

From Virginity to Orgasm: Marriage and Sexuality in Twentieth-century Greece

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Abstract

This article charts the gradual sexualization of marriage in twentieth-century Greece, exploring both expert and lay ideas. First, through official writings and marital correspondence, it sketches the subtle transformation of the nineteenth-century ideal of conjugal love into a more sexualized emotion by the turn of the century. Then, it analyzes the writings of “sex experts” and the correspondence with their clients, showcasing how sexual pleasure became a priority within marriage after World War II. Lastly, the records of a postwar mental health service show that by the late 1970s, the consensus on the importance of mutual sexual satisfaction was being established.

Keywords

marriage, sexuality, Greece, twentieth century, sexology, sexual experts, psychiatry, marital correspondence

Not long ago, Victoria Harris has remarked that “the history of sexuality is still very much a history of the margins,” in the sense that it is mostly engaged with exceptional forms of sexual practices.¹ While sex in marriage, a central institution in Western societies, has recently attracted the interest of historians of sexuality,² it is still less explored than sex outside marriage, especially for the twentieth century. We know more about the nineteenth century. Important research conducted in the last four decades has repeatedly shown that the sexual ideal of the nineteenth century, apparently heterosexual, was firmly based on three pillars. First, on marital stability, with divorces being scarce at the time. Second, on widespread scientific and lay assumptions about the hypoactive female sexuality, with “prostitutes” and “hysterics” acting as loud exceptions to this essentialist rule; to the predominance, finally, of the “double standard,” which allowed men to resort regularly to (mainly paid) pre- and extramarital sex without endangering their reputation, whereas women had to preserve their

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moral and sexual purity at any cost.³ The distinct conceptualizations of male and female sexuality were, as most of the gendered hierarchies of the nineteenth century, based on biased perceptions of human biology, nature, and God. Despite the few revisionist voices that emerged in the 1980s to claim that Victorian couples, contrary to the dominant restrained sexual morals, managed to combine love, sex, and erotic pleasure,⁴ most historians today agree that nineteenth-century middle-class Western marriage was, above all, a spiritual relationship.⁵ As a lifelong relation, conjugality was based on physical intimacy, shared interests, spiritual affinity, and a set of responsibilities that stemmed from the separate spheres' doctrine.⁶ Intercourse was recognized as an integral part of the marital bond but mainly as a necessity and obligation primarily geared toward procreation. Sexual passion was a matter of great concern, even within marriage, and, as almost any passion, was considered harmful and immoral.⁷

However, already by the turn of the nineteenth century, things were changing: physicians and other experts on marriage began to recognize the importance of married women's sexual satisfaction, while expressing concerns of the dangers inherent in according it too much importance.⁸ Dagmar Herzog and others have highlighted the importance that *mutual* sexual satisfaction acquired for a successful marriage in the course of the twentieth century. Physicians, psychiatrists, psychologists, and increasingly the new experts of sexology highlighted that the suppression of the sexual instinct could cause bodily and mental illness not only to men but also to women. Within an increasing sexualization of women and marriage, anxiety over "frigid wives" was all the more present in the interwar and postwar period in the Western world. Marriage manuals and counseling centers were expanding in Europe and the United States, dispersing advice on sex technique and the relief of female frigidity.⁹ At the same time, for the greater part of the twentieth century, experts thought that it was up to men to arouse and satisfy the sexual desires of their wives. In contrast to men, women, although sexualized, were perceived as sexually passive and were discouraged from complete premarital sexual relationships.¹⁰ The double standard was challenged only in the 1970s, when in many Western societies sex was becoming an autonomous activity of pleasure and expression, disentangled from marriage and reproduction, and women who expressed their sexuality in public and outside marriage became more socially acceptable.¹¹

Such accounts of twentieth-century marital sexuality are mostly based on a limited number of national cases, such as Britain, France, and the United States, where substantial research has been conducted.¹² Greece has been absent in this historiography. Research on Greek history of sexuality started to emerge lately, but marriage has remained, as elsewhere, a marginal theme.¹³ It is also true that sources are scarce. They are mainly prescriptive texts or specialists' writings addressed to the middle and upper social classes. Marriage as the precondition for a healthy and moral sexual life, the belief on women's hyposexuality, and the admission of the moral double standard continued to be the dominant features of the Greek model in spite of their changes in the course of the century. Indications of actual sexual practices—male or female, inside and outside marriage—and the ways that they were perceived and experienced are sparse. We know even less about sexual practices of the urban popular strata or the vast rural population.¹⁴

Taking into consideration these limits of the bibliography and sources, we propose a first broad approach of the history of marital sexuality in twentieth-century Greece. Focusing on the middle classes,¹⁵ we argue that in the course of the century, the sexual dimensions of marriage gradually and increasingly became a matter of concern and discussion. Based on a variety of sources, both official and from below, we attempt to approach prescriptive discourses along with the beliefs and experiences of individuals—men and women, sometimes clients of sexologists or mental health experts. The first part of the article, based on medical and pedagogical writings as well as marital correspondence, sketches the subtle transformation of the nineteenth-century ideal of conjugal love, primarily spiritual, into a more sexualized emotion, surfacing in the early twentieth century. In the second part, we focus on the growing literature on sexual matters and the gradual establishment of

“sexual experts,” from the beginning of the century to the end of the 1970s. While sexologists crystallized the dominant model of marital sexuality, at the same time, because of the importance that they conferred to the “sexual instinct,” they allowed the expression of concerns about sexual matters—and especially about women’s sexual pleasure—as their correspondence with patients indicates. The third part illustrates this growing concern about marital sexuality, focusing on the example of a postwar mental health service. Based on case records, this part examines how experts (mainly psychiatrists and psychiatric social workers) dealt with sex in marriage and how this was perceived by their male and female clients. By combining these aspects, we argue that the main change in marital sexuality in twentieth-century Greece was the gradual recognition of women’s sexual pleasure as a precondition for a successful marital relationship, not only by physicians, sexologists, and other experts but also by married women themselves, yet not necessarily by their spouses.

Nineteenth-century Moral Legacy: Love against Lust

Even late in the twentieth century, marital sexuality in Greece was routinely recognized as the sexual norm for both men and women.¹⁶ However, its understanding did not remain the same in time. A sketchy comparison between public discourses on the hygienic and moral aspects of marriage, and nineteenth-century love letters, shows that they shared at least one common element: the opposition between marital love and erotic attraction. Greek upper- and middle-class couples of the late nineteenth century did not express freely their sexual desires and experiences. Conjugal love was steadily organized around the emotion of “love,” primarily recognized as spiritual bonding.¹⁷ Among many others, almost identical love letters of the period, the numismatist Alekos Meletopoulos, for example, wrote in 1884 to his fiancée Maria Kambani—whom he had just met—the following: “I cannot live without you no more. And how could I, [...] since our two souls have been so tied up together.”¹⁸ Up until the last decades of the nineteenth century even in the letters between engaged or recently married upper- and middle-class couples, references to sexuality are missing. Marital correspondence systematically obscured sexual desire, and intercourse was acceptable only within marriage. To understand this absence, we must turn to the dominant ideas that first imposed the conjugal love/lust divide and to the identification of sexual desire as an unruly and uncontrollable emotion.

The pervasive silence over marital sexuality does not imply that couples were not having sex, sometimes even before marriage. Unexpected pregnancies, a solid proof of premarital sexual activity, affirmed that practices did not always conform to dominant moral codes. This was the case, for example, in a letter Marigo Makka addressed to her husband in 1866, when she was mentioning that a lady friend of the family had to be hastily married since she was already “in the family way”;¹⁹ similarly, in a letter exchanged a decade later between the young Valaoritis brothers, the older, Nanos, was writing about a common close friend: “the poor man [...], he liked a young girl and asked her to marry him,” but eventually he changed his mind, and “now her relatives are putting so much pressure, the girl is pregnant, and he is still having second thoughts.”²⁰ Limited knowledge on methods of contraception, even within the educated middle classes, was probably the reason behind this inevitable, at times unwanted, outcome. Nevertheless, it seems that for the most part of the nineteenth century, Greek middle classes did not abstain altogether from premarital sex, especially during long engagement periods. We also know that both premarital and extramarital intercourse were not uncommon in the lower urban and rural classes.²¹

Apart from the few translated foreign manuals, Greek texts on the “hygiene of marriage” or “sexual hygiene” were scarce, with just three publications issued during the second half of the century.²² Willing to disarm erotic desire from its threatening potential, the few Greek authors routinely acknowledged marriage as a mutual spiritual and mental contact. Furthermore, all references to

marital sexuality in a variety of nineteenth-century popular texts denounced sexual pleasure and excessive erotic desire as abnormal and disastrous. "Moderation" was proposed as the norm for successful conjugal relationships. For example, the physician Georgios Kyriakidis in the 1900 edition of his book *The Mysteries of Spousal Love, Namely the Couple's Physiology and Hygiene* was asserting that "the pleasures that both spouses enjoy are divine, only if they do not exceed the bounds of reason."²³ The uncomfortable coexistence of sexual passion and conjugal love allowed only a normative perception of sexuality. At the same time, middle-class prudishness, especially for women, and the ideal of respectability must have been also responsible for the prevailing silence over sexual desire, even within wedlock. In this light, marital sexuality was gradually expelling its bodily, sensual features, to turn, paradoxically enough, into a "nonsexual" sexuality. This purified sexual desire was a direct product of conjugal love and was sanctified through its central role in reproduction.

Aikaterini Laskaridou, one of the most renowned nineteenth-century girls' educators, wrote, amongst many other subjects, on "physical love." In her unpublished essay *Thoughts on Romantic Love*, written in 1872, one can easily detect the moral character of the text, its theological origins, and the explicit distinction between love and sexual desire.²⁴ It is equally evident that her writings were primarily addressed to girls, those considered the weak link in the game of romantic love. Laskaridou supported a popular idea that contradicted true/moral/spiritual love to fake/immoral/somatic love, in order to fight extramarital "temporary [...] carnal appetites, not for the purposes of procreation [...] but simply for vulgar enjoyment and instant pleasure."²⁵ Her aim was to ensure the lifelong commitment of marital relationships and avert the dangers of occasional sex.

Laskaridou's views were not uncommon. In her statement "Here is a soul that falls in love with another soul whom it desires, and only through her feels complete," one could decipher a perception of love as spiritual and psychic mutual relation which owed much to Christian morality.²⁶ Having been strongly influenced by the ethical imperatives and prohibitions of the ecclesiastical vocabulary, public commentators of the time normalized sexual desire by equating it to the emotion of love. In their prose, they described it as an essentialist feeling of high moral value. "Is romantic love bad?" the well-known contemporary theologian Michael Galanos was wandering, only to conclude: "This is a ridiculous question. An emotion born by nature, an emotion that leads to marriage, can be nothing but sacred."²⁷ The love/lust divide was also supported by middle-class women, fervent feminists of the first-wave generation: "True love, lasting, stable love is based only to reason, good taste and mutual trust. Outside these limits, it is merely a passion, which we must fight and triumph over of."²⁸ Finally, specialized treatises on family life emphasized the "unique character" of marital relationship, for it was not a "simple physical union," but the means of fulfilling the divine commandment of "be fruitful, and multiply."²⁹

However, the first decades of the twentieth century witnessed a gradual shift in public and private discourses on sexuality. In literary works of contemporary women writers, for example, one could now decipher the importance of sexual experience, seen primarily as somatic pleasure.³⁰ In the interwar years, the very first poems and novels with male and female homoerotic hints appeared.³¹ As the following section shows in detail, medical and hygienic publications on marital sexuality proliferated, paving the way for the emergence of postwar sexology. Within this climate that encouraged a dynamic discursive production on sexuality, middle-class couples started to bridge over the distances between conjugal love and sensuality. The following passage, from a young army officer's diary, addressed figuratively to his future wife, is quite indicative of this development, among many others that surface with minor variations in love letters of the period: "If you gave yourself to me, and I have asked for even more, it is because my beliefs on the subject are well-known. Besides, the word 'soul', that we are searching to fall in love with, is something connected to the body and not something spiritual."³²

Marriage and Sex: The “Scientific” Point of View

The shift in discourses on sexuality during the early twentieth century was both expressed and amplified by an increasing number of scientific publications dealing with sexual matters. Alongside the republication of previous marriage manuals and the numerous translated authors ranging from Havelock Ellis to Wilhelm Reich, the interwar period witnessed more than twenty original publications.³³ A new generation of writers took an interest in this domain, some attempting to establish themselves as experts, following a larger European/Northern American trend of physicians and psychiatrists mainly laying scientific claims to the issues of sexuality.³⁴ To be sure, there was no abrupt shift in the thought of the self-proclaimed “specialists of sex” in comparison to nineteenth-century manuals on marriage. For instance, they largely subscribed to the double-standard perspective, or they expressed moral judgments on a number of sexual practices. Such continuities, together with the fact that many scholars were writing for decades and scientific and popularizing texts were circulating long after their publication date, make periodization attempts hazardous. However, we could argue that the interwar period was in many respects a transitory one, when “old” and “new” ideas about sex in marriage coexisted and marriage was being all the more sexualized, and that the 1940s constituted a turning point toward a postwar period in which good sex for both spouses became increasingly a prerequisite for a successful marriage. Periodization set apart, the twentieth-century scientific texts on sexual matters compared with previous ones presented some significant differences that became more pronounced in the postwar period.

First of all, they postulated that the sexual instinct or “genital drive” was determinant in human life and societies for both men and women. Accordingly, underestimating or neglecting it altogether was a mistake, imputed to moralists or adepts of religion. For example, Nikolaos Drakoulides, a dermatologist specializing in venereal diseases, who published extensively on sexual issues, claimed in a lecture given at 1930: “The sexual instinct is the most powerful, but also the most important of all instincts and of all functions of the human organism.”³⁵ It is no coincidence that Drakoulides later became interested in psychoanalysis, which made progress in postwar Greece, although still opposed by large segments of society, the Church, and many psychiatrists. The idea that the inhibition of the sexual instinct was responsible for many mental disorders, mainly neuroses, which were seen as the principal postwar diseases, influenced significantly expert attitudes toward marriage and sex.³⁶

Second and related to the first, contrary to earlier authors seeking warrant in religious or literary texts, twentieth-century Greek scholars took into account recent scientific developments relating to sexuality, such as the discovery of hormones and the constitution of endocrinology, and referred increasingly to the works of European (and later also American) sexologists.³⁷ By studying abroad, by consulting foreign publications and translated texts, by attending international conferences, by corresponding with well-known scholars, or even by receiving the visit of eminent sexologists, Greek scholars gained access to a bulk of scientific knowledge on sex that was being developed in Western and Central Europe since the last decades of the nineteenth century.³⁸

Third, since the first decades of the twentieth century, the socioeconomic and cultural context in Greece underwent significant changes, which had an impact on attitudes toward sex, both concerning individual practices and scholarly opinions. To be sure, the backdrop of deep-rooted patriarchy, a strong hold of religion on society, and a widespread conservatism—that from the interwar period onward was expressed through anti-communist policies and later generated also moral panics about youth “in moral danger”—remained, as did the unfaltering centrality of marriage in people’s lives.³⁹ However, Greek society was also rapidly changing throughout the century.⁴⁰ Changes included cities growing due to urbanization, consumerist culture spreading during the postwar period, and women gradually participating more actively in professional life and gaining access to political rights.⁴¹

Greek sexologists—as experts on sexual matters soon started calling themselves—acknowledged the impact of those changes upon the lives and sexual behavior of individuals. They also perceived the new problems that these changes generated, summarized by Alexandros Tsakiris, a physician who authored a *Great Sexology* published in the second half of the 1940s. Tsakiris on the one hand endorsed the opinion that “marriage is the only union ensuring completely the most harmonious relation of soul and body.” On the other hand, he observed that, compared to inhabitants of rural regions, people in urban areas tended to get married later because men were becoming less easily economically independent or women were working in order to contribute to their family’s income. In his opinion, “late marriage” constituted a problem, since sexual urges that appeared during adolescence could not find an immediate outlet through marriage, leaving individuals with the options of chastity, masturbation, or “free love”—namely premarital sex.⁴² However, the latter option did not have the same implications for men and women as Tsakiris conceded: “Society disregards men’s misbehaviour. They have nothing to lose. They represent the sterner sex. Woman is treated differently. She is the fair and transparent creation of nature. And she is crumpled and shredded by whatever affects her chastity.”⁴³

In other words, chastity for men meant merely abstinence from sexual relations, while for women, it raised the key issue of virginity. The latter was a central concern in nineteenth-century manuals of marital sex guidance (the aforementioned G. Kyriakidis called it the “ornament of morality”). Virginity remained a key issue and was addressed by scholars well into the twentieth century: in 1944 the doctor Nikolaos Gyras called it “the most precious asset of a girl.”⁴⁴ However, medical texts and sexology treatises focused increasingly less on the moral aspects of virginity and more on its anatomical characteristics. Typically, sexology treatises included a chapter dedicated to the description of the female reproductive system and the hymen, listing medical cases where the latter was accidentally ruptured, seemingly ruptured, flexible, and so on.⁴⁵ This information was considered crucial in cases where women were accused after their “first night” of having been “spoiled.” Scholars also referred to the medical interventions to restore ruptured hymens (hymenoplasty) to which a number of girls apparently resorted up to the late 1960s in order to avoid a scandal during the “first night,” since the woman’s virginity largely remained a prerequisite for marriage.⁴⁶

Most authors disapproved of the still prevalent mores, especially in rural areas, requiring for the bride to prove her “maidenhood”—and the groom his “vigor”—by exposing the following day in public their bloodstained marital sheets. Such practices were deemed anachronistic, but the concept of virginity was far from dismissed. It remained very powerful in Greek society even after World War II as we can see through various sources ranging from judicial archives regarding trials for “crimes of honor” to the letters sent to “sex experts,” an increasingly common practice, or to the answers offered by gynecologists, pathologists, psychiatrists, and so on to their readers in popular magazines. These sources show that the issue of virginity was a major source of anxiety not only for women but also for their paternal family. Female correspondents often asked the “specialists” whether their relations with their fiancé, boyfriend, relative, and so on could have been detrimental to their “integrity.” Such anxieties were linked both with the possibility of an undesirable pregnancy and with future husbands discovering previous sexual relations (consenting or forced) of their partners. Doctor Nikos Zakopoulos received a sizable correspondence when he collaborated with the magazine *Woman and Home* in the 1950s and 1960s, and the selection of 155 letters that he presented in his book *Counselor of Sexual Relations* showcases how common these anxieties were even so late in the century, leading often to despair: “I am dying of agony,” “there is nothing left for me but to commit suicide,” “my case is the most tragic one.”⁴⁷ The other side of these anxieties, however, as these examples and many others from the same sources show, is that premarital sexual relations were actually quite common in the postwar years. Yet, when they did not end in marriage, as they were supposed to, recourse to justice or even to violence could follow.⁴⁸

While sex experts tried to comfort the anxieties of their correspondents, at the same time, they criticized prolonged abstinence related to late marriages and the psychological pressure for the couple to “perform well” during the first night of married life.⁴⁹ They considered these as possible causes of future sexual dysfunctions, namely “impotence” for men and “frigidity” for women.⁵⁰ Sex experts claimed that the interest in “frigidity” was itself a sign of shifting mentalities, since, as an anonymous psychoanalyst put it in 1951, “50 years ago it was considered almost natural and ‘moral’ for women not to participate too actively in sexual intercourse.”⁵¹ Frigidity, to which we will return in the last part of this article, was construed as a pathology applied only to women. Some authors even made attempts to estimate the percentage of “frigid women” in the general population. The sexologist Georgios Zouraris, a student of Magnus Hirschfeld, reviewing the relevant international literature, considered Kinsey’s recent findings on female “frigidity” as excessive and claimed that three out of the ten women were partially or totally frigid. According to other Greek writers, however, the percentage was even higher.⁵²

Both “impotence” and “frigidity” were considered threats to a successful marriage. The latter was deemed by experts and lay people alike as an imperative step in human life, the “natural” destination for both sexes, associated with childbearing and the creation of a family. Not only early-twentieth-century authors but also later writers, especially those related with religious circles, like the psychiatrist Aristos Aspiotis, believed that a woman’s “trajectory of love” led to “her female destination,” that is, marriage.⁵³ But even a postwar sexologist affiliated to the communist party, like Zouraris, subscribed to the idea that “The solution to the sexual problem of humanity must be *the union through marriage of two sexually contracting parties*.”⁵⁴ Indeed, after World War II, Greece, as many countries, witnessed the reaffirmation of conservative, traditional, and Christian values of marriage as fears about the latter’s alleged crisis spread. Official state, law, and Church discourses emphasized the tripartite “homeland-religion-family,” which dated already back to the end of the nineteenth century.⁵⁵

Sexologists were fervent supporters of marriage. They were concerned that late marriage left men, but also now women, vulnerable toward “undesirable situations,” ranging from venereal diseases that could be contracted by sexual intercourse with “common women” to indulging in practices that diverged from sexual norms. Such practices included many of sexology’s favorite topics, like same-sex love or masturbation, which were termed “perversions.” For example, in a 1950 popular magazine, the editor of a column on gynecological issues replied to a woman seeking advice on how to get rid of a habit with “devastating results for the spirit and body,” presumably masturbation, that “The best therapy is your marriage.”⁵⁶ Consequently, as part of a larger project to promote sexual education, sexologists aspired to guide safely their public to the haven of marriage and to prepare women and men for the requirements of their maternal or paternal role, dispensing advice on how to become a “good wife” or a “good husband” as early in life as possible. Such advice was not limited to pointing out the “ideal” age of marriage, namely a difference of ten to twenty years between the future husband and wife (and many letters addressed to sexologists suggest that age difference was not uncommon).⁵⁷ Recommendations also comprised instructions on how to attain orgasm and descriptions of the human body’s erogenous zones, including the anus or the clitoris, which, according to Zakopoulos, needed to be stimulated “in some way, in order for the woman to also reach the final sexual pleasure-satisfaction.”⁵⁸ Women’s correspondence offers an insight in what practices the couples had recourse to, although sometimes reluctantly: “I avoid this [biting] as long as my husband’s other affections, despite the fact that I extremely like them, thinking that they are bad, and anti-Christian, and unhealthy actions.”⁵⁹

All in all, postwar sexologists subscribed to the importance of sexual pleasure within marriage. Irrespective of their overall progressive or conservative attitude toward sexual matters, they all came to concede that when sexual relations were not satisfactory for both the husband and the wife, the entire edifice of marriage was jeopardized. In a 1955 text addressed to the married couple, Anna

Katsigra, one of the first women to be accepted in the Medical School of the University of Athens and one of the first experts on sexual matters, albeit heavily moralizing, wrote: "Although pleasure during intercourse is not necessary for happiness in married life, a prolonged abstinence cannot but provoke coldness in the married couple's life."⁶⁰ Therefore, gradually, and more explicitly in the postwar years, mutual sexual pleasure was legitimized and acknowledged as an important factor among others for the health, stability, well-being, and happiness of the married couple. These factors were epitomized by George Igoumenakis, a dermatologist and specialist in venereal diseases, in the 1950s, in the following order: psychic (psychological) contact, solid financial foundations, absence of hereditary maladies, and, last but not least, "complete mutual sexual satisfaction of husband and wife."⁶¹ At about the same time, Georgios Zouraris went even further, suggesting around 1958–1959 that "intercourse does not *always aim at procreation* [...], *but at love, at the reinforcement of pleasure and at the psychic and bodily connection of the couple, for the embellishment of married life.*"⁶²

In other words, by the 1950s and 1960s, physicians, psychiatrists, and, above all, sexologists had become convinced that the love/lust divide was irrelevant and that sexual relations providing satisfaction to both husband and wife contributed to strengthening their feelings to each other and thus ensuring marital stability and success. This opinion was not confined to the limited circles of experts but was now popularized to the larger public, for example, through magazines.⁶³

Everything indicates that the readers of such publications increasingly adhered to the promotion of sexual pleasure in marriage and regarded its absence as a menace for their matrimony. Two examples, taken from the more than fifty letters conserved in the personal archive of Angelos Doxas (pen name of N. Drakoulides), showcase the ascendancy of this opinion in the postwar years upon the public. In a 1957 letter, a "miserable husband" regretted that after a month he had still not managed to accomplish his "marital duties" and wondered if "there is any other solution to this terrible situation except from divorce."⁶⁴ The second example dates from as late as 1980, what we consider the extreme chronological limit of our argument: by that time, not only correspondence was declining as a means of communication between experts and public but sexual knowledge was becoming more widespread in Greek society.⁶⁵ In this letter, a married woman from a small town in Northern Greece confided that after twelve years of marriage, she experienced "sexual frigidity that at times even submits [her] marriage to a crisis." As a result, "the relations with [her] husband have become very problematic" and "twenty days ago [they] arrived at the verge of divorce. Perhaps one of the reasons for this situation is the sexual issue."⁶⁶ Besides familiarity with female anatomy (the correspondent talked of the labia) and the specialized vocabulary of sexology (she referred to "clitoral arousal"), this last example shows that in the span of a quarter of a century, scientific views and knowledge on sexuality had become common and had reached even remote areas. To better assess the extent of these changes, one needs to focus more closely on the interaction between specialists, such as sexologists or psychiatrists, and their "patients," bringing thus into view individual experiences and everyday practices of married couples.

Marital Sexuality in "Psy" Practice

The increasing sexualization of marriage in postwar Greece was also manifested in the ways that "psy" professionals and their clients were discussing the latter's marital problems in person in mental health services. We will use here the example of the Centre for Mental Health and Research of Thessaloniki, whose professionals were inspired by and drew on psychoanalysis.⁶⁷ In the early period of the Centre, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, when the clients of the Social Aid Station had mostly material and practical needs, discussions of sex problems were less frequent and were usually framed by the professionals as aspects of "not harmonious interfamilial relationships," featuring recurrent and sometimes violent fights. Since the mid-1960s, when the Psychiatric

Counselling Department was founded and work lost its welfare aspect,⁶⁸ the clientele became mostly middle class.⁶⁹ This is the period on which we focus, as then sex problems became more commonly and openly discussed, shifting in meaning and in some cases, by the late 1970s, gaining priority among other marital problems. Our main source is clients' case files, which allow to study in parallel the views of professionals and clients: although professionals were the ones to ask the questions and decide what to record and how, yet, patients' voices can be heard; their grievances, views, and demands were dully noted, even if not always respected.

Both husbands and wives discussed sex with the Centre's personnel but in different ways. Husbands voiced mainly two types of complaints regarding sex: they were uncertain of their wives' morality, and they were not sexually satisfied. Suspicions of premarital sex or adultery of the wife caused upheavals in the emotional state, everyday life, and marital relationships of husbands, sometimes leading to separation.⁷⁰ 25-year-old Vangelis, who wanted to become a priest, had an arranged marriage but soon broke it, because, as he said to the social worker in 1968, "in his opinion his wife had not been 'virgin'." Although he had a doctor certify her virginity, he still was not convinced that she was "pure." He was preoccupied with this idea and he related it to his inexperience with women, which was associated with his religious beliefs and guilt on sex.⁷¹ Such concerns over the virginity and fidelity of the wife, even if they were deemed by professionals and sometimes by clients themselves to be nonrealistic or even pathological, reflected sex stereotypes prevailing at least up to the late 1960s, which valued women's purity and made men feel threatened by the sexuality of their wives.

Men's insistence on virginity became less common in the 1970s in urban middle-class strata. The case of a 41-year-old man, who as late as 1974 presented as a reason for not having married the inability to find a moral wife, seems more like an exception.⁷² In contrast to virginity, fidelity persisted as a central concern of men, although in the 1970s some husbands became more willing to accept the paranoid nature of their jealousy and to put themselves to therapy.⁷³ But this was not always the case. In 1973, 43-year-old Yannis, who was an alcoholic and frequently quarreled with his wife, believed that she was unfaithful to him because, he thought, she did not want him around in the house and was unwilling to "fulfil his [sexual] desire."⁷⁴

Indeed, often husbands complained about not having (enough) sex with their wives. 34-year-old Alex, despite being very satisfied with his marriage and loving his wife, told the social worker in 1977 that his wife objected his "need to make love every day" because she was afraid of another pregnancy.⁷⁵ Even husbands with more moderate sexual demands did not always readily accept abstinence, a common contraception method at the time, and longed for sexual satisfaction, without caring for contraception. They equally discarded bodily grievances of wives as reasons for refusal of sex. In 1967, a 29-year-old man, who suffered from various physical and mental symptoms, presented as his main problem the "sexual": his 25-year-old wife, who complained of general fatigue but also pain after sex, did not want to have any sexual relationship with him, and, when she rarely and unwillingly accepted, she did not participate. They had many quarrels on this, and he said he was "forced" to go to prostitutes. The professionals diagnosed "marital problems" because of "lack of communication." Translating the couple's problems into psychiatric discourse, they assessed that the husband had a "passive personality" and was hostile toward the wife, who had "hysterical" and "hypochondriac" tendencies and "problems of sexual adjustment," namely "frigidity" and "inhibition."⁷⁶

On their side, women who were not interested in sex rarely worried whether they were "frigid," especially when they had various physical and mental troubles such as headaches, fatigue, despair, stress, and "nerves" (mostly meaning irritability) or serious difficulties with indifferent, unstable, and violent husbands. These women were mainly concerned about how to alleviate their daily problems and handle difficult situations at home.⁷⁷ In addition, they were anxious not to have more children, and the safest contraception—at a time when information on and spread of other contraceptive

methods was scarce—was avoiding sex altogether, especially when husbands “did not care about the need to take precautions.”⁷⁸

Under these circumstances, although mental health experts generally acknowledged the problem of female frigidity, they usually refrained from labeling as “frigid” women with grave familial and psychological problems. For instance, 35-year-old Eleni had a “nervous breakdown” after her father died, and among other symptoms, she had been disgusted by her husband, and avoided sex, pretending that she ached. The psychiatrist and the social worker did not describe her as frigid, although she claimed that she had never been “the type of sexual woman.” Instead, they placed the “troubles of marital and sexual adjustment” in the frame of depression and proposed counseling work and group psychotherapy.⁷⁹

While married women with no sexual interest appeared repeatedly throughout the period, since the late 1960s, the incidence of married women eager to improve their sex life and asking for the help of the Centre’s experts was increasing. Among their problems, they included the lack of sexual satisfaction but also their feelings of fear, disgust, dullness, and guilt toward sex.⁸⁰ Women attributed these problems to their strict upbringing, as they were not allowed to go out and meet boys, and were deprived of any knowledge on sex. Apart for their parents, women also found their husbands at fault, when they were uncaring or when they treated their wives as children, took all initiative, and did not consider their wives’ sexual satisfaction. In some women’s words, their husbands had an “oriental mentality” or “old-fashioned principles.”⁸¹ In the course of the 1970s, more women who talked about sexual dissatisfaction complained about being in a submitted position.⁸²

Some husbands did not understand or approve their wives’ new pursuits, arguing they were irrational and spent money to doctors for no reason. Stavroula, 41 years old in 1967, longed for “psychic contact”—meaning a more satisfied sexual relation—and a more equal relationship with her husband and complained that she rarely had an orgasm. Her husband, on the other hand, told the social worker that he just wanted to find his wife “smiling and carefree” when he got home. Stavroula fantasized of other men but was keen on improving sex with her husband, sometimes even trying newspapers’ advice. Once, she said, she read an article entitled “How to be your husband’s mistress” and then “caressed him as in the old days,” but things did not change. She yearned for a more profound change in her relationship with her husband, which she did not achieve despite long psychotherapy, including couple therapy, in the Centre and elsewhere. In Stavroula’s case, as in other cases of women blaming their husbands, the professionals thought that the key to improvement was acceptance, communication, and compromise between husband and wife.⁸³ They tended to attribute sexual difficulties, like marital disharmony in general, to neuroses generated from childhood conflicts,⁸⁴ and thus, they proposed counseling or medication. On the other hand, they seemed to understand why some women had extramarital affairs. At a time when the still powerful double standard brought shame and social outcry to adulterous women much more than to men, mental health experts construed female infidelity as a response to “serious marital problems” and unsatisfied “needs of sex or tenderness.”⁸⁵ Indeed, through their new sexual experiences, some women realized that they were not as sexually satisfied by their husbands as they previously thought.⁸⁶

Therefore, in the late 1960s married women spoke more about and were becoming more demanding of their sex lives. This tendency became more prominent in the 1970s. 44-year-old Hara visited the Centre in 1974 because of tightening sensations in the chest, exhaustion of the nerves, and constant crying. She was unhappy about her family life: since she married, she was constantly inside the house, doing “whatever the husband ordered.” Her husband, a man of “old-fashioned principles,” believed that women were only suited for the household. He did not give her enough money to cover the family needs, and they never went out to have fun. Their marriage was arranged, and Hara had never been attracted by him nor had she formed a psychical bond to him. He was a good family man, but he was never tender to her, not even during sex, twice a year: “he was acting completely mechanically, without caring about her satisfaction.” She never discussed her problems with him

because she knew he was indifferent. The psychiatrist diagnosed neurotic depression and prescribed medication, thus moving the focus from the couple's emotional and sexual issues to Hara's individual mental health problems. In other words, while mutual sexual satisfaction was by then considered a precondition for a successful marriage, when "psy" experts faced sexually unsatisfied women, they viewed their quest for better sexual relations within the general frame of the wives' own mental troubles.⁸⁷ This was certainly connected with the "psy" orientation of the Centre, which dealt with mental health issues primarily and viewed sexual issues as aspects or symptoms of the former.

Women themselves increasingly presented sexual dissatisfaction as an important aspect of their marital disappointments. However, although they placed more emphasis on the sexual factor than in previous years, they continued to view sexual pleasure as a form and result of psychic contact, a way to "feel" themselves and their husbands.⁸⁸ A 30-year-old dentist, Theano, asked for the Centre's help in 1975 and 1976 because she did not have sex with her husband as often as she would have liked. In addition, her husband had erection problems and ejaculated early. These sexual issues made her worry that he probably had homosexual tendencies. Nevertheless, eventually Theano realized that she was more bothered about his overall attitude than his sexual dysfunctions. She described him as irritable, distant, and introvert. And, even when their sexual life improved, after he had taken medication to treat his "impotence," she was still unhappy with him, as she still could not communicate with him and thought he was dishonest and withdrawn.⁸⁹

Only a small number of the Centre's female clients, and only at the end of the period, viewed sex as the core of their troubles. In 1979, Elpida, a 34-year-old housewife, attributed her bodily and psychic weariness, troubles in sleeping, and want of appetite for life directly to the "lack of sexual satisfaction" and "frigidity." The social worker noted: "She has never felt anything[,] sometimes some pleasure" and she was disgusted when her husband ejaculated. She accepted his demand to make love, but in spite of his efforts, she did not have an orgasm. However, although Elpida insisted on the sexual issue, the psychiatrist deemed her "frigidity" as less important than her depression and prescribed antidepressive medication.⁹⁰

All in all, since the late 1960s, the discussions of marital sexuality between the Centre's staff and their patients intensified and changed. Female chastity and fidelity did not wholly disappear from husbands' or wives' concerns. However, they gradually lost their primacy as sexual intimacy and pleasure were becoming more widely accepted as preconditions of a healthy life and a happy marriage for both men and women. Although men, women, and mental health professionals were still thinking in terms of the double standard (women passive and more prone to frigidity—men active and more prone to extramarital affairs), women were also starting to put sexual problems to the foreground. As they voiced more demands for sexual satisfaction, they usually connected them to the quality of the relationship with their husbands, who, in most cases, were represented as indifferent toward their wives' desires. On their part, professionals, both male psychiatrists and female social workers, acknowledged these sexual complaints and needs and helped women express them, while viewing them within the broader context of marital disharmony and, increasingly in the 1970s, of psychological problems. Thus, they proposed a combination of medication and psychotherapy to alleviate mental and bodily symptoms and enhance the couple's communication, advising husbands and wives to compromise more and be accepting of each other. We could conclude, therefore, that mental health professionals while addressing the distress of the spouses viewed marital stability as a central aim of their intervention.

Conclusions

The 1980s can be said to constitute a turning point in the ways urban middle-class marital sexuality was discussed and experienced in Greece. The legalization of contraception and abortion, the liberalization and multiplication of divorce, but also the development of women's liberation movement did

not necessarily overturn the structural place of marriage in Greek society, the hierarchical gender relations, or even the normalizing tendencies of sexology. But as the country was moving closer to elements that were seen as more “European” and “modern” during the last years of the twentieth century, a clear distancing was taking place from a past marked by authoritarian politics, prevailing moralism, the central place of the Orthodox Church, and socioeconomic hardships. More research is needed about the exact links between these developments and their effects on sex in marriage, especially in respect to the variety of gendered ways in which they were lived and acted upon.

The history of middle-class marital sexuality in twentieth-century Greece is a combination of profound changes in a backdrop of persistent structural continuities. Throughout the century, marriage continued to be a main goal in people’s lives, while sex experts persisted in considering marital sexuality, and especially sexuality within a stable and harmonious marriage, as the most “healthy” and “normal” form of sexual practice. However, aspirations that men and women had from married life but also scientific perceptions of marital sexuality underwent dramatic changes due to profound socioeconomic, cultural, and political transformations. As times and mores were changing, public as well as private discourses increasingly saw sexuality as an integral part of personality, health, and marriage. This brought forward its somatic aspect and allowed middle-class couples to start instilling more sensuality into conjugal love as their love letters and their communication with experts testify.

In other words, while men’s and women’s sexuality continued to be perceived in opposite terms and under the sexual double-standard perspective, marriage became more sexualized, leaving behind the nineteenth-century love/lust divide. Expert discourses on sexuality, enriched by scientific developments on the issue abroad, viewing it increasingly as a determinant aspect in human life for both men and women, influenced new private meanings of sexual desire. In the interwar period, scientific publications dealing with sexual matters proliferated, feeding literary texts with hints of somatic pleasure, in spite of the coexistence in public discourses of “old” and “new” ideas about sexuality and marriage.

This combination of “old” and “new” ideas about marital sexuality was constitutive of sciences dealing with sex in postwar Greece. In the context of the postwar sociocultural transformations, amid shifts in the meanings of sexuality, old anxieties faded and new ones appeared. While women’s virginity continued as late as the 1960s to be considered the bride’s “most precious asset,” late marriage of urban populations was now believed to cause “marital dysfunctions,” namely impotence for men and frigidity for women. As the discourse of sexologists and other experts on sexual matters became popularized through magazines and numerous publications, the issue of sexual pleasure in marriage was increasingly valued by experts and lay people alike as a precondition for a successful and stable marital bond. In fact, the greatest innovation was that now sexologists, psychiatrists, and other experts, but also increasingly women themselves, gradually acknowledged not only men’s but also women’s sexual pleasure as an important factor for a healthy marriage. By the 1970s, urban middle-class couples were more willing to discuss their marital sex problems with experts, seeking help and cure. While fidelity and sexual availability remained central for men, married women more often sought to improve their sex life as a means to advancing their relations with their husbands.

All in all, we can detect a double transition in respect to the history of marital sexuality in twentieth-century Greece. On the one hand, while women’s passivity in sex and their late “sexual awakening” via male initiative and vigor were viewed throughout the century as part of their physiology, by the 1970s, these same features were transformed into a medical, psychological, and hence marital problem to be addressed. On the other hand, in both scientific and lay perceptions of marital sexuality, the focus shifted from concerns over the effects of male abstinence and female virginity upon marriage to anxieties over the quality of marital sex, and especially toward married women’s own quest for their orgasm.

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Notes

1. Victoria Harris, “Sex on the Margins: New Directions in the Historiography of Sexuality and Gender,” *The Historical Journal* 54, no. 4 (2010): 1086.
2. Christina Simmons, *Making Marriage Modern, Women’s Sexuality from the Progressive Era to World War II* (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2009); Simon Szreter and Kate Fisher, *Sex before the Sexual Revolution* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 33–53; Caroline Rusterholz, “‘You Can’t Dismiss that as Being Less Happy, You See it Is Different’. Sexual Therapy in 1950s England,” *Twentieth Century British History* 30, no. 3 (2019): 375–98.
3. Robert Muchembled, *Orgasm and the West: A History of Pleasure from the Sixteenth Century to the Present*, trans. Jean Birrell (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2008), 192; Peter Cryle and Alison Moore, *Frigidity: An Intellectual History* (Basingstoke, UK: Routledge Macmillan, 2011), 37–66. For a concise historical survey of female sexuality in Europe from the eighteenth century to modern times, see Anna Clark, “Female Sexuality,” in *The Routledge History of Women in Europe since 1700*, ed. Deborah Simonton (New York: Routledge, 2006), 54–92. For the double standard and “Victorian sexual hypocrisy” see, indicatively, Hera Cook, *The Long Sexual Revolution: English Women, Sex, and Contraception, 1800-1975* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2004), 92–96.
4. Carl N. Degler, *At Odds: Women and the Family in America from the Revolution to the Present* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980); Ellen K. Rothman, *Hands and Hearts: A History of Courtship in America* (New York: Basic Books, 1984). Serious criticism to this assumption was voiced from Steven Seidman, “The Power of Desire and the Danger of Pleasure: Victorian Sexuality Reconsidered,” *Journal of Social History* 24, no. 1 (1990): 48–49, and Marcus Collins, *Modern Love: An Intimate History of Men and Women in Twentieth-century Britain* (London, UK: Atlantic 2004), 29–30.
5. Indicatively, Steven Seidman, “The Power of Desire and the Danger of Pleasure: Victorian Sexuality Reconsidered,” *Journal of Social History* 24, no. 1 (1990): 47–67; Jesse F. Battan, “The ‘Rights’ of Husbands and the ‘Duties’ of Wives: Power and Desire in the American Bedroom, 1850-1910,” *Journal of Family History* 24, no. 2 (1999): 165–86.
6. For separate spheres as a “way of life,” and not merely a sex-difference theory, see Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850* (London, UK: Routledge, 2002).
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 11. Cas Wouters, "Balancing Sex and Love since the 1960s Sexual Revolution," *Theory, Culture & Society* 15, no. 3–4 (1998): 187–214; Carlfred B. Broderick and Sandra S. Schrader, "The History of Professional Marriage and Family Therapy," in *Handbook of Family Therapy*, ed. Alan S. Gurman and David P. Kniskern (New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1981), 5–31.
 12. Indicatively, for Britain and the United States, see notes above; for France, Anne-Marie Sohn, *Du premier baiser à l'alcôve: La sexualité des Français au quotidien (1850-1950)* (Paris: Aubier, 1996); Véronique Blanchard, Régis Revenin, and Jean-Jacques Yvorel, eds., *Les jeunes et la sexualité. Initiations, interdits, identités (XIXe–XXIe siècle)* (Paris, France: Autrement, 2010).
 13. For example, Pothiti Hantzaroula, "Public Discourses on Sexuality and Narratives of Sexual Violence of Domestic Servants in Greece (1880–1950)," *Journal of Mediterranean Studies* 18, no. 2 (2008): 283–310; Kostas Yannakopoulos, "Cultural Meanings of Loneliness: Kinship, Sexuality and (Homo)Sexual Identity in Contemporary Greece," *Journal of Mediterranean Studies* 18, no. 2 (2008): 265–82; Nikolaos Papadogiannis, *Militant around the Clock? Youth Politics, Leisure and Sexuality in Post-dictatorship Greece, 1974–1981* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2015).
 14. There is a wealth of anthropological research on family and sexuality since the 1960s in Greece. However, it concerns mainly rural population and not urban middle-class couples that consist the focus of this article. Indicatively, see John K. Campbell, *Honour, Family and Patronage: A Study of Institutions and Moral Values in a Greek Mountain Community* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1964); Marie-Elisabeth Handman, *La violence et la ruse: Hommes et femmes dans un village grec* (Aix-en-Provence, France: Edisud, 1983); Michael Herzfeld, *The Poetics of Manhood: Contest and Identity in a Cretan Mountain Village* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988); Peter Loizos and Evthymios Papataxiarchis, ed., *Contested Identities: Gender and Kinship in Modern Greece* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991).
 15. We use here the term "middle classes" in a loose sense that includes the educated, more or less well-off, professional urban dwellers. In the course of the twentieth century, they diversify greatly.
 16. For the most part of the twentieth century, Greece had the lowest celibacy rates in Europe. Evthymios Papataxiarchis, "Shaping Modern Times in the Greek Family: A Comparative View of Gender and Kinship Transformations after 1974," in *State, Society and Economy*, ed. A. Dialla and N. Maroniti (Athens, Greece: Metaichmio, 2012), 230.
 17. The few private letters used in this section are exemplary of broader meanings attached to marital sexuality at the time. For a detailed analysis of a larger body of correspondence—almost 1,800 private letters of five different upper-middle-class families (the Makkas, Valaoritis, Digeni-Douka, Meletopoulos, and the Levidi-Vassiliadi, dating from 1850 to 1930, all of them kept in the Hellenic Literary and Historical Archive [ELIA]/National Bank of Greece Cultural Foundation [MIET] collections), see Dimitra Vassiliadou, *Στον τροπικό της γραφής: Οικογενειακοί δεσμοί και συναισθήματα στην αστική Ελλάδα, 1850-1930* [The tropic of writing: Family ties and emotions in modern Greece, 1850-1930] (Athens, Greece: Gutenberg, 2018), 83–108. Conjugal correspondence forms a crucial part of these archives and reveals the shift—at least among the Greek middle and upper middle classes—from a spiritual kind of romantic love in the nineteenth century to a more sensualized emotion in the interwar period with frequent references to the body.
 18. Alekos Meletopoulos to Maria Kambani, Piraeus, September 12, 1884, ELIA/MIET, Meletopoulou Family Archives, 1.5.

19. Marigo Makka to Georgios Makkas, Athens, July 1866, ELIA/MIET, Makka Family Archives, 2.3.
20. Nanos Valaoritis to Emiliios Valaorititis, Athens, October 13, 1874, ELIA/MIET, Valaorititis Family Archives, 9.2.
21. Statistical data on nineteenth-century illegitimacy are highly fragmented and rather unreliable. For the years 1866–1884, they document a proportion of out-of-wedlock births somewhere between 0.81 and 1.40 percent (Ministère de l'Intérieur, Statistique de la Grèce, *Mouvement de la population pendant les années 1865, 1866 et 1867*, Athènes, Imprimerie Nationale, 1869, ix; Ministère de l'Intérieur, Statistique de la Grèce, *Mouvement de la population pendant les années 1870, 1871, 1872 et 1873*, Athènes, Imprimerie Nationale, 1876, v; Ministère de l'Intérieur, Statistique de la Grèce, *Mouvement de la population année 1884*, Athènes, Imprimerie Nationale, 1888, xx). The exact rates must have been much higher. Although it is impossible to measure the extent of extramarital pregnancies during the nineteenth century in Greece, Evthymios Papataxiarchis's research on Lesbos Island shows that they were not infrequent among the specific rural populations, a hypothesis deriving from the repeated efforts of the local Orthodox Church to thwart them. Evthymios Papataxiarchis, "La valeur du ménage. Classes sociales, stratégies matrimoniales et lois ecclésiastiques à Lesbos au XIXe siècle," in *Espaces et familles dans l'Europe du sud à l'âge moderne*, ed. Stuart Joseph Woolf (Paris, France: Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 1993), 109–41.
22. The French best seller of Auguste Debay, *Hygiène et physiologie du mariage; histoire naturelle et médicale de l'homme et de la femme mariés*, originally published in Paris in 1848, came out in Greek in 1864, and would be reprinted at least six times during the second half of the nineteenth century. See also, A. X. Z., *Εγχειρίδιο υγιεινής των εγγάμων* [A manual of spousal hygiene] (Athens, Greece: Hermou, 1874); Georgios Kyriakidis, *Τα μυστήρια του συζυγικού έρωτος, ήτοι Φυσιολογία και Υγιεινή των συζύγων* [The mysteries of spousal love, namely the couple's physiology and hygiene] (1865; repr., Athens, Greece: I. Nikolaïdes, 1900); Markos Komminos, *Υγιεινή της γενετησίου ορμής* [The sexual urge hygiene] (Athens, Greece: Anastasios Fexis, 1900).
23. Kyriakidis, *The Mysteries of Spousal Love*, 50.
24. Aikaterini Laskaridou, "Σκέψεις περί έρωτος" [Thoughts on romantic love] (January 20, 1872), Aikaterini and Eirini Laskaridou Archives, ELIA/MIET.
25. *Ibid.*
26. *Ibid.* William Reddy compares Christian Europe, India, and China (ninth–twelfth centuries) to argue that the transformation of medieval courtly love to romantic love in modern societies and the strict distinction between love and sexual desire are a Western phenomenon: William M. Reddy, *The Making of Romantic Love. Longing and Sexuality in Europe, South Asia, and Japan, 900-1200 CE* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 44.
27. Michael I. Galanos, *Κοινωνικά μελέται περί έρωτος, γάμου και οικογενειακού βίου* [Social studies on romantic love, marriage and family life] (Athens, Greece: Kollaraki and Triantafyllou, 1888), 9.
28. Annie Mitchell, "Τι είναι συμπάθεια και τι πάθος" [What is affinity and what is passion], *Εφημερίς των Κυριών* [The Ladies' Journal] 134 (October 1, 1889): 5.
29. Pantias M. Karalis, *Περί οικογενείας και γάμου* [On family and marriage] (Athens, Greece: n.p., 1873), 8.
30. Maria Nikolopoulou's research on the first decade of the twentieth century focuses on five women writers who wrote prose and poetry and addressed openly, for the very first time, issues of female sexual desire in Greece: Irene Megapanou, Myrriotissa, Galatea Kazanjaki, Lora Dafne, and Lilika Betsika. See, for instance, Myrriotissas's poems, primarily focusing on female body and sexuality, and Galatea Kazanjakis's prose, featuring *femmes fatales* subjugating men. Maria Nikolopoulou, "Γυναικεία σεξουαλικότητα και γραφή στα περιοδικά λόγου και τέχνης (1900-1920)" [Female sexuality and writing in literature and art journals (1900-1920)], http://www.eens.org/?page_id=1582, accessed August 17, 2019.
31. Dimitris Papanikolaou, "Σαν κ' εμένα καμωμένοι." *Ο ομοφυλόφιλος Καβάφης και η ποιητική της σεξουαλικότητας* ["Those people made like me": Queer Cavafy and the Poetics of Sexuality] (Athens, Greece:

- Patakis, 2014), 91–158; Dora Rozeti, *η ερωμένη της* [Her lover], ed. Christina Dounia (Athens, Greece: Metaichmio, 2005).
32. Stefanos Doukas Diary, *Digeni-Doukas* Family Archive, Athens, October 15, 1936, ELIA/MIET. During the interwar years, references to the body and somatic pleasure are making their appearance in conjugal correspondence, see Vassiliadou, *The Tropic of Writing*, 103–8.
 33. Although the translations of foreign manuals, especially in inexpensive editions, were widely diffused and read, for the purposes of this research, we have focused on the texts of Greek authors. Most of them were trained as physicians and practiced as gynecologists, obstetricians, dermatologists, venerologists, or psychiatrists. Unfortunately, except for a few prominent cases, we lack further biographical information.
 34. Waters, “Sexology,” 43–50; Harry Oosterhuis, *Stepchildren of Nature: Krafft-Ebing, Psychiatry, and the Making of Sexual Identity* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 31–42.
 35. Nikolaos Drakoulides, *η σεξουαλική διαπαιδαγώγησις* [Sexual education] (Athens, Greece: Kontomaris, 1930), 3–4.
 36. Photis Skouras, *Σύγχρονος ψυχιατρική* [Modern psychiatry] (Athens, Greece: A. Karavias, 1952), 7–8, 57; Dimitrios Kouretas, “ψυχική υγιεινή στην καθημερινή Ζωή” [Mental hygiene in everyday life], *Κοινωνική Πρόνοια* [Social welfare] 10 (1958).
 37. Vern Bullough, *Science in the Bedroom: A History of Sex Research* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), 124–32.
 38. For example, in March 1932, the German sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld visited Athens and gave two lectures as part of a world tour. See Panayiotis Vyras, “Magnus Hirschfeld in Greece,” *Journal of Homosexuality* 34, no. 1 (1997): 17–29.
 39. For the postwar period, see Efi Avdela, “‘Corrupting and Uncontrollable Activities’: Moral Panic about Youth in Post-Civil-War Greece,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 43, no. 1 (January 2008): 25–44; Avdela, “Youth ‘in Moral Danger’: (Re)Conceptualizing Delinquency in post-Civil-War Greece,” *Social History* 42, no. 1 (2017): 73–93.
 40. Thomas Gallant, *Modern Greece* (London, UK: Arnold, 2001), 99, 145–50, 188–91.
 41. Greek women (when literate and over thirty years of age) gained the right to vote in the municipal elections in 1930 and full political rights in 1952. For the long process that led to the recognition of women’s political rights, see Dimitra Samiou, *Τα πολιτικά δικαιώματα των Ελληνίδων, 1864-1952* [Greek women’s political rights, 1864-1952] (Athens, Greece: Sakkoulas, 2013).
 42. Alexandros Tsakiris, *Μεγάλη σεξολογία: ανικανότης, στειρώσις και η σύγχρονη θεραπεία των* [Great sexology: Impotence, sterility and their modern therapy] (Athens, Greece: n.p., 1954), 656–63 (quote on 662).
 43. *Ibid.*, 680.
 44. Kyriakidis, *The Mysteries of Spousal Love*, 35; Nikolaos Gyras, *Πριν και μετά το γάμο* [Before and after marriage] (1938; repr., Athens, Greece: P. Dimitrakos, 1944), 37.
 45. Anna Katsigra, *Γενετήσια αγωγή α’: Προετοιμασία του κοριτσιού* [Genital education A: Preparation of the girl], 2nd ed. (Athens, Greece: n.p., n.d.), 38–41; Tsakiris, *Great Sexology*, 263–78; Nikos Zakopoulos, *Σύμβουλος σεξουαλικών σχέσεων* [Counselor of sexual relations] (Athens, Greece: Chr. Giovanis, n.d.), 111–12.
 46. In an undated book that was probably published in the 1950s, Anna Katsigra declared: “I am not ashamed to say that I myself perform it [hymenoplasty] and, what is more, quite often for free”: Anna Katsigra, *Γενετήσια αγωγή για τους αρραβωνιασμένους και τους νύμφαντρους* [Genital education for the engaged and the newlyweds] (Athens, Greece: n.p., n.d.), 24. However, we lack information on the extent of this practice or the profile of women who resorted to it.
 47. Zakopoulos, *Counselor of Sexual Relations*, 145, 153, 158.
 48. Efi Avdela, *Δια λόγους τιμής: Βία, συναισθήματα και αξίες στη μετεμφυλιακή Ελλάδα* [For reasons of honour: Violence, emotions and values in post-war Greece] (Athens, Greece: Nepheli, 2017).
 49. A. Sygkelakis, *Υπόκριση υγιεινή της γυναίκος* [Woman’s intimate hygiene] (Alexandria, Egypt: n.p., 1927), 38–44; Tsakiris, *Great Sexology*, 273–78; Zakopoulos, *Counselor of Sexual Relations*, 415–599.
 50. Frigidity came to replace earlier notions, like “anaphrodisiac,” used as late as the mid-twentieth century, with a more scientific hue. See *Τα αφροδίσια πάθη (Πρακτικά οδηγία και συμβουλαί - Προφυλάξεις και*

- θεραπείαι*) [Venereal diseases (practical instructions and advice—Precautions and therapies)] (Athens, Greece: Papadimitriou Bros, 1928), 28.
51. “η ‘ψυχρή’ γυναίκα” [The ‘frigid’ woman], *Γυναίκα και το σπίτι [Woman and Home]*, 44 (September 26, 1951): 36.
 52. Georgios Zouraris, *Σεξουαλική συμπεριφορά των ανθρώπων: η ελληνική επιστήμη απαντά εις τον Κίνσεϋ*, 2nd ed. [Human sexual behaviour: Greek science responds to Kinsey] (Athens, Greece: Melissa, n.d.), 31; Skouras, *Modern Psychiatry*, 57.
 53. Aristos Aspiotis, *Υπάντησις με το άλλο φύλον [Meeting the other sex]* (Athens, Greece: Institute of Medicine, Psychology and Psychic Hygiene, 1956), 9.
 54. Zouraris, *Human Sexual Behaviour*, 230 (emphasis by Zouraris).
 55. Research on the influence of the Orthodox Church on everyday behavior and mores is lacking for the twentieth century. For its discourse on moral issues, see Efi Gazi, *Πατρίς, θρησκεία, οικογένεια. Ιστορία ενός συνθήματος 1880-1930* [Homeland, religion, family. History of a slogan 1880-1930] (Athens, Greece: Polis, 2011). The military dictatorship (1967–1974) adopted this traditionalist emphasis on religion, family, and homeland, although it did not develop a political program to support it. For the Church’s interventions to and concerns about the laxing morals in postwar Greece, see Avdela, *For Reasons of Honour*, 190–92; Kostas Katsapis, *Ήχοι και απόηχοι. Κοινωνική ιστορία του ροκ εν ρολ φαινομένου στην Ελλάδα, 1956-1967* [Sounds and overtones: Social history of the rock’ n’ roll phenomenon in Greece 1956–1967] (Athens, Greece: General Secretariat for Youth, Historical Archive of Greek Youth, National Hellenic Research Foundation. Institute of Hellenic Studies, 2007).
 56. “Ο γυναικολόγος απαντά” [The gynecologist replies], *Γυναίκα και το σπίτι [Woman and Home]*, 18 (October 4, 1950): 54.
 57. Nikolaos Drakoulides, *Οι 12 σταθμοί της Ζωής μας* [The twelve milestones of our life] (Athens, Greece: Korydallos, 1944), 56–57. Twenty years later, the same author, responding as an expert to readers of a popular magazine, assured a male correspondent who was about to get married that the ideal age difference was eighteen years (“Ο σεξολόγος-ψυχοτεχνικός συμβουλεύει” [The psychologist-psychotechnician advises], *Καρδιοχτύπι [Heartbeat]* 1, no. 3 [1965]: 74). Age played also a part in the conceptualization of frigidity, as sexologists viewed the decline of women’s sexual drive after a certain age, usually after menopause, as normal. Indeed, women’s letters to sexologists highlight that “frigidity” preoccupied younger women (often married to older men), who thought that it was not normal for their age not to be sexually aroused or not to find sexual pleasure.
 58. Tsakiris, *Great Sexology*, 468–69; Zakopoulos, *Counselor of Sexual Relations*, 299.
 59. *Ibid*, 367.
 60. Anna Katsigra, *Για τους παντρεμένους* [For the married] (n.p., 1955), 53.
 61. Georgios Igoumenakis in Konstantinos Katsaras, *Ρόδα κι’ αγάθια της σεξουαλικής Ζωής* [Roses and thorns of sexual life] (Athens, Greece: I. Zacharopoulos, n.d.), 45–46.
 62. Georgios Zouraris, *Σεξουαλική Ζωή: ανανισμός, αποχή, εγκράτεια, ακολασία και η εξασθένησις της ορμής*, 6th ed. [Sexual life: Onanism, abstinence, chastity, debauchery and weakening of sexual drive] (Athens, Greece: Melissa, n.d.), 238 (emphasis by Zouraris).
 63. “Ο σεξουαλισμός ως παράγων οικογενειακής ευτυχίας” [Sexualism as a factor for family happiness], *Γυναίκα και το σπίτι [Woman and Home]*, 19 (October 18, 1950): 29.
 64. Letter dated April 9, 1957, Angelos Doxas Archive (unsorted), ELIA/MIET. Drakoulides replied through the pages of the magazine *Χτυποκάρδι [Heartbeat]* that the “miserable husband” should not have been married before having tested his “performance” and should now seek psychotherapy (“Οι απαντήσεις του ειδικού” [The specialist’s responses], *Χτυποκάρδι [Heartbeat]* 1, no. 14 [May 1, 1957]: 67).
 65. Papadogiannis, *Militant around the Clock?* 27–31; Panayiotis Zestanakis, “Gender and Sexuality in Three late-1980s Greek Lifestyle Magazines: Playboy, Status and Click,” *Journal of Greek Media & Culture*, 3, no. 1 (2017): 95–115.
 66. Letter dated March 15, 1980, Angelos Doxas Archive (unsorted), ELIA/MIET.

67. For a brief history of the Centre, see Despo Kritsotaki, "Initiating Deinstitutionalisation: Early Attempts of Mental Health Care Reform in Greece, 1950s-1970s," in *Deinstitutionalisation and After. Post-war Psychiatry in the Western World*, ed. Despo Kritsotaki, Vicky Long, and Matthew Smith (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016), 155-72. It was founded at the end of 1956 in Athens, and by 1958, an annex in Thessaloniki was in operation. For the purposes of the research, we focus on the latter, where complete series of patients' files have been kept. Most of the Centre's work during this period (late 1950s-1980) was undertaken by social workers and psychiatrists; thus, the views of psychologists are not presented in the analysis. We consider clients diagnosed with mild and temporary disorders, such as neuroses and "adjustment" problems, rather than those diagnosed with grave psychiatric disorders, such as schizophrenia, in order to draw attention to aspects of sexuality that were closer to these of the general population.
68. Despo Kritsotaki, "From 'Social Aid' to 'Social Psychiatry': Mental Health and Social Welfare in Post-war Greece (1950s-1960s)," *Palgrave Communications* 4, no. 1 (2018): 9.
69. The Centre's services for adults (typically over 16 and usually between 20 and 55 years old) examined yearly between 150 and 200 cases in the 1960s and early 1970s, and up to 350 cases in the late 1970s. This means that their clientele was limited in comparison to the sum of patients in more "traditional" psychiatric institutions, namely psychiatric hospitals and private clinics. Therefore, we can conclude that the Centre did not have an impact to large segments of the population in terms of absolute numbers but was a "pilot" institution that expressed new ideas and promoted new practices. Its work, however, reflected and advanced broader social and cultural changes that were taking place in urban Greece of the postwar period. See Despo Kritsotaki, "Ψυχική υγιεινή," *κοινωνική πρόνοια και ψυχιατρική μεταρρύθμιση στη μεταπολεμική Ελλάδα. Το Κέντρο Ψυχικής Υγιεινής και Ερευνών, 1956-1978* ["Mental hygiene," social welfare and psychiatric reform in post-war Greece. The Centre for Mental Health and Research, 1956-1978] (Athens, Greece: Pedio, 2016), 220-21, 230, 255-60.
70. Thessaloniki (Psychiatric Counseling Department (PCD), archive of the Centre for Mental Health and Research of Thessaloniki, case files 31, 65, and 98).
71. PCD, 31. In order to ensure that the privacy of clients is respected, all names are pseudonyms and every effort has been made to remove any element that would reveal their identity. The researcher has acquired the permission of the Centre to have access in case records and publish her findings.
72. PCD, 1072.
73. *Ibid.*, 1174.
74. *Ibid.*, 974.
75. *Ibid.*, 1272.
76. *Ibid.*, 211.
77. *Ibid.*, 11.
78. *Ibid.*, 173. This is a recurrent issue in the historiography. See Bullough, *Science in the Bedroom*, 185-95; Cook, *The Long Sexual Revolution*, 2004.
79. PCD, 273. Eleni asked the Centre's help in 1968.
80. PCD, 114, 222, 1061, 1409, 1411.
81. *Ibid.*, 222, 1061.
82. *Ibid.*, 1372.
83. *Ibid.*, 222.
84. Efstathios Lymperakis, "Συζυγικά προβλήματα και νευρώσεις" [Marital problems and neuroses], 1964, Ομιλίες δι' ευρύ κοινόν [Lectures for the public], folder Γραφείον εθελοντών, εκπαιδευτικών πρόγραμμα [Office of volunteers, educational program], 1958-1965, archive of the Centre for Mental Health and Research of Thessaloniki.
85. PCD, 370. It is telling that far less women complained about their husbands' affairs than vice versa.
86. PCD, 1372.
87. *Ibid.*, 1061.

88. Ibid., 222.

89. Ibid., 1173.

90. Ibid., 1411.

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