

*Gender, nation, and education in the women's magazine Žena (The woman) (1911-1914)*¹

Género, nación y educación en la revista femenina Žena (1911-1914)

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Abstract: This article explores discourses of gender, nation, and education in the women's magazine *Žena/The Woman*, published in the Serbian language over the period 1911–1914. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, many Serbian intellectuals believed that education should be designed to help women to become better (Serbian) wives, mothers, and daughters. Owing to the specific historical and political milieu (the process of the formation of a national state and the Balkan Wars), women were seen as both the mothers and the teachers of the nation. Many women, as advocates for women's rights, demanded the right to a formal education for girls and young women, in the name of national ideals. Thus, for such (proto)feminists, emancipation was a national project.

Keywords: women's magazine *Žena* / The Woman (1911-1914); non-formal education; gender and nation; «feminist maternalism»; cultural racism.

Resumen: Este ensayo explora los discursos sobre género, nación y educación en la revista femenina *Žena*, publicada en serbio entre 1911 y 1914. A finales del siglo XIX y principios del siglo XX, la gran mayoría de los intelectuales serbios creían que la educación tenía que ayudar a las mujeres a jugar mejor sus roles de esposas, madres e hijas (serbias). Por el contexto histórico-político específico (el proceso de la formación del estado-nación y de las guerras balcánicas), las mujeres han sido consideradas las madres y maestras de la nación. Muchas mujeres, abogando por los derechos femeninos, pidieron el derecho a la educación formal para niñas y mujeres jóvenes, en el nombre de los ideales nacionales. Por ende, la emancipación (proto)feminista fue el proyecto nacional.

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Palabras claves: revista femenina *Žena* (1911-1914); educación no-formal; género y nación; «el maternalismo feminino»; racismo cultural.

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1. Introduction

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, social life in the territories of what is now Vojvodina (until 1918 the southern flank of the Austro-Hungarian Empire) and Serbia (until 1878 ruled by the Ottoman Empire) was marked by an emerging women's movement. A number of women's groups, organizations, and, eventually, women's magazines appeared. This provided a space for dialogue and collaboration between women, and men as well, who fought for women's rights. The right to education was essential to women's rights advocates. The idea of education was conceptualized and realized in the context delineated by the national liberation movement and the processes of the formation of both the Serbian state and nation. In such a context, many Serbian women who participated in the national liberation struggle believed that women's emancipation and political equality were in the national interest. For them, emancipation was a national project.

In this article, I will explore the discourses of gender, nation, and education in the women's magazine *Žena / The Woman* (1914-1918)². Two aspects of the construction of woman's identity will be in focus: 1) Educating women to become better wives, better mothers, and better housewives, and 2) Educating women in the field of sexual pedagogy, in order to produce a healthy and strong Serbian nation. Similar tendencies existed in other European countries at the time³. Thus, it does not come as a surprise that in the early twentieth century Serbian authors of articles and textbooks on sexual pedagogy relied heavily on the literature from the Western European countries. However, some Serbian intellectuals believed that the appropriation and utilization of European knowledge and concepts must not challenge the Serbian people's value system, or endanger their «authentic» tradition and national identity. While there was a tendency to move towards economic, political, and cultural modernization, there were also those who strongly criticized processes of modernization, opting for the

² From this point on I will use the original title *Žena* when referring to the magazine.

³ See, for example, Heathorn (2000); Herminghouse & Mueller (1997), Bloom, Hagemann & Hall (2000). Throughout this article, I will point to examples from other European countries. A comparative perspective can shed light on questions and problems that went well beyond national, cultural and linguistic borders, and help us to acknowledge and understand different conceptualizations of «modern», «gender», «nation», which vary depending on the social and political contexts as well as cultural traditions within which they develop.

national tradition. For them, modernization was an uncritical appropriation of the 'foreign' culture and, thus, it presented a direct threat to the «Serbian spirit». They understood tradition as a stable and fixed category, the very foundation of the Serbian nation and its self-understanding. Yet, such an understanding of tradition was «imagined» and «invented» in Serbia, at that very moment, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries⁴.

In the magazine *Žena*, such negotiations between the modern and the traditional («Western» versus «ours») were most obvious in the alliance between emancipatory discourses (above all, the right to education and work) and patriarchal discourses (motherhood and the national idea), which was uncommon more in appearance than in reality. Serbia is not an exception when it comes to complex relations between the women's/feminist movement, the politics of motherhood, and nationalism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Similar relationships existed in many Central and Eastern European countries, in which processes of nation building were progressing at the time. For example, the development of the Czech feminist movement was closely linked to national(ist) ideals. The struggle for education by Czech women was justified by their belief that education would help them better to teach their children how to be good Czech citizens⁵. Rita Felski (1995) has already emphasized the importance of «a careful engagement with the voices of the past» in her study *Gender of Modernity*: «Rather than simply subsuming the history of gender relations within an overarching meta-theory of modernity articulated from the vantage point of the present, feminist critics need to take seriously past women's and men's own understandings of their positioning within historical and social processes» (p. 8). Indeed, editors and contributors to women's magazines in general, and the magazine *Žena* in particular, lived and worked in concrete cultural, social and political contexts and, at least to some extent, were immersed in the ideologies of their time. Thus, it is of the utmost importance always to contextualize and historicize their texts. Felski's (1995) idea of a complex «historical tightrope of empathy and critique» (p. 34) has been valuable in my analysis of the women's magazines from the early twentieth century: while empathy provides a better understanding of the conditions and events of the past, critique enables feminist researchers to recognize the implications that some discourses of the past had – and may still have – for our present time. Thus, this article is based on both the synchronic and diachronic approaches: discourses of gender, nation, and education from the early twentieth century are analysed in their own historical contexts, but they are also – where appropriate – related to present-day events.

⁴ For an insightful analysis, see the collection of essays edited by Perović (1998).

⁵ See Feinberg (2006).

2. Education and nation in formal and non-formal educational contexts

Many scholars have demonstrated that there is a strong relationship between education and national identity construction. Some of them have looked at the school textbooks, especially textbooks for subjects like history, language and literature, and geography, to identify various ways of constructing national, cultural, gender, class and other identities. At the same time, school textbooks often reveal various strategies of exclusion and discrimination based on a strong understanding of identity⁶. Stephen Heathorn (2000), in his study of the construction of gender, race and Englishness in English schoolbooks at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, defines schooling as «explicitly engaged in a process of national identity construction, part of which is establishing in the minds of students not just the place of their country in world affairs, but – more importantly – their own ‘place’ in the complex abstraction called a nation» (p. viii). Keeping in mind that ideology works in complex ways, he emphasizes that «the authors of the nationalist prescription found in elementary schooling were both sincere – in the sense that these authors no doubt believed in these ideas themselves (...) and also socially manipulative» (Heathorn, 2000, p. 18). Heathorn (2000) argues that in the process of gender identity construction, class had a significant role, since «working-class girls were taught to think of their own national duty in terms of their roles as wives and mothers to the English race» while, at the same time, they were expected to serve the upper classes (p. 18). A different approach is found in the short but immensely useful study by Peter Musgrave (1996) of Victorian school textbooks and national identity in Australia from 1895 to 1965. Like many other authors, he also highlights the discursive nature of both national identity and citizenship: these are not inborn qualities; they are being taught and learned in school and other spheres of life (Musgrave, 1996, p. 2). There are many examples of case studies of the relationship between education (in particular, school textbooks) and national identity in the Balkans as well. At this moment, there are a solid number of scholarly studies on the role of school textbooks in national identity construction during the course of the turbulent history of Yugoslavia and Serbia. For example, in one of the essays from a collection of essays on Balkan identities, nation, and memory, historian Dubravka Stojanović (2004) explores the construction of historical consciousness in Serbian history textbooks from the 1990s, focusing primarily on historical revisionism, and identifying permanent, recurring stereotypes such as the image of the victim people. Similarly, Irene Nakou and Eleni Apostolidou (2010) explore the intense public debate in Greece

⁶ For a constructive critique of both «strong» (essentialism, identity politics) and «weak» (clichéd constructivism) understandings of identity, see Brubaker and Cooper (2000).

in the period 2006-2007 that was triggered by the appearance of the new history textbook for the sixth primary school grade. Already in the subtitle of their text they point to «the passionate maintenance of a traditional historical culture» (Nakou & Apostolidou, 2010, p. 115).

In which ways are the previously mentioned examples relevant for this article? In the magazine *Žena*, debates about women's right to formal education as well as about the purpose and contents of such an education, were closely related to gender and national identity construction. It might even be said that this magazine represented a non-formal educational tool and served as an alternative textbook for its contributors and readers. This is illustrated by a brief description of the magazine's main purpose, its structure and frequent topics in the next section.

3. The magazine *Žena*

Several women's magazines were founded in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Vojvodina and Serbia. Not only did these magazines witness and influence the development of formal education for girls and young women, but they also provided their readers with weekly or monthly published issues that covered all aspects of (female) life: political, social and cultural events connected to the women's movement, on the one hand; diet, clothing, health and medical treatments, weddings and marriages, motherhood, on the other⁷.

The magazine *Žena* was founded in Novi Sad, in 1911. Its first subtitle was «a monthly magazine for women»; later, it was changed to «a magazine for education and entertainment». It was issued once a month from 1911 until the outbreak of the First World War in 1914. It was renewed in 1918, and issued until the end of 1921⁸. Milica Tomić (1859-1944) was the founder of the magazine, and its owner and editor-in-chief as well⁹. She was the sole woman editor at the time. Usually, only men worked as the editors on women's magazines in the Serbian language, since by law, women did not have the right to manage money and appear before a court. However, Novi Sad had specific legal regulations and, equally important, Milica Tomić was closely connected to

⁷ For useful information on several women's magazines in Serbian language from the early 20th century see: Peković (2015).

⁸ In this essay, I will analyse examples from the magazine *Žena* published in the period 1911-1914. Although after 1918 the structure of the magazine stayed the same, the topics and problems were marked by the traumatic experience of the Balkan Wars and, in particular, the First World War, together with the experience of living in a newly formed state – the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (or the Kingdom of Yugoslavia).

⁹ For more information about Milica Tomić's life and work see: <http://knjizenstvo.etf.bg.ac.rs/en/authors/milica-tomic>

some very influential men. She was a daughter of Svetozar Miletić, a journalist, politician, mayor of Novi Sad, and the political leader of the Serbs in Vojvodina, and Anka Milutinović. Even as a young woman, Milica Tomić was helping her father and publishing political articles in the newspapers.

Her husband was Jaša Tomić, a well-known politician, publicist, and journalist. Also, he was a leader of the Radical Party. Diana Mishkova (2004), dealing comparatively with political projects in Serbia and Romania in the nineteenth century, says that «three principle solutions to the problem of backwardness, and the inferior state of the nation, each with its ‘restructured’ vision of the national past, took shape during the second half of the century: liberal, democratic/radical, and conservative» (p. 273). In Serbia, the radicals articulated their programme of reforms relying on «the values of Serbian patriarchal tradition» (Mishkova, 2004, p. 285). Mishkova explains the standpoint of the radicals:

In ideological terms, then, the radicals sought to trace an alternative, «third» way between the East and the West – «third» in relation to the means, not the goals. Neither the impulse nor the purpose of their «traditionalist», or populist, discourse was in effect conservative and anti-modernist. As elsewhere, Serbian populism sprang from the (largely intellectual) awareness of backwardness and the fear that, by following the Western «ways», Serbian society would lose its economic and political independence as well as its identity. It was not a «primitive» indigenous ideology of the peasantry but an ideology of the intelligentsia (2004, pp. 287-288).

Tomić’s political views were evident – and influential as well – in the magazine *Žena*, either through his own articles or through the articles of many others who supported the Radical Party (like Milica Tomić, some female contributors to the magazine were married to members of this party). Besides her editorial work for the magazine *Žena*, Milica Tomić founded several women’s organizations, and initiated many projects to help illiterate women, elderly women, poor women, and young mothers. After the World War I, she was among seven women from Vojvodina who entered the National Assembly. After Jaša Tomić died, she practically disappeared from public life. She died alone, in Belgrade.

The magazine *Žena* belongs to a group of magazines of general type, because it was not strictly devoted to a particular subject or area. As stated in one of its issues, the magazine intended to explore «all questions concerning woman’s life and her vocation» (--, 1912, p. 780)¹⁰. Both women and men were contributing to the magazine; there were around 30 contributors per issue, many of them signed by their pseudonyms. Serbian women and their activities were the primary concern of the magazine. However, the editorial board planned to inform their

¹⁰ Unsigned article; most probably written by the magazine’s editor Milica Tomić.

readers about the events and developments concerning women's movements and women's rights in other nations as well (--, 1912, p. 780). Thus, many articles in the magazine spoke of women's rights and experiences worldwide. Each issue had a section dedicated exclusively to the women's movement abroad, informing Serbian women about current events in the USA, England, France, or Norway. This section offered information about the first female doctor or judge, black women's struggles for freedom and rights, women's decision to wear trousers instead of skirts, etc. Serbian women established networks with women and feminists from other nations. Some of their correspondence was printed in the magazine, for example, the correspondence about the 7th Congress of the International Women's Suffrage Alliance in Budapest in 1913, between Milica Tomić and Rosika Schwimmer (1877-1948), the famous Hungarian pacifist, feminist, and suffragette.

4. Educating women to become better wives, better mothers and better housewives

The curious amalgam of emancipatory and patriarchal discourses in the magazine *Žena* resulted in a specific notion of proper womanly behaviour. It would be most accurate to describe the magazine *Žena* as a protofeminist press: it did argue for the women's right to education and work, but it did not question in any substantial way the notions of marriage and family. Yet, many feminists today would agree that one of the main goals of feminism is to criticize, question and deconstruct patriarchy and its main pillars (e.g. ideas of family, motherhood and sexuality). As pointed out by Slobodanka Peković, all women's magazines in Serbian language from the early 20th century were emancipatory, but to a different extent: while some dealt only with housekeeping and motherhood by educating women how to safely prepare food or take care of their children's health, others (like the magazine *Žena*) added to this another dimension: the women's need and right to enter the public space (mainly through their education and work) (2015, p. 26).

As Lucy Delap (2005) showed in her analysis of feminist and anti-feminist ideas in Edwardian Britain: «(T)he newly coined term 'feminism' did not have much coherence, nor much analytic power as a mode of analysis. There was not an established body of ideas, methods and overarching themes on which to draw when writing as a feminist. Nor was there agreement as to what 'feminism' entailed, although it was generally regarded as the expression of the most 'advanced', modern and even *avant-garde* elements within the women's movement» (pp. 382-383). The dominant understanding of emancipation in this magazine is well illustrated by Jaša Tomić's article, «The ultimate purpose of woman». In this article, he endeavoured to maintain values relevant to the

Serbian national ideal, even though those values were central to the patriarchy as well. This is why intersection of nation, marriage, and motherhood was of the utmost importance in his discussion about emancipation and education (as was the case in his many other articles as well). Tomić describes his conversation with four women, all contributors to the magazine, about the possible front cover for the 1912 magazine's calendar. He proposes a cover that shows a woman escaping from an abyss. A man helps her, by giving her a hand and pulling her out. The four women immediately reject this idea and embark upon a debate. The conflict is at its peak when they discuss motherhood.

Jaša Tomić says that «certain borders, determined by nature, cannot be crossed, not even by the finest and most educated people and women» (Tomić, 1911, p. 296). In contrast, one of the women claims that today's men want «contemporary, modern nannies, but they still want their wives to remain nannies» (Tomić, 1911, p. 296)¹¹. Tomić further elaborates that it is important for women to obtain an education and be able to work, because only in that case will they be free to marry for love and not for financial reasons. Despite his obvious support for a campaign for women's rights, Jaša Tomić believes that women should act primarily within the sphere which was assigned to them by nature. They can expand this sphere, but they cannot abandon it. Jaša Tomić is undoubtedly speaking about home and family.

Provoked by these words, his female opponent argues that the magazine's motto, «The house does not rest on the ground, but on the woman» is in fact backward-oriented, and being used to keep women in the private sphere – in their homes. Jaša Tomić, however, believes that the basic unit of a society is – the home. Thus, if women «carry their home on their shoulders», it only means that they have a great responsibility. It seems that Tomić has valued the family more than the individual, even though his opponent has tried to convince him that the responsibilities women have in their homes keep them away from engaging in social matters. Tomić concludes with the following words:

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

¹¹ It is worth noting that Tomić's argument could be interpreted in terms of the «relational» feminist tradition, whereas his opponent's argument could be seen in the light of 'individualist' feminist tradition. See Offen (2005).

Many authors of both genders used similar argumentation in this magazine. The magazine *Žena*, like many others, often promoted a specific «culture of womanliness»¹², based on the belief that «natural», biological differences between the sexes determine a woman's role in society. In other words, instead of gender equality, gender differences were central to its emancipatory discourses¹³.

Thus, knowing how deeply Milica Tomić cared for the struggle for a woman's right to an education, some of her arguments in the article «Our High Schools for Girls» might come as a surprise. The Serbian Church Assembly decided to cease providing financial aid for female schools. Milica Tomić demands of the members of this Assembly that they rethink their decision. She says «(t)here is no place here for us – Serbian women, where we could be enlightened and educated to be Serbian mothers, proud representatives of our people» (Tomić, 1911, p. 368). Thus, she advises members of the Assembly to «establish a Serbian high school for us [women], where we will learn how to be good Serbian mothers and raise good sons. When it comes to emancipation, this is all we ask from you!» (Tomić, 1911, pp. 369-370). Moreover, Milica Tomić argues that higher education for women is a necessary condition not only for family happiness but also for the development of a nation: «It is woman's duty to be a good wife, mother, and housewife in a family; in a society and among her people she should preserve and nurture ideas of national belonging, patriotism, humanity, good will and good national customs!» (Tomić, 1911, p. 370).

However, besides the dominant discourse in the magazine *Žena* that put together woman's right to an education and better motherhood, there were occasional articles in which equal political rights were demanded on the basis of liberal, individualist, and gender-neutral arguments¹⁴. For example, the author of the article «The goal and purpose of the women's movement» says: «If woman is equal to man in her duties then she ought to be equal in her rights as well. The coming generations will wonder how it was ever possible to fight for something so natural and just. [...] Women have no reason to humbly beg for their rights. It is entirely justifiable simply to demand them» (Lacković, 1912, p. 541)¹⁵.

All three dimensions of nationalist projects (Yuval-Davis, 1997) can be identified in Milica Tomić's text¹⁶. Women should give birth to as many sons as

¹² See Todorović-Uzelac (1987).

¹³ This «equality through difference» strategy has been well explained by Gisela Bock (2002).

¹⁴ Such articles and their argumentation could be read in the light of the «individualist» feminist tradition. See Offen (2005).

¹⁵ This author signed only with her/his surname and the first letter of the first name: D. Lacković.

¹⁶ The complex relationship between gender and nation has been elaborated by the feminist scholar of nationalism Nira Yuval-Davis (1997). She identified the significant role of gender relations within the three major dimensions of nationalist projects: national reproduction (i.e. *Volknation*), national culture (i.e. *Kulturnation*) and national citizenship (i.e. *Staatnation*).

possible. They should raise them to be good Serbs. Women's citizenship is always gender-specific: formal education is supposed to enable them to become better mothers and wives. Women serve as keepers and transmitters of national culture and traditions within both spheres – the private and the public. However, one needs to be careful in interpreting Milica Tomić's «nationalism» and «conservatism». First, consider her curriculum vitae: she herself did not have any children and was by no means a common (house)wife. In fact, she received the best possible education, spoke four languages, and since a young age actively participated in all spheres of public life. Secondly, after Milica Tomić had withdrawn from public life, she gave her only interview to the feminist magazine *Žena danas* [*Woman Today*], which was established by the Yugoslav Communist Party in 1936¹⁷. Its editors and contributors advocated for socialism, a strong welfare state, women's right to vote, and against fascism. Furthermore, the importance of overcoming the strength of particular national identities and, instead, establishing a close collaboration between all Yugoslav peoples, was put forward by the promotion in the magazine of the overarching Yugoslav idea. Thus, there are many reasons to believe that Milica Tomić did put women's emancipation before the (Serbian) nation. It is possible that, like some other Serbian women, she rightly assumed that women's struggle for equality at the beginning of the twentieth century would be more readily accepted if it was connected to the Serbian national idea and 'traditional' values and, consequently, to motherhood as well as to the caring and nurturing qualities in general (e.g. teaching, nursing).

The «Serbian case» is by no means an exception. The idea of motherhood was important in processes of nation formation in many European countries, and in the USA as well, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As historian Geoff Eley (2000) says, basing his conclusions on the cultural and historical research on nationalism, «(n)ations have invariably been imagined through the metaphors of family, thereby replicating the patriarchy and heteronormative axioms of conventional familial forms» (p. 32). Similarly to Nira Yuval-Davis and many other contemporary (gender-sensitive) scholars, Eley (2000) summarizes the complex relationship between women and the nation in the following manner: women were perceived as mothers of the nation; their main duty was to reproduce nation's biological future, and to teach the coming generations the «mother tongue»; women were seen as «reproducers rather than producers, prized and revered objects of protection, rather than agents in their own right» (p. 32). Unsurprisingly, within such a conception of women's roles, «(m)aternalism has been a recurring and mobile discursive formation in this sense, focusing forms of welfare-state intervention, condensing large-scale programmes

¹⁷ See: «Susret s Milicom Jaše Tomića» [«An interview with Milica J. Tomić»], interview led by Smilja Ivanović, *Žena danas* [*Woman Today*], 1938, 11-12, p. 3.

of reform, resonating with popular hopes and fears, and working with or against competing conceptions of citizenship» (Eley, 2000, p. 33). Nevertheless, the concept of maternalism has provoked different interpretations among feminist scholars: starting with those who have criticized it as an essentially backward and conservative strategy that can only reify women's subordination, to those who have perceived it as a useful strategy for demanding more rights for women during the development of welfare states in the period of the 1890s-1920s¹⁸.

Ann Taylor Allen (1997) has emphasized that the discomfort of many present-day feminists who work on the history of feminism, stems from the fact that «feminists of the nineteenth and much of the twentieth century often glorified motherhood as the basis of women's claim to dignity, equality, or a widened sphere of action in both public and private spheres» (p. 113). Of course, the history of feminism is complex. Examples of different, more nuanced understanding of motherhood can be found, for example, in the magazine *The Freewoman* (1911-1912). It was founded by Dora Marsden (1882-1960) and her friend Mary Gawthrop (1881-1973). It started coming out in 1911 as «A Weekly Feminist Review». After 27 issues, the journal changed its subtitle to «A Weekly Humanist Review». Both women, well-known suffragettes, left the Pankhursts' militant suffrage organization (*The Women's Social and Political Union*), and established the first (explicitly) feminist magazine in the Anglo-American world. Helen Winter, one of the magazine's readers, says in her letter to *The Freewoman*:

As a Freewoman, I refuse to bear children either to the State or to a man; I will bear them for myself and for my purpose! I care neither for the continuance of the race, or the reproduction of any man; my desire is to continue myself. Partly this desire is of the natural instinct for motherhood, partly it is of the wish to set a plant of my own stock in ground of my own preparing. (...) My children shall be mine for my pleasure, until such time as they shall be their own for their pleasure. I will not bear children to the State or man, and I seek no aid from State or man. The more I can do unaided, the greater joy I will have in the doing. Such is the Motherhood of a Freewoman (1912, p. 312).

The kindergarten movement, that emerged in Germany in the 1840s and «travelled» later to other countries, is an excellent example of «the relationship of child-rearing to feminism, and of both to politics» (Allen, 1997, p. 116). According to Allen (1997), the kindergarten itself challenged the conventional public/private boundaries: «It brought women and small children out of the home into an institution, but it also created an institutional culture based on

¹⁸ See, for example, Pateman (2005), since she highlights the complexities of the «equality» versus «difference» approach, arguing that this relationship cannot – and should not – be boiled down to a simplified dualism.

private, or familial, values» (p. 117). She has however stressed that historians at the present are being very cautious about one specific aspect of German feminist maternalism – «the enthusiastic response of some German feminists, starting around 1900, to new hereditarian and biological theories of human development» (Allen, 1997, p. 121) – since precisely this aspect has been used to link German feminism with protofascist tendencies. Yet, Allen (1997) defied such interpretations by highlighting that similar tendencies existed in other countries as well (for example, among British and American feminists), and concluding that feminist maternalism must always be interpreted in its historical context (pp. 121-123).

Demetra Tzanaki's (2009) study, entitled *Woman and Nationalism in the Making of Modern Greece*, gives a reason for another interesting parallel with the ideas expressed by the magazine *Žena*. Tzanaki (2009) has explored ways in which women became «conscious that: (1) their condition of subordination was not natural or divinely ordained, but socially constructed; and (2) membership to this national entity imposed particular rights and obligations» (p. 4). For women to fulfil their duties and show loyalty to their nation it was enough «to continue to act as mothers, wives and homemakers» (Tzanaki, 2009, p. 5). In one chapter, Tzanaki (2009) deals with the magazine *Ephimeris Ton Kyrion* [*The Ladies' Journal*], published in the period 1887-1897¹⁹, edited by women and intended for women. Its editor-in-chief was Kallirhoe Parren (1861-1940). Instead of focusing on a vote, as many American and British women did at the time, Parren – like Milica Tomić – insisted on the right to education and paid work for *Hellenides*, that is, Greek women. Although this magazine served as a tool of emancipation, focusing on women and education, paid work and economic independence, and child care, it was at the same time marked by a strong national idea, on the one side, and womanly/maternal qualities, on the other. In fact, after the Greco-Turkish war of 1897, Parren suddenly – though unsurprisingly – completely turned to nationalist as well as maternalist discourses: simply put, women's main duty was to give birth to Greek heroes. Thus, she even disagreed with Vlasis Gavriilidis, editor of the journal *Akropolis* in Athens, when he said that *Hellenides* had «the right to practice birth control» (Tzanaki, 2009, p. 154). Like Milica Tomić's magazine, *The Ladies' Journal* also indicates a thin line between emancipation and conservatism, as well as a close relationship between feminist maternalism and «national citizenship» (Tzanaki, 2009, p. 4). As Efi Avdela (2005) has pointed out, «[t]he 'moderate' emancipation that Parren claimed did not question women's biological and social differences»; in fact, Parren founded her ideas on «the concept of the patriotic motherhood» (pp. 122-123).

¹⁹ This magazine was published until 1917.

The concept of patriotic motherhood did not disappear after the so-called first-wave feminism. On the contrary, it has been rearticulated from time to time throughout the last century across the Europe. As in the «German case», the idea of motherhood in the magazine *Žena* from the early twentieth century, which was closely connected to the idea of a woman's belonging and commitment to her nation, could in a certain way be linked to pronatalist discourses in the media, and especially in the press, in the 1990s in Serbia, during the armed conflicts in post-Yugoslav states. Pronatalist discourse in the 1990s was used to assign to women specific roles in society, and did not hesitate to insist on disciplining women's bodies according to the needs of the national state²⁰. Notions of «modern» versus «traditional» were (once again) utilized by pronatalist discourses: Serbian women (seen as modern, emancipated and progressive) were contrasted to Albanian women (seen as obedient and backward). However, this comparison served only to highlight that precisely the lack of traditional values on the side of Serbian women (for example, obedience) caused their low fertility rate. Unsurprisingly, many Serbian feminists, who were at the time engaged in the anti-war movement, were targeted as enemies of the Serbian nation, because they went against «traditional» values and criticized the model of the ideal Serbian woman/mother.

Contemporary pronatalist discourses are not specific merely to the 1990s in Serbia. Recently, in a Serbian daily newspaper *Politika* a number of articles concerned with a question of «endangered Serbian family», «white plague», and «hedonist», well educated (feminist) women above thirty who do not have children, have been published. It is important to note that many authors of those articles (journalists but also university professors) emphasized a clear distinction between the women who have three and more children (like Roma women) and those who have none (well educated, «real Serbian women»). Once again, ethno-racial politics have been put to work: the «real» problem lies in «the quality of the stock»²¹. It is especially frightening that among those who portrayed a well educated women above thirty who do not have children as a «national problem» was a woman, an active member of the current Parliament, who until recently was a health minister.

Of course, it would be both theoretically and ethically wrong to establish a causal relationship between the world-views of the contributors to the magazine *Žena* and its editor in the early twentieth century, on the one hand, and gendered nationalist discourses from the late twentieth century, on the other

²⁰ See, for example, Papić (2002); Gal and Kligman, eds. (2000).

²¹ See articles by Ana Jovanović, historian, feminist and activist, who publicly reacted to the assaults on «childless» women: <http://pescanik.net/feministkinje-su-vas-upozoravale/>, <http://pescanik.net/cuvarke-patrijarhata/>, <http://pescanik.net/ministarka-bez-srama/>.

(some gender-based stereotyping – women as obedient, shy, nurturing, can be found in Serbian language and literature textbooks used in elementary schools even today). However, keeping in mind the «historical tightrope of empathy and critique» (Felski, 1995, p. 34), it would be equally wrong simply to overlook some persistent gender stereotypes.

5. Sexual pedagogy: educating women to produce a healthy and strong Serbian nation

The first textbooks and guides in the field of sexual pedagogy appeared in Serbia in the early twentieth century²². These textbooks, mainly written by men, discussed problems of masturbation, prostitution, sexually transmitted diseases, repression of inappropriate sexual desires, etc.²³. However, the textbook authors rarely spoke about the elements of the sexual act itself, let alone the joy or satisfaction. As has often been pointed out, the role of medical doctors, educators, and even policemen was to sanction sexual misconduct (Mosse, 1985)²⁴. In order to establish «normal» sexual behaviour, it was first necessary to determine what was «abnormal». Relying on seemingly objective science, experts defined «normal» and «abnormal» sexual behaviour²⁵. Furthermore, they connected moral conduct to health and immoral conduct to sickness. Proper sexual and moral behaviour was forced on people with the help of different strategies that involved threats and punishments/prizes. Good citizens were supposed to obey the rules. Everything that went against those rules was condemned, because it undermined the interests of the nation.

A number of reviews of textbooks in the field of sexual pedagogy, and chapters from textbooks, as well as many articles about sexual behaviour and reproduction were printed in the magazine *Žena*. However, the questions of marriage, reproductive health, and hygiene were the most frequent ones. The politics of reproduction entailed some complex, although often discreetly expressed, questions and implications. For example, who is to marry whom? Whose children are to be more welcomed into this world? How many children does one nation need? Who decides about all this? Examples of all three

²² See, for example, Ilić (1910), Marković (ND), Forel (1924). A book by the Swiss author August Forel, known also for, among other things, his contributions to sexology and eugenicist views, was translated into the Serbian language by Aleksandar Đ. Kostić.

²³ In the magazine *Žena*, women authored the articles about marriage *per se*, relationships between the wife, husband, and children, post-natal care, etc. Articles about sexual pedagogy and other ‘inappropriate’ topics were written almost exclusively by men.

²⁴ For a detailed elaboration of arguments from this paragraph, see G. L. Mosse (1985).

²⁵ There are many feminist studies of the rise of the pseudoscience sexology and its consequences. See, for example, Jeffreys (1997 [1985]), Jackson (2005 [1994]), Bland (2001).

discourses – the «people as power» discourse, the eugenicist discourse, and, to a lesser extent, the Malthusian discourse (Yuval-Davis, 1997) – are present in the magazine *Žena*. In the next sections, attention will be paid to several examples of eugenicist discourse in the magazine *Žena*.

The «quality» of the nation has been central to eugenics. As Nira Yuval-Davis (1997) points out, «[e]ugenics, however, did not concern itself with better nurturing of children, but attempted to predetermine the quality of the nation via 'nature' in the way of selective breeding» (p. 31). There were various social and economic programmes aimed at population growth among «adequate», «desirable» groups of citizens, on one hand, and limited reproduction among the «unworthy», on the other. However, the eugenicist discourse is not concerned only with the physical health of future generations, but also with their national and cultural traits. It is precisely «the biologization of cultural traits» that serves to establish the seemingly essential differences and borders between «us» and «them» (Yuval-Davis, 1997, p. 32). Stephen Heathorn (2000) makes a similar observation regarding the nineteenth century usage of the concept of race: «Indeed, the authors of books for the elementary school system frequently invoked the language of race in their discussions of English ethnicity and national origins in a manner that easily traversed the term's biological connotations and socio-cultural meanings» (p. 21).

The biological aspect of the concept of race and eugenicist discourse are quite frequent in the magazine *Žena*. The magazine's contributors who came from the broad field of science, and medicine in particular, were highly interested in the health status of young married couples and their children. For example, in one of his articles, medical doctor Slavko Miletić insists that there must be a medical check-up before entering marriage. This check-up should prevent the potential transmission of sexual and/or mental illnesses, because «only healthy people should get married, and only healthy people can be truly happy» (Miletić, 1911, p. 331)²⁶.

The author of the article «New Views on the Reproduction of People», signed by the pseudonym which was later assigned to Jaša Tomić, briefly paraphrases the attitude of Swiss author August Forel to eugenics: «(W)e have a small number of good, hard-working, healthy people, while, at the same time, we have too many bad, wicked, and degenerate people» (Gr., 1911, p. 446)²⁷. Forel thought that «sick, degenerate people with bad heritage, born criminals, mentally ill people, handicapped, alcoholics, and the like» must be prevented from having children, whereas «healthy» and «strong» people should be encouraged to have as many

²⁶ Slavko Miletić refers to the ideas of Charles Darwin and Thomas Robert Malthus.

²⁷ All the citations from *Gr.*'s article are on pages 446-448.

children as possible. The author of the article also gives the account of arguments made by the German economist and sociologist Werner Sombart (1863-1941), who wondered why anyone would insist on population growth when it was clear that population growth in itself would not necessarily bring anything good into the world. The Serbian author agrees with Forel's argument that «it is not in the best interest of mankind to encourage the growth of what is rotten and degenerate»; however, he rejects Sombart's pessimism. Poor economic conditions are seen as the main reason for poverty and despair among people; thus, instead of pondering on how to reduce the rate of population growth, the author of the article concludes that societies should work towards better economies.

Another distinct example of the eugenicist discourse comes from the unsigned review of Laza Marković's book *O seksualnom pitanju* (*On the Sexual Question*), published around 1913. The reviewer first notes that some female readers of the magazine have written to the editorial board to complain about «open discussions of sensitive questions» (Anonymous, 1913, p. 687)²⁸. Then the author of the review cites longer passages from Laza Marković's book to provide readers with a clear idea of the book's content. In the passages quoted, Marković poses an important question – «What is the role of society in the process of sexual education?» – and answers it. Youth have to be informed about «the unpleasant consequences they will face if they engage too early and improperly in sexual activities». Marković believes that it is possible to repress sexual needs and desires by «strengthening the will, paying attention to more sublime things (sports, art, science, travelling), maintaining good hygiene of the imagination».

Furthermore, Marković states that «the sexual question is tied to the idea of quality, the excellence of the race». The question of marriage should be viewed exclusively from «the standpoint of eugenics», and the young must «seriously consider the health of future partners, instead of the dowry». Laza Marković denies that he is advocating a sort of «perfection, a superman». Instead, he believes that «selection» can prevent people from bringing into the world children who «are not worthy and only destroy the excellence and kill the future of the entire Serbian Nation».

As already stated, the relationship between nation, race, and sexuality was foundational for racial theories in Europe. «Race» usually meant a common ancestor, kinship, and nation. However, in the magazine *Žena*, there are also examples of racial discourses that more concretely establish the difference between «cultural», «progressive» people, on the one side, and «primitive» people or «savages», on the other. In these articles Serbian people are described as more cultural and progressive than savages. However, at the same time, Serbs lag

²⁸ All the citations from the book review are on pages 687-690.

behind the cultural and progressive European peoples. This twofold distinction is significant for the analysis of the process of cultural identity formation: while Serbian people despise and reject savages with disgust, they admire progressive Europeans²⁹.

An article written by Jaša Tomić presents a powerful example of the attitude to «savages». This article comes from Tomić's group of essays dedicated to questions of marriage. The author argues that happy and harmonious marriage rests upon the physical and intellectual/spiritual similarity between partners: «There are numerous races and people in this world. Nature does not prevent them from having children together. Yet, they do not search one for the other, they do not start a family, because they lack the similarity necessary for making a family» (Tomić, 1911, p. 568)³⁰. To illustrate his thesis, Tomić tells a story about Jova, a young man from Vojvodina (then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire) who went to America. Jova's friend sends a letter to Jova's parents informing them about their son's intention «to marry a savage girl, who will become Orthodox». This is how the savage girl is described in the letter: «She is black like the earth is black, and she has an earring in her nose. Her father, with other black men, hunted white people in the woods, he grilled their meat on skewers, and fed his daughter with it». Tomić emphasizes that the letter also says that «although the British and other nations marry Indian girls, a Serb has never done it». It is interesting to compare this and other descriptions of savages in Tomić's essay to rather similar descriptions of the racial «Other» in Stephen Heathorn's study. For example, this is how Australian Aboriginal people were perceived by the British in *Raleigh Geography Readers VI*:

We found this vast country inhabited by a peculiar race of savages, who, in many respects are among the lowest of the human race. The «Blackfellows», as they were nicknamed by the settlers, are rather dark brown, with thick hair, and a coating of grease and dirt that hides the natural colour of the skin. Herded together in wandering tribes, they have no fields or villages, and only faint ideas of religion, government, or comfort. They go naked as willingly as not, unless they can get blankets or cast-off clothes from the white people... (As cited by Heathorn, 2000, pp. 138-139)

In spite of the fact that his parents are desperate, Jova sticks to his plan and sends them a letter to ask for their permission and blessing. He explains that «all people are equal» and that «the fact that one is blacker, and the other whiter, does not make a difference», because «one gets used to it very quickly». His

²⁹ Maria Todorova's conclusions concerning the geographically, politically, and culturally unique position of the Balkans can be valuable in the exploration of the three-sided model: «cultured» people, Serbs, and «savages». See Todorova (1997).

³⁰ All the citations from Jaša Tomić's essay are on pages 566-571.

mother wonders what Jova's and the Indian girl's children would look like. She concludes that they would resemble «real monkeys». The father writes a letter to Jova, with a long and indicative title: «You poor savage and renegade, you have abandoned your parents, your religion, and your own people; you pervert, you like Indian girls with their pierced noses, fed by human flesh; go to Hell and stay there forever, if you do what you say you'll do!» However, it becomes clear later in the essay that Jova did not bring the Indian girl to Serbia. Jaša Tomić explains that their marriage would not have lasted long, since «there had been many significant differences». And, according to Tomić, differences in religion or class later produce «disparities in education, behaviour, thoughts, and feelings». These are the things that make people from different groups so very different. At the same time, Tomić states that mixed marriages have always existed, in spite of the fact that societies have often condemned and even punished those who chose that option. However, concludes Tomić, although democratic tendencies go in the direction of deleting and/or overcoming all the above-mentioned differences, there are still only a small number of mixed marriages in contemporary societies.

In the same article, Tomić uses another example in order to explain that a cultural difference is a real obstacle for mixed marriages. The percentage of mixed marriages between Serbs and Croats is 2.5%. This small number Tomić uses «as strong evidence to prove that Serbs and Croats cannot be one nation». The previous quotation illustrates how a lesson from sexual pedagogy and marriage easily becomes a lesson in ethno-national and ethno-racist politics. Tomić concludes that the «mixing» and «melting» of different nations does not happen through marriages. However, it could happen if and when peoples' religions and cultures combine and fuse, according to Tomić. Furthermore, only when members of a newly formed community become similar, can they enter into marriages.

The example we have just discussed gives reason to ask one apparently simple question: how can one differentiate racist language from the language of cultural differences? Historian Ana Stolić (2006), the editor of Jaša Tomić's collection of essays on the role of women in society, in her introduction to this book rightly claims that Tomić «supported the idea of the anthropological cultural concept of his time that divided people into 'cultural' and 'primitive', and that he believed in the civilizing mission of Western Christianity» (p. 33). However, in regard to Tomić's thesis that «differences in religion, nationality, social status, produce further differences and disparities in education, behaviour, thoughts, and feelings», which he elaborates in the essay about the impossibility of marriage between young Jova and the «savage» girl, Ana Stolić (2006) says that «Tomić was writing about cultural differences, and that racial concept was not the issue» (p. 431). Here, however, is a weak spot in her argument: Stolić overlooks

the fact that a concept of race has at least two aspects: biological and cultural. Furthermore, one must bear in mind the events of recent Serbian history, when discourses of so-called cultural differences, especially those based on religion, were followed by strong ethno-nationalist and ethno-racist discourses, with devastating consequences for the people in Yugoslavia, especially those directly involved in the armed conflicts of the 1990s.

Why did Jaša Tomić use the example of Jova and the savage girl? Why was it important for him to use the strong image of black people eating the flesh of white people? Eventually, what could stories about black people from America mean to Serbs from the early twentieth century? It seems that the category of race, a significant element of the general, dominant discourse in European imperial countries, «travelled» into the Serbian community, where it was appropriated without any substantial modifications. Serbian authors utilized the category of race in the process of Serbian national and cultural identity construction: Serbian identity was perceived as «European» in opposition to «primitive».

6. Conclusion

In this article I have discussed examples from the magazine *Žena* (1911-1914), in order to show that discourses of gender, emancipation, marriage, reproduction and motherhood were utilized in the construction of Serbian national and cultural identity in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth centuries. Women played an important role in the processes of state formation and nation-building. The ideal Serbian woman was supposed to reproduce biologically and culturally the nation and to mark its borders. Fulfilment of this role was a condition as well as a legitimation for emancipation. However, some examples from the magazine *Žena* indicated that women – its editor as well as some of its authors – were more aware of the complex political context and constraints imposed on them by a deeply patriarchal society than might seem at first sight. So, they at once utilized emancipatory and patriarchal discourses in order to achieve their main goals: a right to an education and (paid) work.

Relying on Rita Felski's idea that empathy and critique should be both employed in the dialogue with texts from the past, I have highlighted – where appropriate – some recent examples of (ab)use of gender and/or ethnicity-based stereotyping. Such a «double approach» contributes to better understanding of both past and contemporary social and political contexts. Having in mind, 1) The educational tendencies in Serbia – as well as elsewhere in Europe and America – during the past years (the marketization of education, the weakening position of the humanities in education, the unbearably high fees for students

which lead to social stratification...), and 2) Recent conservative discourses about the marriage, family, and abortion in Serbia and other countries in the region³¹, it makes sense to explore the early history of the women's movement as well as the history of women's education. First, the consequences of either the sincere alliances or necessary compromises that women made with patriarchal discourses and strong national standpoints in the early twentieth century are useful reminders of what is at stake today. Secondly, it seems that education will once again become the privilege of those with more economic, political and cultural capital. As shown in this essay, not that long ago many women in Serbia (and in the Balkans in general) – as well as in Europe and America – dedicated their lives to the idea of equal access to education. It might be vital to keep that in mind. Learning about the history of women's/feminist press in Serbia provides feminist scholars today with arguments and conclusions embedded in the women's history, in the struggles that have already been won. The lack of such knowledge makes us not only sloppy scholars but also undermines our feminist agenda.

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³¹ Recent events in Poland provide great – although terrifying – material for analysis.

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