KOME – An International Journal of Pure Communication Inquiry Vol. 14. No. 2. (2026) • 69–86.
DOI: 10.17646/KOME.of.40

ARTICLE

Representations of Women and Work in the Nineteenth-century Greek Press

A Communication and Media Perspective

Michael Tsangaris*

* University of Piraeus, Greece
E-mail: mtsang[at]unipi.gr

This article examines the nineteenth-century Greek press as a communicative system through which gendered visibility, meanings of work, and women's public identities were discursively constructed within a non-Anglophone national context. Drawing on qualitative content analysis of three historically significant newspapers (*Aion, Akropolis* and *Empros*), the study explores how women's public presence, professional activity and social roles were framed, constrained, or selectively made visible. The findings show that women were predominantly represented through relational identities linked to men or family structures, while references to autonomous professional activity were rare and fragmented. At the same time, the press gradually incorporated selective forms of female visibility in areas such as education, the arts, philanthropy and socially acceptable occupations, particularly towards the end of the century. By focusing on media discourse, symbolic visibility and communicative practices, the article demonstrates that historical press narratives actively shaped gendered public identity and the symbolic boundaries of women's work, rather than merely reflecting social change.

Keywords: media representations, gender and communication, media discourse, symbolic visibility, women and work, historical press analysis

Article received on 17 December 2025. Article accepted on 13 April 2026.
Conflict of interest: The author declares no conflicts of interest.
Funding: The author received no financial support for the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

© 2026 Ludovika University Press, Budapest

Theoretical and historical framework

Mechanisms of representation and gender identity in the nineteenth-century Greek press

The relationship between the press, representation, and the construction of gendered identities constitutes a key field for understanding the formation of the public sphere in the nineteenth century. Prior to examining the ways in which the press constructed and circulated gendered representations, it is necessary to briefly outline the actual forms and conditions of women's economic activity during this period. Women's participation in productive labour was broader in nineteenth-century Greek society than the dominant normative discourse of the time suggested; although its form and social recognition varied significantly according to social class. The construction of bourgeois gender ideology in the newly established Greek state was based on the separation of public and private spheres, assigning women primarily to roles related to the family, moral education and domestic responsibility, even when their contribution to economic life was substantial (Varika, 1987). Among the popular and rural strata, women actively participated in the production process through agricultural work, livestock farming and household crafts, activities that were part of the family economy and rarely recorded as 'professional' employment, despite being crucial for the survival of households (Thanailaki, 2018; Nina-Pazarzi, 2019). At the same time, in urban and semi-urban environments, forms of female wage labour emerged, such as domestic service, work in small crafts, textile processing, or piecework at home, sectors that offered limited and low-paid incomes but nevertheless constituted an important source of economic contribution for women from the lower strata (Hionidou, 2005; Papastefanaki, 2019).

Rather than treating newspapers solely as historical sources, this article considers the press to have been a communicative space in which gendered meanings were produced, circulated and normalised through everyday discourse.

Our main thesis is that the Greek press of the period was not limited to the official roles ascribed to it by journalists, publishers and media institutions, such as: informing the public, safeguarding democratic function, objectively shaping the agenda, and providing education and entertainment. On the contrary, it operated as a mechanism for the construction of social reality and in determining norms regarding gender, work and the position of women in society.

Through choices in discourse, agenda, topic selection, news prioritisation and symbolic silences, the press established a framework that produced not only stereotypes but also boundaries on how women's presence in the public sphere was perceived to be 'legitimate' and 'acceptable' (Hall, 1997; Couldry, 2003).

The analysis examines how communicative practices such as naming, framing, omission, and narrative positioning contributed to constructing women's public identity and the symbolic boundaries of work (Hall, 1997; Bourdieu, 1991; Entman, 1993; Goffman, 1974).

Gender representations in the media of the era highlight the close connection between traditional forms of power and the everyday practices of women's subordination, gender-based professional segregation, and the exclusion of women from various areas of life.

The depiction of various female figures as moral exemplars, family anchors, instruments of national cohesion, or potential threats to the social order was not solely a state-driven

ideological construct; it also functioned as a broader mechanism regulating the types of work, participation, and public visibility considered appropriate for the gender. Figures such as Queen Amalia, celebrated in ceremonial reports; cultural figures like the poet Aimée Landauer,[1] whose work was interpreted through gendered aesthetic norms; and activists such as Callirhoe Parren,[2] alternately recognised and mocked in the press, illustrate how newspapers assigned symbolic roles to women within the public discourse. In this context, the symbolic erasure of women, the systematic reproduction and, when useful, reinvention of gender stereotypes, along with the selective amplification of particular forms of female presence, operated as core mechanisms through which the media actively shaped social reality (Bourdieu, 1991).

The analysis gains further depth when we consider the distinction between the public and private spheres of Greek society in the nineteenth century. The public sphere, where professional and political action occurred, and the private sphere in which family and domestic practices prevailed, largely determined the limits of women's presence and legitimate participation in public activities.

However, despite their normative character, the media of the time did not function solely to reproduce traditional power. Even the deeply patriarchal press of the nineteenth century inadvertently left openings through which discourses emerged that articulated concerns, forms of resistance, and challenges to established gender hierarchies (Varika, 1987).

At the same time, the emergence of exclusively women's publications contributed significantly to the expansion of this field, providing institutionalised opportunities for women's discourse and self-representation.[3]

The coexistence of these contradictions requires a theoretically grounded approach that connects this historical moment to perspectives on the media as fields of production and power, while engaging with feminist analysis.

The origins of this critical inquiry into the representation of women and the construction of gender roles in public discourse can be traced to the early works of Wollstonecraft (1792), Fuller (1845), and Mill (1869), who addressed issues of education, autonomy and the social position of women.

1 Aimée Landauer was a nineteenth-century French poet whose work attracted the attention of the Greek press. Her reception in Greece exemplifies how foreign women's intellectual production was filtered through specific gendered and romantic aesthetic norms, framing female creativity within the idealised boundaries of European literary culture of the period (see Landauer, 1884; for a broader discussion of the gendered constraints on French women's writing in this era, see Finch, 2000).

2 While widely recognised as Greece's pioneering feminist activist and a significant intellectual and literary figure, Parren was also targeted by conservative contemporary newspapers. The press frequently used satire and mockery to undermine her campaign for women's suffrage and professional emancipation (Varika, 1987).

3 This study does not address the women's press or the distinctly autonomous female public sphere that began to emerge during the period through early women's magazines and newspapers (*Eurydice* in the 1850s, *Kypseli* in the 1860s, *Ephemeris ton Kyrion* in the 1880s), the formation of women's clubs, and the initial organised expressions of the women's movement in the second half of the nineteenth century. These publications are excluded because they constitute a distinct communicative field in which women themselves produced discourse and articulated claims about education, work and social rights. The present study focuses instead on the representation of women within the mainstream press, where female identities and forms of work were constructed primarily through male-dominated editorial frameworks. Nevertheless, it is important to recognise that these developments were already taking shape and generating their own discursive frameworks throughout the period under examination (Varika, 1987).

From the 1960s onwards, feminist media theory developed comprehensive approaches to the mechanisms by which representations were constructed, rather than simply reflected gender identities. Friedan (1963), Tuchman (1978), Mulvey (1975), McRobbie (1991) and Hooks (1992) highlighted different, often complementary, aspects of the relationship between media, power and gender. Internationally, the nineteenth-century press had already developed the figure of the 'New Woman' as a symbol of modernisation and social anxiety. Studies by Marks (1990), Tusan (1998) and Stetz (2001) showed that the press did not simply record changes but actively constructed them, transforming the body, fashion, mobility, and work into ideological tools for disciplining and demarcating the female role. Through these signifiers, the press produced divisions between 'legitimate' and 'threatening' forms of femininity, thus mediating the social tensions caused by women's increasing public presence. At the same time, other researchers, such as Sachsman et al. (2009), emphasised that the representation of women in the media cannot be separated from the racial and class connotations that intersect the female experience. While these intersectional dimensions have been widely explored in international scholarship, this study focuses primarily on gendered representations and the meanings attributed to women's work within the specific historical and cultural context of nineteenth-century Greece. In the Greek context, despite substantial historical and sociological research on women's presence and the mechanisms of cultural circulation (Doulkeri, 1990; Konstantinidou, 1997; Anagnostopoulou, 2007; Nina-Pazarzi & Tsangaris, 2008; Anagnostopoulou et al., 2013; Kontaxi, 2020), significant gaps remain with regard to the way the press in the nineteenth century – following the establishment of the Greek state – constructed and attributed meaning to the notion of women's work. Newspapers and periodicals defined this notion much more narrowly than contemporary scholarship, which conceptualises work as a multidimensional field encompassing domestic, waged, educational, emotional and moral forms of labour. It is within this broader analytical framework that we situate our approach.

Building on this framework, the analysis traces how women's work was made visible, silenced, or re-signified across different press formats and historical periods. It examines how women's work was presented or suppressed, highlighting the role of the press in constructing the earliest forms of public female identity in nineteenth-century Greece. In this way, it sheds light on the mechanisms that gradually shaped the possibilities and limits of women's presence in social space.

Historical context of the Greek press

The history of the Greek press begins in the Greek diaspora communities, where printed material primarily served to disseminate ideas and shape political and cultural identity, long before the formal establishment of the Greek state in the early 1830s. After the Greek state was established, the press continued with the enlightening tradition of the diaspora communities, initially functioning mainly as a means of disseminating ideas, political articles and literary discourse, rather than as a purely news mechanism (Droulia, 2005).

During the nineteenth century, a vibrant publishing movement developed, with important political newspapers such as *Athena* and *Αιον*. Towards the 1880s, however,

a decisive shift occurred: journalism became mass-oriented, adopting modern standards and technological innovations, such as systematic reporting and commercialisation, transforming the newspaper into a product of mass consumption. This transition was marked by the typical end of the century urban newspapers that decisively shaped the public sphere and the national ideology of the era, including *Ephemeris ton Kyrion, Estia, Akropolis, Empros* and *Skrip* (Droulia, 2005). Notably, at that time, the publication of the Ladies' Newspaper *(Ephemeris ton Kyrion)* built on earlier female publishing initiatives and distinguishing itself by its relatively broad circulation, continuity, and systematic engagement with gender issues, thereby consolidating women's voices within the Greek press and opening a new thematic period that significantly shaped public discourse on women's work and social status (Varika, 1987).

This article – considering the historical development of the press outlined above – conducts a qualitative analysis of selected samples to illuminate the portrayal of the presence and work of women during the transition from the traditional political press to mass journalism. More specifically, we will examine the representative newspapers *Aion* (as a sample from the first half of the century), *Akropolis* and *Empros* (as samples of the newer, news-based press) from the mid to late nineteenth century.

Methodological framework for the study of representations of women in the press

The selection of newspapers reflects the historical transformation of the Greek press during the nineteenth century, from early political newspapers to the more commercially oriented mass press that emerged at the end of the century.

For this study, three samples from the newspapers *Aion, Akropolis* and *Empros* were examined to explore the presence and representation of women in the Greek press from the mid to late nineteenth century. These newspapers were selected primarily on the basis of the availability and accessibility of archival material for the periods under examination, which enabled the analysis of consistent sets of issues from each publication.

Twenty-five issues from each newspaper were selected from specific chronological periods of the nineteenth century. As the newspapers examined were daily publications, each year contained several hundred issues. The sample, therefore, is not intended to represent the entire annual output statistically, but to provide a manageable corpus suitable for qualitative analysis. The selected issues were drawn from continuous publication periods to capture recurring patterns of representation within each newspaper. The selection was intended to provide indicative snapshots of press discourse at different points in the century, rather than to construct a continuous chronological series. The aim is not to compare the newspapers as equivalent cases, but to examine how representations of women appear across different phases in the historical development of the Greek press.

- Aion (1834–1843)
- Akropolis (1883–1885)
- Empros (1896–1899)

The chronological gap between the first and second samples reflects the limitations of available archival material rather than a deliberate attempt to establish a continuous comparison across the entire period. Nevertheless, the selected samples allow for the examination of representations of women in the Greek press at different historical moments of the nineteenth century, including the early decades of the Greek state and the more developed press environment of the late nineteenth century.

The number of issues per newspaper was considered sufficient to identify recurring patterns of female presence in the press, such as references to women in domestic roles, reports on women's participation in economic activities, or moral commentaries on women's social conduct, without compromising the depth of qualitative analysis. This approach follows established qualitative research traditions in media and discourse analysis, prioritising analytical depth and discursive saturation rather than statistical representativeness (Miles et al., 2014; Saldaña, 2016).

In each issue, all references to women were systematically recorded, regardless of text type or section.[4] The process included indexing every mention of a female name or collective reference to women within a press environment overwhelmingly dominated by male figures and roles.

The collected material formed the basis for a qualitative content analysis focusing on:

- the presence or absence of women in newspaper pages
- the ways in which women appear and the social or professional roles attributed to them
- women's relationship to work in a broad sense, from domestic and informal labour to socially recognised professional roles
- the evaluative charge of descriptions used to frame women in selected article texts

The analysis did not rely on predetermined coding schemes with standardised categories. Instead, the analytical categories and characterisations emerged inductively from the texts themselves, following the semantic units and contextual frameworks of each reference. This approach allowed for an interpretively flexible reading of the material, sensitive to the complexity of historical press discourse.

In the final stage, the study's theoretical questions were developed in relation to the analysed material, enabling a mapping of the ways in which the nineteenth-century Greek press defined, constrained, or highlighted the presence of women within public discourse.

4 It should be noted that for serialised novels published in newspapers, female characters were included in the corpus, but their professions, public roles, or relationship to work were not evaluated. This omission is due to the fictional nature of these narratives, which were often set in earlier periods, and cannot be assumed to reflect contemporary social conditions. The study therefore confines its analysis to representations found in journalistic content, including editorial and opinion articles, news reports, classified advertisements and commercial advertising, which can reasonably be interpreted as indicative of actual social realities.

Representations of women and work in the Greek press of the nineteenth century: Qualitative analysis and historical comparison

Analysis of the newspaper Aion: Gendered visibility in early Greek press

The *Aion* newspaper, examined here for the years 1838–1843, was a Greek political newspaper founded in 1838 by the historian Ioannis Philemonas and published in Athens. It is generally associated with the Russian Party, which represented the most conservative of the 'foreign parties' of the period, emphasising the centrality of Orthodoxy in social order and expressing scepticism towards Western educational and political influences (Koumarianou, 2008; Petropulos, 1968).

Although its ideological foundations were conservative, particularly with regard to the social hierarchy, the newspaper's political stance was more complex: its articles often adopted a strongly critical tone towards governmental arbitrariness and advocated constitutional reform and parliamentary principles. This juxtaposition of ideological conservatism and political radicalism reflects the broader tensions and contradictions of the era (Koumarianou, 2008; Mayer, 1957).

The analysis of twenty-five issues of *Aion* revealed a relatively consistent pattern. Clear references to women or related topics appear in just sixteen issues, approximately 64% of the sample, and even in these, the mentions are sparse, never exceeding four per issue. This percentage is presented as an indicative measure for *Aion* only and is not intended as a direct quantitative comparison with the other newspapers examined, whose analysis in this study remains primarily qualitative. Such references are typically limited to brief notices, such as mentions of members of the royal family, obituaries, wedding announcements, or occasional real estate listings identifying a woman as the seller.

From a communicative perspective, this scarcity does not merely indicate absence but serves as a form of symbolic exclusion, through which women's social presence was marginalised in the public discourse of the press (Tuchman, 1978).

In any case, the recording of instances where a woman is directly presented as a worker, or professional, is rare. Such reports remain isolated and unsystematic, resulting in a highly fragmented or even non-existent picture of women's (professional) work in the sample.

If we examine the material thematically, certain patterns emerge. First, the women who appear in the public sphere generally hold the highest positions in the social hierarchy. Frequent references to Queen Amalia of Greece and other foreign royal women suggest that early forms of female visibility in the press were mediated by class and elite forms of symbolic authority. In this context, it can be argued that Queen Amalia served as a key representational presence within the early Greek press: her public visibility supported broader nation-building processes, mobilised symbolic power around the monarchy, and reinforced the press's role in shaping the representational politics of the newly established Greek state.

Second, a woman's identity is often defined linguistically through her relationship to a man – as a wife, daughter, sister, or widow – which limits her individual visibility. Such naming practices anchor women's public visibility to male-centred reference points, limiting the emergence of autonomous female subjectivity in press discourse.

Third, although this type of journalism is limited, when women appear outside the context of the court or social ceremonies, they usually appear as victims or objects of news, whether in relation to criminal incidents, tragedies, or obituaries. In short, their presence in the news column is often associated with pain, violence, or mourning. Such representational patterns suggest that women entered press communication mainly through narratives of vulnerability and loss, reinforcing a gendered logic of newsworthiness that positioned female presence as exceptional and dependent, rather than active or productive.

Fourth, public discourse occasionally addressed issues related to the education of girls. Reports mention meetings of educational institutions and calls for the establishment of girls' schools, indicating that female schooling was, to some extent, a topic of public discussion. Yet even in these cases, the emphasis is on the 'usefulness' and 'moral benefits' of education as a privilege for future mothers, rather than on the autonomy, cognitive development, social mobility, and public participation that education could offer to women.

Even when women are recorded in legal or commercial documents, the entries often describe them as, for example, 'Pagona, widow and wife of...' or 'Anneta, wife of...', so that even economic activities are referenced through male identities rather than as independent public presences.

At the level of work representation, the conclusion is clear and concise: between 1838 and 1843, women are rarely presented as autonomous professionals or as agents of economic action in the *Aion* newspaper. Where work or occupation is mentioned, it is usually in the context of general or family statistics, medical or demographic data – such as notes on maternal mortality or occasional references to girls' education – detailed descriptions of women's occupations are very rarely, if ever, recorded. Consequently, the public image of women in the sample is mainly directed towards the roles of wife, mother, or feminine presence in high society, or appears as a victim in isolated news cases, while their image as independent working subjects is practically absent from the printed material.

If one considers the extent to which the image projected by the newspaper agrees with broader historiography and available sources, a brief overview shows that these patterns are indeed typical. Amalia of Oldenburg, Queen of Greece and consort of King Otto, for example, has been recorded in research as a powerful public figure who arguably set symbolic standards, as references to her travels and ceremonies in newspapers correspond to her reception as a national symbol (Macha-Bizoumi, 2012).

At the same time, the discussion on the organisation of the education of girls and the creation of relevant institutions in the mid-nineteenth century is historically documented, and references to educational initiatives correspond to the emergence of public interest in the educational destiny of girls (Koutsoulenti, 2005).

Furthermore, the general function of newspapers of the time as places where women appear mainly in social columns, obituaries and advertisements, rather than as protagonists of political or economic news, is also confirmed by the relevant bibliography (Psarra, 2008).

Finally, the practice of identifying women through their relationships with men in official records and publications has a clear socio-legal background and appears as a consistent pattern in nineteenth-century documents (Psarra, 2008).

Although the newspaper symbolically confined women to the domestic sphere, it failed to recognise motherhood, marriage and household labour as productive activities

that contributed to the development of the Greek economy and society. This approach is analytically reductive: by privileging paid work and market-based exchange, it obscures forms of labour that remain unpaid, invisible, or socially undervalued, such as domestic work, care and motherhood (Hochschild, 1983; Beechey, 1988; Federici, 2004). This exclusion operated at the level of discourse, as unpaid reproductive labour remained outside the symbolic economy of press communication and therefore outside the boundaries of socially recognised work.

This gap becomes even more pronounced when contrasted with the lived reality of rural Greek women, who combined agricultural labour with domestic responsibilities and formed an indispensable, yet largely unacknowledged, pillar of nineteenth-century agricultural production (Varika, 1987). At the same time, the near absence of any references to such everyday forms of labour in the newspaper suggests that the press only deemed the actions of exceptional or socially elevated female figures newsworthy, while rendering ordinary female work largely invisible. In this sense, the newspaper's representations are fully aligned with the dominant gender ideology of the period: rather than challenging prevailing assumptions, they confirm and reproduce the normative expectations through which women's work was rendered socially peripheral and symbolically secondary.

The roles and forms of visibility attributed to women in the newspaper thus reflect, reinforce, and circulate the dominant social and cultural understandings of gender in early nineteenth-century Greece.

Analysis of the Akropolis newspaper: Press orientation and partial female visibility

Akropolis was founded in Athens in 1883 by Vlasis Gavriilidis and quickly became one of the most influential Athenian dailies of the late nineteenth century. Associated with progressive and demoticist positions,[5] the paper advocated linguistic and educational reforms and often took a reformist stance on social issues. In contrast to several established conservative titles of the period, *Akropolis* adopted a modernising editorial approach and sought to broaden the newspaper's content by publishing extended reports, interviews and cultural commentary, practices that helped establish the paper as a forum for public debate and cultural renewal (Papadimitriou, 2008; Droulia, 2005; Mayer, 1957).

Analysis of twenty-five issues reveals a complex, although limited, pattern of female visibility. Women seldom appear as fully autonomous social actors; their representation remains relational, framed primarily in connection to men or family structures. Elite figures, particularly the Queen of Greece and foreign monarchs or aristocrats, dominate references, reflecting the newspaper's focus on socially prominent women. Nevertheless, *Akropolis* demonstrates broader engagement with female presence than preceding publications, with

5 The term demoticist refers to positions supporting the use of the Demotic Greek language in education, administration and public life, as opposed to Katharevousa (a learned, purist form of Greek), and is historically associated with progressive, reformist and modernising movements in Greek intellectual and political life from the late nineteenth century onwards (Mackridge, 2009).

mentions of everyday women (that is, women outside royal, aristocratic, or culturally prominent circles) appearing in nearly every issue, albeit usually in a secondary or indirect manner.

From a communicative perspective, this increased visibility does not necessarily indicate a neutral or emancipatory representation, but rather a reorganisation of gendered visibility within the evolving logic of press discourse. Women's visibility in professional and public domains is largely concentrated in roles associated with performance and artistic production, such as singers, actresses and troupe leaders, and in conventional occupations in teaching or the garment industry. Rare instances depict women as independent economic agents, for example, as proprietors of businesses recruiting female labour, challenging contemporary gendered labour boundaries (*Akropolis,* 26.6.1884, p. 4). These representations suggest a form of selective professional visibility, in which women's participation in public life was communicatively framed as acceptable only within specific moral, cultural and social boundaries (Van Zoonen, 2000).

Additional references to women excelling in education, organising charitable activities, or engaging in the arts suggest the emergence of a mediated framework recognising educated and socially active women, albeit selectively. An illustrative example from the analysed material is the reference to the poet Aimée Landauer, which highlights the ideological limits of female representation in *Akropolis.* Notably, the figure discussed is not a Greek woman but a foreign literary figure, a fact that made her presence in the newspaper more acceptable within the cultural framework of the period. References to foreign female artists often allowed the press to acknowledge women's intellectual activity while keeping it symbolically distant from the Greek social context. Within this framework, the newspaper emphasised her youth, beauty, and emotional sensitivity rather than the intellectual content of Laundauer's work, framing her poetry through gendered aesthetic norms.

> *...the poet, but she is probably not a poet, but a poetess, a young girl and certainly beautiful, because the muses are not ugly, and her name is dear Aimee Landauer. Miss Landauer's poetry has the colour and scent of violets, full of delicacy, nobility and soul. The poems of the young girl are rather philosophical studies or sentiments, murmurs of erotic elegies. But deep down, her philosophy is always done through the heart. Many of her inspirations refer to Italy, most of the themes of her verses are distinguished from the masculine in a subdued and very fortunate way...* (*Akropolis,* 9.5.1884, p. 1).

Even when acknowledged as philosophical, Landauer's poetry is interpreted primarily as emotional expression, reinforcing the idea that female creativity must conform to socially sanctioned notions of femininity. This example highlights how *Akropolis* legitimised female cultural contributions selectively, sustaining patriarchal norms even while ostensibly celebrating talent. This framing demonstrates how cultural recognition operated communicatively through gendered aesthetic criteria, shaping the boundaries of legitimate female authorship in press discourse.

Women are more frequently featured in reports of private life, weddings, deaths, social events, or family affairs, yet the focus remains on the family unit, with the man serving as the primary reference point. Female presence is recorded primarily as wife, daughter, or mother, rather than as independent subjects. Education, labour and social reform are

addressed cautiously, and women are seldom permitted to emerge as autonomous agents within these discussions.

Even when *Akropolis* referred to women's responsibilities in the home and family care, these tasks were framed as natural obligations rather than as labour with measurable value. The newspaper did not acknowledge these practices as part of the broader economy of social reproduction or as essential foundations enabling waged work.

Overall, female representation in *Akropolis* operates within what can be termed visible invisibility: women are present in the newspaper, yet their public identities are framed relationally, while their unpaid domestic labour, despite its economic and social value, and their professional, intellectual or civic contributions are marginalised. The editorial logic consistently conveys the social position of women through male counterparts, reinforcing dominant gender ideologies even when the thematic scope allows broader visibility.

Placing these patterns within the broader socio-historical context confirms that the newspaper's approach aligned with evolving, though still limited, public discourses. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the first wave of the Greek women's movement emerged, primarily led by middle-class women advocating liberal reforms, suffrage and access to professional roles. New communicative platforms, such as the women's periodical *Eurydice* (1870), introduced feminist discourses from Western Europe, calling for equality in education and employment. Subsequent organisations, including the Ladies' Association for the Education of Women (1872) and the Union for the Emancipation of Women (1894), further expanded women's organised presence in the public sphere (Stamiris, 1986).[6]

Taken together, these developments indicate that the representations of women in *Akropolis* were not anomalous, but part of a broader ideological landscape in which media narratives, gendered visibility, and nascent feminist claims intersected to shape nineteenth-century public discourse.

However, despite its editorial openness to modernising reforms, the newspaper largely reinforced patriarchal structures: women were present and partially visible, but their representation remained constrained by relational, domestic and gendered frameworks, limiting the construction of fully autonomous female subjects in the public sphere. Even when female achievement was acknowledged, it was filtered through criteria of beauty, delicacy and social propriety, showing that *Akropolis,* like much of the contemporary media, upheld the cultural and ideological prerogatives of patriarchy.

Analysis of the newspaper Empros: Mass press and mediated visibility of women

Empros, founded in Athens in 1896 by Dimitrios Kalapothakis, is a significant example of the late nineteenth-century development of the Greek press. The paper contributed to

6 Historical studies on women's participation in the arts in nineteenth-century Greece (Gotsi, 2018; Georgiadou-Kountouras, 2000; Helioti-Scholinaki, 1990), as well as systematic research on women's charitable foundations of the period (Kladou-Kranidioti, 1996), show that the forms of female social presence mentioned in the press were not isolated but part of broader trends towards the empowerment of women's activity in various fields.

the expansion of journalistic practices by publishing more varied reporting and literary material, and by incorporating advertising into its financing and distribution strategy. Its public interventions combined engagement with nationalist causes and an editorial orientation that embraced elements of modernising discourse, a communicative mix that helped shape public discussion and perceptions during a formative phase of Greek mass media (Droulia, 2005; Mayer, 1957).

A detailed analysis of the issues shows a notable increase in the mediated visibility of women compared to earlier newspapers.

From a communication perspective, this increase reflects both quantitative expansion and qualitative reconfiguration of mediated visibility within the emerging logic of mass press communication.

Female names frequently appear with relational designations such as 'wife', 'daughter', or 'sister', often linked to men of professional or social prominence. For example, in a report about a fire, alongside other properties, the house of the widow A. Davaroukas is mentioned (*Empros,* 12.12.1896, p. 3). Such naming practices serve communicative functions by anchoring female visibility within male-centred reference frameworks, thereby limiting the construction of autonomous female subjectivity in press discourse.

While *Empros* occasionally mentioned women in roles of domestic management and support for dependants, it refrained from attributing any economic significance to these forms of unpaid activity. This omission functioned discursively, placing unpaid reproductive labour outside the symbolic economy of press communication and thus beyond the boundaries of socially recognised work. The newspaper treated these activities as peripheral to productive labour, ignoring their pivotal role in sustaining the conditions upon which paid employment depends.

Elite figures, including the Queen of Greece and members of royal or aristocratic circles, continued to occupy a central place in the newspaper's representations. References to Greek elite women, such as Princess Sophia of Greece, Princess Maria of Greece, and the soprano Elvida Gouida, appear alongside mentions of prominent foreign figures, including European royal women such as Princess Alexandra of the House of Coburg, the historical figure Catherine II of Russia, Queen Victoria of England, and Queen Regent Maria Christina of Spain. The prominence of such figures indicates the persistence of symbolic hierarchies in mediated representation, whereby women's visibility in the press remained strongly associated with aristocratic status, cultural distinction, or dynastic power.

At the same time, *Empros* constructed broader frameworks for female professional identities, reflecting an expanded narrative space for women in the public sphere. Women appear in artistic professions such as actresses, sopranos, musicians, as well as in educational roles such as teachers and girls' school headmistresses. Technical and artisanal work, including seamstresses, weavers and shop employees, is represented in advertisements alongside commercial and specialised professions that challenge prevailing gender norms, such as the Swiss watchmaker (*Empros,* 16.11.1897, p. 4) and dentist Eliza Gasser (*Empros,* 30.12.1899, p. 4).

Classified advertisements reinforce this mediated visibility, detailing professional credentials, as in the case of Antonia Fragkia, whose midwifery training and certifications are documented (*Empros,* 11.12.1899, p. 4).

The newspaper's engagement with the women's movement and figures such as Callirhoe Parren reveals a complex discursive positioning, with some articles disparaging or employing irony, for example, in depicting the movement as divided between 'masculine' perceptions and 'genuinely Greek' positions, or mocking women's participation in rallies (*Empros,* 10.1.1897, p. 1; *Empros,* 2.12.1896, p. 2). Others acknowledge Parren's work in an institutional, authoritative context, such as a promotional article for *Ephemeris ton Kyrion* (*Empros,* 5.1.1899, p. 3). This contrast reflects a deliberate narrative construction in which the press selectively mediates female visibility, integrating it into socially acceptable frameworks while containing its potentially disruptive implications. Such discursive management demonstrates the role of the press in regulating ideological tension through communicative strategies such as framing, irony and selective recognition (Entman, 1993; Hall, 1980).

Empros also highlights women's social and cultural contributions, reporting on school activities, charitable and social-action organisations such as 'Ergane Athena' (named after Athena Ergane, the goddess associated with crafts and labour) and 'Megali Enosis ton Ellinidon' (Great Union of Greek Women), as well as women's participation in artistic life. These representations indicate a gradual expansion of the mediated public sphere, to the point where female creativity and civic engagement become visible. Coverage of private life, for example, of weddings, deaths and family events remains significant, yet women are primarily contextualised through relational identities or male-centred social networks.

From the late nineteenth century, the Greek women's movement experienced significant growth, mainly driven by middle-class women progressively consolidating their public presence and influence in education, professional activity and social reform. The admission of the first female student to the University of Athens in 1890 signalled a landmark institutional opening, reflecting and reinforcing these broader discursive transformations (Varika, 1987). While industrialisation in Greece was modest, artisanal growth and urbanisation created new employment opportunities, and the rise of mass literacy alongside women's journals increased the visibility of women as professionals, consumers and cultural figures in the media.

Empros functioned as an active site of ideological circulation, shaping representations of women through framing and narrative selection. Its construction of female identity reveals a duality: it registers modernity and public participation, yet simultaneously reproduces relational and patriarchal definitions. Although references to women remain infrequent overall, there is a noticeable, albeit limited, presence in certain professional, artistic, and civic roles previously absent from the press. Even in these cases, the newspaper mediates women's activities through male or social reference points, constraining their autonomy within the journalistic narrative.

Thus, while *Empros* documents and occasionally highlights women's emerging roles, this visibility remains conditional and selective. The press amplifies certain aspects of female agency, yet continues to frame women within traditional social hierarchies. Despite incremental recognition of women's contributions in new professional and public domains, the newspaper's editorial stance reinforces patriarchal norms: female presence is acknowledged, but independence, authority, and full participation in the public sphere remain limited. In other words, women's representation in *Empros* illustrates a form of conditional visibility, where modest progress coexists with enduring ideological constraints. This conditional visibility underscores the role of mass press communication not only in reflecting social

change but also in actively structuring the terms under which female participation became intelligible within the public sphere.

Conclusions concerning the representations of women and the limits on public action apparent in the Greek press of the nineteenth century

These findings should be interpreted as indicative of broader shifts in press culture across the nineteenth century, rather than as direct comparisons between individual newspapers. Throughout the nineteenth century, the image of women in the Greek press remained closely linked to the social and political context of a newly established country seeking to form a national identity and social order. In the first decades after Independence, women appeared rarely, and when they did, their visibility was mainly limited to family roles as wives, daughters, or sisters of socially recognised men, without personal or professional autonomy.

The *Aion* newspaper primarily presented women as symbolic figures of the family or the state, exemplified by the Queen, while ordinary women appeared only occasionally at social events such as weddings and funerals, or in their roles as mothers.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the *Axropolis* newspaper began to refer to young women attending schools or educational institutions. This development can be linked to the real increase in female employment in Greece that resulted from urbanisation, women's access to education and vocational schools, the activities of the first women's movements, changes in family and social structure, and international cultural influences. At the same time, the limited development of industry and crafts contributed to the expansion of their professional opportunities.

Women began to appear in professions deemed socially 'appropriate', such as 'feminine' manual work, teaching, nursing, or work in welfare institutions. Newspapers presented them positively, emphasising their moral and socially acceptable contributions, while stereotyping remained strong.

Their public activity was limited and relative, not equal to that of men, and professional recognition was confined to a few fields. At the end of the century, the newspaper *Empros* portrayed a more fluid image, with women appearing under their full names and with descriptions of their qualifications and skills. At the same time, the press continued to be highly caustic towards women's emancipation and to reproduce traditional patriarchal ideology through its themes, news hierarchy, language and symbolic silences.

Women's public recognition remained limited and relative, never approaching the extent of male presence in work, education, or politics. This development shows a gradual but measured shift from the almost exclusively familial and private presence of women in the press towards an image that recognises their education, qualifications and professional activity, without significantly exceeding the boundaries of gender inequality.

The press functioned both as a reflection of social changes and as a vehicle for reproducing the patriarchal norms that defined nineteenth-century Greek society, simultaneously restricting women's professional advancement and marginalising forms of labour traditionally associated with social reproduction, such as child-rearing, domestic work, caregiving

for the elderly or dependent family members, and the emotional support that sustains a household. Across all three newspapers examined, these unpaid forms of domestic and caregiving work were never treated as labour with economic significance; instead, they were consistently excluded from the realm of socially valued production, reinforcing the broader ideological framework that separated women's reproductive roles from the recognised economy of paid work.

In conclusion, analysis of the nineteenth-century Greek press shows that newspapers did not simply mirror social reality but acted as active mechanisms in constructing gendered public identity, determining which forms of work were socially recognised and shaping perceptions of women's participation in the public sphere.

The findings can be interpreted in light of communication theories that emphasise the structuring role of media in shaping public meaning. In particular, they are consistent with perspectives such as Cultivation Theory (Gerbner et al., 1986), Agenda-Setting (McCombs & Shaw, 1972), and Framing Theory (Entman, 1993), which suggest that media contribute to defining which social actors and activities become visible and how they are interpreted. At the same time, it is situated within the framework of social constructivism (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) and feminist media theories (Van Zoonen, 2000; Santoniccolo et al. 2023), which show that representations of women's work are not neutral but mediate social power relations, reproducing or challenging stereotypes. Although these theories were originally developed in relation to broadcast media, their analytical logic remains applicable to historical press cultures as long-term systems of symbolic exposure and meaning-making.

From a communication perspective, these findings underscore the role of the press as a structuring force in public meaning, actively defining the symbolic boundaries of work, legitimacy and gendered participation, rather than merely reporting social change.

Through their continued selection of topics, prioritisation of news, and the ways in which women were presented, often through subtle or indirect references linked to male identities, newspapers set boundaries and examples for what was considered 'legitimate', 'acceptable', or 'morally desirable' for women's work.

In other words, the nineteenth-century press was a crucial tool in cultivating, reproducing and reconstructing gendered reality, creating frameworks of understanding and norms for women's work that contributed to the gradual shaping of women's social visibility and limitations in contemporary Greece.

References

Aion (1834–1843) National Library of Greece. Digital Newspaper Collection. Online: http://rg-dev.nlg.gr/archive/search?sort=rel&serials_of_issues%5B7%5D=%CE%91%CE%B9%CF%8E%CE%BD%E2%80%A179546

Akropolis (1883–1885) National Library of Greece. Digital Newspaper Collection. Online: http://rg-dev.nlg.gr/archive/search?sort=rel&serials_of_issues%5B8%5D=%CE%91%CE%BA%CF%81%CF%8C%CF%80%CE%BF%CE%BB%CE%B9%CF%82%E2%80%A150

Akropolis, 26.6.1884. Athens.

Akropolis, 9.5.1884. Athens.

Anagnostopoulou, D. (2007). *Αναπαραστάσεις του γυναικείου στη λογοτεχνία* [Representations of Women in Literature]. Patakis.

Anagnostopoulou, D., Papadatos, G. & Papantonnakis, G. (Eds.). (2013). *Γυναικείες και ανδρικές αναπαραστάσεις στη λογοτεχνία για παιδιά και νέους* [Female and Male Representations in Literature for Children and Young People]. Papadopoulos.

Beechey, V. (1988). *Women and Production. A Social Analysis.* Routledge.

Berger, P. L. & Luckmann, T. (1966). *The Social Construction of Reality. A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge.* Anchor Books.

Bourdieu, P. (1991). *Language and Symbolic Power.* Harvard University Press.

Couldry, N. (2003). *Media Rituals. A Critical Approach.* Routledge.

Doulkeri, T. (1990). *Μέσα Μαζικής επικοινωνίας και ισότητα των δύο φύλων. Μια πρώτη θεωρητική προσέγγιση και εμπειρική έρευνα* [Mass Media and Gender Equality. A First Theoretical Approach and Empirical Research]. Papazisi.

Droulia, L. (Ed.). (2005). *Ο ελληνικός τύπος 1784 έως σήμερα. Ιστορικές και θεωρητικές προσεγγίσεις, Πρακτικά Διεθνούς Συνεδρίου* [The Greek Press, 1784 to the Present. Historical and Theoretical Approaches. Proceedings of the International Conference], Athens. Institute for Neohellenic Research/National Hellenic Research Foundation.

Empros (1896–1899) National Library of Greece. Digital Newspaper Collection. Online: http://rg-dev.nlg.gr/archive/search?sort=rel&serials_of_issues%5B1%5D=%CE%95%CE%BC%CF%80%CF%81%CF%8C%CF%82%E2%80%A124

Empros, 10.01.1897.

Empros, 11.12.1899.

Empros, 12.12.1896.

Empros, 16.11.1897.

Empros, 2.12.1896.

Empros, 30.12.1899.

Empros, 5.1.1899.

Entman, R. M. (1993). Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm. *Journal of Communication, 43*(4), 51–58. Online: https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1993.tb01304.x

Federici, S. (2004). *Caliban and the Witch. Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation.* Autonomedia.

Finch, A. (2000). *Women's Writing in Nineteenth-Century France.* Cambridge University Press.

Friedan, B. (1963). *The Feminine Mystique.* W. W. Norton & Company.

Fuller, M. (1845). *Woman in the Nineteenth Century.* Greeley & McElrath.

Georgiadou-Kountoura, E. (2000). *Η Γυναίκα στη Νεοελληνική Ζωγραφική του ΙΘ' Αιώνα: Εικόνα και Δημιουργός. Στο συλλογικό έργο Κενά στην Ιστορία της Τέχνης – Γυναίκες Καλλιτέχνιδες* [The Woman in 19th Century Modern Greek Painting: Image and Artist. In the Collective Work "Gaps in the History of Art – Women Artists"] (pp. 59–78). Gvostis.

Gerbner, G., Gross, L., Morgan, M. & Signorielli, N. (1986). Living with Television: The Dynamics of the Cultivation Process. In J. Bryant & D. Zillmann (Eds.), *Perspectives on Media Effects* (pp.17–40). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Goffman, E. (1974). *Frame Analysis. An Essay on the Organization of Experience.* Harper & Row.

Gotsi, G. (2018). *Βλέμματα γυναικών στην τέχνη (1850–1900)* [Women's Perspectives in Art (1850–1900)]. Nefeli.

Hall, S. (1980). Encoding/Decoding. In S. Hall, D. Hobson, A. Lowe & P. Willis (Eds.), *Culture, Media, Language* (pp. 128–138). Hutchinson.

Hall, S. (1997). *Representation. Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices.* Sage.

Hionidou, V. (2005). Domestic Service on Three Greek Islands in the Later Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries. *The History of the Family, 10*(4), 473–489.

Hochschild, A. (1983). *The Managed Heart. Commercialization of Human Feeling.* University of California Press.

Hooks, B. (1992). *Black Looks. Race and Representation.* South End Press.

Kladou-Kranidioti, M. (1996). *Φιλανθρωπία και κοινωνική πρόνοια: Τα πρώτα βήματα του ελληνικού κράτους (1830–1880)* [Philanthropy and Social Welfare. The First Steps of the Greek State (1830–1880)]. Estia.

Konstantinidou, Ch. (1997). *Η αναπαράσταση του κατά φύλο καταμερισμού της εργασίας στον ημερήσιο αθηναϊκό Τύπο* [The Representation of the Gender Division of Labour in the Daily Athenian Press]. PhD Dissertation, Panteion University, Department of Sociology, Section of Social Morphology, Athens.

Kontaxi, K. M. (2020). *Αναπαραστάσεις του γυναικείου φύλου σε εφημερίδες της πόλης του Αγρινίου κατά την περίοδο 1950–1985: λαογραφική και ανθρωπολογική προσέγγιση* [Representations of the Female Gender in Newspapers of the City of Agrinio during the Period 1950–1985: A Folkloric and Anthropological Approach]. Doctoral Dissertation, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (NKUA). School of Philosophy, Department of Byzantine Philology and Folklore.

Koumarianou, A. (2008). Aeon. In L. Droulia & G. Koutsopananou (Eds.), *Εγκυκλοπαίδεια του Ελληνικού Τύπου, 1784–1974. Εφημερίδες, Περιοδικά, Δημοσιογράφοι, Εκδότες. Τόμος Α* [Encyclopedia of the Greek Press, 1784–1974. Newspapers, Magazines, Journalists, Publishers. Volume A] (pp. 153–154). National Hellenic Research Foundation, Institute for Neohellenic Research.

Koutsoulenti, S. (2005). *Το Αρσάκειο και η συμβολή του στην εκπαίδευση των κοριτσιών (1836–1930)* [Arsakeio and its Contribution to the Education of Girls (1836–1930)]. Hellenic Letters.

Landauer, A. (1884). *Mes premiers vers: Avec une lettre autographe de Victor Hugo.* Vienne: Editeur Charles Gerold Fils.

Macha-Bizoumi, N. (2012). Amalia Dress: The Invention of a New Costume Tradition in the Service of Greek National Identity. *Catwalk: The Journal of Fashion, Beauty and Style, 1*(1), 65–90.

Mackridge, P. (2009). *Language and National Identity in Greece, 1766–1976.* Oxford University Press.

Marks, P. (1990). *Bicycles, Bangs, and Bloomers. The New Woman in the Popular Press.* The University Press of Kentucky.

Mayer, K. (1957). *Ιστορία των Ελληνικών Εφημερίδων* [History of the Greek Press]. Volume A, 1700–1900. Dimopoulos.

McCombs, M. & Shaw, D. (1972). The Agenda-Setting Function of Mass Media. *The Public Opinion Quarterly, 36*(2), 176–187.

McRobbie, A. (1991). *Feminism and Youth Culture.* Macmillan.

Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M. & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative Data Analysis. A Methods Sourcebook* (3rd ed.). Sage.

Mill, J. S. (1869). *The Subjection of Women.* Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer.

Mulvey, L. (1975). Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema. *Screen, 16*(3), 6–18. Online: https://doi.org/10.1093/screen/16.3.6

Nina-Pazarzi, E. (2019). *Φύλο και Εργασία* [Gender and Work]. Law Library.

Nina–Pazarzi, E. & Tsangaris, M. (2008). Constructing Women's Image in TV Commercials: The Greek Case. *Indian Journal of Gender Studies, 15*(1), 29–50. Online: https://doi.org/10.1177/097152150701500102

Papadimitriou, D. (2008). Akropolis. In L. Droulia & G. Koutsopananou (Eds.), *Εγκυκλοπαίδεια του Ελληνικού Τύπου, 1784–1974. Εφημερίδες, Περιοδικά, Δημοσιογράφοι, Εκδότες. Τόμος Α* [Encyclopedia of the Greek Press, 1784–1974. Newspapers, Magazines, Journalists, Publishers. Volume A] (pp. 158–159). National Hellenic Research Foundation, Institute for Neohellenic Research.

Papastefanaki, L. (2019). Family, Gender and Labour in the Greek Mines, 1860–1940. *International Review of Social History, 65*(2), 267–288. Online: https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020859019000580

Petropulos, J. A. (1968). *Politics and Statecraft in the Kingdom of Greece, 1833–1843.* Princeton University Press.

Psarra, A. (2008). *Σιωπηρές Ιστορίες. Γυναίκες και Φύλο στην Ιστορική Αφήγηση* [Silent Stories. Women and Gender in Historical Narratives]. Alexandria.

Sachsman, D. B., Rushing, S. K. & Morris, R. (Eds.). (2009). *Seeking a Voice. Images of Race and Gender in the 19th Century Press.* Purdue University Press.

Saldaña, J. (2016). *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* (3rd ed.). Sage.

Santoniccolo, F., Trombetta, T., Paradiso, M. N. & Rollè, L. (2023). Gender and Media Representations: A Review of the Literature on Gender Stereotypes, Objectification and Sexualization. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 20*(10). Online: https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph20105770

Stamiris, E. (1986). The Women's Movement in Greece. *New Left Review,* I/158, 98–114.

Stetz, M. D. (2001). The New Woman and the British Periodical Press of the 1890s. *Journal of Victorian Culture, 6*(2), 272–285. Online: https://doi.org/10.3366/jvc.2001.6.2.272

Thanailaki, P. (2018). *Gender Inequalities in Rural European Communities during the 19th and Early 20th Century.* Springer. Online: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-75235-8

Tuchman, G. (1978). *Hearth and Home. Images of Women in the Mass Media.* Oxford University Press.

Tusan, M. E. (1998). Inventing the New Woman: Print Culture and Identity Politics during the Fin-de-Siecle: 1997 VanArsdel Prize. *Victorian Periodicals Review, 31*(2), 169–182.

Van Zoonen, L. (2000). *Feminist Media Studies.* Sage.

Varika, E. (1987). *Η Εξέγερση των Κυριών. Η γένεση μιας φεμινιστικής συνείδησης στην Ελλάδα, 1833–1907* [The Revolt of the Ladies. The Genesis of a Feminist Consciousness in Greece (1833–1907)]. Research and Education Foundation of the Commercial Bank of Greece.

Wollstonecraft, M. (1792). *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman.* Joseph Johnson.