

THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN THE NOVELS OF
GREGORIOS XENOPOULOS

by

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ABSTRACT

The present study aims to explore the position of women and their role in the domestic and public realm as presented by the Greek prose writer Gregorios Xenopoulos (1867 – 1951). The study will be divided into two chapters. In the first chapter, after having discussed the social context of the last quarter of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century, I will examine and analyze women's position in Greek society as presented in Xenopoulos's novels, with special emphasis on the impact of the feminist movement on marriage and motherhood, education and work. Also, there will be a comparison of the Athenian and Zakynthian novels. In the second chapter, I intend to analyze the presentation of the physical appearance of female characters regarding facial and other physical characteristics, looking also at dress and hairstyles. I will then comment on the way their behavioural patterns are presented and finally, there will be a general, rather brief, survey of the most popular female types encountered in Xenopoulos's novels. This exploration will lead to the conclusion that, although Xenopoulos was writing at a time when women had a secondary role in society, by being his major characters, they are given the importance and respect they deserve to have in society. Thus he can be considered one of the few male supporters of the feminist movement that emerged during the first decade of the twentieth century and one of the first among the minority to applaud women's efforts to achieve emancipation.

To my grandfathers
Christodoulos and Kyprianos
who passed away
while I was writing this dissertation

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INTRODUCTION

Gregorios Xenopoulos (Constantinople, 1867 – Athens, 1951) was one of the most renowned Greek writers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The bulk of his enormous oeuvre was published over a sixty-year period between 1885 and 1945.¹ He was a prolific writer not only of novels, short stories, plays and newspaper articles, but also of children’s literature and reviews. Thus, it is impossible to cover all his work in the limited space of this dissertation. Another obstacle in my research was the fact that some of the novels which might have been helpful for my research are not published in book form, but are still scattered in the newspapers where they were first published, which are not accessible to me.² I could also mention inadequate research by modern scholars into some areas of his work, such as the presence of women in his fiction. In order to overcome these difficulties, I decided to confine my examination to specific novels and short stories,³ with my main criterion being the focus on those written between 1885 and 1945, the central period in his career as mentioned above, and on those which include a female name or female feature in their title (e.g. *Μεγάλη γυναίκα*). An additional criterion for inclusion in this study was that the work should be published either in the *Άπαντα* or as a separate book.

¹ G. Farinou-Malamatari, “Γρηγόριος Ξενόπουλος”, *Η παλαιότερη πεζογραφία μας*, vol. XX, Athens: Sokolis, 1997, pp. 298, 303. Farinou Malamatari mentions that although Xenopoulos began his career as a writer with the Generation of the 1880s and continued until the post-war Generation, his *Άπαντα* does not include his work written in *katharevousa* from 1885–1893 (apart from *Μαργαρίτα Στέφα*), probably because it is juvenilia and does not include his work from 1930–1945 (probably it had not been published in a book form).

² For example the novel *Μοδιστρούλα*, as its title indicates, would be helpful for the section on education and work, where I argue that a popular job for females in Xenopoulos’s novels was being a seamstress. But this novel was not published as a separate book; it was only published in the newspaper *Έθνος* between 12.5.1916–21.3.1917.

³ I will focus mostly on novels, but I will use a few short stories which I deem helpful for my examination (e.g. *Στέλλα Βιολάντη*).

As a personality, Xenopoulos was very popular with his contemporaries and much loved by the public. The methods of dissemination used by Xenopoulos reveal his popularity among his contemporaries. One could argue that all these methods made Xenopoulos's work accessible to all classes of people and to both genders.

While Xenopoulos was still alive he used various methods of disseminating his works. Very often, he published his work in series (roman feuilleton) in different newspaper and periodicals, with which he co-operated on a full-time basis. Such newspapers are *Έθνος*, *Νέα Ημέρα*, *Αθηναϊκά Νέα*, *Ημερήσιος Τύπος* and some periodicals are *Παναθήναια*, *Νέα Εστία*, *Διάβασέ με* and *Οικογένεια*. It was of particular importance where the sequence was cut, so that it drew the reader's interest. This also supposes and imposes the continuous observation of the audience's tastes and reactions.

Some of his work, after having been published in series, was published in a separate book by a publisher (*Κολλάρος*, *Νέα Εστία*) and what is more, most of his novels, such as *Λάουρα* (1921, 1927), *Στέλλα Βιολάντη* (1914, 1923), *Ο κόκκινος βράχος* (1915, 1920, 1924) and others were published in more than one edition. Especially his short stories were afterwards published in an aggregate volume and some of them were illustrated in order to be visually attractive.

Another method of dissemination Xenopoulos used for his work was the popular genre of sequels. Two examples of this method is the novel *Ο κοσμάκης*, which was published in four volumes (A: *Το πρωτοζύπνημα*, B: *Το κέντρον*, Γ: *Τελευταία όνειρα*, Δ: *Ο γυρισμός*) and the social trilogy A: *Πλούσιοι και φτωχοί*, B: *Τίμιοι και άτιμοι* and Γ: *Τυχεροί και άτυχοι*.

Some of his books were translated into foreign languages. *Μητριά* was translated in English (1897), *Κακός δρόμος* in Italian (1926) and *Ο κόκκινος βράχος* in Romanian (1933).

He also adapted some of his novels to plays, such as the novel *Kokkinos vrahos* which as a play was renamed as *Φωτεινή Σάντρη*; *Έρωσ Εσταυρωμένος* was performed as *Στέλλα Βιολάντη*. Both plays were performed by the well-known troupe of Marika Kotopouli. In addition his plays, e.g. *Φοιτηταί*, were also published as books.

Xenopoulos's novels satisfy the basic condition of the popular reading: extensive circulation for their time. The popular reading is mainly a mass reading. This presupposes unformed – yet literate – masses. Xenopoulos's books, his short stories, his novels and his uninterrupted feuilletons entered every household persistently. Almost all of his novels were published, in their primary form, in sequences in the more or less popular newspapers and magazines of their time.

Scholars have recognized his significance in their reviews of his work, and highlighted his contribution to Greek letters examining his work from different perspectives: e.g. the distinctive features⁴ of his writings, influences from literary movements and the question of his originality. His reviewers may be divided into two groups: those who viewed his work positively and those who criticized him.

⁴ The term “features” is used here to mean the literary movements he espoused, that is realism, ethnography or naturalism; the type of fiction, i.e. bourgeois or popular sentimental novels; the themes and leitmotifs of his novels; their structure and narrative techniques.

The scholars who take a positive approach⁵ comment on his popularity, occasioned by his accessible style. At the same time, they highlight his contribution to Greek literature, pointing out his achievements in introducing European literary movements, such as realism and naturalism to the contemporary Greek literary scene. His contemporary Petros Haris in *Έλληνες Πεζογράφοι*⁶ placed him in the realist trend and George Hatzinis in “Τεκμήρια για ένα πορτρέτο”⁷ suggested that he finally adopted naturalism.

Michael Mitsakis, *Η πορεία μέσα στο χρόνο*⁸ criticized his lack of originality as he very often adapted his novels to plays and vice versa modifying their titles. He also criticized Xenopoulos regarding the treatment of the Athenian subject the writer had chosen for his novel Nicolas Sigalos. Mitsakis is annoyed about the subtitle “Athenian novel”, which on his opinion refers to the realist trend, while the book proved to be “a product of overromantic and almost excursive imagination”, thus it does not represent the actual life of Athens. Mitsakis also referred to the literary values of the novel, stating that “it could be an entertaining, enjoyable or strange; it could be proper column in a newspaper [...], but definitely it is not a literary piece”. Xenopoulos is characterized as “illiterate”.⁹

Most of the later reviewers also commended on the literary trend Xenopoulos followed. Takis Adamos in *Η πολιτιστική μας κληρονομιά*¹⁰ agreed with Haris placing him in the realist camp.

⁵ These scholars are K. Palamas, *Άπαντα*, vol.6, Athens: Biris, 1976; A. Karandonis, “Η ζακυνθινή ηθογραφία στο έργο του Ξενοπούλου”, *Ιόνιος Ανθολογία*, no. 126, 1939; P. Haris, *Έλληνες Πεζογράφοι*, Athens: Estia, 1953; T. Adamos, *Η Πολιτιστική μας κληρονομιά*, Athens: Kastaniotis, 1979; A. Sahinis, *Το νεοελληνικό μυθιστόρημα*, Athens: Galaxias, 1972.

⁶ P. Haris, *Έλληνες Πεζογράφοι*, Athens: Estia, 1953.

⁷ G. Hatzinis, “Τεκμήρια για ένα πορτρέτο”, *Νέα Εστία*, vol. 50, no. 587, pp. 29-31.

⁸ M. Mitsakis, *Η πορεία μέσα στο χρόνο*, Athens: Philippotis, 1982, pp.125-139.

⁹ E. Amilitou, Introduction in *Νικόλας Σιγαλός, Αθηναϊκή μυθιστορία*, Athens: E.L.I.A, 2002, p.20.

¹⁰ T. Adamos, *Η Πολιτιστική μας κληρονομιά*, Athens: Kastaniotis, 1979.

Some scholars, such as Stergiopoulos in *Περιδιαβάζοντας*,¹¹ suggesting that ethnography is the Greek version of realism, maintain that Xenopoulos is the representative of ethnography in Greece and Georgia Farinou Malamatari in *Ο θεωρητικός και κριτικός Ξενόπουλος – Επιλογή κριτικών κειμένων*¹² argue that Xenopoulos pushed the boundaries of realism until he finally adopted naturalism.

Some scholars maintain that Xenopoulos was the first to develop the bourgeois novel in Greece. Amongst them is Alkis Thrylos in *Μορφές της νεοελληνικής πεζογραφίας*¹³ and Apostolos Sahinis in *Το νεοελληνικό μυθιστόρημα*.¹⁴ Another group, whose leader is George Veloudis¹⁵ considers the writer the father of popular sentimental fiction.¹⁶

Xenopoulos seems to be aware of women's contribution to the family and their importance in society. That is why he dedicates such a large part of his fiction to an extensive and meticulous description of their duties, obligations and rights within the family and society. One might argue that he uses women in order to write melodramatic fiction¹⁷ and this might be right; but he should not be condemned for doing so, since with this sort of fiction he attributes many important virtues to them and presents them as having a better and more advanced position in Greek society. Furthermore, he may have taken advantage of the fact

¹¹ K. Stergiopoulos, *Περιδιαβάζοντας*, vol. Στ, Athens: Kedros, 2004.

¹² G. Farinou Malamatari, (ed.) *Ο θεωρητικός και κριτικός Ξενόπουλος – Επιλογή κριτικών κειμένων*, Athens: Adelfi Vlassi, 2002.

¹³ A. Thrylos, *Μορφές της νεοελληνικής πεζογραφίας*, op.cit.

¹⁴ A. Sahinis, *Το νεοελληνικό μυθιστόρημα*, Athens: Galaxias, 1972.

¹⁵ G. Veloudis, *Αναφορές, έξι νεοελληνικές μελέτες*, Athens: Philippotis, 1983.

¹⁶ The popular sentimental novel typically describes highly-charged emotions and aims to produce emotional responses in readers. Alternatively called “novel of sensibility”. P. Goring, J. Hawthorn, M. Damnhall, *Studying Literature - The Essential Companion*, London: Arnold, 2001, p.295.

¹⁷ “The sentimental novel has long been noted not only for its liberal and humanitarian interests, but also for its predilection for refined feeling, the privilege, it accords emotion over reason and its preference for the private over the public sphere”. See E. Markman, *The Politics of Sensibility: race, gender and commerce in the sentimental novel*, Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 1.

that the sentimental novel was popular with the female public,¹⁸ in order to rouse more women to claim their right to emancipation.¹⁹ Xenopoulos was probably trying to reveal the social problems of his contemporaries²⁰ and that is why he adjusted his characters and the plot development in such a way as to cater to the needs of the readers.

The readers, above all the female ones, are emotionally involved with the heroines, as they expect them to triumph in the end, as well as with the villain, expecting him to be punished for his actions. That is the main reason why the relationship between the man and the woman in the sentimental novel has a sadomasochistic character. Usually Xenopoulos transcends the stereotypes of the popular sentimental novel by deviating from the clear differentiation between male and female nature and behaviour. It could be said, however, that he follows those stereotypes in showing competition between the sexes and in the relations between persons of the same sex.

Other later critics²¹ criticized his lack of originality as he very often adapted his novels to plays and vice versa modifying their titles. Certain critics²² have also commented on his “craving” for popularity which in their view led to a deterioration in quality, for the sake of what he believed would make him more accessible, hence more popular.

¹⁸ “The sentimental novel was perceived to be widely accessible especially to those who were anxious about their social and cultural position: that is to say, those in the middle station of life and women” *ibid*, p. 8.

¹⁹ “The sentimental novel, although entertainment, was a recognised agent for the dissemination of argument and advice; and as such was a powerful method of advertising charitable concerns. In addition, the form of the sentimental novel theorises the rise of philanthropy through narrative and the sympathetic model of character.” *Ibid*, p. 16.

²⁰ S. Patsalidis, “Σώματα και πτώματα στο θεατρικό έργο του Γρηγόριου Ξενόπουλου” in G. Pefanis (ed.), *Nulla dies sine linea, Θεωρητικές προσεγγίσεις στο έργο του Γρηγόριου Ξενόπουλου*, Athens: Kostas and Eleni Ourani Foundation, 2007, p. 310

²¹ A. Thrylos, *Μορφές της νεοελληνικής πεζογραφίας*, Athens: Difros, 1963, pp. 280-297; F. Politis, *Επιλογή κριτικών κειμένων*, vol. 1, pp. 82-85, vol. 3, pp. 207-215, Athens: Ikaros, 1983; M. Mitsakis, *Η πορεία μέσα στο χρόνο*, Athens: Philippotis, 1982, pp.125-139.

²² G. Veloudis, “Απόψεις για το σύγχρονο λαϊκό αισθηματικό μυθιστόρημα”, *Διαβάζω*, 265, 12/6/91 pp.14-17 and G. Xenopoulos, *Άπαντα*, vol. 1, Athens: Biris, 1972, pp. 36-39.

G. Veloudis²³ suggests that the motivation Xenopoulos ascribes to his characters is typical of the sentimental novel: “παραστρατημένο κορίτσι,²⁴ κοινωνικός και οικονομικός ξεπεσμός,²⁵ επιφανειακές αντιθέσεις – πλούσιος/φτωχός –²⁶ γυναίκα διάβολος και γυναίκα άγγελος”.²⁷ Indeed, many of Xenopoulos’s books could be characterized as sentimental novels, since he frequently uses the motifs of infidelity, immorality, motherhood, love and sex, which are related to those mentioned by Veloudis. These motifs concern the physical appearance of each character, and thus are part of private sphere; therefore, we can note the overwhelming use of female characters at the expense of male characters in the sentimental novel, since women are the “angels of the house”, that is they live and operate only in the private realm. Xenopoulos does not liberate the woman’s body from the typical stereotypes in this respect and in accordance with the traditional views on this matter, he tries to respond to readers’ expectations. Consequently, even though he tries implicitly to be an innovative writer, at the same time nevertheless he omits the social, economic and emotional factors that affect his heroines, so as his progressiveness is not very obvious.

Fotos Politis²⁸ and Alkis Thrylos²⁹ criticize Xenopoulos for shallowness and for a flawed and unsuccessful narrative technique, citing up as their most main argument the fact that he was a prolific writer who had to produce a great deal of work in a very short time.

²³ G. Veloudis, *Το σύγχρονο λαϊκό μυθιστόρημα*, Athens, 1977, p. 108.

²⁴ See the novel *Ο Κατήφορος*.

²⁵ Most of his novels, e.g. *Μαίρη και Μαρίνα*.

²⁶ See the novel *Πλούσιοι και φτωχοί*.

²⁷ See the novel *Αφροδίτη*.

²⁸ F. Politis, op.cit.

²⁹ A. Thrylos, op.cit.

It seems that his contemporaries' views are limited to classify him as a realist or naturalist writer. Later views though, apart from the literary trends of realism and naturalism, include ethnography, bourgeois novel and popular sentimental fiction. His narrative technique was also criticised. These might be due to the development of the literary theory and narratology in recent times.

In recent times, though, apart from a few contemporary scholars, such as Kostas Stergiopoulos, Konstantinos Malafantis, Georgia Farinou-Malamatari, Anta Katsiki-Givalou, Eftychia Amilitou, Maria Trihia-Zoura, Manos Horianopoulos and G. Pefanis, little effort has been made to discuss his work.

These contemporary approaches were all made in the context of a colloquium, entitled *Γρηγόριος Ξενόπουλος, Πενήντα χρόνια από το θάνατο ενός αθάνατου (1951–2001)*.³⁰ Moreover, Xenopoulos was the subject of a special issue of *Nea Estia*, October 2001, which marked the fiftieth anniversary of his death and featured in some other issues of the same journal.

Other publications include Georgia Farinou-Malamatari's articles "Αναγνώστες μυθιστορημάτων στα μυθιστορήματα του Γρηγόριου Ξενόπουλου",³¹ "Οι πρόλογοι των

³⁰ K. Delopoulos, (ed.) *Γρηγόριος Ξενόπουλος, Πενήντα χρόνια από το θάνατο ενός αθάνατου (1951-2001), Πρακτικά Συνεδρίου 28 & 29 Νοεμβρίου 2001*, Athens: E.L.I.A., 2003 in which Georgia Farinou-Malamatari, Anta Katsiki-Givalou, Eftychia Amilitou, Maria Karaiskou and few others contributed with the articles *Ο Ξενόπουλος κριτικός του Παπαδιαμάντη, Γρηγόριος Ξενόπουλος: σύγχρονες αναγνώσεις, Αποσπάσματα κριτικού και αυτοκριτικού λόγου στα μυθιστορήματα του Γρηγόριου Ξενόπουλου, Γρηγόριου Ξενόπουλου, Ο τρελός με τους κόκκινους κρίνους (1901): Ένας διάλογος με τον Βιζυηνό και τον Edgar Allan Poe* respectively.

³¹ G. Farinou-Malamatari, "Αναγνώστες μυθιστορημάτων στα μυθιστορήματα του Γρηγόριου Ξενόπουλου", *Ελληνικά*, no. 46, 1996, pp. 347-362.

πεζών έργων του Γρηγόριου Ξενόπουλου³² and her edition of *Γρηγόριος Ξενόπουλος Επιλογή κριτικών κειμένων* in which various articles regarding Xenopoulos as a novelist, writer of short stories and plays and as a critic are included. K. Stergiopoulos in *Περιδιαβάζοντας* and M. Horianopoulos in *Κορυφαίες μορφές της νεοελληνικής λογοτεχνίας- άγνωστες πτυχές της ζωής τους*³³ have contributed to the debate by including essays on Xenopoulos in their books. Eftychia Amilitou wrote the introduction and edited the new edition of *Νικόλας Σιγαλός*.³⁴ In 2007 the Kostas and Eleni Ourani Foundation published the book *Nulla dies Sine Linea, Προσεγγίσεις στο έργο του Ξενόπουλου*, edited by G.Pefanis. This book consists of many essays arranged according to the aspect of Xenopoulos's work they examine (e.g. fiction, plays, criticism, correspondence).

It is obvious that almost no one of his reviewers (contemporary, later, recent) commented on the constant presence of women in Xenopoulos's fiction. Only Veloudis commented that in the framework of discussing Xenopoulos's classification as the father of the popular sentimental fiction.

Because, as mentioned above, the research on Xenopoulos is patchy, a great deal of research still needs to be carried out in order to fill the gaps in the study of his fiction. Quite surprisingly, though female figures dominate his fiction, no systematic study of this aspect of his work has been carried out and there are only some passing references to his female characters scattered throughout the critical literature. Therefore, it is a field offering

³² G. Farinou-Malamatari, "Οι πρόλογοι των πεζών έργων του Γρηγόριου Ξενόπουλου", *Φιλολόγος*, no. 60, pp. 95-118, vol. 61, pp. 190-200, Summer-Autumn 1990.

³³ M. Horianopoulos, *Κορυφαίες μορφές της νεοελληνικής λογοτεχνίας – άγνωστες πτυχές της ζωής τους*, Athens: Smirniotakis, 1990.

³⁴ E. Amilitou, Introduction in *Νικόλας Σιγαλός, Αθηναϊκή μυθιστορία*, Athens: E.L.I.A., 2002.

considerable potential for further examination. Thus, in this dissertation I will try to fill this gap by looking into the position of female figures in his novels.

I will start by attempting to elucidate the “status of women” in the society of his day. In fact, Xenopoulos wrote at a period (1885 – 1945) when women were playing a secondary role in society, but at the same time they were beginning to realize the major role they could play and starting the struggle to claim their emancipation.

In the period under study (the last quarter of the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century),³⁵ women’s position in society and in the domestic realm, in what was then a patriarchal society, was one of conspicuous subjugation, since women were seen as possessions, entrusted only with domestic responsibilities such as giving birth and bringing up children. Their confinement had a serious impact not just on their social roles, which is reflected in their efforts to gain the right to work, but on their education and on their sexuality as well. Above all at the beginning of the twentieth century, through the Greek Feminist movement, Greek women were demanding emancipation and struggling to achieve it.

Thus, the aim of this dissertation is to study the way Xenopoulos presented women in his novels both as regards the representation of their physical appearance and character, and whether this representation reflected their position in contemporary society. Since no other research has been done on this particular subject, I will try to illuminate not only the possible

³⁵ The examination of the social and historical context will cover that period, which does not strictly coincide with his main writing period, in order to have a complete picture of the social conditions and developments and thus reach safe conclusions as to whether his attitudes were consistent with that development, anachronistic/conservative or progressive.

reasons for his attitude towards women but also assess whether he was an innovative or a traditional writer regarding the representation of women in his novels.

The aim of the first chapter is to analyze women's position in Greek society, as presented in Xenopoulos's novels. To this end a brief overview of the social context of the late nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century must be given. Special emphasis will be given to the Greek feminist movement and its impact on women's education and work, marriage and motherhood. Having examined this, I will go on to analyze the situation women in Xenopoulos's novels found themselves in with regard to these things and make a comparison between the Athenian and Zakynthian novels.

In the first part of the second chapter I will discuss the physical appearance of Xenopoulos's heroines with reference to their facial and other physical characteristics, looking also at clothing and age. In the second part, I will discuss their characterization commenting on the positive and negative features Xenopoulos attributed to his heroines. A presentation of the main female types which the reader encounters in Xenopoulos's novels will be the theme of the third section.

CHAPTER 1

WOMEN IN GREEK SOCIETY AND IN XENOPOULOS'S NOVELS

In the first chapter of this dissertation I will briefly examine the social *milieu* of the period when Xenopoulos was writing his fiction, focusing in particular on the emergence of the Greek feminist movement. This period covers the last quarter of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century. The aim of this examination is to see whether he was a realist writer, if he followed the changes occurring during that period and to what extent he supported the feminist movement.

To achieve this aim, having given a general overview of the Greek feminist movement, I will examine in more detail the changes which resulted from it in the areas of education and work, marriage and motherhood. This will make up the first section of the chapter. An analysis of Xenopoulos's representation of women will follow for each area, as well as comparisons between his Athenian and Zakynthian novels, which will consist the second section of this chapter.

1. The Greek feminist movement

Within the framework of male dominance, most European women mastered the strategies of those of subordinate positions.¹ Feminists have consistently rejected the assumption of women's inferiority. They have asserted that what may seem to be inferiority is really inequality, created by centuries of male dominance. They valued what they had and worked for the survival of their families. Operating within a male-dominated family and world, they learned to manipulate and please, to adjust and endure.

Rejecting the dictum widely repeated in the nineteenth century that a woman had to choose between being a housewife or prostitute; European feminists have consistently claimed their right to determine their own destiny. The new values of humanism – education, individuality, civic virtue – seemed to include all and yet restricted to men. The Renaissance ideal of “man” excluded women and perpetuated traditional views of male dominance. Feminism was born in opposition. The first feminists wrote to overturn arguments for female inferiority and subordination. They criticised men's treatment of women in courtship and marriage, delineating the types of men who most oppressed women: the seducer, the bully, the wife-beater, the miser, the fop. Educated themselves, they claimed the right to education for other women. They also claimed that women should have legal and political rights equal to those of men.

The growing industrial capitalist economy enabled more women to begin earning income or labouring hard in the home, but increasingly, these women claimed more for themselves than

¹ B.S. Anderson and J. P. Zinsser, *A history on their own, Women in Europe from prehistory to present*, vol. II, London, Penguin Books, 1988, pp. 333 - 432.

the life of a traditional wife. In the nineteenth century, feminists organised other women and men to demand political and legal rights for women ranging from child custody to control of property, from equal public education to the vote. They demanded equality for women in the workplace, access to better jobs, better pay, better working conditions and better education.

In England, the success of liberal politics encouraged the early formation of women's rights movement. In France, feminism grew during the revolutions of 1789, 1848 and 1871 and within revolutionary groups like the early socialists, but it declined during the periods of repression which followed the revolutions. In Germany, feminism achieved its strongest early expression during the Revolutions of 1848; the period of conservatism that followed weakened feminism as well as liberalism in Germany.

Between 1875 and 1925, these women's rights movements achieved many of their goals. In England, tens of thousands of women struggled over a seventy-year period (1832-1928) to win legal and political rights. They worked for more equitable child custody and divorce laws, for laws allowing married women control over their own wages and property, for higher education and the right to vote and participate in politics. From the 1850s to the 1920s increasing numbers of women organised to demand their rights. By the early and mid twentieth century, Englishwomen had achieved much. They won the right to sit on town councils and school boards. They could become poor-law officers and factory inspectors. They could vote in municipal and county elections if they had the requisite property. They could even be mayors, but they had still not won the right to vote in national elections. The winning of the suffrage regarding the right to vote was achieved in 1918.

There was marked stagnation in women's social position in nineteenth century Greek society,² even in the last quarter of the century which is the starting point of my examination. The ideology of the preceding Enlightenment, which had championed freedom for women, their right to be educated and equality between the sexes,³ had no obvious effect as regards improving women's position in society. As Dimitra Tzanaki aptly notes “Οι γυναίκες ήταν προορισμένες για το μικρόκοσμο της οικογένειας”.⁴ Consequently, compared to men, women continued to be seen as an inferior category of people. Thus, they continued their traditional tasks, which confined them to the narrow domestic sphere.

The Greek Institution of 1864 established male suffrage in Greece. It provided Greek men with political rights; their civil rights were safeguarded by the establishment of the nation-state, while the absence of their social rights was covered by family relations.

The Greek feminist movement sprang up in Greece during the period under study in this section, that is the late nineteenth century and its progress is divided into two periods:⁵ the “first wave” and the “second wave”. My examination will focus on the “first wave” which covers the period until the early 1950s and covers the initial stages of the incorporation of women into the political system culminating in women being extended the basic citizenship right of suffrage.

² One should read E. Moutzan-Martinegou's pages to understand the extent of this stagnation. See E. Moutzan-Martinegou, *Αυτοβιογραφία*, Athens: Keimena, 1983.

³ M. Kitromilides, “The Enlightenment and Womanhood: Cultural Change and the Politics of Exclusion”, *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, John Hopkins University Press, vol. 1, 1983, pp. 44-45.

⁴ D. Tzanaki, *Δούλα και κυρά*, Athens: Savalas, 2007, p. 203.

⁵ M. Sarafis, M. Eve (ed.), *Background to Contemporary Greece*, London: Merlin Press, 1990, p. 96.

In this framework, because of their “specific qualities” women were defined as “wives and mothers”. Notwithstanding of their marital status, property or education, they were excluded from the public realm. Because of their biological attributes and characteristics, they were thought of as belonging to the domestic and maternal realm, thus being restricted from the public sphere. Their own citizenship, was as Avdela puts it, a special form of “female citizenship” where maternal discourse was applied.⁶ Paradoxically, whereas democracy was established with the 1864 Institution, women were excluded from it.

During the inter-war years there was a demand for “an alternative definition of gender relations”. Until that time, it was expected that women would be excluded from the political and the public realm because of the domineering position of the father and the husband,. They were granted the right to vote and stand in elections in 1952.⁷ For the previous ninety years, the discussion pertaining to their rights had to do with “civil and social rights”, which is education and paid work claimed by middle-class educated women but had nothing to do with the right to vote. Of course with the appearance and empowerment of the middle-class, “gender relations” had to be redefined according to the needs of these classes. Thus, middle-class women could now “publicly formulate demands for rights presented as requirements for the performance of their duties to the community”.

After the establishment and gradual development of the Greek feminist movement, there were changes in women’s position in society. Whereas in the late nineteenth century females often had no voice regarding society, family, or even personal matters, things got slightly better in

⁶ E. Avdela, “Between duties and rights, Gender and citizenship in Greece, 1945-1952”, F. Birtek and T. Dragonas, (ed.), *Citizenship and the Nation State in Greece and Turkey*, N. York: Routledge, 2005, p. 118.

⁷ E. Avdela, A. Psara, *Φεμινισμός στην Ελλάδα του Μεσοπολέμου – μια ανθολογία*, Athens: Gnosi, 1985.

the early twentieth century. They were still confined to the domestic realm, but they were taking steps toward their emancipation.

An important aspect that assisted tremendously in the suffrage of women was the legal reform of family relations during the last period before the establishment of the civil code. The right to hold and manage property and income, to conclude valid contracts and to participate in the administration of justice, on one hand, and the right to education and social provision, on the other hand, were more important for middle-class women at the turn of the century than they were for professional women of the inter-war years. The latter put emphasis on the right to political representation and equality at work. In both cases, these women's intervention built a political discourse destined to surpass their exclusion from the public realm. The fact that male suffrage was granted at the same time that the new domestic ideal was being crystallised led to the discursive distinction between a male public and a private domain; it was this separation that women's public discourse repeatedly attempted to overcome.

Still confined to the Roman and Byzantine laws, women were attached to their inferior legal position. For instance, although they were allowed to own property, married women had no right to handle their own property, the management of which went to the hands of the husband, who had every right to it, even if it had not been given to him as dowry. Interestingly enough, it is to be noted that the state itself found it "unprofitable" to reform the action of "womanhood, especially in the light of the fact that then was closely related to motherhood and" motherhood was a vital social and national mission for the function of future citizens and consequently deserved to be protected".⁸

⁸ E. Avdela, *op. cit.* p. 121.

As far as marriage was concerned, they were no longer afraid to speak up about the proposed bridegroom, who was still suggested by their parents, and in some cases to announce that they were in love with another man and planning to marry him. The matter of a dowry was still a matter for negotiation between the two parties. The social system, however, still disapproved of women having the right to vote,⁹ so the politicians had no concern to change the existing legislation for their sake. The feminist movement in Greece claimed some rights for the mother. It demanded respect for motherhood, whether blessed by the church or not, and the sharing of responsibility for the baby between the father and the mother. The latter, of course, if the baby was born out of wedlock, had to deal with society's condemnation.¹⁰

But the situation regarding women's position in the public and domestic realm was gradually changing in favour of women during the late nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century.¹¹ Women from rural and urban areas of Greece began to realize that their function as productive members of society was being ignored, since most of their duties were confined to the domestic sphere and they were therefore deprived of even the tiny prerogatives they were entitled to as human beings. They perceived that if they wanted to change their position in the social sphere, they had to struggle for emancipation. The first steps towards emancipation, were taken at the end of the 1880s, after the publication of the weekly feminist periodical *Εφημερίς των κυριών* (*The Women's Newspaper*), under the auspices of Callirhoe Parren.¹² Her

⁹ Ibid. P. 118.

¹⁰ A. Theodoropoulou, "Φεμινισμός και μητρότητα" (1933) in *Φεμινισμός στην Ελλάδα του Μεσοπολέμου – μια ανθολογία*, op.cit., p. 295.

¹¹ The most important agents working towards this end were the periodical *Ευριδίκη* first published in 1870, which asserted women's rights to education and work, the association *Ένωση των Ελληνίδων* founded by Kallirrhoe Parren (1879), the newspaper *Εφημερίς των κυριών* also founded by Kallirrhoe Parren (1888), the *Λύκειο των Ελληνίδων* once again founded by Kallirrhoe Parren (1911), and the association *Εθνικό Συμβούλιο Ελληνίδων, Σύνδεσμος για τα δικαιώματα των γυναικών* (founded in 1920).

¹²For details on *Εφημερίς των κυριών* see E. Varika, *Η εξέγερση των κυριών, Η γένεση μιας φεμινιστικής συνείδησης στην Ελλάδα 1833-1907*, Athens: Gnosi, 2004, pp. 205-208. Through its articles the periodical coordinated women's struggle towards emancipation, since most of the women writers were protesting about their

living room was a place for literary gatherings, in which literary men who supported the women's movement (e.g. Xenopoulos, Palamas and others) participated. Gradually women¹³ began contributing to literary life with poems, novels, short stories, theatrical plays or textbooks. Writing by women was not considered a personal affair, and was socially acceptable only if they used writing to promote national interests.¹⁴

Another important presence among the leaders of the feminist movement was Kalliopi Kehagia (1839–1905). She insisted on strengthening the moral, spiritual and emotional differences between the two sexes, buttressing the participation of women in the public realm on the distinctive features of the sex: sympathy, sensitivity and the inner power of a delicate nature.¹⁵ She taught women to be courageous, devoted and brave in their mission to promote the national interest, explaining that philanthropy was their patriotic duty, on a par with men's military service.¹⁶

In 1860s a few educated and professional middle-class women deemed it their duty to formulate their own conceptions as to the educational prerequisites for securing women's social and national mission. They, however were of the opinion that women's education

downtrodden lives, complaining about the necessity of a dowry for marriage at a time when marriage was like a "profit-making business". In addition, they asserted that a woman needed to have a job outside the house and should be educated in order to provide the proper moral and educational guidance to her offspring. Another burning matter was that of sexual abuse and family violence. Of course, they would not have dared claim the right to sexual pleasure, satisfaction or love, because of the acceptance of virginity before marriage and the asexuality of women's nature. This self-definition shows that the feminism was still entrapped in Victorian puritanism. (See E. Varika, op. cit., pp. 232-238).

¹³These women included Calliroe Parren and Alexandra Papadopoulou. See M. Anastasopoulou, "Feminist awareness and Greek women writers' in Philip Carabott, (ed.), *Greek society in the making 1863–1913*, London: Ashgate, 1997, pp. 167-170.

¹⁴ D. Tzanaki, op.cit., p. 210.

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 244.

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 252.

should be geared towards preparing them for their future roles as wives and mothers. Thus, female education was more a duty (“*kathikon*”) rather than a right (“*dikeoma*”).

In the beginning of the twentieth century, the professionalization of women as well as the expansion of “educated” Greek women in male-dominated areas is enhanced. The acute social problem of female inequality is the main reason that forces the state to allow women access to “male” professions. Women gain their financial independence, they participate in public happenings, they overcome their cowardice and shyness towards men; women’s occupation with literature is therefore considered a step of progress for the feminists of the inter-war period.

In contrast to the previous period, inter-war feminism supports the new possibilities for equal social accession, which are offered to women through salaried employment. Women’s need to work will make them pursue a better and broader education, an important means for the intellectual and moral uplift of their gender. So it is believed that they will earn man’s trust which is considered necessary for the positive outcome of women’s demands. The feminist struggle in the inter-war years sets two goals: the claim for the vote and the change of the legal framework in education, work, motherhood and prostitution. The understanding of the fact that women’s collective struggle is necessary to achieve the aims of feminism distinguishes the inter-war period of the previous one (1888–1920).

Through the unions and their practises feminists tried to make other women escape individualism, and have a broader world view to acquire a primarily social consciousness. With their demands they express a new social claim of their time, that is the allowance of

political and social rights to women. Feminism of the inter-war period responded to this social claim, which was formed as a consequence of a historical development; during that period, Greek women participated in economic life with new condition, they developed activities in all fields, while they remained second-class citizens without any possibility of politically influencing their position.

The feminist movement flourished in Greece at the end of the nineteenth century as a reaction against the oppressive situation women faced.¹⁷ It enabled them to gradually transcend their downtrodden lives by gaining the right to work outside the domestic sphere and to education. These advances were a slow process and very few males supported them, but the progress they made was extremely important. However, it all came to a sudden halt with the Metaxas dictatorship in August 1936,¹⁸ since all ideas of equality and social justice were abandoned in the dictatorship. Hence, the vehicles of these kinds of progressive ideas were abruptly silenced.

But, the feminist movement prevailed once more after this period. An important aspect of the first wave of the feminist movement was women's participation in the National Resistance (1941–44), the ideological consequences of which were a combination of empowerment and repression.¹⁹ In the period prior to the resistance, Greek women were afforded very little personal freedom in the public realm and many women, by participating in the resistance,

¹⁷ “Ο φεμινισμός ζητάει για τη γυναίκα την πλέρια ανάπτυξη των διανοητικών και ψυχικών της δυνάμεων με μια γερή μόρφωση και ανατροφή, για να δημιουργήσει ένα ηθικά ελεύθερο πλάσμα που να μπορεί να συλλάβει την έννοια της ηθικής ευθύνης σ’ όλες τις εκδηλώσεις της ζωής. Και η συνείδηση της ευθύνης έχει άμεσο αποτέλεσμα την ατομική αξιοπρέπεια, μια από τις βασικές ιδιότητες της κλασικής αρετής. Έτσι η γυναίκα δε θα καταδέχεται να πουληθεί και θα νιώθει πως η ηθική στάθμη δε μετατοπίζεται αν η ανηθικότητα ενεργείται μόνιμα σαν εξάσκηση επαγγέλματος ή συμπτωματικά για την απόκτηση του πρώτου φανταχτερού κουρελιού”. See M. Svolou, “Η θέση του φεμινισμού στην Ελλάδα” in E. Avdela, A. Psara, op.cit., p. 165.

¹⁸ K. Xeradaki, Το φεμινιστικό κίνημα στην Ελλάδα, Athens: Glaros, 1988, p. 159.

¹⁹ J. Hart, “Women in Greek society” in *Background to Contemporary Greece*, op.cit., pp. 95-121.

were defying the rigid standards of conduct that the patriarchal society had imposed on them for the first time.

A mass social movement was being created simultaneously within the resistance movement. This social movement aimed at defying the set of cultural and political rules of conduct that barred women from (e.g. playing an equal part in the society). Thus, it provided a means for women to improve their low status in the society shifting from the private to the public sphere. The resistance facilitated the liberation of women who participated, by providing the means for social change.

At the beginning of the war, women were active in traditional functions, that is cooking, cleaning, knitting and making a home. But as the war progressed, women began to undertake more crucial roles; they were recruited into resistance organizations and began taking part in sabotage, which was punishable by imprisonment or even death. The type of mobilization the resistance initiated created new political networks and provided to women with the incentives to continue their participation in the public realm.

In conclusion, at the end of the nineteenth century, both in Europe and in Greece the question of woman's position in society was a very important one. And the reactions of the male-dominated society in Greece to that issue and to the consequent changes in women's lives and behaviour, including women's claims to education, economic independence and sexual freedom things that would be achieved through the feminist movement, are reflected in fiction.

Xenopoulos's fiction was produced in the context of the developments and changes mentioned above and some parts of it reveal his opinions on specific matters concerning women, such as their participation in the social and political arena and their role in the family and as educators.

2. Women's social and domestic roles in Xenopoulos's novels

2.1 Education and work

As far as education is concerned, little progress was made during the last decade of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. Education for women was thought of as cosmetic or some kind of supplement to the dowry and was the privilege of well-off families. In an attempt to transcend the more “decorative” aspects of their education and to improve their position in the social sphere, some educated women published in journals and periodicals supporting equality of the sexes and championing the importance of women's education.²⁰ Some of those women, who worked as schoolteachers, demonstrated just how important their contribution to education was among the as yet unliberated Greek people in the process of forming a national identity.²¹

In the framework of the feminist movement in Greece, women claimed their right to education, on equal terms with men. The aim of education was to impart knowledge and to create social persons in accordance with the concept of the “socialization” as it was understood by the standards of the day.²² The state's incapacity to guarantee girls' primary education and its lack of provision for their secondary education, which was not compulsory, caused debates as to the purpose and usefulness of access to knowledge for women. For the few educated middle-class women, education was meant to prepare them for their future duties as wives and mothers. And since motherhood was considered to be a social cause, women's education gradually became a *kathikon* (duty). Women as mothers, wives,

²⁰ These women include Anna Theodoropoulou and M. Svolou, whose writings are published in E. Avdela, A. Psara, *Ο Φεμινισμός στην Ελλάδα του Μεσοπολέμου – μια ανθολογία*, Athens: Gnosi, 1985. Others include Kallirrhoe Parren, the editor of *Εφημερίς των κυριών* and Alexandra Papadopoulou.

²¹ M. Anastasopoulou, “Feminist awareness and Greek women writers’ in Philip Carabott, (ed.), op. cit., p. 163.

²² E. Avdela, A. Psara, op.cit., p. 165.

housekeepers and guardians of the original national culture should be able to broaden their consciousness and develop themselves through knowledge.²³ Mothers had to be educated in order to ensure that their children, the future citizens, would have the appropriate education.²⁴

In the inter-war period the state education scheme built schools that provided women, not just with a general education, that is literature and mathematics, but also with classes in painting, dancing, music, sports, foreign languages (French, Italian, German), religious education and home economics. Till then education had been provided in private schools or in convent boarding schools. But in the early twentieth century, due to the efforts made above all by the feminist movement, the state took over the responsibility for women's education.²⁵

An important improvement in the status of women, albeit a small one, was their enhanced access to work, which was directly linked to their gaining the right to be educated on equal terms with men. Employment opportunities for women were limited to a small number of jobs, such as those of housemaid and seamstress, both of which applied to girls of the lower classes. Rich girls, having no need for money since their parents provided them with all the needed, did not have to work. But in the period under examination, that situation was gradually changing in favour of women. They began to claim their right to equality in employment opportunities and as regards wages as well. Now that their education was public and not private, with a university degree, lower and middle-class girls could seek decent jobs, outside the domestic realm. Feminists argued that their right to work would free them from the economic restrictions their family imposed on them and therefore they would improve

²³ D. Tzanaki, *op.cit.*, p. 204.

²⁴ E. Avdela, "Between duties and rights, Gender and citizenship in Greece, 1845-1952", in F. Birtek and T. Dragonas (ed.) *op.cit.*, pp. 121, 122.

²⁵ E. Avdela, A. Psara, *op.cit.*, p. 231.

their social status and be able to claim their political emancipation as well. Economic independence would give women social and personal independence as well.²⁶

By the end of the century the three female roles in the public arena that were acceptable to society were those of philanthropist, teacher and writer.²⁷ With the emergence of the feminist movement in Greece, this list was broadened to include lower- and middle-class women. Women started being employed as secretaries, lawyers, journalists, doctors as well as in other professions that were previously considered exclusively male.

One could say that, although the relationship of women to literature was in some ways in contrast to their domestic duties, in the late nineteenth century significant changes started to occur. Women comprised a separate category of the reading public. On the one hand, women developed a special bond with the novel, especially French novels, which dominated the Greek literary scene. On the other hand there were ongoing prohibitions on their choice of reading matters. This is due to the fact that, while discrimination continued to exist in relation to their access to the public sector, women's devotion to the novel was inevitable, but this reading experience could offer them experience of life beyond the restricted limits of the private realm.²⁸

Xenopoulos's novels reveal that women were not employed in jobs related to science or commerce because they were considered to be of lower intelligence than men. Their usual occupation was in the domestic sphere, keeping house and bringing up children. A common job for women was that of the seamstress, and parents sent their young daughters to expert

²⁶ Ibid, p. 75.

²⁷ D. Tzanaki, *op.cit.*, pp. 231, 237.

²⁸ I. Rizaki, *Οι γράφουσες Ελληνίδες*, Athens: Katarti, 2007, pp. 297-299.

seamstresses to learn sewing. Although a poorly paid job, it was very popular with girls of the lower classes in Greece. Sometimes expert seamstresses set up sewing schools in their homes, where young female students spent their days learning how to sew. They did not have to pay any fees, but they would practise, under the eye of their teacher, sewing and mending the clothes other people had ordered.

“έραβε στο σπίτι ασπρόρουχα, αυτή ήταν η δουλειά της.”²⁹

Another popular job for lower-class girls in Xenopoulos’s novels was that of housemaid. From an early age girls could be employed as housemaids in middle- and upper-class houses. Their parents made the necessary arrangements, so their daughters went to a decent house, which was very often a relative’s house or one generally known to the family.³⁰

The girls lived with the family that employed them and were responsible for the housework; at the beginning of their employment they were engaged in easy work such as cleaning the house, making the beds, helping the ladies of the house to get dressed, serving breakfast, lunch, dinner or tea/coffee in the afternoon gatherings. Gradually, they took over more responsibilities, such as cooking, and gained the trust of their employers, who very often opened their hearts to them and asked them to do them various favours - mostly concerning love affairs or money matters.

Ωστόσο αποφάσισε να γράψει του Φρίξου, να τον ρωτήσει γιατί δεν πήγαινε πια [...]...Επειδή όμως δεν έβγαινε ποτέ μόνη της, [...] το έδωσε στη Μαρίνα-σε ποιον άλλον μπορούσε;-παρακαλώντας την να βγει με κάποια πρόφαση για να το ρίξει αυτή.³¹

Την Πέμπτη το βράδυ, [...] χτύπησε η πόρτα και μπήκε η Ευαγγελία
– Τ’ απόγευμα, που λείπατε, ήρθ’ εδώ να με ιδεί η Μαρία....

²⁹ G. Xenopoulos, *Μαίρη και Μαρίνα* (1934), Athens: Adelfi Vlassi, 1984, p. 19. Other novels in which girls are employed as seamstresses are *Μεγάλη Γυναίκα*, *Η Τρίμορφη*, *Ο Κατήφορος* etc.

³⁰ G. Xenopoulos, *Μαίρη και Μαρίνα*, Athens: Adelfi Vlassi, 1984, p. 9.

³¹ *Ibid*, p. 196.

[...]

– Και ξέρετε από ποιον ήταν σταλμένη;

– Από εκείνην;

– Ναι, από εκείνην. [...] Θέλει χωρίς άλλο να με ρωτήσει για σας. Αυτό λέει κι η Μαρία...

Η καρδιά του Δώρου χτυπούσε από χαρά. [...]

– Να πας, της είπε, και το γρηγορότερο. Την Κυριακή, ε;³²

The housemaids were allowed to visit their families once a week or whenever was necessary, with their employer's permission. For girls living far from their families, who lived either in some nearby suburb or on an island, this leave was not so frequent and would only take place once a month or even more rarely, e.g. at Christmas, Easter and summer holidays.

Young housemaids assisted their families financially because they were accommodated in the house where they were employed and with their salary, however small, could help with the living expenses of their families.³³

“-[...] Το σπίτι μας έχει μεγάλη ανάγκη και θέλω να βοηθάω με τον μισθό μου...”³⁴

The two aforementioned jobs were for girls of the lower classes, but Xenopoulos's main characters were of the middle and upper classes. The occupations of bourgeois girls were quite different. Of course this differentiation was not unrelated to the greater opportunities in education available to rich girls. While lower-class girls had no educational opportunities, the daughters of the bourgeoisie went to the Parthenagogion (Athens girls' school)³⁵ or, if their parents could afford it, they had private lessons at home from educated people.³⁶

³² G. Xenopoulos, *Φωτεινή* (1941), Athens: Adelfi Vlassi, 1996, p. 181, 182.

³³ G. Xenopoulos, *Μαίρη και Μαρίνα*, Athens: Adelfi Vlassi, 1984, p. 9.

³⁴ Ibid, p. 64.

³⁵ Ibid, p. 60, G. Xenopoulos, *Μεγάλη Γυναίκα* (1936), op.cit., p. 8.

³⁶ G. Xenopoulos, *Μαίρη και Μαρίνα*, op.cit., pp. 60, 23.

These girls were taught literature, grammar, mathematics and in some cases had private piano lessons and learnt foreign languages, such as French and Italian.³⁷

– Θέλω να πεις της μαμάς σου να μου κάνει γαλλικά. [...]
– Μπα! και τι τα θέλεις εσύ τα γαλλικά;
–Νόστιμο κι αυτό! μου αποκρίθηκε. Και τι τα θέλω τα ελληνικά, που μαθαίνω τόσα χρόνια σ’ αυτό το σχολείο; Και τι τα θέλω τα ιταλικά, που μου κάνει από πέρσι ο Μαρτζώκης;...³⁸

After primary and high school the girls who were interested in further studies could go to university; this appealed mostly to girls who had a natural inclination for literature and therefore the most popular departments for young girls were the School of Philosophy and the Faculty of Law.

Έτσι η πρώτη τέλειωσε το γυμνάσιο και σπούδαζε τώρα φιλολογία.³⁹

... η Ελένη [...] είχε την ανώτερη της μόρφωση, σαν φοιτήτρια [...]⁴⁰

As has been mentioned before, the occupations available to middle-class women are related to the opportunities they had for a better education. After graduating from the School of Philosophy they were employed as teachers in the Parthenagion⁴¹ or gave private lessons to rich young girls. Another appealing job educated women could occupy themselves with was journalism.⁴²

If their family and social circle favoured engagement with politics, the girls did not hesitate to engage themselves with this kind of activity, but they never did it as a paid profession. If their

³⁷ Ibid, p. 23.

³⁸ G. Xenopoulos, *Μεγάλη Γυναίκα*, op.cit., pp. 117, 118.

³⁹ G. Xenopoulos, *Φωτεινή*, op.cit., p. 12.

⁴⁰ Ibid, p.103.

⁴¹ Ibid, p.107.

⁴² G. Xenopoulos, *Τρεις αδελφές* (1940), Athens: Adelfi Vlassi 1989, pp. 219, 263, 264.

father or husband was politically active, they would play their part in supporting and promoting their plans.

Όσο για τη Σούζη, [...] βοηθούσε τον άντρα της στην πολιτική. Τον άλλο χρόνο θα γίνονταν εκλογές, [...]. Κι η “μέλλουσα υπουργίνα” είχε ανασκουμπωθεί. [...] το χειμώνα στην Αθήνα, δεχόταν τους “παράγοντες”, φρόντιζε για τις υποθέσεις τους, και τους κατακτούσε με την προθυμία και την καλοσύνη της.⁴³

Xenopoulos was quite progressive. In the novel *Μεγάλη γυναίκα*, his heroine Diane Bartini although coming from a lower-class family, married with a rich English man and after his death got married to an Italian count. Despite her social background she was against the Entente and supported Germany.⁴⁴ What is more, she played an active part in political demonstrations and asked the first-person narrator to write a book about Germany.

In conclusion, as far as employment was concerned, lower-class girls were restricted to working in the domestic realm as housemaids. Xenopoulos gives these maids a certain function in his plots, since they have the power to influence situations positively or negatively according to their sympathies. On the other hand, maids are easy prey for their masters and they are sometimes voluntarily involved in their games: they are in a continuous “kiss chase” with their employer or accept his love affairs without hesitation, while his mother or wife remains ignorant. There are, though, cases in which maids take advantage of the situation to blackmail or pressurize their master, in order to get what they want according to the circumstances (e.g. more money, days off, meeting their lover secretly). In that way, even poor girls, who at first sight seem to have only a minor role in the story, may ultimately become the agent that moves the plot forward or a source of dramatic tension.

⁴³ Ibid, p. 220.

⁴⁴ G. Xenopoulos, *Μεγάλη Γυναίκα*, op.cit., pp. 121,122,161,181.

It is obvious that, in Xenopoulos's novels, middle-class girls are not employed as maids and seamstresses as such a thing would not suit with their social status. Middle-class women were usually the main characters in the stories and the plots unfolded around them. A possible reason for that preference might be that, due to his own social status, Xenopoulos was aware of their living conditions. Because of his education and literary preoccupations, he recognized the gradual change in attitudes towards women's education and how that affected their employment opportunities. This change is illustrated in his early twentieth-century fiction, especially in the Athenian novels and short stories, in which women are presented as school teachers, editors on newspapers or assisting a husband in his duties as a lawyer. Xenopoulos is also innovative in assigning politically active roles to his heroines. This did not constitute a profession, but was part of their emancipation although a rare phenomenon. However, such references, in Xenopoulos's novels show that he was supportive of these changes and we could say that he encouraged more women to take advantage of them.

If we compare the Athenian novels by Xenopoulos with the Zakynthian ones as regards women's education and employment, we can conclude that the educational and employment opportunities in the capital were much greater than in the countryside or on the islands. In the latter areas women were maids, seamstresses or engaged in farm-work. Xenopoulos's attitude towards women in the Zakynthian novels might be generally supportive, as mentioned above, but because in the Zakynthian novels his heroines are mostly females of the lower class and therefore they did not have equal opportunities for education and work as his heroines in the Athenian novels, who were mostly members of the bourgeoisie, did. Nevertheless, neither in the Athenian nor in the Zakynthian novels, does he ignore lower-class women since he gives them important and effective roles in the plots. Through the narrative and more specifically

with the tasks he attributes to them, he makes it obvious that he supports their attempts at emancipation and their claims to a right to better educational and employment conditions.

2.2 Marriage and motherhood

Although, as we move into the last decades of the nineteenth century, education and working conditions changed for the better, other aspect, such as dowries and marriage and the resultant motherhood, remained the same as before. Parents had the first and the last word in the choice of a husband, so love had nothing to do with marriage,⁴⁵ and was considered silly and dangerous. A “decent marriage” was based almost completely on economic factors leading to social elevation.

The “hunt” for a good dowry preoccupied the bourgeoisie. A woman without a dowry would stay unmarried, or at best, she would find a rich old man to marry so as to avoid social condemnation. Marriage was the only way for a woman to obtain social status. On the other hand, according to the historical and social commentators and as the evidence suggests,⁴⁶ divorced women, deprived of the supervision of their children, had to return to their parents’ home, where they were liable to be held up as examples of immorality. Divorce was condemned by society, since the presence of divorced women in public places could encourage other women to consider their marriage just a middle step towards liberation, as divorce would enable them to attend public events.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Wiebke Von Thadden, Translation Martina Koffa, *Άλλο κόρη... άλλο γιος, Η ιστορία των κοριτσιών από την αρχαιότητα μέχρι σήμερα*, Athens: Fitrakis, 2002, p. 22.

⁴⁶ E. Papataxiarchis and T. Papadellis, *Ανθρωπολογία και παρελθόν, Συμβολές στην κοινωνική ιστορία της νεότερης Ελλάδας*, Athens: Alexandria, 1993.

⁴⁷ D. Tzanaki, *op.cit.*, p.280.

Although marriage did not prevent Greek women from ownership of property and income of their own, personal relations between the spouses were governed by the “principle of men’s supremacy”, which recognized the male’s authority over the household.⁴⁸ Consequently, married women did not administer their property or income and were not permitted to begin any form of business without obtaining their husband’s permission.

Women gradually realized that they were possessions, since everyone but themselves could decide things on their behalf. What is more, they were treated as slaves, who had lost the right to speak in their own voice and identity in accordance with the compliant model that their husbands imposed on them.⁴⁹

Only one significant change occurred in the inter-war period as regards the family and that was the new conception of the role of a woman and mother as the “guardian angel of the house”.⁵⁰ Many inter-war feminists conceived of motherhood as a social service that women rendered to the state, on a par with men’s military service and synonymous with womanhood.⁵¹ This happened because of the political developments and historical events,⁵² which caused the demand for a strongly established identity among the unredeemed populations and the younger generation in Greece too. This sense of identity could be achieved by women as school teachers and as mothers, since they could pass on the Greek language, culture and moral values to their children.

⁴⁸ E. Avdela, *Between duties and rights*, op.cit., p. 120.

⁴⁹ M. Anastasopoulou, “Building, Awakening and Self-Redefinition in Contemporary Greek Women Novelists”, *Modern Greek Studies Yearbook*, University of Minnesota, vol. 7, 1991, p. 259.

⁵⁰ E. Varika, op.cit., p. 81.

⁵¹ E. Avdela, op.cit., p. 127.

⁵² The political and historical events which caused the demand for a strongly established identity are The Treaty of San Stefano in March 1878 and its replacement by the Congress of Burling in July 1878 (See M. Anastasopoulou, “Feminist awareness and Greek women writers”, op. cit., p. 163) and The Turko-Greek War in 1897 and Balkan Wars. (See Paparigopoulos, *Η Ιστορία του ελληνικού Έθνους*, vol. 10, 11, Thessaloniki: Alexandros, 1994).

This new role for women as the bearers of values and achievers of national ideas was reflected in late nineteenth-century literature.⁵³ In Palamas's short story *Ta viáta της γιαγιάς* (1883), the heroine lulls her grandchildren to sleep by telling them stories from the War of Independence. Palamas also acknowledged women's importance in the poem "Εκατό φωνές" in *Ασάλεπτη ζωή*, which encapsulates the messianic notion of women prevalent in Greece at the turn of the century. In Karkavitsas' novel *Ο Αρχαιολόγος* (1904), the heroine, who has the symbolic name Elpida, reproduces stories from Greek history in her embroidery in order to inspire her fiancé to continue the struggle for the preservation of Greece's heritage and for independence. Yiannis Psicharis in his novel *Ζωή και αγάπη στη μοναξιά* (1904) points out the importance of women in transmitting their language. This new social role for women gave a new impetus to the debate regarding their education and resulted in the University of Athens opening its doors to female students.⁵⁴

On the other hand, however, according to the commonly held, conservative ways of thinking of the period, these women were not keeping to their "proper sphere" and thus they provoked male criticism, the most acute coming from Emmanouil Roidis. He believed that women were trying to enter male-dominated areas and thought that, though they should participate in cultural events, this should not be at the expense of the qualities traditionally attributed to them, i.e. sensitivity, charm, kindness, artfulness and he characterized their demand for education as sacrilegious.⁵⁵ Women replied to that criticism by expressing the view that they

⁵³ M. Anastasopoulou, "Building, Awakening and Self-Redefinition in Contemporary Greek Women Novelists", *Modern Greek Studies Yearbook*, University of Minnesota, vol. 7, 1991, pp. 4, 5 and M. Anastasopoulou, "Feminist awareness and Greek women writers" in Philip Carabott, (ed.), op. cit., pp. 163, 164.

⁵⁴ E. Varika, op.cit., p. 108.

⁵⁵ E. Roidis, "Αι γράφουσαι Ελληνίδες" in *Άπαντα*, vol. Ε, Φιλολογική Επιμέλεια Άλκης Αγγέλου, Athens: Ermis, 1978, p. 122.

were capable of combining their roles as wives and mothers with education, highlighting the fact that their writings, though meritorious, were rejected because of their sex. The fiercest response came from Calliroe Parren.⁵⁶ Consequently, women's struggle for emancipation was not easy, since they were often up against society's disapproval. Their efforts created a conflict between the qualities they wanted to acquire and those society permitted them to have.

In many novels Xenopoulos followed the traditional view regarding marriage and motherhood. His female characters had no say regarding their future husbands, since their parents, and especially the father, decided on their behalf. The match-making criteria for these girls were their dowry in terms of material wealth and, for rich girls, their intellectual ability, since a university degree or knowledge of a foreign language or piano-playing was considered an additional qualification worthy of serious consideration by the prospective groom.

The institution of the dowry and its significance resulted in the girls' preoccupation with the preparation of their trousseaus from an early age. The bride was expected to have prepared in advance the embroidery needed for the house, the bed and table linen and various sets of clothes.⁵⁷ The husband-to-be should not be of lower economic or social and educational status, but was very often twice the girl's age, since matchmaking was most likely to be with one of the father's friend, so father and son-in-law would be of the same age. This phenomenon was even more common in cases where the girl was not considered to be very beautiful and her parents feared that no man would propose to her. The future couple might

⁵⁶ K. Xeradaki, *Το φεμινιστικό κίνημα στην Ελλάδα*, Athens: Glaros, 1998, pp. 27, 28.

⁵⁷ G. Xenopoulos, *Τρεις αδελφές*, Athens: Adelfi Vlasi, 1989, p. 147.

not have met before the matchmaking, but if the groom was a friend of the family the parents gradually encouraged the development of affection between the couple. In this case the couple would have assignments, usually in the girl's house with his family present or outside walks without needing to worry about public opinion.

Φανήκαμε πως βαριόμαστε τις σοβαρές ομιλίες των μεγάλων και ο μπαμπάς μας είπε “Πηγαίνετε σεις να πείτε τα δικά σας!”
Γιατί ξέρεις, στο τέλος πάντα, την ώρα που σηκώνεται να αποχαιρετήσει, τον προσκαλούν: “Κάθισε να φας μαζί μας”.⁵⁸

Εξακολούθησε και τις επισκέψεις του, και λίγο-λίγο έγινε του σπιτιού. Τότε άρχισε και τα δώρα του, γλυκά, λουλούδια και καθεξής. [...] Κι ολοένα πολυτιμότερα. [...] Τον χειμώνα προπάντων, που ο πατέρας έλειπε απ' την Αθήνα, ο ερωτευμένος την έκανε στο σπίτι του. [...] Το αίσθημα του Δώρου για τη Φωτεινή μεγάλωνε όσο μεγάλωνε κι η Φωτεινή κι η ομορφιά της.⁵⁹

Such incidents, however, were not encouraged for poor girls. Even though their parents might find the “perfect” husband for them and make all the negotiations and arrangements, they could not socialize as a couple before their marriage.

– Α, σ' ένα μπαρ που ξέρω, [...]
– Και θα καθίσουμε μια ώρα;
– Ναι, έστω και μισή. Δεν έχεις αντίρρηση, πιστεύω;
– Μα...είναι σωστό να καθίσουμε οι δυο μας σ' ένα μπαρ;
– [...] Μην είσαι, καημένη, τόσο... σχολαστική. Δεν θα κλειστούμε πάλι σε καμιά κάμαρα· να, στη σάλα θα καθίσουμε, σε μιαν άκρη, και θα μιλάμε. Θάναι μέσα κι άλλοι πολλοί...⁶⁰

Απ' όλη την ομιλία με τη θεία της, της Μαρίνας της έκαμε μεγάλη εντύπωση ο λόγος της, πως τα “καλά κορίτσια” δεν κάνουν έτσι ούτε μ' εκείνον που θα πάρουν. Μόνο ένα “αγνό αίσθημα” δεν είναι αξιοκατάκριτο. Τάλλα δείχνουν έλλειψη αξιοπρέπειας, περηφάνιας και σεβασμού στο σπίτι...⁶¹

At this point the matter of the proper age for girls to get married should be discussed. In the nineteenth and early twentieth century childhood did not exceed the age of fourteen, since by

⁵⁸ G. Xenopoulos, *Μαίρη και Μαρίνα*, op.cit., pp. 173, 190.

⁵⁹ G. Xenopoulos, *Φωτεινή*, op.cit., pp. 15, 16.

⁶⁰ G. Xenopoulos, *Μαίρη και Μαρίνα*, op.cit., p. 151.

⁶¹ Ibid, p. 194.

that time girls were considered mature enough to enter womanhood and hence ready for marriage and motherhood.

- [...] Έπειτα, ένα κορίτσι δεκατεσσάρων χρονών είναι πια σωστή γυναίκα· ενώ ένα αγόρι αυτής της ηλικίας και μεγαλύτερο, δεν είναι ακόμα άντρας.[...]
- Και πότε θα παντρευτούμε; Μόλις τελειώσεις ή... θα περιμένουμε ακόμα; Δεν ξέρω... ίσως χρειασθεί να περιμένουμε λίγο [...]
 - Εγώ όμως θα είμαι είκοσι! Κι οι κοπέλες παντρεύονται, μου φαίνεται, κι από τα δεκάξι!⁶²

There is nevertheless one case where Xenopoulos, through his male hero, expresses the opinion that girls should not get married at such a young age. In the novel *Μαίρη και Μαρίνα* (1942), Mr Mirantis, due to his profession as a doctor, thinks that girls should not get married until the age of twenty. The main reason for that was the fact that at a younger age the girls were not ready to give birth to strong, healthy and children. His wife seems to agree with him on this matter.

- ...Τα κορίτσια δεν κάνει να παντρεύονται από δεκαεφτά χρονώ, ούτε από είκοσι... Γιατρός είμ' εγώ... δεν τρελάθηκα να παντρέψω το κορίτσι μου πριν γίνει εικοσιδύο τουλάχιστο χρονώ... [...]
- ... Μα κι η μαμά σας έχει την ιδέα του μπαμπά: Όταν τα κορίτσια παντρεύονται μικρά, τα πρώτα παιδιά που κάνουν δεν τους ζουν.⁶³

Poor girls, usually employed as housemaids in rich houses, had to quit their job when their parents found them a husband. They then had to be devoted wives and fulfil a woman's purpose in life, that is motherhood and as a result the bringing up of children.

- ...Είχαμε ένα πολύ καλό κορίτσι, καμαριέρα [...] που παντρεύτηκε. Θα την αντικαταστήσεις... [...]
- Η νέα γυναίκα τριγυρισμένη απ' άλλα τρία παιδιά, που το μεγαλύτερο θάταν ως έξι χρονών και το μικρότερο – η Μαρίνα – μόλις δυο, βύζαινε το μωρό της. Ήταν αληθινά μια ωραία εικόνα “μητρότητας”, με το μεγάλο της, τον γεμάτο μαστό, που καθώς τον είχε στο στόμα το μωρό, τον έπιανε και με τα δυο του χεράκια, σα να φοβόταν μην του φύγει, ενώ εκείνη, με το κεφάλι σκυμμένο, το κοίταζε χαμογελώντας.[...]

⁶² G. Xenopoulos, *Μεγάλη Γυναίκα*, op.cit., pp. 48, 52.

⁶³ G. Xenopoulos, *Μαίρη και Μαρίνα*, op.cit., pp. 187, 200.

Τη διοίκηση και την ευθύνη αυτής της οικογένειας την είχε πια, όσο μπορούσε, η μητέρα.⁶⁴

In extremely poor families, where women had to continue working after their marriage the older daughter was responsible for her younger siblings. Consequently, from a young age women were confined to the domestic sphere and what is more, they could not leave the house without a male member of the family escorting them.

Επειδή θα 'βγαινε μονάχη- κι εκείνο τον καιρό δεν ήταν συγχωρεμένο για κορίτσια- είχε πάρει το αμαξάκι της που τ' οδηγούσε η ίδια, με τον υπηρέτη καθισμένο από πίσω.⁶⁵

[...] τρεις (αδερφές) είχα – και γράφτηκαν μαθήτριες. Πήγαινα μεσημέρι και βράδυ να τις σχολάζω.[...]
Και ξεκινήσαμε. Μπροστά οι αδελφές μου με τον Αλέξη – αδερφό της Ξανθής, λίγο μεγαλύτερό μου, που τις συντρόφευε πάντα – και πίσω οι δυο μας.⁶⁶

There was also another reason for this. Parents felt that they had the obligation to protect their daughters and keep them away from indecent morals and in their opinion the house was the only virtuous environment. Within the strict, conservative domestic confines, with their mothers (and grandmothers if they happened to live with them) as examples, they obtained the necessary qualities and prepared to take the responsibilities of married women in the future and thus undertake all the duties that were assigned to them as females.

Having considered women's behaviour prior to marriage, as presented in Xenopoulos's novels, I shall now proceed to an examination of their behaviour within marriage, in order to have a complete picture and arrive at solid conclusions. As mentioned above, women were supposed to be devoted and faithful to their husbands and in some cases to act like servants.

⁶⁴ Ibid, pp. 9, 52, 64.

⁶⁵ G. Xenopoulos, *Λάουρα*, op.cit., p.30.

⁶⁶ G. Xenopoulos, *Μεγάλη Γυναίκα*, op.cit., pp. 8, 15.

They had to obey their husbands' decisions and orders and agree with their opinions. While for a man it was excusable to be unfaithful to his wife, women had no right to be faithless; society and their families would condemn and shun them.

As is made clear in Xenopoulos's novels, it was a rare phenomenon for females of the lower classes to commit conjugal infidelity. There are two possible reasons for this: firstly, after getting married and becoming mothers they were confined at home, doing the housework and bringing up their children, so they did not socialize with other people and the danger of being seduced was limited. Secondly, women were aware of their social position and the duties assigned to them; they knew that even their families and friends would not support them if they were unfaithful, i.e. immoral. They would not dare even to think of betraying their husbands for fear of that isolation and condemnation. Of course there would always be exceptions, but they are overlooked by the writer.

On the other hand, things were quite different for the daughters of the bourgeoisie. Due to their education and social status, these women could continue working in schools, banks, newspapers and accompany their husbands to social gatherings after getting married. Thus, they did socialize with other people and hence were more prone to fall in love with someone else. And in that case, they would not hesitate to leave the house or divorce their husband.

...Βλέπονταν κάθε μέρα, [...] σε όλα τα συγγενικά ή φιλικά σπίτια όπου ο νέος είχε εισαχθεί από τη Σούζη. Καμιά φορά μαζεύονταν και στο δικό του [...] Έν' απόγευμα, όταν ο άντρας της θα έλειπε, θάφευγε μονάχη από το σπίτι του Ψυχικού [...] και θα πήγαινε ίσια στον Άγη [...]. Εκεί θάμενε μόνο μια νύχτα, για το "ανεπανόρθωτο" που απαιτούσε το διαζύγιο. Κατόπι θα πήγαινε στον πατέρα της: "Χωρίζω τον Αμβρόσιο. Αγάπησα και θα πάρω άλλον".⁶⁷

⁶⁷ G. Xenopoulos, *Τρεις αδελφές*, op.cit., pp. 307, 309.

Divorce for women of the middle and upper classes was easy and did not require a serious excuse, just marital discord or changed affections.⁶⁸

This differentiation between the classes that occurred in cases of divorce did not happen in cases where a couple were separated due to natural causes. After her husband's death, the widow, whether rich or poor, continued to live with her children at their former home. Her family and her husband's relatives usually supported them, both emotionally and financially. If the couple did not have children and they had been living in the man's home, the widow would return to her parents' house and continue living with them.⁶⁹

Having examined the social context of the last quarter of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century and women's position in society and the family as presented in Xenopoulos's novels I can draw some conclusions. Since marriage and motherhood constitute important aspects in a woman's life, they are emphasized as such in Xenopoulos's fiction. This is also confirmed by the fact that the titles of a great deal of his fiction are directly connected with the theme of marriage⁷⁰ and women's presence is conspicuous.⁷¹ The writer,

⁶⁸ G. Xenopoulos, *Η Ψέυτρα*, Athens: Adelfi Vlassi 1984, p. 275.

⁶⁹ G. Xenopoulos, *Τρεις αδελφές*, op.cit., pp. 252, 299.

⁷⁰ *Μυστικοί αρραβώνες* (serialized first in the newspaper *Έθνος* in 1915 and then published in book form in 1929), *Η αρραβωνιαστικά μου* (serialized in the periodical *Σφαίρα* in 1923), *Ιστορία ενός αντρογόνου* (serialized in the newspaper *Έθνος* in 1924), *Ιστορία μιας χωρισμένης* (1924), *Μια μοντέρνα οικογένεια* (serialized in the newspaper *Έθνος* in 1925), *Τ' όνειρο του διαζυγίου* (serialized in the newspaper *Ημερήσιος Τύπος* 1928), *Ο γάμος της Λίτσας* (1929), *Ο γάμος του Νάσου* (serialized in the newspaper *Έθνος* in 1932), *Η άπιστη* (1937), *Ένας αλλόκοτος γάμος* (serialized in the newspaper *Αθηναϊκά Νέα* in 1939), *Οι σύζυγοι της θεατρίνας* (1940), *Ο αρραβωνιαστικός μου* (serialized in the newspaper *Αθηναϊκά Νέα* in 1940), *Αρραβωνιασμένοι στα ψέματα* (serialized in the newspaper *Αθηναϊκά Νέα* in 1941), *Οι σύζυγοι της Νίνας* (serialized in the newspaper *Αθηναϊκά Νέα* in 1944).

⁷¹ *Μητριτιά* (1890), *Μαργαρίτα Στέφα* (1893), *Στέλλα Βιολάντη* (1903), *Το μυστικό της κοντέσας Βαλέραινας* (1903), *Η Μοδιστρούλα* (1916), *Λάουρα* (serialized first in the newspaper *Έθνος* in 1917 and then published in book form in 1921), *Η τρίμορφη γυναίκα* (serialized first in the newspaper *Νέα Ημέρα* in 1917 and then in the newspaper *Έθνος* in 1922), *Τρεις γυναίκες* (serialized in the newspaper *Έθνος* in 1917), *Η Ανάθρεφτη* (1918), *Η Συμριτιά* (serialized in the newspaper *Έθνος* in 1920), *Παγίδες για κορίτσια* (serialized in the periodical *Σφαίρα* in 1921), *Αφροδίτη* (1922, 1930), *Αναδύομενη* (serialized first in the newspaper *Έθνος* in 1923 and then published in book form 1925), *Ισαβέλλα* (1923), *Τερέζα Βάρμα-Δακόστα* (serialized first in the newspaper *Έθνος* in 1925 and then published in book form in 1926), *Μάνα και θυγατέρα* (serialized in the newspaper *Έθνος* in 1926), *Το κορίτσι που αγάπησε* (serialized in the periodical *Εβδομάς* in 1930), *Ανάμεσα σε τρεις γυναίκες* (1930), *Παυλίνα* (serialized in the newspaper *Αθηναϊκά Νέα* in 1933), *Η νίκη της Παυλίνας* (serialized in the newspaper *Αθηναϊκά*

however, does not make any direct criticism regarding marriage and motherhood. Through those institutions a woman could gain respect from other people, enter the public realm and mostly fulfil the purpose of her existence, which was to create her own family, since women had no other rights that enabled them to be considered as human beings on par with men.

Xenopoulos makes it clear that the family in Greece was of great significance, since it constituted a microcosm of society and within that small society everyone learnt the role they had to play in the real society. Thus, women learned the limited role they would have in society. They were under the guardianship of their parents whose decisions affected women's personal life and their marital status; they were subject to the parental will. Their reputation, dowry and beauty defined their value as a bride while dignity and chastity were also extremely important not only for themselves but for sake of their families too. Consequently, girls were confined to the domestic arena, so as not to "fall" from virtue and even engaged women could not leave the house without a male member of the family (brother, father, servant, fiancé).

Thus, it can be seen that, in Greek society, marriage was regarded as a financial transaction. The size of a girl's dowry defined her family's wealth, but also her own abilities and organization, since many items of her dowry were made by her. Once they were getting married, sometimes to an older man, women had to be tolerant of their husbands' imperfections and support their opinions and decisions. Their duties were like those they had

Νέα in 1934), *Η γυναίκα που την τρέλαναν* (serialized in the newspaper *Βραδυνή* in 1934), *Γκιοβάννα* (serialized in the newspaper *Βραδυνή* in 1934), *Μαίρη και Μαρίνα* (serialized in the newspaper *Αθηναϊκά Νέα* in 1934), *Ρηγγίνα* (1935), *Μεγάλη γυναίκα* (serialized in the newspaper *Αθηναϊκά Νέα* in 1936), *Τζέννο* (serialized in the periodical *Διάβασέ με* in 1936), *Η ψεύτρα* (serialized in the newspaper *Αθηναϊκά Νέα* in 1936), *Μίνα* (serialized in the periodical *Διάβασέ με* in 1936), *Τρεις αδελφές* (serialized in the newspaper *Αθηναϊκά Νέα* in 1940) , *Φωτεινή* (serialized in the newspaper *Αθηναϊκά Νέα* in 1941), *Η περιπέτεια της Μαρίνας* (serialized in the newspaper *Αθηναϊκά Νέα* in 1942), *Μικρομεγάλες* (serialized in the newspaper *Αθηναϊκά Νέα* in 1944), *Η Απερίγραπτη* (serialized in the newspaper *Αθηναϊκά Νέα* in 1945).

before their marriage; but after getting married they had the responsibility of looking after the children. The same social commentary can be seen in Karkavitsas' *Αυγερή* (1890) and that inclines me to argue that Xenopoulos followed the customs of his day regarding the institution of marriage in his novels.

In conclusion, I will argue that Xenopoulos, as a realist writer, followed the traditional view as regards matters of marriage and motherhood. As time goes by, his views become slightly more progressive, but always in line with the social developments of his time which were mainly due to the effects of the feminist movement. He does not dare to be too progressive, as he does not wish to be deemed revolutionary or insulting to traditional morals.

Comparing Xenopoulos's Athenian and Zakynthian novels, one could conclude in general terms that the Zakynthian novel is dominated by moral values and customs. Female virtue and loyalty featured in both Athenian and Zakynthian novels, but most prominently in the latter. In the former the writer seems to approve of some lapses from what was considered to be "moral behaviour". Parents' choice of the ideal husband for their daughter, matchmaking, and dowry are mostly mentioned in the Zakynthian novels, whereas the matter of infidelity or divorce is mostly mentioned in his Athenian novels. His female figures from Zakynthos (e.g. Margarita Stefa) are usually described as "Vestal Virgins" and hence we could say that he presents himself as a romantic,⁷² albeit conservative writer. A possible reason for this might be the fact that the moral and marital codes in rural areas were more conservative than in the

⁷² W. Harmon, H. Holman, *A Handbook to Literature*, London: Pearson Education, ⁽¹⁰⁾2006, pp. 456, 457. "A satisfactory definition of Romanticism is not possible. The aspect most stressed in France is reflected in Hugo's phrase "liberalism in literature", meaning especially the freeing of the writer from restraints and rules and suggesting that phase of individualism marked by the encouragement of revolutionary political ideas. Among the specific characteristics embraced by the Romantic movement are the idealization of rural life; enthusiasm for the wild, irregular, or grotesque in nature and art; unrestrained imagination; enthusiasm for the uncivilized or "natural"; interest in human rights; sympathy with animal life; sentimental melancholy; emotional psychology. The sentimental novel is a typical literary form of Romanticism."

capital, where moral values began to be undermined due to the invasion of foreign cultural features and Xenopoulos as a realist writer depicted the real-life conditions of his time.

Georgia Farinou-Malamatari observes that characters typical in the naturalist⁷³ novel, such as the single mother, alcoholic father, etc are absent from Xenopoulos's fiction, something that reveals the writer's intention to keep a well-seemly image of the Greek family.⁷⁴ In his Athenian novels, though, he dares to follow social developments and very often assigns women roles, such as that of prostitute or single mother, something which in Zakynthos would definitely have been condemned. But even in those cases the heroines find themselves standing condemned and rarely does the heroine's life have a happy end.

In the Zakynthian novels,⁷⁵ most of the heroines are people of the lower classes, whereas in the Athenian novels⁷⁶ the protagonists are mainly from the bourgeoisie. That fact is reflected in the description of their habits. In Zakynthos the man would spend his free time in the coffee house with other men⁷⁷ while his wife was at home doing the housework and bringing up the children. In the Athenian novels the man was at his home with his family treating their guests or going for a walk or on a visit as a family.⁷⁸ This tradition shows that women in Zakynthos were restricted to the limited boundaries of the marriage, i.e. the house and the children, while her husband had no commitment towards his marriage. On the other hand, in

⁷³ Ibid, pp. 342. "Naturalism is the application of principles of scientific determinism to literature. Naturalistic works tend to emphasize either biological or socioeconomic determinism. The naturalist strives to be objective in the presentation of material; amoral in view of the struggle in which human animals find themselves, neither condemning nor praising human beings for actions beyond their control; pessimistic about human capabilities – life, the naturalists seems to feel, is a vicious trap; frank in their portrayal of human beings as animals driven by fundamental urges: fear, hunger and sex."

⁷⁴ G. Pefanis (ed.), op.cit., p. 150.

⁷⁵ e.g. *Λάουρα, Στέλλα Βιολάντη, Μαργαρίτα Στέφα.*

⁷⁶ e.g. *Μαίρη και Μαρίνα, Φωτεινή, Μεγάλη γυναίκα, Τρεις αδελφές, Η Τρίμορφη γυναίκα.*

⁷⁷ G. Xenopoulos, *Μαίρη και Μαρίνα*, op.cit.

⁷⁸ A picture described in most of his novels.

Athens the couple enjoyed together the benefits of being married. What is more, in Athenian novels, women could visit their husbands at their work and give them a hand, especially if it was a private firm owned by him or another member of his family.⁷⁹ There is nothing of the kind in Zakynthian novels; once married, the woman was obliged to stay at home, give birth and look after her children.

⁷⁹ G. Xenopoulos, *Τρεις αδελφές*, op.cit. Doritsa works in the newspaper her husband's family owns and Souzi becomes engaged in politics to help her husband.

3. Xenopoulos's attitude towards feminism

Xenopoulos was one of the few male writers, who was professedly feminist and sympathetic to the women's question. He subscribed to the “ωραίο φεμινισμό” according to which the position of women needed to be improved, in order for them to fulfil their role as mothers and attend to their domestic duties but not to meet the demand for universal suffrage being put forward by the suffragettes.⁸⁰

The novella *Στέλλα Βιολάντη*⁸¹ is a characteristic example of the feminist (“φιλογυνικής”) class of Greek literature. Its heroine is one of the most fully developed expressions of the ideal woman of the 1880s.⁸² In this framework Xenopoulos presents the heroine that proves to be brave in claiming their love and in valuing beauty and romance and this remains a fiction suitable for the female reading audience: the conservative structure is apprehended as moral, modest, and romantic, especially since the heroine stand as role model for the majority of the women readers. Xenopoulos had already expressed his views on relations between the sexes in *Διάπλασις των παιδων*,⁸³ but this is not a journal that will be used in the limited confines of my study.

⁸⁰ T. Glikofridi Athanasopoulou, “Η νέα γυναίκα στην αστική κοινωνία” in G. Pefanis, (ed.) op. cit., p. 78.

⁸¹ It was first published in 1901 as *Έρωσ Εσταυρωμένος*.

⁸² E. Varika, op.cit., p. 145.

⁸³ V. Patsiou points out that Ο Γρ. Ξενόπουλος διατυπώνει τις απόψεις του για τις σχέσεις των δυο φύλων στη Στήλη της αλληλογραφίας και στη στήλη των Αθηναϊκών Επιστολών. Θεωρώντας φυσιολογικές για τη γυναίκα (και μόνο) τις οικιακές ασχολίες, επιμένει στην ανάγκη της γυναικείας μόρφωσης και αργότερα στη δυνατότητα της εργασίας. Αλλαγές στα ήθη δε σχολιάζονται, παρά μόνο αρνητικά στο τέλος της περιόδου που εξετάζουμε: η ελευθερία στο επίπεδο αυτό πρέπει να είναι σχετική. Τα πολιτικά δικαιώματα αναφέρονται την ίδια εποχή ως η διεκδίκηση που εξισώνει τα δύο φύλα. Το 1912 ο Γρ. Ξενόπουλος γράφει για “μετρημένη και φρόνιμη γυναικεία χειραφεσία: οχτώ χρόνια αργότερα διαπιστώνει: “Ολοένα χάνεται ο τύπος του παλιού κοριτσιού, που μάθαινε λίγα γράμματα όσο που να διαβάξει το μυθιστόρημά του, ή λίγο πιάνο όσο που να παίξει μια καντρίλια στο απρεμιντί... Σήμερα το κορίτσι εννοεί να εργασθεί...”

Η διαδεδομένη άποψη ότι ο ρόλος της γυναίκας περιορίζεται αποκλειστικά στα οικιακά έργα και στα μητρικά καθήκοντα θεωρείται από τον Γρ. Ξενόπουλο κοινωνική πρόληψη. Ο ίδιος από τη Στήλη της Αλληλογραφίας επαινεί τις συνδρομήτριες της *Διαπλάσεως* που αποφασίζουν να εκπαιδευτούν όπως και τα αγόρια και δε διστάζει να υποδείξει και τη δυνατότητα πανεπιστημιακών σπουδών. [...]

The novel in which Xenopoulos indicates the hostility of Greek society towards the feminist problem is *Η τιμή του αδελφού* (1914–1915). The “new woman”,⁸⁴ who started to emerge at that time saw the world differently and reacted differently. The heroine of the novel makes demands on life, seeks her freedom, her independence and believes that her worth should be assessed according to her personal attributes and not just depend on her honour. She does not deny her female nature, but tries to achieve the freedom to choose her husband, becoming an unmarried mother. Xenopoulos reviles the man who denies the woman the rights and freedom she struggles for. Nevertheless, his heroine does not manage to survive.

Within the framework of the feminist movement the woman has legal freedom, the opportunity for education and work, as well as sexual liberation, but she is still an object of sexual exploitation and faces the consequences of the distinction that is made between “moral” and “immoral” women. This conflict is the inspiration for Xenopoulos in his novel *Η Τρίμορφη Γυναίκα* (1922). Educated in Switzerland, Nitsa Gazeli returns to Greece and wishes to enjoy an independent life – as she used to in Europe – in the conservative environment of Athens. Her character and idiosyncrasy do not prove to be strong enough to resist to the temptations that surrounded her. She is free to move unescorted in the city, she gets together with artists both men and women – and finally she is led to bribery,

Με θαυμασμό αναφέρονται και όσες συνδρομήτριες εργάζονται (όχι βέβαια από ανάγκη) σε τράπεζες, ως δικηγόροι κτλ.. Το 1916 ο Γρ. Ξενόπουλος παρατηρεί: “Προ πολλού η γυναίκες εξασκούν ‘ανδρικά’ επαγγέλματα. Άλλη φορά εγίνοντο μόνο διδασκάλισσες ή μοδίστρες. Σήμερα γίνονται γιατροί, δικηγόροι, καθηγηταί, υπάλληλοι, δακτυλογράφοι, ταμιαί...” [...]

Ο ίδιος υποβάλλει από το 1920 την άποψη ότι το δικαίωμα της ψήφου πρέπει να διευρυνθεί και στο γυναικείο εκλογικό σώμα. Ένα χρόνο αργότερα γίνεται πιο σαφής ως προς την έκταση των γυναικείων πολιτικών δικαιωμάτων: “Η γυναίκα μπορεί και πρέπει να έχει ψήφο, μπορεί και πρέπει να γίνεται βουλευτής, δήμαρχος, υπουργός, πρωθυπουργός”.

Στο τέλος της περιόδου που εξετάζουμε, τα ήθη που αφορούν τις σχέσεις αγοριών-κοριτσιών έχουν αρχίσει να αλλάζουν. See V. Patsiou, *Η Διάπλασις των παιδων 1879-1922*, Athens: Kastaniotis, 1995, pp. 124-126.

⁸⁴ In the late 19th and early 20th century both in life and in literature a “new type of woman” “ηθικώς και πνευματικώς ίση προς τον άντρα και άξια πάσης ελευθερίας” appears. See G. Pefanis, *op.cit.* p. 98.

corruption and prostitution. She is a sensual woman, but without male dominance in her life, she ends in the destruction. The writer, though, does not leave his heroine to be completely destroyed. He replaces the inadequate control of her father and brother with the control of her future husband, who will protect her and prevent her from the definite collapse.

In *Η Τρίμορφη Γυναίκα*, Xenopoulos is somewhat ambivalent in his approach to representing assertive or emancipated females who infringe the boundaries of the traditionally defined female space because, as he admits, the world outside home is a dangerous place for a woman and perhaps Greek society has not yet advanced sufficiently to accept the emancipated woman.⁸⁵ In the novel feminist speeches are given by a self-determined woman who allows herself to be carried away and experience the sense of liberated openness, all the time in danger of acquiring a bad reputation. When this happens, society works its usual way: it threatens, punishes and generally seeks to bring its members back to the correct and accepted path. Almost a pioneer in her ideas about the equality of the sexes and an initiator in her social rank of a woman's wish – and right – to earn her independence through a job, Nitsa also acquires the culture and cultivation of an ideal role model for women's emancipation. Xenopoulos approached the feminist question from the perspective of a middle-class woman, who found no solution to her problems through her pseudo-liberated sexuality, because, being a woman without political orientation could not take on the world and did not know how to exploit her new found consciousness of women's important role.

It is apparent from Xenopoulos's work that the idealization of women was not possible without any restrictions and conditions. Public realm was a danger for the desecration of female purity which could readily be transformed to perversion every time a woman sought

⁸⁵ M. Anastasopoulou , “Feminist awareness and Greek women writers” in Philip Carabott, (ed.) op. cit., p. 167.

her autonomy, analogous to that a man enjoyed and every time she sought to determine to herself her needs. Stella Violanti, putting herself in danger, denied leaving her home in the name of the patriarchal honour. In contrast, Trimorfi converted the violation of domestic realm into a symbol of her personal honour as an independent person. Indeed, the writer in *Τρίμορφη* concluded to adopt as a means for the protection of female virtue a paternal behaviour, similar to that he condemned fifteen years ago in *Στέλλα Βιολάντη*.

Even though most of plots' revolutions present a defeat for heroines in the face of the strict notions and standards of society, the novels manage to illustrate the might, persistence and potency that lay behind the creamy exterior of those normally well-bread, refined girls of decent family background. Through his female figures, Xenopoulos offers a sample of the fears and reactions created in the male subconscious by a small number of women acting in an unfamiliar way (e.g. *Στέλλα Βιολάντη*, *Μεγάλη γυναίκα*, *Τρίμορφη*). This viewpoint sought to identify misogynistic passages in fiction and challenge them.⁸⁶

As shown in the previous examples, the writer did not succeed in creating a heroine who was seeking at real emancipation and aiming to develop her capabilities in order to find a job and claim her economic independence and hence make a radical change in her life. He concluded his novels by annihilating the dynamic and autonomous elements of the female characters, thus confirming his conservative and conventional persona. His heroines passively accept what happens to them without seeking a way out of their problems. The female characters emerging from the pen of the author demonstrate how cultural beliefs and values have influenced the depiction of women in fiction, thus preserving the stereotypes of women as

⁸⁶ G. Pefanis (ed), op.cit., pp. 73-74.

passive, weak, provocative and occasionally strong, obedient and self-disciplined.⁸⁷ We could say that Xenopoulos failed to adopt the “new type” of woman and his characters, especially the female ones that we examine, are characterized by inertia and debility.

The overall conclusion of this section is that Xenopoulos seems to be a realist writer, since he represents his contemporary context. He deals with matters of education and work, marriage and motherhood and he shows the impact of the feminist movement on women’s lives regarding their social and domestic roles. Xenopoulos has been shown to be progressive and supportive towards feminism regarding work and education, but conservative regarding the institutions of marriage and motherhood.

To sum up then, as a realist writer Xenopoulos was concerned with writing about his own day. He raises issues about education and work, on which he was progressive, and marriage and motherhood, on which he was conservative. He also shows the impact of the Greek feminist movement on women’s lives. In order to achieve the most accurate representation, most of his heroines were based on real persons whom he knew personally, while a few of them are imaginary.

⁸⁷ Ibid, p. 100.

CHAPTER 2

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE, BEHAVIOURAL PATTERNS AND TYPES OF WOMEN

Having examined women's inferior position in the social and familial context, I will go on to look at their physical descriptions in the first part and behavioural patterns in the second part of the chapter as depicted in Xenopoulos's novels. The reason for examining Xenopoulos's representations of women from this perspective is two-fold: firstly, because the appearance and behaviour of the heroines affect the relationships between characters and thus play a role in the development of the plot;¹ secondly, as it was mentioned in the introduction, no academic studies have been written to date regarding this aspect of Xenopoulos's fiction.

Moreover, in the third part of this chapter, I will present the major types of women encountered in Xenopoulos's novels with a brief reference to some minor ones. The main types are: sensual, spirited, intellectual, liberal, unconventional, pious, immoral and obedient. The aim of this examination is to see whether the author creates types or characters in his novels.

¹ R. Barthes, "An introduction to the structural analysis of narrative" in *New Literary History*, vol. 6, no. 2, The John Hopkins University Press, 1975, pp. 237-272. "Narration can receive its meaning only from the world it uses: beyond the level of narration, begins the external world, that is to say other systems (social, economic, ideological), which no longer include narratives only, but elements of another substance as well (historical facts, determinations, behaviors, etc)". R. Barthes, *ibid*, pp. 264, 265.

1. Physical appearance of the heroines

It is obvious to any reader that Xenopoulos casts the description of women's appearance into sharper relief, by giving an extensive and meticulous account, not only of facial features but also of bodily ones, something unknown to other contemporary male writers.² My analysis of Xenopoulos's descriptions of women's appearance could be useful in helping to answer the following question: does he pay more attention to appearance than character?

Xenopoulos sets out to give a general, often rather detailed description of his heroines from the very beginning of his career in writing novels and short stories. Here is one example:

Είχε την κάτασπρη, τη γαλατένια σάρκα του κρίνου· κι αλήθεια, ήταν περισσότερο λουλούδι παρά άνθρωπος το δροσερό αυτό πλάσμα, με τα μαύρα μάτια τα χαριτοβλέφαρα.³

Sometimes, he combines the description of a woman's physical appearance with that of any clothing which brings out the details of her special facial and bodily features.

Κοντή μάλλον, αλλά εύσωμος, επεδείκνυε τας αμέμπτους στρογγυλότητας των βραχιόνων, του στήθους και των κνημών, τας οποίας επρόδιδεν η βραχεία οικιακή εσθής. Το αυστηρώς μαύρον των ενδυμάτων της, το χρώμα, το οποίον από του θανάτου των γονέων της δεν άφηκεν, ανεδείκνυε το πυρρόν της τρίχωμα και την έκτακτον λευκότητα του προσώπου της και των χεριών, την εσπαρμένην δι αραιών ωχροτάτων εφηλίδων, χαριτωμένων.⁴

In this description the writer makes personal comments by using words such as: “*αμέμπτους*”, “*αυστηρώς*”, “*έκτακτον*”, “*χαριτωμένων*”. As the above passage shows Xenopoulos associates his heroines' physical appearance with their characters. This might be because the

² As has been mentioned in Chapter 1 (pp. 29, 37), in their work Palamas, Psycharis and Karkavitsas show progressive ideas regarding women's position in Greek society in the period under study in this dissertation, but they rarely emphasized facial and bodily features, when depicting women.

³ G. Xenopoulos, *Στέλλα Βιολάντη*, op.cit., p. 11.

⁴ G. Xenopoulos, *Μαργαρίτα Στέφα, Άπαντα*, vol. 1, Athens: Biris, 1972, p. 383.

information, regarding both the appearance and the character of the heroine, is necessary for the development of the plot and for the reader to understand the character's actions and behaviour and find them justifiable.

In most cases, although the writer gives a clear, fully detailed description at an early stage, he keeps on repeating the heroine's features at every opportunity throughout the story, in order to highlight the heroine's most characteristic features and remind the reader of them when he considers it important for the point he wants to emphasize. Descriptions in the course of the narrative may not be as fully developed as those made when the author first introduced the heroine, but he tends to repeat a distinctive feature that he thinks the reader may need to be reminded of.

“Παχουλή, θραυερή, σφριγηλή, σταράτη, ροδομάγουλη [...]”⁵

Ήταν ψηλή, γεμάτη, με γοφιά που φούσκωναν πολύ και με στήθη μεγάλα, μακρουλά και στητά. [...] θαύμασε αληθινά το κανονικό, μεστωμένο και σφριγηλό της κορμί με το βαθύ σταράτο χρώμα και τα πυκνά, σγουρά και μαύρα τριχώματα.⁶

Another technique employed by Xenopoulos is to create suspense created by deferring a detailed description until a subsequent page, gradually revealing and highlighting her special features throughout the story. This way of describing a heroine's appearance can be seen in the novel *Laoura*.

ξανθής κοντεσσίνας⁷
χρυσόμαλλα της τον πολύπλοκο εκείνο κότσο⁸
Χρυσό τρίχωμα της ξανθογάλανης κόρης⁹
τα γαλανά μάτια της Λάουρας¹⁰

⁵ G. Xenopoulos, *Μαίρη και Μαρίνα*, op.cit., p. 16.

⁶ Ibid, p. 18.

⁷ G. Xenopoulos, *Λάουρα – Το κορίτσι που σκοτώνει*, op.cit., p. 25.

⁸ Ibid, p. 33.

⁹ Ibid, p. 34.

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 49.

με μια γαλανή ματιά¹¹
στην άκρη των μαλλιών, όπου [...] σχημάτιζαν μια χρυσή βουρτσίτσα¹²
με τα γαλανά μάτια που ήταν ίδια τα δικά της¹³

The novel *Η Τρίμορφη Γυναίκα* is a similar case, in which the writer does not give a complete description from the beginning, but scatters characteristics sporadically throughout the novel and the reader has to put them together to compose the heroine's portrait.

λεπτό και ρόδινο κορίτσι, μελαχρινό, ανάμαλλο [...] τα μαύρα της μάτια¹⁴

Sometimes, Xenopoulos offers detailed descriptions even in relation to female characters who have a secondary role in the plot. For instance, I could mention the detailed physical description of Myrto in the novel *Η Τρίμορφη Γυναίκα*.

Ένα πολύ όμορφο κοριτσάκι, μικροκαμωμένο, μα όχι κι ανήλικο [...] βαθιά μελαχρινό με θαυμάσια γαλάζια μάτια. Έμοιαζε Τσιγγάνα [...]. Η Νίτσα ελάτρευε την “παράξενη, την εξωτική ομορφιά της”¹⁵
-Και τα μάτια της τι σας λένε; Ζουμπούλια, ε; [...]
Στα μαυριδερά μάγουλά της τα κοκκινάδια έγιναν βυσσινιά¹⁶

Moreover, Xenopoulos very often gives a detailed description of developments in a heroine's looks, by describing the changes in her face and body.

Είχε ψηλώσει, είχε παχύνει και το μακρουλό της πρόσωπο ήταν πιο εύχρωμο από άλλοτε. Μα κι η έκφραση αυτού του προσώπου είχε γίνει πιο γυναικεία κι η χάρη, η ευκινησία-η γατήσια ευκινησία του κορμιού της είχε μεγαλώσει.¹⁷

– Μα εκείνη [...] δεν είχε τόσο κοκκινόξανθα μαλλιά... και τα μάτια της ήταν γαλαζοπράσινα...

– Τα μαλλιά με την ηλικία αλλάζουν [...].

¹¹ Ibid, p. 54.

¹² Ibid, p. 102.

¹³ Ibid, p. 105.

¹⁴ G. Xenopoulos, *Η Τρίμορφη Γυναίκα*, *Απαντα*, vol. 8, Athens: Biris, 1972, p. 221. See also pp. 259, 263, 273.

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 244.

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 245.

¹⁷ G. Xenopoulos, *Φωτεινή*, op.cit., p. 153. See also p. 313.

Τι απίστευτη εξέλιξη που την είχε! Αλήθεια, τα δυο τελευταία χρόνια την είχα δει αρκετά εξελιγμένη και μεταμορφωμένη – όμορφη, περιποιημένη, λουσάτη, γραμματισμένη, έτοιμη να ανεβεί.¹⁸

As well as his more detailed descriptions, Xenopoulos sometimes highlights a girl's beauty in a very condensed way, often using adjectives and nouns or explanatory phrases: “έκτακτο κορίτσι”¹⁹ an exclamation such as: “Τι ομορφιά, τι χάρη, τι σκέρτσο... Τρέλα!”²⁰ or with a simile: “φαινόταν σαν άγγελος”,²¹ “έμοιαζε παραμυθένια βασιλοπούλα”,²² “δροσερή σαν πρωινό λουλούδι”.²³

In the novel *Τρεις αδελφές* the writer gives us his impression of what constitutes ideal female beauty.

Ε, αυτή ήταν καλλονή! [...] Την έλεγαν “Καρυάτιδα”. Κι είχε πραγματικώς ένα τέλειο σώμα, με μακριά χέρια και πόδια, ανάλογα όμως με το μούστο της, μακρύ επίσης και πλατύ, με δυο ολοστρόγγυλα και κανονικότητα εξογκώματα στο στήθος. Και το πρόσωπό της, το σταράτο – τι συμπαθητικό χρώμα! – καθ’ αυτό κλασικό. Αλλά το τέλειο ήταν τα μάτια της: καστανά σκούρα, όχι πολύ μεγάλα, μα γλυκά, εκφραστικά, φωτοβόλα, σε κοίταζαν και σε μάγευαν.²⁴

It is worth noticing that this description concerns a girl with no major part in the plot of the novel.

Although Xenopoulos is very well aware of what constitutes ideal beauty, he does not hesitate to describe ugly girls. However, his description demonstrates the same sensitivity indeed and the same acceptance of those girls as of the pretty ones. After all, for him they are human beings who deserve respect and recognition. What is more, in these instances the writer emphasizes the delicate characteristics of his heroine or her good character in order to

¹⁸ G. Xenopoulos, *Μεγάλη Γυναίκα – Ένα μικρό μυθιστόρημα από τη ζωή μου*, op.cit., p. 133.

¹⁹ G. Xenopoulos, *Η Τρίμορφη Γυναίκα*, op.cit., p. 234

²⁰ Ibid, p. 253.

²¹ G. Xenopoulos, *Μεγάλη Γυναίκα – Ένα μικρό μυθιστόρημα από τη ζωή μου*, op.cit., pp. 11,163.

²² G. Xenopoulos, *Μαίρη και Μαρίνα*, op. cit., p. 16.

²³ G. Xenopoulos, *Φωτεινή*, op.cit., p. 153.

²⁴ G. Xenopoulos, *Τρεις αδελφές*, op. cit., pp. 19, 20.

overshadow her ugliness. Thus his sensitive and sentimental description can make the heroine look attractive in a special way and seen even more admirable and likeable to the reader. Thus, the writer creates a sensitive relationship between the reader, especially the female reader, and the heroine and sometimes a female reader will identify with the heroine.

Η Άννα [...] ήταν μια νόστιμη χοντρή, καστανή, λιγάκι ασουλούπωτη [...]. Η Καίτη Πεφάνη ήταν η μόνη άσχημη του κύκλου. Μπορεί να είχε ωραίο σώμα, μα το πρόσωπο και τα χαρακτηριστικά της ήταν ακανόνιστα – χοντρή μύτη, πολύ λεπτά χείλη χωρίς ωραίο σχήμα, λειψό σαγόκι, ανέκφραστα μάτια – και τα χρώματα χλωμά και άχαρα. [...] Την ασκήμια της τη σκέπαζε η εξυπνάδα της, η ευγλωττία της, η μόρφωσή της.²⁵

Η Έμμα ήταν μια μικρή, μάλλον άσχημη Εγγλέζα, πανύψηλη για την ηλικία της [...] ίσια, ασουλούπωτη, με μεγάλα πόδια, με μαλλιά σα λινάρι και με μάγουλα σα ντομάτες. [...]. Το μόνο της θέλγητρο ήταν η δροσιά της ηλικίας της και τ' αγνά της μάτια-τόσο διαφορετικά από της Ντιάνας – που είχαν το χρώμα του πρωινού ουρανού.²⁶

Εκτός από τα μαλλιά, τίποτα άλλο δεν είχε τέλειο η Φωτεινή. Τα χαρακτηριστικά του προσώπου της ήταν μάλλον ακανόνιστα – μύτη χοντρή, μάτια μικρά, στόμα μεγάλο – κι οι αναλογίες του κορμιού της κάθε άλλο παρά αγαλματένιες. Όλο το σύνολό της είχε χάρη μεγάλη. Γοήτευε με το χαμόγελό της, με τη φωνή της, με τις κινήσεις της και με την υποκρισία της. Γιατί το διαβολάκι αυτό το έπαιρναν όλοι για άγγελο. Κι είχε πάνω της κάτι πολύ γυναικείο, το κατακτητικό. Η κάτασπρη επιδερμίδα της, ο πλατύς και κάπως δυσανάλογος θώρακός της με τα μεγάλα και καλά τοποθετημένα στήθη, κινούσαν τον πόθο· αλλά τα φωτεινά μάτια της, τα καστανά σαν τα μαλλιά της, όπου καθρεφτιζόταν η αγγελική ψυχή, προκαλούσαν μαζί και το αίσθημα. Τόση επιτυχία δεν την είχε η καημένη η μεγάλη. [...]²⁷

Another significant aspect of Xenopoulos's description of his heroines is his focus on clothes. He gives details on the clothes which his heroines, who are usually middle-class girls, wear and even describes the dress of the girls who play a secondary role in the story, mostly housemaids from lower-class backgrounds. Thus, he projects the "dress code" of both classes. Regarding the clothing of the poor girls, it seems to be, more or less, the same for all.

²⁵ Ibid, pp. 18, 19.

²⁶ G. Xenopoulos, *Μεγάλη Γυναίκα – Ένα μικρό μυθιστόρημα από τη ζωή μου*, op.cit., p. 149.

²⁷ G. Xenopoulos, *Φωτεινή*, op. cit., pp. 13, 14.

Φορούσε μόνο τα άσπρα της εσώρουχα – τα χρωματιστά δεν τα συνήθιζαν τότε – και τις ρόδινες κάλτσες της· κι εκεί κοντά ήταν πεταμένα το κόκκινο τσίτινο φουστάνι της – όχι τόσο καινούριο πια – κι οι άσπρες της σάνες, μικρές σαν παιδιάστικες.²⁸

Της έκαμαν κι άλλα ασπρόρουχα, καθώς και δυο φουστάνια – για το σπίτι και για έξω – ένα πανωφόρι κι ένα μπουά – καπέλο δε φορούσε ποτέ – φτωχικά βέβαια και ανεπίδεικτα, μα τα καλύτερα που είχε ως τώρα.²⁹

He is even more meticulous in the description of rich girls' clothing.

Ήταν ντυμένο [το κορίτσι] απλά, σεμνά, ανεπίδεικτα, αλλά κομψά και πλούσια. Τι σήμαινε αν το φόρεμα ήταν σταχτί και σχεδόν αστόλιστο, αφού το ύφασμα κόστιζε [...]. Το ίδιο και οι κάλτσες ήταν από τις ακριβότερες, το ίδιο και τα μαλλιά, χωρισμένα στη μέση, είχαν οντυλαριστεί στο αριστοκρατικότερο κομμωτήριο.³⁰

...μ' ένα κομψό ανοιξιάτικο φορεματάκι με ρίγες άσπρες και γαλάζιες και μ' ένα χαριτωμένο μικρό καπελάκι των ίδιων χρωμάτων που άφηνε να ξεχύνονται ολόγυρα τ' άφθονα, στιλπνά κι οντυλαρισμένα μαλλιά της.³¹

Φορούσε μια θαυμάσια ρόμπα πράσινη, με νταντέλες του ίδιου χρώματος ανοιχτότερες [...] που της ξεσκέπαζε το μισό σχεδόν στήθος και, σε κάθε ζοηρή κίνηση, ολάκερα τα μπράτσα!³²

Μα κι η δροσιά των δεκατεσσάρων της χρόνων σήμερα μου φαινόταν θελκτικότερη, με το λευκό πρωινό φουστανάκι που φορούσε, την μπλε-σαξ ζώνη και το πλατύγυρο καπέλο με τα μπλε λουλουδάκια. Ένα μπεζ πανωφοράκι το έβγαλε και το πέταξε στο ντιβάνι με το τσαντάκι της. Τα γοβάκια της, τετράγωνα μπροστά, με πολύ χαμηλό τακούνι, ήταν άσπρα· κι οι κάλτσες της μακριές και τσιτωμένες στις παχουλές της γάμπες, είχαν το ίδιο χρώμα με τη ζώνη. [...] Σε λίγο έβγαλε και το καπέλο της και φάνηκε ολόκληρη η Εγγλεζούλα με τ' αχυρόχρωμα μαλλιά, που τα είχε καμωμένα μπούκλες.³⁴

The above quotations show that women's clothes reflect their social status and background and in some cases have something to do with their character as well. Dress is usually coupled with hairstyles and both together stress the heroine's characteristics and her beauty.

²⁸ G. Xenopoulos, *Μεγάλη Γυναίκα – Ένα μικρό μυθιστόρημα από τη ζωή μου*, op. cit., p. 113.

²⁹ G. Xenopoulos, *Μαίρη και Μαρίνα*, op. cit., p. 65.

³⁰ G. Xenopoulos, *Τρεις αδελφές*, op. cit., p. 18.

³¹ G. Xenopoulos, *Φωτεινή*, op. cit., p. 201.

³² G. Xenopoulos, *Μεγάλη Γυναίκα – Ένα μικρό μυθιστόρημα από τη ζωή μου*, op. cit., p. 152.

³³ Ibid, p. 154.

³⁴ Ibid, p. 167.

Women's clothing serves a double purpose: firstly, it reveals the woman's social status and secondly it signifies female vanity. It is the means whereby a woman emphasizes her presence and her identity as a social being, just as the housekeeping makes her the "woman of the house". Clothing can also reveal a woman's sensuality. Depending on her clothes woman may be present herself as "childlike", "mysterious", "conservative", "vulnerable", "happy", "naïve", "austere".

The woman develops a special relationship with her dressmaker,³⁵ and her anxiety reveals her sense of insecurity. In the face of jealous or admiring looks, a woman seeks confirmation of her beauty, elegance and taste. She wants to be well-dressed in order to show and highlight her presence. Women also use the way they dress as the means of fulfilling their sexual desires, whether that means attracting a potential lover or making their husband feel jealous and thus obliging him to pay more attention or give more time to them.³⁶

Of course, there are also descriptions of women that combine details of their facial and bodily features with accounts on how they dressed. The writer's comments are not omitted from this kind of description. His comments, as part of his overall descriptive method, stressing a woman's beauty and showing his admiration for her are persuasively conveyed to the reader.

Ήταν χτενισμένη κιάλα για το χορό – είχε παιδευτεί μια ώρα, για να καταφέρει με τα χρυσόμαλλά της τον πολύπλοκο εκείνο κότσο που έμοιαζε με στέμμα – [...] γιατί δεν ήθελε να βάλει το φόρεμα με την πόδεση που του ταίριαζε – ο ευτυχισμένος Αλιβίζος είδε κι άλλες από τις ομορφιές που έκρυβε το μεσοφόρι. Αν και δεν είχε κλείσει ακόμα τα δεκαοχτώ, η Λάουρα, ήταν γυναίκα καμωμένη. [...]. Μα η γύμνια τώρα τη φανέρωνε ολάκερη κι ο ίδιος ο Αλιβίζος [...]Κύριε ελέησον!...

³⁵ G. Xenopoulos, *Λάουρα – Το κορίτσι που σκοτώνει*, op. cit.

³⁶ Ibid.

...Και στάθηκε ορθή μπροστά στο φουστάνι του χορού που ήταν μονοκόματο, ψηλόμεσο κατά τη μόδα της εποχής, με μικρό ντεκολτέ και χωρίς ουρά, πάντα κοριτσιίστικο. [...]...*Α, μα ήταν τρέλα! Κάτασπρο, χιονάτο, αφράτο, γαρνιρισμένο με κιτρινωπά χρυσοκέντητα γαλόνια, πως της πήγαινε στο χρώμα και στο μπόι! Με κάποιες θαυμαστές κι απόκρυφες αναλογίες – κι αυτή ακριβώς ήταν η “επιστήμη” του Αλιβίζου – της έδειχνε όλο της το μέστωμα [...]. Έβλεπες τη γυναίκα μαζί και το κοριτσάκι, σ’ ένα κράμα αρμονικό κι αληθινά χαριτωμένο. Αλλά το θαύμα ήταν εκείνα τα χρυσοκίτρινα στολίδια. Πως έδιναν βαρύ λούσο, μεγαλόπρεπο, βασιλικό, μα και χωρίς να βλάπτουν την απλότητα, την ελαφρότητα του παρθενικού φορέματος. Στο γύρο του στήθους, στις μασχάλες, στη μέση, στον ποδόγυρο, παντού όπου ήταν, πλατύτερα ή στενότερα, έμοιαζαν καμωμένα απ’ το χρυσό τρίχωμα της ξανθογάλανης κόρης, σα μια επέκταση της πλούσιας εκείνης κόμης που έλαμπε πυργωμένη στο κεφάλι [...]. Με το φόρεμα εκείνο, η Λάουρα Κοντάρη ήταν αληθινά το κορίτσι, που είχε για έμβλημα τρεις άσπρους κρίνους σε φόντο χρυσό και γαλάζιο... [...]*

- Ποτέ μου δεν έκαμα ωραιότερο! φώναξε ο ράφτης. *Μα πρέπει να το πω κι εγώ· δεν είναι μονάχα η επιστήμη μου· είναι κι η ομορφιά της αρχοντοπούλας!*³⁷

As the above quotation shows, Xenopoulos gives special emphasis to young women’s hair.

Most of his girls have long, fair, shiny hair and most of his descriptions illustrate his own preferences for the way girls arrange their hair. This kind of description shows that beautiful hair adds beauty to woman’s external appearance as a whole and probably that is one of the reasons why the writer lays so much stress on it. Much of his attention is paid to the colour of his heroine’s hair and his descriptions show that he considered fairness a sign of beauty, since most of his heroines who are characterized as beautiful have blonde hair.³⁸

In the novel *Φωτεινή* the writer describes a then newly fashionable hairstyle for girls.

...είχε χτενισμένα τα μαλλιά της μισά κότσο και μισά μπουκλες στα πλάγια και πίσω-όπως τα κάναν τότε όσες διατηρούσαν ακόμα μακριά μαλλιά.³⁹

Ήθελε να κάμει ένα “κεφάλι αλά γκαρσόν”, πραγματικά χαριτωμένο, που το διατήρησε για καιρό. Ήταν κιόλα η εποχή που οι γυναίκες είχαν αρχίσει να

³⁷ G. Xenopoulos, *Λάουρα – Το κορίτσι που σκοτώνει*, op. cit., pp. 33-35. My italics indicate writer’s comments.

³⁸ Fairness has been related to beauty since ancient times. Ancient Greek writers (e.g. Homer, Euripides) highlighted the fact that her fair hair added to Helen’s beauty.

³⁹ G. Xenopoulos, *Φωτεινή*, op. cit., pp. 17, 18.

κόβουν τα μαλλιά τους, άλλες λιγότερο, άλλες περισσότερο, και μερικές πολύ τολμηρές, όπως τα είχε τώρα η Φωτεινή.⁴⁰

The preceding quotes regarding women's appearance in matters of facial and bodily features, as well as clothing lead us to the general conclusion that Xenopoulos gives much of his attention to the presentation of his heroine's appearance.

Sometimes, he uses these descriptions as the device which enables him to move the plot forward, since the character and consequently the actions of his heroines are reflected in their appearance. Take for example the heroine of *Αναδυομένη* (1923), whose beauty makes her an object of desire for two brothers and leads one of them to commit suicide. Beauty in a heroine, as is shown in most of the novels, adds to their eroticism and thus increases the erotic element in Xenopoulos's fiction. This is particularly important as he was writing romantic fiction.

The detailed descriptions of women might also have another purpose: to make his heroines look more real. What is more, no matter who give the description, be it the narrator or the protagonist of the story, Xenopoulos's own comments and expressions of admiration are in evidence. Therefore one could argue that the writer pays particular attention to describing women's appearance for personal reasons; he is himself a fan and admirer of the female sex and enjoys their beauty.

To sum up, beautiful young women in Xenopoulos's novels tend to have smooth, white skin, long, usually fair, hair and very delicate facial and bodily characteristics. Their eyes may be

⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 322.

dark or light, but in most cases, they are large and expressive. According to Freud, the eye is the organ which is liable to be the most frequently stimulated by the particular quality of excitation whose cause, when it occurs in a sexual object, we describe as beauty.⁴¹ This may lead us to the conclusion that, in order to make his heroines look erotic, in addition to describing their hair, he also describes the eyes in detail, stressing their size, colour and expression. The hair is usually blonde and long, arranged differently by each heroine. He always refers to girls' cheeks as red. The writer dares to make overt comments on girls' breasts, which could be characterized as something rather bold and novel in a male writer, especially given the conservative ideas of his time. Conversely, he gives no clear picture of what is considered ugliness in women. It seems that the main ugly features that he attributes to his heroines are disharmony in her bodily characteristics, harsh facial characteristics and clumsiness in her movements.

What is more, it seems that Xenopoulos discriminates among his heroines. He presents most of the rich heroines as beautiful women, while, when he refers to poor women, he may say they are beautiful or make them appear so, but at the same time the way he presents them makes them look untidy, or shows them wearing dirty clothes and having messy hair, features that undermine their beauty.

Furthermore, the specific references to women's clothes indicate their social status, their character as well as the fashion trends of the times. The description of hairstyles and the accessories women used (bags, jewellery, shoes, scarves) also contributes in this respect. Another conspicuous trend that I have identified is that Xenopoulos pays most attention to

⁴¹ S. Freud, *A Case of Hysteria, Three Essays on Sexuality and other works*, London: Random House, 1996, p. 209.

describing the young, girls full of energy and with a passion for life; very rarely does he describe the appearance of middle-aged women and then only if the description affects the narrative. Even in these cases the woman is presented as looking younger than her real age. It should be noted that he never gives details about old women, who, after all, are never his heroines; they play a secondary role in the plot and their presence is scattered throughout his novels.

Although at first glance the frequent descriptions of appearances seem to interrupt the development of the narrative, in fact they move it on by highlighting the character whose actions affect the behaviour of other characters and thus the plot as well. Therefore, these descriptions do not have a merely decorative role, but contribute to the coherence of the narrative thread, since they help readers form a complete image of the character and thus help them comprehend her actions. “A novelist can draw parallels and resemblances between characters, situations and events such that the novel has coherence even if it plots neither chronological sequences nor casual relationships.”⁴² This argument is all the more relevant if we take into account that one of Xenopoulos’s favourite and consequently main themes is love and its consequences. One might say that each description, whether detailed or brief, together with the character’s behaviour provides us with a complete image of that character.

Xenopoulos’s detailed description of a woman, which includes face, body, hair, clothes and accessories, is two-fold: firstly, it has to do with the degree of correspondence with the social context and secondly, with the plot construction. Since the physical appearance – face, body and especially clothing and hairstyle – is an indicator of the heroine’s social status it reflects

⁴² J. Hawthorn, op. cit., p. 54.

the social context of those times. At this point, one might ask whether this description changes as the author's writing matures. Since he dares to describe women in detail from the beginning of his career, commenting on their breasts, hips or other parts of their body, I cannot argue that there is much progress in this respect. Nevertheless I would go so far as to characterize him as a progressive thinker, though also a realist, since his descriptions reflect the social status and the social context of his heroines.

These detailed descriptions also have an impact on plot construction, because in many cases the physical appearance of a female character is the cause around which the plot unfolds and furthermore, it may affect the heroines' behaviour and therefore their relationship with other characters. Thus it becomes a constructive device for the writer.

2. Behavioural Patterns

The heroine's character and temperament is something else that Xenopoulos throws into sharp relief. He pays considerable attention to the depiction of the girl's temperament, as well as to the surrounding social context in which the characters are displayed in a vivid fashion. The works involved in the present dissertation may be treated as novels of manners in the sense that they focus on the relationship of their characters to a particular social world. In each novel a moral tension or conflict occurs between the heroine and her environment. The relations and conduct among the members of a group, whether this is family, community or marriage, are predetermined by social codes and this etiquette defines the system of ethics which in turn reveals the norms, customs and culture of society. In that way, he depicts his characters as lifelike human beings.

In this section I will examine how he deals with behavioural matters, focusing on character and emotions. It is worth noticing that most of the time the leitmotif of sexual relations in every possible form (legal, illegal, prohibited and renounced by social and moral rules) is the starting point for creating character sketches, commentary on behaviour and the projection of ideals of masculinity and especially femininity, which were particularly bold for his time (e.g. *Η Τρίμορφη Γυναίκα*).⁴³ The main concerns for Xenopoulos seem to be the psychology of his characters with regard to love, the artfulness mostly of women but of men too, women's capricious nature and man's inconstancy in love (e.g. *Laoura*).⁴⁴

⁴³ Κ. Delopoulos, *Γρηγόριος Ξενόπουλος, Πενήντα χρόνια από το θάνατο ενός αθάνατου (1951-2001)*, Πρακτικά Συνεδρίου 28 & 29 Νοεμβρίου 2001, Athens: E.L.I.A., 2003, p. 17.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p. 61.

Reading Xenopoulos's novels one can see that, unlike the way he treats external appearance, he rarely makes clear and extensive reference to the heroine's character; instead, he uses her behaviour and actions, always in the context of her surrounding social context in order to reveal her temperament. Characters are revealed mainly through their relationships with other people. Sometimes, he is progressive, as his female protagonist appears far from the role models of his time, as the following excerpt shows.

Τι παράξενο, αλήθεια, κορίτσι κι αυτή η Κατίνα! Ενώ είχε μια αυστηρότατη οικογένεια [...] κατόρθωνε να τους ξεγελά όλους και “να ζει κι αυτή τη ζωή της” σαν τη Νίτσα. Παντού πήγαινε κρυφά τους. [...] Η ζωή της έτσι ήταν μια αγωνία, ένα μαρτύριο: να λέει ψέματα και να προσέχει πάντα να μην την ιδούν, μην την τσακώσουν. Γιατί αλοίμονό της αν μάθαιναν οι δικοί της πως σύχναζε σε σπίτια που δεν τα ξεραν ή πως γύριζε στους δρόμους με νέους! Θα την σούβλιζαν, έλεγε.
[...] Έτσι τοχε η μοίρα της αυτηνής, να τα κάνει όλα κρυφά. Από μικρή, από τότε που πήγαινε ακόμα στο σχολείο, κρυφά edιάβαζε κι άλλα βιβλία. Κρυφά έστελνε αινίγματα και λύσεις στα περιοδικά. Κρυφά edημοσίευε, αργότερα, καμμιά μετάφρασή της. Κρυφά άνοιξε κάποτε “φιλολογική” αλληλογραφία μ'ένα γνωστό ποιητή. Όλα της κρυφά.⁴⁵

Smoking was another habit prohibited to women. Xenopoulos presents at least two of his heroines as having no hesitation in this respect: Nitsa (*Η ψεύτρα*, 1936) and Diana Bartini (*Μεγάλη γυναίκα*).

Της είχε βάλει στο στόμα ένα τσιγαρέττο με χρυσό επιστόμιο, και της το είχε ανάψει. Κι εκείνη, μιλώντας, εκάπνιζε με χάρη και με τσαχπινιά. [...]
– Στον κύκλο σου δεν καπνίζει καμιά κυρία...
– Και που το ξέρεις; Μήπως καπνίζουν μπροστά σου; πως δεν το ξερες για μένα; [...]
– Κατάλαβα. Ωστε και συ έχεις τώρα το βίτσιο;
– Ω, τι λες;... [...]. Ε, τώρα που είμαι κυρία και θα μπορώ να καπνίζω ελεύθερα, μπορεί να τ' αυξήσω.⁴⁶

Η Ντιάνα μου πήρε ένα τσιγάρο και το άναψε. Μα το σβησε σχεδόν αμέσως κι άναψε ένα δικό της, μυρωδάτο.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ G. Xenopoulos, *Η Τρίμορφη Γυναίκα*, op.cit., pp. 264, 265.

⁴⁶ G. Xenopoulos, *Η Ψεύτρα*, Athens: Adelfi Vlasi, 1984, pp. 85-87.

⁴⁷ G. Xenopoulos, *Μεγάλη Γυναίκα-Ένα μικρό μυθιστόρημα από τη ζωή μου*, op.cit., p. 143.

From the above quotes it is apparent that when smoking is mentioned in his novels it is with reference to middle-class girls and that after marriage women felt freer to smoke in public. The novels *Η ψεύτρα* and *Μεγάλη γυναίκα* were published in 1936, after the first campaigns for women's emancipation. There is no mention of the habit in earlier novels, but a woman smoking was a rare phenomenon. At this point, I should mention the fact that these rebellious acts were mainly associated with girls of the upper classes and not poor heroines.

In other cases he follows the stereotypical female model of his time. The sense of honour (“philotimo”) and modesty (“semnotis”) is repeated throughout his novels, in implicit or explicit references, and his heroines are expected to act within those boundaries. The following quotations with their insistent repetition of some words, such as “καλό”, “αγνό”, “τιμή”, “ηθικό”, highlight the importance of honour and modesty in the heroines of Xenopoulos's novels.

...ηύραν την πυρόξανθην αυτήν και μελανείμονα καλλονήν άτρωτον και ασύλληπτον.⁴⁸

Έπειτα είχε και την περηφάνεια του το καλό κορίτσι. Δε θα καταδέχεται ποτέ να γίνει μια από τις πολλές.⁴⁹

Δεκαεννιά χρονώ τώρα, [...] κρατιόταν κορίτσι αγνό κι ηθικό. [...] κι εύκολα, άκοπα, φύλαγε την τιμή της, ξέροντας καλά πως ήταν το μόνο πολύτιμο που είχε.⁵⁰

Αθώοι, άπραγοι σα μεγάλα παιδιά, την είχαν για τίμια.⁵¹

[η Νίτσα] ήταν το σεμνότερο και τιμιότερο κορίτσι της Αθήνας.⁵²

- Και τι θα πει “τέτοια γυναίκα”; θύμωσε η Μαρίκα. Με συγχωρείτε πολύ, αλλά η Νίτσα είναι η τιμιότερη του κόσμου!⁵³

⁴⁸ G. Xenopoulos, *Μαργαρίτα Στέφα*, op. cit., p. 411.

⁴⁹ G. Xenopoulos, *Στέλλα Βιολάντη*, op. cit., p. 16.

⁵⁰ G. Xenopoulos, *Μαίρη και Μαρίνα*, op. cit., pp. 19, 20.

⁵¹ G. Xenopoulos, *Η Τρίμορφη Γυναίκα*, op. cit., p. 266.

⁵² G. Xenopoulos, *Η Ψεύτρα*, op. cit., p. 76.

⁵³ Ibid, p. 288.

[...]. Ήταν τρία καθαυτό “καλά” κορίτσια.⁵⁴

Although Xenopoulos is shown to be progressive, he is still conservative, since he sticks to the stereotypes of his time, which considered honour and modesty as essential features of women’s behaviour.

As we have seen, there are some examples in which Xenopoulos was a progressive thinker, presenting a woman’s character as being outside the “permitted boundaries”. But each time he points out that the character being described goes against the accepted standards of those times. In other examples though, in which his heroines act within the “established” social context, he seems outspoken and more descriptive; he comments explicitly on his heroine’s character and sometimes he hints that the specific behaviour is applaudable. In these cases, the woman embodies benevolence, disinterest and love; the three values that constitute the foundation stone of the home.⁵⁵ These examples also illustrate that Xenopoulos believes that female values should represent life, love and justice.⁵⁶ Charitable work undertaken by bourgeois women is offered as proof of that.⁵⁷

It seems that in Xenopoulos’s novels, gender is not inseparable from class.⁵⁸ Women of the upper classes by contrast to lower-class women, are presented as noble with morality and femininity. The basic female virtues are modesty, sexual morality and dedication to the family. For lower-class females the value of neatness is added. Their femininity and the respect they received from men depended on the degree to which women’s behaviour

⁵⁴ G. Xenopoulos, *Τρεις αδελφές*, op. cit., pp. 9, 10.

⁵⁵ E. Varika, op. cit., p. 107.

⁵⁶ Ibid, p. 286.

⁵⁷ G. Xenopoulos, *Μεγάλη Γυναίκα – Ένα μικρό μυθιστόρημα από τη ζωή μου*, op. cit., p. 141.

⁵⁸ P. Bourdieu observes that “Sexual properties are inseparable from class properties as the yellowness of a lemon is from its acidity [...]”. (quoted in V. Doulaveras, “Κοινωνικές δομές και ιδεολογία στην τριλογία του Ξενόπουλου” in *Περίπλους*, no. 30, 31, 1991, p. 138.)

corresponded with those female virtues. It is noticeable that the qualities required of women were similar to those required from the lower classes: women had to be passive, submissive and conform to traditional morality, with no opinions of their own and expressing no autonomous critical behaviour.⁵⁹ Interestingly, girls who revolted and faced painful consequences as a result, such as death or humiliating marriage, were usually girls with a “male temperament” or “male drive” (e.g. Nitsa in *Η Τρίμορφη Γυναίκα*).

In order to examine whether he was following any particular literary trend in writing his books or whether he was just writing to entertain (“τέχνη διασκεδαστική”), I shall now proceed to a presentation of the ways in which Xenopoulos presents his heroines’ character and behaviour in his narratives. Xenopoulos uses all three methods of characterization available to the novelist; description or report, through action and through a character’s thoughts or conversation. He uses these methods to comment on a heroine’s character and in most cases their character affects the development of the plot, since events are affected or may be caused by a heroine’s behavioural patterns.⁶⁰ Moreover, by using all these methods, Xenopoulos is able to provide the readers with the necessary information regarding the character of the heroine, so that they can comprehend her actions and behaviour. Thus it is up to the reader to decide whether her behaviour is acceptable or censurable.

⁵⁹ G. Farinou-Malamatari, “Γρηγόριος Ξενόπουλος” in *Η Παλαιότερη Πεζογραφία μας*, vol. Θ, Athens: Sokolis, 1997, p. 313.

⁶⁰ W. Harmon and H. Holman, op.cit., p. 91. The term characterization means the “creation of imaginary persons so that they seem lifelike. There are three fundamental methods of *characterization*: (1) the explicit presentation by the author or the character through direct exposition, either in an introductory block or more often piecemeal throughout the work, illustrated by action; (2) the presentation of the character in action, with little or no explicit comment by the author, in the expectation that the reader can deduce the attributes of the actor from the actions; and (3) the representation from within a character, without comment by the author, of the impact of actions and emotions on the character’s inner self”. See also J. Hawthorn, op.cit., pp. 50, 51.

In a few novels Xenopoulos refers to his heroine's character at the very beginning of the story, but goes on to confirm this earlier characterization through developments in the plot. To demonstrate this, I will use the following passage from the novel *Ισαβέλλα*, in which the writer, using the voice of Isavella's father, makes a clear reference to her character at the beginning of the story, comments which are proved true by her behaviour throughout the development of the story.

...με βοήθησε, χρωστώ να το πω, κι ο χαρακτήρας της Ισαβέλλας μου. Από μικρή αγαπούσε τη μοναξιά. Δεν της παράρεσε ο κόσμος κι από τη χώρα προτιμούσε την εξοχή [...]

- [...] Γιατί απ' όλα τα κοσμικά, το θέατρο της αρέσει της Ισαβέλλας. [...]
- Α, ναι! και το βιβλίο της. Διαβάζει πολύ.[...]
- ... Μπορώ να πω πως από το χρόνο εκείνο συμπληρώθηκε, μορφώθηκε τελειωτικά ο φιλέρημος, ο ήσυχος, ο ήμερος, ο γλυκός αυτός χαρακτήρας, μελαγχολικός κάποτε, μα στο βάθος πάντα φαιδρός. Γιατί μπορεί να μην αγαπάει τον κόσμο η Ισαβέλλα μου, αγαπάει όμως τη ζωή.

There are also other cases, in which the writer refers directly to his heroines' character within the plot of the novel. These references might be made using other characters' words. An obvious example would be the following extract:

- Α, θα τα περνάτε καλά. Γιατί και συ, πιστεύω, θάσαι μαζί της ...υπομονετική. Χαϊδεμένη, βλέπεις, έχει και τις παραξενιές της. Μα, σου το ξαναλέω: ψυχή αγγελική. [...] Τα πείσματά της, οι θυμοί της, της περνούν στη στιγμή.⁶¹

References made by narrator to heroine's character are also very frequent.

Έπειτα η διαβολική της εξυπνάδα, το ζωηρό της ενδιαφέρον για όλα τα πράγματα του κόσμου, η μόρφωση που κατόρθωσε να λάβει σχεδόν μονάχη, κι η τάση εκείνη που είχε από μικρή να ανεβαίνει, όλο να ανεβαίνει.[...] Θυμήθηκα ακόμα και τη μανία που είχε για τα πολιτικά [...] και το ενεργό μέρος που λάβαινε στις διαδηλώσεις τους.⁶²

⁶¹ G. Xenopoulos, *Μαίρη και Μαρίνα*, op.cit., p. 13.

⁶² G. Xenopoulos, *Μεγάλη Γυναίκα – Ένα μικρό μυθιστόρημα από τη ζωή μου*, op. cit., p. 137.

Xenopoulos very often reveals his heroine's character, emphasizing her psychology and emotions, through her actions and behaviour. A few examples to support this argument will follow.

Η Μαρίνα είχε δακρύσει. Χωρίς να το θέλει, φαίνεται, ανέβηκαν τα δάκρυα εκείνα στα ωραία της μαύρα μάτια.⁶³

In the above quote, Xenopoulos, briefly but clearly enough, shows two distinctive features of his heroine Marina: her sensitivity and her display of emotions.

Το σπίτι μας έχει μεγάλη ανάγκη και θέλω να το βοηθάω με τον μισθό μου...Αν δεν είχατε εσείς την καλοσύνη, θα μπαίνα σε σπίτι ξένο.⁶⁴

This quote indicates that Marina is concerned about her family and willing to contribute to their living expenses by offering her wages.

What emerges from the aforementioned examples is that the writer uses all three methods of characterization. Having examined the ways Xenopoulos uses to show his heroine's character leads us to the conclusion that although he uses all three methods, he prefers to present the female characters of his fiction through their actions and not simply by using statements made by the narrator or some other character. Thus, the heroines seem more realistic, since we are given information about their character not so much from simple statements, as from objective observation of their actions which mirror their behavioural patterns.

Focusing on the stance of Xenopoulos has as regard to his heroines, we observe a direct development of plot, a natural and complete growth of his characters, where each one represents a particular unity, an identity with specific gifts and power, set within literary

⁶³ G. Xenopoulos, *Μαίρη και Μαρίνα*, op. cit., p. 9.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

boundaries. A more intense consideration of his imposing female figures reveals the delicate way Xenopoulos depicts the psychology of his contemporary Greek women.

Sexuality is another element of the female nature that Xenopoulos highlights in his female characterization. Their abundant sexuality is what characterizes them most and make them look so alive as characters. Their inclination for love and sexual relations emanates from their forceful temperament, their strange and exotic beauty, their delicacy and cleverness, their whole being, and offers an unconscious challenge. When their sexuality is at its height, it is transformed to faith and love that will finally redeem and purge them.⁶⁵ Even the description of women's external appearance is meant to instigate men's erotic desire, especially when a woman's identity is denoted through the gaze of men. The woman then, once again acquires the position of object, love-object in this case.

The association of the city with sexual awakening is shown in Xenopoulos's novels in the transition of young girls from rural areas to the cities in order to find a job and better living conditions. In urban areas they have the opportunity to give vent to their sexuality. Xenopoulos highlights the instinct for love,⁶⁶ to such an extent that one might assume that he sees human beings, society and its conflicts in terms of sexual attraction and often animal instinct. This mentality was first cultivated by the Naturalist movement led by Emile Zola, but later, it was strengthened by the psychoanalytic theory of Freud.⁶⁷ Naturalism contended that a human being is one of the higher animals whose character and behaviour are determined by two forces: heredity and environment. The individual inherits compulsive instincts –

⁶⁵ S. Mavroidi-Papadaki, "Η γυναίκα στο έργο του Ξενόπουλου" in *Ιόνιος Ανθολογία*, no. 126, 1939, p. 79.

⁶⁶ P. Haris, *Έλληνες Πεζογράφοι*, op.cit, pp. 130-132 and in *Νέα Εστία*, vol. 50, no. 587, p. 29.

⁶⁷ A. Ziras, "Η διακύμανση των κριτηρίων του Βάσου Βαρίκα για το έργο του Γρ. Ξενόπουλου" in G.Pefanis (ed.) op.cit., p. 112.

especially hunger, the accumulative drive and sexuality – and is then subject to the social and economic pressures of the family, the class and the milieu into which they are born.⁶⁸

According to the tripartite structural model of Freud, the human psyche is divided into three parts: id, ego and superego. The id is the irrational, instinctual, unknown and unconscious part of the psyche, containing our secret desires, darkest wishes and most intense fears, which wishes to fulfil the urges of the pleasure principle. It houses the libido, the source of all our psychosexual desires and our energy and is unchecked by any controlling will. What Freud calls ego is the rational, logical, waking part of the mind, which regulates the instinctual desires of the id and allows these desires to be released in non-destructive ways. Superego operates according to the morality principle and serves primarily to protect society and us from the id. It represents all the moral restrictions of the society, and as such, serves as a filter, suppressing the desires and instincts forbidden by society and thrusting them back into the unconscious. It is left to the ego to mediate between the instinctual desires of the id and the demands of the superego.⁶⁹

Xenopoulos did not merely present customs and traditions, but also indicated an entire atmosphere that centred on the mental on the mental state of the heroes and especially the heroines. His plain and uncomplicated style recalls incidents and adventures of life and his concentration on observing the paths of thought and psyche, elevates his narrative technique. The realism indicated early in his work initiates the turn towards the urban-social novel of the early twentieth century in Greece.

⁶⁸ M. H Abrams, *A glossary of literary terms*, op. cit., p. 174, 175.

⁶⁹ S. Freud, *The ego and the id*, Standard edition, vol. XIX, translation: James Strachey, London, 1990.

As Karandonis points out, Xenopoulos knew women better than men; he pictured their sexuality on its peak, their instinctive mentality, their spontaneity, their brilliance, their unfeigned delicacy, their spiritual flexibility and artfulness: all the elements which make up their existence.⁷⁰ A general conclusion regarding the question posed in this section is that, in terms of character and behaviour, Xenopoulos's heroines are not idealized or mythologized; instead they are ordinary everyday people.

⁷⁰ A. Karandonis, "Γρηγόριος Ξενόπουλος" in *Ξενόπουλος, Άπαντα*, vol. 11, op. cit., p. 400.

3. Sensual or powerful women and other minor “types”

I shall now attempt to classify the female characters⁷¹ in Xenopoulos’s novels, in terms of their character and behaviour; this attempt at classification will help us reach a conclusion as to whether he creates characters or types. The two major types⁷² of female characters in Xenopoulos are: the beautiful-sensual one, associated with “eros” and the spirited type, associated with “power”. Subsequently, I will make brief reference to minor types, such as the intellectual-artist, the liberal-progressive, the unconventional, the pious, the immoral, and the obedient. These types are not of less importance in Xenopoulos’s novels; almost all of them may also fall into the two major types, but they have specific characteristics that should be mentioned separately.

Literary theory has formed various opinions regarding the characters in a narrative.⁷³ In accordance with the precepts of the classical theoreticians, who considered a character as nothing but a name, the “person-character” dominated the bourgeois novel, in which it is the embodiment of a psychological essence, which found its expression in the traditional roles of the bourgeois novel, such as the coquette, the noble father, etc.⁷⁴ Later, Propp assumed that

⁷¹ W. Harmon and H. Holman, op.cit. p. 91. “ ‘Character’ is a complicated term that includes the idea of the moral constitution of the human personality (Aristotle’s sense of *ethos*), the presence of moral uprightness, and the presence of creatures in art that seem to be human beings of one sort or another. It is a brief descriptive sketch of a personage who typifies some definite quality. The person is described not as an individualized personality but as an example of some vice or virtue or type.”

⁷² “A group having certain characteristics in common that distinguish them as being members of a definite class. In criticism the term type has two distinct usages. In one it refers to a literary genre with definable distinguishing characteristics. In the other it is applied to a character who is a representative of a class or kind of person. A *type character* differs from a *stock character*. The type character need not have any qualities borrowed from tradition and may be sharply individualized; a type character is one that embodies a substantial number of significant distinguishing characteristics of a group or class. A stock character, on the other hand, is a *stereotype*, modelled on other and frequently used characters, but often representing no actual group.” Ibid, p. 533.

⁷³ R. Barthes, *An introduction to the structural analysis*, op.cit.

⁷⁴ Ibid, p. 256.

there cannot be a narrative without “characters”, who as “agents” of actions cannot be safely described or classified in terms of “persons”; thus, we are obliged to consider whether each narrative uses agents but not persons or to consider the “person” as the convenient rationalization imposed by his/her epoch.⁷⁵ To Claude Bremond, each character can be the agent of his/her own actions.⁷⁶ Analyzing the “psychological novel”, Todorov starts from the relationships the characters are involved in, which he calls basic predicates; those are love, communication, assistance.⁷⁷ Greimas proposed describing and sorting out the characters in narrative on the basis of their actions, as they partake in three main semantic axes, namely communication, desire and ordeal. Since this participation involves opposites and since an actant serves to define a class, its role can be filled by different actors, mobilized according to rules of multiplication, substitution or by-passing.⁷⁸

These last three theories (Bremond’s, Todorov’s and Greimas’s) share the fact that they define a character by his/her participation in a sphere of action; such spheres are limited in number, conventional and subject to classification. It seems that Xenopoulos took advantage of this common element and the innumerable characters of his novels are subjected to rules of substitution and one figure can absorb different characters. The following analysis demonstrates this.

The “sensual” type is the female type most frequently encountered in Xenopoulos’s novels. Almost every woman, as described by the writer, could be characterized as sexy and sensual,

⁷⁵ Ibid, pp. 256, 257.

⁷⁶ Ibid, p. 257.

⁷⁷ Ibid, p. 257.

⁷⁸ Ibid, p. 258.

but some of them play a very different role in the plot. The most palpable example of this kind of female is his heroine Afroditi in the eponymous novel.

Αλλά το μεσοφούστανο ήταν ανασηκωμένο ως τα γόνατα, η καμιζόλα της ξεκούμπωτη στο στήθος ως το κορδονάκι της φανέλας, και το πλατύ μανίκι του ενός χεριού, που το είχε ψηλά στο μαξιλάρι, πεσμένο σχεδόν ως τη μασχάλη. [...] Πρώτη φορά έβλεπε την Αφροδίτη έτσι ωραία. [...] Εκείνα τα κλειστά μάτια προπάντων, με τα γραμμένα φρύδια και τις μακριές βλεφαρίδες, έδιναν μια ηρεμία κι αγγελική γλύκα στο κανονικό πρόσωπό της, που του γεννούσε την έκσταση. Το στήθος όμως και το γυμνό ανασηκωμένο μπράτσο κι η κρεμαστή γάμπα, ω, τι άγρια του ξυπνούσαν τον πόθο.⁷⁹

The plot unfolds around the femme-fatale Afroditi, who, as her name indicates, is a beautiful woman. The narrator-hero is caught in her net and commits several sins and errors of judgement (e.g. gambling, stealing and embezzlement) in order to please her and make her happy.

Βρισκόταν σε δεινή αμηχανία. [...] Οι σχέσεις του με το αλλόκοτο αυτό κορίτσι, που τον τρέλλανε, ήταν σε τέτοιο σημείο, ώστε αν δεν τόδειχνε στη γιορτή της μ' ένα δώρο, [...] κινδύνευε να του πάρει τη θέση[...]ο Γιάγκος. [...] Γιατί τα οικονομικά του φτωχού φοιτητή, από τον καιρό που μπλέχτηκε στα δίχτυα της Αφροδίτης, έμοιαζε καθώς έλεγε ο ίδιος, με της Ψωροκώσταινας.⁸⁰

He gradually succeeds in gaining her love, at least that is what he thinks. But she continues seeing other lovers while being his partner. He ends up in jail for her sake and when he asks for her help and support, she betrays him. This is the story of the first part of the novel, entitled "*Η γυναίκα που σε χάνει*".

In the second part of the novel "*Η γυναίκα που σε σώζει*", the "sensual" type is present again, but this time as is already stated in the title, playing a completely different role.

Ήταν ένα κορίτσι κάτασπρο σαν το κρίνο, κατάξανθο σαν τον ήλιο και με γαλανά μάτια, φωτεινά, σαν το μεσημεριάτικο ουρανό...[...] Βέβαια η Αγνή δεν είχε τη θερμή ομορφιά της Αφροδίτης. Ήταν ψυχρότερη. Ναι, αλλά και ευγενικότερη και ψυχικότερη. Μπορούσε να εμπνεύσει ένα αίσθημα, από τα

⁷⁹ G. Xenopoulos, *Αφροδίτη, Άπαντα*, vol.8, Athens: Biris, 1972, p. 70.

⁸⁰ G. Xenopoulos, *ibid*, pp. 12, 13.

ήρεμα εκείνα, τα αιώνια· ενώ για την Αφροδίτη μόνο από ένα πόθο μπορούσε κανείς ν' ανάψει.⁸¹

Αλλά η παιδούλα εκείνη με τα ξανθά μαλλιά και τα γαλανά μάτια εξαρχής είχε πάνω του μια επίδραση κατευναστική. Τον ημέρωνε, τον έκανε αρνάκι. [...] Και το άφωνο μάλωμά της το λογάριαζε πολύ περισσότερο από τα φωναχτά του πατέρα του, της μητέρας του, των δασκάλων του.⁸²

In this part, after his imprisonment, his platonic friend does everything she can to release him.

They get married and live happily ever after in Paris. The following quotation shows that the love of a woman can be a man's salvation.

- Ναι, του είπε. Θα σε σώσω!...Όποιος άλλος να ήταν, ο αδερφός μου, θα ειδοποιούσα την αστυνομία. Αλλά εσένα σ' αγαπώ, σου τα συγχωρώ όλα και μου φαίνεται πως σε ό,τι κάνεις, έχεις πάντα δίκιο. [...] Ναι, Θράσο, θα σε σώσω!⁸³

This novel is the most indicative one regarding the sensual type in both its aspects: the negative and the positive. It makes it plain that a sensual woman can be a real "*femme fatale*" for the man who loves her whereas another beautiful woman can be his saviour. What plays a major role in this distinction is the woman's character; an immoral and corrupt woman may destroy a man. On the other hand, a moral and chaste woman can help him. Another conclusion that we can infer from this novel is that his choice of names for his heroines is not accidental. The sensual woman that corrupts the man is called Afroditi (the name of the goddess of beauty), while the moral one, is called Agni (the chaste one); from that and other similar cases we can see that there is usually a correspondence between the appearance, the character and the name of the heroine.

The other major type, that of the powerful woman is equally represented by many female characters, such as Artemis/Diana Bartini in the novel *Μεγάλη γυναίκα*, Fotini in the

⁸¹ Ibid, p. 50.

⁸² Ibid, p. 121.

⁸³ Ibid, p. 172.

eponymous novel and many others. In order to reveal the features of this powerful type and paint its picture I will use Fotini as an example. She is a beautiful lady from a wealthy family, who chose to become a sculptor instead of following her father's career and becoming an actress. A rich, young man, Doros Diamantis, falls in love with her and proposes to her. They get engaged, after Doros has accepted her conditions, but Fotini's aim is to take advantage of him and his fortune. All of a sudden, she leaves for Europe with her friend and fellow student Emilios to continue her studies. There, they get married secretly and fritter away Doros's money. After some time, they divorce and Fotini returns to Greece determined not to get married again and to continue working as an artist. It seems, however, that fate had decided differently for her; she has a serious illness. But, due to her determination and of course the love and care of Doros, who stood by her side, she finally manages to recover and marry him.

Αλλά συνέβη και άλλο παράδοξο: αντί να διορθώσει τη Φωτεινή ο Αιμίλιος, αυτή "διόρθωνε" τον νέο, αυτή τον έφερνε στα νερά της. Τόση ήταν η επιβολή που ασκούσε πάνω του.⁸⁴

Σε κανέναν και σε τίποτα δε θα υποχωρούσε ποτέ, ήθελε να υποτάσσονται όλοι στη θέλησή της. Για να κάμει του κεφαλιού της δε δίστασε, [...] να τα χαλάσει με τους δικούς της, αψηφώντας και αυτόν τον πατέρα της.⁸⁵

- Ας μη μου κόβετε τη χαρά μου! είπε η Φωτεινή. Θα χρησιμοποιήσω την ελευθερία μου με τον καλύτερο τρόπο. Τι θέλετε, να σκλαβωθώ πάλι; [...] Εγώ δεν ακούω τίποτα, κανένα μόνο τη Φωτεινή Δανή.⁸⁶
- Δεν έχω ανάγκη τον κόσμο! φώναξε η Φωτεινή σχεδόν με θυμό. Ας πει ότι θέλει! Μπορώ να ζω όπως θέλω. Ακούς εκεί που θα φοβηθώ τώρα τον κόσμο!...Εγώ, εγώ!...⁸⁷

The brief, but telling summary of the novel and the above abstracts reveal the assertive character of the heroine. She does not care for public opinion and she is not subordinated to her parents' will and decisions.

⁸⁴ G. Xenopoulos, *Φωτεινή*, op. cit., p. 30.

⁸⁵ Ibid, p. 198.

⁸⁶ Ibid, p. 288.

⁸⁷ Ibid, p. 296.

Some of Xenopoulos's heroines have features that enable them to be considered as *femme fatales* and as powerful types at the same time. A typical example would be Nitsa Gazeli, the heroine of the novel *Η Τρίμορφη Γυναίκα*. It is clear that the two tendencies are manifested in the heroine's character from the very beginning of the novel. In the introduction the author writes:

Μια μικρή Αθηναία, από σπίτι, η Νίτσα του Γαζέλη, που έκαμε λίγα χρόνια στην Ελβετία, γυρίζοντας στην Αθήνα εννοεί να ζήσει όπως ζούσε κι εκεί. Του κάκου οι δικοί της της παριστάνουν πως αυτά “ο τόπος δεν τα σηκώνει ακόμα”. Η Νίτσα επιμένει. [...] Αυτή θα κάμει την αρχή, την καινοτομία. Και παίρνει σχεδόν μονάχη της, με το στανιό, τις ελευθερίες που ζητούσε από τους γονείς της.

[...] Σ' αυτόν το νόμο πρέπει να αποδοθεί η αιτία της διαφθοράς της. Δεν ήταν φύση διαφθαρμένη, έκφυλη [...] Ήταν απλώς ένα κορίτσι με σάρκα και με νεύρα, ένα αισθαντικό πλάσμα με τις ορμές της νιότης, τις περιέργειες της παρθενιάς και τη χαρά της ζωής. [...] Πότε έπεφτε στην παγίδα, πότε τη νικούσε ο πειρασμός. Και κάθε φορά – ακριβώς γιατί δεν ήταν φύση διεφθαρμένη – γινόταν μέσα της μια πάλη, ένα δράμα, προοίμιο του μεγάλου, του φοβερά τραγικού, που την περίμενε στο τέλος αυτής της άτακτης, της χαρούμενης και δυστυχισμένης ζωής.

Γιατί η Νίτσα του Γαζέλη, με τα χαρίσματα που είχε – ομορφιά, εξυπνάδα, καλοσύνη, μόρφωση, ευγένεια, περιουσία ακόμα – δεν ήταν δυνατό, ούτε δίκαιο να χαθεί ολωσδιόλου. Κι η δεινή πάλη, το δράμα της Νίτσας Γαζέλη τελειώνει με τη σωτηρία της.⁸⁸

Georgia Farinou-Malamatari indicates among the other types of characterization the “contrasting portraits”,⁸⁹ which constitute a form of negative comparison. These two different portraits are important precisely because they are completely contrasts and often their opposition extends throughout the text and constitutes the basis of the plot.

Xenopoulos probably uses these two types to show the role of women and their impact on men as those who influence and guide them. These two types also enable the writer to

⁸⁸ G. Xenopoulos, *Η Τρίμορφη Γυναίκα*, op. cit., pp. 217, 218.

⁸⁹ G. Farinou-Malamatari, *Αφηγηματικές τεχνικές στον Παπαδιαμάντη*, Athens: Kedros, 1987, p. 151.

produce romantic novel, a type of novel that was appealing to readers,⁹⁰ especially to women and gave them pleasure.

I shall now proceed to a brief catalogue of the minor female types encountered in Xenopoulos's novels. As I have mentioned earlier, some of these types may be considered part of the two major types and, what is more, in some cases two or more types may fall within the same category. A definitive classification, however, is impossible because each heroine is unique and her presentation by the writer combines various features that prevent us from classifying her straight forwardly in any of the major types.

Although at the time Xenopoulos was writing, it was a rare phenomenon for women to get an education and employment, after the emancipation movement started, many of his heroines are educated and employed, mostly as teachers in the Parthenagion. Some others studied at the School of Drama or at the School of Fine Arts. Examples of "intellectual" women include Eleni in the novel *Φωτεινή*, who works as a teacher, Nitsa in the novel *Η Τρίμορφη Γυναίκα*, who writes articles in a literary periodical and makes handicrafts to make ends meet, and Diana Bartini in *Μεγάλη γυναίκα*, who, not needing to work for money, voluntarily organizes theatrical shows. Roza, in the novel *Ο σύζυγος της θεατρίνας*, who after studying drama, works as an actress and Fotini in the eponymous novel, who studies art and works as a sculptor, could be mentioned as "artistic" women.

⁹⁰ Xenopoulos in his speech before the Academy of Athens (30.1.1932) indicates as basic feature of the novel the element of love.[...]. Xenopoulos lead himself consciously to Public audience, a fact which is strengthened by his opinion that "η τέχνη είτε μεγάλη, είτε μικρή [...] είναι, πρέπει να είναι [...] διασκεδαστική" it is created to give rest, pleasure, education, raise morality and prudent thought to the audience/readers. He was interest in success, therefore his work was full of current to his times incidents and its distinct feature was the pleasure and the entertainment it offered. T. Glikofridi-Athanasopoulou, "Η νέα γυναίκα στην αστική κοινωνία. Χειραφέτηση και ερωτική συμπεριφορά" in G. Pefanis (ed.), op. cit., pp. 66, 67.

The intellectual-artist type can be linked to the liberal-progressive type. Due to their studies, which in some cases take place abroad, women belonging to this category adopted a different lifestyle one that is quite progressive for the Greek context. This open-minded way of thinking is expressed in all aspects of their lives; they go wherever they want without being accompanied by a male member of the family, they can socialize with people, even men, without hesitation, work in different jobs, engage themselves in politics and, above all, they do not consider marriage and motherhood as woman's first and most important goal. As examples of that type I could mention Nitsa (*Η Τρίμορφη Γυναίκα*), Liza (*Τρεις αδελφές*) and Fotini (*Φωτεινή*).

The type I would call “unconventional” behaves in a similar way to the aforementioned type. Women of this category are not narrow-minded; they articulate their ideas, which most of the time sound revolutionary to others. These ideas are usually based on philosophy and thus contrast with religion. In fact, they do not believe in marrying for love; compatibility of character and thinking alike is more than enough for two people to get married. What is more, they do not consider motherhood as the most important aim of the marriage. The most representative female of this type is Souzi in the novel *Τρεις αδελφές*.⁹¹

In the same novel the exact opposite type is encountered. Souzi's sister, Doritsa, could be characterized as “pious”.⁹² She attends all church services, follows Christian customs and habits very strictly, i.e. fasting, praying, going to confession and receiving the Holy Communion. She is conservative in her thoughts, actions and dress and usually introverted as

⁹¹ G. Xenopoulos, *Τρεις αδελφές*, op. cit., pp. 121, 122, 153.

⁹² Ibid, pp. 111, 115, 152, 153, 159, 162, 227, 230, 237, 239.

far as expressing her feelings is concerned. Dedication to God, Christianity and to other people, plays an important role in the lives of such characters.

The “immoral” type is another female type frequently encountered in Xenopoulos’s novels. We can see that this type applies to both classes: both lower-class and upper-class girls have the features that enable us to put them in this category. For example, Panayioula in the novel *Μαίρη και Μαρίνα* is a poor girl, while Aphroditi in the eponymous novel is a middle-class woman. Girls falling into this category may be prostitutes to earn a living and cover their families’ needs (e.g. Panayioula) or may act like that for their own pleasure (e.g. Aphroditi). In the first case, they usually operate from a house and they are controlled by a madam who arranges their encounters with men and keeps an amount as commission for their “services”. Other women meet their clients in their own homes, even though they may have a loyal partner. In both cases, there are some occasions when the girl’s mother is aware of her daughter’s actions and, to make matters worse encourages her in this way of living.

Women’s physical appearance and dress is not always a sign of their morality. They might be pretty, but they might just be “coquettes” without the good looks. They might dress provocatively, or conservatively and even modestly.

Generally, popular novels feature the sentimental type⁹³ of lower-class woman, who gets carried away by a handsome or powerful man and becomes his lover but never a wife, ending up as a prostitute. By contrast with the working-class heroine, who is exposed to a dual subjugation, financial and sexual, upper-class women, apart from the material benefits they

⁹³ See the passage on the sentimental novel in Introduction, pp. 3-5.

enjoy, also have relatively unimpeded access to the joys of illegal love and the passions of illegal relationships. The city, however, entails risks for the purity of both, upper- and lower-class women.⁹⁴

Another type that features prominently in Xenopoulos's writings is that of the "obedient" woman. Many of Xenopoulos's heroines come within this category, since the social context of the time demanded this behaviour, with Stella Violanti⁹⁵ being the best example of the type. In accordance with the traditional norms of society, girls had to be obedient to their parents', and especially their father's, decisions. They had no right to react and their parents decided on their behalf in matters concerning their personal life, such as education and marriage. If they dared to disagree with their parents they got punished, perhaps even being beaten by them. Knowing this, they preferred to obey the will of others and be unhappy.

One might say that the aim of the novelist is to develop a character in order to represent an idea or a specific characteristic, thus creating "types" or alternatively in order to present a particular individual in which case he creates "characters". Xenopoulos succeeds in combining the two forms of characterization and thus creates novels of "life",⁹⁶ which could be considered at the same time novels of "pattern".⁹⁷

What we can deduce from all the examples and evidence supplied in this section is that Xenopoulos used the whole gamut of female types. As has been shown, each of his heroines

⁹⁴ G. Gotsi, op. cit., pp. 121, 122.

⁹⁵ In the eponymous novel, the heroine obeys her father and brother, both of whom act within the "acceptable" ethical and social boundaries of their society.

⁹⁶ In novels of life one finds characters possessed of a distinctive and idiosyncratic individuality. See Hawthorn, *Studying the Novel*, op.cit., p. 48.

⁹⁷ In novels of pattern one finds characters who stand for something (a giveaway feature is often the name) *ibid*, p. 48.

is unique and cannot be easily classified as belonging to a specific category. Although Xenopoulos attributes common features to his heroines (as regards behaviour, psychology etc) that enable us to classify them in categories, each heroine has her special features that make her unique. Each woman is an individual who lies beyond time and space, beyond the borderlines of eras and countries. Hence, I would argue that the writer veers between creating types and characters.

CONCLUSION

Reading Xenopoulos's novels, the reader will notice that they are full of characters and what is more, there is an overwhelming presence of female characters. Although numerous studies have been made on various topics regarding Xenopoulos's fiction coming from many different perspectives, the particular subject dealt with here has not previously been adequately studied. The present study, although not an exhaustive one, adds to this scholarship by exploring some aspects concerning women in Xenopoulos's novels from the period 1885–1945, providing some conclusions regarding how and to what extent he represents his contemporary context, whether he is being conservative or progressive and if he follows any literary trend, or is just writing to please the public, in which, as it has been mentioned earlier he was very popular.

Having examined the social context of the late nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century and women's position in society and the family as presented in Xenopoulos's novels, I shall proceed to some general conclusions that may be reached regarding women's social position as depicted in his work. Looking at the dates when Xenopoulos's texts were first published, it is obvious that he followed the real-life developments in women's social position, which have been described above.¹

In his early novels² he had a moderately conservative attitude, whereas with the passage of time, he became more progressive.³ This gradual development reaches its climax in his late

¹ See section 1 of the first chapter.

² *Μοδιστρούλα* (1890), *Μαργαρίτα Στέφα* (1893), *Στέλλα Βιολάντη* (1903).

³ *Η Τρίμορφη γυναίκα* (1916), *Ισαβέλλα* (1923), *Παυλίνα* (1933), *Μαίρη και Μαρίνα* (1934), *Μεγάλη γυναίκα* (1936).

novel *Φωτεινή* (1941), in which the heroine, an Arts student, refuses to marry the man of her father's choice, leaves Athens and lives and studies in Europe with the man she chooses to marry. However, it might be argued that from the beginning of his writing career Xenopoulos wavered between conservatism and feminism. He was progressive and open-minded regarding social matters and especially women's position in society, but conservative regarding marriage and the dowry.

In his novels Xenopoulos revealed the discrimination against women in the patriarchal society of the end of the nineteenth and up to the mid twentieth century. His female characters are more clearly defined than the male ones and through them, he presents the fate of woman as decided by the male-dominated prejudices of a patriarchal culture, as well as the changes in their lives brought about by the rise of the feminist movement in the same period.

Xenopoulos described the physical appearance of women with detailed and bold references to facial and bodily features and together with clothing, hair and accessories. These descriptions serve the construction of the plot and help the writer show the realistic character of his novels.

After discussing the opportunities in education and work that women had in Xenopoulos's novels, I reached some conclusions regarding his position on this matter. Firstly, he seems to support their efforts at emancipation and their claims for education and better employment opportunities. It is important to note that he depicts different social classes and this is essential as social class is an indicator of the different approaches to social problems. Secondly, he is a pioneer in the Greek literary context, as he depicts the world of prostitutes and prostitution as a social problem. His depiction of the world of the prostitute could very aptly be termed

characteristic of his progressiveness, but overall, he is conservative in his approach (matters of dowry, marriage, motherhood).

It should be noted that a general conclusion to be drawn about Xenopoulos's attitude towards women in matters of marriage and motherhood is that he is not progressive; rather one might say that he sticks to the traditional views regarding these matters. What is more, I should point out that exceptions mostly concern upper-class women and their unconventional behaviour is a result of their character. This observation leads to the conclusion that the progressive ideas espoused by his heroines coincide with the writer's own, but they are presented objectively by him. It seems that in his novels Xenopoulos tried to avoid any direct criticism of the institution of marriage and the role of the woman as mother, as he did not want to attack the morals of his day.

Regarding the presentation of character and behaviour we can conclude from reading Xenopoulos's novels in chronological order that he was open-minded in his bold descriptions of prostitution and the sexual element (*Τιμή του αδελφού, Κατήφορος*) from the beginning of his writing career, so there is only a slight development in his depiction of his heroines' behaviour in this respect. The only difference observed is that in his earlier novels he is cautious about expressing modern ideas, such as women smoking, or a girl walking alone in the street, whilst in the later stories his heroines' character and behaviour is presented forthrightly, and more accurately.

It could also be said that Xenopoulos observed both the lower- and middle-class milieu of Zakynthos and Athens and the nature of the characters and represented them consistently in

their emotional inner life and their behaviour, with special reference to female characters: the traditional mother, oppressed bride, modern bourgeois girl, innocent girl, as well as the “trollop” (“ανάλαφρη κοκότα”). I found some differences between the Zakynthian and Athenian novels: in the former, he describes the progressive character of his heroines indirectly; by contrast, Athenian girls’ rebelliousness and unconventionality is overtly mentioned.

Xenopoulos did not depict ideal or perfect women; instead he showed them as earthly beings with weaknesses and endearing qualities and thus we cannot classify his heroines in simple categories. He was in a way an “ally” of women who might have unconscious desires, which they could gratify vicariously through his novels. He did not, however, wish to be revolutionary as contemporary society did not seem ready to accept that. As Takis Adamos⁴ and Fotos Politis⁵ observe, he was reserved in expressing his progressive ideas “Να φαίνεται και προοδευτικός αλλά να μην κινδυνεύει να χαρακτηριστεί επαναστάτης”.⁶

In all the her heroines of his books, Xenopoulos has reflected with artistic mastery and delicacy the psychology of the Modern Greek woman, her place in society and the pressures she endured, but he also envisioned a new type of woman who was liberated from the strains of the past and who could equally participate in social life. In Xenopoulos’s work we encountered a contrast that resides in the social descent of women figures: in the highest class of society we find the westernised woman, the ideal beauty, contrasted to subjugated and immoral women who are described based on models of coarseness and ugliness. The writer, in most of his work, avoids expressing an opinion and merely keeps the role of a painter of his

⁴ T. Adamos, *Η λογοτεχνική μας κληρονομιά*, op.cit., p. 98.

⁵ F. Politis, *Επιλογή κριτικών άρθρων*, vol. 3 op.cit., p. 211.

⁶ Ibid.

time. Although the writer avoided criticizing institutions, because that was not his main concern in writing literature, his views are indirectly obvious through his characters' expressions and actions. Therefore, his novels are a helpful device to us in reconstructing the role and the position of women in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Greek society.

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