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Nikolaos Papadogiannis

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# Greek trans women selling sex, spaces and mobilities, 1960s–80s

Nikolaos Papadogiannis 

School of History, University of St Andrews, St Andrews, UK

## ABSTRACT

This article shows how sex work, gender identity and spatial mobilities were entangled for Greek trans women selling sex. Selling sex, particularly as trans women, exposed them to severe threats due to restrictive legislation and bias against them. Nevertheless, sex work could also be an empowering experience, facilitating their gender transitioning and helping them develop professional self-esteem. Greek trans women selling sex experienced such barriers and empowerment between the 1960s and early 1980s. Thus, contrary to the powerful argument in the history of sexuality, the late 1970s witnessed no ‘turn inwards’ for them. Selling sex as a pathway to gender transitioning was a process situated in specific spaces and facilitated by mobilities. Gender transitioning through sex work transpired in niches that trans women selling sex carved out in Athens and Salonica from the 1960s on. Simultaneously, movement across space had a complex and, sometimes, cumulative effect on sex work as a road to gender transitioning. Individuals engaging in the latter process relocated within the urban centres or from villages and provincial towns to the large cities of Greece, populating the abovementioned niches. In these niches, they exchanged information on locations outside of Greece. Subsequently, some trans women travelled to Casablanca to undergo gender-affirming surgery and/or migrated to West Berlin to sell sex. Such cross-border mobility had an ambiguous impact on the link between sex work and gender transitioning for Greek trans women, sometimes consolidating it and sometimes helping weaken it. In exploring the experience of Greek trans women in West Berlin, the article also contributes to the conjoined study of sex work, on the one hand, and migration from Greece to West Germany, on the other, which historians have hitherto primarily analysed separately from one another.

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‘When the autumn came, Mema told me: “Hey you, shall we go to work in [West] Berlin?”’<sup>1</sup> Elisavet Vakalidou,<sup>2</sup> born in 1950 in a village in Northern Greece close to the border with Turkey,<sup>3</sup> remembers this conversation in her memoir *Betty*. There, she recounted her experience of gender transitioning and being a sex worker who moved across space, living in Athens, West Berlin, Salonica and Greek provincial towns between the mid-1960s and 1980.

**CONTACT** Nikolaos Papadogiannis  [np39@st-andrews.ac.uk](mailto:np39@st-andrews.ac.uk)  School of History, University of St Andrews, St Katharine’s Lodge, The Scores, St Andrews, KY16 9BA Scotland, UK.

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This article explores the synergies between sex work and gender transitioning in Greece from the 1960s to the mid-1980s. As the abovementioned vignette shows, my analysis particularly considers how these interfaces related to the spaces where trans women worked and the spatial mobilities in which those women engaged within Greece and transnationally.<sup>4</sup>

My main argument is that sex work, gender identity, spaces and mobilities were entangled for Greek trans women selling sex like Vakalidou. Selling sex and gender transitioning were often interconnected. In this vein, selling sex was both a last resort and an opportunity for the trans women in question. Those individuals were excluded from the mainstream labour market because of their gender identity. Therefore, various forms of sex work were often the only way to earn a living. The sexual labour they were involved in varied: it included streetwalking and/or sexually titillating clients in nightclubs.<sup>5</sup> Simultaneously, sex work was an experience that teemed with difficulties: trans women in Greece faced bias against sex labour that was widespread in Greek society throughout the period in question. Similarly, they had to grapple with legislation that easily rendered their sex work illegal. While the Penal Code became more lenient towards male same-sex relationships in 1951, the police used some of its paragraphs to target sex work involving trans women. This condition lasted throughout the post-Civil War semi-democratic era (1949–67), the dictatorship years (1967–74) and the subsequent democratic period. These difficulties were exacerbated by the transphobia those sex workers faced from institutions and society, as well as the impediments to their cross-border migration and travel, such as the need to apply for a visa. At the same time, sex labour could offer some opportunities for trans women in Greece: trans women selling sex, whose autobiographies I have studied, perceived such sex work as a space of agency, through which they could display their desired gender and develop self-esteem as professionals.<sup>6</sup>

Sex work facilitated several possible paths pertaining to gender transitioning. Some sex labourers under study defined themselves as women. In contrast, others embraced a complex gender identity vacillating between femininity and being non-binary. Nevertheless, given that all of them regarded femininity as a feature of their identity, at least to an extent, I refer to them as ‘trans women’.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, only some Greek trans women selling sex opted for gender-affirming surgery. In this vein, I resonate with Susan Stryker’s approach to gender transitioning: ‘It is the movement across a socially imposed boundary away from an unchosen starting place, rather than any particular destination or mode of transition.’<sup>8</sup> Gender transitioning through or outside of sex work is an unfinished process or tantamount to queerness, to appropriate a notion used by José Muñoz.<sup>9</sup> Individuals who opted for one path to gender transitioning sometimes moved subsequently to another, such as shifting from loathing to embracing gender-affirming surgery.

Gender transitioning (also) through sex work was a situated process, in which spaces and mobilities mattered. Greek trans women selling sex carved out niches, whose emergence I situate around 1960. Part and parcel of the complex experience of facing barriers and feeling empowered that trans women selling sex lived, these niches were ‘perilous refuges’<sup>10</sup> for them, as I would like to label them: trans women who were sex labourers mingled there and exchanged information on their condition with one another but also faced threats. The latter changed over time: crucially, the spread of AIDS and relevant debates in Greece in the mid-1980s posed new threats to the lives of those sex

workers in the perilous refuges. The impact of these developments on Greek trans women selling sex requires further examination. Therefore, the article does not extend beyond that point. Meanwhile, mobilities helped consolidate those perilous refuges. In particular, the individuals in question migrated from rural areas to the large urban centres in Greece, riding the wave of growing domestic migration. They also relocated within Athens and Salonica. In so doing, those individuals relocated within the perilous refuges, where they engaged in gender transitioning and sold sex, although they had not necessarily intended to do the latter when they left the areas where they had hitherto resided. Mobilities had a complex and, sometimes, cumulative impact on gender transitioning through sex work. While living and working in those perilous refuges, trans women selling sex learned about opportunities for cross-border migration to have a gender-affirming surgery in Casablanca or to sell sex in West Berlin. Some of those trans women followed those itineraries. In West Berlin, they partook of a 'transnational piazza',<sup>11</sup> as I call it: streets and bars where sex labourers, cis and trans, non-foreign-born and migrant, worked. The impact of their stay in Casablanca and West Berlin on gender transitioning through sex labour varied: some trans women who sold sex construed their experiences in those places as both facilitating gender transitioning and enhancing their professional skills in sex work. However, others continued to engage in gender transitioning but withdrew from sex work after their surgery in Casablanca or after having sold sex in West Berlin.

Overall, the article echoes Margot Canaday in following its questions 'wherever they go', namely at the local, national and transnational levels.<sup>12</sup> In taking a transnational approach, the article contributes to a conjoined study of sex work and migration from Greece to West Germany. In past decades, the historiography on sexual labour has grown substantially and has increasingly broadened its perspective from women's history to a broader analytical lens on relations of gender and sexuality.<sup>13</sup> Most recently, historians have been increasingly approaching sex work through the lens of labour. Nevertheless, only recently have historians begun to look at the intersection of migration and sex work.<sup>14</sup> Histories of migration and labour, in their turn, tend to neglect sex work, while sociological and anthropological research has engaged more explicitly with the connection of mobilities and intimacy and the 'disappearing of a migration category'.<sup>15</sup> Research on sex workers from Greece, in particular, is limited and has not considered trans women and Greek migrant sex workers.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, histories of migration from Greece to West Germany have concentrated on factory labour, ignoring other forms of labour in which some of them engaged, such as sex work.<sup>17</sup>

In deploying a transnational approach, this article also contributes to the emerging paradigm of Transgender Studies 2.0. The latter analyses trans people in contexts beyond the United States and the UK while carefully exploring their transnational connections.<sup>18</sup> In engaging with Transgender Studies 2.0, my analysis aims to complement research on trans people in Greece and Germany. Some Greek scholars have analysed autobiographies of trans people published since the 1970s. They focus on the narrative tropes that Greek trans people use in their memoirs. For instance, Dimitris Papanikolaou has carefully explored the extent to and how the memoirs of Greek trans women selling sex subvert established views of gender and sexuality in Greek society.<sup>19</sup> Mary Leontsini, Yulie Papadakou and Demetra Vogiatzaki argue that trans people, rather than seeing themselves as victims of social and political circumstances, aimed at establishing

themselves as dignified citizens.<sup>20</sup> Anna Apostolidou has shown how trans people in Greece do not challenge the notions of ‘femininity’ and ‘masculinity’ but still confront their dominant understandings in Greek society.<sup>21</sup> Demetra Vogiatzaki has studied the significance of spatial metaphors in the autobiographies of trans women selling sex in Athens since the 1960s.<sup>22</sup> I expand on this body of research in two ways. In contrast to what Apostolidou argues, I show that trans women who were sex workers may have embraced identities beyond the gender binary. Moreover, and in contrast with all the works mentioned in this paragraph, I analyse in depth the impact of cross-border mobilities on the work and gender identities of trans people. Likewise, research on trans people in West Germany has begun to explore the ways in which they narrate their experiences.<sup>23</sup> However, the interaction between non-foreign-born and migrant trans women selling sex in West Germany has largely escaped scholarly attention.

The study of trans individuals and sex work also helps enrich the historiography of sexual transformations in Europe in the 1960s–70s in general. In this vein, the article also intends to complement Dagmar Herzog’s argument that the late 1970s in Europe marked a turn inwards with a growing number of people in Europe treating sex as a source of anxiety rather than of pleasure.<sup>24</sup> In the case of Greek trans women selling sex, their experience of both grappling with threats and feeling empowered through their profession extended from the early 1960s to the early 1980s. Sex in general and sex work, in particular, did not become more concerning for them in the late 1970s.

In aiming to illuminate their agency, my analysis draws on autobiographical sources by 20 Greek trans women selling sex. These autobiographies include published memoirs, oral testimonies and interviews published in the press. Two memoirs were published in the pre-AIDS era, two in the early 2000s, and three after 2009.<sup>25</sup> Except for one memoir, which I could not retrieve, these represent all the memoirs published since the 1980s by trans women who, at least at some point in their lives, were sex labourers.<sup>26</sup> Overall, most of those memoirs and published interviews were authored either by activist sex workers or one who became renowned as a top model (Heiloudaki). Some of these memoirs have been published by Polychromos Planitis (Colourful Planet): a publishing house and bookshop in Athens, specializing in issues about LGBTQI (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex) individuals. Members of the SYD (Somateio Ypostirixis Diemfylikon, the Association for the Support towards Transgender People), run by trans people of all genders, have been actively involved in Polychromos Planitis. I have also employed life stories of trans women selling sex published in the mainstream or LGBTQI press between the 1980s and today. These life stories cover the whole or parts of the era between the 1960s and early-to-mid-1980s. Finally, I conducted interviews to broaden the perspective and include trans women selling sex who neither engaged in activism nor became famous.

The autobiographical sources I am using do not guarantee factual validity in terms of dates and figures. They are not a sample, from which quantitative data for all trans women who were sex labourers in Greece in the 1960s to early-to-mid 1980s can be distilled, either. These sources are suggestive. They point to contingency and variance in the ways in which gender transition unfolded for the sex workers in question and the impact of moving across space on them, as mentioned earlier. Crucially, they show the subjective perceptions of trans women selling sex. In analysing those memoirs and interviews, I consider the experiences of the trans women between the point when they authored their autobiography

or narrated their oral testimony and the 1960s–80s. Such experiences may have affected their memories of the era I am studying. In this sense, I appreciate the element of ‘partiality’ not only of oral testimonies, as argued by Alessandro Portelli, but also memoirs. The memory of the autobiography authors and interviewees can never be exhausted.<sup>27</sup> For instance, shifting attitudes to gender and sex work as well as changes in their lives, such as their changing economic circumstances, affected memories of trans women about their lives in the 1960s–80s. Moreover, I have taken into account the relationship between the interviewees and me for the interviews I have collected. In this vein, I have tried to employ some elements of what Wendy Rickard has labelled ‘shared authority’ of the interviewers with the interviewees.<sup>28</sup> I have tried to conduct, as far as possible, interviews in spaces where trans women lived, as they may have felt safer and more in control of the discussion there. Interviewees have also retained full control over how long the discussion lasted and what material was recorded. I have asked them about any parts of the discussion they would not like included in my analysis. I had informed my interviewees about these arrangements before the interview, which helped convince them to trust me. Nevertheless, sharing authority does not mean that I necessarily had the same political perspective as my interviewees, especially when some of them had internalized transphobic perceptions.<sup>29</sup> I also acknowledge the gaps in the voices I have collected.<sup>30</sup> Crucially, some trans women selling sex declined my invitations to interview them ostensibly also because they may have found it impossible to recount painful memories to an outsider, namely a cis man not personally involved in sex work. In all the memoirs and published interviews I have used, I have reflected on how the perspective of their publishers to trans people may have shaped the life stories they contained.

Finally, in highlighting the barriers that trans women who sold sex faced, I have studied their relations with state actors and institutions. I have consulted the state legislation in Greece and West Germany and articles published in one mainstream newspaper that circulated in Greece throughout the 1960s to the early-to-mid 1980s, *Ta Nea*. I have also chosen this newspaper because it is fully digitized and searchable in the era under study. Moreover, I have researched the archives of the police in Athens and police archives stored in Landesarchiv Berlin. Newspaper articles have also enabled me to confirm the existence of the venues that trans women mention in their memoirs.<sup>31</sup> I have read such material against the grain, locating bias against trans women selling sex or even silences about their activity.<sup>32</sup>

My analysis will proceed in three steps. The first section addresses the gendered and sexual aspects of the lives of individuals in the process of gender transitioning before sex work became their main source of income, namely when they were teenagers between the late 1950s and early 1970s. The following two sections explore the carving out of the perilous refuges in Athens and Salonica in the 1960s–80s and their link to domestic migration. The final two sections study the impact of cross-border mobilities on Greek trans women selling sex.

### **Life before sex work became the main source of income**

Individuals who were trans women and sex labourers between the 1960s and the early-to-mid 1980s recount that they viewed themselves as young ‘effeminate’ men in their teenage years, namely in the late 1950s and early 1970s. As a result, they faced



stigmatization. This section offers background information on the threats and violence they have experienced before selling sex and their perceptions of sex and gender. These perils help explain what I address in the subsequent sections: why some young 'effeminate' men felt motivated to move from their natal area.

The trans women selling sex, whose autobiographies are available, were born between 1941 and 1968. As teenagers, they construed themselves but were also regarded where they lived, both in urban and rural areas, as *adelfes*, *aderfes* or *poushtides*: men engaging in same-sex relations and performing the 'passive' roles in sex. For instance, Vakalidou and Markella Georgiou embraced such an identity.<sup>33</sup> Georgiou was born in Athens in 1953 and subsequently lived there.<sup>34</sup> Simultaneously, the *adelfes* under study described themselves as boys rather than men in their teenage years due to how they construed their anatomical condition.<sup>35</sup> For instance, Paola Revenioti, who had been assigned the male gender at birth, narrated that, when she was 11 years old, she expected her penis to 'grow' before she exclaimed, 'Yes, I am also a man!'<sup>36</sup> In identifying as *adelfes*, they echoed the dominant perceptions of gender and sexuality. In Greece during the 1950s–70s, according to Kostas Yannakopoulos, the sexual identity of men and women was based on their gender and not their sexual partner of choice.<sup>37</sup> A masculine man (*andras* in singular, *andres* in plural) could have sex with either a woman or an 'effeminate' man (*adelfi* in singular, *adelfes* in plural) without being stigmatized. *Andres* were the ones who penetrated, whereas women and *adelfes* were the ones who underwent the penetration. Only from the 1970s on men in Athens who engaged in same-sex relationships, performing either the 'passive' or the 'active' roles, increasingly labelled themselves as 'homosexual' or 'gay'.<sup>38</sup>

Being penetrated while having sex was something that Vakalidou desired but also found painful.<sup>39</sup> The *adelfes* faced laws that targeted male same-sex relationships. The Penal Code of 1834 banned 'sodomy' (*para fysin aselgeia*). Although it did not explicitly refer to male same-sex relationships, it was often employed to penalize them. Such relationships were partially decriminalized in 1951.<sup>40</sup> However, sex involving men continued to be punished, according to Article 347 of the Penal Code, if an adult man had sex with a man less than 17 years of age. Moreover, this article of the Penal Code penalized same-sex relationships that brought financial gain to any of the involved men. Thus, the Penal Code targeted male sex work. Same-sex relationships involving men were also illegal if one man abused his position or rank to have sex with another man.<sup>41</sup> These conditions applied in the 'weak democracy'<sup>42</sup> years (1949–67), during the dictatorship (1967–74) and in the democratic era after 1974. Article 347 was abolished only in 2015. Meanwhile, sex involving men was also subjected to profound social prejudice in the 1960s–80s. Vakalidou's conduct was an anathema for her male relatives, namely her father and brothers, who, according to the dominant gender norms in Greece in the 1960s, had to safeguard the 'honour' of the family.<sup>43</sup> By contrast, the *adelfes'* mothers were sometimes more tolerant: at least Anna Kouroupou's mother found troublesome that her offspring was an *adelfi*, but, still, this did not bring them at odds.<sup>44</sup> The dominant perception of *adelfes* in the 1960s–80s and up to the present day has been that of cunning and undesirable people. This representation appears both in rural and urban areas.<sup>45</sup> Similarly, the Greek press usually portrayed *adelfes* as 'anomalous', while films produced in Greece treated them as 'caricatures' of men in the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>46</sup> As a result, several memoirs of *adelfes* include memories of humiliation, and even quite graphic

scenes of violence perpetrated against them by their fathers and brothers. For instance, Vakalidou narrated that when her brother lambasted her sexuality and gender, she said: 'Even if you close me in a bottle, I will have sex with the cork.' He retaliated by 'slapping her face hard'.<sup>47</sup> Other *adelfes* were less assertive. Revenioti hated *adelfes* when she was a 12-year-old boy, fearing that she was becoming one of them.<sup>48</sup>

Regardless of how they responded to their humiliation, the *adelfes* who later became trans women selling sex also questioned their manliness. Revenioti, despite yearning to become a man earlier in her life, did not feel a man when she was a teenager and found it hard to identify in terms of gender.<sup>49</sup> Some of them, like Vakalidou, even expressed their disenchantment with their assigned gender at birth already as children. Vakalidou narrated that, when she was a primary school pupil in the late 1950s-early 1960s in a village in northern Greece, she tried to wear her mother's clothes when the latter was away from home.<sup>50</sup> Georgiou went further, as she claimed that while she was still a boy as a teenager, she would wear feminine clothes when attending classes at a school of design in the early 1970s.<sup>51</sup> Similarly, Anna Kouroupou claimed that she tried to use lipstick when she was around 16 years old, namely around 1980.<sup>52</sup> However, the *adelfes* under study did not label themselves as 'women' at that point, namely before they engaged in sex work, at least as appears in their autobiographies, in which they used the masculine grammatical gender to refer to the early period of their lives.<sup>53</sup>

Although bias against *adelfes* was pervasive in rural and urban areas, those from rural areas recount that they moved to Athens, expecting to find an exciting social environment. They rode the wave of the growing domestic migration and urbanization in Greece between the 1950s and the 1980s.<sup>54</sup> Vakalidou narrated that Panagiota, an *adelfi* who lived in her village in Northern Greece, helped imagine Athens as a heaven on earth. Vakalidou narrated:

Panagiota travelled to Athens frequently and, every time she returned, she enthused me: 'You should see how people live in Athens ... a huge city, full of lights, beautiful shops ... some places they call bars ... If you go there, to the bars, someone will find you, will love you, will offer you expensive clothes, will make you a queen!'<sup>55</sup>

Vakalidou kept in mind this claim, which motivated her to move to Athens to live and work.<sup>56</sup> Simultaneously, the mistreatment that some *adelfes* made returning to the place where they had hitherto lived almost impossible.<sup>57</sup> Their motivation was both to sever their ties with an abusive social environment and to try to restart their lives in a place where they would be anonymous, at least initially. There were also *adelfes* who were born and raised in large urban centres who moved within the cities due to abuse from their families. Voula Vetopoulou, born in Athens in 1941 and assigned the male gender at birth, remembers that her family expelled her from home because she was an *adelfi*. She subsequently wandered around and lived on the social fringes.<sup>58</sup>

The urban centres were also fascinating for *adelfes* who recounted that they had not experienced humiliation in their place of birth for having same-sex relationships. A case in point is Marilou Frangiadaki, who grew up in Heraclion, Crete.<sup>59</sup> As a boy, she encountered the counterculture of Matala, a place in Crete that attracted hippies from several countries.<sup>60</sup> In 1972, at least as she recounted, she moved to Athens with two hippie men and two female friends of hers.<sup>61</sup> However, some *adelfes* were domestic transmigrants, moving between Athens and the periphery. Minelli, for instance, was born



in the provincial town of Volos in 1950 and moved to Athens around 1968, where she sold sex. Nevertheless, she narrated that she was 'missing her family'. She briefly returned to Volos to move again to Athens shortly afterwards.<sup>62</sup>

Once they relocated to or within a big city, a tangible concern for *adelfes* was how to earn their living. In general, some of them worked in sedentary, white-collar occupations, if they did not transition in terms of gender.<sup>63</sup> Those *adelfes* did not receive, but, rather, offered money or small gifts to the 'masculine men', with whom they had sex.<sup>64</sup> However, being recognized as *adelfes* made finding or keeping a job very difficult for several of them, who, consequently, had to turn to sexual labour. For instance, Aloma moved as an *adelfi* from a provincial town in northern Greece to Salonica. Being unable to get any other job, she recounted that she sold sex.<sup>65</sup> Simultaneously, some *adelfes* opted for sexual labour, as they anticipated that it paid well. A case in point is Eva Koumarianou, born in a working-class district of Piraeus in 1954 and assigned the male gender at birth.<sup>66</sup> This was not necessarily the first experience of paid sex for *adelfes*. Some of them, like Minelli, recounted that, in their teenage years, they had occasionally got gifts or money from 'masculine men' for being penetrated by them.<sup>67</sup> For some of them, selling sex gradually became not temporary but their only source of income, usually while they were still teenagers. I will now explore how sex work was empowering and helped reshape the gender identities of *adelfes*.

## Sex work and the city

Once they began or resumed to sell sex in Athens and Salonica at various points between circa the 1960s and the late 1970s, *adelfes* further shaped their gender identity. Moreover, they developed self-confidence as professionals.

Many *adelfes*, who moved to Athens and Salonica, worked in bars where they also met clients. A prominent nightclub where trans people, such as Vakalidou, sold sex in the early-to-mid-1960s was called Havai (Hawaii). It was located in Metaxourgeiou Square, a lower-middle-class district of Athens. It is unclear from the sources when it first appeared and when trans women selling sex began to work there.<sup>68</sup> The latter was certainly happening in 1964.<sup>69</sup> Vetopoulou narrated that she worked as a dancer in Havai in the late 1950s. Her performance was mildly sexually titillating, as she claimed.<sup>70</sup> In any case, Havai was shut down in 1965, following the attack by its owners, the Katelanoi brothers, and some employees, on two patrons.<sup>71</sup> These patrons tried to force another client, apparently a trans woman, to 'have fun' with them, which the Katelanoi brothers violently stopped.<sup>72</sup> In the 1970s, *adelfes* in the process of becoming trans women also offered sexual labour in some venues in Plaka, a district of Athens that was particularly attractive to tourists in the 1960s and 1970s, such as Tammy's Bar.<sup>73</sup> In Salonica, they frequented tavernas, such as Stasa and Sehzazade, in the western, working-class districts of the city. A gay activist article mentioned Stasa in Salonica in 1980.<sup>74</sup> In the nightclubs and bars mentioned earlier, employees attracted clients with whom they subsequently had sex.<sup>75</sup>

Shifting consumer cultures in Greece in the 1960s and 1970s may have facilitated the emergence of these nightclubs and bars in Athens and Salonica. Cis women had already used urban leisure spaces to offer sex work in other urban areas, such as Trouba in the port of Piraeus, at least since the 1920s. These venues in Trouba were visited by sailors,

sometimes not Greek.<sup>76</sup> By contrast, trans workers selling sex in nightclubs and bars did not usually elaborate in their autobiographies on the backgrounds of their clients and simply mentioned that the latter were often Greek.<sup>77</sup> Such Greek clients ostensibly rode the wave of 'diminishing toleration of material deprivation', which marked the era between 1960 and 1975, according to Vassilis Karapostolis.<sup>78</sup> This tendency perpetuated and involved people from diverse social origins in the subsequent years, namely between 1974 and 1981: the amount of money that different social strata spent on leisure, such as scientists, high-ranking executives, office clerks, merchants, and workers, tended to converge in this period.<sup>79</sup> Those shifting spending patterns enabled leisure spaces, including the nightclubs and bars employing trans women selling sex, to appear.

Besides the bars, there were also streetwalking *adelfes* in the process of gender transitioning or trans women selling sex. Some of them were both streetwalking and offering sexual labour in bars and nightclubs. They walked the streets particularly around Vardaris, a working-class district in western Salonica, and Syggrou Street, around Omonoia Square in the centre of Athens throughout the era between the 1960s and the early-to-mid 1980s.<sup>80</sup> In his memoir, Kostas Tachtsis, an acclaimed author and a man occasionally engaging in cross-dressing, mentioned the visibility of trans women who were sex labourers and worked in Syggrou Street around the 1960s-early 1970s.<sup>81</sup> Tachtsis may have misremembered when those individuals involved in gender transitioning began to work there. Still, articles in contemporary publications, including the mainstream press, confirm the presence of trans women selling sex in Syggrou Street in the 1970s and early 1980s.<sup>82</sup> Simultaneously, there were some streets in the middle-class district of Kolonaki, where trans women sold sex. Those sex workers in Kolonaki narrated that they earned more money from sex workers in Syggrou Street, which constituted a form of social class differentiation among them.<sup>83</sup> Overall, trans women selling sex remember the era between the 1960s and the early 1980s as one when their presence became consolidated in those streets.<sup>84</sup> Obviously, this periodization reflects the perceptions of trans women selling sex and the mainstream press, as there is no detailed account of how many trans people sold sex there and when. Meanwhile, some trans women who were sex workers claimed that the 1980s heralded an era of economic prosperity, which lasted until the financial crisis that began in 2008–09 and co-existed with the threat they faced from AIDS.<sup>85</sup> The latter era, however, is beyond the scope of this article.

The autobiographies of trans women selling sex highlight their experiences, real or perceived, in spaces where they sold sex, as emblematic for their gender transitioning, as Vogiatzaki aptly remarks.<sup>86</sup> *Adelfes* who behaved as women at some point in their teenage years did not necessarily transition regarding gender.<sup>87</sup> For those who did, however, and whose autobiographies are available, sex work often served as a catalyst: in selling sex, they began to articulate a desire to feel and appear feminine. As mentioned in the previous section, some *adelfes* had experimented in their childhood with looking feminine, without, however, embracing femininity as an element of their gender identity at that point.<sup>88</sup> Vakalidou recounted that when she was still a 'slender boy' and first saw trans women who were sex labourers in Athens, 'I wanted to be like them [trans women]. Young masculine men desired them. I began to imitate them.'<sup>89</sup> Sex work unleashed a long process through which trans women selling sex reconfigured their gender identity and expression so that

they no longer appeared nor felt boys/men. In other words, sexual labour was the breeding ground where they explicitly endorsed the identity of the *travesti* ('trans-vestite', cross-dresser), as they would label themselves at that point. In so doing, they departed from the gender assigned to them at birth, reconfiguring or distancing themselves from the identity of the *adelfi*, as shown in the section on Casablanca in more detail.<sup>90</sup>

What appears in several memoirs of trans women who were sex labourers is an evolutionary narrative of them gradually articulating a gender identity that relied, to a lesser or greater extent, on femininity while selling sex in Athens and Salonica. In some memoirs, such as of Vakalidou, this process began almost instantly once she moved in the mid-1960s, as she recounted, from the provincial town where she was born, to the nightclubs, bars and in Syggrou Street, where she offered sexual labour in Athens. There she dropped her male name and adopted a new one, Betty, naming herself after the actress Betty Moschona.<sup>91</sup> Name changing as an entry simultaneously to sex work and a means of gender transitioning was a rite of passage common among other trans women as well.<sup>92</sup> Greek trans women selling sex usually started using the feminine grammatical gender in their autobiographies to describe their lives from that point on.<sup>93</sup>

Besides changing their names, gender transitioning through sexual labour also involved reshaping their appearances to be more attractive as sex workers. Vakalidou depicts herself getting immersed into a ritual to stress her femininity and become attractive to clients: crucially, she waxed to remove hair from parts of her body, such as her face.<sup>94</sup> She recounted: 'Waxing is a crucial element in the life of a transvestite. It is the landmark that allows her to transition from her male to her female nature.'<sup>95</sup> The phrasing that Betty uses shows that sex work was a process that helped her reconstruct her gender identity in terms of both how she appeared and in terms of her internal sense of gender. Another ritualistic procedure was using make-up and carefully selecting clothes that would make them desirable to (cis) men as women.<sup>96</sup> Trans women selling sex also consumed hormones to make their body conform with dominant norms of femininity, such as to enlarge their breasts.<sup>97</sup>

This gender transitioning was a long-haul process: Vakalidou narrated that she was initially simply a 'half-transvestite', cross-dressing for some hours before she fully became a *travesti*.<sup>98</sup> However, the longer Vakalidou pursued sex work, the more she embraced femininity not only while working but also in her entire everyday life, despite some vacillations and moments when she thought she should appear as a 'man' once again.<sup>99</sup> This gradual, albeit sometimes intermittent, gender transitioning is a statement that other trans women selling sex also made. Georgiou recounted that she began to sell sex around 1975. Once she did so, she invested time to become sexually attractive as a sex worker, which was vital for her not only for enticing clients, but also lovers beyond her work.<sup>100</sup> Thus, selling sex in bars, nightclubs and while streetwalking between the 1960s and early-to-mid 1980s enabled gender transitioning to become a totalizing experience permeating all facets of the social life of trans women who worked there.<sup>101</sup> While sex work was the avenue through some of the trans women, whose autobiographies I have studied, engaged in gender transitioning, it was not the only one: Koumarianou mentioned that she vacillated around the late 1970s between streetwalking sex work as well as singing and dancing, all of which served for her as jobs where she appeared as a woman.<sup>102</sup>

Gender transitioning, mainly through sex work, witnessed a rupture from around 1960. In the 1950s and early 1960s at least, subjects who wished to endorse patterns that deviated from the gender assigned to them at birth did so only in specific contexts, such as when engaging in sex work.<sup>103</sup> A case in point is Kostas Tachtsis. Tachtsis cross-dressed on specific occasions, such as while already offering sex work in the post-Second World War years until the 1980s. Sexual labour was not his main profession, though, and he kept his male name. He despised the trans women selling sex and never regarded himself as a 'transvestite'.<sup>104</sup> The fact that sex work facilitated a totalizing gender transitioning did not eliminate occasional cross-dressers who sold sex, such as Tachtsis, who co-existed with trans women who were sex workers between around 1960 and the early-to-mid-1980s.

In becoming sex workers, trans people also felt empowered as professionals. The venues and streets where they worked also served as a refuge for them, where they mingled, and discussed how they could deal with their working conditions.<sup>105</sup> This was an exercise in community building.<sup>106</sup> In interacting with one another and with their clients, their self-esteem increased. Both trans women selling sex who have published their memoirs and the ones whom I have interviewed echo what Leontsini and Papadakou aptly remark: those trans women made 'claims regarding social esteem by valuing trans sex workers' way of life as interesting and knowledgeable' in what was a pattern of recognition for them.<sup>107</sup> For instance, Vakalidou claimed that it constituted a 'service' to society, as it allowed some men to vent their sexual desires and avoid becoming rapists. As Vakalidou maintained, 'we save the society from rapes and numerous other compulsive sexual manias'.<sup>108</sup> Several trans women added that this job was a source of sexual pleasure for them. A trans woman that her colleagues called *Dystychia* (Sorrow) recounted that her life had been miserable except for the 'fucks' they could enjoy through their work.<sup>109</sup> Besides that, some trans female sex workers negotiated some of the conditions under which they worked. Georgiou, for instance, stressed her agency in selecting clients.<sup>110</sup> Thus, sexual labour could serve as a source of pleasure and self-vindication for trans women selling sex.

## Experiencing perilous lives

Sex work was not only an opportunity for trans women. It also involved serious challenges, even threats to their lives, which they faced throughout the era between the 1960s and early-to-mid-1980s. Trans women selling sex faced legal constraints and social stigma. The government intended to make the legislation regulating sex work even more restrictive around 1977, which sparked protests involving some trans women selling sex. However, the perils that the latter recount that they experienced in their autobiographies were largely the same between the 1960s and early-to-mid 1980s, when a new threat, AIDS, appeared.<sup>111</sup>

Life was challenging for trans women who were sex labourers because of their jobs. Street-based sex work was a harrowing experience. One significant barrier, which sex workers, trans and cis, had to face, was that street-based sex work was criminalized. In the nineteenth century, the legal framework on sex work followed in Greece was regulationist, where brothels were legal and public. In the 1920s, laws on sex work were expanded to address issues of hygiene. According to law 3032/1922 doctors had to

monitor the health condition of sex workers. This regulationist framework changed only to an extent during the post-Civil War era of 'weak' democracy in 1949–67. Public brothels became outlawed, according to law 3310/1955 *Peri Katapolemiseos ton Afrodision Noson kai Allon Tinon Diataxeon* ('On combating sexually transmitted diseases and other issues'). The same law stipulated that sex workers had to ask for permission to work in privately owned flats and have regular medical examinations.<sup>112</sup> At the same time, sex work involving individuals that the institutions viewed as men was generally prohibited in Greece in the era under study according to article 347 of the Penal Code on 'sodomy', as mentioned earlier. Trans women selling sex continued to face these legal restrictions to their work under the 1967–74 dictatorship and after the transition to democracy. In 1977, the centre-right government submitted the bill 'on the protection from sexually transmitted diseases and regulation of relevant matters'. The bill also foresaw closer police supervision of sex workers, stipulating that the authorities could prosecute individuals whom they had suspected of solicitation.<sup>113</sup> The bill never became law, however.

The 1977 bill triggered the joint protest of some gay cis men and trans women selling sex. Some of the former, who had studied in France and Italy and met gay activists from those countries, created the radical left-wing AKOE (Apeleytherotiko Kinima Omofylofilon Elladas, Greek Homosexual Liberation Movement) in 1977.<sup>114</sup> AKOE collaborated with some trans women who were sex labourers, such as Vakalidou.<sup>115</sup> She was the trans woman who delivered a talk at the inaugural presentation of AKOE to the broader public.<sup>116</sup> The politicization of trans women selling sex continued in the 1980s. A case in point is the magazine *Kraximo*. The trans woman and sex worker Revenioti published it from 1981 to 1993.

Although the 1977 bill was not implemented, trans women selling sex faced persecution due to laws restricting sex work and bias against their gender transitioning. Concerning the latter, Apostolidou argues that prejudice against trans people has been constant in Greece, as the dominant pattern of gender relations requires that gender corresponds to what is regarded as the biological sex.<sup>117</sup> In this vein, police officers used Article 347 of the Penal Code to target trans women selling sex, whom police officers treated as men.<sup>118</sup> The encounters of those trans individuals with the police were distressing. Trans women who were sex labourers recount the excessive zeal that several police officers displayed in targeting streetwalking sex workers. Such alleged chasing was manifest during the years of the 1967–74 dictatorship, which professed to serve the goals of 'Fatherland, Religion, Family' and was hostile to individuals who did not conform to heteronormativity.<sup>119</sup> However, the collapse of the military regime did not alter this situation, at least as appears in the memories of trans women selling sex. Crucially, Frangiadaki narrated that she experienced much 'chasing' by the police, which she had not witnessed as a 'poustraki' (young *poushtis*, 'effeminate man') under the dictatorship, but as a trans person shortly after the restoration of democracy.<sup>120</sup> This situation made her move to West Berlin, as analysed in the relevant section later in this article.<sup>121</sup> Other trans women who were sex workers also mention that their harassment at the hands of the police continued after the collapse of the dictatorship. For example, *Dystychia* (Sorrow) recounted that the 'cops' often arrested her when she walked the streets.<sup>122</sup> Similarly, Koumarianou mentioned that '[police officers] sometimes removed our clothes, pressed our breast and said "no milk is coming out" ...'.<sup>123</sup>

Police officers were not the only ones who trans women selling sex claimed that made their lives difficult. In August 1977, some residents of Syggrou Street beat up trans women who sold sex in the area to intimidate them and make them stop working there.<sup>124</sup> Moreover, these women also faced threats, sometimes to their lives, from abusive clients. This condition appeared, for instance, when they travelled in cars with clients to have sex within the vehicle or at a remote location. The case of Sonia, a trans woman and sex worker, is telling: her client took her to an isolated area and strangled and killed her, while they were having sex, in 1982.<sup>125</sup>

Besides legal bias and threats in their everyday lives, trans women selling sex were caricatured in the mainstream press, at least in the case of *Ta Nea*. The latter was initially silent on that group, referring to 'passive anomalous' individuals, instead, in the mid-1960s.<sup>126</sup> Between 1960 and 1977, there were no references to the so-called *travesti*. By contrast, between 1978 and 1983, there were 245 such references.<sup>127</sup> During those five years, articles in this newspaper mostly associated trans people with criminality, portraying them either as perpetrators or as victims. Simultaneously, the newspaper did not usually present the voices of trans people and their views on their desired gender. Rather, it systematically misgendered them and sometimes mocked them, as manifest in excerpts, such as 'transvestites grab the hair or the ... wigs of one another'.<sup>128</sup> A remarkable exception can be found in five articles, in one of which a trans person narrated her gender transitioning.<sup>129</sup>

The social stigma that trans women selling sex faced particularly due to their gender identities made it very difficult for them to visit areas beyond Syggrou and the nightclubs, where they worked.<sup>130</sup> It also complicated the possibility of them finding a job beyond sexual labour, not only in the public but also in the private sector. Georgiou recounted that, even when she considered withdrawing from sex work in the late 1970s, she found the reactions of the society to her gender identity in Athens so negative that she could not find another profession.<sup>131</sup> Legal complications pertaining to gender transitioning further obstructed a possible withdrawal from sex work. Although it first became legally possible for any citizen to change the gender mentioned in their official documents, following the introduction of law *Peri Lixiarchikon Praxeon* (On Registry Acts) 344/1976, the required procedure was convoluted: a district court (*Eirinodikeio*) needed to approve a relevant application and usually demanded that the applicant had already undergone a gender-affirming surgery. Sometimes, the court also asked for a certification from a psychiatrist stating that the applicant was a 'transsexual beyond doubt'. These requirements were not detailed in the relevant legislation, but it was common for the court to ask for them.<sup>132</sup> Therefore, if a trans woman selling sex neither wished to undergo these procedures nor renounce her gender identity, she could not find a job as a civil servant.<sup>133</sup> Overall, withdrawing from sex work was very difficult, albeit not impossible for trans women. Such a withdrawal could be facilitated by cross-border mobilities, as shown in the following two sections.

### Gender-affirming surgery in Casablanca

Undergoing gender-affirming surgery in Casablanca was a key issue for Greek trans women selling sex from around 1960 to the early-to-mid 1980s. It caused rancorous debates among them in the perilous refuges where they lived and worked. Several trans



women loathed it as leading to loss of sexual pleasure. Those individuals who opted for the surgery viewed it as consolidating their gender transitioning, but their opinions on perpetuating selling sex upon their return to Greece diverged.

Casablanca hosted the *Clinique du Parc*, run by Dr Georges Burou, who specialized in gender-reassignment surgeries. Burou performed the first such operation in Casablanca in 1956. He developed his vaginoplasty method in that clinic between 1956 and 1958. As part of this method, he created a neovagina through the inversion of the penile skin of the people whom he operated.<sup>134</sup> Between 1956 and 1974, he appears to have conducted more than 800 confirmed vaginoplasties.<sup>135</sup> Burou continued to work in the *Clinique du Parc* until he died in 1987. His clients hailed from diverse countries and included the Welsh writer Jan Morris and the French actress Coccinelle.<sup>136</sup> Coccinelle worked at the Paris nightclub *Le Carrousel* in the early 1950s and underwent gender-affirming surgery in 1958.<sup>137</sup> The cost of the operation was, at least according to a reply received by a person who had contacted Burou, US\$5000, 'payable in cash upon arrival, if possible in travellers' cheques.'<sup>138</sup> The price entailed '12–15 days hospitalization at the clinic, medical care and fees . . . as well as the doctor's payment'.<sup>139</sup>

The *Clinique du Parc* attracted the attention of Greek trans women selling sex as well. Gender-affirming surgery was not illegal in Greece, as became apparent with the previously mentioned Act 344/1976, but very few such operations happened in that country between the 1960s and early 1980s.<sup>140</sup> Fotis Sioubouras mentions just one doctor who did such surgeries in the late 1970s in Greece, Emmanouil Kontoros, although this issue merits further research.<sup>141</sup> In general, trans women who were sex labourers discussed the gender-affirming surgery in Casablanca with one another in the nightclubs, bars and streets where they worked.<sup>142</sup> One of them, Vetopoulou, claimed in her oral testimony that she travelled to Casablanca and went through such an operation at the *Clinique du Parc* in November 1959.<sup>143</sup> As appears in relevant autobiographies, trans women performing in French cabarets and the gender-affirming surgery of some of them influenced several Greek trans women around the early 1960s. Crucially, Vetopoulou claimed that she learned about the *Clinique du Parc* by reading about the surgery that Coccinelle<sup>144</sup> underwent.<sup>145</sup> Coccinelle had worked, among others, in a French cabaret. She was a transnational reference point for trans women, inspiring, for instance, Israeli trans women in the 1950s–70s.<sup>146</sup> Vetopoulou was also influenced by Coccinelle and decided to have a gender-affirming surgery alongside a colleague of hers, both of whom worked in the nightclub *Havai*.<sup>147</sup> Vetopoulou had to tackle, however, the difficulties of travelling to Casablanca: she had to settle practical issues, such as getting a visa to travel to Morocco and find the money required for the surgery.<sup>148</sup>

Undergoing gender-affirming surgery continued to be a popular option among trans women also selling sex in the 1970s–80s. Georgiou narrated that she contemplated having gender-affirming surgery in the mid-1970s to mid-1980s. She even set aside some of her earnings from sex work to cover those costs.<sup>149</sup> Nevertheless, eventually, she did not take the step, fearing that her face would never look 'feminine'.<sup>150</sup> Rachil Chalari, who lived in Moschato, a district of Athens close to Piraeus, and performed titillating sex dances in 1979, also recounted that she underwent gender-affirming surgery in Casablanca at a point between the late 1960s and the late 1970s.<sup>151</sup>

The key reason that Greek trans women underwent gender-affirming surgery was the drive to change their body and make it match their desired gender. Crucially, Vetopoulou recounted, 'I thought that, even if I die during the operation, I will at least get redeemed from a condition that made me suffer.'<sup>152</sup> Nevertheless, throughout the 1960s–early 1980s, Greek trans women do not appear to have been enticed to be operated on in Casablanca by fantasies of the 'East'. This was in stark contrast to Morris. For Morris, this surgery was the 'literalization of the Western fantasy of the transvestic [sic], pan-sexualized Middle East'.<sup>153</sup> Instead, Vetopoulou and Chalari did not make any Orientalist references to the setting of Casablanca: the exact context where the surgery took place did not appear at all in their narration.<sup>154</sup>

Greek trans women were not unanimously positive towards the surgery, however. For instance, Molly Stellou, born in 1968 in West Germany to Greek migrants working in a village close to Cologne, who has lived in Salonica since she was eight years old and whom I have interviewed, remains adamant to the present day that gender-affirming surgery is a very problematic practice. Stellou claimed that 'you will never feel orgasm subsequently'.<sup>155</sup> Similarly, *Dystychia* believed that the surgery resulted in those who underwent it no longer being able to enjoy sexual pleasure.<sup>156</sup> Nevertheless, testifying to the partiality of autobiographies, as mentioned in the introduction, Vakalidou re-appraised gender-affirming surgeries in the course of her life. Although she had criticized them in the first edition of her memoir, she underwent one herself in 1984. She recounted that she had been wrong about the issue due to inexperience and misinformation.<sup>157</sup>

Trans women selling sex who narrated that they finally went to Casablanca to undergo the operation paint a positive, albeit not a rose-tinted, picture of the whole process. In contrast to what Bernice Hausman argues about US-American individuals who have been through such an operation, namely that 'physical pain is often glossed over', Greek trans women selling sex who went through this process recount moments of intense fear and pain.<sup>158</sup> As Vetopoulou told me: 'When we arrived at the clinic, they took all our belongings from us. The colleague with whom I had travelled was anxious about that. Nevertheless, I reminded her of Coccinnelle and her successful operation in Casablanca.'<sup>159</sup> Vetopoulou was also afraid of the outcome of the operation. The operation was successful, but she narrated that she felt stiff pains for several days afterwards.<sup>160</sup>

The operation created a spectrum of possibilities regarding sexual labour for Greek trans women. For some trans women, sex work was both a factor that helped them collect the money for the surgery, as already mentioned, and a professional condition for trans women that the gender-affirming surgery facilitated. Crucially, Belinda narrated to Sioubouras that after her gender-assigning surgery in Casablanca she worked as a stripper and only after the surgery, 'felt what having real sex is'.<sup>161</sup> Similarly, Kouroupou narrated that, after her surgery, she initially offered 'anal sex', but soon 'discovered new ways [of having sex]' and all her clients 'turned her on'.<sup>162</sup> Belinda and Kouroupou responded to the widespread fear among trans women selling sex that surgery would deprive them of such a pleasure.<sup>163</sup> Regardless of whether her statement corresponds to reality, it shows the significance of sex work and the surgery for her gender identity. Still, not all trans women opted for sex work after their gender-affirming surgery: Vetopoulou recounted that she wished to live as a 'normal' woman after the surgery, escaping from work in Havai and the people frequenting it.<sup>164</sup>

Simultaneously, some trans women recount in their autobiographical material that the surgery was a turning point that helped them match their desired gender to their body: perhaps the consummation of what they viewed as an evolutionary process of embracing femininity. Three relevant examples are Vetopoulou and Kouroupou. Vetopoulou narrated that she was so happy with the result and the change in her body that she felt she had been 'reborn'.<sup>165</sup> Kouroupou recounted that her gender-affirming surgery in Casablanca turned her into a 'woman'.<sup>166</sup> In so doing, trans women selling sex who went through gender-affirming surgery vacillated between conforming to and subverting the dominant perceptions of gender. Quite tellingly, in her memoir, Kouroupou mentioned that she danced *zeibekiko*, a dance regarded in Greece as quintessentially masculine.<sup>167</sup> She was very proud that the clients of that venue seemed to worship her while she was dancing. She thought that she was a 'prostitute', and they were 'at her feet'.<sup>168</sup> Simultaneously, Kouroupou did not claim in her autobiography that dancing *zeibekiko* rendered her non-feminine. Therefore, her case supports what Apostolidou argues: that trans people in Greece did not dispute the very notions of 'femininity' and 'masculinity' but, instead, challenged how these were defined in the settings and period when they lived.<sup>169</sup>

However, some trans women who were sex labourers, especially those who did not undergo gender-affirming surgery, did not follow a linear trajectory from masculinity to femininity. The stories of those sex workers contradict the argument of Apostolidou given earlier, as gender transitioning led them to subvert binary notions of gender. Crucially, Vakalidou vacillated in her memoir between two positions: she sometimes referred to herself as a 'woman', whereas she also labelled herself a 'homosexual, a male sex worker [*andras-porni*], a transvestite [*sic*]'.<sup>170</sup> In making this claim, she tried to occupy a space beyond masculinity and femininity, a space which is close to what is today perceived as a non-binary gender identity: 'I believe that a transvestite is neither a man nor a woman'.<sup>171</sup> Her transition away from masculinity built on a palimpsest memory that, as already mentioned, included moments earlier in her life when she labelled herself an *adelfi* and moments later on when she stressed her femininity. When she wrote her autobiography, she no longer defined herself as an *adelfi*, but, rather, a 'homosexual', using a term that men who engaged in same-sex practices employed to describe themselves in Greece from the 1970s on, as mentioned in section 1. Apostolidou argues that opting for same-sex or heterosexual practice did not challenge the attachment of trans women to femininity.<sup>172</sup> However, in this case, Vakalidou's sexual orientation intersected with her gender identity, preventing the latter from becoming a fixed, feminine one. Similarly, Stellou claimed that she has felt neither a man nor a woman, but, rather, an 'agorokoritso', namely simultaneously a boy and a girl.<sup>173</sup> However, there is a critical difference between what she, on the one hand, and Vakalidou, on the other, recounted, a difference linked to their attitude to activism: Stellou, who did not get involved in campaigns for the rights of trans people, presented this condition as a problem, as her being an 'imperfect woman'.<sup>174</sup> She echoed the perception that her condition constitutes an 'aberration'.<sup>175</sup> Instead, Vakalidou, an activist, as mentioned earlier, claimed that 'I find it entertaining when passers-by realize that I am not an authentic woman [*sic*]'.<sup>176</sup> One way or another, the non-linear gender transitioning of trans women selling sex who did not undergo a gender-affirming surgery lends credence to what Stryker argues, namely, that gender transitioning does not necessarily have a precise destination.<sup>177</sup>

Gender transitioning, regardless of whether it entailed an operation in Casablanca, was also a process of age transitioning. Kouroupou claimed that the surgery turned her into a 'woman' from a 'kid'.<sup>178</sup> She did not elaborate, however, on what elements this age transition contained. Trans women who sold sex and did not undergo the surgery, such as Georgiou, also claimed that their competence in their sex work made them 'experienced' adults rather than girls.<sup>179</sup> Gender and age transitioning through sex work transpired hand in hand for a wide array of trans women selling sex.

### **A 'new world' in West Berlin<sup>180</sup>**

Trans women who were sex labourers did not move across space, only to undergo gender-affirming surgery. They often moved within Greece or abroad to pursue higher earnings or when they could no longer stomach the dangers in the streets and bars/nightclubs where they had worked so far.<sup>181</sup> A case in point is migrating to West Berlin, which several trans women selling sex appear to have considered or even done. Selling sex in West Berlin involved risks. However, it also familiarized them with new sex work tricks as well as jobs beyond sex labour, and further entrenched the departure from their assigned gender for some of them. Thus, their experience vindicates Eithne Luibhéid's argument that migration is not merely a passage from repression to emancipation, but a process that may also reinforce power asymmetries at the expense of queer migrants.<sup>182</sup>

West Berlin was a transnational meeting point for trans women in this period. It enticed, among others, trans women from Israel.<sup>183</sup> Indeed, the era from the 1960s to the late 1970s experienced in West Germany a gradual shift from 'a legal concept of sex/gender as innate and immutable to an understanding of sex/gender as mutable', as manifest in court decisions.<sup>184</sup> Regarding West Berlin, in particular, the city witnessed in the 1970s the emergence of a network also involving trans women who supported other trans women in that city. A key contributor to such a network was the trans artist Romy Haag, who opened her club Chez Romy Haag in West Berlin in 1974.<sup>185</sup> Moreover, cross-border migration of cis and trans women selling sex from Southern Europe to West Berlin to sell sex has long been a historical reality. As police documents show, in the 1970s, Greek trans women selling sex joined many other migrants from other Southern European countries who sold sex in West Berlin.<sup>186</sup> Overall, as Dolinsek notes, by the end of the 1970s, West German authorities increasingly contributed to an understanding of migrant sex workers as a security issue across the country, also in West Berlin. Nevertheless, from the 1980s on, they were concerned with migrant sex workers from Southeast Asia in particular.<sup>187</sup>

Trans women selling sex in Athens and Salonica extensively discussed moving to West Berlin apparently from the 1970s onwards.<sup>188</sup> Both those who had undergone gender-affirming surgery in Casablanca, like Belinda, and those who had not done so, like Vakalidou, were interested in such a relocation.<sup>189</sup> The reason why all these women migrated from Greece to West Berlin was twofold: financial and cultural. Vakalidou described West Berlin as a 'wealthy' and '(socially) liberal' city, that enabled Greek trans women selling sex to earn much money when they were broke.<sup>190</sup> West Berlin, as Vakalidou claimed, attracted Greek trans women selling sex the same as the 'new world' enticed migrants.<sup>191</sup> Moreover, as Stellou argued, Greek trans women believed that the residents of West Berlin were largely more sympathetic to trans women than in

Greece.<sup>192</sup> However, Greek trans women were not necessarily cognizant of contemporary developments in West Berlin, which I mentioned in the previous paragraph, before they migrated to that city. Instead, in appraising West Berlin as 'liberal', the existing autobiographies show that they were familiar with its history before the Nazi era. Liking West Berlin in the 1970s to Berlin during the Weimar years was a widely held belief among trans women who were sex labourers in Athens and Salonica and appears to have spread through word of mouth.<sup>193</sup> Crucially, Stellou recounted that Berlin was famous for its sexual openness, especially during the Weimar Republic. She believed that the aura of that period had re-emerged in the 1970s.<sup>194</sup> One way or another, Greek trans women selling sex maintained that they chose to migrate to Berlin. What the autobiographical sources that I have found do not include is any reference to a pimp/lover forcing some trans women to move to West Berlin or encouraging them to dream of doing so.

Greek trans women recounted two pathways to sexual labour in West Berlin in their memoirs and interviews. The first was to migrate to West Germany to work in a factory. In general, according to the agreement that the West German and the Greek governments signed in 1960, incoming migrant workers were only supposed to temporarily reside in West Germany if they worked for a German company.<sup>195</sup> Henceforth, the number of migrants moving to West Germany from Greece increased substantially. Between 1961 and 1973, when the oil crisis ended foreign labour recruitment, the number of Greek migrants in Germany had risen from 42,000 to 408,000.<sup>196</sup> Some of them seem to have switched from factory to sex work.<sup>197</sup> Vakalidou recounted that Jenny 'initially worked for seven years as a factory worker in West Germany and then became a transvestite [and sex worker]'.<sup>198</sup> The second option was to move from Athens and Salonica directly to West Berlin with the explicit goal of selling sex. Vakalidou and Frangiadaki recounted that they travelled directly to West Berlin shortly after the collapse of the dictatorship in Greece, namely also after the 1973 moratorium on foreign labour recruitment in West Germany.<sup>199</sup> Greek trans women selling sex went to West Berlin through East Berlin on a tourist visa in the 1970s.<sup>200</sup> Their existing autobiographies mention next to nothing about potentially embarrassing moments for those women, when the East and West German authorities checked their visas, which contained their gender assigned at birth. Once in West Berlin, Greek trans women selling sex stayed for three months or, sometimes, even longer, albeit clandestinely.<sup>201</sup> Thus, they did not seek a residence permit as stipulated by the 1965 Alien Law (*Ausländergesetz*) in West Germany.<sup>202</sup> Some of them, such as Vakalidou, re-migrated to Greece and then returned to West Berlin after a few months or years to sell sex.<sup>203</sup>

Once in West Berlin, Greek trans women selling sex partook of a 'transnational piazza'.<sup>204</sup> In available autobiographies, Greek trans women appear to have worked in bars and engaged in street-based sex work in and around Potsdamer Strasse. They attracted clients apparently from diverse ethnicities, such as non-foreign-born West Germans and individuals from Southern Europe who lived in West Berlin. For instance, Vakalidou referred to a client of hers who was a Spanish student in West Berlin.<sup>205</sup> She also mentioned German clients with whom Greek trans women had sex in the cars of the former.<sup>206</sup> This transnational piazza involved interaction and conflict: as Vakalidou claimed in her autobiographies, she worked in West Berlin after 1974 and learned tricks from her West German colleagues while being there, such as stealing money from her clients.<sup>207</sup> However, their relationship to West German

and other migrant sex workers was complicated. As Frangiadaki recounted, she and other trans women selling sex from Greece that she knew were afraid of streetwalking, as they believed that they ran the danger of being attacked by their non-foreign-born German colleagues.<sup>208</sup> Similarly, Vakalidou narrated that once she tried to pursue streetwalking, non-foreign-born West German sex workers attacked her so brutally that she feared for her life.<sup>209</sup> However, Frangiadaki argues that, in her case, there was a gradual process of smoothening of her relations with West German sex workers, with some of whom she became 'terrific friends'.<sup>210</sup> Vakalidou made no similar claim, however.

Due to the complicated relations of Greek trans women selling sex with other sex labourers, the former narrated that they often mingled with their compatriot colleagues. The latter had already moved to the transnational piazza of West Berlin.<sup>211</sup> Crucially, Frangiadaki narrated that, when she moved to Berlin in the 1970s, Greek trans women selling sex worked only in bars, including one that a person coming from Greece owned.<sup>212</sup> This occurred although there were no restricted areas (*Sperrbezirke*) in West Berlin where sex work and solicitation in public were not allowed.<sup>213</sup> Such restricted areas existed in other West German cities.<sup>214</sup> However, in general, their contact with Greek cis men and women was awkward. The organized Greek communities (*Gemeinde*) in West Germany, including West Berlin, ignored their existence. In the announcements and newsletter *Metanasteytika Nea* (Migrant News) of the OEK (*Omospondia Ellinikon Koinotiton*, Federation of Greek Communities) in West Germany, established in 1966, there was nary a murmur of interest in their presence.<sup>215</sup> However, Frangiadaki also largely limited her contact with her cis compatriots: she recounted that she self-consciously avoided other Greek migrants to acclimatize more easily to West Berlin: 'My secret, I did not socialize with Greeks, I socialized with Germans, it helped me very much ... I found many jobs.'<sup>216</sup>

In some cases, staying in Berlin weakened the link between sex work and gender transitioning for some trans women. Frangiadaki narrated being a sex labourer but also getting other jobs in West Berlin, such as in the fashion industry. She also recounted having been inspired by drag shows there to develop her club 'Koukles' as a space where trans people could get involved in jobs other than sex work.<sup>217</sup> The latter was first established in Athens in 1994. The rationale behind framing her club in such a way and why she withdrew from sex labour merit further analysis. Still, Frangiadaki experienced West Berlin as a location where sex work was not the only option for trans people. In the case of Vakalidou, however, working in West Berlin not only familiarized her with new tricks for her profession, as mentioned earlier, but also had a transformational impact on their gender identities while selling sex. As Vakalidou narrated, 'I strongly felt that I was a woman when I returned from Berlin'. she recounted. In this vein, she recounted that she felt confident to wax herself after having been in West Berlin, which, as already mentioned, she construed as the moment for the life of a 'transvestite' (sic) when this person discards the 'masculine nature' and embraces the 'feminine'.<sup>218</sup> Overall, the cases of Frangiadaki and Vakalidou indicate that, similar to Casablanca, going to West Berlin had a complex impact on the link between sex work and gender identities for Greek trans women.



## Conclusions

This article shows the synergies among sex work, gender transitioning and spatial mobilities in Greece between the 1960s and the early-to-mid 1980s. Sex work exposed individuals in the process of becoming trans women to a world of opportunities and threats, real or perceived. Several trans individuals, whose autobiographies are available, demonstrated agency through sex work. Such agency extended to gender transitioning: through sexual labour and, sometimes, other jobs, such as professional dancing, they dropped or reconfigured the identity of the *adelfi* and articulated identities that were feminine or vacillated between femininity and being non-binary. Thus, their gender transitioning was not necessarily a linear trajectory from masculinity to femininity. In any case and in contrast with what individuals who cross-dressed and sold sex did in the preceding decades, trans women selling sex demonstrated from the 1960s on traits they construed as feminine not only in sex work, but in their everyday lives in general. Besides gender, sex work could also help them enhance their self-confidence as professionals. However, trans women selling sex also grappled with barriers linked to both their profession and gender identity: crucially, threats to them as sex workers and trans women from the police, clients and residents of the areas where they worked. Such perils perpetuated throughout the era from around 1960 to the early-to-mid 1980s. Moreover, these sex workers had to grapple with widespread prejudice against them in the mainstream press and legislation restricting their sex work and gender transitioning.

Sex work as a road to gender transitioning was situated in specific perilous refuges, namely niches in urban centres where sex labourers were exposed to the opportunities and dangers of their profession. The link between sex work and gender transitioning was also affected by moving across space in a complex and, sometimes, cumulative manner. Growing domestic migration helped individuals to find themselves in such perilous refuges. They sold sex and experimented with their desirable gender identities there, although engaging in sex labour may not have been their initial intention. While there, some trans women selling sex learned about gender-affirming surgery in Casablanca or working as sex labourers in West Berlin. The impact of such cross-border spatial mobility, experienced or expected, on the gender and sexuality of trans women who sold sex varied: it could consolidate or help challenge the link between sex work and their gender transitioning.

## Notes

1. Vakalidou, *Betty*, 143. Betty Vakalidou was born in 1950 in a provincial town in northern Greece.
2. I am using the surnames of the trans women selling sex, if I know them, as I do with the cis subjects. In Greece, calling someone by their surname is regarded as more formal and respectful than addressing them by their first name. While trans women selling sex usually called themselves by their first names in the 1960s–early-to-mid-1980s, as shown in the article, the very same individuals now use both their first name and surname when introducing themselves.
3. Paridis, “Istoria.” *Lifo*, where this interview was published, is a free press magazine, and published several interviews of trans people in the 2010s sympathetic to their point of view. These interviews include extensive references to the lives of trans people in the period from the 1960s to the early 1980s.

4. On the impact of mobilities on sexualities transnationally, see, for instance: Groes and Fernandez, *Intimate Mobilities*. On the significance of spaces for the study of sexuality in general, see: Houlbrook, "Toward."
5. On the diversity of sex work, see: Nuttbrock, "Toward," xiv–xviii; Boris and Parreñas, "Introduction," 3.
6. The issue of whether sex work also contributed to the social mobility of trans women is certainly a dimension that merits consideration. However, this requires a separate article. On excellent approaches to sex work that seriously consider both the agency of sex workers and the barriers they faced, see, for instance: Laite, *Common Prostitutes*; Oso, "Survival," 101–21.
7. On using the adjective 'trans' by transgender individuals in Greece in recent times, see: Apostolidou, "Kaleidoskopika," 175–201.
8. Stryker, *Transgender*, 1. For an implementation of Stryker's definition, see, for instance: Riseman, "Representing," 228–9.
9. Muñoz, *Cruising*, 1.
10. Some trans women selling sex have themselves labelled those places as a 'refuge' for them. For instance, see Paola Revenioti's letter published in the following book: Sioubouras, *Pezodromio*, 43. Revenioti was born in a working-class district of Piraeus in 1958. I have described these spaces as 'perilous' ones to show the ambiguous experience of trans women selling sex there. Concerning the source, Sioubouras' book is problematic: although this journalist declared that his interviewees should not be vilified, he described them in a sensationalist, moralistic and patronizing manner, and he misgendered them. Still, his book is a useful source that includes fragments of voices of trans women who were sex workers. The autobiography of Revenioti that Sioubouras' book contains, for instance, is lengthy and detailed. I have searched the magazine *Kraximo*, which Revenioti published, as mentioned in section 3, to see whether Revenioti challenged any of the statements that Sioubouras attributed to her. I have not found any relevant objections.
11. Sex workers in Greece use the term 'piazza' to denote the spaces in general where they work.
12. Canaday, "Thinking Sex," 1250–7.
13. See Dolinsek, Hearne, "Introduction".
14. See: Dolinsek, "Gehandelte Frau," 68–70; Kozma, "Women's Migration," 93–113.
15. On the need for the conjoined analysis of migration and sex work, see, for instance: Agustín, "The Disappearing," 29–47. Similarly, Nicole Keusch argues in favour of a global history of migration integrating more the analysis of sex work. See: Keusch, "Migration and Prostitution." While Keusch encourages the conjoined study of migration and sex work outside of Europe, I believe that their link merits more study also in the case of migration within Europe. On a volume that explores, among others, migration and sex work in relation to each other, see: Groes and Fernandez, eds., *Intimate Mobilities*.
16. Some studies of sex work in Greece are the following works: Lazos, *Porneia*; Abatzi, *Poto*; Zaimakis, "Katagogia"; Katsapis, "Neares," 147–82.
17. For instance: Clarkson, *Fragmented Fatherland*; Papadogiannis, "A (Trans)National Emotional Community?," 589–614. See also the following magisterial work: Möhring, *Ausländische Gastronomie*.
18. Stryker and Aizura, *The Transgender Studies Reader 2*. For a recent analysis of transnational flows of ideas and people and their impact on trans people, see, for instance, the following article: Engelstein and Rachamimov, "Crossing Borders." Although Engelstein and Rachamimov do not directly refer to the Transgender Studies 2.0 paradigm, their approach dovetails with the latter's aims. On trans migrations, see also: Luibhéid and Chávez, *Queer and Trans Migrations*.
19. Papanikolaou, *Kati trehei*, 337–412.
20. Leontsini and Papadakou, "Trans Subjects," 76–93; Vogiatzaki, "Trans\*Late."
21. Apostolidou, "Kaleidoskopika," 194.
22. Vogiatzaki, "Trans\*Late Architecture."

23. Trauthwein, "Biografische," 45–7. See also the historiographical review contained in the following article: Meyer, "Zur Geschichte," 44–7.
24. Herzog, *Sexuality in Europe*, 172–4.
25. Vakalidou, *Betty*. Its first edition was published in 1980. The second edition contains some further material, but the main text remains the same. Vakalidou, *Poso paei*; Heiloudaki, *Oi aggeloi*; Heiloudaki, *I Mavri vivlos*; Kouroupou, *Giati*; Koumariannou, *Taxidi*; Heiloudaki, *Aiglis*.
26. The memoir I was unable to retrieve is the following: Baltzi, *To potami*.
27. Portelli, *Death*, 55. Portelli defines 'partiality' both as this incompleteness, which he appreciates, and as the element of taking sides through the story that the oral testimonies underpin. On oral history constituting a queer methodology given the unfinished character of both oral testimonies and queerness as an identity, see Murphy, Pierce and Ruiz, "What."
28. Rickard, "Collaborating." In contrast with Rickard, however, I had an ethics application approved before I embarked on the research on which this article is based.
29. On shared authority as distinct from sharing a political perspective, see Rickard, *ibid.*, 55.
30. On such gaps, see: *ibid.*
31. In so doing, I have taken a cue from the method followed in Lapovsky-Kennedy and Davis, *Boots of Leather*.
32. On such an approach, see Reay, *Sex*, 7–32, particularly 15. Although Reay's book focuses on American sexual histories, the methodological points it contains apply to the history of sexuality in general.
33. For instance, Vakalidou, *Betty*, 51. Interview of Markella Georgiou with the author, Athens, 4 September 2018. Vakalidou sometimes uses the terms *adelfi* and *poushtis* as her identity markers and sometimes within inverted commas to clarify that this is how other people, such as her family, called her. Vakalidou uses those terms in alternation with the label of the 'homosexual' to refer to her early youth. As shown later in this paragraph, individuals engaging in same-sex practices increasingly used the notion of 'homosexual' from the 1970s on in Greece to address themselves. Thus, Vakalidou may have projected that onto her earlier life in the 1960s. See: Vakalidou, *Betty*, 25. I use the terms *adelfi* and *poushtis* in the article only as an identity marker employed by those individuals and without endorsing their pejorative connotations.
34. Interview with Markella Georgiou.
35. For instance: For instance, Vakalidou, *Betty*, 51; Revenioti's letter in Sioubouras, *Pezodromio*, 28.
36. Revenioti's letter in Sioubouras, *Pezodromio*, 25.
37. Yannakopoulos, "Naked," 174–5.
38. *Ibid.*, 175, 180. However, Papanikolaou raises the concern that this argument sidelines the experience of men who had embraced gay identities before the 1970s. See: Papanikolaou, "Mapping/Unmapping," 158–60.
39. Vakalidou, *Betty*, 22–3.
40. Papadogiannis, "Somata," 195.
41. *Ibid.* Mangakis, *Ta egklimata*, 98–110.
42. Nikolakopoulos, *Kachehtiki*. Nikolakopoulos labels it as 'weak democracy' due to the restrictions on the expression particularly of the Communist Left. See also: Panourgia, *Dangerous*.
43. See, for instance: *Betty*, 38. On a historical approach to the issue of 'honour,' see: Avdela, *Dia Logous Timis*.
44. Kouroupou, *Giati*, 26–7. Kouroupou was born in a small village in northern Greece in 1964. Overall, Kouroupou uses the third person singular when recounting her life story. I believe that she does not wish to disown these experiences: she makes abundantly clear that her book is autobiographical. Rather, she aims to acquire some distance from herself in narrating her life to reflect on pleasurable but also painful moments.
45. For instance, see: Loizos and Papataxiarchis, "Gender, Sexuality," 228.
46. Hadjikyriacou, *Masculinity*, 90.

47. Vakalidou, *Betty*, 59.
48. Revenioti's letter in Sioubouras, *Pezodromio*, 26.
49. *Ibid.*, 42.
50. Vakalidou, *Betty*, 11.
51. Interview with Georgiou.
52. Kouroupou, *Giati*, 28.
53. For instance, Vakalidou, *Betty*, 31. Interview with Georgiou.
54. The population of Greater Athens rose from 1,378,686 in 1951 to 2,530,209 in 1971. In total, the population of the urban centres, including Greater Athens and Greater Salonica, increased from 3,628,000 in 1961 to 5,659,000 in 1981. Simultaneously, the population of the rural areas decreased in the same period from 3,675,000 to 2,956,000. See: Campbell, "Traditional," 184; Maratou-Alipranti, "Demographic Trends," 25–34.
55. Vakalidou, *Betty*, 30.
56. *Ibid.*, 42; Vogiatzaki, "Trans\*Late," 6.
57. Vakalidou, *Betty*, 40–1. See also: Leontsini and Papadakou, "Trans Subjects," 83–4. By contrast, Kouroupou narrated that, at least in some important events marking her gender transitioning, her mother was supportive towards her. Kouroupou, *Giati*, 146.
58. Interview with Voula Vetopoulou. She does not clarify where exactly she lived in Athens at that point.
59. See: Boskoitis, "Idioktitria." The interview includes the life story of Frangiadaki.
60. On the hippy counterculture in Crete, see: Theodorou, "Leros tourismos," 293–308.
61. Boskoitis, "Idioktitria."
62. Minelli defined herself as a 'boy' at that point. She began to work as a trans woman selling sex in the mid-1970s. Vakalidou, "Minelli," *Poso paei*, 34–9, 59–61.
63. Yannakopoulos, "Naked," 176.
64. *Ibid.*, 179.
65. Hatzigeorgiou, "Aloma." Revenioti's letter in Sioubouras, *Pezodromio*, 43.
66. Koumariannou, *Taxidi*, 35.
67. Vakalidou, "Minelli," *Poso paei*, 31.
68. For instance, documents of the police that address the activity of sex workers in Athens during the 1960s do not differentiate between cis and trans women selling sex. Thus, it is difficult to discern which fall into the former group and where they worked. See, for instance: General State Archives (of Greece), Archive of the Prefecture of Athens, On Defining Decent and Indecent Women.
69. Agavanakis, "Synevisan," *Ta Nea*, 11.
70. Interview with Vetopoulou. Vetopoulou's narration is ambiguous in this respect: she recounted that her performance was not sexually provocative but that she also showed a 'little bit' of her underpants to the patrons. According to Vetopoulou, the fame of trans artists performing in cabarets in Paris convinced the owners of Havai to host trans women who worked as dancers. I could not find any documents containing the voices of Havai's owners who could corroborate this, however.
71. "Louketo," *Ta Nea*, 11.
72. "Katedikasthisan," *Ta Nea*, page unclear.
73. See, for instance, *Betty*, 156. On tourism and Plaka, see: Nikolakakis, "Tourismos," 408.
74. Harmon, "Omofylofilii" *Mpananes*, 2.
75. For example, see Betty's experiences in Havai and Stasa: Vakalidou, *Betty*, 52–4. Tammy's Bar in Athens was mentioned in *Spartacus International Gay Guide* (Amsterdam, 1979), 238.
76. Lazos, *Porneia*, 104–6. The ongoing research project entitled "A socio-cultural study of prostitution in post-war Piraeus," conducted by Yiannis Zaimakis, Dimitra Vassiliadou and Alexandra Zavos will shed more light onto the backgrounds and the practices of sex workers in Trouba and their clients.
77. Clients mentioned in the oral testimonies I have collected are usually Greek. See, for instance: Interview with Georgiou. However, such claims may simply reflect the perceptions of those trans women and cannot be used as a source offering reliable quantitative data on

the national identity of their clients. Meanwhile, there are no available surveys on the national identity of the clients of trans female workers selling sex. The background and the voices of those clients merit a separate study.

78. Karapostolis, *Katanalotiki*, 332.
79. Souliotis, "Dievrynsi," 279–320.
80. Interview by Molly Stellou with the author, Salonica, January 8, 2019. Stellou was born in 1968 in West Germany to Greek migrants working there and has lived in Salonica since she was eight years old. See also Vakalidou, "Dystychia," *Poso Paei*, 92. Dystychia was born in Cairo, Egypt and moved with her family to Piraeus when she was nine years old.
81. Tachtsis, *To Fovero Vima*, 303–7.
82. For instance: Sioubouras, *Pezodromio*, 17; "Cheiroteri," *Ta Nea*, cover page.
83. Vakalidou, *Betty*, 193. The presence of trans women selling sex in Kolonaki, at least in the 1980s, is also confirmed in the mainstream press, which, however, did not comment on their earnings: "Amartoloi Pezodromoi," *Ta Nea*, 2.
84. Giannis Hatzigeorgiou, "Aloma"; Koumarianou, *Taxidi*, 41; "Cheiroteri," *Ta Nea*, cover page.
85. Interview with Imelda Panou. Panou was born in 1958 in a working-class district of Piraeus.
86. Vogiatzaki, "Trans\*Late," 20.
87. See the case of Tachtsis later in this section.
88. Obviously, some trans women may have projected efforts to look feminine that happened later in their lives to their childhood. However, gender transitioning (also) through sex work may have helped illuminate their first experimentations with femininity, when they were children.
89. Vakalidou, *Betty*, 51.
90. For example: Vakalidou, *Betty*, 225.
91. Vakalidou, *Betty*, 51–2.
92. For instance, see the interview with Georgiou.
93. *Ibid.*
94. Vakalidou, *Betty*, 149.
95. *Ibid.* See also: Leontsini and Papadakou, "Trans Subjects," 85.
96. Interview with Georgiou.
97. Revenioti's letter in Sioubouras, *Pezodromio*, 50. Revenioti recounted that she took hormones around 1978.
98. Vakalidou, *Betty*, 57.
99. *Ibid.*, 117.
100. Interview with Georgiou. Georgiou elaborated extensively on her lovers and how she enticed them. I believe that this forthrightness is linked to her viewing my presence as unthreatening. She stressed that she gave a lengthy interview to me (it lasted for around 3.5 hours) because I am a good friend of a person she took care of when that person was a child.
101. Don Kulick makes a similar argument about the *travestis*, namely trans people in Brazil who did not have gender-affirming surgery. Kulick shows that they took care of their bodies both for their profession and their social interaction in non-professional contexts. See: Kulick, *Travesti*, 90–1.
102. Koumarianou, *Taxidi*, 35–9.
103. Yannakopoulos, "Naked," 178.
104. See his autobiographical book *To Fovero Vima*.
105. For instance, Kouroupou, *Giati*, 70.
106. Leontsini and Papadakou, "Trans Subjects."
107. *Ibid.*, 86–8.
108. Vakalidou, *Betty*, 226. Similarly, Heiloudaki likened sex work to psychotherapy. See: Heiloudaki, *I Mavri Vivlos*, 13.
109. Story collected by Vakalidou and published in: Vakalidou, *Poso paei*, 112.

110. Interview with Georgiou. Sex work appears as an opportunity for trans female sex workers to demonstrate their agency even in the narrations of some of them who claimed that they faced serious financial problems because of low demand for their sex work at the point of the interview, like Georgiou. Those alleged dire conditions did not make these narrators focus on the barriers and perils they faced due to this job.
111. On the threat that AIDS posed to trans women selling sex, see: Betty, "Minelli," *Poso Paei*, 89, where it is mentioned that Minelli died of AIDS. The extent to which AIDS affected trans women selling sex and the issue whether it led to further bias against them merits further study.
112. Lazos, *Porneia*, 67–71. Given the continuing intervention of the state, but the shift away from public brothels, Lazos calls this a 'neo-regulationist' legal regime.
113. The full text of the bill is available here: [https://dspace.lib.uom.gr/bitstream/2159/18324/26/A026\\_4.4.26.pdf](https://dspace.lib.uom.gr/bitstream/2159/18324/26/A026_4.4.26.pdf) (accessed August 20, 2021).
114. On AKOE, see, for instance: Yannakopoulos, "Omofylofiliko Kinima," 392–4.
115. Vakalidou, *Betty*, 168.
116. An in-depth analysis of the politicization of trans people is available here: Papanikolaou, *Kati trehei*, 337–412.
117. Apostolidou, "Kaleidoskopika somata," 187.
118. *Ibid*, 183.
119. Loukas Theodorakopoulos, a gay cis man and activist, offered an account of the persecution of homosexual individuals in 1968, namely during the dictatorship years. See: Theodorakopoulos, *Kaiadas*.
120. Boskoitis, "Idioktitria."
121. *Ibid*.
122. Vakalidou, "Dystychia," *Poso Paei*, 92.
123. Koumarianou, *Taxidi*, 36. Given that police documents on trans women selling sex are not accessible for researchers, I could not double-check whether trans women who were sex workers experienced the mistreatment they narrated. Still, regardless of whether such threats were perceived or real, the autobiographies of trans women selling sex reveal their profoundly entrenched fear of the attitude of the police towards them.
124. "'Omada'," *Ta Nea*.
125. "'Pelatis' straggalise," *Ta Nea*, 3.
126. For instance: "Louketo," *Ta Nea*, 11.
127. This was perhaps linked to the emergence of trans activism. The issue warrants further analysis.
128. "Oi travesti," *Ta Nea*, page unclear. On misgendering, see, for instance: "Den poulisa," *Ta Nea*, 5.
129. Kavvathas, "Me legane Giorgio," *Ta Nea*, 7.
130. On trans women selling sex using a taxi rather than the bus to move in Athens and avoid the jeers of other passengers, see: Vakalidou, *Betty*, 224–5.
131. Interview with Georgiou.
132. Natsi, Papa, *I nomothetiki*, 61.
133. There are no social surveys that demonstrate how many trans women in the 1960s–mid-1980s performed sexual labour and I believe it is methodologically problematic to distil quantitative data from interviews. Still, what appears in all the primary sources, which I have collected, and which contain voices of trans women, is their expectation that their job choice was minimal and usually revolved around sexual labour. This expectation is quite widespread among them even in August 2021 as a book recently published by the president of SYD, Marina Galanou argues. See: Galanou, *Taytotita kai ekfrasi fylou*, 51.
134. Burou presented his method at a symposium held at Stanford University in 1973. See: Georges Burou, "Male to Female Transformation," available here: <http://ai.eecs.umich.edu/people/conway/TS/Bourou/Bourou.html> (accessed August 21, 2021).
135. Hage, Karim and Laub, "Origin," 723–9.
136. Morris, *Conundrum*, 143; Meyerowitz, *How Sex*, 188.



137. Meyerowitz, *How Sex*, 188.
138. Hage, Karim and Laub, "Origin," 727.
139. Ibid.
140. Natsi and Papa, *I nomothetiki*, 61.
141. Sioubouras, *Pezodromio*, 111.
142. For instance: Vakalidou, "Dystychia," *Poso Paei*, 118.
143. Interview with Vetopoulou. Although I have found no evidence of Greek trans women undergoing gender-affirming surgery earlier, this is possible. Moreover, the date that Vetopoulou mentions should not be taken at face value, as it may not correspond to the actual date when she was operated on. No written sources corroborating the date of her operation are available.
144. Famous French actress, impersonator, entertainer and singer. She was a transgender woman. She underwent gender-affirming surgery in Casablanca in 1958. See: Meyerowitz, *How Sex*.
145. Interview with Vetopoulou.
146. Engelstein and Rachamimov, "Crossing Borders," 148.
147. Interview with Vetopoulou.
148. Ibid.
149. Interview with Georgiou.
150. Ibid.
151. Kavvathas, "Me legane Giorgio," *Ta Nea*, 7. There is no precise information on when exactly her surgery occurred.
152. Interview with Vetopoulou.
153. Garber, "The Chic," 646.
154. "Me legane," Interview with Vetopoulou.
155. Interview of Stellou with the author.
156. See Vakalidou, "Dystychia," *Poso Paei*, 118.
157. Vakalidou, *Betty*, 256. This narration of Vakalidou forms part of the postscript version that appeared in the 2007 edition of this book and had not appeared in the initial edition of her book in 1980.
158. Hausman, "Body," 340.
159. Interview with Vetopoulou.
160. Ibid.
161. See: "Belinda and Venardos" in Sioubouras, *Pezodromio*, 125–7. Her date of birth is not mentioned.
162. Kouroupou, *Giati*, 146–8. The year, when Kouroupou underwent the surgery, is not clear. She mentioned that this transpired in 1989, but she also referred to a 'surgery' she underwent, which she does not clarify whether it was the gender-affirming one, and which she claimed that happened in 1985. This uncertainty shows that autobiographies are not a reliable source in terms of factual validity, also concerning dates. Kouroupou, *Giati*, 87, 137.
163. On this fear, see also the interview with Georgiou.
164. Interview with Vetopoulou.
165. Ibid.
166. Kouroupou, *Giati*, 130–46.
167. See: Kouroupou, *Giati*, 122. Men danced the *zeibekiko* individually, improvising. The dance denoted 'authenticity,' purportedly expressing the 'profound' emotions of *dalgas* (grief) and *kefi* (joy). On *zeibekiko* and its gender significance, see, for instance: Kirtsoglou, *For the Love of Women*, 13–14, 76, 109; Cowan, *Dance and the Body Politic*, 175.
168. Kouroupou, *Giati*, 122.
169. Apostolidou, "Kaleidoskopika somata," 194.
170. Vakalidou, *Betty*, 149, 169.
171. Ibid., 230.
172. Apostolidou, "Kaleidoskopika somata," 189–90.

173. Interview with Stellou.
174. Ibid. The interview relationship is particularly interesting in this case. Stellou knew that I am a cis man. Thus, she asked some rhetorical questions, such as whether 'would you have an affair with a trans woman?' She expected me (erroneously) to conform with prejudice against trans people and to vindicate her view that she is an 'imperfect woman.' This case shows that shared authority is distinct from sharing a political perspective between the interviewer and their interviewees, as I do not believe that trans women are imperfect ones.
175. Ibid.
176. Vakalidou, *Betty*, 232.
177. Stryker, *Transgender*, 1.
178. Kouroupou, *Giati*, 130–46.
179. Interview with Georgiou.
180. Sorella in Vakalidou, *Poso Paei*, 149–50. According to Vakalidou, Sorella started working as a trans woman selling sex in 1974 in Athens.
181. For instance, Koumariou, *Taxidi*, 42–4. Koumariou recounted having moved within Greece, to Ioannina and Rhodes.
182. Luibhéid, "Queer/Migration," 169–90.
183. Engelstein and Rachamimov, "Crossing Borders," 147, 151.
184. De Silva, *Negotiating*, 106.
185. Meyer, "Zur Geschichte," 40–1. See also Haag's published autobiography: Haag, *Eine Frau und Mehr*.
186. There is relevant evidence in many sources, such as police and judicial documents from West Berlin. Those documents, however, neither offer quantitative data nor distinguish between trans and cis female sex workers of migrant origin. See, for instance: 'Bekämpfung der Förderung.' This police document referred to police raids in Tiergarten, West Berlin, where migrant sex workers were arrested. Some of them were from Southern Europe. The document does not specify whether they were trans or cis subjects.
187. Dolinsek, "Gehandelte."
188. Unfortunately, there are no reliable quantitative data on when Greek trans women began moving and working in West Berlin and how many of them did so.
189. See: "Belinda and Venardos" in Sioubouras, *Pezodromio*, 125–6. Sorella in Vakalidou, *Poso Paei*, 149–50.
190. Sorella in Vakalidou, *Poso Paei*, 149–50. Although this extract forms part of Sorella's story, it contains a claim that Vakalidou made.
191. Ibid.
192. Interview with Stellou.
193. Interview with Stellou. Interview with Georgiou.
194. Interview with Stellou.
195. Chin, *The Guest Worker Question*, 3. See also: Oltmer, Kreienbrink and Sanz Díaz, eds., *Das "Gastarbeiter"-System*.
196. Data reproduced in: Möhring, *Ausländische Gastronomie*, 392 f.
197. No available quantitative data or narrations mention why these factory workers switched to sex work.
198. Vakalidou, *Betty*, 192. Vakalidou does not specify precisely when Jenny engaged in factory and sex work.
199. Vakalidou, *Betty*, 120–43, Boskoitis, "Idioktitria." There are no available sources from West German authorities confirming when exactly Vakalidou and Frangiadaki entered that country. Still, their autobiographies show that they expected that they did or could do so after 1973.
200. Sergouloupoulos, "Marilou Frangiadaki." See also the interview with Georgiou. She did not go to West Berlin herself, but recounted how some of her colleagues did.
201. Interview with Georgiou.
202. Green, *Politics*, 34–6.
203. Vakalidou, *Betty*, 185, 188.

204. Ibid., 143–8.
205. Ibid., 147.
206. Ibid., 144.
207. Ibid., 144–5.
208. Boskoitis, “Idioktitria.” Frangiadaki moved from Athens to West Berlin in the late 1970s.
209. Vakalidou, *Betty*, 145. Moreover, memoirs of Greek trans women selling sex from the late 1970s and early 1980s do not mention the presence of Greek trans women who were sex labourers in protest initiatives in West Berlin, such as Hydra. The latter was established in 1980, although the latter attracted both non-foreign-born and migrant sex workers, cis and trans. On Hydra, see: Haying, *Huren in Bewegung*.
210. Boskoitis, “Idioktitria.”
211. Vakalidou, *Betty*, 143–8.
212. Boskoitis, “Idioktitria.”
213. Leopold, Steffan, and Paul, *Dokumentation*, 84.
214. See Martin, “Cleaning Up”.
215. The OEK continues to exist, covering the entirety of the reunified Germany. I have checked *Metanasteytika Nea* for 1976–77. I have also explored all the announcements of OEK between 1968 and 1984 that are available in its archive in Cologne.
216. Sergouloupoulos, “Marilou Frangiadaki.”
217. Ibid.
218. Vakalidou, *Betty*, 149. Still, as already mentioned, she also vacillated between a feminine and a non-binary identity after her stay in West Berlin.

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## Notes on contributor

*Nikolaos Papadogiannis* is an AHRC Research Fellow in History at the University of St Andrews. He is currently the Principal Investigator of a project that explores transnational connections among AIDS activists in Western Europe in the 1980s and 1990s. He has published extensively on the history of sexuality. Relevant publications of his include journal articles in the *European Review of History* and the *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*. He is also the author of the monograph *Militant around the Clock? Left-wing Youth Politics, Leisure and Sexuality in Post-Dictatorship Greece, 1974–1981* (New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2015).

**ORCID**

Nikolaos Papadogiannis  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-3521-8152>

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