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## Gender representations in dramatic texts for young audiences in the period 2015–2021

Maria Dimaki-Zora and Asimina Charalampous



### Abstract

This article concerns a research on gender representations in dramatic texts intended for young audiences. It has been based on the master's degree thesis of Ms. Asimina Charalampous, supervised by Ms. Maria Dimaki-Zora. Twenty original plays, intended for young audiences, written by Greek male and female dramatists, were selected. These were published in the period 2015–2021. Our interest focused on the way gender was represented, the existence of gender stereotypes and the possible reproduction of inequalities. In addition, we investigated the presence of this type of stereotypes in the way gender has been represented in modern Greek drama for young audiences over time. The conclusions we have reached demonstrate that some progress has been made in the way gender is represented in recent dramatic production, since there are plays in which the girl is the “acting subject” or has positive characteristics that traditionally identify with the male gender. Unfortunately, however, these cases are the exception. In the vast majority of plays under examination, stereotypical representations of man and woman, boy and girl dominate and reproduce sexist norms and patriarchal notions.

**Keywords:** *gender representations, gender, theatre for young audiences*

## Introduction

Clarifying the term "theatre for young audiences" was a turning point in the field of theatre studies, as for many years the term "children's theatre" produced methodological and ideological ambiguities (Grammatas, 1999, p. 15), creating confusion as to whether it described a spectacle created by adults and aimed at children, or rather one produced by children and directed at peer or adult viewers (Van de Water, 2012). In addition, the term "children's" allowed this type of theatre to identify with lowly, sketchy and ultimately subordinate spectacles (McCaslin, 1978).

Nowadays, the term "child" signifies every human being under the age of 18, with the recognition of case-by-case exceptions in accordance with the applicable legislation, as stated in the UN Declaration of the Rights of the Child. However, since the age criteria do not suffice for a unique and strictly defined approach which covers this term in a clear manner, the use of "theatre for young audiences" is preferable, as it covers the parameters of the reception of theatrical creation by its natural recipients (Grammatas, 2010, p. 22; Wood & Grant, 1997). Theatre for young audiences is both defined and delimited by its final recipients, unlike other genres which are specified in various ways, e.g. according to their content and subject matter, the era of their writing (Hartnoll, 1980) or according to their aesthetics or their ideology (Grammatas, 2015, pp. 287–333).

## Theatre for young audiences in Greece

Since theatre is a complex cultural phenomenon, both the emergence and the development of Greek theatre for young audiences are inextricably linked to economic, social and political changes in our country. In 1881, Dimitrios Kambouroglou published short plays for children. He was followed by Aristotle Kourtidis with corresponding works in 1883 and 1915 (Dimaki-Zora, 2018, p. 260). The playwrights of that era as well as those of the interwar period and those of the first post-war years (Londou-Dimitrakopoulou, Metaxa-Krontira, Sperantsas) believed that the main aim of theatre for young audiences was the moral and national edification of children, thus resulting in the limitation of themes in the triptych "Homeland – Religion – Family". Moreover, the aesthetic aspect of these plays does not remain unaffected by their rigid ideological signification: the characters are one-dimensional, the plot is simplistic, while the plays are characterised by childish expressional mannerisms (Grammatas, 1999, p. 179).

Vassilis Rotas, however, was an author whose works, both the ones created in the first period (1927–1931) as well as those during the German

occupation, placed the child at the centre of dramatic action. The blossoming of Resistance theatre is interrupted during the post-war period, as patriotism and national enlightenment dominate (Grammatas & Tzamargias, 2004, p. 27). Some signs of hope for the emancipation from the ideological burdens of the past appear in the 1950s and 1960s with the works of Iakovos Kampanellis and Maroula Rota (Ladogianni, 2011, p. 114).

Nevertheless, Greek theatre for young audiences saw a great boom in the 1970s, when developments both in Europe and Greece allow the establishment of the "Children's Theatre" by Xenia Kalogeropoulou in 1972. A year later, Dimitris Potamitis founds the "Children's Stage of the Research Theatre". New writers, actors, directors and theatre groups thrive and create the heyday of the theatre for young audiences in Greece, totally revising the prevailing image and aspect of children as spectators. In the next decade, Yannis Kalatzopoulos, Thanasis Papageorgiou, Tzeni Fotiou, Yannis Xanthoulis, among others, emerge. They are succeeded by the Children's Stage of the National Theatre of Northern Greece and that of the National Theatre of Greece as well as plays performed by Municipal and Regional Theatres (Tzamargias, 2010, pp. 451–454). Nowadays, the abundance of theatrical performances for minors is considered to be one of many positive aspects of the genre's evolution. As a consumable cultural product, however, it is forced to obey the law of markets (Grammatas, 1999, pp. 246–247). Unfortunately, this may often result in a lack of experimentation and research, and an absence of a repertoire able to interact with the present (Tzamargias, 2010, pp. 464–467).

## Gender

The concept of gender has been, and still remains, a matter of controversy among philosophers, geneticists, sociologists and ordinary people. The first distinction between biological sex and socially determined gender was formulated in 1972 in sociologist's Ann Oakley's iconic work *Sex, Gender and Society*, a work written during the second-wave feminism in the 1960s. The author defines "sex" as the biological differences between male and female: the visible difference in genitalia. Gender, according to her, refers to the social classification into "masculine" and "feminine" (Oakley, 1985). This book was, of course, preceded by the publication of Simon de Beauvoir's landmark work for the feminist movement, *The Second Sex*. For the first time, the view that "one is not born, but rather becomes a woman" is put forward. In other words, the author argues that the status of women's inferiority has been shaped historically and that gender discrimination is not an inevitable,

natural necessity, but a social construction (Beauvoir, 1979). The next turning point in clarifying the concept of gender is observed in the 1990s during the third-wave feminism, which now focuses on re-defining and expanding the meaning of the terms "gender" and "sexuality". In this direction, the publication of *Gender Trouble* by American feminist Judith Butler is very important, since the concepts of gender fluidity and gender identity are presented for the first time. According to Butler, "gender is more of an identity precariously constructed over time, enacted through a stylized repetition of acts". The author, clearly influenced by Foucault's theory, defines gender as "structured social temporality" (Butler, 2009, pp. 182–183). The American writer Robert W. Connell (2006) analyses the socio-political dimension of gender and questions its biological basis in *Gender* claiming that, "being a man or a woman is not something permanent. It is a becoming, a condition which is constantly in progress" (pp. 41–42). He advocates that since the concepts of masculinity and femininity are fluid and determined by social, political, economic and historical factors, we ought to speak of masculinities and femininities, in other words we should refer to social gender in the plural. In conclusion, modern feminist approaches, despite their individual differences, tend to question the biological basis of sex and support its social substance.

## Gender stereotypes and sexism

Sexism is defined as the belief in the innate superiority of one sex over another (Coleman, 2001, p. 671). It is directly related to stereotypes and gender roles. According to Kanatsouli (1997), gender stereotypes are all those preformed and oversimplified social perceptions that refer to ways of behaving, abilities, roles, professions and other traits of individuals, simply based on their gender (p. 20). Alexandra Freiderikou (1995) further clarifies that the term "gender stereotypes" refers to the process of attributing specific characteristics to each of the two sexes, usually emphasising their biological characteristics (p. 42).

Although they are usually more closely associated with the female, they can extend to rendering characteristics to the male as well. However, the qualities attributed to the male stereotype usually bear a positive connotation, in contrast to the characteristics stereotypically attributed to the female. In addition to this, the positive characteristics attributed to the two sexes are different: for men, competence, rationality and enforcement are positively evaluated, while this is true for love, affection and expressiveness when it comes to women (Mara-goudaki, 1993, pp. 20–22). These stereotypical attributes lead to fixed opinions regarding all aspects of life: business choices, parenthood, even personality traits.

## Research methodology and limitations

In this research, our effort focused on choosing a sample as representative, exhaustive and homogeneous as possible, following the principles of Greimas (2005, pp. 254–258). From a total of 66 dramatic texts published during the period we studied, we ended up with 20 dramatic texts, which were examined using the method of quantitative and qualitative analysis. Adaptations of classic fairy tales were excluded, as they carry the ideological burden of their time. Furthermore, we focused our research on Greek male and female dramatists in order to study whether there is a change in the representation of the sexes in Greek society, since "theatre is the place where society thinks publicly" (Duvignaud, 1973, as cited in Grammatas, 2001, p. 25). Finally, we did not include works based on Greek mythology, stories with Karagiozis as the protagonist, collections of anniversary texts such as Christmas stories, theatrical sketches written exclusively for school use or reprints of older works.

Below is the table including the 20 plays that constitute the material of our research.





**Table 1.** *Corpus of plays (by authors in alphabetical order)*

N/A	AUTHOR	TITLE	PUBLISHING HOUSE	YEAR OF PUBLICATION
1.	Anagnostopoulou Eirini	Ένας ελέφαντας στο δωμάτιο [An Elephant in the Room]	EAN	2019
2.	Arvaniti Stella	Το κυπαρίσσι που έγερνε [The Cypress that Leaned]	Ocelotos	2019
3.	Darlas Angeliki	Ραϊάν και Νουρ ή... Νουρ και Ραϊάν [Ryan and Nur or... Nur and Ryan]	Kapa Publishing House	2021
4.	Dendrinou Philia	Ο ραφτάκος και η κόρη των παραμυθιών [The Little Tailor and the Fairy Tale Girl]	Sokolis	2022
5.	Georgouli Maria	Το παιδί και το δέντρο [The Child and the Tree]	Aparsis	2020
6.	Goumenopoulou Maria	Το θεατρικό της ειρήνης [The Play of Peace]	Nama	2019
7	S. Al. G.	Επαναστατικά μαθήματα επαναστατικής ιστορίας [Revolutionary Lessons on the History of Revolution]	Menandros	2020
8.	Kanli Despina	Τύχη... ουρανοκατέβατη [Skyfall... Luck]	Fylatos	2020
9.	Karoni Toula	Ο Περικλής στον Παρθενώνα [Pericles at the Parthenon]	Dromon	2017
10.	Kastro-Logotheti Kaiti	Σαν αλήθεια και σαν θαύμα [Like Truth and Like a Miracle]	Methexis	2016
11.	Kiousi Elli	Ο κρυμμένος θησαυρός: "Τα παραμύθια" του κ. Μέμη [The Hidden Treasure: "The Tales" of Mr. Memis]	Thea Techni kai Politismos	2020
12.	Kiziridou Georgia	Το αγόρι που ήθελε μόνο να χορεύει [The Boy who Only Wanted to Dance]	Grotesque	2020
13.	Maragou Eugenia	Η μάχη της κασετίνας [The Battle of the Pencil Case]	Sokolis	2020
14.	Michailidou Stella	Κουρδισμένοι [Tuned]	Kaleidoskopio	2020
15.	Moumouzias Giorgos	Η μάγισσα και το σπασμένο σκουπόξυλο [The Witch and the Broken Broomstick]	Kyriakidi Brothers	2020
16.	Papatheodorou Efi	Ο Τσιτσιμπός [Tsitsibos]	Aiolos	2021
17.	Paraskeva Georgia	Η επιστροφή των παραμυθιών [The Return of Fairytales]	Dodoni	2018
18.	Stylianidi Anastasia	Εγωτροπίες [Egototropies]	Kokkini Klosti Demeni	2018
19.	Tsardakas Telemachus	Το κορίτσι που επιμένει [The Girl who Persists]	Sokolis	2017
20.	Xourafa Chrysa	Βύρων [Byron]	Sokolis	2019

The aspects examined were the following:

- Frequency of gender appearance in the dramatic text and title
- Professional roles
- Family – parenthood
- The description of the characters
- Emotional reactions of the characters.

## Findings

Regarding the frequency of gender presence in the body of texts, we observe the following:

**Table 2.** *Frequency of gender appearance in dramatic texts*

	HUMANS	ANIMALS AND PLANTS	FICTIONAL CHARACTERS	INANIMATE OBJECTS	TOTAL	PERCENTAGE	GENDER PERCENTAGE
Men	71	15	26	9	121	42.2%	58.9%
Boys	42	2	3	1	48	16.7%	
Women	27	9	15	10	61	21.2%	34.4%
Girls	26	0	10	2	38	13.2%	
Non-gender Defined Characters	3	8	0	8	19	6.7%	6.7%
Total	169	34	54	30	287	100%	100%
Percentage %	58.9%	11.8%	18.8%	10.5%	100%		

Our initial observation was that the vast majority of characters is clearly and irrevocably gendered, even in cases where there is no real need to do so, such as gendered narrators or animal and tree characters (Arvaniti, 2019, p. 19; Xourafa, 2019).

The limited portrayal of female characters clearly demonstrates that the representation of the female gender does not correspond to the reality experienced by underage spectators. We must, therefore, emphasise that such a contradiction can cause cognitive or even emotional conflicts in the consciousness of underage audiences, who have not yet fully formed a definite view on reality. Especially for girls as spectators, the search for a positive role model on stage becomes even more difficult; therefore, it is more challenging for them to feel empowered and develop a positive gender image.

Regarding the presence of gender in the titles of these dramatic texts, it is clear that the numerical superiority that we observed in terms of the presence of male characters in the texts is further accentuated in the titles of the plays, as is also evident in the following table.

**Table 3.** *Frequency of gender appearance in the titles of the dramatic texts*

CHARACTERS IN THE TITLE OF THE DRAMATIC TEXT	ABSOLUTE NUMBERS	PERCENTAGE %	GENDER PERCENTAGE %
MEN	5	38.5%	77%
BOYS	5	38.5%	
WOMEN	2	15.3%	23%
GIRLS	1	7.7%	
TOTAL	13	100%	100%

It is indicative that the presence of girl in the title also signals a different approach to gender roles. The girl is the "acting subject" in the play *To κορίτσι που επιμένει* [The Girl who Persists] (Tsardakas, 2017), as the heroine "transcends her gendered characteristics and projects supragendered identities that are socio-culturally determined" (Politis, 2013, p. 27). Another characteristic example is *Παϊάν και Νουρ ή... Νουρ και Παϊάν* [Ryan and Nur or... Nur and Ryan], a play by Angeliki Darlasi (2021), where the existence of both sexes in the title and the game of alternating the order of their appearance predisposes the audience as to the content of the work, since in her contemporary, groundbreaking play, the boy does not hesitate to dress as a girl, the girl presents her-

self as a boy, and both genders seem to transcend socially inscribed limitations. It seems, however, that the typical numerical superiority of the male gender expresses its social superiority in patriarchal society.

### **Professional roles**

We chose to examine the professional identity of the characters in relation to their gender as an aspect of our analysis, since the professional field is "preeminently a space for the expression of human potential and at the same time an important dimension of social identity" (Igglesi, 1997, p. 187).

**Table 4.** *Professional roles of adult characters*

	ABSOLUTE NUMBERS	CHARACTERS PRACTISING A PROFESSION	PERCENTAGE
MEN	121	69	57%
WOMEN	61	21	34.4%
TOTAL	182	90	49.5%

As we can see, men work at almost twice the rate of women. In the texts we examined, a total of 69 male characters practise 54 professions, real or imagined ones. Female characters, however, seem to be moving in a much more limited professional range, with just 32 female characters practising 22 real or fictional professions. The difference observed, however, is not merely qualitative: not only do men practise a larger variety of professions, but they practise the ones bearing greater power. Therefore, a great number of kings, scientists, businessmen or pilots are observed, whereas we note a total absence of any stereotypically "feminine" profession practised by a man. On the other hand, the limited variety in the professions assigned to female characters, as well as their lack of power, is notable. On the contrary, stereotypically "female" professions prevail, such as those related to education (professors or teachers), the ones related to raising children (governesses, nannies) or those associated with beautification (e.g. hairdressers). In all the dramatic texts we examined, only two female characters with authority appear: the Queen of Hearts (Paraskeva, 2018) and the Queen of the Country of the Other Side (Darlasi, 2021).

### **Family - Parenthood**

It is worth mentioning that in none of the plays under examination is there a non-traditional form of family or civil union. There is not even a hint of a single-parent family or a family with same-sex parents. Similarly, we have not found anywhere any modern

form of cohabitation that could be mentioned (children out of wedlock, adopted ones, couples who have performed a civil wedding ceremony or signed a civil union agreement, etc.). Family is presented as a natural phenomenon, like rain or snow, which is not affected by socio-economic development. It is not depicted as a constantly changing social institution, which means that, among other things, the juvenile spectator "unconsciously and long-term resists their eventual ... encounter with the scientific concept of the family" (Fragkoudaki, 1979, p. 42).

**Table 5.** Family roles of adult characters

	Men	Women	Total
Married	14	14	28
Percentage	11.6%	23%	15.4%
Unmarried	8	5	13
Percentage	6.6%	8.2%	7.1%
Engaged	1	1	2
Percentage	0.8%	1.6%	1.1%
Divorced/ Separated	0	1	1
Percentage	0%	1.6%	0.5%
Widowed	4	1	5
Percentage	3.3%	1.6%	2.8%
Unspecified	94	39	133
Percentage	77.7%	64%	73.1%
TOTAL	121	61	182
	100%	100%	100%

As can be seen in this table, for the majority of characters no mention is made of their marital status; however, the percentage of female characters whose marital status is declared is much higher. Marriage is more important for women, even in plays where the protagonists are strong female characters, such as the witch who hides her age in order to marry (Moumouzias, 2020, p. 17, 55), or in cases where marriage "excuses" the male habits of the heroine (Kioussi, 2020, p. 29). It seems, then, that marriage or its absence determines the value of a woman's character.

Parenthood is represented in a completely stereotypical way. The father is shown to be absent both from family life and child rearing, either literally or figuratively. The father travels for business (Anagnostopoulou, 2019), or "rarely gave signs of



life" (Kiziridou, 2020, p. 12). However, even when he is present, he seems to be indifferent to his son to the point of cruelty (Xourafa, 2019, p. 30), or to be extremely busy (Goumenopoulou, 2019, p. 38, 40). The mother is responsible for the safety of the child (Paraskeva, 2018, p. 37).

In addition, one area where gender differences are much more pronounced is that of food. In no play is there a father preparing a meal for his children. On the contrary, mothers always assume the role of the nurturer, even to the point of exaggeration (Anagnostopoulou, 2019, p. 66; Kanli, 2020, p. 17, 20). "Maternal" figures, such as nannies, also have a nurturing role, even if they do not play the parental role (Stylianidi, 2017, p. 20, 32). The traditional presentation of the father figure culminates when a father considers it his *de facto* right to take precedence in a queue, just because he is male (Karoni, 2017, p. 19). In the same play, physical violence is also normalised, when the father's "belt" is invoked as a means of corporal punishment (Karoni, 2017, p. 20)! The role of the mother is glorified with the song about mothers (Tsardakas, 2017, p. 10). Even inanimate objects are "sanctified" when they present maternal characteristics: a cypress tree (Arvaniti, 2019, p. 23) as well as an arbutus (Kastro-Logotheti, 2016, pp. 30–31). In any case, selflessness, self-sacrifice and lack of ego are identified with the maternal role.

### **Character description and gender**

In order to be able to identify any differences in the representation and depiction of gender characteristics, we chose to record the total number of adjectives and noun phrases used by the authors.



Male characters are described with the following adjectives and noun phrases: absent-minded (X2), active, adopted, allergic, alone, amorous, angry (X2), aristocrat, aristocratic pig, artist, awesome, bad (X3), barbarian, belligerent, best (X2), big thief, big-headed, black (X3), bony, boor, brave, bright, brilliant (X2), careless, charming, cheat, cheerful, clear-headed, coal-faced, conceited, confused, cowardly, crafty (X3), crooked, cunning, curious, cute, deaf (X3), dear, deceitful (X3), desolate, destitute, different, dim-faced, dirty, disheveled, dotard, dumb (X2), educated, envious, ethereal, excited, fair (X2), famous (X2), fat, father, fearless (X3), fighter, fit, flashy, fool, forgetful, forgotten, free, funny (haircut), funny (moustache), furious, gentle (X3), good (X9), good-natured, goofy, grand, grandpa, great (X2), grumpy, gushing (speech), hairy, handsome, hapless, happy, hard, heartless, hidden, hideous, honourable, horrible, huge (moustache), ignorant, ill-fated (X2), impatient, impertinent, imposing (figure), impressive, imprisoned, in boots, incarcerated, insipid, insufferable (X2), intelligent, invisible (X5), irreplaceable, irritating, jovial, joyful (X3), kind-eyed, kind-hearted, knowledgeable, lad (X2), lame (X2), large (X2), lazy (X2), leader, liar, long-lived (X6), lord, lost, loyal (X2), magnanimous (X2), majestic (X2), majesty (X2), megalomaniacal, megamajestic, merciful, middle-aged, miser, monster, mournful, notable, not fat, not good-looking, not handsome, not married, not short, not tall, not thin, not too tall, not ugly, not very tall, old, of indeterminate age, old (X3), older (X3), old dog, old man (X2), patron (X2), pig-haired (X2), pleased (X2), plump, poor (X2), proud, ragged, rascal, resourceful (X3), respectable, restless, rich (X2), robust, ruler, ruin, sad, scary, scatter-brained, scoundrel, seldom seen, selfish, senile, sensitive, short (X2), sick, silent, silly (X2), smiling, speechless, stooped, stout, strange, strong, stupid, surly, sweet, tall (X2), tamed, thief, thin, thoughtful (X2), toothless (X2), tuneless, ugly (X2), unfaithful, unfortunate, unhappy, unlucky, unmarried, unscrupulous, unsightly, valuable, well-known (X2), well-meaning, wicked, wild, wise, wretched.

The noun phrases and adjectives for women are as follows: aged, a lump of a girl, absent-minded, affectionate, antiquated, barrel (X2), bent, better (person), big, black, blackmailer, blind, boring, calligrapher (X4), chatterbox, chatty, chubby, content (X2), cowardly, deaf, dear, deceitful, dreamy face, dressed (in men's clothes), elephant, emotional, fairy, famous, fast, fatty, gluttonous, gossip, greedy, hag, half-dragged, happy, hateful (X2), hypocrite, ill-mannered, impetuous, inconsolable, irritated, lame, leader (X2), liar, likeable, little (X2), love (X5), lucky (X3), masculine, mean, monster (X2), naive,

nice (X4), of mature age, old, old bird, old hag, old woman (X2), orphan (X2), pampered, persistent, pissed, plump, pretty (X2), pretty face, relieved, restless, sad (X2), scoundrel, serious (X2), shapely (X4), sharp (mind), sick, sightless, silly, sleepy, smart (X2), stout, strict (X3), submissive, sweetie (X3), toothless, tough, trickster, upset, wonderful, worried, youthful.

The adjectives and noun phrases for boys are the following: adventurous (X2), aloof (X2), angry (X2), animal (X2), beardless (X2), better (X6), big (X2), big-headed (X2), blessed (X2), boy (X4), brave (X3), bright (eyes) (X2), brother (X2), bum (X2), carefree (X2), careless (heart) (X2), charlatan (X2), chatterbox (X4), child (X8), chubby (X2), clever (X6), clueless (X2), coward (X2), cranky (X2), crazy (X2), curious (X2), daring (X2), dear (X2), devoted (X2), different (X2), dirty (peasant) (X2), disguised (X4), diverse (X2), dizzy (X2), dominated (X2), educated (X2), elf (X2), emotional (X2), enchanted (X2), excellent (student) (X2), fool (X4), football fan (X2), foolish (X4), forever friend (X2), free (X2), frozen (X2), funny (X4), future king (X2), golden (X2), good-looking (X2), gorgeous (X2), hairless (X4), hard-working (X4), highness (X2), hooded (X2), idiot (X2), ill-fated (X6), impoverished (X2), innocent (X2), innocent soul (X2), insolent (X2), lad (X2), lazy (X4), liar (X2), likeable (X2), little (X10), little orphan (X4), lost (X2), lucky (X4), lucky dog (X2), mad cap (X2), madman (X4), mean (X2), merry (X2), naughty (X2), nice (X12), nice (lips), not too little (X2), not too old (X2), orphan (X4), pauper (X2), poor (X8), pouty (X2), precious (X2), pretty (X10), pretty (face)





(X2), prince (X2), purebred (X10), raw (X2), savage (X2), screwy (X3), serene (X2), silent (X2), slim (X2), sly (X2), smartass (X2), son (X2), spotless (X2), stray (X5), strong (X2), studious (X4), stupid (X5), terrified (X2), thief (X2), tiny (X2), tired (X2), tranquil (X2), unlucky (X6), unnoticed (X2), upset (X2), urchin (X2), warm-hearted (X2), washed out (X2), weird (X2), wicked boy (X15), willing (X2), wonderful (X4), worthy (X2), worthy (warrior) (X2), young (X2), youngish (X2).

Finally, the noun phrases and adjectives for girls are: adorable, all-white (complexion), angry, beautiful (X9), beautiful long hair, beauty, brave, brunette, bull-headed, bursting with life, captive, clever, cowardly (X2), crazy, crazy girl, curly, damsel, daring, daughter (X3), dear, dirty thief, dumb, enterprising (X2), fanciful, girl, half-crazy, happy, heartless, ill, ill-mannered creature, inexperienced, ingenious mind, knowledgeable, lass, little girl (X6), lively, lonely, lovable, maid (X4), maniac, manly, mean (X2), mischievous, mute (X2), nice (X3), not tall, of indefinite age, perky, persistent (X2), phony, playful, precious, pretty, puffy cheeks, pure, silent, sleepy, sloppy, soft (skin), strong, stubborn, stylish, supple, sweet (X4), sweet (heart), sweet (teeth), tease, thin, tiresome, tomboy, troublesome, ugly, unsightly, vivid, weak (X2), well-shaped (eyebrows), white, wicked girl, wild (beast), young girl, your highness.

**Table 6.** Use of adjectives and noun phrases for play characters

CHARACTERS	ABSOLUTE NUMBERS	TOTAL	ADJECTIVES AND NOUN PHRASES	TOTAL
MEN	121	169	208	330
BOYS	48		122	
WOMEN	61	99	90	170
GIRLS	38		80	

As is obvious from the evidence, a multitude of 330 definitions are used for male characters. In contrast, for women and girls merely 170 adjectives and noun phrases describe 99 characters. This quantitative observation is a clear indication of the poorer dramatic development of female characters, who are presented as one-sided, one-dimensional and, ultimately, inferior.

Furthermore, the qualitative analysis of adjectives and noun phrases highlights an even more lucid picture of gender discriminations, as we observe the type of definitions assigned to each gender. More specifically, men and boys are described with a wide range of characterisations that concern not only their appearance (which does not seem to be that important), but also their economic status, their relationship to intelligence and knowledge, or their personality traits.

On the contrary, for female characters, **appearance** is described in a much more detailed manner and even adds value to them, as it appears to be an advantage or even a reason for the family's pride (Kanli, 2020, p. 15). Policing the female body is very intense, as a thin waist is an object of admiration or even envy (Dendrinou, 2022, p. 20). Furthermore, characterisations such as "barrel", "fluffy" "stout", etc. are also used. Even women in positions of power, such as the Queen of Hearts worry about their weight and their appearance in general (Paraskeva, 2018, p. 12), while no man seems to express the slightest concern about his appearance. Anxiety about **age** is much more intense for women (Moumouzias, 2020, pp. 17-18, 55), while for men age does not seem to play any role whatsoever.

The differences between the two sexes in relation to knowledge and **education** are also profound. No woman is "educated", "knowledgeable", or much less "wise" – adjectives which accompany male characters exclusively. A woman who reads is a teacher (S., 2020). On the other hand, we see two men reading a newspaper: a grandfather (Goumenopoulou, 2019) and a worker (Kanli, 2020). Even a lazy man in the same play gets information by surfing the internet, while his wife appears to be



completely ignorant and asks him about the weather report (Kanli, 2020, p. 34).

The majority of adjectives that attribute **courage** or **bravery** describe **men** and **boys**: the adjectives "fierce", "fearless", "barbarous", "active", "strong", "fighter", "lad" and so on describe men and boys, while the adjectives "sweetie" and "cute" are attributed to **women** and **girls**. No woman is described with any characterisation denoting courage (e.g. "fighter" or "warrior"), and very rarely a definition denoting power is attributed to girls. Of all the female characters, only one woman and three girls are described with powerful characterisations, related to bravery and perseverance: a witch (Moumouzias, 2020, p. 44), brave Nur (Darlas, 2021, p. 74), a persistent and stubborn girl (Tsardakas, 2017, pp. 25, 37) and bold Fani (Michailidou, 2020, p. 49).

In terms of the characters' **socio-economic status**, we notice that while it is described in quite a wide range and a detailed manner for men, it does not seem to play such an important role for women, therefore it is usually omitted.

The value of **speech** and **silence** is also very different for the two sexes (Bottigheimer, 1987). Verbosity is a quality for a man, such as the pirate Hook Jack Cod who is "enthusiastic, with torrential speech" (Georgouli, 2020, p. 11), while a woman who talks a lot is a "chatterbox" (Michailidou, 2020, p. 51) or "a gossip and chatty" (Kastro-Logotheti, 2016, p. 23). The Fairy Tale Girl sleeps "mute, silent and alone" (Dendrinou, 2022, p. 15) and waits to be rescued by the male heroes. Finally, whenever the term "child" is mentioned, it always describes boys, while "girl" or "little girl" is used in a pejorative way (Kiziridou, 2020, p. 9; Paraskeva, 2018, p. 21).

### **Emotional reactions and gender**

**Table 7.** *Frequency of characters who cry in relation to appearing characters*

	CHARACTERS WHO APPEAR	CHARACTERS WHO CRY	PERCENTAGE	
MEN	121	5	4.1 %	12.4%
BOYS	48	4	8.3%	
WOMEN	61	5	8.1%	18.6%
GIRLS	38	4	10.5%	

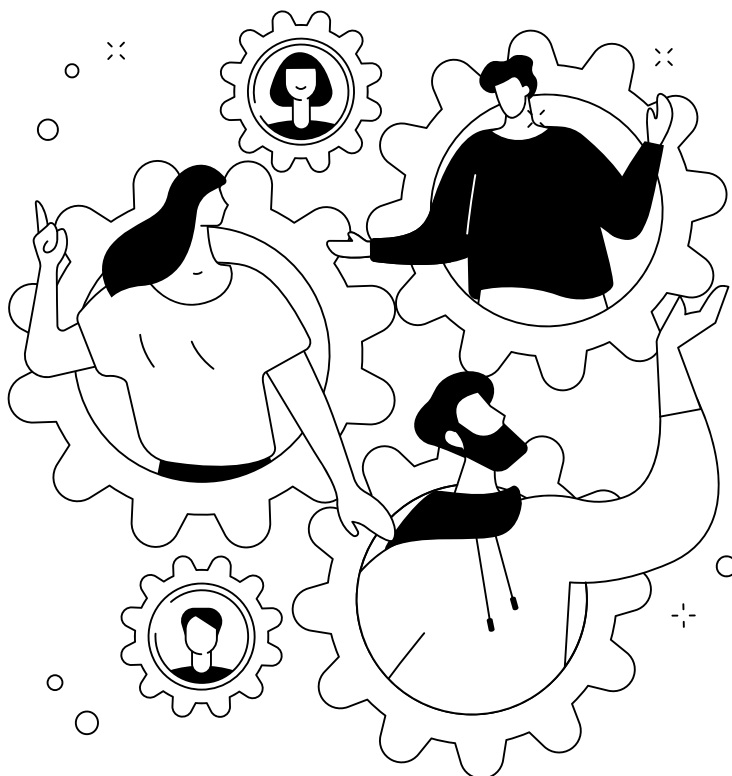
Crying can be a response to an extensive variety of situations (Miceli & Castelfranchi, 2003). It is evident that female characters are more easily brought to tears than male ones.

The number of crying boys is the same as that of girls (4), which is consistent with the characters' young age. According to Kanatsouli (2008), "the young age of the boy allows with greater ease this kind of masculine identity that does not bear obvious elements of masculinity" (p. 122). However, what strongly differs is the way crying characters are treated, based on their gender. Thus, the image of a crying woman or a girl is considered normal or is even presented as an acceptable means to achieve a goal (Moumouzias, 2020, pp. 47–48); on the contrary, for men and boys, crying is a cause for mockery, as it is associated with "feminine" characteristics (Kastro-Logotheti, 2016, pp. 20, 25, 47), that is, with weakness, and can be seen as a reason to call the boy a "little girl" (Kiziridou, 2020, p. 9). Response to danger vastly varies according to gender. Men and boys show composure, courage and boldness (Kastro-Logotheti, 2016, p. 63; Papatheodorou, 2021, p. 37). The study and comparison of the way genders express their emotions shows that male characters are more restrained in the expression of strong emotions, such as fear, sentiments or despair. On the contrary, female characters appear to be more demonstrative while externalising mental tension.

### **Conclusions**

We consider that dramatic texts are socio-cultural products of their time, in other words they indirectly reflect social and ideological views of the Greek society filtered through the expectations, perceptions and positions of their creators and incorporate cultural representations. Unfortunately, the majority of the texts we examined, written between 2015 and 2021, are largely characterised by stereotypical gender representations and have not been created with gender equality in mind.

More specifically, the presence of female characters both in the body of the texts and in the titles was numerically limited. In addition, the representation of family and parenthood was traditional and stereotypical, as was the presence of both genders in the professional field. Finally, the depiction of the characters was clearly defined in a gendered manner. The development of male characters was multifaceted and overall gave them positive characteristics, and, on the contrary, the description of the female characters was very limited, incomplete and focused on stereotypically "feminine" characteristics, identified with a negative connotation. The comparison of our results with the results of similar research preceded by decades is disappointing, as it demonstrates that very little progress has been made in deconstructing stereotypical gender representations



over the years (Kladaki, 2006). As previously mentioned, dramatic texts which are written for young audiences and can potentially be performed on stage reflect deeply rooted social notions; moreover, as cultural products, they can influence their audience and produce misconceptions about gender and gender identity. Theatre for young audiences is intended for a special audience, with their own ideas and particular characteristics, without however being lesser or incapable of grasping the cultural representations of various social phenomena. Playwrights as well as all members contributing to theatre addressed to children and adolescents ought to primarily respect their audience and their receptive ability in a manner equal to adult audiences. Furthermore, they ought to provide their audience with artistic creations based on their needs for recreation and cultural experience, without any intentional or unintentional attempt to impose foreign ideas or ideologically manipulate them.

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