Rethinking Greece’s musical poster child; The case of rebetiko. From the underworld to the cultural forefront.

Marioli, Zoi

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The case of *rebetiko*

From the underworld to the cultural forefront.

Volanakis, Adonis. ''A greek dance after Matisse'', 2022.

Personal Description: Volanakis recreated the 1910 work ''La Danse'' by Henri Matisse, portraying infamous female *rebetiko* singers and artists Roza Eskenazy, Melina Merkouri, Sotiria Bellou and Stella Haskil.

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MA Thesis History

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Word count: 17,108 words (excluding bibliography and notes)

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Introduction

In 2017, *rebetiko* was inscribed on Unesco's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, and was defined as ‘*'a musical and cultural expression directly linked to song and dance that initially spread among the urban lower and working-class populations in the early twentieth century…The practice is open to all and bearers could include any Greek or Greek-speaking person who enjoys this form of music and dance.*''.[1] Thirteen years later, *rebetiko* was featured as an integral dimension of Greece's cultural heritage during the the opening ceremony of the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens.[2] Nevertheless, as pointed out by Sociology of Culture Professor Giannis Zaimakis, *''The path towards the nationalization of rebetika was a long one, with many vicissitudes in the genre's domestic and foreign appeal.*''.[3] As a Greek historian-to-be,-with the above very much depending on the reception of this paper, I weirdly enough remember the most memorable, arguably one of if not the very first time, I was exposed to this so-called ‘*'musical and cultural expression*''. In fact, this experience can be viewed as a contrasting reality, challenging *rebetiko's* acceptance by wider Greek society. It was a pleasantly warm summer afternoon at my grandparents house, when my grandpa decided to put into use his recently repaired cassette player. Seconds after, the shaded yard became the backdrop of Rosa Eskenazy's voice, singing how she drank ''ouzo, morphine and hashish'' in order to forget a man that had driven her crazy. To my ears as a 7 year-old, this seemingly

[1] ''Rebetiko,'' Intangible Cultural Heritage, Unesco, last modified 2016, https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/rebetiko-01291

[2] Yiannis Zaimakis, '' 'Forbidden Fruits' and the Communist Paradise: Marxist Thinking on Greekness and Class in Rebetika,'' *Music and Politics* 4, no. 1 (June 2010): 2.
[3] Zaimakis, ''Forbidden,'' 2.

odd-sounding song certainly managed to spark my curiosity, primarily due to how different it sounded to the soundtracks of my favorite cartoons. As far as the lyrics are concerned, I was by no means baffled by them given the poor audio quality as well as my linguistic ignorance. What I was indeed baffled by, was my grandma's reaction who to my total surprise, stormed our little session, violently grabbing the cassette player from the table, while telling my grandpa that he should be ashamed of himself for listening to ''*devilish songs*'', while in my presence. Eskenazy's raspy voice followed her up the entrance stairs and into the kitchen, singing about finding a new man that truly loves her. Her voice soon disappeared, and was replaced by my grandpa's typical silence, leaving me confused. What my 7-year-old self established that day was that people tend to create lines between songs that we can and songs that we cannot listen to, a theory that judging by the research I conducted and the historiography I studied very much encompasses the spirit and the historic path of *rebetiko*, as well as its complicated presence within Greek culture.

The mysterious and obscure nature of *rebetiko* can even be reflected in the fact that the origins of the very term are yet to be established. If you go through a Greek dictionary today, you will find that the word *rebetiko* derives from the noon *rebetis*, defined as the "someone that leads an untroubled, carefree life, and probably marginal, refusing the habits of the society and the official and commonly accepted values.".[4] According to *rebetiko* researcher Panos Savvopoulos, there is no actual consensus when it comes to the origin of the term, with some of the most popular definitions being the following; from

[4] Panagiota Anagnostou, ''Did You Say Rebetiko? Musical Categories, Their Transformation, and Their Meanings,'' *Journal of Social History* 52, no. 2 (2018): 285.

the turkish word ‘’*rebet*’’ translating to ‘’insubordinate’’, to the exact same word which appears in the serbian language with the definition of ‘’guerrilla’’, a definition which also matches the spanish equivalent ‘’*rebelde*’’.[5] Interestingly enough, the first appearance of the term *rebetiko* was presented on the labels of two gramophone disks, which were most probably released between 1910-1913.[6] Both of these disks were released in Istanbul with Greek titles, and their target audiences were the Greek populations of Istanbul and Asia Minor.[7] According to researchers, it is impossible to establish a concrete theory as to why the term *rebetiko* was invented, with most claims heading towards the direction that it was a marketing strategy used by the record companies to attract the attention of their audiences.[8] *Rebetiko* is presented as the music listened to and often performed by the *rebetes*, with the majority of the literature written about them entailing detailed descriptions of what they wore, how they acted and what was their lifestyle, descriptions which are linked with the figure of the so-called *magkas*.[9] A *magkas* is a prominent member of the underworld of the Greek port city of Piraues with its heavy association with the *rebetes* corroborating their toughness and a particular code of ethics they lived by.[10] *Rebetiko* describes the music enjoyed by a particular group and does not encompass a number of musical characteristics such a melody, rhythm or instrumentation.[11] Therefore, its primary linkage with

[5] Panos Savvopoulos, *Concerning the word ‘’rebetiko”...and more* (Athens: Odos Panos, 2010), 13.
[6] Savvopoulos, *Concerning the word*, 14.
[7] Savvopoulos, *Concerning the word*, 14-5.
[8] Savvopoulos, *Concerning the word*, 16.
[9] Anagnostou, ‘’Did you,’’ 285.
[10] Vassilis Gerasopoulos, ‘’The Malleable and Inevitable Path of Demonizing (Sub)Culture: The Case of Greek Rebetiko,’’ in *Crime and music*, ed. Dina Siegel and Frank Bovenkerk (Switzerland: Springer Press, 2021), 250.
[11] Anagnostou, ‘’Did you,’’ 285.

nonmusical elements renders *rebetiko* an integral part of a particular lifestyle and not just a musical genre.

According to Ilias Petropoulos, one of the most prevalent ‘’rebetologists’’, *rebetiko* was ‘’born’’ in 19th century Athenian prisons and hashish dens.[12] The prisoners would spend their time manufacturing or playing musical instruments and singing about the hardships and the violence involved in prison life, while giving extensive accounts of drug use and even of heartbreak.[13] It is also worth noting that a common theme in these songs was their defiance of power, therefore in our context of the police, which the *rebetes* despised, due how terribly they were treated by them and how fiercely they persecuted them.[14] They often ridiculed the police in their songs, signifying how despite their imprisonment, they never lost their sense of humor and remained true to their lifestyle by smoking hashish and singing while in jail. When such prisoners were released, they continued to sing prison songs in their most typical meeting place, considering that the smoking of hashish was one of the most prevalent activities that the *rebetes* partook in as a group, as well as individually.[15] Their love for hashish is reminiscent of the country’s Ottoman heritage, considering that in the Ottoman Empire it was widely enjoyed by all religious groups, Muslims included.[16] The urban element of that music defined it and shaped it from the very beginning, with *rebetiko* emerging as the urban music which was listened to in poor neighborhoods of large urban centers.[17] The port of Piraeus can be deemed as the capital of *rebetiko*, primarily due to its rapid industrial development in the late 19th

[12] Kyriakos Messinis, ‘’The *rebetiko* music genre and its historic roots,’’ Larrisorama, March 22, 2021, https://larissorama.gr/afieromata/5986-to-rempetiko-tragoydi-kai-oi-istorikes-tou-rizes.html

[13] Gerasopoulos,’’The Malleable,’’ 251-52.
[14] Gerasopoulos,’’The Malleable,’’ 251-52.
[15] Ilias Petropoulos, *Rebetology* (Athens: Kedros, 1999), 40.
[16] Petropoulos, *Rebetology,* 40.
[17] Messinis, ‘’The *rebetiko* music genre.’’

century, which attracted Greek people from all over the country for the large range of work opportunities.[18]

The historical development that revolutionized *rebetiko* as well the very course of Greek history took place in 1922, when following the defeat of the Greek forces in the Greco-Turkish war, the Lausanne Treaty was signed, according to which, an exchange of populations between the two countries would take place, using the criterion of religion.[19] Essentially, the Treaty aimed at achieving ethnic homogenization of the populations in the two countries, so as to avoid future hostilities.[20] The latter resulted in Greece having to manage the influx of 1.5 million refugees, a significant number which caused the poor country an unprecedented 25 percent population increase which primarily weighed down Greece's developing urban centers.[21] Even though a large percentage of the refugees had affluent backgrounds and came from powerful merchant families which carried the economic power of the Ottoman Empire, their cosmopolitan background was met with a great deal of skepticism and hostility by the local Greeks who looked down on them.[22] In fact, they received them as reminders of an Ottoman past, that the newly established country has been trying to distance itself for almost 100 years.[23] Therefore, despite their cosmopolitan background, the Asia Minor refugees remained poor and alienated from wider Greek society and were heavily marginalized. The ostracization that the refugees experienced connected them with the *rebetes*, as they were brought closer by their common struggles such as poverty and alienation.[24] They started joining the *rebetes* in their hashish dens and inevitably started to influence the *rebetiko* musical traditions, by introducing

[18] Foteini Christi, ''The *rebetiko* and the ''*magkes* of Piraeus,'' ''*Elculture*, May 13, 2015, https://elculture.gr/to-rempetiko-ke-i-magkes-tou-perea/

[19] Gerasopoulos,''The Malleable,'' 250.
[20] Zaimakis, ''Forbidden,'' 2.
[21] Ioannis Koliopoulos and Iakovos Mihailidis, *The refugees in Macedonia. From tragedy to a saga* (Athens: Militos, 2009), 24.
[22] Gerasopoulos,''The Malleable,'' 250.
[23] Nikos Sideris, *The history of Rebetiko music* (Athens: Eptalofos, 2018), 22.
[24] Zaimakis, ''Forbidden,'' 2.

distinct sounds and instruments of their motherland of Smyrna-now the Turkish city of Izmir, and Istanbul.[25] The result of this conjunction further enriched the tradition of *rebetiko* by producing two distinct categories; The ‘’Piraeus style’’, initially performed in hashish dens using musical instruments such as bouzouki and the so-called ‘’Cafe Aman style’’, or also known as ’*Smyrneiko*-from the city of Smyrna or Izmir, in which the violin and the santouri were incorporated.[26]

The 1930s is considered to be the golden age of rebetiko, during which some of the greatest rebetiko songs of all time were written and the first organized rebetiko music group was set up, ‘’The infamous four of Piraeus’’.[27] In 1933, the first professional recording of bouzouki music in Greece took place, a musical instrument synonymous with the *rebetiko* music culture.[28] The above acted as an indication that the popularity of *rebetiko* has started to exit the ghettos of Piraeus and gain prevalence within the wider national culture. Unfortunately, this series of successes was violently disrupted by the military dictatorship declared by military officer Ioannis Metaxas in 1936.[29] Metaxas censored rebetiko by banning the performance of songs with lyrics referencing hashish-which he also banned, prisons, sex and anti-police references as well as any other form of profanity.[30] In 1937, he also banned ‘’Cafe Amans’’, due to them being deemed as products of Turkish influence.[31] Ironically enough, two years prior, Kemal Ataturk, the leader of Turkey, also banned ‘’Cafe Amans’’, alleging that they were of Arabic origins.[32] Following WW2 and the Greek Civil War which lasted up to 1949, *rebetiko* music rose in popularity once again, but with a very different direction. To be more exact, rebetiko was now enjoyed by the wider social strata, performed in bouzouki taverns that

[25] Sideris, *The history of Rebetiko music*, 24.
[26] Zaimakis, ‘’Forbidden,’’ 2.
[27] Messinis, ‘’The *rebetiko* music genre.’’
[28] Messinis, ‘’The *rebetiko* music genre.’’
[29] Messinis, ‘’The *rebetiko* music genre.’’
[30] Sideris, *The history of Rebetiko music*, 45.
[31] Anagnostou, ‘’Did you,’’ 290.
[32] Sideris, *The history of Rebetiko music*, 45.

were frequented by the newly developed middle and upper-class bohemian circles.[33] Post-war *rebetiko* music was hybridized with many Western musical elements such as the integration of chordal harmony, while the songs were performed by musicians who had little to no connections with the *rebetiko* tradition.[34] Despite all the different modifications, rebetiko as a *genre* experienced yet another decline in the mid-1950s, but was succeeded by a plethora of rebirths ever since, influencing the creation of hybrid, yet new types of popular music.[35]

That transitional period from the 1930s to the 1950s during which *rebetiko* underwent a significant transformation seems to be a topic of great debate and in my view a rather understudied topic. How did *rebetiko* evolve from the music as well as lifestyle, of the criminal, the poor and the ostracized in the 1930s, to a form of popular entertainment and one of the most widely commercialized music genres in the 1950s, enjoyed by the middle and upper classes?[36] According to Zaimakis, even though rebetiko today, ‘’*...is regarded as a mainstream music and as a distinct national symbol that attracts the interest of foreign tourists, scholars, youths, students and the bohemians, who frequent the small bouzouki taverns.”*, the cultural changes which took place in order for *rebetiko* to acquire such standing within Greece’s identity have become the source of a fierce debate within Greek intelligentsia.[37] This debate has historically been centered around questions of so-called ‘’pure’’ cultural forms, and touches upon the following discourse; ‘’...*Cultural elites and intellectuals covering the whole spectrum of political tendencies tried to approach the newly constructed musical styles and to define what kind of popular music could be viewed as proper national music.*’’. The above ‘’interacts’’ with post-WW2 attempts of Balkan and non-Western European

[33] Zaimakis, ‘’Forbidden,’’ 4.
[34] Risto Pennanen Pekka, ‘’The Development of Chordal Harmony in Greek Rebetika and Laika Music, 1930s to 1960,’’ *British Journal of Ethnomusicology* 6, (1997): 67.
[35] Zaimakis, ‘’Forbidden,’’ 4.
[36] Yiannis Zaimakis, “Bawdy Songs and Virtuous Politics”: Ambivalence and Controversy in the Discourse of the Greek Left on rebetiko,’’ *History and Anthropology* 20, no. 1 (February 2009): 20.
[37] Zaimakis, ‘’Forbidden,’’ 4.

nations to establish themselves as political entities and hence strengthen their social homogeneity and national identity.[38] Considering that music is to this day portrayed as a defining feature of the Greek identity, it should not come as a surprise that the country's cultural and political elite, as part of the overall campaign which heavily emphasized elements of nationalization, modernization, and urbanization, also tried to dictate what type of music could be labeled as appropriate and proper, to represent the country's national music.[39] Zaimakis also draws a parallel between *rebetiko* and the case of the Argentinian tango, which was initially ostracized by the Eurocentric aristocracy because of its roma origins and its cultural connection with the poor, only for the dance to become incredibly popular in between the two World Wars as it was ''cleansed'' by the Parisian bourgeois class that reimagined it.[40] Returning to *rebetiko,* and as pinpointed by Gerasopoulos, the genre challenged the ''...*perception of acceptable Greekness*…'',[41] which ultimately led to its fierce persecution by both the left and the right political and cultural establishments.[42] As a result, the post-War introduction of *rebetiko* music in the 1950s, had to fulfill the newly-set standards of appropriate cultural form, and to fit into an acceptable perception of Greekness which reflected an ideal and homogenous national identity.[43]

Undeniably, throughout the 20th century, *rebetiko* history was marked by vilification, persecution, contradiction as well as a range of political, social and cultural developments.[44] Today, *rebetiko* is viewed as an indisputable symbol of ''Greekness'' while the path towards the national claiming, the nationalization, of *rebetiko* music, is widely misunderstood as well as ignored in this day and age. To me, the above represents a gap which intrigued my curiosity to further research the given topic. My aim is to explore something

[38] Zaimakis, ''Forbidden,'' 4.
[39] Zaimakis, ''Forbidden,'' 4.
[40] Zaimakis, ''Forbidden,'' 5.
[41] Gerasopoulos,''The Malleable,'' 264.
[42] Gerasopoulos,''The Malleable,'' 259.
[43] Gerasopoulos,''The Malleable,'' 264.
[44] Gerasopoulos,''The Malleable,'' 248.

that modern-day Greeks think that we by default possess; r*ebetiko* music and its accompanying culture. In this paper, I will be connecting my research to the academic debate pertaining to the appropriate version of ‘’Greekness’’, as reflected in the persecution and transformation of rebetiko from the 1930s to the 1950s, investigating the mechanisms used to facilitate the transition of *rebetiko* music from a subculture of the underworld, to Greece’s musical poster child. What was the ideological, political and social backdrop of these mechanisms and what role did they carry? Specifically, the question that will guide my research is the following: ‘’Why did *rebetiko* music undergo a transformation from the 1930s to the 1950s?’’

Methodology

When *rebetiko* was selected as my general thesis topic and following some extensive research and reading, it became rather evident that there was a perspective which was nowhere to be found. ‘’*Where were the women*?’’, I wondered, in all of this. Article after article, documentary film after documentary film, it initially appeared as if they were nowhere to be found. As if they had no involvement or any kind of significance within *rebetiko* and its history. Nonetheless, as it appears the songs dare to differ and act as prevalent symbols of the female participation in *rebetiko* music and culture. Given that there is no knowledge of female songwriters of songs labeled as *rebetika* and therefore it would be safe to assume that at least the overwhelming majority have been written by men,[45] it would not be bold to argue that their creation did not necessarily encompass the true essence of female nature-especially since they were written during an era not particularly known for its progressive take on women’s rights.[46] At the end of the day, a man writing a song about a woman is not an original or groundbreaking fact.

[45] Savvopoulos, *Concerning the word*, 77.
[46] Savvopoulos, *Concerning the word*, 76.

What sparked my curiosity was the work of Petropoulos, the father of ‘’rebetology’’. Not only did he acknowledge the participation of women in *rebetiko* culture, also known as *rebetisses*, but he also characterizes them as the ‘’freest’’ women that have ever existed in modern Greek history.[47] The information that we have about these women, derive from *rebetiko* songs themselves, in which both the first and the third person is used in order for the female portrayal to be communicated. My incentive is to make use of such songs written in the 1930s and the 1950s as a case study for my research. Considering that there is a prevalent gap in the presentation and research of *rebetiko* culture utilizing the female point of view and women's involvement, my plan is to allow the music and the lyrics to speak for themselves by dissecting the meaning behind them. In other words, by diving into the female themed *rebetiko* songs of the 1930s and 1950s, I am hoping that I will be in position to unravel the agenda behind the transformation of *rebetiko* music, while paying homage to the creative offsprings of *rebetiko* culture; the actual songs. At the same time, the studying of female-themed *rebetiko* songs could add an extra layer to the debate which my research is connected to; the appropriate version of ‘’Greekness’’, as reflected in the persecution and transformation of rebetiko from the 1930s to the 1950s. What are the common elements and themes which can be observed in such songs that could potentially challenge the so-called purity of Greek identity, as desired and demanded by the political and cultural elites? Could female portrayal in 1930s *rebetiko* music go against the official narrative concerning the appropriate role and traditional standing of women in Greek society? I will be conducting a qualitative analysis of 10 female-portraying *rebetiko* songs for each decade, focusing on the lyrics, while potentially building common themes or even contradictions among the songs of each decade as well as comparatively between the two decades.

[47] Savvopoulos, *Concerning the word*, 47.

Another series of primary sources which I am going to be utilizing and qualitatively analyzing for my research in order to enrich my perspective and potentially illustrate and connect the analysis of the songs with primary historiographical material is an anthology by *rebetiko* researcher Kostas Vlisidis. Vlisidis managed to collect over 100 rebetiko-related texts and articles which were published in Greece's magazine and daily press from 1929-1959. This impressive collection of articles will provide me with the real-time climate of the times that I am researching, while allowing me access to a plethora of perspectives covering my given theme. Lastly, secondary material such as journal articles and books covering *rebetiko* culture as well as significant social and historical developments and events of the 1930s and 1950s are also going to be of great use for the framing of my paper.

As far as the structure of the paper is concerned, I am going to be dividing my analysis into two main chapters; one pertaining to the 1930s and one to the 1950s, while a number of sub chapters will have to be included depending on how the analysis unravels. Naturally, the paper will end with a ''Conclusion'' chapter, where I will be summarizing my research findings, reflect on the entirety of the research process and ideally showcase new knowledge that this dissertation has contributed to the field of history.

Chapter One: The 1930s and the *rebetiko* scene

-The Asia Minor refugees and Greece's orientalist discourse

Following the devastating Greco-Turkish War which resulted in the 1923 exchange of populations as dictated by the Lausanne Treaty, Greece experienced unprecedented increases in its urban population.[48] To be more exact, out of the 1,5 million refugees that arrived within that very first year, 615,000 thousand of them were allocated to reside in urban areas, and 300,000 of them specifically settled in Athens and Piraeus.[49] History and Political Science professor Kostas Tziaras, conducted extensive research targeting the early reception of refugees in local Greek society, by investigating the abujudications which have been registered in the archives of police courts of the country.[50] Such reports included testimonies according to which refugee families were beaten and blackguarded, with the locals using expletives such as ‘’rats’’, ‘filthy’’, ‘’Turkish-seeds’’, and ‘’falsely-Baptized’’, when they tried to partake in local celebrations like Easter.[51] Parents started to threaten their kids that if they do not finish their meal, ‘’*the refugees will come and abduct you*’’. According to Tziaras, one of the most powerful commonalities that can be observed in most stereotypical and discriminatory phrases and terms used to address the refugees are centered around their so-called questionable ethnic consciousness as well as their alleged immorality.[52] The local populations viewed them as ‘’bastardized Turks’’ which arrived to pollute their country, carrying with them diseases and corrupt customs.[53]

A solid explanation behind the heavily racist and discriminatory treatment that was initially experienced by the refugees is very much connected with the

[48] Georgios I. Kritikos, ‘’Silencing inconvenient memories: refugees from Asia Minor in Greek historiography,’’ *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 47, no.18 (2021): 4274.
[49] Kritikos, ‘’SIlencing,’’ 4274.
[50] AlfaVita(not defined author). ‘’Asia Minor catastrophe: «Go away the refugee will eat you»- The racism following the arrival of the refugees,’’ *AlfaVita*, October 29, 2022, https://www.alfavita.gr/koinonia/398002_mikrasiatiki-katastrofi-fyge-tha-se-faei-o-prosfygas-o-ratsismos-meta-tin-eleysi
[51] AlfaVita, ‘’Asia Minor catastrophe.’’

[52] AlfaVita, ‘’Asia Minor catastrophe.’’
[53] AlfaVita, ‘’Asia Minor catastrophe.’’

academic debate addressed in the Introduction, pertaining to the appropriate version of ‘’Greekness’’; ‘’*...Greekness is what is at stake…*’’,[54] as pointed out by Gerasopoulos. The arrival of the refugees took place during a period in which Greece was still in the process of establishing its national identity. The country was still politically and economically recovering from the devastating defeat in the Greco-Turkish War of 1922, a conflict with a heavy ideological backing which was encompassed in the so-called ‘’*Great Idea*’’. The ‘’Great Idea’’ was first expressed in parliament in 1844, by Greece’s Prime Minister at the time Ioannis Koletis.[55] It was a vision which consisted of three central dimensions; the first one had to do with territorial expansion, the second one with imparting Greece’s values, while the third dimension related to the achievement of progress within the country.[56] Greece’s ambition was to fulfill the mission behind the ‘’Great Idea’’ by liberating the Greeks of Istanbul and Asia Minor, a plan with a devastating outcome.[57] In a rather twisted way, the refugees reminded wider Greek society of the collapse of their nationalist plans aiming for territorial and cultural expansion. In the meantime, it is significant to mention that the refugees’ association with Turkey and the former Ottoman Empire, carried a harmful symbolism, given Greece’s continuous effort to balance between the East and the West ever since the break out of the 1821 Greek Revolution against the Ottoman Empire.[58]

Within this historic climate and framework, it therefore does not come as a surprise that the leading political and intellectual structures of the country ‘’*...firmly stood against anything that would make Greece less Greek and more Oriental (that is: more Turkish).*’’.[59] This attitude derives from the country’s status ever since its establishment in the 1820s as a client state for the West,

[54] Gerasopoulos,’’The Malleable,’’ 264.
[55] *Disasters and Triumphs*, Directed by Alexandros Merkouris. Athens: Skai Studios, 2022.

[56] Merkouris, ‘’Disasters,’’.

[57] Koliopoulos and Mihailidis, *The refugees*, 25.
[58] Gerasopoulos,’’The Malleable,’’ 264.
[59] Gerasopoulos,’’The Malleable,’’ 264.

where their role as a ‘’...*custodian of the classical Hellenic heritage*….’’,[60] had to be tested and demonstrated. As cleverly put by Greek Studies professor and *rebetiko* researcher Stathis Gauntlett, ‘’*....until recently westerners have tended to explicate the Hellenic tradition with scant regard for the insights of its indigenous custodians, whom they treated as mere guardians of a kind of classical theme-park containing such physical remains of antiquity as could not readily be transported to the West…*’’.[61] As a result, Greece’s recent Ottoman past and heritage was demolished and presented as an obstacle to the nation’s very validity, primarily in connection with whether modern Greeks were worthy of being guardians of the esteemed Hellenic tradition.[62] Consequently, the country’s Westernization was predominantly defined by an orientalist discourse which was most visible in the arts and different cultural expressions such as literature and journalism.[63]

A representative example which encompasses the orientalist agenda of Greece’s cultural intelligentsia is the poem entitled ‘’Orient’’ by Athenian poet Costis Palamas which was published in 1907.[64] In the poem, the East is presented as a promiscuous and seductive harem slave, ‘’*...ever threatening to infect the unwary with incapacitating doses of lethargy, fatalism, lust and a vague, unfocused longing….*’’.[65] This threat aims to represent the antithesis of the corrupt traditions of the East, against the purity and optimism associated with Western progress.[66] For many researchers of Modern Greek History, this poem ‘’sealed’’ the official direction which defined Greece’s urban culture, considering the respective ongoing debate throughout the last two decades of the 19th century.[67] This debate essentially boiled down to the cultural framing

[60] Stathis Gauntlett, ‘’Between Orientalism and Occidentalism: The contribution of Asia Minor refugees to Greek Popular song, and its reception,’’ in *Crossing the Aegean: an Appraisal of the 1923 Compulsory Population Exchange Between Greece and Turkey*, ed. Renee Hirschon (New York: Berghahn Books, 2008), 248.
[61] Gantlett, *Between Orientalism*, 248.
[62] Gantlett, *Between Orientalism*, 248.
[63] Gantlett, *Between Orientalism*, 248.
[64] Gantlett, *Between Orientalism*, 248.
[65] Gantlett, *Between Orientalism*, 248.
[66] Gantlett, *Between Orientalism*, 248.
[67] Gantlett, *Between Orientalism*, 249.

of modern Greek identity, but was specifically displayed in the dispute between the two different ‘’schools’’ of musical entertainment which at the time prevailed in urban centers; the patrons of west European cafés chantants VS the hashish dens’ ‘’lowbrow’’ music also known as *rebetiko*.[68]

The oriental discourse explained above was naturally employed against the Asia Minor refugees of 1922, who the country’s political and cultural elites attempted to subordinate and emphatically present as intruders who challenged the country’s campaign to realize its true potential as a Westernizing nation. The refugees were essentially perceived as a challenge in the nation’s campaign for ‘’...*the de-orientalisation of Greek popular culture*…’’.[69] Westernization was perceived as vital within the context of the country’s plan to firmly establish its national identity. Therefore, any elements which could result in a deviation from that plan, especially when the given elements derive from the demonized East, are to be fiercely resisted.[70]

-The Asia Minor refugees and their contribution to *rebetiko*

As discussed in the Introduction, *rebetiko* is believed to have been ‘’born’’ in 19th century Athenian prisons and hashish dens.[71] The urban element of that music defined it and shaped it from the very beginning, with *rebetiko* emerging

[68] Gantlett, *Between Orientalism*, 249.
[69] Gantlett, *Between Orientalism*, 250.
[70] Gerasopoulos,’’The Malleable,’’ 264.
[71] Messinis, ‘’The *rebetiko* music genre.’’

as the urban music which was listened to in poor neighborhoods of large urban centers.[72] The port of Piraeus-deemed as the capital of *rebetiko*, and Athens, were settled by over 300,000 refugees, most of whom now resided in the various man-made slums and poorest neighborhoods of the city.[73] Therefore, Piraeus and its impoverished streets became the meeting point of the *rebetes* and the Asia Minor refugees, who started joining the *rebetes* in their hashish dens and hence partaking in this unofficial subculture which dominated the incident parts of larger cities.[74]

At the same time, it is significant to discuss and dive into the very elements which facilitated the ‘’unification’’ of these two distinct groups of people. Despite their cosmopolitan background, the Asia Minor refugees remained poor and alienated from wider Greek society and were heavily marginalized. The ostracization that the refugees experienced connected them with the *rebetes*, as they were brought closer by their common struggles such as poverty and alienation.[75] Another element which often appears in the relevant historiography is the one of so-called ‘’normlessness’’.[76] Sociologist and philosopher Durkheim presents this concept in his work Division of Labor (1893), where he explains that if commonalities are found under conditions of anomie, those commonalities boil down to an inherent sense of normlessness.[77] On the one hand, *rebetes* and the lifestyle they represented clearly separated them from social and political institutions as well as from wider society itself, resulting in their demonization and alienation; ‘’*...A rebetis was a part of the underworld but not “touched” by the underworld. He lives in a world of his own—far removed from the conventions of society…”*.[78] Respectively, Asia Minor refugees were vilified and presented as corrupt disruptions of the country’s path towards the establishment of a strong

[72] Messinis, ‘’The *rebetiko* music genre.’’
[73] Kritikos, ‘’SIlencing,’’ 4274.
[74] Sideris, *The history of Rebetiko music*, 24.
[75] Zaimakis, ‘’Forbidden,’’ 2.
[76] Gerasopoulos,’’The Malleable,’’ 256.
[77] Gerasopoulos,’’The Malleable,’’ 256.
[78] Gerasopoulos,’’The Malleable,’’ 255.

national identity with Western values.[79] Eventually, *rebetiko* music became the bridge which not only facilitated the participation of refugees in *rebetiko* subculture, but also allowed for the transfer of different sounds and music traditions. The success of this ‘’collaboration’’ is greatly summarized by Economic Historian Nicholas Pappas; ‘’*...in the lower-class communities, the refugees found a curious audience that, unlike their wealthier compatriots, were not obsessed with dismissing Greek musical styles of Anatolia as a mere offshoot of Turkish culture…*”,[80] while factors such as economic stagnation further strengthened the harmonious coexistence of this relationship.[81]

The result of their conjunction ended up in the creation of two distinct *rebetiko* paradigms; The ‘’Piraeus style’’, initially performed in hashish dens using musical instruments such as bouzouki and the so-called ‘’Cafe Aman style’’, or also known as ’*Smyrneiko*-from the city of Smyrna or Izmir, in which the violin and the santouri were incorporated.[82] The songs played in the cafe amans were known as ‘’*amanedes*’’, which were performed ‘’*....with a great deal of improvised melodic elaboration and interpolation of the expletive aman (‘mercy!’ in Turkish) between the clusters of syllables, which are repeated in strictly defined patterns…*’’.[83] The influences which the refugees introduced to *rebetiko* were proven to be of monumental importance. Specifically, according to Pappas; ‘’*...This sudden and abrupt incursion of eastern Greek musical culture into mainland Greece was to revolutionize mainstream Greek music—so much so that it may be postulated that a great deal of Greek music today would scarcely have become what it is without it… it was upon the launching pad of the newly imported music of the Mikrasiátes [people of Asia Minor] that they sprang to prominence…*”.[84] Until their arrival in the 1920s and despite the early development of *rebetiko* as the urban music of the

[79] Gerasopoulos,’’The Malleable,’’ 264.
[80] Gerasopoulos,’’The Malleable,’’ 250.
[81] Zaimakis, ‘’Forbidden,’’ 3.
[82] Zaimakis, ‘’Forbidden,’’ 2.
[83] Gantlett, *Between Orientalism*, 252.
[84] Gerasopoulos,’’The Malleable,’’ 251.

underworld, Greece's musical culture very much lied on folk music which derived from different regions of the country.[85] Within one decade, *rebetiko* started to exit the dangerous ghettos of Piraeus through the dominance of the café-aman in Athens, resulting in the growing popularity of the genre across the Greek working class which had recently started to develop and grow further due to the country's industrialization and urbanization.[86] In general terms, the early 1930s is considered to be the golden age of rebetiko, during which some of the greatest rebetiko songs of all time were written and the first organized rebetiko music group was set up, ''The infamous four of Piraeus''.[87] In 1933, the first professional recording of bouzouki music in Greece took place, a musical instrument which by then had become synonymous with the *rebetiko* music culture.[88]

Despite the growing urban popularity of *rebetiko*, Greece's cultural and political intelligentsia were more than skeptical in regards to this increasingly popular music tradition and the connotations it carried.

-The 1930s reception of *rebetiko* in the Press

The shaping of urban culture, expressed through the growing popularity of *rebetiko* and cafe amans from the late 1920s onwards, became a subject of interest as well as of contempt among the intellectual circles, primarily in relation to the position of this music in Greece's national cultural sphere.[89]

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[85] Zaimakis, ''Forbidden,'' 3-4.
[86] Gerasopoulos,''The Malleable,'' 251.
[87] Messinis, ''The *rebetiko* music genre.''
[88] Messinis, ''The *rebetiko* music genre.''
[89] Kostas Vlisidis, *The different aspects of rebetiko* (Athens: Ekdoseis tou Eikostou Protou, 2004), 14.

Initially, the assessment of that positioning appears positive, when lawyer and journalist Kostas Faltaitch-with a strong record in cultural and folklore commentary, was one of the first that decided to dedicate the first recorded article to the the topic of rebetiko, with the title ‘’*The songs of baglama”-baglama* referring to a popular string instrument synonymous with *rebetiko* compositions.[90] In this groundbreaking for its time piece, he introduces *rebetiko* as a cultural movement worth studying, while however presenting it as a subculture solely associated with the underground world.[91] He also addresses and recognizes the popularity which the genre enjoyed in these underground circles while expressing the charming effect that these ‘’*masterpieces*’’ display, through the honesty and the unpredictability of the *baglama* tunes.[92] In addition, Faltaitch brought to the surface a number of *rebetiko* songs written by anonymous creators which he incorporated in full in his article, an addition which according to *rebetiko* researcher Kostas Vlisidis was proven to be significant for the ‘’rescuing’’ and official recording of the given songs.[93]

If Asia-Minor refugees and their musical influences helped r*ebetiko* to exit the ghettos of Piraeus, Faltaitch helped introduce *rebetiko* as a legitimate musical culture that could no longer be ignored or underplayed by Greece’s cultural elite. Despite its association with lower class entertainment, its resonance had to be recognized and therefore discussed. Faltaitch’s article resulted in the creation of a reactionary intellectual movement which was orchestrated by the representatives of Greece’s official music culture and aimed for the stigmatization of *rebetiko* and the subculture it represented.

[90] Kostas Vlisidis, *Rare texts about REBETIKO, 1929-1959* (Athens: Ekdoseis tou Eikostou Protou, 2018), 23.
[91] Vlisidis, *Rare texts*, 23.
[92] Vlisidis, *The different aspects*, 15.
[93] Vlisidis, *Rare texts*, 23.

This reactionary movement was officially inaugurated by prominent music critic Sofia Spanoudi when in 1931, she published an article entitled ‘’*Music and the Greek nation*’’, in which she attacks *rebetiko* and cafe aman entertainment, claiming that they are responsible for the depravity of Greece’s music tradition.[94] She proceeds by characterizing *rebetiko* music as ‘’*vulgar*” and ‘’*sexual*’’, which she perceives as products of the obscene East that corrupt the lower classes.[95] Essentially, the orientalist discourse which was employed by the same intellectual circles against the Asia Minor refugees of 1922, is now applied to the entirety of the *rebetiko* tradition which is very much viewed as a byproduct of their arrival, an eastern corrupt custom. As already discussed, *rebetiko* prior to the 1920s was associated with prison music which was played in hashish dens and enjoyed by society’s outcasts. Therefore, it was a music tradition with no potential of influence. Ever since the conjunction of *rebetiko* sounds with music of Anatolian Hellenism, and the growing popularity of it among the lower classes, *rebetiko* started to become increasingly threatening for the appropriate version of Greek labeled entertainment, as promoted by the country’s cultural elite.

The event which further strengthened the intellectual movement opposing and ridiculing the expansion of *rebetiko* took place in 1933, when serious political discussions were held in Turkey, in relation to the banning of cafe amans and the performance of *amanedes*.[96] A few months later, an article is published in the front page of newspaper ‘’*Ethnos*’’-translating to ‘’nation’’, in which the anonymous writer urges the Greek authorities to also ban *amanedes*, as it is music which transforms the tavern to a prison cell.[97] In fact, confident that cafe amans will soon be banned in Greece, many writers ironically addressed how the only people who will be listening to such music in the near future will be the residents of refugee settlements.[98] This disdainful attitude reflects while

[94] Vlisidis, *The different aspects*, 16.
[95] Vlisidis, *The different aspects*, 16.
[96] Vlisidis, *The different aspects*, 17.
[97] Vlisidis, *The different aspects*, 17.
[98] Vlisidis, *The different aspects*, 19.

also confirming the discriminatory attitude of the country's intelligentsia towards Asia Minor refugees even a decade following their arrival. In their writing, they illustrate time and time again that popularized *rebetiko* culture has no place in the country's quest for the shaping of a Western and progressive identity;''*Why do amanedes dominate from side to side? Generally we can claim that this phenomenon can be attributed to historic and social reasons and specifically to the fact that our social institutions and social functions have not until today been subjected to a deeply progressive-democratic transformation.*''.[99]

The previously addressed association of the Asia Minor refugees with Turkey and the former Ottoman Empire which carried a harmful symbolism, given Greece's continuous effort to balance between the East and the West ever since the break out of the 1821 Greek Revolution against the Ottoman Empire,[100] can be identified in the various intellectual writings pertaining to *rebetiko* and cafe amans. In fact, a parallel is often drawn between former Ottoman occupation and the current occupation of the Greek cultural sphere by *amanedes*; ''*Who is going to convince our people that amanedes are not national music but an effluvium of centuries-long slavery, and that it has to be forgotten?In my view our liberation from amanedes is more important than any other liberation. We have to liberate our souls from the past.''*.[101] In this passage the effects of the Westernization campaign which was initially dictated by the Western powers and later promoted by the country's elite become evident; the objective is to move away from the Eastern past of slavery, and embrace more ''noble'' traditions. It is also significant to add how the element of class plays a protagonistic role in most articles studied; *rebetiko* is repeatedly presented as the music tradition listened to by

[99] Vlisidis, *The different aspects*, 19.
[100] Gerasopoulos,''The Malleable,'' 264.
[101] Vlisidis, *Rare texts*, 268.

‘’*refugees*’’ and ‘’*lower classes*’’, which as indicated can be justified due to their ‘’ humble instincts’’ and their inferior taste.[102]

Based on the analysis that preceded, it becomes explicit that despite the growing urban popularity of *rebetiko* ever since the arrival of Asia Minor refugees in the 1920s, Greece’s cultural intelligentsia perceived the genre as a problematic and deviant subculture which acted as a barrier in the nation’s campaign for ‘’...*the de-orientalisation of Greek popular culture*…’’.[103] Considering that Westernization was perceived as vital within the context of the country’s plan to firmly establish its national identity, *rebetiko* and its growing popularity among the masses could result in a deviation from that plan. It is also worth mentioning that after the establishment of the Metaxas dictatorship in 1936, the press coverage of *rebetiko* was further reinforced and legitimized, which is a period that is going to be addressed in later chapters.

-The Greek woman of the 1930s

[102] Vlisidis, *Rare texts*, 43.
[103] Gantlett, *Between Orientalism*, 250.

Most Anglo-American anthropological and sociological research of the gender studies discipline conducted in mid-20th century Greece, suggests that Greek womens' lives are defined by the concepts of ''*dropi"*-shame, and honor, both of which are presented as the unspoken moral codes which dictated their very existence.[104] Within the context of this traditional and patriarchal society, the female's moral profile had to be safeguarded and protected by the men of their lives, with this need for the unceasing guardianship of women boiling down to the weakness and vulnerability of their gender.[105] In fact, one of the most prevalent elements which can be found in the early ethnographies of Greece pertains to the classification of women as inferior to men, a concept which is framed by strong theological references.[106] To be more exact, as suggested by social anthropologist Juliet Du Boulay, the man appears to be connected with the image of Jesus Christ and the woman with that of Holy Mary, while the nature of males was associated with superior virtues, a fact which symbolically and inevitably relegated women, while putting them in an inferior place.[107] The symbolic theological association attributed to men is that of ''Adam'', therefore closer to God, more reliable, intelligent, and powerful.[108] Respectively, women are connected with ''Eve'', who is deemed as *''inferior, left, closer to Devil, unintelligent, credulous, fearful, unreliable, weak and irresponsible"*.[109] Through those antithetical symbolisms, the guardianship role of men to protect ethically inferior women appears to be a natural and almost inevitable condition.[110]

Interestingly enough, the man's role as a women's protector is deemed as a practice used to safeguard the honor of the family as well as his own, considering that honor acted as an ''*external recognition*'' of his standing as a

[104] Achilleas Hadjikyriacou, *Masculinity and Gender in Greek Cinema: 1949-1967* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing Inc, 2013), 15-16.
[105] Hadjikyriacou, *Masculinity*, 15.
[106] Hadjikyriacou, *Masculinity*, 15-16.
[107] Hadjikyriacou, *Masculinity*, 14.
[108] Hadjikyriacou, *Masculinity*, 14.
[109] Hadjikyriacou, *Masculinity*, 14.
[110] Hadjikyriacou, *Masculinity*, 14.

leader.[111] Therefore, honor was heavily associated with reputation and the man ensuring that no ‘’bad word’’ was spread about the women in his family, a fact which demonstrates how ‘’*honor was not only a matter of private virtue but also a matter of public reputation.*’’.[112] One of the central dimensions on which the man’s honor depended was the woman’s shame, which as supported by Boulay was retained by an ‘’*absolute code of sexual morality*’’.[113] The man’s unwritten obligation to ‘’shield’’ the woman’s virginity returns to the premise of women been deemed as the inferior gender; ‘’*Sex was regarded as a natural physical temptation for all people and thus a girl lacking the protection of her father and brothers would have sex not only with one man but with many, since that is what the law of nature imposes on ‘weak’ people*.’’.[114] In addition, it becomes clear that any kind of premarital or extramarital sexual affair could result in the permanent dishonoring of the woman and her entire family.[115]

Anthropologists also suggest that the division of labor in Greek households was a product of prevalent yet simple sexual symbolism.[116] To be more exact, the man, as the head of the household was in charge of all economic responsibilities and partook in tasks which called for strength and planning.[117] Respectively, women were involved in domestic work and in activities of nurturing nature.[118] The gender distinction between those above-mentioned tasks and responsibilities was so strict, that if for any reason was to be disrupted, it had to be kept in secrecy to avoid mockery and defamation of the male and his family.[119] This paradigm of gender-based separation expands across all social spaces. *Kafeneia*-coffee houses, where ‘’‘*manhood is expressed, reputations are negotiated, and social relationships are enlivened*

[111] Hadjikyriacou, *Masculinity*, 14.
[112] Hadjikyriacou, *Masculinity*, 14.
[113] Hadjikyriacou, *Masculinity*, 14.
[114] Hadjikyriacou, *Masculinity*, 15-6.
[115] Hadjikyriacou, *Masculinity*, 15.
[116] Hadjikyriacou, *Masculinity*, 15.
[117] Hadjikyriacou, *Masculinity*, 15.
[118] Hadjikyriacou, *Masculinity*, 15.
[119] Hadjikyriacou, *Masculinity*, 15.

through endless card-playing, political debate, competitive talk, and reciprocal hospitality",[120] cannot be entered from women, with the same applying to *plateia*-public square, which remained a strictly-male meeting place and socialization spot.[121] Women could go to such public squares when festivities were taking place and only if escorted by a male guardian-husband, father, brother etc.[122] During their leisure time, most of which was spent in coffee houses and public squares, a value which appears to encompass appropriate masculine behavior within the context of socialization is closely tied with *kefi* ; ''*Kefi describes a state of pleasure, delight, humour as well as a slight intoxication*. *Kefi can be determined as the main purpose of socialization in male domains such as plateia and kafeneion, which eventually became a symbol of masculinity.*''.[123] Once again, women were not allowed to publicly showcase behaviors of such emotionality as they were prohibited from drawing the attention of others to themselves, which would result in the humiliation of their families. As far as the woman's input in this moral code which was forced upon her, anthropologist Michael Herzfeld explains, ''*when Greek women exhibit silence and submission they outwardly perform their female identity in a male dominated world*''.[124] Essentially, women were allowed to talk and engage in conversation exclusively in the presence of other women, yet another example which reinforced the suggestion that Greek females viewed these sets of unwritten rules as natural dictations of their existence which were not to be resisted under any circumstances.

Based on the above analysis which outlines the profile of the 1930s Greek woman, the orientalist and discriminatory discourse employed against the Asia-Minor women refugees can be better understood.

-Greek society's perception of Asia Minor women refugees

[120] Hadjikyriacou, *Masculinity*, 13-4.
[121] Hadjikyriacou, *Masculinity*, 13-4.
[122] Hadjikyriacou, *Masculinity*, 13-4.
[123] Hadjikyriacou, *Masculinity*, 14.
[124] Hadjikyriacou, *Masculinity*, 16.

As explored in the chapter ‘’The Asia Minor refugees and Greece’s orientalist discourse’’, Asia Minor refugees who settled in urban centers such as Athens and Piraeus received a heavily racist and discriminatory treatment from the locals, who often blackguarded them and used expletives such as ‘’rats’’, ‘filthy’’, ‘’Turkish-seeds’’, and ‘’falsely-Baptized’’ to describe them.[125] According to the extensive research conducted by History and Political Science professor Kostas Tziaras, targeting the early reception of refugees in local Greek society, one of the most powerful commonalities that can be observed in most stereotypical and discriminatory phrases and terms used to address the refugees are centered around their so-called questionable ethnic consciousness as well as their alleged immorality.[126] Essentially, the refugees were perceived as a challenge in the nation’s campaign for ‘’...*the de-orientalisation of Greek popular culture*…’’, while challenging the portrayal of appropriate ‘’Greekness’’ as presented by the country’s political and cultural elites.[127]

Tziaras also suggests that persistence on the alleged immorality of the refugees emphatically targeted the women, which is by no means a random circumstance. When using the term ‘’*Turkish-seed*’’, the aim is not to just offend the refugees for their backgrounds but to also address the violent and often times traumatic sexual violence that the females endured throughout the period of their persecution in Turkey.[128] A characteristic example of this can be illustrated in the frequently used phrase ‘’*The Turk dishonored you*’’, which aims at disrespecting the honor of the refugee woman’s sexual morality.[129] In fact, it appears that such insults quickly became the most prevalent verbal patterns of profanity targeting the refugees. Going back to the previous chapter, in which the profile of the 1930s woman was outlined, the emphasis

[125] AlfaVita, ‘’Asia Minor catastrophe.’’
[126] AlfaVita, ‘’Asia Minor catastrophe.’’
[127] Gantlett, *Between Orientalism*, 250.
[128] AlfaVita, ‘’Asia Minor catastrophe.’’
[129] AlfaVita, ‘’Asia Minor catastrophe.’’

placed on disrespecting the honor of the refugee woman's sexual morality is correlated with the importance that Greek society places on the protection and safeguarding of the female's moral profile.[130] Considering that ''*dropi"*-shame, and honor are presented as the unspoken moral codes which dictated women's very existence within the context of Greece's traditional and patriarchal society,[131] the targeting of the refugee woman's morality aims to highlight the superiority of local women and reaffirm the refugee community's otherness.

Furthermore, keeping in mind that due to the poverty that the refugees experienced, the men of refugee families were oftentimes not in position to fulfill their economic duties as the heads of the family structure,[132] their masculinity and standing as leaders was ridiculed and undermined by general Greek society. As a result, their role as the woman's protector-which as suggested by Juliet Du Boulay is deemed as a practice used to safeguard the honor of the family as well as his own, considering that honor acted as an ''external recognition'' of his standing as a leader,[133] was no longer viewed as legitimate or worthy of respect in the eyes of Greek society, hence ''allowing'' for refugee women to be openly disrespected and harassed. It is also worth mentioning how in many cases female refugees settled in urban centers as widows or orphans, automatically making them more vulnerable to sex trafficking rings as well as abuse of different nature, solely due to the fact that they had no male guardians.[134] In the eyes of Greek society, which has historically emphasized the man's unwritten obligation to ''shield'' the woman's morality given that women, as the inferior gender are not in position of controlling their weak nature,[135] such ''free of male guardianship'' refugee women were automatically deemed as promiscuous and ''easy''.

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[130] Hadjikyriacou, *Masculinity*, 15.
[131] Hadjikyriacou, *Masculinity*, 15.
[132] Hadjikyriacou, *Masculinity*, 13.
[133] Hadjikyriacou, *Masculinity*, 14.
[134] AlfaVita, ''Asia Minor catastrophe.''
[135] Hadjikyriacou, *Masculinity*, 15-6.

A case which can be considered as representative of the abuse that refugee women had to endure due to poverty, discrimination and lack of male protection is highlighted in their role as working women. To be more exact, by 1928, 84 percent of the Greek industry's new workers were refugees, with the majority of factories purposely selecting to employ widows and orphans due to their vulnerability, as in many cases, ''*this work often constituted their sole means of livelihood*''.[136] It is also worth mentioning that while making up 83 percent of the textile industry's labor force and 71 percent of the clothing industry's labor force in 1930, women refugees ''*...were excluded from labour unions and had no right to strike, they received only half or one-third of male wages. Refugee women also received the lowest wages in the textile and weaving industries under the pretext of apprenticeship; most were girls between 12 and 14 years old*.''.[137] Once again, it is showcased how their vulnerability as poor females who either enjoyed no male protection or had to also economically contribute for the survival of their family-a fact which despite Greece's path toward urbanization and industrialization was still look down upon since men were still portrayed as the sole of breadwinners of the family,[138] placed them in positions in which they had to put up with exploitation and degradation.

All in all, the elements discussed, indicate how the portrayal and perception of the Asia Minor refugee woman aims to contrast her to the one of the local Greek woman, hence emphasizing the otherness of the refugee community in the country. Refugee women are viewed as indecent and immoral, playing into the orientalist discourse of the corrupt Eastern woman, who arrived to pollute the country, carrying with them indecency and degeneracy.[139] The women in

[136] Kritikos, ''SIlencing,'' 4275.
[137] Kritikos, ''SIlencing,'' 4275.
[138] Hadjikyriacou, *Masculinity*, 13.
[139] AlfaVita, ''Asia Minor catastrophe.''

particular became the easiest victims of the local society, due to their vulnerability as poor and unprotected.

Interestingly enough, the so-called ‘’normlessness’ of these women, on the basis of Greek society’s traditional female portrayal, correlates them with the respective normlessness of the *rebetes*. To be more exact, as discussed in the chapter ‘’The Asia Minor refugees and their contribution to *rebetiko*’’, *rebetes* and their alienated and demonized lifestyle, ended up bringing them closer with Asia Minor refugees who were also considered outcasts and were presented as corrupt disruptions of the Greece’s path towards the establishment of a strong national identity with Western values.[140] Eventually *rebetiko* music became the bridge which facilitated the participation of refugees in *rebetiko* subculture, while also allowing for the transfer of different sounds and music traditions between the two, initially distinct, groups of people. However, what seems to be missing from relevant historiography is the discussion pertaining to the female participation in the *rebetiko* subculture, who just like their male counterparts were in certain cases also welcomed into the world of *rebetiko* as a result of their alienation and stigmatization from wider Greek urban society.[141] These women were known as ‘’*rebetisses*’’.

-The female *rebetisses* of the 1930s

The so-called ‘’father of rebetology’’, Ilias Petropoulos, describes the *rebetisses* as the ‘’*freest women*’’ that have ever existed in modern Greek history.[142] However, when going through the relevant primary sources, such as

[140] Gerasopoulos,’’The Malleable,’’ 264.
[141] Maria Louka, ‘’Women in rebetiko: a prelude of emancipation,’’ *To Mov*, December 29, 2017, https://tomov.gr/2017/12/29/oi-gynaikes-rempetikoy-preloydio-cheirafetisis/

[142] Petropoulos, *Rebetology,* 47.

the press articles and commentaries of the 1930s and the 1950s pertaining to the *rebetiko* subculture, there is little to no reference to these women. According to *rebetiko* researcher and writer Panos Savvopoulos, their limited presence and coverage lies on the fact that due to the conservative beliefs which prevailed during that era, no journalist would dare to even consider the prospect of the women who joined the *rebetes* in the hashish dens and taverns as nothing else other than prostitutes.[143] The above is one of the central reasons why we still do not have a concrete sociological account of their special role within the *rebetiko* subculture, with the exception of the songs that the *rebetes* wrote about them, which constitute the central source of information regarding the *rebetisses*. In her book ‘’*The Social status of Women in the Rebetiko songs of the Interwar.*’’, music instructor and writer Konstantina Spiriadou discusses how female-themed *rebetiko* songs idealized ‘’the mother’’ as the ultimate symbol of love and sacrifice, while praising the unconventional *rebetisses*, without however being hesitant to turn violent towards these women, in case they felt disrespected.[144] However, as also pinpointed by Petropoulos, *rebetisses* were not expected to remain unshaken by such behaviors, since they were in position to protect their bodies as well as their dignity and unlike the typically portrayed woman of the time, did not need a man to do so.[145] Furthermore, it is important to add that *rebetisses* partook in all the typical activities of *rebetiko* subculture from smoking hashish to staying up all night at hashish dens dancing and drinking alongside the men.[146] Building the connection with the analysis that preceded, in a country where women were not allowed to enter a coffee house, stroll in a public square without a male guardian, or engage in any public activity which could attract ‘’unwanted attention’’,[147] *rebetisses* are justifiably portrayed as the ultimate feminist figures-but by mistake! Without being conscious of it, they became symbols of an unprecedented for the time form of female

[143] Savvopoulos, *Concerning the word*, 76.
[144] Louka, ‘’Women in rebetiko.’’
[145] Petropoulos, *Rebetology,* 47.
[146] Louka, ‘’Women in rebetiko.’’
[147] Hadjikyriacou, *Masculinity*, 14-5.

emancipation, which as illustrated by their anti-conformist and underground lifestyle was never meant to be a political statement.[148]

In the song ‘’*Marianthaki*’’-a diminute of the Greek female name ‘’*Marianthi”,* written by *rebetiko* composer Panagiotis Tountas in 1933, the *rebetissa* is presented as a woman who is absolutely indifferent to other people’s opinion regarding her lifestyle, which includes ‘’*...at dawn I will take all the magkes and we will take a bath in Glyfada…*’’.[149]The term ‘’*magkes*’’ is the plural of ‘’*magkas*’’, which has been revisited in the Introduction, and refers to a prominent male member of the underworld, typically associated with the *rebetes*.[150] Respectively, ‘’*Glyfada*’’ is a coastal suburb of Athens. The lyrics proceed with ‘’*...This is how beautiful women enjoy life, and i do not care about what people say, I love to party and be naughty, and I will die while living the mortikia life…*’’. ‘’*Mortikia*’’ refers to the term ‘’*mortis*’’ which is an equivalent of *magkas* and hence an equivalent of *rebetis*. In this stich, we have the proud self-identification of the woman as a *rebetissa*, who does not shy away from openly expressing her desires while indicating that despite societal judgment, she will continue living and embracing the *rebetiko* lifestyle. The feminine gender of *mortis -mortissa*, can be found in the 1932 song ‘’*Mortissa*’’, by Adonis Diamantidis, with the *rebetissa* once again unapologetically embracing the ‘’*mortikia*’’-of a *mortissa*, life, while suggesting that even if she became rich, in this ‘’*fake world*’’, she would choose to live the exact same way ; ‘’*...Ah, I was born a mortissa, I will die as a mortissa, because I have not found a life more beautiful that this, Ah I love this mortissa life, and If I happen to get rich in this fake world, I will live more mortika…*‘’.[151] In this stich, there is a reference to the lower social class of the *rebetes*. Despite her poverty, the *rebetissa* enjoys her life, which is one synonymous with freedom, a freedom which she could not experience if rich and part of the

[148] Petropoulos, *Rebetology,* 47.
[149] Tountas, Panagiotis. ‘’Μαριανθάκι’’ (Marianthaki), 1935.
[150] Gerasopoulos,’’The Malleable,’’ 250.
[151] Diamantidis, Adonis. ‘’Μόρτισσα’’ (Mortissa), 1932.

‘’pretentious’’ outside world. It is also significant to add that the willingness of the *rebetissa* to be open and even celebrate her decision to be part of the so-called ‘’underworld’’, goes back to Petropoulos’ claim the the *rebetes,* unlike society’s other ‘’outcasts’’ such as thieves, selected and defended their own marginalization and did not allow others to lecture them for it.[152]

Just like in ‘’*Mortissa*’’, where higher social status and wealth are undermined by the *rebetissa*, a similar pattern can be identified in a number of *rebetiko* songs of the 1930s; In the 1934 song by Tountas, ‘’*I do not want your money*’’; ‘’*...I do not want your money, quit loving me, I told you once and twice…I do not want your houses, your riches…*’’[153] as well as in ‘’*Let go of your tricks*’’, another song written by Tountas in 1934; ‘’*...you cannot change my mind with your stature and your gold watch…let go of your tricks, and do not present yourself to me as a groom…*’’.[154] Challenging Greek society’s perception of the man as the breadwinner and the one responsible for the economic support of the household on which his wife depends upon,[155] the *rebetissa* does not seem to care about the man’s financial status, indicating that she does not adhere to society’s unwritten rules and therefore her life choices cannot be dictated by them. In addition, such songs affirm the economic independence of the *rebetissa,* which derives from the fact that she worked and made her own money, as ‘’narrated’’ in the 1934 song ‘’*Kapnouloudes*’’, by Dimitris Gogos-‘’*kapnouloudes*’’ being the plural form of ‘’*kapnoulou*’’, the female labor worker in a tobacco factory; ‘’*...my beautiful kapnoulou you like to smoke, and you abandon me...And at the end you go and party with magkes in dens…*‘’.[156] Interestingly enough, Gogos wrote this song about his own wife Despoina, a *rebetissa* and tobacco factory worker,[157] further confirming the autonomy of

[152] Petropoulos, *Rebetology,* 47.
[153] Tountas, Panagiotis. ‘’Τα λεφτά σου δεν τα θέλω’’ (I do not want your money), 1934.
[154] Tountas, Panagiotis. ‘’Ας τα κόλπα’’ (Let go of your tricks), 1934.
[155] Hadjikyriacou, *Masculinity*, 13.
[156] Gogos, Dimitris. ‘’Καπνουλούδες’’ (Kapnouloudes), 1934.
[157] Louka, ‘’Women in rebetiko.’’

the *rebetissess* as well as the non-traditional relationships which the *rebetes* engaged in.

Their non-traditional approach towards relationships is also illustrated in the 1931 song ‘’*You sucker pointlessly wander around*’’, by Giorgos Kamvysis, where the profile of the ideal man is described from a female perspective; ‘’*You sucker wrongly wander around, and pass by my house…(I want a man) that gets high, who fights for me…who is a good dancer, who has a lot of chicks…and I will remain in his heart…*’’.[158] These lines not only reaffirm the above-mentioned suggestion that the *rebetes* consciously selected and defended their own marginalization, but also point out the freedom that the *rebetisses* experienced, in terms of being in position to address their wants and needs, to have their own voice. Even when presented with the option of a more ‘’socially-appropriate’’ mate, the *rebetissa* remains true to her desires. It is also vital to pinpoint that the act of cheating does not seem to bother the *rebetissa*, given that as suggested by *rebetiko* researcher and writer Panos Savvopoulos, in *rebetiko* culture, so-called ‘’adultery’’ was not deemed as a faux pas.[159] In fact, the women, just like the men, had equal access to polygamy, as long as sincerity was involved.[160] Another example of this is demonstrated in the 1931 song ‘’*At Podarardes one Politssa*’’, by Antonis Ntalgkas, with ‘’*podarades*’’, referring to a particular Athenian, refugee neighborhood, and ‘’*politissa*’’ translating to a female with origins in Istanbul; ‘’*...And she told me do not try to mess around with me, because many more love me…I told you then and I am telling you now, I want to have many, because one fella like you is not enough…*”.[161] In a society where the woman’s sexual purity and appropriate behavior were interpreted as a commodity which acted as a verifier of the family’s positive public image, the

[158] Kamvysis, Giorgos. ‘’Κοροΐδο άδικα γυρνάς’’ (You sucker pointlessly wander around), 1931.

[159] Savvopoulos, *Concerning the word*, 81.
[160] Savvopoulos, *Concerning the word*, 81.
[161] Ntalgkas, Antonis. ‘’Στους ποδαράδες μια πολίτισσα’’ (At Podarades one Politissa), 1931.

rebetes and especially the *rebetisses*, repeatedly challenged the petty mindedness and pseudo-conservatism which prevailed, by not being ashamed of their sexuality. As pointed out by Savoppoulos, one of the primary reasons why the ‘’outside’’ world was convinced that the *rebetisses* were prostitutes, was because of the different men they were seen with from time to time,[162] a fact which as pointed out in the chapter ‘’The Greek woman of the 1930s’’, was frowned upon, granting the demonization of a woman’s sexual nature.[163]

The indifference of the *rebetissa* towards traditional gender roles as well as traditional institutions such as marriage is a quite prevalent theme in female-themed *rebetiko* songs of the 1930s. In ‘’*You keep wanting*’’ (1936), by Dimitris Semsis, the *rebetissa* appears to be ridiculing the concept of dowry, while addressing her prospective husband; ‘’*You keep wanting and wanting and keep asking for a dowry, you want a house, you want money…get lost you lazy…whoever will want to marry me will have me as his pride and joy…*’’.[164] On the one hand, the *rebetissa* breaks the narrative that in order for a woman to get married, a dowry had to be involved, which at the time was deemed as a necessary prerequisite for the marriage to be agreed upon between the two families.[165] By refusing to engage in this sexist institution, she openly rejects unspoken traditions while showcasing that she understands her own value, and does not see herself as a negotiable product. Panagiotis Tountas 1936 song ‘’*Lily the mischievous*’’, is a representative example of how as put forward by Savvopoulos, the rebetissa’s use of language can be viewed as an element of equality; ‘’...*I do not care if you are an alanis…I do not give give a damn about magkes…Why do you care if I am from Piraeus…And If I get drunk and I hang out with the entire world…you want dissuade me…*’’.[166] ‘’*Alanis*’’ comes from the Turkish word ‘’alan’’, meaning

[162] Savvopoulos, *Concerning the word*, 81.
[163] Hadjikyriacou, *Masculinity*, 15-16.
[164] Semsis, Dimitris. ‘’Όλο θέλεις’’ (You keep wanting), 1936.

[165] Savvopoulos, *Concerning the word*, 82.
[166] Tountas, Panagiotis. ‘’Λιλή η σκανδαλιάρα’’ (Lily the mischievous), 1936.

open space, and in the slang of *rebetiko* it is used to describe a care-free individual who knows how to enjoy life.[167] In ‘’*Lily the mischievous*’’, the *rebetissa* not only has her own voice, but she is also not afraid to use it as she pleases as a means to defend herself and openly express her thoughts and feelings when addressing men.

The *rebetissa's* openness of expression, freedom of thought and care-free lifestyle are also showcased in the songs which address her use of hashish. In yet another Tountas song of 1931, with the title ‘’*The hasiklou*’’- ‘’*hasiklou*’’ describing the woman that smokes hashish, the *rebetissa* presents the smoking of hashish with her lover, as the ultimate sign of affection; ‘’*...you convinced me and I will decide upon it…I will live with you from now on…together we will smoke…we will enjoy…and we will forget our every trouble…*’’.[168] As pinpointed by Savopoulos, due to the *rebetissa's* ability to enter hashish dens, she often smokes hashish alongside the men, which was deemed as a rather typical, and even bonding activity, further reinforcing the gender equality which prevailed within the *rebetiko* subculture.[169]

In a country where womens' lives were defined by the concepts of ‘’*dropi”*-shame, and honor, both of which were presented as the unspoken moral codes that dictated their very existence,[170] it would not be bold to argue that the songs addressed above were groundbreaking. Thankfully, considering that the 1930s is argued to be the golden age of rebetiko, a number of *rebetiko* songs which presented the *rebetissa* as a sexually liberated, respected and independent woman were written and recorded.[171] Specifically, in 1933, the first professional recording of bouzouki music in Greece took place, a musical instrument synonymous with the *rebetiko* music culture.[172]

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[167] Savvopoulos, *Concerning the word*, 79.
[168] Tountas, Panagiotis. ‘’Η χασικλού’’ (The hasiklou), 1931.
[169] Savvopoulos, *Concerning the word*, 81.
[170] Hadjikyriacou, *Masculinity*, 15-16.
[171] Messinis, ‘’The *rebetiko* music genre.’’
[172] Messinis, ‘’The *rebetiko* music genre.’’

The above acted as an indication that the popularity of *rebetiko* has started to exit the ghettos of Piraeus and gain prevalence within the wider national culture. Unfortunately, this series of successes was violently disrupted by the military dictatorship declared by military officer Ioannis Metaxas in 1936, which also indicates the reason why the female-themed *rebetiko* songs discussed were all written and recorded up to that very year.[173]

The *rebetiko* under the Metaxas regime

On August 4th, 1936, the dictatorship imposed by military officer Ioannis Metaxas was officially declared.[174] On the verge of the arrival of Metaxas's military dictatorship, two main trends prevail as far as the publications written about *rebetiko* are concerned.[175] The most prevalent trend, embraced by the country's official cultural institutions, aimed to cultivate a climate of stigmatization and disdain, while emphatically spreading stereotypical and negative *rebetiko* music portrayals.[176] The portrayals presented appear to be closely connected with the following two elements; the so-called ''vulgar Easterness'' of *rebetiko*, which did not fit into Greece's mainstream cultural sphere, and *rebetiko's* hashish culture, despite the country's preexisting tolerance and acceptance of hashish smoking. Once again, the orientalist discourse which prevailed pertaining to the reception of *rebetiko* within the cultural elites appears again. However, as already discussed, from the mid 1930s onwards, *rebetiko* starts exiting the ghettos of Piraeus and gradually becomes more popular among the lower urban classes. The growing popularity of *rebetiko* can be reflected in the second trend followed in *rebetiko*-related press coverage, which was far more moderate in its assessment of the genre, and did not shy away from recognizing its wider

[173] Messinis, ''The *rebetiko* music genre.''
[174] Sideris, *The history of Rebetiko music*, 43.
[175] Vlisidis, *The different aspects*, 23.
[176] Vlisidis, *The different aspects*, 24.

appeal among the masses.[177] Nonetheless, as pinpointed by *rebetiko* researcher Kostas Vlisidis, this less damaging for the *rebetiko* culture approach, was squashed by the overwhelming climate of ethical panic which had already been established through the consistently negative portrayals pushed to the public for almost a decade.[178] This salient public perception of *rebetiko* created the most ideal breeding ground for the Metaxas government to take things further.

To be more exact, the informal public prejudice towards *rebetiko* became institutionalized under the Metaxas regime. One of the regime's most fundamental incentives was ensuring that the country's cultural affairs fully coincided with the construction of a common, ''ethnic'' identity.[179] For Metaxas, *rebetiko* constituted a threat as well as a symbolic miasma for the so-called ''Rule'' which the regime had built, with that ''Rule'' encompassing the appropriate elements which should make up Greece's modern ethnic identity.[180] Metaxas was very much inspired by the so-called ''*Great Idea*'', which was addressed in the ''The Asia Minor refugees and Greece's orientalist discourse'' chapter.[181] The ''Great Idea'', first expressed in 1844, was a vision that consisted of three central dimensions; the first one had to do with territorial expansion, the second one with imparting Greece's values, while the third dimension related to the achievement of progress within the country.[182] Metaxas's take on the ''Great Idea'', preached about the monolithic conceptualization of the country's ethnic cultural identity, a conceptualization which did not allow any leeway for any so-called ''eastern'' urban tradition.[183] Essentially, as we have already concluded, *rebetiko* represented a threat for the realization of the ''true'' Greek identity, and the process towards achieving

[177] Vlisidis, *The different aspects*, 24.
[178] Vlisidis, *The different aspects*, 24.
[179] Vlisidis, *The different aspects*, 25.
[180] Vlisidis, *The different aspects*, 25.
[181] Merkouris, ''Disasters,''.

[182] Merkouris, ''Disasters,''.

[183] Merkouris, ''Disasters,''.

a homogenous cultural footprint defined by Western values.[184] The above adds to this paper's exploration of the academic debate pertaining to the appropriate version of ''Greekness'', as reflected in the persecution and transformation of *rebetiko*. The ''*pre-Metaxian*'' rebetiko music which by the establishment of the regime had already started to gain prevalence within the urban working class, was now viewed as an annoyance that had to be eliminated and return back to its original isolation. The primary incentive was the dismantling and the reintroduction of *rebetiko* music content and format, through the ''sterilization'' and ''smoothing'' of any undesirable elements that could impact the official state depiction of the Greek cultural DNA; ''...*The ''normal'' cultural state of affairs does not tolerate the ''eastern-like'' modes just like it does not tolerate part of its social structure experiencing the hashish performance and its social context…*''.[185]

The relevant legal framework which was put into place within the very first year of the regime's establishment in 1936, aimed for the above-mentioned ''sterilization'' of Greek culture and for ensuring the abidance of the press with the regime's official depiction of the Greek cultural identity.[186] The given framework dictated that anything that is relevant for the so-called ''*enlightenment of the public opinion*''-including Greek and foreign press, theater, cinema, books, gramophone discs and exhibitions, had to follow the regime's core of ''*national traditions and ideals*''.[187] Nonetheless, the triggering event for the implementation of *rebetiko's* individual censorship took place on August 30, 1936, with the banning of the purchasing and even listening of the record ''Varvara'', a song written by Panagiotis Tountas which was released in 1936.[188] The song's provocative lyrics, describing a young woman-Varvara, who was driving around looking for men, was associated with Metaxas's

[184] Gerasopoulos,''The Malleable,'' 264.
[185] Vlisidis, *The different aspects*, 25-6.
[186] Vlisidis, *The different aspects*, 26-7.
[187] Vlisidis, *The different aspects*, 26-7.
[188] Panos Savvopoulos, '' ''Varvara'' and the scumbags,'' Accessed June 20, 2023, http://www.panossavopoulos.gr/p/blog-page_96.html

daughter, who was rumored to be a nymphomaniac.[189] Due to its background, the record sold more than 90,000 copies within the course of a few months after its release, an unprecedented number.[190] Essentially, ‘’Varvara’’ became the first and most prevalent victim of the Metaxas regime censorship campaign which specifically targeted *rebetiko*, a move that was positively received by the press. As stated above, the press was now under the jurisdiction of the state, but as pointed out by Savvopoulos, judging by the predominantly negative press portrayal of *rebetiko* throughout the 1930s, Metaxas’s imposed censorship was presented as an opportunity to further reinforce their judgmental and condescending attitude towards the given music genre and its cultural associations.[191]

A rather representative example which showcases how the complete identification of the press with the regime’s censorship agenda is rooted in the past recorded hatred of the country’s cultural elite towards *rebetiko* and everything it represented, comes down to their common hatred of cafe amans and *amanedes*. The prevalence of cafe amans essentially originated from the the conjunction of urban *rebetiko* underground music of Piraeus with the sounds of Anatolian Hellenism, introduced by the Asia Minor refugees of 1922.[192] Following the individual censorship of ‘’Varvara’’, the regime concentrated its efforts on the broader spectrum of ‘’*...immoral and hashish songs and the amanedes, who were considered polluted by eastern sensibilities…”*.[193] The press repeatedly and openly expressed their support of the regime’s campaign, with theatrical writer and journalist Dimitris Evaggelidis explaining how the barbaric and uncivilized nature of the *amanedes* justify their censorship, which should be perceived as way for the state to enforce decency and avoid anachronisms.[194] On a similar note, many more writers

[189] Savvopoulos, ‘’Varvara.’’
[190] Savvopoulos, ‘’Varvara.’’
[191] Savvopoulos, ‘’Varvara.’’
[192] Zaimakis, ‘’Forbidden,’’ 2.
[193] Zaimakis, ‘’Forbidden,’’ 4.
[194] Vlisidis, *Rare texts*, 78.

advocate for the complete banning of *amanedes* regardless of their content, since they should be deemed as a product of slander for Greek peoples' cultural backgrounds and for the music evolution of the country.[195] Going back to the ''The 1930s reception of *rebetiko* in the Press'' chapter, in which the coverage of *rebetiko* prior to Metaxas is thoroughly discussed, one can detect that the same line of reasoning defines both periods. In fact, when *rebetiko* was first introduced in the press as a legitimate musical culture that could no longer be ignored or underplayed by Greece's cultural elite, a reactionary movement was quickly formulated and was officially inaugurated by prominent music critic Sofia Spanoudi when in 1931, she published an article entitled ''*Music and the Greek nation*'', in which she attacks *rebetiko* and cafe aman entertainment, claiming that they are responsible for the depravity of Greece's music tradition.[196] She proceeds by characterizing *rebetiko* music as ''*vulgar"* and ''*sexual*'', which she perceives as products of the obscene East that corrupt the lower classes.[197] All in all, it becomes evident that the predominant reception of *rebetiko* by the press as an eastern custom which contaminated the country's path towards the establishment of a homogenous national identity with Western values has remained untouched, with the only difference being that the cultural elite now sees eye to eye with the country's political institutions, while enjoying their stamp of approval.

Consequently, by the late 1930s, the cafe aman style had almost ceased to exist, preparing the ground for *rebetiko's* next era, an era of prevalence as well as alienation from the genre's authentic roots.[198]

Chapter Two: The 1950s and the *rebetiko* scene

-*Rebetiko* and its post-war criticism

[195] Vlisidis, *The different aspects*, 39-40.
[196] Vlisidis, *The different aspects*, 16.
[197] Vlisidis, *The different aspects*, 16.
[198] Gerasopoulos,''The Malleable,'' 251.

Rebetiko music is marked in a pivotal way from state control as realized through the censorship campaign imposed by the Metaxas regime. The 1937 banning of cafe amans and *rebetiko* songs with hashish references ends up deviating rebetiko from its roots while creating the ideal breeding ground for its ‘’appropriate’’ reformulation. As explained by Zaimakis, the prevalent anti-*rebetiko* discourse which was by the the end of WW2 shared by the general Greek public as well the well established cultural and political institutions led to significant musical and cultural changes.[199] These changes specifically targeted the more ‘’sinful’’ and now highly taboo elements of *rebetiko* music such as the hashish-related songs.[200] So far, we have dissected the contribution of the cultural intelligentsia and political Right-aka Metaxas’ dictatorial regime, to the ongoing slandering of the *rebetiko* culture. However, from the late 1940s, the anti-*rebetiko* movement was passionately resumed by the leftist intellectual class of the country,[201] a movement that at its core coincided with the respective 1930s discourse; ‘’...*Both the Left and the Right advocated for a folk song that would honor the great eras of Hellenic civilization and would pinpoint to a musical tradition “compatible with the noble traits of the race…*”.[202] The initial interest of left-wing intellectuals in the general topic of popular music goes back to the mid-1930s and creation of the socialist realism dogma by Soviet Union writers.[203] The Marxist take essentially stressed how ‘’*...popular music was expected to express the deeper social needs, feelings, and hopes of the militant proletarians and the virtuous “inner self” of the nation. In this way, the nostalgic attitude towards the romanticized traditions of the nation overlapped with the political goal of creating a noble type of popular song with a social content that bespoke the valour of the proletariat…*’’.[204] In simple words, leftist intellectuals constantly

[199] Zaimakis, ‘’Forbidden,’’ 22.
[200] Zaimakis, ‘’Forbidden,’’ 22.
[201] Gerasopoulos,’’The Malleable,’’ 259
[202] Gerasopoulos,’’The Malleable,’’ 263.
[203] Zaimakis, ‘’Forbidden,’’ 7.
[204] Zaimakis, ‘’Forbidden,’’ 7.

theorized about the ways in which national culture could contribute to the realization of a socialist society.

Consequently, Greek Marxists struggled to detect music which would be appropriately representative of the working class, a struggle which very much lied on the romanticized concept of seeking national music which could illustrate the historic continuation of the heroic and outstanding traditions of the oppressed classes.[205] At the same time, such music should be symbolically oppositional to the so-called ‘’*...hegemonic system of habits, tastes, and beliefs of the ruling classes…”,*[206] while benefiting the proletariat's struggle against capitalist forces and the ruling class.[207] In the Greek case, the issue of Greekness and its appropriate presentation in the arts dynamically appeared in the post-WW2 era, when *rebetiko* music became a central subject of criticism for the country's leftist elite.[208] To be more exact, in order for Greece's leftist intellectuals to abide by the socialist realism dogma, they had to construct and present a musical tradition which could reflect the historic continuity of authentic tradition, a tradition which was defended and eventually liberated by the country's subordinate classes.[209] For this plan, they went back to the roots of Greek history and primarily focused on the various regional folk traditions which were primarily inspired by the epic struggles of the 1821 Greek Revolution against the Ottoman Empire, also known as the Greek War of Independence.[210] However, *rebetiko* music appeared to be an obstacle in the widespread spreading of appropriate, proletariat-inspired music.

As argued by Gerasopoulos, *rebetiko* was not in position of fulfilling the Marxist fantasy, according to which ‘’...*popular music was expected to convey the deeper social needs, feelings, and hopes of the militant proletarians and*

[205] Zaimakis, ‘’Forbidden,’’ 10.
[206] Zaimakis, ‘’Forbidden,’’ 10.
[207] Zaimakis, ‘’Forbidden,’’ 8.
[208] Zaimakis, ‘’Forbidden,’’ 10.
[209] Zaimakis, ‘’Forbidden,’’ 10.
[210] Zaimakis, ‘’Forbidden,’’ 10

the virtuous "inner self" of the nation…'',[211] with the ambition of ''...*creating a noble type of popular song with a social content that bespoke the valor of the proletariat…*''.[212] The reason behind this disconnect lied on the apolitical nature of *rebetiko* as well as its nostalgic attitude towards the past, which as argued by Greek leftists contested their political incentive for the promotion of a music tradition with prevalent social and class-related undertones.[213] To be more particular, the so-called ''melancholic'' and often fatalistic mood which defined *rebetiko* music, challenged the highly optimistic as well as patriotic tone of the Left movement, which encompassed the intellectual awakening of the masses.[214] Following along with the anti-*rebetiko*, orientalist discourse exercised by the political Right and Greece's cultural elite throughout the 1930s, the leftist intellectuals attacked the ''eastern'' origins of *rebetiko*, claiming that it is imperative to disassociate ''pure'' Greek culture from the given music tradition.[215] In fact, the so-called anatolian DNA of *rebetiko* was symbolically presented as the "...*melodic remnants of the Turkish conqueror*…",[216] which were reintroduced in the country with the arrival of Asia Minor refugees in the 1920s, and posed a threat to the tradition of *dimotiko*-folk song, portrayed as the authentic Hellenistic tradition, the ultimate cultural product of Greece's liberation from their subjugators.[217] Similarly to their predecessors, the Left intelligentsia appeared to be threatened by the heterogeneity of musical traditions and cultural elements that the *rebetiko* music communicated, considering that this heterogeneity contradicted the core of their political agenda; the creation of a class-conscious nation bound together through an ethnocentric sense of an unbroken national continuity.[218] The above can be easily connected with the core of Metaxas regime, pertaining to the construction of a homogenous, ethnic identity, with the only

[211] Gerasopoulos,''The Malleable,'' 261.
[212] Gerasopoulos,''The Malleable,'' 261.
[213] Gerasopoulos,''The Malleable,'' 261.
[214] Zaimakis, ''Forbidden,'' 10.
[215] Gerasopoulos,''The Malleable,'' 261.
[216] Zaimakis, ''Forbidden,'' 10.
[217] Zaimakis, ''Forbidden,'' 10.
[218] Zaimakis, ''Forbidden,'' 10.

difference being that Metaxas aspired to the incorporation of Western and not Marxist values.

The Left's anti-*rebetiko* rhetoric heavily emphasized the immorality of the genre, an immorality which quickly led to the formation of an ethics crusade, organized by a number of left-wing publications.[219] Alekos Ksenos, a writer for the popular communist newspaper *Rizospastis*, suggested that the sickening atmosphere of *rebetiko* music which was often combined with sex and hashish related content, should actually be perceived as an aftereffect of the deteriorating portion of the country's upper class, and therefore should not be presented as the music tradition of the working people.[220] Nonetheless, he recognizes that some aspects of *rebetiko* music could perhaps be upcycled in the near future, if they start incorporating actual social messaging, useful for the proletariat.[221] By disregarding the underground and urban origins of *rebetiko*, Ksenos aimed to misrepresent and undermine the given music tradition, arguing that in order for *rebetiko* to represent the people, its politicization is imperative. Respectively, popular leftist journalist Vassilis Papadimitriou addressed the vulgarity and moral deprivation of *rebetiko* which once again illustrates the commonalities that can be detected between the left-wing and right-wing anti-*rebetiko* discourses.[222] In both cases a clear distinction is made between what is moral and what is not, what is Greek and what is not, what is appropriate and what is not. The above perfectly outlines Greece's dominant political culture, which regardless of its ideological colors insisted on the establishment of a homogeneous ethnic identity, free of elements that could potentially disrupt the acceptable version of ''Greekness''. *Rebetiko*, played into the debate of whether such music should or even could ever be viewed as proper national music.

[219] Vlisidis, *The different aspects*, 75.
[220] Vlisidis, *The different aspects*, 75.
[221] Vlisidis, *The different aspects*, 75.
[222] Gerasopoulos,''The Malleable,'' 261.

Another element which defined left-wing rhetoric came down to *rebetiko's* alleged lack of cultural responsibility.[223] As argued by *rebetiko* researcher Gail Holst ''...*the leaders of the left were as rigid and intolerant of mangas society as the right-wing establishment and for similar reasons: the manges were not susceptible to organization. Their own loose society was based on a common distrust towards the rest of society…*''.[224] Essentially, Holst's point takes us back to the previously suggested argument that the *rebetes* had consciously selected their own alienation, which therefore indicated their lack of conformity and their non-existing desire to fit into any mold-including the political Right or Left. Therefore, despite *rebetiko's* contribution to WW2 and the Greek civil war struggles, through the creation of music which addressed the country's suffering, the Left intelligentsia appeared unimpressed from the genre's post-war promotion of social engagement as well as its lack of political messaging.[225] Nonetheless, slowly but surely a shift of rhetoric started to unfold with many noticing that the highly contested, and undesirable oriental elements of *rebetiko* are now fading, a reflection of the the impact of the ongoing anti-r*ebetiko* discourse, as well Greece's post-war path towards nationalization, modernization, and urbanization.[226]

- *Rebetiko's* post-war transformation

[223] Gerasopoulos,''The Malleable,'' 261.
[224] Gerasopoulos,''The Malleable,'' 261.
[225] Gerasopoulos,''The Malleable,'' 261.
[226] Zaimakis, ''Forbidden,'' 4.

The ongoing anti-*rebetiko* discourse exercised from the political and cultural ‘’camps’’ of both the Right and the Left, ended up sowing the seeds for the post-war reintroduction of *rebetiko* music, which now appeared absent from a number of its original subculture values and authentic roots, such as the *amanedes* and hashish-related songs. As discussed, this was far from a voluntary process, but it appeared necessary for the survival of the genre. Within the context of a rapidly growing urban population resulting from the high rates of internal migration following the detrimental economic consequences of the war period, *rebetiko* composers successfully tried to integrate *rebetiko* music into the country’s new reality.[227] This new reality was defined by Greece’s post-war campaign aiming at the reconstruction of a strong national identity through strengthening the country’s social cohesiveness and political stability, a plan which can be viewed as part of a larger historic trend followed by a number of Balkan and other non-western European countries at the time.[228] The ingredients which were deemed as necessary for the realization of this plan were the ones of nationalization, modernization, and urbanization with *rebetiko* naturally not remaining untouched by the given transformative processes.[229] The above passage could also be presented as a short response to the defined research question of this paper; ‘’Why did *rebetiko* music undergo a transformation from the 1930s to the 1950s?’’.

Through utilizing selective *rebetiko* elements a new musical style is born, known as ‘’*laika*’’ music, with *laika* freely translating to popular or ‘’people’s music’’.[230] This new version of popular music placed heavy emphasis on the bouzouki, an instrument synonymous with the *rebetiko* tradition, while incorporating elements of western rhythms.[231] The *laika* style is essentially

[227] Sideris, *The history of Rebetiko music*, 65.
[228] Zaimakis, ‘’Forbidden,’’ 4.
[229] Zaimakis, ‘’Forbidden,’’ 4.
[230] Pennanen, ‘’The Development,’’ 67.
[231] Pennanen, ‘’The Development,’’ 67.

labeled as *rebetiko's* successor, even though this transition of music tradition is presented as rather complex.[232] To be more precise, while *rebetiko* is originally connected with the entertainment of the urban underworld, *laika* is portrayed as the music of choice of Greece's rapidly growing post-war urban population.[233] Even though similarities can be detected in the core musical instruments used, such as the bouzouki, from the mid-1950s onwards the traditional, three double-course bouzouki is abandoned and replaced by a four one and is combined with large electrically amplified ensembles.[234] Post-war *rebetiko* music has officially abandoned the hashish dens, and is now performed at taverns with a diverse repertoire which includes Western-style popular music.[235] Relevant writings which cover Greek music from the 1940s to the 1960s, view ''Westernization'' as the most vital transformative process, a fact which as suggested by ethnomusicologist Risto Pekka Pennanen is a rather monolithic interpretation.[236] For Pennanen, a more reasonable interpretation pertaining to Greece's musical transformation would be the one of modernization which suggests ''*...the incidental movement of a system or its components in the direction of Western music and musical life without requiring major changes in those aspects of the non-Western tradition that are central and essential…*''.[237] In the case of the *laika* style, the ''*central and essential*'' elements that appear to have been retained, do not shy away from favoring modern European musical motifs while disregarding the eastern characteristics which were integral for *rebetiko's* original conception.[238]

The new, *laika* music tradition addressed less controversial and more gentle topics, as a means to ensure its accessibility to wider audiences while making a conscious effort to distance itself from its contested past.[239] As a result,

[232] Pennanen, ''The Development,'' 67.
[233] Pennanen, ''The Development,'' 67.
[234] Pennanen, ''The Development,'' 67.
[235] Pennanen, ''The Development,'' 67.
[236] Pennanen, ''The Development,'' 68.

[237] Pennanen, ''The Development,'' 69.
[238] Zaimakis, ''Forbidden,'' 4.
[239] Zaimakis, ''Forbidden,'' 22.

‘’*...laika songs gained the respect of a much wider audience suited to the needs of the recording market, but lost the peculiar, often radical, character of their ancestors…*’’.[240] A testament of *rebetiko’s* post-war transformation can be detected in the evaluation of the reintroduction of the genre by Greece’s cultural elite, which quickly established a dichotomy between the old and the new rebetiko.[241] Specifically, a dualistic scheme was constructed consisting of the so-called authentic urban music-represented by the *laika* style, and its predecessor, the *rebetiko*, paradigmatically labeled as ‘’hashish music’’, a characterization which is meant to degrade and stereotype the original *rebetiko* tradition and its roots.[242] In the eyes of the country’s cultural elite, the westernization and modernization of the genre, in combination with its dissociation from disreputable themes, granted post-war *rebetiko* the right to be presented as a legitimate music tradition of the urban population.[243] While the old *rebetiko* was closely linked with the ‘’*...oriental indiscipline and backwardness of the nation*…’’,[244] the new, *laika* tradition illustrated Greece’s path towards ‘’...*European rationalism and Hellenism*…’’.[245]

It is also worth mentioning that post-war *rebetiko’s* widespread expansion and success is for many attributed to Manos Hatzidakis, a leading composer and pianist, who was one of the first members of Greece’s cultural elite to publicly defend and support *rebetiko*, presenting it as a legitimate and multifaceted art form in one his lectures which was solely dedicated to the presentation of the genre.[246] In fact, Hatzidakis paralleled *rebetiko* to the works of Bach and Lorca, showcasing the extent of the genre’s influence and significance, for modern Greek culture.[247] Hatzidakis’s admiration for *rebetiko* can be reflected in his decision to cover a number of songs which were composed and written

[240] Zaimakis, ‘’Forbidden,’’ 22.
[241] Vlisidis,*The different aspects*, 97.
[242] Vlisidis,*The different aspects*, 97.

[243] Zaimakis, ‘’Forbidden,’’ 11.
[244] Zaimakis, ‘’Forbidden,’’ 11.
[245] Zaimakis, ‘’Forbidden,’’ 11.
[246] Sideris, *The history of Rebetiko music*, 62.
[247] Sideris, *The history of Rebetiko music*, 62.

from arguably the most important *rebetiko* creator of the 1950s, Vassilis Tsitsanis.[248] Tsitsanis is viewed as the poster child of post-war *rebetiko* or *laika* music and by the early 1950s enjoyed unprecedented popularity.[249] Nonetheless, abiding by the cultural elite's dualistic scheme which separated ''authentic'' urban music-represented by the *laika* style, from its predecessor, the *rebetiko*, paradigmatically labeled as ''hashish music'', Tsitsanis was very adamant about distancing himself from the sounds of the hashish dens.[250] Interestingly enough, when interviewed about his work in 1951, he claimed that the so-called ''*songs of mental corruption*'', had initially created a hostile atmosphere towards his own music, which he describes as the ''*new folk urban music*''.[251] Following the paradigm of the anti-*rebetiko* rhetoric exercised by the political Right and Left, Tsitsanis openly degrades the eastern origins of *rebetiko* while presenting himself as a defendant and representative of the continuation of ''pure'' Greek tradition. The above reflects how the *laika* tradition and its ''members'' are more than willing to be molded by the country's political and cultural elites, signifying how the anti-conformist and authentic nature of their predecessors is now out of the picture. At the same time, *rebetiko* is no longer viewed as an anomaly which disrupts appropriate ''Greekness'', since it has been successfully cleansed of its corrupt and eastern elements.

-Female portrayal in 1950s *rebetiko* songs

In the chapter ''The female *rebetisses* of the 1930s'', we discussed female-themed *rebetiko* songs of the 1930s, which are defined by their

[248] Sideris, *The history of Rebetiko music*, 62.
[249] Vlisidis,*The different aspects*, 78.
[250] Vlisidis, *Rare texts*, 176.
[251] Vlisidis, *Rare texts*, 176.

portrayal of the *rebetissa*. The *rebetissa* represents the female participation in the *rebetiko* subculture, who like their male counterparts were welcomed into the world of *rebetiko* as a result of their alienation and stigmatization from wider Greek urban society.[252] The so-called ''father of rebetology'', Ilias Petropoulos, describes the *rebetisses* as the ''*freest women*'' that have ever existed in modern Greek history,[253] with *rebetiko* researcher and writer Panos Savvopoulos, claiming that their almost non-existent coverage or mere reference by the Greek press, lied on the conservative beliefs which prevailed during that era.[254] To put it shortly, no journalist would dare to even consider the prospect of the women who joined the *rebetes* in the hashish dens and taverns as nothing else other than prostitutes.[255] For that reason, we do not have a concrete sociological account of their special role within the *rebetiko* subculture, with the exception of the songs that the *rebetes* wrote about them, in which their underground and anti-conformist lifestyle is praised and addressed. Nonetheless, Savvopoulos describes the *rebetisses* as a unique 1930s phenomenon.[256] To be more exact, he claimed that the *rebetissess* disappeared along with the respective disappearance of the hashish dens, and the modernization of *rebetiko*. Their profile did not fit into the new, modernized successor of rebetiko music, which by the late 1930s had been alienated from its authentic roots.[257] By the 1950s, post-war rebetiko is viewed as a legitimate music tradition of the urban population which has been successfully cleansed of its corrupt and eastern elements and therefore is no longer threatening for the country's path towards westernization and modernization. The portrayal of women in 1950s *rebetiko* music can be perceived as a testament of the genre's given transformation.

[252] Louka, ''Women in rebetiko.''
[253] Petropoulos, *Rebetology,* 47.
[254] Savvopoulos, *Concerning the word*, 76.
[255] Savvopoulos, *Concerning the word*, 76.
[256] Savvopoulos, *Concerning the word*, 77.
[257] Gerasopoulos,''The Malleable,'' 251.

Savvopoulos urges us to differentiate between the 1930s *rebetiko* songs about *rebetisses* from the ones of the 1950s, portraying the more ‘’modern’’ and ‘’jolly’’ girls of the post-war era.[258] A representative example of the above is the song ‘’*Valentina*’’, written by composer Giorgos Mitsakis in 1950.[259] In ‘’*Valentina*’’, the protagonist of the song is described as a woman who drives her own car, parties at taverns, and has a short haircut.[260] In fact, the above-mentioned characteristics are presented to be that modern and boundary pushing, that in few years, Valentina might even wear pants; ‘’*...You have a car and you go around, you park wherever you want, and based on where you are headed, in a few years, you will wear pants…*’’.[261] Based on the lyrics alone, it becomes evident that the profile of the 1930s *rebetissa* cannot be paralleled with the one described in ‘’*Valentina*’’, a woman who is barely in control of her dressing, let alone of her desires and sexual nature.

As already addressed in the ‘’*Rebetiko’s* post-war transformation’’ chapter, post-war *rebetiko* ended up adhering to some of the most classical paradigms of the historical anti-*rebetiko* rhetoric exercised by the political Right and Left ever since the 1930s. One of those paradigms entailed the oriental discourse which was employed against r*ebetiko*, degrading its corrupt, eastern origins. In Vassilis Tsitsanis’ 1950 song ‘’*Gulbahar*’’-with the term ‘’*Gulbahar*’’ being a typical Turkish female name, the same, oriental rhetoric appears to be applied; ‘’*...One magical night, I saw her, She was an exotic beauty, The sweat Gulbahar…I am tied to her passion, I cry I am nostalgic and I hurt, I do not forget about Gulbahar…”.*[262] ‘’*Gulbahar*’’s lyrics help us build a conceptual connection with Costis Palamas’ 1907 poem entitled ‘’Orient’’-mentioned in the ‘’The Asia Minor refugees and Greece’s orientalist discourse’’ chapter, in which the East is presented as a promiscuous and seductive harem slave,

[258] Savvopoulos, *Concerning the word*, 77.

[259] Mitsakis, Giorgos. ‘’Βαλεντίνα’’ (Valentina), 1950.
[260] Mitsakis, Giorgos. ‘’Βαλεντίνα’’ (Valentina), 1950.
[261] Mitsakis, Giorgos. ‘’Βαλεντίνα’’ (Valentina), 1950.
[262] Tsitsanis, Vassilis. ‘’Γκιουλ Μπαχάρ’’ (Gulbahar), 1950.

‘’*...ever threatening to infect the unwary with incapacitating doses of lethargy, fatalism, lust and a vague, unfocused longing….*’’.[263] This threat aims to represent the antithesis of the corrupt traditions of the East, against the purity and optimism associated with Western progress.[264] Tsitsanis’s portrayal of the ‘’dangerous’’, eastern woman also goes back to the Greece’s discriminatory and stereotypical reception of the Asia Minor refugee woman, who were labeled as immoral and loose.[265] According to History and Political Science professor Kostas Tziaras, the targeting of the refugee woman’s morality aimed to highlight the superiority of local women and reaffirm the refugee community’s otherness.[266]

Another prevalent characteristic of female-themed *rebetiko* songs of the 1950s is the emphasis placed on the male gaze. In the 1952 song *‘’Tonight you are making an entrance*’’ by Vassilis Tsitsanis, the female protagonist is celebrated for her beauty as well as for her overall attractive appearance, attributed to the man that ‘’dresses her’’, meaning that pays for her clothes and overall ‘’upkeep’’; ‘’*...Tonight you are making an entrance, They see you and brake, And the trams stop…Tonight I am taking you out, And the people are jealous…Long live the man, The man that dresses you*…’’.[267] The female is viewed as a product of admiration by men as well as a conquest, a conquest which can be publicly ‘’shown off’’ to cause other people’s jealousy. As supported by Savvopoulos, a representative characteristic of post-war *rebetiko* can be found in the portrayal of women as trinkets of men, accessories who are desirable only when looking presentable and while performing seductive acts such as dancing.[268] At the same time, unlike the *rebetissa* who challenged Greek society’s perception of the man as the

[263] Gantlett, *Between Orientalism*, 248.
[264] Gantlett, *Between Orientalism*, 248.
[265] AlfaVita, ‘’Asia Minor catastrophe.’’
[266] AlfaVita, ‘’Asia Minor catastrophe.’’
[267] Tsitsanis, Vassilis. ‘’Απόψε κάνεις μπαμ’’ (Tonight you are making an entrance), 1952.

[268] Savvopoulos, *Concerning the word*, 77.

breadwinner and the one responsible for the economic support of the household on which his wife depends upon,[269] in post-war *rebetiko*, females are presented as financially dependent on men, hence fulfilling their traditional roles as dictated by the country's unwritten gender rules.[270]

When looking at 1950s female-themed *rebetiko* songs collectively, an element which appears to be their most clear commonality is the one of the particular perspective used to ''narrate'' their stories. To be more precise, a large number of these songs seem to illustrate women almost exclusively from the perspective of their romantic relations with men. In the 1950 song *''What have I done to you?"* by Mitsakis, the woman appears to be begging her lover not to abandon her; ''*...What have I done to you, Why are you sending me away...Do you want me to poison myself…During all these years in my mother's hug, I anticipate, With hope poor me I wait…*''.[271] The female is presented as vulnerable and weak, waiting for her lover to appear for years, while remaining loyal to him despite his rejection. Similarly, in another Mitsakis song entitled *''My sadness about you will be my end"* released in 1953, the woman addresses her suffering, which she continues to endure as a testament of her love for her partner; ''*My sadness about you will be my end, My life is now wasted, And without being ashamed of it, Be glad that I love you…From you I suffer in life, I will get older before I am expected to, I am the victim, And I forgive you about everything…*''.[272] The emphasis placed on the female's sacrificial nature is rather evident, a nature which adheres to her vulnerability and ties with Greece's historic classification of women as inferior to men due to their weaknesses.[273]

[269] Hadjikyriacou, *Masculinity*, 13.
[270] Hadjikyriacou, *Masculinity*, 13.
[271] Mitsakis, Giorgos. ''Τι σου φταίω;'' (What have I done to you?), 1950.
[272] Mitsakis, Giorgos. ''Το δικό σου το μαράζι θα με φάει'' (My sadness about you will be my end), 1953.
[273] Hadjikyriacou, *Masculinity*, 15.

A similar conceptual pattern is followed in the 1953 song ‘’*I was born to feel pain*’’ by Tsitsanis, with the woman cursing her lover for destroying her life; ‘’*I was born to feel pain, And to struggle, The moment that I met you, I bitterly curse…And If I am living a life, That I always hated, For everything you are to blame, You who I loved so much…*’’.[274] The woman is presented as a victim of fate, a fate which she is not in position of taking control over. Her entire life appears to be in the hands of the man, who is presented as her source of struggle and suffering. There is also a significant lack of accountability shown from the woman, reinforcing her helpless and weak depiction, an element which is also present in the 1950 song ‘’*You stole all my rings*’’, by Mitsakis; ‘’*Everything that I had, Before I met you, I have given you everything, So that I can satisfy you…Well done you are worth it, Since you have won me over, How much more much more I can take, Only God knows”*.[275] She appears to lack volition as well as mere critical thinking considering her willingness to suffer and self-sacrifice for the sake of a man’s love. Moreover, her very wellbeing is strictly connected with the actions of a man, with the woman being unable to escape his destructive presence.

The woman’s ‘’attachment syndrome’’ to the male figure can also be identified in the 1950 song ‘’*The first man I loved*’’ by Mitsakis; ‘’*...You have to feel how much I love you, And if I ever reject you, kill me…For me life has just began, you are the first man I loved…*’’.[276] A similar messaging pertaining to the woman expressing her willingness to die as an indication of how absolute her love for a man is can be detected in Tsitsanis’ 1956 song, entitled ‘’*Every night being sad*’’; ‘’*You are hiding something in your heart, I can see it in your eyes, Have you perhaps gotten tired of me and want me to go, Do not make me die little by little*‘’.[277] Time and time again post-war female-themed *rebetiko* songs showcase how a woman’s life is only valued when it entails the reciprocal love

[274] Tsitsanis, Vassilis. ‘’Γεννήθηκα για να πονώ’’ (I was born to feel pain), 1953.
[275] Mitsakis, Giorgos. ‘’Μου ‘φαγες όλα τα δαχτυλίδια’’ (You stole all my rings), 1950.
[276] Mitsakis, Giorgos. ‘’Ο πρώτος άντρας που αγάπησα’’ (The first man I loved), 1950.
[277] Tsitsanis, Vassilis. ‘’Κάθε βράδυ λυπημένη’’ (Every night being sad), 1956.

of the man she loves. In case that man betrays or rejects her, her life becomes ‘’hell on earth’’ since the woman no longer has a purpose. The given conceptual paradigm comes into full contrast with the 1930s portrayal of the *rebetisses,* who are presented to hold their personal value in high regard, while being willing to defend themselves and their dignity using their own, independent voice.

Lastly, the stereotypical and condescending depiction of women as marriage-obsessed, is illustrated in the song ‘’*You crazy woman that want to get me married*’’, which was written and released by Tsitsanis in 1950; ‘’*You crazy woman that want to get me married, And stand by my side as a bride, You should know that you will regret it, And quickly find yourself in the streets..I am not the one for marriage…I am sick of the same kisses…And wherever I stand I build a new nest”*.[278] The above is a representation of Greece’s patriarchal society, in which the woman views marriage as the ultimate testament of personal success, while the man perceives it as a loss of freedom and is encouraged to be promiscuous and gather a number of sexual experiences before taking on the role of the husband and father, the optimum sign of the realization of his masculine adulthood.[279] Once again, this highly monolithic female representation is antithetical to the one of the *rebetisses,* who openly defied the traditionalism and pseudo-conservatism which was forced upon women through the institutions of marriage, and remained indifferent towards society’s unwritten rules, meant to define a female’s societal value.

When looking at the female portrayal in *rebetiko* music of the 1930s and 1950s it becomes evident that post-war *rebetiko* abandoned the image of the *rebetissa* while replacing it with the one of the vulnerable, and man-dependent

[278] Tsitsanis, Vassilis. ‘’Τρελή που θέλεις να με στεφανώσεις’’ (You crazy woman that want to get me married),1950.

[279] Hadjikyriacou, *Masculinity*, 17.

woman, who can only exist from the perspective of the male gaze, or within the context of their romantic relationships with men. The sexually liberated and independent *rebetissa* of the 1930s is forever gone. The above signifies the transformation of *rebetiko* from the 1930s to the 1950s, during which the music genre evolved from being the entertainment of the urban underworld, to the most popular music of choice of Greece's rapidly growing post-war urban population. *Rebetiko's* new status required the ''sterilization'' and ''smoothing'' of any ''undesirable'' elements that could challenge the desired depiction of the country's ethnic identity and culture. Ultimately, through *rebetiko's* transformation, the music genre no longer posed a threat to the appropriate version of ''Greekness'', which had originally caused its decades-long persecution.

Conclusion

The incentive of this paper was centered around the evolution of Greece's *rebetiko* music from 1930s to the 1950s during which *rebetiko* evolved from

the music as well as lifestyle, of the criminal, the poor and the ostracized in the 1930s, to a form of popular entertainment and one of the most widely commercialized music genres in the 1950s. However, as confirmed by the findings of this paper, the history of the music genre has been marked by doubt, controversy, and contradiction, with rebetiko having to endure vicious criminalization prior to its widespread acceptance.[280] The backdrop of *rebetiko's* path towards its status as an indisputable symbol of Greek culture was connected with the academic debate pertaining to the appropriate version of ''Greekness'', reflected in the persecution and transformation of *rebetiko* from the 1930s to the 1950s. Respectively, the research question which acted as a guide for my paper was the following; ''Why did *rebetiko* music undergo a transformation from the 1930s to the 1950s?''

Based on my research, I have concluded that the historical development that revolutionized *rebetiko* as well the very course of Greek history took place in 1922, when following the defeat of the Greek forces in the Greco-Turkish war, Greece had to deal with the influx of 1.5 million refugees, which primarily weighed down the country's developing urban centers.[281] The local population viewed the Asia Minor refugees as ''bastardized Turks'' who arrived to pollute their country, carrying with them diseases and corrupt customs.[282] A solid explanation behind the heavily racist and discriminatory treatment that was initially experienced by the refugees is very much connected with the academic debate pertaining to the appropriate version of ''Greekness''. The arrival of the refugees took place during a period in which Greece was still in the process of establishing its national identity, a process marked by the continuous effort to balance between the East and the West ever since the break out of the 1821 Greek Revolution against the Ottoman Empire.[283] Within this historic climate and framework, the leading political and intellectual

[280] Gerasopoulos,''The Malleable,'' 264.
[281] Koliopoulos and Mihailidis, *The refugees*, 24.
[282] AlfaVita, ''Asia Minor catastrophe.''
[283] Gerasopoulos,''The Malleable,'' 264.

structures of the country ‘’*...firmly stood against anything that would make Greece less Greek and more Oriental (that is: more Turkish).*’’.[284] This oriental discourse was naturally employed against the Asia Minor refugees of 1922, who were essentially perceived as a challenge in the nation’s campaign for ‘’*...the de-orientalisation of Greek popular culture*…’’.[285]

Early *Rebetiko*, described as the urban music which was listened to and performed in poor neighborhoods of large urban centers by the *rebetes*, was highly demonized and alienated from wider Greek society due to its stigmatization as music of the hashish-dens.[286] The respective ostracization that the refugees experienced upon their arrival connected them with the *rebetes*, with *rebetiko* music becoming the bridge which not only facilitated the participation of refugees in *rebetiko* subculture, but also allowed for the transfer of different sounds and music traditions. The result of their conjunction ended up in the creation of two distinct *rebetiko* paradigms; The ‘’Piraeus style’’, initially performed in hashish dens and the so-called ‘’Cafe Aman style’’, or also known as ’*Smyrneiko*-from the city of Smyrna or Izmir.[287] Within one decade since the refugees’s arrival, *rebetiko* started to exit the dangerous ghettos of Piraeus through the dominance of the café-aman in Athens, resulting in the growing popularity of the genre across the Greek working class. The shaping of urban culture, expressed through the growing popularity of *rebetiko* and cafe amans from the late 1920s onwards, became a subject of interest as well as of contempt among the intellectual circles, primarily in relation to the position of this music in Greece’s national cultural sphere.[288] Greece’s cultural intelligentsia perceived the genre as a problematic and deviant subculture which acted as a barrier in the nation’s campaign for ‘’*...the de-orientalisation of Greek popular culture*…’’.[289] Essentially, the orientalist

[284] Gerasopoulos,’’The Malleable,’’ 264.
[285] Gantlett, *Between Orientalism*, 250.
[286] Messinis, ‘’The *rebetiko* music genre.’’
[287] Zaimakis, ‘’Forbidden,’’ 2.
[288] Vlisidis, *The different aspects*, 14.
[289] Gantlett, *Between Orientalism*, 250.

discourse which was employed by the same intellectual circles against the Asia Minor refugees of 1922, was now applied to the entirety of the *rebetiko* tradition which was very much viewed as a byproduct of their arrival, an eastern corrupt custom.

What was also discovered through my research was that the persistence on the alleged immorality of the refugees emphatically targeted the women, which is by no means a random circumstance. The portrayal of the Asia Minor refugee woman as indecent and immoral aimed to contrast her to the one of the local Greek woman, hence emphasizing the otherness of the refugee community in the country. The so-called ‘’normlessness’ of these women ends up correlating them with the respective normlessness of the *rebetes*, resulting in a female participation in the *rebetiko* subculture. Just like their male counterparts, females were in certain cases also welcomed into the world of *rebetiko* due to their alienation and stigmatization from wider Greek urban society.[290] These women were known as ‘’*rebetisses*’’.

Even though there is no concrete sociological account of the special role that the *rebetisses* played in *rebetiko* subculture due to the conservative beliefs that prevailed during the given era, the qualitative research I conducted based on a collection of 10 *rebetiko* songs of the 1930s, led me me to believe that the *rebetisses* are justifiably portrayed as the ultimate feminist figures. Without being conscious of it, they became symbols of an unprecedented for the time form of female emancipation, which as illustrated by their anti-conformist and underground lifestyle was never meant to be a political statement.[291] Respectively, when I dived into the female portrayal in *rebetiko* music of the 1950s, it became evident that post-war *rebetiko* abandoned the image of the *rebetissa* while replacing it with the one of the vulnerable, and man-dependent woman, who can only exist from the perspective of the male gaze, or within

[290] Louka, ‘’Women in rebetiko.’’
[291] Petropoulos, *Rebetology,* 47.

the context of their romantic relationships with men. The sexually liberated and independent *rebetissa* of the 1930s was nowhere to be found, further signifying the transformation of *rebetiko* from the 1930s to the 1950s, during which the music genre evolved from being the entertainment of the urban underworld, to the most popular music of choice of Greece's rapidly growing post-war urban population.

Rebetiko's transformation can be primarily attributed to the ongoing anti-*rebetiko* discourse exercised from the political and cultural ''camps'' of both the Right and the Left, which ended up sowing the seeds for the post-war reintroduction of *rebetiko* music, that now appeared absent from a number of its original subculture values and authentic roots, such as the *amanedes* and hashish-related songs. Greece's post-war campaign aimed at the reconstruction of a strong national identity through strengthening the country's social cohesiveness and political stability, a plan which can be viewed as part of a larger historic trend followed by a number of Balkan and other non-western European countries at the time.[292] The ingredients which were deemed as necessary for the realization of this plan were the ones of nationalization, modernization, and urbanization with *rebetiko* naturally not remaining untouched by the given transformative processes.[293] Because of its post-war reintroduction, *rebetiko* is no longer viewed as an anomaly which disrupts appropriate ''Greekness'', since it has been successfully cleansed of its corrupt and eastern elements. In the eyes of the country's cultural elite, the westernization and modernization of the genre, in combination with its dissociation from disreputable themes, granted post-war *rebetiko* the right to be presented as a legitimate music tradition of the urban population.[294] While the old *rebetiko* was closely linked with the *''...oriental indiscipline and backwardness of the nation*…'',[295] the new *rebetiko* tradition illustrated

[292] Zaimakis, ''Forbidden,'' 4.
[293] Zaimakis, ''Forbidden,'' 4.
[294] Zaimakis, ''Forbidden,'' 11.
[295] Zaimakis, ''Forbidden,'' 11.

Greece's path towards ''...*European rationalism and Hellenism*…''.[296] Ultimately, *rebetiko* no longer posed a threat to the appropriate version of ''Greekness'', which had originally caused its decades-long persecution. All in all it was through this process that *rebetiko* ''moved'' from the underworld to Greece's cultural forefront, a process which aimed at constructing the genre's ability to culturally communicate and represent an appropriate version of Greekness…

Overall, the research process behind this paper was complex, primarily because of the unavailability of sources pertaining to the *rebetisses* and the overall contribution of females in the *rebetiko* subculture. Nonetheless, through exploring the profile of the 1930s Greek woman in combination with the reception of the Asia Minor female refugees, I was in position of developing a better understanding of the portrayal of the *rebetisses* in the relevant songs of the 1930s. Through this dissertation, I attempted to utilize female-themed *rebetiko* songs as a backdrop of the genre's transition throughout the 1930s and 1950s, which based on the research I conducted is not a previously-explored approach. While many have discussed female portrayal in *rebetiko* music, the evolutionary process of such songs has not been thoroughly explored, which was a journey that I certainly enjoyed…

[296] Zaimakis, ''Forbidden,'' 11.

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