

# THE PRAXIS JOURNAL AND WOMEN INTELLECTUALS\*

*Una Blagojević*

## Abstract

*This paper looks at the women in and around the Yugoslav philosophical journal Praxis (1964–1974), some of whom would later become leading feminist activists in Yugoslavia during the late 1970s and 1980s. These women, while being students of philosophy, mediated knowledge from abroad by reviewing and commenting on new publications from the West. Since translations of these books were not yet available in Yugoslavia, the role these women played as reviewers can be highlighted as important to how Praxis and the journal's associated summer school became international platforms for the exchange of ideas between the mid-1960s and the early 1970s. In presenting the role of women in the journal Praxis, this paper engages with an issue concerning the presence of female*

\* I am very thankful to Lúbia Kobová, Jan Mervart, Zsófia Loránd, Tanja Petrović, and Monika Woźniak for their helpful comments and feedback on this text. I also thank Francisca de Haan for discussions in her class which resulted in the first draft of this paper. And I am also grateful to my CEU colleagues Ivana Mihaela Žimbek, Iva Jelušić, Isidora Grubački, and Cody J. Inglis, who read different versions of the text and gave me valuable insights. The paper is based on work of the COST Action NEP4DISSENT, supported by COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology).

*intellectual authors as producers of knowledge. Thus, it points out further possible areas of research in gender history and the history of the Left.*

### Keywords

*Praxis journal, Yugoslavia, women's emancipation, Marxist humanism*

### Introduction

This paper looks at the role of the women intellectuals involved with the Yugoslav philosophical journal *Praxis* (1964–1974), some of whom would later become leading feminist activists in Yugoslavia during the late 1970s and 1980s, among them Rada Iveković, Nadežda Čaćinović, and Blaženka Despot. The women, while studying philosophy, sociology, or literature at the time at the (mainly) Faculty for Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Zagreb, mediated knowledge from abroad by reviewing and commenting on new publications from the “West” in the Yugoslav context. Since translations of these books were not yet available in Yugoslavia, the role these women played as reviewers should be highlighted in the context of *Praxis* and their associated summer school if these are approached as international platforms for the exchange of ideas in the period running from the mid-1960s up to the beginning of 1970s. Thus, we could suggest that the linguistic expertise (the texts were written in French, German, Italian, and English) and the knowledge of philosophical themes reflected in these reviews made these women active participants in the transfer of ideas between Yugoslavia and the West. While the historiography of *Praxis* and, in general, the history of intellectuals in Yugoslavia in the 1960s and early 1970s has only focused on the well-known male figures, this paper emphasizes the importance of analyzing the presence of women intellectuals in *Praxis* – Zagorka Golubović, Rada Iveković, Nadežda Čaćinović-Puhovski, Branka Brujić, Blaženka (Lovrić) Despot, Marija Brida, Zdravka Matišić, Ljerka Šifler-Premec, Lidija Lisicky, Jasminka Gojković, Ina Ovadija Mustafića, Eleonora Prohić, Melita Richter, Erna Pajnić, Vesna Petkovic, Štefica Buhtijarević, Azra Šarac, Maja Minček, Svetlana Knjazeva (Adamović), Marija Kaljević, and Vera Horvat-Pintarić – who were philosophers, sociologists, and literary scholars, some of whom would later become prominent feminist activists in Yugoslavia.

In presenting the role of women in the *Praxis* journal this paper raises three issues: 1) the presence of female intellectual authors in *Praxis* as producers of knowledge, who mainly wrote reviews of foreign books in *Praxis*; 2) the presence of women's issues (women/gender as subjects of knowledge) and 3) the presence of a feminist critical perspective (feminism as a way of knowing and doing).<sup>1</sup> Due to the limited scope of the paper, and as a preliminary research effort, this paper will focus only on the first issue. In doing so, the paper does not suggest that writing reviews as a woman

<sup>1</sup> I thank Lubica Kobová for her suggestion to explicate the issues in this way.

intellectual necessarily brings up the conscious application of feminist perspectives or strategies or a direct link between the women in and around *Praxis* and the emergence of the “new feminism” in Yugoslavia.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, it is also notable that some of these women did become feminist activists of the new wave in Yugoslavia.

The overall aim of the paper is to initiate a dialogue about the historiography that deals with Marxist humanism (or in general the “Left”) and gender history. In focusing on the period between 1964 and 1974, it seems to be the case that both Marxist Humanists and “new feminists” shared a similar political language in socialist Yugoslavia. They read the “young” Marx, who was not only interested in economic issues – a common criticism of the work of the so-called “mature” Marx – but also in questions of human autonomy, social alienation, and the category of humanity. In essence, Marxist Humanist philosophers around the journal *Praxis* wanted to reinvigorate Marxist theory and reinterpret it as a socially relevant discipline that “reflect(s) critically in very concrete terms on the present, not only in light of the past but also of a possible future.”<sup>3</sup> Their main motto was “critique of all existing conditions” – the first step to free Marxism from dogma and to reconstitute it as a living, critical theory. What marked the debates on the pages of *Praxis* were those issues concerning the forms of socio-economic alienation under state socialism, questions of personal autonomy within the socialist system, and whether a genuine type of socialism can exist within the framework of self-management. Moreover, Yugoslav intellectuals around *Praxis* created robust networks with left-oriented intellectuals in Western Europe who annually met at the Korčula Summer School until 1974 when it, along with the journal, ceased to exist. Some of the intellectuals who regularly came to these meetings, which gathered together professors, intellectuals, and students, included Herbert Marcuse, Ernst Bloch, Lucien Goldmann, and Henri Lefebvre, among many others.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> The name “new feminism” or “neofeminism” – not accepted by all the members of the group – “targeted the proclaimed, yet to them, unfulfilled equality of women in Yugoslavia.” Zsófia Lóránd, *The Feminist Challenge to the Socialist State in Yugoslavia* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Mihailo Marković and Robert S. Cohen, *Yugoslavia: The Rise and Fall of Socialist Humanism: A History of the Praxis Group* (Nottingham: Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation for Spokesman Books, 1975), p. 11.

<sup>4</sup> The main representatives of Marxist Humanism in Yugoslavia were gathered around the journal *Praxis*, which was established by philosophers and sociologists from the Faculty for Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Zagreb. Soon they were also joined by their colleagues from Belgrade, Sarajevo, and Ljubljana. Their summer school, held on the small island of Korčula in the Yugoslav Adriatic, took place annually from 1963/4 to 1974. In these years, the Korčula Summer School became the main physical space for the international meetings of intellectuals that complemented the journal *Praxis*, the virtual forum in this exchange of ideas.

### The Framework of the Article

The article grounds itself on the findings and insights of more general historiographies of women in state socialist systems and within the global, geopolitical dynamics of the Cold War. Recent research aims to destabilize the still-dominant post-Cold War historiography that tends to speak about “the absence of feminism and women’s movements in former socialist countries.”<sup>5</sup> One of the main reasons for this absence, specifically when it comes to the history of communism or the left in general, is the “ongoing androcentrism in the history of the Left,” as Francisca de Haan points out.<sup>6</sup> That is, the history of the left and socialism has often been narrated as a history of men on the left and men in socialism. The more recent histories of East-Central Europe move away from the notions of a monolith power of the socialist state and look for a more complex explanation of the functioning of socialist systems. In such a way, they want to examine whether the “gendering of the Cold War” can be a useful lens to approach the history of ordinary women and men and see the role of gender in politics, governance, and culture.<sup>7</sup> For example, in writing about socialist China, Wang Zheng notes that the previous scholarship on this theme did not engage at all with socialist feminist history, thus her own work aims to redefine the history of socialist revolution in China by bringing women into the foreground.<sup>8</sup> In addition, these approaches point out the more nuanced narratives concerning the position of women and women’s organizations in socialist countries.<sup>9</sup>

While the studies dealing with women intellectuals in Yugoslavia are limited, *Praxis* and the Korčula Summer School are relatively well researched.<sup>10</sup> There are numerous

<sup>5</sup> Chiara Bonfiglioli, “Feminist Translations in a Socialist Context: The Case of Yugoslavia,” *Gender & History* 30 (2018), no. 1, pp. 240–254, here 240.

<sup>6</sup> Francisca de Haan, “The Women’s International Democratic Federation and Latin America, 1945–1970s,” originally published as Francisca de Haan, “La Federación Democrática Internacional de Mujeres (FDIM) y América Latina, de 1945 a los años setenta,” in Adriana Valobra and Mercedes Yusta (eds.), *Queridas camaradas. Historias iberoamericanas de mujeres comunistas* (Buenos Aires: Miño y Dávila, 2017), p. 2. Translation courtesy of Francisca de Haan.

<sup>7</sup> Francisca de Haan (ed.), “Gendering the Cold War in the Region: An Email Conversation between Malgorzata (Gosia) Fidelis, Renata Jambrešić Kirin, Jill Massino, and Libora Oates-Indruchova,” in *Aspasia* 8 (2014), pp. 162–190.

<sup>8</sup> Wang Zheng, “Creating a Socialist Feminist Cultural Front: ‘Women of China’ (1949–1966),” *The China Quarterly*, *Gender in Flux: Agency and its Limits in Contemporary China*, no. 204 (2010), pp. 827–849.

<sup>9</sup> E.g., Kristen Ghodsee, “Pressuring the Politburo: The Committee of the Bulgarian Women’s Movement and State Socialist Feminism,” *Slavic Review* 73 (2014), no. 3, pp. 538–562; Krassimira Daskalova (ed.), “Clio on the Margins: Women’s and Gender History in Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe (Part One),” *Aspasia* 6 (2012), pp. 125–185.

<sup>10</sup> Zsófia Lóránd, *The Feminist Challenge to Socialist State in Yugoslavia* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018); Bonfiglioli, “Feminist Translations in a Socialist Context,” pp. 240–254; Renata Jambrešić Kirin, “Yugoslav Women Intellectuals: From a Party Cell to a Prison Cell,” in *History of Communism in Europe*, no.5 (2014), pp. 36–53.

books and articles dedicated to *Praxis* and the Korčula Summer School that were written during their existence, after they ceased to function, and in the period after the disintegration of Yugoslavia.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, the literature produced after the collapse of Yugoslavia, mainly focused on the now well-accepted fact that the majority of those affiliated with the journal *Praxis* either became nationalists or anti-nationalists – at least in the Serbian case. Mira Bogdanović points out that the *Praxis* circle “practically overnight turned coats” and “turned into nationalists and/or liberals.”<sup>12</sup> There is a wide range of works published in recent years that approach *Praxis* and its summer school from different theoretical and historical perspectives.<sup>13</sup> The discussion of women and their engagement with the processes of knowledge production in *Praxis* has not been a theme in the historiography – one exception is Đurdica Degač’s essay “*Praxis i rodna tematika: Raskol između akademskog polja i prakse*” (*Praxis* and the theme of gender: the rift between academia and practice), in which she raises the question of why women’s and feminist issues remained out of the scope of themes addressed in *Praxis*.<sup>14</sup>

As a complement to Degač’s essay, and in order to address the questions posed in the introduction, this paper draws inspiration from the history of cultural and intellectual

<sup>11</sup> E.g., Gerson Sher, *Praxis: Marxist Criticism and Dissent in Socialist Yugoslavia* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977); Nenad Stefanov, “Message in the Bottle’: Yugoslav Praxis Philosophy, Critical Theory of Society and the Transfer of Ideas between East and West” in Robert Brier (ed.), *Entangled Protest: Transnational Approaches to the History of Dissent in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union* (fibre Verlag: Osnabrück, 2013); Dragomir Olujić Oluja and Krunoslav Stojaković (eds.), *Praxis: Društvena Kritika i humanistički socijalizam: Zbornik radova sa međunarodne konferencije o Jugoslavenskoj ljevici: Praxis-filozofija I Korčulanska ljetna škola (1963–1974)* (Belgrade: Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, 2012); Žiga Vodovnik, “Democracy as a Verb: Meditations on the Yugoslav Praxis Philosophy,” *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 14 (2012), no. 4, pp. 433–452; Mira Bogdanović, “The Rift in the Praxis Group: Between Nationalism and Liberalism,” *Critique: Journal of Socialist Theory* 43 (2015), no. 3–4, pp. 461–483; Christian Fuchs, “The Praxis School’s Marxist Humanism and Mihailo Marković’s Theory of Communication,” *Critique: Journal of Socialist Theory* 45 (2017), no. 1–2, pp. 159–182; Borislav Mikulić and Mislav Žitko (eds.), *Aspekti Praxisa: Refleksije uz 50. obljetnicu* [Aspects of *Praxis*: Reflections on the 50th anniversary] (Zagreb: Filozofski fakultet Sveučilišta u Zagrebu, 2015).

<sup>12</sup> Bogdanović, “The Rift in the Praxis Group,” p. 461.

<sup>13</sup> Some of the most recent articles on *Praxis* include: Anita Lunić, “Revolucija u horizontu filozofije prakse. Prilog razumevanju revolucije u filozofiji Milana Kangrga i Gaje Petrovića” [Revolution in the horizon of the philosophy of praxis. Contribution to the understanding of revolution in the philosophy of Milan Kangrga and Gajo Petrović], *Filozofska istraživanja* 38 (2018), no. 4, pp. 827–836; Luka Bogdanić, “Auf den Spuren der “praxistischen” Häresie: Fragmente einer Geschichte der jugoslawischen Zeitschrift Praxis,” *Argument* 326 (2018), no. 2, pp. 214–221; Kaitlyn Tucker Sorenson, “Dionysian Socialism?: The Korčula Summer School as Kurort of the New Left,” *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 55 (2019), no. 4, pp. 479–493.

<sup>14</sup> Đurdica Degač, “*Praxis i rodna tematika: Raskol između akademskog polja i prakse*” [Praxis and the theme of gender: The rift between academia and practice], in Borislav Mikulić and Mislav Žitko (eds.), *Aspekti Praxisa: Refleksije uz 50. obljetnicu*, pp. 113–125.

transfers and the reception of ideas. Transfer and reception however do not presuppose a unidirectional and simple appropriation and implementation of a concept, of practice, from one context to another – it is instead a process “in the making,” as Augusta Dimou points out, that requires both innovation and transformation. As a dynamic activity it resembles a “translation (both literal and metaphorical).”<sup>15</sup> Thus, if we think of the role of women in *Praxis* from this perspective, the practice of writing reviews of books published in foreign languages becomes more vital in this process of the transfer of ideas.<sup>16</sup> At the same time, the paper follows Zsófia Lóránd’s claim that the feminist activists in 1970s reacted to the still present “patriarchal consciousness” by offering a new language created through transfers and translations.<sup>17</sup> This paper thus builds on the importance of these transfers for the appearance of new feminism in Yugoslavia in the 1970s by looking specifically at the journal *Praxis*.

### General Context: Women in Yugoslavia, Self-Management, and Culture

Since this paper is primarily interested in a gendered perspective on the intellectual practices of *Praxis*, it is important to present Yugoslavia in its broader context by surveying those aspects helpful for situating the essay’s narrative. Here, it is important to highlight the role of the *Antifašistički front žena* (AFŽ) [Women’s Antifascist Front], founded in December 1941. AFŽ was established through an initiative of the Communist Party of Croatia (*Komunistička partija Hrvatske*, KPH) as a way to mobilize the already existing women’s activism “for the benefit of the emerging People’s Liberation Army [*Narodnooslobodilačka vojska*, NOV] and, more broadly, in the interest of the People’s Liberation Struggle.”<sup>18</sup> The following year, women’s activism continued to grow, and during its organizing conference in Bosanski Petrovac this organization became an all-Yugoslav organization.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Augusta Dimou, *Entangled Paths towards Modernity: Contextualizing Socialism and Nationalism in the Balkans* (Budapest, New York: Central European University Press, 2009), p. 244.

<sup>16</sup> E.g., Henk te Velde, “Political Transfer: An Introduction,” *European Review of History–Revue européenne d’Histoire* 12 (2005), no. 2, pp. 205–221; Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann, “Beyond Comparison: *Historie Croisée* and the Challenge of Reflexivity,” *History and Theory* 45 (2006), no. 1, pp. 30–50.

<sup>17</sup> Lóránd, *The Feminist Challenge to Socialist State in Yugoslavia*, p. 13.

<sup>18</sup> Iva Jelušić, “Gender and War in the Yugoslav Popular Media: The Role of the *Partizanke* in the Making of the New Socialist Woman” (PhD Diss. Central European University, *forthcoming*), p. 21.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Manuela Dobos, “The Women’s Movement in Yugoslavia: The Case of the Conference for the Social Activity of Women in Croatia, 1965–1974,” *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 7 (1983), no. 2, pp. 47–55; Jelena Batinić, *Women and Yugoslav Partisans: A History of World War II Resistance* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Andreja Dugandžić and Tijana Okić (eds.), *The Lost Revolution: Women’s Antifascist Front between Myth and Forgetting* (Sarajevo: Association for Culture and Art CRVENA, 2018).

Women's participation in the socialist struggle constituted an important aspect of socialist rhetoric.<sup>20</sup> It has already been established that the Yugoslav socialist framework enabled major advances in various aspects of women's equality, which radically changed women's position in postwar society. A woman's right to vote was proclaimed in 1946, together with legal equality within marriage, while in 1951 abortion became legal.<sup>21</sup> At the same time, as Jasmina Lukić notes, this did not mean that "full equality was achieved, or that all the mechanisms of discrimination were neutralized and put under control."<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, the emancipatory politics of the Yugoslav state – despite the negative aspects mentioned above that existed in Yugoslav society – "made women feel more socially and legally protected as citizens than ever before."<sup>23</sup> Lukić highlights the fact that while feminist women in the late 1970s were influenced by the existing feminist movements and theories in the West, they were equally inspired by the discourses on women's rights that were part of official Yugoslav state policy.<sup>24</sup> As she explains, "Just as women from the *Antifašistički front žena* (1942–1953) after World War II felt that they had actively acquired (and not been given) the rights that were introduced into the socialist legislation after the war, feminist intellectuals in Yugoslavia in the 1980s believed they were arguing for something that not only belonged to them but also fit within the system in which they lived."<sup>25</sup>

Mitra Mitrović, one of the key women in *AFŽ* and later the first woman governmental minister in Yugoslavia after the war drew attention in 1960 to the low political participation of women in the Yugoslav People's Assembly while also noting in 1957 a growing tendency for women to participate in politics in Yugoslavia.<sup>26</sup> It is noticeable that she referred to self-management, believing that it will probably "greatly affect the growing percentage of women participating in other forms of people's government and social self-management."<sup>27</sup> However, the younger generation of women in the 1980s interpreted this period of Yugoslav socialism after the dissolution of *AFŽ* in 1953 up until the late 1970s and the beginnings of "new feminism" as the "final assertion of state

<sup>20</sup> Chiara Bonfiglioli, "Belgrade, 1978: Remembering the Conference 'Drug-ca žena,' Thirty Years after," MA thesis, Utrecht University, 2008, p. 34.

<sup>21</sup> Jasmina Lukić, "One Socialist Story, or How I Became a Feminist," in Francisca de Haan (ed.), "Ten Years After: Communism and Feminism Revisited (Forum)," *Aspasia* 10 (2016), pp. 102–168, here 138.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 140.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> Mitra Mitrović, *Položaj žene u savremenom svetu* [The position of women in the contemporary world] (Belgrade: Narodna knjiga, 1960), p. 38.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 38–39.



control over women's activism."<sup>28</sup> Feminist historians in Yugoslavia, and in the post-Yugoslav successor states, have "tended to read the history of women's movements in the region through the second wave feminist ideal of women's political and organizational autonomy," thereby adopting the narratives which speak about the loss of autonomy of women's antifascist organizations in the post-war-period.<sup>29</sup> More recent research is reassessing the above narratives, pointing out the multi-layered and complex character of women's activism in the post-war period.

Following the 1948 break with the Soviet Union, the Yugoslav political elite embarked on an experiment of creating a new version of Marxism which was to be a response to what they characterized as the deviations of Stalinism that led to a Soviet bureaucratic-etatistic and dogmatic type of socialism. The Yugoslav authorities emphasized the departure from the Soviet version of socialism and argued that the Yugoslav path of self-managing socialism was the one truly dedicated to people, having thus a humanist character. During the processes of decentralization, AFŽ as a federal organization was also dissolved and reorganized into Savez ženskih društava (Union of Women's Societies, SŽD).<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, in the 1950s Yugoslav social and cultural life was fundamentally transfigured.<sup>31</sup> The economic and political reform introduced by self-management, as well as the ensuing reformulation of the Party's role, entailed a gradual move away from the one-party state – following this reformulation, as historian Marie Janin Calic writes, "a degree of pluralism was tolerated, at first in literature and the fine arts, but then also in political theory."<sup>32</sup> For example, in cinema, the late 1950s and 1960s saw a proliferation of films done by young filmmakers who, through their visual expression, critically reflected on the Yugoslav socialist system.<sup>33</sup> The humanities benefited as well – the political, economic, and scientific opening of Yugoslavia towards the West was followed by the intense translation of various Western books and an interest in contemporary Western intellectual production.<sup>34</sup> For example, in its feature "Journals

<sup>28</sup> Chiara Bonfiglioli. "Women's Political and Social Activism in the Early Cold War Era: The Case of Yugoslavia," *Aspasia* 8 (2014), pp. 1-25, p. 4.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> Bonfiglioli, "Women's Political and Social Activism in the Early Cold War Era," p. 14.

<sup>31</sup> Miroslav Peršić, "Yugoslavia: the 1950 Cultural and Ideological Revolution," in Svetozar Rajak et al. (eds.), *The Balkans in the Cold War* (London: Palgrave, MacMillan, 2017), p. 295.

<sup>32</sup> Marie Janine Calic, *A History of Yugoslavia* (Purdue University Press, 2019), p. 180.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Daniel J. Gouldning, *Liberated Cinema: The Yugoslav Experience, 1945-2001* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002); Gal Kirn, Dubravka Sekulić, and Ziga Testen (eds.), *Surfing the Black Wave: Yugoslav Black Wave Cinema and its Transgressive Moments* (Maastricht: Jan van Eyck Akademie, 2011). Dijana Jelača's forthcoming essay also brings more nuance to this interpretation by discussing "women's minor cinema": Dijana Jelača, "Towards Women's Minor Cinema in Socialist Yugoslavia," *Wagadu: A Journal of Transnational Women's and Gender Studies*, Fall 2020 (online: <https://sites.cortland.edu/wagadu/v21-towards-womens-minor-cinema-in-socialist-yugoslavia/>).



from Abroad,” the periodical *Naše teme*<sup>35</sup> presented reviews and discussions of journals mainly from France, Germany, Britain, and the United States. The authors wrote articles that surveyed the history of philosophy in England, Germany, and France.

Thus, the “official” new interpretation of Marxism alongside the liberalization of the cultural sphere that came as a consequence of the “Yugoslav path to socialism,” and the subsequent readiness of the Yugoslav political elite to encourage cultural and scientific cooperation with the West, opened up the possibility of Yugoslav intellectuals establishing the internationally-oriented journal *Praxis* and the Korčula Summer School and to create unhindered personal and professional networks abroad.<sup>36</sup> In the journal’s programmatic statement, the editors emphasized that they do not wish to “conserve Marx, but to develop a vivid revolutionary thought inspired by Marx.”<sup>37</sup> While they supported the idea of self-management, which expressed the reformulation of Marx as a “living thought” that approaches man in terms of his historical being of practice, the *Praxis* intellectuals also often criticized its implementation in Yugoslavia. Božidar Jakšić, a sociologist affiliated with *Praxis*, described the journal as an “authentic Yugoslav window into the world, a cultural institution which brought international prestige to Yugoslavia.”<sup>38</sup>

Returning to the issue of women in Yugoslavia, we can say that in the mid-1970s, similarly to the case in the West, Yugoslav women were disappointed with the promises of the left.<sup>39</sup> In 1979, a feminist philosopher and contributor to *Praxis*, Nadežda Čačinović, pointed out the discrepancy between theory and praxis during a conference organized by the League of Communists of Yugoslavia.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Ante Kadić, “Socialist Realism and Modernism in Present-Day Yugoslavia,” *Books Abroad* 33 (1959), no. 2, pp. 139–143.

<sup>35</sup> *Naše teme: Časopis mladih o društvenim zbivanjima* [Our themes: A youth journal about events in society] was a journal established in 1957 by the Central Committee of the People’s Youth of Croatia. The scope of the journal was very wide, and some themes included social-political issues; philosophy, history, and historiography; culture, art, and science; international relations and development; among others. Many of the *Praxis* members published in this journal (Milan Kangrga, Rudi Supek, Danilo Pejović), as well as members of the Yugoslav political elite (Vladimir Bakarić, Miko Tripalo).

<sup>36</sup> While the specific political conditions in Yugoslavia were favorable for the emergence of a circle such as *Praxis*, it was not a unique case. In Central and Eastern Europe during 1950s and 1960s, Marxist humanism was at the core of critical reflection on Stalinism.

<sup>37</sup> From the editorial: “Čemu Praxis?” [Why Praxis?] *Praxis. Filozofski časopis. Jugoslovensko izdanje* 1 (1964), no. 1, pp. 3–6, here 3.

<sup>38</sup> Božidar Jakšić, *Praxis. Mišljenje kao diverzija* [Praxis. Thinking as a diversion] (Belgrade: Službeni glasnik, 2012), p. 13.

<sup>39</sup> Lóránd, *The Feminist Challenge to the Socialist State in Yugoslavia*, p. 8.

<sup>40</sup> The Communist Party of Yugoslavia (CPY) changed its name to the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY) in 1952.

Realistically speaking, there are, however, a lot of practical and theoretically unsettled questions: on the one hand, equality is proclaimed [...] on the other, women that are doing the same work as men are not expected only to complete the additional domestic labor but that double burden is seen as achieving emancipation.<sup>41</sup>

The new feminism in Yugoslavia was leftist but, as feminist theoretician Nada Ler Sofronić noted, it also challenged “androcentrism of the New Left and its relation towards the women’s movement and the women question in general.”<sup>42</sup> Neo- or new feminism, as she explained, pointed out the elements of patriarchalism that persisted in socialist society – at the same time, challenging a “blindness” to specific women’s issues both within “dogmatic Marxism and the conservative left” and the “gender neutral theory and praxis of Western democracy.”<sup>43</sup> In the late 1970s, these women, as Zsófia Loránd shows, still used critical Marxism as the basis of their arguments, yet they also relied on the theoretical positions found in the readings of “post-structuralist French feminism and new theories in psychology, anthropology, and sociology while they also referred to the Yugoslav partisan tradition as an emancipatory ideology for women.”<sup>44</sup>

### *Praxis and the Korčula Summer School*

The idea for the philosophical journal *Praxis* came from a circle of friends and philosophy and sociology professors at the University of Zagreb: Milan Kangrga, Gajo Petrović, Rudi Supek, Branko Bošnjak, Danko Grlić, Predrag Vranicki, and Danilo Pejović.<sup>45</sup> Their colleagues from the University of Belgrade joined as well – Mihailo Marković, Ljubomir Tadić, Zagorka Golubović, and Svetozar Stojanović. Most of these philosophers and

<sup>41</sup> Nadežda Čačinovič, “Ravnopravnost ili oslobođenje” [Equality or liberation], in Ivan Hvala (ed.), *Društveni položaj žene i razvoj porodice u socijalističkom samoupravnom društvu* [The social position of women and the development of family in a socialist self-managed society] (Ljubljana: Komunist, 1979), pp. 502–505, here 505.

<sup>42</sup> Nada Ler Sofronić, “Mlade žene ne smiju pristati da se njihovo pitanje riješava tek poslije pobjede 99%” [Young women ought not to accept that their question starts to be solved only after the victory of the 99%], in Dragomir Olujić Oluja and Krunoslav Stojaković (eds.), *Praxis: Društvena kritika i humanistički socijalizam* [Praxis: Social critique and humanist socialism] (Belgrade: Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, 2012), pp. 261–266, here 262.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> Lóránd, *The Feminist Challenge to the Socialist State in Yugoslavia*, p. 2.

<sup>45</sup> Ante Lešaja, *Praxis orijentacija, časopis Praxis i Korčulanska ljetna škola. Građa* [Praxis orientation, the *Praxis* journal, and the Korčula summer school. Collection] (Belgrade: Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, 2014); the members of the Editorial Board included: Branko Bošnjak, Veljko Čaldarović, Danko Grlić, Milan Kangrga, Ivan Kuvačić, Danilo Pejović, Gajo Petrović, Zarko Puhovski, Rudi Supek, and Predrag Vranicki. The secretaries were Zlatko Posavac, Boris Kalin, Branko Despot, and Gvozden Flego. In Dobrilo Aranitović, *Bibliografija časopisa Praxis: jugoslavensko izdanje 1/1964–11/1974* [Bibliography of the journal Praxis: Yugoslav edition: 1/1964–11/1974] (Belgrade: IDT, 2017), p. 9.

sociologists were of the same generation, born in the 1920s, and some of them participated in the War of Liberation. They made up the members of the editorial board of the first Serbo-Croatian edition of *Praxis*, published in 1964.<sup>46</sup>

In their manifesto, *Praxis* portrayed itself as not just being “another philosophical journal,” but rather as a deeply engaged journal that “discusses the actual problems of the contemporary world and men.”<sup>47</sup> The main themes they chose for the associated Korčula Summer School reflected these problems, as they included, for instance: “The Idea and the Perspectives of Socialism,” “Creativity and Reification,” “Marx and Revolution,” “Power and Humanity,” and “Freedom and Equality.” More specifically, in the context of 1968, debates circled around the meaning and practice of socialist self-management, which was regarded by *Praxis* intellectuals as the precondition for genuine socialism;<sup>48</sup> the possibilities of socialist revolution in developed capitalist societies; the meaning of the contemporaneous student revolts across the globe; the possibility of the internationalization of socialism; the idea of revolution; the role of intellectual elites and students; as well as the position of the working class in “affluent societies.”<sup>49</sup>

In these debates and in their texts, the intellectuals referred to the Black liberation movement, sexual revolution, the anti-Vietnam war movement, and changes in the structure of marriage relations, often when drawing attention to concrete experiences in their respective countries or when using these examples in order to reflect theoretically on some important notions of Marxist thought – such as “revolution” or the “avant-garde.”<sup>50</sup>

<sup>46</sup> The publisher of the journal was the Croatian Philosophical Society; in the first edition, it was stated that the Yugoslav journal has a Serbo-Croatian bi-monthly edition, published from 1964, and an English tri-monthly version (later in French, German, and English) published from 1965. As a result of political pressure, the journal ceased publishing in 1974.

<sup>47</sup> “Čemu Praxis?”, p. 3.

<sup>48</sup> Svetozar Stojanović, “Društveno samoupravljanje i socijalistička zajednica” [Social self-management and socialist community], *Praxis. Filozofski časopis. Jugoslovensko izdanje* 4 (1967), no. 5–6, pp. 680–692.

<sup>49</sup> Some of the presentations at the Korčula Summer School in August 1968 were given by Julius Strinka, “Ideje o demokratskom socijalizmu” [Ideas about democratic socialism], pp. 254–259; Heinz Lubasz, “Marksova koncepcija revolucionarnog proletarijata” [Marx’s conception of the revolutionary proletariat], pp. 270–273; Vilmos Sós, “Totalna revolucija” [Total revolution], pp. 278–280; Mladen Čaldarović, “Permanentna revolucija i revolucionarni kontinuitet” [Permanent revolution and revolutionary continuity], pp. 281–286; and Zador Tordai, “Revolucija i internacionalizam” [Revolution and internationalism], pp. 287–293, in *Praxis. Filozofski časopis. Jugoslovensko izdanje* 6 (1969), no. 1–2.

<sup>50</sup> E.g., Abraham Edel, “Tehnika i moral” [Technology and Morality], *Praxis* 10 (1973) (Korčulanska letnja skola: Građanski svet i socijalizam), no. 5–6, pp. 665–678; Mihailo Marković, “Pojam Revolucije” [The concept of revolution], in *Praxis* 6 (1969), no. 1–2, pp. 39–53; Howard L. Parsons “Tehnologija i humanizam” [Technology and humanism], in *Praxis* 6 (1969), no. 1–2, pp. 160–178; and Norman Birnbaum, “O pojmu političke avangarde u suvremenoj politici: intelektualci i tehnička inteligencija” [About the notion of the political avantgarde in contemporary politics: intellectuals and technical intellectuals], in *ibid.*, pp. 227–269.

While these discussions were mainly mentioned in passing, one particular article published only in an international edition dealt explicitly with the question of the sexual revolution in the Western countries. Namely, Kostas Axelos – who during the student occupation of Sorbonne University in Paris led a debate on the fight against sexual repression – highlighted in an interview with a student that sexual repression is not only exercised in the capitalist system but in the socialist one as well, even if the latter offers economic, political, and social conditions for the liberation of “the citizen, the worker, and the man.”<sup>51</sup>

The growing feminist movement and feminist theoretical positions in the West were not discussed, although they could have been a potential reference as the intellectuals claimed that they were reflecting upon contemporary issues and concrete events. Not least because that which marked the 1960s in every capitalist country was, as the feminist sociologist Lise Vogel writes, the appearance of a movement for the liberation of women and, more specifically, “the emergence of a socialist-feminist trend in the late 1960s.”<sup>52</sup> And what characterized this trend in particular was the “commitment to organizing a women’s liberation movement within the larger radical Movement” that merged in the lead up to the eventful year of 1968 a number of overlapping struggles: the “black freedom movement, anti-war movement, the student movement and the more self-consciously political new left.”<sup>53</sup>

Yet, the presence of women is strikingly lacking in the journal, both in terms of themes concerning women’s issues and gender but also of women as contributors. The majority of presenters at the summer school and contributors to the journal were male intellectuals, the only exceptions being Zagorka Golubović, who was closely engaged with *Praxis*, and the Hungarian philosopher Ágnes Heller. They were the only two female members of the *Praxis* Advisory Board who both contributed with their own essays to *Praxis* and presented their papers at Korčula.<sup>54</sup> One of the possible reasons

<sup>51</sup> Kostas Axelos, “‘Sur la révolution sexuelle’: Dialogue entre Kostas Axelos et un étudiant” [‘On the sexual revolution’: Dialogue between Kostas Axelos and a student], *Praxis. A Philosophical Journal*. International Edition 7 (1970), no. 3–4, pp. 459–467, here 460.

<sup>52</sup> Lise Vogel, *Marxism and the Oppression of Women: Toward a Unitary Theory* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1983), p. 1.

<sup>53</sup> Alice Echols, *Daring to be Bad: Radical Feminism in America, 1967–1975* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), p. 299.

<sup>54</sup> While they did not discuss feminism or the woman question within *Praxis*, both of them would later publish works on these topics outside the context of *Praxis*. E.g., Zagorka Golubović, “Teorijsko-metodološki problemi i iskustva u istraživanju porodice kao totaliteta” [Theoretical-methodological problems and experiences in the research of family as a totaltity], *Sociologija sela* 11 (1973), no. 40–42, pp. 21–37. In footnote number 4 in that essay, Golubović writes that she discussed the topic of family in her book *Porodica kao ljudska zajednica, Elementi i problemi sociologije porodice* [Family as a human community. Elements and problems of the sociology of the family], a manuscript which had already been prepared for print by 1973. I thank the peer reviewer for drawing my attention to this essay and book.

for the lack of women's presence was, as Judith Grant argues, that "as a dialectician Marx did not analyze 'women' in isolation."<sup>55</sup> While not necessarily speaking about women in particular, for Marx, women were a part and parcel of "an ever changing humanity."<sup>56</sup> In an essay presented in 1976 at the symposium "The Social Position of Woman and the Development of Family in Self-Managing Socialist Society," one of the founding members of the journal *Praxis*, Predrag Vranicki, suggested a similar understanding of Marxist thought.<sup>57</sup> In his paper titled "Marksizam o društvenom položaju žene" (Marxism on the social position of women),<sup>58</sup> he pointed out that "[t]o some it may look interesting and even strange that classical Marxism did not dedicate many discussions to the problems of women and family in the contemporary world."<sup>59</sup> Yet, he defended the fact that Marx and Engels did not look at humanity in terms of a duality – "For Marxism, the problem of the human [čovjek] as a social, historical being was a problem of the emancipation of the working class and the freeing of man, and this has always meant freedom in *toto*."<sup>60</sup> Vranicki stressed that this is not an abstract understanding of Marxism – Marxist theory, he argued, had greatly contributed to various issues concerning women. Especially since as a theory it had been helpful in questions concerning marriage and family: Marxism, that is, "destroyed metaphysical conceptions and abstractions which tended to absolutize one type of marriage and family."<sup>61</sup> Vranicki concluded that Marxist theory had already given a lot of valuable insights concerning the woman question. At the same time, one may argue that the philosophers could have theoretically reflected upon the specific ways of repressing women when speaking about issues such as alienation and freedom. Thus, one of the reasons for the lack of discussions concerning women's issues could also be examined from the perspective suggested by Vranicki – the interest of Marxist theory was the liberation of the human being in *toto* – which could, within the still existing patriar-

<sup>55</sup> Judith Grant, "Gender and Marx's Radical Humanism in *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*," *Rethinking Marxism* 17 (2005), no. 1, pp. 59–77, here 61.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> The symposium *Društveni položaj žene i razvoj porodice u socijalističkom samoupravnom društvu* took place in Portorož, Slovenia, between 18th and 20th March 1976, and was organized by Marxist Center of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Slovenia and the Center for Ideational Theoretical Work of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Croatia. The proceedings of this symposium were printed in 1979.

<sup>58</sup> The essay was published by the journal *Žena: Časopis za društvena pitanja žene i porodice* 34 (1976) [Woman: A journal for social questions of woman and family], no. 3, pp. 7–18, and in Slovenian by *Teorija in praksa* 13 (1976), no. 5–6, pp. 383–394.

<sup>59</sup> Predrag Vranicki, "Marksizam o društvenom položaju žene" [Marxism on the social position of women], in *Društveni položaj žene i razvoj porodice u socijalističkom samoupravnom društvu* (Ljubljana: Komunist, 1979), p. 44.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

chal tendencies, and within a male dominated circle of philosophers, be interpreted primarily from the perspective of a male subject.

The tension that existed in this approach to the “human,” which disregarded its “duality” (woman and man), was voiced by another participant at the symposium, arguing that: “...next to these humanist and democratic processes we are still witnessing various types of discrimination and segregation of women [...] due to the paternalistic behavior deeply embedded in men.”<sup>62</sup> Thus, the reflections concerning the perceived situation in Yugoslav society expressed the need to engage with the theoretical problem of the woman question in the socialist self-managed society of Yugoslavia.<sup>63</sup>

Interestingly, in 1968 (the same year that Simone de Beauvoir visited Yugoslavia with Jean-Paul Sartre), the Zagreb-based journal *Naše teme* published a review of Margaret Mead’s 1935 book *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies*, which had just been translated into Serbo-Croatian. Dragutin Mikšić, a sociologist from Zagreb emphasized Mead’s argument that men and women are equal in their biological structure of intellect and talents, but are socially placed as different.<sup>64</sup> While Simone de Beauvoir’s *Second Sex* was only translated in the 1980s, Mitra Mitrović had already in 1960 discussed this, in her words, “excellent book.”<sup>65</sup> In reading Beauvoir, Mitrović – who in the interwar period had founded the Youth Section of the Women’s Movement and the journal *Žena danas* (Woman today) – highlighted that in the big revolutions, women revolutionaries “would be placed equally next to their husbands and brothers” but that when the “revolutionary cries subside, and the peaceful and constructive work begins, the masses of women would not here get their share, they would retreat.”<sup>66</sup> The ideas represented in Mikšić’s and Mitrović’s texts demonstrate the reception of two different and conflicting approaches to the matter of women, family, and freedom – Margaret Mead and Simone de Beauvoir stood for two different streams of thought in the history of feminism.<sup>67</sup>

While on the pages of *Praxis* and during the discussions at the summer school the intellectuals intensively debated, as it was said, “on the one hand about decisive thinkers of the present from Hegel and Marx to Lenin and Marcuse, and on the other hand about important issues of our time such as the relationship between power and human-

<sup>62</sup> Vidak Vujačić, “Svođenje problema emancipacije žene na samo pojedinačnu emancipaciju jest privid [Reducing the problem of women’s emancipation to just individual emancipation is an illusion], in *ibid.*, p. 122.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Lóránd’s *The Feminist Challenge to the Socialist State in Yugoslavia*.

<sup>64</sup> Dragutin Mikšić, “Margaret Mead,” *Naše teme* 12 (1968), no. 11, p. 1798.

<sup>65</sup> Mitra Mitrović, *Položaj žene u savremenom svetu* [Woman’s place in contemporary society] (Belgrade: Narodna knjiga, 1960), p. 177.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 181.

<sup>67</sup> Susan Groag Bell and Karen M. Offen (eds.), *Women, the Family, and Freedom: The Debate in Documents, Volume II, 1880–1950* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1983), p. 252.

ity, utopia and reality, anarchy and revolution,”<sup>68</sup> the serious discussions concerning feminism in Yugoslav public discourse would only emerge after it ceased publication. Returning to the issues raised in the introduction, it can be suggested that there were existing feminist impulses that could have entered the debates in *Praxis* by way of the journal’s international networks or through the existing translations of feminists texts such as that of Margaret Mead, or additionally by the presence of Simone de Beauvoir’s ideas which, it would appear, were making the rounds in the domestic environment. This last point can be illustrated not only in the reflections on Beauvoir’s ideas found in the book by Mitra Mitrović that was already mentioned, but also by the women’s journal *Žena: Časopis za društvena pitanja žene i porodice* (Woman: a journal for social questions of woman and family) – which had been the journal of Savez žena Hrvatske (the Croatian Women’s Association) since 1953 – published an interview with Beauvoir during her visit to Yugoslavia.<sup>69</sup> In this interview, Beauvoir, while acknowledging her limited knowledge of the position of women in socialism, nevertheless argued that only in socialism can women be equal with men according to the law. At the same time, she pointed out that this was not enough, for the very reason that there are “ancient, historical traditions which restrain women and because of them she is not able to free herself from this inequality that is transmitted from century to century.”<sup>70</sup>

While the discussions concerning the issue of women’s position within a socialist society existed in Yugoslavia in different forms, they were not taken as potential topics in *Praxis*, nor were they reflected in the editorial production and the organizational practices of the journal. And with the exception of an article written by Erna Pajnić that surveyed Simone de Beauvoir’s untranslated works and Rudi Supek’s review of the book by Vera Stein Erlich, *Obitelj u transformaciji: studija u tri stotine jugoslovenskih sela* (Family in transformation: a study of three hundred Yugoslav villages) from 1964, there were no essays or debates reflecting upon the “woman question,” the position of women versus men, nor the feminist movements in Western Europe.

One could suggest here that there were specific factors that contributed to the lack of women as knowledge producers in *Praxis* (if we look at the authored essays), and Đurđica Degač in the above-mentioned article already suggested three potential reasons. One possible reason, as Degač notes, is that the question of gender was perceived as solved; the second reason was that the question of gender was not taken up due to

<sup>68</sup> Gajo Petrović, “O međunarodnom izdanju *Praxis* (1970–1973)” [On the international edition of *Praxis* (1970–1973)], *Praxis. Filozofski časopis. Jugoslovensko izdanje* 10 (1973), no. 5–6, pp. 745–757, here 750.

<sup>69</sup> Ana Bogić, “Becoming Woman: Simone de Beauvoir and *Drugi Pol* in Socialist Yugoslavia” in Bonnie Mann and Martina Ferrari (eds.), *“On ne nait pas femme: on le devient...”: The Life of a Sentence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 315–330, here 320.

<sup>70</sup> Simone de Beauvoir, “I u najuspelijem životu postoji osjećaj neuspjeha...,” *Žena: časopis za društvena pitanja žene i porodice* no.3 (1968), pp. 20–225, here 21–22.



their core philosophical concerns, which primarily discussed the notion of human [čovjek]; and the third reason Degač offers is that there was a lack of discussion about economy in the philosophy of *Praxis*, which at the time did not acknowledge the issue of domestic labor and, by extension, the role of women in that aspect of the economy.<sup>71</sup> The following section looks at the ways in which women, although in a limited way, participated in the intellectual dialogues.

### “Translators” of Ideas and “Mediators” of Knowledge

The presence of women in the journal, however, was visible primarily in the section of the journal which presented (mainly) newly published books to its Yugoslav readership. Women in and around the *Praxis* group – and some who would later become the leading new feminism activists in Yugoslavia (Blaženka Despot, Rada Iveković, Nadežda Čačinović, and others) – mediated knowledge by reviewing and commenting on new publications from the West and so “translating” ideas to the Yugoslav context. Reading texts in Italian, German, English, or French, they would present the digested version of the main arguments of the texts. Rada Iveković – inspired by Luce Irigaray’s post-structuralism and the role of language in women’s oppression – in the late 1980s reflected on the importance of language, tying it to the meaning of translations: “čovjek’ [usually translated as “man,” but in Serbo-Croatian denoting both men and women] is a translator and mediator for herself and for the others, and the translations could always be different.”<sup>72</sup>

If we think of translations as intellectual interventions and interpretations,<sup>73</sup> they helped in disseminating the Marxist and non-Marxist knowledge through their own public interventions. In addition, they also acted as translators of the texts presented at the summer school, and possibly worked as translators/mediators at the summer school sessions.<sup>74</sup> In thinking about the meaning of translation, particularly helpful is Maria Tymoczko’s and Edwin Gentzler’s insights that translation is “not simply an act of

<sup>71</sup> Đurđica Degač, “Praxis i rodna tematika”; Borislav Mikulić and Mislav Žitko, *Aspekti Praxisa: Refleksije uz 50. obljetnicu*, p. 116.

<sup>72</sup> Rada Iveković, “Primenjena filozofija i prizivanje drugoga” [Applied philosophy and invoking another], *Filozofska istraživanja* 6 (1986), no. 1, pp. 103–116, here 115.

<sup>73</sup> Gil Eyal and Larissa Buchholz, “From the Sociology of Intellectuals to the Sociology of Interventions,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 36 (2010), no. 1, pp. 117–137.

<sup>74</sup> For instance, Jelena Zuppa translated the texts for the Yugoslav edition of *Praxis* for two presentations given at Korčula Summer School – by Enzo Paci and Daniel Guérin. In the 1980s, Zuppa published essays on “Novo žensko pismo: da bi se kazalo život” [New women’s writing: So that life can show itself], in *Delo*, no. 4 (1981), pp. 15–28; “Žena pisac i suočenje s vlastitim položajem žene” [The woman as author and the confrontation with her position as a woman], *Žena* 38 (1980), no. 6, pp. 50–62. She was also part of the debate concerning the concert *écriture féminine*. Cf. Loránd, *The Feminist Challenge to the Socialist State in Yugoslavia*, pp. 101–102. Other translators of the texts in *Praxis* were Dunja Meličić, Eva Postružnik, and Nada Švob-Đokić.

faithful reproduction but, rather, a deliberate and conscious act of selection, assemblage, structuration, and fabrication” and that “translators, as much as creative writers and politicians, participate in the powerful acts that create knowledge and shape culture.”<sup>75</sup> In this way, they contributed to *Praxis*'s international orientation, alongside their male colleagues or professors who, as the editors of the journal, also reviewed the books in the section of the journal called “Prikazi i bilješke” (or at times only “Prikazi”) which translates to “Views and Notes.”

The general presence of women authors (reviewers and writers) in the journal was quite limited. In the Yugoslav edition of the journal, the articles published by men (both reviews and essays) make up 91% of the total number of published articles between 1964–1974.<sup>76</sup> In the case of the international edition of the journal and during its span from 1965 to 1974, women appeared twenty times in total, three of them were authored texts by Ágnes Heller, ten by Zagorka Pešić Golubović, and one by Jasminka Gojković.<sup>77</sup> In this sense, the international edition had more essays written by women and fewer book reviews. However, in the case of the Yugoslav edition, the number of book reviews written by women is much higher than their contributions to the journal – out of the total number, 43% are authored articles and 57% are book reviews.<sup>78</sup>

If we focus on the papers delivered at the Korčula Summer School in August 1968, which were published in *Praxis* no. 1–2, 1969, the number of total presentations in the journal (and given at the School) was forty, from which the only presentation/paper given by a woman was Ágnes Heller's essay “Marx's Theory of Revolution and the Revolution of Everyday Life.” At the same time, we can conclude from the initials

<sup>75</sup> Maria Tymoczko and Edwin Gentzler (eds.), *Translation and Power* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002), p. xxi.

<sup>76</sup> Yugoslav edition of *Praxis* from 1964 (nos. 1, 2); 1965 (1, 2, 3, 4–5, 6); 1966 (1, 2, 3, 4–6); 1967 (1–2, 3, 4, 5–6); 1968 (1–2, 3, 4); 1969 (1–2, 3–4, 5–6); 1970 (1–2, 3, 4, 5–6); 1971 (1, 2, 3–4, 5, 6); 1972 (1–2, 3–4, 5–6); 1973 (1–2, 3–4, 5–6); 1974 (1–2, 3–5).

<sup>77</sup> Nadežda Čačinović-Puhovski no. 2–3 (1973); Blaženka Despot no. 3–4 (1968) and no. 4 (1973); Branka Brujić no. 4 (1965); Jasminka Gojković no. 1–2 (1971); Svetlana Knjazeva-Adamović no. 4 (1965); Ágnes Heller no. 1–2 (1967); no. 3–4 (1968); no. 1–2 (1969); Ljerka Šifler no. 3 (1966); Zagorka Pešić Golubović no. 4 (1965), no. 3 (1966), no. 4 (1967), no. 3–4 (1968), no. 3–4 (1969), no. 3–4 (1971), no. 1–2 (1972), no. 1 (1973), no. 2–3 (1973), no. 4 (1973). In the *Praxis* international edition, no. 1–2, (1971), Gojković wrote on “The Crossroads of American SDS.” Gojković is mentioned in the book *Feminist Sociology: Life Histories of a Movement*, edited by Barbara Laslett and Barrie Thorne. Gojković received a Fulbright stipend at Brandeis University, Waltham, Mass. (1969/1970 and 1973/1974).

<sup>78</sup> Zagorka Golubović and Ágnes Heller were the only two female members of the *Praxis* Advisory Board. By “contributions” I mean their authored essays, but also those essays that were included in “portraits and situations,” which presented philosophical portraits, like that of Simone de Beauvoir (by Erna Pajnić), Henri Bergson (Marija Brida), Lucien Goldmann (Eleonora Prohić), or other types of reflections, for instance writing surveys about the history of Croatian philosophy (Marija Birda or Blaženka Despot) – which were not part of the section that presented book reviews.

that the opening speech given by Ernst Bloch was translated for *Praxis* by Blaženka Despot, while Herbert Marcuse's presentation, "The Realm of Freedom and the Realm of Necessity: A Reconsideration," was translated by Branka Brujić.

When looking specifically at the book reviews, Ljerka Šifler-Premec wrote three reviews in *Praxis* (1966), no. 3.<sup>79</sup> In this volume of *Praxis*, Šifler-Premec reviewed two books by Kostas Axelos: *Héraclite et la philosophie* (1962) and *Vers la pensée planétaire* (1964). Axelos, a Greek-French philosopher and a resistance fighter, was also a regular participant at the Korčula Sumer School and contributed to *Praxis*. He also translated György Lukács's, *History and Class Consciousness* from German into French, and wrote a preface for it in 1960. The third book she reviewed was by Karl Korsch, an important reference point, alongside György Lukács, for the philosophers of the *Praxis* circle. The previous year, for *Praxis* 4–5 (1965), Šifler reviewed a newly published book by Lucien Goldmann – a Romanian-French Marxist theoretician who was one of the most regular participants at the Korčula Summer School. Goldmann's *Pour une sociologie du roman* [For a sociology of the novel] was first published by Gallimard in 1964 and was inspired greatly by György Lukács's pre-Marxist *Theory of the Novel* (1915–16). Šifler-Premec carefully analyzed Goldmann's text, but also provided a helpful summary of the book. She described the main arguments of each chapter and introduced additional information that she found relevant from the field. For example, she emphasized Goldmann's references to writings by Nathalie Sarraute who, according to Šifler-Premec, is not interested in the global structures of the social world, but rather "looks for authentic humanity, inter-humane relationships, and is interested in psychology."<sup>80</sup>

While Simone de Beauvoir's preeminent work, *The Second Sex*, would only be accessible to the Yugoslav public in Serbo-Croatian in 1982,<sup>81</sup> in 1971 Erna Pajnić discussed Simone Beauvoir's intellectual profile in detail by way of the French author's twenty written works, including novels, stories, theater play, essays, literature studies, and philosophical works, that still had not been translated into Serbo-Croatian. Pajnić commented on and interpreted Beauvoir's ideas and thoughts across the span of these texts.

One of the direct quotations from Beauvoir that Pajnić chose showed that the difference between the situation of a woman and that of a man is that "he is first a citizen, a producer, secondly a husband; she is before all, and often exclusively, a wife."<sup>82</sup> While Pajnić pointed out that some of Beauvoir's analyses appear outdated, she nevertheless

<sup>79</sup> Ljerka Šifler-Premec was born in Zagreb in 1941. She was a philosopher, novelist, and translator. From 1968 until 1977 she worked at the Institute for Philosophy in Zagreb.

<sup>80</sup> Lj[erka] Šifler-Premec, "Lucien Goldmann: *Pour une sociologie du roman*", *Praxis. Filozofski časopis. Jugoslovensko izdanje* 2 (1965), no. 4–5, pp. 699–702, here 701.

<sup>81</sup> Bogić, "Becoming Woman," p. 315.

<sup>82</sup> Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. H. M. Parshley (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), p. 443, cited in Erna Pajnić, "Simone de Beauvoir," *Praxis. Filozofski časopis. Jugoslovensko izdanje* 8 (1971), no. 2, pp. 227–246, here 239.

argued that there is a problem for a contemporaneous woman and her position vis-à-vis that of a man. In addition, Pajnić's position towards Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* can be interpreted as a commentary on Beauvoir's own philosophical achievements – her relationship with Sartre, Pajnić adds, “made her contribution to philosophy neglected.”<sup>83</sup> Yet, Pajnić insisted that “it is a fact that she [Beauvoir] is as prolific a writer as Sartre (her works are perhaps even of greater artistic value), but also that she is read by a larger audience, and that existentialism, insofar as it used literature as its mode of expression, found precisely in her [Beauvoir] its mediator to the wider reading public.”<sup>84</sup> In this discussion, she also highlighted Beauvoir's disagreement that a women's position is simply conditioned by her nature. Instead, as Pajnić wrote, woman's nature is not an internal, unchanged form, hence one cannot speak about a woman's, just like one cannot speak about a man's, essence.<sup>85</sup> That human nature and “man” ought not to be seen as ready-made objects, essentialized entirely by their nature, or even worse, by the external laws, had been to a large extent discussed in the pages of *Praxis*.<sup>86</sup>

Branka Brujić reviewed Herbert Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man* in 1965.<sup>87</sup> The book was originally published in 1964 in English, and soon became one of the most important books of the 1960s. Brujić not only digested the main arguments of the text in her review, but also translated the entire book into Serbo-Croatian, which became available to Yugoslav public in 1968. Brujić thus introduced this book specifically to the readers of the Yugoslav edition of *Praxis* and its editorial board, but also to the Yugoslav reading public.<sup>88</sup> She also authored one essay in *Praxis* (1967), no. 1-2, “Telos samoupravljanja (The telos of self-management).”

Finally, another woman reviewing books for *Praxis* was Blaženka Despot, already mentioned above. She was a philosopher, feminist theorist, and “the first in Yugoslavia to write and publish books, essays, and critical studies in the field of philosophical anthropology on the position of women, feminism, and the New Age.”<sup>89</sup> Before finishing

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 229.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 229–230.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> While I agree with Đurdica Degač's suggestion that Pajnić did not discuss *The Second Sex* at length (her paper represented Beauvoir's intellectual profile through a collection of her works), I propose that we could also read Pajnić as giving Beauvoir a deserving place as a philosopher and existentialist in her own right.

<sup>87</sup> Branka Brujić was born in Zagreb in 1931. She earned a doctoral degree at the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Zagreb in 1973 with the dissertation *Herbert Marcuse's Critical Theory of Society and Historical Thinking*. She also translated Marcuse's *End of Utopia* and *An Essay on Liberation* in 1972.

<sup>88</sup> Filip Kovačević, “Marcuse in Yugoslavia,” *Radical Philosophy Review* 16 (2013), no. 1, pp. 205–222, here 207.

<sup>89</sup> Gordana Bosanac, “Blaženka Despot,” in Francisca de Haan, Krassimira Daskalova, and Anna Loutfi (eds.), *A Biographical Dictionary of Women's Movements and Feminisms: Central, Eastern,*

her dissertation, Blaženka Despot wrote numerous book reviews for the journal *Praxis*, mainly of German-language texts. For instance, for *Praxis* (1969), no. 5–6, Despot reviewed *Zur Dialektik von Arbeit und Bedürfnissen im Sozialismus und Kommunismus* by Heinrich Taut, a German philosopher. For *Praxis* (1973), no. 3–4, she reviewed a book by Wolfgang Harich, another philosopher from the German Democratic Republic, entitled *Zur Kritik der revolutionären Ungeduld*, published in 1971 by Edition etcetera in Basel.

As mentioned at the beginning of this section, reviewing books was not just assigned to women. Men, and often the editors of the journal as well, reviewed books – for example, in *Praxis* (1973), no. 1–2, out of the total of nine reviews, three were written by women (Blaženka Despot and Ljerka Šifler-Premec) while in the next issue (no. 3–4) four reviews out of eight were written by women. The question of the importance of these reviews for the very quality of the journal was discussed during the journal's editorial meeting in 1969, when it was noted that the section must improve “if the journal wants to participate in the international philosophical discussion,” and that the editorial board must “liberate itself from the bad practice which governs in our country, according to which reviews are mainly written by young people who are just starting to write independently.”<sup>90</sup> This section was not to be seen as a secondary aspect of the editorial practices, since through these reviews, the journal and the philosophers, as Rudi Supek pointed out, “come into contact with the important intellectual achievements in the world, we can define ourselves towards them and interest our readers in them, that is, lead them into an intellectual world.”<sup>91</sup>

Thus, it could be pointed out that the reviews were not seen as secondary in the “division of labor” if the editors of the journal also wrote them, but also if the reviews, as stated above, were an essential aspect of the journal's international orientation. In addition to that, it is important to highlight the generational aspect. The majority of *Praxis* intellectuals were from the generation born in the interwar period, while the women intellectuals were from the first post-war generation which – one ought to highlight – was also the first generation of women who enjoyed the universal right to a higher education.<sup>92</sup> Thus, if we approach this issue from a generational perspective,

*and South Eastern Europe, 19th and 20th Centuries* (Budapest, New York: Central European University Press, 2006), p. 114.

<sup>90</sup> Mihailo Đurić, “Uvodna riječ” [Introductory words], at the *Praxis* editorial board meeting, August 19, 1969, at Korčula, in *Praxis. Filozofski časopis. Jugoslovensko izdanje* 6 (1970), no.1–2, pp. 226–245, here 228.

<sup>91</sup> Rudi Supek, “Neka objašnjenja” [Some explanations], in *ibid.*, p. 231. This translation is by Gerson S. Sher.

<sup>92</sup> While the majority of women were born in the 1940s, Marija Brida (1912–1993) finished the Women's *Realgymnasium* in 1930 in Split and gained a diploma in philosophy at the Faculty of Philosophy in Zagreb in 1935. Her dissertation – *Život-doživljaj* [Life-experience], Zagreb, 1937

we can note that women who reviewed the books were from a younger generation and it can thus be suggested that the “division of labor” was primarily age, rather than gender, based. For these women, the reviews offered a first access in terms of expertise, as well as a link to international intellectual discussions. Through these reviews, the women managed to have a space, although limited, for their intellectual engagement.

### Toward a Conclusion

*Praxis* was last published in 1974, and in March of the same year Herbert Marcuse delivered a lecture, titled “Marxism and Feminism,” at Stanford University that was then published the following year in Serbo-Croatian in the journal *Žena*.<sup>93</sup> Marcuse deemed a separate “Women’s Liberation Movement” as being a necessity (agreeing that there can be discrimination against women even in socialist countries) and argued that “beneath and beyond the male-female dichotomy is the human being, common to male and female: the human being whose liberation, whose realization is still at stake.”<sup>94</sup> Inspired by this text, the new feminists discussed texts by other participants of the Korčula Summer School, for instance those of Ernst Bloch, but also of Ágnes Heller.<sup>95</sup> At the same time, alongside Marxist humanism, the new feminists, like Rada Iveković, also debated the French post-structuralist feminism of Julia Kristeva, Héléne Cixous, and Luce Irigaray.<sup>96</sup>

While supported by some of the *Praxis* philosophers, feminists working and writing in Zagreb – Lydia Sklevicky, Vesna Pusić, Gordana Cerjan-Letica, Vesna Kesić, Rada Iveković, Nadežda Čačinović – also noted that the philosophers “did not take feminism seriously, and at the meetings women did not comment much.”<sup>97</sup> Vesna Kesić also remembers “a very bad encounter with Mihajlo Marković, who said it is OK that we come and talk about feminism but asked us: ‘could you please look more feminine.’”<sup>98</sup>

In linking Blaženka Despot with *Praxis*, Gordana Bosanac points out that Despot shared a critical perspective with the journal that focused on social reality and the

– relied on Heidegger, Husserl, Nietzsche, Bergson, and other philosophers linked to the anthropological current of existentialist philosophy, as Franjo Zenko writes in “In Memoriam: Maria Brida Filozofkinja Humanističkog osvjetločenja,” in *Prilozi za istraživanja hrvatske filozofske baštine* 19 (1993), no. 1-2 (37-38), pp. 5-7.

<sup>93</sup> Herbert Marcuse, “Marxism and Feminism,” *Women Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 2 (1974), no. 3, pp. 279-288. In Yugoslavia published as Herbert Marcuse, “Marksizam i feminizam,” *Žena* 33 (1974), no. 5, pp. 77-84.

<sup>94</sup> Herbert Marcuse, “Marxism and Feminism,” *Women Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 2 (1974), no. 3, pp. 279-288, here 280.

<sup>95</sup> Lóránd, *The Feminist Challenge to the Socialist State in Yugoslavia*, p. 49.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 99.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

return to classical Marxists texts.<sup>99</sup> At the same time, Bosanac argues that Despot, although she published her essays in *Praxis* and participated in the Korčula Summer School sessions, never belonged to the group, either formally or conceptually.<sup>100</sup> One can suggest that the above conclusion depends largely on the way in which we approach and understand *Praxis*. Consequently, if we think of *Praxis* as a large transnational platform that had a particular role in bringing the ideas of the new left to Yugoslavia and not just as a journal and group of writers, the role of women in *Praxis* becomes significant in creating this platform and, primarily, in the sense of developing new feminism in Yugoslavia. Furthermore, if we understand *Praxis* as a framework of philosophical thought that emerged in the 1960s in Yugoslavia, whose philosophical activity was deeply engaged with Marxist humanism – the issues of alienation and freedom – then it becomes possible to suggest that there was indeed a woman’s perspective and presence, although not in the main part of the journal.

Thus, from this point of view, one could argue that while reading, translating, and reviewing the books, these women – instead of being separated from *Praxis* as a transnational platform – were using the existing theoretical concepts and positions in order to ask further, previously ignored questions. As Lóránd writes, “*Praxis* therefore had quite some influence on the beginnings of the new feminism in Yugoslavia, even though the relationship was not [...] smooth.”<sup>101</sup> Consequently, the lack of women in *Praxis* then appears, at least in part, to be an issue of the historiography written about *Praxis* and, to an extent, an issue of the historiography on socialism and feminism in East-Central Europe as well – although existing scholarship has already challenged the pre-existing image of women in socialism that relied on the “Cold War paradigm.”<sup>102</sup>

Having reframed the discussion, it then becomes possible to suggest that Blaženka Despot’s insights in her *Žensko pitanje i socijalističko samoupravljanje* (The woman question and socialist self-management) from the 1980s and her position that “Marxism is not a dogma, but a theory of social process” that could trigger the possibility of a different understanding of the relation between “the woman question” and “class question,”<sup>103</sup> can be a stance that, while not discussed in the publications of *Praxis*, is

<sup>99</sup> Gordana Bosanac, “Mjesto i značenje Blaženke Despot u suvremenoj hrvatskoj filozofiji [The place and significance of Blaženka Despot in contemporary Croatian philosophy], *Filozofska istraživanja* 28 (2008), no. 3, pp. 625–637, here 633.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>101</sup> Lóránd, *The Feminist Challenge to the Socialist State in Yugoslavia*, p. 32.

<sup>102</sup> Francisca de Haan, “Continuing Cold War Paradigms in Western Historiography of Transnational Women’s Organisations: The Case of the Women’s International Democratic Federation (WIDF),” *Women’s History Review* 19 (2010), no. 4, pp. 547–573.

<sup>103</sup> Blaženka Despot, *Žensko pitanje i socijalističko samoupravljanje* [The woman question and socialist self-management] (Zagreb: Cekade, 1987), p. 109. A selection from that book appears in English translation in this issue of *Contradictions*: Blaženka Despot, “Women and Self-Management,” *Contradictions* 4 (2020), no. 2, pp. XX–XX.



unavoidably part of the general argument about their understanding of Marxism – as a creative process, and not a prescribed and finalized philosophical thought. Despot defended her doctoral dissertation at the University of Ljubljana on the topic *Humanitet tehničkog društva* (The humanity of technical society) in 1970, re-reading Hegel and Marx from the perspective of women’s emancipation.<sup>104</sup> According to Gordana Bosanac, Despot was the first philosopher in Yugoslavia to examine threats to humanity and freedom in relation to women’s freedom and subjectivity.<sup>105</sup>

The aim of this paper was to present the sphere in which women intellectuals, while facing the limitations of existing patriarchal tendencies, still carved out the possibilities of their engagement, which were not insignificant. Writing reviews in Yugoslavia in the 1960s in a context in which access to Western literature was still limited and inaccessible when it was not translated, was not a minor role by any means. This is not, however, to disregard the points discussed above to the effect that texts authored by women were rarely present on the pages of *Praxis*, and that there was a lack of subject matter that engaged with issues around the woman question and feminism.

Finally, in bringing the gender-critical perspective to the intellectual practice of the *Praxis* circles, and also by bringing these women contributors to the forefront – primarily, women in their prevailing roles of translators and reviewers – the paper suggests the importance of analyzing the spheres of women’s activity in *Praxis* and beyond (like writing book reviews and reflections) that offered these women one of the first places in which they could have access to literature, create intellectual networks, and, through the writing or reviews, could also bring forward their own critical voices. More importantly, these women were philosophers, sociologists, and at the same time translators, whose contribution to the intellectual history of socialist Yugoslavia should be explored as their active participation in *Praxis* was not a passing thought or a coincidence, but could be seen as a very integral aspect of the journal’s history.

<sup>104</sup> The dissertation was published as a book entitled *Humanitet tehničkog društva* [The humanity of technical society] (Zagreb: Centar za društvene djelatnosti omladine RK SOH, 1971).

<sup>105</sup> Bosanac, “Blaženka Despot,” p. 115.