

Beyond the National: Notes on the International Women's Movement(s) in *Žena* ('The Woman')¹

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the role of news and short unsigned articles published in the magazine *Žena* ('The Woman') in the period 1911–1914, with a particular emphasis on the magazine's permanent section 'Various Notes', which consisted of news about the various aspects of women's lives and work. The magazine was owned and edited by Milica Tomić, the first Serbian woman to work as editor-in-chief. The group of women gathered around the magazine *Žena* used the unsigned section to shed light on the events and struggles which they considered significant, such as women's suffrage, but could not advocate as their primary goal because of the restrictions posed by the patriarchal and traditional society in which they lived and worked. Thus, transnational aspect of the magazine *Žena*, conveyed in the news from abroad, enabled the editor and contributors to sometimes express more emancipatory and subversive ideas than they did in the articles which they themselves signed.

Keywords: magazine *Žena* ('The Woman'), Milica Tomić, women's suffrage, international women's movements

INTRODUCTION

The women's movements around the world in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have often been described as an international or transnational phenomenon (Cowman, 2016: 55–56; de Haan, 2017: 513). The most evident common goal of the global women's movement was – and still is – greater economic, political and social equality throughout the world. However, this goal and its realisation have always been determined by distinct historical, political, geographical and cultural contexts. Major issues, such as women's suffrage, equal educational opportunities, professions for women, marriage reform, and prostitution, were approached and resolved differently depending on the specificities of the context in which they were raised. In addition, women themselves often disagreed about the best way to achieve equal rights. Thus, it has become quite common in the recent scholarship on women's and gender history to explore the relationship between the international women's movement(s) and nationally-defined agendas advocated by the local women's organisations and activists (Cowman, 2016; Daskalova and Zimmermann, 2017).

This article examines the role of news and unsigned short articles published in the magazine *Žena* ('The Woman'), which was founded in 1911 and edited by Milica Tomić (1859–1944) in Novi Sad.² Milica Tomić received her education in Novi Sad, Pest and Vienna. She was fluent in four languages: Hungarian, German, French

¹ In 2017 I published a book titled *Rod, modernost i emancipacija. Uredničke politike u časopisima Žena (1911-1914) i The Freewoman (1911-1912)* ('Gender, modernity, emancipation. The politics of editing in the magazines *Žena* (1911-1914) and *The Freewoman* (1911-1912)'), which was based on my PhD dissertation. This article is a continuation of my research on the magazine *Žena*, published in English in *Espacio* magazine under the title 'Gender, nation, and education in the women's magazine *Žena* ('The Woman') (1911-1914)', <https://www.espaciotiempoyeducacion.com/ojs/index.php/ete/article/view/142> (Accessed 18 May 2020).

² Its first subtitle was 'a monthly magazine for women'; later, it changed to 'a magazine for education and entertainment'. The second subtitle underlines the mission of the magazine (to educate and entertain), which was common to other women's magazines in Serbian language from this period, as well (Peković, 2004). *Žena* offered readers in Austro-Hungary, Dalmatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro and America (in this particular order) the opportunity to subscribe to the magazine.

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and English. Two persons influenced her life significantly: her father, Svetozar Miletić, founder and leader of *Srpska narodna slobodoumna stranka* ("Serbian National Freethinkers Party")³ as well as founder and editor of the magazine *Zastava* ("The Flag"), and her husband, Jaša Tomić, a Serbian journalist, politician and writer, leader of *Radikalna stranka* ("Radical Party"). Milica Tomić worked constantly on the enlightenment of women. Not only did she publish articles on the subject of women's rights and education, but she also worked on the enlightenment of women more directly, by establishing – or participating in the work of – various organisations and associations. She played a crucial role in founding the organisation known as *Poselo Srpkinja* in 1905, which later evolved into *Posestrima*, a reading room for women in Novi Sad.⁴ The members of this organisation managed to found a library as well as organise classes for illiterate women. Milica Tomić, along with some of her peers, considered education of women from rural areas to be of great significance and, therefore, one of the main goals of women's organisations. Besides this, *Posestrima* had its charitable fund that was used to help its members financially. In particular, the resources were spent on helping the sick and the poor, for example, in cases of pregnancy or death. Alongside six other women, Milica Tomić took part in the activities of the Grand National Assembly in Novi Sad at the time when women gained the right to vote in this Parliament. This right was abolished shortly after the formation of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.⁵



Женска читаоница „Посестрима“ у Новом Саду.

Figure 1. Unnamed. (1911). *Ženska čitaonica 'Posestrima' u Novom Sadu* (Posestrima, a Reading Club for Women in Novi Sad). *Žena*, 1 (3), unnumbered page.

The magazine *Žena* was issued once a month from 1911 until the outbreak of the First World War in 1914. It was renewed in 1918 and appeared until the end of 1921. After 1918 the structure of the magazine stayed the same. In addition to the focus on women's and gender issues, the topics in the magazine were marked by the traumatic experience of the First World War, together with the experience of living in a newly formed state – the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes.

To illustrate my argument, I analyse examples from the magazine *Žena* published in the period 1911–1914. Serbian women and their activities were the primary concern of *Žena*. However, the editorial board tried to inform their readers about the events and developments concerning women's movements and women's rights in other nations as well. Each issue had a section dedicated almost exclusively to the achievements of women's movements around the world, informing Serbian women about current events in the United States, England, France, Norway,

³ Given Miletić's political views, instead of 'freethinkers', the word 'liberal' may be used in English translation.

⁴ 'Poselo' – a term commonly used in small towns and villages for an informal gathering.

⁵ For more information on Milica Tomić see: <http://knjizenstvo.etf.bg.ac.rs/en/authors/milica-tomic>; for more information on the magazine *Žena* ("The Woman") see: <http://knjizenstvo.etf.bg.ac.rs/en/serial-publications/zena>.

or China. This permanent section, titled 'Various Notes', offered information about the first female medical doctor or judge, black women's struggle for freedom and rights, women's decision to wear trousers instead of skirts, and other similar topics. News and mostly unsigned short articles in this section often advocated more progressive standpoints than the editor-in-chief and contributors did in their own signed articles. Some of the news and short articles were in fact translations or summaries of the articles published in the women's periodical press in foreign languages. The unsigned section in the magazine shed light on events and struggles which the editor and contributors considered significant, such as women's suffrage, but could not advocate as their primary goal because they lived and worked in a deeply patriarchal and traditional society.⁶

In the early twentieth century in the territories of what is now Vojvodina (until 1918 the southern flank of the Austro-Hungarian Empire) and Serbia (ruled by the Ottoman Empire until 1878), there was a tendency to move towards Western-oriented economic, political, and cultural modernisation, but there were also those who strongly objected to processes of modernisation, opting for the protection of the putative national tradition. In the latter case, modernisation was perceived as an uncritical appropriation of Western culture. This was presented as a threat to the Serbian tradition, which was seen as the very foundation of the Serbian nation and its self-understanding.⁷ On the topic of women and modernisation, the dispute between advocates of modernisation and defenders of tradition often resulted in what historians Krassimira Daskalova and Susan Zimmermann aptly described as 'patriotic modernization' in East Central Europe (2017: 279): the intellectual elite supported women's emancipation (especially in the field of education), if it contributed to the process of nation-building and helped their people's development, e.g. educated Serbian women would be better wives and mothers to Serbian men and, furthermore, the Serbian nation. Such negotiations between the modern and the traditional were inherent to the magazine *Žena*, as well. This was most evident in the alliance between emancipatory discourses (the right to education and work) and patriarchal discourses (women as mothers of the nation).⁸ Both men and women utilised this alliance in their contributions to the magazine.

My aim in this article is to explore how the section 'Various Notes', mainly dedicated to the international aspects of women's movements, created a space for challenging or sometimes even overthrowing certain elements of patriarchal ideology which were (re)produced in the rest of the magazine. I first explain why, in order to understand connections between national and transnational aspects of women's movements, I focus on women's/feminist periodicals. In this section, I also include feminist scholarship that had an impact on my analysis of the magazine *Žena*. In the second part, I examine specific examples from the magazine to test my initial hypothesis.

NATIONAL AND TRANSNATIONAL SPACES IN WOMEN'S/FEMINIST PERIODICAL PRESS

The scholarship about Serbian and Yugoslav women's and gender history has been flourishing in recent decades.⁹ However, there is still only one systematic and comprehensive study of 'the woman question' in Serbia in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Neda Božinović, the author of *Žensko pitanje u Srbiji u XIX i XX veku* ('The Woman Question in Serbia in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century'), examined, among other things,

⁶ As with many magazines from the early twentieth century, where unsigned columns like 'Introduction' or 'Correspondence' were often written by editor/s, the unsigned news and short articles in *Žena* were most probably written by Milica Tomić and her close collaborators.

⁷ This definition of 'tradition' privileged collective identities over individual ones. For example, Jaša Tomić wrote that the basic unit of a society was the home, which might indicate that Tomić valued the family more than the individual (Tomić, 1911). This notion of 'tradition' produced an idealised image of rural life (whereas, in reality, peasants did physically hard work and lived in very bad conditions, especially women who, on the top of their work in the fields, gave birth in unhygienic conditions and raised children in severe poverty), and portrayed women primarily as mothers, wives and daughters, who ought to both biologically and symbolically reproduce the nation.

⁸ Serbia is not an exception when it comes to complex relations between women's and feminist movements, the politics of motherhood, and nationalism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Daskalova and Zimmermann, 2017; Feinberg, 2006; Tzanaki, 2009).

⁹ For valuable collections of essays which explore problems related to modernisation, women, and emancipation, see *Srbija u modernizacijskim procesima*, 1–4 ('Serbia in processes of modernisation, vol. 1–4'), edited by Latinka Perović. See also *Sestre Srпкиnje. Pojava pokreta za emancipaciju žena i feminizma u Kraljevini Srbiji* ('Serbian sisters. The rise of the movement for emancipation of women and feminism in the Kingdom of Serbia') by Ana Stolić, published in 2015; Svetlana Stefanović's article 'Rod i nacija: osnovne pretpostavke' ('Gender and nation: basic definitions'); the articles of Vera Gudac-Dodić, Dubravka Stojanović, Sanja Petrović Todosijević, included in the fourth volume of the above-mentioned collection of essays *Srbija u modernizacijskim procesima*, which explore specifically the position of women and children in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; Ivana Pantelić, *Partizanke kao građanke. Društvena emancipacija partizanki u Srbiji 1945–1953* ('Partisan women as citizens. Social emancipation of partisan women in Serbia 1945–1953'), a research based on the oral history, that is, on interviews conducted with elderly partisan women.

different types of women's organisations and institutions in Serbia and Yugoslavia (such as schools, societies, unions) as well as different ways in which their members organised themselves and worked together, first on the national and then on the international level (Božinović, 1996; Stolić, 2018). Božinović was particularly interested in the formation of a domestic organisation, Srpski narodni ženski savez ('Serbian National Women's Alliance'), in 1906 and its admittance to the International Woman Suffrage Alliance (IWSA) in 1909. In order to join the IWSA, the Serbian National Women's Alliance had to add women's suffrage as one of the main goals of its program (Božinović, 1996: 75). Thus, according to Božinović, the first organisations founded by Serbian women introduced explicit feminist ideas into their programs and activities under the influence of various international women's organisations (77). As Francisca de Haan argued, international and transnational perspectives are highly relevant in writing the history of women's movements because 'feminism never existed in isolation', meaning that 'women's struggles for their rights emerged and developed in relation to transnational processes of economic, political and cultural change' (2017: 502). Furthermore, 'there were numerous transnational links between individual women and women's groups' (e. g. participation of the national women's organisations in the three main international women's organisations: the International Council of Women, ICW; the International Woman Suffrage Alliance, IWSA, in 1926 renamed the International Alliance of Women for Suffrage and Equal Rights, IAW; and the Women's International League of Peace and Freedom, WILPF) (2017: 507).

De Haan justifiably emphasised that '[w]omen's journals almost by definition reported about and referred to women's struggles and achievements in other countries' (2017: 515). Thus, instead of exploring concrete relationships between the transnational women's organisations, on the one side, and national organisations established by the Serbian women, on the other, I focus on textual materials produced for publishing in one particular magazine – *Žena*. To be specific, I examine various aspects of the transnational, as the term was defined by Ann Taylor Allen: transnational indicates 'relationships that fall outside formal governmental and organizational structures and evolve from the many ways (...) in which people and ideas cross national boundaries', like intellectual exchange, publications, correspondence, and conferences (Allen, 2017: 5).¹⁰ The women's and feminist periodical press from the early twentieth century represented a textual space in which people and ideas crossed national boundaries via news, articles, book reviews, translations, reports (e. g. reports from various international women's congresses), and correspondence.

On the subject of feminist encounters realised by and through the feminist periodical press, Lucy Delap offered a brilliant in-depth examination of 'a conversation that occurred within and between two groups – the 'advanced' feminists of Britain and the United States, chiefly concentrated in the metropolitan centres (London, Chicago, New York)' (Delap, 2007: 3). Delap managed to 'link feminism to a broad context of political argument in the late Edwardian period' by exploring Dora Marsden's weekly review *The Freewoman* and various intellectual networks which this magazine tried to create and participate in (Delap, 2007: 10–11).¹¹ Furthermore, Delap underlined that in the early twentieth century, 'to be a feminist was very centrally a reading experience' (2007: 4). As a feminist literary scholar, I consider this argument to be significant in a discussion on feminism and/in periodicals. Quite similarly, in an article on the women's movement and internationalism in the twentieth century, Krista Cowman highlighted the role of newspapers and periodicals in establishing (in the past) and mapping (in the present) transnational networks in which women participated:

Newspapers and periodicals associated with national women's organisations aided awareness of activities in different countries by covering events and carrying articles describing conditions for women abroad. Periodicals also facilitated early attempts at international organisation, with national publications such as the *Englishwoman's Review*, *Le Droit des Femmes* and *Die Frau* reporting on activities abroad (Cowman, 2016: 58).

¹⁰ It is sometimes difficult to strictly separate terms international and transnational (history) in a concrete analysis of historical periods and texts. For example, Leila J. Rupp wrote in many of her articles about international women's movement and transnational women's organisations, such as the International Council of Women (ICW), the International Alliance of Women (IAW, originally the International Woman Suffrage Alliance, IWSA), and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF). Even though all mentioned organisations clearly contained 'international' in their name, Rupp preferred to use the term 'transnational' to describe those organizations (see Rupp, 1994: 1571–1600; Rupp, 1997: 577–605). See also Rupp's article from 2011, which contains reference to useful online source of primary materials 'Women and social movements, international – 1840 to present', <http://ieg-ego.eu/en/threads/transnational-movements-and-organisations/international-social-movements/leila-j-rupp-transnational-womens-movements>; <https://search.alexanderstreet.com/wasi>. In all mentioned cases, terms international and transnational have been used interchangeably, as Ann Taylor Allen rightly suggested they would often be.

¹¹ All issues of the weekly review *The Freewoman* have been digitised and are accessible at the Modernist Journals Project website: <https://modjourn.org/journal/freewoman/>.

My analysis belongs to a broader research framework delineated by the continuous and systematic examination of women's and feminist periodical press in the Serbian language by, in particular, Slobodanka Peković and, more recently, Stanislava Barać, both of whom consider women's and feminist periodicals to be either a women's subculture or a feminist counter-public sphere within which various gender identities were at once described and created (Peković, 2015; Barać, 2015; Kolarić, 2019).¹²

FEMINISM(S) IN WOMEN'S/FEMINIST PERIODICAL PRESS

Another important question is – what did feminism mean in the early twentieth century? Krista Cowman pointed out that '[i]nternational women's movements can broadly be defined as feminist, although many of them did not describe themselves primarily in this way' (2015: 56). In other words, even though all women activists fought to secure greater equality for women throughout the world, their self-perception or priorities and strategies varied over time and differed depending on the concrete context. Furthermore, even women who at first glance shared political, social and cultural contexts often disagreed not only about their concrete strategies but also about a deeper understanding of feminist politics.¹³ Such apparent contradictions were in fact quite common for all feminist politics in the early twentieth century (Delap, 2005).

As Peković pointed out, all women's magazines in the Serbian language from the early twentieth century aimed to emancipate women, but to different degrees. While some dealt mostly with housekeeping and motherhood by educating women how to safely prepare food or take care of their children's health, others added another dimension (like the magazine *Žena*), the women's need and right to enter the public space, mainly through education and work (Peković, 2015: 26). Indeed, editors and contributors to women's magazines in general, and *Žena* in particular, lived and worked in concrete cultural, social and political contexts and, at least to some extent, were immersed in the ideologies of their time. Thus, the fact that *Žena* consisted of both emancipatory and patriarchal discourses, which together created a specific notion of proper womanly behaviour, should not come as a surprise if one takes into account the fact that the national liberation and creation of an independent national state were high on the list of priorities of the Serbian intellectual elite at the time. Feminist scholars on gender and nation have already emphasised the significant role of gender relations within the three major dimensions of nationalist projects: national reproduction (i.e., *Volknation*), national culture (i.e., *Kulturnation*) and national citizenship (i.e., *Staatnation*) (Yuval-Davis, 1997). Daskalova and Zimmermann highlight that in many documents from the late eighteenth to the early twentieth century 'women were portrayed as the patriotic mothers and daughters of the nation', who reproduced the nation both biologically and symbolically (Daskalova and Zimmermann, 2017: 296). In other words, women served as keepers and transmitters of national culture and traditions within both spheres – the private and the public. In the analysis of the specific examples from the magazine, it is helpful to keep in mind the importance of 'a careful engagement with the voices of the past' which requests from feminist critics to 'take seriously past women's and men's own understandings of their positioning within historical and social processes' (Felski, 1995: 8; Bucur, 2017). Thus, it is vital to always contextualise and historicise texts from the past.

¹² For Serbian language articles and books about women's and gender history written from the perspective of feminist media history by scholars in the field of literary and cultural studies, see Stanislava Barać's analysis of the feminist inter-war periodicals in Serbian language: *Feministička kontrajavnost. Žanr ženskog portreta u srpskoj periodici 1929–1941* ('The feminist counterpublic. A genre of woman's portrait in the serbian periodical press from 1920 to 1941'); Ana Kolarić's exploration of gender and modernity in periodicals *Žena* (The woman) and *The Freewoman* (already mentioned in the footnote 1); Jelena Milinković's articles in the journal *Knjiženstvo* (<http://www.knjizenstvo.rs/en/journals>) as well as her PhD dissertation about women's writing in the feminist and feminophile periodical press in Serbian language in the inter-war period, Slobodanka Peković's systematic and thorough analysis of majority of women's periodicals from the early 20th century, *Časopisi po meri dostojanstvenog ženskinja. Ženski časopisi na početku 20. veka* ('Journals suitable for respectable women. Women's journals from the early 20th century'), Žarka Svirčev's exploration of women's avant-garde writing in Serbian language, published in periodicals: *Avangardistkinje. Ogledi o srpskoj (ženskoj) avangardnoj književnosti* ('Women of the avant-garde: Essays on Serbian [female] avant-garde literature').

¹³ In her book *Feministička kontrajavnost. Žanr ženskog portreta u srpskoj periodici 1929–1941*, Stanislava Barać explored the feminist counterpublic in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in the interwar period. This counterpublic sphere encompassed different periodicals and feminist movements, such as the radical bourgeois movement, moderate movement, and socialist movement. Barać demonstrated that feminist press from this period covered various issues and problems: from magazines focusing on problems of highly educated women to those which paid attention to the everyday lives of female workers. In other words, the Yugoslav interwar feminist counterpublic was not homogenous (Barać, 2015).

'VARIOUS NOTES': IDEAS FOR (RE)SHAPING SERBIAN WOMEN'S WORLDS

Milica Tomić was the founder of *Žena*, as well as its owner and editor-in-chief, the sole Serbian woman editor at the time. *Žena*, especially in the period 1911–1914, argued for the women's right to education and paid work, but it did not question the gender norms around marriage and the family in any substantial way. As already said, many contributors to the magazine created a specific relationship between emancipatory and patriarchal discourses in their articles. I have explained this relationship in part by the impact of nationalist ideologies on gender politics. In addition, for further clarification, it is worth looking into Karen Offen's definitions of two distinct modes of argumentation in the history of the feminist thought: relational and individualist. While '[r]elational feminists emphasize women's rights as *women* (...) in relation to men' and 'insist on *women's* distinctive contributions in these roles to the broader society', such as 'the feminine' and 'womanliness', 'the individualist feminist tradition of argumentation emphasizes more abstract concepts of individual human rights' or, more precisely, it focuses on the individual who transcends sexual identification (Offen, 2000: 22; Offen, 2005). However, Offen underlined that these two modes of argumentation intertwined and interplayed in various ways in specific historical situations. The dominant discourse about burning issues regarding women and gender relations in the magazine *Žena* was mainly shaped by the ideas of relational feminism. One quote from Jaša Tomić's article, Milica Tomić's husband, a leader of the Radical Party and frequent contributor to the magazine, entitled, almost like a manifesto, 'The Ultimate Purpose of Woman', indicates a dominant understanding of emancipation in the magazine and how it was connected to relational feminism:

There will be many mistakes in your magazine, because the woman's question is among the most complex problems. However, there is one mistake you must avoid. You should never forget one obvious fact: woman must always remain a woman. If not for our sake, then for the sake of our children. Children have an unconditional right to have a father and a mother, rather than two fathers. Woman's main purpose is to remain a woman. Educated and equal, but woman. Whatever goes against this purpose, or questions it, should be put aside (Tomić, 1911: 306).¹⁴

Furthermore, this quote reveals that male politicians and authors/journalists more often than not urged women authors and activists to accept the 'most appropriate' topics and behaviour for them. In other words, even when men supported women's causes and new social roles, they quite often took a position of traditional authority: men were the ones to decide which women's endeavours and behaviours were proper and acceptable. Likewise, they decided which women's activities and beliefs were improper and unacceptable. Such support for women's causes involved deeply paternalistic vision of women's emancipation.

I will pay attention to one particular topic in the section 'Various Notes', which frequently appeared and was of great significance at the time: the right of women to vote. For a contemporary scholar, news and articles in this section serve to illustrate how arguments of relational and individualist feminist traditions from time to time combined within one magazine.

WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE

News and articles about the right of women to vote encompassed several key topics: the struggle of Englishwomen¹⁵ and public reactions that followed their activities; announcements about various women's congresses and conferences and reports after those events were held; and news about concrete legal changes in different countries. The last topic was almost always expressed in a form of a simple statement (e.g. women in XY got the right to vote). The magazine *Žena* published news and articles about the struggle of women for the right to vote in many countries, but the ones about Englishwomen appeared more frequently and spoke about the struggle that was already deemed controversial, both in Europe and the United States. Militant tactics employed by the members of the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU), led by Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst, were

¹⁴ All translations of titles in the magazine *Žena* (from Serbian to English) are mine.

¹⁵ *Žena*, like many of its contemporaries, identified British women incorrectly as 'English'. It was a reflection in part of ignorance about the diversity of self-identification among British women (and feminists in particular) along ethnic and regional lines, and in part of the materials the editor of *Žena* in particular chose to feature. The focus of the magazine was, indeed, on the news and information coming from London, where the Parliament was and large protests by suffragettes were held. Of course, many women were involved in that struggle: English, Scottish or otherwise. The early life of Rebecca West provides a nice example: she was born in London, then lived in Edinburgh where she went to school, and returned to London later on. She praised the suffrage movement while in Edinburgh and continued to do so later on (Glendinning, 1987). I use 'Englishwomen' to stay true to the usage of this word in the titles and articles written by the editor and contributors of the magazine.

heavily criticised by their opponents, especially in Britain (Garner, 1984: 44–60, 94–115). The editor and contributors to the magazine *Žena*, although limited in many ways by their conservative and patriarchal surroundings, reacted rather positively to the activities of the WSPU and their supporters.

In 1911, one short article in *Žena* expressed the opinion that women in England were forced to use ‘desperate measures’ (such as to leave their homes on a census day, because they did not want to be counted among English citizens if they did not have a vote). However, the article concluded with a firm belief that Englishwomen would soon get what they wanted, because their case was solid (Unsigned, 1911a: 254).¹⁶ That same year, a very positive short article informed readers about the Women’s Coronation Procession, a suffragette march with around 40 thousand participants held in June 1911. In that article, the WSPU was particularly praised for its organisation and success: ‘Englishwomen advocate for universal suffrage so fiercely, that we simply must admire them’ (Unsigned, 1911b: 512–513). In 1913, the article ‘What Is Going on in England Because of the Women’s Right to Vote?’ informed readers that Englishwomen got even more aggressive after their issue was once again rejected in the Parliament. They had been attacking Lord Asquith, the Prime Minister of the UK from 1908 to 1916, whenever they got the chance (Unsigned, 1913a: 113–116). The article explained why many citizens reacted negatively to the Englishwomen’s activities:

Such women’s behavior, which goes against their true nature, seems very strange to many people and they simply can’t understand it. What is even more confusing for people is the fact that many highly educated women, teachers, professors, doctors, administrative workers, etc. participate in the women’s movement. Wives of ministers and millionaires as well as women coming from the most respectable circles of aristocracy also support the struggle for the women’s right to vote. Our people [the Serbs] will certainly have no understanding for such means of struggle (Unsigned, 1913a: 114).

The voice of the editorial board resonates in the concluding sentence of the previous quote. However, instead of providing their personal opinion on the matter, the unsigned author of the article decided to offer readers an elaborated explanation formulated by Ethel Mary Smyth, a member of the women’s suffrage movement. Smyth justified women’s militant tactics by pointing out that in order to win the right to vote, women were left with only one option – the use of violence. Since men did not want to give up their privileges and dominance, women were forced to struggle in all possible ways to win their freedom. If they failed, they would end up imprisoned or dead. Smyth described the conflicts over women’s suffrage as a matter of life and death. The article concludes with the comment written by the editor or contributor of *Žena*: ‘That is what women who break the windows on houses and shops have to say (...) So, now, everyone can decide for themselves what they think of the women’s struggle’ (Unsigned, 1913a: 116).

The aforementioned articles sent several messages to the Serbian readers. First, the struggle of Englishwomen for the right to vote was understood as undoubtedly just and righteous. None of the news and articles in the magazine called into question women’s demands. Second, in order to fight for a cause, women needed to organise themselves; hence, the WSPU was praised for an extraordinary coordination of their activities. Third, it was suggested that the choice of strategies in a struggle could have created support (if women relied on diplomacy and negotiations) or discomfort and disapproval (if they resorted to militancy and violence). The fact that the editor favourably referenced Ethel Mary Smyth and her views both on women’s suffrage and life with/out freedom indicated that Tomić understood suffrage as a universal human right and, thus, represented it as such in the unsigned section. Yet, sentences like ‘[o]ur people [Serbs] will certainly have no understanding for such means of struggle’ revealed that she was entirely aware of the local context and dominant beliefs. Strategically, it seems crucial that Tomić, the wife of the leader of the Radical Party, and vocal advocate herself for national liberation and the creation of the independent national state, was an active supporter of the women’s suffrage. In a way, in many articles in *Žena*, discourses of tradition and modernisation were merged into a third one – about Serbian women who were educated and emancipated.

Another article on a similar subject informed readers that the Parliament once again refused to vote in favour of Englishwomen’s suffrage, which provoked women to sit in their automobiles and crash into the windows of many shops. That concrete action, property damage, was particularly useful to anti-suffragists, both men and women, since it provided them with yet another reason to heavily criticise violence done by women and, consequently, their cause itself. However, the article concluded with the conviction that, in spite of all criticisms and opposition, Englishwomen would soon get the vote (Unsigned, 1912a: 248–249). The belief that (English)women would win the right to vote was explained by global processes of modernisation and emancipation of (predominantly, American and European) societies or, as the editor and contributors sometimes put it: humanity was headed in the right direction.

¹⁶ Since all the news and short articles were unsigned, in the rest of the article I will cite articles in a following manner: Unsigned, year: page number.

During 1913 *Žena* published several articles on Englishwomen, all repeating the arguments from previously published articles: in a nutshell, Lord Asquith was still strongly against universal suffrage, women fought back with all available means, the public was divided. The article 'Men against Suffragettes' emphasised how men, organised in groups, interrupted women's gatherings, attacked women and sometimes even physically assaulted them (Unsigned, 1913c: 250). This article also mentioned that Emmeline Pankhurst was absent from a gathering because she was tired, but also worried about her daughter Sylvia, who was imprisoned and potentially forcibly fed at the time (Unsigned, 1913c: 250). Similar articles informed Serbian readers about the Parliament's unfair rejection of the suffragettes' demands, as well as unsanctioned physical violence against women in unprotected spaces, such as meetings and streets, performed by the members of anti-suffragist organisations or anti-feminist men. Quoted news and unsigned articles informed the potential readers of *Žena* that at least one person – one who approved the column 'Various Notes' – condemned any type of violence used against women and, at the same time, showed some understanding for the militant tactics of the WSPU's supporters.

If other, signed articles are taken into account, it turns out that the magazine's attitude towards women's emancipation and rights was more nuanced and might have even seemed, at times, self-contradictory. Such self-contradictions may be seen as a way to reach out diverse audiences. While in the news and short unsigned articles Englishwomen's activities were presented with undivided compassion, in the signed articles their activities were interpreted within the relational mode of argumentation. For example, in a longer article titled 'The Women's Struggle for Equality and Serbian Women', Vukica M. Aleksijević, a frequent contributor to *Žena*, acknowledges the difficult position of women, especially in the West where economy forces them to fight and compete for their survival, but she nevertheless condemns both men's and women's 'extreme behavior' (Aleksijević, 1913: 343). Aleksijević used the case of Englishwomen to explain the latter:

Englishwomen fight for their rights. They do not pick and choose their strategies and means in this fight. They attack ministers and members of the Parliament, they follow them on the street, they smash windows and they even want to smash the ministers themselves. Such manners and means of fight, even if their aim and purpose are dignified and meaningful, cannot be approved. Men don't approve it, but neither should women (Aleksijević, 1913: 341).

Furthermore, Aleksijević clarified what an (in)appropriate behaviour for women was:

It is not appropriate for women to wear cowboy boots or carry swords. Similarly, it is not appropriate for women to be violent. The same way women are not made for hard physical work, they are not supposed to act in a way that would be inappropriate even for men. A woman who loses her gentleness and purity, these specifically women's traits, stops being a woman and cannot ask of others to treat her like a woman. Such struggle is not useful for the women's cause; on the contrary, it endangers it (Aleksijević, 1913: 341).

This article should be read as a part of a larger picture and discourse regarding gender norms in the magazine. It communicated very well with views on emancipation and gender roles expressed by Jaša Tomić in the aforementioned article 'The Ultimate Purpose of Woman'. Furthermore, Aleksijević's article demonstrated that dominant discourse in the magazine *Žena* was shaped by a notion of the specific culture of womanliness: (Serbian) women were expected to keep all their 'specific women's traits' – to be gentle, kind, caring – in order to get the right to education and work. Such a belief about essential gender difference – if and when needed – served conservatives and the defenders of the patriarchal order very well. Yet, without any doubt, Aleksijević was in favour of emancipation and women's rights. In the same article, she equally condemned men who underestimated women's work and their role in society. Moreover, she insisted that there must be a golden middle ground, so that both men and women could contribute to their society in the best possible way, based on their gender(ed) specificities. Thus, even though Aleksijević criticised militant strategies used by Englishwomen, she showed undivided compassion for their cause. To be more precise, Aleksijević considered women to be equal to but different from men. Like some other women and women's organisations in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Aleksijević believed in the value of gender difference, which would be socially and politically valued in a future where gender order would be based on complementarity (Daskalova and Zimmermann, 2017: 304). While Aleksijević wrote about feminine qualities expressed primarily through women's physical and emotional behaviour, using the appropriate wardrobe as a metaphor, the majority of Serbian women were peasants, lived outside cities, and spent their entire days in the fields working as hard as men. Not to mention that rural women were pregnant and gave birth in unhygienic and horrible conditions (which may be considered even harder than their usual physical work in the fields). Thus, the metaphors Aleksijević used in her article corresponded to the practices of everyday life of a particular class of women to which she – and only a tiny minority of Serbian women – belonged.

The editorial board persistently published news and unsigned articles about Englishwomen's militant actions, and firmly believed that the Englishwomen's struggle was just and fair, which suggests that the editor and her peers had a specific strategy for their readership. On the one hand, *Žena* published plenty of articles signed by the editor-in-chief and many contributors that fostered women's rights, especially the right to education and the right to work, but did not challenge the basic foundations of patriarchy (family and motherhood, as well as the notion of exclusive national identity). On the other hand, the editor used the section 'Various Notes' not only to publish news and unsigned articles about progressive and courageous women's deeds and actions in Britain, but also comment on such deeds and actions, most often favourably. *Žena* operated on different levels and with a voice that may seem self-contradictory, but in fact represented strategy for opening up more than one way to imagine female empowerment and public action to an audience that was not already sympathetic to some of the more progressive/radical ideas present in international feminist networks.



Figure 2. Unsigned. (1911). *Naše saradnice iz godine 1911* (Our Contributors in 1911). *Žena*, 1 (12), unnumbered page.

INTERNATIONAL CONGRESSES AND CONFERENCES

Another important line of reporting under the umbrella topic of women's suffrage, was about the various women's congresses and conferences organised by either Serbian or Hungarian women, such as the famous IWSA congress in Budapest in 1913, as well as other international feminist gatherings, including those in Berlin, Paris, and Rome. In an article about the activities of the Serbian National Women's Alliance, founded in Belgrade, which consisted of 110 women's societies, an unknown author reported about the meetings in which Serbian women decided to ask for a change of the Constitution by introducing women's suffrage in it. Those women emphasised that socialist women were already circulating and signing such a petition. The same article underlined that the Serbian National Women's Alliance had already joined the International Council of Women. The list of rules, aims, duties and names of the important members of the Serbian National Women's Alliance was published in the last issue of the first volume of the magazine *Žena* (Unsigned, 1911c: 760–763).

In 1912, a longer article titled 'On Women's Right to Vote' was published unsigned, even though it was not included in the section 'Various Notes', which normally published unsigned materials (Unsigned, 1912b: 347–352). The article reported on a 20 June 1912 meeting organised in Novi Sad by the Radical Party, the Serbian Social Democratic Party, and the Hungarian Independent Party. The meeting was conducted in both Serbian and Hungarian. The well-known Hungarian activist Rosika Schwimmer (1877–1948) was one of the speakers (Zimmermann and Major, 2006: 484–490). The author of the article explained that the famous Hungarian feminist rarely got the chance to speak in public meetings. Because of that, she often resorted to throwing into the audience a short speech typed on paper, signed by the Hungarian Feminist Association (*Feministák Egyesülete*). Schwimmer spoke freely about women's suffrage in front of the audience at the meeting in Novi Sad. Her speech in favour of universal suffrage appeared in full in *Žena*. By quoting Schwimmer's speech in its entirety, the journal was reaching out to all readers who had not had the chance to attend the meeting, providing them with content that was quite radical for some readers at that time. The article concluded with the optimistic remark that the number of countries where women won the right to vote was constantly growing due to the fact that humanity was headed in a positive direction.

Schwimmer's name was also mentioned in relation to the seventh IWSA Congress held in Budapest in June 1913. This congress was repeatedly announced, from issue to issue, before it actually happened. There were many reports about it afterwards as well. One longer unsigned article with various notes not included in the permanent section emphasised that Milica Tomić, the editor-in-chief, received the letter of invitation to the congress directly from Schwimmer (Unsigned, 1913b: 240–245).¹⁷ The letter was quoted in the article and seen as a generous attempt to include Serbian women in the broader struggle for women's suffrage. In one of the reports from the congress, the unknown author cited the words of 'a disappointed man', who, after the congress, said that he had not encountered any 'manly women', but only 'gentle old ladies, beautiful girls, satisfied married women, happy mothers, rich women, none of whom joined the women's movement out of despair' (Unsigned, 1913d: 355). This man's opinion offered a contrasting picture to the widely held antifeminist belief that all feminists were men haters, ugly, frustrated or unmarried. Thus, in order to criticise usual stereotypes used against feminists, the author of the article cited words of a man, imagined or real, who discarded such stereotypes. Strategically, it was crucial to hear from a man how true feminists sounded and behaved. The author also informed readers about real feminists by providing a list of famous women who spoke at the congress (such as Carrie Chapman Catt, Anna Howard Shaw and Charlotte Perkins Gilman). The unnamed author underlined that 'those women talked politics meanwhile keeping their femininity' (Unsigned, 1913d: 356). Once again, the readers were reminded that, as Jaša Tomić said, 'women will remain women', even when they speak in public or vote. *Žena* published several detailed reports about the congress in 1913, which indicated that the editor and contributors were aware of the significance which this particular international event had for them. Furthermore, those reports proved that a group of Serbian women linked to the journal was, in general, supportive of universal suffrage.

PROFESSIONS FOR WOMEN AND THE GENDER PAY GAP

It is important to briefly acknowledge that besides the question of women's suffrage, other urgent issues made the object of the news and unsigned articles. *Žena* paid particular attention to the fact that women in the early twentieth century entered professions that had previously been inaccessible to them. It did not go unnoticed that women were often paid less than men for the same job. For example, a short article published in 1912 explained that the German government wanted to employ 8600 female workers in post offices, but only because their work would be cheaper than men's work. *Žena* reported that many German women's periodicals criticised the

¹⁷ This event was mentioned in the article written by Gordana Stojković on the magazine *Ženski svet* ('Women's World') (Stojković, 2011).

government's intention and requested equal pay (Unsigned, 1912c: 570). Similarly, an article from 1914 informed readers that Turkish women were asked to work as telephone operators. Telephones were a rather new thing in this period, so this type of job was also new. One of the reasons to target women as future employees for such jobs was that they were paid less than men (Unsigned, 1914: 179–180). The gender pay gap was frequently mentioned and criticised in the magazine, which also indicates that the editor and contributors were entirely aware of various aspects of women's rights and basic social justice.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of news and unsigned articles that appeared in *Žena* between 1911 and 1914, especially those published in the section 'Various Notes', indicated two things: first, the unsigned contributions in the women's periodicals were often results of a collaborative work (and even collaborative authorship) and, to a large extent, represented the position common to the group of women who gathered around the magazine;¹⁸ second, both global and local contexts had a massive impact on the politics of editing and, consequently, the conceptualisation of feminist/emancipatory politics in the magazine *Žena*. The local context was limiting and often oppressive towards women: emancipation and modernisation in terms of women's position and gender politics were considered desirable only to a certain extent or, as Daskalova and Zimmermann pointed out, the dominant discourse and mode of behaviour was that of 'patriotic modernization' (2017: 279). In other words, although it was important for the Serbian intellectual elite to become a part of the developed, modern world, even if that meant that women would have the right to education and work and, later on, to vote, they nevertheless insisted that three most important women's roles were: daughter, wife and mother, who nurture, care, and reproduce. Thus, certain issues could have been raised in the magazine only in relation to the global context, as news and articles about the Englishwomen's militant strategies clearly demonstrated. A mixture of relational and individualist arguments in *Žena* may be seen as a consequence of a patriotic modernisation and, in that sense, typical for other countries in a process of nation building at the time. To conclude, *Žena*, reported about progressive and even radical feminist politics and, especially in the unsigned articles, discussed them quite favourably, despite the dominantly traditional and conservative context in which the magazine was published. This reveals diversity, complexity and contradictions which were inherent to the early feminist activism of Serbian women.

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¹⁸ In this regard, it is useful to remember Ellen Gruber Garvey's words: 'Editors crucially act a gatekeepers, admitting or excluding materials, and as generators of community, inviting readers to see themselves as convened around the magazine' (Garvey, 2002: 86–87).

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