

## “There’s no Rest for our Feet...”

### On Social Reproduction in the Discursive Space of Revolutionary Utopias and Propaganda Reports

From 1919 until the 1930s, the questions of women’s perspectives in society and the sexual division of labour were reoccurring themes in the literary oeuvre of Erzsébet Újvári and Sándor Barta. These texts reveal a comprehensive overview of the two authors’ literary work and, in more concrete terms, the social context in which the texts were written. In this study, I will therefore examine how the questions of social reproduction and the sexual division of labour are addressed in Újvári and Barta’s texts.<sup>1</sup> Social reproduction, or reproductive labour, encompasses the multitude of all tasks that the individual or a household must perform in addition to productive (paid) labour. It includes child-rearing, housework, sex, and everything that holds the fabric of society together, including the everyday cultivation of human relationships.

The events that overturned the economic conditions at the turn of the century – such as the First World War or the Soviet-type economic planning – also heightened inequalities in the gendered division of labour. In the factories of wartime hinterlands as well as in Soviet industry, the proportion of female workers significantly increased, and the double burden of reproductive labour and wage labour came to define everyday life for more and more women. Accordingly, this study will focus in particular on the socially constructed image of women in the Hun-

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1 The final form of this study was realised thanks to suggestions from Blanka Bolonyai, Gergely Csányi, Tibor Meszmann, and Katalin Teller. The title is a quote from Erzsébet Újvári’s *Próza: 10 (Prose: 10)*.

garian Soviet Republic (1919) coming after the post-First World War economic collapse and that of the Soviet shock worker movement from the 1930s. It will also discuss in depth how these ideals were depicted in Újvári and Barta's texts. Although both periods placed women's economic emancipation at the centre of their ideologies, there were fundamental differences in the social and economic conditions between the Hungarian Soviet Republic and the Stalin's Soviet Union. These two divergent contexts allow us to examine the rhetorical devices in Újvári and Barta's texts that either conceal or expose the contradictions in public discourse surrounding social reproduction in the given period.

Barta and Újvári were married during the Hungarian Soviet Republic and it was during this revolutionary period that they first formulated their views on the social roles of women and their concepts regarding the family as a social unit during the times of revolution. Despite the fact that both authors imagined an ideal society in which women and men would share equal burdens of productive and reproductive labour, Barta and Újvári's parallel literary oeuvres also bear the traces of structural inequalities in the gendered division of labour. The essence of their revolutionary ideas changed little after 1919, but during their exile in Moscow, the two authors' texts nonetheless lost their subversive potential and became tools of propaganda instead. To better understand this process, we must first examine how the discourses around the gendered division of labour – to which Barta and Újvári subscribed – either concealed the overwork that fell to women or posited it as natural. Because the gendered division of labour is not limited merely to the opposition between productive and reproductive labour, in order to recognise the ideology behind these texts, we must also take the symbolic aspects of labour into account. In doing so, we must also ask in which function and context emotional care – performed in the areas of child-rearing, relationships and collegial relations – appears in Újvári and Barta's texts.

### *Revolutionary Theories of Social Reproduction*

From 1917 onwards, Újvári and Barta worked together on the editorial board of *Ma*. Following the social democratic–progressive Aster Revolution of 1918–1919, the *Ma* group began publishing special issues dedicated to the propagation of their worldview, in which they laid out the founding principles of their own activist programme and declared solidarity with the revolutionary aims of Com-

munism.<sup>2</sup> This series also included a Hungarian translation of the Soviet constitution and excerpts from Lenin’s 1917 work *The State and Revolution*. In the translations for these special issues, the ‘woman question’ was only touched upon in the context of general suffrage and it was only Újvári and Barta who discussed women’s perspectives in relation to the revolution in any further detail. Nevertheless, Újvári and Barta’s works were not completely unique in that, several foundational works on the intersection of Marxism and feminism had already appeared in Hungarian prior to 1919. Engels’s *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* had been included in the first Hungarian edition of Marx and Engels’s collected works (1905). Following Marx and Lewis H. Morgan, Engels examined the historical development of social relations and criticised the subordinate role of women in the bourgeois family in terms of the gendered division of labour. At the same time, however, neither Marx nor Engels developed a coherent or well-integrated theory to interpret reproductive labour. It was through the theoretical and practical works of August Bebel and Alexandra Kollontai, among others, that a political programme emerged after the turn of the century which secured the founding principles of Marxist feminism.<sup>3</sup>

Bebel’s volume *Women under Socialism* was regarded as standard literature in the Hungarian labour movement. It was described as formative by both Kassák in *Egy ember élete (The Life of a Man)* and Barta in his semi-autobiographical novel *Aranyásók (Gold Diggers)*. Kollontai’s work first appeared in Hungarian during the Hungarian Soviet Republic, in the same year that Lenin appointed her to run her own department, the Zhenotdel. Yet Kollontai’s actual achievements as a party politician never lived up to the radical Marxist social politics of her theoretical works. In *Communism and the Family* (1920), she argued for a comprehensive reform of the nuclear family and child-rearing, the abolition of private households, and the complete collectivisation of reproductive labour including child-rearing.<sup>4</sup>

During the years of the Hungarian Soviet Republic and exile in Vienna (1919–1925), Barta’s concept of the family steadily came to resemble that of Kollontai. In Újvári’s poems, however, there was no mention of the collectivisation of child-rearing; only in 1924, in a poem written on the occasion of Lenin’s death, did

2 SZEREDI Merse Pál, „A »Mácaüstülus irodalmi diktátora Lukács György sznob uszályában«. Az aktivisták a Tanácsköztársaságban”, *Enigma* 25, no. 94 (2018): 128–146.

3 CSÁNYI Gergely, GAGYI Ágnes and KERÉKGYÁRTÓ Ágnes, „Társadalmi reprodukció: Az élet újratermelése a kapitalizmusban”, *Fordulat* 24 (2018): 5–30.

4 Alexandra KOLLONTAI, *Selected Writings of Alexandra Kollontai*, ed. and transl. Alix Holt (Westport: Lawrence Hill & Co., 1977).

she refer to elements of Lenin's political programme that were in line with Kollontai's respective thoughts.<sup>5</sup> These ideas faded from Barta's writings too during the years of exile in Moscow. By the 1930s, when Újvári and Barta were discussing the everyday life of Soviet working mothers in the form of schematic propaganda reports, Stalinist politics no longer followed Kollontai's principles even on the level of rhetoric. Stalin had reasserted traditional gender roles linked to the nuclear family,<sup>6</sup> and the state's partial assumption of female reproductive labour was carried out via the same institutions (kindergartens and schools) as in Western capitalist states, while most of the unpaid reproductive labour, in addition to wage labour, was still done by women in their private households.<sup>7</sup>

*Sándor Barta on the Collectivisation of Households and Child-rearing (1919–1924)*

Barta was not involved in the political organisations of the Hungarian Soviet Republic but in line with the reformist initiatives of 1919, he hoped that the proletarian dictatorship would undertake a fundamental rethinking of the modern family and the economic role of women. The representative body of the Republic, the National Assembly of Councils, supported the "opening up of every profession and every field to women,"<sup>8</sup> and "fully equal pay for women and men performing the same work."<sup>9</sup> It also stated that "a sufficient number of nurseries and day-care centres even in the smallest village"<sup>10</sup> should be established, to guarantee child-care during mothers' working hours, yet during the few months of the proletarian dictatorship, no serious steps were taken to realise these goals.

The KMP (Communist Party of Hungary) published Kollontai's 1916 essay *The Working Mother*, which had called for the introduction of maternity benefits in pre-revolutionary Russia, but a radical rethinking of the institution of the bourgeois family was not an integral part of the Hungarian Soviet Republic's programme. A booklet published by the People's Commissariat for Public Education

5 Erzsi Újvári, „Lenin”, in *Wonderful story? An Avant-Garde Artist Couple: Erzsi Újvári and Sándor Barta*, eds. Sára BAGDI, Gábor DOBÓ and Merse Pál SZEREDI, 104 (Budapest: Kassák Museum–Petőfi Literary Museum, 2023), accessed July 13, 2023, <https://opac.pim.hu/record/-/record/PIM2578953>

6 SOMLAI Péter, „A szabad szerelemről az ellenőrzött magánéletig. Családpolitika a Szovjetunióban 1917 után”, *Társadalmi Szemle* 45, no. 6 (1990): 25–40.

7 CSÁNYI, GAGYI and KERÉKGYÁRTÓ, „Társadalmi reprodukció...”, 5–30.

8 *Tanácsok országos gyűlésének naplója* (Budapest: Athenaeum, 1919), 262.

9 *Ibid.*

10 *Ibid.*, 263.

on the subject of free love entitled *Kommunizáljuk-e Zsófi?* (*Should We Communitize Zsófi?*) only dealt with the economic situation of women arguing that without women’s economic autonomy, neither the number of forced marriages can be reduced nor divorce could appear as an accessible legal option.

In his 1919 manifesto *Világforradalom – világburzsoázia és program*, Barta also expected reforms of the economic base to transform social relations, the birth of the “self-confident woman on her way somewhere (and not towards the cage of contemporary marriage)”,<sup>11</sup> but on the pages of *Ma*, he held a much more radical position – one that was almost Kollontai-esque compared to mainstream Republic politics – on the general obsolescence of civil marriage and the family as institutions. Accordingly, he argued that “we want therefore to separate the man from the woman economically and vice versa,”<sup>12</sup> and, like Kollontai, advocated for the complete socialisation of child-rearing.<sup>13</sup>

According to Barta, the socialisation of children should take place among their teachers and peers, “far from the sentimental or brutal tyranny of the parents,”<sup>14</sup> and thus argued that priority should be given to the ideological education within the movement over the symbolic transmission of values within the traditional family setting. On this point, there was no substantial difference in practical terms between Barta and Kollontai’s positions, yet Kollontai did not justify the collectivisation of child-rearing on the basis of the nuclear family’s flawed or even harmful rearing practices. She thought that parental example did not hinder collective upbringing; on the contrary, for the collectivisation of child-rearing, it was a necessary condition that Soviet women should extend the emotional care they provided to their children to the whole of the children’s community.<sup>15</sup>

Barta’s 1919 manifesto did not yet clarify the terms and the specific social and economic conditions in which the left wing reform of the bourgeois family should be conceived. Three years later, when he analysed the cultural and welfare institutions of bourgeois capitalism in his Proletkult journal *Akasztott Ember*, he outlined a clearer picture of the social systems he regarded as ideal. Here, he dis-

11 BARTA Sándor, „Világforradalom – világburzsoázia és program”, in BAGDI, DOBÓ and SZEREDI, *Wonderful story?...*, 86.

12 Ibid.

13 Barta did not borrow his ideas on the collectivisation of child-rearing directly from Kollontai, since these themes were already in the public consciousness. Among others, Oszkár Jászi, a founding member of the Galilei Circle, addressed the question in his 1907 volume *Új Magyarország felé: Beszélgetések a socialismusról*.

14 BARTA, „Világforradalom – világburzsoázia...”, 86.

15 KOLLONTAI, „Selected Writings...”, 250–260.

cussed the bourgeois institutions that simultaneously maintain and conceal the inequalities emerging in capitalist societies. Barta argued that although the proliferation of kindergartens, cheap cinemas, and tenement buildings appeared to respond to the needs of the modern proletariat, their true social significance was confined to ensuring that the workers regained their capacity to work from day to day: “The aim: work, drudgery. And everything else is merely an instrument.”<sup>16</sup>

In this series, Barta criticised the floor layout of tenement blocks for mirroring the traditional forms of the private household and the bourgeois family:

[it] breaks universal reality into millions and millions of small worlds. If we now imagine in these small chambers and also on the gravest of furniture: the father with his hierarchical power and the mother toiling around the square kitchen range in the blindness of motherhood and her 18-hour working day, and the children, who will become pale imitations of their parents.<sup>17</sup>

Barta’s journalistic writings in *Akasztott Ember* already assumed that the abolition of the private household was the most important precondition for demolishing capitalism and collectivising housework and child-rearing, but his own social vision did not take final shape until 1925 in his utopian novel *Csodálatos történet, vagy mint fedezte fel William Cookendy polgári riporter a földet, amelyen él* (*The Wonderful Story, or How the Bourgeois Reporter William Cookendy Discovered the Land on Which he Lived*). The novel condenses all the social experiments and economic innovations that Barta desired from Soviet politics into the fictional space of the Northern Settlement. “Public property, solidarity, collective joint effort, voluntary mass discipline, systematic planning, the material and intellectual collective unity of all workers” would be the principles on which the community of workers would organise the Settlement’s society.<sup>18</sup>

In the novel’s *kolkhoz* and factory communities, the private household has been completely abolished, washing, cooking, and childcare are formally organised, and although productive and reproductive labour are apparently shared out equally, the emotional labour of child-rearing remains invisible, and those social roles that are primarily conceived in terms of emotional labour lose their social meanings in the text. The emotional attachment between mother and child is

16 BARTA Sándor, „Cirkusz-kapitalizmus!”, in BAGDI, DOBÓ and SZEREDI, *Wonderful story?...*, 168.

17 *Ibid.*, 167.

18 Sándor BARTA, *Csodálatos történet, vagy mint fedezte fel William Cookendy polgári riporter a földet, amelyen él* (Košice: Kassai Munkás, 1925).

glossed over even when one of the protagonists, Una, leaves her new-born at the Northern Settlement’s clinic when she and her husband start looking for accommodation and work. Consequently, the collectivity concept sketched out in the novel remains largely pragmatic. The characters have no emotional motivations and their decisions are defined solely by practical concerns.<sup>19</sup>

### *Erzsi Újvári’s Revolutionary Poems*

In Újvári’s works, women’s double burden – the combination of productive and reproductive labour – is a recurring theme. Yet unlike Barta, who almost exclusively emphasised the material dimensions of labour, Újvári approaches the real significance of the double burden from the perspective of the emotional and caring duties that women have to perform. In most cases the emotional aspects are mentioned in the context of reproductive labour and child-rearing but the social and economic relations of wage labour are also maintained by a series of symbolic acts.<sup>20</sup> In Újvári’s oeuvre, women’s emotional labour is most often found in the context of reproductive labour, relationships and child-rearing, but the female protagonists in her texts also perform acts of emotional care within the realms of revolutionary movements and wage labour.

To “be” a woman and a mother also carries an important social meaning in Újvári’s revolutionary poems. Three of her poems appeared in the special world-view issues of *Ma*, in the same series Barta’s *Világforradalom* manifesto was published. Újvári’s *Asszonyok (Women)*, *Próza: 5 (Prose: 5)* and *Próza: 10 (Prose: 10)* represent the revolution as a movement involving the whole of society, whose real impact can be measured in terms of whether it reaches those invisible sections of the working class such as women and children. Her early poems reveal a complex fabric of invisible reproductive labour, which, in addition to housework, caring

19 Kollontai discussed the new morality in several essays, and most extensively in *Make Way for Winged Eros: A Letter to Working Youth* (KOLLONTAI, „Selected Writings...”, 276–292). For more detail on the collectivisation of child-rearing, see *The Labour of Women in the Evolution of the Economy* (KOLLONTAI, „Selected Writings...”, 142–150). Kollontai was unable to successfully bridge the yawning gap between theory and practice but for her, in contrast to Barta, emotionally rich human relations were part of the new Communist morality. Since many aspects of the social expectations vis-à-vis women were mediated through the emotional aspects of reproductive labour, Kollontai recognised that both the symbolic and material aspects of reproductive labour had to be taken into account.

20 KOLLONTAI, „Selected Writings...”, 250–260.

for the sick (*Prose: 1*), and pregnancy (*Prose: 7*), also includes the emotional care to be performed in a relationship.

Újvári's poems also address the disproportionate division of emotional care tasks within relationships and the negative aspects of the expectations attached to them, including anxieties, and the constant sense of responsibility. In her 1918 text *Vándorlás (Wandering)*, she examines how the social expectations attached to motherhood can become the instrument of domestic violence, describing an abusive relationship, in which the father questions the mother's love for the child, making her feel guilty, and who then turns her pain and anger against her own child. The lines of *Próza: 18 (Prose: 18)* also bear the traces of the anxieties that women are burdened with:

In our eyes we carry miscarried children.  
 When we want to laugh, the plates and mortars play the organ out of our mouths.  
 In the evenings we strap our hearts with white sheets.  
 Because we carry every joy and sadness of our partner on our bodies.  
 Who can stand it any longer???

They pin us onto the beds with burning needles  
 If we want to live we build burning towers above our bellies  
 And morning.  
 Every morning doctors open our groins Nuns water our hearts with white cans.  
 [...]

Because today we saw the other woman's breast in our partner's eyes.  
 And in vain we cry. We laugh.  
 Tomorrow we shall find it again inside.  
 Women!!!

If we could tear ourselves away from our partner's warm loins. We'd reach the mountains and foals would run with us. We would bathe our eyes in water and never again see the kitchens' chimneys.

In her early works, emotional labour is often coupled with the experience of shame, a sense of duty and vulnerability, but in her revolutionary poems, the emotional labour performed by women also plays an emancipatory role, inasmuch as women's mostly invisible emotional labour is also indispensable for the reproduction and perpetuation of the movement. Quoting Újvári: "the children want us



to give them their strength”<sup>21</sup> and “the children from our bodies shall carry the eternal dissatisfaction asunder.”<sup>22</sup>

*The Moscow Years: Female Care in the Service of Propaganda*

Following their years of exile in Vienna, Újvári and Barta moved to Moscow in 1925 with the help of Red Aid.<sup>23</sup> During their Soviet exile (1925–1938/40), both followed the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers’ (RAPP) directives on literary realism. The majority of the two authors’ essays continued to be set primarily in Hungary or Vienna, while their recurring themes were the unemployment and vulnerability of workers that characterised the 1920s and 1930s.

In the Moscow Hungarian émigré periodical *Sarló és Kalapács* and occasionally in the New York-based Communist journal *Új Előre*,<sup>24</sup> Barta published short stories about wage strikes and various forms of labour exploitation, including the lack of care for the elderly and sick (*Nyugdíj [Pension]*, 1927) and the vulnerability of house maids (*Marusza [Marusa]*, 1925). In Moscow, he also published the short story *Misa (Misha)*, whose shorter version was published in 1924 in *Ék* and *Új Előre* under the title *Peleske Miska*. The more radical dimensions of the social utopia he had developed in Vienna (rejection of the bourgeois family and private household and educational reforms) faded from his texts written in Moscow exile but in *Misa*, he returned once again to his critique of the bourgeois family and its institutions. He argued that the bourgeois family model and school system – which bourgeois ideology stages as naturally given for all – are neither self-evident nor accessible for those living on the margins of society, and that the workers’ movement therefore had to take over the social integration of those excluded from the institutions of the bourgeois family.<sup>25</sup>

The main character of the text, Misha, was born around the turn of the century in Budapest, lost his parents as a new-born, and found his primary socialisa-

21 ÚJVÁRI Erzsé, „Próza: 10”, in BAGDI, DOBÓ and SZEREDI, *Wonderful story?...*, 90.

22 Ibid.

23 The International Red Aid was founded as the official aid-organisation of the Komintern in 1922 to support political refugees sympathising with the Soviet Union. It also disseminated major propaganda-campaigns during the 1920s and the 1930s.

24 *Új Előre* was the Hungarian-language Communist émigré daily paper in New York. It was initially a socialist publication entitled *Előre*, and adopted a Communist orientation from 1921, appearing as *Új Előre* until 1937.

25 BARTA Sándor, *Pánik a városban. Válogatott prózai írások*, ed. Katalin VARGA, 2nd edition (Budapest: Szépirodalmi Könyvkiadó, 1972), 164–224.

tion through the workers' movement. He is first cared for by the neighbour, a cobbler, and later by a member of the Vasas Trade Union (Hungarian Metalworkers' Federation). He sings for the first time in front of an audience at the Vasas headquarters and later finds a job at the Ganz factory via the trade union. His personality is shaped by mass movements, demonstrations, and the institutions of the workers' culture, and even in the defining moments of his socialisation, he only has sporadic personal contact with others, often remaining an external observer of the ongoing events. Misha only grows really close to the old miller whom he first met at a demonstration at which "the old man lifted him up and held him in front of the crowd,"<sup>26</sup> so that Misha could see the faces of the protesting workers. In contrast to the story of Barta's novel *Aranyásók* (*Gold Diggers*), in which workers are recruited through personal conversations and friendships at work, Misha instinctively sympathizes with the movement from an early age, even before he had met union members in person. Barta's narrative provides no substantive answers concerning the extent to which the solidarity and identity-forming configurations of such political mass movement can correlate with the emotional world and socialisation needs of a child of Misha's age, but unlike the abstract society of *Csodálatos történet* (*A Wonderful Story*), the short story *Misa* provides us with specific examples of how the solidarity networks that develop within the workers' movement and overall in the proletariat function on an everyday level.

After her family had moved to Moscow, Újvári published stories in *Új Előre* on the issues affecting women and children living in extreme poverty including access to education, dangerous urban public spaces, and prostitution. She was particularly concerned with how the double burden of working mothers affects children. In the stories *Szép rét az iskola* (*The School is a Beautiful Field*, 1927) and *Mihályka élete és halála* (*The Life and Death of Mihályka*, 1926), a mother working in the factory leaves her child at home, who then ends up at risk during the mother's shift.

By the turn of the 1930s, the theme of exploitation at the workplace had disappeared from Barta and Újvári's texts. In the interests of establishing the ideological basis for the newly-introduced economic planning, production had to enjoy unquestionable priority in Soviet literature, and the new RAPP directives allowed no room for critical analysis of productive labour. After Stalin announced the introduction of the first Five Year Plan in 1928, the steady growth of production became the most important measure of social progress. From 1930 on-

26 BARTA, „Pánik a városban...”, 190.

wards, the RAPP placed shock workers at the centre of its official programme,<sup>27</sup> and gave preference to journalistic writings in which authors directly addressed the shock workers of Soviet factories.

Barta’s longest report series was written in 1932 on a propaganda tour of the Urals organised by the Soviet government and the Union internationale des écrivains révolutionnaires (International Union of Revolutionary Writers), in which he took part as a member of an international brigade of writers, including Louis Aragon, Elsa Triolet, and Jeff Last. During the tour, he conducted practical, fact-driven interviews in public spaces with workers focusing on the economic situation of Soviet families with a level of factuality similar to that of *Csodálatos történet (A Wonderful Story)*. He summarises the life of a female doctor working in the Urals as follows:

She has two jobs and earns three hundred and seventy-five roubles, her husband earns two hundred and fifty, and her father receives a pension of seventy-two roubles. They have a two-room flat for which they pay eight roubles a month. She tells me that supplies were low in spring, but now that the kolkhoz markets have opened, the situation has improved. They regularly receive bread, sugar, and everything else on the ration card. They receive sixteen kilos of flour per person per month.<sup>28</sup>

A female judge of peasant origin, who was appointed after three months of training, is also mentioned in the report series from the Urals.<sup>29</sup> In the 1930s, women entered many fields that had previously been the exclusive reserve of men while at the same time, many women working in the factories were not skilled. Unlike the female judge representing the people’s court, who immediately landed a responsible job after a brief training, the women who were new to employment generally worked un-skilled or semi-skilled jobs.

The extensive industrialisation of the Soviet economy would not have been possible without the mass employment of women. From 1930 onwards, a campaign was launched to recruit mainly young, unskilled women into the factories. The welfare system was not equipped to provide childcare for such a large number of working women, and so in contrast to the ideas of Kollontai, more and more Soviet women were hit by the double burden of wage labour and housework. The

27 Maria ZALAMBANI, „Literary Policies and Institutions”, in *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-century Russian Literature. Cambridge Companions to Literature*, eds. Evgeny DOBRENKO and Marina BALINA, 257–258 (Cambridge: Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2011).

28 BARTA Sándor, „Útban az Ural felé” in BAGDI, DOBÓ and SZEREDI, *Wonderful story?...*, 223.

29 BARTA, „Pánik a városban...”, 434–439.

new Soviet ideal of woman, the female shock worker (Udarnitsa) was able to assume jobs in sections of industry previously reserved for men, and participated successfully in work competitions to surpass the production norm while also being responsible for the family household.<sup>30</sup>

Újvári published only one report in *Sarló és Kalapács* in 1934, which also marked the end of her career. Nastya, Újvári's interviewee for *Gálocska* (*Galochka*), lived near Újvári in Sokolniki and was home on maternity leave when Újvári visited her for an interview, in which she describes how a young mother, who had recently moved from the countryside to the city, was trained at the childcare centre to care for her baby according to modern medical guidelines. Right before *Gálocska*, Újvári also published a propaganda essay entitled *Udárnyica* (*Udarnitsa*) in *Sarló és Kalapács*. Both texts discuss the Soviet social policy measures (maternity leave) and institutions (prenatal care, the factory medical system, childcare, kindergartens) that helped young female factory workers cope with both wage labour and child-rearing.<sup>31</sup>

Making the emotional labour of women more visible, which in the early poems helped explicate labour-related gender inequalities, now served the projection of propaganda in *Udárnyica* and *Gálocska*. Even at home, Nastya performs her maternal duties as a shock worker and, upon her return to the factory from maternity leave, she continues to work as one. To quote Újvári: "Nastya gets back to work, all her nerves now dedicated to production – because she knows that during this time, Galochka is in good hands. Because she knows that the more consciously she works upstairs, the better life will be for Galochka downstairs."<sup>32</sup>

30 Melanie ILIČ, *Women Workers in the Soviet Interwar Economy* (London: Macmillan 1999), 27–42.

31 In practice, the services listed in Újvári's Udarnitsa-essays were frequently not accessible. In her book on Soviet women workers, Melanie Ilič summarises a Soviet article published the same year as Újvári's texts, in which a labour inspector provides a detailed account of the shortcomings in a Leningrad factory, revealing the contradictions between state propaganda and actual practices in the factories: "In November 1934 *Trud* published a short article by Kletschina, the labour inspector at the Krasnyi Treugol'nykh factory in Leningrad. Kletschina complained that 'the relationship of the administration with working women is heartless'. The director of one of the departments, Khodash, did not want to employ women who were nursing mothers. The situation in other departments at the factory was little better. No special place had been identified where women could feed their babies. The report also noted that there were attempts to reduce the wages of women taking statutory »nursing breaks«. One female shock worker, Naezdnikova, had received wages of 132 rubles a month before the birth of her baby, but once she had become a nursing mother she was being paid only 86 rubles. Kletschina complained that tens of qualified women workers at the Krasnyi Treugol'nykh factory, having become mothers, were being forced to leave the factory." ILIČ, „*Women Workers...*”, 71–72.

32 ÚJVÁRI Erzsé, „Gálocska”, in BAGDI, DOBÓ and SZEREDI, *Wonderful story?...*, 121.

In these texts, Újvári justifies female shock workers’ overwork by the love they feel for both the factory and their children. In the *Udárnyica* essay, Katya voluntarily returns to the factory during her maternity leave to train up the girl who replaced her so that the brigade does not fall behind. The text presents the culture of Soviet work competitions as a grassroots movement brought to life by the commitment of the workers and their love of the factory and work. No mention is made of the real economic pressures behind the shock worker movement or of the fact that the wages of brigade members were dependent on how fast they trained up new workers.<sup>33</sup> In reality, most of the unskilled young women recruited into factory work performed overtime because of the precarity of their financial situation. Declarations about women’s work ethic, the love of the workers’ collective, and work itself served to cover up the underlying economic conditions that created the *udarnitsa* phenomenon and to make women’s overwork appear natural.

### *Closing Remarks*

Overall, social reproduction remained a key issue for both Újvári and Barta, although they departed from different premises and emphasised different aspects of the same social problem. Barta approached the problem of social reproduction from the material side and expected reforms of the economic base to eliminate inequalities in the gendered division of labour. Újvári analysed the same issues but also discussed in detail the emotional aspects of the gendered division of labour and women’s subjective experiences. However, she wrote little on how economic determinants influenced social expectations towards women.

The two authors published many texts on social reproduction between the two world wars, yet, many aspects of women’s invisible labour nevertheless remained invisible in the Újvári–Barta oeuvre. In Barta’s novel *Csodálatos történet* (*A Wonderful Story*) and his later reports, his disregard for the emotional as-

33 Sergei Tretyakov’s 1935 short story *Nine Girls* also argued that the success of the Stakhanovite female tractor brigade led by Pasha Angelina was due to the fact that the brigade was not exclusively organised along formal lines, and that the women also turned to Pasha with their personal problems: “they cry together, they laugh together.” The female shock worker invested emotional labour in rebuilding the brigade’s collective, and this caring love extended beyond the brigade members to the material means of labour: “Pasha knows the tractor like the back of her hand and cares for it as a mother cares for her child.” Sergei TRETIAKOV, „Nine Girls”, transl. James VON GELDERN, in *Mass Culture in Soviet Russia*, eds. James VON GELDERN and Richard STITES, 216-227 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995).

pects leads to an oversimplified model of the gendered division of labour, one in which many elements of the social expectations of women are lost. In the case of the shock worker cult in Újvári's late texts, however, although emotional labour receives a prominent role, the propaganda written into the text treats symbolic aspects – such as caring and love – as inherent parts of “female nature” and uses them to stage the exploitation of female workers as natural.<sup>34</sup>

Ranging from the avant-garde to propaganda, Barta and Újvári's oeuvre provides many insights from various perspectives into the public discourse surrounding social reproduction and their analysis gives rise to numerous methodological questions that can function as a starting point for a critical analysis of literary and journalistic writings on social reproduction. A parallel analysis of the two authors' texts serves as a reminder that when scrutinizing the ideologies behind discourses on the gendered division of labour, it is also important to examine how they tackle the different aspects of emotional care, since the inequalities encoded in the gendered division of labour are not strictly limited to the opposition between productive and reproductive labour. Emotional care, traditionally performed by women, is equally present in both domestic and wage labour, and further complicates and deepens the unequal division of labour.

34 Women's “caring nature,” which is posited as natural, similarly limits the visibility of reproductive labour. CSÁNYI Gergely and KERÉNYI Szabina, „A »jó anya« mítosza Magyarországon a reprodukív munka és a piac globális történetének szempontjából”, *Fordulat* 24 (2018): 134–160.