

## **Women refugees in interwar Greece: From unredeemed Greeks to 'children of a lesser God'**

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### **Abstract**

This paper examines the case of Asia Minor female refugees who fled to Greece in 1922. The Lausanne Treaty that concluded the Greek-Turkish war provided the first obligatory exchange of populations in world history. Almost 1,3 million Greek-Orthodox refugees transferred from Turkey to Greece that had a population hardly over 5 million people. More than half of those people were female refugees. This study explores why Greece was not among the cases where wars brought about catalytic changes in the social division of labour and why a gender-biased society was reproduced through the exploitation of the female labour force by the inter-war Greece. It investigates the subordination of women in the educational, social and cultural spheres of life. It applies the theoretical concept of intersectionality to analyze the interconnections between gender, class and nativism in the construction of social and cultural space. It examines how masculine superiority was reproduced through refugee labour that swept women's rights under the carpet. It will also cover a period of democratic governments until Metaxas' dictatorship (1936-1940), when the image of women as the reproducer of the Greek nation was transmitted by thinking of them as the mothers of future Greek generations. This research will use primary sources from Greek archives as well as from the League of Nations' archives in Geneva.

### **Introduction**

Wars prove the relativism of the gender difference and have catalytic changes in the gender division of labour in different countries. Their outcome can be radical not only in terms of destroying the social fabric, but also reforming it. War brought about the emancipation of slaves in the United States. War also brought about protective legislations for women in many European states. Penny Summerfield argues: "Broadly speaking twentieth-century wars have been seen not just as periods of social change for women, but as periods of progress towards their emancipation".<sup>1</sup> The social and economic effects of conscription were apparent in terms of female

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<sup>1</sup> P. Summerfield, *Women, War and Social Change: Women in Britain in World War II*, in: A. Marwick (Ed.), *Total*

employment in many European countries (such as UK, France, etc.). The role of women in industrial and agricultural production was considerably enhanced, since many European governments were ready to shift labour from one gender to another.<sup>2</sup> War abolished the limitations Linda McDowell defines as giving unequal access to particular places for men and women.<sup>3</sup> Labour shortage prevailed during the war played a vital role in increasing the supply of women workers who were prepared to put up with the double burden in order to go out to work.<sup>4</sup> For instance, Britain mobilised women much more extensively in the Second World War than in the first. Ninety per cent of the able-bodied single women between the ages of eighteen and forty, as well as eighty per cent of those in this age group who were married but had no children, were involved in some form of national service to aid the war effort.<sup>5</sup> In this context, feminist movements managed to prove their case and negotiated better working conditions or wage rates for female labour. In this context, feminist movements managed to prove their case and negotiated better working conditions or wage rates for female labour. Arthur Marwick has also suggested that housewives forced to manage family affairs and workforce demands were emancipated by the experience. In his view, these women voluntarily entered paid work and thus war undermined the gender segregation of jobs, leaving women permanently dissatisfied with traditional sex roles.<sup>6</sup> Even in inter-war Germany, many blatantly discriminatory measures were reversed once a male labour surplus was superseded by a labour shortage as a result of conscription and the regime's

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*War and Social Change*, London, 1988, 95.

<sup>2</sup> P. Hayes, Introduction, in: P. Hayes (Ed.), *Themes in Modern European History 1890-1945*, London, 1992, 12.

<sup>3</sup> L. McDowell, *Gender, Identity and Place: Understanding Feminist Geographies*, Cambridge, 1999.

<sup>4</sup> P. Summerfield, *Women, War and Social Change*, 112.

<sup>5</sup> H.L. Smith, The effect of the war on the status of women, in: Harold L. Smith (Ed.), *War and social change. British Society in the Second World War*, Manchester, 1986, 211.

<sup>6</sup> A. Marwick, 'Problems and consequences of organizing society for total war', in: N.F. Dreisziger (Ed.), *Mobilization for Total War: The Canadian, American and British Experience, 1914-1918, 1939-1945*, Waterloo, 1981, 9.

armaments policies.<sup>7</sup>

In Greece, however, female employment in these sectors did not bring about a radical change in the existing system of labour exploitation or the establishment of a less gender-biased inter-war society. Although women played an active role in the Greek labour market, there was no real challenge to the traditional male domination in either the social or political spheres. It was only on the 28 May 1952 that Greek women obtained the right to vote in national elections and to stand as candidates in parliamentary or municipal elections. It was in that year that the first female parliamentarian was elected.

This study will discuss the inter-sections of forced migration and feminist scholarship, examining the case of female refugees who fled to Greece in the early 1920s. It will examine how and why gender-biased social and economic relations were reproduced though refugee women participated in the paid labour force.

The first part of the paper examines the problems that the refugee women had to deal with after their settlement. The second part will investigate the introduction of this new female workforce into the urban labour market with a focus on its exploitation in the weaving and carpet industries. The final part will investigate the cultural and political space of settlement. It will show that the refugee women had no support from the feminist organisations in Greece and argue that Ioannis Metaxas' dictatorial regime (1936-1940) signalled the end of any prospect for women's emancipation, articulating the female role as being the pillar of the Nation in terms of breeding the youth of Greece as mothers and good housewives.

Despite the extensive literature dealing with various aspects of the refugee question in inter-war Greece, there has been no examination of the role of the female refugee labour force in the reconstruction of gender relations. The primary sources that will be used here include material

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<sup>7</sup> M. Burleigh – W. Wippermann, *The Racial State: Germany 1933-1945*, Cambridge, 1994, 258-259.

from the League of Nations Archives in Geneva and the Centre of Asia Minor Studies Centre in Athens, the Gazette of Debates in the Greek parliament, along with the National Archives in London

### **Difficulties of refugee settlement**

The inter-war period began in Greece with the signing of the Lausanne Peace Treaty of 1923, which ended the Greco-Turkish War (1919-1922) and called for the first obligatory exchange of populations in history based exclusively on the criterion of religion. By April 1923, some 355,000 members of Greece's Muslim population had sent to Turkey. In return, more than 1.3 million Greek-Orthodox refugees fled to Greece. Indeed, almost 900,000 were uprooted and settled in Greece before the conclusion of the Lausanne Conference. Due to their persecution in Turkey or the sanitary conditions in the refugee camps many of them died before the census of 1928 that recorded 1,221,555 refugees as having finally settled in Greece.<sup>8</sup> Their new home was a poor, war-weary country with a population of 5,016,889 that had been called upon to absorb all these homeless people.<sup>9</sup> Of these refugees, 578,824 were settled in rural areas.<sup>10</sup>

What follows focuses will examine the case of female refugees who fled to Greece in the early 1920s to show how and why patriarchal relations were reproduced though their participation in the paid labour force. It will focus on Greek cities to examine the reproduction of gender divisions of labour. This is for two reasons: First, to show that it is not only agricultural work within peasant households that required female work that was traditionally subjugated to male social control. Second, because the rehabilitation of urban refugees through employment

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<sup>8</sup> *Statistical Annual of Greece*, Athens, 1931, 31.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *Statistical Annual of Greece*, Athens, 1930, 104-105.

constituted the most difficult part of the settlement process and was given very limited consideration by Greek policy-makers and international authorities such as the RSC (Refugee Settlement Commission) that was entrusted with the relief of the refugees by the League of Nations,.

In the event, the rural settlement of refugees dealt with fewer problems in economic terms. More than half of the rural settlers fled to Greece from Eastern Thrace after the Lausanne Treaty in 1923. This exchangeable population from this area did not share the appalling economic conditions of the overwhelming majority of Greek Orthodox refugees from Asia Minor. They managed to bring their own animals, seed, and tools, and thus, as Stephen Ladas noted, "The Commission did not have to supply these."<sup>11</sup> These refugees were in a rather better condition than the remainder of the refugees, and were mostly concentrated in Western Thrace and Macedonia. Therefore, their agricultural settlement could be implemented immediately. According to primary sources, "these relatively affluent refugees constituted 256,000 out of the 578,824 who were finally settled as agriculturalists."<sup>12</sup> Moreover, the settlement of this huge refugee mass through land distribution led to "one of the most radical land-reforms in post-1918 Europe."<sup>13</sup> It turned Greece into a nation of smallholders.

In this context, It appeared easier to provide productive employment for the refugees on the land than in the big cities, where "apart from the housing, the occupational rehabilitation of the refugees was an integral part of the urban settlement".<sup>14</sup> Within this context the report of Nansen emphasised that "the most difficult problem for the Greek Government is perhaps to find work for the urban refugees who are estimated to constitute approximately 50% of the total number of

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<sup>11</sup> St.P. Ladas, *The Exchange of Minorities: Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey*, New York, 1932, 655.

<sup>12</sup> League of Nations Archives (LNA hereafter) in Geneva, R 1763,48/25485/25485: Letter from Major Johnson to James W. Verity, Royal Colonial Institute, London, Mar. 3,1923.

<sup>13</sup> M. Mazower, *Greece and the Inter-War Economic Crisis*. Oxford, 1991, 78.

<sup>14</sup> Gazette of the Debates, 65th Session, 25 June 1924, 477.

refugees”.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, the RSC admitted in 1924 that “as regards the urban refugees the Commission is most anxious to foster any form of industry which may be suitable. No practicable schemes, however, for the establishment of new, or for the extension of existing industries have yet been submitted to the Commission”.<sup>16</sup>

At the same time, the loss of property by the overwhelming majority of refugees during their flight led them to be classified as being in need of the very basic things to survive. Female refugees had to cope with the poverty that was a collective characteristic of the incoming populations. In his report to the Lausanne Conference, Fridtjof Nansen accentuated the fact that “The vast majority of these refugees, especially those from Asia Minor, came without clothing or blankets of any kind, except for what they stood up in, which was often of a very light character. The clothing question is most acute and, unfortunately, demands considerable sums of money.”<sup>17</sup> While winter was imminent and hung over the lives of the refugees like the sword of Damocles, Nansen was particularly anxious about the future of those who “had to be fed”.<sup>18</sup> One refugee Nota Diamanti recalled her experience of the settlement camp on the island of Mytilene. She reported that the male and female refugees were accommodated in the public gardens and were given only a small allowance. “The invalids and the children went begging.”<sup>19</sup>

We should stress that the difficulty in terms of gaining employment rights was accentuated

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<sup>15</sup> League of Nations Archives (LNA hereafter) in Geneva (Switzerland), R 1761, 48/24722/24337, Report by Dr. Nansen on the refugee situation in Greece, Part II, 28 November 1922, 9.

<sup>16</sup> League of Nations, Official Journal, April 1925, Annex 610, C.91. M. 30. 1924. II. [Report on the operations of the Refugee Settlement Commission for the first three months, submitted to the Council on 11 March 1924], Athens, 25 February 1924, 590.

<sup>17</sup> LNA, R 1761, 48/24722/24337, Report of Dr. Nansen on the refugee situation in Greece, Part II, 28 November 1922, 1.

<sup>18</sup> League of Nations, Official Journal, Verbatim Record of the Fourth Assembly. Sixteenth Plenary Meeting, Tuesday 27 September 1923, 14-16, [Cambridge University Library, Cambridge].

<sup>19</sup> Oral evidence of Nota Diamanti (From Dikeli of Magnesia or Mannesa), in: F.D. Apostolopoulos (Ed), *Hi Exodos: Martyries apo tis Eparchies ton Dytikon Paralion tis Mikrasias (Exodus: Evidence from the provinces of the west coast of Asia Minor)*, vol. A', Athens, 1980, 145.

by their lack of male protection. Many of their male family members were killed or detained in Turkey. According to Turkish sources published in France in *La Mord de Smyrne* and republished by *The Daily Telegraph* in Great Britain, 125,000 Greek Orthodox men of military age were drafted to the labour battalions in Anatolia.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, about a quarter of the refugee women were widows, while the percentage was only 17.58 per cent for the total female population of Greece (including the refugees).<sup>21</sup> In many ports where the refugees disembarked, the RSC officials reported that 90 per cent of them were old women, old men and children, since all the men of military age had been detained in Anatolia by the Turks,<sup>22</sup> and had been deported into the interior to form the labour battalions.<sup>23</sup> Fridtjof Nansen's report estimated that at least one hundred thousand male refugees had been detained in Asia Minor. He regarded this detention of "the entire male population between the ages of fifteen and fifty-five" as "the chief disaster which had befallen these refugees".<sup>24</sup>

In the event, the absence of men had serious implications for the refugee women who were forced to work with no access to child care. For instance, Cavalla was a city where most of its male and female workers worked either in cultivation or in the industrial sector of producing tobacco. The school inspectors of northern Greece argued, "1,500 refugee children were roaming through the streets of Cavalla, whereas the pupils who attended regularly were stacked into overcrowded classrooms."<sup>25</sup> As MP Alexandros Pappas emphatically stated, "it would be ideal to establish kindergartens everywhere, but mainly in places occupied by labouring classes and refugee

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<sup>20</sup> D. Pentzopoulos, *The Balkan Exchange of Minorities and its Impact on Greece*, London, 2002, 100.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>22</sup> R 1763, 48/25485/25485, 3 March 1923.

<sup>23</sup> LNA, R 1761, 48/24722/24337, Report of Dr. Nansen on the refugee situation in Greece, Part I, (28 November 1922) 2.

<sup>24</sup> LNA, R 1761, 48/24722/24337, 3.

<sup>25</sup> Gazette of the Debates, 175th Session, Apr. 8, 1924, 941.

settlements, where the children are out on the streets and need a shelter while their mothers are at work.<sup>26</sup>

What was demanded of the national and international policy-makers was “to find houses and subsistence for these unhappy victims of war, and to absorb them so far as may be possible into the economic life of the nation”.<sup>27</sup> Nonetheless, this task was a very difficult one, particularly for a state like Greece, which had limited welfare resources and was already facing problem caused by rapid urbanization. As it was stressed in the minutes of the parliamentary discussions, “the cry and the noise are not made by the vast majority of the settled rural people. The pain comes from the urban populations and the unsettled”.<sup>28</sup> It is obvious how difficult it was for a poor country which had been at war from 1912 to 1923, to carry out an urban settlement programme without funding.<sup>29</sup>

At the same time, the lack of funds necessary for the urban settlement was further exacerbated by the rapid movement of refugees towards the cities, threatened the capacity to deal with them.<sup>30</sup> A sharp increase in the urban population be traced across Greece in this period.<sup>31</sup> Of the total number of 615,000 urban refugees 300,000 were in Athens and Piraeus and 170,000 in Salonica.<sup>32</sup> In fact, Drama, Alexandroupolis, Yiannitsa, Kavalla and Serres received more than half of their existing populations in 1923. For Katerini, Salonica, Mytelini, Veroia, Xanthi and

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<sup>26</sup> Gazette of the Debates, 1st Session, July 2, 1929, 19.

<sup>27</sup> LNA, R 1762, 48/25545/24954, World appeal on behalf of the refugees in Asia Minor and Greece (signed by Dr. Nansen), 1.

<sup>28</sup> *Efimeris ton Syzitiseon* [Gazette of the Debates hereafter], 152<sup>nd</sup> Session, 27 May 1925, [Library of the Greek Parliament in Athens], 285.

<sup>29</sup> League of Nations, Official Journal, 4th Year (No. 8, August 1923) Eighth Meeting, Geneva, Thursday 5 July 1923, 903.

<sup>30</sup> League of Nations, Official Journal, July 1927, C. 281.M. 104. 1927. II [Fourteenth Quarterly Report on the work of the Refugee Settlement Commission, Athens, 25 May 1927], 946.

<sup>31</sup> I. Polyzos, *Hi Egkatakastasi Ton Prosfygon tu 1922: Mia Oriake Periptosi Astikoposis*, [The Settlement of 1922 Refugees: A Borderline Case of Urbanisation], Athens, 1984, 31.

<sup>32</sup> League of Nations, Official Journal, Sixteenth Quarterly Report of the RSC, February 1928, 236-237.

Edessa was between 40 and 50 per cent, whereas in Heraklion, Chios, Komotini, Florina, and Athens-Piraeus it was between twenty and forty.<sup>33</sup> In 1928, the population of towns with more than 20,000 inhabitants was on average 31.7 per cent refugees.<sup>34</sup> The cities were also growing. The population of small villages increased from 242,236 in 1907 to 571,735 in 1928, while the population of cities increased from 627,973 to 2,064,696 in the same period.<sup>35</sup> In 1928 the RSC noted that “the majority of towns in Greece are now inhabited by refugee families more or less in proportion to their capacity.”<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, almost a third of Athens’ population were refugees.<sup>37</sup> This rapid demographic change explains the unplanned urbanisation of the Greek towns, as well as some of the major difficulties encountered by Greek policy-makers of the refugees’ settlement. Refugee housing, for example, was built in towns with little or no infrastructure.<sup>38</sup> The strain on the economic, social and political functions and structures of Athens was immense.<sup>39</sup> The government proclaimed its alarm and anxiety about such huge transfers of the population to the fringes of urban life and their impact on urban structures nationwide.<sup>40</sup>

Eventually, the League of Nations took into account the country’s financial difficulties and in 1923 gave its authorisation and support for a loan.<sup>41</sup> After negotiations the Greek government signed contracts with three banks in London, New York and Athens, providing for a seven per cent

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<sup>33</sup> I. Polyzos, *The Settlement of 1922 Refugees: A Borderline Case of Urbanisation*, Athens, 1984, 31.

<sup>34</sup> B. Kayser, *Anthropogeographia tis Ellados* [Human geography of Greece], Athens, 1968, 33.

<sup>35</sup> *Statistical Annual of Greece*, Athens, 1930, 31.

<sup>36</sup> League of Nations, C.569.M.181, Twentieth Quarterly Report of the Refugee Settlement Commission, Athens, 16 November 1928 (Geneva, 21 November 1928), 10.

<sup>37</sup> *Statistical Annual of Greece*, Athens, 1931.

<sup>38</sup> V.D. Gizeli, *Kinoniki Metaschematisme kai Proelefsi tis Kinonikis Katikias stin Ellada (1920-1930)*[Social Transformations and the Origins of the Social Residence in Greece (1920-1930)] Athens, 1984, 136.

<sup>39</sup> B. Kayser, *Anthropogeographia tis Ellados*, 31-34.

<sup>40</sup> *Gazette of the Debates*, 72<sup>nd</sup> Session, 3 July 1924, 639.

<sup>41</sup> League of Nations, *Official Journal*, 4th Year (No. 8, August 1923) Eighth Meeting, held at Geneva on Thursday 5 July 1923, 903.

loan of 12,300,000 £ placed at the disposal of the RSC.<sup>42</sup> Considering the deduction of British stamp-duty (two per cent) and the commission expenses of the three banks (five per cent), the nominal interest of 7 per cent rose to 8.7 per cent. The money was approved by the League of Nations on 29<sup>th</sup> September 1923 and ratified by the Greek Chamber on 24<sup>th</sup> October 1924. The RSC was authorised as an autonomous international body with full legal capacity to deal with the refugee problem in Greece.<sup>43</sup> However, the RSC gave priority to the rural settlement of the refugees in terms of welfare assistance. By 31st December 1928 the RSC had spent 9,117,362 pounds for agricultural settlement and only 1,302,734 pounds on urban settlement.<sup>44</sup> The scope of this policy is also reflected in the proposal of the Greek MP Manousis to entrust the RSC with the exclusive task of the rural settlement. According to him, “such a decision would not imply a contravention of the RSC rules, since its Protocol provided that the functions of the RSC shall be to promote the establishment of refugees in productive work”.<sup>45</sup>

Apart from the lack of male support or funding and welfare assistance for permanent settlement, the female refugee population had to deal with exploitation in the labour market.

### **Sweeping women’s rights under the urban carpet**

In reality, 83.8 per cent of the new workers in Greek industry were refugees in 1928.<sup>46</sup> Almost 60 per cent and 34 per cent of the refugee labour force were employed in the carpet and

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<sup>42</sup> League of Nations, Official Journal, Special Supplement, No. 56. Records of the Eighth Ordinary Session. Minutes of the Second Committee, Twentieth Meeting, 21 September 1927, pp. 61-62.

<sup>43</sup> Société des Nations, *L'Établissement des Réfugiés en Grèce*, Geneva, 1926, 167.

<sup>44</sup> A.B. Protonotarios, *To prosfygiko provlima apo Historikis, Nomikes kai Kratikes Apopseos* [The Refugee Problem from a Historical, Legal and State Perspective], Athens, 1929, 88.

<sup>45</sup> Gazette of the Debates, 65th Session, 25 June 1924, 477.

<sup>46</sup> *Statistical Annual of Greece*, Athens 1930.

tobacco industries respectively.<sup>47</sup> Women consisted 83 per cent of the workforce in textile weaving and 72 per cent in tobacco processing.<sup>48</sup> Refugee women formed 83 per cent of the labour force in the textile industry as a whole, and 71 per cent in made-to-measure clothes production in 1930.<sup>49</sup>

Many factories sought to employ widows and orphans, for whom the work often constituted their sole means of livelihood.<sup>50</sup> Specifically, 52% of all women who were employed in industry were only between ten and nineteen years old and a third of them were refugees, usually orphans without any education or access to trade unions.<sup>51</sup> It was noted in the Greek parliament that there were 54,000 refugee children who had lost both their parents.<sup>52</sup> Similarly, in April 1925 the chairman of the RSC, Charles P. Howland, alarmed at the large proportion of widows and orphans, emphasised that “from the humanitarian and social point of view, this is a very disquieting situation, which the State, already faced with heavy burdens, is not in a position to relieve”.<sup>53</sup> In 1931, the labour inspectors found 1,348 boys and girls aged between fifteen and eighteen years working in the industrial sector of Athens. The overwhelming majority of them were refugee orphans.<sup>54</sup> In fact, a third of the female labour force in Greece was mainly orphan refugee girls. They received 44 per cent of the male salary and were employed in the tobacco,

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<sup>47</sup> M. Riginos, *Paragogikes domes kai ergatika imeromisthia stin Ellada 1909-1936* [Productive structures and labour wages in Greece 1909-1936], Athens, 1987, 144.

<sup>48</sup> L. Leontidou, *Polis tis siopis: ergatikos epikismos tis Athinas kai tou Pireas, 1909-1940* [Cities of Silence: Labour settlement of Athens and Piraeus, 1909-1940], Athens, 1990, 198.

<sup>49</sup> G. Giannakopoulos, *Refugee Greece: Photographs from the Archive of the Centre of Asia Minor Studies*, Athens, 1992, 40.

<sup>50</sup> H. Morgenthau, *I was Sent to Athens*, New York, 1929, 249.

<sup>51</sup> E. Avdela, Stichia gia tin ergasia ginekon sto mesopolemo [Data about the women work in the inter-war period], in: Th. Mavrogordatos and Ch. Chatziosif (Eds), *Venizelismos kai Astikos Eksychronismos* [Venizelism and Civic Modernization], Rethymno, 1988, 196.

<sup>52</sup> Gazette of the Debates, 69th Session, 25 June 1924, 563.

<sup>53</sup> League of Nations, Official Journal, Annex 734, No. C.112.M.53.1925.II, [Fifth Quarterly report on the operations of the Refugee Settlement Commission], Athens, 25 February 1925], p. 514.

<sup>54</sup> M. Riginos, *Paragogikes domes kai ergatika imeromisthia stin Ellada 1909-1936*, Athens, 1987, 195.

paper and carpet industries.<sup>55</sup>

Refugee women and orphans were the most vulnerable people in inter-war Greece. They had to work in order to survive. Even when there were men in the family, refugee women had to work due to male underpayment or unemployment. Their dreadful housing conditions and underpaid work were described by foreign officials in ways that echoed passages in the novels of Victor Hugo and Charles Dickens in the nineteenth century. For example, in the Drapetsona area, lying between Piraeus and St. George's Bay, British officials observed: "It is a slum district inhabited mainly by refugees who have for seven years lived very miserably in mean, demoralising surroundings with little prospect of betterment to look forward to. Many of the men are employed irregularly while the standard of pay even of those in regular employment is not high."<sup>56</sup>

Additionally, the working conditions in larger factories, such as oil and cement companies, in the same area were appalling, and "in a large number of cases the father of the (refugee) family was unable, by his own earnings, to support the household so that the woman is compelled to work too; the food consumed is such as no British workman would eat".<sup>57</sup>

In many factories preference in employment was given to refugee widows and orphans, and this work often constituted their sole means of livelihood.<sup>58</sup> In the same context, 52% of all women who were employed in industry were very young (ten to nineteen years old) usually orphans and without education or access to syndicalism.<sup>59</sup> However, for these female refugee workers employment was like charity. They simply substituted native female work that was not

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<sup>55</sup> E. Avdela, Data about the women work in the inter-war period, Rethymno, 1988, 196.

<sup>56</sup> PRO, FO 371/14380, C 422/41/19, Report from Mr Ramsay (Athens) on economic and labour conditions in Greece in the district of Piraeus, 16 January 1930, 3 - 4.

<sup>57</sup> PRO, FO 371/14380, C 422/41/19, 4.

<sup>58</sup> H. Morgenthau, *I was Sent to Athens*, 249.

<sup>59</sup> E. Avdela, Data about the women work in the inter-war period, 196.

tolerated by labour inspectors. Following the pattern of needy migrants in other countries, the majority "were ready to undertake any low-skilled and undesirable work".<sup>60</sup>

Many Greek refugees reverted to the arts and crafts that were traditional in the places they had migrated from in Anatolia. As a small inquiry conducted by RSC officials on the refugee-workers' backgrounds revealed, the majority of refugees had been agricultural workers. However, among the remainder were "small urban traders (about one hundred thousand), carpet-makers (about fifty thousand), weavers, boot-makers, etc."<sup>61</sup> The main concern of policy-makers was to get this refugee labour force into productive employment which would benefit the national revenue, as well as encourage them to form small independent businesses of their own. As RSC officials reported, this was likely to involve textiles: "In almost all our colonies specimens are to be seen of weaving women, ranging from fine silk tissues from Brussa to woollen '*kilims*' in bright and varied colours."<sup>62</sup>

Some of the new industries, especially weaving and carpet-making were particularly useful because they helped to tackle the problem of female refugee employment. The disproportionate number of women in the first waves of displaced people could not only find immediate employment - three months training being sufficient to make a weaver, for example - but such trades as rug-weaving would not be affected by the absence of men of military age.<sup>63</sup> Other philanthropic refugee organisations attempted to provide assistance along these lines: for example, "the Save the Children Fund had a workroom where the women and girls were being taught weaving (...)"<sup>64</sup> This type of female employment, with its knock-on effects for contractors and

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<sup>60</sup> A. Redford, *Labour Migration in England 1800-1850*, Manchester, 1976, 156-62.

<sup>61</sup> LNA, R 1763, 48/25485/25485, Memorandum regarding the re-settlement of refugees in Greece, 3 March 1923.

<sup>62</sup> League of Nations, Official Journal, C.406.M.126, Nineteenth Quarterly Report of the Refugee Settlement Commission, Athens, 15 August 1928 (Geneva, 22 August 1928), 19.

<sup>63</sup> LNA, R 1761, 48/24722/24337, Report of Dr. Nansen, 28 November 1922, Part II, 3.

<sup>64</sup> V.R. Markham, 'Greece and the Refugees from Asia Minor', *Fortnightly Review*, February 1925, 181.

other specialists, created income for numerous urban families whose male members were unemployed, while at the same time enabling other women often to work at home, thereby bettering the economic condition of the rural settlements as well. It is not surprising, therefore, that such plan preoccupied much of the time of the RSC.<sup>65</sup>

Significantly, several of these industries - especially the carpet industry - had not existed in Greece before the arrival of the refugees. The RSC officials reported that: "With the influx of refugees from Asia Minor, this industry was transplanted to Greece and took root both in the rural settlements and in the urban centres created by the Commission".<sup>66</sup> As Morgenthau pointed out, so-called "Turkish rugs" had for centuries been one of the two or three main exportable products of the Turkish Empire: "They were largely made by Greeks and Armenians. Their fabrication was a domestic art practised in the home by the women and children at odd hours after the household tasks were finished. Each district had its own traditional patterns, handed down through the succeeding generations and representing a local adaptation of some floral design or some Muslim religious symbol".<sup>67</sup> Nansen reported in 1923 that "Large numbers of the refugees are expert dyers, hand-weavers, etc., and the small factory which already exists in this district has always more work on hand than it can cope with. The Governor General is anxious to establish a large factory in which to employ refugees, if the necessary rationing can be carried out".<sup>68</sup> The Commission therefore began to finance the construction of one or more large buildings in each refugee settlement in order to house new looms.<sup>69</sup> In 1925, in the course of a parliamentary discussion, the MP Leonidas Makalambasis reported the outcome of this type of refugee

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<sup>65</sup> League of Nations, C.406.M.126, Nineteenth Quarterly Report, 18.

<sup>66</sup> League of Nations, C.406.M.126, 18.

<sup>67</sup> H. Morgenthau, *I was Sent to Athens*, 248.

<sup>68</sup> LNA, R 1762, 48/27978/24912, Report by Dr. Nansen on the Near East refugees (Western Thrace settlement), Geneva, 19 April 1923, 5.

<sup>69</sup> LNA, R 1763, 48/25485/25485, 3 March 1923.

employment: “The labour involved totals of 4,000 working women; the output amounts to 10,000 square metres”.<sup>70</sup>

Such expansion continued in the following years. The number of textile and weaving industries was six in 1923, ten in 1926, and twenty-four in 1927.<sup>71</sup> In 1929 the chairman of the RSC also reported that the manufacture of oriental rugs was still “one of the most promising fields of industry”. He argued that “the refugees are destined to be one of the greatest assets of the country. The new arts they introduced and the energy they had infused into the whole nation by their competition were strengthening the economic structure of the country and vitalising its enterprises”.<sup>72</sup> Of the large number of specialist refugee women workers in Greece, eleven thousand were occupied in the manufacture of carpets, using 5,600 looms.<sup>73</sup> For the first time, therefore, the RSC was convinced that the carpet industry came under the heading of “productive occupation” and it decided to devote 100,000 £ to its development.<sup>74</sup>

So successful was the industry that it caused a reaction in Turkey. The Turkish newspaper *Journal d' Orient* of 4th March 1925 carried an article (republished in the Greek press) under the title “Greece is creating dangers for the Turkish carpet industry”. In it the Greeks were accused of taking advantage of the exchange of populations in order to conquer the European market, creating “fierce competition for the Turkish carpet industry, labelling without hesitation the trade mark “*Usak*” on carpets made in Athens or Salonica”.<sup>75</sup> It also anticipated that in five years the Greeks would be in a position to match seventy-five per cent of the Turkish output. In fact, keen competition from countries like Persia and Turkey proved to be one of the factors that led to the eventual decline of the Greek rug

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<sup>70</sup> Gazette of the Debates, 194<sup>th</sup> Session, 29 May 1925, 377.

<sup>71</sup> *Statistical Annual of Greece*, Athens, 1931, 96.

<sup>72</sup> H. Morgenthau, *I was Sent to Athens*, 249.

<sup>73</sup> League of Nations, Official Journal, C.406.M.126, Nineteenth Quarterly Report, 1928, 18.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> G.A. Anastasopoulos, *Istoria tis Ellenikis Viomechanias, 1840-1940* [History of the Greek Industry, 1840-1940], Athens, 1940, Vol. III, 1157.

industry. It was exacerbated by the Greek industry's reliance on the United States as the largest market for the rugs, which was curtailed by the world economic crisis of 1929. Thus, in 1929 rug production fell by some sixty-five per cent compared to the output of 1928. The number of factories decreased to eight in 1930 and the supply of capital and credit started drying up. Although the government created an autonomous "Greek Carpet-making Organisation" in 1929 in order to protect and encourage the trade, and granted it special rights in respect to the collection of loans and advances, it was too late to reverse the industry's decline.<sup>76</sup>

The carpet industry, and its many small businesses, collapsed and many women lost their jobs. However, domestic production survived for many years. It is worth noticing that the same small textile workshops were still found in refugee houses forty years later.<sup>77</sup> In the event, the increased household weaving and the introduction of the manufacture of oriental carpets at home caused little upset in the labour market and preserved paternalistic relations in the social space. Regarding also young girls, who were employed in weaving, an additional advantage of home employment "was that they were less exposed to the hazards of the city".<sup>78</sup> In this context, carpet and weaving production created the structures, give credit to Walby's analysis, where patriarchy is reproduced and women are made susceptible to male social control: waged work and sexuality.<sup>79</sup> Rug-industry in Hackney inner London created jobs for women, but the workplace was also the home. Sewing was something that was traditionally regarded as women's work. For men homework had its advantages since sewing jobs could be completed in between other domestic duties. "Hence in the sweated trades of London, capitalism and patriarchy conjoined to produce a

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<sup>76</sup> League of Nations, Official Journal, July 1929, 1193-1194.

<sup>77</sup> R. Hirschon, *Heirs of the Greek Catastrophe: The Social Life of Asia Minor Refugees in Piraeus* Oxford, 1989, 83.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> S. Walby, *Theorising Patriarchy*, Oxford, 1990.

system that was less of a threat to male dominance”.<sup>80</sup> Domestic weaving helped to uphold a patriarchal structure of familial life since men were seen both as head of families with legally sanctioned power over their wives and children and as participants in public life.<sup>81</sup>

During Metaxas’ dictatorship (1936-1940) patriarchy was consolidated through the economic and political subordination of women. In the dictatorial social system the male leader and his male followers hold primary power and predominate in roles of political leadership, moral authority, social privilege and control of property. The weaving industry was also represented as being at the service of the regime. In one propaganda film a shot depicts a group of working girls, presumably from a textile factory, carrying a tapestry and as the camera focuses on the surface it reveals the emblem of the Fourth of August woven on it.<sup>82</sup> Metaxas’ regime associated women with what Anderson calls the three c’s of cooking, caring and cleaning.<sup>83</sup> His regime also articulated the new image of women as mothers of the nation to demonstrate its own aims.

### **Women in the political and cultural space**

These sectors of industrial production (textiles, weaving, etc.) have encouraged actions of female emancipation in other countries. As Linda McDowell and Doreen Massey have demonstrated, the shape of labour markets based on class and gender distinction in the Lancashire textile towns in the north-west of England, which were the birthplace of the factory system, was conducive to social and political changes. It resulted in equal opportunities legislation and employment rights as well as in striving for fairer political representation and greater social

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<sup>80</sup> A. Holt-Jensen, *Geography. History and Concepts. A Student’s Guide*, 3rd Ed, London and New Delhi, 2001, 156.

<sup>81</sup> C. Pateman, *The Disorder of Women*, Cambridge, 1989.

<sup>82</sup> M. Petrakis, *The Metaxas Myth. Dictatorship and Propaganda in Greece*, London & New York, 2011, 104.

<sup>83</sup> B. Anderson, Different roots in common ground: transnationalism and migrant domestic workers in London, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 27 :4, (2001), 673-683.

equality.<sup>84</sup> Women in these towns became more radicalised than the women who lived in the conservative patriarchal environment of rural areas where relations with the male population remained unchanged.<sup>85</sup> One would expect that female refugee workers in Greek industries lacking the support that small property, family ties, unbroken traditions provided in the case of native workers, and with their ambitions for upward mobility destroyed, would be also “threatened by the radical proletarianisation of their labour.”<sup>86</sup>

However, the radicalisation of this refugee labour force never happened. Refugee women and men provided a very large, cheap labour force for Greek employers. These workers wanted only to survive. The presence of 1.3 million refugees offered many employers the opportunity to reduce the daily wage by 20 per cent in 1923 and 50 per cent until 1927.<sup>87</sup> As Henry Morgenthau, the Chairman of the RSC, maintained, the limits of the economy as well as of the firms did not allow anything more than the payment of pitifully small wages “which translated themselves, in practical terms, into half a loaf of bread per person per day, a handful of olives, a little olive oil, and meat or fish perhaps once or twice a month”.<sup>88</sup> The extra refugee workforce also gave employers the chance to replace workers who participated in syndicalism or strikes. At the pan-Balkan conference of March 1924 in Vienna, it was pointed out that the refugees “formed a reserve of strike-breakers, which capital could always rely on in every strike”.<sup>89</sup> Within this framework, the stability of the social fabric was safeguarded. Even the division of labour in terms

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<sup>84</sup> L. McDowell and D. Massey, A woman’s place, in: D. Massey and J. Allen (Eds), *Geography Matters!* Cambridge, 1984, 134.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 136.

<sup>86</sup> G. Th. Mavrogordatos, *Stillborn Republic: Social Coalitions and Party Strategies in Greece, 1922-1936*, Berkeley, Los Angeles & London, 1983, 145.

<sup>87</sup> K. Moskof, *Isagogika stin istoria tou Kinimatos tis Ergatikes Taxis. Hi diamorfosi tis Ethnikes Synidesis stin Ellada* [Introduction to the History of the Labour Class: The shape of national and social consciousness in Greece], Athens, 1987, 425-26.

<sup>88</sup> H. Morgenthau, *I was Sent to Athens*, New York, 1929, 249.

<sup>89</sup> FO 371/10771, C 7036/7036/19, Annual report of 1924 on Greece (from Sir M. Cheetham to Mr. Austen Chamberlain), Athens, 15 May 1925, 22, Public Record Office, London, UK, [PRO hereafter].

of the number of non-manual and manual jobs remained the same as before 1923.<sup>90</sup>

Let's not forget that female refugees without voting rights or without male votes in their families meant that they didn't have any power in the political map of the country. In the Balkan context, localized cultures were not penetrated by modernism in social or economic terms. In these societies, face to face relations were far more important than any legislation or state intervention to receive some benefits. Within this framework, only the nexus of personal relations through political patronage could modify oppressive control and lead to their incorporation in the given political system. In this system the electorate behaviour of natives and mainly of destitute refugees could be easily bought.<sup>91</sup> The well-established clientelistic system provided a functional reason for the perpetuation of the existing political balances in a society, where politics were essential for settling individual economic conflicts and for tempering administrative exaction and public office was highly valued for the advancement of private interests.<sup>92</sup> In this political space female labour force was not useful. This was the case even more so when female organisation ignored their existence or reproduced women's traditional role in a male dominated society and denounced their political emancipation.

In this political system, native women were traditionally subjugated to the male domination. However, they had the protection of their bred-winners as well as of their voting power. At the same time, native women enjoyed better working conditions than refugees. In 1910s, Eleftherios Venizelos' governments voted for protective laws (for the Sunday off, the sanitation and safety of workers, the protection of mothers at work, etc.). Unfortunately refugee female work force was 'invisible' or the inspectors of labour.

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<sup>90</sup> *Statistical Annual of Greece*, Athens, 1931, 49.

<sup>91</sup> G. Kritikos, The agricultural settlement of refugees: A source of productive work and stability in Greece, 1923–1930. *Agricultural History*, 79, 2005, 342.

<sup>92</sup> K.R. Legg, *Politics in Modern Greece*. Stanford, 1969, 35-36.

Apart from their exploitation in the labour market, another problem for the female refugees was that the Greek women's movements were oblivious to their plight. In fact, no movement said anything about the need to protect these female refugees or recognized that they faced distinctive problems. Indeed many of these organisations were rather conservative in their understanding of what it took to work for women's emancipation.

Starting in the nineteenth century, Greece had experienced different types of feminist campaigners. Firstly, it was of a non-militant type organised by the Athenian leader Kalliroe Parren. This Greek women's movement lobbied to achieve 'realistic' targets such as the ownership of property and custody of children, and equal access to education and employment, rather than voting rights.<sup>93</sup> Parren publicized her goals by founding a newspaper, *Efimeris ton Kirion* (Women's Journal), in 1887. She also founded the Union of Greek Women in 1896. This organization coordinated the active involvement of Greek women in the Greek-Turkish war of 1897 when women performed their patriotic duty as nurses, doctors, collectors and managers of funds, and care-givers for Cretan refugees, setting their own living example of female philhellenism.<sup>94</sup> In 1911, Parren also founded the Greek Women's Lyceum. This conservative institution propagandized emancipation and women's self-accomplishment through Greek customs, the values of Greek civilization and the patriotic ideals of the "Greek soul".<sup>95</sup> Parren thought that the role of the modern *Hellenides* (Greek women) was to sustain their nation's

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<sup>93</sup> K.M. Offen, *European Feminisms, 1750-1950: A Political History*, Stanford, 2000, 219.

<sup>94</sup> E. Avdela and A. Psarra, Engendering 'Greekness': Women's Emancipation and Irredentist Politics in Nineteenth-Century Greece, *Mediterranean Historical Review*, 20:1 (2005) 71.

<sup>95</sup> A. Psarra, Ginekes kai politiki sto Mesopolemo, in: Th. Mavrogordatos and Ch. Chatziosif (Eds), *Venizelismos kai Astikos Eksychronismos*, [A. Psarra, Women and Politics in Inter-War Period, in: Th. Mavrogordatos and Ch. Chatziosif (Eds), *Venizelism and Civic Modernization*,], Rethymno, 1988, 70.

authenticity and prosperity, imitating their queen's patriotic attitude and adopting folk costume in their official appearances.<sup>96</sup>

As in other countries there was a real conflict in Greece over the issue of female voting rights. As has been examined, the fact that female refugees were overwhelmingly employed in the industrial production of carpet-weaving or in the agricultural sector where literacy was not a job requirement also confirmed masculine superiority in the labour market. These occupational structures condemned women not to be concerned with education since "in the early stages of factory production literacy is not necessary".<sup>97</sup> The same structures provided a mechanism of control in a political and labour environment that could prove highly radicalised. In this context, voting rights were granted only to literate women by the Constitution of 1930 in municipal elections. Since 1929, the Greek MP (and ex-Prime Minister) Alexandros Papanastasiou subscribed to the view not to register illiterate people to the electoral polls.<sup>98</sup> However, even this bill allowing women to vote in local elections, came to nothing in the following year.

Citizenship as a social concept always contains visions of maleness and femaleness, in effect theorising such things as inclusion, exclusion, and correct and necessary behaviour. These ideas are the products of power holders' personal experiences, which find expression as mobilizational narratives when the right opportunities come along.<sup>99</sup> In Greece, the gendering of

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<sup>96</sup> D. Tzanaki, *Women and Nationalism in the Making of modern Greece: The Founding of the Kingdom of the Greco-Turkish War*, Oxford, 2009, 151.

<sup>97</sup> S. Pollard, *The Genesis of Modern Management. A Study of the Industrial Revolution in Great Britain*, Cambridge Massachusetts, 1965, 180.

<sup>98</sup> *Gazette of the Debates*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 2 July 1929, 12.

<sup>99</sup> J. Hart, *New Voices in the Nation. Women and the Greek Resistance, 1941-1964*, Ithaca & London, 1996, 102.

citizenship was connected with education. Greek statistics show that the percentage of literate women was considerably lower than that for men.<sup>100</sup>

Female refugees without voting rights or without male votes in their families could not exert any political power. In the Balkan context, localized cultures were not penetrated by modernism in social or economic terms. They were rather hierarchical societies, where vertical lines of distinction were much more meaningful than the horizontal ones. In these societies, face to face relations were far more important than any legislation or state intervention to receive some benefits. Within this framework, only the nexus of personal relations through political patronage could modify oppressive control and lead to their incorporation in the given political system. In this system the electorate behaviour of natives and mainly of destitute refugees could be easily bought.<sup>101</sup> The well-established clientelistic system provided a functional reason for the perpetuation of the existing political balances in a society, where politics were essential for settling individual economic conflicts and for tempering administrative exaction and public office was highly valued for the advancement of private interests.<sup>102</sup> In this system female labour force was not useful. This was the case even more so when female organisations ignored their existence or reproduced women's traditional role in a male dominated society and denounced their political emancipation.

As Tasoula Vervenioti stresses “the paradox is that right-wing women demanded the right to vote and the right to occupy political office and at the same time insisted that a woman's place was in the home”.<sup>103</sup> For example, the League for Women's Rights was founded by Avra

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<sup>100</sup> *Statistical Annual of Greece*, Athens 1933, 418.

<sup>101</sup> G. Kritikos, The agricultural settlement of refugees: A source of productive work and stability in Greece, 1923–1930. *Agricultural History*, 79, 2005, 342.

<sup>102</sup> K.R. Legg, *Politics in Modern Greece*. Stanford, 1969, 35-36.

<sup>103</sup> T. Vervenioti, ‘Charity and Nationalism. The Greek Civil War and the Entrance of Right-Wing Women into

Theodoropoulou in April 1920 and, along with Maria Negrepondi, campaigned for women's suffrage. The league was affiliated with the International Council of Women, which adopted a more radical view of feminism. A third feminist organization, of less influence in Greek society, was the Socialist Group that was founded by Athena Gaitanou-Gianniou. It condemned the bourgeois feminism of the League, campaigning for protective legislation for the female labour force, motherhood and women's voting rights. In turn the Communists perceived women's rights as part of the greater struggle for rights through the proletariat. No distinction was made between natives and refugees. Their campaign supported only for those women who were part of the labour movement.<sup>104</sup>

Within this framework, women felt the necessity of putting more efforts in the organising and publishing aspects of their movement so that to have a real impact on Greek society. The Socialist Group managed to propagandize its values through the pages of the periodical *Socialistiki Zoi* [Socialist Life] until 1935. The main outlet for their views of the League for Women's Rights was the periodical *O Agonas tis Gynaikas* [The struggle of woman] (published in 1903) and lasted until Metaxas' dictatorship in 1936.<sup>105</sup>

Apart from the lack of support by the women's organisations, most of which had no radical ideology regarding female emancipation, the dictatorship of Ioannis Metaxas (1936-1940) signified a real regression to extreme conservatism that led to the confinement of women to their family duties. In 1935, the need for the Weberian charismatic leader emerged in a period of strikes and demonstrations that were brutally suppressed. The dictatorship was regarded by the king as a

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Politics', in: P. Bacchetta and M. Power (Eds), *Right-Wing Women from Conservatives to Extremists Around the World*, New York and London, 2002, 115.

<sup>104</sup> A. Psarra, *Ginekes kai politiki sto Mesopolemo*, 70.

<sup>105</sup> E. Avdela, *I gynekes, koinoniko zitima*. In: Ch. Chatziosif (Ed.), *Istoria tis Elladas toy 20ou eona. 1922-1945. O Mesopolemos* [Women, a social issue. In: Ch Chatziosif (Ed.), *History of Greece in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, 1922-1945. The Inter-War period*], v. 2 (Athens, Vivliorama, 2002), 343-344.

last resort to ensure stability against the threat of communism. The final and unequivocal suppression of the Communist Party, which polled its highest electorate percentage (5.76 per cent) of the vote in the 1936 election, came with the Metaxas's "Fourth of August" regime. The pivotal position of the communists after that election "alarmed the supporters of the 'bourgeois state' and ultimately provided a pretext for the abolition of parliamentary government".<sup>106</sup>

After 1936, national ideology was the embodiment of the organic perception of a society which, as with human organisms, promotes interdependence, unity and social continuity and could not allow any particular and radical deviations from the aim of constructing a unified and homogeneous "whole". The interdependence of its parts is safeguarded by preventing rapid and radical social changes and making all its parts - individuals, groups, classes and institutions - to work together with the aim of achieving natural harmony. Accepting that the social fabric is difficult to restore, the policy-makers who espouse the organic theory scrutinise carefully every proposal for social reform.<sup>107</sup> The unity of such a society rests on a community in which the collective national interest is in accordance with a specific leader's way of thinking. This is always placed above the particular interests of individuals, groups and classes. As in every fascist or dictatorial regime, the individual was perceived as being unable to accomplish anything of great significance, having to sacrifice his or her liberty and dedicate his or her life to the glory of the nation-state and to find fulfilment through participation in the organic view of society. Although Metaxas' regime was imposed as a dictatorship and did not gain the support of a mass movement, any expression of individualism was subjugated to Metaxas' will, and suppressed by the

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<sup>106</sup> M. Mazower and Th. Veremis, *The Greek Economy 1922-1941*, in: Robin Higham and Thanos Veremis (Eds), *Aspects of Greece 1936-1940, The Metaxas Dictatorship*, Athens, 1993, 123.

<sup>107</sup> Ch. Funderburk and R.G. Thobaren, *Political Ideologies*, 2nd Ed., New York, 1994, 126.

personality cult of a dictator, who proclaimed himself "First Peasant" and "First Worker".<sup>108</sup> In particular, this involved suppression of and discrimination against minorities, against the political left and against women. This policy led to a new mass emigration of Greeks to Western Europe, the US or Australia after the end of the Greek Civil War in 1949.<sup>109</sup>

The subordination of individual attitudes to the common interest can be also traced in the education of women. Metaxas declared they had to be confined to their domestic roles and that their priority should be to instill Greek values into their children. He boasted in his speeches about the establishment of new urban schools where Greek women "were to be taught all that is necessary to become a good housewife, excellent wife and mother".<sup>110</sup> The sexist values of classical fascism were reproduced during Metaxas' regime. Women were encouraged to undertake charitable activities, to attend rallies and to encourage their children's participation in the EON (Metaxas' youth organisation), but they were specifically forbidden to take any political initiatives. Their role did not allow much scope, like the one prescribed by the *fasci femminili*, which sprang up in support of Italian fascism in the 1920s. Likewise the Italian fascist society woman's 'workplace' was the home.<sup>111</sup> For fascism, biology is destiny. Behind the biological destiny of women lies the biological destiny of the nation, for behind the concern for women's place in society is the assumption that the family is the foundation of the nation and state.<sup>112</sup> In all of Metaxas's speeches, the image of women as the reproducer of the nation is transmitted by thinking of them as the mothers of future Greek generations. He granted honour to women only as the pillar of the house and argued that the destiny of the nation depended on them.

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<sup>108</sup> H. Poulton, *THE BALKANS, Minorities and States in Conflict*, London, 1991, 128.

<sup>109</sup> A. Laiou, 'Population Movements in the Greek Countryside During the Civil War', in: L. Baerentzen, J.O. Iatrides, and O.L. Smith (Eds), *Studies in the History of the Greek Civil War 1945-1949*, Copenhagen, 1987, 103.

<sup>110</sup> I. Metaxas, *Hi Ekpaidefsis meta tin tetarti Avgoustou. E nee Katefthinsis [The Education system after the Fourth of August. New directions]*, Athens, 1937-1938, 26.

<sup>111</sup> J. Whittam, *Fascist Italy*, Manchester 1995, 71.

<sup>112</sup> M. Neocleous, *Fascism*, Minnesota, 1997, 79-80.

Within this framework, feminists constituted a threat to social stability. This perception of female identity confirms Klaus Theweleit's account of the male fantasies which shape the formation of fascism. It reveals a fear of the sexually active, lipstick- and rouge-wearing woman, on the one hand, exemplifying the decadence of the modern bourgeois world, and, on the other, the feminist who questions the nature of sexual division and the patriarchal social order. These two figures constitute a threat by insisting that the 'natural' order is in fact an artificial structure of (male) power. "By challenging this structure of male power they challenge, in different ways, one of the 'natural' forms of domination. And by challenging the fascist view of sexuality they appear to be condoning free love, sexual diversity and experimentation. Feminism is thus unnatural. For these reasons the feminist woman is a proletarian whore (sexually active) and a vehicle for communism (a threat to traditional structures of domination). For fascism, 'proletarian whore' and 'female communist' are interchangeable terms".<sup>113</sup>

Metaxas also possessed another perception of women as militant citizens actively protecting and being involved in the maintenance of the regime. Unlike most Nazi newsreels, where women were usually left out or occupied an insignificant space, the representation of women in Metaxas' newsreels is quite striking. They were all part of a great mobilisation designed and projected to emphasize peoples' unity and devotion to the regime. This perception is intimately connected with the perception of the woman as mother and housewife. In his view, women were destined to bring up their children and imbue them with the national values. Their home careers were more than important as mothers who were the pillars of the family and responsible for the healthy and correct upbringing of the future generations.<sup>114</sup> He also stressed

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<sup>113</sup> K. Theweleit, *Male Fantasies, Vol. 1: Women, Floods, Bodies, History*, [trans. Stephen Conway], Cambridge, 1987. In: M. Neocleous, *Fascism*, Minnesota, 1997, 81.

<sup>114</sup> M. Petrakis, *The Metaxas Myth. Dictatorship and Propaganda in Greece*, London – New York, 2011, 104.

that the schools established by the regime separated girls from boys to fight against corruption and cultivate the traditional values of Greek society. These schools would help women to fulfill their mission as house-keepers, wives and mothers.<sup>115</sup> Another Metaxas' speech points out that education is not the most important ideal. He considers love for the nation as well as devotion to the family, and belief to God the highest ideals, granting women a place at the heart of nation.<sup>116</sup> This female subordination to the male Leader and the role of women as mothers of the nation were essential components of the new methods of the social construction of gender. Metaxas' regime perceived "woman as a national symbol was the guardian of the continuity and immutability of the nation".<sup>117</sup>

## Epilogue

To conclude, refugee women should be approached as a particular social category. The incorporation of the massive influx of female refugees into the inter-war Greek labour market reproduced the uneven relations between men and women. Refugee women were not only abruptly and violently cut off from their homeland, families and properties on the other side of the Aegean, but they were also intensively exploited as a cheap labour force at the service of the receiving society. Without their traditional bread-winners who had been detained in Turkey or with men unemployed in their families, refugee women had to survive without any dependence on male protection. In this context, Gill Valentine's rightfully acknowledged the theoretical framework of 'intersectionality' to discuss the relationship between different social categories

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<sup>115</sup> I. Metaxas, *Hi ekpedefsis meta tin tetartin Avgustu. E nee katefthinsis* [The education system after the Fourth of August: New perspectives], Athens, 1937-1938, 26.

<sup>116</sup> I. Metaxas, *Logi kai skepsis, 1936-1941* vol. II, (1939-1941), [Speeches and Thoughts, 1936-1941], Athens, 1960, 315.

<sup>117</sup> G.L. Mosse, *Nationalism & Sexuality: Respectability and Abnormal Sexuality in Modern Europe*, New York, 1985, 18.

such as gender, race and, so forth.<sup>118</sup> In inter-war Greece discrimination was experienced and negotiated in women's everyday lives in different spaces. It was rooted not in one but in multiple social categories (gender, race, class).

In the industries, the prevailing social equilibrium and male control were sustained at the expense of the female labour force which was subject to abusive and exploitative conditions of work in return for little payment. The refugee female work-force was mobilised into exclusively new industries with no access to syndicalism and without bringing about a fundamental change in the division of labour. Their vulnerability was defined not only because they were women, but also because they were refugees who wanted only to survive. In addition, their confinement to the weaving work space served to increase their marginalization and maintained paternalistic relations in the public space. The majority of female refugees who were employed in domestic production had no access to school education and never challenged masculine superiority in the labour market. The fact that they worked at home served only to blur the boundaries between home and work. It also preserved the gender-biased labour and the paternalistic social structures of Greek society.

Within this framework, refugee women emerged as a new social category between male superiority and native women who had the male protection or feminists that were able to fight against social injustice. On the one hand, it was the female identity which is and suppression in a gender-biased society. On the other hand, it is the identity of poverty and lack of male protection that stigmatised refugee women. Both rendered the female workforce as an easy target for exploitation by the male authority. It allowed the allocation of gender roles in the labour market and the prevailing social equilibrium or socio-economic frameworks to be sustained. Since the

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<sup>118</sup> G. Valentine, "Sticks and stones may break my bones": a personal geography of harassment, *Antipode* 30 (1998) 305-32.

refugee workers were not capable of bargaining for themselves or to demand social and welfare provisions, they simply replaced the already existing cheap labour force in the most segregated, discriminated, underpaid jobs. At the same time, they had neither voting rights – that were connected to literacy qualifications - nor sometimes the power of the male vote in the family to exchange for some political favours in a traditional clientelist system that simply ignored them. Finally, native and refugee women were confined to their domestic duties by Metaxas' dictatorship where their ability to be something more than breeders of the nation was undervalued. His regime extolled the virtues of motherhood or domesticity and cancelled any prospect of real emancipation.

The process of combining different varieties of exclusion on the basis of gender, race or class led to the hybridisation of refugee women in the social and economic space of inter-war Greece. They were either disadvantaged by the native legal system or they were ignored due to the rules of the gender-biased, class-divided working space. The experience of refugee women in inter-war Greece confirms that inequalities result from gender, cultural and class divisions. These were reproduced through refugee labour that transformed unredeemed Greeks into 'children of a lesser God' in the social fabric.

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