

WHEN A HEAD IS CUT OFF THREE MORE GROW IN ITS PLACE

Attempting to examine the rape/abuse accusations
in the context of the patriarchal system



Lately we are witnessing a wave of reports concerning violating and abusive behaviors in the field of sports and spectacle. Sofia Bekatorou was the one to start speaking publicly about her rape. Then others came forth with their stories, resulting in a wide-ranging dialogue on the issue of sexist attacks. For our part, as a feminist group, we consider it important to take a critical stance on this dialogue, expressing our solidarity with the accusers.

In the patriarchal society we live in, the difficulties that anyone who decides to break their silence will face, are known. Usually in such cases the responsibility shifts to the person who was attacked, instead of the abuser. That is, there is the typical commentary that she provoked the abuser, that she "wanted it to happen" or, even, it is claimed that all her testimony is a lie. Such comments were not absent concerning Sophia's report. Moreover, many half-heartedly wondered "Why now?" or (ironically) "Now did she remember?" disregarding all the factors that can lead someone to remain silent (e.g. internalized guilt, feeling responsible for what happened, shame, belief that no one will believe you, fear for physical integrity, the threat of losing contact with your child, your job, etc.). They also overlook the fact that such incidents scar you and remain forever in your memory. In general, once again we are witnessing many criticize something which is not at all their business, namely how one handled their own rape.

However, there were also supportive voices for Sofia's report, among which were both the media and the various state representatives. Some examples are the parliament member Andreas Loverdos, responsible for the public shaming and death of HIV-positive sex workers in 2012, and Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis, who stated that "Sofia Bekatorou's decision to come forward and bravely go on the record regarding the sexual violence she suffered as an adolescent athlete is an act that bears significant social gravitas. It is a move that awakens consciences, setting a positive example. And it promotes maturely the concerns of all progressive forces in our country. The State is equipped with the legislative means provided by the Rule of Law which it intends to exhaust. It is also equipped with the structures necessary to heal the wounds caused by such crimes. It is crucial, however, that every Greek supports her in this mission." Here, obviously, the class and racial privileged position of the accuser plays an important role, who "has made Greece proud" with her athletic performance. We are certain that if she were in the position of a subject who is considered a minority (e.g. an immigrant) the environment wouldn't be as supportive. On the contrary, in this case her side of the story would not be credible, the victim would be accused, as a person with a wrong past and choices and the value of her speech as a non-prominent person would be reduced. Of course, all this followed by the

additional obstacles that she would not have a platform to speak publicly, there would be no money for sufficient legal advice, or a strong environment to act as a safety net. That is, the game would have already been lost before it started followed by negative consequences for the accuser who would have been stigmatized as a disobedient worker.

We see, then, that many were the ones who condemned the rapist and stressed the need to make such incidents public, so that they would not be repeated. But is such a practice enough to eliminate these incidents? Certainly not, especially when such exhortations are made from trash such as Loverdos. Such management is rooted in a narrative that considers the rapist or abuser to be an exception that must be detected and condemned, thus keeping the national body free from such behaviors. In this way, it is presented that female oppression is something that is embodied by specific individuals, thus hiding its structural and diffuse character. In this way, all the institutions that are founded on the system of patriarchy, such as the state, the media, the Greek society, are "laundered". After all, in capitalism, we constantly see issues concerning systemic oppression, depoliticized and reduced to individual problems that are only resolved within its framework. We, on the other hand, know that patriarchy, like any other system of oppression, is an integral part of this society and cannot be considered in isolation. It is necessary for capitalism, since it contributes directly to the reproduction of capital. It is necessary for the nation-states to ensure their power since it is an integral part of nationalist narratives and so on. We know that the rape culture and sexism are not hidden in individual tragic stories, but are permeated in every aspect of our daily lives, on the street, at home, at work in 1002 ways, from dusk till dawn.

Still, although we believe that this wave of accusations is a product of the feminist movement, we see that such reports, accompanied by the intervention of bourgeois justice, are projected as the best way to deal with sexist incidents. Such assumptions reinforce the spectacular dimension of bourgeois democracy through which the bourgeois state is presented as the best possible way to ensure equality, freedom, etc. This fact, in addition to the aforementioned "laundering" of the state, contributes to the further legitimacy of its control. The cops, the courts and everything we find in front of us in various ways (e.g. acquitting rapists or not recognizing our right to self-defense) suddenly appear as our protectors because from time to time they convict a rapist, if class and racial position, both of the victim and of the perpetrator, allow it. In this context, we must be vigilant so as not to allow feminist agenda to be assimilated, losing any radical character.

We, for our part, have to say that we will always be on the side of whoever makes such incidents public in whatever way she chooses. We consider it of high importance that rapists and abusers be reported and finally get what they deserve for all the years that they have stayed afloat at the expense of all the survivors they leave behind. In short, whether someone chooses the path of court or not, we will be on their side. However, due to the process of assimilation of the feminist agenda mentioned above, we could not characterize a positive outcome as a victory. We do not harbor illusions, we know that reporting some men is not enough to uproot patriarchy from our lives. We see the feminist struggle as a set of manifold daily struggles with institutions, figures, discourses and situations always alongside and within struggles, against other systems of oppression as well.

