

'HERSTORY': THE MISSING WOMAN OF CYPRUS

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Abstract

The following article is concerned with the contemporary issue of feminist history, a relatively neglected topic in women's studies, which has received increasing attention in the last few years. A scholarly paper has rarely been published on Cypriot women's history, which is the aim of this work. It is not this paper's objective to give a detailed theoretical analysis of the issue but rather a descriptive account of "hidden" lives.

Introduction

"In the end, it boils down to this: is one prepared to break with tradition, to be 'unhistorical' in order to make history, or not?"

Cyprus is said to be the island of Aphrodite, the ancient Goddess of love and beauty. It says so on postcards and tourist information leaflets given to millions of tourists from all over the world. The name is used in advertising campaigns for wine, for restaurants, and also as a brand name for shoes and clothing. Cyprus is female, and so is its Goddess. Its name is exploited commercially, as is the island.

A number of articles and books, of political, social or journalistic nature describe Cyprus as the *raped island*, the *oppressed beauty of the Mediterranean sea*, the *victimised beauty*, due to its continual invasion by foreign rulers – all explained by the island's size and strategic geographical location. Therefore, Cyprus has been invaded, raped, and oppressed, just as many women in the world argue they have been. It is relatively insignificant in world politics. It is financially and military dependent on bigger, more powerful states. It is always under threat due to its geographical location and the expansionist tendencies of its neighbours; fragile, hanging by the thread. Yes, Cyprus may be a woman. It is prohibited from having a voice and struggling to exist and be accounted for. This is not a personal claim. This is a constant complaint by its people and by the almost all-male government. Its leaders are men, its social system patriarchal and sexist, and yet, a parallel has never been drawn between the two – the country and the woman – by these authoritative

rulers. Ironically, the same rulers who voice these apparent inequalities over Cyprus' international position, are the same rulers who are still far from ensuring women's equality and safety through the legal system. They are the same rulers who hand out government application forms for posts in the civil service on which one's father's name and occupation must be stated along with other information, but nothing concerning the mother.

On my identity card there is the name and surname of my father and following that, the name and maiden surname of my mother. As a thirteen year old and naive young woman I concluded from the above, and thousands of other examples, that as a person, I belonged first to the state, then to my father and then to my mother who in turn belonged to her father – I assumed that he, in turn belonged to his father. It did not occur to me at the time that I could actually be a person in my own right. It did occur to me though that if I had ever had to go through childbirth, I would have expected such documents to be primarily concerned with me. Consequently, my identity card has always been a problem to me.

When I was at high school, all the female students had to take the home economics class. We were taught how to cook, make cakes and sew as well as embroider, in order to grow up 'and be proper women, able to look after our house, our husbands and our families.' These were the constant words of my high school home economics female teacher. The male students had to take carpentry and learn other practical skills necessary for a 'man.' So, when a young boy – aged 13 – asked to take home economics classes as he loved cooking, the school authorities refused to let him, despite the fact that carpentry and home economics classes took place – 'conveniently' – at the same time. In fact, the boy was laughed at and talked about by other students and teachers. I was one of those students although I recall feeling that I had to laugh but did not really know the reason why.

I am a Cypriot woman. I was born in Cyprus and I have spent most of my life here. I have also had the opportunity to live abroad, study abroad and experience different cultures and ideas. I am a Cypriot woman and because of that I feel the need to understand my society, and people's perception and attitudes. I feel the need to understand why I am always placed second, or I am non-existent in any given list.

Methodological Concerns

"If we continue to speak this sameness, if we speak to each other as men have spoken for centuries, as they have taught us to speak, we will fail each other. Again ... words will pass through our bodies, above our heads, disappear, make us disappear."²

In order to try and understand the Cypriot woman of today, her attitudes and perceptions, we have to go back in time and trace the complex antecedents of her

social historical background. Histories have always tended to be stylised and have concentrated on elites and the dominant groups in any particular society. The whole discourse of history is a site of power and resistance. Historians have been so concerned with recording the passage of power and authority throughout the centuries, that the outcome of their work has preserved the patriarchal structures of the societies they studied. Women have predominantly been excluded, ignored or simply mentioned in the background of any given period. In *Northanger Abbey* Jane Austen has her heroine complain about history books being full of "the quarrels of popes and kings, with wars and pestilence in every page; the men also good for nothing, and hardly any women at all." History is written by men (of the dominant class and race) and women have systematically been excluded as *agents of knowledge*.³ Writing in 1972, Anna Davin motivated women to study their own history "for by showing that the role and nature changes with each society we are helping to defeat the argument 'that's how it's always been.'"⁴ It is only through showing that a woman's role is socially constructed "and rooted in a specific historical context, rather than natural and universal, could feminism hope to argue that it was open to change."⁵

June Purvis explains how the publication of Sheila Rowbotham's book, in 1973, *Hidden from History: 300 Years of Women's Oppression and the Fight Against It*, has been followed by "an outpouring of publications making visible women's lives in the past, some of these accounts being more explicitly feminist than others."⁶ Women have been totally 'hidden' from Cypriot history and it is only through reading between the lines of textbooks by eminent male historians that even superficial information on their existence surfaces. Ironically, there has not yet been any single academic publication on the Cypriot woman from a historical perspective – least of all from a feminist perspective. It is therefore important to at least try and examine briefly the thousands of years of history of the Cypriot people in order to understand the "other," the woman. It is important to try and tell 'herstory' rather than 'history.' According to Natalie Davies the aim of telling this feminist story is to comprehend the "significance of the sexes, of gender groups in the historical past. Our goal is to discover the range in sex roles and in sexual symbolism in different societies and periods, to find out what meaning they had and how they functioned to maintain the social order or to promote its change."⁷ This is an extremely difficult task: "so long as a woman lives the life of the past she can never come into conflict with history. But no sooner does she begin to deviate, however slightly, from a cultural trend that has dominated the past than she encounters the full weight of historical inertia, and this unexpected shock may injure her"⁸

Due to the majority of Cypriots' identification with the Greek people and culture, and the lack of academic analysis until very recently, the literature and research covering Greece seems immediately to be applied to the island.⁹ Mavratsas, for example, gives a very interesting sociocultural perspective of the Greek and Greek

Cypriot economic ethos which he names the 'hellenic' ethos. This is well justified for the sake of his analysis but it is important to realise that the different historical experience of the two countries result in obvious differences in attitudes and perceptions of the people. This is especially so in the case of women who had no voice in the thousands of years of history. By looking at a number of historical textbooks and the first relevant article – published in booklet form in 1995 by Mary Pyrgos,¹⁰ I wish to give a brief picture both of Cyprus and of the Cypriot people, *with a particular emphasis on women*. It is not my intention to give an extensive theoretical framework of the history of women in Cyprus; thus, the following paper is a descriptive rather than theoretical/analytical account of what limited materials already exist, which aims at identifying important trends. The paper can indeed be criticised for not challenging the use of concepts developed to explore society from a masculinist perspective since it does not question as such existing methodology and the foundations of existing theoretical frameworks. Knowledge about women is basically added to the knowledge about men. Nevertheless, such research might be argued to be necessary in the context of Cyprus because up to the present day only men have been investigated and thus we need data about women too. In fact, feminist scholarship in Cyprus is such a new field that this is the only immediate way at the moment, for women to gain some access to men's academic world, just as second-wave feminists started off some time ago in Europe and the United States. I am therefore well aware of the limitations of this kind of work which does not strictly adhere to the whole philosophy and ethos of feminist principles. However, I see this piece of work as an encouragement, a starting point for the development of a *feminist* perspective within the academic life in Cyprus. My emphasis on the term 'feminist' (simply to point out the obvious) is necessary since not all work on women is feminist and thus "the claim that research on women is conducted with a feminist perspective can be made only when the methods applied do in fact reflect women's experiences which undoubtedly will vary"¹¹ Thus, the present paper could create a possible problem for some feminists as to whether it should be included in the definition of 'feminist work.' But I feel that in this particular context it is a start, and is a way of demonstrating how women are denied equal opportunities and are discriminated against and for this it should ideally be regarded as promoting positive change. It thus has political implications for the life of women in Cyprus and it is aimed at acknowledging and pointing out their oppression. For this reason, I consider this to be a feminist account.

Cyprus' unique position at a cross-roads between three continents, its size and greatly diverse history of peoples throughout the centuries have had an immense and irreversible impact on Cypriot life and social structure as it stands today. At the same time, Cyprus has been a very isolated place and it is only very recently that further access to the means of communication and transportation has began to change this situation. This uniqueness expresses itself in an extraordinary blend of the East with the West, an internalisation of opposing values, contradicting morali-

ties and a confused perception of the people's identity and culture. In fact, it seems that "the Greek culture has an essentially masculine character ... (that) exhibits certain peculiarities which can easily confuse the social scientist who approaches them with a western theoretical apparatus."¹² A different approach seems therefore to be necessary, not just in terms of Western/Middle-Eastern (thus cultural) point of view but most importantly, from the point of view of women. This point of view does not imply the generalisation of the universality of feminist ways of knowing which I see as inherently perspectival and culture-bound. Feminism is indeed a general theory of the oppression of women by men - a universal theory but a contradictory one at the same time. Although feminists disagree on the uniformity of women's oppression, "without some element of universality there can be no feminism."¹³

While reading the vast amount of literature on feminist concerns, I was confronted with extreme isolation because the 'different contexts' of women in 'my world' were not included since feminists are only now beginning to realise the implications and heterogeneity 'of the condition of being a woman.'¹⁴ Cypriot women do not appear to fit into the Euroamerican feminist writings. Neither are they a part of Third World feminism or Middle Eastern (mostly Islamic-concentrated) analyses of the situation of women. Since Cypriot women have been under the influence of various rulers and invaders,¹⁵ this has resulted in both insecurity and immense confusion concerning their identity, values and beliefs. In fact, it was not until 1960 that Cyprus achieved independence and even after that, a number of political problems which resulted in the Turkish invasion of 1974 created further imbalance in the workings of the society in terms of social structure and collective identity. Understanding the uniqueness and peculiarities of the Cypriot women's situation and attempting to explain it, is necessary for their self-development but also vital towards their struggle to acquire a voice.

The Historical Background

Early times

"But who, if it comes to that, has fully realised that history is not contained in thick books but lives in our very blood?"¹⁷

The first traces of life in Cyprus can be dated back to the 7th millennium BC, beginning with the Neolithic Age (7000-5300BC) and later the Chalcolithic Age(4000-2500 BC). A number of archaeological excavations have exposed a wealth of artefacts, which illustrate the various stages of the development of the Cypriot civilisation. Nevertheless, information of life in early Cyprus, while receiving a lot of attention, is extremely limited and even more so on the life of Cypriot women of the time and it is only certain anthropological studies that offer some light on the subject. Many details of women's lives have simply been lost with the passage of

time. According to Mary Pyrgos,

"The purpose of life of every woman at the time was to survive and propagate the species ... the figurines of pregnant women ... reinforce the view the sexuality and the rituals surrounding it played an important role in Neolithic Cyprus ... Children ... belonged to the mothers and until 8000BC are known by the name of the mother."¹s

During the Bronze Ages-early, middle and late (2500 -1050BC) when the people from Anatolia first arrived on the island, part of the population worked in copper mines and the majority in pottery making, animal breeding, agriculture, weaving. It seems that most of these tasks were done by women. Further on, evidence from the period suggests that:

'The island had a matriarchal system which flourished in the year 2000BC ... It is a fact that a number of findings, myths and information from texts support this view. We do however encounter some elements of a patriarchal system as well. We cannot therefore claim that in Cyprus existed a matriarchal system exactly opposite to the patriarchal. We can assume however, that women and men lived peacefully together and developed in parallel without oppressing each other in a society where the principle of equality of sexes still prevailed. We can also accept that women at the time were greatly respected and that their role in society and the economy was highly significant."¹s

Women of the time had a dominant presence in temples and gave their names to Cypriot cities. According to sources that seem to vary in terms of agreement, Kitium was named after the Princess Kition, the city of Paphos after the amazon Paphos, Amathus got its name from Queen Amathusia, and the current capital of Cyprus, Nicosia was named after the nymph Leucothea.

During the latter part of the Bronze Age, in the 12th century BC, the Achaeans began to emigrate to Cyprus. With their arrival, they established a patriarchal system or Patriarchy. There were now fewer female idols than male ones. According to information drawn especially from myths of the time, the new leadership condemned free sexual relations and imposed the importance of the virginity of a woman and her subservience to man. Monogamy was established and the tradition of succession of power which passed from mother priestess to daughter changed.

"In Cyprus, though the supremacy of Zeus [father of the Gods] was accepted, the Minoan tradition of mother-goddess was continued and found its supreme in Aphrodite - the goddess of fertility, of love both pure and carnal, and, of course -, beauty. Poetic fantasy wants Aphrodite born of the foam of the sea."²⁰

Sacrifices made at the Temple of Aphrodite in Paphos included only male animals. The initiates of these rituals, by paying a coin, were given a lump of salt and

aphallus.²¹

During the Cypro-Geometric period (1050-750BC), further numbers of Greek-speaking invaders, now armed with iron weapons, followed in the wake of the Myceneans. This period saw the rise of the first ancient kingdoms, which was followed by an obscure time, when there was a virtual blank in the history of the island, known as the *dark ages*. By the 9th century a Phoenician colony was established on the island. The Phoenicians brought with them the alphabet, which was being used by the Greek-speaking settlers in less than a century.

During the Cypro-Archaic Period (750-475BC), the Assyrians, the Egyptians and the Persians ruled Cyprus successively. In this period, the chastity of women was promoted and their overall position in society deteriorated even more. Any involvement in public life was unacceptable and women worked as weavers but also guest house owners, midwives, entertainers, paid mourners, companions, prostitutes and last but certainly not least, slaves. An extraordinary succession of Near Eastern Empires marked the island during this period. Assyrian rule was replaced by that of Egypt and then that of Persia, whose domination ended when Alexander the Great, under the support of the Cypriot kings conquered the Persian Empire.

This was soon to become also the end of the Cypro-Classical Period (475-325BC). Alexander gave a decisive impetus to the growth of civilisation.

"... by the planned cities built along his route, with market places, theatres, schools, etc. By the improvement of harbours and transport and the opening up of new roads and by creating monetary unity facilitated both the movements of trade and of people. The Greek language, developed into a great instrument of expression, ... became the vehicle for the movement of ideas which percolated throughout the conquered regions and stabbed beyond them into surrounding barbarism."²²

Information like this should nevertheless be treated with extreme caution.

"Ancient texts give more information about the life of Cypriot women in the classical era but contemporaries who write the history of women should examine this information very carefully and cautiously. The patriarchal authors wrote only the history of men, and they mention only what is important to them as men. The history of women and their role in society was either hushed up or distorted. That is why it is not strange that the information we have on women in ancient Cyprus is so sparse."²³

According to writings of the time, marriage continued to be regarded as the purpose of women of the period. Marriages were arranged by the father, who selected their daughters' husbands - especially within the upper classes - according to their tribe and social class. Similar to today's patriarchal double standards, women were then expected to remain faithful to their husbands but men were free to have

mistresses. The important King of Salamis Evagoras I and his son Onesillus or Evagoras II for example, were murdered on their way to visit their mistresses (374/373 BC). During that period, respect towards women was very low, so having children, and especially sons, protected women's position within society. " For this reason, all married women wanted to have children; but there is no way of knowing if the maternal instinct was highly developed."²⁴

During the Hellenistic Period (325-30BC), which started with the death of Alexander the Great, Cyprus became involved in struggles among his generals over the division of his empire. Throughout these conflicts, many of the cities were destroyed and their kings were imprisoned or executed. The Ptolemies were now in control of the island, which became part of the Hellenistic State of Egypt. As part of the Kingdom of Egypt, Cyprus became culturally and artistically oriented towards the Hellenistic world. Aphrodite remained the most important of the god(desse)s and the Great Mother Goddess continued also to be worshipped as Astarte (an earlier form is Isis-Aphrodite).²⁵ Nevertheless, the Ptolemies maintained "harems" with hundreds of concubines, and encouraged "dissolution in love ... and voluptuousness and exhibitionism among the women of the ruling class."²⁶ According to Pyrgos, the queens of this period were dynamic and determined. "They *stood by* their king husbands as equals, they were worshipped like goddesses, they fought like the men and if necessary they even defied death."²⁷ As an example of a prominent woman of the period she gives Queen Axiothea, wife of Nicocles, King of Paphos. She points out that these of course were the exception and that the majority of women had to struggle in order to survive in a world that belonged to men. However, Alastos explains that when Ptolemy decided to murder Nicocles, the latter demanded to be heard in his defence and as he was given no hearing, he killed himself.

" Queen Axiothea informed of her husband's death, killed her daughters to save them from falling into the hands of the enemy and persuaded the wives of the king's brothers to commit suicide with herself."²⁸

It seems, thus, that Pyrgos regards being helpless and powerless, unable to voice an opinion and having absolutely no other choice but to commit suicide as a sign of women being determined and dominant. Sensitivity to feminist principles and ideas is absent and stereotyping of the definition of power, determination and courage is obvious in this account of women's history which cannot be considered to be feminist. However, it is Alastos who seems to sum up the circumstances under which the Cypriot woman lived:

" The woman was very much the household slave as in all Greece."²⁹

The Romans and the Rest

In the year 30BC, Cyprus came under the Roman Empire as part of the Province

of Syria: this was the beginning of the Roman Period (30BC-AD330). Roman rule in Cyprus was established in its final form in 22BC, when Octavian, now the Emperor Augustus, transferred the island to the rule of the Senate. That was the beginning of a long period of uninterrupted peace. It was also a time when women walked freely in the streets (accompanied by servants the number of whom was determined by the law, depending on the women's social status), attended public spectacles and visited the public baths. However, they were treated as minors by the law, but gained a certain amount of social respect upon marriage. Consequently their parents hurried to marry them off at a very early age. The choice of a husband for the daughter depended on the former's social class and, as Pyrgos explains, Romans could not marry a Cypriot, but could live with her. As for the woman herself, again, she had no say. Pyrgos states that before the marriage ceremony, a woman had to visit the Temple of Priapus in order to symbolically offer her virginity. Furthermore, divorce was easy to obtain for men, who were actually encouraged in this way to abandon their wives and keep concubines. She also informs us that

"In 212 AD, the Emperor Caracalla, (with the *Constitutio Antoniniana*) under the guidance of his mother made all the citizens of the Empire equal. Romans and slaves now had the status of the roman citizen. This law was a decisive one for Cypriot women ... patrician women in Cyprus participated in decision making. Apollonia, who lived in the 2nd century AD and Cornelia Nike were well known for their philanthropy. The latter was also famous for her efforts to free slaves."

June Hannah explains how philanthropy has long been recognised as an arena which middle class women made their own. "As a voluntary activity, and one which required caring qualities, it was seen as a suitable outlet for women's desire to do something useful with their lives for the good of a wider community."³⁰

It was during the Roman Period, in the beginning of the third century that Paphos and other cities, particularly Salamis, suffered extensive damage from an earthquake. Cyprus, with its people stricken by poverty, war, earthquakes, drought but also the decline of morality, was already getting ready for the advent of the new religion which was to change the history of the island and the attitudes of its people irreversibly. The inauguration of Constantinople as capital of the Roman Empire in AD 330, marked the beginning of the Byzantine Period (AD330-1453). By that time, the majority of the inhabitants of the island had become Christians, so the transition to the new order was relatively smooth. Constantine brought with him a more moral and humanitarian world than his Roman predecessor. Based on Christian ideals, he restricted the absolute power that the father had over his children; furthermore, he abolished concubines, thus giving a new status to women. Pyrgos, nevertheless, suggests that this promotion of equality of the sexes was soon to disappear and was substituted by patriarchal thinking. She says that the Church in collaboration with the state promoted rules, which only humiliated women. It seems, thus, that

Byzantine rule was full of contradictions and double standards concerning women. With the complete regulation of social life,

"the son had to follow his father's profession ... the law forbade parents to sell their children...women's rights were advanced. A widow had the right to raise her own children and a wife the right of property equal to her dowry."³¹

It was nevertheless women who substituted donkeys and camels in mountainous areas as porters. Furthermore, the puritanical Byzantine society exorcised anything that the Goddess Aphrodite stood for and dancing, pleasure and enjoyment became sins.

From the middle of the seventh century until the second half of the tenth century, Cyprus was to undergo a series of invasions, beginning with the Arab invasion in AD 649 under Muawiya. In 688 Emperor Justinian II and Caliph Adbel Malik agreed to demilitarise the island and share the taxes extracted from the mixed communities of Muslims and Christians. A succession of *naval* battles and raids between the Byzantine Empire and the Caliphate bring Cyprus to AD 965 when the Byzantine Emperor Nicephoros Phocas was able to reoccupy Cyprus. This marked the Second Byzantine Period AD 965-1191 in Cyprus which was to witness a very rigid tax collection but also a firm government and numerous building programmes, mainly of Orthodox churches and monasteries. Their astonishing elegance alone assured that this was one of the greatest periods of Cypriot history. It was again during this period that two female role models came into existence. One was that of the Virgin Mary. She was interpreted to stand for motherhood, subservience, morality. The other was of the sinful Eve-the seducer, immoral, and valueless. However,

"... both central female figures in the Bible, Eve as well as Mary, are associated with myths concerning the potency of the male creative force. Since the sole creative principle of the universe in the Bible is male, it is not surprising that woman, man, and the son of God, central figures in the divine plan of the universe, are all created by male forces."³²

There were thus only two realistic roles for women to choose from. They had to follow one or the other and live with the implications of their 'choice.' Diversity and freedom of expression were totally denied and as Simone de Beauvoir explains in *the Second Sex*, it is not "reality that dictates to society or to individuals their choice between the two opposed basic categories; in every period, in each case, society and the individual decide in accordance with their needs. Very often they project into the myth adopted by the institutions and values to which they adhere."ss In this case, it was the Church that promoted these images, and misogyny was thus encouraged. Thus, it was only through marriage and children that women felt they could gain respect within a society that relegated them to the back of the house.

Women of the time found strength in Christianity but also in legends such as that

of Regina. Regina was the utopian third choice. The one to exist only in legends but never in reality. The ultimate dream. She was a legendary powerful woman capable of almost everything. She is described in myths of the time riding her horse, building castles and palaces, defending the powerless. According to the legend, she constantly and stubbornly refused to give into Digenis's - the legendary hero who represents men and masculinity - advances. She was a 'complete' woman but also had that times perceived masculine traits that allowed her to be anything she wanted. She represented the best of both worlds.

" Regina is wonderfully beautiful, kind, proud, hard and heartless, woman and goddess, the shadow that goes past our eyes, she glances at us for a moment and then she disappears in the wind or her underground palaces. She is a queen and a demon, an amazon and a woman, she is the Regina of Cyprus."³⁴

The triumph of the First Crusade at the end of the 11th century increased the prosperity of the island which benefited from the new markets for its produce on the coast of Palestine. Nevertheless, the military decline of the Byzantine Empire became obvious by the middle of the 12th century. Isaac Comnenus, one of the rulers of the Byzantine dynasty, took over the government of the island in 1184 and declared himself independent until 1191 when King Richard I (the Lionheart) of England defeated him and took possession of Cyprus. Richard married Berengaria of Navarre in Limassol, where she was crowned Queen of England. It was after this that Richard sold the island to the Knights Templars for 100000 dinars. A year later, in 1192 the Templars resold Cyprus to King Richard who transferred it at the same price to Guy of Lusignan.

This marked the beginning of the Lusignan Period (AD1192-1489) which was to last for three hundred years, impose the feudal system and maintain a regular succession of legitimate male heirs. There were occasional breaks in the dynastic succession, and queens became regents for minor heirs. Despite this, women played a prominent role throughout, which Hunt described as often domineering.³⁵ This period was crowded with historical events: numerous personalities appeared and many tragedies and conflicts took place. A complete new ecclesiastical establishment for Cyprus appeared whereby the Latin Church took over administration of the dioceses from the Greek Orthodox bishops. The Greek Orthodox Church was fanatically persecuted by the Latin Church, to which the Lusignans owed their allegiance. The Latin Church acquired great power and together with the state, they controlled society. Rules and laws were again characterised by double standards.³⁶ Adultery, for example was condemned, but numerous evidence from stories of the time, show how it was really accepted by society, a fact taken for granted, that only few women, such as Helena Palaeologina, confronted. Most of this information and stories of the period have been preserved by travellers. It was a traveller, for example, who explained that most women could play the spinet. Another explained how the

atmosphere of the country, due to its warm climate, encouraged hedonism and the majority of the people had extra-marital relationships. King John II for example had Marietta of Patras as a mistress and his wife, Helena Palaeologina was well aware of it. It was, in fact, Marietta de Patras who was the mother of James II (the Bastard), "loved and spoiled by his father when alive and his eventual successor."³⁷ Double standards and the Christian rulers, nevertheless, demanded that marriage and chastity remained the central concern of women's lives.

"Rapists were severely punished by the Assizes. If the rapist came from the same social class as the victim and her family accepted him, he was obliged to marry her. If he was not accepted by her family, the girl became a nun and the rapist had to pay the amount necessary for her to enter the convent."³⁸

Chastity and monogamy were indeed valued and respected. It is interesting here to mention Peter I, ruler of Cyprus as from 1358, who believed in the preaching of the Christian Church and who was the 'chosen instrument' to liberate the Holy Land. It was nevertheless the same man who, despite his marriage to Eleanor of Aragon, had numerous mistresses among whom, his favourite was Joanna l'Aleman.³⁹

Among the eminent women of the time was Queen Alice who became Regent of the Kingdom and guardian of her infant son. She held the regency with the assistance of her two brothers, Philip and John. There was also Queen Helena Palaeologina, mentioned above, who was Greek and became the second wife of King John II in 1441. According to Kleanthis Georgiades, "mostly serious developments of Cypriot history are connected with her."⁴⁰ Helena represented a symbol of national resurgence – her belonging to the Imperial family of Constantinople raised hopes for union with the Byzantium once more. She was devoutly Orthodox, well educated and spoke foreign languages fluently. She was an intellectual, famous for her energetic and ambitious nature, who went as far as to confront the Pope when she felt that she had to. Her daughter Charlotte, who also followed a pro-Greek policy, also showed the strength of character she had inherited from her mother and reigned Cyprus for six years. The next female ruler of Cyprus, and a greatly dominant figure in the political history of the island, was Caterina Cornaro. She was the daughter of the Venetian patrician Mark Cornaro and married James II. She remained Queen for fifteen years until 1489.

When James II and his son died in suspicious circumstances in 1474, they left the Lusignan line without a successor. This gave Venice, now at war with Turkey, the opportunity to intervene directly and seize the island for the defence of her eastern flank. This marked the beginning of the Venetian Period (1489-1571) which was characterised by the continual struggle of its rulers to prepare the island defences against the inevitable Ottoman invasion, which eventually took place in 1570 on the orders of Sultan Selim II. There appear to be no information about the life of women of that time apart from the fact that Caterina Cornaro died in Venice in 1510, still

bearing the title of Queen of Cyprus, Jerusalem and Armenia.⁴¹

Cyprus's entry into the Ottoman Period (AD 1571-1878) was a liberation for the bulk of the Greek Orthodox population who were relieved to get out of the oppressive feudal system and the authoritative administration. Serfdom was abolished and the rights of the Greek Cypriot Orthodox Church gradually restored. However, there were serious and continual revolts against Ottoman rule later on, mainly as a result of harsh taxation.⁴² The most serious of these occurred in 1764 when Ghil Osman Agha was killed after more than doubling taxes. The rebellion, nevertheless, continued for another two years. Despite this, the Church acquired more and more political power⁴³ and had the authority to solve family differences amongst the Greek, Armenian, Maronite, and Latin citizens. The family problems of Ottomans married to Cypriot women were solved by the *Kadi*, in accordance with the Koran. Generally speaking, there was a very strong emphasis on religion by the people themselves who prayed, went on pilgrimages, made offerings and donated icons to the Church. The Orthodox Church was used by the Ottomans to control the Greek Cypriots. Thus, the Archbishop grew particularly influential and was the official representative of the Greek Cypriots and gradually gained the right to appoint the dragoman of the serai, who was the head of the civil service. Half a century after the murder of Ghil Osman, and after a series of revolts and hatred, in 1821, the High Porte brutally intervened to forestall support among Cypriots for the revolt against Ottoman rule in Greece. On the 9th of July – a historical landmark in Cypriot history, Archbishop Kyprianos was publicly hanged by the Turks, together with three other bishops. By the 14th of July, 470 citizens and mostly members of the clergy were killed.

According to Pyrgos, despite the wealth of texts written at the time, women were nowhere mentioned during the first two centuries of Ottoman rule. She finds that their position of the somewhat freer disappeared and women now felt totally oppressed in every sphere of their existence. "Society had crushed their spirit and their activities"⁴⁴ especially due to the Islamic Law – which was directly related to the Koran - and the Byzantine Ecclesiastical Law. It was only in rural areas where no Ottomans lived, that the Cypriot women initially continued to behave as before, but gradually their lives changed as well.

"Ottoman women, most of whom were Latin women who became Moslems, behaved like other Cypriot women. They appeared bareheaded and participated in social events. In time, however, urban Ottoman women withdrew into harems and were seldom seen out."⁴⁵

Cypriot society was influenced immensely by the three hundred years of Ottoman rule and the effects are still visible in 20th century attitudes and lifestyle. "Of all the periods of which there is historical record this is without doubt the unhappiest and least prosperous."⁴⁶ Similar to other circumstances of social

oppression or unrest, it was women who were victimised more than anyone. They were not allowed to say their opinion concerning their future partners and marriages were arranged by matchmakers. A precondition for marriage was the dowry provided by the bride, but also a brideprice from the groom which included the building of the house. The dowry issue often caused disputes which resulted in marriages or engagements being dissolved.⁴⁸ Christian or Muslim, they suffered and struggled their way through the whole of the Ottoman period, hiding away⁴⁷ unable to have a voice, living a life of misery where no self-expression apart from praying was allowed.

"Modern" Times

It was during this period, the latest part of the 19th century, that Russian encroachments on the Ottoman Empire began to alarm Britain as well as Turkey. Eventually, this resulted to the signing in 1878 of a defensive alliance between Britain and Turkey. Under the Cyprus Convention, Britain assumed administration of the island, which remained formally part of the Ottoman Empire. This marked the beginning of the British Period (1878-1960) – a crucial time for both the political but also the social history of the island. From this time onward, the hope of the Greek Cypriots for unification with Greece never dimmed and this is quite important to note for the further developments on the history of Cyprus.

The effects are strongly visible in the current social structure of the island in general, and in the position of women in particular. Pyrgos suggests that with the British rule came a new era for Cyprus. "The liberalism that blew from the West lifted Eastern despotism from the Cypriot people... The once locked doors of the houses now opened and women, timidly at first, and later more courageously, greeted the outside world with curiosity ... they were no longer as isolated as before".⁴⁹ She points out, however, that this new way of life influenced in the first three decades of the British rule only the women of the upper classes.⁵⁰ On the other hand, life for the vast majority of lower class women who lived predominately in rural areas had not changed especially due to major difficulties in the means of communication and transportation.

It was not until the outbreak of the First World War that Cyprus was actually annexed to the British Empire as before that, it was leased from Turkey on payment of an annual tribute. In 1925 it was formally declared a Crown Colony. Victorian values might have been indirectly imposed on the Cypriot women in the past but by this point the objectives of the suffragettes were still unheard of on the island.⁵¹ Neither women nor men received the right to vote for their rulers until 1960. Patriarchy and the consequent power relations at all levels prevailed. Western feminist researchers explain how the greatest influence on family life since the seventeenth century has been the institutionalisation of women's role as mothers and housewives: women were forced to obey their fathers, their husbands, their broth-

ers and the clergy. Their place was in the houses² and their sole purpose was still marriage, family and motherhood. Marital fidelity and devotion, purity and virginity were immediately associated with the health of the state and women had once more to bear the responsibility of it. Honour, and its social implications within the family, remained a crucial value in society.

"A man's honour, expressed primarily as manliness ... , basically entails ensuring the moral propriety of the members, and, especially the female members, of one's family ... A woman's honour, expressed as *ntrope* or sexual shame, revolves primarily around her sexual propriety. An honourable woman, thus, is, if married, one who is faithful to her husband; and, if single, one who maintains her virginity until marriage."⁵³

The Twentieth Century

A new phenomenon for the island arose during the first two decades of the 20th century. Although working women constituted a striking minority at the time, social and economic changes led a number of working class young women (most of them still in their early adolescence) from rural areas moving into the cities in order to find work as domestic servants in the middle and upper class households.⁵⁴ This, in turn led to their use by the male middle and upper class employers who took advantage of both their financial situation but also their fragile position as women in a society governed by men. In many cases, the wives of the abusers became aware of the situation or, worst, the young house assistants became pregnant. As a result, they had to return to their villages and families, stigmatised and humiliated- scared for life, as no 'respectable' man would accept to marry them.⁵⁵ A woman's sole destiny at the time was marriage, and this possibility was therefore ruined because her virtue and honour had been stained forever. For the unmarried woman shame directly affects parents and brothers, as her honour is almost exclusively associated with sexual modesty. It does not simply involve herself but also her immediate environment. Thus, the social pressure and personal oppression that the Cypriot woman has to deal with, has made it extremely difficult for her to revolt against the *status quo* that keeps her in the background of society.

Any form of recreation was unacceptable for women in the villages, whose sole outing was the Sunday mass, but things were somewhat different for the wealthier minority of women who lived in the cities. "Apart from religious activities and visits to the baths, they were seen going for walks with their female friends or their families; they went to dances, receptions, attended the races and also exercised, rode, and played tennis."⁵⁷ Relative to previous times in history, the Greek Cypriots enjoyed increasing prosperity. "The Cypriot people rediscovered themselves. They sang of joy and sorrow, of love and death. This change which was welcomed by the young girls, created problems for their mothers whose responsibilities increased now and obliged them to find new ways of guarding their daughters chastity

The change caused parents' insecurity, forcing them to marry their daughters off as soon as possible. In the first years of English rule the usual age of marriage was 15 years. Later, girls married at about the age of eighteen and a large number of girls married in their twenties."⁵⁸ Nevertheless, under the canon law, in the first half of the twentieth century the minimum age for marriage was 12 for women and 14 for men. In June 1935, however, this minimum age was increased to 16 for both men and women.

It was during these first years of the twentieth century that the first indirect steps towards women's rights occurred. In 1905, Greek Cypriot women who paid the tax *vergi* voted in the School Committee elections since men felt that the outcome of these elections would work to their favour. Soon after the results came out, the new legislation was withdrawn, as the outcome was not that which was expected. Women were once more denied the right of expression not just in matters of national importance but in educational issues that influenced the next generations. Their reaction to this denial was indifference, which could very probably be because of their hesitation to create unrest and the consequences of such a form of expression.

Until 1895, the maintenance of schools and the payment of the teaching staff was the responsibility of the community and the Church. In 1895, an Education Law was passed which regulated all relevant issues to the establishment and function of primary schools. As from that time, the extension of primary schools was rapid. In fact, "schools were very early seen by Cypriot leaders as an important vehicle for nationalist education and the existing schools rapidly multiplied."⁵⁹ The Educational Law of 1923 ensured that the full responsibility of employment, placement, transfer, payment, firing and pension of the teachers lay with the Government. More girls were thus given the opportunity to get educated but this hardly made any difference to attendance rates as parents opposed, or in the best circumstances hesitated to send their daughters to primary school. Rather, they made the young girls stay at home and prepare themselves accordingly for their future husbands (in terms of dowry but also moral standing in society). According to the 1946 Census by the British Colonial Administration, in 1901, 15558 male students enrolled in elementary school as opposed to 5373 women. Nevertheless, by the year 1943, the number of enrolments of boys rose to 32963 whereas of girls to 27398. In the years 1935 and 1952, laws were introduced which also regulated secondary education. In fact, the Girls' School of *Phaneromeni* in Nicosia became part of the Pancyprian Gymnasium in 1935 and offered the same curriculum to women as to men.

The educational system was undergoing drastic changes not only as an expression of social reforms but also due to political unrest. During the first half of the twentieth century,

"One of the many problems which Britain had to face, perhaps the most perplexing was the agitation by the Greek inhabitants for the union of Cyprus with

Greece. The Hellenic ideal was much older than the British occupation. Modern Panhellenism silently grew under centuries of foreign domination."⁶⁰

In October 1931, there took place the most serious demonstration up to then in favour of enosis. An important role was played by the high-ranking members of the clergy, one of whom, Dionysios Kykkotis, 'proclaimed the revolution' which resulted in the burning down of Government House. Order was restored for a very short period and resulted in the suspension of the constitution, the deportation of ten Greek Cypriots, and the censoring of the press.

Despite the political suppression, social, cultural and economic activities were enhanced. Within a period of twelve years, the trade unions increased from one in 1932 to ninety in 1944.⁶¹ Furthermore, until 1932 the leading newspaper of the island, *Eleftheria*, was published twice a week whereas in that year, a daily paper appeared and only some weeks later, a second one began its circulation. Within the next twenty years, there

"were six Greek papers, three Turkish and one English dailies, and eighteen weekly papers. Literary magazines made their appearance, the most important of which was the monthly *Kypriaka Grammata* ... Great advance was also made in education. There were, in 1953, fifty Greek and ten Secondary Schools, with a total of 16536 pupils, which represented an increase of over five times the number in 1930. In this the communities as such, by giving their labour free, or public-minded individuals by money donations have assisted greatly... Parallel developments occurred in health questions ... in road communications, in water supply and afforestation, but not, as yet, in housing conditions, particularly in the rural areas."⁶²

The benefit of all these advancements for women was nevertheless very small. The 1946 Census explains how at that time, 7.21% of the women population over the age of fourteen in Cyprus were employed full-time whereas the percentage for part-time female workers was 12.98%. Men, however, represented the overwhelming 86.80% out of a total of 154000. Women did not need any formal training or education as they worked mostly in weaving, agriculture, and dressmaking or as domestic assistants. The excuse of honour and virtue which had been used by the parents and especially fathers, was further reinforced by the low-prestige, low-paid jobs that women had the opportunity to perform. Women had to stay at home, unless in desperate need of financial contribution in the family, and received no formal education. That was their place and that is where they were forced to stay for many more years to come. In fact, it was not until 1963, that women acquired the right to equal pay in the public sector and that did not, of course, guarantee their equal chances of employment in the first place.

The political situation did not improve on the island during the 1940s and the idea of union with Greece resulted in most of the Greek Cypriots demonstrating to the

world their desire for *enosis*. In 1949, an Ethnarchic Council was created under Archbishop Makarios II who urged people to take part in a national plebiscite on the issue. The plebiscite was held from 15 to 22 January 1950 in the Christian Orthodox churches and women cast votes for the first time. Out of the 224757 Greek Cypriots eligible to vote, 215108 or 95.7 per cent voted for *enosis*. This led to the events of the 1st of April 1955 when leaflets were distributed all over Cyprus declaring that "a secret association calling itself EOKA had embarked on an armed struggle to throw off the British yoke."⁶³ The attack began on that day with explosions directed at first at government buildings and then at officials and Cypriots who were considered collaborators. The struggle of EOKA, continued until 1959 under the guidance of General Georgios Grivas (known as *Dighenis*). In the meantime, the Turkish Cypriot community on the island was contented with the given status quo and strongly opposed to being forced into unification with Greece. Their main fear was that of becoming second-class citizens since they would consist a very small minority in the whole population of Greece. They, therefore, favoured partition of the island.

The very turbulent years of 1955-58 came to an end when negotiations between Athens and Ankara led to the creation of the independent Republic of Cyprus. The negotiations were concluded in Zurich in February 1959 and the republic came into being on 16 August 1960. On 21 September 1960 it was admitted as the 99th member state of the United Nations and in 1961 it became a member of the Council of Europe. Cyprus had to renounce both *enosis* and partition and at the same time enforce stringent safeguards for the minority. Archbishop Makarios and Dr Fazil Kuchuk were elected President and Vice-President of the Cyprus Republic. As an indirect consequence of independence, women were eligible to vote for the first time in the history of the island. "Whether Makarios owed his election to the 'housewife vote' or not, his 66.82 per cent share was due less to approval of the Zurich-London Agreements than to the belief of a majority of Greek Cypriots that in any situation the archbishop was the best man to handle their affairs."⁶⁴ Women were indeed allowed the right to vote for the first time but they were nevertheless stereotyped as the housewives whose vote could be used for the benefit of those in control: men. The independence of the Republic contributed very little to the independence of the women on the island.⁶⁵

Within three years of the independence, in 1963, violent intercommunal conflict started as a result of a Greek Cypriot determination to modify the constitution safeguards that had been incorporated into the agreements of 1960 in order to protect the Turkish Cypriot minority. This resulted in the withdrawal of the Turkish Cypriot community from their constitutional role and positions and the establishment of a 'green line' dividing the two communities in Nicosia. These borders of the enclaves, the neutral zone that divided the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot areas of the city, were guarded by the British and subsequently by United Nations troops for the following ten years. The political unrest continued and the Turkish community created

its own political and social structure under the administration of Dr Kutchuk. Progress towards a solution was slow and was ultimately overtaken by the actions of the Greek military junta in Greece who, in 1974, launched a suicidal *coup d'état* to take control in Cyprus. Turkey took the opportunity to use the Greek coup as an excuse for 'humanitarian' action in order to protect the Turkish Cypriots. As a consequence the over-extended Greek military government was humiliated and fell, and democracy returned to Greece. The consequences for Cyprus were catastrophic as the Turkish military machine advanced unhindered until 40% of the island fell under their control. International opinion supported the initial Turkish action in so far as it served to protect the Turkish Cypriots, but condemned the brutality with which it was conducted. As a result, several thousand Greek Cypriots were killed, hundreds disappeared and are still tragically missing and about 70% of the island's productive capacity fell into the hands of the Turkish army. The Turkish Cypriots, who had suffered from 1964, felt themselves to be liberated. Until today, little progress has been made in finding a solution and one of the most important issues that has dominated political discourse, but also the population at large, since the Turkish invasion of 1974 has been the tragedy of the missing: these are people who were lost to war. One of the less obvious tragedies of contemporary Cyprus are the missing of Cypriot history – women.

Conclusion

In *Medea*, Euripides's Jason gives voice to the desire of men for a world without women as they were seen as one of the greatest dangers to 'mankind': *What we poor males really need I is a way of having babies on our own- I no females, please. I Then the world would be I completely trouble free.*⁶⁶ Jason's words express an idea frequently repeated in the next two millenniums: except from her function in reproduction, women do not offer anything to men's lives. In fact, women also bring unhappiness and misery to men and therefore their energy should be restricted within the walls of the house and the well-being of the family. Their activities should be limited and kept within the private realm of the home, and are to be governed by men. They have no place in the public sphere of authority, power and law. Therefore, they have no place in historical accounts and no place in history. Very little change has taken place since Virginia Woolf complained that even though woman

"pervades poetry from cover to cover; she is all but absent from history Of our fathers we always know some fact or some distinction. They were soldiers or they were sailors. They filled that office or they made that law, but of our mothers, our grandmothers, our great grandmother what remains is nothing but a tradition. One was beautiful, one was red-haired, and one was kissed by a queen. We nothing of them except their names and the dates of their marriages and the number of children they bore."⁶⁷

Historians and social scientists all over the world have paid little or no attention to women in history. For many years, archaeologists working on Cyprus had been refining theories about life on the island based upon knowledge about behaviour linked with what is generally a man's activity; that is, hunting. Little is known though about women's activities throughout the centuries and especially during the prehistoric times. Elisabeth Wayland Barber has questioned this lack of knowledge, for example, and has asked, "For millennia women have sat together spinning, weaving, and sewing. Why should textiles have become their craft par excellence, rather than the work of men? Was it always thus, and if so, why?"⁶⁸ She argues that women do not need "to conjure a history for ourselves. Facts about women, their work, and their place in society in early times have survived in considerable quantity, if we know how to look for them."⁶⁹ In Cyprus these facts have never been sought.

The limited information though shows that the Cypriot women were oppressed and subjected to the authority and dominance of men throughout the centuries. The strong presence and blend of Orthodoxy and Islam on the island have left women suppressed, powerless and confused. Nevertheless, tracing the history of oppressed, powerless groups is a very difficult task when information is based on government records, textbooks or other official documents. We are actually just beginning to find out how little we know and understand about half the human population – women. It would take detailed analysis and extensive personal interviewing which would raise unexpected issues and new questions in order to arrive at conclusions about 'ordinary' women's lives throughout history and it has not been the immediate purpose of this paper to achieve it. This could be criticised as merely carrying out 'compensatory' research since knowledge about women is added to the knowledge about men. There are lessons to be learned and a perspective to be gained in knowing the past for this is a history that is both humbling and inspiring. Women have been hidden from the Cyprus history and it would be a distortion of history itself to assume that the course of social events has been directed by men's activities alone. The history of the island has been recorded in terms of political events, authority, financial affairs and formal institutions – the public discourse, what patriarchy has considered important throughout the ages. Personal accounts, relationships, families – the private sphere in general – has been considered trivial, and so have women, whose lives revolved around these areas. Nevertheless, these personal experiences have been as historically significant as the world of politics and public life. In order to try and comprehend the attitudes and perceptions of these Cypriot women, it is thus necessary to search for missing information about women and try and put them in the context of what we have been taught to present. However, "the hardest thing to notice, is what isn't there."⁷⁰ The poverty of Cyprus' history is the darkness it sheds on its women rather than the light.

Notes

1. C.G.Jung, *Aspects of the Feminine*, Ark, 1982, p.72.
2. Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, translation Gillian Gill (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), p.69.
3. Sandra Harding, "Introduction; Is there a Feminist Method?," in Sandra Harding (ed) *Feminism and Methodology; Social Science Issues* (Indiana University Press, 1987), p.3.
4. Quoted in June Hannam, "Women, History and Protest," in Diane Richardson and Victoria Robinson (eds.), *Introducing Women's Studies* (Macmillan Press, 1993), p.303.
5. *Ibid.*, p.303 .
6. June Purvis, "Doing Feminist Women's History: Researching the Lives of Women in the Suffragette Movement in Edwardian England," in Mary Maynard and June Purvis (eds.) *Researching Women's Lives from a Feminist Perspective* (Taylor and Francis, London, 1994), p.166-7.
7. Natalie Z. Davies, "Women's History in Transition: The European Case," *Feminist Studies* 3 (1976), p.90.
8. Jung, *op. cit.*, p.72.
9. The Turkish Cypriot community identifies more with Turkey.
10. Mary Pyrgos, *The Cypriot Woman at a Glance* (1995). Pyrgos's publication is a reference article rather than an analytical piece of work, and it is not footnoted. Furthermore, there is no index or bibliography. Another, extended work of Mary Pyrgos within the same framework still remains unpublished.
11. Renate Duelli-Klein, "How to Do What We Want To Do: Thoughts About Feminist Methodology," in Gloria Bowles and Renate Duelli-Klein (eds.) *Theories of Women's Studies, Women's Studies* (University of California, Berkeley, 1980,) p.52.
12. Ceasar V. Mavratsas, "The Greek and Greek-Cypriot Economic Ethos: A Sociocultural Analysis," in *The Cyprus Review*, vol.4, Fall 1992 no.2.,p.35, footnote 25.
13. Caroline Ramazonoglu, *Feminism and the Contradictions of Oppression* (Routledge, 1989), p.22.
14. Liz Stanley and Sue Wise, "Method, Methodology and Epistemology in Feminist Research Processes," in Liz Stanley (ed.), *Feminist Praxis; Research, Theory & Epistemology in Feminist Sociology* (Routledge, 1990).
15. The Cyprus case is very complex as the men have always been under for-

eign domination as well. The Cypriot women have thus been oppressed by both dominant leaders of the state and dominated leaders of the society and the family unit.

16. The actual fact that this is an almost total lack of academic publications on women is, in itself, an important indicator of the current dominant attitudes and perceptions on the island.

17. Jung, *op. cit.*, p.72.

18. *Ibid.*, pp.1-2.

19. The quotation in itself is a sample of the attitudes and understanding of the role of women in general, written by one of the pioneers of the feminist movement in Cyprus. Matriarchy and patriarchy are not explained in the article neither is the described phenomenon of their co-existence. Rather, the terms are used unproblematically throughout Pyrgos' work to describe certain social conditions and trends. Furthermore, the writer uses no examples or documentation to support her views.

20. Footnoted in D Alastos, *Cyprus in History*, (Zeno, 1956), p.37., on myths surrounding Aphrodite's birth (my italics).

21. Alastos, *op.cit.*, p.37-9.

22. Alastos, *ibid.*, p.74.

23. Pyrgou, *op.cit.*, p.18.

24. *Ibid.*, p.20. The issue of whether the so-called maternal instinct actually is not discussed at all by Pyrgos. In fact, its existence seems to be taken for granted despite the vast amount of feminist critiques on the subject.

25. Hunt, Sir David (ed.), *Footprints in Cyprus* (Trigraph: London, 1990), p.101.

26. Pyrgos, *op.cit.*, p.20.

27. *Ibid.*, p.21 (my italics).

28. Alastos, *op.cit.*, p.77.

29. *Ibid.*, p.93.

30. June Hannah in "Women History and Protest", *Introducing Women's Studies*, Diane Richardson and Victoria Robinson (eds.) (Macmillan, 1993), p 316. Interestingly, it was only about half a century ago (1940) that women joined in philanthropic associations.

31. Alastos, *ibid.*, p.121.

32. Nancy Tuana, *The Less Noble Sex; Scientific, Religious, and Philosophical*

Conceptions of Woman's Nature (Indiana University Press, 1993), p.126.

33. Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (Penguin, 1986), p.284.

34. N.S.Spanos, *New Cypriot Mythology*, p.6, in Greek, my translation.

35. Hunt, *op.cit.*, p.177.

36. "In the narrow society of the Latins it was difficult to find a wife or husband outside the prohibited degrees. Significant are the words of the dispensation granted to Henry de Novaria and Mary Dagulier of Nicosia, '*pro eo quod arta et ab inimicis fidei orthodoxe circumvallata existit*' and the people of the island are Greeks, they themselves are Catholics, and cannot easily find their equals outside the prohibited degrees The same reason is given over and over again, as when dispensations were granted to Exilia ... to Guy d'lbelin and Isabel ... and to Thomas de Montolif and Alice de S.Bertino So too Pope Clement VI was told in 1348 by Philip, Archbishop of Nicosia; and owing to the remoteness of Cyprus it was not easy to obtain dispensation from the Pope. Accordingly Clement granted Philip power to give the dispensation to six couples who applied for it Another reason given is that the marriage would heal a family feud ... ," Sir George Hill, *A History of Cyprus: Volume I/I-The Frankish Period 1432-1571* (Cambridge University Press, 1948), *passim*.

37. Hunt, *op.cit.*, p.207.

38. Pyrgos, *op.cit.*, p.34. The actual punishment of the victim by the society at large and by her family in particular is not discussed in the paper.

39. It is interesting here to quote a male historian's version of the facts surrounding Eleanor's reaction to her husband's mistresses. Much information has surfaced about perceptions and morals of the given time. "Joanna was eight months pregnant when Peter left for the West and the jealous Eleanor had her beaten and tortured to make her miscarry. Having failed, she sent her to a home to have the child but instructed the midwives to bring the infant to her as soon as it was born. This was done. Joanna was separated from her child and thrown into jail...When Peter heard about this, he wrote to Eleanor, threatening on his return to do her so much violence that many will tremble Eleanor, obviously frightened, released Joanna from jail and shut her in a convent. She also desisted from doing harm to her other known rival, Echive de Scandelion, Peter's second mistress. Peter received other hard news. John Visconte, who was left in charge of the household, wrote to him that Queen Eleanor was unfaithful to him with the Count John de Morphou. Peter was enraged. What was sauce for the goose was most obviously not sauce for the gander! So on his return ... Joanna was taken away from the convent and installed in the Palace. The Queen was brought to trial before the Haute Cour. Conviction meant death for her and her lover. The nobles felt that to convict the Queen might bring upon Cyprus the wrath of Aragon, and in any case, such a

conviction was bound to strengthen the hands of the King by the removal of two of his opponents, while the opposite would leave him saddled with the 'dishonour' of an unfaithful wife. The Queen was exonerated." Alastos, *op.cit.*, pp.196-7.

40. Kleanthis Georgiades, *History of Cyprus*, Nicosia, p.206.

41. Queen Caterina Cornaro was forced to abdicate and the Venetians formally annexed the island in 1489.

42. Stavros Panteli, *A New History of Cyprus. From the Earliest Times to the Present Day* (1984. East-West Publications, London and the Hague), p.27. According to Theodore Papadopoulos, women and children were excepted, and it was only the male civilians who had to pay the taxation - *Haratsi*, as it was called. Theodore Papadopoulos, Social and Historical Data on Population, 1570-1881," Cyprus Research Centre, *Texts and Studies of the History of Cyprus* (Nicosia, 1965). Actually, men from the age of 14 to 60 were forced to pay, depending on their financial situation. (Kleanthis Georgiades, *op.cit.*, p.332). Pyrgos informs us that the fact that women did not pay taxes was in fact a privilege as it helped them to acquire property - their husbands registered property in their names in order to avoid taxation.

43. "Nevertheless, despite their enhanced and seemingly omnipotent position, the status of the Church leaders was difficult and delicate They often became victims of intrigue, plots, and rebellions." *Ibid.*, p.32.

44. *Ibid.*, p.39. One can not assume that this is necessarily true. In fact, as soon as the Turks invaded the island, there followed murders and disasters. On the 15th September 1570, Saint Sophia Cathedral was turned into a mosque. (It is still a mosque to the present day). The most beautiful young women were sent on ships to the Sultan as a gift. Among them was Maria Synglitiki who acted, according to Kleanthis Georgiades, "in the most memorable manner of heroism in Cypriot history: in order not to remain a hostage together with the other young women, she ignited the powder magazine of the ship, which exploded taking the purest youth of Cyprus to a wet grave." (My translation). Kleanthis Georgiades, *op.cit.*, p.229.

45. *Ibid.*, p.40. It is also explained here how women, and especially the young, pretty, unmarried ones and were locked in the house, hiding themselves from the urges of the Pasha or some other Ottoman official "who might claim them for their harem."

46. Hunt, *op.cit.*, p.253.

47. In fact, Ottoman women had to hide their faces when they went out, and this habit was gradually adopted by Christian women both as a sign of morality and respect, but also because of fear that if they were beautiful, or if the high officials of the Ottoman rule would take them up as mistresses against their will. It is important

to note that to present day, it is customary for older women in rural areas to be seen wearing a scarf, hiding their hair. This is an especially important ritual for these women when they go to church.

48. Pyrgos, *op.cit.*, p.41. It is interesting here to note that the same issue for disputes between the couple exists to the present day and I have, myself, witnessed serious family arguments over the issue of the dowry which have sometimes resulted in divorce. In fact, a husband who does not demand a dowry, is nowadays regarded with respect as this is a sign of his personal integrity and love for "his" bride.

49. Pyrgou, *op.cit.*, p.47.

50. At the end of the 19th century the wealthy young women spoke foreign languages, were interested in music and painting; they recited Greek and French poetry, danced, dressed in the latest fashions and *behaved like Europeans*. Many studied in Athens, Smyrna, Constantinople, Alexandria and Beirut." *Ibid.*, p.47 (my italics). Pyrgou seems to suggest a positive change in the life of women under the British. In terms of standard and 'quality' of life, one would agree but that very same way of life also seems to have promoted further inequalities for women. In fact, the stereotyped, delicate, passive upper class image of the woman who is unable to 'be out in the world' and must be looked after but keep silent at all times was not only sought for but rewarded in terms of social acceptance and indeed, admiration. The latest fashions from Paris fascinated the wealthy Cypriot women who, for the first time, had access to expensive clothes and accessories - trophies given to them by men when being 'proper ladies.' They were also given by the parents to attract eligible husbands for their daughters. Ibsen's heroine in *The Doll House* but also, closer to "home," Victorian modes of behaviour and double-standards were promoted under British rule.

51. Nevertheless, the first female teachers appeared on the island on approximately this time.

52. Discussing the structure of Nicosia during British rule, Attalides points out that "the necessity to segregate, especially unmarried women, is satisfied by this structure, as well as covered balconies, which are found not only in Moslem, but also in Christian houses," *op.cit.* (1981), p.101.

53. Mavratsas, *op.cit.*, p.17.

54. SurrIDGE B.J.A., *A Survey of Rural Life in Cyprus* (Nicosia, 1930), *passim*.

55. Commenting on SurrIDGE's survey on rural life in Cyprus, Storrs found that "Though sad reading, it was to be the basis of much social legislation-as in the treatment of domestic servants - for many years", Storrs *R., Orientations* (Nicholson & Watson, London 1937), p.570

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56. The Census of 1931 showed that the rural population constituted 80.5 per cent of the total. Further on, Surridge's study explains how over 25% of the rural population lived below the minimum level of subsistence which it had fixed, 50% around that level, and the rest, the wealthy, above that level. A clear indication of a vast working class as opposed to a very small middle and upper class.

57. Pyrgou, *op.cit.*, p.48

58. *Ibid.*, p.48. It is interesting to note here how mothers were responsible for their daughters moral upbringing and social respectability but it was the father as a rule who had the final word on their personal life, outings, and choice of their future husband.

59. Michael Attalides, *Social Change and Urbanization in Cyprus* (Nicosia, 1981), *passim*.

60. Stavros Pantelis, *op. cit.*, p.417. *Enosis* means union, and it was the slogan of those who wanted to join Greece.

61. *Report of the Cypriot Delegation to the Second World Trade Union Congress* (Paris, 1945).

62. Alastos, *op.cit.*, p.361-2 .

63. Panteli, *op. cit.* _P.265

64. Panteli, *op.cit* p.331. Archbishop Makarios remained the President of the Republic until 1977 when he died from a heart attack.

65. A rare exception to the stereotyping of women and their abilities was Archbishop Makarios' decision in 1960 to appoint Mrs Stella Souliotou as Minister of Justice in the cabinet.

66. Euripides, *Medea*, 573-79 lines.

67. Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (London, Grafton, 1929), (Reprinted 1977), p.45.

68. Elisabeth Wayland Barber, "Women's Work. The first 20000 Years; Women, Cloth and Society in Early Times" (W. W. Norton & Company, 1994), p.29.

69. *Ibid.*, pp.299-300.

70. *Ibid.*, p.299.