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CASE STUDY

Assuming Agency: Women of nobility as forced migrants

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Abstract

This article examines the experiences of noblewomen who became forced migrants due to politically arranged marriages or other political circumstances. By employing an intersectional lens, the case studies explore how the complex interplay of gender, class and nationality shaped their lives. Focusing on three case studies of prominent noblewomen, from the Middle Ages, Renaissance, and 20th century, such as Barbara of Cili, Catherine de' Medici, and Ksenija Petrović-Njegoš, the research reveals how these women navigated the intersections of power, privilege, and oppression. By examining the ways in which these women's identities were shaped by both their social status and their experiences of forced migration, this paper contributes to a deeper understanding of the complexities of identity formation and social inequality. By centering the experiences of these women, this article challenges traditional narratives of migration that often prioritize male experiences and overlook the agency and resilience of women. Furthermore, it highlights the need for more nuanced analyses of forced migration that account for the intersectionality of social identities.

Plain Language Summary

This article looks at the lives of noblewomen who were forced to move to new places because of political marriages or other political reasons. It examines how their gender, social class, and nationality influenced their experiences. The study focuses on three well-known noblewomen from different historical periods: Barbara of Cili (Middle Ages), Catherine de' Medici (Renaissance), and Ksenija Petrović-Njegoš (20th century). By exploring their stories, the article shows how these women dealt with power, privilege and hardship. It also highlights how their identities were shaped by both their high social status and the challenges of moving into another country. This research challenges traditional migration stories that mostly focus on men and instead emphasizes the strength and resilience of women. It also calls for a deeper understanding of forced migration that takes into

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account the different social factors that shape people's experiences.

Keywords
noblewomen, forced migration, intermarriage diplomacy, intersectionality, Barbara of Cili, Catherine (Caterina) de' Medici, Ksenija Petrović-Njegoš, WEMov

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Theoretical framework and existing research

Migration studies represent a pivotal area in the social and historical sciences, offering insights into the movement of people across borders and cultures. Theories of migration, ranging from historical-structural and globalization to dependency theories, provide various frameworks for understanding and theorizing about the causes, nature, processes, and consequences of migration (for more about migration theories, see for example, De Haas *et al.*, 2020, p. 49–58; and De Haas, 2021). However, scholars argue that it remains an "under-theorised field of social-science inquiry" despite the increasing number of empirical studies on various forms of migration (De Haas, 2021). Nonetheless, the field has become increasingly multi- and interdisciplinary, enriching the range of field-specific inquiries and theoretical approaches. Interdisciplinary perspectives, such as gender studies and intersectionality, present themselves as tools that can be applied to migration studies in an attempt to open new avenues for more nuanced analysis of migration and the realities of migrants. Despite significant advancements in scholarly discourse, for instance on empirical research, biases persist, especially concerning women migrants, whose roles have often been marginalized in historical narratives. Scholars have struggled with the question of how to identify women's migration as separate from male dominated or family migration (see, for example, Kofman & Raghuram, 2022). Moreover, scholars' tendency to homogenize men, women, and other identity groups, and for "othering" those who differ from the hegemonic mainstream is a practice also relevant to migrant studies. This article focuses on three case studies of migrant women—from the Middle Ages, Renaissance, and 20th century. By employing an intersectional lens, the case studies explore the experiences of Barbara of Cili, Catherine de' Medici, and Ksenija Petrović-Njegoš, examining the ways in which the complex interplay of gender, class, and nationality shaped their lives.

Despite the differentiation of migrants based on their migration destinations, motives and methods of travel, duration of their migration, their professions, and so forth, scholars tend to categorize migrants into groups that overlook individual aspects. Fortunately migrant studies, like other disciplines of scientific inquiry, is a constantly evolving field to which a more recent addition has been the increased attention paid to gender-based migration. If previously women migrants tended to remain overshadowed by their male counterparts and treated merely through their association to men as their spouses, daughters or other companions (for an overview, see, for example, Schrover, 2022; Schrover & Moloney, 2013), since at least the early 2000s, women migrants have started to be identified as a separate focus category, with its own subcategories (see, for example, Ball, 2022; Passerini *et al.*, 2007; Willis *et al.*, 2019; Zulauf, 2001). In this context, the Black feminist theorization of intersectionality can function as an efficient method used for a closer examination of women migrants and their subclassifications.

Scholars, activists, and political officials have introduced the concept of intersectionality into transnational discussions about policies and practices in academia, governments, and public venues. Critical race theory and gender scholar, also civil rights advocate, Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991, p. 1242) points out how intersectionality can be seen as a response to the ways in which identity politics repeatedly has failed to recognize intragroup differences. Intersectionality, she notes, "highlights the need to account for multiple grounds of identity when considering how the social world is constructed" (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1245). Social theorists Patricia Hill Collins and Irma Bilge (2016, p. 2) underscore intersectionality's significance in understanding the underlying social power structures; they define intersectionality in the following way:

> When it comes to social inequality, people's lives and the organization of power in a given society are better understood as being shaped not by a single axis of social division, be it race or gender or class, but by many axes that work together and influence each other. Intersectionality as an analytic tool gives people better access to the complexity of the world and of themselves.

As gender theorist Judith Butler (1999, p. 6) points out, however, "because gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities," it therefore "becomes impossible to separate our 'gender' from the political and cultural intersections in which it is invariably produced and maintained." Intersectionality, hence, functions to shed light on individual experiences of migrant women.

This article contributes to the ongoing trend of mainstreaming women migrants' experiences by discussing three case studies of noblewomen, who represent different geographical and chronological backgrounds, but share political, social, and economic experiences and forced migration patterns. For centuries, aristocracy has used young daughters as commodities by marrying them into foreign noble families to consolidate power, secure territorial possession, and join families. Indeed, arranged marriages among the upper-classes was a stabilized custom in many European countries and states. However, these women have often been excluded from various migrant stories because of their social status, wealth, and power that many of them acquired - or were believed to acquire. For instance, in global histories of migrants, scholars tend to focus on such early migrant groups as pilgrims, traders, Germanic masses, Muslims, Vikings or other exponents of so-called "destruction narratives," many of them male-dominated (Schrover, 2022, p. 33–34). Early migrant histories repeatedly exclude feminocentric narratives, marginalizing or completely ignoring the international, cross-state and cross-cultural movement that saw women as protagonists, among them noblewomen.

Noblewomen on the move: Gender, class, and forced migration

This article examines the stories of noblewomen across different historical periods, connected by a shared experience of migration. From medieval queens and Renaissance rulers to

women of the 20th century, noblewomen often migrated due to marriage, family alliances, or political exile. The narratives of some of the young women who were forced to migrate as a consequence of their marriages are well known, others forgotten. There are several examples, for instance one that pictures a prominent noblewoman whose destiny remained in the shadow of her much better-known powerful husband. She was Ana Marija Katarina Zrinska (1625–1673), wife of Croatian Ban Petar Zrinski. Her life was marked by political upheavals, forced migration, and the interplay of multiple identities. Born into the influential Frankopan family, her marriage united two powerful Croatian lineages. After the failed Zrinski-Frankopan conspiracy against Habsburg rule, her husband was executed in 1671, and Ana Marija was forcibly relocated to a Dominican convent in Graz, where she remained until her death. This relocation illustrates politically driven internal migration within the Habsburg Empire. Her life highlights intersectionality—of being a woman, noble, and in political exile in a male-dominated society, a situation that brought unique challenges. Despite her education and cultural influence, she endured the consequences of her husband's rebellion and the rigid power structures of her time (Holjevac *et al.*, 2014).

Among those that have received more attention, although not in the frame of migration studies, can be named, for instance, Maria de' Medici (Florence, Italy, 26 April 1575–Cologne, Germany, 3 July 1642), the daughter of the Grand Duke of Tuscany, Francesco I, and Joanna of Austria (24 January 1547–11 April 1578), herself a migrant from Prague. Educated in science and arts, Maria became the second wife of King Henry IV when her marriage contract was signed in 1600. She was subsequently crowned the Queen of France in 1610, then confirmed the Regent of France after her husband was assassinated but her son, Louis XIII, was underaged (see, for example, Castelot, 1995). Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz (Mirow, Germany 1744 – London, United Kingdom 1818) can be cited as another example among numerous others. Her marriage contract was signed in 1761 and the 17-year-old Princess was taken to England to marry King George III, whom she had never met. They moved into the new Buckingham Palace, where 14 of their 15 children were born. Charlotte is believed to have been a descendant of a Portuguese royal family, a daughter of Alfonso III and his lover, a Moor woman, which would make Charlotte the first Black Queen of Great Britain and Ireland. Although King George lost the war with American colonies, places like Charlotte (North Carolina, U.S.A.) and Charlottesville and Mecklenburg County (Virginia, U.S.A.) have been named after Queen Charlotte (see, for example, Craig, 2018; Curzon, 2022). As is evident, the background and circumstances of the girls born into wealth differed greatly: not all of them came from aristocratic families, not all of them were white, the age in which they entered the marriage market may have differed considerably, and not all of them were able to assume positions of political power. Many of them, however, became forced migrants after the conclusion of the negotiations for their arranged marriages, and many of them had a great impact on the socio-cultural landscape to which they were forced to adopt.

The 20th century brought profound changes to migration patterns as it became increasingly driven by violent geopolitical upheavals, including wars, revolutions, and the redrawing of borders. The century was marked by forced migrations caused by political persecution, imperial collapse, conflict, ethnic cleansing and genocide, which is why it came to be known as the "century of the refugee" with peaks occurring at three key moments, including end of the First and end of the Second World war, and the collapse of communism. (Panayi & Virdee, 2011, p.3). World crises and World wars changed European borders leading to mass displacements when populations were relocated to conform to new borders as part of what Churchill described in 1944 as the "disentanglement of populations" (see Reinisch & White, 2011, p. 54). In her recent study, Eleonora Narvselius examined Leggewie's concept of the seven circles of European memory, which include the Holocaust, Soviet totalitarianism and the GULAG, ethnic cleansings, wars and crises, colonial crimes, migration history, and European integration as key influences on collective European history. She argued that, although migration is categorized as one distinct "circle," forced migrations actually intersect with all these themes, shaping Europe's major historical narratives—from the tragedies of the Holocaust to the "success story" of European integration (Narvselius, 2024).

During this time, noblewomen often found themselves at the crossroads and in the whirlwind of political and dynastic shifts and were deeply affected by them. Dynasties rose and fell during bloody wars and revolutions, and millions were displaced or killed. It is difficult to estimate the number of noblewomen who became migrants in the 20th century. Unlike earlier migrations, often driven by dynastic marriages that served political purposes, many noblewomen in the 20th century were displaced due to violent societal upheavals. For instance, the last Italian queen, Elena of Savoy, born a Montenegrin princess, became Italy's queen through marriage but was later exiled with the fall of fascism and the monarchy (see Andrijašević, 2016). As queen of a nation where fascism emerged and spread globally—a regime tolerated by her husband from the royal throne—she faced displacement after the fall of fascism in Italy, when the royal family was forced to leave the country. Remarkably, despite her forced migration following the regime's collapse, her legacy endured in both Italy and her native Montenegro, where she remains remembered and honored in cultural memory (Bonanno, 2016; Gentile, 2018). In contrast, her sister, Princess Ksenija Petrović-Njegoš, experienced a vastly different migratory journey, illustrating the varied and complex experiences of noblewomen during periods of societal transformation and forced migration. Although the specific experiences of many noblewomen remain underdocumented, which emphasizes the need for more gender-focused research in migration studies, their stories reflect the broader impact of 20th-century geopolitical changes, contributing to the complex history of forced migration in this era.

As is evident in these and many other examples, "Migration is hardly ever a simple individual action in which a person

decides to move in search of better life-chances, pulls up his or her roots in the place of origin and quickly becomes assimilated in a new country," as migrant scholars Hein de Haas, Stephen Castles, and Mark J. Miller (2020, p. 42) point out. Migration is a process that affects not only the migrant but those close to them, even those in future generations. Noblewomen, like many other migrant groups, often migrated because of structural forces that left them no alternatives, as historical-structural theorists observe. Unlike rural populations, however, that become uprooted because of the deprivation of their livelihood (De Haas *et al.*, 2020), noblewomen's migration was commonly politically motivated.

When addressing forced migration, scholars often associate it with refugees (see, for example, Fiddian-Qasmiyeh *et al.*, 2014; Grabska & Clark-Kazak, 2022; Michelini, 2023; Randall, 2004; van Selm, 2003) or contrast it with 'voluntary' migration (see, for example, Bakewell, 2011; Crawley & Skleparis, 2018; Erdal & Oeppen, 2018). Despite attempts to place more emphasis on the heterogeneity characterizing forced migration by paying attention to differences between various identifications within forced migration (for example, between asylum seekers and refugees) or by using variations of field-specific terminology (for instance, discussing the context of displacement and displaced persons; see, for example, Grabska & Clark-Kazak, 2022), in these contexts, forced migrants tend to be homogenized into specifically defined and categorized groups that in the case of refugees, for instance, tend to emphasize social class but fail to take into consideration migrants' individual circumstances. Some scholars have further argued that refugees should be excluded from the category of migrants altogether since their purpose of moving to another country is to seek protection (Carling, 2017; Talleraas, 2022). Forced migration and forced displacement are repeatedly associated with labour migration, deportation, and wars, even addressed within the frame of digitalisation (Preiss, 2022; Schrover, 2022, pp. 35–36). Separate studies address forced marriage or forced sex work through the lens of humanitarian migration and human trafficking. Other underpinnings in forced migration deal with ethnic, racial, political or religious issues, even forced return migration (Talleraas *et al.*, 2022). It is uncommon in these studies to center the experiences of women, let alone women linked with wealth.

Nobility has commonly been approached as a gender-specific category, with main emphasis placed on male-centered narratives. The notion relies on generalisations and has been defined through the status and privileges associated with the concept itself and social class it entails. More recent scholarship on nobility, however, introduces the voices and viewpoints of noblewomen, examining the ways in which they assumed agency in their restraining circumstances under patriarchal oppression. For instance, in Violet Soen and Yves Junot's edited volume (2020) an entire section is dedicated to women ("Partie III: Femmes aristocrates engagées, médiatrices, marginales"). Other scholars, such as Elizabeth den Hartog, examine noblewomen's roles and actions, for instance, medieval women's involvement in building castles and fortresses or their participation in wars (den Hartog, 2020). This gender-conscious approach discloses the ways in which women navigated their restrictive socio-political boundaries, boldly pushing their way into public domain. By changing the angle of vision from a male perspective into centering the realities of women, the case studies discussed in this article recognize that the experiences of many noblewomen can be read as feminocentric narratives of forced migration that led the women to significantly contribute to socio-political change.

Methods

Noblewomen, as a distinct social group, have frequently been portrayed in historiography through the lens of their political marriages and social power, while the migratory dimensions of their experiences remain overlooked. Moreover, their agency and the socio-political impact of their actions tend to be downplayed. This article challenges such biases by redefining noblewomen as migrants who navigated complex processes of adaptation, identity transformation, and challenges in foreign contexts. Frameworks such as intersectionality help uncover the hidden dimensions of their lives, enabling an understanding of how their migration patterns influenced broader societal and cultural developments.

The case studies introduce Barbara of Cili (1392–1451), Catherine (Caterina) de' Medici (1519–1589), and Princess Ksenija Petrović-Njegoš (1881–1960). The first two case studies—dating from the 14th to the 16th centuries, set approximately a century apart—serve to highlight similarities in the women's age, status, educational backgrounds, marital experiences, and the outcomes of their forced migration from one state or nation to another because of their involuntary marriage to foreign statesmen, marriages that were nothing more than commercial and / or political transactions. The last case study showcases a different narrative, of a woman who despite her vulnerable position as a migrant woman, preferred to remain independent rather than rely on male relatives or charity. Even though noblewomen migrants were dominantly tied to political marriages as an instrument of diplomacy, there is another aspect adopted by noblewomen, one they came to embody in the twentieth century. They embraced the opportunities that this century brought—such as the fight for women's rights, improved access to education, and the ability to choose their own marital status (although, admittedly, this freedom was often significantly constrained).

Although gender was the one common denominator in the forced marriages that were a consolidated practice in several European countries and states, intersectionality helps recognize the individual experiences of the young women traded to secure political alliances. The approach to discussing the case studies is analytical and comparative, covering a time period of long durée, from the 14th to the 20th century. As mentioned earlier, the women centered in the case studies represent different locations and time periods—the Middle Ages, Renaissance, and 20th century. This perspective underscores how throughout centuries, societal structures and historical contexts have pressured noblewomen, turning them into migrants, and how their circumstances have shaped their lives afterwards as noblewomen who can be identified as forced migrants.

The primary methodology employed in this paper is a case study approach, focusing on the lives of three noblewomen from distinct geographical areas and historical periods, each with unique life migratory path.

We harvested data for these case studies predominantly from secondary sources and existing scholarly literature on these women, complemented by theoretical approaches to migration discussed in the initial sections of the paper. The review and comparative analysis presented here are based on desk research and source criticism through content analysis and examination of publications, including books, book chapters, and journal articles, al while maintaining objectivity and interpretation in mind.

Additionally, the Women on the Move COST Action catalogue of primary sources (https://www.womenonthemove.eu/catalogue-primary-so/) was consulted to determine the selection criteria for the case studies.

The chosen case studies were categorized based on several factors, including historical period, geographical scope (focusing on Europe, in alignment with the Women on the Move catalogue), marital status, political context, and type of migration (whether through marriage or exile) and the specific circumstances influencing and leading to their migration.

The case studies are observed through an analytical and comparative framework, covering a broad temporal scope from the 14th to the 20th century. As noted, the selected noblewomen represent nobility in different historical periods—namely, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and the 20th century.

Finally, each case study was analyzed individually before being compared, aiming to identify both commonalities and differences in the migratory experiences of noblewomen. The study seeks to determine to what extent noblewomen shared similar migratory destinies and to analyze the specific historical and social circumstances that differentiated their experiences.

This article was developed within the framework of the Women on the Move COST Action (CA19112) as part of the efforts of WG1 to identify and describe primary sources on women's migrations found in European archives, libraries, and museums (https://www.womenonthemove.eu/catalogue-primary-so/). During the creation of a catalogue of metadata for primary sources addressing women's migration as a distinct scholarly focus, the need became apparent to spotlight an often-overlooked group of women migrants: noblewomen.

The Black Queen's journey: Migration, marriage, and identity in medieval Europe

Barbara of Cili (1392–1451), also known as Barbara of Celje and the "Black Queen," was a fascinating historical figure whose life reflects the intricate dynamics of power, gender, and identity in the late Middle Ages, which coincides with the Italian Renaissance. This study follows Barbara's story, showing how her gender, social status, and the cultural/patriarchal expectations of medieval Europe shaped her journey. By looking at how Barbara navigated political power, her rumored connection to mystical practices, and the debates surrounding her legacy, we seek to understand her not just as a historical figure, but as a reflection of the challenges and forces that shaped women's lives in a patriarchal and highly stratified society. Her story offers insights into the themes of forced migration, political strategy through intermarriage, and the combination of power and vulnerability that noblewomen experienced during this era.

Born into the influential Celje family in the Duchy of Styria, modern-day Slovenia, Barbara was the daughter of Count Herman II of Celje, one of Europe's most powerful feudal lords (Pálosfalvi, 2006, p. 295–97). His ambitions for political alliances through intermarriage set the stage for Barbara's life in the European courts. Barbara married Sigismund of Luxembourg (1368–1437), the King of Hungary and Croatia and later Holy Roman Emperor. It was a political arrangement orchestrated by her father—she was engaged when she was only nine, and the wedding took place in 1405 when she was 13. The marriage was part of a broader strategy known as "intermarriage diplomacy," wherein noble families formed alliances to consolidate power, secure territories, and uphold dynastic claims. For Barbara, this meant leaving her home in Celje and relocating to Sigismund's several courts, where she would take on new roles as queen and, eventually, empress, supporting her family's political goals (see more in: Dvořáková, 2021). This move exemplifies what is known as migration by marriage (Santinelli-Foltz, 2019).

In her new role, Barbara found herself in a complex political landscape, where she had to quickly adapt and show a bit of resilience. Barbara's marriage to Sigismund wasn't her own choice but a result of her family's ambitions. This meant she had to adjust to somewhat unfamiliar customs and overcome language barriers, even though the cultural differences weren't entirely foreign to her.

Unlike traditional forced migration, which often implies displacement due to economic hardship or conflict, migration by marriage meant forcibly placing noblewomen like Barbara in prestigious yet isolating circumstances. Although these women held significant titles and were often viewed as alliance symbols, they lacked autonomy over their movements and marital arrangements (Dvořáková, 2021, p. 45–48). As a migrant in her new role as queen and later empress, Barbara experienced necessary cultural and social adjustments. Although historians rarely consider noblewomen like her as "migrants," their lives were significantly uprooted.

Barbara and Sigismund had just one child—daughter Elizabeth of Luxembourg. Born around 1409, as the daughter of powerful rulers, Elizabeth was a sought-after bride. She shared her mother's destiny by marrying into a powerful family—this time the Habsburg dynasty.

Barbara's role as queen and empress sheds light on the nuanced and multifaceted nature of noblewomen's power in medieval Europe. Her titles—Queen of Hungary and Croatia (1408),

Queen of Germany (1414), Holy Roman Empress (1433), and Queen of Bohemia (1437)—granted her notable political visibility (*Hrvatski biografski leksikon*, 2023). Particularly during Sigismund's absences, she assumed regency in Hungary, enabling her to oversee governance and financial matters which made her one of the most powerful medieval queens of her time (Engel, 2001, p. 234). Barbara was known for her education, spoke several languages, and gained significant influence at court and over her husband's political decisions early on. While these roles allowed her to exercise a considerable degree of agency, her influence was inherently tied to her husband's authority and the expectations placed upon her by a patriarchal society. Barbara's political activity, though significant for her time—she was probably the most politically active queen of that period in Europe, underscores how her power was mediated through male-dominated structures, highlighting the conditional nature of her autonomy. This duality—commanding influence while lacking control over personal life choices—captures the broader intersectional struggles of noblewomen in medieval Europe.

Barbara's relationship with the Catholic Church further illustrates her precarious position within both the secular and religious spheres. Although a devoted Christian, contemporaries, among whom Enea Silvio Piccolomini, the future Pope Pius II, who was close to the Habsburg family, the everlasting enemies of Barbara and Sigismund, stands out, accusing her of evil and heresy, a perspective later adopted by many subsequent historians (*Hrvatski biografski leksikon*, 2023). She was also associated with an interest in alchemy and esoteric practices, which led some of the Church officials to view her with suspicion, perceiving her possibly, intellectual pursuits as a threat to the established order and Church dogmas (Brenčič, 2017, p. 28–31; Paušek-Baždar, 2008, p. 277–279).

Her supposed involvement in alchemy and other forbidden studies enhanced her reputation as the "Black Queen," a figure shrouded in mystery and intrigue (Dvořáková, 2021, p. 185–190). The scepticism of the Papacy towards Barbara's interests highlights the challenges faced by women pursuing intellectual and scientific endeavors considered unorthodox, especially those in positions of power.

After Sigismund died in 1437, Barbara's fortunes changed dramatically. Her son-in-law, King Albert II of Germany, who after Sigismund's death, became King of Germany and Holy Roman Emperor, accused her of conspiring against Sigismund, confiscated her possessions, and imprisoned her in Bratislava Castle (Fugger Germadnik, 2010, p. 22). Barbara was forced to relinquish her Hungarian territories and dowry and faced an uncertain future as she was transported between various residences. A major role in these events also played her daughter, Elizabeth who conflicted Barbara as they struggled for power and control over the vast inheritance left by Sigismund. Their differing goals and strong personalities led to open conflict, with accusations, power struggles, and ultimately, a temporary estrangement.

Barbara eventually fled to Poland, where she sought refuge and stayed financially supported by the Polish king for several years. Her exile illustrates the precariousness of her position and highlights how noblewomen's power was often fleeting, reliant on the protection and approval of influential male allies. In 1441, Barbara returned to Bohemia, where she lived in Mělník. By this time, she had lost her Hungarian territories, divided among her daughter, Queen Elisabeth, and other claimants. Barbara's relationship with her daughter was strained, but they eventually reconciled, and Barbara renounced her rights to Hungarian possessions. A retreat from public life marked her final years as she assumed the role of dowager queen in Bohemia (Kosi, 2023). However, her reputation remained controversial—the Habsburg court continued to view her as a threat, accusing her of heresy, alchemy, and immoral behaviour. These accusations, combined with her enduring interest in the esoteric, contributed to her portrayal as a dangerous figure, sometimes referred to as the "Messalina of Germany" due to her perceived licentiousness and defiance of social norms (See more in: Duggan, 2002; Dvořáková, 2021). Barbara died in 1451, reportedly from the plague.

Barbara's legacy endured through legends and folklore that immortalised her as the enigmatic "Black Queen" (Balog, 1999, 407). In Croatian tradition, she is portrayed as a sinister figure—a stern woman with long black hair, dressed in dark clothing, and deeply connected to the supernatural. Such stories crafted an image of a fearsome and commanding woman who boldly defied societal expectations of her gender and rank. While these depictions were undoubtedly exaggerated, they reflect the contemporary anxieties and biases of the era toward women who stepped outside traditional roles.

Barbara's interest in alchemy and her intellectual pursuits, combined with the power and wealth she enjoyed as well as her responsibilities as a queen, likely stemmed from a desire for knowledge and autonomy. This need was especially significant as she was married to a husband often busy with political and military endeavours. These interests, deliberately or not, misunderstood and maligned by her contemporaries, contributed to the enduring myths that shrouded her in mystery and controversy.

Barbara's life, shaped by both privilege and restriction, offers a rich case study of the challenges faced by noblewomen in medieval society. Her story reveals the intersections of forced migration, intermarriage diplomacy, and the gendered constraints that limited noblewomen's autonomy. Although she had significant influence in her court, her life was largely governed by the expectations of male family members, highlighting the paradox of her position: she was powerful in name and title but often powerless in personal agency. Barbara's life and legacy challenge the traditional view of noblewomen as non-migrants and underscore the importance of understanding migration through an intersectional lens. Her life serves as a reminder that even women of high rank experienced both social privilege and personal sacrifice,

illustrating the resilience required of women in positions of power during a time when autonomy was rarely granted freely and who were forced to adapt to the ever-changing political landscape of medieval Europe.

Florence-France axis around Catherine (Caterina) de' Medici

Migration scholarship tends to treat forced migration as pertinent to specific groups of people who are perceived to share particular characteristics, for example, country of origin, citizenship, and socio-political circumstances; moreover, there is a tendency to elevate one category above others (see, for example, Koser & Martin, eds., 2011). Women in general tend to be perceived as relational—as daughters, wives, mothers (Broomhall, 2021). Catherine de' Medici was no exception: her relational position was first emphasized in the scheming of her marriage. For her—like for numerous women of nobility, such as Barbara of Cili—the marriage was a political transaction carried out with the goal of reinforcing political alliances between foreign states. It entailed forced migration, a move into an unknown reality. Although scholars have examined Catherine de' Medici's experiences in the roles of daughter, wife, and mother, less attention has been paid to her as a migrant who assumed agency, taking control of French politics, culture, and social landscape.

Catherine de' Medici's mother, Madeleine de La Tour d'Auvergne (1498–1519), was a French princess who had been forced to move to Florence to marry Lorenzo II de Medici (1492–1519), the ruler of Florence and Duke of Urbino, in 1518. The bride, at the time twenty years old, was the French King Francis I's cousin. Money and property changed hands, and political alliances between Florence and France were consolidated through the marriage. Shortly after the birth of Catherine, the young bride died of fever, soon to be followed by her husband, believed to have contracted syphilis as he enjoyed women, carnivals, and entertainment in general. The deaths of both her parents within a month of her birth left Catherine an orphan (more on Lorenzo de' Medici and Madeleine (Maddalena) de La Tour d'Auvergne see, for example Benzoni, 2006a; Benzoni, 2006b; Orieux, 1987). Already vulnerable because of her gender and age, without parents Catherine was even more defenseless as a political trading instrument.

In Catherine de' Medici's case the negotiations for her marriage started when she was merely three years old. Initially the main instigator of a contract with Ippolio de' Medici, the 11-year-old illegitimate son of the Duke of Nemours, was Pope Leon X, an influential member of the Medici family who had secured the most powerful position in the Catholic Church in Rome. The plans changed over the years as the political situation shifted or potential spouses were killed in battle or by plague. In 1523, when Clement VII (Giulio de' Medici) became the head of the Catholic Church, Catherine de' Medici became little more than a political object and an exchange commodity. Potential spouses for her were variously considered in Ferrara, Scotland, and England. Catherine herself, who was held in Florence practically as a hostage, was not involved in the diplomatic machinations concerning her future, plans that simply aimed to cement political pacts and guarantee the power and glory of the Medici family (Broomhall, 2021; Orieux, 1987; Vannucci, 2006).

In 1530, when Pope Clement VII was still looking for a good investment the Medicis could obtain through Catherine, the Italophile French King, Frances I, sent the first marriage negotiator on behalf of his second son, Henry II, to Rome. The negotiations were more complicated than anticipated because Catherine was not royalty but came from a family of powerful bankers. Although the wealth and socially elevated position of de' Medici family made Catherine's status comparable to nobility, it was her mother's rank as princess that was the determining factor in identifying Catherine as a woman of nobility. In 1533, Henry II (1519–1559) and Catherine de' Medici became husband and wife. Both spouses at the time were 14 years old (Orieux, 1987; Vannucci, 2006). The French had won the competition over the desirable alliance with de' Medicis, as historian Marcello Vannucci observes (2006, p. 67). The scheming had taken approximately eleven years. The transaction that led to the politically profitable marriage was conducted by men: the Pope, together with the male members of the Florentine Medici family and the court in France. In other words, Catherine de' Medici found herself in the middle of a transaction in which men exercised their power, using her as a pawn to cement an alliance between Florence and France. Through her arranged (forced) marriage to Henry II, who after the death of his brother became King of France in 1547, Catherine was forced to migrate to France. With no decision-making power, she was uprooted from her native Florence and transported to a foreign, rather hostile, French society. She would never be able to return to her native Florence again. As a young, forced migrant woman, she represented one of the most vulnerable human categories, despite her high social rank.

Although Catherine de' Medici represented the educated and cultured upper class elite, she had to face and overcome the challenges that troubled many migrant women, among them women of nobility like Barbara of Cili. For her, like for others, the move to another country meant struggling with language barriers, accompanied with inability to feel accepted and integrated in her new reality. For Catherine, it also meant feeling rejected by her husband whose many lovers were common knowledge at the French court; and she later grieved over the death of her four sons who died of diseases such as tuberculosis. In addition, she became a hated figure in France, accused of being evil, corrupt, a witch, with blood on her hands: when Protestantism was spreading in Europe, leading to wars between Protestants and Catholics, she was held responsible for the Paris massacre of thousands of Protestants in 1572. Catherine de' Medici was further regarded with contempt because of her origins and was accused of contaminating the French language with Italianisms (Broomhall, 2021; Hollingsworth, 2024; Orieux, 1987; Tomas, 2003). She was approached with suspicion and distrust, which is a common attitude towards foreigners and migrants in general.

Many of the negative depictions circulating about Catherine were due to her gender since the organization of power was interconnected to sexism (Hill Collins & Bilge, 2016, p. 7). Similarly to other women of nobility, a position she fully conquered in France, the often misogynist representations of Catherine stemmed from the fact that she ruled at a time when male-based power was the norm. As gender historian Natalie R. Tomas (2003, p. 1) observes: "Most women rulers had to exert considerable effort to legitimise their position."

Although she was a forced migrant, Catherine de' Medici was neither victim nor heroine, which have been identified as the two most common feminized imageries linked with women's forced migration. Forced migration scholar Anna Ball (2022, p. 4) observes how women migrants tend to be "read as passive victims of a world in flux," and even as heroines they end up being depicted in "ultimately reductive terms." The feminocentric imagery constructed around noblewomen glorifies their wealth and (presumed) luxurious living, overlooking the complexities of their displacement and what in contemporary terms could be perceived as commercial exploitation. As a highly intelligent woman, Catherine de' Medici—who mastered science, mathematics, astronomy, and was cultivated in the arts— created strategies of survival and found a space in which she could realize her potential. Soon after her arrival in France, she learned French, started following the religious controversies, and became a skilled hunter, thus gaining the admiration of King Frances I (Vannucci, 2006). She responded to changing political circumstances, not only relationally as a wife, powerful widow, and mother of sons who became kings and daughters who were queens, but first and foremost as a woman. She ruled with humility but also authority, defending France in a way none of her sons had been able to do (Orieux, 1987). She moved through different roles and status positions tied with relationships to power, adapting to her continuously changing circumstances.

Despite the many adversities, Catherine de' Medici assumed agency and shouldered a commanding socio-political position in her country of reception. Her family had taught her the skill of negotiation and diplomacy, the force of peace over war. With strength, courage, and intelligence, Catherine ruled aside her husband until his death in 1559 (probably of poisoning), at the age of 40. She then fought enemies inside and out of the court, negotiated peace and declared war, she ruled officially and in the shadows, and she contributed to the society, for instance, with her diplomatic politics, impeccable sense of fashion, by introducing France to perfume and tableware such as forks already in use in Florence, and under her influence, French cuisine was dramatically changed (Broomhall, 2021; Orieux, 1987). She had a great impact on the social, political, and economic systems of the migration destination in which she settled. The space in which she navigated was public.

Catherine de' Medici has been hailed as one of the great figures of the Renaissance (Vannucci, 2006). She proved to be an asset in her adoptive country in a similar way to many other migrant women who, however, initially tend to be perceived as a problem rather than a resource. The reason for women like Catherine de' Medici to be excluded from forced migration scholarship concerns the time period, her gender, and social status. Arranged marriages were a common practice in the Renaissance, and the social status of Catherine de' Medici was elevated. And yet, she transformed the initial gender-related persecution that forced her to migrate in order to ensure the political survival and economic prosperity of Florence and France, claiming power and by doing so, she departed from prevailing assumptions of gendered inequalities. She created an assertively feminocentric counter-narrative to male-dominated hegemony, proving that migrant women can be invincible creative forces. Catherine de' Medici left a legacy whose impact continues to resonate in today's French society.

The life in exile of Princess Ksenija: modern woman limited by patriarchal and gendered constraints

Princess Ksenija Petrović-Njegoš (Cetinje, 1881–Paris, 1960) was one of twelve children of Montenegro's first and last king, Nikola I Petrović-Njegoš. Her life journey, spanning two centuries and two states, began in the royal splendor in Cetinje and ended in solitude, poverty, and exile in France.

Examining Ksenija's story through the lens of intersectionality reveals how her life was shaped by several gender-predetermined principles: being a woman, a daughter, and a sister. These roles positioned her as an accompaniment, a supporting figure rather than the central protagonist in her own life. As a woman in patriarchal Montenegro, Ksenija could not realistically aspire to wield genuine political power—a limitation that persisted even during her exile. Age, a factor often critical in defining women's societal roles, played a less restrictive role in Ksenija's case. She emigrated at the age of 35, a significant age for a woman at the time. Being unmarried by then diminished expectations for her to adhere to norms typically imposed on young ladies, granting her a degree of personal independence.

Women's roles in Montenegrin society were predominantly confined to the family. In exceptional cases, their influence extended beyond familial boundaries, yet even then, women were not perceived as equals to men. Instead, their duty was to uphold the honor and reputation of their family or tribe (Tepavčević, 2018). The strength of male-dominated historical narratives relegated women to the shadows. Women were rarely considered in historical discussions, often dismissed as a marginal phenomenon within male-centric historical accounts (Tepavčević, 2018, p. 238). However, women in Montenegro became "socially visible, turning from object to subject of history" in the first half of the 20th century, socially more engaged and more aware of their rights (Kovačević, 2015, p. 80). This was visible in Ksenija's case.

Ksenija's life was not marked by intermarriage migration but family migration, shaped by the political shifts of the 20th century. During the reign of Ksenija's father Nikola Petrović-Njegoš, women's rights to freely choose their partners

were formalized in the 1906 Constitution and the Orthodox Consistory Statute of 1904 (Tepavčević, 2018). Ksenija exercised this right, demonstrating a certain level of personal independence.

At the royal court in Cetinje, Ksenija received a solid education, demonstrating equal interest in both natural and social sciences. She played the piano, mastered three foreign languages (Jovićević *et al.*, 1999), and was known for her versatile personality. For instance, she was the first female driver in the Balkans and had a passion for photography (Šekularac, 2024). These were the features that characterized noble, privileged women, so when she had become a forced migrant, it already set her aside from what typically was perceived as forced migrant. However, Ksenija was not shy and too proud to use her knowledge and skills to survive in migration- unlike many noblewomen, she worked, lived alone and maintained a high degree of personal independence.

Ksenija's education and interests influenced her independence and even her audacity to engage in politics—a domain traditionally dominated by men. Yet, as a Montenegrin princess, she remained deeply tied to a society that resisted the idea of women as political actors, especially unmarried ones.

Matthew Frank has characterized the 20th century as an 'era of population transfer,' with the Balkan population exchanges between 1913 and 1925 holding particular significance (Frank, 2017). Although Montenegro fought on the side of the Entente during World War I, Austro-Hungary's invasion in early 1916 left the Montenegrin dynasty and its people without external support (Andrijašević, 2016; Šistek, 2022). The Austro-Hungarian army entered Cetinje on January 15, leading to Montenegro's capitulation (Rastoder, 2004). Following this, the royal family began their life in exile, which was fully verified in 1918 with Montenegro's loss of independence when it was annexed to Serbia and incorporated into the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. The Montenegrin dynasty was permanently banned from returning (Andrijašević, 2016; Rastoder, 2004).

While Ksenija's sisters married into European courts—her sister Jelena (Elena) even became the Queen of Italy (Gentile, 2018)—she chose a different path, rejecting all marriage proposals (Jovićević *et al.*, 1999). Her decision was to remain unmarried and stay with her parents, even in exile. In exile, she was an active, persistent, and unwavering advocate for Montenegro's survival (Šekularac, 2024; Vičević, 2012).

Forced to leave her homeland, Ksenija, along with her father King Nikola, mother Queen Milena, and sister Vjera, journeyed through Albania and Italy to France. The family eventually settled in Lyon before moving to Neuilly-sur-Seine, Cannes, and finally, in 1920, to Cap d'Antibes (Rastoder, 2004). While the French court nominally provided them with a villa, they possessed no substantial privileges or influence. Thus, their exile was marked by both political circumstances in Montenegro and the lack of autonomy abroad.

In France, Ksenija became her father's closest confidante, assisting him with secretarial duties and actively engaging in futile efforts to restore Montenegro's independence. She had three brothers, predestined to be rulers and decision-makers, even though none of them possessed any diplomatic talent. Yet, their gender provided them the prerogative, which Ksenija, as an unmarried woman didn't have. Critics accused her of meddling excessively in political affairs, but her influence on her father was unmatched (Rastoder, 2004; Vičević, 2012). He often called her 'Velika' (The Great) because she was intelligent, capable and his trusted advisor. However, her father often lamented, saying that it would be different if only she were a man (Šekularac, 2024, p.162). That clearly implied that her gender limited her in gaining any formal decision-making power.

Simultaneously, Ksenija contributed to humanitarian efforts in exile. In 1916, the government-in-exile established a temporary Montenegrin Red Cross Society in Neuilly, where Ksenija and her sister Vjera worked daily, and soon after, under Ksenija's direction, an institution for aiding Montenegrin war prisoners was founded in Paris in November 1916 (Rastoder, 2004). These humanitarian activities allowed Ksenija to channel her efforts into causes that supported her people during the displacement and war.

Princess Ksenija's life serves as a profound case study of the intersection of forced migration, political exile, and limited power for a noblewoman during a time of intense political upheaval. As a woman who was not married, she had no male protector and was largely abandoned by the political structures that had once supported her. In contrast to the practices of intermarriage diplomacy that characterized much of her family's history- unlike her sisters, who had been married off for political alliances, Ksenija's life choices reflected a rejection of this traditional path.

While King Nikola was alive, Ksenija's family maintained a degree of influence. However, his death in 1921 and the passing of her mother, Queen Milena, shortly afterward rendered Ksenija powerless and forgotten in the new political landscape. Her brothers, who were not equipped to govern effectively, had little influence, and the government (nor the one in exile or the new in Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes) never consulted the royal family (Andrijašević, 2016). In the newly established Kingdom, she was relegated to the role of a political exile. The title of princess held no real meaning, and her noble heritage did not provide her any real privilege.

In France, Ksenija and her sister Vjera, found themselves working to survive. They took jobs as typists in a local factory, and sold furniture from their home (Vičević, 2012). This was a reality faced by many European noblewomen in the early 0th century, as wars and political upheavals stripped them of their wealth and status. Unlike their younger brother, Prince Petar, who acquiesced to the new authorities, Ksenija refused to bend to those whom she considered responsible for the

downfall of her family and the destruction of Montenegro (Vičević, 2012). Petar often criticized her 'meddling in politics to Montenegro's detriment instead of attending to the household or matters befitting a princess' (Rastoder, 2004, p.161). This relation is yet another proof that there was no place for women, especially unmarried and unprotected ones, in Montenegrin perception of politics.

Ksenija never fully accepted the annuity offered to her by the government of the Kindgom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (later Yugoslavia) in her home country immediately after her sister's death in 1927, viewing it as charity rather than compensation for her lost property (Rastoder, 2004). Her financial struggles were compounded by the political climate of postwar Yugoslavia. After 1945, new communist regime marginalized the remnants of the monarchy, however, chose to help Ksenija, because of her persistent battle for Montenegrin independence, which was re-established at the republican level after the war.

Despite receiving some compensation from the government between 1930 and 1945, and from the new communist regime, she died in poverty in Paris in 1960 (Rastoder, 2004). However, another characteristic attributed to her noble heritage was evident in her behavior, which Blažo Jovanović, one of the new Montenegrin communist leaders, perceived as the 'disability of noble people to grasp reality' (Rastoder, 2004, p.168). Her pride and sense of nobility prevented her from accepting charity, and she remained steadfast in her principles until the end of her life. It is a distinction that differentiated Ksenija from many forced migrants, who often had no choice but to accept charity- she stood by her convictions built into her by her noble heritage.

Ksenija's story is one of resilience, but it is also a reflection of the limitations imposed on women, particularly those of noble birth, in a patriarchal and politically volatile world. Her noble birth, once a source of power, became a burden when the dynasty lost power. Ksenija wasn't a ruler, and that is why her life turned in a somewhat different direction- independent in one aspect, her circumstances were in fact conditioned by political and family matters and shaped by the male-centric perspective of women's role in public. Similar as in the case of Barbara of Cilli, she depended on the men in her surroundings-her father, brothers or politicians that possessed true power, so that in many ways her position depended on the protection and support of men.

Her independence comprised of the fact that, in the 20th century, she caught a glimpse of modernity and had the option of being unmarried, get a job and use her skills, such as knowledge of French language.

In Montenegrin historiography, Ksenija has not been recognized as a migrant in the traditional sense, although she spent over four decades in exile. European historiography overlooks her completely. Her legacy is confined to her roles as daughter and sister, rather than as an individual who lived a life shaped by the forces of history. Only recently, through the publication of *Crna Gora u fotografskom oku princeze Ksenije* (Montenegro in the Photographic Eye of Princess Ksenija), has her artistic talent been recognized, at the same time shedding light on the other facets of her life and legacy.

Conclusions

Migration studies encompass a broad and dynamic field of social research—scholars have developed a diverse range of theoretical frameworks to analyze the complex causes, consequences, and experiences of migration. One of the most significant recent developments in migration research is the growing emphasis on interdisciplinarity that facilitates the application of such theoretical tools as intersectionality. This approach acknowledges that migrants experience the world in multifaceted ways, shaped by factors such as gender, race, class, and other social identities. By incorporating intersectionality into migration research, scholars move beyond one-dimensional understandings of migration, allowing for a more nuanced exploration of the unique challenges and opportunities faced by different migrant groups.

Furthermore, the historical narratives of migration often focus on large-scale population movements, such as the forced displacement of refugees or the labor migrations of economic migrants. However, the experiences of individual migrants, particularly those from privileged backgrounds, can offer unique insights into the complexities of human mobility. One such group that has been overlooked in this context are noblewomen, who can offer compelling insights into the intersection of gender, class, age, power, and forced migration. Noblewomen have remained excluded from migrant studies in general and from the subcategory of forced migrants more specifically for several reasons. Their identities, realities, and experiences have rendered their categorization complicated and definition complex. The problematic labelling concerns their position within migration studies: should they be considered minority migrants, migrant women providing services, victims of commercial or even sexual exploitation, or simply forced migrant women? Although they could fit into any of these categories, noblewomen remain distinct due to their high social status, wealth and power, which set them apart from the groups typically included in migration studies. While their migrations may appear voluntary at first glance, they were, in reality, conditioned and forced into politically governed circumstances through a process in which their opinions and desires played no role.

To shed light on this unique form of female migration, this article explores the lives of three noblewomen across different historical periods—Barbara of Cilli, Catherine de' Medici, and Princess Ksenija Petrović-Njegoš, whose forced migrations were shaped by political alliances, dynastic marriages, and the shifting movements of European power politics. As the case study on Barbara of Cilli reveals, she was a medieval queen, a subject to dynastic marriages and political alliances.

Her life was marked by constant movement and adaptation, as she was forced to relocate to different courts to serve the political interests of her family. While she wielded considerable power, her agency was often constrained by the patriarchal structures of her time. Catherine de' Medici, on the other hand, used her marriage to the French king as a springboard to political power. However, her foreign origins and gender made her a target of suspicion and hostility. Princess Ksenija Petrović-Njegoš, a member of the Montenegrin royal family, experienced the devastating consequences of political upheaval firsthand. Her life after the fall of the Montenegrin monarchy was spent in exile, with established personal independence, but no real, decision-making power.

These women's experiences challenge traditional narratives of migration, which often emphasize the agency of male migrants and overlook the constraints faced by women. The lives of the women in the case studies involved movements driven by political alliances, marital duties, and exile, reflecting the intersectionality of their status as women, representatives of nobility, and as political actors in patriarchal societies. By examining the lives of these noblewomen, we can gain a deeper understanding of the intersections of gender, class, and power in shaping migration experiences.

In conclusion, these case studies reveal several key themes. First, the experience of forced migration among noblewomen is often intertwined with issues of gender and power. Noblewomen were frequently used as political pawns, their marriages arranged to secure alliances or consolidate power. This placed significant constraints on the women's personal freedom and autonomy. Second, the intersection of class and migration is complex. While noblewomen enjoyed certain privileges, their social status did not protect them from the challenges and uncertainties of migration. Finally, these case studies highlight the importance of historical context in understanding migration experiences. The political, social, and cultural conditions of each woman's epoch of life shaped their experiences in unique ways. Their stories also highlight the resilience and adaptability of these women. While their realities were shaped by the constraints of their time and geographical location, they also demonstrated the agency that individuals can assume and exercise, even in difficult times and challenging circumstances.

The study of noblewomen migrants offers a valuable opportunity to challenge traditional narratives of migration. By centering the experiences of women and by adopting an intersectional approach, it is possible to develop a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the complexities of human mobility. The stories of Barbara of Cilli, Catherine de' Medici, and Princess Ksenija Petrović-Njegoš highlight how migration, whether voluntary or forced, reshapes identities, redefines roles, and leaves a lasting impact on both personal histories and broader socio-political landscapes.

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"No data are associated with this article."

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The article “Assuming Agency: Women of nobility as forced migrants” examines the experiences of displacement and mobility of three noblewomen from different periods: Barbara of Cili, Catherine de' Medici, and Ksenija Petrović-Njegoš. Based on arranged marriages and political exile, the experience of these three women is situated within the theoretical-conceptual framework of forced migration and intersectionality. The text indicates that it analyses how the identity of these women was shaped by forced migration, gender, class and nationality. And it will decisively highlight the agency of the women whose experiences have been selected for research.
The object of analysis of the text is very suggestive and interesting when talking about gender and power and raises questions of great relevance for feminist analysis of the role of women and political power from a historical perspective. This allows for the construction of a new representation of women's role as queens and rulers and their position in a patriarchal and historical framework. The choice of these three cases is highly relevant for reconstructing the aspects of their trajectories that have been rendered invisible and undervalued in patriarchal and national histories and narratives.
Although the proposal is of great interest, it presents some theoretical and analytical problems.

1) Firstly, it is necessary to broaden the discussion on the field of migration and gender studies beyond the identified authors. It is a field of study with autonomy and original contributions. Relevant to this article is the critique of the androcentric perspective in the study of migration that situates the male experience as the migratory pattern, the relevance of understanding gender relations as unequal power relations based on sex in migration, and the understanding of patriarchal structures in female mobility. As a brief example, I would recommend reviewing and incorporating the contributions of authors such as:
-Mirjana Morokvasic (1984) (Ref 1)
-Donato, K., MD Gabaccia, J. Holdaway, M. Manalansan and P.R. Pessar (2006) (Ref 2).
-Nicola Piper (2008) New Perspectives on Gender and Migration: Livelihood, Rights and Entitlements, Routledge.
-Caroline Brettell (2016) Gender and Migration, Polity Press, UK. (Ref 3)

2) Secondly, the forced migration framework does not fit well with the first two cases, but it does fit well with the third. Forced migration as a category of analysis is designed more for the case of population displacement from the First World War onwards and fits well with the category of political exile and the third case of Ksenija Petrović-Njegoš.
However, the category of mobility would be much more useful for analysis by including social class as a marker of global difference (see Sheller, M. and Urry, J. (2006) (Ref 4) and/or Glick Schiller, N. and Salazar, N. (2013) (Ref 5)

3) Thirdly, from a methodological point of view, it is necessary to make explicit the categories of comparison of the three cases, which would help to gain clarity and depth. In a framework linking gender and mobility in the case of noblewomen it would be more useful to introduce more fine-tuned analytical approaches for the cases analysed. I would highlight the old proposal made by Claude Lévi-Strauss in which women are exchanged for men as a founding feature of human culture from the prohibition of incest and the imposition of exogamy. Thus, the exchange of women is at the basis of patriarchal society and translates into the fact that men have rights over women, but women have rights neither over men nor over themselves. The most prominent manifestation of this is the marriage alliances of royal and noble families. The exchange of women is to relate to the kinship imperative in such a way that both power systems will reinforce each other. Here it is worth clarifying further how intermarriage diplomacy operates and how this reinforces patriarchal power patterns.
4) Finally, and following on from the above, intersectionality needs to be explicitly analysed. Beyond stating their elements, it is necessary to identify which axes of intersection are relevant to explain the position of these three women in each of their new political, social and cultural contexts of residence. These axes must also be linked to the axes of domination (systems of domination are intersectional), which helps us to understand how the vectors of discrimination operate in the experiences of these women. How was gender articulated with the ethnic/national origin, kinship and/or religion of these women? What differences are found in the three cases? And what similarities are there?
I consider that these aspects will contribute to deepen the analysis presented and provide a more complex and elaborated narrative that goes beyond the description and repetition of notions related to gender, forced migration and intersectionality. It is a highly interesting text that contributes to broadening and resituating the representation of empowered women in political and historical discourse by reviewing their experiences from a gendered and intersectional perspective.

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Is the background of the case's history and progression described in sufficient detail?
Partly

Is the work clearly and accurately presented and does it cite the current literature?
Partly

If applicable, is the statistical analysis and its interpretation appropriate?
Not applicable

Are all the source data underlying the results available to ensure full access and reuse by other researchers?
No source data required

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data and analysis?
Partly

Is the case presented with sufficient detail to be useful for teaching or other practitioners?
Partly

Competing Interests: No competing interests were disclosed.

Reviewer Expertise: Gender and migration

I confirm that I have read this submission and believe that I have an appropriate level of expertise to confirm that it is of an acceptable scientific standard, however I have significant reservations, as outlined above.