THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE STATE: COMPARING 1970S AND 1980S FEMINISM IN ITALY AND YUGOSLAVIA THROUGH TWO AUTHORS' RE-READINGS OF HEGEL

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Abstract

In this thesis, I analyze the relationship between Carla Lonzi and Blaženka Despot, two feminist theorists active in Italy and Yugoslavia, respectively, between the early 1970s and mid-1980s. My study focuses specifically on the possibilities that their theories open up for a feminist understanding of philosophy, especially in relation to the undoing of notions of 'Western-ness' and 'Eastern-ness', which often lead to the discounting of perspectives coming from the regions labeled as 'Eastern'. To do so, I engage in critical discourse analysis to identify themes within their work, focusing specifically on their discussion of 'male culture' (or 'male thought') and the alternative relationship between the notions of 'universal' and 'particular' that their work establishes. Their location in both time and space – in countries which, for various reasons, can be considered 'at the border' between the two blocs of the Cold War, and in the decades of the 1968 student movement and the 1978 *Drug-ca Žena* conference, one of the most important moments within Yugoslav feminism – is particularly relevant to my research, owing to the numerous and frequent exchanges occurring between the two countries and the lively cultural environment of the time. I argue that despite their vastly different attitudes towards Hegelian and Marxist philosophy (and, in the latter case, practice), with Despot taking on a position that is generally of praise and Lonzi instead being very critical, some elements of theoretical convergence between them trace a path forward that, with its rejection of patriarchal violence, can easily be applied not just for strictly feminist (in a narrow understanding of the word) purposes, but can also comfortably be extended to a new understanding of issues related to East-West binaries, providing an alternative model to the still-popular Cold War understanding of the division as hinged on the (highly debatable) presence or absence of 'civil society'.

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List of Abbreviations

AFŽ – Antifašistička Fronta Žena

CIF – Centro Italiano Femminile

DC – Democrazia Cristiana

IRI – Istituto per la Ricostruzione Industriale

KDAŽ – Konferencija za Društvena Aktivnost Žena

KPJ – Komunistička Partija Jugoslavije

LF – Lotta Femminista

PCI – Partito Comunista Italiano

PSI – Partito Socialista Italiano

SKC – Studentski Kulturni Centar

SKJ – Savez Komunista Jugoslavije

ŠKUC – Študentski Kulturno-Umenitški Center

UDI – Unione Donne Italiane

1. Introduction

The feminist movement (or, perhaps more accurately, movements) took on vastly different forms throughout its long history. This is especially true in the case of the movements emerging on the border between the two Cold War 'blocs', with popular discourse often dismissing the forms of women's activism that emerged on the "Eastern" (socialist) side of the split, partly also because of unfortunately common 'Orientalist'[2] presuppositions that consider the "East" backwards and undeveloped in comparison to the modern (capitalist, feminist) "West". In this thesis, I will carry out a comparison between two contexts – Italy and Yugoslavia – and two authors – Carla Lonzi and Blaženka Despot – that, in differing ways, straggled the divide between these two geopolitical groupings.

Italy and Yugoslavia both occupied positions 'at the border' between the two Cold War blocs. Italy did so through its strong communist party, which promoted close industrial, economic, and cultural exchange with the USSR despite the country's adherence to NATO. Yugoslavia, instead, did so through its participation in the creation of the Non-Aligned Movement, which distanced it from the USSR, and the close collaboration with the USA, from which it received reconstruction funding, while also adopting a socialist system. The connection between Lonzi and Despot, on the other hand, is more indirect – yet their work is easily comparable in so far as they include in the main elements of their comparison two authors who were at the very heart of the division between the socialist 'East' and the capitalist 'West': Hegel and Marx. Marx, of course, was relevant in his role as the undoubtedly most influential theorist of socialism. Hegel, on the other hand, was among the earliest – and, again, among the most influential – theorists of "civil society", a concept which would become widely used to 'explain'

[2] Used here somewhat improperly compared to Said's definition, given that I'm extending it to mean both within countries and within Europe – but I would be far from the first to make this sort of extension (see, for instance, Bakić-Hayden and Hayden, 1992).

the differences between the two blocs: the 'democratic' (with exceptions) 'West', where civil society was supposedly thriving, and the 'undemocratic' (again, with some exceptions) 'East", where instead it was supposedly repressed. Lonzi and Despot's works – two sharp critiques of the two German authors, as made evident by the title of Lonzi's book ("Let's Spit on Hegel") and in the first few pages of Despot's – work to question these assumptions, each criticizing both the theoretical foundations and the lived reality of both political systems. They come to similar conclusions on the need for a specific focus on women's oppression, if it is to be solved, but also on the need for radical reform of the structures of power, despite their differing contexts and theoretical backgrounds. Their deeply anti-authoritarian critiques are rooted in a different era, but remain deeply relevant today, at a time when rights and freedoms are being rolled back worldwide, and both institutions and social movements struggle to protect them.

This chapter introduces the topics of the thesis and, in its four sub-chapters, respectively lays out my positionality in regards to the issues that I am covering, the research questions that have guided me and the methodology that I have used to conduct my research, a brief contextualization of the economic and political situations of Italy and Yugoslavia between the late '60s to mid '80s, and an overview of the existing literature on civil society as a 'marker' of 'Easternness' or 'Westerness', as well as of analyses of Lonzi and Despot's thought. Chapter 2 covers the basics of the Hegelian and Marxist systems, articulated in two sub-chapters, as well as their post-World War II interpretations in the two contexts that I am analyzing. The first two sections focus on the former issue, with the first analyzing and comparing Hegelian and Marxist dialectics (and, consequently, the idealistic and materialist approaches) and the second focusing instead on Hegel's triad of ethical life, which both Lonzi and Despot reference in the central parts of their arguments. The third sub-chapter comprises two sub-sections, which analyze Hegelian and Marxist theory throughout the late 1960s and 1970s in Italy and Yugoslavia, respectively. The third and fourth chapters have parallel structures, respectively focusing on

Lonzi and Despot. Each analyzes the situation of the feminist movements in the respective author's country before their writing in the first sub-chapter and breaks down and provides an analysis of the author's arguments in their respective texts. The fifth chapter carries out a comparison of the two authors along three axes, articulated in the respective sections: the "philosophical" and the "political", "male culture" and violence, and the state and authoritarianism. The sixth summarizes the findings and identifies possible avenues for further research.

1.1. Positionality statement

This thesis was not what I had initially intended to write – I came in to the Gender Studies department, after switching from Philosophy at the end of my first term at CEU, with the idea of comparing trans legislation and non-binary identities in pre-colonial Southern India and Southern Italy (Naples, specifically), topics which I had previously encountered in my Bachelor's degree and much closer to me, as someone questioning their gender identity and who was involved in transfeminist, queer, and Marxist activism in Italy for several years. The current topic was, instead, a backup plan, something still linked to philosophy in case the department switch fell through. I quite literally stumbled upon it at a lecture on Despot's work (held by Zsofia Lóránd, who I will often cite throughout) for one of my first Fall Term courses, a substitute mandatory elective for a course which could not be held, which left me thinking: "This sounds so similar to Lonzi!", whose work I was familiar with as it is considered foundational for a great majority of feminist groups in Italy to this day. Little did I suspect that I would become so interested in this topic when Nadia, the head of department at the time of my switch, suggested pursuing it, mostly due to logistical difficulties with my former idea. When I came up with it, I didn't yet know how many themes it would intersect: feminism and Marxism, of course, but also global and local structures of race and privilege and reflections on political situations which belonged to the '70s and '80s, but which reflect so closely the current

conditions of the world – wars rampaging, rights and protections being stripped from some behind the excuse that they are 'special treatment', attempts to homogenize groups within abstractly-constructed borders.

In the comparisons I carry out throughout the thesis, I am often on the side that is widely considered 'more privileged': I was born in Italy, in 'Western Europe' (although the whole point of this thesis is to question what that 'Western' even means), and I was raised as a man. I was active in some feminist groups in Italy, but as I will mention again in later chapters, participation in feminist organizing was rarely enough to prevent people from dismissing 'other/Other' feminisms as backwards, and it is arguably not enough to understand what feminism – or any social movement or form of 'civil society', which is what I think this thesis is most interested in – can, or wants to, or should do. Because of the history of at least one side of my family, I think of myself as a socialist, which probably makes me view Yugoslavia with lenses slightly too rose-colored, but at the same time, I'm not immune to the 'Western' presuppositions about the 'East'. The fact that I only speak limited Serbian-Bosnian-Croatian – I can read some independently, but often need a translation on the side, or to look up specific words – adds to my limitations in that regard. Likewise, although all oppression along the axes of gender and sexuality is arguably connected, as an AMAB, non-binary-at-best (but really, questioning, and likely cisgender) person, I only have so many stakes in feminism as a fight against the oppression of women (however that can be intended) – still, especially when adopting a position like that of either Lonzi or Despot, feminism is far from 'just' that (as if it was a small task in itself!). Still, my position and my experience of feminist organizing in Italy drive me to prefer more intersectional visions of what feminism is about – and although this thesis is not about 'choosing favorites', this probably shines through in my mild preference for Despot's interpretation.

1.2. Methodology and research questions

The research question that I am trying to answer, along with its sub-question, is the following: can feminism(s) engage in philosophy – a traditionally 'universalist' pursuit, at least in its self-understanding – without reducing or 'flattening' the particularities and individualities of different contexts and people? To what extent is such a discipline applicable to (or practicable in) (semi-)peripherical spaces, and how and to what extent does theory define, shape, and uphold notions of (semi-)peripherality? In what ways do Lonzi and Despot's feminist theorizing, or a combination of the two, address these issues, specifically in relation to the two levels of the 'particular' individual/citizen within the 'universal' state and of the 'particular' country within the 'universal' global geopolitical order?

I will be addressing these by focusing on the relationship between private and public life – as an 'individual', on the one hand, and as a 'citizen' (of a state, subject to its 'universal' – over the collective – law) on the other – that emerges in the work of Lonzi and Despot, two feminist thinkers from Italy and Yugoslavia respectively. Their work is especially relevant to my research question as the both of them address these topics from two different, albeit related, directions: where Lonzi promotes a vision highly critical of the state and 'institutionalized' collective life, Despot instead - partly owing to the state's much more proactive role in the development of women's rights in Yugoslavia – has a much more positive view on the possibility of life-as-'citizen' (i.e., of a change in the character of the 'universality' of the institution-state to truly include women). Both also share similarities in their links to the student movement, with Lonzi's stream of thought being deeply influenced by the student protests of 1968 and Despot's "neofeminism" having very close ties to the Student Cultural Centers in Belgrade and Ljubljana. Most importantly, however, both have an analysis of Hegel's notion of "civil society" – a concept which was overwhelmingly used throughout the Cold War in an attempt to justify the division between 'East' and 'West', i.e., the supposedly backwards

'periphery' and supposedly progressed 'center' (at least from a 'Western' perspective) – at the core of their arguments, although, again, with vastly different approaches.

Even though this is not 'marked' as a philosophy thesis, the above sections of the introduction should already be enough to understand that that has been, essentially, what I have been doing. Because of the murkiness of philosophical methodology (and of philosophy more generally, when it comes to methods), however, I've struggled somewhat to come up with a 'methodology' section, especially in regard to naming what I have done. The easier part concerns the more 'contextual' sections – 3.1 and 4.1 – where I have mostly focused on reading and synthesizing secondary literature. The best fit for the rest of it is probably a form of discourse analysis, whereby I identified key themes in the texts and reconstructed the authors' arguments about those, questioning what ideas and authors they reference, as well as what assumptions drive their arguments, through explicit and implicit references in word choice and in the 'voices' they represent in their text. For the final chapter, I selected the most relevant themes that emerged from the individual analyses in relation to the research questions I set out to answer, considering the influence of their different backgrounds on the positions they argue for.

A special linguistic note should be made pertaining to the reading of Despot's text, toward which some special limitations apply. Whereas I am a native speaker of Italian, and I am very familiar with philosophical terminology in that regard given my previous studies, two factors which allowed me to read and analyze Lonzi's work relatively straightforwardly, I am far from fluent in Croatian. In order to carry out the analysis of Despot's text, and due to the significantly greater quantity of text, I used an AI tool to translate the entirety of her book and identified the most relevant passages through a parallel reading of the original text and the translated version. I then went back to the selected sections in the original text and translated them in greater detail with the support of an online translation dictionary, researching specific,

'specialistic' philosophical terms when they emerged. This process was undoubtedly facilitated by Despot's much more pervasive use of pointed, explicit references to the authors she quotes, in part owing to her more 'academic' approach, in contrast to Lonzi, whose references are almost exclusively implicit.

1.3. Context

To better understand Lonzi's and Despot's theorizing, as well as the specific conditions of Italy and Yugoslavia as 'border regions', I will now provide a brief overview of the post-World War II economic and political situation in the two countries. This becomes especially important when considering the significant influence of the major parties in each of the two countries on local feminist movements, with some of the most influential feminist organizations in Italy and Yugoslavia receiving organizational and economic support from, when not directly part of, national political parties.

In Italy, the experience of World War II coincided with the time of the most intense repression carried out by fascism. The regime had outlawed opposition parties already in the 1920s, upon its rise to power, but the repression it carried out gradually spread to all areas of society. After the war, the banned parties resurfaced, having supported the partisan brigades who were active in the liberation of the country's northern and central regions (the South, instead, had already rid itself of the nazi-fascist government in 1943, thanks to an armistice brought on by the Allied invasion of Sicily and Southern Italy and signed by a part of the Italian army with the support of then king Vittorio Emanuele III), in part reinforcing the North-South split in the country, caused by deep-rooted administrative and historical (as well as partly geographical) reasons. Among these were, for instance, the Spanish crown's lack of investment in the region before Italy's unification and the stark population difference between the North and the South which, combined with Italy's proportional voting system, encouraged politicians

to cater primarily to the North. The country became a republic through a national referendum held in 1946, and three parties emerged as the leading contenders in the subsequent elections: the centrist *Democrazia Cristiana*,[3] the socialist, non-Soviet-aligned *Partito Socialista Italiano*,[4] and the communist, Soviet-aligned (but growing increasingly independent after 1956) *Partito Comunista Italiano*.[5] Up until the 1990s, when a corruption scandal hit the five parties in the government coalition (the DC, PSI, and three other minor parties), only two Italian prime ministers did not belong to the DC, and the PCI was never in the government despite its great cultural influence (as the second most-voted party in Italy and communist party with the most absolute members in non-state socialist Europe; see Bracke and Jørgensen, 2002). Catholicism did indeed have a profound cultural influence in Italy, affecting most aspects of life, including many women's rights, like abortion, which the Catholic Church opposed.

Italy soon developed into a market economy, although several major industries (especially metalworking and natural resource extraction, two of the country's most profitable) and banks were under the administrative control of the Italian state through the *Istituto per la Ricostruzione Industriale*,[6] and the combination of the IRI's policies and the economic support received through the Marshall Plan resulted in an economic boom that lasted until the early '70s. In 1968, the country was hit, like many others, by the wave of student protests that swept the world. This also coincided with the beginning of the period of internal terrorism known as the *anni di piombo*,[7] which saw far-right and far-left groups (referred to locally as the "extraparliamentary" right and left) attempt to (re)establish authoritarian regimes in the country, driving many Italians away from politics and exacerbating the economic turmoil of the 1970s oil crisis. Only in the mid-1980s, partly also due to the end of internal terrorism, did the Italian

[3] "Christian Democracy", henceforth also "DC".
[4] "Italian Socialist Party", henceforth also "PSI".
[5] "Italian Communist Party", henceforth also "PCI".
[6] "Institute for Industrial Reconstruction", henceforth also "IRI".
[7] "Years of lead", in reference to the metal used in the production of firearms and ammunition.

economy recover. The PCI's influence, as well as the IRI's intervention in the economy, are alternative testaments to Italy's condition as a border region that go beyond the strictly geographical.

In Yugoslavia, on the other hand, liberation from Axis forces happened almost entirely autonomously, with the local partisans, led by Josip Broz Tito and his *Komunistička Partija Jugoslavije*[8] (later *Savez Komunista Jugoslavije*),[9] gaining control of most of what would become Yugoslavia (plus Carinthia and parts of Friuli and Venezia Giulia) by the end of the war. Yugoslavia was then organized as a one-party federation,[10] comprising six republics (Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, and Macedonia) and two autonomous provinces (Vojvodina and Kosovo, both formally part of the Serbian federal republic). Initially close to the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia was expelled from the Cominform in 1948 and went on to receive aid from the United States, thus being able to trade with both the capitalist 'Western' bloc and the socialist 'Eastern' bloc, as well as having significantly more relaxed regulations over the cross-border circulation of information and people compared to Warsaw Pact countries. Proof of this is the large number of Yugoslav citizens who worked abroad from the 1960s onwards, especially in 'Western' countries. Through the foundation of the Non-Aligned Movement in 1961, an organization grouping countries "not aligned" with either of the major Cold War blocs, Yugoslavia further expanded its trade network, as well as positioning itself "against imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, racism, and all forms of foreign aggression, occupation, domination, interference or hegemony" (Castro, 1979). Yugoslavia also experienced student protests in 1968, together with demands for greater autonomy from some of the constituent republics, which were granted to some extent with a new Constitution in 1974.

[8] "Communist Party of Yugoslavia", henceforth also "KPJ".
[9] "League of Communists of Yugoslavia", henceforth also "SKJ".
[10] Technically speaking, each of Yugoslavia's constituent entities had its own, formally independent branch of the League of Communists.

Yugoslavia's economy was initially fully centrally planned, but soon, in 1945, switched to a model of "socialist self-management" (*samoupravljanje*), a sort of socialist market economy (Estrin, 1991, p. 193) whereby a company's workers were responsible for electing a council which would in turn elect the company's managers. In 1974, in the same year as the new Constitution, reforms to self-management were introduced, breaking companies down into even smaller, 'self-managed' units (Estrin, 1991, p. 189). Throughout its existence, Yugoslavia's economic performance was remarkably good (Estrin, 1991, p. 187), but it crashed in the 1980s, partly also due to the conditions of the international economy, with inflation especially rising out of control and prompting austerity measures and economic reforms in the country, as well as privatization throughout the 1990s. Still, the self-management system was promoted as a 'third way' between capitalism and planned socialist economies, remarking, as for Italy, Yugoslavia's 'border' position. The philosophy behind this system (and the state's overall federal structure) is also closely connected to Despot's emphasis on the 'particular' over the 'universal', which will be discussed in further detail later.

1.4. Literature review

Throughout the afterwar period, the Italian context was significantly marked by its condition as a border region both geographically and politically, with the PCI being the largest communist party in Western Europe (Bracke & Jørgensen, 2002), even after the beginning of the decline of Western European Communist parties (Markham, 1986). Lonzi operates within this context by taking on a position critical of the PCI's stance on the woman question, claiming that, following Hegel's theory, it unduly "homologated" women to the patriarchal order by naturalizing their different "role" compared to men – for Lonzi, instead, true women's liberation necessarily had to go through a construction of sexual difference radically outside and independent of the logics and dynamics of the patriarchy (Rudan, 2020). Lonzi's theoretical critique of Hegel specifically focused on the triad of ethical life (family – civil society – State),

targeting the second moment of it, that of civil society (Locatelli, 2022), unlike Despot, who instead focused on the family. Notably, criticism of Hegelian or Hegelian-influenced positions within the PCI's theory had already been expressed by such philosophers as Galvano Della Volpe in the previous decade (Ferencz-Flatz & Cistelecan, 2022). Lonzi's disagreement with these Hegelian, patriarchal tendencies within communism led her away from the PCI's cultural circles and her job as an art critic, dedicating the rest of her life to the feminist cause and maintaining an extremely close link between her theoretical work and ideals and her practical efforts within the Rivolta Femminile feminist collective (Fontaine, 2015). Her early work within Rivolta Femminile – namely, the group's programmatic pamphlet *Manifesto di Rivolta Femminile* – is analyzed in connection with her main work, *Sputiamo su Hegel*, in Buttarelli's *Carla Lonzi. Una filosofia della trasformazione* (2024), where the break (both personal and theoretical) with the two other foremost theorists within Rivolta Femminile, Carla Accardi and Elvira Banotti, over the relationship between feminism and Marxism, and ultimately the future of the group, is also examined in detail. The practice of "feminist self-consciousness", in fact, is key in her re-conceptualization of history and historiography, their traditional interpretation perceived by her as an instrument of male domination over women (Zapperi, 2015): she chooses to "incorporate" both her own and other women's voices, from the past and the present, in a "horizontal relationship" and not always necessarily in chronological order, refusing "recognition as […] a conflictual relationship" but rather as "the sharing of the same life circumstances […] in a history" (Subrizi, 2020). At the same time, Lonzi and Rivolta Femminile's place within the broader context of Italian feminism is analyzed in Adriana Cavarero and Franco Restaino's volume *Le filosofie femministe: due secoli di battaglie teoriche e pratiche* (1999), where it is also situated alongside the slightly later Italian Marxist feminist movement, which emerged soon after the publication of *Sputiamo su Hegel* and took much from Lonzi's reflection (Curcio, 2019). While, as shown here, there is much literature on Lonzi's

reflections on Hegel, not as much attention has been paid to her relationship with Marxism directly, despite it being a key point within her work (Lonzi, 1970/1982; Campagna, 2023).

Yugoslavia, similarly to Italy, was also significantly marked by its condition as a border country between the 'Eastern' and 'Western' blocs. A state socialist country, Yugoslavia was nonetheless for the most part independent from Soviet politics and quite open to Western influence, receiving financial support from the United States (Zarev, 2018) and both welcoming Western scholars and developing theories departing from Stalinist Marxist-Leninism through such avenues as the Korčula Summer School or the *Praxis* journal (Ferencz-Flatz and Cistelecan, 2022), as well as holding a prominent position within the Non-Aligned Movement (Kilibarda, 2010) and functioning on an economic system – that of "worker's self-management" – which mixed elements of a market economy with limited state planning, partly in an effort to pursue a specifically "Yugoslav road to socialism" (Musić, 2011), the latter a concept which would have resonated greatly with the leadership of the PCI of the late 1970s and '80s, also moving away from the USSR in favor of a "national way to socialism" (Azcárate, 1978). Despot, a philosophy professor at the University of Zagreb, had close ties to intellectuals of the *Praxis* group, but maintained some distance from the group as an institution (Bosanac, 2008), over the same theoretical reasons as those for which Lonzi took some distance from Italian Marxism and broke away from the early (Italian) Marxist feminism of Accardi and Banotti: she criticized the *Praxis* group's "collapsing" of the woman question into an issue merely of capitalist or class oppression, awarding it little significance of its own (Blagojević, 2020). Still, Blagojević argues, through the translations and reviews of "Western" feminist texts by Yugoslav women philosophers within the *Praxis* journal, *Praxis* played an important role in the development of Yugoslav feminism (Blagojević, 2020). Nonetheless, Boršić and Skuhala Karasman (2023) argue that many achievements towards women's equality in Yugoslavia were not so much a product of activism as one of "bureaucracy", linked to academic philosophical discourse and

women's magazines such as *Start*. Interestingly, they seem to view these as a result of state policies, rather than mostly grassroots movement (albeit undoubtedly receiving at least some level of support from the governing regime), which, as I will argue later in chapter 4, was instead the case for the most part. Like the intellectuals of *Praxis*, Despot criticized the "socialist reality" of Yugoslavia at the time, but, like Lonzi, she focused on the relationship between Hegelian thought and Marxism and the "social roles" it brought forth within socialist society (Bosanac, 2008). Unlike Lonzi, however, she utilizes Hegel to attempt to change "established Marxism", suggesting that the idealized figure of the "working mother" is a patriarchal instrument that, by allowing violence and prevarication within the family, oppresses women, but that by returning to Hegel – for whom a "lack of violence […] [is] a prerequisite of freedom" (Despot, 1987) – this can be overcome (Despot, 1987). Despite the amount of scholarship on Despot's relationship with Hegelian and Marxist theory, however, relatively little has been written on the influence of feminism of European and American feminism on her work, and specifically on the relationship to Lonzi, with whom she appears to share conclusions but not methods.

Central to this comparison is the Hegelian understanding of what he calls the "philosophy of spirit", and most importantly, the triad of "ethical life" (*Sittlichkeit*), composed of family life – civil society – State (Hegel, 1817/1963), the one referenced by both Lonzi and Despot. While many feminist scholars would agree with Lonzi to consider Hegel's model of the family as detrimental to women's liberation because of its focus on gender roles within the family (Easton, 1987), many others have also argued, instead, that there is much potential for a feminist re-reading of Hegel's work on the family (Stafford, 1997; Wildemann Kane, 2014), namely by suggesting that that the "problem of the relation between identity and difference […] is at the heart of a feminist project to create a free and equal society" (Stafford, 1997). Some, like Landes (1981), suggest that Hegel's conception of the family, while very patriarchal, roots

what she terms the "authoritarian dimension of the family" (the father's monopoly on the representation of the family in civil society, and thus on the acquisition of the means of subsistence) in the "antagonistic property structure of civil society", allowing in this way for both Despot's argument – which is founded on the avoidance of violence as a prerequisite for any property – and Lonzi's argument – rooted, instead, in woman acting as an "ironic"[11] force upsetting and uprooting the patriarchal order – to take place.

'Civil society', however, is also a central concept in understanding both the reciprocal and internal constructions of the two countries of origin of the authors that I am analyzing, and the relationship between 'East' and 'West' at least on a national and a regional/European level – Seligman (1992), among other points, comments on the then-dominant Cold War idea of either the presence or the lack of 'civil society' as the marker of whether a country belonged to 'Eastern' or 'Western' Europe. On this criterion, however, it seems hard to argue that Yugoslavia would count as 'Eastern Europe' – and yet, that seems to be common opinion among many. The processes of (political, economic, discursive) peripheralization that characterize the region find their roots, according to authors such as Böröcz (2021), in an attempt by the "'White-identified' subject" to self-constitute itself as "putative[ly] 'superior'" by (discursively) inferiorizing the Other, thus attempting to justify its exploitation. "Balkanism", in Todorova's (1997) words, is one of the ways in which this process of peripheralization can be called, constructing the region (specifically, the Balkans, including former Yugoslavia) as an "Other within" Europe – "racially white", not quite European but not quite not-European either, yet constructed as more "backwards" than "Western Europe". A similar process, as some, such as Tlostanova (2012), have argued, also occurred more recently with the creation of the category of "Southern Europe", albeit carrying somewhat different stereotypes and presuppositions about the region. Bakić-

[11] Lonzi uses this term in reference to Hegel definition of women – specifically, Antigone – as the "eternal irony of the community" (which she reclaims), a radical and unexpected break with patriarchal logic. A more in-depth analysis of this will be given in the relevant chapter.

Hayden and Hayden (1992), as well as Baker et al. (2024), note that, within these peripheralized regions, analogous processes have been carried out internally to attempt to "regain" the status of (putative) "superiority" that was denied to them in that process of peripheralization by doing the same to other areas within their respective regions, through what Bakić-Hayden and Hayden call "nesting orientalisms": their example is that of the northwestern republics of (former) Yugoslavia, who claimed for themselves the category of "Central European" as "a strategy for "reclaiming" a Western European heritage and a denial of Easternness" (Ballinger, 2017) opposed to the "barbaric" Orthodox and Muslim southern republics, in a similar way to how, in Italy, the northern regions (corresponding roughly to the geographical area of the Po valley) claimed the heritage of the communes' "civic responsibilities" and supposed "Alpine, or Aryan, or Celtic [genetic] endowment" as a way to distinguish themselves from the "backwards" South, constructed as a sort of mere passive subject to the Bourbon monarchy (Schneider, 1998/2020). Similar ideas are expressed by Žižek (1999), who argues that the category of "Balkan" is consistently applied to the places south-east of wherever who is speaking is located (except for Greece, often viewed as "the cradle of our Western civilization" – relevantly, the only country in the region not to adopt state socialism). It is notable that many of the ideas that underpin these categories – "development", "civilization", and most importantly "civil society" – originate in the Enlightenment, as Seligman (1992) notes, and are touched on by Hegelian thought.

2. Hegel's family-civil society-State triad and its readings in Italy and Yugoslavia

The triad of "ethical life", most clearly elaborated on by Hegel in his *Elements of a Philosophy of Right* (1820/1952), is central to the theoretical analyses of both Despot and Lonzi as the primary focus of their critiques of the discrimination faced by women in their respective societies. In this chapter, I will first briefly touch on the Hegelian idealist dialectical method and its differences from Marxist materialist dialectics, with the reversal occurring between them playing a central role, which will be explored in more detail in the later chapters, in Lonzi and Despot's theorizing. I will then be presenting Hegel's political theory as it takes shape in the triad of ethical life, paying special attention to the first two moments – that of the family and that of civil society, which are the key ones for Despot and Lonzi's theorizing respectively –, and looking at the theory's reception in Yugoslavia and Italy in the period immediately before the two's writing.

2.1. Idealism and materialism: Hegelian and Marxist dialectics

The entire Hegelian philosophical system depends on the dialectical method of transcendental idealism, which he developed on the one hand as a response to the Kantian 'doctrine of antinomies' (Cortella, 2020, p. 349) and on the other as a further elaboration of the works of two slightly precedent German idealist philosophers, Johann Fichte and Friedrich Schelling (Severino, 1996/2020a, p. 382), although the history of dialectics can be traced back all the way to Platonic/Socratic dialectics, in ancient Greece (Brooks, 2024). In the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline* (Hegel, 1817/1830, §§79-82), Hegel presents the dialectical method as split up into three main "moments": the intellectual or abstract, the negative-reasonable or dialectical, and the positive-reasonable or speculative

(popularly – and improperly – known as the 'thesis', 'antithesis', and 'synthesis' because of a later Hegelian commentator, Chalybäus – Cortella, 2020, p. 351). The main premise of idealist dialectics – that which gives rise to the famous Hegelian claim according to which "What is real is rational; And what is rational is real" (Hegel, 1817/1830, §6) – is that the material world (i.e., the phenomena that we experience in our daily lives) is but the external manifestation of the self-determined and -determining process of development of the 'Idea' (hence the name 'idealism'). This is the general process through which dialectics itself can happen, 'posing'[12] concepts into objectivity (concreteness) and later dissolving them until they are re-affirmed together with their negation and can thus become a new concept, ultimately resulting in the Absolute, which carries in itself the entirety of what exists (Cortella, 2020, p. 344). Marxist dialectics acknowledges and adopts this general structure, but claims that it is "standing on its head" (Marx, 1873/1999) and must therefore be flipped right-side-up again, the material – "nature", in the Hegelian system (Cortella, 2020, p. 355) – no longer merely the external manifestation of what occurs in the human mind (the Idea) but, rather, the starting point which only in a later moment gets "reflected by the human mind, and translated into forms of thought" (Marx, 1873/1999). Importantly, however, even in this reversal, the negative moment, the one which allows for the 'movement' of the whole system and which distinguishes the dialectics of modern philosophy from those of the ancient Greeks, maintains center stage. This feature, I want to argue, is key to understanding the points of contact between Lonzi and Despot, while also acknowledging the radically different stances they assume towards Hegel's work.

The first step towards doing so, however, is gaining a better understanding of how exactly the three moments of the dialectic process, as well as the process itself, function. Each manifestation of the idea – that is, each moment of the dialectic process – is not entirely separate

[12] Meant, here and henceforth, in the same sense through which one would "pose" a question – it can be understood as the "statement" of the certain concept.

from the others (both within each individual triad and within the whole system); rather, each moment is the result of the self-destabilization (and subsequent negation) of the previous, which in turn lead to the affirmation of a new moment which, as the product of the negation of the previous, contains in itself the traces of the previous one, hence why they are 'moments' and not 'parts'. In the first moment, the Idea poses itself as 'intellect' or 'understanding' (*Verständnis*) in a "rigid determination", separate and clearly distinct from everything else, of which it is the negation following the Spinozian principle that every determination (of one particular) is a negation (of everything else) (Hegel, 1817/1830, §80). Notably, for Hegel any one thing can be posed in the intellectual moment (the first moment of dialectics), even those that in Hegel's dialectical development of history would appear under a different moment, but, if that is done, they cannot be understood in their full reality, as by being limited to the first moment they would not go through the dialectical process that allows for their full understanding. To give an example of this, a political philosophy that does not paint a dialectical picture of the development of the State through the negation of the two moments of the family and civil society is technically possible, but it would not provide – in Hegels' view – a successful or complete explanation of how the State comes to be and of what it is (Hegel, 1817/1830, §79). The second moment – whose centrality to dialectics is already hinted at by its name, "dialectical" – is the result of the realization on the part of the Idea that the first moment is unable to hold its own separateness from all other concepts because of its dependence on them (specifically, on their negation) for its existence: this self-destabilization, then, determines that the opposite determination to the one in the first moment is posed (Hegel, 1817/1830, §81). As a determination itself, however, determined by the negation of the first concept, the concept originating from the second moment likewise cannot hold its own separateness: thus, the third and final moment, the "speculative", comes about, affirming the "unity of determinations in their opposition" (Hegel, 1817/1830, §82). In it, what was contradictory between the first two

moments is eliminated and remains only 'as a trace' in the final moment, in the history of its formation, and what remains after the contradiction carried out in the opposition of the first two moments – an opposition which is therefore never total, never absolute – properly constitutes the third moment of dialectics (Severino, 1996/2020a, p. 387).

Marxist dialectics, on the other hand, reverses the order of Hegel's, keeping negation as the central moment that allows for change and 'movement' within reality, but grounding this process in "the material conditions of life" rather than the "general development of the human mind" (Marx, 1859/2009). For Marx – whose theorizing on dialectics is split between various texts – the Hegelian understanding of reality as the progressive development of the Idea corresponds to what he calls "superstructure" (Severino, 1996/2020b, p. 97), or "the material world reflected by the human mind, and translated into forms of thought" (Marx, 1873/1999), the theoretical self-understanding and self-theorizing of (those living in) a certain time of that time itself (Marx, 1859/2009). The 'proper' movement of dialectics, then, is not that of the (logical, theoretical) self-development of the Idea, as for Hegel, but the "effective development of empirical reality"[13] (Severino, 1996/2020b, p. 97) – history as it happens and involves (and is determined by) human subjects. The reason for this change is, essentially, avoiding what Marx views as the main issue with Hegel's understanding of dialectics: the 'Absolutization' (and therefore 'stopping') of what should instead be a process, a *movement* of progress through the re-integration of all previous moments into the (overall) final moment of the absolute spirit (Severino, 1996/2020b, p. 96). An effective metaphor for this, formulated by Severino (1996/2020b, p. 96), presents this reversal in linguistic terms: for Hegel, the Idea is the subject and empirical reality is the predicate, such that the general (e.g., "the man") is the substance of which the particular is the attribute (e.g., "Socrates": "the man is Socrates"); for Marx, on the

[13] "lo sviluppo effettivo della realtà empirica".

other hand, empirical reality (the particular) becomes the subject, with the idea (the general) being the predicate ("Socrates is a man").

2.2 The triad of ethical life

The main work in which Hegel presents his political philosophy is, as mentioned previously, the *Elements of a Philosophy of Right*, which was first published in 1820. In the third part of the book, he describes the triad of "ethical life", composed of the three moments of the family, civil society, and the State, and largely commented on by both Lonzi and Despot as well as by their contemporaries in their respective countries. The core principle behind ethical life according to Hegel is, essentially, the "identity of the universal will with the particular will" (Hegel, 1820/1952, §155), that is, the overlapping of the 'external' moral laws with the 'internal' sense of morality of each individual: in this sense, then, "ethical life" is the process delineating the subject's (the 'internal' morality of each) passage into objectivity (the 'external' moral laws). This move from the particular to the universal is key in the critiques of Hegelianism and Marxism brought forth by Lonzi and Despot, as will be shown in later chapters: where for the former the implied inaccessibility to this process for women is the reason behind their exclusion from Marxist politics in 1970s Italy, the latter highlights woman's role in the family in Hegel's triad in order to reaffirm the essentiality of her participation in public politics.

Throughout the triad of ethical life, the relationship between the three moments of Hegelian dialectics emerges with great clarity especially concerning the individual subject and its objectification-universalization, which is the key theoretical point of the more general triad to which that of ethical life belongs (that of "objective spirit", or spirit-made-objective, which preludes the "absolute spirit", i.e., subjectivity in its full realization and self-determination). The first moment of ethical life is what Hegel calls the "ethical mind in its natural or immediate [i.e., non-mediated] phase" (Hegel, 1820/1952, §157): De Ruggiero (1968, p. 158) suggests that

this is the individual having "annihilated their personality closed in itself and found themselves, with their conscience, in a totality".[14] In this way, this moment constitutes the simple statement of objectivity which results in a mere annihilation of the individual – the morality of the collective (not yet the state but the family) takes complete precedence over the moral sense of the individual. However, the first moment is itself broken down into three further moments, which are at the heart of Despot's argument – who uses them to salvage women's individuality in the later stages of objectivization of spirit (the 'absolutization' or universalization of individual will into an almost-Rousseauian general will) – and which it is therefore useful to explore further for the purposes of later discussion.

The first moment of the family, that of marriage, is a moment that involves both "physical life" (in the first place – part of Despot's comment will be on this) and, in a later moment, also "the level of the mind" and "self-conscious love" (Hegel, 1820/1952, §161). Notably, however, Hegel claims that marriage depends on "the free consent of the persons […] to renounce their natural and individual personality to this unity of one with the other" (Hegel, 1820/1952, §162): "both sexes" operate this "surrender […] of their personality" (Hegel, 1820/1952, §168), which of course presupposes that both sexes at first possess this "personality" – that is, the condition of subjectivity, and the corresponding agency, that allows them to freely decide to partake in the union of marriage. At the same time, the family pays an important role in Hegel's overall picture of society by "providing the institutional context within which people can develop and find recognition of the psychological dimension of their particularity" (Hardinon, 2009, p. 181) – this same point, however, is an important precursor of the part of Hegel's argument that will then most harshly be criticized by Lonzi, as it grounds women's exclusion from political life 'properly intended' by suggesting that their full realization comes

[14] "[L'individuo ha qui] annullato la sua personalità in sé chiusa e si ritrova, con la sua coscienza, in una totalità". The beginning of the quote, excluded in the in-text translation above, is included here for contextualization.

in the "private life of the family" (Hardinon, 2009, p. 184). This is because, in Hegel's view, they are not oriented towards "the objective" (the universal-absolute, the theoretical – Hegel, 1820/1952, §166) like men but instead toward "the concrete", with feeling as their primary faculty (Hegel, 1820/1952, §166; Hardinon, 2009, p. 184), and therefore would not 'need' anything of the 'objective' kind (i.e., the kind of universality of moral laws in the State, for instance) for their full realization.[15]

The second moment of the family – family capital – is less relevant to the argument being made by the two authors analyzed, but it generally consists in the acquisition of independence of the new familial unit from the families whence the two members of marriage come (Hegel, 1820/1952, §§170, 172), and represents the negation of the first moment insofar as feeling is taken out of the equation (Hegel, 1820/1952, §176). The most notable element of this moment for this discussion is Hegel's note according to which the family "as a legal entity in relation to others" (that is, in civil society) is to "be represented by the husband at its head", even though "each [member of the family] has his right in the common stock" (Hegel, 1820/1952, §171): this is, again, re-affirming the exclusion of women from civil society and therefore, later, the State, potentially representing one of the points which Lonzi comments on in her work (although she chooses not to provide any references to the specific passages she critiques – Rivolta Femminile, 1970/2017).

The third and last moment of the family triad – the education of children and dissolution of the family - consists of the education of children thanks to the resources provided by the family capital and the child's acquisition of independence from the family and coming into existence as a separate subjectivity which however, at the same time, represents the material embodiment of the union of the two members of marriage (Hegel, 1820/1952, §§173-174). At

[15] While it might make sense for feminist purposes to not want to uphold this distinction, it is interesting to note how instead, on a Marxist interpretation of dialectics, it would instead seem to *prioritize* the participation of women in politics.

the same time, as a new independent subject the child is not itself part of the property of the family (the family capital, of which it therefore represents the negation), and represents the dissolution of the family by inheriting the very family capital after the father's – the administrator of the family capital – passing (Hegel, 1820/1952, §§176, 178). In discussing this moment, Hegel confirms further the point made earlier – and partly employed by Despot in her critique – that women, before marriage, are free subjects at least to the extent necessary to willingly and freely partake in the marriage contract (Hegel, 1820/1952, §177), thus providing at least one grounds for an argument for their full inclusion in political life.

Returning to the discussion of the triad of ethical life, its second moment is that of civil society. This is the moment when the individual pursues his[16] own personal interests in a sphere that is not quite yet that of the political (Hegel, 1820/1952, §183) – that will be the public, political sphere of the State, to which only some participate directly, whereas most interact with it only through civil society, directly for men and indirectly through the family for women. This sphere will be centered on the new relationships established by the market (Hardinon, 2009, p. 190), and more generally meant to allow each to attain "livelihood, happiness, and legal status" (Hegel, 1820/1952, §183): these are attended to by the three moments of civil society itself, the "System of Needs" (participation in labor and the market), the "Administration of Justice" (the legal system), and the "Public Authority and the Corporation" (the institutions that maintain public infrastructure and manage the relationship between the individual-as-laborer and the State) (Hegel, 1820/1952, §188). All these structures mediate between the private sphere of the individual and the public sphere of the State, but, according to Hardinon (2009, pp. 190-191), this conception of civil society does not correspond fully with the one elaborated by "Central and Eastern European intellectuals", being in many ways more restricted to specific fields

[16] Because the moment of civil society comes after that of the family, it is only the man that participates in it, as it is not the same as the private sphere of the family: see, in this regard, Hardinon (2009, p. 189).

(excluding, for instance, social movements or 'neighborhood life'), as well as including ones – like the legal system or the parts of the state responsible for the maintenance of infrastructure – that would be excluded from the contemporary conception of civil society. This is relevant not just because of the role that civil society specifically plays in Lonzi and Despot's theorizing, but also in regards to the discussions over what differentiated "East" and "West" in Europe (Seligman, 1992) and which are central to the comparison of the instances of feminist movements represented by the two authors that I am analyzing. On the other hand, the conception of civil society provided by Hegel places great importance on the domain of labor as one of the main forms of civil participation (Hegel, 1820/1952, §§189, 196, 251): the increased participation of women to the labor force in Lonzi and Despot's contexts, however, would, in a Hegelian framework, seem to place them within civil society and, therefore, the kind of 'civil' life that is the main expression of politics in the Hegelian system. It remains to be questioned, however, how much such an interpretation – which Lonzi especially does not seem to endorse – questions the radically bourgeois (by his own admission!) understanding of society proposed by Hegel, this questioning nonetheless appearing to be one of the objectives of both Despot's and Lonzi's critiques despite the different directions they take in other respects.

Lastly, mentioned only for completeness' sake as it is not greatly relevant to either Lonzi or Despot's critiques, the Hegelian State is the actual manifestation of "the ethical Idea", transforming the rights and duties (though not quite yet called that in the first moment) that are upheld in the family only through "feeling" into – effectively – a universal law grounded in rationality (Hegel, 1820/1952, §§257-258). It encompasses the 'properly political' sphere: laws that are not meant to pursue the interests of individuals (or corporations, or the family – generally, those with legal personhood) but rather a "universal" interest (Hegel, 1820/1952, §260), as well as the relations between states both in the present moment and, ultimately, in the

whole of history, thus reaching the third and final moment of the State, "World-History" (Hegel, 1820/1952, §259).

2.3 Interpretations of Hegelianism in Italy and Yugoslavia

2.3.1 Hegelian political philosophy in 1960s and '70s Italy

The interpretations of Hegelian political thought in late 1960s Italy were, for the most part, closely tied to the Italian Communist Party – the main target of Lonzi's critique – following a decade-long struggle between the party's intellectuals on what to do with the Hegelian heritage of Marxism after the significant practical and theoretical upheavals which followed the 1956 revolution in Hungary and the 1968 one in Czechoslovakia (Azzolini, 2023, pp. 30-31). Generally, two main positions can be recognized: the first, linked to Galvano Della Volpe, Antonio Banfi, Lucio Colletti, and, to some extent, Lonzi herself, aims to separate Marx from Hegel, whose influences in Marxism were seen as the main issue with which contemporary Marxism had to contend (Azzolini, 2023, pp. 30-31). The second, instead, was supported by such philosophers as Biagio De Giovanni, Norberto Bobbio, Massimo Barale, and Remo Bodei, instead called for a positive reconsideration, if not even an extremization, of the Hegelian elements in Marxism (Azzolini, 2023, p. 36; Fabiani, 2024, pp. 87-88). Because many of these discussions took place throughout Lonzi's life and work on *Sputiamo su Hegel*, I will not focus on the writings of the specific authors – some of which were published only after Lonzi's volume, but nonetheless provided significant contributions to the debate (and, more importantly for the purposes of this thesis, influences on Lonzi) – but rather on the main theoretical points being argued for by the two sides.

The first group's argument originated essentially from the point already mentioned at the end of the above paragraph on civil society, according to which Hegelian thought is ultimately too closely tied to a bourgeois understanding of society for it to provide a truly

revolutionary – and therefore liberating – alternative (Fabiani, 2024, pp. 87-88), and contesting Hegel's idealism, which especially according to Colletti represents a hindrance to the pursuit of science by prioritizing reason over sensible certainty and intellect (Azzolini, 2023, p. 31). The necessary result of this, according to Mancina (1972, pp. 185, 189-190) is the elimination of the remaining traces of Hegelian dialectics in Marxist thought – which, for her, remain despite Marx's 'inversion' of it through Engels's reading – towards a different understanding of dialectics, which cannot be eliminated entirely in pursuit of a completely "anti-Hegelian" reading (Azzolini, 2024, pp. 31-32), but rather must take on a different direction. This can either be a Kantian one, as for Della Volpe (Mancina, 1972, p. 185), or the one that Lonzi suggests (Azzolini, 2024, p. 33), which will be discussed further in the later chapter on her work and which consists, essentially, in re-centering women as almost a class of their own, to an extent which she sees as potentially fatal for the Marxist project as a whole.

The second group, instead, is in direct contrast to this view, suggesting that it is the very Kantian elements emphasized by the first group and inherited by Marx through Hegel that constitute a major issue, especially, for De Giovanni, regarding the conception of history and the relationship between past and present (Azzolini, 2024, pp. 34-35). Specifically, what is argued is that thanks to Hegelian dialectics – which, for De Giovanni and the others, should go so far as to be re-adopted by Marxist thought – it is possible to have an understanding of history that goes beyond that of a mere linear temporality but which, instead, allows for the "discovery of a hermeneutical function of the present that reconstructs the epistemological presence of the past"[17] (Mancina, 1972, p. 183). What this means is, in effect, that the Hegelian conception of history, as the self-understanding of bourgeois society, is essential for a Marxist revolutionary project to fully understand the bourgeois society that it aims to restructure radically. It is in this sense, too, as will be shown in the relevant chapter, that Despot's critique likewise repurposes

[17] "scoperta della funzione ermeneutica del presente che ricostruisce la presenza epistemologica del passato".

Hegelian thought, taking it as the basis for the criticism of the parts of Yugoslav 'real socialism' that maintain the (bourgeois and pre-revolutionary) discrimination of women.

2.3.2 Hegelian political philosophy in 1970s Yugoslavia

In Yugoslavia – where Hegel was reportedly the third most cited philosopher in the country until its dissolution in 1991 (Hrnjez, 2024, p. 307) – interpretations of him centered mostly around two groups, albeit both with significant divergences among their thinkers: on the one hand were the Marxist humanists gravitating around the Praxis group, most active in Croatia and Serbia, and on the other was the (slightly later) 'Ljubljana School', in Slovenia. Where the first group comprised of authors such as Gajo Petrović and Milan Kangrga, as well as Despot herself, and mostly dissolved with the closure of the eponymous journal in 1974 (and definitively in 1991with the breakup of Yugoslavia), the second, most notably represented by Mladen Dolar and especially Slavoj Žižek, although not necessarily still acting as a unitary group, has continued its theoretical production along a similar vein (Hrnjez, 2024, pp. 327-328). Due to Despot's own involvement and, as with Lonzi, the timing of the two groups in relation to her work, with the mature thought of the Ljubljana School emerging mostly after her writing, I will primarily focus on the understanding of Hegel provided by Praxis.

The Praxis group, as already mentioned, emerged in the 1960s around the *Praxis* journal and the Korčula Summer School, two institutions that were a product of Yugoslavia's peculiar position among state socialist countries due to its independence from the Soviet Union and which were meant to create a space for the discussion of the project of 'socialism with a human face' between various communist parties, including, notably, intellectuals tied to the French and Italian Communist Parties (Blagojević, 2022, pp. 2, 4). The Praxis school sought to carry out a radical critique of the present, which included a revision of (existing) Marxism – including the Yugoslav one – in favor of a 'rediscovery' of Marx, which for many in Praxis was to be carried

out through Hegel (Hrnjez, 2024, p. 312): for Despot, as mentioned, this meant, following an acknowledgement of the enduring oppression of women under socialism, returning to Hegel's political theory and providing a new reading of it and, with it, of Marxism; for others, like Kangrga, instead, it entailed a return to Kant and dialectics – like the one carried out by De Giovanni in Italy – to re-center 'practical reason' and, with it, the freedom of individual humans (Hrnjez, 2024, pp. 312-313). Hegel's re-formulation of Kantian dialectics, and specifically the centrality of the negative (dialectical) moment which is likewise central to the theoretical production of the Ljubljana School, is the beginning of a de-stabilization of metaphysics that opens up the possibility of an interpretation of the world as a product of the freedom of humans that, in turn, entails the possibility of revolution (Hrnjez, 2024, pp. 315-316), notwithstanding (or not considering) the bourgeois nature of much of Hegelian thought already mentioned previously. Despot's critique, while having a different, narrower focus, shares with the rest of the Praxis school and Yugoslav Hegelian thought more generally the centrality of the negative moment in Hegel's dialectics.

The Ljubljana School, on the other hand, center in a first moment around the *Problemi* journal, founded in 1962, which published the works of contemporary French philosophers (including some French feminists, who share some of their theoretical points with later Italian difference feminists[18] such as Luisa Muraro) and later, from 1982, around the Ljubljana School of Theoretical Psychoanalysis (Hrnjez, 2024, p. 317). Most of the Ljubljana School's theoretical work focuses on revisiting Lacan, ultimately resulting in a view that, like for Praxis, retains the

[18] "[Sexual] Difference feminism" ("femminismo della differenza [sessuale]") is the term used in Italy to refer to a strand of post-Lonzi and post-Irigaray feminism which considers formal equality between women and men a 'trap' to subsume the 'maternal/feminine symbolical order' into the 'paternal/masculine' and thus annihilate it, suggesting instead the need to "build a feminist alternative to 'sexed' practices and languages" ("la costruzione di un'alternativa femminista al linguaggio e alle prassi 'sessuate' della tradizione di ascendenza maschile" – Cavarero & Restaino, 1999, pp. 102-103). Although some, such as Luisa Muraro, have since (regrettably) taken this stream of thought in a trans-exclusionary direction, many others continue to pursue it while including trans individuals.

second moment of Hegel's dialectics as central, but does so to highlight the impossibility of a radical change in social (specifically, class) relationships (Hrnjez, 2024, pp. 322-323).

3. *Let's Spit on Hegel*: Carla Lonzi and Italian feminism

Carla Lonzi was arguably the most influential figure within the feminist movement in Italy at her time. Her thought, which first emerged during her experiences in the world of art criticism and early activism, initially within Italian communist circles and later within feminist ones, was central to the theoretical elaborations of many later feminist thinkers and activists. Simultaneously, it often crossed the 'border' between the different strands of feminism, being recognized as the 'mother' (within Italy) of difference feminism while rejecting both psychoanalysis (which difference feminism is deeply connected to – see Cavarero & Restaino, 1999, pp. 68-70) and Marxism as examples of the violent 'male culture' that she opposes. Despite this, she herself concedes that, at least in the first phase of her work with Rivolta Femminile (which includes *Let's Spit on Hegel*), her thought was profoundly shaped by Marxist reasoning (Colantuono, 2024). In this chapter, I will first examine the evolution of the feminist movement in Italy from the late 1960s to the late 1970s – the period during which Lonzi was active – to understand the context in which her work was situated and its impact on the overall Italian feminist movement. Secondly, I will be carrying out an analysis of Lonzi's *Let's Spit on Hegel*, focusing primarily on her treatment of Hegelian thought and of Marxism, in order to understand her main ideas regarding the liberation of women from the structures of patriarchal society, which, for her, these two ideologies represented. In particular, I will attempt to explore how her thought was still, to some extent, tied to the work of the two German authors, rejecting many of their key points while retaining some of the general theoretical structures they employed.

3.1 Between Catholicism and Marxism: The Italian feminist movement in the 1960s and '70s

Many scholars have chosen to mark the beginning of second-wave feminism in Italy by making it coincide with the establishment of a specific collective, organization, or association (see, for instance, Lussana, 2012, p. 16; Nava, 2011; or Morini, 2007). This approach has merits, but it hides, at least to some extent, the broader context in which Italian second-wave feminist movements operate, continuing the rebirth (or, better, 'resurfacing') of Italian feminism after the 20-year repression carried out by the fascist state. In this section, I will first look at the changes in the conditions of women in the period following the Second World War, when many significant changes took place as part of Italy's 'de-fascistization'. Afterwards, I will focus on the theoretical positions of some of the main Italian feminist organizations from the late 1960s to the early 1970s and how they developed, summarizing some of the key events and splits that led to the creation of different 'currents' within Italian feminism of the time.

Until 1945, the year of the end of the fascist regime (and, of course, of the Second World War) in Italy, women were effectively completely excluded from 'official' political life. This changed in February 1945, during Italy's 'liberation' from fascism, when they were granted the right to vote (Camera dei Deputati, 2023). Later, in 1946, after the decision to make the new, post-fascist Italy into a republic (as opposed to maintaining the monarchy), twenty-one women were elected to Italy's Constitutional Assembly – the organism granted the task of writing and approving the new republican Constitution – and later, in 1948, to the Italian Parliament (Camera dei Deputati, 2023). Their participation in the Constitutional Assembly determined the inclusion of women's equality as one of the fundamental rights guaranteed by the Italian Constitution. It also prompted the proposal of early laws, which, at least in the lawmakers'

intentions, promoted women's equality, such as the 'Merlin Law' (later passed as Legge n. 75/1958), outlawing brothels (Bracke, 2014, p. 34).

At the same time, the two parties that dominated the early period of Italian politics – the Democrazia Cristiana and the Partito Comunista Italiano - created two somewhat independent women's organizations, the *Centro Italiano Femminile*[19] and the *Unione Donne Italiane*[20] respectively, with the latter also intended to take in women from the Partito Socialista Italiano and other, minor left-wing parties (Bracke, 2014, p. 35). These two organizations' main objective was to reach "women's emancipation", and the means through which this is to be achieved is legislation (Lussana, 2012, pp. 47-49). Between their foundation and the earliest "neofeminist"[21] group, DEMAU,[22] three new laws targeting women's equality are passed by the Italian parliament, prohibiting the firing of women from jobs in reason of marriage, allowing women to access public sector jobs, and introducing a public pension scheme for homemakers (Lussana, 2012, p. 49). Contemporarily, the heated legislative debate over divorce also begins, but only results in an actual law in 1970 (Lussana, 2012, p. 50), when most 'neofeminist' movements are in their earliest stages. In 1969, a third group linked to a political party was founded: the *Movimento di Liberazione delle Donne* (later *Movimento di Liberazione Femminile*),[23] with ties to the *Partito Radicale*[24] (Morini, 2007). Their main goal consisted in the approval of the law on abortion, which was strongly opposed by the DC (and the Catholic Church more generally, following the Pope's 1968 *Humana Vitae* encyclical, which opposed contraceptive pills and abortion itself) and the *Movimento Sociale Italiano* (Lussana, 2012, pp.

[19] "Italian Women's Center". Henceforth also "CIF".
[20] "Italian Women's Union". Henceforth also "UDI".
[21] "Neofeminist" is the term used by Lussana to denote the feminist movements emerging throughout the late '60s and '70s and focusing on the practice of consciousness raising more so than on (primarily legal) emancipation, unlike the CIF and UDI.
[22] *DEMistificazione AUtoritarismo*, later *Demistificazione Autoritarismo Patriarcale* ("Demystification [of] Patriarchal Authoritarianism").
[23] "Movement for the Liberation of Women", later "Female/Women's Liberation Movement".
[24] "Radical Party", one of the main liberal parties – although still minor compared to the DC and PCI – in post-war Italy.

55-56),[25] and the achievement of a wider availability of contraceptives (Morini, 2007). The law on abortion would only be approved in 1978 (Lussana, 2012, p. 108), the same year that the group decided to separate from the Partito Radicale (Morini, 2007).

Also relevant to the formation of early feminist groups in Italy is the significant cultural and economic divide between the North and the South. This had existed ever since the unification of Italy in 1861, but it only grew larger in the late '50s and early '60s during the period known as the 'economic boom', which saw the industrialization and urbanization almost exclusively of Northern Italy[26] – especially the Northwestern regions of Piedmont, Liguria, and Lombardy – and the ensuing economic migration of many from South to North (Lussana, 2012, p. 118). Despite the economic growth, in this five-year period over one million women lost or left their jobs (mostly, though not exclusively, in the North), usually replaced by men, and for the most part became homemakers; many others, on the other hand, find new employment in the North (Lussana, 2012, pp. 25-26). The combination of internal northward migration, more active cultural life, and women's limited participation in paid labor are among the factors that contributed to the birth of the *Coordinamento Nazionale Donne FLM*.[27] This was a women's labor union born out of various cities' separate *Intercategoriali delle Delegate CGIL-CISL-UIL*[28] and local Coordinations of FLM Women, and also including domestic workers and

[25] "Italian Social Movement", a post-war far-right party composed of many of the members of the former fascist party of Italy.
[26] The reasons for this are complicated and manifold. Some factors that contributed to this situation were the history of 'local' political administration in the North, reinforced by the Savoys of Piedmont unifying the country in 1861, as opposed to the quasi-colonial administration of the South by the Spanish kings, and the geographical features of the region, with the Po river plainlands in the North facilitating the construction of infrastructure, in contrast with the mostly mountainous terrain of Central and Southern Italy. For similar reasons, the North gained greater representation in the new country's parliament, in 1861, determining greater investments in that area and the reproduction of these conditions for the decades to come.
[27] "National Coordination of FLM Women" (where "FLM" stands for "Federazione Lavoratori Metalmeccanici", "Federation of the Metalworkers").
[28] Literally "Intercategorical [Group] of the Delegates [female noun] of CGIL-CISL-UIL", where CGIL, CISL, and UIL are the three major labor unions of Italy (Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro, Confederazione Italiana Sindacati Lavoratori, Unione Italiana del Lavoro). "Intercategorical" refers to the non-specificity of the work field (the "categoria") of its members.

homemakers among those it represented, and of "neofeminist" groups mostly in cities north of Rome.

This does not mean that (neo)feminist groups were absent in the South: the *Nemesiache*,[29] for instance, were a major group formed in Naples in 1970. Other groups were also formed in other major Southern cities, such as Salerno, Catanzaro, and Pescara, mostly linked to far-left revolutionary movements like *Autonomia Operaia*[30] (Panico, 2022). The main exception to this group is the already-mentioned group of the Nemesiache, whose focus was primarily on artistic work (something they shared with Lonzi, whose training in art history remained important throughout her life despite her rejection of art criticism, among other things, as 'male culture') – "film, performance, critical writing, painting, poetry, music, collage and costume" – attempting to repurpose mythology and folktales for the purpose of (autonomous, non-male-determined) "self-discovery" (D'Alto, 2024).

The group most widely recognized as the first "neofeminist" movement, despite its foundation prior to the 1968 protests, is the already mentioned DEMAU group, established in Milan in 1966. DEMAU was formed at a time when the whole country was involved in a debate over the position of women in society following a legal case stemming from an interview on young women's views on family, sex, labor, and participation in society, published by the students' newspaper of the Parini high school in Milan (Lussana, 2012, pp. 52-53). The group's main objective was raising awareness among women of the legal changes that were happening in their favor – one of the major issues that prevented the proper application of the laws – and, more importantly, changing the "backwards-looking morals"[31] that prevented women from

[29] A rough translation would be "The disciples [feminine noun] of Nemesis", or "The followers [feminine noun] of Nemesis", in reference to the Greco-Roman goddess of the same name, responsible for retribution against those who committed the sin of *hybris* (excess of pride, confidence, or arrogance, especially against the gods).
[30] "Worker's Autonomy", one of the many far-left parties/'political groupings' that formed in Italy after the protests of '68 rejecting parliamentary politics and the "democratic way to socialism", instead (mostly) embracing violent, armed revolution.
[31] "costume retrivo".

"thinking of themselves for themselves, and not always and only in relation to man"[32] (Lussana, 2012, p. 151). This was unlike the UDI and CIF's approaches, at least in the first two decades of their existence, which instead aimed to promote women's emancipation primarily through the introduction or modification of laws, without attempting to alter women's role in the family. The group was diverse in its members' political beliefs, including Catholic, socialist, communist, and radical/liberal women in their meetings, and non-separatist, also allowing men to participate sometimes (Lussana, 2012, p. 152). According to the group's members, in fact, the "authoritarian" values of patriarchal society, while primarily affecting and hurting women, also saw men "stripped of vast human possibilities"[33] (Morini, 2007). This attitude not only shaped the position of the great majority of Italian feminist groups – including Lonzi's Rivolta Femminile – but it is also found, to some extent, in Despot's work, probably partly mediated through Italian participation in the *Drug-ca Žena* conference of 1978.

Throughout the protests of 1968, many chose to leave the group, to pursue separate politics and, sometimes, join the more politically connotated groups that emerged in the following years (Lussana, 2012, p. 153). On the one hand, many of these groups emerged out of the experiences of exclusion and discrimination faced by women within the (mixed-gender) activist groups and collectives of 1968, and on the other, many women continued to pursue specifically feminist projects within groups such as DEMAU while also taking part in groups or parties such as the PCI (Rossi-Doria, 2005/2010). While some of these experiences would go on to shape the thought and practice of later 'neofeminist' groups – especially the focus on raising awareness over the condition of women and the recognition of the specificity of their oppression, as well as the rejection of the 'authoritarianism' of existing systems – later groups,

[32] "pensarsi per sé stesse e non sempre e solo rispetto al maschio".
[33] "privato di vaste possibilità umane".

like Lonzi's Rivolta Femminile, would pursue their objectives with even greater radicality and a more extensive theoretical elaboration, as will be shown throughout this section of the chapter.

Many feminist collectives, as mentioned, were formed as part of the 1968 protests, joining together with the other protestors and advancing a set of specific demands and positions, which they published in Rome in 1969 as the *Collettivi Femminili del Movimento Studentesco*[34] (Morini, 2007). In this document, the members of these groups claim that the (anticapitalistic, revolutionary) duty of the student movement was to "weld together […] immediate and sector-specific demands and revolutionary principles".[35] For women, they claim, there are some "specific revolutionary tasks",[36] focused on dismantling the unequal division of labor between man and woman beginning from the family and on starting a "cultural revolution, within [the anticapitalistic front], for the clarification of woman's role in the revolutionary process"[37] (Morini, 2007). While the objective of ending the unequal division of labor might seem related to the UDI's objectives, this is only true to some extent: the main strategy to achieve this is not legal reform, but, in a fashion closer to that of DEMAU and, later, of Lonzi and Rivolta Femminile (who, however, did not share the Roman collectives' faith in what is essentially a Marxist "class movement"), a "cultural revolution" within society (and the family) (Morini, 2007). This hostility towards the 'reformist' model prompts these groups to break with the PCI and the labor unions, while still recognizing a need to participate in a "generalized class movement"[38] (Morini, 2007). At the same time, however, the group practiced and promoted 'autonomy' (meaning, essentially, separate, women-only meetings, a practice that they shared with Rivolta Femminile, among others), grounding this choice in the fact that "our very

[34] "Female Collectives of the Student Movement", the joint name used in writing by the various female groups that operated independently or semi-independently from wider groupings and collectives during the protests of '68.
[35] "saldare […] le rivendicazioni immediate e settoriali con le dichiarazioni rivoluzionarie di principio".
[36] "compiti specifici rivoluzionari"
[37] "una rivoluzione culturale, al suo [il fronte anticapitalistico] interno, per la chiarificazione del ruolo della donna nel processo rivoluzionario".
[38] "un movimento generale di classe".

comrades reproduce the dominant authoritarian model"[39] (Morini, 2007): many of the women who partook in the protests of 1968 in Italy lamented their systematic exclusion from any kind of role 'of importance' (theoretical production, speaking in public), instead being relegated to administrative tasks like the printing of documents or even being spoken over during meetings and assemblies (Lussana, 2012, pp. 40-41; Bellè, 2021). This (justified) dissatisfaction with the attitudes of male comrades within the student movement and anticapitalist organizing more generally – and the ensuing separatism, at least for some – will also be reflected in the choices made by later 'neofeminist' movements, including Lonzi and Rivolta Femminile.

Starting in 1970, new groups with strong ties to the student movement of '68 also started forming in many of the cities of Northern Italy: *Cerchio Spezzato*,[40] born out of the relatively new Sociology department at the University of Trento in 1971 and whose members had been among the initiators of the '68 protests both in the city and in the whole country, and *Lotta Femminista*,[41] born in Padua in 1970 and strongly influenced by the struggle for wages for domestic labor in the United Kingdom (Fraire, 2005/2010). Cerchio Spezzato, as mentioned, was created by some of the female students who had participated in the 1968 protests and, like Lonzi and Rivolta Femminile, had been left disillusioned with the students' movement, specifically with its potential for women's liberation. They intended to build a space where women could theorize on their own, in order to be able to do so freely without the intervention or conditioning of men, so that they could reach a "collective reckoning of our own specific condition", which they saw as "[t]he only possibility for liberation"[42] (Morini, 2007). Despite this, they were not 'full' separatists: they remained open to "discussion and collaboration with the male comrades who realize we have a head",[43] albeit deeming it fundamental that a "unity

[39] "gli stessi compagni riproducono il modello autoritario dominante".
[40] "Broken Circle".
[41] "Feminist Fight/Struggle". Henceforth also "LF".
[42] "L'unica possibilità di liberazione passa attraverso la presa di coscienza collettiva della propria condizione specifica".
[43] "il confronto e la collaborazione coi compagni maschi che si rendono conto che noi abbiamo una testa".

between women"[44] must be constructed first (Morini, 2007). The need for a space where women could theorize autonomously was also shared by Lonzi and Rivolta Femminile, as was the relative openness to the participation of men. However, Rivolta Femminile was somewhat more restrictive, limiting their inclusion of men to the youth, specifically, and only doing so theoretically, without allowing young men to participate in their actual meetings.

On the other hand, Lotta Femminista's work – which quickly expanded to include branches in many other cities of Northern Italy – mainly focused on the campaign for wages for housework, which resulted in the foundation in 1972 of the International Feminist Collective (IFC) by LF member Mariarosa Dalla Costa, alongside Selma James, Silvia Federici, and Brigitte Galtier. The IFC declared itself to be made up of "Marxist feminists",[45] but at the same time "rejected 'both class struggle subordinate to feminism and feminism subordinate to class struggle'"[46] (Collettivo Internazionale Femminista, 1972/2022), taking on a stance similar to that of the feminist collectives of 1968 but with greater emphasis on the equal importance of feminism and anticapitalism. They shared little with Rivolta Femminile, and specifically Lonzi, instead being closer, at least in some elements, such as the focus on wages for housework, to a position like that of Despot.

A similar group, the *Fronte Italiano di Liberazione Femminile*,[47] was also founded in 1970 as a Marxist feminist group sharing similar concerns with both Cerchio Spezzato and Lotta Femminista, but also incorporating thoughts derived from the experience of DEMAU (Morini, 2007). The Fronte Italiano was fully non-separatist, as its members believed that "the interest of the proletariat and all those that chose to be its allies and vanguards are identical and

[44] "un'unità tra le donne".
[45] "Femministe marxiste".
[46] "rifiutano 'sia la lotta di classe subordinata al femminismo che il femminismo subordinato alla lotta di classe'".
[47] "Italiano Front of/for Female Liberation".

as such must be defended and claimed by both men and women",[48] seemingly seeing the class struggle as the 'primary', including over feminism (which was nonetheless the group's explicit priority) (Morini, 2007). Compared to Lotta Femminista, their position was even farther from Lonzi and Rivolta Femminile's, given their non-separatism and priority to the class struggle.

Not all feminist groups emerging after 1968 were grassroots, however. While much of the PCI and the PSI continued pursuing the approach of 'legal emancipation' at least until the end of the 1970s (Lussana, 2012, p. 105), labor unions – the metalworkers' union in particular – instead applied significant changes to their structure based on feedback (and criticism) from groups such as Lotta Femminista: starting in 1973, they demanded that both companies and the State introduce provisions that reduce the effect of the 'double burden' of salary and care work on women, such as kindergartens or workplace and school canteens, and, in 1974, women's branches of the labor unions (the previously mentioned Intercategoriali and Coordinamenti delle Donne FLM) were created in various cities throughout Italy (Lussana, 2012, pp. 120-121), uniting into one national group in 1976 (Lussana, 2012, p. 150). Starting in 1973, and enabled by new laws introducing free, 150-hour training courses for workers, the labor unions began organizing women-only 150-hour courses on specific topics, such as women's condition in society and work or sexual and reproductive health, which also acted as 'alternative' meeting spaces for masses of women in opposition to the small circles of the consciousness-raising groups of the same period (Lussana, 2012, p. 127), which I will discuss in the following few paragraphs. The legacy of the 150-hour courses will be especially important for Lonzi, who was a part of one such consciousness-raising group, Rivolta Femminile.

[48] "gli interessi del proletariato e di tutti coloro che hanno scelto di esserne gli alleati e le avanguardie sono identici e come tali debbono essere difesi e rivendicati sia dai maschi che dalle femmine".

Two main groups emerge as the main initiators of the consciousness-raising strand of Italian feminist thought: *L'Anabasi*[49] and Rivolta Femminile. L'Anabasi was founded in 1970 in Milan by Serena Castaldi, a young woman who had participated in the protests of 1968 and subsequently left for New York in 1969, from where she had just returned upon the group's formation (Lussana, 2012, p. 159). The group's primary purpose was initially to recount and share Castaldi's experience of U.S. feminism, particularly consciousness-raising, with other women (Morini, 2007). However, it soon began focusing instead on the analysis of U.S. feminist writing and applying the actual method of consciousness-raising in Italy to construct "the theoretical basis for a new philosophy with woman as its subject"[50] (Lussana, 2012, p. 159), an objective shared with Lonzi and Rivolta Femminile. What this involved was sharing one's own experiences with a small group of other women and reflecting upon them together, with the group's focus being primarily on the "internal front"[51] rather than on broader society, aiming for "a change within ourselves, recognizing our condition, its oppressive component, its consequences, possible alternatives, [our] wants"[52] (Lussana, 2012, p. 160). This results in the creation of an experimental living situation in 1972 in a home in via Caccianino, also in Milan, to which the members of the group moved – some with their lesbian partners, others with their children, one also with her husband (allowed by the group's conscious choice of non-separatism) – and where they worked on a translated collection of U.S. feminist writing, *Donne è bello*,[53] and a magazine collecting their own writing based on their work on consciousness-raising, "Al femminile", but the group ultimately disbanded in 1975 (Lussana, 2012, pp. 160-161).

[49] Literally "Anabasis", an (uncommon) word taken from ancient Greek referring to expeditions from the coast to the inland areas of territories (and the historiographical genre which recounted them).
[50] "le basi teoriche di una nuova filosofia che ha la donna come soggetto".
[51] "fronte interno".
[52] "mutazione di noi, individuazione della nostra situazione, del suo contenuto oppressivo, delle conseguenze, delle possibili alternative, delle voglie".
[53] "Women is beautiful" [*sic*], echoing the Civil Rights slogan "Black is beautiful".

The focus on the members' own writing was even stronger within Rivolta Femminile, which was created in 1970 in Rome by Carla Accardi, Elvira Banotti, and Carla Lonzi, the author of *Let's spit on Hegel.* Its creation was marked by the publication of a document, which they named the "Manifesto" and hung up in both Rome and Milan, to which Lonzi had moved over the spring – summarizing their principles, and soon followed by other publications: Lonzi's *Let's spit on Hegel,* Banotti's *La sfida femminile*[54](a report on illegal abortion), the products of other members' 'consciousness-raising' journeys, and a couple more collective theoretical works (Lussana, 2012, pp. 155, 158). All of these were published as the *Libretti verdi*,[55] an editorial collection curated by Lonzi for the *Edizioni di Rivolta Femminile*,[56] the group's own publishing house (Lussana, 2012, p. 158). The group, while recognizing the need for the 'legislative' struggle carried out by the UDI and CIF, agreed with most other 'neofeminists' that this was not enough ("Equal wages are our right, but our oppression is something else altogether";[57] Morini, 2007): instead, they believed that what was necessary was a radically new theoretical reflection for women and starting from women (importantly rejecting "philosophy", which they also saw as a primarily male pursuit and part of male-patriarchal-'authoritarian' culture), so that they may become truly independent of the understanding of 'woman' imposed by man (Morini, 2007). As a result of this, they embraced separatism and 'rejected culture', which for them expunged women from history and forced them to conform to the 'male model', and the "systematics of thought",[58] meaning those philosophers who "have justified in metaphysics what was unfair and atrocious in woman's life"[59] – Hegel first and foremost (Morini, 2007).

[54] "The Female Challenge".
[55] "Little green books".
[56] "Editions of Rivolta Femminile".
[57] "La parità di retribuzione è un nostro diritto, ma la nostra oppressione è un'altra cosa".
[58] "sistematici del pensiero".
[59] "Hanno giustificato nella metafisica ciò che era ingiusto e atroce nella vita della donna".

Lonzi, Accardi, and Banotti identify four specific ideologies responsible for this, alongside culture as a whole: the Church, which reduced women to their bodies; psychoanalysis, that "betrayed" them (without further elaboration, at least in the Manifesto – in *Let's spit on Hegel*, Lonzi, 1970/1982, p. 42 hints at the family as a place of reproduction for the "taboos with which the adult man has always limited the free relationship between the adult woman and the young"); Hegelianism, for its relegation of women to the home; and Marxism, which "sold them to hypothetical revolution"[60] (i.e., 'extinguished' women's struggle in the class struggle, or did not actually achieve the promised radical change in the socialist revolutions around the globe) (Morini, 2007). In pursuit of this, the members of Rivolta Femminile welcomed "free sexuality in all its forms",[61] divorce, the "freedom of abortion"[62] as a form of women's autonomy over her body, and supported the wages for housework movement, seeing unpaid care labor as what "allows capitalism […] to subsist".[63] In 1972, Rivolta Femminile would be among the groups to hold its meetings in a building in via Cherubini, which it shared with other groups or their past members (Cerchio Spezzato, DEMAU, L'Anabasi, the Milanese chapter of Lotta Femminista) and with two new groups, born in 1973 and 1974 and focusing on integrating psychoanalysis and feminism: *Analisi* and *Pratica dell'inconscio*[64] (Lussana, 2012, pp. 162-163). The various groups' interactions during this period would go on to shape the views of the Italian delegation to the 1978 Drug-ca Žena conference in Belgrade (Bonfiglioli, 2011, p. 77), one of the major events in the history of Yugoslav feminism, which will be discussed further in the relevant chapter.

[60] "la Chiesa ci ha chiamate sesso, la psicanalisi ci ha tradite, il marxismo ci ha vendute alla rivoluzione ipotetica".
[61] "la libera sessualità in tutte le sue forme".
[62] "libertà dell'aborto".
[63] "permette al capitalismo […] di sussistere".
[64] "Analysis" and "Practice of the unconscious".

3.2 Carla Lonzi: Breaking with Hegel, and/or breaking with Marxism?

In 1970, Carla Lonzi published her essay *Let's Spit on Hegel*, the first work in the *Libretti verdi* of the Edizioni di Rivolta Femminile. In it, she undertakes a radical critique of culture as a whole, considering it almost completely infested by structures that perpetuate the patriarchal domination of women (and the youth), articulated in three 'classics of modernity', all three of which she rejects: Hegel, Marx, and psychoanalysis. In this section, I will break down her argument, focusing specifically on her critiques of Hegel and Marx for the connection to Despot's work that can be established through them. Throughout, I will pay particular attention to the intertextuality of her writing and her lexical choices, elements that reveal a deeper engagement with Hegelian and Marxist thought than might appear from a surface-level reading of her work.

Lonzi's objective throughout the essay is to introduce and prove the exclusion of women from what she calls "*philosophical* equality" (my emphasis), as opposed to the "political equality"[65] offered by the emancipatory projects of groups such as the UDI and CIF (Lonzi, 1970/1982, p. 26). For her, however, this – and specifically the "[self-]posing of women"[66] – can only be reached through a "calling into question of the concept of power",[67] which, for Lonzi, is the common denominator of all male-patriarchal authoritarian systems throughout history, from feudalism to capitalism and socialism (Lonzi, 1970/1982, p. 26). Because of this rejection of power, she claims that woman is the "Unexpected Subject"[68] (Lonzi, 1970/1982, p. 57), breaking the 'order' and rationality of Hegelian dialectics by rejecting the logics of political

[65] "L'uguaglianza disponibile oggi non è filosofica, ma politica".
[66] "il porsi della donna", where "porsi" ("porre") is the same verb that is used by Hegel when talking about the Idea's self-determination in the various moments of its development.
[67] "una messa in questione del concetto di potere".
[68] "Soggetto Imprevisto".

power (Lonzi, 1970/1982, p. 32) and – according to her – going "beyond the dialectics of classes [which are] internal to the patriarchal system"[69] (Lonzi, 1970/1982, p. 37).

Lonzi seems to agree to some extent with Hegel in claiming that woman is "immediately universal",[70] i.e., of the kind of universality that comes before the dialectical process: the kind of subjectivity that stipulates the marriage contract to form the family, in essence, but also, therefore, free of the "mythicization of facts [operated by patriarchal culture] […] on the basis of power"[71](Lonzi, 1970/1982, pp. 30, 47). Lonzi, to be precise, claims that Hegel used this as a way to "keep the a-priori of passivity [in the feminine principle]"[72] (Lonzi, 1970/1982, p. 30), but later, on p. 47, explores the other possibilities that this identification opens. Specifically, she argues that this 'non-mediatedness' is nonetheless a driver of change, in contrast to Hegel, and it is so through woman's role as the "eternal irony of the [patriarchal] community"[73] (Lonzi, 1970/1982, pp. 30-31): like Antigone, she questions the 'universal' of the State/adult (self-conscious, realized) man and his 'universal' law, instead acting "against the family and against society in the form of the representative of power [the adult man] that dominates both"[74] (Lonzi, 1970/1982, p. 31). To better understand and analyze Lonzi's argument, I will provide a brief summary of the play's plot, focusing on the most relevant passages for the Italian thinker's theorizing.

The play is set after the events of the Theban civil war as narrated by Aeschylus's (467/1987) *Seven against Thebes*, where the two brothers Eteocles and Polynices fight against each other for the control of the city after the death of their father Oedipus (relevantly, also an important figure for psychoanalysis) and a first period of peaceful alternation between them

[69] "oltre la dialettica delle classi interne al sistema patriarcale".
[70] "immediatamente universale".
[71] "mitizzazione dei fatti […] in base al potere".
[72] "Nel principio femminile Hegel ripone l'a-priori di una passività".
[73] "eterna ironia della comunità", a direct (and explicitly quoted) reference to Hegel's comment on Sophocle's *Antigone* in the *Aesthetics*.
[74] "contro la famiglia e contro la società nel rappresentante del potere che domina su entrambe".

(although their two sisters, Antigone and Ismene, as was customary in Greek times, are excluded from the government of the city). The titular protagonist, Antigone, buries Polynices, who attacked the city after Eteocles refused to give up power at the end of his allotted year, against the orders of the new king, their uncle Creon. After being discovered by the city guard and brought to Creon, she proudly confesses and is sentenced to be buried alive in a cave along with her sister Ismene, who had been crying for her sister's and presumed guilty, but who is ultimately spared. Haemon, Creon's son, has a verbal fight with his father over Antigone's fate, who in the meantime had committed suicide in the cave. Haemon, who finds her, and his mother and new queen of Thebes, Eurydice, also kill themselves, respectively, upon finding Antigone dead in the cave and upon learning of her son's suicide, but not after having cursed Creon for his actions (Sophocles, 442/1982).

In Lonzi's reading, with her actions, Antigone breaks with the patriarchal order that controls her and the institutions of the family and the State by granting recognition (again a term taken from Hegel and used by Lonzi), and therefore subjectivity, to her brother Polynices not out of the 'fight to the death' that determines the slave-master dialectic (whereby Polynices would emerge as occupying the position of the slave, in contrast to his brother Eteocles, granted recognition by Creon, the patriarchal authority) but out of love. According to Lonzi, this 'fight to the death' is the "propelling force of the danger in the character structure of the patriarch and his culture"[75] (Lonzi, 1970/1982, pp. 55-56). This claim also resonates with the genealogy of dialectical thinking in classical Greek authors such as Heraclitus, who saw 'war' (*pólemos*) as the "opposition that constitutes everything and whence everything is generated"[76] (Severino, 1996/2019, p. 58). For her, the ultimate result of this logic of violence is only the proliferation and reproduction of more violence, as seen in the text of the *Antigone* through the self-imposed

[75] "il centro propulsore della pericolosità nella struttura caratteriale del patriarca e nella sua cultura".
[76] "l'opposizione in cui ogni cosa consiste e da cui è generata".

(but motivated by Creon's actions) deaths of Eurydice, Haemon, and Antigone herself. Linked to the *Antigone* is also Lonzi's (only) moment of discussion on the place of men within, and not just outside, of the feminist movements, in her consideration of the role of Haemon. As a young man, he, too, opposes Creon's violent-patriarchal logic and, more generally, the logic of patrilinear power (in his – the heir to the throne's – taking of his own life) which excludes Antigone from the community. Lonzi, although she does not explicitly explore this connection with the Antigone, speaks in a similar way of the youth of the hippy movement, who "make of their life a mix of the feminine and the masculine"[77] (Lonzi, 1970/1982, p. 44) through their rejection of war, and therefore of the patriarchal order, although she does note – as will indeed end up happening for many – that the young men of the hippy movement, despite their rejection of patriarchal logic, still have the privilege, at any time, to "submit […] his candidacy to [the role of] oppressor"[78] (Lonzi, 1970/1982, p. 43).

To this principle of the 'fight to the death' Lonzi opposes, on the other hand, 'love', which, as a non-destructive 'motor' of recognition, is the possible alternative to the patriarchal order that feminism introduces (Buttarelli, 2024, p. 50), opening up the possibility of an alternative, non-hierarchical societal form (embodied by the experience of L'Anabasi, more generally in the practice of consciousness-raising, and in the early hippy youth movement – Lonzi, 1970/1982, p. 44) that manifests itself in the "dissolution of the institution of family [the primary breeding ground for violence in society in general, as the *Antigone* metaphorically shows] at the hands of woman"[79] (Lonzi, 1970/1982, p. 50). This argument, which Lonzi expands to Marxism by suggesting that his thought turned "Labor" into a form of "Fighting"[80] and thus integrated it into patriarchal culture (Lonzi, 1970/1982, p. 50), seems counter to

[77] "fanno della loro vita un impasto di femminile e di maschile".
[78] "pone nel tempo la sua candidatura a oppressore".
[79] "la dissoluzione dell'istituto familiare a opera della donna".
[80] "Il Lavoro come Lotta".

Despot's insofar as it undoes the moment of the family on which the Yugoslav philosopher instead bases her argument, arguing not for its complete dissolution but rather for a reform of it to eliminate the element of violence which then spreads dialectically to the rest of society. At the same time, though, there is a significant resonance between the two, which will be explored further in the later chapters, as far as the relevance of the rejection of violence, and of its reproduction within the family, for both authors' arguments. This rejection of the family, of course, also destabilizes the entire process of the formation of civil society and the State as it is formulated in Hegel, since the first moment becomes absent, or at least is radically altered: consequently, the entire conception of social life changes, if the Lonzian scheme is adopted.

Although this argument clearly explains some of the choices and positions of Rivolta Femminile (namely separatism, the support for abortion, and the rejection of marriage and family life), there is also a critical point to be made pertaining to Lonzi's rejection of the dialectical process and her reclaiming of woman as 'immediate universality', and specifically to its 'immediate' character. Lonzi's reflections in *Let's spit on Hegel* are a product of the process of consciousness-raising that she underwent with the other members of Rivolta Femminile (Lonzi, 1970/1982, p. 7). As a result of this, her claim to 'non-mediatedness' seems to need some amendments: the acknowledgment of this capacity for universality is likewise 'mediated', although by a process that is not akin to either Hegelian or Marxist dialectics, as it does not involve a 'fight to the death' as its moving force but, instead, the 'loving' practice of consciousness-raising, which synthesizes both the collective (insofar as it is done in groups in which experiences are shared and elaborated together) and the individual (in regards to the change that it operates on the individual – it is *their own* consciousness that is 'raised', hence Lonzi's translation as "autocoscienza", literally "self-consciousness"). Nonetheless, this 'process' is not *in* history, for Lonzi, because of woman's exclusion from – but also rejection of – power and society, which is precisely what allows for it to act as an alternative "propelling

force" through its ironic, negative component (Lonzi, 1970/1982, p. 30). This removal from the 'predetermined' history traced out by the dialectical method, then, speaks to her specific understanding of 'universality', whereby the element of the 'particular' (as opposed to the 'universal') is not lost in the immediacy of what she reclaims. This is especially evidenced by her (and Rivolta Femminile's) choice of the practice of feminist consciousness-raising, which begins with the sharing and (re)consideration of each woman's individual life and experiences, elaborated on through the very practice of sharing them with other women and reflecting on them collectively.

What Lonzi appears to be doing in her text, then, is not quite, as she puts it, a *tabula rasa*, a complete clearing of the previous, male-dominated (and, in that regard, self-justifying) 'culture' for a fresh new start. Instead, she appears to be replacing the 'negative' principle that moves Hegelian (and Marxist) dialectics – the "second moment", in the previous chapter – with a new principle that is not 'negative' in the sense of dialectics. It is important, however, that the radicality of Lonzi's proposal is not lost in making this consideration: although she is, in a sense, 'negating' the dialectical model that emerges from Hegel (and the whole history of philosophy before him, as touched upon in the previous chapter), her new principle does completely revolutionize the sense of dialectics, from an adversarial "speaking together" ("dialectics" comes from Greek *dialegesthai*, literally "to speak among two") to the collaborative "speaking together" of consciousness-raising (which, in her later works, will also take on the sense of "speaking together" within oneself, between the conscious and the un-conscious woman recounting her experiences and practicing consciousness-raising alone – Lonzi, 1970/1982, p. 7). Although some men – the youth – could theoretically be included in this, Lonzi implicitly chooses not to do so, likely because of their constant potential to become oppressors, as previously mentioned in her discussion of the hippy movement. Despite Lonzi's claims in *Let's Spit on Hegel* that "the needs that she [woman] comes to clarify don't imply an antithesis but

one's moving to a different plane"[81] (Lonzi, 1970/1982, p. 52 – her emphasis), which is indeed warranted by some of her claims, her general argument aims to undo the structures of male power (the political, social, and cultural power of the State) by attacking what 'male culture' itself bases these structures on (the family), and therefore must necessarily refer back to and enter a dialogue with it.

This rejection of power and its models is what drives Lonzi to also critique Marxism (especially in the form of 'lived' or 'real socialism', which, like Despot, she criticizes for not having addressed the struggles of women – Lonzi, 1970/1982, pp. 36-37) while also recognizing that "women are aware of the political ties that exist between the Marxist-Leninist ideology and their suffering, needs, and aspirations"[82] (Lonzi, 1970/1982, p. 28). Yet, she argues (with somewhat Foucauldian implicit undertones), so long as Marxism does not recognize that the oppression of woman is not as a class but as a sex (i.e., that woman is oppressed "on all social levels", not just the economical and not just as a proletarian – Lonzi, 1970/1982, p. 29), on the one hand, and its complicity in the "dialectics foreseen by patriarchal culture, a culture focused on the seizure of power"[83] (Lonzi, 1970/1982, p. 33), not only can it not be truly liberatory for women (and the youth – again, her experience of the 1968 protests shines through in this passage), but it also cannot be a *truly* revolutionary movement.

This critique of power and Marxism links Lonzi's work to that of the many feminist groups that emerged in Italy between the end of World War II and the mid-1970s, whose work, especially in connection to Lonzi's thought, I summarized in the first section of this chapter. Similarly, in this last section, I have provided an analysis of her essay *Sputiamo su Hegel*, from which both her anti-authoritarian (if not fully anti-institutional) stance, derived from the work

[81] "Le esigenze che essa viene chiarendo non implicano un'antitesi, ma un *muoversi su un altro piano*".
[82] "Le donne hanno coscienza del legame politico che esiste tra l'ideologia marxista-leninista e le loro sofferenze, bisogni, aspirazioni".
[83] "una dialettica prevista dalla cultura patriarcale, che è la cultura della presa del potere".

of DEMAU as well as the general experience of 1968, and her rejection of all forms of 'male culture' – including Marxism – shine through. Specifically, she argues for the need to shift from a "violent", adversarial, male-patriarchal logic to one rooted in collaboration and sharing, allowing for individual needs not to be subsumed into an arbitrary – and violently determined – 'universal'. In doing so, her rejection of Hegelianism and Marxism becomes more connotated, though maintaining its radicality: she seems to adopt a somewhat dialectical model still, albeit rooted in a completely different principle, effectively carrying out a radical reform of philosophy which breaks with the imposition of the (falsely) 'universal' male culture which the 'old' philosophy upheld. In the next chapter, I will conduct a similar analysis of the Yugoslav context and Despot's book *Žensko pitanje i socijalističko samoupravljanje*, where her somewhat different priorities become clear.

4. *The Woman Question and Socialist Self-Management*: Blaženka Despot and Yugoslav feminism

Despot was, not unlike Lonzi, one of the most prominent figures in Yugoslav feminism, although, unlike her Italian counterpart, her work was much more tied to the pre-existing power structures, mostly taking the form of (academic) books or journal articles (Lóránd, 2020, p. 142). As I will explore further in the next chapter, there are many reasons for this, but a quote from Christine Delphy, one of the French feminists who took part in the *Drug-ca Žena*[84] conference of 1978, summarizes them well: "How to struggle against a system when women's liberation is part of its principles?" (Delphy, n.a., as cited in Zaharijević, 2017, p. 277). Yet Despot, like Lonzi, also participated in different groups over time, being very close (although never a 'participant') to Praxis, for instance attending the Korčula Summer School and other Praxis events, and, starting in the 1980s, took part in the "neofeminist"[85] *Žena i društvo*[86] groups (Lóránd, 2020, p. 142). In this chapter, parallel to the previous one, I will first present the main currents and views within Yugoslav feminism (or, more broadly, approaches to the 'woman question'). Afterwards, I will analyze Despot's book *The Woman Question and Socialist Self-Management*, which goes into great detail on her conception of Hegelism and especially Hegelian dialectics, highlighting not just the praise that she gives but also the criticisms she moves to the German philosopher's thought (and its afterlife in both Marxist theory and 'real socialism').

[84] Translatable as "Comrade-ss Woman".
[85] In this chapter, "neofeminism" (*neofeminizam*) refers to one of the three 'currents' within Yugoslav women's movements, on which I will provide more information in the next section. The term is used by several scholars – and some of the Yugoslav activists of the time (with others, like Despot, preferring just *"feminizam"* instead) – to mark their different focus compared to the earlier 'emancipationist' approach of the AFŽ and other such groups and, for Yugoslav neofeminists, to attempt to avoid the negative connotations associated with "Western", "bourgeois" feminism.
[86] "Woman and Society".

4.1 Comrade Woman: Yugoslav feminism in the 1970s and '80s

Within Yugoslavia, as in most socialist states, 'feminism' as such was initially looked at with some suspicion (Zaharijević, 2017, p. 263): socialist regimes for the most part claimed that the 'women question', that is, women's oppression, had been solved with the revolution and the implementation of new legal regimes (Zaharijević, 2017, p. 266). Feminism – understood primarily in the emancipationist sense – was consequently viewed by the Yugoslav authorities as an essentially bourgeois pursuit, aimed at addressing an issue that had already been resolved with the advent of socialism (Bonfiglioli, 2018, p. 242). As shown in the previous chapter, however, and as I will discuss in this section, the meaning of 'feminism' in both capitalist and socialist contexts spanned much further than this strictly emancipationist, legalistic logic. This very contextual difference, however, was also a major source of misunderstanding in the encounters between feminists operating in capitalist and socialist regimes, respectively. Yugoslavia, as a 'bridge' between these two political ideologies thanks to its peculiar geopolitical position, was a prime location for these exchanges, and arguably provides one of the clearest examples of the potentialities and possibilities of feminism past its strictly emancipationist sense.

At the same time, due to the regime's official attitude towards feminism, groups within the country were variably defined as feminist: according to Zaharijević (2017, p. 269), three main "views" can be recognized. These are, namely, the "emancipationist" one, mainly represented by the *Konferencija za Društvena Aktivnost Žena*,[87] the post-WWII 'evolution' of the *Antifašistička Fronta Žena*;[88] the "socialist feminist" or "neofeminist" one, mainly gathering in groups gravitating around four universities (Belgrade, Zagreb, Sarajevo, and

[87] "Conference for the Social Activity of Women", henceforth also KDAŽ.
[88] "Women's Antifascist Front", henceforth also AFŽ.

Ljubljana); and the "liberationist"[89] one, which similarly congregated mostly around academic spaces. Although Zaharijević divides these three streams, and indeed there were significant tensions between them (for instance, a shared point between the last two was a critique of the emancipationist model), their activities often overlapped, with reciprocal collaboration and influences. Many of the earlier examples of neofeminism, for instance, appeared within the scope of the activities organized by the (emancipationist) KDAŽ for the UN International Women's Year in 1975 (Bonfiglioli, 2018, p. 242). In this section, I will be looking at some of the main theoretical points represented by these three streams, especially the ways in which they were discussed in popular magazines, academic journals, and (local and international) conferences – the main avenues through which feminist thought took shape and was disseminated in Yugoslavia, where feminist consciousness-raising only took ground in the last couple of years of the 1980s (Lóránd, 2018, pp. 171-173).

The first of the three streams that can be (chronologically) identified in Yugoslav women's activism is the 'emancipationist' stream. The KDAŽ – a state-sponsored sub-group within the *Socijalistički Savez Radnog Naroda Jugoslavije*,[90] created after the AFŽ's dissolution in 1953 – was the main group representing this perspective. The KDAŽ's general position was, in accordance with that of the League of Communists and Marxist parties more generally, that the women's question was essentially a subset of the class question (Lóránd, 2018, p. 42; Zaharijević, 2017, p. 269 notes, however, that this position was not shared by all the KDAŽ's members). Despite this assimilation of the two issues, however, individual members of the KDAŽ were praised by some of the 'neofeminists' for their actions and positions, despite their opposition to explicitly-labeled 'feminism' (Zaharijević, 2017, pp. 270-271). Most of the

[89] The three terms in quotation marks denoting the streams are the ones used by Zaharijević, but importantly *not* by the groups themselves.
[90] "Socialist Alliance of the Working People of Yugoslavia", the organization formed in 1945 and before 1953 called the "Front of National Freedom", led by the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (the ruling party) and joined by trade unions and other professional, cultural, and students' associations.

women that took part in the KDAŽ were former partisans involved in the antifascist resistance during WWII (as the earlier organization's name suggests), and because of this thought that "the emancipation of women was a prerequisite for a totally emancipated socialist society" (Zaharijević, 2017, p. 269) – one of the many positions of the KDAŽ that, as will be shown later in this chapter, Despot fully embraced and promoted, despite her adhering to a different stream of Yugoslav feminist thought. Much of their concerns were over the "conservative tendencies" still present in many aspects of the country's social and public life – from the educational system to the family structure – and which drove the discrimination of women despite the legal advancements made by the socialist Yugoslav state since its inception (Zaharijević, 2017, p. 270): this topic – a change in the 'consciousness' of Yugoslav citizens, against conservative-bourgeois tendencies upholding patriarchal structures – will also be one of the core concerns of Despot's work.

Much of the KDAŽ's activity focused on making women in all portions of the country – especially in more rural areas – aware of their rights (Zaharijević, 2017, p. 270), garnering varying results considering that issues over this were still present even among those engaged in women's activism at the 1978 *Drug-ca Žena* conference[91] (Bonfiglioli, 2011, p. 91), and similarly on countering the 'double burden' (women being assigned both manual or factory labor and being the sole one within the family responsible for house- and care work) (Zaharijević, 2017, pp. 270-271). Specifically, greater participation in self-management structures, as well as the already mentioned 'consciousness work' on individuals and families, was the KDAŽ's preferred avenue of operation in this regard – and again, Despot agreed with the need for a greater participation of women to self-management structures and a more equal split in house- and care work in opposition to 'segregation' within the family.

[91] Bonfiglioli reports an anecdote from Rada Iveković about a Kosovar girl who, upon a question from the Italian delegates over abortion in the country, was unaware that it was allowed and hence responded that it wasn't, promptly being corrected by Žarana Papić, one of the conference's organizers.

Lastly, the KDAŽ also believed – again in agreement with Despot – that the responsibility for the solution to the women's question belonged not just to women but "to the entire Yugoslav society", although the reasons were different (Lóránd, 2018, p. 42) – for them, it was because the women's question was, for the most part, a matter of class, whereas for Despot it is because of the relevance of the women's question to the real emancipation of society as a whole, as will be explained in further detail later.

As for the activities the Conference carried out, following a similar timeline to Italy's UDI, in its earlier stages the KDAŽ (and more so the AFŽ) promoted the introduction of new laws which would further women's rights, with many having been introduced already by 1958 (following the inclusion of gender equality as one of the principles of the Yugoslav Constitution already in 1946) and with the 1974 Constitution especially introducing and enshrining numerous forms of protection (Zaharijević, 2017, p. 266), with support for these proposals gathered through the publication of reports on the status of women in Yugoslavia (Bonfiglioli, 2018, p. 242). Among the KDAŽ's activities was also the publication of the woman's magazine *Žena*, one of – if not the – main magazine on women's issues in Yugoslavia, covering everything from the social and economic condition of women in society and the family and the education of women in Yugoslavia's constituent republics to strategies to improve their standing and participation in "self-management" (Yugoslavia's specific interpretation and implementation of socialist economics) and feminism and the "women's movement in the West", with remarkable openness to "differing opinions on what emancipation really meant" (Zaharijević, 2017, pp. 264-265).

Potentially the most influential activity of the KDAŽ, however, was the organization of events in Yugoslavia for the 1975 UN Year of Women, which sparked many discussions over women's activism throughout the country, introduced "Western second wave feminism" to Yugoslavia, and brought great popularity to the then-emerging 'neofeminist' movements (and,

indirectly, the 'liberationist' movements that emerged some ten years later) (Lóránd, 2018, pp. 41-43). Within the scope of these events was also one of the most relevant conferences on women's conditions before the 1978 *Drug-ca Žena* conference in Belgrade (which was widely recognized as the true watershed moment within Yugoslav feminism, sparking a lively debate over neofeminist and 'Western' feminist ideas throughout the whole of Yugoslavia – see, for instance, Zaharijević, 2017, p. 264, or the entirety of Bonfiglioli, 2008): the Portorož conference of 1976, co-organized by the editors of *Žena* and the Croatian Sociological Society (Bonfiglioli, 2018, p. 241; Lóránd, 2018, p. 43). The conference saw the juxtaposition of "authoritative Marxist politicians" and more radical young scholars (who would later go on to join *Žena i društvo* or other 'neofeminist' groups), who were criticized by the editors of *Žena* (the organizers) for engaging in a divisive "fight against the male sex" and "disregard[ing] world liberation" by taking a stance closer to that of "Western feminism" (Bonfiglioli, 2018, p. 243). From then on, the neofeminists would "[have] to prove that these ideas were not anti-socialist, but rather universal, and liberating for society as a whole" in order to continue pursuing them (Bonfiglioli, 2018, p. 243): this focus on proving the impact of women's liberation on the liberation of society as a whole is, as mentioned previously, an evident focus in Despot's theorizing.

The second of the streams to emerge in Yugoslavia is the one that Zaharijević calls "socialist feminist" or "neofeminist", and to which Despot is usually understood to belong. Two main groups were at the center of this primarily theoretical stream: on the one hand were the *Žena i društvo* groups, active in various cities throughout Yugoslavia (but most influent in Ljubljana and Zagreb) and mostly (though not exclusively) made up of women, often coming from academic backgrounds (Lóránd, 2016, pp. 855-856) and with support from the Italian and Austrian Cultural Centers, as well as the intellectuals of the Praxis group (Lóránd, 2018, p. 32). On the other hand were the two 'students' cultural centers' of Belgrade, the *Studentski Kulturni*

Centar,[92] and Ljubljana, the *Študentski Kulturno-Umetniški Center*[93] (Lóránd, 2016, p. 857). These, emerging between the late' 60s and the early '70s (for instance, the group at the Belgrade SKC was founded in 1968 – Bonfiglioli, 2008, p. 51), operated in close collaboration with each other, with the two students' cultural centers often organizing university seminars to which *Žena i društvo* members – often part of the local universities' sociology departments – were invited (Lóránd, 2016, p. 857). Soon, the groups even ended up partnering with the *Žena* magazine, which published some of the young students' works (Lóránd, 2016, p. 858), showing the relatively collaborative nature of the different streams of Yugoslav feminism (loosely intended), as opposed to the often tenser relationships within the Italian feminist movement. Within the neofeminist groups, still, different specificities emerged, in part due to the different nature of their two main sub-groups: whereas *Žena i društvo* (especially in Ljubljana and Zagreb) paid more attention to institutional and academic questions, the SKC and ŠKUC were more attentive to grassroots questions and forms of quasi-intersectional struggle with other student groups, such as the "punk and green movements", congregating around the two centers (Lóránd, 2016, p. 857). Despite this, some general theoretical positions can be identified.

First and foremost, in contrast with the emancipationists' view, they believed that the woman and class questions could be understood as separate, given the chronological precedence of the former, but – exactly like Despot's argument – "true liberation" is achievable only with a combination of the two (Zaharijević, 2017, p. 271), reconciling their position with the League of Communists' position. This precedence was not just chronological, but also 'logical', meaning that "all social antagonisms are molded against it [the oppression of women]": for some, like Ler-Sofronić, this was because of "deep roots in the psychological structures of both sexes" (Zaharijević, 2017, p. 272); for others, like Despot, this was more due to a pre-bourgeois

[92] "Students' Cultural Center", henceforth also "SKC".
[93] "Students' Cultural and Art Center", henceforth also "ŠKUC".

construction of nature inherited by Marxism through Hegelianism, as I will argue later. They also argued that socialism was insufficient for the liberation of women, but agreed with the emancipationists on its necessity (and on the steps forward that it made compared to the previous condition) – for Despot, like for the other 'neofeminists', a 'true' liberation of women could only occur in a socialist system, reformed (in Despot's case, from within) to allow women to also "[reach] the status of full humanity" (Zaharijević, 2017, pp. 272-273).

Much of their work also had to do with the redefinition of terms such as "consciousness", "patriarchy", or "family work" to fit into and advance their feminist project – as Despot will also do, in part, with "nature", "science", "technology", and "history", among others – and the introduction and interpretation of "new feminist texts from the United States and Western Europe" (Lóránd, 2016, p. 864), something particularly evident both in the 1976 "Women Studies" seminar in Dubrovnik and in the 1978 *Drug-ca Žena* conference, which they organized and that I will discuss in the following paragraph.

The international nature of the 'neofeminist' stream within Yugoslavia, as already mentioned, was especially evident in some of the events it organized. The first of these was the 1976 "Women Studies" seminar, held over two weeks in December of that year in Dubrovnik. The seminar was attended by "scholars and students from Germany, Scandinavia, and the UK", stressing the (explicitly) international nature of it (Bonfiglioli, 2018, p. 243). This continued in the report on it prepared by Žarana Papić, one of the most active 'neofeminists' of the time, who focused on some issues which would later also become of concern for Despot, such as the integration of an academic perspective with one linked to the "political, existential, and subjective relevance to women's lives" or "the false neutrality of the sciences, the naturalization of women's inequality and the marginalization of women within the process of knowledge production" (Bonfiglioli, 2018, p. 243). At the same time, Papić also reflected on the inapplicability of a 'direct' carryover of the "Western" model of feminism to Yugoslavia, but

similarly criticized the Yugoslav authorities' dismissive and "suspicious" attitude towards "feminist ideas", arguing for the need of a "broader critique of women's oppression in society" which – with similar concerns to Despot's – should first of all focus on the institution of the family (Bonfiglioli, 2018, p. 244).

These themes would be explored again, less than two years later, at what was arguably the most important event in Yugoslav women's activism: the *Drug-ca Žena* conference of 1978, held in Belgrade. The conference was organized by the SKC group, and consisted in two separate events, both approved by the local authorities (Bonfiglioli, 2008, p. 52) – one earlier event, held in Serbo-Croatian with translations of feminist texts from English, Italian, and French, meant to promote feminist debates within the country, and the 'main' event, which saw the participation of feminists from many countries in "Western Europe" thanks to the Yugoslav women's connections in the various countries and the translation of Yugoslav texts into English (Bonfiglioli, 2008, pp. 53-55; Bonfiglioli, 2018, p. 245).

The international conference, which took place over three days, initially led to some misunderstandings between the two sides. The international guests, which the Yugoslavs often praised for their "double militancy" (i.e., declaring themselves both socialists or communists, depending on the specific person, and feminists – this was especially true of the UDI-affiliated Italians:[94] Bonfiglioli, 2011, p. 81) or for the radicality of their positions, both theoretical and practical (especially the French, and among these especially Christine Delphy, known for her work in materialist and lesbian feminism – Bonfiglioli, 2011, p. 96), were skeptical of the tone of the Yugoslavs, which they perceived as too "official" or close to the authorities' positions (despite the conference having been organized independently!) (Bonfiglioli, 2008, p. 64). The Yugoslavs, on the other hand, felt "treated as backwards" – and indeed, the Italians especially

[94] Although UDI-affiliated feminists were a sizable group among the Italians, they were not the only one: many of them also came from other, not always Marxist feminist, feminist groups within Italy.

criticized them for not applying feminist consciousness-raising and, in their view (somewhat ironically, given the UDI's even more 'legalistic' position before the '70s!), focusing too much on legal, economic, and political issues instead of 'consciousness' (Bonfiglioli, 2008, p. 66). These misunderstandings – which also reiterate, even among subjects nominally 'more progressed' and progressive than average given their participation to feminism, the very 'Balkanist'/(para-)'Orientalist' dynamic that this thesis aims to discuss and criticize through the work of Lonzi and Despot – had to be cleared up with an intervention by Rada Iveković,[95] who had been living in Rome for an extended period of time, explaining the Yugoslav neofeminists' choice (and willingness!) to agree to Yugoslav workers' self-management as one of their theoretical bases (Bonfiglioli, 2008, p. 71) and remarking their autonomy from Yugoslav state authorities, whose contradictions they – including Despot – sought to point out (Bonfiglioli, 2011, pp. 80, 83). After this, on the third day, the discussions reportedly became "more spontaneous", in an "atmosphere of openness, enthusiasm, and reciprocal exchange" (Bonfiglioli, 2011, pp. 86, 89), which promoted the introduction of a new "body of feminist knowledge that combined translations from Western feminist authors with original research […] related to the Yugoslav context" (Bonfiglioli, 2018, p. 248). This would ultimately lead to the emergence, a little less than a decade later, of the final stream of pre-dissolution feminist thought in Yugoslavia: the 'liberationist' one.

The last stream – the "liberationist" one – is most likely influenced by Despot's thought, rather than the opposite being true, seeing as many of their points already appear in her 1981 essay *Žene i samoupravljanje*.[96] This stream emerged between 1985 and 1986, when some of

[95] Her response was apparently – and not unjustifiably – somewhat terse, by her own account, scolding the Italians for adopting a 'holier-than-thou' and trying to "teach us lessons [on how to be 'proper' feminists]" (Bonfiglioli, 2011, p. 85).

[96] "Women and Self-Management", published in 1981 in the Yugoslav journal *Delo* and translated in the same year by S. Ninčić for *Socialist Thought and Practice: A Yugoslav Monthly*. In this four-page text, Despot briefly anticipates most of the themes that she will later develop in detail in *Žensko pitanje i socijalističko samoupravljanje*.

the women who had been active in *Žena i društvo* and the two student cultural centers, along with some newcomers, moved from theory to more 'practical' activism in the form of, for instance, emergency helplines against gender-based violence or the kind of feminist consciousness-raising discussed at *Drug-ca Žena* and influenced by U.S. and "Western European" feminist thought (Lóránd, 2016, p. 859). They took the neofeminists' approach to the separation of the women and class question even further, claiming that socialism "had not solved the woman's question, *regardless of what it did with class* [Zaharijević's emphasis]" as a result of their focus on the "liberation of consciousness" and the constatation that "patriarchalisms had not disappeared from the socialist private life" (Zaharijević, 2017, p. 274) – these two points, unlike the distrust in the potential of socialism, shared with Despot. In another point shared with Despot, they believed that there had been a conflation of "female biological and social roles", although they saw it as having a different, and less theoretical, origin: not the separation of science from history, like Despot, but instead the presuppositions and ideology enshrined in textbooks and the very women's magazines that had been the cornerstone of early Yugoslav women's activism (Zaharijević, 2017, p. 257). Still, despite their disillusionment with socialism, they did not believe that the situation was better in 'capitalist countries': reflecting the international character of their positions, inherited from *Drug-ca Žena*, they argued that in all of the world women were treated as "second-class citizens", and reflecting their distance from the emancipationists, they suggested that "formal policies" had reached as far as they could, but that was still not enough (Zaharijević, 2017, p. 276).

4.2 Blaženka Despot: Hegel for socialist reform

Blaženka Despot's *The Woman Question and Socialist Self-Management* was published in 1987, almost ten years after the *Drug-ca Žena* conference in Belgrade. In the book, she discusses the specific possibilities that Marxist feminism (which she explicitly mentions as such – see, for instance, Despot, 1987, p. 9) can open for socialist countries and civil society within

them. Her argument, as I will show further in this section, focuses explicitly on the shortcomings of Marxism, which according to her does not adequately consider the woman question, and science and technology in capitalism, which provide an 'abstract' understanding of "nature", divorced from "history"[97] and therefore conducive to a naturalization of the oppression of women (and other oppressed social groups) (Despot, 1987, p. 59). The argument explicitly rests on Hegel's triad of ethical life as it is discussed in his *Philosophy of Right* (already analyzed in the second chapter of this thesis) and on his "dialectical-speculative method"[98] (Despot, 1987, p. 8 – previously, I have also called it the "dialectical method of transcendental idealism"). These, according to Despot, allow for a rethinking of the relationship between nature and history (and, analogously, the body and science-technology) when appropriately interpreted through the lens of an "open [as opposed to 'dogmatic'] Marxism"[99] like that of Yugoslav socialist self-management (Despot, 1987, pp. 122-123).

Her main objective in the text is to demonstrate how on the one hand the "woman's question", although analogous to the "class question", cannot be simply reduced to it (or to a "particular" understanding of the "general"[100] problem that it poses – Despot, 1987, p. 117), and on the other to provide a solution to it, guaranteeing real, rather than merely formal, freedom to women in socialist Yugoslavia (Despot, 1987, p. 12). This is, effectively, a response to an earlier essay of hers, *Žene i samoupravljanje*[101] (Despot, 2020/1981), in which she denounced the insufficient theoretical development of "the woman question" in Yugoslavia. More specifically, she believed that women were not oppressed only in the legal and economic sphere – two aspects that, as already mentioned in the previous section of this chapter, Yugoslavia had already addressed – but also in "consciousness"[102] (Despot, 1987, p. 128). For her, the Yugoslav

[97] "povijest" and "priroda", respectively.
[98] "dijalektičko-spekulativnoj metodi".
[99] "otvorenog marksizma".
[100] "posebnog" and "općeg", respectively.
[101] "Women and self-management".
[102] "svijest".

state had not completely rid itself of capitalist-patriarchal logics, which had been carried over into Marxism through the mediation of the quintessentially bourgeois thought of Hegel (and specifically of the "family – civil society – State flow",[103] that is, the triad of ethical life – Despot, 1987, p. 17). Despite Marx and Engels elaborating it in what she considered a promising start in the form of their (and especially Engels's) critique of the "[m]odern monogamous family [as something] based on the open or concealed slavery of women",[104] comparing the husband-wife relationship to the bourgeois-proletariat one, she deemed the readings that ultimately reduced this to a matter of property relations and not also 'consciousness' one that drove the misrecognition of the autonomy of the women's question and, therefore, that hindered the actual, real emancipation of women (Despot, 1987, p. 132).

Her argument, which elaborates on the two elements that I just mentioned in the previous paragraph, focuses on four main, interconnected axes: history and nature, science-technology and the body, the "universal" and the "particular", and violence and bodily autonomy in the family. Despot claims that the oppression of women is a result of the Enlightenment-era separation of reason and passions, where the former is free and therefore in history (public life, that is, civil society, and later politics) and the latter is instead enslaved to natural, biological needs and wants (Despot, 1987, pp. 12-13).

Hegel's ethical life triad, then, as seen in the second chapter of this thesis, is the reification of precisely this division: women, equated with passions, that is, nature, are relegated to the private life of the family; men, equated with reasons and therefore in history, have access to civil society and the State. This discriminatory division is justified, according to Despot, through appeals to women's "biological [reproductive] function",[105] where however this

[103] "privatno vlasništvo, porodica, građansko društvo i država stoje u protoku".
[104] "Moderni se monogamni brak osniva na otvorenom ili prikrivenom kućnom ropstvu žene".
[105] "građanskim svođenjem žene na 'prirodu', na njenu *biološku funkciju* [my emphasis – the translated portion], na spol, ona u 'reprodukciji materijalnog života' također reproducira hijerarhičnost i autoritarnost sistema".

'biological function' is in reality only a result of a 'bourgeois' understanding of science (Despot, 1987, p. 97 – science, like technology, however, need not be such: in and of itself it is, instead, "simply […] something neutral and positive",[106] which can be used as a tool to achieve different aims, Despot, 1987, p. 45). She argues for a new, "socialist" understanding of nature, not abstracted from but instead informed by history, as a tool to dispel this misconstrual and make clear the historical (social) construction of women's 'natural inferiority' (Despot, 1987, p. 89 – 'inferiority' because Hegel's three moments are progressive – the first is inferior to the second, which is inferior to the third: woman as nature, the first moment, then, is below man as the *Bürger*).

This new understanding of nature, for Despot, is closely linked to the abolition of private property and the division of labor, which, not unlike the identification of woman purely with nature, are also a result of the bourgeois understanding and development of science and technology (Despot, 1987, p. 58). The abolition of these two institutions (private property and the division of labor), together with an effort to avoid the "[h]ypertrophy of the state and the political",[107] would allow for the reconciliation of the two identities that man takes on – one as an egoistic individual (in the private sphere and in work, where inequalities in skills and capacities are essentialized and hierarchically organized/retributed through the division of labor) and one as a citizen (in civil society and the state - Despot, 1987, p. 41). The division of labor in the family determines a similar process of hierarchization: in an argument not too unlike that of the IFC's Wages for Housework Campaign (with which Despot was definitely familiar), the biological-reproductive nature of the two sexes is used to justify the division of labor within the family, with childcare and housework assigned to women and essentially completely devalued. The abolition of the division of labor in general society would, for Despot, also have to include

[106] "naprosto kao nešto neutralno i pozitivno".
[107] "Hipertrofiranje državnog i političkog".

the abolition of the division of labor in the family and the socialization of familial care work (Despot, 1987, pp. 56-57, 118).

This distinction between the level of society and that of the family (public and private life) is also mirrored in Despot's philosophical discussion of the relationship between the "general" and the "particular" under "Bolshevik-Stalinist"[108] Marxism and socialist self-management, respectively. Despot argues that the relationship between the class question and the woman question is typically understood by Marxist-Leninism as one between the "general", broader issue of class liberation, which involves all members of society and solved in Marxism-Leninism through a "loss of all 'particularity' into an abstract 'generality' of the state and the party",[109] and the "particular" one of gender liberation, which is instead limited to women and therefore either dismissed or condemned "as bourgeois feminism" or reduced to a 'side issue' of sorts, to be resolved at a later moment or even automatically solved by class liberation (Despot, 1987, p. 111). The philosophical operation carried out by Despot in this regard is similar in its premises to the one that Marx carries out in regards to Hegel's dialectics: she argues that, instead, the particular should be the point of derivation for the general, rather than the opposite, in order to avoid its reductionism to the 'class question' and, consequently, "prevent[ing] them from becoming aware of their own being",[110] i.e., of reaching self-consciousness and true liberation (Despot, 1987, pp. 111, 114). This strategy – which, for her, coincides with the theoretical approach of Yugoslav socialist self-management – allows for the working class to reclaim the unity between the two, otherwise abstractly separated, identifications as an individual and a citizen, but, unlike in "authoritarian, statist socialism",[111] with freedom at the center, allowed by the primacy of the "particular" which, unlike assimilation

[108] "boljševičke-staljinističke" (Despot, 1987, p. 111).
[109] "gubljenje svake 'posebnosti' u jednu apstraktnu 'općenitost' države i partije".
[110] "onemogućava im osvještavanje svojeg vlastitog bića".
[111] "autoritarnog, etatističkog socijalizma" (Despot, 1987, p. 117).

into the general, is not "a contradiction to the pluralism of self-governing interests"[112] (Despot, 1987, p. 115). With this move, Despot also links together the "woman question" and the "class question", establishing a theoretical basis according to which the requests being brought forth by feminists (in the broadest sense) are not requests for a 'special treatment' of sorts, but rather just a request for the conditions of possibility for women's real emancipation – that is, for their full participation in the class-liberating system of socialist self-management – to be put in place, which she views as only possible if men also recognize that these are also "preconditions of their own emancipation"[113] (Despot, 1987, pp. 119-120). In this regard, her position straggles the line between a Marxist understanding – restarting from the 'concrete' in opposition to the Hegelian centrality of the (categorizing and therefore divisive) 'abstract', which she views as the source of the "[b]attle between the sexes"[114] and between the class and woman questions (Despot, 1987, p. 124)– and its Hegelian roots, with the process of the abolition of the division of labor and private property as a sort of dialectical *Aufhebung* of the division between the two (abstract) identifications of man (individual/citizen) and between the stark labor division (and subsequent discrimination) among men and women.

The duality of her position towards Hegelianism continues in the last of the axes which she covers in her argument, that of violence and bodily autonomy within the family, the first moment of the triad of ethical life. Despot views part of the feminist movement (the one which some Marxists call "bourgeois feminism", and which would probably include Lonzi and many of the feminists attending *Drug-ca Žena* and coming from 'capitalist' European countries) as exclusively focusing on "the psychological, patriarchal, ideological, traditional, male, sexist orientation of society",[115] in response to the typical Marxist analysis of the woman question

[112] "'Opće' je […] proturječnost pluralizmu samoupravnih interesa".
[113] "pretpostavke vlastite emancipacije".
[114] "Borba među spolovima".
[115] "psihološke, patrijarhalne, ideološke, tradicionalne, muške, seksističke usmjerenosti društva".

which reduces it to being "objectivist and economist"[116] (Despot, 1987, p. 128 – i.e., analogous to the emancipationists' position in Yugoslavia, or to the early UDI's in Italy). Her argument, however, holds that both are necessary for women to achieve true freedom, and that this union can be reached through a combination of Marx's critique of private property, which saw it as the source of self-estrangement from oneself rather than the objectification of freedom (i.e., one's will made manifest in the physical world) as for Hegel, and Hegel's understanding of the "relation of the will and the body",[117] which requires that one be physically free (i.e., that their bodily autonomy and integrity is safeguarded) as a guarantee of one's individuality (remember, from the second chapter, one of the premises to contract marriage and enter into the moment of the family – Despot, 1987, p. 127). This is relevant because on the one hand, for humans, one must will to be alive – "the animal cannot maim or kill itself, but man can"[118] – and consequently, because of that, that a threat to bodily integrity is a graver insult to one's will than one to private property: hence, the class question, which deals primarily with private property in the form of objects, cannot take precedence over the woman question, which instead deals more directly with the body (Despot, 1987, p. 128).

Proven this, the issue that remains for the "women's question" is that of "the difference of mediation of woman and man in the family to move from the subjective level of spirit – family – to the objective spirit – the state"[119] (Despot, 1987, p. 129): Despot argues that in Hegel's system (and, in part, in non-feminist Marxism), it was "'male' thought"[120] that determined the stark division into three moments of the "substantiality of ethical life"[121] in the form of "the objectification of free will in private property"[122] (Despot, 1987, pp. 130-131).

[116] "marksizmu kao *objektivističkom i ekonomističkom* [my emphasis – the translated portion]".
[117] "odnos volje i tijela u Hegela".
[118] "životinja se ne može sama osakatiti, ili ubiti, ali čovjek može" (Hegel, 1820, in Despot, 1987, p. 127).
[119] "različitost posredovanja žene i muškarca u porodici da bi se iz subjektivnog duha — porodice stupilo u objektivni duh države".
[120] "'muškim' mišljenjem".
[121] "supstancijalitet […] običajnosti".
[122] "Objektivacija slobode volje u posjedu, u privatnom vlasništvu".

This in turn determined the exclusion of women from both private property – the exclusion which they share with the proletariat, and targeted by Marxism – and from work, where even Marx viewed woman "primarily as a mother, and only then as a worker",[123] with the man-worker's wage being fixed on what was needed to sustain not just himself but the whole family[124] (Despot, 1987, p. 131). Because of this, Despot suggests that "with the abolition of private property, only the preconditions for the emancipation of both women and men arise"[125] (Despot, 1987, p. 132), thus needing for the woman question to be considered autonomously of the class question (and thus, also in regards to the self-consciousness of women, as per the suggestion of "bourgeois feminism"), lest Marxism truly is susceptible to the critique that accuses it of mere "objectivism".

This critical – albeit overall positive – attitude towards Marxism, which Despot shared with the members of the Praxis school with whom she often collaborated, is at least in part a result of her interactions with the broader debates around feminism in Yugoslavia in the time frame preceding her writing, as summarized in the first section of this chapter. In this section, instead, I have provided an analysis of her main arguments within her book *Žensko pitanje i socijalističko samoupravljanje*, where she suggests that the discrimination and exclusion of women depend essentially on a failure to recognize the vestiges of patriarchal-bourgeois domination in science and technology, whose supposed universality and objectivity are used to justify that very same discrimination. She argues that these manifest themselves with greater intensity in the sphere of the family, where physical violence is a material product of these relationships, but that similar effects are felt throughout all spheres of life and prevent the full realization of everyone as both individual and citizen. Through this, she connects the

[123] "uloge žene kao prvenstveno majke, a onda tek kao radnice".
[124] That is, the wage having to cover both productive and re-productive work, the latter however being the assigned prerogative of woman due to the abstract separation of history and nature already mentioned previously.
[125] "ukidanjem privatnog vlasništva nastaju tek pretpostavke za emancipaciju i žena i muškaraca".

supposedly ‘particular’ women’s struggle with the supposedly ‘universal’ class struggle, and argues that only by centering the former it becomes possible to achieve true liberation for all, without discounting individual needs and wants (and, through this focus on every ‘particular’, also to address the ‘universal’ or, more appropriately, the ‘general’). In this, although with significant differences, she echoes parts of Lonzi’s central argument: the next chapter will focus precisely on comparing the two authors’ work over these topics.

5. Feminisms through the border: Comparing Lonzi and Despot

Having analyzed both Lonzi and Despot's arguments and the context of their respective countries, I will now focus on a comparison of the two authors across three main areas in this chapter. These are, namely, the focus on the "philosophical" as opposed to the "political" dimension of the liberation of women; the emphasis on "male culture", violence, and their respective approaches to sexual and gender difference; and their views on the state and authoritarianism regarding feminism (or the "woman question"). Throughout, after having provided a brief recounting of their theorizing in these three areas, I will emphasize the effects and possibilities that their work, taken together, opens for a reconsideration of philosophy, of the division between 'East' and 'West' (or 'periphery' and 'center'), and of the interactions between the 'state' and the 'individual', primarily through their reconsidering of the relationship between the 'universal' and the 'particular'.

5.1 The "philosophical" and the "political": Consciousness and emancipation in Lonzi and Despot

In both Yugoslavia and Italy, as shown in the previous chapters, it was impossible for anyone attempting to engage with feminism in any shape not to acknowledge the struggles for the legal and economic (and sometimes political) emancipation of women that had been occurring at the very least since the end of the Second World War, since these constituted the primary mode of expression of the feminist movement in both countries before the advent of the "neofeminist" groups of which both the authors being discussed were part. However, despite the claim shared by both Lonzi and Despot that these fights for legal and economic changes were not enough to bring about a true liberation of women, the specific situations that they were

addressing when writing in their respective contexts were vastly different. Where in Italy many laws concerning basic women's rights – namely initiating divorce and carrying out an abortion – were only passed in the 1970s, and to this day maintain some limits (for instance, medical doctors may refuse to perform abortions if it goes against their religious beliefs, leading to situations where in many regions of the country getting an abortion at a public hospital is rendered impossible to this very day – see, for instance, Labarile, 2024), most of these had been present in Yugoslavia since the fall of the Karađorđević regime and the institution of socialism in 1945, as already discussed in the fourth chapter of this thesis. This difference notwithstanding, many of the Italians in attendance at the *Drug-ca Žena* conference of 1978 nonetheless 'accused' the Yugoslavs of focusing too much on legal emancipation at the expense of (by then popularized) consciousness-raising practices, reportedly unaware (Bonfiglioli, 2011, p. 61) – probably partly because of prejudices towards the "Eastern" Yugoslavia – that many of the emancipationist struggles in Yugoslavia, unlike in Italy, focused not so much on the *passing* of laws but rather on their *proper application* – already in this form taking issue with the 'consciousness' of Yugoslavs more than with the legal form of the state (Zaharijević, 2017, p. 271).

A significant convergence between the works of Despot and Lonzi, then, is this very focus on addressing the '(self-)consciousness' of women – a prerequisite for liberation – and, in Despot's case especially, the 'self-consciousness' of men, too, necessary for the recognition of the 'precedence' and universal relevance of the "woman question". Both the specific understanding of 'self-consciousness' and the (conception or actual practice) of the methods to achieve it, however, varied vastly between the two.

Lonzi, the earlier of the two writers, sought an approach that, at least nominally, broke off completely from previous "male" understandings of 'self-consciousness' (expressed primarily through three out of the four ideologies that she explicitly addresses – Hegelianism,

Marxism, and psychoanalysis). This was articulated specifically in a rejection of the 'violent' approach of Hegelian and Marxist dialectics, which views self-consciousness as a moment arising from the annihilation of an (individual, objective) consciousness in the "fight to the death" of the slave-master figure in Hegel (whereby two individuals 'fight to the death', the one who concedes becoming the "slave" and the other the free self-consciousness of the "master" – later, only the slave, recognizing themself in the product of their labor, becomes truly free, in a process reutilized by Marx).[126] Lonzi's alternative to this is effectively a reworking of the scheme of "recognition" intrinsic to Hegelian and Marxist dialectics, where self-consciousness remains as the product of an interpersonal process which, however, loses the 'adversarial' character that it possessed in the conceptualization of it brought forth by classical German idealism. The specific process which Lonzi envisions as bringing about this recognition is (feminist) consciousness-raising, where small, usually self-organized groups share their experiences and reflect upon them. This method, which Lonzi and *Rivolta Femminile* shared with much of the rest of the (non-Marxist stream of the) Italian feminist movement of the late '60s, as already mentioned in this thesis's third chapter, emphasizes the apport of the 1968 student movement and the hippy movement on her work, as opposed to the more institutional, academic approach of Despot. Likewise, it makes clear her rejection of the institutions of 'male culture', an issue that Despot – perhaps in relation to her overall fairly positive opinion of Yugoslavia's framework of workers' self-management as a whole – does not address as strongly.

Despot's approach, on the other hand, remains much more faithful to the Marxist and Hegelian conceptualization of recognition. Although she does believe that both German authors' ideas need revisions and amendments in order to be properly used in support of the feminist cause, the main framework is nonetheless maintained relatively unchanged, with her work focusing primarily on providing critiques of the individual 'moments' in the two philosophers'

[126] For more on the slave-master figure, see Hegel, 1807/2018, pp. 108-116.

dialectics rather than of the process itself. Still, her view does not significantly lose in radicality, compared to Lonzi's: she denounces the maintenance of patriarchal logic within both Hegelianism and Marxism (specifically in the context of Yugoslavia, but her critique could easily be extended at least to all other socialist countries), and, similarly to Lonzi, argues for radical (albeit different) shifts in the roles within and makeup of the family. Probably as a result of the greater amount of laws protecting women's rights in Yugoslavia, her arguments do not focus just on women – who Lonzi views as essentially having to liberate themselves 'from the ground up', almost regardless of the condition of legal, economic, and political institutions – but also on men, suggesting that, although much (if not all of) the 'empirical' groundwork in the form of laws has been laid, everyone needs first of all to be aware of the existence of this laws and, more importantly, be genuinely willing to apply them and the general principles that stand behind them. It is in order to do so that a change in consciousness is required: women need to be made aware of the fundamental legitimacy of their claim to bodily integrity and autonomy, and men need to reject the logics of violence and prevarication which allow them to maintain a privileged role in both private and public life. In this last point, there is an element of convergence between Lonzi and Despot: however, as should have already been noticeable, and as will be highlighted further in the next section, the different targets of this exhortation (women only for Lonzi, both women and men for Despot) speak to fundamentally different concerns in their theoretical work.

Although the two authors appear, at first glance, to have vastly different positions on the place of philosophy (and of politics) regarding feminism, with Lonzi being particularly skeptical of both as forms of patriarchal 'male culture', a more careful analysis reveals a different picture. They both reject the 'traditional' understanding of 'universality', which according to both upholds the condition of the state's institutions as patriarchal and 'homogenizing', but see a possibility for a different, feminist philosophy (and, consequently, a

different organization of politics), still maintaining a 'general' applicability but doing so only after the particular is taken as its fundamental core, rather than just a basis. What this means is that the particular, which is ultimately "lifted" and "transcended" (*aufgehoben*) and thus "removed" in Hegelian dialectics, is instead retained throughout the entirety of the philosophical and political reflection. In doing so, Lonzi and Despot manage to avoid the supposed 'unmarkedness' of 'traditional', 'universal' philosophy (which, instead, adopts and imposes the violent logic of 'male culture', on which I will elaborate more in this chapter's next section) and draw out the groundwork for a theoretical and political system which takes into account the specific needs of individuals, instead of mandating adherence to 'universal', i.e., male-patriarchal, morality to be included in civil society and the state, as was the case in Hegelian theory. The fact that it is the particular that assumes a central role in both also serves, at least partially, as a guarantee against the replacement of the 'old universal' with merely a 'new universal', although, as will become evident in the discussion of the relationship between center and periphery that this setup introduces, there are still limitations to this. Taken together, their work allows for a radical rethinking of philosophy: where Lonzi questions its assumptions and its supposed 'universality', then, through the explicit re-use and resignification of the work of those same authors that Lonzi had considered part of 'male culture' Despot opens a path for a new 'general philosophy of the particular'. By remarking on the 'generalizable' nature of the 'particular', Despot brings Lonzi's new principle – the new philosophy that she advocates for with her rejection of the 'male' logic of violence – to the level of the political, going beyond the limitation of its application to just the small consciousness-raising communities that Lonzi envisions.

This vision of philosophy and politics also has clear consequences on the construction of (semi-)peripheral spaces. In shifting the focus of philosophy from the universal to the particular, there is not only a recognition and displacement of 'male culture' as the (supposed)

'universal' that undergirds philosophy in its entirety, but also, implicitly, a questioning of the 'universal' represented by 'central/Western' thought. Still, this is not necessarily always the case in the work of feminists after Lonzi (or after Despot), as evidenced by some of the episodes reported in this thesis: for instance, the discounting of the Yugoslav experience of (neo)feminism by the Italians, who claimed to have been adopting the method of consciousness raising and yet, because of their assumptions on socialist regimes as necessarily authoritarian (or "statist", in Despot's words), did not recognize that the Yugoslav feminists at the *Drug-ca Žena* conference were doing precisely the same – departing from their own experiences, and elaborating their theory from there – is one such example. This, however, as I will discuss further in the third section of this chapter, should not entirely undermine the possibilities opened by the theoretical-methodological structure set up in Lonzi and Despot's work.

5.2 "Male culture" and the logic of violence: Separatism or inclusion?

Despite both Lonzi and Despot sharing many elements regarding their criticism of "male culture" (or "male thought"), including the reading of it as essentially 'violent' in nature, they appear to come to vastly different conclusions insofar as who is included in their (theoretical) projects of liberation.

Unlike Despot, Lonzi's work primarily focuses on "male culture", highlighting how many of the most influential streams of thought of modernity actively contributed to creating the conditions for the oppression of women. Both authors see in the family one of the key areas in which this oppression manifests itself and radiates to the rest of society: for Lonzi, in an approach arguably more radical than Despot's, the solution is not a (fundamental) renovation of the family but instead its wholesale abolition. In this context, another significant point of contact between the two authors emerges regarding the abolition of private property, which, however, is conceived of somewhat differently by the two. The kind of private property that Lonzi is

concerned about is specifically man's claim over woman as a "bearer of the species", producing children that 'belong' to the father and the patriarchal order and herself, in a way, owned by the father; instead, children will be "given to them themselves", just as women "return to us ourselves"[127] in the same process (Lonzi, 1970/1982, p. 50). Despite Lonzi's intention of distancing herself from Hegelianism and Marxism, this passage once again has some similarities to the (previously mentioned) slave-master figure and especially to the consequences of it in the slave-worker's recognition of themself in the product of their labor, which also gives rise to the concept of alienation, heavily discussed by Marx, where the worker becomes dominated by ('alienated from') their own objectification in the product of their labor, and consequently from their own activity and therefore alienating "his [creative, human] essence from himself and he alienates himself from his essence" (Petrović, 1963, p. 421). This reference back to Marxism is a significant connection Lonzi and Despot (even more so when considering the emphasis that the Yugoslav theorization of workers' self-management put on avoiding alienation compared to e.g., Stalinist Marxism – see, in this regard, Whitehorn, 1974, p. 164): and indeed, Lonzi herself, in her later writings, will recognize the influx of Marxism on her thought (Colantuono, 2024). This reference to a (universal) 'essence', however, also appears to go counter to both Lonzi and Despot's central points: where in the (fundamentally Hegelian) slave-master figure one's full realization fundamentally derives from their integration in the supposedly maximally-'universal' moment of "absolute spirit", the two authors analyzed in this thesis reclaim the earliest moment of all Hegelian-dialectical triads, which instead emphasizes the 'particular' (with some important notes as to its potential for generality, already made in the relevant chapters).

Despite the greater influence of 'male culture' on Lonzi's work than what she had anticipated at the time of writing *Sputiamo su Hegel*, as had already been anticipated in the

[127] "Li diamo a loro stessi e restituiamo noi a noi stesse".

analysis in the third chapter, Lonzi's thought still has elements that represent a significant break from the male-dominated European philosophical tradition, especially when it comes to her reflections on violence. In this regard, her work differs quite significantly from that of Despot. Whereas the Yugoslav author mainly focuses on violence as it occurs within the lived reality of the family, Lonzi instead centers the 'symbolic'-metaphysical violence that permeates all areas of society. This focus derives, at least in part, from the chronological and (relative) theoretical proximity of her writing to the 1968 student movement and the hippy movement. This is particularly relevant when attempting to understand who Lonzi chooses as her audience and interlocutors: she explicitly speaks primarily to women, and some parts of her writing are indeed exclusively targeted to them. Still, she stops short of 'full' separatism and opens up her dialogue to include the youth – *men* and women – who, by taking part in anti-war and anti-violence movements, *de facto* reject the 'male culture' of violence that she denounces. The only group that she explicitly excludes, then, is that of 'adult' men, whereby she means not those past a specific age, but rather those who have interiorized the patriarchal logics of war, fighting, and violence, represented most eloquently by the *Antigone*'s Creon – a figure which, in a way, reopens the possible connection with Despot over violence within the family (although the violence enacted by Creon involves not the exploitation of Antigone's labor but instead the physical violence that he indirectly incites through the system of patrilinear throne succession between the two brothers Polynices and Eteocles). This contrasts with Despot's openness to the inclusion of men in the feminist (Marxist) project, which, as I will remark in the next paragraphs, is dependent on her specific conceptualization of the relation between the 'general' and the 'particular'. Similarly, despite the latent Marxist influences in her work, she (Lonzi, 1970/1982, p. 27) agrees with Despot (1987, p. 133) that capitalism is not the ultimate source of women's oppression, but rather that it "inherited"[128] it from previous structures and reinterpreted it in a

[128] "L'oppressione della donna è il risultato di millenni: *il capitalismo l'ha ereditato* [my emphasis – the actual part included in the above translation] piuttosto che prodotto".

material-economic key. Their approach to Marxism, however, differs significantly. Whereas Lonzi seems to share the feminist position on it as a merely 'objectivist' (and therefore not fully liberatory) pursuit, adding onto it her criticism of it as one of the perpetuators of 'male culture's' violence, Despot instead views it as a necessary prerequisite for the liberation of women.

The focus of Despot's book, as already mentioned in the previous chapter, was not as restricted as Lonzi's, in part simply because of the sheer difference in length between the two texts. Still, Despot also commented extensively commented on 'male thought' and 'male culture', although, unlike Lonzi, the focus for her had not so much to do with philosophy (she explicitly references and is influenced by both Hegel and Marx, alongside other, more contemporary philosophers) as it did with prevailing social and cultural norms. Despite this, her analysis of 'male culture' extends beyond just violence, as it did for Lonzi (although the Italian author's understanding of 'violence' is, arguably, wider): instead, Despot also views technology and, more importantly, science as two areas in which patriarchal logics are most clearly expressed (even though they are not patriarchal, or capitalist, in their essence – they are simply exploited to those ends). Science especially, for her, is used to artificially and abstractly construct the distinction between women and men which is used to justify exploitation within the family and the ensuing violence. Despite these differences with Lonzi, though, Despot's argument likewise ultimately expands to beyond the level of the family strictly: her adoption of the dialectical method means that her argument soon goes to cover the exclusion and exploitation of women on the levels of work, civil society, and politics (i.e., the state, in Hegelian terms). Although her focus remains more 'practical' than Lonzi's, whose concern seems to be almost exclusively philosophical-theoretical, their scope ends up aligning.

What does not align between the two thinkers, however, is, as was already anticipated, the target audience of their works. Similarly to how Lonzi's closeness to the 1968 student movement drove her to speak to the 'youth' beyond just women, Despot, because of her

commitment not just to feminism but to a specifically *Marxist* feminism, spoke to both men and women, since she saw a close relationship between class and gender oppression. Contrary to 'mainstream' Marxist thought, however, Despot gave priority to the 'woman question', reclaiming the 'mainstream' accusations of being a 'particular' issue that should be addressed after the more 'general' 'class question' (or even not addressed, as the resolution of the latter would also solve the 'woman question'). By arguing for the greater relevance of the 'particular' issue, not only does she take the 'concrete' as her starting point, in an approach potentially 'more Marxist than Marxism', but she also keeps women as the primary subject of her theory – like Lonzi – while not excluding men from her project, losing some of the radicality characterizing Lonzi's response but responding more directly to her objective of generating a change in the (social, everyday) 'consciousness' of all parts of society. Still, the claim to 'particularity' is something that both, in some way, share: as seen in the relevant chapter, Lonzi's reclaiming of the condition of 'immediate universality' nonetheless depends on a procedure similar to Despot's centering and reconceptualization of the 'particular' as something that is *more* relevant to everyone than the 'universal', in contrast to the suggestions of classical, male-dominated philosophy (and of "statist socialism" – Despot, 1987, p. 111).

The question of 'male culture' or 'male thought' is especially relevant to the debate regarding the possibility of a 'feminist philosophy' (where the necessity to mark it as 'feminist' as opposed to the unmarked, '[universal] philosophy' is already indicative of the epistemological question at hand), meaning a philosophy 'of the particular'. The combination of Lonzi and Despot's works is especially effective at breaking down the specific ways in which the assumed 'universality' of philosophy operates, which is at the heart both of the reproduction of patriarchal values and logics (as per Lonzi's reflection) and, in a similar process, the 'centering' of the 'West' as the 'legitimate' (i.e., self-legitimized, through its oppression of the 'East' in the various dimensions of colonialism – physical, economic, but also theoretical)

source of theoretical production. In this regard, Lonzi's work acts as the *pars denstruens*, highlighting and criticizing the elements of philosophy that uphold patriarchal logics and which represent the 'particular' (masquerading as 'universal') within it, and Despot's as the *pars construens*, indirectly 'rehabilitating' philosophy by decoupling disciplines themselves from assumptions and presuppositions that appear to be embedded in them. Lonzi specifically does so through her critique of the 'male' "logic of violence", which she explores in the *Antigone*. In contrast, Despot comments on the dichotomy of genders (and sexes!) enforced by (she notes, "bourgeois", rather than leaving it unqualified as in bourgeois-patriarchal-Western discourse) science and technology (which, as already seen, in themselves are "neutral"). Although her argument is specifically linked to these two disciplines, it is easily extendable to many others, including philosophy, especially in light of Lonzi's analysis, which identifies it as one of the main fields in which 'male culture' is maintained and reproduced. Through the combination of these two perspectives, then, what again emerges clearly – albeit from a different avenue – is the possibility of a 'feminist philosophy', in opposition to the 'old', 'patriarchal philosophy' insofar as this pretends and demands to be 'universal' despite its very own particularity.

Despot's point specifically also speaks to the possibilities that (semi-)peripheral spaces open for philosophy and, vice versa, that philosophy opens for (semi-)peripheral spaces. Throughout her work, she argues that the specific perspective offered by the 'open' socialism of Yugoslavia – a space that is 'de-centered', compared to both the 'Western' and 'Eastern' blocs of the Cold War (although, arguably, it occupied a central position within the Non-Aligned Movement, despite the organization's objectives of horizontality, hence 'semi-peripheral') – is key for revealing the assumptions upholding patriarchal (and 'bourgeois') assumptions in the sciences and, therefore, in society as a whole. In doing so, and through the extension of her argument to philosophy, she opens the possibility for an understanding of philosophy that not only questions the assumptions of its 'universality' (with the ensuing relevance to semi-

peripheral contexts already discussed in the previous section), but also allows for a questioning of those assumptions in regards to the 'universality' of theory coming 'from the center', revealing its 'particularity' and calling for it to assume a perspective that truly includes those that it considers 'particulars'.

Before moving to the next section, which goes into more detail regarding the topic of philosophy and theory in (semi-)peripheral contexts, it is important to add a note regarding what each context considers 'central' and 'peripheral' (and everything in between), which is also relevant to the point just made. As hinted at before, and despite the undeniable existence and constant presence of a global symbolic hierarchy that informs and shapes any production of theory, there is often a tension whereby most will tend to consider themselves the 'center' and oppose some other group as a 'periphery', an 'Other' to itself. This emerges in the Italian feminists' attempt to "teach" the Yugoslav feminists how to 'do feminist consciousness-raising (and feminism more generally) properly', as in the episode from *Drug-ca Žena* reported in the first section of chapter 3, or in the choice of who to invite to *Drug-ca Žena* on the Yugoslav feminists' part – only the 'progressed' feminists of Europe and North America, even despite Yugoslavia's participation in the Non-Aligned Movement and the presence of feminist movements and theoreticians in many of the NAM countries throughout the organization's existence. Although Lonzi and Despot's thought does indeed open possibilities for the dismantling of this very global symbolic hierarchy, then, it is important to note, even if it does not necessarily affect the avenues that their thought opens theoretically speaking, that in the practical, lived reality of their two contexts these same radical possibilities were often not explored, or did not otherwise come to fruition.

5.3 State and civil society: Power and autonomy in Lonzi and Despot

Lonzi and Despot both commented, to some extent, on the relationship between their theoretical work and politics (both as the political institutions they were critiquing or supporting, either in civil society or in the state, and in reference to the final moment of Hegel's ethical life triad). For Lonzi, this happened primarily through her (implicit) comment to the *Antigone* and her criticism of the PCI; for Despot, this was primarily in her comments regarding the relationship between capitalism, socialism, and the Yugoslav interpretation of workers' self-management, which she praised as a successful 'alternative' to the former two (Despot, 1987, p. 100). In both instances, a concern with avoiding authoritarianism emerges: in Lonzi's case, this is related to the influence of early Italian feminist groups – especially DEMAU – and in Despot's, to the comparison between Yugoslav and other socialist systems.

Lonzi's argument in this regard, partly owing to its derivation from DEMAU's position, is not engaging directly with the state (as intended in the Hegelian sense) but rather with civil society and, more generally, the results of (her view of) 'male culture', which she understands as the form of authoritarian domination *par excellence*. Her criticism specifically targets the PCI and the emancipationist feminist groups which they supported (that is, the UDI): specifically, she claims that "equality is what is offered to the colonized on the level of laws and rights[, …] what is imposed to them on the level of culture[, …] the principle according to which the hegemonic keeps conditioning the non-hegemonic"[129] (Lonzi, 1970/1987, pp. 26-27). In doing so, she rejects a 'bureaucratic' approach to liberation, which would flatten the differences between – and needs of – different individuals and their needs, assimilating them to a 'general' idea of equality (exactly what happens in the Antigone, as discussed before: the family is subordinated to the state) which is, nonetheless, set on a 'male' standard, thereby *de*

[129] "L'uguaglianza è quanto si offre ai colonizzati sul piano delle leggi e dei diritti. E [sic] quanto si impone loro sul piano della cultura. È il principio in base al quale l'egemone continua a condizionare il non-egemone".

facto maintaining the 'philosophical' oppression of women. With the same passage, she also connects feminism and anti-colonialism, arguing that the same patriarchal logic of violence embedded in philosophy also marginalizes and silences voices from peripheral and semi-peripheral spaces, imposing the 'center's' will and culture on them. What Lonzi denounces, then, is not a specific ideology or form of government, but rather power as a whole, which, by its nature as power, is essentially patriarchal, prevaricatory, and authoritarian, in her view. Even democracy and socialism, then, like any form of power, are "authoritarian", and depend fundamentally on "a particular, very effective type of *alienation* [my emphasis]"[130] (Lonzi, 1970/1987, p. 26) – a point whence her rejection of power and emancipationist politics (which aim at the *integration* on 'equal' – political, but not philosophical – terms of women in the male/patriarchal system) derive.

Despot's discussion of state and authoritarianism, on the other hand, focuses much more on the situation within Yugoslavia, on the one hand, and in international politics, on the other. Despot's argument fundamentally depends on her – and, more generally, the Praxis group's – understanding of Yugoslav socialism as a form of "open Marxism": a form of socialism that she opposes to "dogmatic Marxism",[131] and which, unlike it, is especially open to internal contestation and theoretical re-workings (Despot, 1987, pp. 122-123). The specificity of "dogmatic Marxism" is an assimilation of the 'particular' – individual needs and interests – into the "'general' interest of the state and the party"[132] (Despot, 1987, p. 110). Despot, then, does not attribute authoritarianism to power generally, like Lonzi, but she nonetheless argues against a system which disregards the specific needs and abilities that the different groups and individuals – primarily women, who for her are systematically excluded from state-level political considerations due to their relegation within the home at the hands of patriarchal

[130] "una particolare forma di alienazione molto efficace".
[131] "dogmatskog i otvorenog marksizma".
[132] "'posebnom' interesu bivaju asimilirani u 'opći' interes države i partije".

assumptions, but her argument extends to all members of society – may have. Notably, although her argument is critical of both capitalist and Soviet-aligned socialist systems, she does not spare Yugoslav workers' self-management from criticism, either, suggesting that it, too, when it does not properly get rid of the patriarchal assumptions, on the one hand, and bureaucratic methods, on the other, that it inherits from the 'bourgeois' and 'statist' remnants in Marxism can prevent the "self-awareness [i.e., self-consciousness] of both women and men in their essential human emancipation"[133] (Despot, 1987, p. 133).

Both Lonzi and Despot, then, integrate their views on freedom and each individual's self-consciousness of it with those on social life (be it in civil society or at the level of the state) and power, arguing, despite the vastly different theoretical and political contexts that their work is situated in, for systems which do not uncritically subordinate individual and particular needs to general or universal principles. However, while Despot has a relatively high degree of trust in the state's capacity to set up the preconditions needed to achieve this goal (which nonetheless still requires the collaboration of its citizens for what she considers *real* emancipation to be achieved), Lonzi's understanding rejects the state almost completely, finding in the private life of small communities like consciousness-raising groups – *de facto* alternatives to the 'traditional' family model – the ideal environment for the fostering of self-consciousness and, therefore, the achievement of true liberation.

This conclusion is especially interesting given the differing understanding of (and discourse on) civil society in the 'Eastern' (now post-)'socialist' bloc – of which Yugoslavia was not properly a part (Boršić & Skuhala Karasman, 2023, p. 6), but to which it and its former constituent republics are still to this day assimilated (Seligman, 1992, p. 151; but also, for instance, Bonfiglioli, 2011, p. 77; Stańczak-Wiślicz, 2020, p. 193) – and the 'Western'

[133] "samoosvješćivanje i žena i muškaraca u njihovoj bitnoj ljudskoj emancipaciji".

'capitalist' bloc – of which Italy, instead, was usually considered a part, despite its very strong Communist party. Adam Seligman, in his book *The Idea of Civil Society*, suggests that the notion of civil society, expressed as a "dialectic and tension between public and private", was "central to the development of both the liberal-parliamentary tradition and the socialist, Marxian one" (Seligman, 1992, p. 5), and argues that, in the post-socialist nations of "Eastern Europe", there was an "attempt […] under way to reconstitute civil society" (Seligman, 1992, p. 6), implying that it was absent before the fall of communism (Seligman, 1992, p. 7). Despite Seligman's analysis, however, the different attitudes of Lonzi and Despot seem to point in a somewhat different direction.

Lonzi, with her essentially anti-statist and anti-institutional approach, appears to almost completely reject the "problem of uniting individual and social wills" (Seligman, 1992, p. 101) that Seligman views as the central aim of discussions over theories of civil society, arguing instead for small and fundamentally like-minded – almost separatist – communities as the primary mode of social organization. This is made possible through her radical resignification of the 'immediate universality' assigned to women by Hegel, as explored in the third chapter, and her rejection of the traditional family structure, breaking the dialectical process that would lead to the emergence of civil society and the state. Through feminist consciousness-raising, then, she hopes to provide a workable alternative to what she considers a male-centered, violent institutional framework, within which she also includes (often not without reason) some of the expressions of Italian civil society.

Despot, on the other hand, while certainly expressing some degree of criticism of the organization of Yugoslavia at the time, is much more open to the real, and seemingly easily reachable, possibility of harmonizing the functioning of the state with the needs and wills of individuals within the system of workers' self-management. In contrast to the limits of Seligman's strictly liberal viewpoint, Despot envisions self-management as the harbinger of the

possibility of a form of civil society that, supported by appropriate state intervention and the openness of individuals to interior change, can promote an even deeper reconciliation of the state and individuals' needs, wills, and, more generally, freedom. Despite the many internal tensions within Yugoslavia, then, the reconsideration of and proposed changes to its political system carried forth by Despot are an interesting and stimulating discussion in the face of the increasing democratic backsliding throughout the world, and especially Europe and North America, of the 2010s and 2020s, given the focus of her theory on the promotion of the conditions that would allow the full participation of everyone at all levels of politics, the lack of which (caused by the exclusion of many – including women – which she condemns) she saw as the root of all authoritarianism.

The consequences of the combination of the parts of Lonzi's and Despot's thought explored here are especially relevant regarding the possibilities that their new understanding of philosophy opens for the reconsideration of (semi-)peripheral spaces in and through theory. In this instance, it is Lonzi who provides a more 'straightforward' suggestion on this issue, albeit very briefly: she intrinsically (though very briefly) links the question of feminism to anti-colonial politics, arguing that the mechanisms of oppression determining both are the same. Despot, later, indirectly further elaborates on this through her move to the 'particular' and its generalizability, whose effects were already explored in the first section of this chapter (by bringing attention and giving priority to the particular, the peripheral and semi-peripheral can find a voice, without getting drowned out by the falsely 'universal' center). Still, Lonzi's questioning of 'equality' must be kept in mind in this context: as she repeatedly notes, as long as the same logics and methods of old are applied, 'equality' is not conducive to any elimination of oppression or other form of change. In this sense, even more evidently than in the previous chapters, the radical rethinking of philosophy that the two advocate for is deeply connected to countering the marginalization of (semi-)peripheral spaces.

6. Conclusion

In this thesis, I have analyzed the works of Carla Lonzi and Blaženka Despot, departing from the most evident and surface-level similarity between the two – their rejection of 'mainstream' Marxism's position on dealing with the woman question – and from their most obvious difference – their surface-level attitudes towards Hegel, with Lonzi calling to "spit" on him and Despot, instead, showing relative appreciation for his work. After the summary and analysis in chapter two of the notions of 'traditional' philosophy that Lonzi and Despot criticize or re-adapt, particularly as they appear in the works of Hegel and Marx and the major authors that 'mediated' their works into the mainstream culture of this thesis's protagonists' countries, chapters three and four focus on the feminist movement in the two countries and on Lonzi and Despot's work more specifically. In them, I explore the arguments behind Lonzi's recognition of the ubiquitous "logic of violence" that upholds the exclusionary patriarchal system and her suggestion for a radical alternative, as well as Despot's analysis of the artificial construction of the "inequality of the sexes" in (bourgeois) science and technology and its physical manifestation in violence within the family. Further conclusions – laid out in the next paragraph – are drawn from the comparison of their work in the fifth chapter.

Both Lonzi and Despot's work contributes to a questioning of the notions of 'universality' embedded within 'traditional' philosophy (and culture more generally), highlighting its ultimately 'particular' – male, patriarchal – nature which emerges as an obstacle to the actual participation and full consideration of all those subjects who do not (fully) adhere to the patriarchal system from society and, more specifically, from the dimensions of politics and civil society. Besides laying out a new theoretical basis for a reform of the state in a direction that takes into greater account the needs and specificities of all individuals, especially those marginalized by the patriarchal system, through their centering of the 'particular(s)'

excluded by the 'universal', their work also opens up – for the same reason – the possibility for a reconsideration of the very notions of 'East' and 'West' – 'periphery' and 'center' – which similarly are also rooted in a self-ascribed 'universality' of the 'center's' experience which ultimately excludes the experience of the (semi-)'periphery'. This latter conclusion is supported not just by their theoretical elaborations, where it is very seldom explicit, but also by the very context of their writing, with the anecdote described above relating to the treatment of the (supposedly, though questionably, for the reasons highlighted in the introduction and throughout the text) 'Eastern' Yugoslav feminists by the (similarly supposedly, and similarly questionably) 'Western' Italian feminists at the *Drug-ca Žena* conference being especially eloquent. Still, despite the interesting theoretical basis that their work provides, more research is needed on the application and practical possibilities that their theories open, especially at the level of the organization of states, in particular regarding their effects on the strengthening of democracy and public participation.

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