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'Fully Electrified Kitchen is all That a Modern Emancipated Woman Needs': The Feminist Techno-Utopia in The Interwar Czechoslovak Women's Magazine *Eva*

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the emancipatory techno-imaginary portrayed in the media discourse of the Czechoslovak interwar women's magazine *Eva*. Employing a feminist lens on media archaeology, we dissect the magazine's usage of the *topos* of the *new woman*. Central to the analysed discourse is the concept of an emancipatory scale, rooted in the technodeterminist belief that new technologies will inevitably revolutionise gender dynamics. Despite *Eva*'s declarative upscale audience, it perpetuates the collective idea that any woman can attain emancipation through technological investment. This scale emphasises women's indispensable role in household management for economic advancement, with ownership of household appliances marking progression. The pinnacle of emancipation, symbolised by the automobile, remains elusive for many women due to male influence. The analysis uncovers overlooked aspects of interwar Czechoslovak discourse, shedding light on women's techno-imaginary and the limitations of everyday emancipation.

Keywords: techno-imaginary, interwar Czechoslovakia, media archaeology, *Eva* magazine, new woman

INTRODUCTION

'The *Perun*'s washing and ironing machine, that's all that us female members of the housing association wish for Christmas from the association,' says an anonymous woman in an alleged survey conducted by the editors of the Czechoslovak magazine for 'modern and educated women' *Eva* in 1928. New domestic technologies were at the centre of the so-called rationalisation of the household in the interwar period, which was discursively associated with women's liberation from demanding domestic chores. The newly established Czechoslovak Republic was no exception, but the discursive constitution of this current of women's emancipation in conjunction with technology is a largely neglected research topic. The present text, therefore, aims to map the structure of women's emancipatory techno-imaginary related to household rationalisation and domestic technologies.

At the level of the media discourse of *Eva* magazine, we deconstruct the ideas associated with liberation with the help of new technologies, which at that time were, for example, new cooking or cleaning devices. Thus, using the methodological framework of feminist media archaeology and the contemporary concept of the *new woman*, we focus on the forgotten components of Czechoslovak interwar media discourse concerning the modernising techno-imaginary. In the text, we first present the historical context of the Czechoslovak *new woman*, the analytical concept of the *new woman* as such, along with concepts such as rationalisation and Americanism, and in the analysis itself, we focus on the components of the present emancipatory techno-imaginary concerning specific domestic appliances and the automobile.

THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE CZECHOSLOVAK *NEW WOMAN*

The historical conditions out of which the figure of the interwar emancipated woman emerges are strongly related to two aspects:

(i) feminist efforts in the Czech lands during the second half of the 19th century and the pre-war period of the 20th century, and

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(ii) the transformation of state borders and organisation after the World War I and the accompanying establishment of Czechoslovakia.

These aspects intricately interrelate, forming a constellation influencing the feminist imaginary. As Malečková (2016: 46) maps, the Czech women's movement and debates concerning the 'women's question' were always closely linked to Czech nationalism, which aimed at state emancipation from the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, and 'carried a strong "patriotic" aspect' (Malečková, 2016: 49). The accentuation of national interest over women's or gendered interests was also common in the activities of Czech feminists within international women's organisations (Malečková, 2016: 52). Within these national interests, cooperation between women and men in the interest of a common goal, of which women's emancipation was to be a part, was widely emphasised (Malečková, 2016: 47).

The primary common goal was achieved in the new European order after World War I, when the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy resulted in the establishment of the Czechoslovak Republic, along with the newly formed Poland, Hungary, and Austria (Vujnović, 2008: 4; Jusová, 2016: 10–11), creating a new aspiring state in need of further support of active citizens, including women. The partial goal of women's emancipation of attaining active and passive suffrage, established by the 1920 constitution, was also achieved (Jusová, 2016: 12). Given the openly feminist first president of the Czechoslovak Republic, T. G. Masaryk (Jusová, 2016: 11; Malečková, 2016: 51; Feinberg, 2006: 11–40) and other feminist achievements such as the open debate on abortion, the abolition of celibacy for female civil servants, and the availability of divorce (Jusová, 2016: 13; Huebner, 2016: 62), interwar Czechoslovakia is considered the 'golden age' of women's emancipation (Eriksroed-Burger, 2023: 89), even though the feminist movement began to decline after gaining the suffrage (Huebner, 2016: 63). The continuity with the previous nationalist movement was crucial for the new state and economy, especially in stabilisation.

Therefore, the emancipated woman was ascribed an economic role linked to her efforts to work outside the home. Bahenská et al. (2017: 43) trace the political and media emphasis on the role of economically educated women in industrialised and modern society since the 1890s, both in terms of employment and especially in terms of appropriate economic management of the household. In the industrialised Czech lands[1], women worked both in agriculture, where a significant proportion was also present in the interwar period (Bahenská et al., 2017: 83), and industry, for which, as part of urbanisation, women concentrated or moved to cities, among other things for the prospect of acquiring the freedom associated with higher incomes (Bahenská et al., 2017: 43). The women's labour market was significantly transformed by the 'women's mobilisation' during the World War I, when they replaced men drafted into the war in all jobs (Bahenská et al., 2017: 47). In the interwar period, this female mobilisation became to some extent a destabilising element of the gender order, particularly in middle-class society; Bahenská et al. (2017: 59) refer to it as a 'foreign element' in the 'status of the married middle-class woman', which nevertheless cannot be ignored. On the one hand, the modern state and the new economy needed to ensure a sufficiently large productive force. On the other hand, it needed to ensure sufficient population growth, which brings the ideal of the mother and the ideal of the female citizen into conflict within the middle-class myth. This ideological contradiction culminates in the figure of the *new woman*.

THE CONCEPT OF A *NEW WOMAN*

The figure of the *new woman* is a relatively marginally mapped phenomenon in interwar Czechoslovakia, and the conceptualisation of this concept as an analytical category in a specific socio-economic and political context is, consequently, underdeveloped. Pachmanová (2018, 2021) deals most extensively with the *new woman*, primarily on the level of her visual representation in interwar media and visual culture. The *new woman*, a signifier also found in German and French, is referred to here as a 'civilised woman', as 'the adjective "civilised" is at the same time fundamentally linked to the Czech environment' (Pachmanová, 2021: 13), in the sense of 'civilisation' as 'the opposite of primitivism and barbarism', which was to be 'our [Czech] local specificity at this time' (Pachmanová, 2021: 13). This 'civility' was to consist in 'denying the instinctive "self"' and 'accepting "discipline and organisation" as a condition of modernity' (Pachmanová, 2021: 13). However, this feature is further extended to 'Central European space in general' relying on unspecified 'anthropological theories' (Pachmanová, 2021: 13n.). It is therefore unclear why, or if, this was a purely local specificity. Pachmanová (2021: 15) further sets the 'civilised woman' in opposition to the rural: '(...) the central figure of this publication is a distinctly urban being and is seen as one of the features of the modern city.' In the voluminous book that this conceptualisation frames, the *new woman* is much more present as precisely the counterpoint of the underdeveloped non-industrialised countryside, which is also reflected in the diversity of signifiers for the figure of the contemporary ideal of the woman, who is

[1] At the end of the 19th century, the Czech lands were the most heavily industrialised parts of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, and their level was rather close to the German or British level than to other parts of the monarchy (Kelly, 2002: 542–543). In 1900, 42% of Bohemian, 35% of Moravian, and 46% of Silesian workers were employed in the industrial sector (Kelly, 2002: 543).

not consistently described as a 'civilised woman', but often also as a 'modern woman' (e.g., Pachmanová, 2021: 25, 30, 54, 102, 113, 142). For this reason, we do not accept the definition of the *new woman* as a counterpoint to the colonial view of barbarism but rather as an opposition to the absence of modernity, industrialisation, and urbanisation.

This interpretation is based on other texts dealing with the concept of the *new woman* in interwar Czechoslovakia. For the present interpretation, it is essential to view the figure of the *new woman* as a discursive object present in the female emancipatory imaginary; it is, therefore, not an interpretation that assumes the real existence of *new women* as a demographical group. According to Huebner (2012: 231–248), who analyses a range of Czechoslovak interwar periodicals, the *new woman* was an educated, fashionable, politically and socially active figure. Eriksroed-Burger (2023: 102) emphasises the consumerist aspect of the *new woman* related to the 'economic boom after World War I,' which 'allowed for the development of mass consumption in the newly founded nation states,' among which she explicitly includes the Czechoslovak Republic. As such, she describes the *new woman* as a 'symbol of modernity and cultural progress,' which was also a 'projection surface for desires, imaginings and expectations in the interwar period' (Eriksroed-Burger, 2023: 102). Pachmanová also maps consumerism as a space for emancipatory imaginary. Still, in both texts, there is a premise that it must be 'correct' for consumerism, such as acquiring simplified household furnishing (Pachmanová, 2021: 180–181) or reading a specific book (Eriksroed-Burger, 2023: 94). However, for a broader conceptualisation of the *new woman*, we consider it necessary to expand the corpus of literature to include sources related to the non-Czechoslovak interwar environment, as the explicit definition of the *new woman* as an analytical category is too limited. Specifically, conceptualising the *new woman* in the Weimar Republic, arguably the most abundantly analysed in interwar continental Europe, also provides several parallels in the Czechoslovak interwar discourse.

The situation of Czechoslovakia and the Weimar Republic was similar – in both cases, it was the newly established democratic state system after World War I dealing with the problems associated with the newly established economy and the consequences of the war (Mongu, 2010: 196). A part of that process is the matter of the newly emancipated women. Weimar *new woman* visually represented in media primarily as a woman with a short haircut, so-called *bubikopf*, and loose clothing (Lynn, 2022: 337; Rocco, 2012: 218), is, on the one hand, a representation of female emancipation and on the other a representation of a threat to 'traditional' socio-political order. Women's emancipation was primarily tied to increasing the number of women in office jobs, typically represented in media as typists, telegraphists and telephonists (Führich, 2000; Hales, 2010a; 2010b; Smith, 2008) and acquiring the right to vote in 1918 (Hales, 2010a: 534–535). The threat embodied in the figure of a *new woman* consisted in the same areas, as Hales (2010a: 535) states: 'Conservative critics feared that the modern woman, with her self-interested orientation, would undermine the traditional family structure.'

The figure of the *new woman* in the Weimar discourse defied the pre-war gender order, both visually, when she was labelled 'boyish,' 'lesbian', or 'intersex' (Hales, 2010b; Otto, 2012; Renault-Steele, 2017), and through her work and political activities, such as the ability to vote or run for office and being employed. Her contradictory nature was mainly due, on the one hand, to women's active economic role being celebrated as progress. On the other hand, women's way of spending their newly acquired leisure time, for example, by frequenting cafés, was criticised as inappropriate for women (Otto and Rocco, 2012: 9). The transgression of traditional gender order was seen as threatening to men, and the anxieties arising from these transgressions, but also from the modernisation of society in terms of the reorganisation of work, new technologies and the general acceleration of social and work processes were projected onto the figure of the *new woman* (Rocco, 2012; Hales, 2010b; Hung, 2015; McCormick, 2001). Although higher purchasing power, residing in both two-income households and individual young wage-earning women, is desirable in the recovery of the post-war economy, other state interests, such as the area of natality, lie in a more conservative conception of the gender order.

NEW WOMAN, AMERICANISM AND RATIONALISATION

European countries sought inspiration from the burgeoning modern economy and society that materialised in the United States, which seemed to be a stable, thriving economy that provided the key to the puzzle of European states' economic and sociopolitical problems (Peach, 1997: 48–49). The specific management of society was part of the Weimar imaginary of 'America', the so-called 'Amerikanismus', in English literature 'Americanism' (e.g., Peach, 1997; Nolan, 1994). Nolan (1994: 17–82) extensively traces how the writings of economists and industrialists travelling to the United States in search of inspiration influenced what politicians and citizens of the Weimar Republic perceived as available economic opportunities. The desirable aspects of Americanism were primarily Taylorism and Fordism[2] related to the 'rationalisation', as their mix was referred to in Weimar discourse,

[2] Frederick Taylor introduced the concept of an 'honest day's work', scientifically determined to rationalise and economise results. This approach shares similarities with Henry Ford's Fordism, which operated on a much larger production scale.

as opposed to the American label 'efficiency' (Nolan, 1994: 6), of production and economic processes and household functioning.

The figure of the *new woman* was associated both with the rationalisation of work; for example, the position of a typist was constantly rationalised by training typists with a metronome and other tools to type as efficiently as possible, as described in literature on contemporary psychotechnics (Rabinbach, 1992, esp. 278, 249–250; Hales, 2010b: 302–303), and with the rationalisation of the household, which was the sole responsibility of women. Even housework itself was subjected to rationalisation and detailed research, as shown, for example, by studies on the most efficient way to sweep the floor or cook (Nolan, 1990: 206–226; Hagemann, 2009; Saldern, 1997). In this sense, the figure of the *new woman* is also closely associated with new technologies, both in an emancipatory sense and in a disciplinary sense. New technologies, such as the typewriter, the automobile, and new household appliances, were described as new extensions of the *new woman* that made their work, including that of the home, more efficient and faster (Nolan, 1990: 206–226). Thanks to their existence, the *new woman* could acquire leisure time to engage in activities for which she had not previously had the capacity – for example, greater involvement in social and political life, but also in consumer behaviour such as fashion and cultural pursuits. At the same time, technology served to discipline the female body further – along with new household appliances and work tools, the *new woman* was 'upgraded' to the greater efficiency that was to be her goal. Viewing the human and, specifically, the female body as an efficient machine was also reflected in more 'traditional' policies that could be described as de-emancipatory – the female body was also viewed as a birthing machine (Hales, 2010b: 302). This mechanisation of the female body and the association of new technologies as its extensions can be considered the cyborgisation of *new women,* as analysed by Matthew Biro (2012: 132).

An undesirable aspect of the 'appropriation' of American culture, or the discursive transformation of the imaginary of 'America' into a local cultural critique, is the so-called Girlkultur, presented as a product of mass modern industrialised society (Berghaus, 1988). 'Girl,' one of the names for the *new women*, is defined by its consumption based on the more robust economic position acquired through its entry into the workforce (Berghaus, 1988).

The American image of the *new woman* is confined to white middle-class bourgeois women (Nolan, 1994: 121). The character of 'Girl' represents an even narrower segment within this socio-demographic group, predominantly young, unmarried white women employed in offices. The Weimar perception of 'America' disregards 'non-modern' women, such as those employed in agrarian sectors or migrating from rural areas to cities out of financial necessity (Bridenthal, 1973: 151–153). Additionally, while there was optimism regarding increased purchasing power among white-collar female employees, the overall rise in female employment and its associated emancipatory potential was slow (Bridenthal, 1973: 149–150).

For all interpretations of the role of the figure of the *new woman* in interwar Weimar discourse, Graf (2009: 672) finds a common point in the fact that the *new woman* always functioned conceptually as an 'anticipation of the future in the present'. In other words, the *new woman* represented the promise of a hopeful and terrifying future, discursively constructed as already existing in the present (Graf, 2009). Cyborgised through their technological extensions, the *new women* thus became ubiquitous, especially in media discourse and political debates, even though they could have been, as Donna Haraway (1991) later argues, essentially invisible.

In the Weimar context, the new woman is analysed as a contradictory figure; in the Czechoslovak context, she is not developed much in this respect – the discursive object of the *new woman* is presented primarily as an emancipatory ideal that is internally unconflicted (e.g., Pachmanová, 2021; Huebner, 2013). In part, the *new woman*'s conflictual nature is addressed by Eriksroed-Burger (2023: 87) regarding the critique of female consumerism, similar to how this aspect is critiqued in the Weimar context. The *new woman* as a threat to the traditional gender order in the sense of the concentration of anxieties about modernity and especially new technologies is also largely neglected in the interwar Czechoslovak context. Pachmanová (2021) discusses the *new woman's* relationship with technology, primarily at the historiographical macro level. She outlines principles of household rationalisation using technological inventions (Pachmanová, 2021: 181–183) and rationalising kitchen movements (Pachmanová, 2021: 194–199). Within the chapter on the 'machinised woman', she partly explores the techno-imaginary of women-machine connections in the interwar art scene (Pachmanová, 2021: 389–392) and female automobilism (Pachmanová, 2021: 396–411).

As mentioned, the *new woman* also figured in the Weimar imagination of Americanism. In the Czechoslovak interwar context, the concept of Americanism is only present in Mongu's work (2010). Concerning the *new woman*, Americanism is analysed as an emancipatory model linked to the interconnection of the Czech and American women's emancipation movements and the media image of the American woman in Czech periodicals (Mongu, 2010: 259–267). However, the relationship between the *new woman* and technology within the emancipatory imaginary of Americanism is not analysed or explicated in detail in Mongu's texts.

The present text, therefore, aims to connect aspects such as the relationship between *new women* and domestic technology and the imaginary of Americanism, which are partially outlined in the existing literature on the interwar

Czechoslovak context but are not analysed in detail as a distinct (female emancipatory) techno-imaginary on concrete material.

METHODOLOGY

To analyse the relationship between the figure of the *new woman* and the new technologies and their (proclaimed) emancipatory potential, we have chosen the method of media archaeology along with its conceptualisation from a feminist perspective. This method was chosen primarily for two reasons:

(i) it itself explicitly focuses on the techno-imaginary and related power relations, and

(ii) it aims to focus on hitherto neglected aspects of the media.

Media archaeology, rooted in Foucauldian discourse analysis, delves into the power dynamics of human-technology relations (Huhtamo and Parikka, 2011: 8). This approach reveals forgotten connections between past and present, uncovering the historical layers of technological artefacts, beginning with the present's organic and technological interplay (Ernst, 2015: 29; Huhtamo and Parikka, 2011: 1–24; Parikka, 2012). Dissatisfied with mainstream media history, media archaeologists construct alternative narratives, excavating suppressed and overlooked media histories (Huhtamo and Parikka, 2011: 3). However, Skågeby and Rahm (2018: 4) criticise media archaeology for neglecting certain 'power grains', especially gender-related ones. They propose feminist media archaeology to question power differentials and technology's impact on gender order (Skågeby and Rahm, 2018: 7–13, 14).

The implementation of the media-archaeological methodological approach in the present text takes place at the level of

(i) topic selection,

(ii) sample selection, and

(iii)analytical unit selection.

The focus on women's emancipatory techno-imaginary, which we understand here as the imaginary projected into the relationship between women and the new technologies, the purchase and use of which should facilitate their emancipation, i.e., to help them achieve social equality with their male counterparts, reflects feminist media archaeology, given the scant literature attention to this aspect within the broader Czechoslovak interwar techno-imaginary (Charvát, 2024). Discussions on women's techno-imaginary remain peripheral in texts primarily addressing broader themes.

In the realm of gender-segregated media spaces, particularly within women's magazines, specific ideologies of femininity are constructed (Ballaster *et al.*, 1991: 171–173), encompassing concepts like 'modern womanhood' (Hackney and Bigham, 2022: 103). Despite this, historical Czech and Czechoslovak popular women's magazines remain largely overlooked in media research, a trend mirrored in other post-socialist nations such as the former Yugoslavia (Vujnović, 2008: 70–71). When these magazines are analysed, studies often provide broad overviews of women's periodicals without delving into the unique characteristics of individual magazines (e.g., Pachmanová, 2021) or emphasise femininity through biographical studies (e.g., Penkalová, 2011). The present text focuses on this overlooked part of media historical research: the gendered power grains associated with the emancipatory techno-imaginary. To accomplish this, one magazine is selected to explore the specifics of a gendered and socioeconomically segregated media space.

The Czechoslovak interwar fortnightly magazine *Eva*, first subtitled '*Magazine of the Modern Woman'* (1928–1932) and later *'Magazine of the Educated Woman'* (1932–1943), was chosen because of its declarative focus. According to its publisher, it was intended for 'readers from the circle of employed intellectuals and freelancers' (Šalda, 2001: 211) feeling the need for information 'about literature, art, music and theatre alongside the usual news from society' (Šalda, 2001: 210). *Eva* is described in the existing literature as a 'quality' and 'prestigious' magazine (e.g., Penkalová, 2011: 71; Korábková, 2022: 173), but also as 'a feminist and socially conscious medium aimed at the modern, rational and fashion-loving woman of the upper middle class' (Eriksroed-Burger, 2023: 91) or as a 'bourgeois consumer magazine' (Huebner, 2013: 444). These characteristics imply that the magazine presented itself as a women's magazine for well-to-do urban women, a type of woman who was a prototype of the figure of the *new woman*. Hence, *Eva* was chosen for media archaeological analysis of techno-imaginary related to the *new woman* figure. In the analysis, we concentrate only on issues from the First Czechoslovak Republic (1918–1938) period, i.e., from the magazine's beginning in 1928 to 1938, when the First Czechoslovak Republic ceased to exist. Along with the change in the political system during the Second Republic and the Protectorate under German Nazi rule, the media system (Bednařík et al., 2011: 183–214) and the content of the magazine changed, shifting towards Czech cultural topics, indicating resistance to the German regime (Mongu, 2010: 239). *Eva* ceased to be published during German rule in 1943, precluding comparison with the post-war era. Texts dealing with technology and household organisation have been selected from each issue, with no distinction between editorial and advertising content.

These two types of content are intertwined in *Eva*, and many of the texts are unlabelled. In the analysis, we focus exclusively on textual material; visual material is not analysed.

At the level of the analytical unit, the methodological approach follows Foucauldian principles and Huhtamo's perspective on media-cultural phenomena. The fundamental unit of analysis is Foucault's concept of the statement as the smallest part of discourse (Foucault, 1989: 33–41). Unlike (critical) discourse analysis, this approach doesn't limit the unit of analysis to specific linguistic manifestation but to the discursive object on which it focuses. We are therefore not only looking at specific phrases such as 'new woman', 'techno-imaginary', 'women's emancipation' or 'emancipation by technology', but at broader discursive formations (Foucault, 1989: 41–44) composed of the statements to which the linguistic manifestations refer. For these identified statements, recurring *topoi* are established, defined by Huhtamo (2011: 28) as 'stereotypical formulas' and 'discursive meaning processors' shaping media culture's development, unveiling traces of lost media-cultural phenomena and underlying ideological mechanisms. Hence, the *new woman* emerges as *topos* in this text, rooted in specific Foucauldian statements. Huhtamo's example from the interwar period illustrates this concept: the merging of female telephone operators with their headsets, symbolising the merging of the female body with technology, encapsulated in the phrase 'dressing up in technology' (Huhtamo, 2011: 37).

THE RATIONALISATION OF THE *NEW WOMAN* AND HER HOUSEHOLD

In the present analysis of *Eva* magazine, we focus on the mechanisation and cyborgisation of the *new woman* for her emancipation, considering the general Taylorisation and electrification of households as the basic pillars of the *topos* of the *new woman*. We focus primarily on three aspects, inter-related Foucauldian statements, of this *topos*:

(i) the *new woman* as manager of the household economic unit,
(ii) the *new woman* and her emancipatory extension in the form of power tools and appliances, and
(iii) the *new woman* and her emancipatory extension in the form of the automobile.

Linking these aspects is, as we argue, the so-called emancipatory scale, which the *new woman* can ascend according to the analysed discourse.

New Woman as a Manager of the Household

The need to streamline the functioning of the household is framed by the notion of the household as an 'economic enterprise' (Mencák, 1932a: 20, 1932b: 22) in which the woman as consumer plays an irreplaceable role. Not only is it claimed that 'thirty-six billion Czech crowns pass annually through the hands of Czechoslovak housewives' (Mencák, 1932a: 20), but the woman is also active as a productive force as she cooks (Mencák, 1932a: 20). The production of food is again emphasised in the context of the national economy, as 'health and labour energy' (Mencák, 1932a: 20) depend on food and, as a result, costs incurred or, conversely, saved in the case of illness within the public health system. Marja Boučková, a journalist who contributes mainly to the section on the household and housing, considers such thinking about women housewives to be a significant shift since 'the immense importance of the housewife is now understood, and the question of the normalisation and typification of the household is of interest to the general public' (Boučková, 1930: 26), implying that this crucial role in the context of the functioning of society and the state was previously neglected.

The due attention paid to 'household organisation' and the role of the domestic economy is illustrated by the activities of the Masaryk Academy of Labour [Masarykova akademie práce, further abbreviated to MAP], where a 'group on household organisation' was concerned with the efficiency of this economic unit (Boučková, 1930: 26). The MAP, founded in 1920, was considered internationally to be the leading scientific organisation dedicated to the study of the technical aspects of work and its organisation to implement technical progress in everyday social life (Šerackỳ, 1929). The MAP also maintained close contact with Frank B. Gilbreth, an American engineer and theorist in scientific management (Gilbreth, 1912), and his wife, Lilian. Lilian Gilbreth's research on the rationalisation of housework resonated in the Czechoslovak interwar context, especially as she collaborated with local women's housekeeping organisations and, for example, with the Czechoslovak revue *Úspora v domácnosti* (*Savings in the household*) (Pachmanová, 2021: 196).

Unlike caring for others, which was discursively constructed as a natural desire and ability even for modern women (e.g., Menjou, 1929: 25), effective household organisation was a skill the *new woman* had to learn. In a review of Dr Erna Meyer's *Modern Household: A Guide to Economical Housekeeping*, the editors of *Eva* assess Meyer's assumption that 'the household requires systematic management adapted to each individual case, and each individual woman must therefore work independently to equip herself with all her latent mental potential' as 'correct' (Boučková, 1929a: 18). This ability to 'equip oneself with sufficient mental potential' is attributed exclusively to modern women, who 'lack neither logic nor ingenuity and practise the system of substitution and compensation quite vigorously' (M. P., 1929: 25). Sufficient mental capacity to manage the household was also attributed to job training.

The *new woman*'s choice of employment in the periodical is highly gender-segregated, in line with the specific ideology of femininity constructed in the magazine – the primary role of the woman, in the sense of an expected socially constructed 'doing of gender' tied to the person's sex (cf. West and Zimmerman, 1987), is caregiving and so-called practical activities. Women are described as 'naturally practical', and the choice of 'a practical field rather than, say, purely scientific work' is particularly advantageous from the point of view that 'we can pursue such employment for life, even if we marry and have a household of our own' (Anon., 1929a: 21). The choice of profession is thus discursively limited to so-called less intellectual activities, which women can use in everyday life, typically care-related professions such as nursing or teaching.

The 'practicality' of the *new woman* is also reflected in the exclusivity of combining household care and gainful employment: 'No man under the sun could do it, even if he were ten times broader in the shoulders, and even if his, as he says, the superior brain worked even better than the most precise machine, that he would therefore not even have to lubricate himself occasionally' (Sadecká, 1931: 8). The *new woman* is thus discursively constituted as a 'more precise machine' and, in the interest of rationalisation, as a 'more suitable machine' for the Taylorisation of the household by saving money (-č, 1928: 26) and time spent on housework (Boučková 1929a: 18). Here, the man is explicitly identified as less capable and suitable in these respects, thereby reinforcing a gender order in which the man is primarily expected to perform activities outside the home, i.e., to go to work, take part in social and political activities etc., within the given ideology of femininity.

New Woman and Electrical Appliances

The general electrification of Czechoslovakia took place throughout the interwar period (1918–1939) and was part of the ethos of building an independent democratic Czechoslovak state (Mikeš, 2016). As electricity was still a new energy source, part of electrification was also about familiarising and persuading the population to use electricity. The engineer František Pergler wrote a text for *Eva* entitled *Problém elektrické domácnosti* (*The Problem of the Electric Household)*, where he names as one of the hindering obstacles 'finally, then, the still constant conservatism of our ladies, sometimes even those who in other respects always stand on the extreme left' (Pergler, 1929: 24), pointing out that electricity was a significant advance wrapped in the notion of danger even for otherwise progressive women. Another text in *Eva* discusses the electric bathroom, which 'represents the fulfilment of a good 20% of the entire housing culture programme. For a tiny purchase and running cost, it gives you comfort, health and cleanliness for the whole family, reliably and safely' (Anon., 1930a: 32). The general reassurances about the safety and reliability of electricity subsequently made it possible to focus only on the benefits for women users of individual electrical household appliances.

Home appliances are presented as a way of significantly streamlining housework and are intended to liberate women from domestic drudgery via feminist techno-imaginary topoi. The discourse is therefore characterised by a strong technodeterminism, based on the premises of 'democratic rationalization', in which social hierarchies (Feenberg, 1999: 76), such as the traditional gender order, are disrupted by technology and the linear development of technology, i.e. the idea that the newer the technology is, the more efficient and advanced it is (Feenberg, 1999: 77). Part of the emancipatory techno-imaginary analysed here is the idea that social institutions must adapt to new technologies and therefore it is essentially impossible to start using these technologies without some social change following, an idea in line with strong technodeterminism (cf. Feenberg, 1999: 77). This notion is contested in the feminist theoretical literature (Franklin, 1999; Einhorn, 1993; Wajcman, 1991), mainly because it overlooks the gendered organisation of work that precedes the emergence of new technologies and their use (Wajcman, 1991: 28) and views emancipation as an exclusively women's affair that need not change the activities and position of men (Einhorn, 1993: 32).

Thus, emancipation is attributed exclusively to new technology without reorganising the division of labour into gainful work as primarily male and domestic and caring work as exclusively female, resulting in the spread of female so-called 'double burden' in interwar Czechoslovakia, where women both went to work and thoroughly cared for the household and children (Bahenská et al., 2017: 64–66). Nevertheless, as Wajcman (1991: 82–83) argues, these 'labour-saving' technologies, along with the rationalisation of housework, did not save the woman's time spent on housework due to their efficiency, as their use was similarly time-consuming.

The analysed discourse, however, does not thematise the concept of 'double burden' and promises exactly what the later feminist literature tries to refute within its techno-imaginary. 'Labour-saving' devices are placed in the techno-imaginary on an emancipatory scale, which depends not only on their alleged effectiveness in simplifying work and subsequent emancipation but also on their affordability.

For example, the 'Kunz stewer' is 'particularly indispensable for single women who do not have a household of their own', of which the oven is a standard part (Neff, 1929: 4–5). The electric oven itself is a sign of 'modern cooking', which, as 'an electric surprise in the home, will come into its own and make cooking easier' (Boučková, 1933: 20). The availability of some equipment is discursively constructed as so limited that only the whole housing cooperative can afford it, as in the case of the Perun washing and ironing resource, which 'all cooperative's female

members want as a Christmas present' from the cooperative itself (Hela, 1928: 26). However, the higher stage of kitchen and cooking modernisation is not the concentration of streamlining into one superior machine, but the multiplication of them:

> There are special cooking stoves, appliances, and vessels for cooking with gas, kerosene, and electric cooking (...). This includes all the 'miraculous' steam pots that cook beef in 29 minutes, the various fast-stewers, frying pans for quick frying, moulds for quick baking (...), but it also includes numerous 'boiling pans', devices in which entire lunches can be cooked in an hour. (Zemanová, 1929: 10)

The wide range of tools is supplemented by 'utensil cleaning and washing aids, starting with a simple machine for cleaning knives and ending with an expensive electric washing machine' (Zemanová, 1929: 10). The ranking of household appliances by price and from simple to superior implies a specific notion of their subsequent imaginary of women's liberation from housework – the more and better appliances a woman has, the freer and more modern she will be. However, this ordering does not merely create a negative hierarchy where women with fewer and simpler appliances are less free; on the contrary, it explicitly emphasises that emancipation and progress are at hand: 'That and this [domestic appliance] mark a marvellous advance on the road to the facilitation of domestic work, seeking to liberate woman from drudgery and free her for the myriad of modern-day important interests' (Zemanová, 1929: 10).

Moreover, emancipation through the rationalisation of the household with the help of new appliances and better work organisation is presented as entirely in the hands of housewives. In her text *Moderní domácnost* (*Modern Household)*, Papáčková addresses and encourages readers to rationalise their households: 'Dear Eves, the creation of the modern household lies within you. I know it is in good hands' (Papáčková, 1929: 19).

The motivation to modernise is also negative, using comparisons with foreign countries; for example, one appeal is explicitly directed at women, with the rebuke that 'what is commonplace abroad must be rebuilt again and again in this country so that at least half of it becomes commonplace' and that although 'modern home furnishings are a familiar thing', 'few people have a hygienically equipped kitchen a practical laundry and drying room and, after all, a decent toilet' (J. E. K., 1929: 18). The concept of Americanism, i.e., the imaginary relating to the borderline mythical 'America' is ubiquitous in texts about modernising the home. The more theoretical texts presenting the foundations of Taylorism explicitly mention the origins of this concept or American authors (e.g., Kučerová-Záveská, 1929: 23; Boučková, 1930: 26), and the names of individual household appliances often have English names, such as the Mellita Non-Plus-Ultra coffee machine (Anon., 1928: 28) or the Electro-Star universal household appliance (Anon., 1929b: 28).

Along with Americanism, which is even more evident in texts on child-rearing (e.g., Wattersonová, 1929: 12; Řezáčová, 1930: 24), the idea of an achievable but 'foreign' modernity is reinforced by the construction of the kitchen and the home itself as 'scientific'. 'The modern kitchen resembles a kind of chemistry laboratory rather than a kitchen' (Boučková, 1929b: 18) or 'it is not a physics laboratory that you see here, it is the machines necessary in the modern kitchen' (Anon., 1929c: 28) are statements emphasising the need for women to learn to adapt to the 'foreign' to emancipate themselves fully. The texts explain in detail the working procedures when using a coffee machine (Boučková, 1929b: 18; 1929c: 18) or an electric dust extractor (Boučková, 1935: 24), but the women are also encouraged to self-educate themselves about the conductivity of different types of utensils, especially aluminium utensils (Zemanová, 1929: 10), and the workings of electricity and gas, including their financial cost (Zemanová, 1929: 10; Boučková, 1933: 20).

The analogy between scientific knowledge and knowledge concentrated on the handling of modern appliances in the kitchen is present in the texts. It is as if the modern woman were becoming the expert and engineer of the household as if a specific epistemic network involving haptic knowledge were being constructed. New devices and tools require the appropriation of new sequences of movements, as well as their rhythm and interplay. To put it another way, it is as if pans, dishwashers, and other appliances have become an extension of the hands of the housewife. The eventual failure of these extensions is thematised as a potential failure of the mechanised woman as such, not as a mere failure of an independently existing machine: 'Every housewife will also have to be a trained assembler; imagine her situation if the cookers were to fail at half past eleven on a Sunday' (Boučková, 1929b: 18).

Attributing an expertly superior position regarding the technical aspects of the devices to a woman is quite atypical. Solving technical problems such as various domestic repairs is usually discursively established as the responsibility of men (Sitar, 2015: 45); however, the exception to this rule has a clear motivation and implication in the discourse at hand. The new woman here is an agent of modernisation who needs an expertly superior position for her persuasive power. Otherwise, she would not function as a sufficient emancipatory aspirational target in the techno-imaginary.

New Woman and the Automobile

The next and final emancipatory scale level was the most advanced machine used by households during the interwar period – the automobile. Its emancipatory techno-imaginary, however, is markedly different from that concerning household appliances. In the case of the automobile, there is a discursive shift – the *new woman* does not need to be extensively educated in the workings of cars; instead, at all stages of production, cars are adapted to her.

> The influence of women in the development of the automobile is steadily increasing. Women today have more confidence in their art of motoring than in their other jobs. The modern automobile has evolved under a woman's influence into a technical creation that suits her aesthetic sensibilities and practical needs.

PRAGA's advertisement in the above quote (Anon., 1930b: 30) describes the automotive industry and the influential position of women. The shapes of the car must be aesthetically pleasing and elegant, in the form of drop-shaped cross sections, and in this sense, the woman getting into a car seems to grow directly into the automobile as a technological womb, and her movement merges into the movement of the machine.

'Quite objectively, I had to admit that in her capacity as a female driver, she has many advantages over her male colleague,' the editor of *Eva* describes women's driving skills (Sl., 1931: 5), which are repeatedly emphasised as superior to men's, often mentioning statistics of accidents that women caused significantly fewer than men (e.g., Pirner, 1931: 4). Women are depicted here as intuitively understanding of the steering mechanism and possessing a specific sensitivity to driving. The emancipatory potential connected to the act of driving a car is distinct from that of domestic appliances. Unlike the liberation from household chores for redirection toward social, political, or educational pursuits, which characterises domestic appliances, the liberation experienced through driving is conceived as absolute freedom.

The automobile was created for women because of 'their freedom' (Anon., 1930b: 30), and can 'carry away fairy princesses to the realm of dreams and eternal bliss' (Anon., 1930c: 1), and the 'fresh air' while driving 'refreshes a woman and calms her nerves' (Kovaříková, 1930: 22). It brought 'a radical change' to women concerning 'her desire for independence', states the seminal figure of interwar automobilism, a record-setting racing car driver Eliška Junková (1929: 14), who was also a chairwoman of the *Ladies' Union* of the *Autoclub of Czechoslovak Republic*, a female drivers organisation which was established in 1930 (Žáková, 2020: 24). Junková was both an occasional contributor to *Eva* and the subject of reports, her authority a prominent part of the techno-imaginary concerning emancipation through the automobile.

While this pinnacle of freedom and emancipation is presented as accessible and self-evident for the modern woman, it is also a pinnacle to be worked towards: 'There is only one mistake here: most women in our country do not have nearly the opportunities men have. Our women drivers are largely at the mercy of their husbands or boyfriends, who let them "drive them around"' as one of *Eva*'s editors describes the limits of emancipation (Kovaříková, 1930: 22). However, it is also admitted that a woman can be a car owner in her own right as 'today's woman if she can afford it, or if her husband or partner can afford it, today's woman drives the car' (Pirner, 1931: 4), but owning a car must be a clear goal, since 'one works for the car, one saves for the car' (Junková, 1929: 14). The covering of the emancipatory scale by the figure of a man who either borrows or buys a car is symptomatic. Within the techno-imaginary analysed, female emancipation is subordinated to a specific type of male help and permission. Although the automobile is supposed to be the pinnacle of female emancipation, this pinnacle is still lower than the pinnacle of masculine status, which is not discursively contested here[3].

CONCLUSION

In our study, we have examined the emancipatory techno-imaginary present in the media discourse of *Eva* magazine, which was declaratively aimed at women from higher socio-economic classes. Using a feminist interpretation of media archaeology, we focused on the magazine's *topos* of the *new woman* and the statements that constitute it. We identified the so-called emancipatory scale as a structuring element in the discourse analysed. Its basis is the technodeterminist utopian idea that with the help of new technologies, the gender order will necessarily change, and women will be more emancipated thanks to new technologies. While *Eva* declaratively caters to upscale women, it fosters a collective illusion inherent to the techno-imaginary that any woman can achieve emancipation by investing in and utilising new technologies.

[3] The subordination of female emancipation to the male position is evident in Česálková's (2020) analysis of the documentary *Šest žen hledá Afriku* (*Six Women Search for Africa*) (1934). Although the film focuses on the female emancipatory position of female motorists, the female role is still referred to as 'decorative' and 'cute' in related media texts (Česálková, 2020: 8-9).

This scale is bolstered by the idea of women's indispensable role in household management, seen as vital for economic progress. Advancement along this scale involves acquiring and utilising various household appliances, with education on their benefits being crucial. The pinnacle of this scale is the automobile, symbolising ultimate freedom. Despite portraying women as skilled drivers and cars designed for them, male influence often limits actual ownership, with women typically relying on male counterparts for access.

In this way, our text maps areas largely neglected in the existing literature on Czechoslovak interwar discourse – women's techno-imaginary and the limits of women's everyday emancipation. Furthermore, this contributes to the generally neglected area of research on Czech and Czechoslovak popular women's magazines, a similar situation, as Vujnović (2008: 70–71) writes, in other post-socialist countries.

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