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WOMEN AS THE FOCUS OF KSENIJA ATANASIJEVIĆ

Abstract: The subject of this chapter is Ksenija Atanasijević's depiction of female characters in the works of ancient literature. Through them, she affirms her standpoint that a woman, in her natural complexity, is a valuable active participant in ancient myths and tragedies. The aim of the text is to show that Atanasijević considered women to be equally glorious expressions of a set of thoughts and feelings as the most successful male dramatic characters, and that their fates are no less tragic. The conclusion is that she affirms female subjectivity and dignity even in the most difficult and tragic circumstances, thus encouraging readers to take up such an attitude. A warning that "the possibility of being carefree has been radically removed from all of us" is also present in her works, a warning equally pertinent in her time as today. The chapter is structured as an imaginary dialogue between the author and Ksenija Atanasijević, touching upon her most significant attitudes, thoughts and ideas.

Keywords: female characters of ancient Greece, position of women in Atanasijević's time, multiplicity of female identities, reception of philosophical opus

Introduction

The reception of the works of prominent philosophers enables the discovery of the virtues of philosophical thinking and their association with today's interests. Receiving, accepting, incorporating and adopting are acts of reception that can also be specifically applied to the works of Ksenija Atanasijević (Mršević, 2022, p. 197). Bearing in mind that her work, as an example of philosophical female experience, was systematically neglected and marginalized until the first decades of the 21st century,

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such reception is all the more necessary. In this way, her philosophy as a universal ambition of the mind – in particular the portions related to the multiplicity of female identities – becomes accepted.

In this chapter, I apply the basic postulate of reception theory, that is, considering a dialogue between Atanasijević's oeuvre and the readership. This dialogue emerges in our time through an interest precisely in those neglected fragments of ancient Greek female figures, as well as Atanasijević's contemporaries. These fragments of hers strive towards a whole, proving that there is a transformative power in fragments – from parts to wholeness – from the female characters of ancient drama, through the writings of Atanasijević's contemporaries, all the way to her creation of a consistent hologram of the female soul. The rights to this fragmentary approach have been given to us by the unexpected but convenient coincidence of the literary affirmation of fragmentation at the time of writing this chapter.¹

The methodological innovation of this text is of the dramaturgical type and is implemented in the form of an imaginary dialogue between the author of the chapter and Ksenija Atanasijević. It is a dialogue that enriches our knowledge and reading experience through six sections. Against Ksenija Atanasijević's dominant opus (Atanasijević, 2011), we now stand with our horizon of expectations, giving our philosopher access to the current social context through dialogue. Thus, all her earlier writing ceases to be sealed within scientific immutability, and is rejuvenated by a dialogic reception in the present (Atanasijević, 2008). We are convinced that Atanasijević would not hold this against us, bearing in mind that she herself stood for *poiesis*, i.e., participation in the creation of new knowledge in dialogue with otherness, expanding variety, potentiality of meaning, as well as shaping the sensitivity for virtual and unpredictable imaginativeness.

The basic philosophical and ethical credo of Ksenija Atanasijević

Q: Summarized, what would be the starting point of your philosophy?

My life and work are significantly marked by French spiritual values and role models, especially beginning with my studies in Paris and the publication of my doctoral dissertation in French. That is why my entire philosophy, its starting point and origin, could be summed up by Pascal's

1 Danica Vukićević received the 2023 NIN Literary Award for her book *Inner Sea* (Unutrašnje more), a novelistic collection of fragments and records, mini-essays, lyrical-narrative fragments, (auto-)poetic, personal and valuable fragmentary insights.

thought: All human dignity is contained in his one thought. So, let's try to think well: here is the moral principle. And I really believe that people who think well always act ethically (Đurić, 2020, p. 254).

Q: From which ethical values are your courage and feminism derived?

A: In short, whatever I write about, I always strive for the truth in a sincere desire to help an individual or a community. Although basically pessimistic, my philosophy is fundamentally altruistic (Atanasijević, 1924).

Q: Was your academic preference for the French language also noticed by your high school teachers?

A: Yes, among the high school teachers I fondly remember are Draga Đurić, the French teacher, and Mileva Petrović, the Latin teacher... they encouraged me to write a diary of my thoughts in French. I am grateful to them for that, because this is how it began to enter my consciousness that many artistic objects, events and various phenomena of inestimable value existed in Paris. (Đurić, 2020, p. 251)

Q: Did all of this manifest in Geneva as an environment of strictly moral understandings?

Oh yes! All of that came true in Geneva, even more than I could have imagined. That's how I found all the cultural activities I loved: "concerts, operas, the latest films, theatrical performances, all kinds of exhibitions, books, magazines, encounters with an interesting world" (Đurić, 2020, p. 252).

Q: From a feminist position, you pointed out the inadmissibility of misogyny and gender discrimination?

A: Yes, because feminism is not only an economic and legal, but primarily an ethical system. Feminism represents an eminently idealistic direction, the starting point of which is the belief in inviolability of the person, in its absolute right to freedom and the provision of all the needs for its development. From this issues, as a necessary logical consequence, the refutation, both theoretical and practical, of the gross absurdity of the rooted belief that one gender has, by nature, superiority over another (Atanasijević, 1930, p. 304–306).

Q: From a higher philosophical point of view, what will have to fall away, considering that "social, interpersonal monstrosities that can no longer be tolerated" (Atanasijević, 1929, p. 24)?

A: First of all, these are all gross violations of personality, because the principles of democracy, freedom and fairness have been officially adopted.

Q: How would you summarize the genesis of feminist ideas?

A: It is necessary to understand the historical movement as progress in the consciousness of freedom as follows: “The irrevocable and unstoppable flow of culture has brought with it the awareness that a woman, in terms of her abilities, endowments, virtues and sins, is no different from a man; therefore, her duties, her rights and her entire destiny cannot and should not be diminished or obstructed” (Atanasijević, 1931, p. 2).

Q: You stand for feminism, which is not only a striving for women’s rights, but for the advancement of the rights and dignity of all people (Atanasijević, 1932). What does this achieve?

A: This builds a new ethical doctrine that strives to achieve certainly a more universal, better and nobler relationship between people of both sexes that will exclude any physical and moral abuse of the other. This is my starting point: the abolition of forcibly imposed differences and inequalities between human beings. This is a position – albeit a utopian one – that should be accepted as imperative at all times (Duhaček, 2020).

Q: You not only perceive, analyze and describe, but also enter into dialogue with written texts and other forms of cultural processes. Where do you look for answers?

A: I look for answers to questions that affect me and the writers I write about in our worldly experience as human beings. I am not only interested in *mimesis*, the tautological creation of a model for understanding the given, but also *poiesis*, participating in the creation of new knowledge in dialogue with otherness, inscribed in the read texts, in the expansion of variants, and the potentiality of meaning (Svirčev, 2020, p. 312).

Q: What is ‘activist pessimism’, and who influenced you in this sense?

A. ‘Activist pessimism’ does not mean a resigned surrender to life’s difficulties, but rather a fighting attitude, the igniting of unquenchable restlessness after every life break, a pessimism that “acquires a suggestive, strong and unforgettable expression in the luxuriously sonorous and often triumphantly overflowing verses of this poet, whose feelings, almost always, were saturated with intensity” (Svirčev, 2020, p. 303). My role model is Đura Jakšić who, despite the “bitter residue of experience,” has room for happiness and delight in his poetic world.

Q: How did you come to opt for the short form as your writing style, as precise and concise expressions in fragments and aphorisms that leave a deep impression?

A: First of all, I have never been a slave to dry philosophical concepts, but I instead live my philosophy deeply, that is, I live it personally by

building up my own philosophy of life that bears my intimate, spontaneous and convincing hallmark. What I have in common with, for example, the French moralists, is the chosen form of the fragment (Đurić, 2020, p. 254), i.e., a short statement that transmits to readers the maximum message through minimal means.

Q: Why do you use first-person narration?

A: With first-person narration, characteristic of the essay, I try to escape the figure of a woman deformed by stereotypes as a culturally immature person who is spoken of in the third person, as being looked at from above, protectively, as if she were not part of culture, despite being conspicuously present (Svirčev, 2020).

Q: What is the social environment in which your views on women have been formed?

A: They have been formed in an atmosphere hostile to women; one that is openly misogynistic (Atanasijević, 1928). The need for women to express their political will is viewed with disapproval and ridicule, based on the belief that they are not intellectually capable of such a role. “This environment is far from the golden age of Serbian democracy” (Popović-Obradović, 2008, p. 22), and by other criteria, especially considering the ubiquity of cultural misogyny (G. Bašić, 2020).

Q: Do you feel that support for women is very much denied in your age?

A: Yes, I absolutely do. I myself write and publish in an intellectual climate where support for women is denied on many fronts. Women in our country play an increasingly crucial and beneficial role in raising the cultural and ethical level of society, something that is to be attributed far more to a woman’s abilities and her conscientiousness and perseverance in her work, than to any kind of support (Atanasijević, 1931).

Q: As an engaged intellectual, you concretized your philosophical point of view through constant dialogue with the challenges of your time (Atanasijević, 2011), which you dealt with comprehensively through your texts. What is your message to us, your future audience?

A: You need the “conviction that, in due time, what until recently looked like a utopia, will become a reality” (Mršević, 2020, p. 330). I did not see a realization of that utopian vision of mine, and you probably won’t either, but that makes it even more pressing that it be accepted as a task for everyone to work on in their own time. “*Feci quod potui, faciant meliora potentes*” – I have done what I could; let those who can do better (Đurić, 2020, p. 263).

Q: Do you believe that the reception of Ibsen's *Nora* was marked by a particularly patriarchal, i.e., anti-feminist and 'universalist' approach, during the 20th century?

A: Yes, I believe that with the play *A Doll's House*, Ibsen showed that he understood the essence of women's liberation down to its last psychological subtleties (Svirčev, 2020). This drama, heavy in content, presents the evolution of a woman as first her father's, and then her husband's doll, and then a conscious being who independently wants to solve serious life problems from which she was previously sheltered (Atanasijević, 1927a). Cunningly deceived in her feverish expectation of a miracle that would unite her and her husband in sovereign understanding, she has the decisive courage to cut the untruth of her marriage at the root, and to leave the man who has become a stranger to her and the three children she had with him (Žikić, 2013, p. 796).

Q: Do you think Ibsen shows respect for women's struggle in fighting for their rights?

A: Yes: the creation of Nora, who evolved to devote herself to the sacred and most important duty to herself, upon arriving at the knowledge that she must not accept responsibility for anyone until she first forms herself, irrefutably proves Ibsen's respect towards women's struggle to achieve their rights (I. Bašić, 2020).

Female characters in Ancient Greek tragedies

Q: What are you trying to show through your analyses of female characters in Ancient Greek tragedies?

A: I claim that a woman, in her natural complexity, is a precious participant in myths and tragedies, as well as in literature about them. I clearly express my desire to write about women as complicated but also interesting, because that's exactly what they are (Atanasijević 1927b). I point out that ancient authors singled out several women who are equally glorious expressions of a complex of thoughts and feelings as the most renowned male dramatic characters. According to Aeschylus, catastrophes ripen in the soul of a woman, and she is always exalted in his plays with her overwhelming energy (Žikić, 2013, p. 796).

Q: What do you want to achieve by affirming the female subjectivity and dignity present even in the most difficult and tragic circumstances?

A: I want to encourage myself and others to understand that we can live in dignity, both in my time and other times, as we women know

that the possibility of being carefree has been radically removed from us (Mršević, 2020).

Q: You point out that the fates of female characters in tragedies are no less tragic than those of male characters; Polyxenes, Andromache, Alcestis, Electra, Iphigenia, Antigone, Jocasta, Makaria, and more?

A: Absolutely. You mentioned only the most famous female characters of Greek antiquity. Iphigenia is a heroic girl who willingly goes to her death for the salvation and glory of Greece. Antigone is a timeless heroine, an advocate of divine right as higher justice; only a woman knows how to defy the tyrant and bury her brother in spite of his ban. Jocasta does not believe in prophecies but in her own decision-making, Makaria willingly wants to be a victim, giving her life when not forced to do so, begging only that she be permitted to die among women, far from the eyes of men, which is why King Demophon calls her the bravest of all women (Atanasijević, 1924, pp. 1–12).

Q: What attention did you pay Iphigenia?

A: Agamemnon killed Artemis' stag in ignorance. Artemis becomes angry and prevents the fleet from sailing out, which she will only allow when Agamemnon's daughter Iphigenia is sacrificed to her. Iphigenia's awareness that she will be the savior of Greece prevails over her desire to live. She says that all of mighty Greece is looking toward her at this moment: the fleet's departure, the destruction of Troy, it is all dependent on her. She knows that it is necessary for her to sacrifice herself, to give her blood to reject the prophecy. At the moment when she is to be killed, Artemis substitutes a stag in her place at the altar, takes her in a cloud to the land of the Tauri. Iphigenia is then made a priestess of the cult of Artemis (Atanasijević, 1924).

Q: Did you also represent the stereotype of the faithful wife, as was Alcestis, for example?

A: Yes, that's important: you see, her husband Admetus was promised he could escape death if someone agreed to die for him. Even his old parents, much less his friends, would not do this, but his wife Alcestis agreed voluntarily to sacrifice herself and go to her death in place of her husband. What better way to show a devoted wife than by her agreeing to die for her husband! Her conjugal devotion is nevertheless rewarded; Hercules steals away Alcestis from death, because her devotion and self-sacrifice contrasts sharply with Admetus' male self-absorption. (Atanasijević, 1924).

Q: You depict Hermione as a multi-layered character though: Are there elements of misogyny in her?

A: Yes. In an act of remorse, Hermione complains that evil women have caused her to envy and hate Andromache, and concludes that no man should allow his wife to have communication with other women, because such visits always result in trouble.

Q: And how do you present Andromache, the widow of Hector, who becomes a slave of Achilles' son Neoptolemus, also brimming with misogynistic attitudes?

A: Andromache is an example of conjugal and maternal love, but with too little – in fact, without a shred of – female solidarity, I must say. She believes that, regardless of a man's mistakes, his wife should please him, and not always look for a reason for a fight. She pronounces judgement on women: "How strange it is, that though some god hath devised cures for mortals against the venom of reptiles, no man ever yet hath discovered aught to cure a woman's venom, which is far worse than viper's sting or scorching flame; so terrible a curse are we to mankind!" (Atanasijević, 1924, p. 1–12).

Q: How do you introduce Polyxena?

A: I introduce her as another heroine. When it is decided that Polyxena, the daughter of the captive Hecuba, Priam's wife, should be offered as a sacrifice at Achilles' grave, the young girl willingly agrees to die and is only worried about how her mother will withstand the impact. Proud Polyxena demands that her mother not beg Ulysses for mercy. Hecuba's despair subsides when she is told that Polyxena died fearlessly, "beautiful as a statue" (Atanasijević, 1924).

Q: What attracted you to the character Makaria in the tragedy of Heracles, and why does the Attic king Demophon describe her as the bravest of all women?

A: I presented another heroic female self-sacrifice through the character of Makaria, the daughter of Heracles and Deianira, recognized for her bravery. She hears that the gods demand the sacrifice of a girl to ensure salvation of Heracles' children and of Greece in the fight against the enemy. She therefore willingly wants to be a victim, like Antigone, Polyxene and Iphigenia. She claims that her life belongs to the king; that she gives it willingly, and is not forced to do so. She declares that she has found the best way to leave life: with honor; begging only the king for permission to die away from the sight of men, among women (Atanasijević, 1924).

Q: Who would you highlight as one of Euripides' strong-but-evil female characters, and why?

A: That would be Phaedra. Aphrodite makes Phaedra fall in love with her stepson Hippolytus out of revenge. But Hippolytus rejects Phaedra's love. She sees only one way to get rid of the pain, and that is to die as soon as possible, because only this way would she avoid embarrassing her husband and children. But, before she dies, Phaedra wants revenge upon Hippolytus for his arrogance and insensitivity. She hangs herself and leaves a letter containing a false cause of her death, blaming Hippolytus. Hippolytus falls victim to her mindless passion and desire to punish him (Atanasijević, 1924).

Q: What other female character is driven by a terrifying desire for revenge?

A: In my opinion, Medea, a desperate and abandoned woman whose husband, Jason, is unfaithful, even going so far as to wish her and her children's banishment from their home of Corinth. Driven by hatred, she sends her rival a dress of the finest material and a golden crown, gifts she received from her grandfather Helios. As soon as her rival Creusa puts them on, she dies of the poison Medea laced the garments with. But it was not enough for her to kill her hated rival; she would go on to kill her own children, wanting to crush their father's heart. She refuses the offer to spare the children and go into exile together and be each other's life's joy with the words: "By those avengers in lower Hell, I'll never deliver up my children, hand them over to their enemies, to be humiliated. They must die — that's unavoidable, no matter what. Since that must happen, then their mother, the one who gave them life, will kill them" (Atanasijević, 1924, p. 10). Poisonous and destructive, Medea resembles Hecuba, albeit with a much harsher nature to her inhuman and demonically designed revenge (Atanasijević, 1924).

Q: When and why did the beautiful Helen of Troy, the cause of the Trojan War, curse her beauty?

A: Helen is in Egypt during the Trojan War. There she comes to learn that her mother Leda hanged herself due to the shame her daughter brought upon the family, that Troy was destroyed, that her husband Menelaus had died, and that great shame is attached to her name. She then curses her beauty as the cause of so many conflicts and destructions, including her own misfortune: "If only! If only I could scratch this beauty out, like painters do to their pictures and paint another picture of me, this time an ugly one! If only! [...] Ah! Such is the depth of misery into

which my beauty has brought me. While beauty makes other women happy, mine is the very implement of my destruction!” (Atanasijević, 1924, p. 7). It transpires, however, that Menelaus is actually alive; he comes and assures her that she is completely innocent, and that all of the misfortune that befell the world was caused by a vain goddess, and he escapes to Greece with Helen (Atanasijević, 1924).

On Teresa of Ávila

Q: You also chose to present Teresa of Ávila. How did you encounter this saint, who, in your time, was almost unknown in the Serbian linguistic and cultural context?

A: The Spanish mystic and Catholic saint, Teresa of Ávila is a noteworthy figure in the Christian religious tradition. Moreover, she was “the most gifted of all female mystical writers” (Atanasijević, 2010, p. 137) During her lifetime, she did much to strengthen the Catholic faith at a time when it was internally shaken up in various ways (Vuletić, 2010). She built up the Church’s strength through her way of living, her experience and her diplomatic gift, and in this sense, she is the forerunner of many feminist ideas that exist within the Church today. In her theology, Teresa starts from a personal experience with God. She is a famous mystic who found her own way to God and as such teaches more through her deeds than the written word. She dedicates the books to her sisters so that they can learn from her experience of how to avoid sin and come closer to God.

Q: How did the ‘greatest mystic’ – Saint Teresa of Ávila – influence you as a philosopher?

A: Saint Teresa had a significant (perhaps decisive) influence on my independent philosophical orientation; I saw it as a meeting of two feminists on the same objective. The saint’s thinking helped me to ‘talk’ with others in my own environment through a publicly published text, but also with those who are close to me; sisters in the feminist movement. This is the approach that the saint primarily adopted in her texts addressed to her sisters, writing so that everyone finds a message relevant to themselves, in order to transmit it to others within the Church who need to hear it (Savić, 2020).

Q: By informing the general public about the opinions of women from other religious denominations, you became one of the pioneers of feminist theology in your country. Why did you decide to do this?

A: A feminist’s interests is to reflect on the truth of living together, and attempt to answer the essential questions of philosophy and religion

as well. I understood its importance, not only for the needs of my sisters (and students) in the community, but also for our feminist movement between the two world wars (Savić 2020).

Q: What examples does she offer for today?

A: At the same time, Teresa is an example of a wise woman who, in unstable medieval times, managed to maintain and expand monastic life, to communicate with her religious superiors with great diplomatic skill, and at the same time maintain her understanding of the life of the community and the Church. Her capacity for personal experience with God, with which contemporary feminist theologians empathize, and her gift of diplomacy in dealings with Church institutions, which we can also identify today in many contemporary theologians within Christianity, are two things we can learn from Teresa of Ávila. Teresa's message about the necessity of diligent devotion is also relevant: "We work to make at least some small progress for ourselves every day, and to grow in zeal; after all, the truth is that we are always in the midst of battles, and that neither the desire for rest nor carelessness should overwhelm us, until we achieve final victory" (Žikić, 2013, p. 797).

Q: How was Teresa educated, and what influence did it have on her works?

A: Her path of self-education is interesting: "she was a great and passionate reader, but she did not have a particularly literary education. That is why her prose (although she also wrote a little poetry) is characterized by simplicity, sincerity of expression and spontaneity. This was also her conscious intention, since she cared about reaching the largest number of people, women (nuns in the first place), but also the uninitiated world in general. But we the moderns, we do not need a withered logician, but a philosopher-visionary and preacher of religion." (Đurić, 2020, p. 253).

On women writers

Q: Do you write essays about women writers?

A: Yes, I especially strive for the affirmation of female creative practice. Essays on female authors are particularly important to me, because my engagement in this field has coincided with the formation and affirmation of feminist literary-critical discourse in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes/Yugoslavia, and I want to contribute to that process (Svirčev, 2020).

Q: What did you strive for in your essays about women writers?

A: I tried to shed light on their characters and life experiences as comprehensively as possible, and to present the key poetic characteristics, imbuing them with my own reflections on various literary and non-literary problems. I wrote particularly enthusiastically about the process of the reader's sympathy with the narrative world of Milica Janković and about the prose works of Desanka Maksimović. Essays on women writers, that is, their portraits on the level of interpretative procedures and linguistic and stylistic expression, correspond to my essay writing on literature (Svirčev, 2020).

Q: Do you see women's imagination as a means by which to attempt to avoid fate?

A: Yes, that's right, I find the imagination invigorating in women writers, which is important, because "...when our imagination is full of joyful images, then we have cheated fate, and when our dreams are ugly, then fate has overcome us" (Atanasijević, 1929, p. 148). I should additionally mention that I publish in magazines of various profiles and have a stratified readership that includes both the intellectual elite and the general public (Milanković, 2020). With regard to essays on female writers, I think it is particularly important to point out the politics of the place of publication. Namely, I have not published essays about women authors exclusively in feminist-oriented periodicals, but also in a wide variety of other magazines and periodicals, with a broad range of scopes and themes. I believe that this has been extremely important in the process of affirming women's creativity and breaking down barriers to their reception (Milanković, 2020).

Q: Do you consistently affirm women's solidarity and the importance of mutual support?

A: I insist that any ethics of feminism should be based on the selfless provision of solidarity and mutual support by and between women (Atanasijević, 2011).

Q: In addition to writing and publishing essays, do you regularly give public lectures?

A: Yes, I have also given many public lectures on pacifism, anti-Nazism, and feminism (Marinković, 2020). There are few authors who through their essays and literary criticism have had a presence in different public spheres in the way in which I have. I am certainly the only author of this kind in the interwar era.

Concluding questions

Ksenija Atanasijević is one of those prominent women who are of great importance for the achievement of gender equality because by her example and activities she contributed to the creation of a society in which women and men are equal in terms of rights and opportunities, and where the contributions of all members of society are recognized and appreciated, regardless of gender. She was engaged in the promotion of gender equality and the fight against discrimination against women. Her presence in the public space allowed her to raise awareness of the problems faced by women in society. Her openly expressed feminism represents an eminently idealistic direction, to achieve certainly a more universal, better and nobler relationship between people of both sexes that would exclude any physical and moral abuse, and the abolition of forcibly imposed differences and inequalities between human beings. She also devoted herself not only to feminism, to pacifism and anti-Nazism, but also to the principles of democracy, freedom and fairness which she wanted to be officially adopted. Or to put simply, her message might be that people who think well always act ethically.

Ksenija Atanasijević had an important role in promoting and achieving gender equality, acting as inspiration and role model for other women and girls. Her achievements, if and when known, can motivate others, regardless of gender, to fight for their goals and dream big. This helps to break down stereotypes and prejudices related to women's abilities. She advocated for fairer rights for women, by providing examples of heroic women of Greek antiquity, the bravest of all women as she called them, but also of wise women, such as Theresa of Ávila. Her message is that women can build strength through their way of living, experience and diplomatic gift, as did Theresa of Ávila.

The virtues that Atanasijević recommended through her work to women are: mutual support by and between women including necessity of diligent devotion to solidarity, self-education and simplicity, sincerity of expression and spontaneity, invigorating imagination, learning from our sisters' experience in the feminist movement, always having a sincere desire to help an individual or a community. She affirms the presence of female subjectivity and female dignity, philosophical female experience and multiplicity of female identities. But also, she warned every single woman that she must not accept responsibility for anyone until she first forms herself.

Women should never stop working towards at least some daily, small progress for themselves. After all, the truth is, that women are always in

the midst of battles. By affirming women's creativity and breaking down barriers to their reception, Atanasijević affirmed female creative practices, characters and life experiences, as well as women's imagination as a means by which women can try to avoid tragic fates.

Ksenija lived and wrote in a time when the need for women to express their political will was viewed with disapproval and ridicule, based on the belief that they are not intellectually capable of such activity. In response, she warned that women in their surroundings played an increasingly crucial and beneficial role in raising the cultural and ethical level of Serbian society. Simply put, women can live in dignity. She thus warned that women's duties, their rights and entire destiny cannot and should not be diminished or obstructed.

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