

The Ambivalence of Socialist Working Women's Heritage: a Case Study of the Jugoplastika Factory

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This article focuses on the segment of socialist modernization connected with the industrial production of plastics, which developed largely as a result of women's achievements, i.e. as the symbiosis of the early socialist culture of competition, (self-)discipline and (self-)correction of human flaws, and the patriarchal heritage that praised female virtues, such as readiness to sacrifice and to take responsibility for the prosperity of family and community as a whole. As early as the late 1950s, the rivalry between the two collectivist projects – patriarchal and communist – that, each in its own way, disciplined, socialized and used the female workforce and reproductive ability, found a common interest in reinstating the discourses of femininity and domesticity. The transition from penury to relative abundance, alongside the beginning of mass production of domestic appliances and consumer goods, synthetic materials and plastics, was accompanied by the passivization of the woman as a political subject and the commodification of her image in the mass media.

This ethnographic study of women employed in the Split factory Jugoplastika (1954–1991) and those working in its plant on the Dalmatian island of Šolta (1959–1991) discusses the ambivalent heritage of socialist emancipation. For most women, regular work at the plant fundamentally changed their everyday lives, gender relations within the families, their living standard and the way they perceived their own abilities and competency. Their narratives reveal a selective view and evaluation of their lives in socialism; a lack of critical reflection on their own ideological position within the local and national context, a nostalgic look back at the economic empowerment they experienced and pride in the skill with which they performed their working tasks. These experiences are contrasted with those from the period of dependence on the island's traditional economies (agriculture, fishing, lime production), as well as with the recent focus on natural resources and tourism, based on the reactivation of the traditional way of life, where women have little opportunity for (self-)affirmation.

Key words:

women's heritage, Jugoplastika, socialist working women

Dolls are certainly the most favourite toy of every girl, and dearest to her heart. [...] A girl identifies with her doll; she wants to find herself through the doll, or find in it a sister, a brother, a friend. She dresses the doll, combs its hair, and looks after it the way she was looked after by her mother. Every girl spends a lot of time playing with her doll, so one can say that a doll is not only a toy, but every girl's very intimate friend.
(Design team, Catalogue by Termoplastika – Toys, part of the Jugoplastika company, late 1980s)

[Jugoplastika's] market and product brands which were so easily discarded become proof that by renouncing socialism we are actually renouncing capitalism in its better segment. Jugoplastika was an efficient socialist production machine that met high consumer criteria and standards that were customary in the capitalist market. (Katić Jovanović 2011/2012)

In line with the NU anniversary issue guidelines, we would like to reflect on the gendered dimensions of the rise and collapse of one of the most successful “female industries”¹ in Croatia – the Jugoplastika multi-plant firm (“kombinat” in socialist lingo) – which played a particular role in promoting women as a new socialist collectivity of producers and consumers with minimal political influence on the society’s present and future.² Like many employed socialist women, the Jugoplastika workers felt proud and satisfied for being liberated “qua animal laborans”, but our research points to the unfinished nature of their emancipation as “political beings, that is, as citizens” (Jalušič 1999: 112). The factory itself was one of the strongest symbols of the country’s modernization, technological innovation and novelty of goods and brands connected with accessibility, practicality, happy childhood, leisure, and free time.

¹ Statistics about factory workers in the socialist period allow us to claim that there were *female* and *male* industries. Typically *male industries* were ironworks and shipbuilding, and *female industries* were textile industries where nearly 80% of the workers were women (cf. Milat 2011). This division is still present, but one should bear in mind that the average salary in shipbuilding is 3% higher than the average salary in Croatia, whereas the salary in the textile industry is as much as 50% lower. The salaries of women employed in shipbuilding are 12% lower than the salaries of their male co-workers, while the salaries of women in textile industries are 30% lower than those of male workers, even though women make up a majority in this industry (Prlenda and Šinko 2009: 43).

² The relation between consumption, citizenship, and political rights in the transitional period forms a new kind of “post-political citizenship”, in which an individual’s “presence in the public sphere is defined not so much by the transformation of the political system as by a notion of the self, of collective identity, and of entitlement associated with the diffusion of mass consumption” (de Grazia, quoted after Berdahl 2005: 237).

Through an analysis of ethnographic materials, company's brochures, personal recollections of Jugoplastika female workers and discourses related to everyday life and the socialist ideology, we would like to show the extent to which socialist production and consumer practices and their cultural codes participated in the design of gender-specific "technologies of the self". In other words, we will show to what extent socialist ideals of emancipated and employed women really changed the position of women in the family, workplace and the society at large. Using a feminist conceptual prism we would like to test the main hypothesis that forced socialist modernisation (with its radical shifts of Foucauldian *technologies of production, technologies of signs, technologies of power*), despite of significant improvement in the status of women, failed to create the conditions for their full emancipation, autonomous action and self-realisation. We are claiming that the rapid reconstruction and industrialization could not be possible without a symbiosis of the early socialist culture of competition, (self-)discipline and (self-)correction of human flaws with the patriarchal heritage that praised the pre-modern female gender role and female virtues, such as readiness to sacrifice and to take responsibility for the prosperity of the family and the community as a whole.³ It is thanks to the positive ideological assessment of "saving, labour discipline, social and personal responsibility" (Duda 2010: 389)⁴ as culturally validated "female" qualities (not only in the socialist but also in the protestant, early capitalist context) that ordinary citizens could resist the temptations of blatant consumerism for so long, and that they could endure the disadvantages and shortages of the socialist economic life.⁵ This represents another historical confirmation

³ These aspects are often brought up in interviews. For example: "[...] we used to work with a special kind of responsibility, rarely arriving late for work" (Blagaić IEF rkp 1997); "I used to go to work with such a joy; who does that nowadays, you tell me?" (Blagaić IEF rkp 2037); "[...] contributing to the plant, now that was a real thing, the workers contributed during their whole lifetime, I remember it well, that we had twelve different contributions – for education and the health system, for culture, for the Split county..." (Blagaić IEF rkp 1997); "There was another plant for plastic boats in Komiža and textile garments in Vis, but they couldn't cover their transport costs, so our work helped another plant, but still in a factory where the profit was higher, the salary would also be a bit higher" (Blagaić IEF rkp 1997).

⁴ The quote comes from the proceedings of the meeting of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, held on 4 December 1980. It gave a recommendation on how to defeat the global crisis: "The global political and economic situation has escalated, with slight chances for a quick recovery. The only way to counteract this negative global trend and to solve our internal problems is through hard work, saving, labour discipline, and social and personal responsibility" (Duda 2010: 389).

⁵ "How great is the responsibility of invisible women who, from the home sphere, maintained the political system not only by voting in elections [...] but by being ready, in conditions of the col-

of Daniel Miller's (1998) thesis that women as "the managers of the family budget" are the initiators and regulators of major economic developments in a country and in the global economy.

By juxtaposing anthropological and feminist theory we intend to avoid elisions by analysing either the embodiment of women workers' production or "the disembodiment of consumption where [...] consumers use commodities to reshape the contours of their self-identities" (Ellis 2008: 46). Putting women's processes of subjectification in the foreground, in the Foucauldian sense of self-making and being made by power relations, we will primarily focus on women's immanent strategies of coping with challenges and restrictions at work, in the family, in the community and the public sphere where they were rhetorically recognized as the new social subject (cf. Jalušič 1999; Milić 2012; Pantelić 2011; Sklevicky 1996; Slapšak 2001) but also controlled and supervised by the ideological and labour agenda of mass organizations, administration, state security services and by the new role model of a modern woman. We are also determined to avoid simplification in interpreting everyday socialist experiences by invoking a genderless, nationless and classless Yugoslav everyman or by overemphasizing the unique, "decadent", market-like and sunny side of Yugoslav socialism, unburdened with the political conundrums of the Cold War era, internal power struggles, inflation, the regimes' need for control and the Party's patriarchy (cf. Bren and Neuburber 2012; Grandits and Taylor 2010; Luthar and Pušnik 2010; Patterson 2011).

To support our main thesis, in the first part we discuss the importance of the plastic industry in shaping a new industrialized society and improving the material conditions of modern socialist homes. Parts two and three illustrate this impact by presenting ethnographic data from fieldwork conducted in 2011 among female and male workers in some of Jugoplastika's plants and by consulting digital materials related to the recollections of former Jugoplastika workers and consumers collected by the community of art initiatives in Split that took place in 2011 and 2012. The two concluding sections examine the issue of the discrepancy between the socialist rhetoric of women's emancipation and non-discriminatory employment and the gradual objectification of women's bodies, desires

lapse of the social and economic system, not to challenge it even in the domestic sphere – making do, patching up, making an Amish cake [...] creating something out of nothing, even agreeing with explanations such as 'this is the way in which our ancestors would do things', thus actually agreeing to a pre-modern female gender role." (Erdei 2008: 269)

and wishes in a sexualized media and popular culture parallel with their passivization within “discourses of domesticity”.

WOMEN IN THE (YUGO)PLASTIC INDUSTRY

If we interpret industrial modernity as a passage from “the machine age” towards “the plastics age” (Spake 1990), then the industrial production and processing of Polyvinyl Chloride (PVC) and new synthetic materials provided vital evidence on following the main road of post-war modernization. The ability of the communist nomenklatura to start the production of PVC powder – the Jugovinil factory in Kaštel Gomilica near Split started operating in 1950 – was more important for ordinary citizens than steel mills, because plastics meets the basic needs of consumers (cf. McLellan 2010) and corresponds to their desire “for synthetic raincoats (*šušlavci*), prams, plastic boats, toys, slippers, pads” (Pavičić 2006).⁶ At a time when no one thought about the toxic side-effects of the everyday use of plastic and synthetic textile, Jugoplastika’s ever-expanding assortment of products fed the ever more refined needs of socialist consumers: from clothing, shoes and home wear to beach equipment (cf. Duda 2010; Patterson 2011). There was no Yugoslav family without at least one Jugoplastika product (cf. Adrić et al. 2004: 177), such as a school bag, slippers, rubber sandals,⁷ a jacket, sneakers, a ball, a doll or some plastic accessories:

Children went to school carrying Jugoplastika schoolbags, played with Jugoplastika dolls, and wore Adidas sneakers manufactured by Jugoplastika. When in their Renault 4s or VW Golfs, Yugoslavs would drive in the car assembled from dozens of plastic parts manufactured in the factory located in Brodarica, a part of Split. At that time Jugoplastika manufactured all kinds of products, even ships. (Pavičić 2012: 82)

⁶ In the early 1950s synthetic materials “had that something that was exotic, that something that smelled of the West and had the aroma of modernization, if not of Western decadence” (Pavičić 2012: 81).

⁷ “Jugoplastika rubber sandals” is the only lexical entry in the *Lexicon of YU mythology* (2004). It says that “[w]henever the family went to the sea, parents would buy Jugoplastika rubber beach sandals. [...] All the children on the beach wore them, so you could easily mistake your pair for somebody else’s. Whoever had transparent sandals was the king of the beach” (Adrić et al. 2004: 177).

“Natural” was not particularly popular at the time, with vinyl much better suiting the needs of designers who wanted to meet the needs of the consumer groups that had been neglected until then – young people, lower class, everyone who didn’t spend a lot on fashion. A reflection of this new love for polyvinyl in socialist societies became evident from their desire for raincoats (*šuškvavci*). Vinyl allowed the colours to keep their properties and could withstand all fabric printing techniques excellently, turning the world of the 1960s into a colourful and joyful place, or at least so it seemed at first glance. (Slapšak 2010)

Although we cannot accept the claim that deficient socialist (plastics) industry brought about “the reasons for the ultimate collapse” of socialism (Stokes 2000: 76), we agree that the abundance of cheap and durable plastic handy products, accessories, clothing and footwear, was crucial for a sense of wealth of the poor, as is still the case today thanks to all the cheap products made in China. If production and consumption, industry and tourism went hand-in-hand in Split as an important Mediterranean city, its current de-industrialized urban zones are becoming the epitome of consumerism where all that happens is “about consumer *rites* – about the making of citizen-consumers” (Berdahl 2005: 235). In the main building of the former factory that once produced sneakers, tracksuits and jackets, a shopping mall called Joker is located today, “where they sell jackets, sneakers and tracksuits sewn by some other proletarian working mothers from Turkey, Thailand, Bangladesh, southern China” (Pavičić 2012: 84). As opposed to the previous practices of participation in the public life saturated by political discourses and manifestations that concern “the moral and imperative dimensions of membership which define the meanings and practices of belonging in society”, contemporary pseudo-public places more or less function as “instrument[s] of social stratification” (Berdahl 2005: 236). Although Joker has become a substitute “living room” for the citizens of Split, the majority of visitors – unemployed people, youngsters and pensioners in particular – are rather excluded from this mall of desired prosperity as “inadequate consumers”. This neoliberal principle of an “exclusive inclusion” is the source of depression, frustration and tension in the second largest Croatian city.

Regardless of real employment data, a “new woman” – created by revolutionary ideals, state feminism and American movies (cf. Jambrešić Kirin 2012) – was crucial for promoting urbanization, industrialization and consumption in the socialist Yugoslavia on the shortest path from penury to middle income welfare state. If we could judge by the

recollections of Jugoplastika's former female workers, self-understanding of their emancipation and personal empowerment owes much more to regular wages and possibilities of crediting than to their (modest) participation in the political life or in the self-management of the factory. Although memories of building their family wellbeing, of consumption, of opportunities for educating children and travelling abroad, and of their pride because of the factory's market success prevail in the ethnographic material, our aim is to leave the "nostalgic turn" aside and instead to analyse the women's combined experiences as workers, consumers and citizens.

If a prosperous plastics industry in the East (in the GDR and SFRY) was a metaphor for "confidence, pride and progressivism" (Stokes 2000: 72) or for "creativity, efficiency and branding" (Katić Jovanović 2011/2012), its transitional fate represents its very antithesis; it becomes a symbol of backwardness, uncompetitiveness, ecological hazard and architectural ugliness, which deserves to be blown up with dynamite. In 2003 the company's plants were pulled down to be replaced by apartments as a part of a housing incentive scheme. A hotel and a shopping mall were also built on the foundations of the old production plant.⁸ The demolition of a factory in a Split neighbourhood which was the symbol of a new socialist town directly and vividly shows the transition from a self-sustainable production society into a consumer one in debt, with completely new value regimes.⁹ Replacing a production plant, which guaranteed growth and development of the urban community and the whole region, with a shopping and entertainment centre of mass consumption (Joker) does not only represent a replacement of one socio-economic constellation by another, but is at the same time the end of the age of gender emancipation achieved through work accomplishments and the value of work, now replaced by the age of "gender mainstreaming", as well as massive unemployment of women, followed by ambivalently complementary discourses of re-patriarchization

⁸ "The demolition of Jugoplastika's production plant and its identity as well as a forcible transformation of the same location into apartment-hotel-sales facilities reflects a juxtaposition and change of the two social realities: a closed massive plant characteristic of the socialist period undergoes a complete transformation and its location is changed into apartments, a shopping mall and a hotel complex with a glass facade which entirely erases the recognisable identity of the location and gives it an open, accessible and 'transparent' character fit for the contemporary consumerist society." (Perišić 2013)

⁹ Dora Sapunar writes that the demolition of Jugoplastika cannot be identified with the demolition of the American apartment block Pruitt-Igoe in 1972, since in the case of Split it was not about non-viability of the modernist idea of progress but about the end of "the utopia of security and public good" (Sapunar 2013).



Photo 1. Women at work (*Trideset godina rada i rasta* 1982)

and consumerism, re-christianisation and sexism (cf. Jalušić 1999; Kašić 2011; Milat 2011). Since women comprised two thirds of the workforce in all Jugoplastika plants, the story of one feminised multi-plant factory is a story of the greatest losses of the transition economy – former workers who are not visible or referential in the public and media space of Split, as opposed to the female characters on advertising panels of the Joker shopping mall (as well as in other shopping malls, abundant in Croatia).¹⁰

¹⁰ Just like the values of individualism replaced collective values, a headline story about a town patriarch and his wives and sons replaced a thousand of life stories of Jugoplastika's female workers, stories which were exchanged daily in the factory canteens, on the buses, sports grounds, excursions, etc.

JUGOPLASTIKA – “A BRAND FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY”

Established in 1952, during, as stated in the brochure published on the occasion of the company's 30th anniversary, the spirited postwar 1950s, when the country's war-ravished economy needed new foundations for economic development, Jugoplastika left a big mark in the economic development of the town of Split and its surroundings (see Blagaić 2012) over the following forty years. Its activity most dramatically changed the structure of the economy: an increase in the number of the employed in the production sector as well as changes in the gender structure of the employed. Jugoplastika was a multi-plant complex organisation of associated labour (*kombinat*), which employed 25% of the total number of employed citizens of Split, while 80% of that number were women.¹¹ The factory itself was located in Split, with smaller production plants in other parts of Dalmatia,¹² and a sales network in the whole of former Yugoslavia. The significance of Jugoplastika as an industrial, social and emancipation heritage of Split has been assessed in recent years through performative and exhibitiv actions of the cultural Association for Culture and Visual Arts (OUR).¹³ Indicatively named after the smallest organisational unit of the former factory, and the basic unit of the socialist self-managing structure, this association initiated the collection of documents, artefacts and personal recollections connected with the Jugoplastika's production and sales through a provocative socially-engaged artistic activity:

The exhibition enabled anyone in whose life Jugoplastika played a role to express their opinion in conversation with both the curators and the other members of the community as well as by bringing artefacts, fragments of memories that had, until then, had no place other than in the basements of those families. The younger generation was given an opportunity to get

¹¹ “These women were not only seamstresses and workers operating machines, but also female designers, economists, marketing and distribution experts.” (Katić Jovanović 2013)

¹² The *kombinat* Jugoplastika consisted of four factories, manufacturing fancy goods, garments, footwear and thermoplastics. In addition to Split, the plants were located in Zadar, Benkovac, Makarska, Dubrovnik, Muć, Vis, Stari Grad on the Island of Hvar and Grohote on the Island of Šolta.

¹³ OUR (i.e. Organisation of Associated Labour) – organised a program entitled “Work ground (...with transformation through deconstruction)” in the Galić showroom, in Brodarica and in Kinoteka Zlatna vrata, in the period from 22 November to 5 December 2011. Its authors were Alemka Đivoje, Dalibor Prančević and Robertina Tomić. The exhibition was accompanied by discussions, lectures and performances. The three authors were awarded the annual “Jure Kaštelan” award for art by the local newspaper *Slobodna Dalmacija*.

to know an important part of their heritage for the first time, even if that heritage is almost invisible in today's Split. (Sapunar 2013)

In November 2012, OUR continued with its art for social change¹⁴ and organized several activities across the city on the occasion of Jugoplastika's 60th anniversary under the motto *support the memory*. "Giving" support, judging by its enthusiastic public response (visitors, critics, media), was entirely successful, achieving the goal of starting a broader social dialogue among former male and female workers, associations, city authorities and critics of the transitional model of "scorched earth" (Kranjčević Batalić 2011; Parić 2012). It appears that this curatorial activity served as a successful "platform to initiate similar future projects which will explore the problematic treatment of (industrial) heritage" (Perišić 2013), and try to save the other large socialist factories (such as Koteks, also in Split) from a similar fate. On the other hand, massive exchange of recollections about Jugoplastika in the new media and collection of memorabilia support Pierre Nora's claim about the emergence and sacralisation of places of recollections once the object of recollection is gone. This is also a local reflection of a global phenomenon: the transformation of spaces and objects of de-industrialisation – abandoned factories, mines and plants – into spaces of new creative industry, independent cultural projects and NGO initiatives, revealing complex connections between culture and economy in late capitalism (cf. Matošević 2011; Potkonjak and Pletenac 2011).

What is it that Jugoplastika symbolises and what is it that its former workers nostalgically regret that has become a topic and an object of analysis for their children in these actions?¹⁵ It is not only a matter of longing for the period of security, stability, prosperity, and sociability, or for a meaningful and dignified life; it is a matter of identifying with the success of a factory whose products were marketed on the Yugoslav and foreign markets,¹⁶ as well as about the feeling of pride in the steady growth

¹⁴ The website <http://www.artforsocialchange.net/projects.html>, dedicated to social art projects, describes the basic idea: "In those areas of the world where people need help, we assist them to tell their stories to the world in compelling, informative and engaging ways through art, (cross-)media productions and interactivity" (accessed 10 January 2013).

¹⁵ This is particularly important in the city "where too often the pre-modern, peasant-fishermen past of Tijardović, Uvodić and Smoje claims to have the monopoly on nostalgia" (Pavičić 2012: 84). Ivo Tijardović, Marko Uvodić and Miljenko Smoje were popular local artists who used Split in their work, often humoristically.

¹⁶ By 1976 Jugoplastika had developed a network of 180 shops all over Yugoslavia and two department stores – in Belgrade and Split. Moreover, as early as 1970 the company also focused

of the company, and the empowering competence of its male and female workers who enhanced the productivity and designer recognisability of the company. As the curators conclude, it is primarily about “nostalgia for our own production, for the time when we shaped our space ourselves as well as our everyday life” (Katić Jovanović 2011/12). Recollections of Jugoplastika and the discussions about its economic importance and symbolic capital are therefore carried out on the level of juxtaposing political economies of socialism and capitalism,¹⁷ as well as on the level of juxtaposing their gender policies. The socialist legal framework offered Dalmatian women emancipation, economic independence and security. This kind of “employment policy”, in a traditionally patriarchal society in Dalmatia, “contributed far more to the emancipation of women than the usual rhetoric of feminism and gender equality” (Katić Jovanović 2011/12),¹⁸ and had a marked influence on women from rural areas. In addition to being formally employed for the first time in the Jugoplastika plants, after a number of years of service women were entitled to a family flat, and could take out loans relatively easily. Until 1982, flats were allocated to around 1400 workers of the company, i.e. to every eight worker, and since women prevailed among the work force, they were the ones who secured homes for their families through their work. Regular income and creditworthiness changed consumer habits as well, primarily towards furnishing homes and later, acquiring a car and spending on hobbies and holidays.¹⁹ An incentive for the organised use of free time and the offer of associated products was also thought out by the company management. Organised holidays for workers were considered to be a “prerequisite for the revitalisation of the psychological and physical state of the people”

on the foreign market (European and non-European): the USSR, West Germany, Italy, Belgium, Switzerland, Bulgaria, as well as Iraq, Iran and Algeria.

¹⁷ Curators carried out a semantic analysis of the collected recollections, big and small stories associated with Jugoplastika in the old days and today singling out two parallel sets of juxtaposed concepts: the first set – *our community, the heart of the collective (team), a worker, normal work, a collective (team), our industry, successful, our, a woman in a collective (team)* – points to the value of the community and fellowship, solidarity and normality, while concepts such as: *cumbersome, managers, collapse, company recovery, losses, fall, zero, nil*, point to the feeling of loss, defeat and hopelessness (cf. Perišić 2013).

¹⁸ In this quote Katić Jovanović refers to the socialist rhetoric typical for agitation by the Anti-Fascist Front of Women (1941–1953). The merit of the socialist legal framework was that the employment of women has been encouraged by socialist planned economy.

¹⁹ As in the other socialist countries, “as time went on, the population started to see formerly ‘luxury’ goods such as refrigerators, washing machines, televisions, and cars as necessities” (McLellan 2010: 49).

(*Trideset godina...* 1982: 4), and as a part of factory activities, art and sports groups were organised.²⁰ The success of establishing a female football club in 1972 was of special importance, as was the holiday resort for workers on the nearby island of Šolta, which was a place where workers from the whole of former Yugoslavia came together.

After the collapse of Yugoslavia in 1991, the company Diokom was established as the successor of Jugoplastika. In 1994, the plant on the island of Šolta was privatised. Today, the plant in Grohote on Šolta employs 22 people, mostly women. The production focuses primarily on boat fenders. In dilapidated factory workshops, where parts of the ceiling damaged by moisture literally hang above the heads of the employees, with no heating in winter, the employees still recall the factory's former successes. The workers are proud of today's factory, too; they tell us it is one of just six factories in the world that produces boat fenders. They are very busy and still work in shifts. The company exports to Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa, which encourages optimism among the employees. They hope the company will grow, provide employment for the people on the island and once again boost the island's economy (cf. Blagaić 2012).

THE WORK OF INDUSTRIAL FEMALE WORKERS – ETHNOGRAPHIC INSIGHTS

The ethnographic research we conducted among the women of Split and Šolta who used to work at Jugoplastika, and among those who still work at the plastic production plant on Šolta (that was privatised in the meantime) has provided some valuable insight into the changes brought about by industrialization. During the period of 2011–2013 we conducted semi-structured interviews with over a dozen women in Split and Šolta, some of whom later worked in Split, and with several male workers. Most of them had not worked anywhere else but in Jugoplastika's plants, which shaped both their everyday life and their retirement days, insuring their regular income. The family situations of women were different: most women

²⁰ "Competing in workers' sports games, organised and programmed physical exercises, swimming, using a trim-track, special breaks during working hours for special exercises- these are all permanent forms of recreation and entertainment which make it possible for the performance curve of our workers to increase steadily." (*Trideset godina...* 1982: 33)

we talked to were married, but we also talked to single women, with or without children. Changes have been especially dramatic for the island women, taking into consideration their way of life and their economic context until they started working. Their recollections of factory work illustrate, more clearly than in the urban Split environment, all the changes brought about by industrialization and modernization.²¹ The plastic factory on Šolta was founded in 1959, and it became an integral part of the Split Jugoplastika in 1963. At its peak, in the period between 1985 and 1990, the Šolta plant employed over 200 workers, or more than 60% of all the employed on the island. It was again women who made up the majority of the employees. One of the male workers explains this tongue-in-cheek by saying that “mothers were afraid to let their little girls leave the house, and besides, a lot of men were fishermen or sailors” (Blagaić IEF rkp 1997). Despite inadequate working conditions²² and outdated technology,²³ women carried out their tasks with enthusiasm, as they said, and the fact that they had a steady monthly income was the most important of all. A modest salary was not a guarantee of economic independence but it was a foundation of their emancipation, since it enabled women to be more active

²¹ We would like to emphasize that we are referring here to working women – they did make the majority of workers at the Jugoplastika’s island plant, but they weren’t the majority in the entire island’s women population. The majority of island women still lived within the “traditional” patriarchal framework, and it would be necessary to see what actual changes happened to them during the industrialization and modernization period, and also in the recent transition economy period. Lynette Šikić-Mićanović conducted a similar case study in the rural areas of Slavonia, and with very interesting findings. She explored “some indicators of traditionalism (patterns of residence, levels of education, attitudes to women’s employment) showing that gendered values and attitudes in these rural areas were and continue to be deeply rooted in tradition” (Šikić-Mićanović 2012: 167).

²² The fact that former female workers did not complain much about the harsh working conditions could possibly be explained by an optimism of memory and technological modernisation in the new production plant in Grohote (built in 1963). However, the ethnologist Marija Borovičkić spoke with the oldest generation of former female workers in the sardine factory in Vela Luka on the island of Korčula who remembered and vividly described the inhuman working conditions at the beginning of the 1950’s. The accounts of female workers relating harsh working conditions in the fish factory are reminiscent of Dickens’ novels or the conditions in in sweatshops today. They depict hard labour of thirteen-year old girls, labour in multiple shifts or at the weekends, frequent injuries and unsatisfying working conditions without scheduled lunch breaks, unpaid maternity leave extended to three months or more, etc: “I wouldn’t come home for three days. I would be lying on the crates, would lie there for two-three hours waiting for the press machines to cool down so that we could clean them. Everyone working in the ice-storage would have bloody fingers. [...] Eight hours, wet all the time. [...] No boots but merely tennis shoes...” (Borovičkić 2011).

²³ The lack of basic infrastructure on the island made work difficult: women, for example, carried the water needed in the production from village wells. They would carry it on their heads, putting a small pillow between the head and the canister.

in choosing a spouse and a place to live and thus, over time, break free from the constraints of the patriarchal family. By carrying water on their heads, women used traditional knowledge and skills, thus participating in creating the preconditions for the industrialisation of the island. They also introduced their traditional skills, abilities and aesthetic views into their work on the assembly line, when making plastic lace and later sewing clothes for dolls. The narratives of the island women testify to a substantial influence that a job at the plant had on the dynamics of everyday duties. Work was organised in three shifts and often included the weekends, which made it difficult for married women among them to juggle their job and the family. The new job and the accompanying salary changed their lives significantly. Until that time, they had worked at home and in the fields, and occasionally earned wages by doing various manual jobs, such as collecting firewood for burning limestone or taking cases of fish on their heads to the market place, on foot, to the villages that were sometimes as far as nine kilometres away. Their wages were lower than the men's, and they often did the toughest jobs. It was the women, for instance, that carried the cases of hot lime on their heads from the lime kilns, through karst terrain, to the place where the boat would be waiting. They would get into it over a board held onto the side of the boat. Sometimes, when the lime was too heavy and the sea rough, they would lose balance and would fall into the sea. Women shape the recollections of these difficult work experiences with possibly tragic consequences into anecdotes with a bitter smile, stressing that, when things like this happened, men regretted the lost lime more than they felt sorry for them falling into the sea. Women worked even when they were heavily pregnant. One of the informants tells us how she used the money earned by collecting and carrying the firewood for the lime kilns to buy herself a coat, the first she had ever had. At Jugoplastika, women rarely did the most difficult jobs. They mostly worked in the final phases of the production and in administration. There are cases when both a wife and a husband worked at the factory, and sometimes up to four members of the extended family. With Jugoplastika granting home loans, significant changes took place in the housing circumstances of the islanders. Employment at the plant, as demonstrated by the recollections, fundamentally changed the everyday lives of the island women, gender relations within the families, the living standard and the way women perceived their own abilities. Their narratives reveal a selective view and evaluation of their lives in socialism; a lack of reflection on their own ideological position within the local and national context, a nostalgic look back at the economic empowerment

they experienced, and a pride in the skill with which they performed their working tasks. These experiences contrast with those from the period of dependence on the island's traditional occupations (agriculture, fishing, lime production), as well as with the recent focus on natural resources and tourism based on presenting the traditional way of life.

The research of industrial plants on the island of Iž in the second half of the 20th century and on the island of Dugi otok at the beginning of the 20th century testifies to the effect that employment had on social security and emancipation of the island girls. In her study of three generations of women living on the island of Dugi otok from 1918 until today, the historian Tereza Ganza-Aras concluded that women's duties and responsibilities increased as the society developed: "technological innovations have made work less physically strenuous, [women] have an opportunity to be educated, they are in principle equal to the men, and because of the dissolution of large family households they are now in charge of their immediate families" (Ganza-Aras 2002: 106). Ganza-Aras provides a description of a typical island woman: "an island woman is disciplined, restrained in her analysis of her position, tending to make it look better than it is; it is difficult to determine to what extent her satisfaction with her life is the result of a self-protection instinct, and to what extent it is the result of tradition and her upbringing" (ibid.). While this description should be viewed critically due to its generalizations, it is a good example of the metanarratives about women. Unlike most other authors in the collection, and partly in contrast to the most common generalizations, Ganza-Aras does not see the woman as a guardian of the traditional way of life: "she quickly took an opportunity to continue her education, get a job, settle in the town, showing a true willingness to adapt to new situations" (ibid.: 107).

And yet, when they recall their lives in the socialist era, the women do not see themselves as victims because of their "double" or, rather, "triple burden". This point of view emerges when they refer to their role in the pre-industrial ways of earning a living. The opportunity to have a life outside the family circle and traditional patriarchal relations,²⁴ together with at least partial financial independence and creditworthiness, had a significant impact on the self-empowerment of these women. This has shaped their

²⁴ "Those women started to live back then. [...] That's why they all miss the times when they had eight hours for themselves; you would work, but you had eight hours for yourself. You could chat a little and have coffee, laugh, tell a story to a colleague... you could dress, comb your hair and put on some make up... and those are the basics." (Blagaić IEF rkp 2037)

memories of socialism; their narratives are utterly devoid of any ideological convictions. This kind of pride is lacking from the testimonies of the former workers of Šolta's Jugoplastika about their present jobs and roles in, for the most part, tourism-related activities that they have today. The heritage of working in industry and the visibility of that work in the context much broader than that of the island where they live seemed to have lifted the burden of islandness.²⁵

FROM DISCIPLINED WOMEN WORKERS TO DISCIPLINED CONSUMERS

The socialist legal framework enabled the economic and socio-political equality of women, which changed their centuries-long subordinate position in the family and the society. The legally guaranteed equality of women, modelled on the 1936 USSR Constitution, included the right to vote, the right to education, employment and equal price of labour, the right to a civil marriage, divorce and equal inheritance rights. In addition to health-care, social protection and organized child care, these rights contributed significantly to women's economic independence and their self-empowerment. They brought most benefits to the educated and employed women but, in the long run, they also changed the social fabric of entire communities and enabled a considerable horizontal and vertical mobility of women.²⁶ Looking comparatively, contemporary social

²⁵ The idea of islandness allows for most various conceptualizations, being a part of numerous metaphysical, literary, geographic, economic, social and anthropological discussions. "The notion of the edge is central to constructions of islandness, and islanders are more aware of and more confronted by the fact of boundaries than are most peoples – and the smaller the island the more this is so" (Hay 2006: 21). It is clear that this edge is the coastline, which is most often defined as the constraining natural border.

²⁶ Although large-scale, the employment of Yugoslav women during the first post-war decade matched the figures from the 1930s: women made 25% of all employed population, working mostly as manual workers in the industry and agriculture. During the crisis years of the 1950s the number of employed women even decreased. On the other hand, the number of women in the manufacturing industry grew and by the 1960s women started getting jobs in administration and service trades. By the 1970s the labour market saw more and more academically trained women who managed to occupy positions they well deserved, but the largest number of women still worked in "feminized professions" (social services, health care, textile, education, trade, tourism) marked by low salaries and limited career opportunities. In the 1980s the share of employed women on the labour market peaked, reaching 35.5% (cf. Ramet 1999: 98).

inequalities and gender-based differentials of power, status and income,²⁷ have been increasing in such a way that they are waiting for a new “cultural turn in the humanities”²⁸ or a new feminist intervention.²⁹

What still remains unresolved is the question to what extent these radical changes in the position of women were “causally linked to the process of modernization initiated by the communists in undeveloped agrarian countries” (Sklevicky 1996: 134), and to what extent can those be attributed to the communist policy of gender egalitarianism.³⁰ Just as the process of modernization and urbanization could not take place without a serious subversion of the patriarchal settings, the consolidation of the autocratic, one-party system of government with the charismatic presidential “father figure” was not possible without ritual elements and symbolic forms of power transfer typical for patriarchal culture and paternalistic-clientelistic relations it nurtures. Milovan Đilas, the first Yugoslav dissident of the highest rank, criticized the communist “new class”, the “partisan jet set” for its clique mentality which “carefully guards its borders from undesirable people” (cf. Erdei 2012: 39). In line with his misogynistic remarks, Đilas claimed that women were “much more brutal in defining and guarding borders of this new class” (ibid.). However, as early as the mid 1950s, the rivalry between the two collectivist projects – patriarchal and communist – that, in its own way, formed, disciplined, socialized and used the female workforce and reproductive ability for

²⁷ There are numerous cultural, racial, political, and legal factors that influence women’s lack of property and specific patterns of women’s ownership and disenfranchisement connected with the global prevalence of patrilineal inheritance customs. According to UNIFEM, women own less than two percent of all property worldwide. In many countries, less than 10% of women hold title to their land, which limits their access to resources and credits. Development-related problems across the globe have been increasingly linked to women’s lack of property and inheritance rights, especially with regards to land and property ownership, encompassing areas such as low levels of education, hunger, and poor health (cf. Deere and Doss 2008; http://www.unifem.org/partnerships/climate_change/facts_figures.html; accessed 15 May 2013).

²⁸ As stated in the call for the workshop “History, Consumption & Inequalities” (Cambridge, 6 June 2013) organized by the Research Network on Inequality, Social Science & History.

²⁹ Since women are mostly employed in the public sector, deindustrialization, deregulation, privatization and cuts in the social sector directly threaten their acquired rights and chances for dignified aging: “Speaking from the left-feminist position, public sector cuts mean several things: depreciation of material rights that women have acquired when entering the labour market, a crisis of social reproduction, the reproduction of classes, household financial burden, and empowerment of patriarchy” (Čakardić 2012: 46–7).

³⁰ For example, the fact that the number of employed Czech women is still among the highest in Europe owes much more to the complete industrialization of the country in the late 19th and early 20th century, accompanied by the public education for women, than to communist politics of non-discriminatory employment (cf. Marksov-Tominova 2005).

the paternal, i.e. national and common good, found a mutual interest in reinstating the discourses of femininity and domesticity. It was a prelude to the state-enabled consumer practices of “market socialism”, but also cause for dissatisfaction with the growing social disparity.

The communist project started as a revolutionary war that transformed social relations in the name of socialist and gender equality,³¹ but the establishment of autocratic and paternalistic power structure put women into a subordinate position. Their paradoxical position as breadwinners and “the slave of the family” was an obvious “symptom of socialist contradictions” (Milić 2012: 43). Yugoslav women lived in two worlds: in the morning at work and at other forms of self-management public activities, and in the evening in the private family world of the “bourgeois idyll” (ibid.). The incomplete transformation of social and gender relations together with the economic contradictions and openness for Western cultural influences (Senjković 2008: 47–91; Kolanović 2011: 72–80), contributed to the exhaustion of the revolutionary morale, which implied a strong moral association between individuals and the obligation of the state towards its workers. The Yugoslav third way of socialist development “at the cross-section of capitalism and socialism” (Kirn 2010: 257) represents a specific juncture of the Foucauldian *technologies of production*, *technologies of signs* and *technologies of power*. Although most scholars point to the last two when analyzing the cultural and ideological mixture of discourses, tendencies and practices in the everyday life of the Yugoslav people, there are important arguments for the thesis that Yugoslav self-management could be interpreted as a prototype of Post-Fordism:

Specific to the Yugoslav development was precisely its formation that was bordering on different types of economies, at the cross-section of capitalism and socialism. *In concreto*, post-Fordist characteristics can be found in the 1965 market reforms, which attempted to respond to the crisis of the “productivist” model. These reforms stressed the role of technocrats (managers) as leaders of the production process, innovation and knowledge in the industry (later reform of educational system), the role of “participation” within the socialist enterprises and “politicisation” of all social spheres. (Kirn 2010: 258–59)³²

³¹ “Like the revolution itself, anti-patriarchal revolution was stopped when it was clear that it was leading to either reified emancipation or women’s liberation unmatched in history, which no one could any longer control.” (Katunarić 1984: 217)

³² “The synthesis of plan and market caused a new equilibrium. The constant struggle of the ruling class engendered the over-politicisation and *self-managementisation* of the society. Reforms

Complex historical circumstances where the focus changed to personal initiative, personal responsibility and *self-management*, required the women to follow a gradual transformation of repressive and coercive measures into practices of self-disciplining, self-criticism and self-correction (Foucault's *technologies of self*). It means that the communist "daughters of our peoples" had to comply with a new vocabulary of loyalty, competence, excellence and normative desires, but also that they had to effect "a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct and way of being, so as to transform themselves" (Foucault 1988: 18) in accordance with the new feminine ideal:

While the former Amazon/Partisan wishes in peacetime to be well dressed in public, she has also to be reminded that in private, at home, she is expected to conduct her domestic duties as if the Revolution never took place. The morning after, the new body politic already showed serious sings of re-establishing patriarchy. (Pejić 2010: 101)

Despite Tito's speeches against the traditional division of domestic labour, the new Yugoslav woman was expected to "hold up three corners of the house", to educate herself, to work full time and volunteer the rest of the day, to educate a new generation in a collectivist spirit and adapt to "rational consumerism" and socialist leisure culture. According to ethnographic resources (cf. Blagaić 2011: IEF rkp 1997, IEF rkp 2037), women enthusiastically supported the socialist ideological and working agenda within the public sphere, but within the family sphere they had difficulties in negotiating between their patriarchal and non-discriminatory roles. Soon, a woman, who was mostly addressed as "comradess" since the Revolution, was faced with many contradictory demands – "to behave nicely and encourages men to extraordinary deeds" (Jambrešić Kirin 2012: 183), to "promote novelty, liberalization and openness" (Tivadar and Vezovnik 2010: 387), to inform on her comrades who were "not on the political line", to be a docile housewife who "dress[ed] well and... clean[ed] her home... quickly" and to be the incarnation of "beauty, joy, and diversity" (Vida Tomšič 1955, quoted after Pejić 2010: 97). This ambiguous process of women's subjection and subjectivation was in line with the new/old proletarian morale, which was sceptical about "women [being made] to be

produced the opposite of what party functionaries wanted: rather than enthusiastic workers, expert technocrats ruled in the economy and professional functionaries in politics." (Kirn 2010: 291)

in politics” although they were appreciated as very “useful to politicians” (Malešević 2007: 72). This shift of revolutionary rhetoric, symbols and values into a more mundane social imaginary of the “communism with a human/woman’s face” was not peculiar to the Yugoslav socialism (cf. Ramet 1999). More generally, since the 1950s, “the eastern and western blocs carried out the Cold War over consumer issues such as which side could provide the best domestic appliances and styles in furniture, dishware, and household decoration” (Smith 2012: 2; cf. Erdei 2012: 53–60).

This specific historical conjuncture has brought about a new flexible personality that “activated itself in the direction of something ‘not-yet-realised’” (ibid.) but whose “points of failure” or “constitutive rupture” ought to be filled out by the new register of (commodity) aspirations and desires. The turn from the world of production to the world of consumption was decisive for women’s unfinished political subjectivation. It was accompanied by the political pasivization of women and their sexualisation in the public sphere. The political pasivization of women,³³ a phenomenon recognized and interpreted by feminist sociologists, historians and anthropologists (cf. Despot 2004: 137–202; Malešević 2007: 41–88; Milić 2012; Papić 2012: 67–287; Sklevicky 1996; Slapšak 2001: 206–210), has been overlooked by insightful leftist theoreticians such as Gal Kirn who recognized “the youngsters and the unemployed” as the single target of “the most blatant case of political and economic exclusion” in the Yugoslav society (2010: 291).³⁴ As Lydia Sklevicky noticed, only a “dialectic confrontation and historical comparison of men and women in different historical periods will lead to a more complex understanding of the flaws in the socialist system” (1996: 14). One of these “dialectical analyses” is offered by Miroslava Malešević (2007: 41–72) who describes ritual, ideological and performative changes in urban and rural practices of celebrating the International Women’s Day (8 March) in the socialist

³³ It is a rather uneasy feeling that most female politicians and intellectuals, whether freely or by force (as in the case of women political prisoners who were deprived of freedom and their civil rights), agreed to the political marginalization in the name of social security. On the other hand, as the philosopher Blaženka Despot points out, the nomenclature encouraged a lack of solidarity among intellectuals and women workers: “Patriarchal structure of the society can be traced to the attempt to deny the rights of women [...] coming to reason of women intellectuals is spoken against as bourgeois, while the dissatisfaction of women workers with their role in the social division of labour is often manipulated with, and directed towards women intellectuals” (2004: 82).

³⁴ “It was only through collective struggles by students and workers (1970s and 1980s) that self-management politics emerged. The ones that were not counted made themselves heard and seen in mass strikes and occupation of universities.” (Kirn 2010: 291)

Yugoslavia. The history of this workers' holiday – starting as a political protest for women's rights and ending up as a celebration of socialist consumerism and leisure practices on behalf of female colleagues, wives and mothers – is the best indicator of the ungrateful fate of emancipation processes in the country.

Rapid development of light industry and the production of domestic appliances and consumer goods, accompanied by the development of the advertising industry, pulled more women into the workforce, simultaneously influencing how the “new woman” constituted herself as an embodied subject in a context full of contradictory social demands and ideological messages. Socialist magazines, newspapers, literature, films, and comic books were the main scene of intense debates about a desirable socialist lifestyle and an ideal socialist way of life. The Soviet-like tough proletarian woman in a work uniform soon lost its credibility, and the habit of former female partisans to wear side caps (the so-called *titovka*) and war medals at the workplace disappeared; elegantly dressed and sexually attractive women took over the women's press and popular culture as early as the mid 1950s. It has to be noted that the proliferation and profiling of women's magazines in Croatia started as early as the mid-1940s. In addition to *Žena u Borbi* (Woman in the Struggle, 1936–1953; 1953–1989 as *Žena*), the official publication of the Croatian Anti-Fascist Front of Women, we find *Modni list* (Fashion Paper, 1945–1946) and *Naša moda* (Our Fashion, 1946–1950) as well as the most popular *Svijet* (World, 1953–). It is hard to believe today that the same circle of female activists and journalists who, judging by the archival sources, feared party criticism because of a lack of a “dialectical and materialistic worldview” managed to launch an extremely apolitical and conformist journal such as *Naša moda*. Whereas *Žena u borbi* ran headlines about the suffering of women in Greek prisons and camps and the hard life of female peasants and workers in India, China and Korea, *Naša moda* zealously kept track of the fashion novelties from Paris, London, Geneva and Moscow, and gave practical advice on how to sew garments for different occasions and times of day or make swimsuits, along with culinary and cosmetic tips, gymnastic exercises and ads by the remaining private craftsmen from Zagreb. As Gordana Stojaković (2012) also confirmed in her analysis of the Anti-Fascist Front of Women magazines in Serbia and Vojvodina, the intended public of those very different journals was not at all the same.

In addition to being formed by movies, the tastes of male and female citizens were formed by women's magazines, which offered desirable images

of material abundance in a period that still glorified production and did not care much about the design and quality of products, i.e. their distribution, promotion and “rational consumption”. As early as the end of the 1950s, Zagreb became the Yugoslav hub of fashion, modern industrial design, architecture and trade-fair business open to the world. The transition from general poverty to relative prosperity, from social realist indoctrination to the seductive world of commercials, was accompanied by the depolitization and passivization of women, the degradation and commodification of their symbolic representations: the allegory of revolution and Muhin’s female proletarian became the girl from the ad for Savica engines, Perion laundry detergent or Zvijezda refined edible oil.

The discourses of modernity, prospect, mass education, functionality, moderation and rationality articulated issues around women’s wishes, desires and concerns, widening the area of their (ideological) subjection and (personal) subjectivation. Practical courses in cooking, child-care, housekeeping and dress making were organized and advertised by party members in order to modernize socialist houses and farms, but also in order to “encourag[e] and invit[e] housewives to accept the cultural and political ideas of collectivism and modernisation” (Tivadar and Vezovnik 2010: 385). Making women skilled meant “making them accessible to everyone and therefore, serving the public interests” (ibid.). Despite the propaganda about the modern household that would make home life “organized, clean and easy”, the gradual introduction of new electric devices did not save the housewife’s time. The fact was that devices to spend time (radios, turntables and TV-sets) spread faster than devices to save time (refrigerators, electric stoves, washing machines) so that during the 1960s owning a TV-set was still more important and more common in Yugoslav homes than owning any other electronic device (Duda 2010: 197). On 4 July 1973, the Day of the Partisan Uprising (which was a national holiday), the *VUS* newspaper ran the story of Eleonora Sirotić, an “outstanding worker in the kitchen” who should get a manager’s salary. Her conclusion was the same as those formulated by American feminists about the same time:

Yes, washing machine frees me from doing the most difficult jobs... But I use the time I save thanks to the use of the washing machine to iron. Household appliances free housewives of some effort... but the time that is needed to do each of these operations has remained largely the same. (cf. Duda 2010: 201)

Looking at the long list of skills and talents related to the modern socialist

womanhood – i.e. the woman as a diligent and responsible worker, a thrifty housewife, a rational consumer and a devoted mother – we can now better understand how ordinary citizens could manage to survive the ruptures, shortages and scarcity underlying the Yugoslav macroeconomic shifts and upheavals. Despite modest wages, low purchasing power, periodic shortages and shocks that the Yugoslav economy shared with the other socialist countries, women's economic independence and their urge to improve the quality of everyday life contributed significantly to the economic boom and the development of a consumer oriented lifestyle “which openly blended Western styles and socialist values” (cf. Massino 2012; Senjković 2008). On the other hand, women were the main absorbers of side-effects of both, consumer mentality and backwardness, as the two main social features of the Yugoslav society in the 1960s and 1970s (Duda 2010: 35).

Concurrently with the political demise of genuine women's initiatives represented by the Antifascist's Front of Women grassroots organizations and a possible feminist critique of “gender and sexual exploitation of women and psychological aspects of it” (Milić 2012: 41), women were drawn into the commodity economy not only as consumers: they were also “consumed” as sex objects, movie stars, secretaries, wives, super-mothers (Ehrlich 1977: 18). The socialist popular and consumer culture flirted with (naked) women bodies, beautiful figures and faces (cf. Jambrešić Kirin 2012; Pejić 2010; Žikić 2011). By putting the emphasis on the reproductive, educational and aesthetic aspects of their lives, women were urged to help shape “a new, culture, which would be characteristically ours” and, at the same time, once again in the history of the 20th century, to start from “decorating and furnishing homes” and buying clothes according to their “taste, needs and possibilities” (cf. Jambrešić Kirin 2012). They were implicitly told to realize their desire for happiness and a better future in the place where they had relative power and control: in their homes and through their own body, whose (auto)eroticism, utility and political functionality they were about to become aware of in the following decades.

Despite the “double burden” that the ordinary Croatian and Yugoslav employed woman had to cope with during the 1960s and 1970s, the quality of life was much improved in comparison with the early post-war years. However, with the termination of public works and solidarity actions, as well as with the ousting of heroic work, working successes and working conditions from the core of the Yugoslav ideological and public discourses in the mid 1950s, the interest in working women disappeared. The recollections of Jugoplastika female workers symptomatically underline

this change of discursive regimes; after vivid memories of a heroic start of production in the first plants, memories of solidarity and self-sacrifice for the success of the factory, memories of idyllic relations between different ranks of workers, their memories from late socialism are more closely connected with making their own households, buying their first car and going on short trips. This gradual erosion of the workers' consciousness and the political being of the socialist woman had long-term consequences. The exclusion of women from the sphere of power reproduction is an integral part of the socialist emancipation heritage, and that is why we should not be surprised that women's recollections about their life in socialism contain very few references to political or "historical milestones". This negative political heritage will strip the women of their ability to become active in trade unions and to fight for their rights in the postsocialist period:

Socialism as remembered by workers is not a story of the former political system. Memories of everyday socialist life have obviously been depoliticized as they tend to revolve around daily problems and pleasures that workers experienced. Most people miss "the good old days", but this does not mean that they identify with the politics of the former SFRY. Workers themselves do not refer to socialism as a political era. (Vodopivec 2010: 228)

CONCLUSION, THE FANCY DOLL, OR "LONGING FOR THE INDEFINITE *OTHER*"

Manufactured by the women in a factory on the small island of Šolta, plastic dolls had a great success on the European market, symbolizing commodification and feminization of girl's dreams. As the Jugoplastika brochure from the 1980s clearly states, they did not represent only a toy "but every girl's very intimate friend", a model for identification and mimicry, for playing stereotypical gender roles. The variety of skin colours and appearances – "with lush hair or without, with nice dancing dress or sport trousers" – testifies to the aim of the manufacturer to meet the taste of an international community of female buyers. Contrary to the recent opinion that the socialist "new way of life" and mass consumption started in the late 1950s, with Party's care for "the better supply of consumer goods", for the citizens' "everyday needs, their free time and entertainment" (Duda 2010: 18), and with Ivo Robić's song *Tata, kupi mi auto* (Daddy, please, buy me a car, 1958) as the hymn of consumerism, the writer Slavenka Drakulić

remembers the same decade as the years of austerity when “poverty didn’t look terrible only because almost everybody else was equally poor – and it was considered just” (2003: 68). She got her first plastic speaking doll from her aunt in Napoli in 1956, and it was an object of fascination for the whole neighbourhood. She and her young friends were drawn to this doll because it was so different from anything they had ever seen before, including their moppets. While the generation of her daughter in the 1970s and 1980s was enjoying a “truly happy socialist childhood” (Erdei 2012: 73–82), playing with all kinds of toys and accessories, Drakulić was socialized as a disciplined post-war consumer and pioneer to keep precious items in the special place of the “family museum”. Being a clever and sensitive girl, she started to interpret it as “an icon, a message from another world” that challenges the communist rhetoric about the best possible “real world” (2003: 59). The first suspicion about the existence of a more efficient, more consumer-friendly and more superior society – that later grew with the experience of crossing the border to go shopping in Trieste, Graz or Istanbul – ultimately made the socialist consumer “suffer in some strange way, longing for the indefinite ‘other’” (ibid.). But the speaking doll was not a “horrifying reminder of what they [girls] believed they could never have” (Augustine 2010),³⁵ it became a means of catharsis when girls started to feel a painful discrepancy between the rhetoric of women’s emancipation and the gradual objectification of women’s bodies, desires and wishes. At a time when schoolbooks started to promote different values for men and women, when girls started to be socialized as nice, industrious, obedient, maternal, and sensitive vs. boys as independent, competitive, smart and aggressive, the plasticity of the socialist women’s body became the site where the ideology of collectivism and self-sacrifice turned into the ideology of consumerism, domination and patriarchy.³⁶

³⁵ “Along with enchanting them with its exotic beauty, the comparison of this doll with their own plain dolls merely heightened their awareness of the great disparities between their own society and the kind of society that was capable of producing a doll like that, ultimately ‘making [them] suffer in some strange way, longing for the indefinite “other.”’ Rather than inspiring them to dream of a life not under communism, the apparent hopelessness of their circumstances instead cast the doll as a horrifying reminder of what they believed they could never have.” (Augustine 2010)

³⁶ A study of Croatian textbooks from the late 1970s, done by Rajka and Milan Polić, showed that 73% of people depicted in them were male. Female characters were portrayed as maternal, beautiful, and indecisive, thereby giving encouragement to women to be weak objects of male conquest. Since the schoolbooks came under the authority of the Communist Party, “the failure to cultivate more equal images and aspirations for girls and boys was, in the final analysis, a failure of the Party” (Ramet 1999: 104). Rajka Polić again analysed elementary school history textbooks in 1986, confirming that men were mostly portrayed as leaders, military persons, politicians,



Photo 2. Termoplastika – Toys (*Termoplastika – Igračke*)

As the historian Sabrina P. Ramet concluded:

[...] no one is surprised that capitalism, which does not make any promises of gender equality or social justice, fails to achieve either of these. But the failure of self-managing socialism to achieve these twin goals, which it had set for itself, invites the question as to whether the radical feminists are right, that is, whether only a struggle which prioritizes the achievement of full gender equality can have any prospects of success. (1999: 104)

We would rather offer a hypothesis that the first plastic dolls produced in

intellectuals and artists, while women were depicted as peasants, as female symbols (freedom, patria, motherhood) or in unspecified roles. Commenting on the fact that the number of horses is greater than the number of women in Croatian history textbooks, Sklevicky wrote a plea for a new history of the workers' movement which would include a feminist critique of the false universalism of mainstream historiography (1996: 13–24).

the Yugoslav factories were exported because nobody had a real chance to play with them: for most of the children they were too expensive and too precious, for adult women they were the object of beauty and adoration, a matter of prestige (speaking dolls in particular). For decades, these big sitting dolls in fancy dresses decorated the bedrooms of our grandmothers. For them they represented the lost ideal of desirable femininity: an image of girls – domesticated, immobilized, gracefully dressed and brought up, pious and never grown up. They – at least in small towns where the progressive time of socialist changes ran slowly – symbolized the bastard variant of the socialist “bourgeois idyll” marked by the return to traditional family values, family celebrations and church holidays, with a clear sign of mass consumption and mass taste. Instead of a clear conclusion, we could offer a rather hypothetical thought about economic emancipation and emotional deprivation of our working foremothers. As mostly religious, modest, restrained, and politically passive women, ready to sacrifice themselves for the benefit of their collective, families and children, they used to carry the triple burden of their daily schedules with a smile and satisfaction because of their belief in the female “holy trinity” of the welfare state: a) economic independence of women; b) access to education and c) new social identity (Frýdlová 2008: 7–8). Our foremothers constantly encouraged us to educate ourselves and make professional careers. It was the best indicator of their questionable contentment within the scope of emancipation gained by their generation. Perhaps, by forcing us out of the *dollhouse* of our homes and away from worshipping the big doll in an ideologically mixed home sanctuary, they secretly mourned for their lost or betrayed girls’ dreams about ideal woman, eternal youth and deserved happiness.

However, we hope that our article has offered some thoughts and arguments in favour of several theses. First, that unqualified, cheap but extremely responsible and disciplined labour of girls and women was important for the rapid socialist industrialization and its productivist orientation. Second, that the feminized sector of consumer manufactures and plastics industry, able to move with time but also able to integrate traditional female skills, was decisive in fostering the modernization of society and bridging the gap between socialist productivism and consumerism. Third, that the women workers in plastics and rubber, but also in textile, leather, chemical, food, and toy industry, not mentioning those in the entertainment and advertising industry, indirectly participated in shaping the Cold War “discourses of domesticity” (Bracewell 2012;

Frieden 1963; Slapšak 2001; Smith 2012; Tivadar and Vezovnik 2010; *Women's Corner* 2010) that gradually captured women's minds and desires both on Eastern and Western ideological shores of Europe and gradually expelled women from the political sphere.

Our final concern is connected with the fact that Croatia's current Mediterranean orientation to tourism, the service sector, agriculture, and the revitalization of traditional arts and crafts, exposes the female workforce to precarious, less paid and seasonal jobs. It offers fewer opportunities for their career and self-realisation than the socialist project of empowering women through education and employment opportunities in urban centres.³⁷ As Jagoda Milidrag Šmidt summarized the current perspectives for women's employment, "women in Croatia should definitely incline towards Zagreb and its surroundings, since women living on the islands or in rural areas have even fewer chances for employment" (2005: 18). Those women represent the largest part of unemployed persons in Croatia today,³⁸ having in mind that women are in a far more unfavourable social position according to the 2003 survey entitled "Sexual Non-Discrimination and Equality of Wages" (cf. Milidrag Šmidt 2005: 9–18). With regard to employment quotas and economic relevance, the collapse of the female industries (textile, leather, plastics, clothing, footwear) is an equally heavy burden on the Croatian economy as the collapse of the shipbuilding industry (Šokčević 2009: 42–43). However in contrast to the generously subsidized shipbuilding and construction sector, the government has no problem leaving "the female sector" to bankruptcy, thus confirming "the invisibility of women in economic crises" (Šipić 2009: 126) as well as the gradual depreciation of legal and material rights that women have acquired long ago with the entrance to the labour market.

³⁷ Despite the war, transformation of ownership structures and recession during the transitional 1990s, women were not part of large-scale layoffs because of "gender segregation of jobs (mainly women employees in public services) and a slower decline of the social infrastructure (education, health services, etc.)" (Milidrag Šmidt 2005: 7). Since the year 2000 women dominated the unemployed population for the first time as a result of the collapse of textile and other manufacturing industries, with "the access to the labour market [becoming] ever more difficult; they are undesirable manpower to their employers [...] the age factor badly affecting their employment opportunities [...] they participate in 'atypical' forms of work (short hours, shorter working-hours, temporary jobs) far more than men. The economic power of women (and their incomes) rapidly decline with age more than that of men (ibid.: 17).

³⁸ According to official statistical data from 2012, in the total number of unemployed persons, there are 53.3% (178,220) of women and 46.7% (156,131) of men (*Registrirana nezaposlenost...* 2012).

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Ambivalentno nasljeđe socijalističkih radnica: slučaj tvornice Jugoplastika

SAŽETAK

Socijalistički je pravni okvir omogućio poboljšanje pravne, ekonomske i socijalne ravnopravnosti žena što je izmijenilo njihov tradicionalno subordiniran položaj u obitelji i društvu. S druge strane, konflikt revolucionarnih i tradicijskih vrednota generirao je različite antagonizme i kompromise kao i "nizove konfliktnih komplementarnosti" (G. W. Creed) starog i novog sistema, posebice u privatnoj sferi gdje se očuvao patrijarhalni "seksualni ugovor" (C. Pateman) s jasnom podjelom muških i ženskih uloga. Članak se usredotočuje na segment socijalističke modernizacije vezan uz nagli razvoj industrije plastike koja je rasla uglavnom kao rezultat ženskih napora i postignuća, to jest kao simbioza rane socijalističke kulture kompeticije, (samo)discipline i (samo)korekcije ljudskih mana, i patrijarhalne baštine koja je cijenila ženske vrline poput spremnosti na žrtvovanje (za druge) i preuzimanja odgovornosti za obitelj i zajednicu u cjelini. Već od kraja 1950-ih, rivalstvo dva kolektivistička projekta – patrijarhalnog i komunističkog – koji su, svaki na svoj način, disciplinirali, socijalizirali i koristili žensku radnu i reproduktivnu sposobnost, pronašli

su zajednički interes u obnavljanju diskursa ženstvenosti i kućevnosti. Prijelaz iz siromaštva u stanje relativnog blagostanja, praćen počecima masovne proizvodnje kućanskih aparata i potrošnih dobara, sintetičkih materijala i plastike, pratila je pasivizacija žena kao političkih subjekata i komodifikacija njihovih slika u masovnim medijima.

Etnografsko istraživanje iskustava žena zaposlenih u Jugoplastici (1954. – 1991.), a posebice radnica iz Jugoplastikinog pogona na Šolti (1959. – 1991.), raspravlja o ambivalentnom nasljeđu socijalističke emancipacije. Za većinu žena, stalni posao u tvornici fundamentalno je promijenio njihove svakodnevne života, rodne odnose u obitelji, razinu životnog standarda i način na koji žene prosuđuju svoje sposobnosti i kompetencije. Njihova kazivanja otkrivaju selektivno viđenje života u socijalizmu; nedostatak kritičke refleksije o vlastitoj ideološkoj poziciji unutar lokalnog i nacionalnog konteksta te nostalgiju za vremenom ekonomskog osnaživanja, vremenom radnih uspjeha i ponosa zbog vještina koje su koristile obavljajući radne zadatke. Ta su iskustva supostavljena onima iz razdoblja tradicijske otočne ekonomije (poljoprivreda, ribolov, proizvodnja vapna), kao i onima recentnog oslanjanja na prirodne izvore i turizam koje reaktiviraju tradicijske (patrijarhalne) obrasce života i ženama ne ostavljaju mnogo prostora za (samo)afirmaciju.

Ključne riječi:

žensko nasljeđe, Jugoplastika, radnice u socijalizmu