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Artistic Work for Children between Productive and Social Reproductive Work*

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Drawing on professional discourses and the organisation and status of artistic production in publishing for children in socialist Yugoslavia (1945–1991), and by the conceptual bridging of social reproduction theory, this article turns to artistic work for children as productive and social reproductive work and to the social construction of its value in order to reflect on the reasons for the relative feminisation of this work.

Keywords: artistic work for children, productive work and social reproductive work, women's work, social reproduction theory, Yugoslav socialist self-managed publishing for children, feminist canonisation

In this article, I discuss artistic work for children as realised in publishing for children in socialist Yugoslavia,¹ where this production has already been largely understood in terms of a dialectic between educational engagement and aesthetic impact, on the axis between productive and social reproductive work as suggested

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¹ The Federative People's Republic of Yugoslavia or the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (the official name since 1967) was founded and organised after WWII as a federation of six republics including two autonomous regions, and politically was a one-party system; its social and economic system from the 1950s was based on self-management. The country's dissolution began in 1991 with the Yugoslav wars and the subsequent introduction of multiparty systems, representative democracy, and neoliberal capitalism into the different nation states of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Slovenia.

particularly by the Marxian social reproduction theory (SRT). I do so to reflect on the reasons why artistic work for children, particularly in some of the ex-Yugoslav production contexts (Slovenia, Serbia, and partly Croatia),² has been more open to women cultural workers than has been the case with autonomous “high” arts for adults, and also to instigate the problematisation of the social construction of the artistic value of this production.

With the Yugoslav socialist revolutionary insistence on an inclusive answer to the question of who the public were or who should participate in the *res publica* of the post-war modernisation of the then underdeveloped country, not only class and gender, but also generation played an important role. Women’s and children’s questions were placed at the centre of society’s overall emancipation (Burcar 2014; Jeraj 2005; Tomšič 1978). Women’s entrance into the public domain and productive work in socialist Yugoslavia as in other welfare states of the second half of the 20th century was tied to the establishment of socialised structures of reproductive work. In other words, women’s social reproductive work which had previously been mostly a private affair was then to some extent taken on and managed by institutions which also offered women opportunities for productive work (Tomšič 1978; Fraser 2016). Considering that one-third of the post-World War II Yugoslav population was younger than fourteen and almost half was younger than nineteen, and that the baby boomer generation perpetuated this demographic trend, the centrality of the “child question” is not surprising (Petrović Todosijević 2018: 157, 158). In line with the idealist idea of enlightened rational subjectivity as the product of own work, characteristic also of other socialist emancipatory projects of the time, the core Yugoslav socialist idea of freeing people from alienated work and working towards (more) self-determined work and relations in production and thus life, was, especially since the introduction of self-management from the 1950s on, based on the project of “humanising” social relations through education and cultural activity (Alečković

² My study of children’s publishing in socialist Yugoslavia and the women artists who contributed to it encompasses all ex-Yugoslav contexts. The search for women artists working in the field of children’s publishing is based mainly on digital catalogues of public libraries in the region: the digital catalogues of the Cobiss platform in Slovenia, Serbia, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, the catalogues of the Belgrade City Library, the National and University Library in Zagreb, Zagreb City Libraries, the National University Library of Kosovo Pjetër Bogdani and Biblioteka Hivzi Sulejmani. The search was limited to the years 1945–1991. The indicated prints of the publications of the most important publishing houses and children’s editions were researched according to possible participation by women artists. These were: Mladinska knjiga and Partizanska knjiga, Ljubljana; Mladost, Naša djeca, Novo pokoljenje, Zagreb; Makedonska knjiga, Kočo Racin, Nova Makedonija/Detska radost, Naša knjiga, Skopje; Dečja knjiga, Mlado pokolenje, Savremena škola, Vuk Karadžić, Belgrade; Forum, Novi Sad; Svjetlost, Veselin Masleša, Sarajevo; Obzor, Petrovci; Rilindja, Pristina; Republički zavod za unapređivanje školstva, Titograd. Selected yearbooks of periodicals for children were also considered in the research: Slovenian *Ciciban* and *Pionir*, Kosovo Albanian *Pionieri*, *Rilindja për fëmij*; Macedonian *Rosica* and partly *Drugarče*, as well as *Novi svet*, *Pionirski vestnik* and *Tomorcuk*, *Fatosi* and Serbian *Proletarac* (autumn 2023). Most women artists, contributing illustrations for children between the years 1945–1991, could be found in the Slovenian context – 63, in Serbia 46, and Croatia 38. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, where there were 29 women artists and in Macedonia where there were 14 women artists, who produced illustrations for children, women seemed to have joined the sector, as a rule on a freelance basis, only from the mid-1970s, which Katja Praznik (2021) denotes as the final stage of the liberalisation of Yugoslav socialist cultural policy.

1954: 366, Kocijan 1970a, 1970b, Hofman forthcoming).³ These goals were systemically implemented by questioning and restructuring the autonomous social spheres, especially the spheres of productive and reproductive labour (Burcar 2014; Jeraj 2005; Tomšič 1978), education (Duda 2015; Petrović Todosijević 2018) but also of culture and art (Kocijan 1970a, 1970b; Petrović 2021: 63–66; Praznik 2021: 61; Videkanić 2019: 51, 232).⁴ Especially children, as subjects in formation, were seen not only as “a symbolic representative of societal change” (Ule 2012: 290) and as “bearers of the future” (Erdei 2004: 27) but also as capable of agency to influence other demographic groups (ibid.). As a consequence, in socialist Yugoslavia – just as in the post-revolutionary Soviet Union (Balina and Oushakine 2021) and to some extent also in post-war European welfare states – within modernisation efforts huge investments were made in public infrastructures, including education, culture, and consequently publishing for children, too (Žnideršič 1999).

The immense growth of publishing for children – at first in terms of print run, and later also in terms of original production – was interconnected across sectors with the established structures of socialised reproductive work. However, the growth differed sometimes quite essentially in individual Yugoslav socialist republics (Alečković 1954)⁵ in accordance with their different temporalities stemming from different historical constellations of individual nations.⁶ Huge support for the growing production for children came especially from the introduction of daycare centres, publicly and institutionally secured mass curricular and extracurricular education, existing professional and academic institutions and networks, as well as structurally

³ Ana Hofman demonstrates in her forthcoming book *Socialism, Now! Music and Singing Activism after Yugoslavia* the immense Yugoslav infrastructural investments in amateur arts and cultural education and leisure activities, which targeted all segments of society, transcending traditional class distinctions, and in particular broadened access to cultural and art institutions, not only in terms of audiences for artistic and cultural content, but also in terms of the production of that content.

⁴ Bojana Videkanić (2019) and Katja Praznik (2021) point out the figures in regard to the growth of the cultural sector, which from the 1950s grew fivefold: “[...] Macedonia perhaps witnessed the most dramatic change, from 5 artists and 6 writers in 1945 to 105 artists and 120 writers in 1972, from two to eight theatres, from zero to eighteen museums, as well as the establishment of the first philharmonic orchestra, an opera, an academy of music and drama, a national and university library and so on, all in the same period from 1945 to 1972” (Praznik 2021: 61).

⁵ In 1945 (that is, in its first half year of existence) the specialised publisher for children Mladinska knjiga, Ljubljana, Slovenia, published seven books, some of them in a remarkable print run of 50,000 copies. By its second year, at the end of 1946, Mladinska knjiga had published 52 different books in an all-round print run of 260,000 editions (cf. Štraus 2005). This number grew over a decade (in the year 1954) to 90 published books for children in Slovenia and Serbia, in Croatia about 45, in Macedonia 28 books, in Bosnia and Herzegovina 10, and in Montenegro only 6 (Alečković 1955: 371).

⁶ To name some of the diverse reasons for the uneven starting and development positions of the Yugoslav socialist republics and their publishing for children in the Yugoslav socialist context: the imperial legacies of the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian times including from the mid-19th century rising nationalism (on practically all sides) and the pre-WWI imperial tensions as well as the foundation of new states, post-WWI territorial changes, the political and economic constellations of the mid-war Yugoslav monarchy, different positions in WWII and post-WWII federal, republic and global political and economic streams.

implemented access to cultural and artistic production (Hofman forthcoming; Praznik 2021: 61; Videkanić 2019: 51, 232), including art schools, the network of public libraries, book fairs, tenders, literary festivals, associations of applied artists⁷ with gallery spaces, specialised curators, continuous prizes,⁸ exhibition programmes, and so on. Particularly, in the contexts which experienced the rapid re-establishment and development of publishing for children (Slovenia, Serbia, and most of Macedonia, where in the socialist context publishing for children started almost from the scratch, Alečković 1954) but also in other contexts where publishing for children was re-established (Croatia) or established gradually (Bosnia and Hercegovina and Kosovo), it was publishing for children and also other branches of artistic production for children that provided an important platform for the inclusion of a broad network of cultural workers (often also autodidacts)⁹ and thus also supported the social and political homogenisation of the cultural scene and of its public – children. And it was here that also Yugoslav women artists, to whom the newly founded art academies also opened, and women writers, especially in certain Yugoslav contexts, had the chance to pursue their artistic, writing, and editorial practice – as productive work. There are manifold reasons and structures that supported the opening of artistic production for children also for women art and cultural workers much more than had been the case with the autonomous “high” arts (for adults): from ideological, cultural- and structural-historical and class contextual reasons constructing and delegating women in natural proximity to children, to the educational (pre-war possibilities of art education also for women)¹⁰ and structural (from the above-mentioned role of publishing for children to pursue social and political

⁷ Particularly noteworthy here is ULUPUDS (The Applied Artists and Designers Association of Serbia) in Serbia. The association, founded in 1952, organised the central federal award and the Zlatno pero Beograda (Golden Pen of Belgrade) open-call exhibition for illustration from 1959. It has run a curated exhibition space and made recommendations to the cultural administration regarding the self-employed status of artists, which includes social and health insurance and the like (Lakičević-Pavičević and Palavestra 2023).

⁸ Some of the various prizes for illustrations and/or literary works for children in socialist Yugoslavia were: the Zlatno pero Beograda award by ULUPUDS, the Grigor Vitez award from 1967 awarded by the Union of Societies “Our Children” in Croatia, awards given by publishers like Kočo Racin in Macedonia or the Levstik award by Mladinska knjiga in Slovenia, and other Zlatno pero awards by individual publishers awarded at the central Belgrade bookfair. Some children’s magazines in socialist Yugoslavia, such as *Proletarac* in Serbia in the 1960s, in addition to paying fees to contributors, promoted original contributions to the magazine through additional cash prizes for the “most successful illustrations”.

⁹ Producers included in the research received different types of education, depending primarily on their class background as well as educational institutions in the towns where they lived. Some artists, working in production for children, attended academies and schools outside their hometowns and republics, but this was rarely the case for women.

¹⁰ Next to private educational possibilities in art, which usually attracted young women whose families could afford paying for such an education, official education institutions in the region started from the beginning of the 20th century, with the Academy of Fine Arts in Zagreb from 1907, the Faculty of Fine Arts from 1937 and the School of Applied Arts from 1938 in Belgrade, the Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Ljubljana from 1945, the Faculty of Arts in Pristina from 1973, and the Faculty of Fine Arts in Skopje from 1980. Secondary education art schools also provided important educational opportunities.

homogenisation of the post-revolutionary cultural scene) to the material and temporal organisation of artistic work in both institutions, and, last but not least, also due to the persistent extraordinary status of the institution of autonomous “high” arts (Praznik 2021: 11).

Art, women, children

Recent art theory, especially Marxist feminist art theory, has gradually introduced the question of social reproductive work into the (largely Marxist-dominated) history of art as history of labour. Of course, formative for the research of social reproduction theorists and their takes on art theory and history is the legacy of the Marxist art theoretical lines of thinking, whose most prominent representatives are Walter Benjamin and the thinkers of the Frankfurt school with especially Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, who all problematised the relations of artist and/as producer (Benjamin 1966 [1934]; Adorno 1997 [1970]), of art and society and of popular/mass culture or the culture industry and autonomous (high) art (Benjamin 1966 [1934]; Adorno and Horkheimer 1988 [1947]). However, art theoretical and art historical conceptualisations from the social reproduction angle are still in their early stages, and an extensive study which would bring together the different Marxist lines of art theory with social reproduction theory is still a desideratum. Next to the 2017 *Third Text's* special issue *Social Reproduction Struggles and Art History*, coedited by Angela Dimitrakaki and Kirsten Lloyd, it is the sociologist of culture and unionist Katja Praznik (2021) who, in the case of the different temporalities of the socialist Yugoslavia and its changing cultural policies, contributed probably one of the most consistent works in terms of the needed amalgamate. Praznik (2021) focused particularly on the revolutionary Yugoslav socialist shifts in the realms of productive and reproductive labour, enabling in the first two Yugoslav decades especially the emergence of art workers as workers, thus entitling them also to workers' rights. In her analysis, Praznik also pays attention to the reasons for the gradual devaluation of artistic labour in the context of the autonomy of art, as well as of strategies and structures of resistance against this devaluation. Instead of drawing on the Adornoian thesis in regard to artistic labour as social labour as recapitulated by Ulrich Plass (2020), and which could offer a productive ground for the future conceptualisations of artistic work as social reproductive work, Praznik (2021) followed Peter Bürger's ([1974] 1992) critique of Adorno, repeating that “Lukács and Adorno argue within the framework of the institution that is art [... and that] a distinction between works of art and the social function of art as a social sphere is missing or is obscured, as is the labour of an artist” (Praznik 2021: 32). Praznik (21) departs in her analysis from the observation that the constitution of social spheres, especially since the bourgeois revolution, has been tied to the rise of the capitalist mode of production and to the phenomena of the separation of spheres, and thus the division of labour. As Praznik (2021: 23) and also other researchers (Rose 1993; Salecl 1994) underline, in the separation of social spheres gendered domains of public productive and private reproductive work were also established. Reproductive work was largely relegated to

the gendered private sphere, or to women, and was made unproductive or excluded from value production (Ferguson 2019: 85). In these processes, not only were the state and the economy (nominally) separated (*ibid.*), but an autonomous institution of art was established, which, even though embedded in the governing production mode, was separated from the pragmatic rationality of life (Bürger [1974] 1992: 56; Praznik 2021: 21). This opened the doors to a new paradigm on the autonomy of art, cemented in particular in the hegemonic construction of a genius (white bourgeois male) artist, the mystification of artistic labour, and the (market) abstraction of the results of this labour – works of art (Praznik 2021: 5; Vishmidt 2017: 22). Praznik drew particularly on Silvia Federici's (1975) reflections on social reproductive labour, who, along with other Italian autonomists such as Carla Lonzi and Mariarosa Dalla Costa, departed from an observation of the centrality of the capitalist removal of reproductive labour from value creation (Praznik 2021: 37). Praznik's critique of the status of artistic labour within the autonomy of art, and of the exceptionalism of artistic work, which is presented as something other than work, and thus excluded from value production (or simply being low-paid or unpaid work), are elaborated with concepts such as mystification and "consecration" (Bourdieu, as quoted in Praznik 2021: 45): "Through this circuitous consecration, the artistic value embodied in an artwork and the belief in the artistic genius therefore establish the mystique that becomes a guarantor for economic value" (Praznik 2021: 45). Praznik locates the accumulation of value in the processes of establishing authority, either in terms of the aesthetic value of certain works, or through the name of the artist as genius (*ibid.*). One of the sites of Katja Praznik's critical intervention (2021) is her critique of "artistic genius" as "a socially exclusive figure" (Praznik, 2021: 43), bundled acutely in specific conditions of work (of under- or unpaid work, flexibility, mobility, etc.) that only certain social classes (and genders) can afford to do and what socialist Yugoslavia, embedded of course in a global context, could especially in its later periods no longer withstand.

However, while Praznik (2021) pays attention mostly to the sector of the so-called autonomous arts, the following discussion turns to artistic work for children, usually, and even in the socialist Yugoslavia, positioned in certain opposition to the realm of the autonomous "high" arts (for adults): especially in terms of the uneven social construction of the value of artistic activities in the sectors of autonomous arts on the one hand, and the production for children on the other. The uneven social and economic value had consequences for access to both sectors: who could (afford to) enter and work successfully in both sectors. Here, I am mostly engaged with the gendered dimension of this access, but my research actually shows that the (pre-war) class contexts, which changed precisely due to the educational and labour structural changes in socialist Yugoslavia, gradual though they were (Suvin 2014), had the major impact. This can mostly be read from the cross-sectoral mobility (or lack of it) of the cultural producers and in regard to the reception of their work, especially in terms of awards. While male artists, who produced also for children, often worked in both sectors – autonomous arts and production for children – and as a rule had access to diverse

institutions of autonomous art (literary and artistic production for adults, exhibitions in museums and galleries, the art market, professorial positions, art academies, association and editorial boards), and thus were also the subjects of reviews, awards, academic research and canonisation processes, there were few women authors and illustrators for children who had successful careers in both sectors. For the argument, the winners of the central Slovenian national cultural award Prešeren and the federal Yugoslav Zlatno pero Beograda award were here analysed according to their artistic expression in fine art and/or illustration and their gender. Of the twenty-eight male visual artists awarded the Prešeren prize between 1947 and 1991, twenty worked in the realm of fine art, mostly painting or graphic art; eight also created illustrations for children. The first woman artist to win the Prešeren award was children's book illustrator Marlenka Stupica in 2013. More women artists have been awarded the Prešeren Fund, a so-called secondary prize that has been awarded since 1964. Of the six awarded women visual artists, four were also active as children's illustrators. Two of them – Zdenka Golob and Alenka Gerlovič – were awarded explicitly for their fine art works, and two – Marlenka Stupica and Marija Lucija Stupica – were exclusively active as children's illustrators.¹¹ The list of winners of the central Yugoslav illustration award Zlatno pero Beograda suggests similar conclusions: between 1959 and 1991, the prize was awarded thirty-three times to twenty-six male artists, fourteen of whom were engaged in various forms of applied art (ranging from illustration, graphic and book design to scenography and wall decorations) as well as in various forms of fine arts (mostly graphics and painting), and five women artists, including two female artists who were also engaged in painting and graphics (ULUPUDS n.d.).¹² Even if the exceptionality of artistic work within the autonomous arts and the social construction of the predominantly male artist genius persisted, what Praznik (2021) unfolded in her analysis of the different Yugoslav cultural policies through the existence of the socialist Yugoslavia and what can also be read from the aforementioned figures, artistic work for children, especially as conceived, structured, and organised in Yugoslav socialist publishing for children, does reveal additional aspects of artistic work. Even if the ways this work was organised in the past have been overshadowed not only by the passage of time but also by profound systemic, social, economic, and thus epistemic and affective changes, revealing some of the past aspects of artistic work for children might allow for understanding the past, the present, and thus also the future of this work in a more complex way.

In the following section, I thus turn mainly to Yugoslav socialist discourses on the production for children and the organisation of artistic work for children within self-managed publishing. On the ground of semi-structured interviews with illustrators, authors, and editors who worked in the field of socialist Yugoslav publishing for children, I follow the arguments of artists and authors about why and how they produced for

¹¹ Both the Prešeren Award and the Prešeren Fund Award were sometimes also awarded with special reference to production for children (Prešernov sklad).

¹² Some artists (Dušan Ristić, Lidija Osterc, Živojin Kovačević and Bogdan Kršić) were awarded twice with the Zlatno pero Beograda (ULUPUDS).

children, also in relation to their other work, reproductive work in the private sphere, which especially women artists reported on.

Literary and artistic production for children in Yugoslav self-managed publishing

Policy

The programmatic speech on the specifics, roles, and needs of children's literature in establishing Yugoslav socialist self-management that Mira Alečković (1955), then an influential children's poet, editor, and decision-maker based in Belgrade, delivered before the 4th Congress of the Yugoslav Writers' Union (Ohrid, Macedonia, 1955) should be considered particularly seminal in socialist Yugoslavia. In her speech, Alečković outlined the first postwar decade of Yugoslav socialist children's literature in the broader geo- and local political and cultural-political context. In particular, she asked how artistic freedom and quality could be accommodated in the context of children's literature, which historically and at that time still had mainly didactic goals (Alečković 1955: 366, 384). Alečković drew on the specific autonomy paradigm that reverberated in postwar, especially post-Infornbiro, socialist Yugoslavia, and was – in the wake of the “conflict on the artistic left” – also situated in the general Yugoslav search for democratic participation and collective democratic governance by “socialist democracy”, articulated and systematically introduced with the principles of Yugoslav self-management (Kardelj 1949: 1100, 1102). Alečković emphasised that children's literature must and could address children in the contemporaneity of their life experience and their “affects” embedded in “socialist relations” only if writers were to search freely for a “contemporary language” beyond normative aesthetics and tendentiousness (Alečković 1955: 366, 384). However, in raising the question of a “contemporary language” (that is, of content and style in children's literature), Alečković emphasised that “this term is neither identifiable nor can it assume the same meaning that it has in the polemics of modernism and realism” (Alečković 1955: 367). In this way, she anticipated recent international debates that have shaped international academic research on children's literature and its aesthetic value, concluding that production for children “does have an aesthetic of its own” (Nikolajeva 2005: xvii) and that lived actuality in the depiction of childhood, as opposed to the romanticised representation of children, is central to the aesthetic quality of works (Alečković 1955, Blažić 2021, Burcar 2007). By welcoming the fact that Yugoslav children's literature had gradually become more complex in its conception and appealed to everyone (children, adolescents, and adults), Alečković emphasised the necessity of what is now called the “dual addressee” (Ewers 1990: 75–91) or “dual audience” (Beckett 1999) or “crossover” (Falconer 2008) of children's literature (Alečković 1955: 367, 368). In order to achieve aesthetic quality in children's literature, which she considered crucial for its didactic impact as well as for children's development, she explicitly emphasised the need to improve the conditions of production and to democratise the profession (Alečković 1955: 364–366). And this, she pointed out, could only be achieved through original production, created in a favourable production framework with adequate

remuneration and careful editorial and translation practices, all subject to dedicated publishing boards, reviewers, cultural-political advisory boards, awards for children's literature and illustration established in the period of socialist Yugoslavia, and cooperation with school and out-of-school education, and so on (Alečković 1955: 378, 385).

Organisation

The outlined programmatic directions of the goals, methods, and organisation of artistic production for children were embedded in self-managed organisation and decision-making in publishing for children in Yugoslavia. Using the example of Slovenian publishing, which generally followed federal cultural policy and thus can serve as a model for understanding the Yugoslav publishing system, Martin Žnideršič (1999) provided an insight into the economic organisation of publishing, which, since the 1950s and the abolishment of the centralised structures, was embedded in Yugoslav socialist self-management and was organised as a public-market-public cycle. The central role – in terms of deciding on the titles to be published – was held by publishing committees or the boards of publishing houses, including salaried editors as well as representatives from public, political, cultural, and academic life (Žnideršič 1999: 122). The publishing committees' proposed programmes had to be confirmed by the workers' councils, which comprised representatives of the employees. Another organisational unit within publishing houses was the boards of directors; however, the publishing board and the workers' council were the ones who had to agree on the programme to be published (*ibid.*). Subsidies were lump sums, and thus publishing houses in the past were independent in their decisions about which titles the subsidies should be spent on. This contrasts with today, where publishers in Slovenia, for example, receive subsidies on the basis of their reported planned titles. In addition to public subsidies and income from the sale of books and magazines, publishers also had other sources of income (mainly wholesale and retail office supplies and printing services) and, from the mid-1950s, paid into the Fund for the Promotion of Publishing in the Republics and Autonomous Regions. The contributions of publishing houses to the fund were sometimes up to twice as much as the sum of the subsidies¹³ (Žnideršič 1999: 123, 125, 129). Pavle Učakar (2022), a longstanding visual editor at Mladinska knjiga, reported that another crucial difference with production today was the decision-making authority on possible profit distribution from commercially successful projects: editorial boards could decide to invest profits into new projects that perhaps did not promise commercial success, whereas nowadays editorial boards are very limited in their ability to determine how to redistribute possible profit. Učakar (2022) also underlines the advantages of production in which all the different stages of the production process could be performed in-house: Mladinska knjiga previously had an integrated (internationally successful) printery, which enabled an integrated production process from the initial phase onwards; also, master printmakers could be consulted on the possibilities of the final realisation of envisioned layouts and visual compositions.

¹³ Žnideršič (1999: 129) reports that between 1957 and 1962 a total of 9.16% of overall subsidies for publishing in Slovenia was dedicated to production for children.

Access

With regard to access to the sector, the interviewed illustrators, authors, and editors reported different entry-interfaces: invitations to selected authors and artists to contribute written or illustrated works for magazines and/or book programmes were sent out mainly by editors. In particular, artists who were not well connected to the publishing and/or art scene reported entering the publishing sector through public tenders or on their own initiative by approaching editors themselves or on the recommendation of their professors or colleagues (Lambevaska Gulevska 2022; Likar-Smiljanić 2023).

Jelka Reichman (b. 1939), a Ljubljana-based children's illustrator, reported turning to this work on the advice of her teacher at the Ljubljana Academy of Fine Arts, Marij Pregelj (Reichman 2022). His recommendations reportedly helped her get the first project at Mladinska knjiga (Youth Book) publishing house. Reichman underlined the good working conditions, the especially favourable fees, and the better compatibility of illustration with her reproductive work as mother as additional reasons for pursuing a career in illustration for children (Fig. 1).¹⁴ The materiality of illustration, which allowed her to use dry colours, such as pastels and crayons, in contrast to graphic making or other visual art techniques prevalent at the time, was according to Reichman more compatible with the temporality of her artistic work embedded in her reproductive activities (Reichman 2022):

A woman has just got married. She has a household, a baby, children. She has to work somewhere, she's dyeing a puppy, and now the tail and the paws have to be dyed. Now, I am saying this in general. It's not really like that. But now it's half past twelve, or twelve of the clock. Now I have to put the potatoes on. And make the salad. And the kids are coming home from school. You leave it. And you leave. And then when you come back at half past five or whenever and you come back in the evening, you still have it anyway. But if I, who did the graphic master, and I did it at Debenjak and Pogačnik, I bought the graphic press (we sold it last year, cheap, but it was gone, this weight). You cannot do that. I was all black. You had to clean all these colours, all these stains, you had to close all these colours, otherwise everything was ruined, you could throw it away. If you wash it all off, it does not go away at all. How are you going to do that? In great painting, too. If you do a portrait or something, you cannot just leave it. [...]

¹⁴ For her first work – eight illustrations for *Šivilja in škarjice* by Dragotin Kette (1964), simultaneously published in different languages (Slovenian, Croatian, Serbian, Macedonian, Slovak, Hungarian, by Mladinska knjiga Ljubljana; Savremena škola Belgrade; Naša djeca, Zagreb; Forum, Novi Sad; Vuk Karadžić, Belgrade) – Jelka Reichman (2022) reportedly received YUD (Yugoslav dinars) 150,000 or USD (US dollars) 200 or, taking inflation into account, USD 1,940.90 in 2023, while her monthly salary as a teacher at elementary school was reportedly YUD 30,000 or USD 40, which would be equivalent to USD 338.18 in 2023. Based on the honorarium notes in selected *Rosica* journals for preschool and first grades of elementary school children that I found in the *Detska Radost* archive in Skopje, which has been largely destroyed since the privatisation of the Nova Makedonija publishing house in 2003, the honorarium for a full double-page spread in 1983 was YUD 2,000 or USD 32 or USD 97.31 in 2023. The calculations are based on the rates and calculations by Stojanović (2007) and Banka Slovenije (n.d.1, n.d.2, n.d.3) as well as the US Inflation Calculator.



Fig. 1. The front cover of *Šivilja in škarjice* [A Seamstress and Scissors] by Dragotin Kette in Slovenian, illustrated by Jelka Reichmann in 1964.

Sl. 1. Prednja strana korica slikovnice *Šivilja in škarjice* avtorja Dragotina Kettea s ilustracijama Jelke Reichmann iz 1964.

Other women artists, authors, and editors reported likewise, especially those with children, who, like Vladana Likar-Smiljanić (2023) from Belgrade, Serbia, even involved her daughters and their girlfriends in the production of paintings. Likar-Smiljanić, a professor of electrical engineering at the University of Belgrade, who did not receive

any artistic training apart from aesthetic education in elementary and high school, nevertheless contributed very well-known illustrations to popular editions of authors such as Jovan Jovanović Zmaj's poems or Dositej Obradović's fables. In her illustrations, she mostly used monochrome figures and backgrounds outlined with black contours, so that when she produced illustrations as her afternoon and evening freelance work, she could involve children to colour in her illustrations as colouring books (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2. The front cover of *Riznica pesama za decu* [A Treasury of Children's Poems] by Jovan Jovanović Zmaj, in Serbian, illustrated by Vladana Likar-Smiljanić in 1974.

Sl. 2. Prednja strana korica slikovnice *Riznica pesama za decu* [Riznica dječjih pjesama] Jovana Jovanovića Zmaja, ilustracije Vladane Likar-Smiljanić iz 1974.

In addition to the specific materiality, the interviewed artists also reported a specific, project-related temporality of their work, for which, in order to meet the agreed deadlines, they usually had to work night shifts. Reichman explicitly addressed temporal and material, but also affective, problems with regard to the compatibility of artistic work and motherhood, and doubted that artistic work and motherhood could be reconciled in such a way that a woman would not constantly feel that she was neither a committed mother nor a committed artist (Reichman 2022):

This duality is pernicious. Be it under capitalism or socialism. It does not matter; the thing remains the same. ... As Irena Rahovsky [artist, 1937–2011, who studied in the same class as Jelka Reichman – author’s comment] and I once laughed when Metka [Metka Krašovec, celebrated Slovenian painter, visual artist, 1941–2014 – author’s comment], who had married Šalamun when she was already forty years old, but she did not have a classical family, said: you know what, why don’t you put a sign on the studio door: “Mom is working, do not disturb!” With Irena, we both burst out laughing. “Meta, do you know”, I said, “how it is when a child does not knock, flies in and shows you he’s cut himself: ‘Mommy, the blood is running’, or he brings you a bug”. I said, “you know, it all happens at once!”

However, the realm of reproductive labour in the private sphere to which especially women writers and artists, particularly those who were mothers, have had to (and still have to)¹⁵ align their artistic work is only one part of the story. The other part is surely the socialised realm of reproductive work, which has substantially supported the inclusion of women into the realm of productive work, as well as the organisation of work in publishing and the favourable conditions of work.

Organisation of work

With regard to fees and material copyrights, following a 1957 Yugoslav authors’ rights law, in which illustration was explicitly named, authors and artists were paid according to approved public tariffs and they retained material copyrights for the whole period of their life as well as 50 years after their death,¹⁶ which enabled them to be paid royalties on reprints (Ukaz o razglasitvi zakona o avtorski pravici 1968: 604). In production contexts, where illustrators in particular were permanently employed by publishing houses (as was the case with publishers like Detska radost / Nova Makedonija in Skopje, Macedonia or Rilindja in Pristina, Kosovo), the employed illustrators enjoyed

¹⁵ The current exhibition (12 October 2023 – 25 February 2024) at the City Museum Ljubljana features Slovenian women artists 1850–1950: painters, sculptors, among whom artists who also worked, and some even more successfully, as illustrators for children (Alenka Gerlovič, Bara Remec, Cita Potokar Mara Kralj, Lidija Osterc). However, this part of their activity is not even mentioned in the exhibition. The curatorial text specifically underlined motherhood as the most defining “obstacle” for their artistic work: “Despite the many innovations introduced by socialist Yugoslavia, each of the artists was still faced with a central personal decision that continued to shape their lives: the decision about motherhood” (Savenc 2023: 4).

¹⁶ The 1968 law introduced a change, with which authors kept material copyrights on the works, which were produced in the frame of permanent employment for 50 years after the first publication of the works. Artists who worked freelance, however, kept the material copyrights for their whole life, as well as 50 years after their death.

continuous employment taking care of the visual aspect of the publications.¹⁷ Especially in production contexts in which publishers for children engaged (also) on a freelance basis, as was the case in Slovenia, Serbia, and Croatia, and later on also in Macedonia and Bosnia and Hercegovina, more women writers and artists could be found among contributors to production for children.¹⁸

Relational aspects

Illustrator Jelka Reichman (2022) and editors for children's and youth literature at Mladinska knjiga, Alenka Veler, Andrej Ilc, and Irena Matko (2022), reported that in the early Yugoslav decades, the longstanding children's literature editor at Mladinska knjiga, Kristina Brenkova, who was very active in both Yugoslav and international translation and publishing collaborations, consulted renowned art professors to review illustrations before commissioning artists.¹⁹ While editors, especially of children's periodicals addressed to younger children, report on quite extensive editorial interventions into texts, illustrations (Remškar, as quoted in Kos 2018: 107, 108), especially for children's periodicals, seem usually not to have been the subject of substantial editorial briefing, feedback, or changes. Also, in the commissioning of book illustrations, apart from the initial discussion between the editor and the illustrator, especially about the technical aspects of the publication (size, scope of the illustrations, and colour or black-and-white printing) and some close collaboration between authors and illustrators, illustrators reported autonomous work processes and artistic decisions.

All the illustrators, authors, and editors I spoke with in the course of the research argued for the guiding principles of their artistic and/or editorial work, particularly their anticipation of what children need and want, especially in aesthetic and affective terms. All interviewees emphasised the affective and value system of the textual source material as starting points for illustration. Vesna Lakićević Pavićević, a former curator of ULUPUDS Belgrade, who was also in charge of the organisation of the Zlatno pero Beograda award, commented on the specific heteronomy of illustration (Lakićević Pavićević 1994: 5):

¹⁷ In the case of periodicals, for the Kosovo-Albanian *Pionieri* usually two illustrators supervised the whole monthly, with a scope of approximately 30 pages.

¹⁸ While authors of texts often worked on a freelance basis, in Macedonia and Kosovo up to the mid-1970s illustrators only rarely worked freelance. The situation changed thereafter, especially following the establishment of the Faculty of Arts in 1973 in Pristina and the Faculty of Fine Arts in Skopje in 1980, as well as the 1982 Law on Self-Employment in Macedonia (Zakon za samostojnite umetnici 1982). These structural changes regarding freelance artistic work resulted – especially in Macedonia – in women artists, often art students, illustrating not only books for children but also periodicals on a freelance basis, suggesting that women artists joined the sector especially in contexts where freelance work was possible. Biserka Filipova, 1936–2018 (Filipova Kitanovska 2022), a trained painter who worked as a graphic designer at the Museum of Macedonia, contributed on a freelance basis after the late 1970s to the book issues of *Naša knjiga*, where her husband, painter and illustrator Tomislav Filipov (1935–2002), was employed as illustrator. Daniela Weinerová (2023), b. 1951, Simonida Filipova Kitanovska (2022), b. 1965, and Lenče Lambevaska Gulevska (2022), b. 1965, worked as art students on a freelance basis for *Detska Radost*, Skopje.

¹⁹ Jelka Reichman's first illustrations for Mladinska knjiga, for *Šivilja in škarjice* by Dragotin Kette, were reportedly reviewed by the renowned painter and professor at the Academy of Fine Arts in Ljubljana, France Mihelič, who also himself contributed illustrations for children (Reichman 2022).

Since illustration suffers but also uses the “neighbourhood” of the text, it acts as a multiplied and doubled reality in mirrors, and sometimes as a whimsical exile who has gone his own way. In fact, such illustrations “say more about their author and the atmosphere of their time than about the text”.

Marijan Tršar, painter, art historian, educator, and writer advocated in a similar way. Tršar started his speech on the specifics of illustrating for children – which he presented at the symposium celebrating the 25th anniversary of the children’s magazine *Ciciban* in Ljubljana – from the general understanding of illustration as a “mediator [...] to enter the imaginary world of the writer, [...] to make it easier for [the reader] to understand the specific language of the word that represents this world” (Tršar 1969: 12). Tršar listed possible approaches or relationships of an illustrator and their work to the textual source and concluded that “the level of the image-text relationship is to place both on their own terms: a special work of art alongside the literary work” (ibid.). Furthermore, Tršar addressed different levels of visual development of children in specific age groups and social contexts, and measured the success of a work of illustration by its ability to match the age- and context-specific “representational world” of children, to whom the work is primarily directed (Tršar 1969: 13, 14). The reader, Tršar argued, should cross between the contours and features of the world suggested by the text, those suggested by the image, and the reader’s own visual world (ibid.). By recognising the heteronomy of illustration, bound by “certain imposed limitations” (Ege 1949: 13), not as a deficiency of illustration but as its strength, Tršar anticipated contemporary theoretical thinking on illustration (Male 2016 [2007]). My interviewees reported similarly in claiming the importance of totality between an independent text and the image level (Veler, Ilc, and Matko 2022; Lambevaska Gulevska 2022; Weinerová 2023) and that between these two levels of text and image a “certain in-between space” must be established in which readers can experience “magic” (Učakar 2022).

“...as all historians know, there is only one time for the actuality of struggle: now”²⁰

What have the different reported lines of force in the heteronomy of artistic work for children to do with the research aim of the article: problematising artistic work for children between productive and social reproductive work and the social construction of the value of this work? For a conceptual bridging between the researched professional discourses and the organisation and status of artistic production for children in Yugoslav socialist self-managed publishing, its discussion as productive and social reproductive work, I turn finally to the relation between productive and reproductive work as conceptualised by Marxian social reproduction theory (SRT).

There are multiple reasons for my reading of artistic work for children in socialist Yugoslavia within the spectrum of recent Marxian social reproduction theory. The analysis undertaken here clearly emphasises productional, relational, and contextual aspects in the production and reception of artistic work for children. Supportive of a

²⁰ (Dimitrakaki and Lloyd 2017: 13).

parallel reading of artistic production for children, especially how it was organised in Yugoslav self-managed socialism, within the SRT is their common ideological pursuit of subjectivation, which would lead to a freeing of people from alienated work. Aiming at disruption and the overcoming not only of gendered exploitation, but mostly of alienation, in the sense of the self-determination of work and of means of production and relations in production (thus social relations), SRT feminists have productively connected precisely to “capitalism’s separation of productive from reproductive work” (Ferguson 2019: 4). By insisting on Marx’s position that “capitalistically productive labour [...] is that which directly creates value”, Marxian SRT operationalises the capitalist distinction between productive (largely abstracted and alienated) labour as a value-creating activity, in which workers reproduce the previously posited value of their labour power, and its counterpart, reproductive work as a “practical human activity through which people meet their current needs and imagine new possibilities – be they pursuing food and shelter or love, play, and rest” as both an analytical and political operation (Ferguson 2019: 119, 123). By resorting to “a classical conception of value as surplus-value extraction through waged work” and rejecting “the assertion that unwaged social reproductive labor is value-producing [...]” (Doyle Griffiths 2020: 3), central to Marxian SRT is the assertion that the transformation of use value into abstract value takes place in the marketplace (Ferguson 2019: 124). In her monograph *Women and Work. Feminism, Labour, and Social Reproduction*, Susan Ferguson (2019) notes for reproductive work that “[s]uch labour certainly contributes to creating a commodity, labour power”; however, she underlines that “it does so by producing things to be consumed – things that support life (not capital) in the first instance” (123). Ferguson grants to products of reproductive work a use value, as these are “useful things – things produced not for sale, but to sustain life” (123, 116). Ferguson locates resistance to the “alienating tendencies of capitalism” in the relationships between people whose emotional and intellectual bonds with one another, and in relation to the products of their (concrete) labour, are directed against the “disciplining pressures of management and/or technology” (126, 129). By escaping capitalist relations of production and organising them according to “revolutionary principles of cooperation”, concrete labour and concrete products resist abstraction (taking place at the market) (132).

As I have shown above, publishing for children offered its producers favourable conditions for pursuing their artistic work as productive work. In socialist Yugoslavia, artistic production for children was the subject of collective but self-determined work between the actors of the self-managed publishing system (authors, illustrators and editors, cultural-political actors, cultural and academic workers, curators, and so on) with the aim of achieving an educational, aesthetic, and affective effect for the masses (of children). Aesthetic-ideological notions of what children were, could be, want, and should be, and thus of implied readers, were and remained more accentuated in production for children than in production for adults. The production for children has been largely considered in its impact, reinforcing the process of interpellation and

subjectification, especially of younger readers (Nikolajeva 2005: xi; Appleyard 1990). As I have indicated above, Yugoslav socialist children's book publishing was surely a subject of the intra-Yugoslav and, to some extent, also international book market. However, it was not solely focused on profit maximisation, but on a clear social role of educating and through aesthetic experience, based on free artistic work, also humanising social relations. This was reinforced by internal references such as editorial decisions, literary prizes, book fairs, translations, exhibitions, festivals, and reading programmes, which the actors of children's book publishing still insist on today (Blažić 2021). Last, but not least, the reception framework for artistic production for children (especially of a younger age) has always been relational and interactive, since – unlike production for adults – it is usually read collectively both in institutionally organised settings (daycare centres, schools, and extracurricular contexts) and in private settings.

Because of the specific relations of production and reception of Yugoslav socialist artistic production for children summarised here and described in detail in the article above, the products of artistic work for children (here explicitly children's books and magazines), unlike artistic work in the autonomous arts, were more prone to resist abstraction. Even if (young) readers were (and are) through the reading process also to be made into adequate labourers, the interpersonal relational webs of the production and reception processes, especially as organised in the socialist Yugoslav framework, made artistic work less suspect for abstraction (through market relations). The inter-relational production and reception network—which was comprised of, on the one hand, authors and artists who invested in it by considering and enriching the concepts of childhood and art through their professional dialogues, collective work, and the like, and, on the other, parents, pedagogues, or other community members, who advanced it by joint reading or other forms of presentation and display—could not be easily commodified. The involved actors of this network were free to decide on the how of their labour.

However, as canonisation is largely linked to hegemonic social processes that define aesthetic values and norms, not only through the selection of “worthy” works and artists, but also through “canon interpretation” that constrains how works should be read, canonisation discourses, still largely depending on the superiority of autonomous art, have also been (as the awarding policies analysed above clearly reveal), linked to abstraction (von Heydebrand and Winko 1994). Artistic production for children, especially that from the period under study, which has been in the post-Yugoslav decades a subject of multiple reinterpretations (e.g. changes in curricular and library programmes, Burcar 2019) and new insights (Božović 2021), has transcended abstraction and has therefore also been largely excluded from the processes of historicisation and canonisation. Yet it is precisely the supposed “lesser” or the use value of this production that also holds potential for resistance, due to (in the sense of the above-quoted affirmation) opening up the temporality of any struggle as the present or “now”, which can be actualised every time we collaborate in production for children or sit down with one or more children and open a book together (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3. Photo work: “Luisa Lobo Reads for Nico Lobo” from the series *Leyendo Resistencia / Widerstand Lesen / Reading Resistance* by Verena Melgarejo Weinandt from 2018.

Sl. 3. Fotografija: “Luisa Lobo Reads for Nico Lobo” iz serije *Leyendo Resistencia / Widerstand Lesen / Reading Resistance* Verene Melgarejo Weinandt iz 2018.

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Interviews conducted by the researcher with:

- Lakičević-Pavičević, Vesna and Dragana Palavestra (former curators at ULUPUDS), 18 January 2023, Belgrade, Serbia;
- Lambevska Gulveska, Lenče (illustrator, who worked freelance for Detska radost), 1 November 2022, Skopje, Macedonia;
- Likar-Smiljanić, Vladana (illustrator, who worked freelance for different publishers), 17 January 2023, Belgrade, Serbia;
- Reichman, Jelka (illustrator, who has worked freelance for different publishers), 15 July 2022, Ljubljana, Slovenia;
- Učakar, Pavle (former long-term visual editor at Mladinska knjiga), 16 February 2022, Ljubljana, Slovenia;
- Veler, Alenka, Andrej Ilc and Irena Matko Lukan (editors at Mladinska knjiga), 10 February 2022, Ljubljana, Slovenia;
- Weinerová, Daniela (freelance illustrator, who worked for different publishers), 7 April 2023, online.

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