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Never on Sunday: Feminist Questioning of Dominant Epistemology and Philosophical Tradition*

Through the interpretation of the movie *Never on Sunday* (1960) by Jules Dassin, this paper opens some important epistemological questions from the feminist perspective. Namely, the film is set in the contemporary Greece, while the main characters are a prostitute Ilia and an American tourist Homer, who is at the same time disappointed in Greece and in the beautiful woman he meets. His inability to understand people and social context in which he finds himself, as well as his effort to educate Ilia and impose her his own values and ideas about ancient Greece reveal much of chauvinism and cultural colonialism, opening questions crucial for feminist and other critical epistemologies which are: who produces knowledge, for whom and how to approach it critically. Finally, through the interpretation of Ilia's attitude to knowledge, I will turn also to the feminist notion of embodied feminist subject. Apart from that, I will deal with hegemonic attitude of the West towards ancient Greek past.

Key words: dominant epistemology, critical thinking, feminist knowledge, *Never on Sunday*

Никад недељом: феминистичко преиспитивање доминантне епистемологије и филозофске традиције

Овај рад ће кроз интерпретацију филма *Никад недељом* (1960) Жила Дасена отворити важна епистемолошка питања из феминистичке перспективе. Радња филма смештена је у савремену Грчку, а главни протагонисти су проститутка Илија и амерички туриста Хомер који је истовремено разочаран Грчком у коју је дошао, као и женом у коју се заљубљује. Његова неспособност да разуме људе и ситуације у којима се нашао, као и покушај да Илији пружи образовање намећући јој сопствене вредности и идеје о античкој Грчкој, разоткривају шовинизам и културни колонијализам, отварајући питања кључна за феминистичке и друге критичке епистемологије, а то су: ко производи знање, за кога и како знању критички прићи. Најзад, кроз интерпретацију Илијиног односа према знању, осврнућу се и на феминистичко схватање отеловљеног феминистичког субјекта. Поред тога, позабавићу се хегемоним односом Запада према античкој грчкој прошлости.

Кључне речи: доминантна епистемологија, критичко мишљење, феминистичко знање, *Никад недељом*

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Today, the corpus of feminist theories is rich and very heterogeneous dealing with numerous questions and often being grounded on very different starting, even conflicting positions. However, what is in common to those theories approaching femininity, gender, feminine subject, women's tradition or their invisibility, is that they all intend to challenge and question dominant, phallogocentric production of knowledge, which steadily tries to keep its universal denominator. In order to discuss several aspects of this problem, I have chosen a film comedy *Never on Sunday*¹ from 1960 directed by Jules Dassin, with Melina Mercouri in the main role.

Particularly interesting for approaching issue of knowledge is the theme of the film: an American tourist (Homer) enthusiastic about Greek antiquity comes to Piraeus and falls in love with a beautiful and intelligent prostitute, Ilia. Disappointed with her lifestyle, but also dissatisfied with Greece he is visiting, Homer tries to "improve" the woman through classical education. Full of comical twists, this film problematizes hegemonic (academic) discourse, dominant knowledge and the attitude towards it, as well as who is authorized to produce and spread knowledge. These and many other questions are crucial for feminist and other critical epistemologies. On theoretical grounds (and inspired by the character of Ilia) I will reflect on *embodied feminist nomadic subject* as defined by Rosi Braidotti, as well as on corporeal theory of Elizabeth Grosz, whose standpoints widely regard construction of women's subject corporeally, finely reflecting on the interdependence of biology and culture. Another significant concept in this interpretation will be the concept of *eternal presence* as understood by Sanja Milutinović Bojanić, which makes possible to resume several questions important for the film, above all general (patriarchal) attitude towards past and history, which endlessly replicate the same patriarchal values, as well as a feminist response to it.

Never on Sunday is a film from 1960, the time when antiquity already had important place in the seventh art. The popularity of epic films set in antiquity belonging to the *sword-and-sandals* (*peplum*) genre flourished. In the same year Kubrick shot *Spartacus*, while just one year earlier cinema audience enthusiastically watched *Ben-Hur* by William Wyler.² Concerning the fact that antiquity on the film screen may be traced to the very beginnings of the cinematic arts, when (as it is often the case with antiquity) symbolical capital of the ancient past was used to provide new medium with credibility, already in the middle of twentieth century, *peplum* genre characterized common motives and very often typified view to the past. Film *Never on Sunday* is not related to this genre by its form, typical characters and common episodes, as it is mostly the case. Rather, it goes about questioning of knowledge and relations to Greek antiquity that are often formal in the mentioned genre, reduced to the cliché and frequently even the sole reason of using (and manipulating with) antiquity. In interesting and humorous way, this romantic comedy reveals not only the knowledge about ancient past, but more importantly it critically approaches epistemological questions opening several important topics related not

¹ *Never on Sunday*, 1960, Jules Dassin, Greece: Melina Production.

² Epic historical drama *Cleopatra*, by then the most expensive film ever filmed, with Elisabeth Taylor and Richard Burton in the main roles, appeared in 1963.

only to our attitude towards knowledge about ancient Greece (through the question about the colonization of the ancient past recognizable also in *peplum* genre), but likewise regarding our attitude towards knowledge in general, toward its production and usage, questioning the potential for critical thinking that might be inspired by knowledge (although it is not always the case), which are crucial problems discussed by feminist and other critical theories and approaches.

Never on Sunday, black-and-white romantic comedy, is an excellent example revealing that great comedy is not characterized only by a good sense of humour, but rather by serious thinking and questioning numerous complex problems. The main character of this comedy is a woman (a prostitute) that gains classical education, becoming main bearer of individual and above all, critical thinking that will uncover not only chauvinist attitude of famous ancient philosophers such as Aristotle, but also colonial character of the common knowledge about antiquity, putting models of chauvinism and (cultural) colonialism into parallel perspective and thus revealing their structurally similar character. Extremely important for the heroine is that her critical knowledge is related to her social engagement which gives the film activist, in other words, feminist dimension. So, this movie does not only pose the question of the availability of knowledge to women. It rather questions the character of the offered knowledge that is available to women (or men), it questions who produces and claims ownership over that knowledge, with which aim, and whether it is common at all to question the knowledge. In relation to this, especially when it goes about the scholarship about the past, important concept is the one about *eternal presence* as discussed by Sanja Milutinović Bojanić (2019, 15–36). According to this author, *eternal presence* is defined by historical discourse which is unchangeable and homogenous, consisting of male voice and male perspective, being grounded on the heroic concept (since Homer) and reproducing itself always and eternally in the same (masculine) way. In her text “On the Eternal Present” (2019) Sanja Milutinović Bojanić argues that the key relationship for such a discourse is based on nostalgia (*nostos álgos*), which literally means „longing for the impossible return into the past“. By nature melancholic, and striving to return to the impossible spot, this relationship is never grounded in reflexion. This model is generally widespread and also imposed on women in a sense that social norms do not allow women to act differently, on the grounds of their own thinking (Bojanić 2019, 18), which is one of the ways to understand functioning of patriarchy. The main character of the discussed film is a woman who overcomes mentioned patriarchal model, not only behaving according to her own thinking, but also openly challenging conservative educational models.

The mentioned character is a prostitute Ilija, impersonated by Melina Mercouri. Her partner is an American tourist passionate about ancient Greece, Homer (!) impersonated by Jules Dassin who is also a screen writer, a director and a film producer. Parodic names (Homer and Ilija), both of the passionate tourist obsessed with classical Greece, but also of a woman he falls in love with (trying to “invent her anew”), announce humour that will be subtly created through male character and its limited, even unintelligent fascination with ancient Greek past, but also through his misunderstanding of Greece which he visits and people whom he meets

there. Comical situations in the film are numerous, beginning with arrival of Homer to Piraeus and his announcement that he has come to Greece to find the truth. Soon after he meets Ilia for the first time, he falls in love with her. However, his passion for Ilia is limited with his need to change and educate her according to his own taste and measures, which after all fits into patriarchal morality. In this pattern of morality, a prostitute is seen as a person who falls into sin, regardless of the fact that her job is not individual act, but the profession that is a part of a wider social context. Namely, Homer makes parallel between sins of Ilia, and the decline of Greek culture that, according to his opinion, used to be perfect in the ancient times. His effort to save Ilia is made through offering her education. Homer believes that saving the woman will mean rescuing degenerated Greece. This dismay is a consequence of his inability to understand people and social situation that surround him, and humour is constructed exactly around this. “You are the beauty that was Greece. You are the reason I came to Greece”, Homer says to Ilia. However, he is not represented only as an idealist, but also as an unchaste person. Namely, he is bribed by a local pimp enraged with independent and free Ilia, afraid (with reason) that she might influence other prostitutes that he controls (who also pay him very high rents for the flats). And truly, with the support of Ilia, these women will rebel in amazing scene of throwing furniture through the windows. Following scene is in prison when the lawyer of the pimp comes to set them free. However, resolute women led by Ilia, refuse to go out of prison (in a collective singing scene) until the pimp reduces the prices of their rents. This episode of the prostitutes on a strike recalls Aristophanes’ *Lysistrata*, a heroine of the comedy and a leader of a strike of women, wives of soldiers fighting also on the opposite sides in Peloponnesian war, whose going on a sexual strike forced their husbands and lovers to end the war. This scene is more profound reference to Greek antiquity than usual Roman palaces, togas or race charts in peplum movies.

Comedy *Never on Sunday* creates a complex picture reflecting the attitude of the West towards Greece, equally towards its past as well as contemporariness. Personified in the character of Homer, this attitude is on one hand idealizing, but on the other it is corrupt and based on own interest, which corresponds to the mentioned concept of *eternal presence* that refers to projecting contemporary ideals on the past. Admiring ancient Greece, the western world has adopted it as a cradle of its own civilization. Namely, although European culture owes a lot to ancient Greece, this position is often taken for granted without any critical questioning, being at the utmost instance reduced to glorifying Greece in order to glorify Western culture’s own past. In this „perfect“ and „invented“ own past modelled according to the needs of elites, the picture of contemporary Greece does not fit.³ Such superior attitude of the West towards Greece is personified by Homer who is disappointed with the local people.

³ This is the reason way classical scholars for a long time avoided many topics of research that did not fit into the construction of glorified past, such as everyday life, life of women, children, foreigners etc.

Apart from dealing with the western myth of its own past, film tackles numerous patriarchal mechanisms and disdaining prejudices towards women, which actually do have long history that reaches the ancient past. Not only that Homer regrets because Greece does not fit to his expectations, but he feels exactly the same about Ilia. He wishes to lead her to the right path convinced that this is possible only if she accepts knowledge that he offers her, but also if she behaves according to his expectations. And while Homer tries to newly “invent” Ilia (the allusion to the famous ancient epic poem and its supposed author is obvious), the picture that film offers about complex colonial attitude of West towards Greece, as well as about patriarchal and patronizing attitude of a man who wishes to “correct” a woman, is complex, critical and humorous. Homer’s attempts look funny and futile, leading to the conclusion that patriarchal and colonial attitude towards the Other are grounded on the same codes – of personal/cultural narcissism and inability to recognize and accept worldview, thinking and qualities that the Other has.

If we turn to colonial western view of the antiquity, it originates in the academic milieu of 19th century,⁴ the same period in which the nations were constructed⁵ where not only national histories were invented, but also a common cradle of the European civilization.⁶ However, like in the film we are analyzing, there were also many efforts in academia to problematize this issue, mainly by representatives of French school of anthropology of ancient worlds.⁷ In this film, it is achieved through parody and laughing at a superior attitude personified by Homer who sees himself as unassailable authority, convinced that his knowledge and values are unquestionable and universal. It corresponds to the idea on which Luce Irigaray insists, that knowledge is not neutral, but rather marked with the discourse of male subject (Đurić 2006, 95). Let us turn back to Homer. He is not only ignorant and unable of criticism or self-criticism, but he is also morally corrupt. Namely, he accepts to be bribed by pimp and with this money he pays Ilia to give up her job and study instead. It is interesting that in the character of Homer we may recognize another continuity that spans to antiquity. It goes about the jokes on the account of a shallow intellectuals, many of which may be found in the collection of jokes *Philogelos* from the early Byzantine period (IV – V CE). Namely, Greek word *scholastikos* refers to egocentric educated people preoccupied with their own ambitions, loosing contact with reality. There is no doubt that this definition completely fits the main character of the film.

⁴ However Greek and Roman antiquity as a mythical imaginary were used in a quest for origin of European people even before Renaissance. See for example, Pierre-Vidale Naquet. 1992. “Atlantis and the Nations”. *Critical Inquiry* 18 (2): 300–326.

⁵ Marcel Detienne points that academic interest for classics and development of the discipline went parallelly with the development of history as a national discipline, although by that time the view to the past used to be comparative (Detienne 2007, 4).

⁶ There was no awareness that it went about culture that is not only distant in time and that many concepts and categories had different meanings.

⁷ Although the critical positions and methodologies of this school partly entered mainstream approach to antiquity, it is possible to notice that conservative streams have lately revived.

Continuity of some ancient attitudes may also be recognized in understanding the status of prostitutes in ancient and contemporary Greece which are not marked with moral stigma, except by Homer himself. “Prostitution was very much a fact in classical Athens.” (Dillon 2002, 183) If prostitutes were marginalized in Greek antiquity, it did not have to do with the despise on prostitution, but exclusively with the social status of women who, even when they were Athenians (we have most information about this polis) had only mediate role in citizenship, with the right to give birth to Athenian citizens. Among prostitutes were free women, slaves, but most often foreigners, they could be poor, but also very rich and extremely well educated. It is considered that hetairai who are mentioned as good interlocutors on feasts were more educated than pornai. Some of hetairai, like the famous Phryne, were very beautiful, rich, and even extremely influential. In a religious sense, there was no ritual impurity that was related to prostitutes and all were allowed to go into shrines, participate in rituals and make sacrifices,⁸ while limitations to join certain festivals (as Thesmophoria for example) were related rather to the foreign origin than to the prostitution. Namely, it was considered that prostitutes in fact kept a balanced sexuality of (male) citizens by preventing lustful men from indulging in adultery: men turned to prostitutes and not to the wives of other citizens (Dillon 2002, 183–184).

Semantic references of the film refer both to ancient and contemporary context of Greek culture. Namely, *Never on Sunday* also represents a kind of response to the movie *Stella* (1955) in which Melina Merkouri had a debut five years earlier (on the projection of this film in Canes, the actress met her future husband and the main actor, screen writer and director of the film *Never on Sunday*, Jules Dassin). *Stella* is another example of reception, but this time not related to antiquity. It goes about Cacoyannis’ adaptation of *Carmen*, opera by Georges Bizet⁹ in which Stella appears as an independent woman who sings rembetiko. When famous football player falls in love with Stella and tries to limit her freedom, she runs away from the wedding. For this act, he punishes her by death. The same actress appears again in film *Never on Sunday* as an independent and free woman, this time as a prostitute, who will become educated, which actually does not change her essentially. She continues to think with her own head all the time and she has very refined sense of justice. Both films with Melina Mercouri as a main actress point to double morality of patriarchal society in which woman’s freedom is limited variously in different roles. In each of these roles, women’s behaviour is easily judged by patriarchal society as inappropriate. Refusing to become a wife, Stella paid with her life. As an answer to this film heroine’s fate, the character of Ilia was created as an independent, cheerful, and optimistic prostitute, with clear standpoints and strong per-

⁸ Ritual impurity (*miasma*) affected those who were in contact with death (and birth), or participated funerals, which brought the ban on entering shrines or participating public rituals. Interestingly, this impurity did not affect contact with death on the battlefield or in wars, which reveals that male and female domain were even in this regard differently treated. See more in Parker (1983, 32–70) and Stevanović (2009, 109–113).

⁹ Libreto was written by Henri Meilhac and Ludovic Halévy, being based on novella by Prosper Mérimée.

sonality that enabled her to choose her own destiny—resist the pimp, and finally Homer, when she discovered his hypocrisy.

The film title is related to Ilia's habit to have a break from her work on Sunday. During the time when she worked as a prostitute she always made parties on Sunday. Later on, when she started to study, Sunday was a day for leisure, listening to the music and smoking. The famous song that she sings is "Children of Piraeus", while children, *ta pedia*, are actually young men she adores, the whole football team pinned on her wall. Her singing recalls the character of Stella from previous movie, while a poster of a football team is a link to a football player who killed Stella. Ilia chose the whole team, succeeding to stay independent and safer than Stella, who wrongly decided to get married. Eventually, Ilia decided to marry (or continue the affair) with one of the workers from the port – the Captain, who loved her and accepted her as she was, with no intention to change her.

Let us go back to *Never on Sunday*. Concerning the fact that a big part of the film is devoted to Ilia's education, numerous episodes have ancient references, because antiquity is a main (although not the only) theme of Ilia's education. One reference might be that in the character of Ilia is possible to recognize hetaira Phryne, famous for her independence, beauty and wealth. Phryne was a model for Praxiteles when he was creating Aphrodite od Knidos, and about her beauty and character many authors wrote, especially Athenaeus in *Deipnosophistae*, mentioning that Phryne rarely put off her clothes and loosened her hair publicly except for some holidays or when she, like Ilia, went naked to swim. However, Phryne ended at the court, accused for blasphemy (allegedly she tried to introduce new divine cult), but one of her lovers, Hypereides, the famous rhetor, defended her. In the closing word he tore her chiton and showed her breasts to a jury, with the argument that such a beautiful body could have been only created by a goddess. A jury freed Phryne, because they were afraid to offend Aphrodite (Athen. *Deipnosoph.* 13. 59). It is interesting to mention that this act of uncovering breasts is a very old ritual procedure with the aim to call for compassion. Famous example is from twenty second book of the Iliad, when Hecabe tries to persuade her son Hector to give up his fight with Achilles (who would kill him) (*Il.* 22. 83–85). Uncovering her breasts in front of him, she reveals her motherly vulnerability (Havelock 1995, 45). In this act we may recognize a continuity, which even today women use in public protests against authoritarianism and injustices. This act of exposing the vulnerability of woman's own body is actually a call for compassion. Archaic religious attitude towards breasts is grounded in the respect of women and their real and religious role in creation of life, which, apart from respect deserves compassion. And, although in the time when Phryne was on a trial, original meaning of mentioned ritual had already been forgotten, this act still provoked emphatic reaction. This change of meanings of ritual practices is actually usual process that might be followed through history of religions. Namely, while taboo often provides continuity of certain religious practices, their meanings change through the time, sometimes becoming more complex, other times keeping some meanings and leaving others into oblivion.

Another link to antiquity is Euripides' *Medea*, the play that Homer and Ilia watch together in the theatre. Ilia is thrilled, while Homer tries to explain her that

she has totally misunderstood the play. Namely, in her version, Medea is a nice woman who really loved her husband a lot. However, he cheated on her and wanted to leave her for a younger woman. Angry with him, she only pretended that she killed her children. Ilia was trying to persuade Homer that her trick turned to be successful and after that they all went to the seaside.

Although this version sounds absurd and comical, it should be mentioned that there were many versions of myth before Euripides', in which Corinthians (and not Medea) were responsible for death of her children (probably only Neophrones' version is similar to Euripides'). And in spite of this fact, and in spite of numerous later adaptations that tried to vindicate Medea, Euripides' Medea represented as a mad woman killing her own children is the most famous. With her comic interpretation Ilia reminds us that myth is a fictional story that everyone can tell in her/his own version (in this way myth was approached in antiquity), and exactly this did Euripides when he changed many earlier versions, and made Medea a killer.¹⁰

Another feminist issue that film problematizes is related to misogynist heritage of antiquity, which has a long continuity in western thought. Homer perception of Ilia as a beautiful, attractive woman that needs male intellectual guidance and of himself as a bearer of knowledge, fits into standard binary thinking model that always privileges one part of the polarized pair – a man and characteristics that are ascribed to male domain (spirit, intellect, culture etc.), meaning that the other part of the pair is always despised – a woman (body, sensibility, nature etc.). Exactly this binary system makes one part of the pair always problematic, because the mentioned cognitive logic does not allow existence of autonomous, independent Other (Grosz 2005, 211).

This lead us to the film episode in which Homer mentions Aristotle, when Ilia rephrases that he said that men were everything and women were nothing, wherefore she was not interested at all what this man thought. Aristotle's misogynist attitude was commented still in 17th century by François Poulain de la Barre (1647–1723), who turned his attention to the same patriarchal mechanism ridiculed in the film, mechanism that still today easily and automatically depreciates and disqualifies women.

Aristotle... pretends that women are but monsters. Who would not believe it, upon the authority so renowned a personage? To say, it is an impertinence would be, to choak his supposition too openly.

If a woman, (how learned soever she might be), had wrote as much of men, she would have lost all her credit; and men would have imagined it sufficient, to have refuted such a foppery; by answering, that it must be a woman, or a fool, that has said so.

¹⁰ An intention to represent a myth as a true story is not completely absent in Greek antiquity, but the theatre plays were undoubtedly understood as fictional.

De égalité des deux sexes (Paris, 1673)¹¹

Although, as we see, misogyny of Aristotle and the lack of space in which women as equal and respected opponents were noticed and discussed almost five centuries ago, the same problem is still here. Patriarchal tradition/oppression indefinitely justifies itself and enables further reproduction through all non-critical approaches that a priori reject women. On the other hand, feminist epistemologies and different critical theories approach this problem from various perspectives, sometimes having more difficulties to break academic universalism, than to enter popular culture.

However, things did not always go smoothly even in entertainment and media industry. Namely, the USA censors marked *Never on Sunday* as immoral film. In spite of this and regardless of boycott of Dassin because of his leftist ideas and activism (that forced him to leave USA a few years earlier) the film achieved huge popularity both in Europe and in a New world.¹² It earned Academy Award nomination for best actress, for best screen play, for costumes and for music, winning only in the last category. Manos Hadjidakis was the first winner of this award for the film that was not American. The song *Children of Piraeus* was sang in many languages. In Yugoslavia, Lola Novaković recorded it for Yugoton in 1961.

Comedy *Never on Sunday* may be watched in numerous ways. The most interesting for me has been to follow continuities with ancient Greece and to focus on patriarchal and colonial settings in which epistemological questions emerged, above all about the nature of knowledge: who owes and produces it, for whom, and what is the general attitude towards knowledge when it is out of hands of authorities? The film was inspiration to deepen and theoretically approach the issues raised in popular culture. The main character of the film is a woman from the social margin, a prostitute who is intelligent, has refined sense of justice and thinks always critically. She opposes western white man, an arrogant tourist (coming from far away) convinced in his own authority. He is a personification (or caricature) of colonial western academic discourse and attitude towards Greece – both ancient and contemporary. And although Ilia allows to be educated by Homer, her way of thinking overcomes standard and offered models, she changes perspectives, she is able to put new questions and sheds new light not only on the knowledge he offers, but on him as a person and his act of imposing self-proclaimed authority. Homer becomes interpreter of another culture. As I have already pointed, Greece turns out to be at the same time the most of Europe and the least of it¹³, since western view to Greece is indefinitely trapped in Western (self) idealization. In spite of the fact that Greece is

¹¹Anonymously translated into English as *The Woman as Good as the Man* (London 1677, Lange 2003, 1).

¹² Pappas, Gregory. “Never on Sunday’, The Most Successful (and Controversial) Greek Film Ever?”, October 1, 2019, <https://www.pappaspost.com/never-on-sunday-the-most-successful-controversial-greek-film-ever/> (Accessed January 6, 2021).

¹³ This is an endless topic that might be problematized both through the idealized image of ancient Greece as own childhood, as well as in perpetual disappointment with contemporary Greece. Things towards ancient past are not less complicated also in Greece itself

appropriated as a cradle of European civilization, which means that, at the first glance, it does not include the attitude towards the Other, the sole process of appropriation of culture corresponds to orientalism as discussed by Edward Said, who explained its appearance as a consequence of power interests and need for self-definition (Said 1997, 143; Balibar 2016, 218). The cultural colonisation of ancient Greece is grounded on blurred boundaries between Self and the Other in a way that positive Self-reflection is imposed on the Other, who thus becomes invisible.

At the first sight, the beautiful and desirable body of the heroine places her into supposed traditional cognitive binary model that relates woman and corporeality. However, Ilija challenges binary system that denies her right to have an intellect. Her character corresponds to a possibility of affirmative turn of disadvantage into advantage (Braidotti 1994, 187). In her corporeal feminist theory, Elizabeth Grosz emphasizes that

“If women are to develop autonomous modes of self-understanding and positions from which to challenge male knowledge and paradigms, the specific nature and integration (or perhaps lack of it) of the female body and female subjectivity and its similarities to and differences from men’s bodies and identities need to be articulated. The specificity of bodies must be understood in its historical rather than simply biological concreteness” (Grosz 2005, 19).

Although the issue of woman’s corporeality is complex, feminist theoreticians approach it from different perspectives. Both Grosz and Braidotti recognize in the body possibility of the embodiment of women’s subject.¹⁴ However, both emphasize that this has to happen constantly reflecting on physical, symbolic and sociological dimension of women’s corporeality, in order to avoid being trapped in essentialism (Braidotti 1994, 16) and being aware that body-mind relation has to be adequately approached and theorized, since bodies are interconnected with the matters of race, culture and class always reflecting on their mutual constitution, and not intersection (Grosz 2005, 19–20). Both theoreticians further agree on non-homogenous women’s subjectivity which Braidotti discusses in following words:

“In feminist theory one *speaks as* a woman, although the subject ‘woman’ is not a monolithic essence defined once and for all, but rather site of multiple, complex, and potentially contradictory sets of experiences, defined by overlapping variables such as class, race, age, lifestyle, sexual preference and others” (Braidotti 1994, 16).

Strong spirit and free thought of the main actress enable her to think without a ballast of tradition and out of widely accepted models of thought, which fits into the requirements of feminist nomadic thought as it is formulated by Rosi Braidotti: “Nomadism is an invitation to dis-identify ourselves from the sedentary

¹⁴ The body has important place also in the theories about *women’s writing* (*écriture féminine*) in which binary antagonism and despise toward women’s body is replaced with its acceptance and establishing connection between women’s body and mind inscribed in *women’s writing*, which is especially recognizable in the theory of Hélène Cixous (Cixous 1976, 866–867; Đurić 2006, 88).

phallogocentric monologism of philosophical thinking and to start cultivating the art of disloyalty to civilization, which Adrienne Rich advocates, or, rather, that form of healthy disrespect for both academic and intellectual conventions that was inaugurated and propagated by the second feminist wave” (Braidotti 1994, 30). *Disloyalty to civilization* might be recognized in Ilia’s parodic interpretation of Medea. Interestingly, Braidotti singles out exactly parody as a possibility of nomadic style that uses it “sustained by critical consciousness” (Braidotti 1994, 7), to challenge patriarchal tradition grounded in pure rationality (Braidotti 2011, 7). *Disloyalty to civilization* is recognizable in Ilia’s questioning of misogynist attitude of authority such as Aristotle (whom she called “that man”), but also in the whole film setting in which American tourist is represented as narcissistic, corrupted monopolist of knowledge, unable to see himself and reality that surrounds him, which is reflected in his uncritical attitude towards presence, past and towards knowledge about it.

Ilia’s attitude towards ancient Greece and towards knowledge about it appears as a means to challenge *eternal presence* and a monolith historical discourse constructed always and exclusively by a male voice and from a male perspective (Bojanić 2019, 18). Importance of such an attitude lies in the fact that contesting such hegemonic knowledge about the past at the same time questions resistant and permanent patriarchy that is grounded in it. Ilia’s recognizing of misogynist tradition applied on other available texts is a simple methodology, similar to recognizing examples in women’s ancient studies. Omission of women from history is so prominent that sometimes it is necessary only to read ancient sources anew, and find information about women that nobody found interesting before. Brilliant example of such research is a work of Sarah Pomeroy (e.g. *Spartan Women* or *The Murder of Regilla: a Case of Domestic Violence in Antiquity*) who reads sources carefully bringing to light information about women and revealing what was concealed.

However more often, feminist epistemologies require inventive methodological strategies because women’s voices are covered with double veil of silence. Being silenced in everyday life, there were sometimes women who had succeeded to break this silence, but were later erased from history. Svetlana Slapšak suggests a methodology to approach this problem of double silence, proposing anthropological research of different phenomena in order to reconstruct a context in which views of women from different perspectives might appear (Stevanović 2020, 167–168).¹⁵ Only various critical theories, feminist epistemologies and alternative methodologies in combination with arts and popular culture might challenge the concept of *eternal presence*, breaking the vicious circle and creating multidimensional view and understandings of our societies – today and in the past. Only in this way we may hear and notice the silent Other.

¹⁵ This methodology has its grounds in work of the already mentioned French school of anthropology of ancient worlds. About approaching connections between past and present following methodology of the school, see Slapšak 2006, 450.

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