

## The Historical Review/La Revue Historique

Vol 18, No 1 (2021)

Historical Review / La Revue Historique

The *H*istorical Review  
La Revue *H*istorique



VOLUME XVIII (2021)

Section de Recherches Néohelléniques  
Institut de Recherches Historiques / FNRS

Section of Neohellenic Research  
Institute of Historical Research / NHRF

### “Pervert, Sadist, Voyeur and Necrophile”: Pathological Sexual Desire in the Case of the “Dragon of Sheikh Sou”, 1959–1963

*Despo Kritsotaki, Panagiotis Zestanakis*

Copyright © 2022



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

#### To cite this article:

Kritsotaki, D., & Zestanakis, P. (2022). “Pervert, Sadist, Voyeur and Necrophile”: Pathological Sexual Desire in the Case of the “Dragon of Sheikh Sou”, 1959–1963. *The Historical Review/La Revue Historique*, 18(1), 43–66. Retrieved from <https://ejournals.epublishing.ekt.gr/index.php/historicalReview/article/view/31314>

“PERVERT, SADIST, VOYEUR AND NECROPHILE”: PATHOLOGICAL  
SEXUAL DESIRE IN THE CASE OF THE “DRAGON OF SHEIKH SOU”,  
1959–1963

*Despo Kritsotaki and Panagiotis Zestanakis*

---

*Abstract:* This article analyses the case of the “Dragon of Sheikh Sou”, the alleged perpetrator of four crimes committed in 1959 and 1963 in Thessaloniki, which terrified and fascinated the public, as a case study for the construction of “perverted” sexuality in Greece during this period. Combining journalistic and medical (forensic and psychiatric) accounts, it argues that sexual violence was turned into a central dimension of these crimes, as, within the sociocultural transformations of the time (mainly urbanisation and new gender roles), anxieties about sexuality intensified. The article concludes that in late-1950s and early-1960s Greece, “perverted” sexual desires remained more closely connected to vice than illness, and were understood as a male psychiatric pathology only to the degree that they could contribute to the normalisation of a supposedly “moderate” male sexual violence, but not to the extent that they required psychiatric treatment.

---

In early 1959, Thessaloniki, the second largest city in Greece, was shaken by three crimes.<sup>1</sup> In February, a boilermaker and his girlfriend were struck from behind with a rock in Sheikh Sou forest, on the city’s outskirts. Bleeding, the woman was sexually abused. The next morning, a boy playing in the area discovered the victims. As frost had mitigated the bleeding, the victims survived. A few days later, another crime took place in the remote area of Mikra, near the city’s airport.

---

\* The title comes from “Ανώμαλος, σαδιστής, ηδονοβλεψίας και νεκρόφιλος είναι ο ‘Δράκος του Σέιχ-Σου’,” *Απογευματινή*, 16 December 1963. For a similar headline, see “Σαδισται και νεκρόφιλοι διέπραξαν το σκοτεινόν έγκλημα της Θεσσαλονίκης,” *Βραδυνή*, 9 March 1959. Panagiotis Zestanakis worked on this article during his time at the Institute for Media and Communication at Hamburg University, which was supported by the Fritz Thyssen Foundation, and Despo Kritsotaki, during her Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship at the National Institute of Health and Medical Research, Paris. Both authors would like to thank Alexandra Dimitrouka for her help in the General State Archives of Thessaloniki, Dimitra Vassiliadou for the opportunity to publish in this special issue, and the reviewers for their valuable comments and suggestions.

<sup>1</sup> According to the general census, in 1961 Thessaloniki had 378,444 inhabitants and Athens 1,852,709. *Στατιστική Επετηρίς της Ελλάδος* (Athens: Ethniki Statistiki Ipiresia tis Ellados, 1970), 24.

The victims were also a couple: an army officer and his mistress. They were struck with rocks and the woman was raped. This time the victims died. Almost a month later, a woman (sometimes referred to as nurse, others as a midwife or seamstress) was murdered in the nurses' home of the municipal hospital in an inhabited area close to Sheikh Sou forest. While newspapers initially reported that she had been raped, it later emerged that this was not the case, possibly because another nurse had entered the home and disturbed the attacker. A period of widespread fear of future crimes followed.

These crimes were attributed to the same perpetrator, who became known as the “Dragon of Sheikh Sou”. Some journalists, and occasionally the authorities, considered the possibility that there was more than one perpetrator.<sup>2</sup> However, the jargon of the time usually referred to “*the* Dragon”, a term we adopt. Discussions on the “Dragon” gradually faded, until 1963, when a young man attacked a 12-year-old girl in an orphanage. Aristidis Pagratidis, a 22-year-old man from a working-class family, was arrested. He confessed to the three 1959 crimes and was sentenced to death in 1966. He was executed on 16 February 1968 by firing squad at Sheikh Sou forest, where the “Dragon” had committed the first crime nine years previously. His last words were that he was innocent and did not commit the three crimes in 1959.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, the widespread suspicion that he was innocent has persisted to the present day. Journalists have investigated the case many times, especially after the 1974 political transition. The case has inspired novelists, filmmakers and playwrights.<sup>4</sup> Historian Judith Walkowitz argues that Jack the Ripper (an unidentified serial killer who murdered at least five women in late-Victorian London) inspired many stories about his identity, while the meanings of the murders stimulated fantasies for a long time afterwards.<sup>5</sup> In a sense, the “Dragon of Sheikh Sou” represents a similar

<sup>2</sup> Indicatively “Συνεκλόνησε την Θεσσαλονίκη το νέον αποτρόπαιον έγκλημα: Περισσότεροι του ενός δράσται,” *Μακεδονία*, 8 March 1959.

<sup>3</sup> “Ο Παγκρατίδης εξετελέσθη εις το Σείχ-Σου,” *Μακεδονία*, 17 February 1968. This was one of the last executions in Greece. The final one took place in 1972 and the death penalty was abolished in 1975.

<sup>4</sup> Kostas Papaioannou, *Ο δράκος του Σείχ Σου: Υπόθεση Παγκρατίδη* (Thessaloniki: MEDA, 1966), republished as *Ο “δράκος” του Σείχ Σου: Ένας αθώος στο απόσπασμα* (Athens: Pontiki, 1988); Kostas Tsarouchas, *Υπόθεση Παγκρατίδη: Αθώος ή ένοχος*; (Athens: Dodoni, 1989), republished as *Ο δράκος που διέφυγε... Υπόθεση Παγκρατίδη: Μια αστυνομική πλεκτάνη, μια δικαστική πλάνη, μια άδικη εκτέλεση* (Athens: Ellinika Grammata, 2006); *Υπόθεση Παγκρατίδη: Αθώος ή ένοχος*, dir. Dimitris Arvanitis (Athens: ERT, 1989); Thomas Korovinis, *Ο γύρος του θανάτου* (Athens: Agra, 2010); *Αρίστος*, dir. Yorgos Panagiotopoulos (Athens: Goo Theater Company, 2018–2019).

<sup>5</sup> Judith R. Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (London: Virago, 1992), 3.

case, one that continues to attract interest due to the horrific nature of the crimes as well as the sense of wrongdoing and plotting. Many people never believed that Pagratidis was guilty, and stories about the real culprit's identity and motives have flourished in the intervening decades.<sup>6</sup>

In this article, we argue that sexual violence and “perversion” were turned into central dimensions of the crimes of the “Dragon of Sheikh Sou”. Therefore, the case of the latter can help us investigate criminal and “perverted” sexuality in late-1950s and early-1960s Greece, and claim that, although “perverted” sexuality was constructed as a male psychiatric problem, it remained closer to a vice than an illness. This corresponds to the assessment of anthropologist Kostas Yannakopoulos that homosexuality, which was also perceived as a sexual “perversion” during this period, was understood more as a vice than an illness, at least by the press and the judicial authorities in late-1950s Greece.<sup>7</sup> The first part of the article focuses on representations of the “Dragon of Sheikh Sou” in the press, while the second examines the expert – forensic and psychiatric – understandings of criminal and “perverted” sexuality. The final part combines media and expert narratives, as the press – the main channel for the mediatisation of scientific discourse in this period – extensively exploited forensic and psychiatric understandings of “perverted” sexuality in building the persona of Pagratidis. We employ newspapers published in Thessaloniki and Athens, covering the political spectrum from the centre-left to the right: the main criteria for inclusion in our analysis were the length of the coverage of the crime and the extensive use of images, which helped the press construct their story. In tune with framing theory, we approach media discourses, along with the medical discourses they put forward, as interpretative schemes with which audiences interact: the mediatisation and pathologisation of criminal and “perverted” sexuality emerge as a reciprocal process conveying public assumptions and emotions about crime and sexuality.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> See Zoi Kyrogiorgiou, “Κλειστός φάκελος Παγκρατίδη: Ζει ακόμα ο πραγματικός δράκος του Σείχ-Σου;” *Status* (May 2004): 192–99. According to such a story, the real perpetrator originated from a rich Thessaloniki family, committed the first two crimes assisted by his chauffeur and left the city permanently after the 1959 crimes. See also Tsarouchas, *Υπόθεση Παγκρατίδη*, 482–86.

<sup>7</sup> See Kostas Yannakopoulos, “Γνώση και εξουσία: Μυστικότητα, εννοιολογήσεις των ανδρικών ομοερωτικών σχέσεων και ένα (ομο)σεξουαλικό έγκλημα στη μεταπολεμική Αθήνα,” in *Ιστορίες για τη σεξουαλικότητα*, ed. Dimitra Vassiliadou and Glafki Gotsi (Athens: Themelio, 2020), 167–87.

<sup>8</sup> Discussions on mediatisation have been often associated with the globalising media

*Postwar Society and the Construction of “Perverted” Sexuality in the Press*

Before the popularisation of television in the 1970s, newspapers and magazines, along with radio and cinema, formed what we now call the mediascape.<sup>9</sup> Newspapers published lurid details of crimes, making extensive use of photographs with no consideration for personal data, to attract readers and transmit a tone of objectivity in the coverage. We do not perceive photography as an objective medium or, as photography studies scholars Robin Kelsey and Blake Stimson claim, as one entailing an “expressively rich (artistic) or ethically withheld (scientific) subjectivity”, but as part of the media discourses produced within a specific historical framework and as a medium servicing (to employ a later term) infotainment practices. The mediatisation of scientific discourses is also analysed within this assumption.<sup>10</sup> Of course, we cannot approach visual documents as the then audiences interpreted them. However, combining the press with other sources, such as medical texts, we can explore the social and cultural parameters of the historical environment in which such information was produced and offered to readers, and propose potential interpretations of this material, simultaneously deconstructing media strategies. In Greece, as in many Western countries, popular journalism sought to inform and entertain

---

environment and the interweaving of media technologies in the formulation of communities. We employ the term to describe how media presented the crimes. See Herman Bausinger, “Media, Technology and Daily Life,” *Media, Culture and Society* 6, no. 4 (1984): 343–51. See also Nick Couldry and Andreas Hepp, “Conceptualizing Mediatization: Contexts, Traditions, Arguments,” *Communication Theory* 23, no. 3 (2013): 191–202. For framing theory, see Robert M. Entman, “Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm,” *Journal of Communication* 43, no. 4 (1993): 51–58; Stephan Reese, “The Framing Project: A Bridging Model for Media Research Revisited,” *Journal of Communication* 57, no. 1 (2007): 148–54.

<sup>9</sup> Newspapers had more impact than what can be supposed by sales and their influence extended beyond literate audiences due to loud reading practices and images, at a time when limited literacy was still common, especially in rural areas and among the elderly population. According to the 1961 general census, 47.2% of the population had not finished elementary school (34.2% of men and 56.5% of women) and about one third of them (17.7%) were completely illiterate. For data on postwar illiteracy, see Anna Fragoudaki, “Η εκπαίδευση στη μεταπολεμική Ελλάδα,” Athens Social Atlas, <https://www.athenssocialatlas.gr>, December 2015.

<sup>10</sup> Robin Kelsey and Blake Stimson, “Photography’s Double Index (a Short Story in Three Parts),” in *The Meaning of Photography*, ed. Robin Kelsey and Blake Stimson (Williamstown: Sterling and Francine Art Institute, 2008), xxi. This position reflects earlier works on the meaning of photography, arguing that the reception of photographs depends on the conditions in which they are read. See John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories* (London: Macmillan, 1988), 4.

audiences, creating suspense to increase sales.<sup>11</sup> This could be a significant motivation in the late 1950s and the early 1960s, a period when literacy was rising and newspaper sales were increasing.<sup>12</sup>

The “Dragon of Sheikh Sou” was ideal in this sense. His crimes appeared shockingly violent, especially within the context of postwar social change. Criminological research argues that the fear of crime intersects with the consequences of modernity and finds its social meaning among people’s sense of change and decay, optimism and foreboding in the neighbourhoods, towns, cities and wider political communities in which they live and move.<sup>13</sup> In our case, fear was produced within transforming social conditions: the economy improved, living standards ameliorated and urbanisation progressed. The expanding cities encouraged anonymity and the emergence of new gender roles, with women gaining further public visibility.<sup>14</sup> Women voted for the first

---

<sup>11</sup> Ray Surette, “Some Unpopular Thoughts about Popular Culture,” in *Popular Culture, Crime and Justice*, ed. Francie Y. Bailey and Donna C. Hale (Belmont: Wadsworth, 1997), xiv–xxiv (esp. xviii). Such practices have a long history going back at least to the early nineteenth century. Indicatively, in France the *Gazette des tribunaux* (launched in 1825 in Paris) systematically presented crimes, triggering emotions of insecurity among the public. Historian Louis Chevalier characterises such emotions as a “psychosis about crime” (psychose du crime). Louis Chevalier, *Classes laborieuses et classes dangereuses à Paris pendant la première moitié du XIXe siècle* (Paris: Hachette, 1984), 41. Such practices continued in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century: Dominique Califa, *L’encre et le sang: Récits de crimes et société à la Belle Époque* (Paris: Fayard, 1995). In the context of postwar Greece such attempts are shown in the novel by Yannis Maris, *Έγκλημα στα παρασκήνια* (Athens: Pechlivanidis, 1954), which was adapted into a homonymous film directed by Dinos Katsouridis (Damaskinos Michailidis and Techni AE, 1960).

<sup>12</sup> To provide some indicative quantitative data about sales in the examined period, *Απογευματινή* sold on average about 20,000 copies in the early 1950s and about 50,000 in the mid-1960s; *Καθημερινή* sold on average about 40,000 copies (about 30,000 in Athens) in the late 1950s. Dimitris Psychogios, *Τα έντυπα μέσα επικοινωνίας: Από τον πηλό στο δίκτυο* (Athens: Kastaniotis, 2004), 458 and 488, respectively.

<sup>13</sup> Tim Hope and Richard Sparks, “Introduction: Risk, Insecurity and the Politics of Law and Order,” in *Crime, Risk and Insecurity*, ed. Tim Hope and Richard Sparks (London: Routledge, 2000), 5.

<sup>14</sup> For postwar urbanisation, see Lila Leontidou, *The Mediterranean City in Transition: Social Change and Urban Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 127–71. According to historian Thomas Gallant, who has examined interconnections between the growth of Athens and the rise of crime in the late nineteenth century, urbanisation entailed mobility, especially the relocation of poor young single men (a group prone to violence) from rural areas to the capital. Thomas Gallant, “Murder in a Mediterranean City: Homicide Trends in Athens, 1850–1936,” *Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora* 23, no. 2 (1997): 22–23.

time in the 1952 national elections, claimed more active roles in the economy and enrolled in universities in greater numbers.<sup>15</sup> Such developments signified the growing mobility of women, especially in cities, a mobility presented as increasingly exposing women to danger, including sexual crime. Although cities were often portrayed in the media as more civilised and more easily surveyed than the countryside, metonymising expectations for a modern and less violent everyday life, the rising urban population, along with the anonymity of city life, was also viewed as facilitating criminal activity.<sup>16</sup> After the crime in Mikra, an Athenian reporter argued: “Thessaloniki, like the capital [Athens], has thousands of inhabitants. It not unlikely that it hosts two or three such deviants.”<sup>17</sup>

Urbanisation was also connected with the transformation of cultural codes, which affected criminal activity as well. An example was the decline of “honour crimes”, which since the late 1950s were increasingly seen as pertaining to a rural framework of values, made to an extent obsolete by a new cultural context where sexuality was less rigidly regulated. Violent crimes against strangers appeared as a new kind of city-based criminality, which undermined the narrative of development and progress of the post-civil war state. Hence, this criminality was less easily understood, and was often approached as resulting from the criminal’s vicious or ill personality. Part of this new trend was the emergence of “dragons”, criminals who randomly attacked couples or women unknown to them, and were represented as “perverts” and mentally disturbed.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, the

---

The relationship between urbanisation and higher crime rates in France and Germany has been explored by Howard Zehr, *Crime and the Development of Modern Society: Patterns of Criminality in Nineteenth Century Germany and France* (London: Croom Helm, 1976). For Zehr, urbanisation, industrialisation and higher criminality were interrelated, while the growth of crimes against property was greater than crimes against life.

<sup>15</sup> Laura Maratou-Alipranti, “Female Roles,” in *Recent Social Trends in Greece, 1960–2000*, ed. Dimitris Charalambis, Laura Maratou-Alipranti and Andromachi Hadjiyanni (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2004), 119.

<sup>16</sup> For the supposed rural population’s proneness to crime, see Efi Avdela, *Διά λόγους τιμής: Βία, συναισθήματα και αξίες στη μετεμφυλιακή Ελλάδα* (Athens: Nefeli, 2002), 194–97. On living conditions in the cities, see Efi Avdela, “*Νέοι εν κινδύνω*”: *Επιτήρηση, αναμόρφωση και δικαιοσύνη ανηλίκων μετά τον πόλεμο* (Athens: Polis, 2013), 278–303.

<sup>17</sup> Ilias Malatos, “Ανώμαλος τύπος ο δράκος της Θεσσαλονίκης που εσκότωσε τον μαύρο αετό και τη φίλη του,” *Βραδυνή*, 10 March 1959.

<sup>18</sup> Avdela, *Δια λόγους τιμής*, 32–33, 140–41, 189, 193 and 242; Efi Avdela, “Making Sense of ‘Hideous Crimes’: Homicide and the Cultural Reordering of Gendered Sociality in Post-Civil-War Greece,” in *Problems of Crime and Violence in Europe, 1780–2000: Essays in Criminal Justice*, ed. Efi Avdela, Shani D’Cruze and Judith Rowbotham (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 2010), 281–310.

“Dragon of Sheikh Sou” was not the first to make the headlines. Crime reporters compared him to earlier notorious “dragons”, such as the one of Vouliagmeni (a seaside resort about 20 kilometres south of Athens), who had shot a couple in 1953, killing the man and injuring the woman. Identifying the city centre with safety and painting the suburbs as uncontrollable (an important distinction, as we will see), reporters argued that the victims’ decision to flirt in remote areas facilitated the perpetrators.<sup>19</sup>

Beyond such well-discussed cases, readers were occasionally informed about “perverts” and “dragons” who threatened couples usually in the suburbs.<sup>20</sup> From the beginning, the Sheikh Sou crime was attributed to a “dragon” who terrified couples in the area.<sup>21</sup> According to one newspaper: “lately, in many isolated places ... attacks by perverts on love couples have been noted” but were not always reported to the police.<sup>22</sup> Such narratives capitalised on the stereotype of linking remote areas with an increased possibility of sexual assault.<sup>23</sup> More importantly, they expressed the rising concerns about juvenile and extramarital sexuality, which were becoming more common and visible, as Greece reluctantly started to participate in the postwar sexual revolution.<sup>24</sup> However, the persisting

---

<sup>19</sup> Malatos, “Ανώμαλος τύπος ο δράκος της Θεσσαλονίκης,” *The Dragon of Vouliagmeni* was sentenced to death in 1954.

<sup>20</sup> “Η αστυνομία της Θεσσαλονίκης πιστεύει ότι θα συλλάβη τον κακούργον,” *Καθημερινή*, 5 April 1959.

<sup>21</sup> “Οι άγνωστοι εις το Σέιχ-Σου εθρυμμάτισαν τα κεφάλια ενός ζεύγους ερωτευμένων,” *Μακεδονία*, 20 February 1959. Some reports ascribed to the “dragon” two (less violent and without sexual assault) attacks with rocks against couples in Sheikh Sou in 1957 and 1958. See Lambros G. Koromilas, “Τα πέντε μυστηριώδη εγκλήματα που συνεκλόνησαν τη Θεσσαλονίκη,” *Μακεδονία*, 18 December 1963.

<sup>22</sup> Malatos, “Ανώμαλος τύπος”; “Ανώμαλος, σαδιστής”; “Ο συλληφθείς δράκος του Σέιχ-Σου αναπαρέστησε πλήρως όλα τα εγκλήματα του,” *Απογευματινή*, 16 December 1963.

<sup>23</sup> This stereotype is not statistically corroborated, as such attacks often take place in central areas. Jaqueline Burgess, “But Is It Worth Taking the Risk? How Women Negotiate Access to Urban Woodland: A Case Study,” in *New Frontiers of Space, Bodies and Gender*, ed. Rosa Ainley (London: Routledge, 1998), 118. According to historian Joanna Bourke, the validity of this assumption varies in different national contexts. In the United States, sexual crime is seen as usually happening in cities, while in Australia in isolated places; Joanna Bourke, *Rape: A History from 1860 to the Present* (London: Virago, 2007), 130–31. In Greece, representations of sexual crimes in the press and beyond aligned generally with the Australian perception. Especially, in cinema, scenes of rape in urban woodland (parks, etc.) flourished after the political transition of 1974. See Panagiotis Zestanakis, “Historicizing Early 1980s Greek ‘Denunciation Movies,’” *Cultural History* 7, no. 1 (2018): 58.

<sup>24</sup> Claire Langhamer, *The English in Love: The Intimate Story of an Emotional Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 112.



connection of sexuality with marriage and the structure of the Greek family, where young and even middle-aged unmarried but also divorced people often lived with their parents, did not facilitate extramarital sexual intercourse at home, leading lovers to public, albeit secluded, spaces.<sup>25</sup> Infrastructures facilitating connections between the city centre and surrounding areas (for example, beaches), but also growing automobility, as in the case of the couple of the second crime (in Mikra), gave people the opportunity to reach remote “romantic” areas to make out.<sup>26</sup> This, however, led to worries about the control of these areas, especially after dark. The struggle of the authorities to supervise remote areas is eloquently visualised in a large photo published in *Μακεδονία* after the crime in Mikra depicting policemen and experts meticulously researching the crime scene (fig. 1).



Fig. 1. Policemen and experts at the scene of the crime in Mikra. *Μακεδονία*, 6 March 1959.

The cases of “dragon-type” criminality illustrate that the effort to control remote areas was linked to the effort to control sexuality. The spatial and sexual dimensions were central to and interconnected in how the media dealt with the “Dragon of Sheikh Sou” and attempted to attract readers. Journalists reported that the crimes had taken place in remote and unsupervised areas, idyllic and

<sup>25</sup> Indicatively, the female victim of the first crime, 33 years old and divorced, was living with her mother. “Σκοτεινόν παρέμεινε και χθες το διπλούν έγκλημα του Σείχ-Σου,” *Μακεδονία*, 21 February 1959. For the association between marriage and sexuality in Greece during the twentieth century, see Efi Avdela, Kostis Gotsinas, Despo Kritsotaki and Dimitra Vassiliadou, “From Virginity to Orgasm: Marriage and Sexuality in Twentieth-Century Greece,” *Journal of Family History* 45, no. 3 (2020): 315–33.

<sup>26</sup> For the development of such infrastructures, see Sofia Alexia Papazafeiropoulou, “Το εθνικό οδικό δίκτυο κατά την περίοδο 1930–1980: Η κουλτούρα του αυτοκινήτου στην Ελλάδα” (PhD diss., National Technical University of Athens, 2015), 435–50.

popular among unmarried couples. Such areas can be understood as “islands of privacy” within public spaces, which, at the same time, permitted dragons to follow and attack couples, acting on their violent and “perverted” sexual desires.<sup>27</sup>

From the outset, the press presented sexual “perversion” as the main motive for the crimes of the “Dragon of Sheikh Sou”, even though other rationales, such as theft or blackmail, were occasionally recognised.<sup>28</sup> The perpetrator(s) were described as “perverts”, mentally “abnormal”, “sadists” and “necrophiles” – as they assaulted an unconscious and likely dead women: “They tore the dress and the undergarment with unprecedented ferocity, removed the brassier and underpants and abused her while she was dying.”<sup>29</sup> It was also reported that “imprints of blooded lips were found on the woman’s body”, and the perpetrators were described as “vampires”, who drank blood from her wounds. Thus, it was concluded that the crime was clearly sexual.<sup>30</sup> The second and third crimes were attributed to the same criminal, because rocks were used and a dying woman was assaulted.<sup>31</sup> Although in the third crime sexual assault was finally disproved, the effect of the press narratives that mapped the “Dragon’s” activity on the female victims’ bodies remained: they painted a lurid picture of uninhibited and morbid sexual violence referred to as abuse (*ασέλγεια*) or rape, symbolised with the ripping off of female clothing and underwear. In 1963, after the crime in the orphanage, the press sustained the “Dragon’s” portrayal as a wild beast, with wicked, dirty instincts and abyssal passions.<sup>32</sup> The press narratives focused on the crime’s sexual aspect: the “human beast” tore the clothes off the “innocent little

---

<sup>27</sup> “Ανώμαλος, σαδιστής.” The term “islands of privacy” comes from sociologist Eva Illouz, *Consuming the Romantic Utopia: Love and the Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 56.

<sup>28</sup> “Ένας άνδρας και μια γυναίκα ανευρέθησαν βαρύτατα τραυματισμένοι εις το Σείχ-Σου,” *Φως Θεσσαλονίκης*, 20 February 1959; “Οι άγνωστοι εις το Σείχ-Σου.”

<sup>29</sup> “Έργον ψυχικός [sic] ανώμαλων είναι η δολοφονία του λοχαγού και της νέας,” *Φως Θεσσαλονίκης*, 8 March 1959; Ilias Malatos and St. Christodoulou, “Ένώ ο μαύρος αετός έπεφτε με πολτοποιημένο το κεφάλι οι κακούργοι έπιναν το αίμα της κρεουργημένης φίλης,” *Βραδυνή*, 9 March 1959.

<sup>30</sup> Malatos and Christodoulou, “Ένώ ο μαύρος αετός.” As already noted, some journalists suggested that the perpetrators were two or more. The permutation that the perpetrator was only one person actually prevailed after the third crime.

<sup>31</sup> “Ο δράκος είχε εμφανισθή από της εσπέρας της Πέμπτης περίξ του δημοτικού νοσοκομείου,” *Φως Θεσσαλονίκης*, 5 April 1959; “Η αστυνομία Θεσσαλονίκης πιστεύει ότι θα συλλάβη τον κακούργον”; “Νέο διπλούν φρικιαστικόν έγκλημα εις Θεσσαλονίκην,” *Καθημερινή*, 8 March 1959.

<sup>32</sup> “Δράκος εισήλθε την νύχτα.”

girl” and “rushed in a deranged way”, kissing and biting her.<sup>33</sup> As had happened in other national contexts in earlier times, such as late Victorian Britain and fin-de-siècle France, the press willingly published details of sexual crimes.<sup>34</sup> In the French and British context, such representations went against a climate of silence around sex. In postwar Greece the situation was more complicated: discussions about sex were still absent in the family and education, but bold sexual representations were not uncommon in the cultural industry (in cinema, for example), especially from the early 1960s.



Fig. 2. The wall of the municipal hospital, where the third crime took place. *Μακεδονία*, 5 April 1959.

<sup>33</sup> G. Vaxevanidis, “Νοσοκόμος ανεγνώρισε εις το πρόσωπον του δράστου της επιθέσεως εναντίον της νεαρής τροφίμου του ορφανοτροφείου της Θεσσαλονίκης τον ασύλληπτον ‘δράκον του Σείχ-Σου’,” and Vaxevanidis, “Σεξουαλικά ανώμαλος τύπος και τοξικομανής είναι ο συλληφθής δια την κακοποίησιν 12έτιδος νεανίδος,” *Απογευματινή*, 9 December 1963; “Ο ‘δράκος’ του ορφανοτροφείου της Θεσσαλονίκης είναι ο ίδιος με το φοβερό δράκο του Σείχ-Σου,” *Βραδυνή*, 9 December 1963.

<sup>34</sup> Elizabeth Pleck, *Domestic Tyranny: The Making of American Social Policy against Family Violence from Colonial Times to the Present* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 95, and Ann-Louise Shapiro, *Breaking the Codes: Female Criminality in Fin-de-Siècle Paris* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 11.

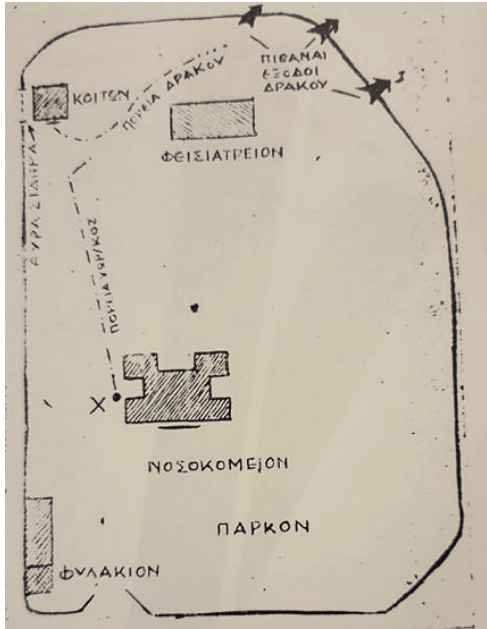


Fig. 3. Plan of the area around the municipal hospital, showing the itinerary of the “Dragon”. *Μακεδονία*, 4 April 1959.

A kind of panic, described in the press as “dragonphobia”, followed the third crime. Insecurity was triggered by hoaxers purporting that they had seen the “Dragon”, but mostly by the crime’s features: having taken place within the city, the third crime undermined the distinction between the dangerous outskirts and the safe centre, alarming the residents of both zones. *Μακεδονία* visualised the criminal’s ability to escape after having committed a crime inside a busy building in a residential area, publishing photos of the wall (the barrier between the public and the private space that the criminal easily outflanked) and a plan of the area of the hospital that

illustrated the “Dragon’s” itinerary inside the building in detail (see figures 2 and 3).<sup>35</sup> Such publications warned readers that they could not feel safe anywhere, not even in public buildings or in their houses. After this crime, citizens, particularly women, in Thessaloniki and other cities, including central areas of Athens, such as Agios Artemios, reported that they had encountered the “Dragon” or had been attacked by him.<sup>36</sup> On the outskirts of Thessaloniki, residents organised group patrols to protect themselves.<sup>37</sup> The authorities and the press usually disregarded these incidents, seeing them as signs of collective hysteria or figments of women’s imagination. Some articles even connected attacks by “dragons” with more trivial forms of delinquency preoccupying the public, such as teddyboyism,<sup>38</sup> or regarded

<sup>35</sup> “Ο δράκος ενεφανίσθη την νύκτα όπισθεν του δημοτικού νοσοκομείου βιάσας και φονεύσας μιαν αδελφή και επιχειρήσας να στραγγαλίση άλλην,” *Μακεδονία*, 4 April 1959; “Ο ασύλληπτος δράκος σκορπίζει πάλιν τρόμον,” *Μακεδονία*, 5 April 1959.

<sup>36</sup> “Η ασυδοσία των φημών φέρει τον δράκον εις τας Αθήνας, Κόρινθον και Μυτιλήνην,” *Μακεδονία*, 11 April 1959.

<sup>37</sup> “Ερημιά και φόβος εις τας ακραίας συνοικίας,” *Μακεδονία*, 5 April 1959.

<sup>38</sup> Ilias Malatos, “Αι επιθέσεις κατά γυναικών είναι νέα μορφή του τεντιμποϊσμού,”

the episodes as “usual” cases of harassment of women by acquaintances, and not by “dragons”.<sup>39</sup> This shows that the sexual assault of an adult woman by a man she knew was not necessarily recognised as a criminal act.<sup>40</sup> Strangers who followed women; who harassed them by assertively expressing their refuted love sentiments; who even attacked them, were not necessarily perceived by the press as “dragons”.<sup>41</sup> They could be cheeky and get carried away “unconsciously”<sup>42</sup> by their “sexual drive”,<sup>43</sup> but they were not necessarily “perverted”, as “dragons” were represented. In addition, the victims were not always innocent; some were of a “lively character”, usually meaning that they went out late at night or had a boyfriend.<sup>44</sup>

Through such narratives, the press drew a line between “normal” and “abnormal” sexuality. Men were “normally” aggressive, driven by their sexual instincts, and women were inclined to resist them and usually managed to do so. Men crossed the line and reached the “abnormal” exactly at the point at which women could no longer resist their aggression. In other words, “normal” women could not resist “dragons”, as the latter transcended the “normally” violent male sexual desire and were transformed to “monsters”. This representation of the “dragon” set forth an understanding of sexually “perverted” men as “monsters”, calling to mind the primary identification of the rapist as a “monster” in other national contexts, such as in England.<sup>45</sup>

Nevertheless, the boundary between “normal” and “pathological” sexual desire was hard to discern. It is telling that the press was sympathetic towards the unmarried couples who frequented isolated spots in the city outskirts, but

---

*Βραδυνή*, 17 April 1959; Alekos Sakellarios, “Το δρακάκι,” *Απογευματινή*, 11 April 1959.

<sup>39</sup> Ilias Malatos, “Φανταστικά ή σκηνοθετημένα αι επιθέσεις εναντίον γυναικών;” *Βραδυνή*, 20 April 1959.

<sup>40</sup> This resonates with research on the United States in the late nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries: See Stephen Robertson, “Seduction, Sexual Violence, and Marriage in New York City, 1886–1955,” *Law and History Review* 24, no. 2 (2006): 331–73.

<sup>41</sup> “Δύο επιθέσεις αγνώστων το Σάββατον κατά γυναικών,” *Καθημερινή*, 14 April 1959.

<sup>42</sup> “Ο δράκος της Θεσσαλονίκης... εις το Άργος,” *Βραδυνή*, 20 April 1959.

<sup>43</sup> Ioannis Voutsinas, “Επίθεσις εν μέση Ομονοία κατά της καλλιτέχνιδος του άσματος Σαμπρίνας,” *Βραδυνή*, 15 April 1959.

<sup>44</sup> “Δύο επιθέσεις αγνώστων;” Malatos, “Φανταστικά ή σκηνοθετημένα.” Certainly, the disbelief in women’s sexual assault accusations was not new. For relevant legal and forensic discussions in the first half of the twentieth century, see Dimitra Vassiliadou, “Κατεστραμμένα’ κορίτσια: Ηθική, γαμηλιότητα και δικαστική πρακτική στη νησιωτική Ελλάδα,” in *Ιστορίες για τη σεξουαλικότητα*, 103–22.

<sup>45</sup> Garthine Walker, “Everyman or a Monster? The Rapist in Early Modern England, c.1600–1750,” *History Workshop Journal* 76, no. 1 (2013): 5–31; Joanna Bourke, “Sexual Violence, Marital Guidance, and Victorian Bodies: An Aesthesiology,” *Victorian Studies* 50,

simultaneously channelled the message (usually implicitly) that “dragons” rightfully punished these couples for frequenting remote areas at night to satisfy their illicit passion. Although the couples’ sexuality was acceptable in comparison to that of the “dragons”, it was nonetheless borderline. Indicatively, the image of the victims of the second crime, who were involved in an extramarital relationship, were ambiguously constructed. The man, who worked in the army, a pillar of authority in the postwar state, was represented in a more positive light. His attempt to resist the “Dragon”, to protect himself and his mistress, corresponded to a brave masculinity and was highlighted by the press.<sup>46</sup> On the contrary, the woman was less favourably represented as morally unprincipled. A report said her room suggested she was a person interested in fashion and popular literature (issues identified with feminine birdbrains), who also had a suitcase full of romantic letters.<sup>47</sup> Similarly, *Βραδυνή* published a photo of the victim in a rather narcissistic pose, characterising her as “the fatal flirt of the captain” (fig. 4).<sup>48</sup> Here, tacitly, the press seemed to employ a media strategy, common since the late nineteenth century, to explain crimes (usually against women) through the actions and behaviour of the victims and not the attackers, by defining the violence of the latter not in the context of their experience but in that of the victims’ behaviour.<sup>49</sup>

In spite of the grey areas between “normal”/acceptable and “abnormal”/unacceptable, “dragons” clearly represented the second: they were described as sexual “perverts” and dangerous “pathological types of rascal”,<sup>50</sup> who followed the “normal”, albeit illegal, couples, engaged in voyeurism and committed crimes, such as bodily harm, homicide, rape and sexual assault. Their sexual desire was clearly and extremely “perverted”, and could also be seen as pathological. To support this view, the press often invoked forensic medicine and psychiatry experts.

---

no. 3 (2008): 419–36; Georges Vigarello, *Ιστορία του βιασμού, 16ος–20ός αιώνας*, trans. Lia Voutsouroulou (Athens: Alexandria, 2001), 280–97.

<sup>46</sup> “Ο ίλαρχος επάλαισεν απεγνωσμένως με τους στυγερούς δράστας: Η νέα ενώ επιθυμεί ακόμη εβιάζετο υπό των κακούργων,” *Μακεδονία*, 8 March 1959.

<sup>47</sup> “Εις το δωμάτιόν της,” *Μακεδονία*, 8 March 1959.

<sup>48</sup> “Τα δύο θύματα των δολοφόνων της Θεσσαλονίκης,” *Βραδυνή*, 9 March 1959; “Η Ευδοξία Παλιογιάννη κατά τελευταίαν φωτογραφίαν της,” *Βραδυνή*, 10 March 1959.

<sup>49</sup> Joanne Jones, “‘She Resisted with All Her Might’: Sexual Violence against Women in Late Nineteenth-Century Manchester and the Local Press,” in *Everyday Violence in Britain, 1850–1950: Gender and Class*, ed. Shani D. Cruze (Harlow: Longman, 2000), 108.

<sup>50</sup> “Το άγριον έγκλημα της Βουλιαγμένης διέπραξε παθολογικός τύπος αλήτου;” *Ελευθερία*, 11 August 1953.



Fig. 4. The victim of the crime in Mikra. *Βραδυνή*, 10 March 1959.

#### *Expert Views on “Perverted” Sexuality*

The first expert implicated in the case of the “Dragon of Sheikh Sou” was Dimitris Kapsaskis.<sup>51</sup> A respected scientist, Kapsaskis (1909–1993) had studied law and medicine in Athens and Paris and forensic medicine in London, Edinburgh, New York and Paris, and was appointed chief coroner of the Forensic Medical Service of Athens in 1957. Travelling from Athens to Thessaloniki to examine the crimes of 1959, Kapsaskis concluded that the perpetrator was a “true dragon”, a “vampire” and the number one public danger in Thessaloniki due to his cruelty

---

<sup>51</sup> Other criminologists who worked on the case were Konstantinos Iliakis, professor of forensic medicine and toxicology at the University of Athens, and Dimitrios Rovithis, assistant professor of forensic medicine and toxicology at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.

and sadism.<sup>52</sup> He deemed the crimes, particularly the hideous ones, to be of the “classical sexual type”,<sup>53</sup> because there was no history between the perpetrator and the victims, no cause or pretext, such as revenge or hate.<sup>54</sup>

As already noted, the lack of easily discernible motives was a central cause of anxiety and fascination about new forms of criminality in the late 1950s. But what did Kapsaskis mean by a “classical” type of sexual crimes? Following Western jurisprudence, Greek forensic medicine in the 1950s considered the penetration of the penis into the vagina as the only “normal” and non-delinquent sexual activity, provided that intercourse took place in a private space and the woman was an adult and fully conscious of her actions. Any other activity was criminal: rape, assault or sexual “perversion”. The latter included homosexuality, necrophilia, exhibitionism, sadism, masochism and nymphomania.<sup>55</sup> The definitions of criminal and “perverted” sexuality mostly referred to male sexual desires and activities, excluding homosexuality, which could be male or female, and nymphomania, which was female. Especially sexual violence was by definition male. For example, rape was defined as “the coercion of a female into extramarital intercourse through physical violence or by the threat of a great and immediate danger”.<sup>56</sup> As in many countries, in Greece it was rare before the 1970s for investigators to even consider the possibility of women exercising sexual violence.<sup>57</sup>

Moving from forensic medicine to forensic psychiatry, the field of expertise that explored the link between criminality and insanity, sexual crimes were understood as being connected to mental illness. Although forensic psychiatry was still underdeveloped in Greece, and the role of forensic psychiatrists in courts was limited, forensic psychiatrists were supposed to attest whether a defendant was unaccountable due to a mental disorder and thus should be committed to a psychiatric rather than a penal institution.<sup>58</sup> Forensic psychiatrist Michael G. Stringaris (1903–1996) claimed that many crimes, especially crimes against life, were committed by mentally ill individuals, as their personality was

---

<sup>52</sup> Malatos, “Ανώμαλος τύπος ο δράκος της Θεσσαλονίκης.”

<sup>53</sup> “Επικηρύχθησαν αντί 100.000 δρχ. έκαστος οι δολοφόνοι του λοχαγού Ραΐση και της νέας,” *Φως Θεσσαλονίκης*, 10 March 1959.

<sup>54</sup> “Θα είναι δύσκολος η διελεύκανσις του εγκλήματος,” *Καθημερινή*, 10 March 1959.

<sup>55</sup> Grigorios Katsas, *Στοιχεία Ιατροδικαστικής* (Athens: s.n., 1951), 2:21–34; Takis Nikolopoulos, *Σημειώσεις ιατροδικαστικής* (Athens: s.n., 1952), 134–44.

<sup>56</sup> As stated in the Penal Code of 1950, article 336, cited in Nikolakopoulos, *Ιατροδικαστική*, 138.

<sup>57</sup> Bourke, *Rape*, 214.

<sup>58</sup> For the development of forensic psychiatry in Greece, see Efi Avdela, “Medea’ in the Greek Courtroom: Contesting Insanity Among Jurists, Psychiatrists and the Public,” in this issue.



weakened and their impulses prevailed.<sup>59</sup> Stringaris also deemed it necessary to seek the opinion of an experienced forensic psychiatrist in cases of sexual “perversion”.<sup>60</sup> He understood the lack of control over an intense and “perverse” sexual impulse as a key factor in sexual crimes, and perceived sexual criminals as “individuals with sexual perversions, but mainly psychopaths and mentally retarded individuals with manifestations of primitive satisfaction of the instinct, manifestations that simultaneously constitute a criminal action”, such as rape and algolagnia.<sup>61</sup>

Such claims were based on a genealogy of psychiatric thought that identified exaggerated, uncontrolled and aberrant sexual desire of men as a mental disorder. In the West, this “psychiatrisation” of sexual behaviour was initiated in the late nineteenth century by psychiatrists who analysed sexual “deviations” or “perversions”, some of which had already been classified as crimes by national legal systems.<sup>62</sup> Psychiatrists saw sexual “deviance” as common among the mentally ill, and argued that sexual criminals were “psychopathic personalities” and “sexual perverts”. A number of disorders for out-of-control male sexuality was described, from the nineteenth-century “erotomania” and “satyriasis” to the mid-twentieth-century “sexual psychopathy”.<sup>63</sup> While women had a share in sexual disorders, mainly when diagnosed as “nymphomaniac” or “hypersexual”, psychiatric understandings of sexual crimes focused on men.<sup>64</sup> In all these ways,

---

<sup>59</sup> Michael G. Stringaris, *Στοιχεία ψυχιατροδικαστικής* (Athens: s.n., 1959), 95; Stringaris, *Ψυχιατροδικαστική: ψυχοβιολογική και ψυχοπαθολογική εγκληματολογία* (Athens: s.n., 1947).

<sup>60</sup> Stringaris, *Στοιχεία ψυχιατροδικαστικής*, 30, 105–6.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 40. Stringaris defined as psychopaths those suffering not from mental illnesses, but from pathological mental reactions, which were not clearly demarcated from normal reactions. Algolagnia is the derivement of sexual pleasure from pain.

<sup>62</sup> A key publication was Richard von Krafft-Ebing’s *Psychopathia Sexualis* in 1886. Psychiatry officially placed sexual deviations under its purview, including them in the disorders of character and personality of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD) only in 1948. See Tommy Dickinson et al., “‘Queer’ Treatments: Giving a Voice to Former Patients who Received Treatment for their ‘Sexual Deviations,’” *Journal of Clinical Nursing* 21, no. 9–10 (2012): 1345–54.

<sup>63</sup> Timothy Verhoeven, “Pathologizing Male Desire: Satyriasis, Masculinity, and Modern Civilization at the Fin de Siècle,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 24, no. 1 (2015): 25–45; Estelle B. Freedman, “‘Uncontrolled Desires’: The Response to the Sexual Psychopath, 1920–1960,” *Journal of American History* 74, no. 1 (1987): 83–106.

<sup>64</sup> Elizabeth Lunbeck, *The Psychiatric Persuasion: Knowledge, Gender and Power in Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 185–208; Janet Weston, *Medicine, the Penal System and Sexual Crimes in England, 1919–1960s: Diagnosing Deviance* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 39–58.

psychiatry influenced the identification of the rapist “as a discrete category of the human” in the late nineteenth century.<sup>65</sup>

Following these developments, Greek psychiatrists classified sexual “perversions”, along with criminality and toxicomania, under personality disorders or psychopathy (diagnoses characterised by a lack of social adjustment, shallow social relationships, aggression and despondency) and asserted that sexual “perversions” and sexual crimes were manifested in individuals with psychopathic, neurotic or psychotic disturbances.<sup>66</sup> These trends were evident in the psychiatric handling of the “Dragon of Sheikh Sou”. Psychiatry entered the case after Pagratidis’ arrest in 1963, when Agapitos Diakogiannis, assistant professor of neurology and psychiatry at the University of Thessaloniki, examined the suspect. Although some newspapers reported that a team of psychiatrists would examine Pagratidis, Diakogiannis remained the only psychiatrist summoned in the case, and the press referred frequently to his opinion.<sup>67</sup> Early on Diakogiannis ascertained that Pagratidis was the dragon, describing him as an individual with “many abnormalities of the character and perversions”, including passive and active homosexuality, voyeurism, theft, alcoholism and hashish abuse.<sup>68</sup> But was he mentally ill? Although Diakogiannis initially stated that Pagratidis had a “split personality” – which implied a severe psychosis – he later proclaimed that he did not suffer from any psychosis, but only from a character and behaviour disorder.<sup>69</sup> Diakogiannis also excluded organic brain damage by ordering an electroencephalogram of Pagratidis, which he found normal.<sup>70</sup> Diakogiannis stated that Pagratidis was *compos mentis* and fully conscious of his actions. He was “just a psychopathic type” with “a sexual abnormal tendency”.<sup>71</sup> In the trial, he testified that passive homosexuals like Pagratidis were psychopaths, socially unadjusted and their

<sup>65</sup> Bourke, *Rape*, 5–18.

<sup>66</sup> Fotis Skouras, *Σύγχρονος ψυχιατρική* (Athens: A. Karavias, 1952), 10; Panagiotis Sakellarios, “Ψυχανωμαλίες και τοξικομανίες,” in *Θέματα ψυχιατρικής*, ed. Kostas Stefanis et al. (Athens: Symmetria, 1991), 266–81.

<sup>67</sup> “Διχασμένην προσωπικότητα έχει ο δράκος του Σείχ-Σου απεφάνθη ο εξετάσας καθηγητής,” *Μεσημβρινή*, 16 December 1963.

<sup>68</sup> “Ο Παγκρατίδης κατόπιν εξαντλητικής ανακρίσεως ωμολόγησεν ότι είναι ο καταζητούμενος δράκος,” *Καθημερινή*, 15 December 1963; “Εκθεις πραγματογνωμοσύνης ιατρού Διακογιάννη,” 18 December 1963 and the indictment of the case “Εφετών εν Θεσσαλονίκη αρ. 134,” 10 July 1965, General State Archives, Thessaloniki.

<sup>69</sup> “Διχασμένην προσωπικότητα έχει ο δράκος”; “Ο Παγκρατίδης ανήρθεσεν ενώπιον του εισαγγελέως ότι είναι ο δράκος του Σείχ-Σου,” *Καθημερινή*, 17 December 1963.

<sup>70</sup> “Εκθεις πραγματογνωμοσύνης” and “Συμβούλιο Εφετών εν Θεσσαλονίκη αρ. 134.”

<sup>71</sup> “Διχασμένην προσωπικότητα έχει ο δράκος.”

deviance was lifelong and incurable; they were hideous criminals who enjoyed crime.<sup>72</sup>

The term “psychopath” that Diakogiannis employed brings to mind the “sexual psychopath”, a category constructed to deal with a perceived increase of sexual crimes in the United States from the late 1930s to the 1960s.<sup>73</sup> The “sexual psychopath” was a man unable to control his impulses – a constant feature of “pathological” sexuality.<sup>74</sup> In our case, the term was not used, possibly to avoid a lenient sentence for Pagratidis, since the “sexual psychopath” diagnosis could lead to a decision to place him in psychiatric treatment. On the other hand, the simple “psychopath” diagnosis meant he would receive the full punishment, on the basis that he was not insane.

#### *Putting a Face to “Perverted” Sexuality: Pagratidis as a Model “Dragon”*

Mental aberration – even with a low degree of psychopathy – was part of a more complex image of “perverted” sexual desire constructed when the “Dragon” became identified with Pagratidis. From then on journalists sketched the profile of the sexually “abnormal” type based on elements of Pagratidis’ life history, which were discovered with the help of acquaintances, officials and medical experts, even though Diakogiannis was the only physician who examined him. Thus, a complete picture of the sexual “pervert” was formed that combined social, psychological and moral features.

Pagratidis grew up in extreme poverty in a village during the Greek Civil War, when he witnessed the murder of his father. The family moved to Thessaloniki and resided in the humble district of Germanika in Ano Touba. The press presented him as illiterate and reserved, with a variety of vices: seemingly innocent tastes, like a liking for candy, pies and cinema during his childhood, were presented as evidence of his “perverted” desires, while his inability to obtain these things supposedly made him an unhappy and violent child. Once he even hit his mother because she did not give him money. He tortured animals and injured children with stones. He gradually became “perverse”, was arrested for theft and was committed to a reformatory.<sup>75</sup>

After that, his life became “irregular”. He abandoned his family, did not have steady employment and did not serve in the army, as the military authorities

<sup>72</sup> Tsarouchas, *Υπόθεση Παγκρατίδη*, 287.

<sup>73</sup> George Chauncey, “The Post-War Sex Crime Panic,” in *True Stories from the American Past*, ed. William Graebner (New York: McGraw Hill, 1993), 160–78.

<sup>74</sup> Freedman, “Uncontrolled Desires.”

<sup>75</sup> “Συμβούλιο Εφετών εν Θεσσαλονίκη αρ. 134”; “Εκθεσις πραγματογνωμοσύνης ιατρού

characterised him as “mentally abnormal”, a “psychopath” and a “drug addict”.<sup>76</sup> Furthermore, he committed thefts and other illegal acts and became known to the police as part of the city’s “underworld”, having contacts with “abnormal types”, such as criminals and “women of free morals”.<sup>77</sup> Some of his activities corresponded to those of the “poor devils” (*φτωχοδιάβολοι*), a category of petty criminals in the cities,<sup>78</sup> showing that, despite improving living standards, the Greek version of the swinging 1960s included significant poverty and inequality, as unemployment was substantial and the welfare state weak.<sup>79</sup>

Yet, the image of Pagratidis as “perverted” was linked less to such minor crimes against property than to sexual crimes, associated with deviant performances of masculinity, homosexuality included. In the cities of the 1960s, homosexuality was not unknown among working-class men, whose passive homosexuality represented a disapproved performance of masculinity, while middle-class active homosexuals were more acceptable.<sup>80</sup> Pagratidis’ sexual identity was more complex. The journalists reported testimonies by his “underworld” friends that he was a “sexual pervert”, who satisfied his passion on girls, passive homosexuals and animals and that he had been sodomised first at the age of 14. He had sex for little money and socialised with “perverts” and prostitutes. He also spied on couples in parks and forests, sometimes blackmailing them for money.<sup>81</sup> He was additionally presented as a necrophile: a prostitute claimed that once he paid her to have sex with him on a tombstone. In

---

Διακογιάννη”; “Ο Παγκρατίδης είναι ο δράκος;” *Θεσσαλονίκη*, 14 December 1963; “Ο δράκος αρνείται πάσαν σχέσιν με τον δολοφόνον του Σέιχ-Σου, περιπίπτει όμως σε αντιφάσεις,” *Μακεδονία*, 10 December 1963; “Ο Παγκρατίδης κατόπιν εξαντλητικής ανακρίσεως ωμολόγησεν.”

<sup>76</sup> “Ο ‘δράκος του ορφανοτροφείου’ ωμολόγησε την ενοχήν του. Ψυχικώς ανώμαλος τύπος,” *Βραδυνή*, 9 December 1963.

<sup>77</sup> “Συμβούλιο Εφετών εν Θεσσαλονίκη αρ. 134.”

<sup>78</sup> The term comes from Kostas Katsapis, *Οι καταραμένοι: Σπαράγματα κοινωνικής ιστορίας, αντίδοτο στη νοσταλγία του εξήντα* (Athens: Okto, 2019), 93–121.

<sup>79</sup> David Close, *Ελλάδα 1945–2004: Πολιτική, οικονομία, κοινωνία*, trans. Yorgos Mertikas (Thessaloniki: Thyrathen, 2006), 108, and Antonis Liakos, *Ο ελληνικός εικοστός αιώνας* (Athens: Polis, 2019), 360.

<sup>80</sup> Kostas Yannakopoulos, “Naked Piazza’: Male (Homo)sexualities, Masculinities and Consumer Cultures in Greece Since the 1960s,” in *Consumption and Gender in Southern Europe Since the Long Sixties*, ed. Kostis Kornetis, Eirini Kotsovili and Nikolaos Papadogiannis (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 174–78. Homosexuality was decriminalised in Greece in 1950, but intolerance towards homosexuals remained powerful at least until the 1980s.

<sup>81</sup> “Η νοσοκόμος και η σύζυγος αξιωματικού αναγνωρίζουν ομοιότητας εις τον δράκον με τον φοβερόν εγκληματίαν του Σέιχ-Σου,” *Μακεδονία*, 10 December 1963; “Ο Παγκρατίδης κατόπιν εξαντλητικής ανακρίσεως ωμολόγησεν;” “Συμβούλιο Εφετών εν Θεσσαλονίκη αρ. 134.”

sum, he was “rotten”: “there was not a perversion that his body did not long for”.<sup>82</sup> In general he was portrayed as cruel, twisted and abominable: after the attack in the orphanage, *Μακεδονία* described him as *βδελυρός*, a pejorative term describing a simultaneously dangerous and disgusting person, and attempted to visualise him as such. The first page hosted a photo of Pagratidis next to one of his young victim, juxtaposing his supposed ferocity to the “child’s” innocence (figs. 5 and 6).<sup>83</sup>



Fig. 5. Aristidis Pagratidis. *Μακεδονία*, 8 December 1963.

<sup>82</sup> “Ο δράκος αρνείται πεισμόνως να ομολογήσει πάσαν ενοχήν του δια τα παλαιά εγκλήματα του Σέιχ-Σου και Μίκρας,” *Θεσσαλονίκη*, 16 December 1963; “Ανώματος, σαδιστής.”

<sup>83</sup> “Δράκος εισήλθε την νύκτα εντός ορφανοτροφείου και επετέθη κατά παιδίσκης,” *Μακεδονία*, 8 December 1963.



Fig. 6. The victim of the crime at the orphanage. *Μακεδονία*, 8 December 1963.

Alongside the “lay” sources for Pagratidis’ sexual “perversion”, the press invoked the views of experts, “magistrates and criminologists”, who described him as a “fetishist”, namely “a pervert who is sexually aroused by the sight even of a woman’s object”.<sup>84</sup> A journalist reported that Konstantinos Iliakis, professor of forensic medicine and toxicology in the University of Athens (1945–1946 and 1959–1960), explained that the “Dragon” belonged to the “sadist necrophiles”, a category of very dangerous criminals who killed to satisfy their sick passion.<sup>85</sup> Such “perversions”, disgusting for “any normal human”, were presented in the press as part of a mental “abnormality”,<sup>86</sup> demonstrated by Pagratidis’ apathy, cold gaze and “stupid smile” under interrogation; by his bestial laughter, as he was being taken to the police station; and by the information that after the second crime, he went home, had dinner and slept.<sup>87</sup> In a nutshell, newspaper articles

<sup>84</sup> “Ο δράκος αρνείται πεισιμόνως.”

<sup>85</sup> “Ανώμαλος, σαδιστής.”

<sup>86</sup> “Εις τας φυλακάς μετήχθη αιτήσει των συνηγώρων ο φερόμενος ως δράκος,” *Μακεδονία*, 18 December 1963.

<sup>87</sup> “Εκθεσις πραγματογνωμοσύνης ιατρού Διακογιάννη”; “Συμβούλιο Εφετών εν Θεσσαλονίκη αρ. 134”; “Ανώμαλος, σαδιστής”; “Ο δράκος αναιρεί τώρα την ομολογία,” *Βραδυνή*, 17 December 1963; “Ο δράκος αρνείται πάσαν σχέσιν με τον δολοφόνον.”

depicted the full image of Pagratidis' "perverted" sexuality, underlining that the passion blurred his mind, making him rush to his victims; that the sudden and uncontrolled desire to satisfy his "abnormal urges" made him run "amok"; that he was devoid of reason, and lived only to kill and gratify his "perverted" sexual passions.<sup>88</sup>

*Conclusion: The Incomplete Psychiatrisation of Male Violent Desire*

Although represented as practically deranged, Pagratidis was sentenced to death. As noted, Diakogiannis concluded that Pagratidis was a "simply perverted" criminal and was thus fully culpable and responsible for his actions.<sup>89</sup> Having been diagnosed as a "psychopath", Pagratidis could be considered to be of lessened mental capacity, but not of lessened accountability.<sup>90</sup> On the grounds of his alleged dangerousness and the severity of the crimes, no mitigating circumstances were taken into consideration. The defence argued that Pagratidis was sexually "peculiar" but not a hideous criminal, and that society was somehow responsible for the fact that he had grown up in such precarious conditions, but these arguments were rejected.<sup>91</sup> The defence also contested Diakogiannis' scientific competence, arguing that he had not examined Pagratidis according to medical standards. For this reason, they asked for the opinion of more experts.<sup>92</sup>

These requests were overruled. Drawing on Diakogiannis' report, the court condemned Pagratidis to death. This did not mean that the Greek judges generally trusted expert psychiatric testimonies; quite the opposite, they were sceptical towards them, even as seemingly irrational violent crimes increased and the explanation of mental illness and the role of forensic psychiatry became more relevant in the 1960s. Moreover, psychiatric opinion was not binding on judges, who often opposed psychiatrists on the issue of accountability, while the press and, likely, public opinion were negative towards psychiatric expertise in trials, as they worried it could lead to the acquittal of dangerous criminals.<sup>93</sup> In the case of the "Dragon of Sheikh Sou" this dimension was crucial, given that,

<sup>88</sup> "Ο συλληφθείς εν Θεσσαλονίκη κακοποιός αρνείται ότι έχει σχέσιν με τον 'δράκον' του Σείχ-Σου," *Καθημερινή*, 10 December 1963; "Ανώμαλος, σαδιστής."

<sup>89</sup> "Διχασμένην προσωπικότητα έχει ο δράκος."

<sup>90</sup> This view was voiced by Professor Konstantinos Iliakis, as cited in Tsarouchas, *Υπόθεση Παγκρατίδη*, 27. See also Stringaris, *Στοιχεία ψυχιατροδικαστικής*, 108.

<sup>91</sup> Tsarouchas, *Υπόθεση Παγκρατίδη*, 446–54.

<sup>92</sup> Papaioannou, *Ο 'δράκος' του Σείχ-Σου*, 143–50, 208.

<sup>93</sup> Avdela, "Making Sense of 'Hideous Crimes,'" Avdela, *Δια λόγους τιμής*, 160–61; Avdela, "'Medea' in the Greek Courtroom."

as we have seen, the crimes preoccupied the press for days on end and were presented in chilling detail, provoking fear in people who wished to see the “Dragon” in jail. The difficulty of forensic psychiatry to establish its credibility in courts was a transnational phenomenon. Although psychiatry became more respected in justice systems in the interwar period and even more in the postwar era, in practice the new experts faced difficulties in establishing their authority on sexual crimes and advocating a more therapeutic than penal approach.<sup>94</sup>

Since forensic psychiatry was even less established in Greece, the judges accepted Diakogiannis’ opinion (a non-specialist in forensic psychiatry) not because they trusted psychiatric expertise but because his opinion assisted them in convicting Pagratidis. Journalistic research has claimed that the conviction was valuable for the authorities in Thessaloniki (especially the police) in that it helped them re-establish their reputation after their failure to find the culprit of the 1959 crimes and, furthermore, after the assassination of MP Grigoris Lambrakis, which had taken place only a few months before.<sup>95</sup> Apart from this contingent political need, we would argue that Pagratidis’ conviction served a social need: the need to locate “extreme” sexual violence in a singular “perverted” individual. In this way, “excessive” sexual violence was constructed as uncommon and different from “ordinary” and supposedly “normal” male sexual aggression. Therefore, similar to the “sexual psychopath” in the mid-twentieth-century United States, in Greece the category of the “dragon” contributed to the consolidation of the boundaries between acceptable and unacceptable sexual behaviour at a time of change in premarital sexuality and women’s roles.<sup>96</sup> However, despite this similarity to the “sexual psychopath”, the “dragon” was never completely psychiatrised. The case of the “Dragon of Sheikh Sou” exemplifies that he clearly represented an “extreme” and unacceptable side of male sexual violence, considered occasionally pathological, but mostly

---

<sup>94</sup> Freedman, “Uncontrolled Desires;” Janet Weston, “‘Prison Will not Cure a Sexual Perversion.’ Sexology, Forensic Psychiatry, and their Patients in Twentieth-Century Britain,” in *Crimes of Passion: Repräsentationen der Sexualpathologie im frühen 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Oliver Böni and Japhet Johnstone (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), 344–67.

<sup>95</sup> See Tsarouchas, *Υπόθεση Παγκρατίδη*, 9. Lambrakis was a pacifist MP of the left-wing United Democratic Left party. He was murdered in May 1963 by right-wing extremists, who (protected by the police) had organised a counterdemonstration in the area where the murder took place. For Lambrakis’ life, see Evi Gkotzaridis, *A Pacifist’s Life and Death: Grigorios Lambrakis and Greece in the Long Shadow of Civil War* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2016). For his assassination, see Kostas Papaioannou, *Πολιτική δολοφονία. Υπόθεση Λαμπράκη* (Athens: To Pontiki, 1995).

<sup>96</sup> Freedman, “Uncontrolled Desires.”



vicious. As the press reports highlight, it was accepted that something was not “normal” with men like Pagratidis: they were blinded by passion and lust, driven by pathological sexual desire, unable to control their perverted impulses, bestial instincts and sadist appetites. But such perversions were seen as signs of reduced social adjustment and faulty character, not of illness. No psychological explanation of Pagratidis’ perversion was offered, emphasising, for example, a damaged or incomplete psychosexual development, a central aspect of the “sexual psychopath”, which would not have been hard to show in the case of a man with Pagratidis’ background.<sup>97</sup> The option of psychiatric treatment as an alternative to punishment was not considered. His diagnosis as a “psychopath” with a “perverted” personality and sexuality was used to eliminate the possibility of acquittal on the grounds of mental illness, and to ensure a harsh punishment, by proving his inability to repent and reform.

All in all, the “Dragon of Sheikh Sou” case shows that in 1950s and 1960s Greece the press played a significant role in the construction of sexual violence and “perversion”, capitalising to a great extent on the mediatisation of scientific (forensic and psychiatric) discourses. More specifically, our analysis illustrates that violent sexual desires were constructed as a male pathology to the degree that they could be placed on the margin of society and help normalise “moderate” male sexual violence, but not to the extent that they might be treated as a mental illness. It is therefore crucial to understand the case within the social and cultural transformations of the time. As urbanisation progressed and new gender and sexual attitudes were moulded, lay, expert and state anxieties about sexuality arose, which were accompanied by the intensification of attempts to control it. Such concerns certainly motivated the fascination with the “Dragon of Sheikh Sou” and his crimes.

*Centre of research for medicine, sciences, health, mental health, society (CERMES3), Paris  
Institute for Media and Communication, Hamburg University*

---

<sup>97</sup> Robertson, “Separating the Men.”