WORKING MOTHERS AND THE WORKINGS OF MOTHERHOOD: REGIMES OF SOCIAL REPRODUCTION IN STATE SOCIALIST ROMANIA

by Oana Pop

Submitted to Central European University

Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

Supervisors: Ju Li, Violetta Zentai

Central European University

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Chair, Examination Committee

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Thesis Supervisor

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Abstract

Women formed a large part of the industrial workforce in Romania until 1989. Manufacturing enterprises accompanied the heavy industry sector, giving rise to various small, export-oriented feminised industries. Not only do factories incorporate the labour force proper, but also the reproductive forces of women. This was often done through control and repression (as in the results of the notorious anti-abortion decree of 1966), but also in the form of institutionalising and socialising reproductive labour: through factory manged cafeterias, kindergartens, nurseries and clinics, industrial enterprises take over and provide assistance in areas traditionally confined to women and domestic work. Soon after 1989, with the collapse of the industrial sector, this system was reshaped, as factory-managed social institutions were privatised or closed down. Women were therefore faced with the difficult, yet imperative tasks of keeping their jobs as well as finding ways to manage the no longer socialised arena of reproductive labour. In light of feminist theory on the social reproduction of labour and of the discussions I've had with 10 women who've worked in three specific factories both before and after 1989, the purpose of this thesis is twofold: on the one hand, to provide a more complicated analysis of how the reality of socialised reproductive labour played out for women under state socialism in Romania and on the other, to understand how women comprehended, lived through and coped with the systemic transformations that came about with the demise of state socialism.

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The writing of this thesis would have been infinitely less exciting without the presence, thoughts and encouragements of all my friends and colleagues from the MA program in Sociology and Social Anthropology here at the CEU. I would like to thank my supervisors for the patience, trust and care with which they guided my research, and without whom many of my ideas ideas would have not made it onto paper.

I have written this thesis with Miss Turoș in mind, who still calls me from time to time to ask how my ”project about factories” is going.

Thank you

Table of contents

CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

I am listening to the first interview I ever recorded as an Anthropology student, back in 2012, in Cluj, at a time when my fascination with the local industrial past far exceeded my knowledge and skills as an oral historian. I am listening to Miss T, an 84 year old industrial chemist whose sober voice is trailing along as she explains the complete set of mechanical steps and chemical processes involved in the production of fine-grained sandpaper (it is surprisingly easy to follow). Almost 10 minutes later she stops as if to search through her memory for some minute detail which nevertheless is essential. I take advantage of the short silence and ask timidly: "do you maybe remember about the people? in the factory". She thinks for a while. "I have pictures" – she gets up and quickly pulls out a photo album from one of the old wardrobes behind her. "Ah, what a mess… They aren't properly ordered" she sighs as she flips through the photos. "Let's systematize!" – and thus I am again left to in want of details about "the people in the factory", while she neatly makes order out of the supposed chaos of her "un-systematized" memories.

I was baffled. My supervisors were eager to find out how the interview had gone – after all, a 84 year old woman who'd had a long career as a chemical engineer was a rare find. She'd started to work in 1958, and had been in the factory until 1995. The proverbial "goldmine". However, I did not get an answer from them as to why, even though I had initially specified my interest in the social aspects within the factory, she was clearly more eager to give me insight on the technical details of production. The answer came later on from Miss T. herself, and has shaped and given drive to much of what I am attempting through this

paper: “I think I understand how difficult it is for you to actually picture that factory when *it used to work*” she says. “I’ve seen it recently, all fallen apart, and of course it’s hard to believe that 2500 people once used to go through those gates every day. But things *did* work”. Having witnessed the act of production at such close range, she found that the best way to let me know about *how things were* was to make me imagine the living heart of something which was now long gone. Yes, they did have “social gatherings”: choir practice, football matches, theatre plays, but it seemed that what brought them together in the first place was the factory itself, the immediacy of the fact that they were all in it together.

It was only later that, equipped with an expanded notion of production (which included social reproduction and recognised it as crucial) that I realised it was by no means an exaggeration (or just wims of nostalgia from my informants) to think of factories as the focal points of entire social worlds in state socialism. This is the result of social reproduction being brought in close spatial proximity to industrial production itself. From hospitals to sports centres, nurseries and kindergartens (which were often within the factory grounds themselves) to blocks of flats built exclusively for workers, factory regimes in state socialism managed to structurally incorporate within them almost all the social dimensions of production. Factories became all-encompassing. And in that initial interview, through her exhaustive focus on the production process, miss T. was in fact telling the story of but one aspect of her social existence.

Needless to say, the agents of reproductive tasks remained predominantly women, and it is this dual role of women as both workers and mothers that I am focusing on throughout this thesis. One of my aims is to understand how women who lived under state socialism in industrial communities made sense of the realities that surrounded them and shaped their

outlook on aspects ranging from work to family, children and personal identity. With the demise of state socialism, one of the most visible transformations that took place in East European countries was the rapid disintegration of industrial platforms. Ways of being which had been organised around factories started breaking apart at alarming speeds, as the logics of free market stepped in. The experience of this transition, with its continuities and discontinuities, is also central to my investigations.

In light of feminist theory on the social reproduction of labour and of the discussions I've had with 10 women who've worked in three specific factories both before and after 1989, the purpose of this thesis is twofold: on the one hand, to provide a more complicated analysis of how the reality of socialised reproductive labour played out for women under state socialism in Romania and on the other, to understand how women comprehended, lived through and coped with the systemic transformations that came about with the demise of state socialism.

In the first part of the thesis I will focus on the historical context in which the factory regimes were shaped. I introduce the main actors and briefly describe their biographies. Given that my research relies on interviews and life stories, I will describe in short the main outline of my informants' experience as working mothers. Following this, I give an overview of the methods employed in the process: I highlight the appropriateness of using oral history methods and a history from below approach in tracing the on-ground complexities of reproductive labour. Before leading on to the main chapters, I present the bodies of literature and theoretical framings that have shaped my approach to the gendered division of social reproduction. This is followed by the analytical chapters, in which I explore in more

depth dimensions of production and social reproduction and connect them to my informants' accounts of their experience.

CHAPTER 2 - HISTORICAL CONTEXT

2.1 A short history of the Clujana, Someșul and Carbochim factories and their social reproduction infrastructure

By the end of the Second World War, Cluj already had a considerable rate of urbanisation and industrialisation. According to the census from 1948, the city had a population of 117 915 people. Half a century later, in 1992 this figure had almost tripled, as a result of state socialist urban and industrial policies (a sharp increase in rural urban migration) and of Ceaușescu's notorious project of "political demography" (Kligman 1998). Stalinist industrialisation of the city began in the 1970s, and by 1980, Cluj had over 32 industrial units, with some of them employing more than 10,000 workers. The women I've talked to worked in one of three plants: a footwear factory, Clujana, employing 8000 people at its peak and considered the largest Eastern European shoe manufacturer during the 1980s; a clothing plant, Someșul, the largest in the Romanian textile sector, with 5400 workers in 1989, and Carbochim, a grindstone and sandpaper manufacturer, also the Romanian leader of its sector.

"Clujana" was initially founded as a private entity in 1911, under a different name, and became the largest shoe and leather-wear manufacturer in inter-war Romania. In 1948 it was nationalised and it expanded its infrastructure for recreation, childcare and healthcare. The platform included a hospital, a swimming pool, a sports hall, football and tennis courts, a kindergarten, a nursery and a cafeteria. The hospital as well as the kindergarten and the nursery were used by workers from other factories as well. For example, workers from Carbochim -one of the other factories I focus on- would take their children to the Clujana kindergarten, because of the small distance between the two factories. Carbochim, because of its predominantly male workforce, had no kindergarten or nursery of its own.

Someșul, the third factory, incorporated several smaller textile producers active on the local market before 1948. During state socialism the plant became the largest clothing manufacturer in Romania, reaching 5400 employees in 1989. As the factory's history book notes, the development of the clothing industry was triggered by the availability of female workforce. The social infrastructure included weekly and daily kindergartens, two cafeterias, a medical centre and a sports facility.

As in the case of Hungary (Fodor 2002), the extensive industrialisation project meant that women's involvement in waged labour became necessary at a very early stage. While the project of including women in educational institutions and in paid work is to some extent emancipatory, the factory, through its management and party representatives, enacted its role as "pater familias" (Verdery 1994). Once they were out of the surveillance of their husbands, women were drawn into the factory's paternalistic control. Factory provided housing, for example, is but one dimension of control and dependence fostered by the power relations between workers and management. Imagining the factory (especially the director) as generous provider is especially visible in how some women negotiate the length of maternity leave (usually at their own loss).

What is interesting is that during the 1980s, when austerity led to the downgrading of working conditions overall, the factories where my informants worked still produced intensely, even if the working and health conditions decreased in general, which means that women were very much connected to the factories (in fact, so connected as to delegating some tasks, like taking the kids to kindergarten in the morning, to their husbands; this was because some of their shifts started at 5 or 6 in the morning, while their husbands were able to do evening shifts and therefore had time to care for the children before going to work).

2.2 The demise of state socialism. Cutting down on socialised reproductive labour

Throughout the 1990s, factories experienced major shocks. The national bank reformed its policy of lax crediting towards industry, and enterprises "woke up" from the soft-budget constraint model which had characterized their existence throughout state socialism: enter the logic of profit, market competition and economic efficiency (Ban 2014). Restructuring meant changes had to be made from deep within the existing factory systems. The practice of laying off "superfluous" personnel was common throughout the first decade of postsocialism. The fact that the first parts of the platforms to go down were those which accommodated reproductive tasks (as I will discuss later on, the kindergartens, nurseries and cafeterias were the first branches to close down in the case of Someșul and Clujana) indicates that a new trend was emerging: one in which social reproduction is thought of as the responsibility of family units and individuals, not of factories which are henceforth supposed to prioritise commodity production and financial discipline above anything else. In the case of Someșul, the factory kindergarten and nursery were closed down in 1990. After the revolution, the factory was split into two separate companies, with the kindergarten and the cafeteria being closed. The sports facilities (swimming pool, tennis and football court) were privatized. After investing in new machinery, it started laying off people during the 90s, reaching 950 employees in 2005 (Ziarul Financiar 2005), and then only 70 in 2009.

In the case of Clujana, during the 1990s the plant experienced rapid decline. Early retirements became common practice in 1993, followed by two waves of layoffs in 1997 and 1998, and ultimately to the factory's closure in 1999. In 2004 the Government took over the stocks from the private shareholders as compensation for tax debts and restarted production with 35 employees. It also transferred ownership to the Cluj County Council and today employs around 400 people. However, the entire social and recreational infrastructure was either

privatized or transferred to the public authorities. Carbochim still functions today, although the cafeteria has been privatised, and its small theatre hall was closed down. The same strategy of early retirements affected most of the women workers who were in their early 50s. In 1989 it had around 2000 workers, whereas today it functions with less than 200 people.

An important argument is that Cluj has a longer history of power accumulation in the region. In the final chapter, where I deal with continuities between state socialism and the new capitalist regime, I will develop an argument based on how and why some factories did in fact manage to survive early "transition" and continued, to some degree, to produce during the 1990s, while factories in the rest of Romania tumbled down. In short, Cluj became an "entrepreneurial" or "competitive city" during the 70s when there was a national attempt to somehow decentralize the state (Petrovici forthcoming 2017). Thus, the directors of the factories created extended networks of power and influence which helped them survive without experiencing such abrupt discontinuities.

CHAPTER 3 - METHODOLOGY

As the main tools for this research I used interviews and techniques which fit in the broader toolkit of oral history methods. Inscribed in these methods is an agenda concerned with issues of memory, personal history and voice. In the words of Maureen Healy (Bucur 2009) "everyday life history is when you want to write about politics and the workings of power in a given historical context, and you want to emphasize human agency in the process", that is, without neglecting consideration of the power structures which shape the subjectivities of those in question. My initial attempt was focused more on the investigation of "ways of thinking and acting that had looked only natural, but were beginning to disappear by the early 1990s, in the period of rapid and profound changes in Eastern Europe" (Koleva 2007). It is this "archivist impulse", that shaped the interactions with my informants but also made me realise that, through recording and paying attention even to their most general thoughts, one could allow for the experience of women to become visible, thus making available valuable insight into how specific work regimes shaped gendered (but reactive) subjectivities.

I have had conversations with 10 women who each worked in one of three factories in Cluj, both before and after 1989. Eight of them became mothers at one point during this time (most of them before 1990) and had to make things work as both workers and mothers. It is this aspect of their lives that I am most interested in, as will show further on. Three of the interviews (with women whom I will refer to as Raluca, Viorica and Doina) are semi-structured: I used a set of core questions focused on factory and house work and on socialised childcare systems and the changes that occurred in these systems after 1989. From previous research projects, I had known and been impressed by the infrastructure for social reproduction created within factory regimes: from blocks of flats built for the exclusive use of factory workers (which are even today known as the "Carbochim apartments" or the "Someșul apartments") to the Clujana factory's hospital (today one of the largest public

hospitals in Cluj) and then to the endless numbers of sports centres and recreational facilities now turned public parks or simply waiting, abandoned, for someone to claim ownership over them.

I also payed close attention to the aspects that women insisted on without being prompted by me (for example, in many cases they seemed more eager to discuss factory work than issues related to the household based "second shift"). Three of the women I was more familiar with (which, throughout the paper, will go under the names of Tuca, Ioana and Otilia) allowed for more open-ended, intimate and dense interviews, where their personal opinion on issues such as women in full time employment, on motherhood and on how they perceive the work-family relation throughout time came through more richly. It is these women who, without my prompt, compared their experience with that of their own daughters, who are facing different challenges today as working mothers. I also draw from the experience of two women (Miss Turoș and Miss Rachița) who have started working in factories in the late 1950s. The two have very different social and professional status –the former an engineer, the latter a manual worker- but both have quite thick descriptions of the workings of the factories they spent almost half of their lives working in. Miss Rachița was a shop floor worker in a weaving mill, where she worked between 1957 and 1989, while Miss Turoș was a chemist in the Carbochim factory, between 1958 and 1995. These last two discussions are closer to life stories than the rest.

I owe my relative easy access to the field to the fact that my father has worked in the Carbochim factory and is friends with miss Turoș and Tuca. Despite no longer working in Carbochim, Tuca is very active in keeping in touch with the factory community, and therefore was very kind and helpful with putting me in touch with other former workers. All my informants were very open to the discussions, although I must admit that the most

enthusiastic story tellers were those women who had had a strong worker identity (had enjoyed their workplace to a greater extent than the others).

I have also had a series of informal discussions with a former kindergarten teacher and a woman who worked in a factory cafeteria before 1989. I did not use an audio recording device in these two cases – I spoke to the retired kindergarten teacher while she was working in the local food market, selling flowers, and with the cafeteria worker as she was having a walk with her grandson in the park. These interactions where the most formal ones: the rest of the interviews took place at the informants' homes, and the women involved were relatively eager to discuss the subject. One of the greatest drawbacks of my data collection process was that I could not contact more women who had actually worked in nurseries or kindergartens during state socialism. However, the one discussion I did have with the above mentioned former kindergarten teacher revealed more of a sense of loss and disappointment at the turn of events after 1989 (a sadness which, I recall thinking, speaks for the fate of all socialised reproductive labour from state socialism). Another one of my conceptual problems was that I wanted to take into account both structure and agency. However, the methods of investigating everyday life history do not only serve as useful when, as Maureen Healy suggests is the case with Alltagsgeschichte, "you want to write about politics and the workings of power in a given historical context, and you want to emphasise human agency in the process" (in Bucur 2007). While agency is central to my concerns, I agree that it becomes manifest within structured spaces and situations, and it is precisely these structures which become visible through the value systems, opinions, fears and joys (subjectivities) which people evoke when discussing their lives under state socialism.

Recent local literature insists on either the formality of the women's emancipation process (i.e. Ghebrea 2015; Ilinca and Bejenaru 2015), or the "threats" that working mothers posed on conventional family organisation (Dumănescu 2015). However, the narratives of

women who were actually on the shop floor differ in how they present work and motherhood as intertwining/coexisting aspects of their lives, and not necessarily as radically opposed projects, one "burdening" the other. At the same time, moving beyond the reading of factory regimes from above - as totalising structures, which hegemonically construct women as consenting, committed working subjects, the interviews show how women "negotiated normality" (Koleva 2014) and created and maintained paths and social ties which shaped their everyday tactics in both factory and home life.

History from below

I used the centrality of factories to workers' everyday lives in state socialism, and thus a "history from below" approach to my study. If, as the workers I'd spoken to so far reveal, the spheres of social and private life somehow became integral parts of local industrial settings then, much like the production of commodities itself, social reproduction became intimately linked to factories, and therefore to the party-state (it is enough to mention the state-provided housing system based on factory membership, factory owned recreational or medical facilities such as cafeterias, hospitals, kindergartens and sport courts, or the very high occurrence of marriage between people who worked on the same industrial platform – quite literally the emergence of families within factories). Narratives act as gateways through which to become accustomed to the lived experience of people. There are multiple layers to be examined in the situation of an interview, so I found it important to take into account the complexities involved in the apparently banal act of "telling one's story". For example, an individual's personal "truth" may coincide with the shared imagination of a group (Portelli 1990) to the extent that one's narrative tends to reproduce the publicly available, and socially acceptable versions of things. The socio-cultural context at the time of the interview

determines how memories can be put into words: some workers closed up when asked to talk about their membership in the communist party, dismissing the topic with a simple "we all did it because we had to" which precludes all information related to their actual experience as party members within the factory.

I look at these experiences not from a perspective which emphasizes the taking over by the state of domestic life or the private sphere, but rather a view from the other side: women, the main purveyors of care and agents of social reproduction saw, interpreted, changed, challenged and, most importantly, actually used and dealt with factory related institutions. How did their perception of gender roles, femininity, women as labour force form and transform in these conditions? True to the words of Wendy Goldman: "gender history is less concerned with women's oppression than with how male and female identities are produced in any given time and place" (Bucur 2007).

CHAPTER 4 - LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL LENSES

Thoughts on the production and reproduction of labour power

Women workers can be seen as the link which connects industrial regimes to the social universe in which they are embedded. This link can be explored by drawing upon how Social Reproduction Theorists analyse the connection between the production of commodities and the reproduction of labour force. Reproductionists argue that even if value-producing labor is central to how people cooperate and organise their daily lives, it is a "necessary yet insufficient condition of historical analysis" (Bakker & Gill 2003). In order to broaden this narrow conception of labour, what must be taken into account is the daily (and generational) production of the crucial commodity of labour power, and of "the social processes and human relations associated with the creation and maintenance of the communities upon which all production and exchange rests" (Bakker 2002:16). Social reproduction can therefore be thought of as the production and reproduction of workers themselves, as well as of their communities (Federici 2012; Bakker & Gill 2003).

There are three fundamental dimensions entailed in the process of social reproduction (Bakker & Gill 2003:32): the biological reproduction of the species, the reproduction of labour force (through assuring subsistence and education for children, enabling the process through which they become workers, followed by their "daily maintenance" as workers) and the reproduction of provisioning and caring needs (given that the reproduction of labour power involves a very broad range of activities: food needs preparation, clothes need washing, and bodies have to fall under the caring/disciplining attention of someone). As industrialised economies began to recruit workforce from among women, some reproductive tasks were socialised: they were "brought out" of the private sphere and into the

administration of welfare states -in the West- and of the centralised regimes of state socialism in the Eastern bloc.

However, in capitalist political economy housework was (and still is) defined as non-productive and private**,** as opposed to the sphere of commodity production which is thought of as productive and public. It is chiefly this belief that led thinkers such as Engels to emphasise women's re-entry into the arena of productive labour as a measure that could radically improve the political, social and economic status of women (Mies 1998:178). Instead of reorganising paid employment (conceptualising care work *as* productive work – and paying it accordingly; improving and expanding nursery provision; or addressing and shifting the gender imbalance in care provision), the emphasis was foremost on bringing women into the sphere of established social production. What this historically led to was women having to take on the double burden of dealing with the demands of paid employment, as well as with the care-giving responsabilities which remained almost exclusively entrusted to them (Philips 1997).

Social reproduction regimes in state socialism

A quick view at the transformations of gender legislation in Romania during state socialism reveals broadly two distinct periods: one of relative freedom concerning reproductive choices (divorce and abortion were legalised in 1957), and the subsequent period of drastic regulation, following 1966 when abortion became illegal and divorce was restricted. In her work, Gail Kligman complexly articulates the consequences of this turn (Kligman 1998) and, given the extent of the coercive monitoring programs enacted by the state throughout the final decades of the regime, it is no wonder that most of the local literature primarily links issues of gender, women's rights and state power in Romania with the notorious legislative changes

of 1966. There are, as I will argue, multiple other factors which build a substantial part of working women's experience of socialised reproductive labour. Housing, various resource allocation systems, childcare facilities and food provision were channeled through industrial units. This means that a more complicated analysis is welcome, one which, while keeping in mind the coercive use of the state's structural powers, should also explore the systems of redistribution and social provisioning made possible through them.

Kligman and Gal (2000) note the broad features of state-socialist gender orders**:** the failed attempts to erase gender difference, the strive to create socially atomized individuals, who depend on the (paternalistic) state; the fact that women were envisioned as a joint category in state policy, with ministries and state offices dedicated to what was supposed to be their concerns – but in reality did not reflect that at all)**.** With regards to women in the labour force, their critique revolves again around the issue of dependency: with full time participation in the labour force, they argue that, far from being "liberated", women actually became more directly dependent on the state instead of on individual men (2000:6). Although the authors agree that the gender relations of the socialist period must serve as the backdrop for understanding present, ongoing transformations, their focus lies almost entirely on the realm of politics, with greater interest in discourse and culture.

The politics of gender after state socialism - postsocialist transformations and continuities

In their analysis of the first few years after 1989, Kligman and Gall signal the appearance of increasing class and ethnic differentiation, of a steady rise in unemployment, and a prompt decline in state subsidies in Romania. According to political and economic theorists of the

time, these were among the costs considered necessary to transform dying socialist economies into thriving markets (2000:3).

The authors offer an analysis of postsocialist gender orders, again in the realm of politics: their emphasis lies on how men and women came to be differently reimagined as citizens (in times when politics itself was being redefined as a specifically masculine endeavour). What is surprising is their lack of focus upon women freshly out of the industrial sector. They do, however, offer insight on the new feminized phenomenon of small-scale, service-sector marketization and discuss how the situation of women in the labor market radically changed, as they were left facing paradoxical situations: while unemployment drastically grew, a multitude of new career opportunities opened up, giving (specific) women more choices than they had ever had before. One of their more interesting arguments is that in post-1989 Eastern Europe in general, women (as well as men) consider a wife out of the labor market as an achievement, rather than as a sign of gender inequality. As will be discussed in further chapters, the talks I've had with women workers from Cluj challenge this view.

Notes on class differentiation in social reproduction in Eastern Europe

In his work with former miners of the Jiu Valley in Romania, David Kideckel notes that "the circumstances of men and women differ less by gender than by socio-economic condition and category, as might be said for regional groups, age grades, and even ethnic relations in the postsocialist world" (2008:40). In some circumstances, class inequality is way more visible than gender inequality, in the sense that both men and women of the working class face downgrading social conditions and status. He argues that there is a certain commonality to processes of class differentiation throughout Eastern Europe, some of the catalysts of these transformations being industrial restructuring, higher costs of living and the decline of the

state and its dying regulatory functions (2002:41). For the postsocialist working class, these processes produce major changes, which become quite visible within gender relations: family life reconfigured according to new standards, new physical and role expectations from both men and, insecurities about male and female identities, and, of course, the waning of formerly affective, close social relationships. The later chapters of this thesis will deal with these transformations

Beyond structure: interpreting narratives and revealing tactics

Reproductive work still goes largely unseen. Difficult to quantify, and thus largely evading most types of "institutional gaze", the processes behind reproductive work can only be read at the place of their production (in action). Thus an important part of my focus will be on informal ties which tend to evade the gaze and control of institutional, bureaucratic rationality. I start from the assumption that in everyday situations people possess agency which, however, does not necessarily equate to resistance, nor lead to the emergence of formalised political action groups. The manifestations of this agency can perhaps best be captured by Michel de Certeau's concept of "tactics", which he describes as "small fortuitous arrangements" which work "within the given rules rather than challenging them" (de Certeau 1984). *Tactics* are opposed to the more ample *strategies* of institutions: "the tactics of «users» are actions unrelated to a project but nevertheless constructive. They «parasitize» on institutions, taking advantage of chances and trying to manipulate events into opportunities" (Koleva 2012:XVII).

Tactics do not exist in a void, they are oriented *towards* specific objectives. One of my assumptions is that women workers' late socialist tactics are somewhat aimed at building networks of interdependence and collaboration which endure and provide a sort of

infrastructure for getting by through the instable 1990s. Bearing these in mind, part of my task will also be to understand how, and to what extent, structural and institutional change interfered with workers' ability to continue shaping these tactics, or forced them to create new ones. Thus, I hope to contribute to answering one of the questions posed by the expanding literature on East European Post-Socialism.

Narratives act as gateways through which to become accustomed to the lived experience of people. There are multiple layers to be examined in the situation of an interview, so I found it important to take into account the complexities involved in the apparently banal act of "telling one's story". For example, an individual's personal "truth" may coincide with the shared imagination of a group (Portelli 1990) to the extent that one's narrative tends to reproduce the publicly available, and socially acceptable versions of things. (For example, one worker started by praising the inclusive education system in 1960s Romania, but then added that "the communists destroyed it, like everything else". She thus excluded any possibility that it was "the communists" who had built the system in the first place, and instead subscribed to the ever present anti-communist metanarrative). The socio-cultural context at the time of the interview determines how memories can be put into words: some workers closed up when asked to talk about their membership in the communist party, dismissing the topic with a simple "we all did it because we had to" which precludes all information related to their actual experience as party members within the factory.

On the issue of subjectivity, Therese de Lauretis notes that it is "interpreted or reconstructed by each of us within the horizon of meanings and knowledges available in the culture at given historical moments" (de Lauretis cited in Abrams, 2010:56). This definition comes against more structuralist approaches which see subjects as static entities, shaped exclusively from the outside by societal forces. Abrams emphasises that interviewees use a whole range of

ideas and meanings when constructing the subject in the specific situation of the interview (2010:56).

Recent trends in the reprivatisation of social reproduction

The recent decades marked by intensified globalization have brought about new shifts that relate to the household, social institutions and the state. In the words of Isabella Bakker: "What is happening during the contemporary process of globalization involves not only the integration of world market, but also the disintegration of aspects of previous structures of community and political economy, and a transformation of production systems and labour markets where capitalist market forces have become dominant" (Bakker & Gill, 2003:10)

One such trend is the reprivatisation of social reproduction (Bakker 2003:76-78). We have seen that the state plays a major role in the socialisation of some tasks concerning social reproducion. As the state retreats with the advent of anti-interventionist neoliberal policies, social reproduction is brought back into its so called „natural" arena in the household. Also, household and caring activities can be accessed through the market, thus being commodified and exposed to the movement of money. The authors behind "Power, Production and Social Reproduction" also point out to the fact that the return of social reproduction within the household is enforced by another transformation, one through which societies tend to become redefined as "collections of individuals (or at best collections of families), particularly when the state retreats from universal social protection" (Bakker & Gill 2003:36).

CHAPTER 5 – NURSERY-FACTORY: WORKING MOTHERS AND THE WORKINGS OF MOTHERHOOD

"Woman is provided with great possibilities for affirmation, in conditions of absolute social equality with man, and granted equal pay for equal participation in labour and special measures of protection. Woman is granted the right to occupy any work place or office compatible with her professional competence, so that she can bring her contribution to the development of material production and spiritual creation, and at the same time she is given access to all the conditions necessary for the care and education of children."

Romanian Labour Code 1972 (my translation)

As in the case of Hungary and other East European countries, the project of women's emancipation, mostly thought of in terms of their access to waged labour, did not bring about a radical change in the gendered structure of domestic and reproductive responsibilities in state socialism (Fodor 2002). Factories did provide care centres which socialised part of the domestic labour: these came in the form of institutions designed for childcare (kindergartens, nurseries, sports centres), or for workers' health control (the Clujana factory had its own hospital, for example -now taken over by the municipality-, while Someșul and Carbochim had smaller clinics, resting places and even gardens). Once home, however, women still had to deal with care tasks which took up most of their free time.

This idea of a "failed emancipation" is visible in recent local literature which insists on either the formality of the state provided assistance (i.e. Ghebrea 2015; Ilinca and Bejenaru 2015), or on the "threats" that working mothers posed on conventional family organisation

(Dumănescu 2015). However, the narratives of women who were actually on the shop floor offer a more complex view of these systems in how they present work and motherhood as intertwining and coexisting aspects of their lives, and not necessarily as radically opposed projects, one "burdening" the other. Throughout this chapter I first examine my informants' narratives about motherhood and I then invoke Burawoy's analytical separation of three distinct aspects of production (economic, political and ideological) in order to understand how the relational modalities (ways of acting, reacting in a social group) of motherhood also exist in (and indeed influence from within) the factory production system.

4.1 Factory provided social reproduction

This chapter is called "Nursery-Factory" precisely to emphasise how aspects of social reproduction were intricately linked to women's workplace during state socialism. This title is also suggestive of the way in which women's subjectivities were constructed as **essentially maternal**: they themselves never questioned the institution of "motherhood", despite the fact that they often had to abandon the role of mother in order to fulfil their tasks as workers in the factory**.** Where the institutions provided by the state did not suffice, women outsourced the tasks they could not take care of by themselves.

For example, both Ioana and Otilia took their children to the factory provided weekly nurseries after their short maternity leave ended: "You could bring your children on Monday morning, and take them back Friday or Saturday, I wouldn't have managed otherwise. After that my parents helped me, I took her to the country-side. And she lived there until she was three years old, and I brought her back to Cluj so she could go to kindergarten here" (Ioana).

However, taking care of children was often outsourced to grandparents or elderly relatives and neighbours. Both Tuca and Viorica employed this option at some point in their children's

youth, which they said was more convenient because the distance from home to the kindergartens was too long and public transport was notoriously crowded. This option was not embraced by everyone, however, because the institutionalised childcare system was seen as more reliable and encompassed more services. Raluca, for example, did not need the help of her own parents in raising her children, and explained why the state nursery was a better option for her:

> "I trusted the staff there, they had a doctor and nurses who were there permanently, so they were always taken care of. R. never got sick while she was there. I remember, for example, there was this flu epidemic, and every morning the nurse would check the children's throats to see if they were fine. And before lunch, there was someone who made sure they all washed their hands... I know what you are saying, I had colleagues who would ask their neighbours or parents to take in the kids while they were at work. But then if something happened, if the kids had a stomach ache or got hurt while playing outside, you know how kids do, then they had to call the factory and as a mom you'd worry so much and probably have to ask for early leave from work and so on… It was easier, and then there was this one other thing: kids would get breakfast and lunch over there" (Raluca)

I think that the interconnectedness of family life with factory work is especially visible in the working schedules of both parents were coordinated by factory staff when the couple had small children:

> „We would work complementary shifts, as both of us worked in the factory. My husband worked in prodcution, they had three shifts, and I was in post-production, where there were only two shifts. And at the begining of every week the work team would meet and it was decided who had to work what and where, you know. And of

> course the head of my work team knew who had small children so she would make special schedules for us, so either me or my husband could take the kids home from kindergarten at the end of the day." (Raluca, Carbochim)

Despite our imagining of industrial work as rigid and strictly planned, cases like this reveal the inherent flexibility of factory regimes. However, much like in the case of the neoliberal "flexible work" paradigm, the consequences of this regime are gender specific and reinforce certain role dependencies: it was usually the schedule of women in post-productive departments that was shifted and moulded according to their husbands' fixed schedules in prodcution.

Another case of slight shifts in who had more responsibility for children is made visible through Tuca and Ioana's experience. In their case, it was the husbands who had to take children to school or kindergarten before going themselves to work, because both Ioana and Tuca's shifts started earlier in the morning:

> "her father worked in a different field, and he had to go to work by 7, so he was the one to wake our daughter in the morning and take her to kindergarten. I went to work at six or even five in the morning, and finished work at two or three so I would be the one to take her home" (Ioana)

> „In the morning, I was always the first to leave the house, and after me came the flood (she laughs). Radu would take T. to kindergarten... and children had lunch there and then an afternoon nap, until five in the evening, when I would finish work and go fetch him." (Tuca)

4.2 Mother Industry: gendering production politics (or how workers become mothers)

"Free nursery and child care centers, paid leave time for mothers of sick children, subsidized meals and laundry services, and generous maternity leave policies did indeed reduce women's burdens, which became even more evident after these support systems disappeared in 1989. However, they did not reorganize the division of labor in the household." (Fodor 2002:245)

I now look at how the work-place itself acted as an agent in organising and connecting the reproductive labour of women to their activities as factory workers. Women's working schedules were affected by maternity, and it is here that the gendered aspects of socialised reproductive systems becomes fully visible. In this chapter I first offer a reading of factory regimes from above: as totalising structures, which hegemonically constructed women as consenting, committed working subjects. I then move on to a closer analysis of women's personal accounts of how they "negotiated normality" (Koleva 2014) and created and maintained paths and social ties which shaped their everyday tactics in both factory and home life. Through written accounts from factory monographies and women's recollections, my aim is to give a balanced account of both dimensions –coercive and permissive- with special focus on the lived experience of women who were engaged in these systems.

As described in earlier chapters, both the Clujana and Someșul factories had extended infrastructure for childcare provision. Even though the platforms did provide institutionalized help, they hardly ever questioned the gendered aspects of reproductive labour. This is easily observable in my informants' narratives, who do not think of factory-supported child care - from nurseries to youth organisations- as something meant to completely remove or reshape

the responsibility of domestic work for women. The idea that motherhood is the responsibility of women isn't directly questioned by any of my interviewees. Motherhood – from establishing a nuclear family, to bearing children and then taking care of them– is understood as a "natural" dimension of life, for which one has to find time and energy regardless of other constraints. However, waged work was itself regarded as a normal, indispensable aspect of life, not unlike motherhood and childrearing. The existence of institutions to take care of children while their mothers were at work appeared as something commonsensical, and I could read the puzzlement on my informants' faces as I questioned this normality: "Well of course we took them to nurseries and kindergarten, what else? There was a lot of work to be done in the factory, and everyone, *everyone,* worked." (Miss Raluca).

In order to grasp the complexity of the social dimensions of factory organisation, I use Burawoy's analytical separation of three distinct aspects of production. Apart from the economic aspect, he signals the existence of political and ideological dimensions to production: "political" in that factories also produce and articulate specific social relations created through labour, and "ideological" because the experience of these social relations is given a particular meaning (Burawoy 1985:36). For example, Burawoy uses the latter dimensions to explain why it happens that workers are exploited not only through coercion, but also through consent: workers' consent, he argues, can be produced "as the ideological effect of a game: workers tried to produce more and/or faster in order to earn better wages, but also to have fun and experience self-fulfilment. From the point of view of the management the most important outcome was that the game pulled them into the «pursuit of capitalist profit» (Burawoy 1985:10).

To ensure control over society, state socialist regimes used not only coercion and repression of their ideological opponents and rewards for those who complied, but also a more subtle mode of control based on ideological models (Koleva 2012: xiii). The state, as much as the

factory, appears as provider, with social welfare as its foremost duty: ”all in the name of man, all for the wellbeing of man”, with strong moral imperatives which envision work as a civic obligation, as an effort for the benefit of the entire society), societal norms (related to the socialist way of life) (Koleva xiii). Under these circumstances, women workers would put forward informal efforts into work, which ultimately increased production (Borocz 2000). Take Miss Rachița, for example, explaining why she was so eager to participate in (and win!) “Socialist competitions”:

> Q: So who provided the prizes if you won?
>
> A: The factory. But I was never upset if there was no prize at all, as long as I won first place. The director even gave me the nickname “Rocket” because I was so fast and won all the competitions. And he’d come to me on the shop floor and say «Rachița, Rachița! Our very own rocket! You won again! » and that would make me very happy”

Informal ties with management also played out in beneficial ways for those women who were in more privileged positions and could therefore negotiate more, or “pull the devil by the tail”, in Tuca’s words:

> “We had 112 days of maternity leave. I went to work one day, and the next I gave birth at Stanca <hospital>. So I didn’t take any pre-natal leave. When the 112 days came to an end, I also took my normal paid leave, and then I pretended I suffered from this and that, so I pulled the devil by the tail and managed to get around seven months at home with T. But then I said to myself «stop! I’ll go crazy if I stay home for another day» and I went back to work.
>
> Q: Did you have the same job afterwards? The same salary?
>
> A: Yes, I kept my job as a foreman in the mechanical maintenance department.”

Otilia's case is more revealing:

> "You see, I had helped the director throughout college and so when I came back from maternity leave he helped me get the post I had always wanted, as an economist, in the factory, which was very good for me". (Otilia)

Those women who did not have social capital in the guise of informal ties with management have a very different experience with maternity. For example, Ioana, Raluca and Doina told me that their maternity leave was strictly 122 days, and there was no way one could negotiate for a longer stay at home:

Informality is, of course, present horizontally as well, among workers themselves. Tuca tells me stories of how they would juggle shifts among each other in order to avoid penalties if one of them was too tired after a double shift. Or Miss Turoș, who through some administrative tricks helped women who worked in the cafeteria and other "non-productive" jobs keep their jobs:

Given her direct knowledge of the workers in different departments and of their tasks within the factory, at one point she was made to create a list of "indirectly productive workers" – an ambiguous umbrella term for those people who were not directly involved in the production process, such as gardeners, maintenance personnel and cafeteria workers. Through the list, the Party wanted to have direct knowledge of the workers who were most easily disposable in case of internal restructuration of the factory departments. Most of these workers were women whom she had come to befriend. Both the unclear scope of the list she was supposed to make, and her affective relations with the people whom she could protect by not registering in her notebook enabled her to shift the meaning and the dimension of her task:

> "I have another notebook, where at some point I was supposed to list and reduce the number of workers who were indirectly productive. They would be fired whenever it

> was necessary. But I wanted to show you that we had these people who worked as gardeners in the greenhouses, and the Party saw them as directly productive for some reason. So I would list cafeteria workers as gardeners whenever they needed it." (Miss Turoș)

One might argue that these forms of "innocent" informality (as opposed to more active, class-conscious responses to being over-worked) are living proof of the symbolic hegemony and normative consensus engineered by the elites. However, I prefer to think of some types of conformig behaviour as resourceful and pragmatic. In Koleva's words, docile resourcefulness or the "tactical manipulation of chances and appearances for one's own ends, can be an effective but informal and unacknowledged agency, which leads to a profanation of power rather than a resistance to it, to a cynical distance from it, but not to opposition." (Koleva 2012:XIX)

CHAPTER 6 - BRINGING IT ALL HOME AGAIN?

The Someș factory emblem is inscribed on the plate on which Otilia serves cakes for us to have during our talk. “Is this from the factory?” I am quick to ask. “It’s from the cafeteria. You see, after 1990 the main cafeteria was closed down, and they had just bought large sets of plates, so I took a set home, that’s why the factory emblem is on them.” Her own train of thoughts leads precisely to what I was about to ask:

> “Yes, a lot of workers used to eat there before. It was ours. The one they built after 1990 was only used on special occasions, for meetings and festivities. So after 1990 the kindergarten and the nursery were closed down and they used the building for this new cafeteria, where one could eat, but it was mainly for the TESA <administrative> personnel and for official dinners. For example, we collaborated with an Italian businessman, and whenever he’d come visit, a special meal was organised there. So we didn’t usually eat at this cafeteria, no. Not for daily, regular meals anyway. Before 89 we had the cafeteria in the Argos factory <a branch of Someșul which produced lingerie and had separated from the main factory in 1991> and we went there for lunch. We had weekly or monthly subscriptions and every day when we finished work we would have lunch there. You see, I also had evening classes so I never went home after work: when my shift ended, I ate at the cafeteria and then went to school and I only got home at 9-10 in the evening. So there was no time for me to eat at home, let alone cook lunch.”

The demise of state socialism is often celebrated as a release from the pervasive intervention of state control into all dimensions of life. However, the closing down of the kindergarten and nursery mentioned by Otilia, and the conversion of the same building into a business

meeting spot make visible other tangible ways in which the state's reduced economic and social role (in terms of provisioning, financial investment and redistribution) played out. In her research on the gendered aspects of early postsocialism, Alina Hurubean explains that the retreat of the state "especially its role of redistributing and achieving social justice, has led to an alarming decrease in the number and quantity of existing support services (nurseries, kindergartens, public care services for persons in need, hospitals), which inflated the amount of labour "to be carried out" by women in the private sphere, the impairment of their freedom of movement and of their chances to combine professional labour with domestic/family tasks." (Hurubean 2007)

This "retreat" of the state is visible at the macro-economic level: during the 1990s, an internationally favoured, neoliberal approach to Romania's economic transformation led to an agreement between the IMF and the Romanian National Bank which brought to an end the latter's policy of providing "generous credit" for the financing and restructuring of state owned enterprises (Ban, 2014:122). The Central Bank's policy of lax crediting towards the industrial sector was perceived as a toxic remnant of the former communist regime. It followed that the IMF-RNB alliance cut down on access to credit for covering the financial necessities of state owned companies. By 1991 the national level of employment halved; production collapsed, and by the end of 1992, 60% of industry had disappeared, along with an army of workers who were bought out or fired, with little prospects of finding employment elsewhere (Ban, 2014:126). The Romanian economy lost 1.9 million jobs in the manufacturing sector between 1990 and 2000, and the share of manufacturing in total employment decreased from 33 to 20 per cent (ILO 2014, Conditions of Work and Employment Series No. 51).

The pressure to become functional within the logic of market competition and profit accumulation posed difficult challenges on the remaining factories. With no overarching,

centralised authority to direct production quotas, to bail out companies whose revenues were below production costs, or to institute as law the employment of all available workforce -and, more importantly, with the new governments almost always ready to cut down on social protection policies in order to implement haphazard visions of rapid "transition"- workers became extremely vulnerable. Heinen and Wator sum it up nicely as they observe the similar circumstances in Poland: "although democratic freedoms, along with the civil and political rights typical of a state based on the rule of law, have been restored, many of the previous social structures and legal provisions have been rejected in keeping with stringent budgetary restrictions" (Heinen and Wator 2006). I will further my argument by elaborating on how postsocialist transformations (and continuities) played out both at factory level and in workers' families and personal lives. My central argument is that many of the changes experienced as loss, incertitude and vulnerability are gendered transformations: the most uncompromising cuts were applied either to auxiliary, feminised sectors of production -virtually forcing women into early retirement and back into the domestic sphere- or to the institutions which served as socialised spaces for the reproduction of labour force –thus reprivatising and devaluing the tasks of social reproduction.

6.1 Gendered transitions: anticipated retirement, young grandmothers and mother penalties

> "there were many people who, after 1990, retired when they were only 50 or 51 years old, and ended up regretting it later. But they were in fact pushed into retirement. There was this woman who worked as a typist at Someșul, and she was raising her child on her own. She would have liked to continue to work, but she was pushed into retirement. The factory was already taking care of its own business, it no longer had any money from the state. If, for example, things were not going so well, they would only pay the standard wage for everyone, even for the seamstresses who had individual contracts and who worked on piece rates – so they were paid according to how much they produced. But because there was no money, there were times when they all got paid the same, and it was less than they had worked… anyway, the fluctuation was huge, and people were coming and going. They hoped that after the "anticipated retirement" phase the older women would be replaced by younger ones, but that didn't happen." (Otilia)

After 1989, factories embarked on projects to reorganise the internal dynamics of production – for workers, this often translated into "a filtering process", as some who I have spoken to remember: through vast restructuring programs, young, skilled workers were "saved" and given jobs in parts of the factory which management knew were going to survive, while the older, under-skilled labour force was either bought out, made to retire early, or simply announced that their production section would soon be closed down. The above example is but one among a series of cases that are familiar to the women I've spoken to. The "solution" of early retirement was generally directed towards unqualified workers, in auxiliary sectors:

the typist in Otilia's case was put in a situation similar to gardeners, cleaning personnel, drivers or cafeteria workers in the Carbochim and Clujana factories. In a recent talk I had with Miss Turoș, for example, she explained how most of the workers she had been able to help during the 80s through her meddling with the productive/non-productive categories (described in the previous chapter), were now being fired or entered early retirement because there was no way for the factory to pay their wages.

Otilia's final remark, her observation that middle aged women tended to be replaced by younger workers, brings to mind the motherhood penalties documented in the case of work recruitment practices in post-socialist Hungary (Fodor 2007): the new managers preferred to employ younger women with no children precisely because they were more productive (and predictable) and free of reproductive duties. It has been observed that employers in transnational firms tend to "weed out" the women who are more likely to aspire to motherhood in the near future and place them on lower-level positions within the firm. Whereas in state socialism both labour reproduction and commodity production were under the purview of the state -and the aim was, of course, to maximise both, as the Romanian case is a sad and most accurate example of- in the new regime increasing production and adjusting it to the rules of the market comes to the forefront. As Hurubean notes, research in gender studies makes visible the fact that, in postsocialism "domestic labour … does not enjoy the same social valorization as paid labour, it generates and maintains relations of power and structural gender inequalities within the couple and family, preserving the woman's economic dependence, isolating her in the private space and being the cause of rendering her inferior" (Hurubean 2007).

Some of the women, as is the case of Raluca and Viorica, said they felt alright with leaving factory work (even though their pension would be considerably lower than their salary) because they both had grandchildren and felt their help was needed at home. And indeed, the

case of Viorica is a good anecdote for the whole situation: even though she was a skilled worker, her specific skills were no longer needed because the process she was specialised in had been automated. She was 53 when she left the factory in 1995, but still worked as a tailor from home (she smilingly glances at her old Singer sewing machine which is perched on top of a small desk in her kitchen, as she tells me these things). "I still work today, you know!" she says briskly and winks – indeed, miss Viorica is the only seamstress with a Singer machine in our block of flats, so everyone goes to her for small stitches and adjustments. Apart from being glad that she could spend more time with her nephews, she was also aware of the fact that her help as babysitter was in fact necessary: "My daughter… well the only nurseries she trusted were too far away. And her work schedule was quite unpredictable so I said – look, leave them with me, I'd rather take care of them than go all the way to the other side of town to fetch them when you are too busy. So I left my job at Someșul and worked from home and took in the kids".

The shock produced by the disappearance of many manufacturing jobs after 1989 must have been greater given that in the late years of state socialism these jobs were highly valued. The women who worked in Clujana and Someșul all remember how, if anything, work also intensified as the factories were pushed into boosting production quotas. This period is experienced in radically different ways by Ioana and Sănica, who both worked in Clujana. For Ioana –who has an overall positive view towards her work as a needleworker in the Clujana factory- the extra hours of work were a means to boost the family income:

> Q: How important was it to have that job? Were you ever afraid of losing it during the 80s?
>
> A: No. If you did your job well and finished your part, no… for example, in Ceaușescu's time I was paid very well. I worked piece rate, my standard wage was

> 2300 lei and because I worked extra hours there was a point where I would reach 3000 or 4000 per month, which meant a lot for me. My husband was an engineer and his salary was smaller than mine. So my salary kept the family going, that's for sure.

Sănica, on the other hand, who had started working only in 1987, has different feelings about her experience of working in the factory: her most vivid memories are of the decaying working conditions during winters, the poor housing conditions (she was not married at the time, and lived in factory provided shared rooms), and the strict head of department who supervised their work. This type of experience is shared by women hired throughout the late 1980s, when energy and food shortages became drastically visible at factory level as well, and as new types of organising work on the shop floor were implemented, which allowed for little interaction between workers. Sănica left the factory in 1995, the year she got married, had a child, and moved to a nearby town where her husband works as a farmer. Alex, her son, went to kindergarten and school in the town, and she has been working in the farming sector ever since. In fact, the informal discussions I have had with other women who started working in the late 1980s almost always showcase the same type of grim experience with life and work in the industrial environment.

The case, however, is slightly different in the experience of older women, who have had a longer stay and thus a life more personally and intimately shaped by the factory regime. During my long discussions with Tuca and Ioana, at some point both of them reflected upon the situations their children face nowadays as adults and –with motherly concern- compared them to their own experience as young parents. What was consistent in both cases was a concern for the private life of their children being taken over by their jobs:

> "yes, I have two grandchildren, a boy and a girl, from Andreea... they live in G. <15 km from Cluj>, so she has to drive to the city every morning. She wakes up early,

gets them ready for school and kindergarten, she drops them off, there's all the traffic, and then she has to get to work herself, on time. I think it's much more difficult for her than it was for me! She gets out from work at around 5, grabs the kids, brings them home – traffic again, she only gets home at around 6-7, feeds them, puts them to sleep and then the next day all over again from the beginning. I often think about this, and you know what? Andreea doesn't have more free time than I did. It's even more difficult for her, that's my opinion…" (Ioana)

After having told me about these thoughts, we both laughed as her phone rang: her daughter was calling her to ask if she could pick up her granddaughter from kindergarten, as she herself would not make it in time because of work. Tuca has very similar thoughts:

"I retired 7 or 8 years ago, I don't even remember. So from 81 until 2010… Anyway, time passes by so quickly! When we worked, I used to get out of the factory at 3 and a half! Fridays were short, we only worked until one or two. So you could then go home and actually do something else. Nowadays I pity you! My son, T., we met yesterday and half of the time he was on his phone because there was some problem at work! He's never really free because his mind must always be there! It's so stressful."

I find these reflections interesting in that they illustrate how women who have worked in state socialism observe the working lives of the new generation. Like opinions themselves, memories are created and influenced by the current social and cultural context in which they are voiced (). Given the confusing socio-economic climate that their children are facing (with visible economic decline, faltering educational & health system and increasing unemployment) memories of their own past are essentialised and presented as having a singular, polar opposite and consistent characteristic: work was predictable and constant, and it offered a sense of security which is all but gone today. I do not read this as an "imagined

past", or as nostalgia created as vantage point for the critique of the status quo. It's just that the differences between work-regimes now and those in state-socialism are seen as one of the most dramatic aspects of transition. Indeed, the way my informants always come back to talking about work (waged labour, that is) even though my questions are specifically oriented towards the social reproduction aspect, might just hint at the fact that, for some women, the demise of factory regimes themselves was so much more important and personal than the closure of the childcare centres channelled through them.

6.2 Notes on continuities

However, presenting "transition" as total rupture oversimplifies the highly complex landscape of the 1990s. I therefore further my analysis by discussing some continuities, observed and analysed in emerging academic literature and also discernible in the narratives of my informants. I will illustrate some of the reasons why I believe my informants have not experienced transition as complete rupture, and indeed for whom 1989 was more of a symbolic event, with little felt consequences in the aftermath of everyday life.

To begin by highlighting some structural continuities, it can be argued that some features of the industrial landscape of Cluj favoured its survival in the new capitalist, decentralised regime. As Petrovici argues, Cluj started to look like an "entrepreneurial" or "competitive city" ever since the 1970s, when there was an attempt to somehow decentralize the state through a new administrative configuration (Petrovici forthcoming, 2017). Having had a long history as a centre of power accumulation even before the war, Cluj started to accumulate various types of capital in the new administrative order, which in turn allowed factory directors and party officials in Cluj to create extended networks of power and influence (both political – in relation to Bucharest, and economical – in the form of economic ties with

foreign companies) which continued to exist after the revolution, and thus save certain industries from the sudden demise experienced throughout the rest of the country. I see this as a very important argument, as it allows for a historical explanation as to why 1989 was differently felt throughout the country: it did not produce such powerful discontinuities for some factories in Cluj (which continued to function well into the 90s and still function today, albeit at smaller scales and as private firms). At the same time, one can argue for a certain type of continuity at the legislative level: as in the case of Hungary, the Romanian labour code still specified certain provisions for women and working mothers, who were eligible for long paid maternity leave and were, in fact, "modified forms of the original state socialist ones" introduced in the 1950s (Kispeter 2012:26).

Coming back to a smaller scale, and to the experience of my informants, I argue that the ideological aspects of production in state socialism (elaborated on in the previous chapter) shaped women's subjectivities in ways which lasted throughout the economic "transition" of the 1990s. For example, the notorious paternalism of factory management towards women (Verdery; Kligman) meant that the factory was envisioned as a benevolent provider who helped women and cared for their needs. This prompted the formation of informal ties both between management and workers, and between workers themselves.

The informal relationships which lasted even after the revolution can be read as a legacy of state-socialist paternalism in the workplace. "Vertical" informality -between management and (some) workers- played an important role in redistribution, and thus in eliciting workers' consent (Burawoy and Lukacs 1992). The examples here are abundant, from workers pulling on longer shifts in exchange for a place on the list for a new apartment (which could only be obtained through the factory), to more recent cases in which workers are offered the job itself in exchange for low wage expectations. There are cases in which managers invoke the factory as an "extended family", encouraging workers to give all their best in order to keep things

going in difficult circumstances. What is also important is that there are gender specific patterns of informality which are actually amplified in the new regime: Miss Turoș remembers how the women in a post-production department of the factory were talked into agreeing to have lower wages during the 1990s, under the pretext that this would allow for the productive department in which their husbands worked to continue functioning well. Thus, the preservation of the structures which enabled informality between management and workers meant that women who were more favourably placed in power structures (especially highly skilled workers, administrative personnel or as part of management) managed to keep both their jobs and a privileged position which helped them navigate "transition" with relative ease, at the expense, maybe, of less skilled, marginal workers.

The issue of motherhood and reproductive rights has been discussed extensively in literature on recent transformations of postsocialist Eastern Europe (Hurubean 2013; Fodor 2002; Kligman & Gal 2000; Teplova 2007; Kideckel 2004; Haney 1994; Weiner 2007). Apart from the emergence of a powerful anti-communist rhetoric (which aims to explain the troubles of the present by means of criminalising the past) Verdery notes that in the Romanian case public discourse was especially prudent in tackling the issue of motherhood and women's rights. Given the tragically restrictive birth control policies of the last two decades of state socialism, the first move of the post 1989 regime was to legalise abortions and decriminalise divorce. While the tendency in reconfiguring gender roles in Hungary (Toth 2005), Slovenia (Vodopivec 2011), Poland (Heinen and Wator 2006), Bulgaria (Kofti 2016) and other EE countries was a return to the "traditional" family model (with men as bread winners and women's activities confined to the household, with special emphasis on childbirth as both duty and "natural event") in Romania, Verdery argues, a more liberal stance shaped the reconfiguration of gender roles. Wary of the enduring catastrophic outcome of the 1966 anti-abortion decree, Romanian postsocialism allowed for somewhat less conservative (re-

)imaginations of gendered identities. This idea, that some women did not feel pressured into shifting their core identities "from proud worker to good mother" (Haney 1994), is visible, for example, in how Miss Rachița feels about the idea of women participating in full time waged labour:

> A:Well of course women should work just as hard as men. Why should she be condemned to stick to the oven and pan? We should be... I don't know, maybe I'm not seeing things straight. But you will finish University, right? And shouldn't you go into practice, should you just stick to cooking potatoes and chicken stew?
>
> Q: Yes, but then you have work to do back at home as well, that's difficult.
>
> A: Well yes. But look, when I went out of the factory doors, I left everything that had to do with the factory there. I didn't think about it for one moment. When I got home, I took in the house work and that's that. Sometimes, when we got home earlier on Saturdays we would both start cleaning up the whole apartment. My husband helped, you know: he cleaned the carpets and washed clothes, he helped a lot. Never in my life did I clean a carpet! (Rachița)

Even if gender regimes change and women are becoming differently positioned actors in postsocialist social landscapes, a powerful rhetoric on what the new role of women ought to be was less present than in other EE countries during the 1990s. Only recently have there been political attempts to narrow down gender roles in accordance with conservative ideal (for example, the "Coalition for the family" is a group who recently gained momentum and started pushing for a Constitutional reform which would define the family unit in very restrictive, conservative ways)

CHAPTER 7 - CONCLUSIONS

> ”You can do both, of course. Take me, for example: when I’d finish work in the factory, everything which had to do with the factory I would leave behind. It simply didn’t bother me any more. And when I got home, I took in all that had to do with being at home. It’s that simple!” Rachița

In an interview for The North Star in 2014, Silvia Federici described the arena of social reproduction as “a social factory that extends beyond the factory itself”. It can be argued that in state socialism, with its centrally controlled industrial growth and its equally governed population increase, the “factory itself” ends up containing the social factory that produces its most vital resources: labour power. The main purpose of this thesis was to look at how, and to what extent, the identity of women who worked in state socialist factory regimes was shaped by the intertwining of production and social reproduction at factory level. Moving beyond the structural elements which enabled factory regimes to shape the identity of women as both workers and mothers, my research focuses on how, despite normative gender roles and strict production politics, women developed modes of navigating daily life which allowed them to negotiate and shape to their own advantage their dual role of mother and worker. Through analysing interviews with 10 women who have worked in three factories before 1989, I provide a more complicated view of how the reality of socialised reproductive labour played out for women under state socialism in Romania, an aspect which becomes more visible once these systems collapsed with the demise of state socialism in 1989.

My thesis was initially meant as an analytic incursion into the quite specific circumstances of social reproduction practices in state socialist factory regimes. I wanted to know more about the ideas, processes, and relations that women workers were embedded in during state

socialism, given the regime's complex and hegemonic practices of identity construction. However, instead of creating order out of the three distinct yet entangled conceptual tropes I was focusing on (women, production, social reproduction), the "mess" kept getting worse. The lines between the three dimensions were blurring: as I was getting to know the life stories of my informants, I could no longer think of production without relating to issues of social reproduction (thanks to Marxist feminism), it was also impossible to separate issues of gender from those of production, given the strong worker identity of the women who were also mothers. And then of course, there never really was a way of looking at women's lives and separating them from aspects of social reproduction.

In the end, I feel that I have not actually progressed much in the process of detangling the threads of gender, production and social reproduction as they played out in state socialism. What I did, instead of detangling, unraveling or dissecting this world, was to attempt the greater challenge of understanding it as a functioning whole. This approach turned out to be more true to my informants' experience, who have navigated socialism and transition by always shifting between their roles as mothers and workers, but never quite being able (nor willing) to abandon one role for the sake of the other. I argue that structural accidents (geopolitical events, the emergence of local power networks, industrialization, state retreat) and the specific subjectivities, interests and actions of women determined how they managed to produce and reproduce (and live to tell the tale). During state socialism, a variety of reproductive tasks were partly socialised by the state, and at the same time the "soft" industries were pushing for increased production which meant they engaged women, their predestined workforce, in playing their role as worker for a longer time. These dynamics changed after 1989, as the state began its retreat from controlling production. And given that systems of production are intricately related to systems of social reproduction, the gender roles and identities of women were also challenged, enforced, transformed in complex ways.

My analysis of women in relation to labour in the context of industrial platforms is fruitful precisely because in the factories I worked with, production and reproduction were brought together both spatially and ideologically: "factories had nurseries" as my informant miss Turoș would put it.

The fact that "soft" industries which employed women were also hubs around which the state would invest massively in "life preserving" facilities -hospitals, cafeterias, housing- is, at least symbolically, a way of making it clear that the place of reproduction is in very close proximity to the socially valued production. The critiques of state socialism from a western feminist perspective are on point: although it had spatially and symbolically brought production and social reproduction in the same place, little was done in terms of substantially elevating one (reproduction) to the level of social acknowledgement and importance the other one had historically received (production), thus not only marking, but actually entrenching the divide that capitalism had created between them. Dalla Costa made explicit the banal truth that housework, domestic labour and the entire array of actions through which life itself is reproduced, is "actually work that is essential to the capitalist organization of labour. It produces not just the meals and clean clothes, but reproduces the workforce and therefore is in a sense the most productive work in capitalism. Without this work, no other forms of production could take place" (Dalla Costa & James 1973). With this and the particularities of state socialist factory regimes in mind, one can argue for more attempts at analysing instances where social reproduction is in such intricate and close connection with the productive dimensions of society.

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