

## Women Editors in Interwar Yugoslavia Between the Struggle to Write and the Struggle for Rights: Katarina Bogdanović and Paulina Lebl Albala

What did it mean to be a woman periodical editor in the Kingdom of SCS/Yugoslavia? What was the price of constant efforts made by some women periodical editors to reconcile the private and public, individual and collective, the desire for creative freedom or belonging to the literary community on the one hand, and feminist engagement on the other? How were their *habitus* and identity shaped between the struggle to write and the struggle for (women's) rights? In this paper, I partially answer these and similar questions – which I cover more extensively in my doctoral dissertation in progress *Women Periodical Editors in the Kingdom of SCS/Yugoslavia: Biographical, Literary-Historical and Typological Aspects* – using the magazine *Ženski pokret* (Women's Movement, 1920–1938) and the (auto)biographies of its founders and first editors, Katarina Bogdanović and Paulina Lebl Albala, as the subject of a case study. The interdisciplinary framework in which I operate consists of periodical studies, gender studies, intellectual history and literary studies.

Few professional identities, at least when it comes to dealing with literature and the problems of the literary field, spontaneously connote integrity and authority, Bourdieusian “symbolic and cultural capital,”<sup>1</sup> an aura of infallibility and omniscience, as much as the vocation of *editor*. At the same time, or precisely because of this, few require careful feminist analysis, i.e., deconstruction of traditionally masculine coding, as much as this one. In recent decades, “the editorial habitus” has been among the privileged subjects within European and transnational (literary) periodical studies in various ways. On the one hand, researchers have focused on the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in the Anglophone context, on the re-constitutions of editor positions and prerogatives that occurred along with the breakthroughs of modernism and the avant-garde, and they have been striving to conceptualize, classify, and describe different models of editing the (literary) periodical press, often with a special focus on the position of the editor as an individual.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, more recent initiatives in periodical studies,

<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, BURDIJE 1970.

<sup>2</sup> See, for instance, PHILPOTTS 2012.

both in a domestic and wider academic context, usually tend to question the very assumptions of editorship research considered this way – the Western-centric and the masculine-centric assumptions as well – trying to answer basic questions such as “What is a (periodical) editor?” from the feminist standpoint.<sup>3</sup>

Prominent European contemporary researchers of periodicals who plead for a gender-based approach note, for example, that “[T]he production of meaning through collaborative models of editorship is an increasingly dominant feature of feminist studies of the press.”<sup>4</sup> Namely, the “existing models and typologies of periodical editorship” are not only based on the Anglo-American corpus but also “invariably derived from examples of male editors”; today’s research on the *women* editors in European periodical studies, however, shows that “these models and typologies fail to capture the diversity and specificity of women’s editorial practices, roles, and identities.”<sup>5</sup> Studying the women’s and feminist press in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (SCS)/Yugoslavia, just as the general (editorial) activities of women in interwar periodicals, both support and expand these remarks.<sup>6</sup> First, women editors, in contrast to their male colleagues, mostly belonged to the heterogeneous *feminist counter-publics*, aspiring to network, to a greater or lesser degree, with other (women) intellectuals who were concerned with the “women’s issue/question,” and they predominantly edited the various periodicals we could classify as the *women’s* and *feminist* press.<sup>7</sup> Second, another striking, although not equally regular, tendency refers to the (simultaneous) promotion of women editors as active participants in the so-called literary field. Bearing in mind gendered educational policies and the gender conventions that directly influenced “acceptable” or “desirable” professional orientations and public agency, it comes as no surprise that most of the women editors obtained academic titles in the humanistic disciplines (e.g. philology and philosophy) and that they, even if they were not formally highly educated, were inclined to literature, art, and culture.<sup>8</sup> This, too, had a significant impact on the features of the press in

<sup>3</sup> See, for instance, KOLARIĆ 2017, MAREK 1995.

<sup>4</sup> DILLANE 2021: 21.

<sup>5</sup> VAN REMOORTEL 2021: 4.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. SIMIĆ 2022b.

<sup>7</sup> To put it briefly, Stanislava Barać, dealing with interwar periodicals and further developing their genre classifications, defines the magazines she takes into consideration – women’s and feminist – as those “created by women,” which are assumed to be primarily dedicated to the female readership, and which in the first case do not, in principle, problematize the established division into the *public and private sphere*, while in the second, they “require a review or/and abolition of traditional gender roles” and norms (БАРАЋ 2010: 519). For other possibilities of classifications, see: БАРАЋ 2015; OGRAJŠEK GORENJAK 2014. On “feminist counter-publics” see: БАРАЋ 2015.

<sup>8</sup> See: OGRAJŠEK GORENJAK 2020. After all, medicine was also among the privileged educational and professional fields for women of this period, which is also understandable due to its *feminine* coding (ethics of care). Not a small number of women editors in the feminist press

interwar Yugoslavia edited by women – whether individually or collectively, as well as on the partial overlap of the policies of that press with those policies typical of the (leading) literary magazines of the same period, edited, as a rule, by the prominent *male* intellectuals.

What did it mean to be a woman periodical editor in the Kingdom of SCS/Yugoslavia and why is it necessary to consider this phenomenon from a feminist perspective, insofar as the intellectual, periodical and literary fields of the era were gender polarized and segregated? What historical, political, psychological, and cultural factors contributed to this situation, and what was the price of constant efforts some of the women periodical editors made to reconcile the private and the public, the individual and the collective, the desire for creative freedom or belonging to the literary community on the one hand, and feminist engagement on the other? How were their habitus and identity shaped between the struggle to write and the struggle for (women's) rights?

On this occasion, I will partially answer these and similar questions – which I cover more extensively in my doctoral dissertation in progress – using the magazine *Ženski pokret* (Women's Movement, 1920–1938), its founders and first editors, as the subject of a case study. The interdisciplinary framework in which I operate consists of periodical studies, gender studies, intellectual history, and literary studies. I focus on the (auto)biographies of Paulina Lebl (Albala) and Katarina Bogdanović, two *modern women thinkers* who, while pleading for women's emancipation in interwar Yugoslavia, represented themselves as such – in the words of the former, “modern women,”<sup>9</sup> or, in the words of latter, “women who work and think,”<sup>10</sup> independent women who rely primarily on their own creative capabilities and resources, regardless of class position, religious convictions, or identity features such as nationality or ethnicity.

The selection of these two women thinkers is contingent upon multiple factors, including both analogies in their intellectual biographies and my specific research competencies and affinities. First of all, both authors dealt with literature in various ways, thus confirming the invaluable insights of Ida Ograjšek Gorenjak,<sup>11</sup> i.e. the

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were involved in the field of medicine, and their (feminist) engagement frequently concerned the problems of social and health care and education, prostitution and venereal diseases, or (men and) alcoholism, to name just a few.

<sup>9</sup> See: LEBL 1918.

<sup>10</sup> BOGDANOVIĆ 1920: 3.

<sup>11</sup> “Journalism was simultaneously both an unusual and a traditional choice of profession for women. On the one hand, it challenged the gender concepts of the time because it enabled women to participate in shaping public opinion. On the other, journalists were required to have writing skills, and women were authors in different literary genres throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Therefore, most of the women who wrote for various papers in the interwar period were also or even primarily writers” (OGRAJŠEK GORENJAK 2020: 396).

necessity of an interdisciplinary gender-based approach to literature and periodicals in interwar *feminist counter-publics*. Both testified on several occasions to the decisive influence of Jovan Skerlić on their intellectual genesis and careers and verbalized the impression that his premature death, among other things, contributed to the “failure” of that same career. In other words, in their old age, independently of each other, both of them perceived themselves as unfulfilled writers – authors of fiction – but also as women editors who did not leave a significant mark in the intellectual field of the Kingdom of SCS/Yugoslavia.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, in their testimonies, we find indicative guidelines for locating “the tension between what Dallas Liddle describes as the lived experience of the individual engaged in editing work and the ‘discursive’ construction of the Editor,”<sup>13</sup> including the tension between the *feminist* and *feminine* (literary) identities of women editors. Thus, along with their published articles, the autobiographical confessions, diaries, and memoirs of Katarina Bogdanović and/or Paulina Lebl Albala testify in both specific and paradigmatic ways to the complex evolution of the intellectual, periodical, and literary field in (the territory of) Yugoslavia in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

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Both Katarina Bogdanović (Trpinja, 1885 – Kragujevac, 1969)<sup>14</sup> and Paulina Lebl (Belgrade, 1891 – Los Angeles, 1967)<sup>15</sup> were among the first women graduates from the University of Belgrade before World War I. Simultaneously, both of them were undisputed favourites of that era’s highest academic, critical, and editorial authorities – above all Jovan Skerlić, but also Branislav Petronijević, Bogdan Popović, and Pavle Popović. Initially, the two met “in the orbit of Skerlić’s constellation.”<sup>16</sup> Prior to the establishment of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, within the borders of today’s Serbia, it was an indispensable step in – in the case of women, pioneering – academic philological education. In the next

<sup>12</sup> See: БОГДАНОВИЋ 1986; LEBL ALBALA 2005; НИКОЛИЋ 1986.

<sup>13</sup> DILLANE 2021: 21.

<sup>14</sup> On Bogdanović see: ВУЈОШЕВИЋ 2018, 2019; НИКОЛИЋ 1986; СИМИЋ 2021. Katarina Bogdanović was born in Trpinja near Vukovar, then Austro-Hungary. She went to school in Karlovac. For a short time, in 1913, she studied at the Sorbonne, Paris. Prior to that, she worked as a teacher in Tuzla. However, she spent most of her (professional) life in the borders of today’s Serbia (Belgrade, Niš, Kragujevac) where she graduated, developed her informal engagement, and pursued her career.

<sup>15</sup> On Lebl see: KOCH 2023; PEROVIĆ 2008. Paulina Lebl (Albala) was born in Belgrade to a Jewish family. She went to school in Niš and then Belgrade. After she graduated in 1913, she spent World War I in various Serbian cities (Niš, Kruševac, etc.) as well as Switzerland. Later, after returning to Serbia, she briefly worked as a teacher. Just before World War II, she moved to the USA with her husband, a prominent politician, and their daughter, Jelena Albala.

<sup>16</sup> LEBL ALBALA 2005: 169.

step, the young Belgrade women philologists were *launched* from the same orbit into the non-academic spaces of the intellectual public, thus becoming literary translators, critics, and collaborators in the periodical press. Above all, it included one of the most prestigious Serbian literary publications of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, *Srpski književni glasnik* (Serbian Literary Herald), which Jovan Skerlić himself edited from 1905 until his death in 1914.<sup>17</sup>

The “multiple (editorial) habitus”<sup>18</sup> of Jovan Skerlić included, among other things, a passionate advocacy for the “liberation and unification” of South Slavs based on the discourses of the Enlightenment, (French) positivism, (British) utilitarianism and rationalism. Skerlić is considered both “the most important ideologist of Yugoslav nationalism of his time” and a “typical representative of *critical* Yugoslav nationalism,” essentially unencumbered by “ethnic competition” and prone to a moderate and pragmatic approach to “the Yugoslav issue/question.”<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, “the economic aspect of Yugoslavism was mostly neglected in Skerlić’s thought at the expense of the cultural and political aspects.”<sup>20</sup> Skerlić perceived his political views as inseparable from the cultural, including (his own practice of) literary criticism, and he demanded of artistic practice to be subservient to the main socio-historical issues of the era. In such a *structure of feeling* of what, due to Skerlić’s enormous impact, will eventually be referred to as “Skerlić’s era” among numerous Serbian (literary) historians, his engagement as a literary scholar, critic, historian, editor and also professor at the University of Belgrade on the eve of World War I, greatly influenced several generations of students and young activists, the first Ženski pokret editors among them. It should be emphasized that Skerlić was also a life-long and “great feminist” – primarily as a huge admirer of Svetozar Marković’s socialist legacy.<sup>21</sup> It partially shaped the initial positioning of his favourite women students, Katarina Bogdanović and Paulina Lebl, not only in terms of the selection of research topics but also regarding their relationship to their own (literary) authorship, authorial identity, and later vocations of periodical editor. The traces of Skerlić’s authority, especially in

<sup>17</sup> Paulina Lebl Albala and Katarina Bogdanović, except in the papers of feminist researchers, are almost completely absent from reviews, anthologies, and studies devoted to literary issues, including those concerning the influential “Skerlić era” and early modernism in the Serbian or Yugoslav context. And when their names are mentioned (see: ПИЛИБЕСТРА 2013), the entire intellectual and creative evolution of these women authors (including literary criticism, translation, *editorship*, and *feminist activities*) is not taken into account, so that they are perceived as an “organic” product of Skerlić’s (editorial) authority and politics. Furthermore, research on Skerlić mostly overlooks his pro-feminist stance.

<sup>18</sup> See: DILLANE 2021: 18. Cf. PHILPOTTS 2012.

<sup>19</sup> BAKIĆ 2004: 130, 119 (emphasis added by Z.S.).

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.: 135.

<sup>21</sup> See: МИЛОЈЕВИЋ 1937: 36–41.

the case of Paulina Lebl Albala, would remain visible and even gain importance over time, after his death, while his influence would indirectly remain relevant throughout the interwar period, in which these two women intellectuals achieved the peak of their public (feminist) engagement.<sup>22</sup>

During World War I, and after their mentor's death, as not yet fully seasoned and established authors, now more deeply interested in "the women's issue", both of them collaborated for a short time with the magazine *Ženski svijet/Jugoslavenska žena* (Women's World/Yugoslav Woman), established in 1917 and edited by Zofka Kveder Demetrović in Zagreb.<sup>23</sup> Kveder ceased publishing the magazine in 1920, the same year when the magazine *Ženski pokret* was established in Belgrade as the official newsletter of the feminist organization *Društvo za prosvjećivanje žene i zaštitu njenih prava/Ženski pokret* (Society for the Enlightenment of Woman and the Protection of Their Rights/Women's Movement).<sup>24</sup> Both Bogdanović and Lebl Albala, along with the latter's then close friend Zorka Kasnar, the nominal editor of the magazine's first issue, were among the Society's younger founders and members, formerly Kveder's collaborators and former students of Skerlić. In the early 1920s, they were employed as teachers at the Second Girls Grammar School in Belgrade, where the editorial office of *Ženski pokret* was located. Lebl Albala was a member of the editorial staff, while Katarina Bogdanović, as *prima inter pares*, was the magazine's official, nominal editor (1920–21). Sources, however, show that the former's role was far more significant: not only did Paulina Lebl Albala *de facto* co-edit the magazine with Katarina Bogdanović, but she also initially formulated its concept. In doing so, she relied on her cooperation with Zofka Kveder's magazine and on her dedicated reading and knowledge of the Western European, primarily Swiss (women's and feminist) press.<sup>25</sup>

Placing *Ženski pokret* in a broader periodical, historical, and social context, at least in terms of its launch and initial years of publication, in other words, should take into account the post-World War I reconstitution of the political order, the establishment of a new state, and the equally significant international feminist/suffragette wave that did not bypass the same state.<sup>26</sup> However, of no lesser sig-

<sup>22</sup> See: LEBL ALBALA 2005.

<sup>23</sup> See: BADURINA 2010; FELDMAN 2004, 2022; СИМИЋ 2022; STEFANOVIĆ 2020; СВИРЧЕВ 2015, 2020.

<sup>24</sup> See, for instance: БАРАЋ 2015; БОŽINOVIĆ 1996; КЕСМАН 1978; МАЛЕŠEVIĆ 2007; МИЛИНКОВИЋ, СВИРЧЕВ 2021 (eds.); OGRAJŠEK GORENJAK 2014.

<sup>25</sup> "Much more willingly than in sessions, I participated in the editing of the magazine *Ženski pokret* itself, of which I was a member of the editorial staff. A good part of the work pertained to that editing that I did myself, as a loyal collaborator with my older friend from the University and current fellow teacher at the secondary school, Katarina Bogdanović" (LEBL ALBALA 2005: 270).

<sup>26</sup> See: OGRAJŠEK GORENJAK 2014, 2020.

nificance is the pre-war history, including both the legacy of the University of Belgrade and the role of Zofka Kveder Demetrović as the “charismatic editor” of the magazine *Ženski svijet/Jugoslavenska žena*, and thus the history (of disputes) of mass women’s organizations in the first years after the Kingdom’s establishment, of which a more painstaking reconstruction has yet to be offered.<sup>27</sup> According to Lebl Albala’s testimony, the policies of the Society and the magazine were also influenced by the older generation of Belgrade women intellectuals, mostly educators and pedagogues active in the Girls Secondary School/Second Girls Grammar School in Belgrade.<sup>28</sup> As already indicated, in addition to their initiative and support, the foreign (women’s and feminist) press played a significant role in the establishment and conceptualization of *Ženski pokret* as we know it.

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In the earliest period of the magazine’s publication, in the “spirit of optimism” that swept through the collective initiatives of women after the First World War<sup>29</sup> and in conjunction with international feminist and pacifist networking, the policy embodied by the name of the Society for the Enlightenment of Women and the Protection of Their Rights was advocated quite openly and resolutely. The enlightenment discourses were undoubtedly privileged, and rationalism prevailed over irrationalism – which, as with Skerlić, was identified with reactionism.<sup>30</sup> At the same time, this tendency significantly differed from Kveder’s idolisation of South Slavic epic traditions and mythology and her rigid Yugoslav unitarism based on ethnicity and romanticism.<sup>31</sup> Political participation and the protection of women’s (civil) rights as the editorial staff’s primary aims dictated and directed the newsletter’s contents and its discursive, genre, inter-media and formal configuration.

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<sup>27</sup> See: GRUBAČKI 2022. Isidora Grubački has been conducting Ph.D. research in which she strives to partially reconstruct the history of these organizations and to more thoroughly explain the dynamics of interwar liberal feminism. On this occasion, it can be briefly stated that the conflicts and (dis)continuities among women intellectuals and feminists in the immediate aftermath of World War I were dictated by multiple factors: different ideologies, generations and policies of collective (social or humanitarian) engagement. Lebl Albala and Bogdanović were among the young members of the Women’s Movement and they generally preferred a suffragist to a humanitarian agenda. However, they were involved in various types of feminist and socialist activities. On Kveder’s “charismatic editorship” see: СИМИЋ 2022.

<sup>28</sup> She mentioned Mileva Petrović, Malvina Gogić, Persa Prodanović, Delfa Ivanić, Lepasava Petković, Milica Dedijer, Novka Kovačević. See: LEBL ALBALA 2005: 268–269.

<sup>29</sup> OGRAJŠEK GORENJAK 2014: 91. Cf. GRUBAČKI 2021.

<sup>30</sup> Explanations for the dispute/discontinuity between the Society’s younger members and Zofka Kveder and other women activists who were more conservative and/or inclined towards (ethnic) nationalism may be sought here.

<sup>31</sup> See: BADURINA 2010; СИМИЋ 2022a.

Forceful intellectualism and a didactic impulse were the common denominator in the publication's wide body of contributions, resulting in a seriousness that has been acknowledged by subsequent researchers.<sup>32</sup>

In other words, the crucial aspects of the magazine's editorial policy in the initial period were the enlightenment of (socially underprivileged/uneducated) women throughout the Kingdom, the fight for women's suffrage and the full inclusion of all women in the legal frameworks/political currents of public life in the newly-established state, i.e., reformist suffrage engagement. The agenda of the women editors was based on pacifist motives and general humanistic discourse, with a touch of socialist and/or social-democratic positioning.<sup>33</sup> However, in contrast to Katarina Bogdanović – who was simultaneously engaged in informal socialist organizations, always utterly disinterested in the “national issue,” and insistent upon the combination of socialist discourse/engagement with liberal feminism since she considered the enlightenment of (politically) illiterate women as “our most pressing needs”<sup>34</sup> – Paulina Lebl Albala based her feminist agenda on a worldview that implied a more pronounced “respect for sanctified principles and conventions,” i.e., a kind of “bourgeois” ideology inseparable from patriotism.<sup>35</sup> In each case, however, these women editors highlighted the various gender-specific obstacles and restrictions in public intellectual life, thus *feminizing* the political contribution of their professor, Jovan Skerlić, on the one hand, and *denationalizing* the pre-war tradition of the “women's issue” and late Zofka Kveder Demetrović's (editorial) legacy on the other.

Neither Paulina Lebl Albala nor Katarina Bogdanović were as loud and passionate advocates of the Yugoslav idea as their predecessor Zofka Kveder. However, through their involvement with her magazine *Ženski svijet/Jugoslavenska žena*, and through the Yugoslav orientation of the Women's Movement itself, they affirmed and in a certain way created continuity with the fundamental aspects of Kveder's editorial policy: sisterhood/feminism and the Yugoslav national idea. The denationalization of the “women's issue” emerged from their interpretation of Kveder's view of these phenomena, and the concept of sisterhood gradually

<sup>32</sup> See: БАРАЋ 2015; МАЛЕШЕВИЋ 2007.

<sup>33</sup> This position is hinted at in the programmatic editorial by Katarina Bogdanović, “The Importance of and Need for the Newsletter” (*Ženski pokret*, 1/1920), in which “‘propaganda objectives’ are presented. The key words are duty, responsibility, initiative and solidarity”; following the imperatives which Bogdanović herself lived and pursued at the time, “a woman should be aware of her duty to emancipate herself, to accept responsibility for the dynamics of its implementation, take the initiative in that direction and show solidarity, i.e., associate with other women” (МИЛИНКОВИЋ, СВИРЧЕВ 2019: 16, emphasis added by Z.S.). See: МАЛЕШЕВИЋ 2007; SIMIĆ 2021.

<sup>34</sup> This is the headline to one of Bogdanović's articles in the magazine. The socialist “note” is indisputable. See: *Ženski pokret* 9/10 (1922); НИКОЛИЋ 1986.

<sup>35</sup> LEBL ALBALA 2005: 103.



evolved into a more articulated and gender-centred feminist engagement, devoid of ethnic and nationalist connotations. The contributions by other women authors in the first, in some way programmatic, issue of *Ženski pokret*, including the introductory article by Zorka Kasnar may shed some light on the similar mechanism of simultaneous *denationalization and/or feminization of politics*.<sup>36</sup>

From its very beginning, the magazine headed by Bogdanović, Kasnar, and Lebl Albala was constituted not only as the organ of the corresponding women's organization but also as a platform for the expression of a *critical patriotic*, more or less direct or sharp anti-regime stance. This confirms and complements Isidora Grubački's insights about the unjustified neglect of the so-called daily political positions of liberal feminists in the Kingdom of SCS/Yugoslavia. Stated succinctly, for Bogdanović and other "interwar liberal feminists, the state was the main functional framework, but also the central object of critique."<sup>37</sup> Accordingly, the importance of the anti-monarchist, mostly social-democratic orientation of the Women's Movement, underscored, for instance, by Miroslava Malešević, is confirmed again.<sup>38</sup>

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At the moment when *Ženski pokret* was established, very soon after the long-awaited "liberation and unification," Jovan Skerlić had been dead for years and the participation of (young) women in the leading literary periodicals was mostly limited to collaborative contributions. They did not have the opportunity to make important editorial decisions. Moreover, it was clear to educated women that they were not welcome in teaching positions in university departments, to which Paulina Lebl Albala suggestively testified several decades later: "What a pity, Paulina, that you are a girl – otherwise I would know who would be my successor at the Department," Pavle Popović said to her when she graduated, just before World War I.<sup>39</sup>

Of all general matters in our country, I believed at that time that feminism was the only one within my purview. Since those days under occupation, when I became interested in feminist issues through Zofka Kveder's magazine, I constantly followed these issues carefully in the columns of Swiss newspapers... I have become an 'expert on these issues'. [...] And when Zora Kasnar, right after liberation, began to tell me about the strong movement that arose among women in our country to gain political rights, I happily welcomed that movement and actively cooperated by regularly sending Zora various suggestions, encouragement, and instructions.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> See: СИМИЋ 2022a; *Ženski pokret* 1/1920: 5–6.

<sup>37</sup> GRUBAČKI 2021: 19.

<sup>38</sup> МАЛЕШЕВИЋ 2007: 13.

<sup>39</sup> LEBL ALBALA 2005: 268.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.: 263.

Unlike Katarina Bogdanović and Zorka Kasnar, Paulina Lebl Albala did not distance herself from the Women's Movement/Ženski pokret after her initial editorship, and she continued to contribute articles to this magazine until 1934. She was primarily engaged as a literary critic, but also in her capacity as president of the Association of University-Educated Women established in 1927. She consistently proposed changes to the Kingdom's educational policies in favour of women, advocating for greater gender inclusiveness when it came to positions of power/influence/authority – primarily at universities.<sup>41</sup>

Bogdanović, on the other hand, departed from feminist circles in the Kingdom's capital as soon as 1923/24, determined to devote herself primarily to pedagogy and teaching practice, and soon (as of 1928) started her career as administrator of the girls secondary schools in Niš and Kragujevac, for which she would express regret near the end of her life, believing that such choices thwarted her progress in the intellectual field.<sup>42</sup> During the interwar period, the two of them kept in touch and occasionally collaborated. Nevertheless, they crowned their peer-to-peer collaboration in the early 1920s: both in editing Ženski pokret and publishing the co-authored textbook *Teorija književnosti i analiza pismenih sastava: za srednje i stručne škole* [Theory of Literature and Analysis of Written Compositions for Secondary and Vocational Schools; First Edition, Belgrade: Geca Kon, 1923).<sup>43</sup>

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In her memoirs, written in the last decades of her life as an émigré compelled to leave by the rise of Nazism and the Holocaust, Paulina Lebl Albala offered guidelines for retroactively examining her public (feminist) engagement but also for contemplating her unfulfilled literary potential (the memoirs were published in 2005 and 2008). Katarina Bogdanović, on the other hand, allowed her diaries and other written bequests to be preserved in Kragujevac and published after her death, thus providing us with similar, very valuable insights and advice. Both Bogdanović and Lebl perceived themselves as some manner of “writers without an *oeuvre*,”<sup>44</sup> those who failed to fulfil their main ambitions, which were to acquire

<sup>41</sup> See: KOSIJER 2021.

<sup>42</sup> See: НИКОЛИЋ 1986.

<sup>43</sup> See: БОГАНОВИЋ, ЛЕБЛ АЛБАЛА 1923. “In the collegium, I also met my earlier acquaintance from the University, Katarina Bogdanović. Loyalty to our mutual teachers from the University, as well as the common desire to make our scholarship as accessible and attractive as possible to our students, made us very close, and since then friendship and collaboration have grown between us, which was crowned by the creation of the textbook *Teorija književnosti*” (LEBL ALBALA 2005: 202-203).

<sup>44</sup> See: НИКОЛИЋ 1986.

their own authorial voice, to write and publish fiction, thus significantly influencing the public sphere of interwar Yugoslavia. According to their testimonies, neither of them lacked literary aspirations, as well as a philological education, stylistic excellence and a reliable command of literary-theoretical, poetic and rhetorical conventions and customs. This is precisely what their textbook on the theory of literature demonstrates to the fullest extent. Nevertheless, this was not enough for them to become (women) authors and the main reasons for this can be, at best, cautiously reconstructed and surmised today.

In her memoir *Tako je nekad bilo* [That's How It Used To Be] (written, most likely, during or immediately after World War II), in an incidental place, Lebl Albala claimed that she “sought substitutions for her failed literary career in family duties as well as in feminist activities.”<sup>45</sup> On the one hand, it indicates that her gradual separation and distancing from the literary field was dictated by familial preoccupations, especially from the moment Lebl Albala gave birth to a child (1925) with David Albala, a prominent Yugoslav Zionist and diplomat, whom she had married in 1920. This is certainly supported by numerous other testimonies of hers in the book *Vidov život: biografija dr Davida Albale* [Vid's Life: A Biography of Dr. David Albala],<sup>46</sup> from which one may easily conclude that she perceived the issue of choosing between parenthood and her career as mutually exclusive – as, perhaps, after all, Bogdanović did. Additionally, Albala explicitly describes her “feminist activities” as a “substitution” as well.

The feminist activities of Lebl Albala and Bogdanović were the most intense precisely in the years after the formation of the Kingdom of SCS and during the 1920, the period when the “spirit of optimism” spread among the educated and emancipated women. This also coincided with their exclusive periodical editorial engagement within the borders of this country. Although later, in the interwar period and after the Second World War, they were still active in the intellectual field as writers, essayists, and literary critics present in various periodicals, and even though they remained interested in the humanities, literature and culture, both mostly reoriented themselves to other preoccupations: Lebl Albala to the already-mentioned “familial duties” and work within the Association of University-educated Women, and Bogdanović to education, pedagogy and the conscientious administration of secondary schools for girls.

Lebl Albala's memoirs contain a subdued note of resentment due to an unfulfilled literary career but not a deeper, explicit authorial argument that would allow us to unravel (how she herself perceived) the key causes of this “failure”. On the other hand, the dissatisfaction caused by the same problem is much more evident through Bogdanović's later testimony:

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<sup>45</sup> LEBL ALBALA 2005: 135.

<sup>46</sup> See: LEBL ALBALA 2008; KOCH 2023.

I expected much, much more from life and myself when I went to Belgrade in 1906 to study. If I achieved anything, it was more in my career than in literature. In myself, in my talent, I did not find what I had expected.

I wanted to write a work that would influence individuals and society. I didn't achieve that. I wanted to be a journalist and write editorials, to influence public opinion. I didn't get that either.

If I were a man, if I didn't have any women's responsibilities and jobs, if I could devote myself entirely to studies and writing, maybe I would have created something worthwhile and influential, which would have outlived me. But I devoted only my free time to writing and studying, barely finding it because of tedious school and domestic chores.<sup>47</sup>

In her retrospective, Bogdanović insisted on multiple interconnected issues: high expectations of herself in terms of literary and journalistic creativity, talent, *influence* (on public opinion), as well as, again, on the gender conditioning of her intellectual genesis. Bogdanović locates the problem in "women's affairs," the patriarchal, traditionally coded spheres of public and private. Even though she was never married and had no parental duties – and although she was among the first women to obtain a degree from the University of Belgrade, a respected contributor to numerous periodicals, one of the founders of the feminist association Women's Movement and the editor of the eponymous magazine (where she *wrote* introductory articles, in which, in an attempt *to influence public opinion*, she persistently criticized political conditions in the newly-formed state and advocated for the emancipation of women), and, last but not least, a life-long, very successful and dedicated teacher and secondary school administrator – near the end of her life Bogdanović considered the range of her influence quite narrow and tended to diminish or deny the importance of her various efforts, in the belief that she had left behind nothing that would "outlive" her, and finding, in part, the reasons for this in gender politics.

The question of fulfilment of Bogdanović's undoubted individual talent, as well as her literary attempts, is too complex and delicate to be discussed here. The problem of high and rigid expectations of oneself, i.e., persistently diminishing one's own merit – especially keeping in mind the rather difficult circumstances of Bogdanović's upbringing, her exclusively independent struggle for formal education, achieving a rich and fruitful career due solely to her intellectual capabilities, or her willingness to consciously make sacrifices to emancipate herself – could largely be explained by the psychological profile, character traits and privileged literature of this woman thinker, a passionate reader of Nietzsche, Schopenhauer and Dostoyevsky. Namely, although she was prone to self-doubt and self-criticism like Lebl Albala, their personalities, life circumstances and individual (literary)

<sup>47</sup> BOGDANOVIĆ 1986: 136.

affinities differed from each other, which, of course, resulted in different (self-) perceptions of their biographies. In Bogdanović's case, the self-diminishing strategies were not as perceptibly *feminine* as those of her colleague.

In this regard, "Skerlić of mine" by Paulina Lebl Albala – in whose "orbit" her memoir *Tako je nekad bilo* "moves"<sup>48</sup> – seems to be, from a feminist standpoint, an extremely interesting psychological and discursive construction. Besides genre conventions, the habitual rhetorical gestures, statements of gratitude, admiration and recognizable strategies of self-denial and humility – along with the desire to pay a debt to a key mentor and with (latent) eroticism, which in itself constitutes an indispensable aspect of the intellectual and literary field – one may also perceive in Lebl Albala's autobiographical discourse a somewhat more extreme transfer of her creative initiatives, ambitions and achievements to others, their overemphasized attribution to the merits of Skerlić and other male authorities, even in those cases where it simply appears not to be largely founded.<sup>49</sup> At first glance, the hyper-idealization of Skerlić is not enigmatic and hermeneutically challenging insofar as Lebl Albala's sense of debt and respect for him was openly and publicly emphasized on other occasions as well – for instance, in her periodical contributions. However, it becomes very significant if, with transition from Lebl Albala's autobiographical to biographical discourse – following the different genre and stylistic strategies of the books *Tako je nekad bilo* and *Vidov život...* – one notices the mechanisms of traditional feminine self-reproach or even self-cancellation, renunciation of one's authority, both in relation to the male teaching authorities of her era and the "character" of a prominent interwar intellectual and political activist, Dr. David Albala, Paulina's only husband.<sup>50</sup>

On the other hand, Bogdanović – although she also, both publicly and privately, emphasized the enormous debt to as well as gratitude and respect for Jovan Skerlić and other university professors – did not show a tendency to mystify male (editorial or spousal) authorities, which could be explained not only by her much more pronounced individualism, or anarchist, anti-institutional and anti-conventional intellectual origins, but also by her radical decision to live under by her own principles, all by herself, "among the papers," without children or marriages.<sup>51</sup> In Bogdanović's own words:

My friends? They are gone. They have all died, and only Albala lives with her daughter in America. Are you interested in Skerlić and Isidora? I loved Skerlić

<sup>48</sup> LEBL ALBALA 2005: 224.

<sup>49</sup> For instance: "If I offered a good textbook on the theory of literature, from which generations of our secondary school students learned to write, it is primarily due to my outstanding teacher of literary theory, Bogdan Popović" (LEBL ALBALA 2005: 139).

<sup>50</sup> See: KOCH 2023.

<sup>51</sup> See: ВУЈОШЕВИЋ 2018, 2019; НИКОЛИЋ 1986.

like a father. He had a strong influence on me, and he also helped me with the publication of my manuscripts. I mourned his death properly. But I have to admit that I didn't like the fact that he and Bogdan Popović always treated Isidora with a sort of scorn. [...] She was quite a handsome but terribly unhappy woman. It always seemed to me that she could have been an ideal wife and housewife, but men fled from her, I suppose because she was too educated.<sup>52</sup>

The “paternal” component of Skerlić’s image and role, explicitly highlighted by Bogdanović, potentially deepens previous insights into the biographical constants of some of the first female teachers/educated women in Serbia from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, which pertain to their “negative perception of one’s father,” the difficult (patriarchal) circumstances of their upbringing, as well as the absence of early authorities.<sup>53</sup> Furthermore, this brief statement by Katarina Bogdanović, both explicitly and implicitly based on gender binary oppositions – *male/female* and *masculine/feminine* – testifies to the fact that this binary logic was certainly inscribed and implicit in Serbian/Yugoslav literary and academic fields in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as well as in the attitude of leading authorities toward their female colleagues. This applies not only to their students – where the vertical distribution of authority and influence was taken for granted – but also to female peers or female colleagues whom they could consider equal to themselves on all grounds such as Sekulić.<sup>54</sup> Accordingly, this aspect of the quote becomes multiply significant: in the case of the particularly dynamic (feminist) reception of Isidora Sekulić, power relations in (intellectual) public life and (self-)perception of women’s authorship in general, including the authorship of Paulina Lebl Albala and Katarina Bogdanović themselves.<sup>55</sup>

Like Lebl Albala, Bogdanović did not declaratively renounce her feminist engagement until the end of her life. However, in her various writings – private as well as public – a blind spot in the author’s gender self-reflection, a tendency towards the internalization of masculine viewpoints, or at least a kind of “un-traveled path from theory to activism”<sup>56</sup> are certainly noticeable, though in a different manner than in the case of Lebl Albala. In the “*Belgrade Diary*,” which Bogdanović wrote from March to November 1924 (at that point she was still close to the Women’s Movement and participated in feminist conferences in Europe, although she had already begun to distance herself from feminist agitation a few years earlier), she noted:

<sup>52</sup> НИКОЛИЋ 1986: 14-15.

<sup>53</sup> ТОМИЋ 2019: 142. Svetlana Tomić points out these *topoi* in women’s (auto)biographies considering, among other things, precisely the cases of Paulina Lebl Albala and Katarina Bogdanović.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. СКЕРЛИЋ 1913.

<sup>55</sup> On Sekulić see: КОХ 2012.

<sup>56</sup> ВУЈОШЕВИЋ 2019: *sine pagina*.

I am looking forward to seeing Prague and all the work of the Congress, but *I doubt that I will be able to put together anything to say, because I am not fond of women's and children's issues, and it wouldn't make sense to speak about any others next to four men if they all go.* I received (swallowed) such a large dose of feminism at the International Women's Congress in Rome that I am still sated today, and I think I will be for a long time. If I spoke about feminism again now, it would seem to me that I was listening to my own words from a phonograph. That's why I distanced myself from the Women's Movement, and *I'm tired of constantly demanding what can't be obtained.*<sup>57</sup>

The fight for “what can't be obtained” – women's right to vote – was among Bogdanović's key motives for joining the Society and her collaborative and editorial contribution to *Ženski pokret*, while the frustration caused by the insensitivity of the regime in that respect influenced her decision to change her activist path. Furthermore, she revealed that she had wearied of such engagement, that she felt deflated, as if she were “constantly” making futile efforts. This should not be considered separately from the very difficult conditions of the production, editing and distribution of *Ženski pokret* in the initial years of its publication, to which Bogdanović, as an editor, testified in her public contributions.<sup>58</sup>

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Bearing all of this in mind, it is expedient to look back at the results obtained by Ograjšek Gorenjak in her research on women journalists in the Kingdom of SCS/Yugoslavia, which focused among other things on the intriguing professional and intellectual paths of women editors such as Marija Jurić Zagorka (Croatia) and Ivanka Anžič Klemenčič (Slovenia). The reconstruction of the establishment and initial editing of *Ženski pokret*, i.e., the biographies of Paulina Lebl Albala and Katarina Bogdanović, confirm that the “antifeminist sentiment had intensified in the years that followed the Great War,” that “it was an inauspicious time for women to pursue any type of career, especially one that would challenge the image of acceptable women's competencies,” and that “as a result, female journalists were removed from ‘vital’ stories and they were encouraged to write about topics that targeted the female market.”<sup>59</sup> The dissatisfaction of Bogdanović and Lebl Albala, rooted in the impression that they had failed to develop their talent and influence optimally, may, to a significant extent, have been dictated by their personal choices, circumstances and/or decisions. However, there can be no doubt that

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<sup>57</sup> BOGDANOVIĆ 1986: 62–63 (emphasis added by Z. S).

<sup>58</sup> See: *Ženski pokret* 1/1921: 1–5.

<sup>59</sup> OGRAJŠEK GORENJAK 2020: 382.

the gender politics (of the literary field) in the Kingdom of SCS/Yugoslavia also intensively shaped this dissatisfaction. The constellation that Ograjšek Gorenjak wrote about contributed to the discontinuous or unacknowledged public journalistic engagement of women in the domain of the (women's and feminist) press in interwar Yugoslavia. Numerous studies have been conducted thus far concerning this periodical corpus. The question of the status of *women periodical editors* in interwar Yugoslavia has yet to be considered more deeply. The re-construction of the life and professional paths of two of them, Paulina Lebl Albala and Katarina Bogdanović, provides us with the opportunity to locate the complexity and tensions in the public engagement of these women editors in interwar Yugoslavia who were utterly torn between the struggle for rights and the struggle to write.

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## Urednice u međuratnoj Jugoslaviji između borbe za pisanje i borbe za prava: Katarina Bogdanović i Paulina Lebl Albala

Intelektualke koje su obavljale uredničke funkcije u periodu Kraljevine SHS/Jugoslavije gotovo isključivo su to činile u domeni takozvanih feminističkih kontrajavnosti – tj. *ženskog* i *feminističkog* tiskanog materijala. Mnoge od njih bile su i spisateljice, teoretičarke književnosti, kritičarke i/ili prevoditeljice, a pridonosile su istaknutim književnim časopisima tog vremena. Ipak, kao urednice preferirale su feministički angažman i suradnju, dok su se sekundarno ili neizravno bavile pitanjima svog zanimanja. Takva situacija trajala je tijekom cijelog međuratnog perioda i bila je povezana sa ženama urednicama koje su se inače međusobno razlikovale na mnogo načina. U raznim zapisima neke od njih svjedočile su o motivima, razlozima i implikacijama takve situacije i njihove profesionalne orijentacije. Ovaj se rad, temeljen na doktorskoj tezi u nastajanju, *Urednice periodike u međuratnoj Jugoslaviji: Biografski, književno-istorijski i tipološki aspekti*, bavi se dvjema među njima – Katarinom Bogdanović (1885–1969) i Paulinom Lebl (1891–1967). Obje su bile među prvim urednicama jednog od najvažnijih feminističkih časopisa u međuratnom periodu, *Ženski pokret* (1920–1938, Beograd), biltena istoimene ženske organizacije. Obje su bile među prvim diplomkinjama Univerziteta u Beogradu i obje su u nekoliko prilika svjedočile o odlučujućem utjecaju Jovana Skerlića na njihov intelektualni razvoj i karijeru, izražavajući dojam da je njegova prerana smrt, među ostalim, pridonijela “neuspjehu” iste karijere. Drugim riječima, u starosti su, neovisno jedna o drugoj, doživljavale sebe kao neostvarene spisateljice – autorice fikcije, ali i kao žene urednice koje nisu ostavile značajan trag u intelektualnom polju Kraljevine SHS/Jugoslavije. U ovom radu uzeli smo u obzir autobiografije i biografije Pauline Lebl Albala i Katarine Bogdanović, bogate tragovima tenzija između feminističkih i ženskih (književnih) identiteta žena urednica. Njihove profesionalne geneze rekonstruirane su s posebnim fokusom na njihovo samopercipiranje, svjedočanstva i sjećanja, tj. na memoarski i autobiografski diskurs. Pored toga, na mnogo manje razrađen način nego u samoj tezi, i – koliko znamo – prvi put, naglašena/locirana je povezanost između takozvanog Skerličevog doba na početku 20. stoljeća (politika tadašnjeg Univerziteta u Beogradu) i početaka Ženskog pokreta u Kraljevini SHS/Jugoslaviji.

*Ključne riječi:* studije periodike, urednice periodike, Kraljevina SHS/Jugoslavija, književno polje, ženski i feministički tisak, Paulina Lebl Albala, Katarina Bogdanović, Jovan Skerlić

*Key words:* periodical studies, women periodical editors, Kingdom of SHS/Yugoslavia, literary field, women’s and feminist press, Paulina Lebl Albala, Katarina Bogdanović, Jovan Skerlić

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ZAGREB 2023.

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Knjiga 55, broj 1

*Izdavač / Publisher*

Zavod za hrvatsku povijest  
Filozofskoga fakulteta Sveučilišta u Zagrebu  
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Tel. ++385 (0)1 6120191

Časopis izlazi jedanput godišnje / The Journal is published once a year

Časopis je u digitalnom obliku dostupan na / The Journal in digital form is accessible at  
Portal znanstvenih časopisa Republike Hrvatske „Hrčak“  
<http://hrcak.srce.hr/radovi-zhp>

Financijska potpora za tisak časopisa / The Journal is published with the support by  
Ministarstvo znanosti, obrazovanja i športa Republike Hrvatske

Časopis je indeksiran u sljedećim bazama / The Journal is indexed in the following databases:  
Directory of Open Access Journals, EBSCO, SCOPUS, ERIH PLUS, Emerging Sources Citation  
Index - Web of Science

*Naslovna stranica / Title page by*

Marko Maraković

*Grafičko oblikovanje i računalni slog / Graphic design and layout*

Marko Maraković

*Lektura / Language editors*

Samanta Paronić (hrvatski / Croatian)

Edward Bosnar (engleski / English)

*Tisak / Printed by*

Tiskara Zelina d.d.

*Naklada / Issued*

200 primjeraka / 200 copies

*Ilustracija na naslovnici*

Muza Klio (Alexander S. Murray, *Manual of Mythology*, London 1898)

*Časopis je u digitalnom obliku dostupan na Portalu znanstvenih časopisa  
Republike Hrvatske „Hrčak“ <http://hrcak.srce.hr/radovi-zhp>*

*The Journal is accessible in digital form at the Hrčak - Portal of scientific  
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