

Pavlina Bogdan Bijelić – Traditional Female Identity on the Threshold of Modernity*

The writings of teacher and ethnographer Pavlina Bogdan Bijelić provides a rare opportunity to gain insight into women's professional advancements in Dubrovnik at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century from the perspective of ego-documents, using the case study method. Bogdan Bijelić's personal attitudes and professional choices were analyzed in the context of accelerated social, economic and political circumstances. The focus is on three aspects of Bogdan Bijelić's public activity: professional positioning in the cultural milieu of Dalmatia and Croatia, the interaction between politics and women (including her), and Bogdan Bijelić's participation in the discourse on the "woman question."

Introduction

Pavlina Bogdan Bijelić¹ was a teacher, ethnographer and a writer. She was born to well-to-do middle-class family in Cavtat in 1855. She graduated from the women's teacher training school in Dubrovnik, the highest education a girl could get in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy of that time, establishing her among the ranks of the educated female intellectual elite. She was a teacher and headmistress in Cavtat and Dubrovnik from 1879 until her marriage in 1904, and at the same time she was engaged in gathering ethnographic materials from the Konavle area. With her husband Vlaho Bogdan, she lived in Salzburg for a time, but the couple moved back to Dubrovnik in 1908. By marrying Vlaho Bogdan, she acquired a noble title and, after his death in 1910, probably his pension, and devoted herself to humanitarian work within the associations of Catholic women for the rest of her life.

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¹ Different versions of Pavlina Bogdan Bijelić's name can be found in documents, archival sources and literature. She was baptised as Paola Maria Anna Bijelich. In the documents of the Pile Public Girls School, where she was the headmistress, she was registered Pavle Bijelić. She signed her letters to Baldo Bogišić as Lina Bijelić. After marriage, she assumed her husband's surname and noble title and was most often referred to as Lina pl. Bogdan. As an author, she also signed her name as Paulina Bogdan. In this article, I will use her full first name and both surnames by which she is known, especially in ethnographic literature: Pavlina Bogdan Bijelić.

Pavlina Bogdan Bijelić was mostly written about in the context of her ethnographic work.² But in addition to the ethnographic aspect, her struggle to participate in the cultural and intellectual milieu can be analysed in the context of the “woman question” in Dubrovnik and Dalmatia at the turn of the 20th century. Records and ego-documents on Bogdan Bijelić provide an insight into the specific life path of a woman at that time. Those are primarily the letters she wrote to Baldo Bogišić,³ an ethnographer, legal historian, jurist of international reputation and a family friend.⁴ Bogdan Bijelić regularly wrote a “chronicle” for him, at his request – because Bogišić wanted to stay informed of all social, political and economic events in Cavtat and Dubrovnik. Writing the chronicle, Bogdan Bijelić also wrote about her professional and life choices. Also, an analysis of school documents from the period in which she worked as a teacher and the head of the Public Girls School in Dubrovnik reveals her work ethic and attitude towards her superiors (District School Council).⁵ The research has included her other writings as well. Bogdan Bijelić actively contributed to the local newspapers,⁶ she had texts published in Croatian journals,⁷ and her views are incorporated into her ethnographic work mostly published by Yugoslav Academy of Arts and Science in Zagreb.⁸

This analysis, based on the case study methodology, will focus is on three aspects of Bogdan Bijelić’s public activity: professional positioning in the cultural milieu of Dalmatia and Croatia, the interaction between politics and women (including her), and Bogdan Bijelić’s participation in the discourse on the “woman question.” Ultimately answers should be found to the following questions: how could she, as a woman, proceed professionally or politically? What were her views on the “woman question” and did they affect her professional and private life? It seems that female authors and intellectuals, mostly teachers, who work and publish in today’s Croatia, accept the discourse about separate spheres.⁹ Taking into consid-

² ŠIMUNOVIĆ-PETRIĆ 1983; ŠIMUNOVIĆ-PETRIĆ 1984; BATINA 2012; BATINA 2015.

³ HR-Zbirka Balda Bogišića u Cavtatu-sign. B XVIII.

⁴ Baldo (Baltazar, Valtazar) Bogišić was highly influential scholar. He lived most of his life in Paris, but maintained extensive correspondence with numerous political and cultural figures in his home region. His and Bijelić family were on friendly terms, and correspondence with Pavlina Bogdan Bijelić was maintained on that basis. He was 21 years older than her and influenced her as an intellectual authority.

⁵ HR-DADU-470-Ženska osnovna škola Dubrovnik (Pile), (boxes 3 and 4).

⁶ In the interwar period, Bogdan Bijelić contributed a number of brief articles to the Dubrovnik newspaper *Narodna svijest*.

⁷ For example, Bogdan Bijelić published several texts in the “family” magazine *Domaće ognjište*, which was edited by women educator and teachers from Zagreb.

⁸ Most of her ethnographic texts were published by Academy’s *Zbornik za narodni život i običaje*.

⁹ See, for example: BATINA 2015; KATIĆ 2012; KATIĆ 2019; OGRAJŠEK 2004; POTKONJAK 2012.

eration the records on Bogdan Bijelić, the earnest acceptance of imposed inferiority is questioned: what were the standard forms of acceptance of the mainstream discourse, and what form did silent opposition take in everyday life?

Pavlina Bogdan Bijelić's teaching career and ethnographic research – public engagement suitable for women

The state Women's Teacher Training School in Dubrovnik was established in 1874 to meet the demand for female teaching staff in the province of Dalmatia.¹⁰ Pavlina Bogdan Bijelić received education in that school. Teachers were among the first intellectual professions for women, and the problems confronted by Dalmatian women teachers were similar to those in other European countries.¹¹ Female teachers were required to remain unmarried, for the incompatibility between a career and motherhood was widely accepted as fact. This harsh obstruction of their private life was difficult for them, and many decided to marry and abandon their careers. The public statements against the celibacy of female teachers at the turn of the 20th century by the Croatian educator and writer Marija Jambrišak is only the most well-known example of the general dissatisfaction of teachers on this matter.¹² With no families of their own, and due to their postings often outside their home towns, they perceived the teaching profession as a lonely one.¹³ That was not the case with Bogdan Bijelić, for she lived in her home region; she often visited her parents in Cavtat, or her sister and brother-in-law in Plat. Yet she felt as though she had sacrificed her private life to her calling; after some inconveniences at work, she bitterly complained to Bogišić (prior to marriage): "I didn't get married, but devoted myself to teaching."¹⁴

The salaries of female teachers in Dalmatia were 20% lower than the salaries of male teachers, which they perceived as an injustice.¹⁵ Bogdan Bijelić repeatedly complained about her material status: "If Dalmatian teachers were not so poorly paid (and female teachers 20% less), I would immediately ask for retirement and devote myself to the further research and writing, *aber geduld!*"¹⁶ She was not

¹⁰ PERIĆ 1978: 381-382.

¹¹ KATIĆ 2012: 149-151; PULJIZEVIĆ 2021: 298-300; ROGERS 2006: 106-117.

¹² BATINA 2015: 71-72.

¹³ ROGERS 2006: 115.

¹⁴ HR-Zbirka Balda Bogišića u Cavtatu-sign. B XVIII, the letter dated 25 Jan. 1902.

¹⁵ For example, an anonymous group of women teachers published an article on that topic in the Dalmatian teacher's bulletin: "Pravedna želja učiteljica", *Učiteljski glas* 5/5-7 (Split, 31 July 1903), 70-72.

¹⁶ HR-Zbirka Balda Bogišića u Cavtatu-sign. B XVIII, letters dated 12 May 1901, 22 Sept. 1900 and 25 Jan. 1902.

happy with the working conditions either, as she wrote in her letters to Bogišić. At the end of 1901, when the school where she was the headmistress was moved from the suburbs of Pile to the 'City' (i.e., inside Dubrovnik's historic ramparts), she was not accommodated in the school building, as would have been customary at the time. She found it a nuisance to have to walk to school and back twice a day, sometimes in very inclement weather.¹⁷ After some time and her own repeated requests, the District School Council provided her with suitable accommodation inside the school building.¹⁸ Also, due to reassignment of the school staff and sick days and leave-time on the part of other teachers, the workload was often too much of a burden for her: "I work so hard that my life has no joy anymore. They assigned 30 additional pupils to me, and now I have 80 altogether, divided into four classes, which requires different curricula and attendance. This is temporary, but still... Medicine is no use after one is dead! I'm exhausted, my lungs hurt, my stomach is cramped. I purchased a ticket for 4 K state lottery, and if I win I will bid farewell to my kind and dear superiors by telegraph!"¹⁹

Moreover, she was in constant conflict with her superiors, and it seems with some of her female colleagues as well.²⁰ There were numerous minor tensions between Bogdan Bijelić and her superiors in the District School Council.²¹ For example, during one of the city ceremonies to which women teachers in the Public Girls School were invited, there was no place in the church designated for them, so they had to stand behind the seated "gentleman teachers." Bijelić reacted sharply: "Since this is beneath common dignity, we demand that our superiors take action to see to it that nothing similar happens in the future."²² However, it would appear that the principal conflict broke out over the assignment of schoolgirls from the areas of Grad, Pile and Kono to certain schools. In 1899, after the school year had already begun, some girls from the "training room" at the Women's Teacher Training School were transferred to the Public Girls School in Dubrovnik, where Pavlina Bogdan Bijelić was headmistress. Some parents protested against this decision, claiming that they would transfer their children to private schools. Bogdan Bijelić warned her superiors that the children had not been transferred in compliance with the rules and even laws, and that by moving the children to another school during the school year, educational norms had also been violated.

¹⁷ HR-Zbirka Balda Bogišića u Cavtatu-sign. B XVIII, letter dated 26 Nov. 1901.

¹⁸ HR-DADU-470-Ženska osnovna škola Dubrovnik (Pile), document no. 923 of 19 Aug. 1902 (box 4).

¹⁹ HR-Zbirka Balda Bogišića u Cavtatu-sign. B XVIII, the letter dated 12 Dec. 1901.

²⁰ PULJIZEVIĆ 202: 301-302. HR-Zbirka Balda Bogišića u Cavtatu-sign. B XVIII, letter dated 25 Dec. 1902.

²¹ HR-DADU-470-Ženska osnovna škola Dubrovnik (Pile), (boxes 3 and 4) *passim*.

²² HR-DADU-470-Ženska osnovna škola Dubrovnik (Pile), document no. 9 of 1.9.1899, (box 3).

However, the transferred girls were apparently poorer students and displayed worse behaviour, and the parents who opposed the Council's decisions were respectable and wealthy citizens, so the background of this conflict was probably more complex, and perhaps also based on private motivations.²³ Bogdan Bijelić ultimately ended up falling out of favour with her superiors. At the grand opening ceremony for the new building of the Women's Teacher Training School, with all provincial and local dignitaries attending, Bogdan Bijelić - the headmistress of the only public girls school in Dubrovnik – was not invited.²⁴ A few months later, she competed for a teaching post in the "training room" at the Women's Teacher Training School. Despite recommendations, awards and acknowledgments for her work, a younger rival was granted the post, and that, as Bogdan Bijelić claimed, was thanks to bribery of officials in the provincial government in Zadar who made the decision.²⁵

By all indications, however, she was scrupulous and diligent headmistress. She took arranged for repairs to the school building and pupil dormitories²⁶ and she supervised and reported on the hygiene of the schoolgirls.²⁷ The attendance of Catholic mass by schoolgirls with their teachers was mandatory. Girls were known to faint in the overcrowded churches, and Bogdan Bijelić persistently asked her superiors to arrange a separate mass just for the needs of the Public Girls School.²⁸ She particularly advocated for the popularization and production of traditional embroidery by schoolgirls and as part of the school curriculum.²⁹ She encouraged the work of better pupils³⁰ and formed something of a warm teacher-pupil relationship with some of them.³¹ She worked as a schoolteacher

²³ HR-DADU-470-Ženska osnovna škola Dubrovnik (Pile), documents no. 12 of 13 Nov. 1899 and no. 13 of 13 Nov. 1899 (box 3). Similar problems continued in the following years, see: HR-DADU-470-Ženska osnovna škola Dubrovnik (Pile) (box 4) *passim*.

²⁴ HR-Zbirka Balda Bogišića u Cavtatu-sign. B XVIII, letters dated 19 Dec. 1901 and 25 Jan. 1902.

²⁵ PULJIZEVIĆ 2021:301-302; HR-Zbirka Balda Bogišića u Cavtatu-sign. B XVIII, letters dated 19 Dec. 1901 and 25.1.1902.

²⁶ HR-DADU-470-Ženska osnovna škola Dubrovnik (Pile), document no. 24 of 31 Dec. 1899, (box 3); document no. 34 of 15 Mar. 1900 (box 4).

²⁷ For example, Bogdan Bjelić informed her superiors about the outbreak of measles: HR-DADU-470-Ženska osnovna škola Dubrovnik (Pile), document dated 7 Mar. 1901 (box 4).

²⁸ HR-DADU-470-Ženska osnovna škola Dubrovnik (Pile), documents dated 22 Nov. 1899, 4 Dec. 1899. (box 3); document no. 32, 3/1901 (box 4).

²⁹ HR-DADU-470-Ženska osnovna škola Dubrovnik (Pile), document dated 12 Mar. 1896 (box 3).

³⁰ BATINA 2015: 383-384.

³¹ For example, one of Bogdan Bijelić's students composed a sonnet in her honour and had it published (under a pseudonym) in *Narodna svijest*: ELMOT 1940. "Svojoj učiteljici," *Narodna svijest*, 20 November 1940. <https://zdur.dkd.hr/?pr=iiif.v.a&id=20578&tify={%22panX%22:0.293,%22panY%22:1.177,%22view%22:%22info%22,%22zoom%22:0.612}> (retrieved 30 October 2022).

for 25 years until, at the age of 49, she married Vlaho Bogdan and retired to marital bliss.³²

In contrast to her teaching work, she was very passionate about collecting ethnographic materials: “As you know, I research Konavle’s folk customs with particular interest and inexpressible love. I’ve been doing this for a long time, it’s in my flesh and blood, when I talk about it – I’m nervously excited. (...) If Dalmatian teachers were not poorly paid, I would immediately ask for a pension and dedicate myself to further studies and literary work!”³³

Collecting the ethnic treasures had a special significance in raising awareness of belonging to a specific ethnicity and building national identity. During the first half of the 19th century in Croatia, the gathering of historiographic, archaeological, philological and material artefacts was accompanied by the establishment of state cultural and scholarly institutions and also by the development of certain research-oriented disciplines. The methodology for collecting the cultural heritage was also defined during this period.³⁴ Dalmatian intellectuals also wrote articles about “folk inventions” by recording oral traditions and writing short articles for the Dalmatian press.³⁵ The most extensive study of folk customs in the field of law was made by Bogdan Bijelić’s correspondent Baldo Bogišić.³⁶ Although Bogdan Bijelić emphasized that she had begun collecting ethnographic material at her own initiative without adequate guidance and methodology, her friendship with Bogišić must have encouraged her interest in ethnographic work. Also, teachers were called upon to collect folk treasures through various cultural and vocational periodicals.³⁷ The educational and didactic journal *Napredak*³⁸ emphasized the moral, educational and patriotic character of gathering national treasures, and for this purpose a methodological template was offered.³⁹

To Bogdan Bijelić, collecting ethnographic material was not a hobby, for she referred to it as a “career”.⁴⁰ Most of the materials she collected during her lifetime

³² She worked as a teacher from 1879 to 1903. During 1903, she trained in Vienna to become a lacemaking instructor. She ran the lacemaking course in Dubrovnik until 1904. HR-DADU-470-Ženska osnovna škola Dubrovnik (Pile), document no. 29 of 5 June 1904 (box 4); HR-Zbirka Balda Bogišića u Cavtatu-sign. B XVIII, letter dated 26 Mar. 1904.

³³ HR-Zbirka Balda Bogišića u Cavtatu-sign. B XVIII, letter dated 12 May 1901.

³⁴ For example, the official state historian Ivan Kukuljević Sakcinski compiled questions for collectors of oral literature and published them in 1851 in the journal *Arkiv za povjestnicu jugoslavensku*. BATINA 2015: 42-43.

³⁵ BATINA 2015: 45.

³⁶ BOGIŠIĆ 1867.

³⁷ BATINA 2015: 19-24.

³⁸ *Napredak* was the bulletin of the Croatian Pedagogical-Literary Assembly and the Croatian Teachers Association.

³⁹ BATINA 2015: 23.

⁴⁰ HR-Zbirka Balda Bogišića u Cavtatu-sign. B XVIII, letter dated 25 Jan. 1902.

are kept in the Ethnography Department of the Croatian Academy of Arts and Science, and partly in the Baltazar Bogišić Museum and Collection in Cavtat.⁴¹ The largest part of the materials were given to the Academy by Bogdan Bijelić herself between 1901 and 1907, but she also sent smaller contributions and corrections of older texts during the interwar period. The materials include stored samples of traditional embroidery from Konavle, a collection of photographs and almost 1,600 handwritten pages, a significant part of which has not been published. All materials were collected in the field, from local tellers, and pertains to the population and customs of the Konavle region.⁴² The material she collected, along with embroidery patterns, includes sayings, riddles, proverbs, anecdotes, legends, prayers and other oral lore that she intended to publish in a single comprehensive volume.⁴³ Her contribution to the popularization and preservation of Konavle embroidery is particularly significant. She was the first woman to research the techniques and nomenclature of Konavle folk embroidery,⁴⁴ and the samples she collected or had made received awards at exhibitions in Paris, Vienna and London.⁴⁵

She wrote brief texts about Konavle folk customs and Konavle traditional embroidery for various journals and magazines, but most often for the journal *Zbornik za narodni život i običaje* published by the Yugoslav Academy of Arts and Science in Zagreb.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, she was eager to see her complete collection published by the Academy. The editors of *Zbornik za narodni život i običaje* and other folk embroidery experts rated Bogdan Bijelić's collection highly, and she was promised that it will be published in a special edition with high-quality colour printing.⁴⁷ It was never published, however. This was not due to potential conflicts with the first editor of *Zbornik za narodni život i običaje*, Antun Radić, nor with his successor Dragutin Boranić, even though Bogdan Bijelić did recount several unpleasant episodes with certain male rivals, especially Vid Vuletić Vukasović.⁴⁸

⁴¹ BATINA 2015: 178.

⁴² BATINA 2015: 178-179.

⁴³ She consulted with Bogišić about the methodology and structure of her work. HR-Zbirka Balda Bogišića u Cavtatu-sign. B XVIII, letter dated 12 May 1901.

⁴⁴ BATINA 2015: 183.

⁴⁵ ŠIMUNOVIĆ-PETRIĆ 1983: 664; ŠIMUNOVIĆ-PETRIĆ 1984: 144.

⁴⁶ Now: Croatian Academy of Arts and Science. For a bibliography of Bogdan Bijelić's articles published in *Zbornik za narodni život i običaje* see: BATINA 2015: 180.

⁴⁷ HR-Zbirka Balda Bogišića u Cavtatu-sign. B XVIII, letters dated 12 May 1901, 4 Jan. 1902, undated letter from 1902.

⁴⁸ Vid Vuletić Vukasović (1853-1933) worked as a teacher in the Dubrovnik area; his literary and ethnographic work is significant. He wrote numerous treatises on history, art history and archaeology. In one of her letters to Bogišić, Bogdan Bijelić contested his knowledge of traditional Konavle embroidery. HR-Zbirka Balda Bogišića u Cavtatu-sign. B XVIII, letter dated 25 Jan. 1902.

Based on the correspondence and minutes of meetings of the *Zbornik* editorial board, ethnologist Klementina Batina believes that the reasons were financial. Pavlina Bogdan Bijelić maintained an agreeable correspondence with the editorial board until the late 1930s, requesting the return of the embroidery samples. She also continued to send brief excerpts and corrections of her texts.⁴⁹

Pavlina Bijelić Bogdan and politics – on the margins of the male world

Dubrovnik's political scene was extremely turbulent at the turn of the 20th century. After the loss of sovereignty at the beginning of the 19th century, the former Republic of Ragusa and its citizens, then part of Dalmatia, became participants in and, partially, creators of integrationist national ideas and movements. In Dubrovnik, the idea of *slovinstvo* was traditionally nurtured, i.e., the unification of Dalmatia and Dubrovnik with Croatia as the first step in uniting the South Slavs. Additionally, Dubrovnik's rich cultural and literary heritage was considered one of the foundations of ethnic and national identity, therefore the National Party, the bastion of the Croatian national idea, won the elections in that city as early as 1869. The Autonomist Party, which insisted on the further autonomy of Dalmatia and prioritised the Italian language and culture, was better represented in parts of Dalmatia that were under Venetian rule until 1797, while they had no significant support in Dubrovnik. However, when the creation of the dualist Monarchy with the Austrian-Hungarian Compromise (1867) made unification with Croatia impossible and after the Croats and Serbs in the National Party in Dalmatia (1870s) became national differentiated and Serbia was recognized as an independent state (a monarchy ruled by a native dynasty) in 1878, the circle of politicians and citizens in Dubrovnik who accepted the Serbian national identity, known in historiography as the Serb-Catholic movement, grew stronger.⁵⁰ By downplaying religion in political matters and in the question of nationality, they maintained their affiliation with Catholicism and emphasized their local patriotism based on Dubrovnik's glorious past. The coalition of the Autonomist Party and the Serb-Catholics was the leading political option in Dubrovnik from 1890 to 1899. They were still active at the beginning of the 20th century, and its members held important posts in the city's political and economic life. In the subsequent decades, the Serb-Catholic movement gradually faded. Since the 1890s, the struggle for national integration within the framework of the Croatian ethno-national identity in Dubrovnik was assumed by the Statehood Right Party.⁵¹

⁴⁹ BATINA 2015: 181-183.

⁵⁰ On Serb-Catholic movement, see: BANAC 1983; BENKOVIĆ 1990; ČOSIĆ 2001; MACAN 1990; TOLJA 1999.

⁵¹ See: PERIĆ 1979.

The political struggle between different options was almost entirely concerned with the national question. In her descriptions and comments on political events that she sent to Bogišić, Bogdan Bijelić did not even name the parties, but exclusively talked about “Serbs” and “Croats”.⁵²

In her letters to Bogišić, Bogdan Bijelić herself claimed that she did not want to take sides.⁵³ However, in what way could she have been politically active? Women, although they did not have the right to vote in elections, participated in political events. They expressed patriotism, which was especially favoured and approved by the male political community in moments of crisis, wars or national movements in the 19th century, although the character of their activities was more philanthropic than political.⁵⁴ Female patriotism was very welcome during the Croatian national revival.⁵⁵ In more peaceful times, they were prohibited from attending party meetings and delivering political speeches, but they could support certain political options and ideas through protests, boycotts and activities in women’s associations.⁵⁶

In the 1880s, the political situation in Civil Croatia aroused great interest, and the opposition Statehood Right Party enjoyed a great deal of support. Women took part in public receptions for party leaders, they were part of the popular movement, present on the streets, squares and public political events, loudly expressing their support. Their political views were mostly those of their husbands, but the influence of women on their husbands cannot be excluded. The regime did not respond to women’s voices from the streets, but when female teachers expressed political support for the Statehood Right Party, they were severely punished.⁵⁷

In an atmosphere of fierce national political struggle, the role of women on Dubrovnik’s political scene at the turn of the 20th century was to provide patriotic support for male family members who were involved in politics. Bogdan Bijelić described several such examples in her “chronicle”. She described the celebration on the occasion of the appointment of Ernest Katić⁵⁸ to serve as a representative of

⁵² In several letters; I shall cite two examples: “Bepo Škrabo collects money for Serbian music, because the Serbs decided not to give anything to the organizers of the St. Blaise celebration, because the celebration is managed by Croats”; “On the occasion of the conference, the Poles laid a silver wreath on Gundulić’s monument, and there the Serbs and Croats quarrelled (...)” HR-Zbirka Balda Bogišića u Cavtatu-sign. B XVIII, letter dated 1 Feb. 1902 and an undated letter.

⁵³ HR-Zbirka Balda Bogišića u Cavtatu-sign. B XVIII, letter dated 19 Dec. 1901.

⁵⁴ HUNT 2006: 229-230.

⁵⁵ OGRAJŠEK 2004: 97-98; ŽUPAN 2013: 39-39.

⁵⁶ HUNT 2006: 231-235.

⁵⁷ TURKALJ 2009: 175-189.

⁵⁸ Ernest Katić, a member of the Croatian National Party, was appointed to the curia of cities during the term from 1895 to 1901, instead of the former Dr. Vlaho Matijević. PERIĆ 1978: 222, 228.

the Croatian National Party in the territorial diet: “His friends came to congratulate him in the evening and music was playing under his home. His wife, they say, was clearly moved. She hosted, as she knows, a lovely treat that ended with her donuts.”⁵⁹ A similar celebration was also held when Konstantin Kosta Vojnović⁶⁰ was elected to the Dalmatian diet. His daughter Katica received the congratulations instead of her father, who was currently absent: “In the evening, the Stradun [the main street in Dubrovnik] was illuminated and music played in honour of the newly elected representative. Katica stood at the window and represented the whole family because her elders were in Zadar with Ivo.”⁶¹

Furthermore, Bogdan Bijelić described a minor controversy that broke out during the opening ceremony for the railway. Serbian flags were hung on the house of well-known and respected Cavtat resident Luko Zore,⁶² and the local newspapers wrote about it. Bogdan Bijelić continued: “He asked that it be said that the flags were not hung by him, but by his tenants who live on the upper floor. They say that Mrs. Luce [his wife] said: ‘If they hadn’t, I would have hung them’.”⁶³ Besides not wanting to raise political tensions (hence this co-statehood with Serbian flags), Zore was a supporter of the pro-Serbian idea,⁶⁴ and his wife obviously shared his views. In addition to sharing political stances with the male members of their families, women guarded the political legacy of worth politicians. For example, the reaction of the closest (female) relative of the late politician Miho Klaić⁶⁵ was very emotional, having experienced a situation that she perceived as disrespectful towards the deceased. Arriving at the premises of the Epidaurus Entertainment and Education Society, she saw that Klaić’s portrait

⁵⁹ HR-Zbirka Balda Bogišića u Cavtatu-sign. B XVIII, letter dated 19 Dec. 1901.

⁶⁰ Kosta Vojnović (1832-1903) was an attorney, law professor at the University of Zagreb and a politician, representative in the Dalmatian and Croatian diets. Politically, he stood for the union of Dalmatia with Croatia. Vojnović, Konstantin. *Hrvatska enciklopedija, online edition*. Leksikografski zavod Miroslav Krleža, 2021. <http://www.enciklopedija.hr/Natuknica.aspx?ID=65237> (retrieved 30 October 2022).

⁶¹ HR-Zbirka Balda Bogišića u Cavtatu-sign. B XVIII, letter dated 4 Jan. 1902.

⁶² Luka Zore (1846-1906) was a philologist, he published a number of philological and literary-historical treatises, mostly on Dubrovnik poetry and speech. He worked in education, and was also involved in politics as a representative in the Dalmatian diet and the Imperial Council in Vienna. Zore, Luka. *Hrvatska enciklopedija, mrežno izdanje*. Leksikografski zavod Miroslav Krleža, 2021. <http://www.enciklopedija.hr/Natuknica.aspx?ID=67408> (retrieved 30 October 2022).

⁶³ HR-Zbirka Balda Bogišića u Cavtatu-sign. B XVIII, letter dated 19 Dec. 1901.

⁶⁴ PERIĆ 1980: 323.

⁶⁵ Miho Klaić (1829-1896) was a Dalmatian politician born in Dubrovnik. He was one of the founders of the National Party and during his political career he advocated for the establishment of the Croatian language in Dalmatia and the union of Dalmatia with Croatia and Slavonia. MACAN 2009.

was placed above the door in the cafeteria. Very upset and in tears, she asked for the portrait to be moved to a place suited to his importance or to be returned to her. She was also disappointed and angry to see that his name was deleted from the list of honorary members of the Society, instead of placing a cross next to his name, as was the custom for deceased members.⁶⁶

Just as women could be indirectly politically active at the turn of the 20th century, so too could politics influence their careers. Pavlina Bogdan Bijelić was convinced that Vid Vuletić Vukasović was accorded priority to publish his text in the journal *Dalmatien* because he shared the same political (pro-Serbian) beliefs with the editor, with whom she had previously come to an agreement.⁶⁷ Also, anticipating the publication of her material in the journal *Zbornik za narodni život i običaje* of the Yugoslav Academy of Arts and Science in Zagreb, she expressed her fear that the deal would backfire: “A professor from Zagreb, Dragutin Boranić, came here. He told me that the Academy would have published my work as early as this winter. (...) But now, as you know, things have changed. Not that I wouldn’t spare the time, but I’m afraid that I would be prevented from doing so because everything is too political. You should know that my future husband, unfortunately, is a fanatical Serb, who, I think, cannot be talked into sense!”⁶⁸

In the period leading up to World War I, Bogdan Bijelić strictly avoided having her work published in magazines and newspapers that declaratively supported any national idea. Her friend Luko Zore, a professor, philologist and politician, invited her to contribute her texts to the magazine *Srđ*, which he had launched and edited. Initially, she was willing to submit an article, but changed her mind when she realized that the journal would be printed by a “Serbian” printing press.⁶⁹ On top of that, when describing political events in Cavtat and Dubrovnik, she often indulged her correspondent. Baldo Bogišić, a world-renowned scholar, avoided ethnic and national identification, and he considered Croats and Serbs “one branch of our great ethnic family.”⁷⁰ In her letters, Bogdan Bijelić mostly disparaged the struggle between “Croats” and “Serbs” and downplayed the importance of national identification in general.⁷¹ She condemned the fierce debates being waged in the

⁶⁶ HR-Zbirka Balda Bogišića u Cavtatu-sign. B XVIII, letter dated 15 Mar. 1902.

⁶⁷ BATINA 2015: 182; HR-Zbirka Balda Bogišića u Cavtatu-sign. B XVIII, letter dated 25 Jan. 1902.

⁶⁸ HR-Zbirka Balda Bogišića u Cavtatu-sign. B XVIII, undated letter from 1902. Dragutin Boranić, editor of *Zbornik za narodni život i običaje*, was in Dubrovnik in 1902 (BATINA 2015: 180), so the letter is dated based on that information.

⁶⁹ HR-Zbirka Balda Bogišića u Cavtatu-sign. B XVIII, letter dated 19 Dec. 1901.

⁷⁰ ČEPULO 2008-2009: 27-29.

⁷¹ For example, HR-Zbirka Balda Bogišića u Cavtatu-sign. B XVIII, letters dated 20 Feb. 1902 and 16 Apr. 1903.

press, in civic associations, and especially the street violence that sometimes broke out due to political-national disagreements. She considered these tensions unnecessary and politics in general unworthy, and believed that things would be much better if everyone would just go about their business. In this regard, she briefly commented on the interference of women in politics: "Over here, they still fight constantly! Blessed art thou, who have never been involved in politics, and over here – such are the times, I guess – that even women engage in politics. I said it to Toni: politics precludes every noble sentiment!"⁷²

However, even though Bogdan Bijelić was reserved on the national issue, one can sense, sometimes solely by her choice of words, that she was more inclined to the Croatian national idea of integration. For example, during the elections for the Dalmatian diet in 1901, she favoured Kosta Vojnović, the Croatian National Party's candidate. She explained her pleasure over Vojnović's electoral victory to Bogišić by saying that it would be good for Vojnović because the term in office could improve his poor financial situation.⁷³ Furthermore, describing a dispute between the parties regarding the establishment of and investment in "the Bank,"⁷⁴ she described "gross fraud" perpetrated against "Croats" concerning the paid-in shares.⁷⁵ She also mentioned that her sister Malvina had participated in an event organized by "Croats," which may be indicative since the families often shared political views.⁷⁶ In June 1902, a ceremonial academy was being prepared in honour of Bogišić, and Bogdan Bijelić commented on the sonnets composed in his honour: "In that praise, they made You a Serb so much that the second part is missing, and I'm very sorry that you are not mutual, so everyone can celebrate You (...)." ⁷⁷ Finally, mentioning her future husband, "unfortunately, a fanatical Serb," in the context of the impact of politics on the publication of her work, she closed with the comment: "There is no rose without a thorn!"⁷⁸ It is not known who her fiancé was at the time, but apparently nothing came of the engagement, because two years later she married Vlaho Bogdan, the harshest critic of the Serb-Catholic idea.⁷⁹

⁷² HR-Zbirka Balda Bogišića u Cavtatu-sign. B XVIII, letter dated 16 Apr. 1903.

⁷³ Letters dated 19 Dec. 1901, 21 Dec. 1901 and 4 Jan. 1902.

⁷⁴ Although Bogdan Bijelić did not state the full name of the bank mentioned in her letters, she referred to the Dubrovnik Commercial Bank (*Dubrovačka Trgovačka Banka*), the establishment of which was reported by the Dubrovnik weekly *Crvena Hrvatska*: "Dubrovačka trgovačka banka." *Crvena Hrvatska*, 18 January 1902. <https://zdur.dkd.hr/?pr=iiiif.v.a&id=31660> (retrieved 16 February 2023); "Obznana," *Crvena Hrvatska* 22 February 1902. <https://zdur.dkd.hr/?pr=i&id=31664> (retrieved 16 February 2023).

⁷⁵ HR-Zbirka Balda Bogišića u Cavtatu-sign. B XVIII, letter from 20 Feb. 1902.

⁷⁶ HR-Zbirka Balda Bogišića u Cavtatu-sign. B XVIII, letter from 1 Feb. 1902.

⁷⁷ HR-Zbirka Balda Bogišića u Cavtatu-sign. B XVIII, letter dated 28 June 1902.

⁷⁸ HR-Zbirka Balda Bogišića u Cavtatu-sign. B XVIII, undated letter from 1902.

⁷⁹ STRAŽIČIĆ 2018: 87.

The idea of South Slav unification came to fruition after the First World War as the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. Even in the new state, national issues were not satisfactorily resolved, and the political situation in Dubrovnik remained tense and charged with national turmoil. In the interwar period, Bogdan Bijelić's work was most published often in the Dubrovnik weekly *Narodna svijest*, to which she contributed short articles on cultural topics. *Narodna svijest* openly supported the Croatian Popular Party and Catholic clericalism.⁸⁰ The Croatian Popular Party advocated for Yugoslav unitarism, but with respect for provincial autonomy; it aimed its appeal at the peasantry as the largest socio-economic group and its primary orientation was political Catholicism. In that period it stood in the political centre.⁸¹ Interestingly, the Croatian Popular Party supported women's suffrage.⁸² However, it seems that it was mostly due to the party's Catholic character that Bogdan Bijelić decided to contribute to its bulletin with culturally-themed articles, even after the party itself ceased to exist. The Croatian Popular Party was dissolved due to a lack of support and the introduction of a dictatorship in 1929, but *Narodna svijest* was published in Dubrovnik until 1941 as a political weekly as a part of the Croatian Catholic press.⁸³ In the context of unresolved national issues, religion in Dalmatia in the interwar period was a vital pillar in the construction of national identity,⁸⁴ and Pavlina Bogdan Bijelić was a sincere and devoted Catholic.⁸⁵ That defined her character and influenced her actions and beliefs. In 1912, she established the Our Lady of Mercy Association, and she was also the founder and president of a cultural and educational association for Catholic women, the *Anica Bošković Society* (established in 1924). *Narodna svijest* regularly reported on the activities of these two associations, which included lectures, humanitarian campaigns and donations.⁸⁶ *Narodna svijest* also reported that the *Pro*

⁸⁰ PERIĆ 1980: 295; On the Croatian Popular Party in Dalmatia, see: MATIJEVIĆ 2000.

⁸¹ MATIJEVIĆ 2000: 483-487.

⁸² "Žensko pravo glasa," *Narodna svijest*, 23 June 1920 [https://zdur.dkd.hr/?pr=iiif.v.a&id=21497&tify={%22pages%22:\[2\],%22panX%22:0.742,%22panY%22:1.244,%22view%22:%22info%22,%22zoom%22:1.329}](https://zdur.dkd.hr/?pr=iiif.v.a&id=21497&tify={%22pages%22:[2],%22panX%22:0.742,%22panY%22:1.244,%22view%22:%22info%22,%22zoom%22:1.329}) (retrieved 30 October 2022); "Žensko pravo glasa," *Narodna svijest*, 1 March 1921 [https://zdur.dkd.hr/?pr=iiif.v.a&id=21448&tify={%22pages%22:\[2\],%22panX%22:0.387,%22panY%22:0.231,%22view%22:%22info%22,%22zoom%22:1.291}](https://zdur.dkd.hr/?pr=iiif.v.a&id=21448&tify={%22pages%22:[2],%22panX%22:0.387,%22panY%22:0.231,%22view%22:%22info%22,%22zoom%22:1.291}) (retrieved 30 October 2022); "Izborno pravo za žene," *Narodna svijest*, 11 April 1922 <https://zdur.dkd.hr/?pr=iiif.v.a&id=21404&tify={%22panX%22:0.601,%22panY%22:0.385,%22view%22:%22info%22,%22zoom%22:0.774}> (retrieved 30 October 2022).

⁸³ PERIĆ 1982: 295.

⁸⁴ JAKIR 2018: 35-37.

⁸⁵ For example, from a letter to Bogišić: "Faith (...) saved mama, because she trusted God and in her illness she persistently prayed, as did we by her side. God gave me the great strength to receive the sacraments and reliably pray – and to seek help from Him for no earthly help was available. Faith is beautiful!" HR-Zbirka Balda Bogišića u Cavtatu-sign. B XVIII, letter dated 19 Dec. 1901.

⁸⁶ *Narodna svijest* 1919-1941: *passim*.

Ecclesia et Pontifice Medal was conferred to Lina Bogdan Bijelić.⁸⁷ The ceremony was held in the diocesan palace, and the bishop presented her with the award on behalf of Pope Pius XI; the weekly carried the bishop's speech in its entirety.⁸⁸ Citing her many virtues, he emphasized her willingness to cooperate in good faith with the members of other religions "to the benefit of the Homeland," but continued targeting, perhaps, provocations by the Orthodox Church: "She never allows the Church, Our Father the Pope, the Bishop or episcopate and clergy in general to be attacked in her presence."⁸⁹

Pavlina Bogdan Bijelić on the "woman question"

Although she apparently showed no interest in proactive participation in politics, Bogdan Bijelić certainly thought about the status of women in society. As a teacher, a member of the female educated elite, an ethnographer and a writer, to her the "woman question" was not merely a topic of speculation in the popular press.

Debates about the status of women in the writings and activism of Western European intellectuals, in addition to the "woman question," also considered the problems that arose with the industrial revolution, such as women's labour, and philosophical and social doctrines such as socialism and civil rights.⁹⁰ The "woman question" was covered by the Croatian and Dalmatian press at the turn of the 20th century.⁹¹ A fundamental and rather one-sided discourse arose about the status and role of women in society and in the family, and about women's education. In the context of Croatia's politics, which during the 19th century was marked by the national awakening, national self-determination and efforts to preserve autonomy, the patriotic and educational role of women was emphasized in particular. The debate about opening a women's lyceum and about higher education of women in general intensified in Zagreb at the 19th century. However, even advocates of the idea of women's higher education agreed that women were not capable enough for certain spheres of life and that it is more beneficial for them and society to engage in activities suitable for women.⁹² Dalmatian educational and teacher-

⁸⁷ *Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice* (For Church and Pope) is the highest honour conferred by the Pope to worthy individuals (both clergy and laypersons) for service to the Catholic Church.

⁸⁸ "Visoko odlikovanje," *Narodna svijest*, 18 October 1933 [https://zdur.dkd.hr/?pr=iiif.v.a&id=20947&tify={%22pages%22:\[3\],%22panX%22:0.403,%22panY%22:0.23,%22view%22:%22info%22,%22zoom%22:0.78}](https://zdur.dkd.hr/?pr=iiif.v.a&id=20947&tify={%22pages%22:[3],%22panX%22:0.403,%22panY%22:0.23,%22view%22:%22info%22,%22zoom%22:0.78}) (retrieved 30 October 2022); "Svečana predaja odličja 'Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice'," *Narodna svijest*, 25 October 1933 [https://zdur.dkd.hr/?pr=iiif.v.a&id=20948&tify={%22pages%22:\[3\],%22panX%22:0.351,%22panY%22:0.171,%22view%22:%22info%22,%22zoom%22:1.617}](https://zdur.dkd.hr/?pr=iiif.v.a&id=20948&tify={%22pages%22:[3],%22panX%22:0.351,%22panY%22:0.171,%22view%22:%22info%22,%22zoom%22:1.617}) (retrieved 30 October 2022).

⁸⁹ "Svečana predaja odličja."

⁹⁰ See: DELAP 2011.

⁹¹ See: KATIĆ 2011; OGRAJŠEK 2004.

⁹² OGRAJŠEK 2004: 94-96; OGRAJŠEK 2006: 155-157.

oriented periodicals also supported the idea of girls' education adapted to their nature.⁹³ The Dubrovnik press followed this trend, and articles on the “woman question” supported the idea of separate spheres and assignment of women's status in society based their gentle “nature.”⁹⁴ This narrative persisted in Dubrovnik in the interwar period. For example, according to an article published in *Narodna svijest* in 1939: “In order to judge the woman question correctly, one should take a good look at a woman's physique, her mental development, her nature. (...) She is delicately formed, she is really the weaker sex. (...) There are also jobs outside the household, where a woman can do some work, but these are limited. (...) It is appropriate for a woman to be educated according to her nature (...).”⁹⁵

Bogdan Bijelić rarely expressed her opinion on the “woman question” directly. In her letters to Bogišić, she did not take the liberty of speaking about women's inferiority in society, probably out of consideration for her older interlocutor, simple decency and learned servility. Complaining about her status as a teacher in general, she briefly mentioned the inequality of salaries earned by male and female teachers,⁹⁶ and, as noted earlier, she avoided condemning or commenting on attempts to secure women's involvement in politics, and she endeavoured to maintain a neutral tone. From Bogišić, however, she asked for, and received, information about the Parisian feminist daily *La Fronde*.⁹⁷ She wrote two articles about *La Fronde* in which she expressed a somewhat more direct opinion on the “woman question.”⁹⁸ The articles were published in Zagreb, in the journal *Domaće*

⁹³ KATIĆ 2011: 16; Such articles were regularly published in *Učiteljski glas*, the bulletin of the Association of Dalmatian Teachers; I will cite several examples: PETRAS, Kristina. 1899. “Neka se djevojčice uz pouku priučaju radu i redu,” *Učiteljski glas*, 15 March 1899, 15 May 1899; BELOVIĆ BERNADZIKOWSKA, Jelica. 1900. “Odgoj i položaj žene u 20. vijeku,” 15 June 1900, 15 November 1900, 15 December 1900.

⁹⁴ Due to the absence of a more thorough analysis of the “woman question” in the Dubrovnik press, I will cite a few examples: BELOVIĆ-BERNADZIKOWSKA, Jelica. “Prigodom sadanje bečke izložbe za narodnu industriju,” *Crvena Hrvatska*, 7 December 1905. <https://zdrur.dkd.hr/?pr=iiif.v.a&id=31559&tify={%22panX%22:0.261,%22panY%22:1.166,%22view%22:%22info%22,%22zoom%22:1.646}> (retrieved 30 October 2022); “S.P. Uzgoj,” *Crvena Hrvatska*, 19 April 1906 [https://zdrur.dkd.hr/?pr=iiif.v.a&id=31474&tify={%22pages%22:\[2\],%22panX%22:0.431,%22panY%22:0.206,%22view%22:%22info%22,%22zoom%22:1.216}](https://zdrur.dkd.hr/?pr=iiif.v.a&id=31474&tify={%22pages%22:[2],%22panX%22:0.431,%22panY%22:0.206,%22view%22:%22info%22,%22zoom%22:1.216}) (retrieved 30 October 2022); Dr. A. M. “Propovijed O. P. Vlašića uzvitala veliku prašinu u Beogradu,” *Narodna svijest*, 1 April 1931. [https://zdrur.dkd.hr/?pr=iiif.v.a&id=20969&tify={%22pages%22:\[2\],%22panX%22:0.707,%22panY%22:0.276,%22view%22:%22info%22,%22zoom%22:1.373}](https://zdrur.dkd.hr/?pr=iiif.v.a&id=20969&tify={%22pages%22:[2],%22panX%22:0.707,%22panY%22:0.276,%22view%22:%22info%22,%22zoom%22:1.373}) (retrieved 30 October 2022).

⁹⁵ “Feminizam,” *Narodna svijest*, 31 August 1939. <https://zdrur.dkd.hr/?pr=iiif.v.a&id=20725&tify=%7B%22pages%22%3A%5B%5D%7D> (retrieved 30 October 2022).

⁹⁶ HR-Zbirka Balda Bogišića u Cavtatu-sign. B XVIII, letter dated 12 Ma 1901.

⁹⁷ HR-Zbirka Balda Bogišića u Cavtatu-sign. B XVIII, letter dated 25 Jan. 1902; On feminist issues in *La Fronde*, see: LUENGO-LÓPEZ 2020.

⁹⁸ BIJELIĆ, Lina. 1902. “La Fronde,” *Domaće ognjište*, September 1902; BIJELIĆ, Lina. 1904. “Sic transit gloria mundi,” *Domaće ognjište*, January 1904.

ognjište edited by Marija Jambrišak and Jagoda Truhelka, both educators and teachers and advocates for women's higher education.⁹⁹

Bijelić introduced the first article by connecting the two periodicals on a female basis, even though *La Fronde* aspired to the "great emancipation" and *Domaće ognjište* to "moral edification." However, she then followed this by dwelling on a superficial description of *La Fronde*. For example, Bogdan Bijelić described the physical appearance of Marguerite Duval, the editor of *La Fronde*, but not her views on the "woman question." She also described the building and offices in which the newsroom operated; but not the content of the newspaper. That article, as well as numerous shorter ones in *Domaće ognjište* which reported on the first female physicians and scientists and women's associations, as its purpose certainly represented a paradigm shift about the possible achievements of women.¹⁰⁰ Despite the superficiality with which she reported on *La Fronde*, Bogdan Bijelić concluded the article by quoting intriguing verses from the Dalmatian national renaissance: "Dawn is breaking, the day will come!"¹⁰¹

In her second article about *La Fronde*, she referred to the cessation of its publication. Bijelić cited the withdrawal of a wider female readership due to the editorial board's excessive attitudes as the reasons for the paper's economic difficulties: "She [Duval] over-emphasized emancipation, feminism, etc. Every intelligent French woman condemned her for that, and distanced herself from the newspaper [*La Fronde*]." According to Bijelić, "conscientious" Parisian ladies found an alternative in the magazine *Femina*, edited by Pierre Lafitte. Bogdan Bijelić further reviewed women's aspirations for equality. She believed that there were numerous social, educational and economic "tasks" in which women were allowed to participate and intellectually capable of doing so. However, "they [women] must not neglect their household work, which must always be the priority, and must also be supported by the mind. Feminism, but not that of Marguerite Duval, should not frighten anyone. Today, there is only talk about science and progress, so no one should be surprised if a woman also feels like a member of this general movement, and if she too aspires and demands that she deserves a little piece of that promised happy future! The more man becomes enlightened and advances, the more a female being is educated and bettered. But a woman has to remain a woman and be proud as such." With this principle, according to Bogdan Bijelić, Pierre Lafitte gained a

⁹⁹ ČORKALO 1998.

¹⁰⁰ Compare: OGRAJŠEK 2004: 96-97.

¹⁰¹ BIJELIĆ 1902: 13-14. The quoted line is from the poem "Zora puca" (Dawn is Breaking) composed by Petar Preradović, a Croatian romantic poet. It was first published in 1844 on the front page of the first issue of *Zora dalmatinska*, a newspaper that promoted national revival in Dalmatia. The poem encourages the awakening of national consciousness, as dawn and daybreak metaphorically herald a new era for Dalmatia.

female readership, while *La Fronde* went out of business: “The great flame of the straw pyre was extinguished and left nothing but insubstantial ashes behind.”¹⁰²

She clearly expressed her views on the subordination of women in the family and everyday life in her texts about Konavle customs. Although she idealized the people and folk customs of Konavle in every aspect, she strongly criticized their attitude toward women. This is evident in her very choice of words: according to Bogdan Bijelić, women were considered “inferior,” they were “slaves of their husbands” and “despicable, low creatures,” and they were “equal to a housemaid, even lower.”¹⁰³ She described the harsh stance of husband toward their wives, who were supposed to be quiet and submissive. Husbands often coarsely admonished their wives to remain silent, telling them that the distaff is the only thing they can command. Women had to demonstrate reverence by standing every time a man passed by, and they were expected to be obedient at all times. Daughters, without question, married whomever their father chose. The people of Konavle spoke reluctantly and uneasily about their wives, never mentioning them by name, but by a pronoun. If they had to say the words “my wife” they used the phrase to excuse themselves, as if they had said something inappropriate or a curse.¹⁰⁴ Men used a similar apologetic phrase when talking about the birth of their children.¹⁰⁵ Bogdan Bijelić found that such an attitude toward women was slowly changing, “although they [women] still have not taken their place at the table with men, rather they sit separately.”¹⁰⁶ However, according to the speech in her honour delivered by Dubrovnik Bishop Josip Marčelić during the presentation of the *Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice* Medal, she strongly opposed divorce, in compliance with the Catholic worldview, considering it an unacceptable violation of Catholic and family values.¹⁰⁷

Bogdan Bijelić sought respect and appreciation for female artists as well. She wrote several brief articles for *Narodna svijest* about handcrafts, embroidery, weaving and paintings produced by women as votive gifts to Dubrovnik churches commenting: “It is a pity that these most valuable items go unnoticed.”¹⁰⁸ She

¹⁰² BIJELIĆ 1904: 94.

¹⁰³ BOGDAN BIJELIĆ, Pavlina. “Žena, majka i udovica” (unpublished text); BOGDAN BIJELIĆ, Pavlina. “Žene u Konavlima” (unpublished text). In: BATINA 2015: 385-388.

¹⁰⁴ The phrase is: “If you’ll excuse me – my wife” (“*Da prostiš – moja žena*”). In contemporary slang the most suitable translation would be “My wife – pardon my French”.

¹⁰⁵ This peculiar tendency to avoid the words “wife”, “birth” and “childbirth” prompted the phrase “*Da prostiš, našo mi se sin/kći*”, which can perhaps best be translated as: “If you’ll excuse me – a son/daughter happened to me”.

¹⁰⁶ BOGDAN BIJELIĆ, Pavlina. “Žene u Konavlima” (unpublished text). In: BATINA 2015: 387-388.

¹⁰⁷ “Svečana predaja odličja.”

¹⁰⁸ L.B.B. 1937. “Neprocijenjeni ženski ručni rad,” *Narodna svijest*, 15 July 1937 [https://zdr.dkd.hr/?pr=iiif.v.a&id=20660&tify={%22pages%22:\[5\],%22panX%22:0.792,%22panY%22:0.287,%22view%22:%22info%22,%22zoom%22:1.115}](https://zdr.dkd.hr/?pr=iiif.v.a&id=20660&tify={%22pages%22:[5],%22panX%22:0.792,%22panY%22:0.287,%22view%22:%22info%22,%22zoom%22:1.115}) (retrieved 30 October 2022).

thoroughly described works embroidered with silk and gold threads. She cited the names and surnames of their creators with the aim of highlighting their work as valuable, with high artistic merit.¹⁰⁹

Within the discourse on the “woman question,” criticisms about the superficiality of women’s interests, vain behaviour and insufficient education were often repeated.¹¹⁰ The personality of women in Croatia was discussed as a part of debates on women’s education and in texts on upbringing intended for mothers.¹¹¹ Confronting such views, Bogdan Bijelić wrote an interesting article about women’s gatherings in middle-class families in “old Dubrovnik,” meaning the Ragusan Republic. She thoroughly described the education of the women of that time, the literature they read and the content of their home libraries. Women¹¹² met on winter evenings, and while doing handicrafts, they had constructive conversations about politics and literature. That article was obviously her response to certain accusations (by a male author) that these women’s gatherings were nothing but gossip sessions. “Maybe that was the case elsewhere,” Bogdan Bijelić said, “but not in Dubrovnik.”¹¹³

Pavlina Bogdan Bijelić tried to raise awareness of the value of and respect for women in everyday life. Although she demanded a change in the perception of women and the assurance of human dignity for women in everyday, familial and work environments, she did not deeply delve into individual feminist topics in her writings. She avoided activism and radical attitudes, and some of her views¹¹⁴ on the “women’s question” were, like her political preferences, based on a Catholic worldview.

¹⁰⁹ L. B. B. 1930. “Naši incefi,” *Narodna svijest*, 12 November 1930 [https://zdur.dkd.hr/?pr=iiiif.v.a&id=21153&tify={%22pages%22:\[4\],%22panX%22:0.527,%22panY%22:0.793,%22view%22:%22info%22,%22zoom%22:0.89}](https://zdur.dkd.hr/?pr=iiiif.v.a&id=21153&tify={%22pages%22:[4],%22panX%22:0.527,%22panY%22:0.793,%22view%22:%22info%22,%22zoom%22:0.89}) (retrieved 30 October 2022); L. B. B. 1937. “Neproci-jenjeni ženski ručni rad”; L. B. B. 1937. “Umjetničke ženske crkvene radnje u starom i novom Dubrovniku,” *Narodna svijest*, 23 July 1937. [https://zdur.dkd.hr/?pr=iiiif.v.a&id=20664&tify={%22pages%22:\[5\],%22panX%22:0.655,%22panY%22:0.2,%22view%22:%22info%22,%22zoom%22:1.183}](https://zdur.dkd.hr/?pr=iiiif.v.a&id=20664&tify={%22pages%22:[5],%22panX%22:0.655,%22panY%22:0.2,%22view%22:%22info%22,%22zoom%22:1.183}) (retrieved 30 October 2022).

¹¹⁰ DELAP 2011: 345-346.

¹¹¹ OGRAJŠEK 2004: 92-96; ŽUPAN 2013: 32-33; PULJIZEVIĆ, KRALJ-BRASSARD 2018: 626.

¹¹² Bogdan Bijelić lists the names of women from the respectable families Kazilari and Miletić.

¹¹³ L. B. B. 1928. “Večernja sijela u starom Dubrovniku,” *Narodna svijest*, 24 May 1928 [https://zdur.dkd.hr/?pr=iiiif.v.a&id=21076&tify={%22pages%22:\[2\],%22panX%22:0.456,%22panY%22:1.263,%22view%22:%22info%22,%22zoom%22:0.886}](https://zdur.dkd.hr/?pr=iiiif.v.a&id=21076&tify={%22pages%22:[2],%22panX%22:0.456,%22panY%22:1.263,%22view%22:%22info%22,%22zoom%22:0.886}) (retrieved 30 October 2022).

¹¹⁴ Although the phrase “women’s question” is singular, it encompasses several aspects of the status of women in society, so it is possible to have views (plural) about “women’s issues” (education, work, political and civil rights). See: DELAP 2011, 319-325.

Conclusion

Pavlina Bogdan Bijelić's legacy is intriguing. Her work as a teacher was marked by conflicts, her pioneering work to gather and describe Konavle folklore was never published in its entirety, and her devotion to the Catholic Church dictated her political standpoints.

Following the usual options for a daughter in a well-to-do bourgeois family, she became a teacher. However, although female teachers in the 19th century and the early 20th century were considered the first female intellectual elite, in practice – as it turned out for Bogdan Bijelić – teaching was hard work and entailed many compromises that she was not always ready to make. Defying her superiors cost her a promotion, but it seems she was willing to take that risk, for after twenty years of teaching she was exhausted. At the same time, she enthusiastically engaged in ethnographic work. Therefore, in her communications with editors and scholars, on whom the publication of her collections and records could very well depend, she employed compliant and indulging rhetoric. In the end, she earned recognition for her ethnographic research, but not the result she had expected. Bogdan Bijelić was similarly balanced in her political statements. She carefully avoided expressing strong views, as she did not want to create unnecessary antagonisms that would be an obstacle to her progress in ethnographic research. Bogdan Bijelić's anxiety about the influence of "politics" on her work shows that although mechanisms for active participation in political life were not available to women, the political sympathies of editors, the directors of cultural institutions, schools and educational institutions and high-ranking officials could indirectly influence female writers, culture workers, teachers, and other women who were active in the community's public space.

Based on the documents of the school that she administered and the letters to Baldo Bogišić, it is obvious that Pavlina Bogdan Bijelić faced the harsh reality of her gender's inferior status on a daily basis, although she avoided directly addressing it. Like other female intellectuals of her time in Croatia and Dalmatia, she declaratively accepted the assignment of a woman's destiny based on her gentler nature – which was a common form of acceptance of mainstream discourse on the "woman question." Nevertheless, at a time of great economic and social change, industrial revolutions and scientific progress, she considered women's aspirations for progress and improvement of their position to be natural. Such feminism, she believed, should not be understood as a threat. However, in her daily activities she was not so conciliatory, for she vehemently backed her moderate views. Being aware that the big ideas of the women's movement such as emancipation and gender equality were a very distant goal for Dubrovnik society, she took the first steps in changing the paradigm about the status of women in society. She fought a multitude of small battles, standing up for Konavle women, embroiderers, artists,

ordinary women, and herself, demanding common respect and human dignity, which, in the broader context, made her a feminist.

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Pavlina Bogdan Bijelić – tradicionalni ženski identitet na pragu moderne

Pavlina Bogdan Bijelić bila je učiteljica, etnografkinja i kulturna djelatnica u Dubrovniku i Cavtatu krajem 19. i početkom 20. stoljeća. Arhivska dokumentacija Ženske pučke škole Grad, u kojoj je kao nadučiteljica vodila administraciju, njezina korespondencija s Baldom Bogišićem te tekstovi objavljeni u periodici pružili su temelj za studiju slučaja i analizu djelovanja Pavline Bogdan Bijelić u javnom prostoru zajednice s obzirom na učiteljsku profesiju, etnografski rad, političke stavove i stavove o “ženskom pitanju”.

Njezin je učiteljski rad na samom prijelazu u 20. stoljeće obilježen sukobima s nadređenima. Bogdan Bijelić u učiteljskoj svakodnevici nije bila spremna na kompromise te ju je prkos stajao promaknuća. Čini se da je bila spremna na taj rizik: nakon 20 godina rada učiteljsko zvanje doživljavala je kao teret. S druge strane, entuzijastično se bavila sakupljanjem etnografskog gradiva iz Konavala te zapisivanjem konavoske usmene tradicije. Stoga je u komunikaciji s urednicima i uglednim znanstvenicima, o kojima je mogao ovisiti njezin angažman u etnografskom i spisateljskom radu, zadržala konformistički pristup i strpljivu

retoriku. Jednako je tako balansirala iskazujući političke stavove. Izbjegavala je, posebno u pismima Bogišiću, izraziti svoje simpatije prema političkim opcijama koje su, zapravo, bile nacionalne, “Srbi” i “Hrvati”. Izbjegavala je objavljivati u političkim novinama i časopisima (barem do kraja Prvoga svjetskog rata) ne želeći stvarati antagonizme koji bi joj bili prepreka u etnografskoj djelatnosti. Strahovi Pavline Bogdan Bijelić o utjecaju “politike” na njezin rad pokazuju kako, iako za žene ne postoje mehanizmi za aktivno sudjelovanje u politici, političke simpatije urednika, ravnatelja kulturnih i obrazovnih institucija, viših činovnika mogu indirektno utjecati na spisateljice, kulturne djelatnice, učiteljice i druge žene aktivne u javnom prostoru.

Analizirani izvori otkrivaju da je Pavlina Bogdan Bijelić svakodnevno bila suočena s grubom stvarnošću inferiornog položaja svog spola, iako je to izbjegavala direktno tvrditi. Ona je, kao i druge intelektualke, njezine suvremenice, barem deklarativno priznala determiniranost sudbine žena njihovom nježnijom prirodom i intelektualnom podkapacitiranošću – to je bila uobičajena forma prihvaćanja dominantnog diskursa o “ženskom pitanju”. Ipak, želju žena za napretkom i sudjelovanjem u generalnom razvoju svijeta, posebno u kontekstu modernizacije i globalnih ekonomskih i društvenih promjena tog doba, smatrala je prirodnom. Takav feminizam, istaknula je, ne treba shvaćati kao prijetnju. U svakodnevnom životu, Bogdan Bijelić nije bila tako pomirljiva; za svoje se umjerene feminističke stavove snažno zauzimala. Zacijelo svjesna da su velike ideje ženskog pokreta poput emancipacije i jednakosti spolova vrlo udaljen cilj za dubrovačko društvo, radila je početne korake u promjeni paradigme o položaju žena u društvu. Vodila je mnoštvo naizgled malih bitaka zauzimajući se za Konavočke, vezilje, umjetnice, obične žene; zahtijevajući za njih jednostavno poštovanje i ljudsko dostojanstvo. To je, u širem kontekstu, čini feministkinjom.

Ključne riječi: Pavlina Bogdan Bijelić, učiteljice, etnografija, žene u politici, “žensko pitanje”, korespondencija, Cavtat, Dubrovnik.

Keywords: Pavlina Bogdan Bijelić, female teacher, ethnography, women in politics, “woman question”, correspondence, Cavtat, Dubrovnik.

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