspects of the educational system. The teacher's methods resulted in a poor level of education and caused the following: «attending the school for three years, I still could not read, let alone calculate, my handwriting was nasty and sloppy for awe and hearsay»²³. It would be wrong to assume that this teacher's skills equipped Stojanović's colleagues with a notably better education.

For those who possessed the means of decent teaching – meaning if they grasped basic content knowledge through channels other than the official school system – it became a rule to utilize this knowledge in the classroom. Therefore, it would be wrong to assume that Gaj spoke only Croatian until well into the first years of elementary school, as he claims in his autobiography²⁴. This assertion of speaking the mother tongue obviously stems from his political orientation at the time he wrote his memoirs. Furthermore, Gaj's family did not originate in Hrvatsko Zagorje, where he was born. Rather, his mother was an ethnic German²⁵. Therefore, the idea of young Ljudevit's patriotic upbringing was probably a product of his political thought later in life. Furthermore, what makes Gaj's claims highly improbable, is the poor state and non-uniformity of the Croatian language in the period – a fact which would certainly discourage his parents from insisting on its exclusive practice. Šporer addresses this topic in his autobiography, and, apart from giving similar remarks on the quality of public education, adds that the language spoken among the people of Croatia was a mixture of German, Hungarian and Slavic languages²⁶. The state intervention in education had, therefore, an important task in unifying not only the system of practical knowledge for its subjects, but also the language spoken among them. Speaking in short terms, it failed; not only did the pupils, after learning German in elementary school, arrive in gymnasiums or other types of

²¹ M. Stojanović, *Sgode i nesgode moga života*, in Brešić, *Autobiografije hrvatskih pisaca*, cit., p. 154.

²² Jarnević, *Dnevnik*, cit., p. 9.

²³ Stojanović, *Sgode i nesgode moga života*, cit., p. 49.

²⁴ Gaj, *Vjekopisni moj nacrtak*, cit., p. 133.

²⁵ E. Murray Despalatović, *Ljudevit Gaj and the Illyrian Movement*, New York-London, Columbia University Press, 1975, p. 31.

²⁶ Šporer, *Odziv iz prošlosti*, cit., pp. 28-29.

high schools with little or no knowledge of the language²⁷, they were also the targets of teacher's frustrations, poor pedagogical skills and lack of educational means, making private forms of education a much more desirable option.

The scope of the problem of implementing secular state education system becomes visible when we examine the role of the Church in schooling. At the end of the 18th century the composition of the teachers' cadre consisted almost exclusively of the clergy, which retained its important position in public and private education, even after the intense secular politics of the contemporary Habsburg court. This situation had a strong influence on Šporer's memories of his childhood, and reflections upon clerical pedagogy and teaching often occur in his autobiography. As a part of young Matija's life, holy confession was an obligatory practice for him and his colleagues, which, as he vividly narrates, often spurred anxiety for him personally. In his view as an adult, this practice presented a form of a violent intrusion into a child's privacy²⁸. It is interesting to note that in presenting us with these emotional reminiscences, Šporer probably incorporated his later psychological frictions regarding the issue of the holy confession into the memories of his early school days, as he practiced confession on a regular basis even as he grew up. Namely, at an age of twelve, he fell sick and was treated by a young girl, to whom he was attracted to and developed feelings for²⁹. Perhaps his notion of priestly injustice stems from this experience, for which he felt the need to confess and in fact did confess, rather than the earlier years of his childhood.

First encounters with educational practice outside of parental upbringing were also mediated by clergy for Imbro Tkalac. He attended the school governed by the Franciscans in Karlovac, confirming in his memoirs that the role of the clergy was essential for the functioning of the whole educational system. The method used by these clerical teachers, however, is again described as backward, their knowledge poor and based on Latin language to a great extent, which again caused a lack of communication in the classrooms. On the other hand, Tkalac's often ironical narrative was sometimes aimed at the clergy. At this point he does not ascribe very pejorative characteristics to it, at least no more than he ascribes to the capability of secular teachers³⁰. For Ljudevit Gaj experiences gained through communication with priests and friars of the Franciscan monastery in Krapina, also present the first educational practices he encountered. In his short narrative, lacking in many details of his childhood memories, Gaj introduces his first teacher, a priest, by the name of Evgenije Rebić. Furthermore, the emphasis on the clerical role in transmitting

²⁷ Tkalac, *Uspomene iz Hrvatske*, cit., p. 158.

²⁸ Šporer, *Odziv iz prošlosti*, cit., pp. 27-28.

²⁹ *Ibid.* On the notion of memory formation during the adolescence, primarily referring to Sigmund Freud's work, see: Hernández, *A Childhood Memory: Time, Place and Subjective Experience*, cit., pp. 323-324.

³⁰ Tkalac, *Uspomene iz Hrvatske*, cit., pp. 142-146.

knowledge in a broader sense comes from the episode of Gaj's memoir that describes his orderly visits to the Franciscan monastery in his home town. He spent time there in order to visit the monastery's library and investigate the 'real' history behind the legends he listened to as a little child³¹.

These stories and legends of ancient Slavic heroes, which were told by an old servant of Gaj's family, by the name Mateuš³², represent a part of his familial upbringing, which is an aspect of childhood exclusively described in a positive light by all the authors whose memoirs we are examining here. Dragojla Jarnević describes her upbringing as being endowed with the virtues of «patriotism, honesty and love for one's neighbour»³³. The phrase from Biblical motive «Love thy neighbour» obviously indicates firm Christian identity which Dragojla's family cherished, and which apparently remained a part of her own psychological profile in later life. Šporer states that his upbringing was «remarkable and full of love, but also surrounded with many-a-prejudice»³⁴. In a very similar fashion, but elaborating a little longer, Stojanović cherishes a memory of a loving mother, but also indicates the poor intellectual state of his parents:

I was raised very simply. Nor did my parents know how, nor did they have the time to develop my intellect uprightly, ennoble my heart and will, as it should be, nor did they know how to teach me of things which surrounded me [...]. Only did my mother by word and example implant fear of God into my young heart³⁵.

These, usually somewhat idealized memories of childhood are present in Tkalac's recollections as well; he claims his mother nursed and raised his brother in accordance to principles introduced by J.J. Rousseau. His governess taught him Italian and French languages utilizing modern educational methods, and as a young boy he was equipped with many books and taught by two private writing teachers – all before he attended elementary school³⁶.

2. *Children before Childhood*

With images of early education and upbringing introduced in the previous chapter, here we will discuss a notion of sensibility towards children – the way a child was viewed by the adults in the preindustrial community of early 19th-

³¹ Gaj, *Vjekopisni moj nacrtak*, cit., pp. 133-134.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 131-132.

³³ Jarnević, *Dnevnik*, cit., p. 9.

³⁴ Šporer, *Odziv iz prošlosti*, cit., p. 27.

³⁵ Stojanović, *Sgode i nesgode moga života*, cit., p. 51.

³⁶ Tkalac, *Uspomene iz Hrvatske*, cit., pp. 46, 61-65.

century Croatia. Philippe Aries' book, *Centuries of Childhood*³⁷, deals with these issues following the evolution of childhood images and adults' perception of children themselves since the medieval period. It is in preindustrial European societies that the notion of childhood consisted of vague understandings of child behaviour and its basic needs. The duration of childhood was defined by entering the world of adulthood through education³⁸. It was at this point that a *child* started on the road to becoming a fully adult *person*. However, years before that still remained of little interest for adults aside the child's parents.

Although there is hardly any doubt that parents took great care to raise their children as best as they could, provide them with necessities and protect them from any harm, an inevitable fact of high infant mortality conditioned sensibility which may strike us as cruel or indifferent. A demographic study of 19th-century England shows that parents may have consciously neglected their children, which drastically influenced their safety. That this practice took place reveals the poor state of family life among the poorer strata of society. In fact, historians presume that infanticide by suffocation in bed often occurred. Accidental suffocation is highly implausible after all³⁹. The attitude towards children was, therefore, necessarily deprived of emotions. «The general feeling was, and for a long time remained, that one had several children in order to keep just a few. [...] Nobody thought, as we ordinarily think today, that every child already contained a man's personality. Too many of them died»⁴⁰.

The images of death in young age occur also in the memoirs at hand; both of Tkalac's two sisters died at a very young age⁴¹, and most of the authors describe episodes of close-to-death encounters from their youth. While riding a horse as a young boy, which was his favourite activity before he started attending school, Tkalac was caught in a heavy thunderstorm. Frightened by thunder, his horse knocked him off the saddle, throwing the boy on the ground. Being absent from home and barely conscious, a search was organized and Tkalac was fortunately found, although in a condition of terrible health. Consequently, he suffered from an illness that almost cost him his life⁴². Particularly striking is Stojanović's memory of two such incidents; as he was wandering the fields around the age of five, playing an improvised instrument, he was attacked by two wild dogs, annoyed by the whistling sounds he produced. His father, who heard the boy's screams, rescued him, but by that time he was covered with blood, barely alive⁴³. On another occasion, at the age of four, young Mijat

³⁷ P. Aries, *Centuries of Childhood*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1962.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 238-239.

³⁹ E. de G.R. Hansen, "Overlaying" in *19th-Century England: Infant Mortality or Infanticide?*, «Human Ecology», vol. 7, n. 4, 1979, pp. 335-336, 342.

⁴⁰ Aries, *Centuries of Childhood*, cit., pp. 38-39.

⁴¹ Feldman, *Imbro Ignjatijević Tkalac: Europsko iskustvo hrvatskog liberala 1824-1912*, cit., p. 34.

⁴² Tkalac, *Uspomene iz Hrvatske*, cit., pp. 90-95.

⁴³ Stojanović, *Sgode i nesgode moga života*, cit., p. 49.

was left to sit alone on a horse-drawn cart for a brief moment, at which point the horses ran amok. By the time the horses stopped, entangled in a hedgerow, the boy was badly hit all over his body and bled from deep scratches so that «everyone thought of me that I am already deceased, dead»⁴⁴. Even as children grew up and developed immunity to disease or general body stamina, the risk of falling seriously ill or becoming injured with possible fatal results was still present in their lives. Šporer witnessed a most unusual episode when he was a schoolboy in Zagreb. A bizarre event occurred when his teacher, dressed as Saint Nicholas, and followed by a strong student dressed as Krampusz, entered Juraj Matija's lodging, and made him repent for his alleged sins by carrying him to the Sava river in a basket, half naked and in the middle of winter. The episode ends with the young boy passing out, while the pranksters ran away abandoning their prey. Šporer fell sick with heavy fever for three days⁴⁵. While not withholding his own decadent behaviour in memoirs – at the age of twelve he was involved in gambling and playing cards, he visited dancing places of questionable repute, drank brandy and crashed public lights – we can assume that he was not completely innocent of the wrongdoings for which he was punished by his teacher. Apart from again indicating the fragile nature of childhood, this event also sheds light on topics discussed in previous chapter – those of contemporary teachers' competence.

Jarnević's *Diary* is a historical source of great value, and was, as already mentioned, private, made public only ten years after her death. Reading through her writings, we encounter detailed emotional struggles, intellectual strivings and reflections, well ahead of the society which surrounded her, which make it impossible to doubt that the author was endowed with not only a basic grasp of emotional intelligence, but with a sophisticated plethora of feelings and ethical norms – which makes the episode we encounter even stranger. Young Dragojla acted as a nursemaid for two of her nephews, her sister's sons, who perished before they learned to walk. With the birth of the first child, she could no longer dedicate as much time to reading, but «at this time my sister's firstborn died, and I was relieved for at least a couple of months, because another one was making its way»⁴⁶. Her free time and 'inner peace,' as the author herself puts it, was again consumed by the arrival of a new child: «Meanwhile, I learned to play the zither, and I often sang along the sound of its strings, until horrible crying interrupted the dance and play [...] The other son of my sister also died to my joy, and I was relieved»⁴⁷. To clarify, Jarnević writes of these things without shame or regret. To expect from her to express at least sympathy for her sister would again be futile, since it seems plausible that

⁴⁴ Id., *Sgode i nesgode moga života*, cit., p. 48.

⁴⁵ Šporer, *Odziv iz prošlosti*, cit., pp. 29-31.

⁴⁶ Jarnević, *Dnevnik*, cit., p. 10.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

no great sorrow affected her either, giving birth to a new child so soon after the first one perished. This fragile nature of children's lives obviously further rendered childhood incomprehensible in the eyes of adults; this category was simply not an important part of human life.

Conclusion

What we aim to understand about childhood and early experiences of school, presented in autobiographical accounts, unavoidably meets with barriers of individual memory and subjective thinking. However, these memoirs, written by authors whose backgrounds provide us with a critical point of view, when comparatively investigated, point to some emotionally and intellectually shared *topoi*. Further research might indicate many more differences between the authors' reminiscences of childhood and add many more individual layers to the experiences of the official educational system. This analysis hopefully serves to bring forward the notion that specific memories, compared in this manner and incorporated into a wider framework, can serve as a window into a reality otherwise absent in source material. As it is obvious from, for instance, the authors' romanticized recollections of their early childhood, this approach still runs up against the issue of the generally subjective character of human memory and its transference, still blinding us to the genuine child's point of view.

After witnessing Jarnević's somewhat unpleasant and disturbing memories, we can only confirm that the notion of childhood transcended from an unimportant category, expendable in its content, to a cherished and almost consecrated part of human life. This shift provides us with much more attainable data on children's lives today, which stems from the newly awakened interest of adults. However, in order to account for the child's own point of view before this shift occurred – what did the boy Imbro really think of his teachers, how did Juraj Matija feel after his first confession, was Dragojla truly indifferent to the death of her nephews, or did the flow of time erase her memories of grief? – will require further reading, comparison and, perhaps a very innovative, new interdisciplinary approach. The Madeleine cakes which would evoke our own personal reminiscences in a clear and conveyable way are regrettably unattainable when investigating memories of other people. Still, the experiences provided by the authors of memoirs reach as close as possible to understanding the 19th century child's mentality, its view on the schooldays, teachers and ever-pressing rules of behaviour; its love for parents, feelings, fears and hopes.