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Special Issue

Serbian Women and the Public Sphere
1850–1950

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Introduction

Anna Novakov and Svetlana Tomić

This special issue of *Serbian Studies* focuses on the contributions of Serbian women to the first and second generations of the “New Woman” movement that spread across Europe from the latter part of the nineteenth century to 1950. The second wave of “new women” was documented photographically and presented in 2011 in an exhibition entitled “Being Beautiful” at the Historical Museum in Belgrade. The exhibition presented images of the Serbian “New Woman” during the 1930s—wearing trousers and walking down city streets as well as lounging in stylish interiors. During this historical period, women worked to establish a public presence for themselves as teachers, writers, doctors, artists, and professionals in many other fields. Their entry into these uncharted territories resulted in remarkable work that revealed their professional struggles as well as professional advancements.

This issue coincides with three important anniversaries which are deeply intertwined with the Serbian women’s movement. The first marks 150 years since the establishment of the High School for Girls (1863), which changed the traditional women’s image and role in Serbian society. The second marks 100 years since the death of Katarina Milovuk (1913), the first principal of the High School for Girls, who held that position for three decades and as a true leader and bold feminist fighter succeeded in making a long-lasting impact on the Serbian women’s movement. The third important anniversary marks 100 years of the publication of *Srpskinja* (1913), a compendium of the first biographical dictionary of Serbian women who made significant contributions to Serbian education, culture, art, science, and journalism with additional essays on male supporters and women in literature. We have no doubt that the link between these events was part of the development of Milovuk’s visionary strategies. She knew that only an uncompromising fight on the part of well-educated women and professionals would lead to the growth of numerous exceptional female intellectuals who would impact Serbian culture and politics, thus making it possible for women who contributed equally to become respected, acknowledged, and accepted members of Serbian society.
As is the case with the writing of any history, and especially with the writing of women’s history, chronicling the women’s movement in Serbia has been a challenge. The Serbian women’s movement is still not well-known, although a number of attempts, ranging from papers to monographs and studies, have been made in order to reconstruct the main chain of events and leading figures. We are proud to acknowledge that among the scholars who researched the Serbian women’s movement and key feminist figures (Ljubica Marković, Paulina Lebl Albala, Jovanka Kecman, Neda Božinović, Thomas A. Emmert, Gordana Stojaković, and Ljiljana Stankov) there are a number of researchers who published their essays in *Serbian Studies* (Biljana Šljivić Šimšić, Sibelan Forrester, and Gordana Stojaković), widening the scope of investigations on significant Serbian women in art, literature, philosophy, and architecture (Ljubica D. Popovich, Jasna Jovanov, Jovana Stokić, Vasa D. Mihailovich, Biljana Šljivić Šimšić, Jelena Milojković Đurić, Svetlana Tomić, George Vid Tomashevich, and Jelena Bogdanović) and the representation of women in literature and art (Biljana Šljivić Šimšić, Ljubica D. Popovich, Olga Nedeljković, Nancy Eyl, and Marija Mitrović). One need not mention what it meant to have these topics included in the first issue of *Serbian Studies* as legitimate scholarly themes at a time when women’s studies was yet to come into its own in Serbia. Today, 20 years after the founding of the Women’s Studies Center in Belgrade and Women’s Studies and Research Center in Novi Sad and the scholarly journals *Ženske studije* (later *Genero*) and *ProFemina*, we can say that many scholars have contributed to the investigation of women’s history in Serbia and some of the key issues of feminism. Nowadays, some of the founders and their works live in our memories (Neda Božinović and Žarana Papić), while others still teach and struggle for better positions for women in law, culture, and education (Svetlana Slapšak, Svenka Savić, Marina Blagojević, Gordana Daša Duhaček, Sonja Drlijević, Jasmina Lukić, Zorica Mršević, Slavica Stojanović, Lepa Mlađenović, Jasmina Tešanović, Biljana Đojčinović Nešić, Dubravka Đurić, and many others).

By dividing the essays into four categories, we as editors hope to represent the diversity of Serbian women in professions such as medicine, art, and politics. Their gender, serving as a framework, enabled them to bravely push the boundaries of modernity by occupying previously unknown spaces. In many areas of public life these women, like other European women of their time, were progressive.
I. Entering the Public Sphere

The status of women in Serbian society was intimately linked with their growing position in the public sphere. Their elevated rank emerged as a result of their newfound access to education—literacy that enabled their voices to be heard on a much higher level. Ljubinka Trgovčević outlines the gradual flowering of Serbian women, who in the latter part of the nineteenth century were granted new educational rights that liberated them from domestic spaces. It is significant to acknowledge the facts Trgovčević gathered about how young Serbian women gained the right to an education before it was granted to girls in the Habsburg and German empires and how female students in Belgrade in 1900 outnumbered the women enrolled at other European universities. Their emerging voices, now in print in women’s publications, allowed for generations of female thinkers to publish their thoughts and opinions. In order to show the changing conceptions of women’s position in Vojvodina, Gordana Stojaković analyzes the women’s journal Ženski svet (Women’s World) and its subjects, events, people, and groups who played an important role in shaping a huge range of women’s private and public spheres. Stojaković stresses that the emergence of Ženski svet and other women’s publications at the turn of the last century was intricately linked to the women’s rights movement in Serbia. The ability of women activists to state their positions in print solidified their resolve and dedication to equal rights for the female population of Serbia. Ženski svet was a treasury of information about the creativity and political engagements of Serbian women who understood this publication as a laboratory for their literary and scholastic work. It promoted the foundation of women’s societies and networks in order to encourage the creative exchange of ideas as a vehicle for reaching their common goals.

II. Literary Provocations

Svetlana Tomić explores the contributions of female teachers and writers to the liberation of women in Serbian society. She highlights the fact that they challenged the domination of male writers, a fact that was routinely ignored or censored by historians of Serbian literature throughout the twentieth century. Tomić also reveals a little-known group of male intellectual elite who supported the new social category of female intellectuals. The symbiotic form of a female teacher and writer is understood as the vital enlightened role of the new intellectual identity in nineteenth-century Serbian education and culture. Draga Gavrilović changed a Serbian literary hero and plot, introducing many variants of a new character type, that of the female intellectual. Her heroines
endured severe hardship as they were aware that the education of Serbian girls would play a crucial role in intellectual, cultural, and social emancipation. Together with the works of Mileva Simić, Danica Bandić, and Kosara Cvetković, this new literature broke with patriarchal culture, creating new women’s morality and cultural symbols.

III. (Mis)Representations of Women in Modern Art and Film

The growing status of women in interwar society also became potent subject matter for male painters and filmmakers, who understood the women’s movement as at once provocative and threatening. Simona Ćupić traces the status of women as subject matter in prewar Serbian painting, where artists captured the physical characteristics of this social liberation. The representation of women in Serbian painting during the first half of the twentieth century, however, was integrated into the criteria or symptoms of social reality. The status of women in society was shaped by standards of public morality; a system of exclusion from the public sphere. The politics of depiction was defined through a scheme of social stereotypes about male and female interests, objects, rules of behavior, professions, and rituals. Radina Vučetić’s essay explores the status of Serbian women in films during the interwar period. By seeing themselves reflected on screen, modern Serbian women were able to role-play and test the parameters of their emerging public profiles. Despite the accelerated modernization of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, there was strong pressure from traditionalists, who vigorously resisted women’s emancipation. This is apparent in all cinematographic genres of the time. Although it was made at the height of women’s emancipation and the struggle for women’s rights in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, the film Sinner without Sin is a homage to the patriarchal family and the village, and it saves all its criticisms for the city, modernization, and the emancipation of women.

IV. A Man’s World: Serbian Women in Philosophy

An essay by Anna Novakov completes this collection by analyzing the philosophical and literary contributions of Serbian women. Novakov positions the philosopher Ksenija Atanasijević as a pioneer within Belgrade academia as well as an unfortunate casualty of the struggle for female equality in Serbia. This biographical study focuses on Atanasijević’s contributions to the history of philosophy and the interwar women’s movement in Serbia and the conflicts that this allegiance caused in her professional and personal life. Atanasijević was a prolific writer who completed over 400 texts covering a wide range of
topics from aesthetics, metaphysics, and literature to feminism and philosophy. A pioneer for women’s rights, Atanasijević was active in the Serbian Women’s League for Peace and Freedom, the Women’s Movement Alliance, and the Women’s Movement (Ženski pokret) journal, which she edited from 1920 to 1938. In 1936, Atanasijević’s male colleagues launched a smear campaign that cost her her professorship.

We hope that this collection will inspire other scholars to take further steps in bringing to light the history of the Serbian women’s movement and feminist efforts to build a better society. Every history is a construction of the past and a simultaneous deconstruction of a sociocultural system. This convergence leads to the discovery of our cultural ancestors while teaching us to bravely embrace power as free individuals.
The Professional Emancipation of Women in 19th-Century Serbia

Ljubinka Trgovčević
Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Belgrade

In the nineteenth century, Serbia had just started working towards its independence. The difficult legacy of centuries under Ottoman and Habsburg rule had left Serbia an agricultural society of small landholders with an undeveloped economy, general illiteracy, no public institutions, and no infrastructure. Development was further hindered by Serbian and other Balkan national movements and the clashing interests of great powers, which caused permanent political instability and constant wars. By the early twentieth century, Serbia was still one of Europe’s most underdeveloped states.

In such an underdeveloped society, patriarchal norms linked the position of women to their biological role as mothers and wives and relegated them to the private realm. In the first half of the nineteenth century, there were only a few women in the public sphere: wives and daughters of rulers and some members of the elite. The traditional role of women was woven into the law. The right of women to engage in business transactions was abolished in the Civil Code of the Principality of Serbia of 1844 (in force until 1946). A married woman could enter into legal and business agreements only with her hus-

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1 This research was conducted as part of the project Rodna ravnopravnost i kultura gradanskog statusa: Istorjska i teorijska utemeljenja u Srbiji [Gender Equality and the Culture of Civil Status: Historical and Theoretical Foundations in Serbia], no. 47021, 2012. This project was funded by the Ministry of Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia.

2 Following the First (1804) and Second Serbian Uprising (1815), Serbia was declared a vassal principality. It was recognized as independent at the Congress of Berlin in 1878, and four years later it became the Kingdom of Serbia. After the uprisings it had a territory of 24,000 km² and about 400,000 inhabitants, while in 1910 its territory was 48,303 km² with a population of 2,911,701. Holm Sundhaussen, Historische Statistik Serbiens 1834–1914: Mit europäischen Vergleichsdaten (Munich: R. Oldenburg Verlag, 1989).

3 In 1900, the urban population was 350,000, or 14.1 percent, while the number of literate citizens was only 17 percent. See Sundhaussen, Historische Statistik Serbiens 1834–1914; Marie-Janine Calic, Sozialgeschichte Serbiens 1815–1941: Der aufhaltsame Fortschritt während der Industrialisierung (Munich: R. Oldenburg Verlag, 1994).

band’s consent. A married woman could not be employed or engage in any public service without her husband’s consent; unmarried women were in certain cases left the possibility of free choice. This was not an exception in countries in which Napoleon’s Civil Code of 1804 was imposed. Consequently, women were legally and politically subordinate to men.

From Education to Emancipation

The first step towards the emancipation of women was the right to education, which provided access to employment, economic and social independence, and active participation in civic life. In the nineteenth century, this request preceded the demand for female suffrage.

The Ottoman Empire granted Serbia the right to open Serbian-language schools in 1830. Before then, hardly any Serbians, especially women, were literate. Apart from a few wives of Serbs from Hungary who came to help in building the new state, Jevrem Obrenović’s daughter Anka, who at the age of 13 published translations of stories in Zabavnik and wrote a diary, was one of the few Serbian women to have a solid education. It is documented that in 1832, of 211 pupils in Belgrade 16 were girls.

An incentive for opening girls’ schools was provided by the satirist and Minister of Education Jovan Sterija Popović, who claimed that the state had an equal obligation to the education of boys and girls. The passage of the first school law of 1844 allowed for the establishment of the first special schools for girls, and where such schools did not exist, girls could attend boys’ schools until the age of ten. By 1858, 30 girls’ schools had been opened. The beginning of 1883 saw the passage of the most important law of that time, which introduced six years of compulsory and universal public education “for

7 Ibid., 64–65.
each child living in Serbia,” which by that time was the standard in most developed states, like France, the United Kingdom, and some American states.9

Secondary education for girls started with the opening of the Higher Women’s School in Belgrade in 1863. Apart from providing general education, its task was to prepare female teachers to work in girls’ elementary schools. Its faculty boasted some of the most highly educated women in Serbia.10 In 1879, the first female craft school opened its doors, followed by a school of commerce and several private institutes. The first gymnasium for girls was not established until 1905. By 1900, Serbian girls were attending 165 elementary schools, and by 1914 there were 12 gymnasia, 45 craft schools, 2 schools of teacher education, 3 colleges, and several private schools.11

The increase in the number of educated girls notwithstanding, at the end of the nineteenth century Serbia had the lowest rate of female literacy in Europe. Out of 1,211,604 women listed in the 1900 census, 94 percent were illiterate. Compulsory education was not enforced; only about 10 percent of girls and 44 percent of boys regularly attended elementary school. Craft and housekeeping schools enrolled fewer than 2,000 girls.12

There were no universities in Serbia until 1905; however, they were preceded by the Lyceum (1838), which had departments of legal and philosophical sciences. The Higher School (established in 1863) had faculties of philosophy, law, and technical sciences.13 In 1871 a girl by the name of Draga Ljočić attended lectures at the Faculty of Philosophy for one semester, after which she withdrew and went to Switzerland. Under the regulations, students were required to take a matriculation exam, and since no gymnasia admitted

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9 This law could not be implemented in practice, in part because Serbia had the youngest population in Europe. In the year 1900, 54 percent of its citizens were under 19 years of age, while 24 percent were between the ages of 5 and 14. The education of all children required more than 1,100 large school buildings and 12,000 teachers, which the Serbian economy could not finance. See Ljubinka Trgovčević, Planirana elita: O studentima iz Srbije na evropskim univerzitetima u 19. veku (Belgrade: Istorijijski institut, Službeni glasnik, 2003), 9–31.
12 Sundhaussen, Historische Statistik, 119, 533.
girls, female candidates had to take their graduation exam in male gymnasia. Most directors of gymnasia and rectors of the Higher School were reluctant to approve the enrollment of girls.

In 1891 two women, Leposava Bošković and Kruna Dragojlović, defied these obstacles and graduated from the Faculty of Philosophy. In subsequent years other women enrolled, and in 1905 the newly established University of Belgrade made no distinction between male and female students. By then, female students in Belgrade outnumbered female enrollees at other European universities. The exercise of the right to an education, even before it was granted to girls in the Habsburg and German empires, was the first victory of the Serbian women’s movement.

Paulina Lebl, a first-generation student at the University of Belgrade, wrote, “Generally, in our country, a conviction persisted in the very atmosphere that women should be precluded from higher education, and we didn’t even think that this opinion could be changed in the near future. In general, we perceived the entire feminist movement as a movement for higher education of girls.”

### Female Students at the High School and University of Belgrade

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Female Students</th>
<th>All Students</th>
<th>% of Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1892/3</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>583</td>
<td>2.74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1897/8</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>416</td>
<td>5.28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900/1</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>5.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1903/4</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>462</td>
<td>10.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905/6</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>487</td>
<td>15.40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Before taking advantage of the right to an education in their own country, Serbian girls who wanted a university education and to enter a profession usually attended universities elsewhere in Europe. In the second half of the century, the University of Zurich was the most receptive to female students. The first to enroll in its medical program, in 1872, was Draga Ljočić, who was joined by other Serbian women; by 1914, 32 Serbian women were studying in

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14 In France in 1900, female students made up 3 percent of all enrolled students.
15 Paulina Lebl Albala, *Tako je nekad bilo* (Belgrade: A. Lebl, 2005), 244.
16 *Statistika nastave u Kraljevini Srbiji za 1892/3 i 1893/4*, and vols. 1897/8, 1900/1, 1903/4, 1905/6 (Belgrade, 1898–1912).
Zurich; a few others were attending universities in Geneva, Lausanne, and Bern. The data from France, although incomplete, shows that in 1914 more than 20 female students from Serbia were paying their own way, while six had state scholarships. German universities did not open their doors to women until 1908. Between then and 1914, ten Serbian girls attended the University of Berlin, two enrolled in Munich, three in Halle, and one in each of Jena, Giessen, Tubingen, and Darmstadt. Several women who had completed their medical studies obtained their doctorates in Russia.

Apart from doctorates in medicine, several women earned doctorates in philosophy, law, and the sciences. The first PhD in philosophy among Serbian students was awarded to a girl from Belgrade, Pravda Marković, who earned this honor at the University of Munich at 24 with a thesis on Schopenhauer. At Swiss universities, which girls from Serbia first attended, a PhD in chemistry was granted to the Serbian chemist Vukosava Marjanović and a PhD in pedagogy to Ljubica Roknić.

The Serbian state supported the advanced education of its female citizens. After 1882 it sent 46 girls to universities and higher schools in Switzerland, France, Austria-Hungary, Russia, and Italy. This number constituted 5 percent of all state scholarship holders. Although this percentage seems small, it becomes impressive in light of the high rate of illiteracy, the general subordination of women, and Serbia’s poverty, as well as in comparison to the number of female students in far more developed European countries.

Ladies: The Pioneers of Professionalization

Entry into a profession implies the possession of a set of knowledge and skills obtained through specialized education. A profession itself, apart from profoundly contributing to material wealth and permanent income, is also a status symbol and a means of social advancement. The entry of women into professions required them to leave the home. In Serbia at that time, the only respectable social role for a woman was that of mother and housewife, who, in addition to working in the house, did farm work.

In contrast to more advanced countries, Serbia did not have clearly defined classes; it did have a small middle class, composed of civil servants,

17 Trgovčević, Planirana elita, 185–209.
19 Prawda M. Markowits, Die Einfühlung bei Schopenhauer (Munich: Wolf, 1910).
20 Trgovčević, Planirana elita, 290–93.
army officers, traders, academics, and a few doctors and engineers, and established gender relations were socially enforced. There were virtually no industrial workers, nor were there occupations at lower levels common to those in the West, such as domestic servants, which in Belgrade had mostly been left to newcomers from southern Hungary.

The first demand for professional women came from the education sector, so that Serbia’s first educated women were teachers, and then physicians, nurses, and telegraph operators. At the same time, women began conquering some of the remaining male bastions.

There were two motivations behind women’s appeal for education and choice of profession. The first was the desire for knowledge, and the second was the desire for economic self-sufficiency. The girls who acquired a profession most often belonged to the middle class; they were daughters of traders or senior public servants, who could afford to pay for their extended education.

Most often the strongest support for girls’ education came from family members. Dr. Pavle Bota expressed his commitment to the education of his daughter Milana, a philosophy student in Zurich:

> From the start of her schooling twelve years ago, I wanted, and I still want, her “survival” to be assured in any circumstance that may occur in her life, even if she should ever by misfortune lose the support of her husband and of course, more easily of her father.21 (Fig. 1)

Dr. Bota could support his daughter financially. However, Mrs. Lebl, a poor mother of four girls, also understood very well the importance of female independence As soon as the first Serbian female gymnasium was opened, she enrolled her youngest daughter, Paulina (“my mother didn’t doubt for a single day”).22

Class origin influenced the girls’ choice of school. Poor girls chose craft schools, professional career schools, or schools for teacher education for practical reasons as these professions improved their prospects for employment and self-sufficiency. On the other hand, for about half the wealthier young women who attended the Higher Women’s School, an education was thought to improve marriage prospects.

*Teachers and professors.* Teachers were the first women employed by the state in public service and therefore received recognition of their right to

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work. The demand for teachers coincided with the establishment of schools for girls. In the beginning, teaching positions were held by women from Hungary who were well-educated but not necessarily proficient in Serbian. Graduates of the Higher Women’s School were qualified to teach in girls’ schools. Alongside general education courses, the school offered instruction in housekeeping, handicrafts, singing, and the basics of pedagogy. In other words, girls were taught “these female specificities” that they would need as wives and mothers. With the opening of the Women’s School for Teacher Education (1900), male and female teachers had the same training and had to pass the teacher’s examination. Female teachers, however, were paid less than their male counterparts. The placement of teachers was determined by the state, and their first job was usually in a remote village.

Although they were public servants, female teachers were not appointed by ministerial decree as males were. A ministerial decree could only apply to those who had performed their military service. Thus, for a long time the status of female teachers remained legally unclear. Another important factor in their status came from regulations, which in most cases prevented female teachers from getting married and raising a family. Female teachers were not allowed to keep their jobs unless their husbands were also teachers. The assumption was that a woman would work only until marriage; afterwards, it would be the husband’s duty to provide for her. The extent to which this attitude was accepted is evidenced in a statement made by Ljubomir Kovačević, Minister of Education, who claimed in 1902 that if a female teacher “gets married, it cancels any reason whatsoever for a woman to deal with public service.” He added that “she cannot be a good mother and a good teacher, as she will be either a bad mother or a bad teacher” and concluded that women received sufficient concessions by being granted approval to marry their male colleagues.

However, these rigid regulations were not enforced, usually because there was a shortage of teachers. Sometimes women returned to work after marriage and childbirth, although it often meant that they would be separated from their families. The state placement of teachers could not always accommodate the needs of teacher couples, so many of them lived and worked in

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different places for years. In 1863 a man from Šabac petitioned the Minister of Education to order that his wife, a teacher in Valjevo, be dismissed from her job so that she could return home. He cited Article 110 of the Civil Code, which prescribed that a husband decides on all issues in the name of his wife. The minister denied the request, violating two laws: that a woman must obey all decisions of her husband and that female teachers who were married to men who were not teachers were ineligible to work. Although the restrictive laws remained in force, the number of exemptions increased, as did the number of women who wanted to work in their professions.

In addition to stipulating a mandatory level of professional knowledge, the law required teachers to be mature and well-behaved. In practice, this request was often abused by school inspectors or municipal authorities, which led to the dismissal or transfer of female teachers. Thus, the result was a dual scrutiny, professional and social. The livelihood of female teachers depended on the educational authorities’ arbitrary assessments of their conduct, because they were expected to set a good example for their students. Paulina Lebl, as a young girl, had so much respect for her teacher that she later wrote that “teacher Mara is getting married to a trader. What a fall, what a pain. As I understood at that time, teachers [and] professors were members of the highest social class, i.e., the highest beings on Earth.”

The state did not hold female teachers in such high esteem, in spite of some progress. The number of female teachers grew, much more slowly, however, than the number of male teachers. Additionally, equal attention was not paid to women’s professional education, as they only began to obtain adequate professional knowledge after 1900. The number of female teachers grew with the number of schools: in 1864 there were 38, and by 1900 the number had reached 916. It is evident that in time this profession became recognized and in smaller communities even valued, although the above-mentioned limitations for female teachers were extremely high. The only teachers were those individuals who liked the work and could make a living from it.

26 Stolić, “Vocation or Hobby,” 70.
27 Lebl Albala, Tako je nekad bilo, 44.
Architects. Jelisaveta Načić graduated from the Faculty of Engineering at Belgrade High School in 1900 and became Serbia’s first female architect.²⁹ She thus became one of the ten first female architects in the world.³⁰ (Fig. 3)

Thirteen years after Načić, Jovanka Bončić from Niš³¹ graduated with a degree in engineering from Darmstadt, thus becoming the first woman in Germany to have this title.³² A photograph of her sitting among her male colleagues was published in Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung in 1913 and on the cover page of the catalogue for the exhibition honoring the 100th anniversary of that university being open to women.³³

These two examples show that Serbian girls were entering demanding technical professions. What is even more impressive is that they were being hired. Upon graduation, Načić became an architect for the Belgrade municipality. Thus, she not only entered a male preserve but also distinguished herself by designing architectural pieces which still adorn Belgrade, such as the school “Kralj Petar” on the street of the same name (1906) and the Aleksandar Nevski Church. Her colleague Jovanka Bončić started her career as an architect in 1914, but upon marriage to a Russian she left Serbia only to return after the October Revolution. She was immediately admitted to the Ministry of Civil Engineering, and during her long career several of her projects were realized, among which are the Banska Palace in Banja Luka, the Women’s School for Teacher Education in Belgrade, and the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine. By 1914, several more women had graduated with degrees in architecture from the University of Belgrade: Angelina Nešić, Vidosava Milovanović, Jelena Golemović-Minić, and Milica Vukšić (married Karasin-

³⁰ The first American woman to become an architect was Mary L. Page (1873). In Europe the first was the Finn Signe Hornborg (1890), followed by the Norwegian Lilli Hansen (1894) and Briton Ethel Charles (1898). Two years after Načić’s graduation, the first woman graduated from the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, the American Julia Morgan. Elena Markova was the first Bulgarian to obtain the title of architect, and she received it in Berlin in 1917. The first Romanian female architect, Virginia Haret, did the same in 1919 at the School of Architecture in Bucharest, followed by the first Austrian, Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky, and the Canadian Ester Hill (1920).
³¹ Bončić’s examination records and diploma can be found in the Archive of the Technische Hochschule in Darmstadt (TH Darmstadt, Archiv), no. 25-2a.
ski). The majority of them established careers, some leaving upon marriage. In any case, they left their mark on architecture.

**Female physicians.** On 3 February 1879, Draga Ljočić from Šabac defended her doctoral thesis in medicine in Zurich and became Serbia’s first female physician. She had interrupted her studies to work as a nurse during the Serbo-Turkish War (1876–77). Nevertheless, she belonged to the first generation of European female physicians; preceding her were the Russian Nadezhda Suslova in 1867 and Elisabeth Garret Anderson from Britain, with a PhD from Paris in 1865. Ten years later the first Frenchwoman, Madeleine Brès, obtained her doctorate. In 1879, Aletta Jacobs from the Netherlands defended her PhD, followed by Maria Cuţarida from Romania (1884), Ana Panova from Bulgaria (1887), and Hedwig Wodmer Zimmerli from Switzerland (1889). Maria Montessori was the first to accomplish this at the University of Rome in 1896. Since there was no medical faculty in Serbia and the country had a shortage of physicians, young Serbian women followed Draga Ljočić to Switzerland and later to France, Russia, and Germany.

However, the medical diploma was not sufficient for obtaining employment. Immediately upon graduation, Dr. Ljočić submitted a request to the minister for permission to practice. 35 Despite the divided opinions of male colleagues, she was allowed to take the state examination, and after she passed it, she was granted permission to practice. However, she still could not work in public hospitals, because she had not completed military service. Ljočić herself commented on the absurdity of this provision in a job application, claiming that although the law did not envisage women physicians in public service, it did not prohibit them. When she was finally admitted to the Public Hospital in Belgrade in 1882, she could not obtain a better status than that of a physician’s assistant, although she performed the duties of the head of the Hospital for Women. (Fig. 2)

In 1886, she was promoted to assistant doctor, a position for which she was grossly overqualified. However, with the same assurance which made her decide to go study and prove women’s capacities for becoming medical doctors, Draga Ljočić continued to break through bureaucratic logjams in order to reach professional equality with her male colleagues. The requests she sent to ministers and the king himself resulted in her dismissal in 1889. By then she

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had enough of a reputation to establish her own practice, but she continued working for women’s professional and political emancipation. She did not receive the desired public appointment (decree) with the right to a pension until 1919. In the meantime, she helped found the Maternity Association and the Association of Women Physicians and contributed to the passage of regulations that allowed women to take professorial examinations. Although she suffered humiliation at the hands of her male colleagues, and particularly from the bureaucracy, which either would not or could not find a legal basis to put her undoubted expertise into the same realm with her male colleagues, Ljočić took strides toward the acceptance of women as equal professionals, which was gradually becoming the rule in Serbian society.36

What to Sacrifice – Family or Career?

The majority of Serbian female professionals wanted to define themselves as wives and mothers. One of them wrote, “It is not enough to obtain a diploma, get a job, become financially independent. It is equally important … to get married, get a life companion, own a home.”37 And of course, like the majority of women, they followed their instincts, fell in love, and raised families. Some of them abandoned their studies or careers.

Draga Ljočić balanced her private and professional duties without sacrificing her marriage or children. Her daughter Radmila Milošević, who graduated from medical school in Zurich in 1912, gave up her career when she married a Serbian diplomat. Mileva Andrejević returned to Serbia from Zurich with a husband but without her medical degree. Sometimes the termination of studies was influenced by financial troubles, sickness, marriage, or pregnancy. Svetislav Stefanović, who, in order to be with his sweetheart Milana Bota as soon as possible, wrote to his future father-in-law:

I was never against her taking the PhD, but I knew how much she would suffer working to obtain that ‘dumbing-down’ diploma. What I know is this: so far, she doesn’t even know the topic of her thesis, and between October and next May she needs to finish her dissertation, study Goethe and Schiller, acquire significant knowledge in experimental psychology, and remain healthy without losing her feminine nature. Our love is not since yesterday, nor does it need to be nurtured by phrases anymore. It is mature and gives us the right to be proud of

37 Lebl Albala, Tako je nekad bilo, 77–78.
it. It is strong and stronger now than ever and gives us the strength to overcome all existential difficulties.\(^\text{38}\)

Milana Bota left Zurich without completing her doctorate, married her impatient fiancé, gave birth to their children, and accompanied her husband throughout his successful career as a physician and writer. Her good friend Mileva Marić did the same by marrying Albert Einstein. The previous example also reflects both sides of the then male society: while the father wanted his daughter to achieve success in science and become independent, the boiling blood of her young lover was sending a message that love is a sufficient guarantee of her future status!

The assumption that a career is an obstacle to family life can be questioned when it comes to these female pioneers. They did not question the institution of marriage, but they wanted it to be an equal partnership. A sample of 24 women architects and 17 female physicians indicates that 62.8 percent were married and that 22 percent of them left their jobs after marriage.\(^\text{39}\) That is a larger percentage than in Western countries. Most of these pioneers of professional emancipation kept their birth name or added their husband’s surname. They were not only wives but independent persons with their own identity. Draga Ljočić was known by her maiden name, not her married name—Milošević. The same is true of Jovanka Bončić, whose married name was Katerinić, and Jelisaveta Načić, whose married name was Lukai. That readiness to keep their personal and professional identity was the result of an enormous effort to become accomplished and recognized on their own. Most of these women were familiar with the works on female emancipation by Svetozar Marković and Russian socialists, as well as the work and accomplishments of early feminist movements.

Their cousins and friends encouraged the first generation of Serbian female professionals to stand up against stereotypes and move towards professional and political emancipation. Draga Ljočić’s biggest supporters were her brother Đura and her husband, both of whom were socialists. The sisters Milica and Anka Ninković continued their education, inspired by the ideas of Svetozar Marković. In that prominent, although small generation, spouses were partners, and some of the advances towards recognition of women in public and professional life were accomplished with their help. Subsequent generations of girls did not have strong political encouragement, but they did

\(^{38}\) Letter from Svetislav Stefanović, January 1900, in Stefanović, Privatna priča, 197.

have more access to employment and less difficulty obtaining positions. All of these pioneers of female emancipation saw their occupations as a way to prove that both sexes were equal, and that is why the most active among them succeeded in achieving the right to education, equal employment, and professional recognition.

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Figure 1. Milana Bota, student from Serbia at the University of Zurich (1898)  
[Source: Private archive of the Stefanović family]

Figure 2. Dr. Draga Ljočić, the first female physician in Serbia  
[Source: Historical Museum of Serbia]
Figure 3. Main staircase, Kalemegdan Park. Project designed by Jelisaveta Načić, the first female architect in Serbia [Source: Historical Museum of Serbia]
Women’s World (1886–1914): Serbian Women’s Laboratory as an Entrance into the Public Sphere

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1. Introduction

In Serbian literature, there has not been a systematic study of women’s press, even though women in Vojvodina were reading women’s newspapers and magazines written in Serbo-Croatian, German, and Hungarian by the late 19th and early 20th century. Moreover, women from Novi Sad were editors and owners of magazines, both for women and for men. These women were Milica Tomić (Žena – Woman), Viktorija Jugović Risaković (Fruškogorac – Fruška Gora’s Newspaper), Jelica Belović-Bernadžikovska (Frauenwelt – Women’s World; Napredna snaga – Progressive Power; Srpska vezilja: Ilustrovani list za ručni rad, domaću potrebu i zabavu – The Serbian Female Embroiderer: Illustrated Magazine for Handicrafts, Home Necessities, and Entertainment), Zorka Lazić (Vrač pogađač – The Fortuneteller Guesser; Dečije novine – The Children’s Newspaper), and Zorka Hovorka (Srpsko cveće – Serbian Flowers).1 Little is known about the influence of the women’s press on the lives of its readers.

In my research on the women’s movement and on women’s magazines from the late 19th to mid-20th century, I have found a link between women’s activism and women’s magazines.2 It is quite clear that the first decades of the

1 Gordana Stojaković, Znamenite žene Novog Sada I (Novi Sad: Futura publikacije, 2001), 45–47.
2 As a result of the Znamenite žene Novog Sada (Famous Women from Novi Sad) project, the following papers by Gordana Stojaković were published: Znamenite žene Novog Sada I; Neda: Jedna biografija [Neda: One biography] (Novi Sad: Futura publikacije, 2002); Skica za portret: Antifašistički front žena Vojvodine 1942–1953 [An outline for a portrait: Antifascist Women’s Front in Vojvodina], in Partizanke: Žene u Narodnooslobodilačkoj borbi [Female Partisans: Women in the national liberation struggle], ed. Daško Milinović and Zoran Petakov (Novi Sad: Cenzura, 2010), 13–38; CD presentation of research called Antifašistički front Vojvodine 1942–1953 (Novi Sad, 2007); and Rodna perspektiva u novinama Antifašističkog fronta žena 1945–
Serbian women’s activism north and south of the Sava and the Danube rivers, was continuously covered. However, it is also evident that their activism was influenced by major women’s magazines in Serbian. These included Domaćica (Housewife; Belgrade, 1879–1914 and 1921–41), Ženski svet (Women’s World; Novi Sad, 1886–1914), and Žena (Woman; Novi Sad, 1911–14 and 1918–21).

Women were encouraged to publish news articles, book reports, illustrations, and literary works in these magazines. The most significant in terms of circulation and topics were the monthlies Ženski svet and Žena. Women’s World, an organ of the Serbian Women’s Charitable Cooperative owned by Dobrotvorna Zadruga Srpkinja Novosatkinja (Charitable Cooperative of Serbian Women from Novi Sad), was read by Serbian women from 1886 to 1914. The significance of this monthly is its continuity, circulation, and geographical distribution, in addition to its broad appeal to both urban and rural women.

Women’s World was a treasure trove of data on the activist and creative work of women and a forum for their first literary and journalistic works. The influence of these women on promoting the establishment and networking of women’s organizations for the sake of common actions and the exchange of ideas is unquestionable.

This analysis of the texts in Women’s World begins with the role of women in Vojvodina in the 19th and early 20th century. I will present data on the social and political context in which Women’s World appeared, with special attention to organizations that made a women’s press possible.

Analyzing the press for scientific reasoning is one of the usual methods of reconstructing the past. I apply it in this paper as a method of discourse analysis in order to point to the phenomenon of transferring socially constructed attitudes in the sense of the transformation of the status and role of women in Vojvodina from 1886 to 1914. I analyze the content and articles in Women’s World by applying the theories of gender studies of the last decade of the 20th century. This goal was achieved through analysis of the dominant topics, events, people, and groups presented as well as the texts of the authors. I also provide some basic information about both the female and male authors.


3 The names of female organizations are given in the original orthography. If they are not written in the text within quotations, where we find various orthographies, their names are given according to their “Constitutions.” The texts contain the original orthography within quotations, hence, in the light of the original texts the names of organizations or institutions will be used differently.
1.1. Women in the Public Sphere

During the 19th and early 20th century, the Serbs were scattered north and south of the Sava and Danube rivers in the Austro-Hungarian Empire and in the Ottoman Empire, but by 1830 they had their own state: the Principality of Serbia. From the 19th century to 1918, Vojvodina was part of the Habsburg Monarchy, an economically developed, multiethnic, and multireligious state that from 1867 on consisted of the Austrian Empire and the Kingdom of Hungary. The monarchy was enlarged by the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1908. The Kingdom of Hungary consisted of Hungary, Transylvania, Slovakia, Croatia, and Slavonia.

Novi Sad (Újvidék) was a peripheral city of Hungary but a center of Serbian cultural and political life. The Serbian Reading Room was established in 1845. The seat of Matica Srpska (1826), the oldest and most important cultural institution, was moved from Pest (Pešta) to Novi Sad in 1864. The literary magazine Letopis Matice srpske (Matica Srpska’s Chronicle) was founded in 1826 and is still in publication. The first professional Serbian theater was established in Novi Sad in 1861.

The Ujedinjena omladina srpska (United Serbian Youth), founded in the 1860s, was a Serbian cultural movement created to awaken national awareness and instill cultural values. Women’s issues were not a priority. The writer and actress Draga Dejanović raised such issues. She demanded women’s economic independence as a precondition for their liberation. In her article “Emancipacija Srpkinja” (Serbian Women’s Emancipation), published...

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4 The Austrian Empire lasted until 1867, the year when Austria-Hungary was established.
5 The Principality of Serbia (Kneževina Srbija) was established in 1830 and internationally recognized in 1878.
6 On page xiii of the text “Zemlje i države na svijetu,” published in Srbo Bran: Narodni srpski kalendar za godinu 1914 (Zagreb: Srpska štamparija u Zagrebu, 1914), we find that Austria-Hungary with Bosnia and Herzegovina had 51,390,223 citizens. Reading further, we find that “in Austria, religiously speaking, there are 25,949,627 Roman Catholics, 667,065 Orthodox, 588,686 Evangelists and Calvinists, 1,313,687 Jews, and 52,869 others. In Hungary with Croatia and Slavonia there are thousands of residents including 618 Roman Catholics and Uniates, 190 Evangelists and Calvinists, 143 Orthodox, 45 Jews, and 4 others. In Bosnia and Herzegovina there are 612,000 Muslims, 825,000 Orthodox, 442,000 Roman Catholics, 12,000 Jews, and 6,000 Evangelists... Vienna, the capital of Austria, hosts 2,031,000 residents, Budapest, Hungary 880,000, Sarajevo in Bosnia and Herzegovina 52,000... Currency: (K) Crown of one hundred poturas.”
7 Đorđe Srbulović, Kratka istorija Novog Sada (Novi Sad: Prometej/Opštinski zavod za zaštitu spomenika kulture, 2002), 99.
Dejanović advocated for equal education for boys and girls, women’s economic independence, and the abolition of the “patriarchal constraints that bind woman to the house even under the most difficult marital moral bargains.” She thought it was possible and necessary for women and girls to work in bakeries and restaurants, or to do the work of tailors and weavers, producing gloves, hats, or shoes and watches, in order to become economically and financially secure.

According to the plan for the cultural revival of the Serbian people in Vojvodina, women were allowed to study at girls’ colleges. The first such institutions were established in Novi Sad and Pančevo (1874) and in Sombor (1875). Women who were educated at these colleges and universities gravitated toward careers in teaching, nursing, midwifery, and later medicine.

While women were still barred from public life, they were allowed to establish humanitarian and educational organizations. The first such Serbian female organization, the Serbian Women’s Charitable Cooperative, formed in 1873 in Velika Kikinda, was followed by 22 Serbian women’s cooperatives in Hungary by the beginning of the 20th century. These cooperatives appeared in Veliki Bečkerek (Zrenjanin), Turski Bečej (Novi Bečej), Melenci, Pančevo, Temišvar (Timișoara, today a city in Romania), Vršac, Bela Crkva, Novo Selo, Veliki Sentmikluš (in present-day Romania), Segedin (Szeged, today a city in Hungary), Battonja (Battonya, Hungary), Novi Sad, Sentomaš (today Srbobran in Serbia), Stari Bečej, Ada, Subotica, Sombor, Čurug, Stari Futog, Stapor, and Budapest (the capital of Hungary). The largest and most affluent were Prosvetna zadruga “Svete Majke Angeline” (Educational Cooperative of “Holy Mother Angelina”; 1898) in Budapest, Dobrotvorna zadruga Srpkinja Novosatkinja (Charitable Cooperative of Serbian Women from Novi Sad; 1880), Dobrotvorna zadruga Srpkinja u Subotici (Charitable Cooperative of Serbian Women in Subotica; 1878), and Veliko Kikindska Dobrotvorna Zadruga Srpkinja (Charitable Cooperative of Serbian Women in Velika Kikinda; 1873). The “Holy Mother Angelina” Cooperative was dedicated to girls’ education. A three-story Angelineum was built in the center of Pest in 1908.

According to Arkadije Varadanin, Novi Sad’s cooperative had “196 regular members and 32 supporters … its own one-story house, with an estimated value of 40,000 K and 20,121.39 in cash … Dorde F. Nedeljković’s
fund 11,581.86 K, for clothing poor schoolchildren and providing firewood for the poor.12 In 1908, the Serbian Women’s Charitable Cooperative in Velika Kikinda had “9 beneficiaries and 90 regular members,” and its property consisted of a house worth 7,663.67 crowns, with kindergarten and cash in the amount of 18993.59 crowns (in 1910 this was about $3,700).13 In addition to the kindergarten, the cooperative established (1 May 1891) and financed a “working school” for girls. In 1938, the cooperative owned two houses in Kikinda’s downtown: one on the corner of Vuk Karadžić and Nikola Pašić streets and the other on Vilsonova street.14

Up until 1901, the Serbian Women’s Charitable Cooperative in Subotica offered 600-crown scholarships for talented but needy girls from its endowment of 12,000 crowns.15 In 1904, the Charitable Cooperative in Subotica, with an investment of 100 crowns, became a member of Matica Srpska; two years later, with a 200-crown investment, it became a member of the Serbian National Theater in Novi Sad. In 1923 the cooperative became “a charity member of maternal association” in Belgrade, and with a contribution of 1,500 dinars, it helped build a home for juveniles in Belgrade.16 The members of the cooperative helped the work of Gajret (a Muslim educational and cultural association) in 1926, the Committee for the Protection of Blind Girls in Belgrade (1930), the Croatian Singing Society “Neven” (1931), unemployed workers (1932), and the families of those miners who died in Kakanj (a small town in today’s Bosnia) (1934). The greatest successes of the cooperative were the establishment of the Teachers’ Boarding School for Women (1924) and the Women’s Trade School (1922), both in Subotica.17

The former was established at the initiative of the Ministry of Education.

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12 Gordana Stojaković, Diskursive osobine privatne prepiske o knjizi “Srpskinja: Njezin život i rad, njezin kulturni razvitak i njezina narodna umjetnost do danas (1909–1924)” [Discursive features of private correspondence about the book Serbian Woman: Her Life and Work, Her Cultural Growth and Her Folk Art up to the Present (1909–1924)], specialized work, University of Novi Sad (Center for Gender Studies, ACIMSI, 2005), 3, www.nsic.yu.

13 Data was gained on the basis of the crown/dollar exchange rate which was provided by Arkadije Varadanin, “Ženska udrženja medu Srpskinjama” [Women’s associations among Serbian women] in “Ženski svet”: Kalendar za prostu godinu 1910 [Women’s World: Calendar for the year 1910] (Zemun: Štamparija Milan Ilkić, 1910), 97–106.

14 Gordana Stojaković, Kikinda iz ženskog ugla [Kikinda from a female point of view] (Kikinda: Centar za podršku ženama, 2010), 8.

15 Izveštaj o radu Dobrotvorne zadruga Srpskinja u Suboticë [Report on the activities of the Charitable Cooperative of Serbian Women in Subotica] (Subotica: Dobrotvorna zadruga Srpskinja u Subotici, 1938), 16.

16 Ibid., 23.

17 Ibid., 22.
Serbian women also established cooperatives in other parts of Austria-Hungary. By 1906, there were 22 cooperatives in Croatia and Slavonia, 3 in Dalmatia, 1 in Vienna, and 11 in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Varadanin writes that “in Austria-Hungary, Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as in America, there are 5,441 members (from each kind of cooperative), and their property in cash and other assets is 927,514.47 K. More than one-third of this capital belongs to the Educational Cooperative of St. Mother Angelina in Budapest.”

In order to coordinate the actions of women’s organizations and to more effectively use the funds, Serbian women from the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy initiated activities to form an alliance modeled on the Serbian National Women’s Federation (1906) with Novi Sad as its headquarters. Because of the opposition of Hungarian authorities, the Alliance of Serbian Women from Vojvodina and Croatia was based in Zagreb. The alliance worked “under the guise” of a joint-stock company, which had the task to “improve the households of its members and other Serbian women.”

The Serbian-Bosnian Women’s Association was founded in 1911 on the initiative of the Charitable Cooperative of Serbian Women in Sarajevo. There were more than 20 cooperatives in this association. The Bosnian government approved of its work in 1912. The alliance launched a Serbian women’s magazine which ceased publication after its third issue.

1.2. The Press Dedicated to Women

The network of women’s organizations was a fertile ground for the formation and maintenance of magazines aimed at women. According to the book Srpska štampa 1768–1995: Istorijos-bibliografski pregled (Serbian Press 1768–1995: A Historical-Bibliographic Review), the following publications were directed toward female readers:

- Domaćica (The Housewife), Belgrade, 1879–1914 and 1921–41

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18 Ženski svet, no. 3 (1906), 51–52.
19 Varadanin, “Ženska udruženja među Srpskim,” 106. Based on the US dollar and Austro-Hungarian crown exchange rate (1 US dollar was equivalent to 5 Austro-Hungarian crowns, K), the value in property and cash of the Serbian women’s cooperatives in Austria-Hungary, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and America worthed $927,514.47, or 185,502.89 US dollars in 1910.
21 Ibid., 12–13.
Women’s World: Serbian Women’s Laboratory

Srpkinja: Poučan i zabavan list za naše ženskinje (Serbian Woman: Instructive and Entertaining Paper for Our Girls), Pančevo, 1882–83 and 1886

Bazar: Novine za modu i zabavu (Bazaar: Magazine for Fashion and Entertainment), Belgrade, 1883

Ženski svet (Women’s World), Novi Sad, 1886–1914

Ženski zabavnik: List za svakog (Women’s Entertainer: A Paper for Everyone), Belgrade, 1890

Posestrima: List za pouku i zabavu našem ženskinju (The Sisterhood: Magazine for the Instruction and Entertainment of Our Girls), Velika Kikinda, 1890

Porodica: List za roditelje (The Family: Magazine for Parents), Belgrade, 1892

Domaće blago: List za srpsku porodicu (The Home Treasure: Magazine for the Serbian Family), Belgrade, 1893

Ručni rad: List za muški i ženski rad u srpskoj školi (Handiwork: Magazine for Male and Female Work in Serbian School), Belgrade, 1898–1901

Materinski list: Ilustrovan mesečnik za domaće vaspitanje i negovanje dece, ispitivanje detinjstva i rad u zabavištu (The Mother’s Magazine: An Illustrated Monthly Magazine for Home Care and Nurturing of Children, Studying of Childhood, and Work in Kindergarten), Belgrade, 1901–03

Srpska vezilja: Ilustrovan list za ručni rad, domaću potrebu i zabavu (Serbian Embroiderer: Illustrated Paper for Handicrafts, Home and Entertainment Needs), Vršac, 1903, 1905–06

Žena: Mesečni časopis za žene (Woman: A Monthly Magazine for Women), Novi Sad, 1911–14 and 1918–21

Srpska žena: Organ Saveza dobrotvornih zadruga Bosne i Hercegovine (Serbian Woman: An Organ of the Association of Charitable Cooperatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina), Sarajevo, 1912–13

In Vojvodina, by the late 19th and early 20th century, women could read magazines in Serbo-Croatian, German, and Hungarian. The Housewife, Women’s World, and Woman covered the first decades of activism of Serbian women north and south of the Sava and the Danube. At the same time, women were encouraged to publish their own writing. In Vojvodina, the most significant of these publications were Women’s World and Woman.

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World, for which Arkadije Varadanin was the editor, was a magazine run by the Serbian Women’s Charitable Cooperative. The magazine was published on the first day of each month. Woman had the subheading “a monthly magazine for women” between 1911 and 1914, and from 1918 to 1921 it was “a journal for entertainment and instruction.”

Women’s World contains a wealth of data on the activist and creative work of women. Woman advocated for women’s suffrage. Both papers were of great importance to the collaboration and exchange of ideas among women activists.

The press for women in Vojvodina came from other parts of the empire, and knowledge of language, primarily Hungarian and German, enabled women of different ethnic groups in Vojvodina to expand their own knowledge and interests. Vojvodina’s most important newspaper in Hungarian for women was A Nó és a Társadalom (Woman and Society), renamed A Nő (Woman) in 1914. The editor was Rózsa Bédy-Schwimmer (1877–1948), a leading Hungarian and European feminist. The newspaper was an organ of the Hungarian Feminist Association (Feministák Egyesülete).

1.3. Arkadije Varadanin (1844–1922)

After graduating from the Serbian Teachers’ School in Sombor in 1864, Arkadije Varadanin began his career as a pedagogue in his native town of Velika Kikinda. A Serbian National-Church council funded his training under the German pedagogue Dr. Karl Kehr (1830–85) in the town of Gotha. He became the headmaster of the Serbian Girls’ College in Novi Sad in 1874, the year the school was founded, and held this position for 31 years. During his tenure, the Serbian Teachers’ Boarding School and the Teachers’ Society “Natošević” in Novi Sad were founded.

He was a board member of the Serbian government’s largest monetary institution in Hungary, the Central Credit Bureau, and a member of the Literary and Administrative Board of Matica Srpska and of the Serbian National Theater. At the initiative of Nana Natošević and Arkadije Varadanin, the Charitable Cooperative in Novi Sad was founded in 1880, and Varadanin became its secretary. In addition, he was an editor for Women’s World (1886–1914) and Matica Srpska’s Chronicle (1910–11).

His work in the field of women’s education, in encouraging and supporting women’s literary work, was very important. His work on the

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23 Rozsa Schwimmer’s activism for women’s suffrage was regularly followed in the magazine Žena, founded and edited by Milica Tomić. Žena, no. 5 (1911), 317; no. 7 (1912), 347–52; no. 4 (1913), 240–45.
collection and publication of reports on the activities of women’s organizations was also crucial.

Varadanin was active in women’s education until the end of his life. He encouraged girls and women to write, and he published some of their works in *Women’s World*.

From the late 19th and early 20th century, Varadanin enjoyed great respect within the women’s activist and creative corps in the Serbian community. Varadanin’s wife, Beta (Varvara), née Stefanović, was the first Serbian woman to complete a program for preschool teachers in Gotha. Their daughter, Vida Varadanin Vulko, was a founder of the Women’s Musical Association, a board member of the Charitable Cooperative of Serbian Women from Novi Sad, and president of the local committee of the Red Cross.

### 2. *Women’s World*: Chronicle of Women’s Public Works in Serbian Society

#### 2.1. The Beginning and the End

The first issue of *Women’s World* was published on 6 April 1886. According to the header, it was “an organ of the Serbian Women’s Charitable Cooperative.” It was a monthly magazine published on the “entire sheet of paper.” It cost “one forint a year or two dinars in silver.” Varadanin wrote:

>This cooperative has found that the most convenient and the best sower would be one common newspaper which would connect all existing cooperatives from this side in one spiritual community and thus make other Serbian women become thrilled by the idea of charitable and cultural association for the sake of its suffering people…. Its second task is to broadcast the activities of our female cooperatives, and by doing so, assure its people and society of its beautiful mission, pure intentions, and noble work. And eventually, its task is to take women’s education to a higher level, if it is possible to do such a thing in this way, though its direction will be limited mainly to those three areas which are of strictly and solely feminine nature like. That is, it will give women advice as mothers on how to nurture and raise their children, will give them lessons on health care … teach them how to behave as wives and make peace, happiness, and contentment in their homes, their sanctuary, and teach them how

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24 *Ženski svet*, no. 1 (1886), 1–2.
25 This refers to cooperatives of Serbian women in Austria-Hungary.
to become better housewives and generally help our women establish Christian morals, plant virtues, encourage patriotism and enthusiasm for everything that is useful, commendable, and worthy.\textsuperscript{26}

In “Subscribe here,” we find that the idea for the newspaper originated with the members of the Charitable Cooperative of Serbian Women from Novi Sad and that the other cooperatives situated in Vršac, Velika Kikinda, Veliki Bečerek, Srpski Bečej, Bela Crkva, Mitrovica, Subotica, Sentomaš, Segedin, and Ruma had joined “the common cause.”\textsuperscript{27}

Women’s World aspired to a Serbian readership: the forint was the Austro-Hungarian currency, while the dinar was used in the Principality of Serbia. The editorial board consisted of Arkadije Varađanin, Dr. Đorđe Natošević, Dr. Ilija Ogjanović, Dr. Milan Jovanović-Batut, Jovan Simeonović-Čokić, and Pavle Marković Adamov.\textsuperscript{28} The editorial board invited all the secretaries of charitable cooperatives, teachers and senior teachers in Serbian girls’ colleges, “patriots and especially our Serbian women, whom God gave the talent and power to help our noble enterprise”\textsuperscript{29}—as they called Women’s World.

\textsuperscript{26} “Našla je zadruga ova da je najzgodniji i najbolji sejaš jedan zajednički list koji bi sve dosadanje zadruge s ove strane vezivao u duhovnu zajednicu i pri tom oduševljavao i ostale Srpskinje na tu misao udruživanja za dobrotvornu i kulturnu cel svoga napačenog naroda… Drugi mu je zadatak, da iznosi na javnost rad na ovostrani ženskih zadruga, da tim narod i društvo uverava o svom lepom pozivu, o čistoj nameri i plemenitom radu. I na posletku uzeo je u zadatak da podiže žensko više obrazovanje, ukoliko se to ovakim putem može činiti, a smer će svoj ogrančavanje poglavitno na ona tri pravca, koja su čisto ženskoj prirodi blagodana, a to je: davaće im savete kao materama, kako će odranjivati i odgajati decu, pružaće im pouke kako će negovati zdravlje svojih … poučavati, kako će kao supruge stvarati mir, sreću i zadovoljstvo u kući, toj porodičnoj svetinji i uopšte pomagaće da se u društvu naših ženskinja utvrđuje hrišćanski moral, zasađuje vrlina, krepi rodoljublje i podstiče oduševljenje za sve ono što je lepo korisno i uzorito.” Ženski svet, no.1 (1886), 1–2.

\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., 29–30.

\textsuperscript{28} Đorđe Natošević (1821–87) was a physician, superintendant of Serbian schools in Austria-Hungary, an MP, and the president of Matica srpska. Ilija Ogjanović-Abukazem (1845–1900), a physician and writer, was also an editor of Javor for some time (1874–93). Milan Jovanović-Batut (1847–1940), a physician, served as rector of Big School (Velika škola) in Belgrade, president of the Serbian Medical Society, editor of Zdravlje newspaper, and was one of the founders of the Medical Faculty at the University of Belgrade. Jovan Simeonović-Čokić was a prominent academic from Sremski Karlovci. Pavle Marković Adamov (1855–1907), a writer and a teacher at the gymnasium in Sremski Karlovci, was an editor of Brankovo kolo magazine for some time.

\textsuperscript{29} Ženski svet, no. 1 (1886), 31–32.
Judging from articles in *Zastava* (Flag), *Branik*, *Stražilovo*, *Javor* (Maple), *Naše vreme* (Our Time), and *Bosanska vila* (Bosnian Fairy), the first issue of *Women’s World* was greeted with approval by the Serbian cultural community.\(^{30}\) The editor praised the support of an anonymous benefactor from Gornji Milanovac:

> But girls, we need to hold on and maintain our presence by defending ourselves, by what is lifting us, by what is preparing our future—to prove to the world it is unworthy of its vain rise, which it has boasted over crushed women’s world for so many centuries. We would be real cowards and one big nothing, not worth fighting for, if we didn’t give life to our magazine, mainly by subscribing to it and reading it (of course not in the skimble-skamble manner).\(^{31}\)

In the first year, *Women’s World* distributed nine issues in the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Principality of Serbia, each issue with a circulation of 1,100 copies, which was rare at the time. As an editor, Varadanin happily noted the rise in circulation and the number of subscribers. He testified that “we hit the right spot of our people, especially our women’s world and that we did a great job.”\(^{32}\)

Financial irregularities within *Women’s World* caused discord between Varadanin and Julka Radovanović, the head of the Charitable Cooperative of Serbian Women from Novi Sad. Varadanin eventually threatened to resign from *Women’s World* and from his position as secretary in the cooperative:

> But when recently, on December 8 this year, in your presence and with your approval, it was said to me that I’ve cheated the cooperative, and thus taken advantage of the subscribers, by taking 1f instead of 75n for the subscription fee and 200f for editing instead of 150f, since in 1886 I had published and edited the magazine for only nine months: then I saw in your hearts hidden anxiety for the social interests, and suspicion arose that I followed my own interests at the expense of damaging social material interests…. It was obvious that

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\(^{30}\) *Ženski svet*, no. 2 (1886), 34–35.

\(^{31}\) “Ali ženskinje i toga radi treba da održi ono što ga brani, što ga podiže, što mu spremal budućnost—da dokaže svetu e je suviše nedostojan onog praznog uzvišenja, kojim se toliko vekova ponosi nad smrženim ženskim svetom. Bile bi smo prave slabotinje i odista nule za koje se ne vredi boriti kad ne bi smo svoj list održavali glavno—pretplatom i čitanjem (naravno ne u vetar).” Ibid., 36.

\(^{32}\) *Ženski svet*, no. 9 (1886), 257–58.
you considered me a cheat. I was trying so hard to prove the opposite … but you remained convinced that I was guilty of taking away 50f in salary from the cooperative and 25n per issue from the subscribers… You asked that I give you 50f from my salary and 224f 50n from each subscriber … moreover, you wanted me to make another contract which would bring more profit to the cooperative.33

Varadanin was persuaded to remain with *Women’s World* and with the Charitable Cooperative of Serbian Women from Novi Sad. This episode shows that the cooperative was a serious enterprise based on precise finances and contracts.

*Women’s World* was not published during the First World War. In 1918, Bačka, Banat, and Baranja were annexed to the Kingdom of Serbia. The nationalist hopes of the Serbian population in Vojvodina were being fulfilled. However, *Women’s World* was not run again. The Charitable Cooperative of Serbian Women in Zagreb had offered to take over publication, but the Charitable Cooperative of Serbian Women from Novi Sad did not want to give up publishing rights, so the magazine ceased publication34. Belgrade then became the center of women’s activism.

### 2.2. *Women’s World* Content

The content of the first nine issues of the magazine for 1886 was published in a separate section of the last issue for that year. Articles were grouped into the following sections: Songs, Articles, Charitable Cooperative Work, Papers; Miscellaneous, and Mail. Many pages were dedicated to “Little Papers”: “a)

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33 “Ali kad mi se onomadne 8/20 decembra o.g. počelo u Vašoj prisutnosti i odobravanjem prebacivati da sam prevario zadrugu i zakinuo pretplatniše tim, što sam uzeo za list pretplate od 1f a u ime honorara za uređivanje lista 200f mesto da sam po Vašem mišljenju uzeo za pretplatu samo 75n a za honorar 150f, pošto sam te 1886. godine izdavao i uređivao list samo 9 meseci: onda sam video, da se u Vašim srima skriva zebnja za interese društvene i da se pojavljuje podezrenje kao da ja idem za tim da na svoj račun štetim društvene materijalne interese…. videlo se da me smatrate za varalicu. Badava sam ja dokazivao, da u pozivu za pretplatu izrikom stoji, da se plaća 1for. za ovu 1886. g. … ipak ste Vi ostali s tim ubeđenjem, da sam ja zakinuo zadrugu sa 50f. u honoraru i sve pretplatniše po 25 nov. od primjerka… tražili ste … da Vam na lep način dodem kako od honorara 50f, tako od svakog pretplatnika 224f 50n … i pored svega tog, tražili ste da sačinim drugi ugovor koji će zadruzi izgurati lepši i bolji dobitak.” A letter from Varadanin to Radovanović, manuscript, 1886, Rukopisno odeljenje Matice srpske—ROMS (Manuscript Department of Matica Srpska Library), no. 15417, Novi Sad.

34 Compare Jovan Grčić’s letter to Varadanin, manuscript, 17 April 1921, ROMS, no. 16035; and Varadanin’s postcard to Grčić, manuscript, 25 April 1921, ROMS, no. 3778.
From the company, b) For the sake of health, c) For housewives, d) From the garden, e) For mothers, and f) Miscellaneous.”

In (a) “From the Company” in 1886, the following articles were published:

“New Fashion” (p. 23)
“Women’s University in Moscow” (p. 87)
“How Did People Live Some 100 Years Ago” (p. 120)
“First Female University” (p. 153)
“Female Artists” (p. 154)
“Women’s Suffrage” (p. 182)
“Women’s Society Against Drunkenness” (p. 182)
“Higher Women’s Education” (p. 215)
“Women and the Medical School” (p. 215)
“Women’s Craft School” (p. 249)
“Practical Schools and Women” (p. 250)
“The Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences” (p. 282).

Texts grouped in the section (b) “For the Sake of Health” had these headlines:

“Don’t Forget to Clean the Basement, Too” (p. 24)
“Madness Coming from Drinks, Spirits, Wine, and Beer” (p. 25)
“Beware of Colored Clothes” (p. 25)
“Sunbeam as a Medicine” (p. 56)
“Summer and Our Food” (p. 57)
“On Tobacco Smoking” (p. 58)
“Is it Good to Keep Your Window Open during a Thunderstorm” (p. 89)
“It is Not Good for Children to Sleep Next to Grown-Ups” (p. 89)
“Why are Fruits and Vegetables Good” (p. 125)
“Wrinkles” (p. 125)
“For Sick Children” (p. 154)
“What Food Should Children Get Used To” (p. 183)
“Health of People in Different Places” (p. 283).

35 Ženski svet, no. 9 (1886), iv–vi.
36 Ibid., iv.
37 Ibid.
Among the headlines in section (c) “For Housewives,” the following titles can be found:

“How to Remove Stains From Black Silk” (p. 27)
“Do You Have a Desire to Eat All the Time?” (p. 28)
“Poultry and Mortality” (p. 28)
“Poultry and Orchards” (p. 28)
“How to Fatten Poultry Fast” (p. 28)
“How to Fatten Geese Fast” (p. 61, 92)
“How the Cow Can Give More Milk” (p. 91)
“How to Cook the Soap of M.M.” (p. 156)
“Leaving and Cooking Fruits by J. K. Borjanović” (p. 185)
“Sweet Wines that You Can Drink Throughout the Whole Year” (p. 187)
“Beans and Peas in Pods that Last until Easter” (p. 188)
“How to Make the Sweetest Bread” (p. 188)
“Pickled Cucumbers that Won’t Become Moldy” (p. 220)
“How to Keep Your Parsnip Better over the Winter” (p. 220)
“How to Keep the Flies Away from Food” (p. 220)
“How to Save Sour Cabbage from Acetifying” (p. 254)
“Poultry in Winter” (p. 284)
“The Best Way to Buy or Sell a Pig” (p. 284)\(^{38}\)

“From the Garden” comprises a series of tips on cultivating flowers (georgina, nasturtium, hyacinth, carnation, “lepa Kata,”\(^ {39}\) and oleander branch) (pp. 28, 29), growing vegetables (kohlrabi, cucumbers, tubers, eggplant, beans…), and fruit (cherries and strawberries).\(^ {40}\)

Readers of the section for mothers could read the following articles: “To Teach Children to Safeguard and Save Money” (pp. 26, 217), “Do Not Turn Your Children into Guttlers (Overeaters)” (p. 26), “To Raise Children Mentally, Too” (p. 60), “Higher Serbian Girls’ Schools” (p. 158), “The Three Largest Gems among Books about Education” (p. 126), etc. Among the articles in section (f) “Miscellaneous” we find: “Have Mercy on a Bird in a Cage” (p. 190), “Mosquitoes—That Won’t Bother You While You’re Sleeping” (p. 191), and “The Third Age” (p. 255).\(^ {41}\)

In the section “Articles,” the following headlines stand out: “What Women Know to Do” (pp. 65–66, 129–30, 161–62, 195–96, 225–26, 259–

\(^{38}\) Ibid., iv–v.

\(^{39}\) Aster amellus

\(^{40}\) Ženski svet, no. 9 (1886), v.

\(^{41}\) Ibid.
Judging by the contents of *Women’s World* from the year of 1886, the section “Charitable Cooperative Work” is most associated with the work of the Charitable Cooperative of Serbian Women from Novi Sad (pp. 17–18, 45–46, 75–76, 111–12, 141–42, 173–74, 209–10, 243–44, 273–74) and the Charitable Cooperative of Serbian Women in Subotica (pp. 19–20, 118–19, 245–46, 279–80). There are also reports and news on the activities of the Charitable Cooperative of Serbian Women in Bela Crkva, Serbian Women’s Charitable Cooperative in Velika Kikinda, Serbian Women’s Charitable Cooperative in Segedin, Charitable Cooperative of Serbian Women in Vršac, Serbian Women’s Charitable Cooperative in V. Bečkerek, Serbian Women’s Charitable Cooperative in Ruma, Charitable and Educational Cooperative of Serbian Women in St. Bečej, Women’s Charitable Cooperative in Mitrovica, and Serbian Women’s Charitable Cooperative in St. Futog.

In 1910, the following topics were covered:


*Songs:* Christmas Eve, Your Portrait, Post Factum, Prayer to St. Sava, On Mother’s Grave, To Heart, To Brother Čeda, To You, To My Neighbor.

*Correspondence:* Zagreb – Ruma.

*Work:* Novi Sad

*Small Paper:* Jovo Illiterate, The Unexpected Turn.

The most important contents were moved to “Articles,” “Work,” and “Letters.” For the development of the women’s movement, important texts are found in “Articles”: “Serbian Woman,” “Opening of the Exhibition ‘Serbian Woman’ in Prague,” “The Emancipation of Women,” and “Alliance of Serbian Women as a Cooperative.”

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42 ** signifies a person who did not want to be identified to the readers.

43 Ženski svet, no. 12 (1910), separate section.

The magazine was enriched with new sections in 1911. “Articles,” “Letters,” “Poems,” “Work,” and “Small Paper” were complemented with “Journal,” “Obituaries,” “Notes,” “Literature,” and “Miscellaneous.”

The gazette also contained short articles about awards, recognitions, anniversaries, and accomplishments of prominent figures and of the Serbian people:

- “40th Annual Celebration of Andrija Lukić”
- “100th Anniversary of the Birth of Nikanor Gruijić” (no. 1, 1911)
- “Varađanin’s Medal” (no. 2, 1911)
- “100th Anniversary of Dositej” (no. 4, 1911)
- “Serbian Woman: Candidate for a Lawyer” (no. 5, 1911)
- “Medals of Helena Gavriloči and Miljev Pl. Milekić” (no. 6, 1911)
- “Charitable Cooperative’s Ceremony”
- “Literary Award to Jel. Dimitrijević” (no. 10, 1911)
- “New Serbian Women in Scientific and Commercial Vocations”
- “Requiem for Miss Irbijeva” (no. 11, 1911)
- “Brother and Sister Become Doctors of Medicine” (no. 12, 1911)

Obituaries often took the form of short biographies. They are the only source of information about the lives and activities of many charity cooperative members north and south of the Sava and Danube rivers.

“Notes” consisted of news articles about “Education,” “Health,” and “Housewives.” Among the texts on education we find information on “Gornjo-Karlovačka’s Teachers’ School,” “Women’s Gymnasium in Belgrade,” and “Institute of Ms. Netović in Niš.” Health tips were practical advice on caring for patients and on the importance of sleep and nutrition. Among the articles on literature in 1911, the reviews were mostly gathered from the following Serbian magazines and newspapers:

- Dački prijatelj (Student’s Friend)
- Žena (Woman)
- Pčelica (Little Bee)
- Golub (Pigeon)
- Spomenak (Scrapbook)
- Mali đakon (Little Deacon)
- Srpski soko (Serbian Falcon)
- Otadžbina (Fatherland)
- Srpska vezilja (A Serbian Embroiderer)
- Srpska škola (Serbian School)
Women’s World: Serbian Women’s Laboratory

Pravoslavlje (Orthodoxy)
Bosanska vila (Bosnian Fairy)
Pijemont (The Piedmont)
Srpski pčelar (Serbian Beekeeper)
Zmaj (Dragon)

Readers were recommended to pay attention to “Thus Spoke Zarathustra by Friedrich Nietzsche” (no. 11), “Đura Jakšić’s Issue” (no. 10), and “The History of the Serbian People in Images and Words” (no. 12).

The content of Women’s World was quite in accordance with its goals. The articles and information had to inform, encourage activism and personal improvement, as well as educate and engage Serbian women of all ages and social classes.

2.3. Women’s World Contributors

Arkadije Varadanin was a pedagogue and headmaster of the Serbian Girls’ College and the editor in chief of Women’s World. Among the magazine’s Serbian associates were other educators such as


Milovanović, Ljuba (St. Bečej) Mrdenović, Ružica (Stapar) Novaković, Milan (Dolovo) Pantelić, Maksa (Vršac) Popović, Dorde (Bela Crkva) Poštić, Boško and Aleksandra (Stapar) Putnik, Danica (Perlez) Radić, Stevan (Irig) Simić, Mileva (Novi Sad) Stanivuković, Draga (Vršac) Svirčević, Bogdan (Subotica) Šimić, Vukosava (St. Pazova) Terzin, Laza (Sentandreja) Udicki, Jovan (Mitrovica) Uzelac, Dane (Vukovar) Živković, Sofija (Sremska Mitrovica) Živojnović, Jovan (Novi Sad)
Among pedagogues outside of Austria-Hungary, the list of associates from 1911 includes:

- Ćirić, Anka (Belgrade)
- Kojić, Dorde (Belgrade)
- Kosić, Slavko (Stojnik)
- Prica, Zora (Belgrade)
- Radosavljević, Dr. Paja (New York)
- Vuković, M. Milan (Pljevlja)

The associate network consisted of an almost equal number of men and women, mostly teachers, such as Jovan Živojnović, Mihajlo Miša Kosić, Stevan Radić, and Bogdan Svirčević. It should be noted that Dr. Paja Radosavljević was a professor at New York University and the first Serbian PhD in pedagogy. Other prominent associates were women teachers and writers—Danica Bandić, Cveta Bingulac, Olga Kernic Peleš, Mileva Simić, and Dr. Zora Prica.

2.4. Topics: Reports on the Work of Women’s Cooperatives

Reports on the work of charity cooperatives were featured in Women’s World. It was a sort of platform for women’s humanitarian work. It was also significant for the primary education of girls. Among these reports were descriptions of the work and activities of charity cooperatives in Novi Sad, Subotica, Zagreb, V. Kikinda, Bela Crkva, Vršac, etc. By reading them, we can reconstruct the work of most Serbian women’s cooperatives, from their first assemblies, statutes of organizations, and their prominent founders to annual accounts, list of activities, and cooperation with sister organizations. It is quite certain that these organizations followed Austro-Hungarian laws. From treasury reports of the Serbian Women’s Charitable Cooperative in Vukovar in 1911, one can clearly see the seriousness of the cooperative’s financial intake and expenses:


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45 Jovan Živojnović (1841–1916) was a writer and a teacher both at the Gymnasium and the School of Theology in (Sremski) Karlovc. He was a pioneer and propagandist of modern beekeeping among Serbs. Mihajlo Miša Kosić was a prominent pedagogue and academic from Velika Kikinda. Stevan Radić (1863–1917), a writer and a pedagogue, was a teacher and the head of the elementary school in Irig and the secretary of the Charitable Cooperative of Serbian Women in Irig. Bogdan Svirčević was the principal of the Serbian School in Subotica.
Bela Baum’s gift: 50 K. Money raised in the organization: 11 K. Contribution from the late Đoka Stanić: 206.50 K. Total: 14,732.71 K.


Serbian women’s cooperatives were built on foundations which were designed to last far into the future. The property and wealth possessed by some as well as the volunteer work of their members provided a new picture of women’s organizing capacity north of the Danube and Sava rivers in the late 19th century. This can be seen in the following report on the work of the Serbian Women’s Educational Cooperative in Stari Bečej:

The cooperative was founded in 1874 by Juliana Djordjević, its first president. The goal of the cooperative was to “promote education for Serbian Orthodox orphan girls in their native place.” Initially, members of the cooperative went from house to house and advised parents to send their daughters to school. Girls from poor families were given financial assistance. Later, the cooperative hired a private handiwork teacher and a gardener. By the end of 1877 the cooperative had hired “a well-examined teacher, a Hungarian woman, to teach the girls handicraft as well as Hungarian and German.”47

46 “Izveštaj o radu Prosvetne zadruge Srpskinja u St. Bečeu,” Ženski svet, no. 5 (1886), 147–48.
According to the report on the Charitable Cooperative of Serbian Women in Zagreb, presented at the 16th Regular Assembly:

The Zagreb cooperative has five major benefactors who donated substantial sums to the Serbian Girls’ Boarding School, founded by the cooperative: namely, Mrs. Paulina Matijević with 6,000 K, Marija Lađević with 2,000 K, Marija Milanković with 1,000 K, the late Jelena Popović with 5,000 K, and the late Jelena Br. Jovanović with 2,000 K to the boarding school and 2,000 K to the cooperative. The honorary president of the cooperative is Baroness Katinka Živković Fruškogorska, the president of the cooperative is Ms. Jelena Stojanović, vice president Mrs. Paulina Matijević, treasurer Nada I. Prica, and secretary Mr. Vladimir Vujnović. The cooperative has 11 benefactors, 35 founders (with 100 K each), 152 regular members (12-K annual membership fee), and 98 helpers (4-K annual dues).

The boarding school is governed by the headmistress Mara Velisavljević and two prefects, Marianne Dimović and Mileva Petrović. During the school year of 1911–1912, the boarding school had 33 cadets, of whom 17 attended Women’s Lyceum, 10 girls’ college, 5 women’s vocational, and 1 teachers’ school.48

In the article “V. Kikinda’s Charitable Women’s Cooperative,” we learn that at the insistence of the “great county prefect of Torontal,”49 Joseph Hertelendi, and by the efforts of Nina Petrović, the first women’s charity

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Na čelu internata stoji kao upraviteljica: Mara Velisavljevićeva sa dve perfektice: Marijanom Dimovićevom i Milevom Petrovićevom. U internatu je bilo u toku školske 1911–12. godine: 33 pitomice od kojih su 17 pohadale Ženski Licej, 10 višu devojačku školu, 5 žensku stručnu školu i 1 učiteljsku školu.” “Zagreb,” Ženski svet, nos. 7–8 (1912), 176.

49 Torontál County (in Hungarian, Torontál vármegye; in Serbian, Torontal) was part of Austria-Hungary. Today this territory is in Serbia (eastern Vojvodina), western Romania, and southern Hungary. The capital was Veliki Bečkerek (Zrenjanin), today in Serbia.
cooperative was founded in 1872.\textsuperscript{50} It is documented that among the members of the cooperative there were “38 non-Serbian women (German, Hungarian, and Jewish) and 71 Serbian women.”\textsuperscript{51} According to the article, “non-Serbian women” wished to use German, and Serbian women wanted both German and Serbian as the languages used in meetings and in documents. Non-Serbian women left in protest and formed their own cooperative.

Something similar happened with the establishment of the first women’s cooperative in Novi Sad. In his eulogy for Dafina Nana Natošević, published in \textit{Women’s World}, Varadanin stated that in 1867 the organization’s first members were women of different ethnicities and that after the split, which he described as positions against Serbian interests, the Charitable Cooperative of Serbian Women from Novi Sad was founded in 1880.\textsuperscript{52}

\textbf{2.5. Topics: Education for Female Students}

Each of Vojvodina’s religious and ethnic communities took care of the elementary education of their children. Even before public schools were established by law in 1776, it did not matter whether the schools were in churches or synagogues. Early in the 19th century in Vojvodina, public schools were established where women, “regardless of religion,” taught girls who had already completed the elementary schools’ knitting, sewing, and embroidering curricula.\textsuperscript{53}

The existence of private schools in Budapest, Vienna, and Zurich slowed down the opening of women’s colleges in Vojvodina. Thus, Belgrade had such a school before Novi Sad. Based on the decision of the Serbian National-Church Assembly in (Sremski) Karlovi, colleges in Novi Sad, Pančevo (1874), and Sombor (1875) were opened to women.\textsuperscript{54} The curriculum of the Serbian Girls’ College was created by Dr. Đorđe Natošević and Arkadije Varadanin, its first headmaster. The first teachers, Pačariz Janoš and Mileva

\textsuperscript{50} “V. kikindska dobrotvorna ženska zadruga,” \textit{Ženski svet}, no. 6 (1886), 175–80. Text was probably written by Varadanin.

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., 177.

\textsuperscript{52} Arkadije Varadanin, “Nana (Dafina) Natoševićka (1830–1911),” \textit{Ženski svet}, no. 9 (1911), 199–202.


\textsuperscript{54} The decision was made at the request of a group of Serbian women from Novi Sad: Savka Subotić, Nana Natošević, Sofija Pasković, Koda Justina, Ana Demelić, Ana Pavlović, Julijana Radovanović, Anka Miletić, Jelena Jovanović, and Anka Marinković, who personally lobbied for the opening of the school.
Simić, were elected by the Serbian church community of Novi Sad. The patroness of the Serbian Girls’ College in Novi Sad was St. Ana, and the school’s slava was “Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary.” During the 1878 academic year, the school was included among the renowned Hungarian civil schools, which means that it was accredited.

*Women’s World* regularly reported on the advantages of the educational system of Hungary, which Serbian women implemented:

Before Christmas last year, Royal Hungarian Minister of Religion and Public Education, Dr. Julius Vlašić, directed the universities of Budapest and Kolozsvár (kološvarsko) to admit to the medical, pharmaceutical, and philosophical departments those girls who have documents proving that they have completed the required studies. Because of this regulation, girls must now be admitted to high schools as well, the private ones at least, so that they can prepare themselves for further academic studies.

Here there are also brief items about Zirzen Janka (director of the Institute for Teacher’s Education in Budapest), the Women’s Gymnasium in Budapest, scholarships for Serbian women, girls’ colleges in England, the Higher Institute for Girls’ Education, Ljubica Sladojević’s book on

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56 The Hungarian school system had a long tradition of accredited high schools.
57 “Kraljevski ugarski ministar bogočasti i javne nastave Dr. Julijus Vlašić izdao je, pred božić prošle godine, poziv na sveučilište Budimpeštansko i kljuško (kološvarsko) da imaju primiti za redovne slušače na medicinskom, apotebarskom i filozofskom odeljenju ženskinje, koje ispravama svojom dokažu da su propisane studije dovršile. Po tome se moraju sad primati ženskinje i na gimnazije, za privatne ako ne za redovne učenice, da se mogu spremiti za ove velike nauke.” “Više žensko obrazovanje u Ugarskoj” [Higher women’s education in Hungary], *Ženski svet*, no. 1 (1896), 10. This text was probably written by Varadanin.
58 “Vesti,” *Ženski svet*, no. 8 (1896), 120–21.
59 “Vesti,” *Ženski svet*, no. 9 (1896), 135.
60 *Ženski svet*, no. 4 (1897), 49–51. The text is about Anastasija Kolarović’s will (1811–91). She was an educated daughter of bookseller Kirjaković from Novi Sad. She left a significant amount, which she had gained on the basis of “love settlement and family expenses” increasing it by clever management, for the education of talented Serbian girls abroad—in medical and pedagogical schools in Germany and Switzerland. See Stojaković, *Znamenite žene I*, 7.
61 Article written by Katarina Holec (Belgrade) and published in *Ženski svet*, no. 12 (1897), 179.
62 Article written by Ljubica Sladojević and published in *Ženski svet*, no. 8 (1898), 117–18.
women’s institutes and cloisters, the establishment of the Worker’s School for Girls, the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the Serbian Girls’ College in Novi Sad, a report on the Serbian Teachers’ Convent School in Novi Sad, the inauguration of the Association of Serbian Teachers for Bosnia and Herzegovina, the founding of a magazine called Serbian School, a Serbian Orthodox kindergarten in Banja Luka, the Serbian Girls’ School in Budapest, the school for illiterate female and male Serbs in the village Metak in Lika, and the Serbian women’s boarding school in Dubrovnik.

Greeting cards praising the academic accomplishments of women and girls were widespread up until 1914:

Sofija Jocić, daughter of our fellow citizen, the former bookseller Luka Jocić, passed with honors the exam in piano and singing skills at the Prague Conservatory last November. Miss Sofija had, here in Pančevo and Belgrade, tried her beautiful talent before the exam and now proved with this test that her good reputation as well as that beautiful voice goes a long way. Congratulations!

On Saturday, April 14 (27) this year, Ms. Vidosava Jovanović, daughter of Mr. Milan A. Jovanović, a local teacher at the Serbian high school, was promoted to doctor of the entire medical department.
at the University of Budapest. Two years ago, at the same university, Ms. Kornelija Rakić73 was also promoted. Both were excellent students at the Serbian Girls’ College, then continued their education at the Serbian Big Gymnasium and finally completed their medical studies with honors. As we were informed, Dr. Vida Jovanović will practice for a year with her university professor in Budapest. After that she will be employed as a physician in Zemun. We are sincerely glad of her success and our other students’ success, and we wish to congratulate their parents. We wish Vida many years of happiness and success in the field of philanthropy, which she gave her heart to.74

On 9 (22) of June this year, for the first time at Zagreb University, a girl was given a doctoral honor. This was Ms. Milica Bogdanović. She passed the hardest exams with honors and got a PhD for academic expertise in history and geography. She is the daughter of the famous writer and retired soldier Siniša, who lives in Zagreb. Long live (Viva)!75

Dr. Nada Ćavić, the daughter of a mailman from Parage and a former student at the Serbian Girls’ College in Novi Sad, was proclaimed a general medical practitioner at the University of Budapest.76

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73 Kornelija Rakić (1879–?), with a scholarship from the Serbian Girls’ College in Novi Sad, graduated from the Medical Faculty and worked as a physician in Bosnia, primarily in Banja Luka.

74 “U subotu 14 (27) aprila o.g. promovisana je za doktora celokupne medicine na budimpeštanskom sveučilištu g-dica Vidosava Jovanović, kćerka ovađnjeg profesora srp. vel. gimnazije g. Milana A. Jovanović. Pre dve godine promovisana je na istom sveučilištu i g-dica dr. Kornelija Rakić. Obe su bile prvo odlične učenice ovađnjeg srp. vel. gimnaziji, te dovršile škole na svojoj srpskoj školi na ovdašnjoj srpskoj školi. Kako smo izvešteni, g-dica dr. Vida Jovanovićeva praktikovača godinu dana kod svog sveučilišnog profesora u Budimpešti onda će se nastaniti kao lekник u Zemunu. Mi se iskreno radujemo ovom uspehu i druge naše učenice Vide, te čestitamo roditeljima na doživljenoj sreći a Vidi želimo mnogo sreće i uspeha na čovekoljubivom polju, kome se tako od srca posvetila.”

75 “9 (22) juna o.g. promovisana je na zagrebačkom sveučilištu g-dica Milica pl. Bogdanovićeva. Ona je sa odličnim uspehom polagala sve strogе ispite te postigla čast doktora filozofije za struke istorija i geografija. Ona je kći poznatog našeg književnika Siniše, vojenog časnika u miru, koji živi u Zagrebu. Živela!” “Srpskinja prva doktor zagrebačkog sveučilišta,” Ženski svet, nos. 7–8 (1907), 185.

76 “Dr Nada Ćavić postavila kći iz Paraga bivša učenica srp. više devojačke škole u Novom Sadu proglašena je na budimpeštanskom sveučilištu za doktora celokupne medicine.” “Srpskinja dr. medicine,” Ženski svet, no. 3 (1911), 68.
At the request of Mr. Nikola Nikolić, a Belgrade lawyer, the Belgrade Court of First Instance allowed Ms. Roknić, a graduated lawyer, to be included in the list of its interns. This is the first Serbian woman attorney candidate. Whether or not she becomes an attorney is for the court to decide.77

The work of Serbian girls’ colleges did not usually meet the approval of the Serbian National-Church Assembly. Financing of such schools in Sombor and Pančevo ceased in 1911, and in Novi Sad in 1913. The members of the Charitable Cooperative of Serbian Women of Novi Sad released a statement they had made at the Session of the Cooperative Board on 18 June:

We foresaw, and as the general public already knows, we worked hard to avoid such a fate, even when 37 charitable cooperatives of ours with 6,544 signatures of our mothers and our sisters from 42 municipalities appealed to the National-Church Council of 1911 to not cut off three Serbian girls’ colleges in Novi Sad, Pančevo, and Sombor for at least another year or two and to assist in the issuance of public funds, until their own funds become stronger. We did not receive help yet again: the school in Sombor still holds on with the difficult and supernatural sacrifice of its teachers, who have been working there for two years with an annual salary of 1,000 K, and a catechist even for free, all of them expecting that the inheritance from benefactress Julijana, Laza Kostić’s wife, born Palanački, will come to life and save the teachers and this school from poverty and thus save the face of this municipality and of the people who approved of such a shameful act and allowed 3 to 4 poor teachers to keep this school alive with their health and lives.78

77 “Na molbu g. Nikole Nikolića advokata beogradskog dozvolio je beogradski prvostepeni sud da se g-dica Roknićeva svršeni pravnik, uvrsti u spisak advokatskih pripravnika. To je prvi srpski adv. kandidat—žena. Hoće li postati advokat to će docnije sud odlučiti.” Ženski svet, no. 5 (1911), 118.
78 “Mi smo predvidale, i kao što je našoj javnosti poznato, radile da se otkloni ta kob, još onda kada smo nas 37 Dobrotvornih Zadruga sa 6544 materinskih i sestrinskih potpisa iz 42 opšine molbenu obratile na narodno crkveni sabor od 1911. godine da se još koju godinu ne uskrati trima ovostranim srpskim devojačkim školama u Novom Sadu, Pančevu i Somboru izdavanje pripomoći iz narodnih fondova, dok njihovi fondovi ne ojačaju; a nismo se pomogle, i evo, somborskog te država teškom i natprirodnom žrtvom svojih nastavnika, koji služe već dve godine sa godišnjom nagradom od 1000 K, a katiheta čak i besplatno, sve očekujući da stupo u život ostavina dobrotvorke Julijane dra Laze Kostića rod. Palanački, te da spase nastavnike i ovu školu od bede i otkloni sramotu s lica te opštinu i naroda koji je dopustio da mu svojim
When it became clear that the school in Novi Sad would lose its funding too, the members of the cooperative bitterly concluded that it was “premeditated murder” and called to Serbian women from Novi Sad, whose mothers proposed raising institutes of higher education for Serbian women, to eliminate “that threat to our place and nation, because even though the School of Novi Sad was located in Novi Sad, it had become a popular, public need so to speak; since at the time of its founding, this school was the place where Serbian girls, gathered from the surrounding villages and distant parts where our people were scattered, could educate themselves and gain knowledge.”

At this session, the cooperative board decided to donate 1,000 K to the school’s fund.

The “Request to Alumni of the Serbian Girls’ College in Novi Sad,” written by Dr. Vladislava Polit and published in Women’s World in 1913, opened with the following statement:

Sisters! Can we allow this to happen? Can we calmly watch our cradle be taken away from us, the cradle in which we acquired our love for science? Could any of you stand the people’s defeat and indifferently watch one educational institute for the training of girls and the upbringing of an entire generation of women be closed due to our carelessness and fiscal tightness?… Sisters we cannot allow this. We will not allow this… Let every former student commit herself to give her annual contribution to the school, no matter how modest the contribution is… Sisters! Let us show that we are able to keep zdravljem i životom održavaju školu 3–4 sirota nastavnika.” “Pokret da se održi novosadska srpska viša devojačka škola” [The movement for the maintenance of the Serbian Girls’ College in Novi Sad], Zenski svet, nos. 7–8 (1913), 149.

Dr. Vladislava Polit (1886 –?) completed elementary school, Serbian Girls’ College, and then private Serbian Big Gymnasium in Novi Sad. She studied at the University of Budapest. She is one of the first Serbian women to be proclaimed a doctor of philosophy at the Department of Slavistic Studies and Foreign Languages (German, Hungarian, and English). This happened in 1912, when she was only 26 years old. She was openly declaring herself a feminist.
ourselves alive and that we are strong enough to take care of the educational progress and improvement of our people.  

In the article “For the Serbian Girls’ College in Novi Sad,” Savka Subotić agitated for the survival of the school but also incorporated important information about the establishment of the first college for girls:

The idea of establishing our girls’ colleges came from me first, which Natošević publicly acknowledged. But I did not let it remain simply an idea. I moved from ideas to action: I called to the educated Serbian women from Novi Sad for an agreement and asked all of them to sign the petition for the establishment of girls’ colleges in Novi Sad, Pančevo, and Sombor. With this petition we went to (Sremski) Karlovci, just before the adjournment of the (Serbian National-Church) Assembly meeting, and got the signatures of all the members of the assembly, who then placed the petition before this institution, which unanimously decided that girls’ colleges must be opened.

Subotić concluded with an invitation:

And you, my daughters, get down with all your powers to preserve that which your mothers obtained from the people through supplication and that they managed to create. Surely, the Zeitgeist demands this of you when women from all over the world are conquering new ramparts for their own defense and salvation: at least protect the old, already built ones for better times, until your children are strong enough to join the people who are standing in the world

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81 Dr. Vladislava Beba Polit, “Molba bivšim učenicama Srpske Više Devojačke Škole u Novom Sadu” [A request to the former students of the Serbian Girls’ College in Novi Sad], Ženski svet, nos. 7–8 (1913), 1.

82 Savka Subotić, “Za Srpsku Višu Devojačku Školu u Novom Sadu” [For the Serbian Girls’ College in Novi Sad], Ženski svet, nos. 7–8 (1913), 146–47.

83 “misao o osnivanju naših viših devojačkih škola prvo od mene (je) potekla, a to je Natošević i javno priznao. No ja nisam ostala samo kod zamišli nego sam prešla i na delo: sazvala sam ondašnje obrazovane Srpskinje Novosatkinje na dogovor i pokupila od njih potpise za molbu na sabor, da se osnije viša devojačka škola u Novom Sadu, Pančevu i Somboru. Sa tom molbom otišle smo u Karlovce baš pred zatvaranje sabora i zadobile potpise sviju poslanika, koji onda molbu podnesoše saboru, te ovaj jednoglasno zaključi otvaranje viših devojačkih škola.” Ibid, 146.
flank, fighting for the rights and progress of the other sex of humankind.84

2.5. Topics: Women’s International Activism

The peace activism of Serbian women before World War I is less well-known. We can find some information on this issue in *Women’s World*. There the readership could read about the peace conference, held 6 (18) May 1899 at The Hague:85

The women of Serbia are glad that the peace conference at The Hague will work toward general world peace. We hope that its work will be to the benefit of the whole of humankind, including our suffering Serbian tribe. Trusting that the peace conference will base its work on justice and justice for all, which His majesty, the noble Russian tsar, proposed, we Serbian wives and mothers joyfully welcome the work of the conference by sending it our best wishes for its happy success.86

In the newspaper *Žensko srce* (Woman’s Heart), we find information about the peace activism of Hungarian women:

At that most critical time when across European courts the discussion of peace or war between Austria and Serbia was taking place, the Hungarian Women’s Association sent a telegram to His Majesty King Franz Joseph I: “With deepest reverence, we Hungarian mothers, wives, and sisters stand before Your Majesty’s gracious heart and beg you that you give your highest consent to directing the dispute

84 “a vi, kćeri moje, prionite svom snagom, da očuvate ono, što su matere vaše od naroda izmolile i stvorile. Bar to od vas traži duh vremena, kada ženskinje svega sveta osvaja nove bedeme za svoju odbranu i spas: vi bar stare i gotove očuvajte za bolja vremena, dok se i vaša deca uzmogu pridružiti svetskoj koloni za prava i napredak druge pole čovečanstva.” Ibid., 146–47.
85 The Peace Conference was convened at the suggestion of the Russian tsar, with the presence of representatives from the European countries, the United States of America, China, and Japan, with the goal of avoiding military clashes in the future.
86 “Ženskinje iz Srbije raduju se što će konferencija mira u Hagu raditi za opšti Svetski mir. Nadamo se da će njen rad biti od koristi celom čovečanstvu pa i našem napačenom plemenu srpskom. Uzdajući se da će konferencija mira osnivati svoj rad na pravdi i pravici za sve, što je predložilo Nj. V. Plemeniti ruski vladar, mi srpske žene i majke radosno pozdravljamo rad konferencije šaljući joj najbolje želje za srećan uspeh.” *Ženski svet*, no. 6 (1899), 94.
between Austria-Hungary and Serbia to the International Court in The Hague.\textsuperscript{87}

These activities did not include the Serbians of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Arkadije Varadanin, assessing the political moment, sent a political message by writing about other organizations. Having in mind the political situation of Serbian people in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Varadanin decided to direct his support to the politics of peace of the Russian tsar and of Hungarian women activists by publishing such news.

In \textit{Women’s World} news on international women’s organizations was published first and then the reports from the international conferences attended by representatives of Serbian women’s organizations from Serbia and the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The first report from the International Congress of Women was entitled “The International Women’s Congress in Paris,”\textsuperscript{88} excerpted from the newspaper \textit{Deutsche Hausfrauen-Zeitung}.\textsuperscript{89} The readers of \textit{Women’s World} could see “how the girls in more progressive and more educated nations advanced their minds and how the flower of French intelligentsia thinks about women’s position in society, the need for women’s education, about their task in the field of arts and sciences, and their legal status in the country.”\textsuperscript{90} Among the resolutions adopted at the International Women’s Congress, held in Paris in July 1889, the most important pertained to peace and family law.

According to the article “Serbian Women in International Women’s Organizations,” by Jelena Lazarević, a teacher at the High School for Girls in Belgrade and member of the Serbian National Women’s Alliance,\textsuperscript{91} “the Serbian national association was connected with the International Women’s Alliance,”\textsuperscript{92} and the Serbian women created the educational, philanthropic,

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{87} “U najkritičnijem vremenu kada se po evropskim dvorovima lomilo pitanje o miru ili ratu između Austrije i Srbije mađarski ženski savez je uporio brzojav Nj. Veličanstvu kralju Francu Josifu I: ‘Sa najdubljim strahopoštovanjem stupamo mi, mađarske majke žene i sestre pred milostivo srce Vašeg Veličanstva, te molimo da date Vaš najviši pristanak da se spor između Austro Ugarske i Srbije uputi međunarodnom sudu u Hagu.’” Ženski svet, no. 4 (1909), 92.
  \item \textsuperscript{88} Ženski svet, no. 8 (1889), 226–31.
  \item \textsuperscript{89} When translated, \textit{Glasnik nemačke domačice} [German housewife’s gazette]. The newspaper was issued in Berlin beginning in 1873.
  \item \textsuperscript{90} Ženski svet, no. 8. (1889), 226.
  \item \textsuperscript{91} Ženski svet, no. 1 (1907), 18–19.
  \item \textsuperscript{92} Jelena Lazarević, “Međunarodni ženski savez i Srpkinje” [International Women’s Alliance and Serbian women], Ženski svet, no. 6 (1907), 121. From this text we learn that the Serbian Alliance from 1907 contained “Udruženje Srpskih Ženskih Činovnika, pojava u punom smislu feminističku” (Association of Serbian Female Officials, a completely feminist phenomenon).
\end{itemize}
economic, and legal sections upon the model of the international organization. Kosara Cvetković received a letter about the International Women’s Alliance and asked Varadanin to publish it in Women’s World.93 The letter, however, was not published because, according to Lazarević, “Mr. Varadanin—as well as Ms. Cvetković—doubted the possibility of the cooperation between the Serbian and International Women’s Alliance.”94 This is a testament of the strong reputation that both Varadanin and Women’s World enjoyed among the members of women’s organizations north and south of the Sava and Danube rivers. Evaluation of the ability of the female activist work in the country and abroad had to go through Varadanin’s verification.

The article “Congress of Russian Women in St. Petersburg”95 is important because the Russian successes in the emancipation of women had an impact on Serbian politics, culture, and women’s rights. The matters discussed at the congress were “the economic situation of women in the municipality and beyond,” “women’s political and civil status and … women fighting for their rights,” and “the education of females in Russia.”96 The Russian women at the congress demanded educational and political equity, the democratization of the state administration, women’s participation in town and state administration, marriage law reform, personal rights for women, abolition of prostitution, and the prohibition of overtime work for women and children. They also protested the persecution of Jews in Finland and the death penalty.97

Savka Subotić98 was the first president of the Serbian National Women’s Association. After lecturing at the Vienna Science Club in 1910, she was

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93 Kosara Cvetković was a teacher at the Girls’ College in Belgrade, where she taught geography and art. Her articles, essays, and poems were published in all the prominent magazines of the time. She was one of the pioneering writers for children. Her texts and illustrations were published in Neven (Marigold). She translated from Russian and prepared for printing Pripovetke za devojčice i dečake (Novels for Girls and Boys) (1907 and 1911).
94 Lazarević, “Međunarodni ženski savez i Srpkinje,” 125.
95 “Kongres Ruskinja u Petrogradu” [Congress of Russian women in St. Petersburg], Ženski svet, no. 2 (1909), 44; no. 3 (1909), 49–51.
96 “Kongres Ruskinja u Petrogradu,” Ženski svet, no. 2 (1909), 44.
97 “Kongres Ruskinja u Petrogradu,” Ženski svet, no. 3 (1909), 51.
98 Savka Subotić (1834–1918) was born in Novi Sad, and most of her activities related to the women’s emancipation she performed within the borders of Austria-Hungary. She spent a part of her life in Zemun and Belgrade. She was an honorable member of all women’s organizations. Today we know that she cooperated with (or knew) Carrie Chapman Catt.
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awarded the name *Der Mutter ihres Volkes*. She created and put into practice her own program for emancipating women from the countryside through affirmation of the local industry (linen and carpet weaving). For years *Women’s World* followed her activities by publishing her articles and speeches or by bringing news of the texts that many European newspapers published about her. This is how *Women’s World* published the news that she had “become a prominent member of the World Congress of the International Women’s Suffrage Alliance in Stockholm.”

The International Congress on women’s voting rights was held July 1913 in Budapest. It was followed by the women’s press, especially *Žena*, edited by Milica Tomić. This magazine published Rosa Schwimmer’s letters inviting Serbian women activists from Vojvodina to come to the International Women’s Congress in Budapest.

As the day of our congress draws closer, we have the mission of assembling all women who care for the women’s movement. Our special concern lies in welcoming women of all Hungarian nationalities into participating in our congress… We assure our Serbian sisters that we shall accept them generously and with care, as long as they join our congress in large numbers… Rosika Schwimmer.

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(Ženski svet, no. 1 [1914], 3), Rozsa Schwimmer, and Gubarevich from Russia. Savka Subotić was an honorable member of the Congress of the International Women’s Suffrage Alliance in Stockholm (Ženski svet, nos. 7–8 [1911], 160) and the Women’s Club of Amsterdam (Ženski svet, no. 1 [1909], 18). Her influence was so great that through her Leo Tolstoy “thanked the Serbian National Women’s Alliance for their wishes meant for his 80th birthday” (Ženski svet, no. 1 [1909], 18).


100 Milica Tomić (1859–1944)—a journalist, reporter, politician, and advocate of women’s political rights—will be remembered as the founder and owner of the magazine *Žena* (1911–14 and 1918–21), the founder of the women’s library Posestrima (1910), and one of the seven women from Vojvodina (the only one from Novi Sad) chosen to be a member of the Great National Assembly in 1918, just when, for a little while, women, too, received the right to vote.

101 Rosika Schwimmer (1877–1948) founded the Hungarian Association of Working Women (Munkásmó Egyesülete) in 1903, and in 1904 she founded the Council of Women (Nőegyesületek Szövetsége) in Hungary and the Hungarian Feminist Association (Feministák Egyesülete). She founded and edited a magazine called *Žena és a društvo* (Woman and Society) – *A Nő és a Társadalom*, which from 1914 onwards went by the name *Žena* (*A Nő*). In 1913 Schwimmer organized the 7th Congress of the International Women’s Suffrage Alliance, held in Budapest from 15 to 20 July 1913 with the members of the Hungarian Feminist Association.

102 “Kako se približuje dan, kad će se održati naš kongres, to nam je mnogo stalo do toga, da u naše kolo prikupimo sve ono ženskinje, koje se za ženski pokret interesuju. Naročito nam je do toga stalo da i ženskinje ostalih narodnosti Ugarske pozdravimo kao učesnice našeg kongresa… Mi uveravamo naše sestre Srpske, da ćemo ih svesrdno i puno pažnje primiti,
Savka Subotić spoke at the congress, which Vladislava Polit described in her article “On Feminism at the 7th International Women’s Congress in Budapest”: 103

All I want is to give you my impressions and present an outline of how the “women’s issue” has already strongly progressed and how “feminism” is a matter which has put down its roots in all parts of the world…. When Savka Subotić spoke in the name of Serbian women, women from Russia showered her with praise and words of flattery, and there was no end to their excitement over such a remarkable and successful speech made by a Serbian woman…

On leaving, Mrs. Chapman Catt 104 told me to say hello to my Serbian sisters and pass on her regrets for not having more Serbian women at this congress. But she hoped that more of them would come next time, because they too, as the daughters of a heroic people, should join the line of the cultural champions of women’s interests and thus become worthy of their heroic husbands. Will the Serbian women answer this call? 105

The women activists from Serbia did not attend the congress because of the political situation, that is, World War I, which started just a few months after the meeting.

103 Dr. Vladislava Beba Polit, “On Feminism,” Ženski svet, nos. 7–8 (1913), 155–58.

104 Carrie Chapman Catt (1859–1947) was the leader of the International Women’s Suffrage Alliance.

2.6. The Future and the Past

*Women’s World* is a rare source of biographies and other data on prominent women from Serbia and other countries. Biographical data can mostly be found in the form of obituaries for Marija Dimitrijević (née Gavanski), Staka Skenderova, Dr. Bojana Stefanović, Elodija Mijatović, Nina Petrović, Danka Jovanović, Lina Morgenstern, Sara Karamarković, Nana Dafina Natošević, Adelina P. Irby, and Amalija Stratimirović.\(^\text{106}\)

These data also include a large corpus of short reviews about women’s life and work. Women’s accomplishments were carefully recorded in *Women’s World* as testaments of women’s efforts towards continuous progress. For example, the magazine featured a large corpus of short news items on a number of women (and their reputable husbands) who contributed as benefactors or who worked as actresses, writers, or members of charitable cooperative associations. The accomplishments of these women were

106 Marija Dimitrijević was a respectable member of the Charitable Cooperative of Serbian Women from Novi Sad (Ženski svet, no. 6 [1898], 83–84). Staka Skenderova (around 1828–91) was a Serbian nun and teacher who founded the first school for girls in Sarajevo (1858/1859). Up until the breakup of Yugoslavia, there was a street named after her (see “Jedna hercegovačka spisateljica” [A female writer from Herzegovina], Ženski svet, no. 9 [1907], 198–200). Dr. Bojana Stefanović was one of the first Serbian female doctors. She completed her medical studies at Budapest University in 1905 and then worked in Velika Kikinda, where she died at age 27 (see Ženski svet, no. 4 [1909], 92–93). Elodija Mijatović (1825–1909) will be remembered as a female writer and translator (*The History of Modern Serbia*, 1872; *Serbian Folklore*, 1876; and others). She is known to have participated in the founding of the Belgrade Women’s Association and to have been an honorable member of the Charitable Cooperative of Serbian Women from Novi Sad (see Ženski svet, no.1 [1909], 7–9). Nina Ana Petrović (1833–1908) was the founder of the first Serbian modern women’s association—the Charitable Cooperative of Serbian Women in Velika Kikinda in 1873. Her most significant contribution to the emancipation of women was in the field of “developing national industry,” when “women’s handicraft” became valued as an exported product and when women from the countryside were given the opportunity to work and earn (ibid., 9–10). Danka Jovanović was the patron of the female painter Danica Jovanović (Ženski svet, no. 1 [1910], 17). Lina Morgenstern (1830–1909), a German benefactress and founder of various humanitarian organizations, was a fighter for peace and women’s rights (ibid., 69). Sara Karamarković was the president of the Belgrade Women’s Association (Ženski svet, no. 3 [1910], 69). Dafina (Nana) Natošević (1830–1911) was a benefactress and one of the founders and leaders of the Charitable Cooperative of Serbian Women from Novi Sad (Ženski svet, no. 1 [1911], 133–202). Adelina Paulina Irby (1831–1911) will be remembered among the Serbian people as the great female benefactress “Miss Irby” (Ženski svet, no. 10 [1911], 217–19). Amalija Stratimirović (1821–1911) will be remembered as the woman who at age 70 took 13,000 women’s signatures to Pest in 1892, defending Jaša Tomić, who committed murder in defense of his wife Milica Tomić’s honor. Stratimirović’s speech before the Minister of Justice of the Kingdom of Hungary, Szilagyi, was on defending a woman’s honor (Ženski svet, no. 1 [1912], 21).
carefully documented. This is proof that women respected the different experiences that other women had upon entering the public sphere.

Many young teachers published their first literary works—poems, and short stories, as well as works translated primarily from Hungarian and German literature—in *Women’s World*. We should view *Women’s World* as a treasury of literature by women authors. From 1896 to 1897, it published the works and translations of the following authors: Katarina Holec, Danica Bandić, Danica Čaklović, Kosara Cvetković, Jelica Belović-Bernadžikovska, Olga Kermić-Peleš, and Darinka Nerandžić-Brašovan.

107 Katarina Holec, “Moderno cveće,” *Ženski svet*, no. 1 (1896), 7–9; “Neobični događaj od Erneste Dodea,” *Ženski svet*, no. 5 (1897), 77–80. Holec at 17 had already become one of the most important members of the Belgrade Women’s Association, and after the founding of *Domacića* magazine she became a member of the publishing board and one of the most fruitful writers and translators (from German and French). She was the secretary of the Mother’s Association (Belgrade) and one of the founders of the Serbian National Women’s Alliance. She was an honorable member of the Belgrade Women’s Association, and for her work in female organizations King Petar (Karađorđević) awarded her the Order of St. Sava, 5th class.

108 Danica Bandić, “Sestra,” *Ženski svet*, no. 1 (1896), 12–13; “Po snegu,” *Ženski svet*, no. 2 (1896), 27–28; “Prve Ljubičice,” *Ženski svet*, no. 3 (1897), 45–46. Bandić (1871–1950) worked as a teacher in Kikinda after finishing the Teachers’ School in Sombor. She will be remembered as the founder of Devojački Sokol (The Girl’s Falcon) (1921), the Association for the Enlightenment of Women, and the Vocational School of Women, and as the director of the Serbian Theater Society of Velika Kikinda. She published her literary work from 1897 onward in the following magazines: *Ženski svet*, *Branik*, *Spomenak* (Forget-Me-Not), *Bosanska vila*, *Brankovo Kolo* (Branko’s Kolo), *Letopis Matice Srpske*, *Golub* (The Pigeon), *Književni sever* (Literary North), *Naš list* (Our Magazine), and others.


111 Jelica Belović-Bernadžikovska, “Milosrde,” *Ženski svet*, no. 5 (1897), 68–69; “Prve sumnje,” *Ženski svet*, no. 7 (1897), 109; “Nada,” *Ženski svet*, no. 8 (1897), 116; “Aforizmi,” *Ženski svet*, no. 8 (1897), 124; “Tebe zlato milujem ja,” *Ženski svet*, no. 8 (1897), 125; “Sličice sa kolodvora,” *Ženski svet*, no. 11 (1897), 169. Belović-Bernadžikovska (1870–1946) completed her studies at the Higher School of Pedagogy in Vienna and Paris. She spoke nine languages and worked as a teacher in Zagreb, Ruma, Osijek, and Mostar, where she became an associate of *Srpska Zora* (Serbian Dawn) magazine. For a while she worked as a teacher at the School of Merchandising in Sarajevo. The Austro-Hungarian authorities retired her in 1909 as the headmistress of the Higher School for Girls. She was an associate of most of the school magazines in Zagreb, Sarajevo, Sombor, and Sremski Karlovec. She published her work in *Ženski svet*, *Frankfurter Zeitung*, *Revue des Deux Mondes*, and *Journal of the Gipsy Lore Society*. She was the editor of *Narodna snaga* (National Strength) in 1918 and *Frauenwelt*. She wrote on the subjects of literature, pedagogy, children’s psychology, and ethnology (e.g.,
Among the reputable writers who published their works in Ženski svet were Milka Grgurova,¹¹⁴ Mileva Simić,¹¹⁵ Darinka Bulja,¹¹⁶ and Zorka Janković.¹¹⁷

Serbian and Croatian folklore). She was an honorable member of the Vienna Folklore Society. She was Professor Friedrich Salomon Krauss’s associate in Vienna. Her work was published in the yearbooks, entitled Anthropophytia, which Krauss edited and published in Leipzig from 1904 to 1913. Belović-Bernadžikovska’s book Die Sitten der Sudslaven, published in Dresden, received positive reviews from the professional public and is very often cited as one of her most significant literary works. In 1933 in Novi Sad, she published a book called Jugoslovenski vezovi. The fruitfulness of her scientific and literary work is evidenced in the fact that she sent 19 of her 48 books to an exhibition organized for the members of the Association of University Women held in Belgrade in 1935, which made her one of the most successful writer among 75 female authors.

¹¹² Olga Kernić-Peleš, “Pesmo moja,” Ženski svet, no. 6 (1897), 85; “Stani Sunce,” Ženski svet, no. 7 (1897), 102; “Na obalama Neretve,” Ženski svet, no. 7 (1897), 103–04. Kernić-Peleš was a teacher at Bosnian schools for girls in Trebinje, Doboj, and Banja Luka and was the founder and member of many Serbian women’s cooperatives in Bosnia. She was one of the more eminent members of the National Women’s Alliance of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. In addition to Ženski svet, Sarajevski list (Sarajevo Magazine) and Srpska žena (Serbian Woman) published her work until 1914.

¹¹³ Darinka Nerandžić-Brašovan, “Zvono,” Ženski svet, no. 7 (1897), 99. Nerandžić-Brašovan (1870–1939) worked as a teacher in Novi Bečej and Kikinda after graduating from the Teachers’ School in Sombor. She published her poems and stories in various magazines: Ženski svet, Javor, Neven, Golub, and Spomenak. She also wrote the following books: Hrišćanin na hrišćanskom putu (A Christian on the Road to Christianity; 1902), Večne zagrobné tajné (Eternal Sepulchral Secrets; 1906), Kolvilje (1906), Pismo srpskimama (A Letter to Serbian Women; 1906), Život sv. Vasilija Novog (The Life of St. Vasilije Novi; 1908), Život sv. Save (The Life of St. Sava; 1909), Seja iz Bečjeja dobroj deci (The Sister from Bečej to Obedient Children; 1912).

¹¹⁴ Milka Grgurova, “Pred ikonom,” Ženski svet, no. 1 (1898), 11–14; “Sirotinskijska majka,” Ženski svet, no. 10 (1898), 156–59, and no. 11 (1898), 170–73; “Ratari,” Ženski svet, no. 9 (1899), 139–42, and no. 10 (1899), 156–59; “Dobrila,” Ženski svet, no. 4 (1906), 84–86 and no. 5 (1906), 107–12. Milka Aleksić Grgurova (1840–1924) was a famous actress and writer who managed to publish a book of stories, Pripovetke Milke Aleksić-Grgurove (Belgrade, 1897).

¹¹⁵ Mileva Simić, “Svoj svome,” Ženski svet, no. 9 (1906), 193–94; “Naši kupci i trgovači,” Ženski svet, no. 10 (1906), 219–21. A female pedagogue and writer, Mileva Simić (1859–1946) became, at age 12, the youngest student at the Teachers’ School in Sombor, and at age 15 she received a teaching position at the Serbian Girls’ College in Novi Sad, where, for a little while, she had the job of headmistress as well. For the needs of her school she wrote two textbooks, Kućansstro (Housework) and Pedagogija. She started writing literary works in 1876, mostly poems and tales, which were published in Javor, Dubrovnik, Srpska Zora, Stražilovo (Novi Sad), Delo (Work; Belgrade), Branik (Novi Sad), Ženski svet, Kolo (Novi Sad), and others. For the series Knjige za narod (Books for the People), which was initiated by Matica Srpska publishing house, Mileva wrote several books on pedagogy.

Due to the separation of the Serbian people before 1918, the history of women was only partially recorded. The fact that women from Vojvodina were attending European universities at higher rates than that of Serbian women from other parts of the country, and were then qualified for many occupations and achieved respectable results, has to be shown in Serbian cultural history. This is why *Women’s World* is an essential textbook on women’s accomplishments. It shows that the education of girls and women was a priority not only for women’s organizations but for a great part of the Serbian elite during the 19th century, because marriage was no guarantee of stability or security. What opportunities were left to female children if they chose to stay single? Or, what could women do if they suffered as spouses? These were some of the most important questions at the end of the 19th century, when it became clear that women had to work due to economic changes as well as the socio-political conditions. It was clear that married women would have to work outside of the home. People could no longer live on one salary alone. If a husband died or got sick, the members of his family were helpless.

When women from Vojvodina started graduating from European universities, they were less likely to marry. In “Naučenjakinje i veštakinje u braku”118 (Academic and Artistic Women in Marriage), Đorđe Natošević writes, “‘with much wisdom comes much folly.’ Those wise men and artists know this well so they avoid marrying those same wise and artistic women, but they rather choose servants over these.”119 Natošević concludes, “it would be more advisable for these women not to marry at all, at least science and art began publishing her literary works in 1906 in *Women’s World*, where she first published her translations and then in 1907 her first stories.

117 Zorka Janković (1870–after 1940), from Golubinci, was a member of the Charitable Cooperative of Serbian Women, one of the founders of the Alliance of Serbian Women from Vojvodina and Croatia (1910), one of the respectable members of the National Women’s Alliance of the SCS (Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes), the editor of *Glas Narodne ženske zajednice* (Voice of the National Women’s Alliance; 1928–33). Her most important period of activism coincided with the organizing of the exhibition “Srpska žena” in Prague in 1910. Janković also issued a series of texts under the title *Žensko pitanje* (The Women’s Issue), which contained basic information on the history of women’s emancipation through the centuries—from the classical to the modern period. A special place was reserved for texts on the development of the feminist movement in France, Switzerland, Italy, Belgium, England, Germany, Denmark, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, and Sweden. This series of texts first started to appear in *Ženski svet*, no. 2 (1911). All texts were featured in the book *Žensko pitanje*, published in Novi Sad in 1911.

118 *Ženski svet*, no. 9 (1887), 269–72.

119 Đorđe Natošević, “Naučenjakine i veštakine u braku,” *Ženski svet*, no. 9 (1887), 270.
would then have more use of them.”\textsuperscript{120} However, Natošević draws some encouragement from a few rare marriages between educated German men and women.

Educated women in Vojvodina could only rely on the charitable cooperatives of Serbian women to produce, in addition to humanitarian work, women’s magazines, feminist groups, and international cooperation. The mass number and organization in all areas of the women’s organizations still fascinate. \textit{Women’s World} was the richest source of data on organizations of Serbian women and their national and international activities.

\textit{Women’s World} did not directly support the fight for women’s rights. Rather, it followed the activities of Savka Subotić and other feminists. For Arkadije Varađanin, female activism began and ended with women’s humanitarian and educational activities; being wives and mothers was considered more praiseworthy.

\textit{Women’s World} was a women’s literary magazine in which women published poems, tales, short stories, and reports. It encouraged women’s literary creativity and was thus important for both Serbian women’s literature and the reconstruction of this literature. \textit{Women’s World} magazine is an extraordinary source of documentation for contemporary scholarship. Reprinting the magazine will greatly assist in the reconstruction of the history of the women’s movement in Vojvodina and Serbia from 1886 to 1914.

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Translated by Snežana Bogdanović

\textsuperscript{120} Ibid., 269.
Figure 1. Dr. Vladislava Beba Polit, “Molba bivšim učenicama Srpske Više Devojačke Škole u Novom Sadu” (Petition to the Former Students of the Serbian Girls’ College in Novi Sad) [Source: Ženski svet, nos. 7–8, 1913, 1.]
The First Serbian Female Teachers and Writers: Their Role in the Emancipation of Serbian Society*

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To the teacher who has influenced me the most, Dr. Ljubica D. Popovich, Professor Emerita

In this paper I present the history of the intellectual identity of Serbia’s first professional female teachers. Not only did they struggle to educate girls, but they also fought against Serbia’s culture of prejudice and for women’s place and role in society. For that reason, they entered many literary spheres that had previously belonged exclusively to men. I shed light on the dynamics between ideology and cultural memory by reflecting on support that these female teachers and writers received from certain male intellectuals in the nineteenth century and which they have not received since. I hope that we will become more aware of the complex relationship between gender and knowledge and that other researchers will be more responsive to the connection between past and present crises within educational and epistemological systems.

By the end of the nineteenth century, there were more than one hundred Serbian women writers.¹ This phenomenon is connected to women’s right to receive higher education, to work, and, consequently, enter the professional world. Some of the first female teachers were novelists or short-story writers whose works were published in well-known Serbian periodicals and in the first “women’s” issue of Zora in 1899. Historians of Serbian literature have

* A version of this paper, “Prve srpske učiteljice-književnice: Prilog istoriji srpske gradanske kulture” (The First Serbian Teacher-Writers: Their Contribution to the History of Serbian Cultural Citizenship), was presented as a lecture to advanced university students in the DAUS Civic Culture and Values Program at the Belgrade Open School (Beogradska otvorena škola) on 12 December 2011.

¹ This means that the emergence of Serbian female writers did not take place at the end of the twentieth century, as stated by Jovan Deretić in Istorija srpske književnosti [History of Serbian Literature] (Belgrade: Prosveta, 2004 [1983]). Rather, it happened a century earlier.

neglected this founding generation of female teachers and writers who tried to make Serbia’s repressive patriarchy more liberal and modern. Although there has been research on the origins of girls’ education in Serbia, it has ignored the female intellectuals of the Middle Ages and the significance of their contributions. During that time, many widowed Serbian queens, princesses, and noble women entered convents and women’s monasteries, where they taught girls and, in some cases, independently managed the communal economy, producing and trading goods. The first institution of this kind was founded in the thirteenth century by the Serbian queen of French origin, Jelena Anžujska (circa 1237–1314), and throughout the Middle Ages Serbian nuns followed this tradition. The latest institution of that kind was the Serbian school for girls, founded in Peć in 1855 by the nun Katarina. This era saw the first link between women of distant social classes and the positive impact of women of privilege on the lives of the less privileged. Female monastic communities seem not to have been cut off from the world and particularly not from poor, young women. Thus, Serbian female teachers who appeared in public schools in the mid-nineteenth century were not the novelty that some historians have suggested. On the contrary, they were part of a long struggle for female education.

The main difference between the aristocratic noble nuns and public school teachers was the growing number of the latter and their greater impact on women in Serbia and in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In Serbia, the first female teachers at public schools for girls appeared in response to greater interest in and demand for female education. By 1846 the government had opened its first public elementary schools for girls in Paraćin and Belgrade. At the

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3 The well-documented history of the Serbian nuns and their efforts can be found in Milojko V. Veselinović’s Srpske kaluderice, first published in 1909 by Srpska kraljevska akademija and lately reprinted (Belgrade: Izdavačko-knjižarsko preduzeće “Nikola Pašić,” 1997). Veselinović meticulously studied the specific identity group of Serbian nuns throughout history. He also supported their efforts to preserve the Serbian female elite together with their complex philanthropic, humanitarian, and entrepreneurial work. Veselinović wrote about many Serbian nun-teachers who lived outside of Serbia. One of them was Staka Skenderova (circa 1830–91), who opened a school for girls in Sarajevo in 1858.

time, the first Serbian female teachers came from the Austro-Hungarian Empire but had no formal pedagogical training. Even though boys’ education had been established fifty years earlier, male teachers did not receive training that was any better than that of their female colleagues. Due to lack of professional teacher training, the Serbian school system was under constant pressure.

As in other European societies of the time, it was not important to give boys and girls the same education. This remained unchanged until the end of World War II. In the most developed as well as the poorest European coun-

5 The school reforms were implemented in the eighteenth century by the only female ruler of the Habsburg dominions, Queen Maria Theresa (1717–80), who ordered that all boys and girls between the ages of six and twelve attend school. In Hungary, at the end of the sixteenth century, there were some Serbian schools for boys, usually within monasteries. Between 1740 and 1780, the number of Serbian schools grew along with the number of male teachers, who got their jobs because they were outstanding students: “At the time, those who knew how to write something were considered writers and they were acknowledged as sages.” Ilija Petrović, “Tri veka srpske škole,” Norma 9, no. 1 (2003): 167–79, at 169. Petrović does not distinguish female students from male, so we still need more information about this privileged group of educated persons. The same tradition of educating boys within monasteries existed in Serbia. Vuk Stefanović Karadžić noted that, at the end of the 18th century, in more than a hundred Serbian villages, there were no schools to be found (ibid., 171). In Hungary, Serbian people’s schools (Srpske narodne škole) were established on 2 November 1776, and in May 1778 the professional education of Serbian male teachers was instituted at the Teacher’s School (Učiteljska škola) in Sombor. About one hundred years later, this institution opened its doors to female students. The first Serbian girls enrolled there in the 1866–67 school year. The list of female students can be found in an unsigned article, “Učenici koji su završili učiteljsku školu i pedagošku akademiju,” in Dve stotine godina obrazovanja učitelja u Somboru 1778–1978, ed. Radomir Makarić and Stevan Vasiljević (Sombor: Samoupravna interesna zajednica za naučni rad Vojvodine, 1978), 599–637.

6 In 1872 the need for teachers led to the passage of a new law, which allowed female teachers to teach male students in the first two grades of elementary school (Milan Ristović, “Dug putka promeni rodnih odnosa,” in Istorija privatnog života, 423). A new law in 1879, which required female students to pass a teacher’s exam in order to obtain the status of a public teacher, seems not to have been enforced. Stanka D. Glišić (1859–1942), who was the younger sister of the writer Milovan Glišić, was also one of the first Serbian female public teachers and wrote in her memoirs that she began to work in 1878 and took her teacher exam in 1889. See Glišić, Moje uspomene (Belgrade: Srpska književna zadruga, 1933), 24–26. In 1883 the Serbian government enacted the law requiring elementary school for children of both genders, but the percentage of illiterate women in Serbia remained high even one hundred years later. In 1948, 37.6 percent of Serbian women were illiterate; by 1961 the number was 32.8 percent, in 1981 it was 16.9 percent, and in 1999 it was 10 percent. See Vera Gudac-Dodić, “Školovanje žena u Srbiji (1945–1991),” Tokovi istorije (Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, Belgrade), no. 3 (2006): 90–105, at 93.
tries, this was not a question of economics but of patriarchal prejudices. Another little-known fact is that after establishing the Principality of Serbia, the government began to view higher education of men as dangerous. In 1848, or just after the first generation of university-educated men had returned from studying abroad, the government was enormously fearful of schools and education, which pushed it to more repressive responses. In that context, we need to understand why the government was so adamantly opposed to the education of girls. It was not just a question of having more intelligentsia in the opposition but of having the patriarchal foundation of society destroyed. Therefore, the Serbian intelligentsia split into two groups: a large group of conservative intellectuals and a smaller liberal group who constituted the elite.

The history of girls’ education in Serbia leads to the conclusion that were it not for female historians, we might not have sufficient data to enable us to see how complex this problem was. While the education of boys and young men in Serbia started at the beginning of the nineteenth century and was part of a state initiative, the first high schools for girls were the result of private initiatives. These institutions were established by foreign female teachers such as Klara Špaček, Nemica Cimeran, Longovica, Marija Smutekovica, and Marija Garija-Hon, who tried to superimpose European culture onto Serbian tradition. At such schools, Serbian girls were taught foreign languages, musical education, and good manners.

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10 Perović mentions that the first such school was opened in 1853 by Klara and Leopold Špaček (Između anarhije i autokratije, 283). Stolić states that in Belgrade in 1842 some of Serbia’s female teachers, such as Natalija Petrović and Sofija and Katarina Lekić, opened a private school for girls after receiving permission from Prince Mihailo, but Stolić does not mention
The professionalization of female teachers developed rather slowly, reflecting the conflict between modern and traditional values within Serbian society. These two sets of values have not changed. The first law prescribing the establishment of elementary schools for girls was enacted in 1846, and the first elementary schools were opened in Paraćin and Belgrade. In 1863, girls in Serbia received the right to higher education, and the High School for Girls opened its doors in Belgrade. This institution had two purposes: to advance girls’ education and to professionalize female teachers. These important changes were the result of efforts by two intellectuals, Minister for Education Konstantin Kosta Cukić (1826–79) and his counselor, the writer Ljubomir Nenadović (1826–95), both of whom had attended universities in Western Europe. Cukić and Nenadović pushed this law, which led to subsequent reforms for Serbian women. This chapter from Serbian history is a remarkable other details about these individuals (see “Društveni identitet,” 209). This paper is also translated in English: Ana Stolić, “Vocation or Hobby: The Social Identity of Female Teachers in Nineteenth-Century Serbia,” in Gender Relations in South-Eastern Europe: Historical Perspectives on Womanhood and Manhood in the 19th and 20th Century, ed. Miroslav Jovanović and Slobodan Naumović (Belgrade: Udruženje za društvenu istoriju; Graz: Institut für Geschichte der Universität, Abteilung Südosteuropäische Geschichte, 2002), 55–90.

While offering details about these private initiatives, historians have not underlined the gender link behind the influence of foreign female teachers on their Serbian female students, who received the European model of female education. Compare Svetozar Dunderski, “Institucionalno obrazovanje ženske dece i omladine u Srbiji u periodu 1858–1903,” Pedagoška stvarnost 53, nos. 7–8 (2007): 653; and Perović, Između anarhije i autokратije, 282–83. Perović’s book can be found online at http://www.helsinki.org.rs/serbian/doc/Ogledi08.pdf


The fact that Serbia opened such an institution in 1863, that is, before the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1866, has led some historians to overemphasize Serbia’s modernity. Perhaps this was an incorrect conclusion since the Austro-Hungarian Teachers’ School (Učiteljska škola) was opened for female students in Sombor, where girls received professional knowledge and were trained for teaching from the beginning of the 1866–67 school year. In Serbia, the High School for Girls had more methodological problems to solve in the upcoming years. Therefore, it frequently changed its school program, trying to reach high professional standards. For more about the laws in 1879, 1886, and 1898, see Perović, Između anarhije i autokratije, 287.

Information about Ljubomir Nenadović’s role cannot be found in Deretić’s Istorija srpske književnosti (see pp. 702–04) but in Perović’s Između anarhije i autokratije, 283. For more on Nenadović’s liberal thoughts, see Jovanović, Ustavobranitelji, 105.

Perović points out the different cultural impacts of Serbian students who had received state scholarships. Contrary to conservative influences from students who were sent to the East (Russia), those students who returned from West Europe (Germany and France) brought more progressive and liberal ideas (Između anarhije i autokratije, 56–57).
example of how a few educated people can move a primitive society toward a modern future.16

Even though this law opened doors for Serbia’s young women, the establishment of the High School for Girls was not the triumph of modern Serbian intellectualism. It was a new phase in the struggle for the recognition of female intellectuals as its principal, Katarina Milovuk (1844–1913), fought to keep her school alive. For the next fifty years this institution experienced constant pressure from various ministers of education, as one of its faculty members, Kosara Cvetković (Fig. 1), documented exhaustively.17 Perhaps without the strong leadership of Katarina Milovuk, all types of obstacles could have undermined education’s crucial importance to the emancipation of Serbian women. The school could not have gained modern and elite status nor could its women have been able to work as a united source of intellectual power. It was not a coincidence that Milovuk was also a founding member of the first Serbian Women’s Society (Žensko društvo) in Belgrade in 1875.18

In order to understand the emerging identity of female teachers, it is important to follow their actions. Whether they appeared in the Austro-Hungarian Empire or in Serbia, it was difficult for them to work and write without obstacles.19 As a radically new identity group, female teachers were under constant pressure from state, church, and local officials. They were spied on and controlled. Various bogus complaints filed against them were part of the strong resistance against this new woman’s identity.20 Unlike male teachers, female teachers suffered discrimination, and in contrast to their male peers, teaching was the only profession that was open to them. The more pressures the government exerted through new laws, the more motivated female teach-

16 Jovanović stresses this morality by referring to Konstantin Cukić’s nickname as one of the “ministers with virtues” (ministri sa vrlinama). Slobodan Jovanović, Druga vlada Miloša i Mihaila (Belgrade: Geca Kon, 1933), 246–47. Also available online through Digitalna Narodna biblioteka Srbije, http://scc.digital.nb.rs/document/TDJ-0989-006.
18 Compare Ikonija Klajić-Simić, Katarina Milovuk (Belgrade: Štamparija Davidović, Pavlović i Druga, 1936); and Ljiljana Stankov, Katarina Milovuk (1844–1913) i ženski pokret u Srbiji (Belgrade: Pedagoški muzej, 2011).
19 At the Teachers’ Congress that was held 17–20 September 1870 in Srpski Bečej, male teachers agreed that women should not be permitted to teach since “today our women are not capable of undertaking the teacher’s duty. If that day ever comes, and we get educated women, then we will discuss allowing them to work” (Petrović, “Tri veka srpske škole,” 174).
ers became. In Serbia, Milovuk strengthened the relationships between her students and faculty and supported the establishment of the Society of Students of the Higher Women’s School (Društvo učenica Više ženske škole) in 1884. Moreover, Milovuk cultivated the Serbian female intellectual elite in her school by hiring her most promising graduates. Very soon after, female teachers outnumbered male.

Why did these women enter such a difficult profession? Were they hurt by the lack of substantial moral and intellectual support from Serbian society? Why did female teachers defy certain laws? Why was it so important for female teachers to educate themselves, to read until dawn? Why were most of them willing to sacrifice their private life? Was the growing number of well-educated girls sufficient encouragement? Or was it their primary goal?

The literary works of the first female teacher-writers provide some of the answers. Despite their innovative writing, these women and their works have not been sufficiently researched. The male historians of Serbian literature have only written about a few of these female teacher-writers and dismissed their works as insignificant. It seems that Jovan Deretić was the first historian to mention even two of these female teacher-writers: Stanka Glišić and Draga Gavrilović (Fig. 2). The truth is that Deretić did so without devoting his study

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21 In 1898, a law was passed forbidding female teachers to work if their husbands were not teachers. Married female teachers and mothers were under even greater pressure. Compare Glišić, *Moje uspomene*, 61–62; Stolić, “Društveni identitet,” 228–29; and Ristović, “Dug put,” 424.

22 Perović underlined this process, stressing that “all generations of female teachers were characterized by a great enthusiasm for self-education and improvement” (*Između anarhije i autokratije*, 293).

23 In today’s Serbia, we have a predominance of female teachers in elementary and high school but not at the academy. For the positive and negative impacts of this predominance, see Vera Ž. Radović, *Feminizacija učiteljskog poziva* (Belgrade: Učiteljski fakultet, 2007).

24 The case in 1863 of a female teacher, wife, and mother, Marija Stojković from Valjevo, is described in Aleksandra Vuletić, “Vlast muškaraca, pokornost žena: Između ideologije i prakse,” in *Privatni život kod Srba u devetnaestom veku*, ed. Ana Stolić and Nenad Makuljević (Belgrade: Clio, 2006), 112–32.

25 In her memoirs, Stanka Glišić, one of the first teachers and translators, described her late hours reading: “When I got the books I had ordered, I immediately immersed myself in reading. I read until 2 and 3 in the morning. One time, the reading captivated me so much, that I didn’t notice time passing by. My cousin Miloš had gotten up early and was on his way to the bistro when he saw a light in my room. He knocked on my window, asking why my candle was still lit, and I answered: ‘I am reading.’ Then he shouted: ‘You fool! Who on earth reads until dawn?’” Despite the fact that on the very first day I entered the classroom I had no idea what to say to the children, at the end of the school year I got an excellent evaluation. That is proof of how great my effort was, and more than that, taking into account Miloš’s scolding itself: “You fool! Who on earth reads until dawn?” (*Moje uspomene*, 22).
to examining their work. In his historic-poetical monograph of Serbian realism, Dušan Ivanić only mentions Draga Gavrilović, but in a review of her collected works he defines her fiction as literature without value. In a recent academic survey translated into English, *A Short History of Serbian Literature*, Ivanić does not mention Gavrilović at all. After some research, it becomes clear that we are dealing with overlooked information. There are several periodicals from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, such as *Javor* and *Srpskinja*, whose editors printed lists of more than a hundred Serbian female writers, most of whom were teachers. Many of these women published their literary work, usually in periodicals, and very rarely as books. In 1899 a special issue of *Zora* was dedicated to Serbian female writers. Why have historians of Serbian literature not mentioned these changes?

In Hayden White’s view, literary history is an account both of change in continuity and of continuity in change. If there were so many female writers, why have their works been ignored? I also call for a wider exploration of this problem, because the sources on female teacher-writers have been available, but researchers rarely study them. Clearly, we are dealing not only with a manipulative and ideologically generated system of knowledge but also with its pressure to forget female culture, which makes it difficult to eradicate gender inequality and improve the other social frameworks of the culture of memory. What we have here is a transdisciplinary phenomenon of cultural memory studies which deals with “remembering” or “forgetting” aspects of the past, challenging the notion of collective or cultural memory.

A second group of historians, consisting of female historians of Serbian society and particularly of girls’ education, have actually evaluated the contri-

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27 *Javor* (Novi Sad: Luka Jocić i druga), nos. 6, 9, 16, 17, 20, 23, 26, 37, 39, 44, 48, 50, and 51 (1891); *Srpskinja: Njezin život i rad, njezin kulturni razvitak i njezina umjetnost do danas*, edited by the Serbian female writers (Irig: Dobrotvorna zadruga Srpskinja u Irigu; Sarajevo: Štamparija Pijaković i drug., 1913), 20–21.


29 For more about this new study, see Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning, eds., *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008).
bution of the first female teachers, which they perceive as a complex phenomenon, but the emergence itself of these teacher-writers has remained unknown to them. Some of these historians have made ambiguous arguments: for example, what could motivate female teachers to endure harsh circumstances or to struggle against prejudice? We need to utilize the narratives of teacher-writers as a special confessional form of their experience.

I have written about the institutional efforts to diminish the importance of Draga (Draginja) Gavrilović and her contemporaries. Draga Gavrilović (1854–1917) was the first Serbian feminist writer and a fierce critic of the Serbian patriarchal tradition and misogyny in its educational system. She moved women from the bottom to the top of Serbian culture. Gavrilović reinvented the Serbian story and novel by writing about women. She changed a Serbian literary hero and plot, introducing many variants of a new character type—the female intellectual. She wrote stories and novels about teacher-intellectuals, actresses, female bookkeepers, nuns, writers, and about friendships among women. For example, she created female teacher-writers, of both Serbian and American origin, agitating for American success in women’s emancipation. She wanted Serbia to emulate the US.

In doing so, Gavrilović constructed a range of new thematic concerns, all pertaining to a new female intellectual group. That is why her two novels, Iz učiteljicø života (From a Female Teacher’s Life) and Devojački roman (A Young Girl’s Novel), begin with original images and rhetoric. Both stories begin with long discussions between young women, some of whom are graduates of a girls’ high school or teachers. Instead of having physically attractive women in a narrative background, Gavrilović unambiguously creates women who are morally and intellectually irresistible. Behind these creative efforts stands the writer’s mission to make Serbians, especially young women, more critical of their society, as Gavrilović stated in her story “Radi nje” (Because of Her), published in Sadašnjost (Kikinda) in 1896.

30 Within this group of female historians are Neda Božinović, Latinka Perović, Ljubinka Trgovčević, and Ana Stolić.
32 A poem by a teacher-writer, Sofija Stefanović, is dedicated to her friend, also a female teacher. Stefanović’s main thematic concern is missing her friend. See Stefanović, “Mojoj prijateljici Milici Mihajlovićevoj,” Javor, no. 19 (8 May 1883), 577–78.
Although Gavrilović lived in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, poverty was also a reality in Serbia. She often wrote about Serbs, specifically, Serbian teachers in the Austro-Hungarian Empire who needed to defend their national identity. Gavrilović also narrated the political aspect of a female teacher’s life:

A few days ago she received a formal notice from the school’s officials stating that teachers are strictly commanded to follow the rule that children must know and speak Hungarian by the time they finish third grade. So how does one manage this despite the fact that children irregularly attend the classes in school villages and are generally neglected, and in addition to the other prescribed subjects?! Furthermore, Gavrilović’s stories about female teachers shed light on their life and work and stress the strong link between girls’ education and female emancipation. While some female teachers resigned from their position because of poor conditions or public opposition to them, others, such as Darinka in *Iz učiteljičkog života* and *Devojački roman*, were more resilient.

It is important to note that both of Gavrilović’s heroines, with the same name (Darinka), have a broad view of the political problems and their own visions. Unlike their colleagues, Lenka and Milica in *Iz učiteljičkog života*, for instance, the Darinkas know that fighting poverty is hard and that it is too optimistic to expect teachers to be well paid. Both heroines also know that Serbian people are not well educated, so they have to work harder in order to overcome their prejudices. They criticize Serbians’ view of education as

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33 The law about having Hungarian language as an obligatory subject by third grade was implemented from the school year of 1879–80. For more about these political aspects known as Hungarization or Magyarization, see Petrović, “Tri veka srpske škole,” 176–80.


35 Gavrilović graduated from the Teachers’ School in Sombor in 1878, and she immediately started to work in Srpska Crnja, becoming the first female teacher in her hometown. She published her novel *Devojački roman* in Javor in 1889. Knowing this, we may ask when she wrote this novel and how long it took her to publish it. Vladimir Milankov wrote that Gavrilović was very disappointed when the editor of *Sadašnjost* in Kikinda refused to publish her novel, but he provided no further details. Milankov, *Draga Gavrilović: Život i delo* (Kikinda: Književna zajednica Kikinde, 1989), 119.

36 Compare *Iz učiteljičkog života*, 192, 198, 203; and *Devojački roman*, 162, 170.
something evil and unnecessary. In addition to teaching in the classroom, female teachers taught women, especially in villages, how to raise their children, cure illnesses (as described in one episode in Iz učiteljskog života, 212–15), embroider, and be better homemakers.

Despite their devotion to their work, Gavrilović’s heroines found that their intelligence was neither welcomed nor appreciated but was rather resented. The Darinka of Devojački roman discovered this when she became one of the first female students in a high school for teachers. She wrote letters to her sister, making “feminist confessions” about professors’ misogyny and the immoral behavior of some of the professors and female students.

According to Barbara Sheldon, “feminist confessions” are crucial moments of discovering women’s motivation for changing traditional gender roles. It may be argued that these confessions are a part of Gavrilović’s personal biography. They help us to understand her motives for defending a new social identity of her own, that of teachers, or female intellectuals. It all began with Darinka’s school years, especially after she received a diploma which she enigmatically describes as “osakaćena svedodžba”—meaning “a lame” or “disabled diploma.”

Neznanko Neznanković (Mr. Unknown Unknowingly)—a young government official, and later Darinka’s fiancée—noticed the discrepancy in her diploma between her bad grades and her very good schoolwork and reputa-

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37 This is not only the case with the 19th-century Serbian population in the Austro-Hungarian part, but also with the Serbs in Serbia too, where even during the second half of the 20th century, people in villages did not want to send their female children to school, thus disregarding the law. In a recent interview about the newly published book Istorija privatnog života u Srba, one of the authors, academic historian Milan Ristović, cited cases in which Serbian police officers had to accompany female children to school. See “Istorija i svakodnevica,” Vreme (Belgrade), no. 1102 (14 February 2012), 45.


39 For further details, see Tomić, “Draga Gavrilović,” 182.

40 Barbara H. Sheldon, Daughters and Fathers in Feminist Novels (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1997), 123.

41 Gavrilović, Devojački roman, 155–56. There is one piece of Gavrilović’s school document, dated 1878, found in the archive of the National Library Dura Jakšić (Srpska Crnja), where we can see that she received an excellent mark for behavior. If we had her other school documents, we might know if her behavior had changed during her more advanced education. There are some questions still worth asking: About whom did she write? How much of her prose was factual? Why did she frequently stress the discrepancy between two realities, one of a student’s behavior and her knowledge, and the other of the diploma, or the reality of the professors’ professional identity and their relationship to the new social identity group, that of female intellectuals?
tion. Neznanko also noticed that she had received a poor grade for misbehavior. In reality, Neznanko perceives the opposite, that Darinka behaves without any complaints and that her behavior may serve as a model for female teachers. Since we know that in reality there were other officials who spied on and complained about female teachers, Neznanko may represent a new fictional type of emancipated official who respects and admires female teachers. Because he is named “Mr. Unknown Unknowingly,” perhaps Gavrilović wanted to stress his hypothetical perfection, not found in real life. Thus, Neznanko becomes a part of the author’s new narrative standards for manhood.

At the time, Darinka did not confide to Neznanko what she had previously confessed to her sister, that during her college education she had advocated feminism and that that was the reason why she received a bad grade for her behavior in class. This problem has a deeper meaning, connected not only to the professors’ misogyny but also to the same orientation of Serbian society in general and its patriarchal morality. To the young government official Darinka only admitted that this poor grade offended her the most. She said, “that will plague me forever.” This could be one of her central confessions, which reveal her reasons for sacrificing her life in order to educate girls. She was giving up her own happiness in order to contribute to society. What kind of society did she want to build? Her confessions provide the answer again. That is, a society that is all about a new morality, or new feminist morality, which closely binds the ethical and the intellectual. Gavrilović’s teachers were emancipated women. In addition to fighting misanthropy, primitivism, pseudo-intellectualism, and misogyny, they struggled for Serbian women’s freedom, their right to work, and their right to enter the profession of their choice.

These demands began with the activism of female teachers. Gavrilović comments on the difficult position of female teachers, writing, “We are still a novelty in our society. We have not gained sufficient trust or popularity, so first of all we need to protect the good name of our girls and our teachers’ reputation.” Later, she describes their public service: “Our field of work, for

43 Gavrilović, Devojački roman, 176. A similar and equally painful experience made another female teacher-writer, Kosara Cvetković, resign from teaching in the Serbian town of Čačak. Kosara received bad marks because she helped her female colleague, Atanasija Berberović-Majzner, teach while she recovered from her husband’s suicide. This was the moment of Kosara’s disappointment but not discouragement. Kosara chose instead to educate herself, to learn foreign languages and how to read and paint. Olivera Nedeljković, “Kosara K. Cvetković: Život preveden u knjige,” Glas biblioteke: Časopis za bibliotekarstvo (Čačak), no. 17 (July 2010): 96.
44 Gavrilović, Devojački roman, 165.
now, is school, paragon, and the pen.”

Then, she describes the strength of her determination: “All my energy, all my life I will sacrifice to my calling.”

According to Darinka, her calling was more than professional. It was a duty to society in general and to the liberation of women specifically. Due to a lack of professional choices, many girls turned to the teaching profession even though they did not love it or appreciate its demands. As a teacher-writer, Gavrilović demanded the right of women to choose from many different professions which were available only to men. She understood the weak morality of some female teachers as the consequence of girls’ immaturity, poverty, and the humiliating treatment they experienced in school.

Gavrilović’s other heroine, Darinka from the novel Iz učiteljickog života, has the same character traits as Darinka from Devojački roman. In contrast to Lenka and Milica, Darinka wants to fight to improve the position of women. For her, the biggest reward comes from the girls’ desire to become educated: “Don’t you find any happiness at all when even a four-year-old girl stops you in the street, asking ‘When will I become your student’?” Darinka dreams of male and female students who love and respect their female teachers and admire knowledge, which implies that these are people who have overcome gender prejudices and have a sense of justice. These teachers wanted progress and all they needed was determination and dedication. Darinka said to Milica, “Of course the field of teachers’ work is full of thorns, but over the thorns leads the path to happiness. All we need is will and persistence.”

The symbiotic form of a female teacher and writer may suggest the vital enlightened role of this intellectual identity in nineteenth-century Serbian education and culture. Also, because of the literary work of these talented teacher-writers from the Austro-Hungarian empire, the idea that they did not know the Serbian language well can be rejected. Ognjanović praised their language skills and literature. The same symbiotic form of a new and progres-

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45 Ibid.
46 Ibid., 166.
47 Darinka understands her colleagues who abase themselves, begging the school council to employ them in order to financially help their families: “It is not her fault. There are other reasons for that. It would be much different if they didn’t enroll female students at the age of 14 and if society didn’t smother our pride while we are students. Our female position is also to blame. Out of fashion and necessity, all girls are running into the teaching school. We have no other field” (ibid., 177).
48 Gavrilović, Iz učiteljickog života, 220.
49 Ibid., 209.
50 Ibid., 203.
51 Stolić, “Društveni identitet,” 211.
sive gender identity was also applied to the model of a new literary hero, which Draga Gavrilović created. Unlike Gavrilović, who created this unique identity and a fierce critique of patriarchal society, her contemporaries chose to “soften” this political rhetoric, leaving it in the background, yet having the same positive approach to the new emancipated female characters in their literary works. This was probably on account of their social context. Gavrilović was the first female teacher in an elementary school in Srpska Crnja, where she lived alone. She was a powerful critical thinker and writer. She denounced the misogyny of Serbian male writers who said that Serbian female writers were “refuse.”

Among Gavrilović’s peers, only Mileva Simić (1858–1954) (Fig. 3) had a high position. At the age of 15 she was appointed the principal of the first high school for girls, which opened in Novi Sad in 1874. Quite possibly she obtained this high position because she was the cousin of Đorde Natošević—a renowned Austro-Hungarian government official at the Serbian education department who had a fruitful network within the Serbian cultural and literary establishment. Simić was also a teacher at the high school for girls and the author of several textbooks. When she published her first story, Simić, unlike Gavrilović, used a pseudonym.

52 In her satire “Zašto greh napreduje,” which was published in Sadašnjost in 1892, before the well-known Serbian male satirist Radoje Domanović published his first work of that genre (1898), Gavrilović sent an anonymous Serbian male writer to heaven to ask St. Peter why there are so many evils among Serbs. The male writer was not able to understand Serbian reality. At that moment, some soul fell down just in front of the writer’s feet. He asked St. Peter if the soul was male or female. Peter reprimanded the writer: “‘Why do you need that? There is no sex here. All souls are equal. Where you come from male has the priority, but here we have equality for all.’ The writer was upset. How wrong, he thought, that in heaven women are already emancipated. That is why here on earth women writers are shooting up like mushrooms… We can’t live because of them… Beforehand, when some editors would announce an award for a story, we male writers would grab Turgenev or some other favorite writer, just rewrite or translate their work, and sign it with our name, so glory and award would go to our hands… But now, dear brother, you cannot even do that… Immediately that female shit starts smiling… It seems as if they want to say: ‘We know you and your maneuvers full well!’” Draga Gavrilović, “Zašto greh napreduje,” in Sabrana dela, vol. 2, Pripovetke, Devojački roman, prevodi, ed. Vladimir Milankov (Kikinda: Književna zajednica Kikinde, 1990), 43.

53 Mileva Simić was the daughter of a celebrated Serbian painter, Pavle Simić. She became a student at the Teachers’ School in Sombor at the age of 12 and graduated when she was 15. Đorde Natošević was her uncle. At the beginning of her career, she lived in the Natoševićes’ home in Novi Sad, where she met many famous Serbian writers. Cf. Gordana Stojaković, Svenka Savić, and Mirjana Majkić, Znamenite žene Novog Sada, ed. Stojaković (Novi Sad: Futura publikacije, 2001), 129–30; and “Mileva Simić,” in Šrpski (1913), 67–69.
In her short stories “Nada” (Hope) and “Adidari” (Jewelry), Mileva Simić depicted the psychological atmosphere within a family. Moral wives and mothers save their families. When a husband acknowledges the value of his wife, which is a cultural situation that appeared for the first time after Laza K. Lazarević’s story “Prvi put s ocem na jutrenje” (With Father to the Matins for the First Time), one can clearly see the connection between this new women’s morality and the new cultural symbols suggested in Simić’s titles. That is, “Hope” and “Jewelry” are used to refer to these precious new women. The same message can be found in Gavrilović’s story “Misli u pozorištu: Jedinoj srpskoj glumici” (Some Observations in a Theater: To a Serbian Actress).

Kosara Cvetković (1868–1953) began her career as a village teacher in Gornji Milanovac, later in Guća and Čačak, and then became the teacher at a high school for girls in Belgrade, where she also had bookkeeping duties. Afterward, Cvetković became a distinguished Serbian translator. Her translations of Russian classics by Dostoyevsky and Chekhov remain highly respected today. Danica Bandić (1871–1950) was a teacher at an elementary school in Kikinda, a town in Austria-Hungary, but after some twenty years she moved to Belgrade.

The distinction between the direct feminist critique of a patriarchal society, culture, and education in Draga Gavrilović’s fiction and its “softer” variant in the fiction and plays of her peers can be best seen if we compare Darinka from Gavrilović’s Devojački roman and Mileva from Bandić’s Emancipovana. Compared to a play, a novel offers wide and complex space for working out ideas with great care and nicety of detail. But here I want to stress the creation of a heroine who in both genres could have achieved the same political power. While the former work elaborated upon a woman’s position in the family, in marriage, in a high school for girls, in culture, and in literature, the latter stressed the problematic position of an emancipated woman who wants to marry. Unlike Gavrilović, Bandić (Fig. 4) tells the story from the male point of view, softening Gavrilović’s serious debate by using

55 The power of the same message in Gavrilović’s story is elaborated in Tomić, “Draga Gavrilović,” 179.
56 For additional information on Cvetković’s life and translations, see Nedeljković, “Kosara K. Cvetković,” 89–124.
57 Danica Bandić, Emancipovana [The emancipated woman], Letopis Matice srpske 182, no. 2 (1895): 58–74. Bandić’s drama was later published as a book in Novi Sad in 1923. According to historians, Gavrilović was the only Serbian female novelist of that time.
comedic strategies, which could gently change public opinion. Bandić, however, followed Gavrilović’s suggestion that the resolution of the drama of women’s emancipation resides with cultivated men who are free of all prejudices. It is worth noting that at the core of this change is the role of fathers, who have to support their independent daughters. That said, the father’s true love is a part of his respect for his daughter’s personal and professional freedom. One could then ask why Emancipovanica had to wait so long to be published and why it was so quickly forgotten. Why did Belgrade intellectuals only approve of Bandić’s children’s books? Why have male and female historians of Serbian literature ignored Bandić’s works? In whose interests should historians and academics work?

Bandić’s literary talent is apparent in her play Emancipovanica and her short stories “Plava traka” (The Blue Ribbon), “Pod jesen” (In Fall), and “Spram mesečine” (Across the Moonlight), in which she effectively controls her characters, scenes, and dialogues. It is likely that she inherited her talent for drama from her father, Laza Telečki (1841–73), a Serbian actor, dramatist, and translator of plays. She carried her literary ability over into other genres, especially in her writings for children. Bandić was also the director of a theater in Kikinda (Velikokikindska srpska pozorišna dobrovoljna družina). She may well have been one of Serbia’s first female theater directors. She was also one of the founders of numerous women’s societies, including the Young Girl’s Falcon (Devojački soko), the Society for Women’s Education (Društvo za prosvećivanje žene), and Women’s Craft School (Zanatska ženska škola). What makes Bandić’s intellectual identity even more distinctive is that unlike most teacher-writers, who stayed single, she was married to a teacher and was the mother of four children. Her daughter became a well-known actress.

The literary works of Mileva Simić, Kosara Cvetković, and Danica Bandić offered glimpses of the same new emancipated culture. That culture had an abundance of independent female intellectuals, who had like-minded friends, as implied in the title of Bandić’s drama (Emancipovanica). These writers described encouraging and supportive fathers, quite unlike the tyrants mentioned above. 


59 When the work of Laza Telečki appears online, one rarely finds any reference to his daughter Danica and her work. It is the opposite case when female authors write about Danica Bandić. For example, see “Danica Bandićka,” in Srpskina (1913), 59, or Julija Bošković, “Danica Bandić-Telečkova,” in Leksikon pisaca Jugoslavije, vol. 1, A–Dž (Novi Sad: Matica srpska, 1972), 144.

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ical patriarchs who dominated Serbian literature from the early novels of Jakov Ignjatović (Milan Narandžić, Vasa Rešpekt, and Večiti mladoženja) to the later novels of Stevan Sremac (Zona Zamfirova) and Borisav Stanković (Nečista krv).

This new emancipated culture opposed patriarchal marriage, which was perceived as immoral since it treated daughters as chattel to be bought and sold. Therefore, it agitated for love and respect between two spouses, which implies autonomy and personal freedom for girls (as expressed in most of Gavrilović’s fiction and Simić’s drama Retka sreća, 1900). In contrast to Laza Lazarević’s story “Švabica” (The German Girl) and Sremac’s novel Zona Zamfirova, this new culture welcomed international marriages, which these female writers regarded as important cultural exchanges. This new culture saw the effect of positive kinds of female relations, such as mothers, daughters, sisters, artists, and nuns, on Serbian fiction, and it struggled for its place in Serbian society. Women writers broke old myths about mean stepmothers (Cvetković’s story “U dvadeset osmoj”⁶¹ and asked young female students to be moral, as evidenced in several of Simić’s dramas, such as Drugarice (Female Friends; Sombor, 1886) and Polaženik (Novi Sad, 1891).⁶²

In addition to writing fiction, drama, and literature for children, these writers worked as translators. Numerous works appeared in periodicals of the nineteenth century, especially in Bosanska vila in Sarajevo.⁶³ As in other cases, their translations were not acknowledged, even if they translated such modern writers as Walt Whitman or Charles Baudelaire, or well-known foreign women authors of the time, such as Romanian queen and poet Carmen Sylv, the Czech writer Gabriela Preissova, or the Austrian writer and director Olga Wohlbrück. Some of these teachers even crossed into literary criticism; Kosara Cvetković, for instance, wrote a critique with coauthor Hristina Ristić of the poetry book Pesme (Niš, 1894), written by another female author, Jelena J. Dimitrijević.⁶⁴ This meant entering the men’s sphere of judging, evaluating, and analyzing literary work. Cvetković and Ristić meticulously wrote about Dimitrijević’s first poetry book, stressing its values as well as some of the weak points in Dimitrijević’s poetry. In the recently published Istorija srpske književne kritike (History of Serbian Literary Criticism), how-

⁶¹ Published in Bosanska vila 10, nos. 7–10 (1895).

⁶² Polaženik is a Serbian term for the first person who enters someone’s home on Christmas Day and thereby receives special honors and gifts.


ever, there is no information on Kosara Cvetković and Hristina Ristić.\textsuperscript{65} In addition to these activities, most of the female principals and teachers were first authors of textbooks (Katarina Milovuk and Persida Pinterović in Belgrade and Mileva Simić in Novi Sad).

At the time, this new culture received a few supporters, mostly from the Austro-Hungarian Empire. I want to focus on two of them. One was Ilija Ognjanović, a doctor and editor of Javor, which was a highly-regarded cultural periodical in Novi Sad. When the first female teachers sent their literary work to Ognjanović, he published it (Gavrilović’s Iz učiteljčikog života in 1884 and later Simić’s “Nada”). Not only did Ognjanović make their work accessible, but he also showed them the highest respect, frequently printing their fiction on Javor’s first page, which was usually reserved for male authors. In this way, Ognjanović paid respect to the creativity of female intellectuals. Ognjanović also wrote articles elucidating these new values and explaining why they were important for Serbian culture and society.\textsuperscript{66}

Ognjanović’s articles are not mentioned in two monographs about Serbian periodicals of the nineteenth century, both written by the academic Dušan Ivanić.\textsuperscript{67} Ognjanović’s support of Serbian female writers was quite unusual for its time. In 1891 Ognjanović even proposed writing a history of Serbian women’s literature. This happened just after he printed the news that Matica srpska had published the book Srpski pisci (Serbian Male Writers). Obviously, he was dismayed by the institutional exclusion of women writers from Serbian culture and especially from the professional judgments made by academics and critics. Apprehending this reality, Ognjanović encouraged his associates and readers to send in any information they had about the Serbian


\textsuperscript{66} Ognjanović wrote, “As in the literature of other larger nations, in our small literature there are only a few female names who try and really work in the sphere where otherwise only men’s heads work. Let people think whatever they want about whether women should interfere in this business and whether they should venture beyond their designated women’s area, but everyone has to admit that these women who engage in literature clearly demonstrate that they are gifted and that they have a more liberal outlook on the world. In their real sphere they feel as if they are in some tight confine, so they want to develop their minds outside of its boundaries so that they can be useful to their gender on a broader scale.” “Jevstahija Arsić, née Cincić,” Javor (Novi Sad: A. Pajević), no. 6 (20 February 1891): 87. After mentioning the names of Evstahija Arsić and a few female authors known from the beginning of the nineteenth century, Ognjanović distinguished “especially Draga Gavrilović and Mileva Simić” as authors who have “skillful pens … beautiful, original thoughts and reflections, and healthy tendencies.”

\textsuperscript{67} Compare Ivanić, Zabavno-poučna periodika srpskog realizma: “Javor” i “Stražilovo” (Novi Sad: Matica srpska, 1988); Ivanić, Književna periodika srpskog realizma (Belgrade: Institut za književnost i umetnost; Novi Sad: Matica srpska, 2008).
women writers and their works so that he might document and publish them in Javor, thus constructing a parallel history of Serbian literature. During the year 1891, Ognjanović published a long list of names and works of almost 100 female authors, most of them teachers. In 1897 this list was expanded to incorporate the names of 149 women writers in the calendar Srpinja. The list was reprinted in the almanac Srpinja in 1913. It is strange that Ognjanović valued male and female authors equally and that no one has taken up his call to write a history of Serbia’s female writers. Why did Ognjanović want to help the new female cultural identity gain equal respect, and why have today’s academic representatives been working in a diametrically opposite manner? We can only speculate to what extent Serbian society could have changed if male officials had wanted to promote a new emancipated culture.

Atanasije Šola went a step further than Ognjanović, dedicating a special thematic issue of his cultural periodical Zora (in Mostar, at that time part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire) to Serbian female writers. In doing so, Šola followed Ognjanović’s efforts to respect gender differences and make them communicate inside one culture and not separate them into a hierarchy of values dictated by male culture. Šola’s innovation, which was unique in the region at the time, had the same bad fate as Ognjanović’s throughout a century or so. Historians of Serbian literature, male and female, applied double strategies regarding that issue of Zora. Some historians and scholars of Serbian literature have not mentioned the issue at all.68 A historian from the Serbian Academy of Science and Art designated that thematic issue “feminine” and dismissed it as weak.69 Therefore, a link between female and literature was established not as a part of scientific efforts but as a result of the prejudices of a male or patriarchal culture.

Many researchers emphasized the role of Jovan Dučić (1871–1943) in advancing Zora to a more aesthetic level, often clouding Dučić’s true role in editing the special issue.70 Among many studies on Dučić’s role in Zora, one could ask for the caution which Mihajlo Miša Đorđević showed in addressing

68 Jovan Skerlić, Istorija nove srpske književnosti (Belgrade: Rad, 1953 [1914]); Deretić, Istorija srpske književnosti; Ivanić, Srpski realizam; Ivanić and Vukičević, Ka poetici srpskog realizma.
70 For a history of the misinterpretation of Dučić’s role in publishing this issue, see Tomić, “Nov kulturni identitet srpskih književnica.”
the origin of the “feminine” issue of Zora. Đorđević defined that issue as “the greatest innovation.”

Only Staniša Tutnjević clearly stressed that Dučić could not have been the editor of Zora’s “feminine” issue. At the time, Dučić was studying in Geneva and had sent a bitter letter to his friend Milan Savić. In that letter, Dučić revealed how furious he was about that issue, writing, “For me, no woman exists as an educated person, much less a writer. If my fellows from Zora wanted to give me such proof, they showed it with that issue by using black ink on white paper.”

Little has changed since Laza Kostić (1841–1910), another Serbian poet and intellectual, stated that Serbian women should not be included in political organizations, nor should they be treated as the equals of men because of the nature of women.

The first female teachers encountered prejudice and discrimination. They knew that girls’ education would lead to better lives as women. The growing number of female teachers was congruent with the rise in girls’ ambitions, which broke with prescribed gender roles. The teachers created the opportunities for their students. They went abroad to study medicine (Draga Ljočić 1855–1926), architecture (Jelisaveta Načić 1878–1955), painting (Andelija Lazarević 1855–192674 and Nadežda Petrović 1873–1915), and chemistry (Delfa Ivanić 1881–1972).

More tolerant laws regulating the role and status of women and women’s education in the Austro-Hungarian Empire helped the Serbian female intellectual elite emerge and develop. To a certain extent, the first Serbian female teacher-writers were accepted and recognized in the public sphere. Support granted by male editors was essential to the publication of their work in a prestigious magazine such as Javor. A positive social climate was one of the key differences between editorial politics in the Austro-Hungarian Empire and in Serbia at that time.

74 Andelija L. Lazarević was the daughter of a distinguished Serbian writer, Laza K. Lazarević. From 1911 to 1914 she taught drawing at the First Women’s High School (Prva ženska gimnazija) in Belgrade and went abroad to study paintings in Munich. Her selected prose was published recently in Andelija L. Lazarević, Gовор stvari, sabrani spisi, ed. Zorica Hadžić (Belgrade: Službeni glasnik, 2011).
The first female teacher-writers were well-known and openly venerated and encouraged by their female readership. In contrast to contemporary male writers, who were teachers as well, the women authors promoted different, more liberal and emancipated ideas. Their work, in fact, was not merely educational but culturally enlightening as well. Nonetheless, while the feminist movement of the early 20th century upheld the legacy of the first female teachers, these women and their work were soon after forgotten and repressed from cultural memory.

When the Serbian Women’s Movement organized a celebration of the 45 years of committed work of one of the first Serbian teacher-writers, Stanka D. Glišić, its members wanted to acknowledge the forgotten role of teachers in the emancipation of Serbian women: “They gave all they had, and all of them made our female offspring embark on the path of their own cultural development, which they pass on as a legacy to new generations. Thanks to them, the path was blazed and belief in the necessity of girls’ education was cemented. In general, they created better conditions for further work.”75 If today’s students know and understand these inspiring examples, and if they learn about the prejudices of respectable and honorable men of Serbian literature and the academy, perhaps they will not be shocked or disappointed.76 Rather, they will be more interested in investigating the complex history of a society, learning from it, explaining it in a profound way, and applying its lessons to their own time.

75 The author of this article signed it “A.” See “Stanka D. Glišić: Povodom proslave 45-godišnjice njenoga rada,” Politika (Belgrade), 12 April 1925, 4.
76 During the lecture, students were very dismayed by the reactions of the Serbian male poets and other intellectuals towards the emerging group of Serbian female intellectuals, teachers, and writers.
Figure 1. Kosara K. Cvetković

Figure 2. Draga Gavrilović as a student, circa 1874 [Source: Archive of the National Library Đura Jakšić in Srpska Crnja]
Figure 3. Mileva Simić
[Source: Zora, no. 12, 1899: 402]

Figure 4. Danica Bandić
[Source: Gordana Stojaković, Kikinda iz ženskog ugla, p. 29]
Spaces of Femininity, Gender, and Ideological Boundaries: Serbian Painting 1900–41

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The recording of the phenomenon of *modernity* when it appeared and became established in Serbian society and culture during the first half of the 20th century was thoroughly systematized historiographically during the second half of the century. The period between 1900 and 1941 was interpreted in terms of decades, creating a framework within which recognizable peculiarities could be noticed. Although different, these approaches have one strong common denominator: they are based on a rectilinear passage through space, time, and formal linguistic characteristics of the painting. In this series, one artistic phenomenon replaces another, thus becoming the main one, and this is followed by a sort of reaction to it. However, the origin of painting is not determined by a change in style exclusively, nor is it enclosed within itself and its own medium/technical regularities, but is conditioned to a great extent, often crucially, by general social conditions. Bearing this in mind, this text questions and relativizes these rectilinear structures. Beyond looking for formal similarities, it examines motives, reasons for, and processes of the creation of artistic work; it suggests a broader definition of the depiction’s meaning by cross-analyzing social and symbolic, aesthetic and historical contexts; and it asks questions about the degrees and reasons for the artist’s personal, intimate, or social stands and limitations with the idea of exposing the influence of gender and ideological boundaries. The representation of women in Serbian painting during the first half of the twentieth century is integrated into social reality and systems of representation changed by social circumstances. The social role and status of women in the society is shaped by “standards of public morality”; they are excluded from full participation in civil and political life (without the right to vote, without protection from discrimination on gender grounds or the ability to work without restrictions, among other things). The politics of representation is defined through social stereotypes about male and female interests, objects, rules of behavior, professions, and rituals. The places in which women are represented strongly emphasize isola-
tion and preoccupation with “desirable activities.” Like personal records, these works of art describe the atmosphere without questioning it. Critical stance is replaced by a melancholic and meditative attitude and an obviously ambivalent experience of reality. These scenes are not shaped, or at least not exclusively, by the look of the creator but primarily by the social framework and its characteristic gender policy of viewing. Their marked unpretentiousness makes them a chronicle of the epoch.

I

The projection of a social reality, and the role of women in it, constitutes the way they are represented in Serbian art as a visual extension of the everyday. Women’s role, shaped by the social standards and positioned outside the main social currents, was being reproduced in the artist’s works. Although it is easy to fall into the trap of viewing art and female representations as a simple reflection of social groupings, it might be better to ponder their subtext, because, as Griselda Pollock claims:

Art is not a mirror. It mediates and represents social relations in a schema of signs which require a receptive and preconditioned reader in order to be meaningful. And it is at the level of what those signs connote, often unconsciously, that patriarchal ideology is reproduced.¹

The way the images of the woman are transferred onto the canvas, or to be more precise, the spaces accorded to them, are coordinates of a limited system of movement, of being and existing. Except in cases of classical portraits or nudes, women were mostly painted in the midst of work, as long as that work was exclusively female. Women were depicted sewing, knitting, embroidering, working in the kitchen, or cleaning rooms, in paintings such as The Knitter (c. 1910) by Angela Mačković, Milica with Her Knitting (1921) by Miloš Golubović, The Portrait of Ruža Branovački (1924) by Andelija Lazarević, The Lace-Maker (1934) by Bosa Valić, and Mother at the Sewing Machine (1941) by Liza Križanić. The division of duties, as social projections of what constitutes female or male fields of activity and interest, is present not only among the bourgeoisie but also among the working classes, and it proves that the gender division of labor is a universal social phenomenon. Thus, women are limited to a few branches of production, mostly the textile indus-

try. The job availability reflected the traditional work division, according to which women were relegated to duties connected to the home, while men were left with everything else. According to social historians, this division was not determined by the difficulty of the work.²

The spaces in which women were being represented accentuate the isolation and dedication to “desirable activities.” Like personal diaries, these works describe the atmosphere and do not question it. The critical force is being replaced by a melancholy-meditative attitude and an obviously ambivalent perception of reality. The absence of communication—the embodiment of chastity and submission as female virtues—is emphasized by downcast eyes or a faraway look, as well as by the compositional solution of representing women in three-quarter or full profile, sometimes from behind, and most rarely en face.³ It is important to note that an identical treatment of the topic is perceived both in male and female painters:

[t]he spaces of femininity operated not only at the level of what is represented, the drawing-room or sewing-room. The spaces of femininity are those from which femininity is lived as a positionality in discourse and social practice. They are the product of a lived sense of social locatedness, mobility and visibility, in the social relations of seeing and being seen. Shaped within the sexual politics of looking they demarcate a particular social organization of the gaze which itself works back to secure a particular social ordering of sexual difference. Femininity is both the condition and the effect.⁴

When the spaces in which figures are situated in Girl in an Interior (1910) by Vidosava Kovačević or Woman in an Interior (1915) by Ljubomir Ivanović (Fig. 1) are compared, the visual definition of the typology of female spaces becomes clearer. These scenes are not shaped, at least not exclusively, by the view of the creator, but primarily by the social framework and its gen-

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³ A descriptive attitude towards passivity as a female virtue is seen in the commentary on the question of women’s voting rights by the journalist of the daily newspaper Politika, who claims in 1919 that Yugoslavian women would mock the right to vote because “they already indirectly influence politics and all other spheres of life, but would not want to do it publicly, as they are modest.” Cited in Peda Marković, Beograd i Evropa 1918–1941: Evropski uticaji na proces modernizacije Beograda (Belgrade: Savremena administracija, 1992), 52.

der policies of viewing, which discreetly define possibilities and limitations. Their unpretentiousness positions them as a chronicle of the epoch.

By painting her sister sitting at home in a wicker chair with her embroidery, Vidosava Kovačević is depicting the milieu within which “femininity was lived.” That this scene is a depiction of everyday life is evidenced by the photograph of the model in the same dress and the same environment in the family album. The scene in Ivanović’s paintings is similar. The girl is seated and is sewing. The table covered with a white table cloth is repeated, as is the presence of a window, and the homey atmosphere. The door of the room is ajar. It leads into the next room, which contains the window that lets the light in, but the outside world is not seen. However, the indication of the outside world suggests a further spatiality which could be extended by a forced logic by which each fragment could become a scene in itself, within which another scene is contained, and so on. The woman sewing is alone. It seems that the next room is empty as well. The scene does not offer a glimpse into the outside world. The labyrinthine approach, from room to room, emphasizes this solitude. The core of the representation is contained within the visual relations that become psychological.

To a certain measure a similar compositional structure—is found in the paintings At the Sewing Machine (1913) by Natalija Cvetković (Fig. 2) and Woman in the Kitchen (1920) by Beta Vukanović. The first shows an interior in whose furthest angle a woman is sewing at the machine, completely unaware of the observer. In front of her is an empty wicker chair. No one is disrupting the diligent housework. As if “every corner of the house, every nook in the room, every confined space into which a person likes to hide away, and be with themselves” is an imagination of solitude, while it is precisely “the awareness that we are peacefully in our own corner that promotes an immovability.”5 The room ends with a window as the limiting line which is at the same time inside and outside, the outside of the one who is inside.

This special relationship with the window, which seems to underline the absence of the outside happenings or, perhaps, craving for it, is repeated in A Woman Before a Window (1929–30) and Interior (1935) by Marko Ćelebonović, The Japanese Cherry (undated) by Beta Vukanović, or A Woman Inside (c. 1933) by Stojan Aralica. In many thematically similar works of Natalija Cvetković the woman sits at the open window, gazing into the distance. She participates within the view only with a quick and restless side look. Next to her is a lady’s purse, as a symbolical mark of intent, need,

and/or desire to go out. The composition is formed by spatial division. In the foreground is the model and, indirectly, the artist herself. In the background tree crowns are glimpsed, parts of the outside world, framed by the window. Cvetković is referring to the supporting role that society accords women. Literally and metaphorically they are placed outside the main courses of events, outside the public spaces, which are primarily perceived as male.

In the same gender-defined ambiences women are often shown reading, resting, adorning themselves, combing their hair, or dressing, as in A Woman in Front of a Mirror (1927), Lonlet (1932), and Rests (1933) by Čelebonović, Women Dressing (1935) and Daydreamings (1938) by Milosavljević, or Bathroom (1936) by Radović. However, there are no comparable representations of men—neither in bathrooms, nor next to flower vases, mirrors, beds, or kitchen tables. And least of all, men daydreaming. Although the mentioned spaces and objects are universal in their application, their banal narrative does not suit the projected perception of male spaces. A similar logic is perceived when it comes to dressing, with regard to wardrobe and jewelry, which is left to women and “inferior races”:

men disdain jewels, leaving them for women. They only retain those worn as remembrances, emblems of attachment and fidelity, jewelled and wedding rings, lockets, trinkets, or rich scarf pins, which excuse their beauty by their utility.6

The politics of representation functioned as an image of stereotypes of male and female spaces, interests, objects, rules of behavior, and rituals. Those selectively chosen fragments of the social matrix were an authentic witness of “who belongs where,” because, as Pollock claims, “phenomenological space is not orchestrated for sight alone but by means of visual cues refers to other sensations and relations of bodies and objects in a lived world.”7

An analysis of Dressing (1912) by Natalija Cvetković (Fig. 3) tries to point to the markers of the phenomenological framework. The loosened hair is, as a symbol of female sexuality, the consequence of a social paradox. The required length and style, especially of hair twisted into buns, turned the everyday hygienic ritual of combing hair into a long-lasting act of beautifying. The duration of this process was of no consequence because female (bour-

6 Charles Blanc, Art in Ornament and Dress (1877), as quoted in Tamar Garb, “Gustave Caillebotte’s Male Figures: Masculinity, Muscularity and Modernity,” in Bodies of Modernity: Figure and Flesh in Fin-de-Siècle France (London: Thames and Hudson, 1998), 36.

...duties never required women to do anything but housework and dressing up. Consequently, the loose hair became a sign of intimacy, a form not seen in public, the secret of private spaces. By painting her friend, Cvetković uses her own gender privilege to go behind the screen. For when they are brought to order the pink garters, silk stockings, the loose strap of the negligee, as well as the hair, they will remain hidden from view. The dress on the screen will take on their function. The fact that the act of this woman’s dressing becomes the subject of the painting at all exposes another social paradox. The rules of behavior dictated much stricter standards for females hiding in public than it did for males. A respectable woman would never expose her cleavage, her back or her knees. A man, however, could have shown much more without risking his reputation. In the same spirit, the conventions of private dressing were forced upon girls much earlier than upon boys. Thus, in 1926, reacting to fashion changes, the Serbian clergy suggested that the state regulate by law the length of female skirts at 25cm above ground at the shortest, and that “females of 15 years on must not have their hair cut.” With these social rules in mind, intimate female rituals would remain unavailable to an observer. However, men’s bedrooms were not entered, while female spaces were subjects of numerous works. At the same time, both the artists and the viewers lacked the logic of the active female gaze—they neither had nor were they accustomed to enjoying a man combing his hair, putting on his underwear or socks. The viewing of women, however, has been accepted and shaped since the Old Testament legend of Susanna, whose bathing is surreptitiously being observed by two lecherous old men. The inscription of symbolic value of a saved soul and the victory of justice and truth into the narrative of the scene offers an educational allegorical basis, providing the survival of the male gaze in the centuries-worth of development of such a voyeuristic genre-scene.

In the spirit of these divisions, a difference can be perceived in the experience and depiction of men and women reading, based on the historical gender construct of intellectual work. Among this multitude of paintings are several examples of related types of female reading: reading as rest, reading as a pose, and reading as an outdoor activity. The common denominator is the atmosphere of leisure, ease, and passivity; none of Tabaković’s scenes of women reading, created during the 1930s, leave an impression of being engaged or informed, just as in Dobrović’s painting of his wife On the Terrace (1938) and The Reader in a Kimono (1940) by Lazar Ličenoski.

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Spaces of Femininity, Gender, and Ideological Boundaries

(1932) in a painting by Konjović and Ljubica Grol (1934) by Miloš Golubović have almost fallen asleep while reading. It is also notable that the models of these and similar works rarely read newspapers as a symbol of gaining information or at least as an indirect participation in social events. As an emblematic sign of the female reading, but also of maturation, intellectual advancement, and social position, there are two works by Borivoje Stevanović: Young Girl with a Book (1906) (Fig. 4) and Girl under a Tree (1912) (Fig. 5). Sitting in a chair in the garden, painted in full profile, the girl is reading. The identically solved compositions inevitably give the impression that, except for the physical growth, nothing in the girl’s life has changed. The atmosphere of time standing still appears as another element of female spaces.

Scenes in nature are interesting also by the absence of expanse, depth, and openness. Vague shapes, almost as a rule blended into monochromatic color masses, mostly limit the figures. The grass is often so thick that one could speak of an enclosed exterior, producing a sense of claustrophobia in the open. And although women represented in Breakfast (c. 1910) by Mihailo Milovanović, A Summer’s Day (1918–19) by Beta Vukanović, Mara Lukić in the Garden (1915) by Cvetković, and Under a Tree (c. 1918) by Sava Šumanović are positioned within open spaces, this open space is just a part of a limited private land, an artificial part of nature—the controlled outside world of bourgeois women.

II

In the years between the two world wars, tensions between bourgeois and working-class women permeated all female organizations in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. This dichotomy grew especially profound in 1919 after the founding congress of the Socialist Workers’ Party of Yugoslavia (Socijalistička radnička partija Jugoslavije), later the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (Komunistička partija Jugoslavije), when the social-democratic women of Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina founded the Secretariat of Socialist Women (Sekretarijat žena socijalista). At the same time another society was formed—the Society for the Enlightenment of Women and the Protection of Their Rights (Društvo za prosvećenje žene i zaštitu njenih prava), later simplified to the Women’s Movement (Ženski pokret). Aiming to realize the civic and political rights of women, the society consciously refrained from exclusively humanitarian activity. Although its members tended to disregard

10 For its first eleven years of existence (1918–29), the Kingdom was officially called the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, but the term “Yugoslavia” was its colloquial name from the very beginning. It was officially renamed in 1929.
political, social, religious, and national affiliations, the widest possible platform was never reached. The Society attracted employed women of the middle class, teachers and office secretaries but not workers. As stated in the report from the chairing board: “The female workers have remained distanced—they have not joined us, they criticize our work from their own narrow political viewpoint.”11 In 1919 the National Female Association of Serbs, Croatians, and Slovenians (Narodni ženski savez Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca) was also formed. The historical moment conditioned a unification of women from what had been opposing war sides, directing their activities to universal pacifist and humanitarian tasks. In 1920, after the Second Congress of the National Female Association of Serbs, Croatians, and Slovenians held in Zagreb, the feminists in attendance agreed to found their own section and adopt a communal program to work for “women’s issues”: the protection of the female work force, educational equality, the right to vote, and the right to join political parties. However, even after this the majority of members stolidly held on to the humanitarian-enlightening and national programs without accepting the feminist orientation encouraged by the management. By the end of 1926, ten Belgrade societies had left the association. The daily newspaper Politika attacked the management and members. What was advertised was the primary importance of humanitarian and social work and the adoption of “a tempered, evolutive feminism” rather than “a feminist onrush.” Led by the ideas of the Belgrade societies, another 46 societies joined them and founded the National Women’s Community (Narodna ženska zajednica), an organization dedicated to philanthropic activities, not to overturning the patriarchal system, that would lead to a legally regulated change in the role and position of women in society.

By the mid-1930s, following a reconfiguration of political parties after a period of dictatorship, the Communist Party appointed special committees to increase membership, inviting female Communists and sympathizers to join and to form women’s organizations, expressly those that were geared to political activism. A youth section was also established. For the rest of the decade there was a marked decrease in the class division between women activists. At the beginning of the 1940s, the war issues, the politics of the Dragaša Cvetković and Vladimir Maček government (from political agreement on the internal divisions in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia to Vienna Protocol on the Accession of Yugoslavia to the Tripartite Pact), and the difficult economic circumstances led again to open and vociferous disagreements, ending in the separation of the youth section and the management of the Women’s Move-

11 According to Neda Božinović, Žensko pitanje u Srbiji u XIX i XX veku (Belgrade: Devedesetčetvrta/Žene u crnom, 1996), 114.
ment. Women’s acceptance of the Communist ideology was confirmed at the Fifth Conference of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia in 1940 through a speech which emphasized women’s demands within the program of the revolutionary movement. Vida Tomšić insisted on rejecting bourgeois feminism:

Feminism posits communal demands of women of all classes separately from the demands of the working people. By accentuating communal women’s demands in opposition and within a battle against men, feminism hides the class basis of the women’s issue, by which it discourages masses of women from fighting capitalism and the class system in general. [...] Feminism in our midst should be labeled as a rightist opportunistic aid to the bourgeois women’s movement in spreading illusions that some reforms could allegedly solve the women’s issue within the class society.

This image of a community in which homogenic gender categories and their gender identities exist is the result of construction and fiction, and as such, is untenable and obstructed by a variety of other divisions of similar or identical provenance. As will be shown, the politics of representation, constituted by the social reality, was based on the same divisions.

During the first decades of the century, typical female occupations were those of maids, waitresses, and nurses. The women who performed these jobs were invariably regarded as immoral. A contributing factor to this was the fact that the Kingdom of Yugoslavia had kept the 1844 Serbian law under which women would, upon marrying, lose the right to work and fall into the same category as children, “mentally handicapped, court adjudged spendthrifts, vagrants and bankrupt debtors.” For legal endeavors to have lawful recogni-

12 The demands were (a) demand for the protection of motherhood, (b) demands for elimination of double standards in public and private life, (c) demands of an economic nature, and (d) the demand for the acknowledgment of all political rights for women with complete active and passive right to vote.
13 “Feminizam postavlja zajedničke zahtjeve žena sviju slojeva odijeljeno od zahtjeva radnog naroda. Naglašavanjem zajedničkih ženskih zahtjeva u suprotnosti i u borbi protiv muškaraca feminizam sakriva klasnu osnovu ženskog pitanja, te time odvraća masu žena od borbe protiv kapitalizma kao i protiv klasnog društva uopće. [...] Feminizam u našim redovima treba da označimo kao desničarsku oportunističku pomoć gradanskom ženskom pokretu kod širenja iluzija da se nekim reformama tobože može riješiti žensko pitanje u okviru klasnog društva.” Vida Tomšić, Referat o ženskom pitanju na Petoj zemaljskoj konferenciji, Izvori za istoriju KPJ, vol. 1, bk. 10 (Belgrade, 1980).
14 Ana Stolić, “Od istorije žena do rodne istorije,” in Gizela Bok, Žena u istoriji Evrope (Belgrade: Clio, 2005), 433.
tion, wives needed their husband’s approval.15 Between 1929 and 1935 the number of female workers began to increase, not as a consequence of social emancipation but of a growing economic crisis. Since these women were mostly young, unskilled, and could be paid less than men, they had an employment “advantage.” The cynical explanation of the employers was that the expensive male workers should be replaced by the cheap female ones.16 The logic of the employment policies is further proven by the fact that children were able to find factory jobs. However, women’s industrial work was perceived as dangerous, not because the female workers were exploited or risked their health, but because such jobs separated them from their enforced family role and tended to transform them into social beings capable of conscious activism.17 As Linda Nochlin claims:

The rural woman-worker, the peasant-woman, on the contrary, insofar as she was poor, passive, natural, and understood to be content with her God-given role as mother and nurturer, served as an ideal vehicle not only for ideological definitions of femininity but for those of the good worker as well.18

The frequent representation of peasant women in Serbian painting of the first half of the century forms an antithesis to studies of female workers, visualized rarely and sporadically, and only within the framework of socially engaged artistic activity. The way these women lived—“through generations the ideal was keeping the woman in the house to perform house duties, so to work outside the house meant being poverty-stricken and worthy of contempt”19—offers one possible answer to the question of why their presence in production outside leftist activism was not wanted. That this is a questionable context is proven also by the absence of animosity towards depicting servants, who by spatial logic belong to the ideologically acceptable content of bourgeois interiors, such as in The Housewife (c. 1920) by Beta Vukanović, The Girl with

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16 Čalić, Socijalna istorija Srbije 1815–1941, 247.
18 Ibid., 84.
Spaces of Femininity, Gender, and Ideological Boundaries

the Lamp (1923) by Natalija Cvetković, Interior (1929) by Marin Tartalja, and The Washer Woman Suzana (1931) and The Maid (1932) by Dobrović, as the culmination of playing with identities, in which, aside from the painter’s attribution, the true class character of the women is not even hinted at. This was the appropriate image of the social attitude

against any work of the woman outside the home and family. There, between the walls of her home, where every corner should be filled with her soul, there is her only place, this is where she is at her most beneficial for society, and only there can, to our mind, a woman express her soul, develop her feelings, nurture her nature. There is no home without a woman, and there is no woman without a home.20

With these social standards in mind, it can be concluded that the affirmative, or at least non-critical, representation of a working woman glorifies the proletarian woman who is without “the privilege of leisure” or privacy. The activity is constituted in this way as a determinant of the social position, the paradigm of the new ideology.

The image of working spaces was an image of depression, strife, hopelessness, and lowly positions. To find a way—similar to romantic visions of the village—to represent this motif as something other than a crucial proof of marginalization and lack of rights was very hard. The images of existential crisis, even when minimized and reduced in content, were an unequivocal criticism of social reality. The images of mothers with children, which rely on the chastity and motherly gentleness of large Madonna-like compositions, only now contemporary and anonymous, evoked special compassion: “Working women, like the one depicted in Daumier’s famous The Laundress, who were poor, who were fated by sheer necessity to work as part of their central nurturing function, were accorded serious, sympathetic treatment.”21 Scenes of breastfeeding can be considered emphatically modern as their secularization is of more recent origin. However, this modernity is selective. When numerous paintings by Beta Vukanović are compared with Mother (1937) by Đorđe Andrejević Kun (Fig. 6) or Mother and Child (1940) by Nikola Martinoski, it is clear that the freedom of representation was based on the

class of the depicted women, easily available by their social subordination. While the bared privacy of the lower classes could become a legitimate topic, the members of the bourgeois elite were not depicted in the same poses. Female bodies were as determined by class as by gender. The typical image is seen in *Mother and Child* (c. 1910) by Mihailo Milovanović or *Mother and Child* (1913) by Borivoje Stevanović (Fig. 7), which are based on the idea of femaleness within the bourgeois family; still and chaste, gentle images of intimate respect.

Another indicative phenomenon is the strategy of selective narrative connected to female spaces, where older women do not seem to exist. Among the rare paintings of old women are *Mother* (1906) by Nadežda Petrović, several paintings by Gvozdenović, and Radović's mother, *The Old Woman with the Dog* (1925). As opposed to male maturity as an ideal of wisdom and experience, the life of the woman, after the ending of her reproductive cycle, seems of no significance. The idea of motherhood as the central experience of a woman’s life dates to the Madonna—the *Mother of God* (in Serbian). The painting *An Afternoon with the Family* (1942) by Milan Konjović can be read as a programmatic work, a synthesis of the social concepts of femininity, female activity, and female spaces. In the foreground is the artist’s mother, reading. Through a wide opening a room is seen in which the artist’s young wife is sitting on a sofa, knitting or embroidering. In the background, the artist’s daughter plays the piano. None of the women are looking at the viewer. All three are silently dedicated to their tasks. The walls of both rooms are decorated with the artist’s paintings. An imaginary diagonal connects the three figures as a sequence of the three phases of life, a contemporary paraphrase of the *memento mori* historical composition. The life of the woman, even within these gender-specified spaces, is shaped exclusively in relation to a man.

Since it emerged in close connection with historical, political, and cultural characteristics of Serbian society’s development, changes, and modernization, along with all its contradictions, possibilities, limitations, and differences, Serbian painting in the period between 1900 and 1941 bore the aspirations, ideals, system of values, and disappointments of the same epoch. Today this can be noted in its ideological gender and social content, selection, and motifs. It is a form of representation of social codes which possessed, cherished, or interpreted elements of modernity beyond the domain of exclusively formal competency and innovations of modern painting. In this way Serbian painting

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of the epoch was established not only as a chronicle of the modernity of one complex society but also as a testimony of its own creative thought and as one of the key elements of social articulation in the sphere of artistic action.

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Figure 1. Ljubomir Ivanović, *Woman in an Interior* (1915), oil on canvas, 25 x 19 cm [Source: The National Museum, Belgrade]
Figure 2. Natalija Cvetković, *At the Sewing Machine* (1913), oil on canvas, 77.5 x 62.5 cm
[Source: The Museum of Contemporary Art, Belgrade]
Figure 3. Natalija Cvetković, *Dressing* (1912), oil on canvas, 120.5 x 66.5 cm
[Source: Private Collection]
Figure 4. Borivoje Stevanović, *The Young Girl with the Book* (1906), oil on canvas, 40 x 32 cm [Source: Private Collection]
Figure 5. Borivoje Stevanović, *Girl under a Tree* (1912), oil on canvas, 34 x 29 cm [Source: Private Collection]
Figure 6. Đorđe Andrejević Kun, *Mother* (1937), oil on canvas, 129 x 97 cm [Source: The Museum of Contemporary Art, Belgrade]
Figure 7. Borivoje Stevanović, *Mother and Child* (1913), oil on cardboard, 40 x 37 cm [Source: Private Collection]
“Sinner without Sin”
or
The Sin of the Emancipated Woman

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The interwar years (1918–41) were a time of accelerated modernization in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, and part of this modernization was the emancipation of women. The struggle for women’s rights and emancipation, which began at the end of the nineteenth century, reached its peak during this period. This coincided with worldwide trends; not only were the material conditions of women’s existence transformed, but women also gained some of the rights for which their foremothers had fought: citizenship status, marital equality, access to higher education and professions, increase in earning power, and expanded opportunities to work, to create, and to live as they chose.¹

In Serbia, the struggle for the emancipation of women began with the formation of the first women’s societies in the 1870s and continued throughout the interwar period. A strong social engagement among women changed the core of women’s public and private lives, despite strong opposition from conservatives. Urbanization, division and specialization of labor, the introduction of new home appliances, and new forms of entertainment all encouraged “the emancipated woman” of the 1920s and 1930s to step out of the patriarchal framework and into a better position in society.²

The increase in the number of women’s humanitarian, artistic, feminist, and pacifist societies testifies to the entry of women into public life. The number of women enrolled at universities increased, women artists conquered the cultural scene, and professions previously reserved for men became avail-

able. Belgrade saw its first woman police officer, Marija Ilić, in 1929 and its first woman pilot, Danica Tomić, in 1933.³

Even the appearance of women indicated that a new look meant a new perspective and a new position in society. The changes to dress and behavior were most shocking after World War I and most upsetting to conservatives. From the thirteenth century right up until World War I, women’s skirts and dresses covered the entire leg, nearly touching the ground. This tradition changed during the war. From December 1914 skirts became shorter, and by the winter of 1915–16 they were 25cm above ground.⁴ A short skirt, high heels, and silk stockings were shocking in that age. The fashion came with a new look, and women began to watch their figures and to diet. Along with the short skirt, short bobbed hair replaced long hair, a centuries-old feminine attribute. The shortening of skirt and hair brought women greater freedom of movement, allowing for a freer walk, as well as participation in many sporting activities.

The changes included makeup and cosmetics. At the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century, a woman with makeup signaled sexual availability. This question burst onto the scene during and after the war, when women began to use makeup more frequently—some on special occasions, others on an everyday basis.⁵

The new European woman had a boyish figure, short hair, and wore a short skirt. She conquered the street, the cafes, and the dance halls. Such women graced the front page of Vogue. They were heroines of novels and films (such as Coquette of 1929) and were portrayed by cinema stars such as Lillian Gish and Mary Pickford. They were on the cover of Žena i svet (Woman and World), in the novels of Milica Jakovljević Mîr-Jam and Branimir Ćosić, in paintings by Milena Pavlović-Barili, and in the Belgrade theater.⁶

In addition to the physical changes, there were much more serious ones. Short hair and short skirts were accompanied by, as the satirist Branislav Nušić wrote, short marriages. Women’s emancipation led to changes within the family—the number of divorces increased and the size of the family decreased, disrupting the patriarchal order and system of values. The number of

³ Ibid., 134.
⁵ Ibid., 202.
⁶ Vučetić, “Žena u gradu,” 132.
divorces in Belgrade reached “epidemic proportions,” rising from 10 percent in the 1930s to 16.36 percent in 1939.7

The new women developed new standards and values for their private lives, relationships, and sexual behavior. Sex was no longer taboo but increasingly a part of public discourse.8 Serbia got its first sexologist, Aleksandar Kostić, and 42 books regarding problems of sexuality, marriage, and free love were published between 1919 and 1935. The publishers at Napredak (Progress) had a special series of books entitled Seksualna biblioteka (Sexual Library).

Open sexuality and advocacy of “free love” inevitably led to questions of sin and morality. Sin was always associated with women. The press wrote about the high number of suicides among lovesick or lovelorn women. These articles were accompanied by debates in the press over whether only the woman ought to bear the consequences of sin and premarital sex. Stories of innocent girls seduced and abandoned by rich men were a favorite topic of crime reports and popular literature.9 However, the increasing number of university women, women’s societies, feminist gatherings, the Charleston, short skirts, thick makeup, smoking, and freer sexual behavior towards men does not sum up the experience of all women in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.

The 1844 Serbian Civil Code, according to which a woman was subordinate to a man, was still in effect. Upon marriage, a woman lost her legal right to conduct business and was reduced to the status of a minor. Furthermore, she was placed in the same category with the “insane, adjudged spendthrifts, vagrants, and bankrupt debtors.” When she was allowed to work, a woman still needed her husband’s approval.10 The dominance of men was guaranteed with respect to questions of child custody. Thus, in case of divorce or separation, male children older than four and female children older than seven belonged to the father, stripping the woman of her role as mother. In the case of children born out of wedlock, the situation was reversed—the mother had full custody. This placed a further economic burden on single mothers. Particularly discriminatory was the provision in the Serbian Civil Code which prohibited the determining of paternity, except in cases of rape. The most dama-

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8 Gizela Bok, Žena u istoriji Evrope (Belgrade: Clio, 2005), 286.
ging discrimination against women was a product of the inheritance law, which provided that property could be passed on only to male heirs.  

In addition to these regulations, in Yugoslavia and elsewhere there was strong pressure from conservatives and opponents to women’s emancipation. The story of women’s emancipation was not just about progress. It was also about the difficult struggle women were leading and the terrible resistance they encountered from conservatives and the patriarchal environment in general.

The struggle for the right to vote, to education, new sexual freedoms, as well as modernization in fashion was an affront to conservatives, who could not accept the fact that women were abandoning their traditional roles of wives and mothers and gaining a more prominent role in society. Hence, the new societal engagement of women, just like the entire process of emancipation, faced merciless criticism and sometimes-unabashed cynicism and ridicule.  

In the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, resistance to women’s emancipation was evidenced in the press, in religious circles, and among conservative intellectuals. The playwright Branimir Nušić often satirized women’s emancipation. His most famous attack on women’s emancipation was his comedy Ujež, even though his own wife and daughter were active members of women’s societies.

Women in the Whirlpool of Modernization and Sin

Women’s experience was reflected in popular films, which had become not only the most celebrated art form, but a mode of entertainment, education, propaganda, and part of everyday life. Every film, aside from being an important historical source, is important as a public good. Due to their easily understood language, films contributed significantly to the worldviews of many generations. Cinema has been studied as an apparatus of representation, a machine developed to construct images or visions of social reality and the spectator’s place in it.

11 Ibid., 18–19.
In cinema the stakes for women are especially high. The representation of woman as spectacle—a body to be looked at, a place of sexuality, and an object of desire—finds in narrative cinema its most complex expression and widest circulation. Whether we think of cinema as the sum of one’s experiences as spectator in the socially determined situations of viewing, or as a series of relations linking the film production to ideological and institutional reproduction, it situates woman in a social and natural order, in positions of meaning, and in a certain identity.

With women’s emancipation, the representation of women on the screen was indicative of the “new woman” as well as society’s view of her. Among all popular images, that of the “new woman” was the most sensational and became a theme of interwar culture. This “new woman” was usually a single young woman who rejects marriage, motherhood, and domesticity in order to live independently and support herself with a job or career.

The “new woman” appears mostly in melodramas and films focused on the question of her sinfulness. Advertisements for films The Kiss with Greta Garbo from 1929, Indizienbeweis, Diary of a Lost Girl by G. W. Pabst with Louise Brooks, Heilige oder Dirne, and the “sexual film,” as Inherited Passions from 1929 was advertised, testify to this “new” and “sinful” woman.

Judging by how often and in what way they were represented in film, these women were a curse to men, perhaps best evidenced by one of the famous films of the time, Pandora’s Box (1929), directed by G. W. Pabst, in which the promiscuous Lulu drives her husband to suicide on their wedding night. According to some analyses, most of the films of the time were supposed to drive the audience to the conclusion that women are to blame for all things bad.

The sinful woman is also a theme in Yugoslav cinematography, and the best example of this is Sinner without Sin by Kosta Novaković (1895–1953). This 1930 film is an excellent resource for the analysis of women and women’s emancipation in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. Kosta Novaković was a pioneer of Serbian cinema, owner of the Novaković film studio, a film la-

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15 Ibid., 4.
16 Ibid., 19.
18 Ibid.
20 Ibid., 5. The film is from 1929 and was directed by Georg Jacoby.
21 Filmska revija, no. 15 (15 August 1929), appendix.
boratory, and the movie theaters Novaković, Korzo, and Odeon. He was also an importer of films and director of documentaries and short films, as well as the feature films *Novaković Žurnal* (Novaković Newsreel; 1926), *Kralj Čarlstona* (The King of Charleston; 1927), and *Sinner without Sin* (Grešnica bez greha; 1930).

*Sinner without Sin* is one of only five surviving feature films produced in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (1911–43). The others are *Karadorde* (1911), *Ulrich Celjski i Vladislav Hunjadi* (Ulrich of Celje and Ladislaus Hunyadi; 1911), *Sa verom u Boga* (With Faith in God; 1932), and *Nevinost bez zaštite* (Innocence Unprotected; 1943). We will analyze *Sinner without Sin* for its views of women’s emancipation and modernization in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.

The filming of *Sinner without Sin* began in 1928 and was finished in 1929. However, the film did not have its premiere until 12 April 1930, to honor Persa Pavlović’s fifty years of work as an actress at the National Theater. To emphasize the importance of this film, Novaković did not show it in one of his theaters but in the elite cinema Kasina. The press described the film as “a drama taking place in our milieu, ‘showing’ our rural and urban conditions, our types, our society.” From its premieres, the film was “exuberantly accepted by the Belgrade audience” and critics.

The plot of the film is similar to that of many other melodramas: a young couple, Ljubica and Nikola, live in an idyllic village in Šumadija (a region in central Serbia). Nikola is a student in Belgrade. Encouraged by the village teacher, Ljubica’s parents send her to the city. However, the city is full of temptations. Ljubica meets the thief and knave Layosh, who presents himself as a chivalrous gentleman. She succumbs to his wiles, and one evening, after a dance, he takes her to a villa and attempts to rape her. The police rescue her, but they arrest her as Layosh’s accomplice. She spends the night in jail with prostitutes but is released due to a lack of evidence. Despondent and humiliated, she returns to the village, where the news of her arrest has already arrived. Her father throws her out of the house, so she returns to Belgrade and attempts suicide, only to be saved by Nikola. The film ends with Ljubica and

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Nikola’s return to the village, where they are married and “live happily ever after.”

In his *Istorija jugoslovenskog filma*, Petar Volk notes that the screenplay for the film was made up of “all the stories that were popular quotidian journalistic fodder.” Indeed, a look at the daily press shows a great number of stories of tragic girls who committed suicide because they were “dishonored” or lovesick (for example, “Danube Drowning Due to Love” or “Committed Suicide to Free Herself from Malicious Talk”).

Excluding the portions of the film that take place outside the city—in the village in the heart of Šumadija—the plot and the representation of women is not too different from movies produced elsewhere at the time, especially in the rising new movie town of Hollywood. However, what makes the film valuable to the social history of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia is the insight it provides into the values that it conveys. Like any other film, this one ought to be viewed in its historical context, defined by the development of cinematography and emancipation as part of general social processes. The main themes and motifs of the film are valuable resources for the study of the processes of modernization and contemporary reality in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.

Although it was created at the height of women’s emancipation and the struggle for women’s rights in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, *Sinner without Sin* is an homage to the patriarchal family and the village and saves all its criticisms for the city, modernization, and emancipation of women. The only moments of happiness in the film are those depicting Ljubica and Nikola’s love in the village. The rupture of this idyllic scene is announced in the film with intertitles: “the moment has come for another young being to leave the quiet village and naively start off for the big city.” From the moment they depart for the city their troubles begin. In the city, Nikola’s significantly older landlady attempts to seduce him, threatening the loss of Ljubica’s love, whereas Ljubica becomes the “sinner without sin.” In the film, the city is depicted as full of evil people, debauchery, and immorality.

This is stated in one of the onscreen intertitles: “Even virtuous Ljubica is transformed into a modern girl by the big city.” Immediately upon coming to the city, Ljubica starts wearing makeup and the latest fashions; she goes to dances and rides in expensive cars. Her rejection of the old is illustrated by her removal of her thick village socks, which she replaces with silk stockings.

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27 “Grešnica bez greha,” directed by Kosta Novaković (1930; Belgrade: Jugoslovenska kinoteka, 2008), *Pioniri filma*, vol. 1, Kosta Novaković, DVD.
28 Volk, *Istorija jugoslovenskog filma*, 78.
29 *Politika*, 10 July 1930, 7.
30 *Politika*, 20 July 1930, 7.
The scenes in which she dresses and undresses reflect the erotic spirit of the age, and the critics noted the similarities to the worldwide box-office hit Erotikon, with Ita Rina.31

Another sign of the dangers present in the city is that upon her arrival in the city, a dolled-up Ljubica meets Layosh on a walk through Kalemegdan (a former fortress, now a park in central Belgrade). They flirt casually with each other. This all-too-easy acceptance of flirting with an unknown man by a traditional girl from a village, who came to the city with her love, Nikola, may also be reflective of the director’s own attitudes towards women and the city. The author thus reiterates the theme of the movie—women are fickle and promiscuous, and the city corrupts everyone.

Divergent Models: Patriarchal Idyll and the Emancipated Woman

Unlike the sordid city, the village is presented as an oasis of normalcy. The first critiques of the film, following the premiere, asserted that the first part of the film “presents the life of our villages, full of beauty and health, and still maintaining that patriarchal appearance.”32 The problems of the city are impressed upon the viewer by the sentence uttered by Ljubica’s mother prior to her departure for Belgrade: “She is my only child, and big city means big trouble. But God will watch her.”

In addition, the film highlights the positive role of the church. Thus, for example, the moments of Ljubica’s greatest agony in the film are followed by scenes of her mother praying before a candle and image of the family saint, with the onscreen intertitles reading, “Far away the unfortunate mother is praying to God to protect her child: Now only God can save her.” The scene in which Ljubica throws herself into the river, in which Nikola appears and saves her, is also followed by the mother’s prayer before candle and icon that “God save her.”33 Precisely because of the message of the film, that the only life worth living is village life, within the patriarchal family, under the auspices of the church, it is important to show what this model, so desired by conservatives, really looked like and what the role of the church was, particularly with respect to women.

The lives of village women, so glorified in Sinner without Sin as well as in the press, were far from this ideal. Eighty percent of the people in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia lived in rural areas composed predominantly of small landowners, widespread poverty, and rampant illiteracy. In these villages, the

31 Compare Sinner without Sin and Erotikon (Seduction; 1929), directed by Gustav Machatý.
33 Ibid.
position of women was exceptionally difficult. Patriarchal family values were fostered, married life for women was best described with the saying “slavery begins after the wedding,” and the complete absence of love in marriages was a common occurrence, given the crucial role of parents in arranging marriages. In addition to doing housework, women toiled on the land and cared for livestock; they were on their feet at the break of dawn, rising before everyone else and going to bed last. This image appears at the beginning of *Sinner without Sin* when we see women cheerfully harvesting corn and doing heavy manual labor. This depiction implies that this way of life for women was perfectly normal.

The film’s positive depiction of the village and the Serbian Orthodox Church and its criticism of the city, modernization, and the emancipation of women reflect the views and values not only of the director, Novaković, but of Serbian society at large. *Sinner without Sin* was made at precisely the time when women were engaging forcefully and conspicuously in society, entering new professions and assuming new social positions, changes to which the church responded with strong opposition. The same church, lauded in the film as the keeper of Serbian values and morality, attacked the “false emancipation of women” in the form of “free love” and promoted the social and economic subordination of women and strict gender roles. In this patriarchal framework, woman was inferior, and her work was confined to the home and the family. The church equated women’s emancipation with the ruination of Serbian society and a “lethal Western novelty.” Free love was described as “legitimizing prostitution for women.”

Given this context, most of the women in *Sinner without Sin* are depicted as immoral. The only virtuous woman is Ljubica’s mother, the devout peasant. She always wears traditional clothing and is constantly engaged either in prayer or in housework. This woman lives in the confining quarters of her household and is submissive to her husband.

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35 Ibid., 389.
38 Ibid., 122.
In one of the first city scenes, we see Lenka, Nikola’s lascivious landlady, portrayed by the doyenne of the National Theater Žanka Stokić. She tries to seduce her tenant and corrupt his true love for Ljubica.

Most of the female characters in the film are prostitutes, played by the dancers of the National Theater Company. They appear in the prison scenes, in the scene in which Ljubica decides to commit suicide, and when Nikola wonders how to return Ljubica to the righteous path. The prostitutes all smoke, are scantily clad, and make no secret of their profession. Having “the modern girl” end up in prison with prostitutes warns the audience of what awaits a girl who chooses emancipation and city life.

_Sinner without Sin_ depicts women as victims of modernization and emancipation. The reviews following the premiere of the film clearly indicated that the city inevitably posed a threat to female virtue.40

Although prostitution was a serious problem throughout the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, the film depicts it as emblematic of the moral corruption of women in the big city. Prior to 1934, prostitution was legal; _Sinner without Sin_ came out at the height of the debate over abolishing prostitution.41 The film presents prostitution as almost the only profession open to urban women,42 as evidenced in the scene depicting Ljubica’s return to the city. Released from prison due to lack of evidence, “humiliated, disgraced and depressed, Ljubica more than ever felt the need for her mother’s love and sought shelter in the parental home.” However, there too she is rejected, since her father throws her out for being a sinner. Socially disgraced, expelled from her parental home, with no desire to live, Ljubica desperately seeks a solution in Belgrade where, in the view of contemporary criticism, her only options are “turn to a life of unchastity, or kill herself.”43

It is interesting to look at the representation of men in the film prior to the happy resolution, in which Ljubica, after all that has happened to her, returns to the patriarchal order. The morality of the male protagonist is never brought into question. From the beginning of the film, Nikola is honest and sincerely loves Ljubica. While the first suitor turns Ljubica’s head, Nikola rejects Lenka’s advances and those of the many prostitutes who approach him. Even

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40 “Prva domaća filmska premijera,” 7.
42 Although Lenka the landlady is not a prostitute _per se_, her behavior indicates that immoral conduct of women is self-evident.
43 In., “Prvi domaći film,” 7.
after Ljubica betrays him, he does not give up on the idea of struggling for their love. In the end, his love triumphs when he saves her from drowning and they get married. Ljubica’s father symbolizes patriarchal values. Although shamed by Ljubica’s fall, he finally accepts her, and her return to him (or to the family as represented by the *pater familiae*) and the village is really a plea for a return to the patriarchal family and its values.

The film does, however, feature a bad man. Unlike Ljubica, Lenka the landlady, and the prostitutes, Layosh is the only true villain in the film, played by the Zagreb stage actor Viktor Starčić. He is a gangster and leads a chaste girl into sin. But the very fact that only one man is presented as evil confirms the thesis that it was women who were bad, consistent with the misogyny present in Serbian life and society.

Conclusion

*Sinner without Sin* reinforced prevailing stereotypes of women. This representation of women is not surprising in view of the fact that women were a constant target of mockery and criticism in the press, literature, and on the stage. The president of University-Educated Women of Yugoslavia (Udrženje univerzitetski obrazovanih žena u Jugoslaviji), Paulina Lebl Albala, wrote:

> Put together, this only supports the belief in the masses that women are not to be taken seriously, that they are vain, thoughtless beings, flighty and moody, faithless and perverted, endlessly curious and superficial, at best pseudo-educated and pseudo-emancipated, incapable of approaching work thoroughly and reasonably.  

> From the perspective of feminist film theory, the cinema of the time, including the cinema of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, was often strikingly misogynistic. This heightened misogyny was the result of the new role of women. That women engage in sexual relations outside of marriage is a theme in many films of the 1920s and 1930s. All these films suggest that male directors were opposed to women’s emancipation. However, many popular writers also depicted women as tragic figures caught between traditional subservience and lonely emancipation.

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44 Vučetić, *Europa na Kalemegdanu*, 120.
Sinner without Sin carries a very direct message. Since for the humiliated and fallen Ljubica nothing but suicide remains, clearly what is offered by modernization and women’s emancipation is the irreversible path to women’s doom. Still, the author takes yet another step in this pessimistic view of the modern and emancipated woman’s destiny. The film ends on a happy note—Ljubica and Nikola return to the village and get married in a church, in traditional dress. In rejecting modern clothes, they discard modernity. Thus, the film shows the triumph of patriarchy. This too was in accordance with the general trends of world cinematography, since in most movies the woman’s guilt is sealed by either punishment or salvation. In Sinner without Sin, salvation and hope are to be found in the man (Nikola), God (the church), and the patriarchal family.

This age of great dilemmas and contrasts such as urban versus rural, patriarchal versus modern society, subjugated versus emancipated woman, saw the victory, at least in Sinner without Sin, of the village, conservatism, and patriarchy. The emancipated woman, however, remained, like the first Serbian female pilot Danica Tomić, either in the clouds or at the bottom of society, as a prostitute.

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Ksenija Atanasijević and the Emergence of the Feminist Movement in Interwar Serbia*

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Congratulations, young lady, you have entered into hell.¹

Ksenija Atanasijević (1894–1981) was the first Serbian woman to earn a doctorate and become a professor of philosophy at the University of Belgrade in 1924. Atanasijević was a prolific writer, fluent in German, French, and Serbian, who published more than 400 books and articles on aesthetics, metaphysics, literature, feminism, and philosophy. A pioneer for women’s rights, Atanasijević was also active in the Serbian Women’s League for Peace and Freedom, the Women’s Movement Alliance, and the Women’s Movement (Ženski pokret) journal, which she edited from 1920 to 1938. In 1936, her male colleagues launched a smear campaign that cost her her professorship. A series of heated public hearings was then held at which some of Belgrade’s most prominent intellectuals, including the poets Rastko Petrović and Sima Pandurić, came to Atanasijević’s defense. From 1936 until 1941 she worked in the Ministry of Education. While there, she wrote articles denouncing anti-Semitism and National Socialism that brought her to the attention of the Gestapo, who arrested her in 1942. In 1944, after the Partisans had liberated the country, Marshall Tito’s government accused Atanasijević of spreading controversial political ideas during the occupation, and she was imprisoned. Her final prison release came in 1946, after which time she was only able to

¹ Research for this essay was conducted while I was a 2011–12 visiting scholar at the Institute of Slavic, East European and Eurasian Studies at the University of California, Berkeley. I would like to thank Dr. Jeffrey Pennington, Executive Director of ISEEES, for facilitating my access to the Slavic archives at the university. This essay was completed during the 2012–13 academic year while I was a visiting scholar at the Beatrice Bain Research Group at the University of California, Berkeley.

¹ Professor Tihomir Đorđević welcomed Ksenija Atanasijević to her new position at the university in January 1924 with this greeting. It is something that she remembered and referenced often during her turbulent professional life.

work as a clerk in the National Library of Serbia. This biographical study
focuses on Atanasijević’s contributions to the history of philosophy, the inter-
war women’s movement in Serbia, and on the personal and professional price
that she had to pay for her activism.

Ksenija Atanasijević was born on 5 February 1894, the sixth child of
Jelena (Cumić) and Svetozar Atanasijević, a medical doctor. Svetozar trained
in Berlin before settling on Svetogorska Street in Belgrade’s Terazije district.
Tragedy hit the Atanasijević family early when Jelena died of an infection
shortly after giving birth to Ksenija. A few years later, Svetozar married Sofia
Kondić, a teacher at Viša Ženska Škola (Higher Women’s School) in
Belgrade. Sofia assumed the role of second mother to Svetozar’s six children,
even after her husband’s death from tuberculosis on 3 May 1906. Raising her
stepchildren as her own, Sofia supported them through the tragic death of
Milutin, Ksenija’s 28-year-old brother, who was killed, while another brother,
Dragomir, a writer, died on 4 January 1938. Sofia’s devotion to the children
was profound and lifelong. She also kept in close contact with Ruža, Ksen-
ija’s sister, who was a teacher, and their other sister Zorka, who was married
to Pavle Ljotić, a university professor. Sofia lived with Ksenija in her Bel-
grade apartment up until her death on 29 December 1940.

Growing up, Atanasijević was friends with famed female artist Nadežda
Petrović, who painted her portrait in 1912. The portrait, now in the Pavle
Beljanski Memorial Collection in Novi Sad, captures the 16-year-old Ata-
nasijević visiting the Petrovićes’ family home on Ratarska Street. At the time,
Nadežda had just returned from Paris, bringing with her a large black hat, a
present to her sister Milica Misković. Ksenija posed for Nadežda in this hat.
The image is striking in its dramatic use of black and white as well as mas-
terly impasto brushstrokes, which reflected the artist’s interest in Expression-
ism. The painting remained in Milica’s personal collection until 1956, when
Pavle Beljanski purchased the work for his art collection in Novi Sad.

Ksenija Atanasijević attained an unprecedented level of academic
achievement at a time when educating girls was rare in Eastern Europe. In the
19th century, education for girls in Serbia was reserved for children of the
elite intelligentsia.

The state adopted a policy of sending talented students to major Eu-
ropean universities, in order that upon their return they enter civil ser-
vice and become well-qualified state functionaries. The professional
differentiation of the elite emerges only in the second half of that
century, when the state stipends were also given to students studying
medicine, philosophy and the arts alongside the previously dominating subjects of law and engineering.²

Most female students within this time period went to Zurich, where higher education was available. Draga Ljocić-Milošević (1855–1926) studied medicine in Zurich from 1872 to 1879 and became active in the movement for universal male and female suffrage. Sisters Milica (1854–81) and Anka Ninković (1855–1923) from Novi Sad studied pedagogy at the University of Zurich from 1872 to 1874. Upon returning to Vojvodina, they submitted plans for a private high school for girls in Kragujevac, based upon progressive, creative educational practices. Although unable to realize this project, they remained ardent and committed feminist activists.

The 19th century also saw the rise of women’s arts organizations such as the Blue Salon, organized in the 1860s by Anka Konstantinović-Obrenović (daughter of Jevrem Obrenović) and based on the French model: “Anka’s artistic female gatherings involved concert performances—in accordance with the spirit of the time and the fact that she was one of the first owners of a piano in Serbia—poetry in French, Italian, and German, as well as the verses of Serbian poets.”³ According to Radina Vučetić, these were “colorful artistic social gatherings … where respectable men and women read stories and poems, played the violin, the piano, the harp, and the guitar, and occasionally even discussed politics.”⁴

Atanasijević, with Sofia’s encouragement, was fortunate to have attended the Lyceum, where she was taught by Nada Stoiljković, an inspirational teacher with a strong interest in philosophy. Stoiljković urged Atanasijević to enroll at the University of Belgrade, where in 1918 she began studying with Branislav Petronijević. Petronijević (1897–1954) was a brilliant philosopher who rose from a modest childhood in the village of Sovljak. Educated in Vienna and Leipzig, he earned a doctorate in philosophy, botany, and physics and published texts on mathematics and evolution.

Atanasijević graduated with highest honors in 1920 before starting work on her doctoral dissertation, written in French, on Giordano Bruno’s De tri-

³ Poleksia Dimitrijević-Stošić, Posela u starom Beogradu (Belgrade, 1965), 68.
plici minimo. She conducted her dissertation research in Geneva and Paris, where she was able to find original texts by Bruno scholars who specialized in the analysis of his work. In 1922, upon returning to Belgrade, she successfully defended her dissertation in front of a committee of five scholars including Professors Petronijević and Milutin Milanković (1879–1958), a noted Serbian geophysicist and civil engineer. Atanasijević was 28 years old when she became the first Serbian woman to complete a PhD in philosophy.

Alongside her devotion to philosophy, Atanasijević’s interest in the burgeoning feminist movement in Serbia also started early. In 1920, having just finished her undergraduate degree, she became the first editor of the influential Ženski pokret—an arm of the Organization for the Liberation of Women and the Protection of Their Rights (Društvo za prosvećivanje žene i zaštitu njenih prava). This was one of numerous feminist organizations, including the Alliance of Feminist Societies, the Female Student Union of Belgrade University, the Female Little Entente, the League of Women for Peace and Liberty, the Woman’s Party, and the Union of University-Educated Women.5 The journal, published from 1920 to 1938, became the voice for the growing movement for women’s emancipation. The journal focused on the expansion of educational opportunities for girls and women. Among its many contributors, the architect Milica Krstić submitted articles on the “Design of Belgrade” (“Uredjenje Beograda”) as early as 1926.6 These writings on modernist design foreshadowed her later contributions to school architecture in the city.

Serbia’s population explosion and shift from agrarian to urban lifestyles coincided with the women’s rights movement. In 1921 women gained the right to vote in Yugoslavia, and by 1941 they were granted full legal status to own property. The late 19th-century and early 20th-century educational system, however, restricted where and when women could be educated. Girls attended segregated schools, which trained them for employment in traditionally female occupations that did not offer pensions or wages comparable to those of their male counterparts. This began to change in 1909, when the first women were admitted to Belgrade University. By 1930, twelve female professors were on the faculty.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the female illiteracy rate in Serbia, as in many other predominantly agrarian cultures was high, well above 70 percent. There were scant opportunities for girls to attend primary school and virtually none for advanced studies. Culturally, there were many prohibitions against educating women:

5 Neda Božinović, Žensko pitanje u Srbiji u XIX i XX veku (Belgrade, 1994), 113–16.
Male peasants rationalized their authority over women by maintaining that women were stupid. Innumerable proverbs such as, “Long hair, little wits,” “Consult your horse or ox rather than your wife” were current. But once schools were established and a few peasant girls … were allowed to go to school, it was found that they could hold their own in learning, so that the mass of the peasants had therefore to revise their opinion about the intelligence of women.7

After 1918, dramatic changes were starting to take place within the educational system of Serbia: “During the interwar period, politically active women tended to be school teachers sent by the Ministry of Education to rural schools or organized university and professional women, educated women from urban families, who were frequently unmarried.”8 Likewise, “when women teachers began to be appointed in the villages, the process went further, for peasant parents realized that there might be good sense in taking trouble over the education of their daughters now that a daughter as well as a son could be expected to reflect credit on the family and bring an income into it.”9

The real obstacle for continuing education on the high-school level was the absence of grammar schools for women, and finishing one was an admission requirement for entering the university. In 1909, when the first generation finished the First Female Grammar School, higher numbers of women started enrolling in Belgrade University. By the First World War, 10% of all enrolled students were women.10

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From 1911 to 1921, Žena (Woman), a monthly publication from Novi Sad, was in distribution. The magazine, edited by Milica Jase Tomić, shed light on the changing status of Serbian women. It acknowledged the strides made by the women’s movement, while warning of the dangers of such changes. In the first issue of Žena, published in 1911, a male contributor, Mita Đorđević, wrote:

Our school structure since 1872 has ordered that female children, like male, are obligated to go to elementary school. But we look, if we can, to get female children out of that requirement. We let our female children into high school, but reluctantly, afraid that a woman might become serious competition for a man.11

Alternative experimental arts schools for women began to open as early as 1910, when Expressionist dancer Maga Magazinović (1882–1968) started a school for modern dance and gymnastics in Belgrade. Magazinović was “a philosopher, dancer, choreographer, and dance theoretician … [who] developed Expressionist dance pieces.”12 Magazinović’s modernist school followed the teachings of Isadora Duncan; another dancer, Jelena Polyakova, founded the first classical ballet academy in Belgrade. By 1933, Polyakova’s ballet troupe had embarked on a European tour, the first in its history to include Greece (1933), Romania (1936), Czechoslovakia (1938), and Bulgaria (1938) in its itinerary.

Atanasijević was vocal as well as scholarly in her approach to women’s rights. She often wrote about the long history of women’s emancipation in classical literature as a way of grounding the contemporary discussions in the classical world. In 1923 Atanasijević published a text in Ženski pokret on the “Emancipation of Women in Plato.” She argued that in Plato’s Republic the role of women’s emancipation is an integral component of the ideal state:

Women must be given the right to take part in the same offices that men from the first two classes of the ideal state participate in (according to Plato, the ideal state consists of three classes: rulers, soldiers, and craftsmen and farmers.) If women are to serve the same goals as men, then they must also be educated the same as men.13

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11 Mita Đorđević, “Šta tražimo od žena,” Žena 1, no. 1 (1911), 17–18.
Atanasijević suggests that the women’s emancipation movement was rooted in the Western tradition advanced by Plato in the fifth century BCE. As such, the concept that “there is no difference between the abilities of men and women that would be decisive in the choice of a profession” takes on a much more solid grounding in both the history of philosophical thought and in more contemporary notions of segregated professions for men and women. By linking feminism with philosophy, Atanasijević forged the foundation for her own professional work—achievements that would earn her an academic position by 1924 and the hostility of her male colleagues.

Atanasijević was hired to teach aesthetics and classics as well as medieval and modern philosophy in the arts division of the Philosophy Department at the University of Belgrade. She was the first woman to hold this position at the university and as such was scrutinized by her male colleagues, who felt threatened by her interests in women’s equality. Professor Miloš Trivunac complained that “There are parts of Serbia where women kiss the hands of younger men, and you want to give a professorship to a girl!”¹⁴ Her colleague Professor Nikola Popović referred to Atanasijević as “Mata Hari” in front of his students. In 1924, his resentment towards Atanasijević grew after she published a negative critique of his philosophical work in Srpski književni glasnik. Popović secretly accused Atanasijević of plagiarism, denying her the opportunity to respond to the charges.

In many ways Atanasijević was singled out to be an example to other women with professional aspirations. Despite educational opportunities afforded to them, professional women in interwar Serbia still experienced an ambiguous and problematic status. Married women, along with “the feebleminded, squanderers noted by court, libertines [and] debtors whose property is in bankruptcy” were not allowed to own property.¹⁵ While the rights of married women were limited and tightly controlled by their husbands, single women and widows had more freedom when it came to property ownership.

Atanasijević’s 1926 essay on Gaius Musonius Rufus, the first-century Stoic philosopher, endorsed the role of women in the study and practice of philosophy. This essay, published in Pravda (Justice), brings to light Rufus’s beliefs, which he held during a difficult time in human history. He was one of

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the only philosophers allowed to remain in Rome under Vespasian after several lengthy periods of exile. Rufus wrote:

as for ethical education, it can be rightly said to apply to both genders, at least if we allow that the virtues of one gender also apply to the other... Why would it be more necessary for a man to learn than a woman? Without philosophy, neither men nor women can be well-mannered. Because philosophy is the exercise of justice, nothing else.16

According to Atanasijević, Rufus wrote “two fragments about women, which are so modern that they can be applied even today.”17 Atanasijević’s interest in applied philosophy through an excavation of ancient texts on gender equality became a foundation for interwar feminism. This approach allowed her to view contemporary social issues through the lens of the classics. This philosophical position made her a pioneer. It also created a dangerous divide between her work and that of her colleagues.

In 1927, Atanasijević expanded her discourse to the issue of creativity within the social structure of her time: “By excluding an entire, certainly more sensitive and kinder gender from the creative endeavors of society and the state, an immense human resource has remained untapped … a neglected creative force—that of women.”18 The issues of creativity, access to education, and avenues through which to contribute to culture came to the forefront in her work. It may also have been a reaction to the changes that she witnessed in her own institution: “From 1926 to 1927 the student body of the University of Belgrade consisted of 4,688 men and 1,235 women, while in the Arts Faculty there were 707 women and 469 men.”19 This shift in the student body was not reflected, however, in the demographics of the faculty—which remained almost completely male.

In 1929, on the tenth anniversary of the Serbian women’s movement, Atanasijević, although hopeful about the prospects for change within her culture, was also frustrated by the slow evolution of the movement. By this time there was a palpable backlash against achievements in the realm of women’s rights.

17 Ibid.
Many female activists, whom Atanasijević described as “selflessly continuing to work creatively under the lash of the whip,” experienced discrimination and retaliation from male colleagues. As if anticipating her own professional and personal struggles, Atanasijević wrote:

with their deeply rooted salutary faith, our best, often badly abused feminists will find the strength to lay the foundations of a more ethical and fairer life, so that no destructive force, no perfidious dreams will be able to hold back the unfolding historical imperative that comes with the evolution of all expressions of life and all beings therein.21

Atanasijević’s social activism came at a heavy professional price. Ostracized by her male colleagues, she became a scapegoat in 1936 when she was fired from her academic position. Atanasijević fought the accusations and the dismissal in a series of humiliating public hearings.22 Coming to her defense during the hearings were some of the leading figures of Belgrade intellectual and literary life.

The poet Rastko Petrović (1898–1949), whose sister was noted female painter Nadežda Petrović and Atanasijević’s childhood friend, called for her reinstatement and a retraction of the charges. Petrović, associated with Le Corbusier’s L’Esprit Nouveau in the 1920s and later with Zenit in Belgrade, was a longtime friend. He was a noted art critic who had spent much of the interwar period in Paris alongside some of the country’s most prominent artists and writers. He attested to Atanasijević’s character and contributions to intellectual history. Živojin Perić, a law professor and specialist on communal housing and gender issues, emphasized her contributions to the cause of women’s emancipation. Sima Pandurović (1883–1960) was perhaps Atanasijević’s most adamant defender.23 Pandurović was a poet, member of the

21 Ibid., 904.
Symbolist movement, and founder of *Misao* literary magazine. He declared that “she has been accused at the plenum of the University Council of plagiarism by one member of the faculty who has not the remotest inkling of philosophy and who has unaccountably taken it on himself to defend that discipline from a genuine thinker.”

The female members of the Cvijeta Zuzorić Society also supported Atanasijević and started a letter-writing campaign in her defense. The society was a gathering of intelligent women “with a task to promote interest for art and create conditions for its improvement and development.” Among the signers of the petition protesting the decision of Belgrade University were members of the managing board Stana Đorđević and Milica Spiridonović, “ordinary” members Gita Predić and Angelina Odavić, and the secretary Vidosava Jevremović. Artists such as Beta Vukanović and Zora Petrović along with the poet Desanka Maksimović also rallied around Atanasijević. Together with 170 notable women of “free professions and public workers” (*slobodnih profesija i javnih radnika*), they signed a letter supporting Atanasijević, which was published on 29 October 1935 in *Vreme*. Even this massive show of support, however, did not affect the university’s decision.

Atanasijević’s tribulations were in the media like a Greek tragedy. *Politika*, Belgrade’s daily newspaper, published three articles on Atanasijević’s hearings in 1935. In the same year, *Pravda* and *Vreme* published four of Atanasijević’s responses to the hearings. Atanasijević was also supported by her students, who “were always on my side, they were always very gentle towards me and they respected me. My lectures and my work in philosophy, which has always been my life, were my consolation.” Even with this groundswell of public support, she was never reinstated. Her request to enter early retirement at the age of 42 was also rejected.

Following the hearings, Atanasijević was only able to find work as an inspector for the Ministry of Education, a position for which she was vastly overqualified. Nonetheless, she continued writing and lecturing. In June of 1936, she traveled to Athens to give a lecture which had been announced in *Politika*, the oldest daily newspaper in the Balkans. Founded in 1904 by

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24 “Govor g. S. Pandurovića na široj konferenciji intelektualaca i javnih radnika za pravdu dr. Kseniji Atanasijević,” *Život i rad* 22, no. 146 (November 1935): 593.
27 Atanasijević, quoted in Ast, “Život i misao Ksenije Atanasijević.”
Vladislav Ribnikar, it showcased the works of Ivo Andrić, Branislav Nusić, Moša Pijada, and other notable thinkers from the Balkans.

Atanasijević’s personal and professional challenges contributed to her most innovative writing on the female condition. She continued her work as a contributor to Život i rad (Life and Work), published in Belgrade from 1928 to 1941 under the direction of Milan Pajić. Her essay “The Feminist Movement and Its Leaders,” published in the July/August 1938 issue, describes the personal sacrifices that are necessary for the good of the women’s movement. She mentions “the cruel historical injustices” and the required “sacrifices, which every struggle invariably presumes.” Atanasijević writes that “the women’s movement must be led by people who subordinate their personal to the general interest, who work selflessly and out of conviction, ready for any sacrifice, and not for material gain.”

In the late 1930s, Atanasijević began giving public lectures at Kolarac National University (Kolarčev narodni univerzitet) in Belgrade. The lectures were financed by a generous donation from Ilija Milosavljević Kolarac in 1932. Kolarac University did not award degrees but was a site that hosted lectures, concerts, and exhibitions on topics in the arts and sciences. Aleksandar Belić, professor of philology and linguistics, who had been educated in Belgrade, Moscow, and Odessa, directed the organization. His most enduring contribution came in 1954 when he advocated for the unification of the Serbian and Croatian languages. Atanasijević’s talks between 1936 and 1941 were popular and included “Morals of the Stoics” (1937), “Chinese Philosophy” (1937), and “Eternal Life” (1938). This part-time employment provided her with a modest income and the opportunity to continue sharing her great intellect with eager students.

In 1936, she published articles in the Jewish newspaper on the dangers of Hitler and anti-Semitism. The Jewish community in Belgrade goes back many centuries and includes the 1879 establishment of the Baruh Brothers Choir—the oldest Jewish choir that is still in existence today. In 1938 Atanasijević began giving public lectures at the Jewish reading room in Belgrade. These activities led to her arrest and imprisonment by the Gestapo in 1942.

Atanasijević began writing art criticism in 1936, when she published a piece on Zora Popović, a female artist who had an exhibition at the “Cvijeta Zuzorić” pavilion in Belgrade. Popović (1902–78) graduated from the Academy of Art in Belgrade in 1926 before going on to study at the Scandinavian Academy in Paris (1927–29). An exceptional draftsman, she specialized in

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29 Ibid.
portraits and street scenes. In 1937, Atanasijević published a review of the L’Exposition Internationale in Paris. This highly political exhibition showcased Picasso’s Guernica in the Spanish pavilion, the German pavilion designed by Albert Speer, Hitler’s architect, and the newly constructed Musée de l’Homme (formerly the ethnographic collection in the Trocadéro) in Paris. Among the Serbian artists in attendance was Predrag Peđa Milosavljević (1908–89), a Renaissance man—a lawyer, artist, and dramaturg from Kragujevac—who was awarded the Grand Prix that year.

On 25 April 1946 Atanasijević was imprisoned for a month by the postwar communist regime. Her release from prison was followed by a ban on her books from January 1947 until April 1952. Two years later she became a contributor to Republika as well as a regular speaker at Kolarac University. However, at that point in her life and within the postwar regime, she no longer felt comfortable as a public intellectual.

During the last few years of her life, Atanasijević focused on translating philosophical works from German, English, French, Latin, and Ancient Greek. She continued to publish her translations until 1973. In 1981, Atanasijević died in Belgrade at the age of 87. She made many lasting contributions to the field of philosophy, and her struggle for women’s rights has provided us with a written record of the challenges and triumphs of Serbian women in their quest for equality and educational opportunities.

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