Žena danas (1936–40; 1943–44; 1945–53) and Mitra Mitrović: The Policies of (Ghost) Editorship, Feminism, and Antifascism

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Žena danas (1936–40; 1943–44; 1945–53) and Mitra Mitrović: The Policies of (Ghost) Editorship, Feminism, and Antifascism

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ABSTRACT

This article offers an innovative contribution to previous and current reconstructions of the dialectics of the national and women's questions in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. More precisely, it aims to open questions about local and global dis/continuities both between and within Yugoslav left feminism, antifascism, and communism in the period immediately before, during, and after the Second World War (1936–53). Focusing on the magazine *Žena danas* [Woman Today] (1936–40; 1943–44; 1945–81), along with the bio-bibliography of one of its key founders, collaborators, and editors, Mitra Mitrović (1912–2001), the article engages with recent reconceptualizations of women's collective engagement in social and cultural movements, as well as historiographical syntheses on global left feminism. Our approach combines three methodological frameworks: 1) periodical studies and the study of editorship in national and European contexts, on which we build to explore the notion of 'ghost editorship'; 2) gender studies, including the conceptualization of 'women as a group', and 3) the history of communism, antifascism, and left feminism in the interwar period, primarily between 1936 and 1953, in Yugoslavia and beyond.

KEYWORDS

Žena danas, Mitra Mitrović, women periodical editors, Kingdom of SCS/Yugoslavia, feminism, antifascism, communism, ghost editorship

Introduction

The history of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes/Kingdom of Yugoslavia (1918–29–41), a state that was formed in 1918 by the unification of very different cultural-historical, socio-economic, and military-political areas, has so far, mainly, been studied as a history of 'national questions' (Yugoslav ideas), 'ethnic competitions', ideological, party, and parliamentary conflicts,[1] even regarding cultural policy issues,[2] or long-term social processes in continuity with the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia/SFRY.[3] At the same time, particular importance is often attached to the conflicting and turbulent dynamics of anti-communist and communist tendencies in the interwar period, since, after the Second World War, the same geopolitical space was radically reconstituted into a socialist state, which would eventually collapse in the early 1990s. A focus of this kind, however, mostly leaves aside the (parallel) genesis of the so-called Woman Question, i.e. the history of the women's emancipation movements, feminist ideas, and agendas. This lacuna has been filled by researchers in the field of nineteenth- and twentieth-century women's history, who have offered various feminist revisions of the existing macro-historical narratives.[4] Elsewhere there is a growing body of work on socialist Yugoslav feminism, which we rely on to draw lines to the pre-WWII period.[5] Likewise, recently there have been new initiatives and insights concerning (interwar) communism and the politics of the Popular Front in Yugoslavia as well as globally.[6]

In this paper, we intend to engage with existing and open new questions about local and global dis/continuities both between and within Yugoslav (left) feminism and communism in the period immediately before, during, and after WWII, more precisely, from 1936 to 1953. We do so by offering a critical discourse analysis of the magazine *Žena danas* [Woman Today] (1936–40; 1943–44; 1945–81), along with a bio-bibliography of one of its key founders, collaborators, and editors: Mitra Mitrović

1 See, for instance, Branko Petranović, *Istorija Jugoslavije, knj. 1: Kraljevina Jugoslavija: 1914–1941* (Beograd: Nolit, 1988); Jovo Bakić, *Ideologije jugoslovenstva između hrvatskog i srpskog nacionalizma* (Zrenjanin: Gradska biblioteka 'Žarko Zrenjanin', 2004); Dejan Djokic, *Elusive Compromise: A History of Interwar Yugoslavia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).

2 See Ljubodrag Dimić, *Kulturna politika u Kraljevini Jugoslaviji, 1918–1941* (Beograd: Stubovi kulture, 1996/97).

3 See Mari-Žanin Čalić, *Istorija Jugoslavije u 20. veku* (Beograd: Clio, 2013).

4 See, for instance, Jovanka Kecman, Žene Jugoslavije u radničkom pokretu i ženskim organizacijama 1918–1941 (Beograd: Izdavačko preduzeće Narodna knjiga, Institut za istoriju radničkog pokreta, 1978); Neda Božinović, Žensko pitanje u Srbiji u XIX i XX veku (Beograd: 'Devedesetčetvrta', 'Žene u crnom', 1996); Svetlana Stefanović, 'Žensko pitanje u beogradskoj štampi i periodici (1918–1941)' (unpublished master's thesis, University of Belgrade, 2000); Ivana Pantelić, *Partizanke kao građanke: društvena emancipacija partizanki u Srbiji 1945–1953* (Beograd: Evoluta, 2011); Ida Ograjšek Gorenjak, *Opasne iluzije: Rodni stereotipi u međuratnoj Jugoslaviji* (Zagreb: Srednja Europa, 2014); Jelena Petrović, *Women's Authorship in Interwar Yugoslavia: The Politics of Love and Struggle* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019); Isidora Grubački, 'Communism, Left Feminism, and Generations in the 1930s: The Case of Yugoslavia', in *Gender, Generations, and Communism in Central and South-Eastern Europe*, ed. by Anna Artwińska and Agnieszka Mrozik (London: Routledge, 2020), 45–65; Isidora Grubački, 'The Politics of Feminisms in Interwar Yugoslavia: Local, National and Transnational Perspectives' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Central European University, 2024).

5 See, for instance, Chiara Bonfiglioli, 'Women's Political and Social Activism in the Early Cold War Era: The Case of Yugoslavia', *Aspasia*, 8.1 (2014), 1–25; Chiara Bonfiglioli, 'AFŽ Activists Biographies: An Intersectional Reading of Women's Agency', in *The Lost Revolution: Women's Antifascist Front between Myth and Forgetting*, ed. by Andreja Dugandžić and Crvena Tijana Okić (Sarajevo: Association for Culture and Art, 2018), 16–41; Zsófia Lóránd, *The Feminist Challenge to the Socialist State in Yugoslavia* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018); Adriana Zaharijevic, 'The Strange Case of Yugoslav Feminism: Feminism and Socialism in "the East"', *Montenegrin Journal for Social Sciences*, 1.2 (2017), 135–56.

6 See James Barrett, 'Rethinking the Popular Front', *Rethinking Marxism*, 21.4 (2009), 531–50; Elinor Taylor, *The Popular Front Novel in Britain 1934–1940* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2017); Stefan Gužvica, *Before Tito: The Communist Party of Yugoslavia during the Great Purge (1936–1940)* (Tallinn: Tallinn University Press, 2022).

(1912–2001). Our approach combines three methodological frameworks and branches into three corresponding problem areas. First, we consider the theories of seriality (Iris Marion Young) and positionality (Linda M. Alcoff) as an optimal theoretical framework for understanding women editors of periodicals as a group in different periods of Yugoslav history. We then examine the history of Yugoslavia in relation to the Popular Front, communism, antifascism, and feminism in the interwar period, mainly from 1936 to 1953, and zoom in on the history of the magazine *Žena danas* in local and global contexts, the politics of gender, genre, and ideological mimicry in the magazine, offering simultaneously an editorial portrait of Mitra Mitrović as a paradigmatic product of these politics. Finally, we use the conceptualization of 'women as a group' as a stimulus for engaging with key insights within present-day periodical studies from a gender perspective, and explore the notion of 'ghost editorship' as a further feminist revision to current theories of periodical editorship.

Women Periodical Editors in Yugoslavia as a Group

The dynamic multi-decade development of the magazine *Žena danas* is inseparable from the (parallel) growth of both the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (CPY), including the international policies of the Popular Front, and the (more or less) autonomous feminist movements — in the Kingdom of SCS/Yugoslavia as well as globally. In the Kingdom of SCS, the CPY was banned the same year it was founded, in 1920. Consequently, all of the Party's activities were illegal and developed underground throughout the interwar period. On the other hand, women's and feminist movements and organizations — mostly bourgeois-oriented — were tolerated and visible to the public, although they were largely neglected and considered marginal by the state. *Ženski pokret* [Women's Movement] (est. 1919) was the most influential among these collective initiatives, alongside the eponymous magazine *Ženski pokret*, its official organ, published continuously from 1920 to 1938.[7]

Women were not full citizens in the Kingdom of SCS/Yugoslavia. Without suffrage, or the right to be formally called 'responsible/executive editor',[8] deprived of participation in the parliamentary, legislative, and administrative forms of government, operating not only in a male-dominated but also in a deeply patriarchal political, socio-economic, and intellectual climate, numerous women in the Kingdom of SCS/Yugoslavia were united in their attempts to feminize and/or transform the public sphere, while simultaneously exercising and gaining their own authorship and authority. One of the rare, but possible, and most effective ways was through (editing) the periodical press. The periodicals of the interwar period edited by women included women's as well as feminist periodicals, testifying to the significance and heterogeneity of the feminist 'counter-publics' in the Kingdom of SCS/Yugoslavia, to borrow a term from Nancy

7 The initial name of the association was Društvo za prosvećivanje žene i zaštitu njenih prava [The Society for the Woman's Enlightenment and the Protection of Her Rights]. Soon, it was renamed into *Ženski pokret* [The Women's Movement] (1922), and finally, due to coordination and unification with other feminist organizations in the country, Alijansa ženskih pokreta [The Women's Movements Alliance in the Kingdom of SCS/Yugoslavia] (1923). These changes were visible in the subtitle of the magazine. *Ženski pokret* [Women's Movement] (1920–38) was the most enduring and influential feminist periodical in interwar Yugoslavia. The editors and contributors were active in the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Little Entente of Women, and the International Council of Women. The magazine belonged to the currents of interwar liberal feminism (or, in other words, radical bourgeois feminism). However, it also included and was influenced by social-democratic and communist ideas. See *Ženski pokret (1920–1938): zbornik radova*, ed. by Jelena Milinković and Žarka Svirčev (Beograd: Institut za književnost i umetnost, 2021).

8 See Božinović, p. 101; Miroslava Malešević, Žensko: etnografski aspekti društvenog položaja žene u Srbiji (Beograd: Srpski genealoški centar, 2007), 20–21.

Fraser.[9] Due to their pronounced collectivism, these periodicals can be productively analysed through the gendered concepts of 'positionality' as understood by Linda Martín Alcoff and Iris Marion Young's 'seriality'.

Both scholars, like many feminist researchers in recent decades, try to offer a possible solution to one of the most persistent and significant problems in feminist theory — 'conceptualizing women as a group'.[10] By gendering Sartre's concept of seriality, Young examines how different forms of association and grouping of women based on sex/gender figure as a step towards (individual) feminist self-awareness and (collective) feminist politics. Alcoff's notion of positionality, on the other hand, implies the following two key points: first, 'the concept of woman is a relational term identifiable only within a (constantly moving) context', and, second, 'the position that women find themselves in can be actively utilized (rather than transcended) as a location for the construction of meaning, a place from where meaning can be *discovered* (the meaning of being female)'.[11] In the theories of seriality and positionality women are not considered to be identical among themselves, but constitute a 'passive unity' that arises from shared (marginal or invisible) social positions.[12]

In short, as a group, women periodical editors in the Kingdom of SCS/Yugoslavia shared a sense of belonging to the feminist counter-publics and an inclination towards particular periodical genres (women's and feminist magazines), alongside an overall interest in women's issues and the Woman Question. Discourses of womanhood and femininity, and the presence of a more or less explicit feminist agenda, were key aspects of women periodical editors' policies, regardless of great differences in their biographies, political (feminist) orientations, and various individual circumstances and aims.[13] Sometimes, however, the femininity-based, gender-based discourses and the insistence on women's issues, notable on the surface of periodical policies, were a mere mask for other forms of political activism and mobilization. In some cases, these discourses even served an opposite agenda — supporting deeply patriarchal, anti-feminist tendencies.[14]

The *Žena danas* Magazine: (Re)Contextualization

Considered in this local and national context, the *Žena danas* magazine, founded in 1936, represents a unique phenomenon in the periodical, intellectual, and political fields of its era. It is the only magazine in the Kingdom of SCS/Yugoslavia in which feminine discourses and genres, feminism, antifascism, and communism intersected for almost four years, thus producing a specific new (left) feminism in parallel with the feminization of communism. However, if considered from an international perspective, this kind of feminism, as shaped and promoted in *Žena danas*, can also be found in other Popular Front left-feminist periodicals, most of which were related to the Women's

9 See Stanislava Barać, *Feministička kontrajavnost:* Žanr ženskog *portreta u srpskoj periodici 1920–1941* (Beograd: Institut za književnost i umetnost, 2015).

10 Iris Marion Young, 'Gender as Seriality: Thinking about Women as a Social Collective', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 19.3 (1994), 713–38 (p. 713).

11 Linda Martín Alcoff, *Visible Identities: Race, Gender and the Self* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 148.

12 Ibid., p. 735.

13 See Zorana Simić, 'Urednice periodike: Rod i vokacija', *Književna istorija*, 54.178 (2022), 145–63.

14 Such tendencies are visible, for instance, in the late engagement of the periodical editor Zofka Kveder Demetrović during and right after the First World War, marked by a masculinist conception of ethnic-based Yugoslavism; see Natka Badurina, 'Od strepnje do autoritarnog subjekta: ideološki zaokret Zofke Kveder', in *Riječki filološki dani*, ed. by Lada Badurina and Danijela Bačić-Karković (Rijeka: Filozofski fakultet u Rijeci, 2010), 49–67. To a much greater extent, they are visible in the case of magazine *Naša žena* [Our Woman], edited by Zdenka Smrekar immediately before WWII, where the discourses of femininity eventually appeared to be a cover for this woman editor's profascist agenda; see Marina Bitunjac, *Žene i ustaški pokret* (Zagreb: Srednja Europa, 2023).

World Committee against War and Fascism,[15] either implicitly or directly undertaking the official policy of the Committee, as we will elaborate later. These periodicals were, among others, *Les Femmes dans l'action mondiale: Organe mensuel du Comité Mondial des Femmes* (1934–39, France), *Jeunes filles de France* (1936–38, France),[16] *Mujeres Libres* (1936–38, Spain), *La Mujer Nueva* (1935–41, Chile),[17] *Die Frau* (1936, Paris), *Woman To-Day* (1937–39, Great Britain), *Woman Today* (1936–37, USA), *Ženski svijet* (1939–40, Zagreb, Kingdom of Yugoslavia), *Kvinner og Klær* (1940, Norway), *La voce delle donne: rivista mensile in lingua italiana del Comitato mondiale delle donne contro la guerra e il fascismo* (1936–3?, Italy).[18] The Yugoslav magazine *Žena danas* thus participated in an international project realized within the corresponding national frameworks.

Credit for this primarily goes to the women editors of these periodicals, who continuously operated as a group in their own right, practicing multi-layered, more or less explicit, forms of collective feminist-as-antifascist (editorial) engagement. Among them, as *prima inter pares*, Mitra Mitrović stands out for her influence and exemplary role. Mitrović was a lifelong feminist and antifascist, a member of the CPY, a well-known figure of the People's Liberation Movement and Struggle, and officially the first female minister (of education) in the ex-Yugoslav countries. She was imprisoned during the Nazi occupation of Serbia and famously managed to escape, which she describes in detail in her memoir *Ratno putovanje* [A War Journey], published in 1953. During and right after WWII, Mitra Mitrović was also an editor of the communist magazine *Borba* [Struggle],[19] a delegate to the Antifascist Council for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia, and a founding member of the Women's Antifascist Front of Yugoslavia (AFŽ). From 1945 to 1953, she held several high political positions in the SFRY.[20]

The beginning of young Mitra Mitrović's public engagement, as well as her joining the illegal CPY, coincided with significant reconfigurations and redirections in both the Party's course and in the political climate in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in general. On the one hand, in the second half of the 1930s, the CPY developed a new policy according to the strategy of the Popular Front, conditioned, as is well known, by the rise of fascism and the aim of opposing it. The acceptance of the Popular Front strategy as a turn to non-sectarian class politics, which occurred at the Seventh Congress of the Communist International (Comintern) in August 1935, is best known from Georgi Dimitrov's report 'The People's Front'. In a later report, Dimitrov pleaded for a further rethinking of the notion of the masses and the role of popular culture.[21] In both cases, Dimitrov formulated certain ideas in the form of directives, which, in fact, were already in the process of development. Dimitrov claims that the success of the

15 This was an international organization, sponsored by the Communist International, that was active in the struggle against Fascism in the 1930s.

16 Susan B. Whitney, 'Embracing the Status Quo: French Communist, Young Women, and the Popular Front', *The Journal of Social History*, 30.1 (1996), 29–53.

17 On the long continuity of Chilean feminist internationalism and the place of *La Mujer Nueva* within the international women's antifascist movement, see Corinne A. Pernet, 'Chilean Feminist, the International's Women's Movement, and Suffrage, 1915–1950', *Pacific Historical Review*, 1 (1990), 213–28.

18 Stanislava Barać, 'Žena danas (1936–1940) i kultura sećanja', in *Časopis Žena danas: prosvećivanje za revoluciju* (Beograd, Institut za književnost i umetnost, 2022), 21–53 (p. 26); Grubački, 'Politics of Feminisms'.

19 See Mitra Mitrović, *Ratno putovanje* (Beograd: Prosveta, 1953), 136–60.

20 See Stanislava Barać, '(Ne)pristajanje na zaborav: Mitra Mitrović, portret revolucionarke', *Komuna Links* (23 January 2017); Žene *Srbije u NOB* (Beograd: Nolit, 1975); Veljko, Stanić, '*Parče velikog* života: Mitra Mitrović o tridesetim godinama 20. veka', in *Časopis Žena danas (1936–1940): prosvećivanje za revoluciju*, ed. by Stanislava Barać (Beograd: Institut za književnost i umetnost, 2022), 55–104.

21 See Georgy Dimitrov, 'The People's Front', *Georgy Dimitrov Archive*; Georgy Dimitrov, 'The Fascist Offensive and the Tasks of the Communist International in the Struggle of the Working Class against Fascism', in *Georgy Dimitrov Archive*.

Popular Front 'depends on a correct policy of the working class towards the peasantry and the petty-bourgeois masses of the towns. These masses must be taken as they are, and not as we should like to have them.'[22] The Popular Front strategy, in other words, should use the popular culture of different social groups and invent ways to produce a new culture for the mass public. This particular idea is of the utmost importance in situating the editorial policy of *Žena danas*.

As shown by recent research on the Popular Front, nationally and internationally, the Popular Front Strategy was established as both a top-bottom and, to a lesser extent, a bottom-top policy.[23] While initiatives for cultural and political activities came mostly from the top of the Party's hierarchy, such activities were also practiced relatively autonomously 'from below', prior to the Comintern's declarations. In the context of women's emancipation in Yugoslavia, for instance, Isidora Grubački points to the previous argument that the CPY 'had followed the line of the "united front from below"' from 1932 which made the 'CPY approach "a sort of cautious vanguard" of the developments which would be sanctioned by the Seventh Congress of the Comintern in August 1935'.[24]

On the other hand, these bottom-top dynamics coincided with the development of Yugoslav revolutionary Youth and collectively organized women students specifically. From the very beginning of the 1930s, within the students' anti-regime protests against the 1929 King's Dictatorship, groups of Yugoslav female students grew gradually as political subjects and a 'political generation'.[25] Thus, they were a kind of 'cautious vanguard' too: their politicization in the first half of the 1930s directly enabled the birth and development of the left-feminist movement in the second half of the decade.[26] Or, to move from a temporal to a spatial axis, the local context and local anti-dictatorship reaction provided these young women, including the ones who would eventually become the editors of *Žena danas*, with the knowledge and experience needed to fuel the already smoldering global women's antifascist action. In such a revolutionary climate, young women were able to take the initiative ahead of the Party's directives despite a strong hierarchy. Even though the Party's supreme organs, consisting of men, had to approve every proposed action, 'marginal' party members, including the youth, students, and women, were able to act according to their own affinities and aspirations.[27]

The new local policy of the CPY in 1935 required 1) the involvement of Party members and sympathizers in existing legal organizations, 2) the establishment of new legal forms of work, and 3) addressing a wide audience to build a mass antifascist action and coalition. Alongside her young female comrade Dobrila Karapandžić (1911–2009),

22 Dimitrov, 'Fascist Offensive'.

23 See Barrett, pp. 537–38 and Taylor, pp. 6–11.

24 Isidora Grubački here relies on Stefan Gužvica's insights. Grubački, 'Politics of Feminisms', p. 173.

25 Grubački, 'Communism', pp. 46–47. To put it very briefly, the crisis of the (Serbo-Croatian) national question — especially visible within the Parliament, culminating in 1928 with the assassination of the three of its Croatian Members — was behind the King's strict decision to introduce dictatorship on 6 January 1929. Parliament and all political parties were abolished, and the constitution was suspended. As a result, starting from 1930–31, students continuously organized anti-dictatorship protests in Belgrade. In doing so, many of them also became aware of their leftist beliefs. Until 1935, huge numbers of those students joined the CPY officially, mostly starting with membership of the League of Communist Youth of Yugoslavia.

26 Ibid., pp. 45–65.

27 In an account of her in-depth archival research, Chiara Bonfiglioli accurately described this aspect of Yugoslav women's agency in the antifascist movement. In addition, she stressed that 'AFŽ militants' biographies, agency and subjective processes of politicization remain under-researched, notably when it comes to leaders and intermediate cadres', which is mostly the consequence of the fact that even feminist researchers in the 1980s and later tended to be prejudiced against the after-war testimonies of these activists. See Bonfiglioli, 'AFŽ Activists' Biographies', p. 22.

Mitra Mitrović was in charge of applying this policy to women in Serbia.[28] Although they ultimately did so within the Party's strict framework, they simultaneously followed their particular wishes and choices.

First, in 1935, with a group of other young female Communists, Mitra Mitrović and Dobrila Karapandžić formed a Youth Section within the Women's Movement (ŽP), thus making a curious pact with a predominantly bourgeois-oriented, non-institutional, and non-partisan feminist organization. As Grubački writes, 'while the scholarship has so far emphasized that the KPJ delegated the women to join ŽP, Mitra Mitrović, who was the president of the Belgrade ŽP Youth section, wrote in a 1959 text that she and her friends themselves had the idea to join the ŽP, and then the KPJ approved it'.[29] Second, they established a new, legal form of work — the periodical *Žena danas*, officially run as an independent private publication. The magazine was published in Belgrade, the capital of Yugoslavia. The *Impressum* included only the name of the official owner and editor and not a single piece of information on the actual editorial staff members or the magazine's circulation.[30] As later sources and testimonies show, the first members of the Youth Section of the Women's Movement overlapped with the editorial staff of *Žena danas*: they 'conducted it as a single legal antifascist action' and the magazine launching coincided with their 'infiltration into public political life and public organizations' in general.[31] Finally, the periodical was intended for a wide, heterogeneous female audience, and, accordingly, designed as an illustrated magazine.[32] In the words of Mitra Mitrović:

> We lacked a periodical that we would edit independently, without any double censorship, and through which we would channel more autonomously and boldly the Party's positioning in the fight against fascism and for democratic rights. We were looking for opportunities to establish such a periodical, whereby, under the influence of the Party and its leadership, a fairly wide corpus of the antifascist press, youth-oriented and other periodicals, in addition to literary magazines, had been already in development. I remember all too well that afternoon when — it seems — we founded such a periodical. […] We were very excited, almost childishly joyful, warmed by the idea of a magazine that we would edit by ourselves, we

28 Božinović, p. 117.

29 Grubački, 'Politics of Feminisms'.

30 The magazines of this epoch such as *Ženski pokret* usually included the Impressum — containing the basic information on the publishing policies, owner, editors, and the editorial board — on the very first page, or even the front cover, using larger type for that purpose. Contrary to that practice, the editors of *Žena danas* put the Impressum at the very bottom of the last page of the magazine, avoiding to name the editorial board members, and using smaller type than in the rest of the articles on the page.

31 'što smo to radile kao jednu jedinstvenu legalnu antifašističku akciju, što to pada u isto vreme našeg prodora u javni politički život i u javne organizacije.' Mitra Mitrović, '*Žena danas*', *Godišnjak grada Beograda*, 6 (1959), 413–24 (p. 414). See also '[Introduction]', in *Žena danas. Brojevi 1/1936–33/1944: Fototipsko izdanje* (Beograd: Konferencija za društvenu aktivnost žena Jugoslavije, 1966), p. vi.

32 All the social positions of the editorial staff members and regular contributors as well as the targeted audience of the magazine were peripheral, even extremely peripheral, both in the specific context of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and beyond it. Their multiple identities were those of outlawed Communists (many of them already arrested or followed by the police), young women, university students, manual workers, apprentices, trade unionists, and peasant girls. Besides, the multifold peripheral position of *Žena danas* can be explained within broader categories: it was just one more — seemingly typical — women's or feminist magazine in a deeply patriarchal community, a left-feminist journal in a bourgeois-dominated feminist counter-public, the proletarian voice in a capitalist society, a disguised activity of a political party that was illegal in its own country, and the activity of the small Communist Party that was dependent on larger parties within the Communist International, as well.

> women communists, in such a way that it would be appealing, vivid, attractive to women, with images.[33]

A periodical young women Communists themselves wished for, Žena danas started from multiple marginalized or proscribed positions during the late 1930s in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, developed through WWII and the Revolution, and eventually took a kind of 'central', or at least recognizable place in a newborn socialist state (SFRY). Banned by state censorship while the Kingdom was still officially neutral (1940), it was resuscitated by Mitra Mitrović herself, in the middle of war struggles (1943–44), with the added subtitle 'Organ Antifašističkog fronta žena Jugoslavije' [The Organ of the Women's Antifascist Front of Yugoslavia] (AFŽ). This subtitle, we argue, functions as a valuable clue and relevant historiographical source for periodical researchers, alongside archival documents and testimonies: it indicates that the engagement of the members of the Youth Section of the Women's Movement and/as the members of the editorial board of Žena danas represents the first phase (1936–40) of the AFŽ, officially established several years later, in December of 1942. The first phase is the phase of left-feminist, i.e. antifascist's women's movement formation, while December 1942 designates the date when this movement transformed into the organization, which was followed by the recognition of its official name. The same could be said in the case of the magazine Žena danas in this phase itself.[34] In other words, the seemingly small editorial gesture of adding the subtitle when publishing the magazine on the liberated territories during the Second World War, reveals what could not be revealed during the illegal phase of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia: the magazine's goal of the women-focused massification of the antifascist movement in the country. However, after WWII, the Party's patriarchal tendencies grew stronger and the AFŽ was abolished in 1953. From then on, Žena danas continued without its added subtitle until it ceased publication in 1981, a decade before the dissolution of SFRY.

During the first four years of publication, Žena danas was published under strict censorship: any direct reference to communism, even the name of the editor, could provoke resistance or punishment from the monarchical regime and the state's repressive apparatus. Aware of this, the women founders and editors of the magazine, led by Mitra Mitrović, carefully designed and implemented mimicry strategies on at least three interconnected levels: editorial, genre, and visual. First of all, the role of the owner and editor of the magazine was officially performed by one of the representatives of the bourgeois class with whom the young female Communists shared a basic antifascist and

33 'Nama je nedostajao jedan list koji bismo nezavisno uređivale bez ikakve duple cenzure, kroz koji bismo samostalnije i smelije pronosile liniju Partije u borbi protiv fašizma i za demokratska prava. Tražile smo mogućnosti da osnujemo jedan takav list, a pod uticajem Partije i njenim rukovodstvom već se razvijala dosta široka antifašistička štampa, omladinska i druga, pored književnih časopisa. Isuviše se dobro sećam tog popodneva kad smo ga, čini mi se, osnovale. […] Bile smo veoma uzbuđene i skoro detinjasto radosne, zagrejane idejom o listu koji ćemo same uređivati, same mi komunistkinje, i to uređivati lepo, živo, privlačno za žene, sa slikama.' Mitra Mitrović, '*Žena danas*', p. 415. All translations from Serbian into English are the authors'.

34 We can rely on this hypothesis although we are lacking the official pre-war archive of the organization or, as explained, the pre-war archive of the movement as the first phase of the organization. Moreover, we consider the magazine itself (1930–40) the only existing archive of the movement, due to the illegal and conspiratorial nature of communist activism in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, and the first-rate document and testimony of AFŽ's continuation (Barać, '*Žena danas* [1936–1940] i kultura sećanja', pp. 44–45). This kind of understanding of the role of *Žena danas* and its editors complements and fulfills the methodological instructions that Chiara Bonfiglioli formulated in her work on the AFŽ: 'A biographical and intersectional approach also allows us to map the continuities between women's engagement within feminist organizations and cultural associations in the interwar period, and their leadership within the AFŽ during wartimes and in the post-war era, avoiding a paradigm of absolute discontinuity between "feminist" and "proletarian" women's movements.' Bonfiglioli, 'AFŽ Activists Biographies', p. 23.

feminist attitude (Radmila Dimitrijević, 1936–38; Olga Timotijević, 1938–40; Mira Vučković and Ljerka Babić, 1940). As Mitra Mitrović later recorded in Ratno putovanje (1953): 'We needed to find a female comrade, an antifascist, who would publicly put her name on a magazine which was known to be connected with the Party, but in such a way that the name, at the same time, wouldn't be suspicious to the police.'[35] In other words, Mitra Mitrović and other female Communists practiced a certain kind of invisible or 'ghost' editorship.

The ideologies represented in *Žena danas* were cleverly 'organized' within the text: feminism, along with femininity-based discourses, was the most explicit; pacifism and antifascism were equally present but not used to promote the magazine (in editorial articles, advertisements, or announcements); communism was expressed only indirectly. Communism was the unsaid, hidden, and implicit aspect of *Žena danas*. Just as the young female Communists were 'ghost editors', the communism they advocated was a 'ghost ideology' of the magazine; nevertheless, it was a *sine qua non* of this collective periodical project.

Last but not least, the visual aspect of the magazine was used to convey a message that would have led to the ban of *Žena danas* by state censorship had it been expressed in words (which actually happened with the 30th issue in 1940). Comparative analysis of the aforementioned Popular Front's left-feminist magazines from all around the world, including *Žena danas*, shows that a significant number of the same pictures circulated through most of them (just as the practice was to circulate, translate, and publish the newest reportages and short stories of leftist journalists and writers such as Agnes Smedley). *Žena danas* developed its own visual language, composed of original photographs, photomontages, and photo collages, as well as reproductions of paintings and drawings.[36] The great importance attached to the magazine's visual presentation was a consequence of at least two editorial necessities: the avoidance of censorship and the need to communicate with a mass, semi-literate audience (the magazine was intended to be read in a trade union or in the countryside, where an activist would read from it and many women would listen to her). Furthermore, as opposed to most of the periodicals of the corresponding era, the selected images on the cover page of *Žena danas* (mostly photomontage in the manner of John Heartfield or Alexander Rodchenko) were not followed by any textual explanation, not even a short legend.[37] The cover images, consequently, constituted relatively independent semantic and media units. Their meanings, at first glance, seemed to be quite diverse: smiling peasant girls in a wheat field, a mother worried about the threat of the war, young girls skiing, etc. (see Fig. 1). However, they belonged to a unique, recognizable semantic base, inseparable from the other aspects of the magazine, and the women editors apparently hoped that the majority of readers would decode the meanings appropriately (see Fig. 2).

The process of building this semantic base started as soon as the magazine itself did. In the first issue, a distinct editorial gesture already marked *Žena danas*'s multifold, complex, but firm positioning: the young Yugoslav female Communists chose to publish an article by Gabrielle Duchêne as a manifesto. Duchêne was the initiator and the president of the Comité mondial des femmes contre la guerre et le fascisme [Women's World Committee against War and Fascism, WWCWF], established in Paris in 1934, together with its organ, the aforementioned monthly magazine *Les Femmes dans l'action*

35 'Trebalo je pronaći drugaricu, antifašistkinju, koja *će* javno staviti svoje ime na jedan list za koji se zna da ima veze sa Partijom, a njeno ime ne sme *da bode oči policiji*.' Mitra Mitrović, *Ratno putovanje*, p. 160.

36 Milanka Todić, 'Fotografija i fotomontaža na naslovnim stranama revije *Žena danas*', in *Časopis Žena danas (1936–1940): prosvećivanje za revoluciju*, ed. by Stanislava Barać (Beograd: Institut za književnost i umetnost, 2022), pp. 367–90.

37 Ibid.

Fig. 1 Cover of *Žena danas*, 11–12.3 (1938). National Library of Serbia

Fig. 2 Cover of *Žena danas*, 7.2 (1937). National Library of Serbia

mondiale [Women in the Global Action]. She wrote the introductory article to mark the launch of *Žena danas*, addressing Yugoslav women specifically. Moreover, the editors put Duchêne's article before their own, unsigned articles entitled 'Introductory Word' and 'New Feminism', to position themselves in the international left antifascist feminist network that was being established globally at that very moment. In doing so, may have been drawing on connections made with other women at the international pacifist conferences (such as the founding congress of the WWCWF held in Paris in 1934). Accordingly, Grubački's recent hypothesis that the work of the Youth Section and *Žena danas* arose and continuously figured as part of a relatively autonomous international women's movement (within the communist and antifascist movement) should be examined further.[38]

As already indicated, such a movement started with the foundation of the WWCWF and continued through the post-war work of the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF, est. 1945 in Paris).[39] Francisca de Haan based her research and concept of global left feminism on the latter. However, we suggest that these two organizations and the movements they represented should be considered as a continuum and together make what she calls 'left-feminist global history'.[40] In the most recent research on the subject, Jasmine Calver examines national interwar left-feminist organizations and their magazines (focusing mostly on the French *Femmes dans l'action mondiale* and British *Woman To-Day*) as sections of the WWCWF.[41] Calver argues that the WWCWF 'declared itself to be above the parties and was therefore used by Comintern to test the Popular Front strategy of collaboration between parties on the left before adopting it as official policy'.[42] The position of these national and international women's organizations, as well as their magazines, oscillated between dependence and autonomy in relation to the male-dominated framing organizations such as CPY and Comintern. Interestingly, the WIDF's continuity with the WWCWF and dependence on Comintern/Cominform policy can be argued precisely based on its relationship with the Yugoslav organization, the Women's Antifascist Front of Yugoslavia. Although the AFŽ was the founding member of the WIDF (where Mitra Mitrović also delivered a speech in the name of the Yugoslav delegation), initially functioning as a highly respected organization within it, in 1949 — after the Soviet-Yugoslav split — the WIDF expelled the AFŽ from its membership.[43] *Žena danas*, the official magazine of the AFŽ at the time, continuously reported on these unpleasant developments.[44] One could therefore argue that there was a greater degree of women's autonomy among left-feminist organizations on a global level in the first, interwar period than after WWII. Nevertheless, as De Haan's seminal research on the WIDF implies and other researchers confirm, although the WIDF 'fell increasingly under Soviet influence after the onset of

38 Grubački, 'Politics of Feminisms'.

39 Grubački, 'Communism', pp. 45–46.

40 Francisca de Haan, 'The Global Left-Feminist 1960s: From Copenhagen to Moscow and New York', in *The Routledge Handbook of the Global Sixties: Between Protest and Nation-Building*, ed. by Chen Jian et al. (London: Routledge, 2018), pp. 230–42 (p. 230).

41 Jasmine Calver, 'The *Comité mondial des femmes contre la guerre et le fascisme*: Antifascist, Feminist, and Communist Activism in the 1930s' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Northumbria University, 2019); Jasmine Calver, '"Warphans" and "Quiet" Heroines: Depictions of Chinese Women and Children in the *Comité mondial des femmes contra la guerre et le fascisme*'s Campaigns during the Second Sino-Japanese War', *International Review of Social History*, 67 (2022), 23–47.

42 Calver, '"Warphans"', p. 26.

43 Aleksandra Đorđević, 'Drugarice i (ne)prijateljice — učešće Antifašističkog fronta žena Jugoslavije u radu Međunarodne demokratske federacije žena 1945–1950', *Arhiv,* časopis *Arhiva Jugoslavije* (2017), 146–62 (pp. 148–59).

44 Ibid., pp. 155–60.

the Cold War',[45] women's agency in the mass left-feminist organizations of the Cold War period — both in the East and in the West — was greater than post-socialist academic production has tended to present. In feminist-oriented historiography, this has resulted 'in a lively debate about the extent to which women in these organizations possessed "agency" vis-à-vis ruling parties or state authorities'.[46] The 'Yugoslav case', in that sense, turns out to be 'strange' and 'unusual'[47] or, simply put, continuously marked by women's autonomy.[48] However, as Zsófia Lóránd correctly summarizes, this tendency is in fact usual for the whole of East Central Europe: 'While the coherent and organized feminism emerging in Yugoslavia was indeed exceptional in the region, much of its intellectuals inspirations were part of a shared regional context, and much of the criticism leveled by new Yugoslav feminism against the state could be addressed to any other post-WWII socialism in Eastern Europe.'[49]

Like similar left-feminist magazines in the 1930s, *Žena danas* was deeply connected to the lives and bodies of young (communist) women, relying, *avant la lettre*, on the feminist epistemologies and policies of 'lived experience'. It was precisely because of their own life and work experiences that these women were able to create such a new, global generational movement. After all, politics and practices of this kind were present from the very beginning of women's involvement in leftist and workers' organizations. For instance, as Martha Ackelsberg points out, within the anarcho-syndicalist movement in Spain (La Confederación Nacional del Trabajo, 1910–), one of the main principles was that 'revolutionary movements can develop effectively only if they speak to the specific realities of people's lives'.[50] Guided by this belief, female members founded Mujeres Libres (1936–39), alongside the eponymous magazine, as an autonomous initiative within the Spanish umbrella organization, even though some of its male members opposed it. The idea behind it was that women needed separate spaces to pay special attention to their particular life experiences and the realities of their gendered subordination, which differed from the class subordination of men and women. In their own words, women suffered and thus must end 'triple enslavement', 'to ignorance, capital, and men'.[51]

Moreover, as in the case of *Mujeres Libres* and other magazines we have mentioned, all of the periodical genres in *Žena danas* were aligned with a specific left-feminist Popular Front emancipation programme, and all of them aspired to convey and validate particular women's lived experiences. *Žena danas* was filled with authentic reportages, readers' letters, testimonies, travelogues, interviews, fashion advice, and literary contributions in the style of socialist realism. Scientific, political, and theoretical articles addressed a narrower circle of readers with the same purpose. Among the main discourses, those of emancipation, pacifism, antifascism, new feminism, feminist internationalism, motherhood, trade unionism, and communism were prominent. Regular topics included suffrage, world peace, the Spanish Civil War, the life of women workers, the life of peasant women in Yugoslavia, and exemplary women achievers or fighters for women's rights in the past and present (the genre of the women's portrait).[52] The privileged textual genres in *Žena danas* were reportages and short stories; they

45 Celia Donert, 'Women's Rights and Global Socialism: Gendering Socialist Internationalism during the Cold War', *International Review of Social History*, 67 (2022), 1–22 (p. 4).
46 Ibid.
47 Zaharijevic, pp. 135–56.
48 Bonfiglioli, 'Women's Political and Social Activism' and 'AFŽ Activists Biographies'.
49 Lóránd, p. 229.
50 Martha Ackelsberg, '"Separate and Equal"? Mujeres Libres and Anarchist Strategy for Women's Emancipation', *Feminist Studies*, 11.1 (1985), 63–83 (p. 63).
51 Ibid, p. 64.
52 See Barać, *Feministička kontrajavnost*, pp. 11–27; pp. 63–96.

also included the listed topics and discourses but produced much more complex meanings (see Fig. 3). In each case, the editorial goal was to unite 'universal', feminist and revolutionary, left-feminist discourses in the magazine, just as the Popular Front's goal was to unite antifascist forces of the world.

ШЕГРТ

Fig. 3 'Apprentice' by Milka Žicina, with a reproduction of an unsigned and untitled drawing

A good illustration of the revolutionary discourse in the magazine can be found in the unsigned article 'Women in the French Revolution' (1939; see Fig. 4). The article is based on Michelet's and Kropotkin's writings, and images of women as mass and sketches of individual women revolutionaries are alternated throughout it. Quotes from Kropotkin, describing the women's march on Versailles on 5 October 1789, represent women as a conscious group. The author of the unsigned article (by all style features we identify the author as Mitra Mitrović) does precisely the same by depicting the conscious decision of women to undertake a risky march just to be where they believe they belong. Later, in 1790, when the Federation was celebrated, 'women walked huge distances on

ŽENE U FRANCUSKOJ REVOLUCIJI

Kete Kolvic: Ustanak

Fig. 4 'Women in the French Revolution' by Mitra Mitrović, with a reproduction of Käthe Kollwitz's drawing 'Uprising', *Žena danas*, 21.4 (1939), p. 11. National Library of Serbia

foot, many of them with the children in their arms, just to take part in the celebration'.[53] The author also reminds readers that women's struggle, despite all sacrifices, did not bring rights to women but only to men. Quite the contrary, women were punished: after the Revolution, as explained in the article, the National Convention forbade women's clubs and passed a law to imprison women gathering in groups of more than five in the street. Despite all of this, the article proclaimed that a class revolution must occur. This message was produced alongside and reinforced by other media discourses: a reproduction of Käte Kollwitz's drawing 'The Uprising' served as an illustration of the article. Taken in unison with other articles in the same issue, this told readers that 'today's uprising', the global antifascist action, was to be undertaken inevitably.[54]

53 'Kad je 1970. proslavljena Federacija, hiljade žena su pešice prelazile ogromna rastojanja, i to mnoge se decom na rukama, samo da bi učestvovale u proslavi.' 'Žene u Francuskoj revoluciji', *Žena danas*, 21 (1939), 12.

54 For example, next to it there was an article entitled 'U Francuskoj se živo radi na organizaciji žena za odbranu zemlje' ['In France the hard work is being done for the organizing women with the aim of state defense'].

At the same time, in order to meet the requirements for being seen as a 'normal' women's or feminist magazine, and thus escape censorship, *Žena danas* also reported news from the so-called women's world, about 'serious' topics such as the struggle for suffrage and other women's rights, including the right to abortion and the rights of single mothers. In addition, more entertaining content (everyday women's lives, fashion, holidaying, etc.) was prominent, occasionally taking up half the pages of the magazine. The 'entertaining turn' was, of course, the product of the Popular Front's strategy of turning to the masses. Simultaneously, it caused a kind of break-up with the existing local and national feminist tradition which, from the perspective of the Yugoslav 1930s generation, was represented by *Ženski pokret* (see Fig. 5).

Жена у дому и на улици

Тајне искусне домаћице

М О Д А

Fig. 5 Fashion column in *Žena danas*, 11–12.3 (1938), p. 31. National Library of Serbia

Žena danas thus raised the level of enlightening discourse in European periodical culture by changing the very notion of reader enlightenment. More precisely, the editors managed to appeal to semi-literate, middle-educated, and highly-educated audiences at the same time. That is why in the end — although the overall demand for protecting world peace proved impossible to fulfill — the Women's Antifascist Front of Yugoslavia, ideologically prepared on the pages of pre-war *Žena danas*, played a substantial role in WWII. In the words of Chiara Bonfiglioli, 'the contribution of women to the Yugoslav

Resistance was unprecedented in Europe'.[55] The organization also made a crucial impact on women's emancipation in Yugoslavia immediately after the liberation. This, at least partially, was because the AFŽ of Yugoslavia — as well as the women editors of *Žena danas* — took (young) women of Yugoslavia, to refer to Dimitrov again, 'as they were', and not as someone else 'would like to have them'.

Žena danas: Feminism and/as Antifascism

Despite the complex, palimpsestic strategies and various (genre) mimicries, through all the aspects and policies of *Žena danas*, the women editors continuously and consistently examined how 'bodies and objects constitute the gendered series of women through structures like […] the sexual division of labor'.[56] The editors of the magazine passionately strived both to oppose the prevailing anti-feminist (micro-)historical forces and to constitute women as a feminist group based on shared antifascist positions. As a prominent founder, editor, and contributor, Mitra Mitrović herself insisted on a non-vulgar, dialectical understanding of so-called women's issues, claiming that one should by no means either confuse the categories of *female, feminine,* and *feminist*, on the one hand, or separate feminist struggle from antifascist struggle, on the other.[57] Moreover, this strong attitude was one of the main reasons why she and her young women comrades opposed some of the older feminists and women editors in the Kingdom (in some respects), even the ones with whom they nominally shared a principled antifascist attitude.

An illustrative example in this respect is the polemical review of the book *Žena kroz vekove* [Woman Through the Ages] by Milica Đurić Topalović,[58] which Mitra Mitrović wrote together with her colleague Milica Šuvaković (1912–42). The two critics uncompromisingly expose the internalized misogyny of the female author of the book, by analysing, in detail, how it is implicitly inscribed in her understanding of 'women's issues' and her self-proclaimed aspiration towards the emancipation of women, concluding: 'No, there is no lesson, there is no call for action, there is no love for women in the book of Mrs Milica Đurić Topalović.'[59] From this review, we can reconstruct how Mitra Mitrović herself — in the period that immediately preceded WWII as well as afterwards — perceived both the 'Woman Question' and (anti-)fascism:

> Apparently, here the women's issues are framed as a battle of the sexes, not as a social issue. […] Mrs. Topalović fails to realize that the sexual abuse of an employed woman is only one among the inevitable forms of her exploitation and consequences of her general position; thus it cannot be solved by the individual and at the same time unachievable appointment of female supervisors [instead of male ones, note by S.B. and Z.S.].
> That is what 'feminization' offered by Mrs Topalović looks like.

55 Bonfiglioli, 'Women's Political and Social Activism', p. 5.

56 See Young, p. 730.

57 Here we can spot a valuable anticipation of later, even contemporary, feminist theoretical insights. See, for instance, Toril Moi, 'Feminist, Female, Feminine', in *The Feminist Reader: Essays in Gender and the Politics of Literary Criticism*, ed. by Catherine Belsey and Jane Moore (New York: Blackwell, 1989), pp. 117–32.

58 See Svetlana Stefanović, 'Radnički vs. građanski ženski pokret u Srbiji i Jugoslaviji 1910–1940', *Antropologija*, 20.1–2 (2020), 55–72.

59 'Ne, nema pouke, nema poziva za akciju, nema ljubavi za žene u knjizi g-đe Milice Đurić Topalović.' 'Knjiga g-đe Milice Đurić Topalović "Žena kroz vekove"'[The Book of Mrs Milica Đurić Topalovič 'Woman Through the Ages'], *Žena danas*, 23.3 (1939), 8–10 (p. 10).

> […] Mrs Topalović's attitudes are, apparently, very ossified and retrograde. But they are also 'original', in addition to being outdated and inaccurate. Thus, in her opinion, fascism is a 'new ideology' that emerged by 'barbarizing human life and understandings'. It is clear that the only thing new in fascism is that it wants to present itself as a new ideology, a sort of messianism. According to specific needs and circumstances, this 'ideology' is being reshaped. The most superficial analysis shows that this 'new ideology' is just a patchwork and compilation of various understandings.[60]

The ways of practicing feminist as antifascist engagement — perceived as indicated — were visible not only in the editorial policies of *Žena danas* but also in the direct, whether legal or illegal, political actions, the lived experience of young women Communists, many of whom participated and heroically died in the antifascist resistance to the Nazi occupation.[61] Mitra Mitrović was one of those who survived and left testimony. Moreover, her ego-documents, both published and unpublished (some of them are now partly known thanks to the efforts of historian Veljko Stanić),[62]on the one hand, and her articles in *Žena danas*, mostly signed with initials because of censorship[63] on the other hand, could and should be read from a comparative perspective. All of them contain a strong and consistent advocacy of the (collective-oriented) ethics of love and care, of solidarity without boundaries, grounded in a high self-consciousness of existing gender bias and the deeply polarized, 'black and white' global political situation. Last but not least, her articles demonstrate the personal as political and vice versa, whereby the terms 'feminist' and 'antifascist' imply each other and ultimately become synonyms.

Ratno putovanje provides us with precious information and proof in this regard, as well. The year of its publishing, 1953, was marked by multiple turning points not only in Mitra Mitrović's personal and professional life but also in the history of the SFRY in general. A certain kind of circular positioning, a journey from the margins to the center of political life — both of Mitra Mitrović as an editor and the magazine *Žena danas* (described in the book) — and then back to the periphery (curiously, in the time of the book's appearance), was partly conditioned by the notorious 'dissident' case of Milovan Đilas, Mitra's intimate partner and husband. Although they were already

60 'Očevidno, to je postavljanje ženskog pitanja kao borbe polova, a ne kao socijalnog pitanja. […] G-đa Topalović ne shvata da je polna zloupotreba uposlene žene samo jedan od neizbežnih oblika njenog iskorišćavanja, posledica njenog opšteg položaja, pa se ni pojedinačnim i neostvarljivim postavljanjem ženskih starešina ne da iz osnova rešiti. To je "feminiziranje" g-đe Topalović. […] Shvatanja g-đe Topalović su, kako se vidi, vrlo okoštala i preživela. Ali su ona i "originalna", pored oveštalosti i netačnosti. Tako je fašizam za nju "nova ideologija" do koje je došlo "varvariziranjem ljudskog života i shvatanja. Jasno je da je u fašizmu novo samo to što on hoće da se pretstavi kao nova ideologija, neko mesijanstvo. Prema potrebi i prilikama, on tu "ideologiju" menja. Najpovršnija analiz pokazuje da je ta "nova ideologija" samo kompilacija i krpljenje raznih shvatanja.' Ibid., pp. 8–9.

61 All members of the editorial board were committed to the Partisan Movement and wanted to join Partisan military units. Nevertheless, only some of them managed to enter liberated territories, including Mitra Mitrović and Milica Šuvaković. However, Šuvaković was later captured, imprisoned in the Nazi-camp, and executed. The magazine's illustrator, Paulina Sudarski, managed to become a nurse in the Partisan hospital, but during the Battle of the Sutjeska (Case Black for the Nazis) in 1943, together with part of the medical staff, she refused to leave the wounded, and thus all of them died. Fani Politeo Vučković was arrested with her husband Vojislav Vučković just a couple of hours before they were supposed to be secretly taken to a Partisan group; instead, they were taken to the Special Police prison, where they were tortured and eventually succumbed to their injuries. The same happened to Dušica Stefanović and Nataša Jeremić. Olga Alkalaj was arrested at the very beginning of the Occupation both as a Jewish and a communist. She was among the first victims killed in a so-called 'dušegupka' [gas van, literally 'soul-killer']. See *Žene Srbije u NOB*, pp. 56, 69–80, 114, 173.

62 See Stanić.

63 We can now appropriately attribute the authorship thanks to the bibliography of the magazine. See Larisa Kostić and Emilija Aćimović, *Žena danas (1936–1940): bibliografija* (Beograd: Institut za književnost i umetnost, 2021).

divorced at the time of the Party's accusing Đilas of counter-Party, intolerable liberal ideas, she supported him, risking her own career, reputation, and even future life, and losing, as a result, many of her prerogatives.[64] Moreover, as already stated, the year 1953 was marked by the abolition of the AFŽ, one of her most significant and far-reaching political projects.

Žena danas and 'Ghost Editorship'

Regardless of her distancing from the official Party and State activities after 1953, which included engagement in editing the post-war *Žena danas*, Mitra Mitrović continued to write and publish various types of texts, still insisting on feminist, antifascist, socialist, and democratic political ideas, as well as on the WWII People's Liberation Movement's (women's) legacy. She considered *Žena danas* another of her great and most important initiatives. In the beginning, from the founding of the magazine in 1936 until WWII, Mitra Mitrović's engagement was more indirect and hidden than obvious and public. Her editorial and authorial strategies were largely disguised. As already indicated, this was in part a consequence of the anti-regime position of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia. However, the strong collectivism with which she and her women comrades imbued all of the magazine's aspects, including its editing, is not of lesser importance from the point of view of periodical studies if we consider its two-fold reliance on women as a group — an interweaving of communist ideology and already-emphasized autonomous feminism, at both a national and transnational level.

Building on the work of Fionnuala Dillane, we argue that *Žena danas* is among the magazines in which the highest degree of 'the production of meaning through collaborative models of editorship'[65] was achieved in the entire history of periodicals in Yugoslavia. This process can be traced to the very founding of the Youth Section of the Women's Movement. It can support and expand our understanding of this history, but also adapt to the most recent tendencies in the discipline since the issue of collaborative editorship models is becoming an 'increasingly dominant feature of feminist studies of the press'.[66] In other words, the case of *Žena danas* provides us with a new micro-historical contribution to the transnational process 'of recuperation and shared conversation' in this discipline. It shows us how 'the growing body of scholarship on women editors is changing the way we think about editorship, editorial models, and editorial functions'.[67]

When considering the problem of editorship in the Kingdom of SCS/Yugoslavia from a feminist perspective — both the engagement of women editors and the models of editing the women's and feminist press — it becomes obvious that the existing and prevailing, male-oriented 'models and typologies fail to capture the diversity and specificity of women's editorial practices, roles, and identities'.[68] In the case of the magazine *Žena danas*, diversity and specificity gain special interest and importance. In 1943 Mitra Mitrović recorded:

64 See Dragomir Bondžić, 'Dokumenti o držanju Mitre Mitrović u slučaju Milovana Đilasa 1954. godine', *Istorija 20. veka*, 1 (2013), 195–207. See also Milovan Djilas, *Memoir of a Revolutionary*, trans. by Drenka Villen (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973), pp. 148–56; Stanić; Barać, '(Ne)pristajanje na zaborav'.

65 Fionnuala Dillane, 'What is a Periodical Editor? Types, Models, Characters, and Women', *Journal of European Periodical Studies*, 6.1 (2021), 7–24 (p. 21).

66 Ibid.

67 Ibid., pp. 20–21.

68 Marianne Van Remoortel et al., 'Women Editors in Europe', *Journal of European Periodical Studies*, 6.1 (2021), 1–6 (p. 4).

> I struggle to edit *Žena danas* all by myself. […] I feel some sort of obligation towards my women comrades to do it according to their opinions and taste so that they won't be angry with me after the war. And who could be angry, after all?[69]

Some of them, in fact, had already died before this magazine eventually became legal again in the newly liberated territories, and for that reason, Mitra Mitrović stated that she knew already that Olga Alkalaj would not be able to see it, nor would the other members of the Youth Section and editorial staff of *Žena danas* such as Nataša Jeremić and Vukica Mitrović. In the same manner, she concluded:

> I'm glad that we printed *Žena danas*; however, now I find this work quite disturbing. The magazine should be edited in the same manner we used to edit it together, in our small newsroom. […]
> There is no censorship in Drinići, the magazine is printed for free, and everything is different than before, but now I am alone in the working process. I am anxious, torn into pieces, and, for some reason, I cry.[70]

Mitra Mitrović's first-hand record supports the claim that *Žena danas* was a deeply collectivist project, paradigmatically conducted by women as a group of left feminists. In the very beginning, at the very periphery of the monarchist regime and under the permanent threat of censorship, she herself used to be some kind of 'ghost editor', hidden behind other colleagues and the more appropriate discourses of femaleness, femininity, and feminism. During the war, she was the exclusive editor of *Žena danas*, and yet the one striving to remember and retain its pre-war legacy, the common legacy of her numerous women comrades. In other words, like many women periodical editors throughout Europe, she was what Dillane calls a 'socio-cultural memory activist' *par excellence.*[71] Symbolically, thanks to Mitra Mitrović's active remembrance, all of the women who participated in the founding and publishing of *Žena danas* before WWII remained its editors even during the war, simultaneously with the founding of The Women's Antifascist Front. At that moment, Mitra Mitrović's own ghost editorship was no longer necessary. Nevertheless, the renewed *Žena danas* appeared full of traces of its previous women editors and contributors, thus memorializing a new, specific kind of (collective) 'ghost editorship' in Yugoslavia.

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69 'Sama se mučim da uredim Ženu *danas*. […] Osećam neku vrstu obaveze prema drugaricama da prelom napravim po njihovim shvatanjima i ukusu, da me ne grde posle rata. Ko će me i grditi?' Mitrović, *Ratno putovanje*, p. 160.

70 'Radujem se što štampamo Ženu *danas*, ali me sam rad mnogo uznemiruje. Treba urediti časopis onako kako smo ga zajedno uređivale u našoj maloj redakciji. […] U Drinićima nema cenzure, list se štampa besplatno, sve je drukčije, ali ga sama radim. Uznemirena sam, sva iskidana, i zbog nečega plačem.' Ibid., p 161.

71 Dillane, p. 8.

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