



Institute for Literature and Art, Belgrade  
IULM University of Milan



BETWEEN DISTANT  
AND CLOSE READING:  
PERIODICAL STUDIES  
AND HUMANITIES IN  
THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

*The book of abstracts*

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October 27<sup>th</sup> 2023, Belgrade

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This conference is organized as a joint effort of the Department Periodicals in the History of Serbian Literature and Culture (Institute for Literature and Art) and the luPS Research Group on Periodical Studies (IULM University of Milan)

### Publisher

Institute for Literature and Art, Belgrade

### Print

Intcopy, Beograd

### Print circulation

100

### ISBN

978-86-7095-321-5

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## FEMINIST PERIODICAL STUDIES: FROM AN INDIVIDUAL INTERPRETATION TO A TRANSFORMATIVE DISCIPLINARY ENTERPRISE

The presentation aims to outline how the research project proposal of Slobodanka Pekovic from the late 1970s (*The Presence and Contribution of Women Writers in the Modern Serbian Literature*) – rejected by the Scientific Council of the Institute for Literature and Art – was actually implemented much later (after 2010) when better circumstances arose. The proposed research was meant to include complete ‘newer’ Serbian periodicals, while the approach was planned to be “theoretical-historical”, and seen as “useful because there is no systematic research on the contribution of women in the literary-historical perspective”. The whole idea was based on the first research results: “The reviewed 19<sup>th</sup> Century magazines show that the number of women writers is significantly higher than it is generally believed. Women authors are widespread: women are the authors of short stories, plays, poems, travelogues, and diaries. Some of them even set the tone for magazines.” Due to the impossibility of wider and institutionally organized research, Slobodanka Peković conducted it individually and presented her scientific articles in the edition of *The History of Serbian literary periodicals* (est. 1988), or in other publications. Slobodanka Pekovic therefore – in accordance with general methodology elaborated by periodical researchers at the Institute – developed her own method of interpretation of women’s contributions and meaning(s) of their texts in “classical” literary magazines, as well as in the two kinds of women’s magazines: 1) those intended for women, and 2) those edited and written by women. The scientific potential of the rejected project was realized only after Slobodanka Pekovic’s retirement: 7 of 36 volumes of *The History of Serbian periodicals* are dedicated to women’s authorship in periodicals or to women’s and feminist periodicals. The researchers of the department of periodical studies in the ILA anyhow nurtured a non-canonical approach to the history of Serbian literary



periodicals and thus to (Serbian) literature. They have been focusing not only on the academically already privileged magazines, but also on marginalized periodicals, those published out of the capital, those which belonged to ethnic minorities, or immigrants, or intended for children, or those which were of Yugoslav orientation (in the time of repulsion of Yugoslav heritage in Serbia). The mentioned seven volumes indicate that the history of Serbian periodicals and Serbian literature – seen as a dynamic structure or understood as polysystem – was largely women’s and feminist.

Laurel BRAKE

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## SERIAL ORDER AND THE EXPLOSIVE MAGAZINE BEFORE THE NEW GENERATION: DISTANT READING AND COMPARATIVE METHODS

This is a paper about a moment in the 19C in which important books were published cheek by jowl in divergent fields—science, theology, and classics—which, though connected, are normally discussed separately: the *Origin of Species* (1859) under the dominant discourse of science, *Essays and Reviews* (1860) under that of theology, and *On Translating Homer* (1861) under that of classics. In these years the new generation of *monthly* magazines and reviews – such as *Macmillan’s Magazine*, the *Cornhill*, the *Fortnightly Review*, and the *Contemporary Review* – was only beginning to proliferate and to create the mindset of routine serialization that developed immediately afterward, the authors of these books did not have opportunity to serialize their texts monthly pre-publication, though the latter two did participate in other types of serial forms, of lectures and collection. In each case however, single or successive articles post-publication in high culture periodicals propelled these works into the public sphere, into popular debate across the press and into the institutions from which they emanated, with dramatically different effects. Evolution and Darwin’s claims, though robustly resisted and contested in their day, survived to the present; and while authors of *Essays and Reviews* suffered censorship and career damage due to the exposure of their collection, Matthew Arnold’s launch of *his* career as a critic – however castigated and inappropriate it was deemed in the press – was patently a success; his name has lived on. Digitisation and distant reading tools from the *Wellesley Index* to the ProQuest and Newspaper British Archive platforms have made the comparative study of the periodicals and newspapers in which these explosive reviews appeared. The paper will end with a critical and political assessment of these titles – a weekly (the *Saturday Review*, a monthly and a quarterly (the *Westminster Review*).



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## THE RETURN OF THE GENRE: CONSIDERATIONS ON PERIODICAL STUDIES FROM A PHILOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century philology as a discipline encountered a methodological revival, where a Paul de Mann's famous essay *The Return to Philology* (1986) marked a game changer. In other words, philological studies and its methodologies of close reading and interpretation of the text regained a substantial validation in literary theory. It was also in this period that periodical studies began to articulate their metatheory (Bethem 1989, Brake 1989), which has been being developed up to date. This presentation consists of two parts. In the first part we give a critical overview of the theoretical evolution in both disciplines, aiming at underlining the common methodological presumptions and perspectives. The periodical genres such as literary polemic and reviews constitute a natural intersection between 'narrow' philological method of close reading and a broader socio-cultural perspective of periodical studies, which necessarily insist on the dialectical dynamic of a text and its historical/social/political context. In the second part we will try to elaborate how the field of periodical studies sparked interest and enabled the development of exploring the genres of literary criticism, which, in return, aligns with the *return to philology* as a method of reconceptualizing new research in literary history.

## FROM ESSAYISM TO THE ENCYCLOPEDIA: THE CASE OF (YUGOSLAV) PERIODICALS

The presentation will try to connect two features of Yugoslav (literary) culture – essayism and encyclopedism – focusing on periodicals as one of their crucial links, but also as a facilitator of these phenomena. In contrast to the time of its origin (16<sup>th</sup> century), originally published in books, the essay has, at least in the last three centuries, become a primarily periodical genre. Moreover, the French literary historian Marielle Macé labeled the 20<sup>th</sup> century as the “age of essays”. She recognizes a certain manner of thinking characteristic of literature, which serves to keep the genre of essay socially relevant in an age dominated by the model of sciences. In 20<sup>th</sup> century Yugoslavia the development of the press, the creation of a wider public opinion and the extensive publishing activity, and no less the social importance that culture had in the political-ideological turmoil, contributed to essayism occupying a more important place than before, both within individual authors' works as well as within the consideration of collective problems. Written in layman's language and dedicated to the widest possible range of issues – including, according to Richard Rorty, almost all other major cognitive modes (religion, philosophy, science) – the essays acquired an integrative social function in the era of specialization of knowledge and professionalization of occupations. The proliferation of magazines which carried a subtitle “for all cultural problems”, resembling the mannerism of Miroslav Krleža, corroborate this thesis. Encyclopedism, on the other hand, figures as the opposite pole of this process. Not only did the scientific effort of this period culminate in the work on *the Encyclopedia of Yugoslavia*, whose initiator and editor was Miroslav Krleža, the most prominent Yugoslav writer and essayist, but encyclopedism – bearing in mind the enlightening and modernizing impulses implied by this term – can be considered an important characteristic of Yugoslav culture in general. Therefore, the Yugoslav periodicals can be read as an unintended mosaic, *encyclopedic* of the entire epoch.



Fionnuala DILLANE

University College Dublin

## THE PERIODICAL AS TECHNOLOGY OF EMOTION

This paper will discuss the periodical as a technology of emotion that generates feeling in temporally and spatially distinctive ways from other print formats. It will consider recent studies of the periodical that are informed by histories and theories of emotion (e.g. Ben Crewe; Sabina Fazli; Barbara Green; Sage M. Milo) to probe the ways the periodical produces feeling through the interactions of design, layout, genre admixture, editorial curation and serial reinforcement, whether in print copy or digital format. I am not proposing a macro- or ur-theory: the messiness and temporal instability of feelings will always undercut such totalizing approaches. However, I suggest reading for feeling helps us to navigate the disparate scales of distant, close and surface reading, scales that in various configurations structure scholarship of the multi-faceted, capacious object of our study since the early 21<sup>st</sup>-century. Reading for feeling is a syncretic practice that draws on reader-response theories, genre-based, cultural studies, historical media studies and literary studies approaches and prioritizes both evolving and historically situated interactions of these lines of inquiry and investigation.

Reading for feeling also asks us to address the convergences and differences that shape digital and print reading experiences and knowledge generation (as James Mussell, Laurel Brake, and Marianne Van Remoortel among others have shown). There has been significant work done on the economic and pragmatic decision making that underpins choices around what constitutes the archive (what we preserve as print; what we decide to digitize; what happens to the print copies of digitized periodicals and newspapers; what is accessible and to whom). I will conclude, however, by suggesting that more work is needed on the cultural politics of emotion that inform strategic priorities around archive preservation, work that might help us to understand more fully how 'strategic priority' is a 'structure of feeling' (Raymond Williams) or a dimension of 'intimate public policy', to borrow from Laruen Berlant's influential conceptualization of modernity's 'intimate publics'.

Ana KOLARIĆ

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## TEACHING WITH PERIODICALS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF A FEMINIST AND LITERARY SCHOLAR

This presentation aims to shed some light on the process of introducing periodical studies at the Faculty of Philology, University of Belgrade. First, I will briefly describe courses which I teach at all study levels (BA, MA and PhD) and which all largely focus on women's and feminist periodicals. Then, I will discuss different problems which each course highlights: theoretical (e.g. gender and genre); historical (e.g. periodicals and literary/feminist history and criticism); methodological (e.g. literary studies vs. periodical studies; stories of intellectual conflict: history of women's movement as well as history of feminist ideas; close reading vs. distant or surface reading). Also, I will explore if and how studies of women's and feminist periodicals can contribute to the making of an activist-scholar, since such periodicals, in different periods of history, examined and criticized social injustice and gender discrimination, at the same time mobilizing activists for the women's movement. I will argue that teaching women's and feminist periodicals is not – and should not be – politically neutral. In conclusion, with regards to the field of women's and feminist studies, I will highlight the importance of feminist interpretive communities which are continually being created through mentioned courses.



Stefano LOCATI

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## FILM AND PERIODICAL STUDIES AS STRANGE BEDFELLOWS: INTERMEDIALITY, REMEDIATION, AND EVERYTHING IN BETWEEN

Looking at the field of periodical studies from my starting discipline of film studies, I cannot but approach it with a twofold attitude: on the one hand, what periodicals, and their study, can add to film studies; on the other hand, how film studies can integrate, on a theoretical and methodological level, with periodical studies. This means looking at periodicals both from the 'outside' (as a tool for film studies) and from the 'inside' (as a medium that developed, as far as mass publishing is concerned, at the same time as the film industry, and thus the interrelationships that are created). If looking at periodicals from the 'outside' has made it possible to expand historical knowledge about film, as for example in the redefinition of early cinema (taking into account the evidence brought by the mass periodicals of the period), looking at periodicals from the 'inside' allows us to analyse the exchanges that take place in periodicals with an audiovisual medium such as film (the remediations and new languages that are created in that border territory between texts and epitexts). These two attitudes, or approaches, do not have a definite, but a transitory, transient and plural value: different approaches are possible, depending on the degree of specificity and pervasiveness required by the starting research question. What I find interesting, however, and it is specific to periodical studies (precisely because of the link between different disciplines, methodologies and theoretical planes that is created in studying them), is the ability to broaden the field of media studies from the isolation of each different discipline to the need for dialogue that comes to redefine that very isolation.

Marianne VAN REMOORTEL

Ghent University

## EARLY FEMINIST PERIODICAL POETRY BETWEEN CLOSE AND DISTANT READING

While the key role of poetry in feminist activism since the 1960s has been widely acknowledged, poetry is not usually considered essential to the first women's movements of the mid-nineteenth to early twentieth centuries. Yet in this earlier period, poetry proliferated in feminist periodicals, alongside journalistic materials such as news reports, articles, and editorials. My talk will address the methodological and theoretical challenges which the recovery and study of this poetry presents to periodical scholars and feminist literary critics. I will start with the question of how to identify the research object in a scattered corpus like the early feminist press, and consider the ways in which distant reading methods such as computer vision, topic modelling, and metaphor detection may give us a sense of the contents and dimensions of this virtual body of texts. I will then discuss how distant reading will inevitably fall short of capturing the full breadth and diversity of early feminist periodicals' engagement with poetry, which also included in-text poetry quotations in journalistic prose texts or poetry snippets in mastheads or on cover pages (all less likely to be detected by computer vision) as well as the reprinting – and therefore, recontextualisation – of canonical poetry. I will conclude with a reflection on the ways in which studying poetry in the early feminist press both up close and from afar invites us to rethink our current understanding of feminist poetry.



Zorana SIMIĆ

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## WOMEN PERIODICAL EDITORS (IN THE KINGDOM OF SCS/YUGOSLAVIA): WOMEN'S EMANCIPATION AS VOCATION

Fionnuala Dillane, a researcher of periodicals and their women editors in the European context, notes in 2021 that “the production of meaning through collaborative models of editorship is an increasingly dominant feature of feminist studies of the press”. As Marianne Van Remoortel adds in the same year, it turns out that this characteristic is, more often than not, a *differentia specifica* as well, since the “existing models and typologies of periodical editorship” are not only based on the Anglo-American corpus but also “invariably derived from examples of male editors”; contemporary research on the *women* editors in European periodical studies, however, shows that “these models and typologies fail to capture the diversity and specificity of women’s editorial practices, roles, and identities”. The study of the women’s and feminist periodical press in the Kingdom of SCS/Yugoslavia (1918–1941), just as the general examination of the editorial contribution of women in interwar Yugoslav periodicals, both support and expand these insights. Some of the most prominent typologies of periodical editorship, such as that of Matthew Philpotts, for instance, are much more adaptable to the part of (literary) periodicals’ corpus of this era in which women hardly participated except as collaborators, although they were simultaneously active within editorial boards and on nominal editorial positions in the so-called feminist counter-public, where they managed to exercise their authority and “soft power”. Starting from that corpus and its contextual conditioning, this presentation contributes to the existing conceptualizations of women periodical editors and their engagements, whereby its focus and goal are twofold: 1) understanding specific dialectics of *gender* and *genre* in the editorial activity of women in the Kingdom of SCS/Yugoslavia (within current transnational disciplinary frameworks), and 2) the possibilities of further elaboration of “existing models and typologies of periodical editorship” in a transnational context based on this privileged research corpus.

Žarka SVIRČEV

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## PERIODICALS AS SPACE OF FEMINIST CURATING

The paper will depict the connection between women’s periodicals and the idea of a women’s museums. I will use the materials from Serbian culture at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and locate women’s press in a broader network of exhibition activities led by women, that is, social, political, and aesthetic activism. These practices resulted in a periodical project, the publication *Serbian Woman: her life and work, her cultural development and her folklore art up to date* (1913). This publication is a template for developing the concept of *periodical musealization*. The research focus is on the constitutive strategies: independent feminist curatorial knowledge production, challenging the gendered ‘epistemic injustice’, re/historisation, re/representation, re/imagination of the women’s role and position in a diachronic perspective, establishment of the new feminist historical consciousness. I will discuss the creative appropriation of periodical space, its functions and social impact in the context of contemporary pedagogical issues as well as in the context of digital preservation and actualization of periodical heritage.