

# Outside of Society: The Representation of Athenian Outcasts in *Tmima Ithon/Vice Squad*

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## ABSTRACT

*Following the deregulation of the Greek television sector in 1989, as well as its influence on the production of new television series and serials during the next decade, television crime fiction appeared in the scheduling agenda of the newborn private stations. Tmima Ithon/Vice Squad (1992-1995, ANT1) was an early example of such a trend, introducing a fresh perspective on how law enforcement and marginalized subjectivities could be represented onscreen. By examining the series' place within the genre of television crime fiction along with its historical and social context, this article offers a space of reconsideration of the role and function of the genre in Greece. Furthermore, through quantitative and qualitative analysis, it explores the way social outcasts are represented, in relation to general perceptions of social categories and the rapidly shifting sociocultural environment of the 1990s, when postmodern forces were attempting a reconstruction of what was until then perceived as solid and stable.*

## KEYWORDS

crime television

Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft

outcasts

otherness

*Tmima Ithon*

## INTRODUCTION

The 1990s crime series and serials, orienting either towards comedy or drama, emerged as a dynamic category in the early years of Greek media deregulation, providing a thematically interesting group of narratives about the role of the police and the outlaws. In this article, we take a closer look at *Tmima Ithon/Vice Squad* (1992-1995), directed by Manousos Manousakis and aired by private broadcaster ANT1. The series presents, through its 112 episodes, the adventures of a team of police officers working in the Vice Squad Department of Athens.

Drawing from television genre criticism, cultural studies and, sociology, as well as an extensive qualitative and quantitative analysis, our discussion of the series aims to place itself within the frame of a representation analysis of the anthropogeography of the Outside, i.e. the villains, the outcasts, the police officers, and their surroundings. Moreover, it closely examines the representations of outsiders in terms of sensationalism and the perceptions of the Other in Greek media and proposes an interpretational frame which reflects certain perceptions of how social categories and identities are formed within Greek society. This is examined through the application of the classical sociological framework of the 'Community versus Society' divide; the implementation of key contemporary concepts of social phenomenology is also part of the analytical process, mainly those of the 'failed consumer' and the organic nature of Greek social/cultural suspension, reflecting the fluidity of the formation of modern social categories.

## FROM PARALITERATURE TO GIANNIS MARIS: SHAPING THE GREEK CRIME GENRE

The complete history of the TV genre under investigation could not possibly be addressed here (for such accounts, see Cooke 2001: 19-23; Mittell 2004: 121-152). However, we could underline some of its basic characteristics, familiar on both sides of the Atlantic: the 'whodunit' narrative formula, episodic structure, and absence of a continuing storyline. In each particular episode, a crime takes place and a police officer (uniformed or undercover) or a detective is in charge of solving the mystery behind it. Throughout this process that includes elements of procedural drama, melodrama, and features of action-adventure genres, the offender is eventually revealed. It should be stressed here that the aforementioned formula was further enriched by the presence of tougher cops and by treating gun shooting in a semi-realistic, semi-documentary way. Moreover, the settings and iconography were reasonably standardized.

When examined within its historical context, Greek crime series seem to be epitomizing the combination of three different literal and mediatic traditions: the 19<sup>th</sup> century European paraliterature, the 1960s-1970s Greek crime literature, as formalized by prolific novelist and journalist Giannis Maris (Tsirimokos), as well as the American radio and television genres, which had been under formation in the late 1940s. This combination offers a space for considering the crystallization of generic conventions and routines.

In this sense, the three aforementioned traditions allow us to emphasize the connections between a variety of sources that shaped our understanding of the Greek crime series. First, Greek paraliterature served as a hotbed for the formation of the genre. Flourishing within the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and being associated with the European tradition (Kalfopoulos 2016: 165; Kassaveti 2017b: 47-48; Meraklis 2007: 44; Martinidis 1994: 141-144; Veloudis 1977: 3-4), it was centered on either melodramatic or crime-adventure narratives, pitting former heroes of the Greek revolution against the Turks (see Veloudis 1977). Such stories were published either as novels or as pamphlets in the newspapers and their popularity implies a further familiarization of their readers with the motifs and formulas of the genre.

Second, one should keep in mind the undeniable role that Giannis Maris played in opening a way for a national Greek crime literature and its generic conventions in other media (Leontaritis 2013). From the 1950s until the 1970s, Maris published 46 novels, sixteen 'novelas', and six short stories (Apostolidis 2012), contributing to the genre's popularity and wider circulation while writing in newspapers and magazines (Filippou 2016: 41-47). His corpus provides insight into the lifestyles of the Greek upper-middle class who lived and worked in specific Athenian areas (such as Kolonaki, Kifisia, etc.) (Kalfopoulos 2016: 161-170; Myrogiannis 2016: 85-91). Furthermore, he blended the Greek and European tradition of the genre, especially the work of Georges Simenon (Kalfopoulos 2016: 161-170), and expanded his narratives in other media: as a scriptwriter in Greek radio-series, film (Ragkos 2016: 133-139) and on television. In the latter arena, in particular, Maris provided several of his stories for specific 'Maris' branded' television adaptations, e.g. *Ypopsies/Suspicious* (1977-1978, ERT), *I Eksafanisi tou John Avlakitoti/The Disappearance of John Avlakitotis* (1985, ERT), and *Oi Istories tou Astynomou Beka/The Stories of Officer Bekas* (2006-2008, ALPHA).

A third factor that played an important role in shaping the Greek crime tradition was the American radio-series and television archetype. Attempting to examine the television crime series, Snauffer (2006: 2-3) makes explicit that in the case of the USA,

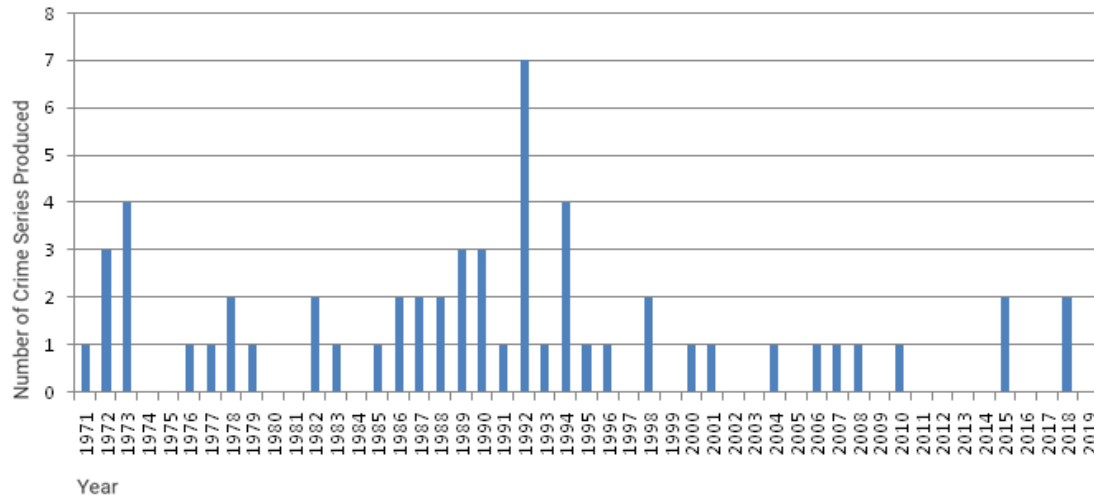
the earliest crime series that came to television closely resembled the radio dramas of the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s. Many in fact were literal translations. The people involved with the production of these programs, for the most part, had actually come from radio.

During the 1940s, the crime genre, ranging from radio-series to television, had to face a considerable contradiction: as producers had to refrain from high production costs, improvisation and interior shooting became prominent, while all violent scenes were tremendously restricted – at least, until the broadcast of *Dragnet* (1951-1959, NBC), the crime series that defined the American crime genre, collaborating with the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) for its stories. Such a radio influence has been evident in the Greek case as well: Giannis Maris and other scriptwriters, as well as actors, had been involved in the Greek crime radio-series, providing a set of narratives that circulated in different media.

### **CRIME SHOWS ON GREEK PUBLIC AND PRIVATE TV: OVERVIEW OF THE GENRE FROM THE 1970s TO *TMIMA ITHON*/VICE SQUAD**

In the previous section, we considered the Greek crime genre as an epitome of three diverse mediatic traditions. Although this three-fold synthesis was already available to the genre, the rather delayed advent of public television in the late 1960s and the circulation of similar film narratives in the Greek popular cinema of the era by filmmakers such as Ntinos Dimopoulos and scriptwriter and director Nikos Foskolos (who also wrote crime fiction for newspapers) (Kassaveti 2017b) marked the similarly delayed emergence of the genre in the Greek television. In the course of the decades, crime drama occupied the place of a rather peripheral television genre, while its American equivalent held a strong position (see Paschalidis 2017: 67-68, 98).

The following table (Fig. 1) presents the production rate of crime shows from 1972 to 2019, providing a frame upon which to implement a critical perspective.



**Fig. 1:** Production of Crime Series/Serials of Public and Private Television 1972-2019. Source: Valoukos 2008, Retrodb.gr. Numbers refer to unique productions of crime series/serials per year and not their actual running periods or re-runs.

The 1970s (see also Vamvakas 2017: 322, 338-339) can be considered the definite birth date of the Greek television crime genre. It was shot live and rather sketchily, employing an episodic structure and a ‘whodunit’ formula, while revolving around either a private eye or a specific police officer (Officer Lekkas, instead of Bekas – a specific Giannis Maris device) working in a police department yet rarely engaging with his colleagues. Giannis Maris provided the scripts for some of the series, while other crime fiction authors, such as the equally prolific Jimmy Korinis, often served as director (*38o AstynomikoTmima/38<sup>th</sup> Police Department*, 1972, YENED). Real crime, instead of fiction, provided the cases for *Aporritos Fakelos 27/Confidential File 27* (1972, YENED), a series supported by the Greek Police Force in an effort to communicate to the general public their risky and difficult work in the urban centre of Athens. In the 1980s, Giannis Maris’ works – e.g. *O Thanatos tou Timotheou Konsta/The Death of Timotheos Konstas* (1987, ERT2) – continued to function as the primary source for new crime television ventures, in a decade when American crime dramas and comedies were the fourth most popular genre on the two public television channels (Kassaveti 2017a: 157-158).

The 1990s represented a departure from older narratives; the deregulation of the Greek audiovisual field meant that private channels could compete with public ones in terms of their entertainment scopes, based on their genre availability. During this decade, crime shows oscillated between the following contrasting characteristics: they were episodic or continuous, cosmopolitan or urban, dramatic or comic, conservative or modern – no signs of blending could be observed. Furthermore, as we argue below, they began to bear a closer relationship to the wider mediatic field,

representing youth subcultures and reflecting the public sphere's emerging concerns instead of revolving around an unhistorical problem-solving mystery.

Πληρωμένοι έρωτες, ναρκωτικά,  
στιγμές απελπισίας, θύματα και θύτες

ΧΡΗΣΤΟΣ ΤΣΑΓΚΑΣ  
ΤΙΜΟΣ ΠΕΡΛΕΓΚΑΣ  
ΘΕΟΦΙΛΟΣ ΒΑΝΔΩΡΟΣ  
ΒΕΡΟΝΙΚΑ ΑΡΓΙΕΝΤΖΗ  
ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΟΣ ΓΚΛΕΤΣΟΣ

αντιμετωπίζουν το έγκλημα, τη διαφθορά και τον  
ανθρώπινο πόνο στο...

**ΤΜΗΜΑ ΗΘΩΝ**  
σκοτεινές ιστορίες της πόλης μέσα στη νύχτα

Όλα τα μάτια στραμμένα στον **ANT1**

ΑΠΟΨΕ ΣΤΙΣ 22.20 ΣΤΟΝ **ANT1**

**Fig. 2:** Newspaper ad for *Tmima Ithon* starring the main two younger undercover police officers: Stavros (*Apostolos Gletsos*) and Pavlos (*Theofilos Vandoros*). Source: *Apogevmatini*.

It is within this 1990s context (see also Markatas 2017), that *Tmima Ithon* was produced by the television production company Telekinisi. The series premiered on ANT1, a major private channel, on the 15<sup>th</sup> September 1992 (Fig.2). It ran for three

seasons (1992-1995) and consisted of 112 ca. 45-minute-episodes. It was directed by director Manousos Manousakis. However, several other directors (Andreas Thomopoulos, Vasilis Tselemegkos, etc.) and scriptwriters (Vasilis Manousakis, Nikos Spanos, Vasilis Spiliopoulos, Nikos Panagiotopoulos, etc.) worked on *Tmima Ithon*. The opening credits music, as well as the series' score, was composed by well-known Greek composer Giorgos Chatzinasios.



**Fig. 3:** *Elina Akritidou as Lina Xirogiannaki, who starred in the early episodes of Tmima Ithon with the late Timos Perlegas as Sublieutenant Apostolos Velios and Christos Tsagkas as Lt. Michalis Kessanlis.*

The basic cast included the characters of Lt. Michalis Kessanlis (Christos Tsagkas), Sublieutenant Apostolos Velios (Timos Perlegas) (Fig. 3), undercover police officers Stavros Karras (Apostolos Gletsos), Pavlos Kampanis (TheofilosVandoros), Lina Xirogiannaki (Elina Akritidou), Irimi Tatoglou (Veronica Argientzi), psychologist Despoina Argyrou (Alexandra Pavlidou) (Fig. 4-5), Eleni Anastasiou (Marianna Toumasatou) (Fig. 6), and Manolis (Grigoris Toumasatos) – all of whom worked in the Vice Squad of the city of Athens.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> During the total run of the series, its cast underwent major changes: for instance, actor Timos Perlegas died during the shooting of the first season (around the 27<sup>th</sup> episode), and the character of Lina appeared only in the first episodes of the first season.



**Fig. 4-5:** *Both Undercover*: Police officers Irini Tatoglou (Veronica Argientzi) (left) and Despoina Argyrou (Alexandra Pavlidou) (right) in *O Drapetis/The Fugitive* (S01E18).



**Fig. 6:** The iconic Angelos Rokkos (Panos Michalopoulos) and Eleni (Marianna Toumassatou) in *Trigono/Triangle* (S02E16).

After Stavros' (Gletsos) departure from the show, Angelos Rokkos (Panos Michalopoulos) (Fig. 6), a hard-boiled cop, permanently joined the team during its third season.

The episodic plot of *Tmima Ithon* revolves around the days and, mostly, nights of the officers of the Vice Squad working undercover in Athens as law enforcers and crime-solvers of the various sexual, drug-related, or general crimes that come under the jurisdiction of Vice Squad, or happen to involve one of its members. Most often, the episodes focus on the activities of the villains and the underdogs themselves, rather than the actions of the police officers who primarily respond to crime rather than actively pursue large scale investigations. Sometimes, vigilante justice is the final word against the villains, while the officers arrive too late to dictate the outcome of the situation, not being able to solve the case 'by the book'.

In this view, the series cannot be regarded as a typical Greek crime drama series – that's why there has been a problem in its categorization by the press<sup>2</sup>: firstly, it differentiates itself from the Greek crime television series' established generic traits, as it does not focus solely on one character usually associated with blue-collar police officers, such as Bekas, Lekkas, etc., but rather on a special force team consisting of members of different age groups and personality traits. It is perhaps the first time in Greek television history that different power dynamics at play are represented onscreen in an essentially dramatic series. One could see the first traces of such a characterization in a police comedy series, in Greek scriptwriter and director Giorgos Lazaridis' *Astynomos Thanasis Papathanasis/Officer Thanasis Papathanasis* (1990-1992, ANT1), broadcasted two years earlier. However, in *Tmima Ithon*, the previously established detective-centricity is lifted and officers of the Vice squad share the show's focus, and even have episodes dedicated to them.

Secondly, not every episode employs a 'whodunit' formula, but rather a loose crime fiction quality (Myrogiannis 2012: 11). Frequently, the viewers watch the crime unfolding from the perspective of characters directly involved, and thus know who the villain is from the very start. What follows is the interrelationships between the underdogs and social outcasts that populate the crime's environment, and not always the actions undertaken by the Vice Squad or its officers per se. The issues dramatized in the series stand as a conscious shift towards a more modern view of crime. As is shown below, another crucial point can be made about this breach in the older established tradition: upper-middle class characters and places are not common and plots do not unfold in old Athens, the Athens of post-WWII

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<sup>2</sup> *Radiotileorasi* magazine characterizes *Tmima Ithon* from its first episode (*Radiotileorasi*, 11-17 September, 1992) as a 'crime social adventure series', while *Mesimvrini* newspaper's programme from 15/9/1992 to 31/12/1992 has successively and alternately attributed the following generic categorization to the series: 'social adventure', 'drama series', 'crime drama series', and 'crime social adventure series'.

reconstruction, where political upheaval is often concealed. Of course, *Tmima Ithon* also features rich characters, mainly associated with organized crime, and a few coming from the world of journalism and television, but most of the series' protagonists are rather marginal. Lastly, there has been a deliberate overture to the living city of Athens as a site of crime and cultural change. Shooting takes place in a real-world setting (interior/exterior), while in older television series an absence of real-world settings was noticeable and may be attributed to the logic of constructing an older, but plausible, iconography for a particular series, but also to the usual practice of studio shooting during the 1980s or even to a restricted production budget.

Despite its modern approach to the crime television genre, *Tmima Ithon* was not very popular until the screening of its second season (1994), even though it was scheduled in the prime-time zone since its first day (i.e. 22:20-23:30). However, it was a strong rival to other private channels' programs. Furthermore, when *Tmima Ithon* was moved from Tuesday to Thursday, it brought along a drastic change in the audience's preferences, occupying the first position in the ratings throughout its final season: viewers' ratings did not include the series<sup>3</sup> until the autumn of 1993, during which it became their top choice, according to AGB.<sup>4</sup> However, we should take into account that the evolution of the distribution of the television genres in the total sum of the Greek television production for the two rival private channels, ANT1 and MEGA, from 1992 to 1997 marks a serious decline of the crime genre (Papathanassopoulos 2000: 172-174). The latter had been the first to be affected from this decline and did not manage to attract the interest of the audience, a significant part of which consisted of women and children.<sup>5</sup>

So far, we have touched upon questions concerning the generic structure, the likeness and the deviation from an established television crime series archetype, as it took shape from the 1970s onwards by the choices and contingencies of its

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<sup>3</sup> See *Mesimvrini*, 25/9/1992, p. 23. Just one week after its premiere, *Tmima Ithon* was considered a series that held the interest of the viewers alongside with *Anatomia enos Egklimatos/Anatomy of a Murder*, broadcasted also by ANT1. Overall, the article claims that "all the new television serials have failed" in terms of spectatorship. Throughout 1992 until the fall of 1993, soap operas, like *I Lampsi/The Shining* (1991-2005, ANT1) by Nikos Foskolos, comedy shows (*Deka Mikroi Mitsoi/Ten Little Mitsoi* (1992-2003, MEGA; 2018, ANT1), *Hi Rock* (1992-1994, MEGA) and news programs, such as *Enopios Enopio/Face to Face* (1991-2002, MEGA) or *60' Horis Montage/60' Without Editing* (1993, MEGA), were the most popular Greek programs.

<sup>4</sup> AGB Hellas is a division of an international television audience measurement company, founded in Greece in 1988.

<sup>5</sup> Out of 322 Greek TV series and serials, only 20 belonged to the crime genre, 148 were comedies, while the remaining 154 consisted mainly of drama, and soap opera.

producers and directors. In the following section, we shed light on the representation of the anthropogeography of *Tmima Ithon*, focusing mainly on the outcasts, the villains, and their surroundings, in other words, whatever constituted the *Other/Outside* for Greek society, as well as their interconnections to the specific sociocultural outline in the 1990s Greece.

## **TOWARDS AN ANTHROPOGEOGRAPHY OF THE OUTSIDE IN *TMIMA ITHON***

### **A. Criteria of Classification**

While Greek bibliography on police dramas is nearly nonexistent (see Kassaveti 2019), it should be stressed that there has been significant literature on the history and content of crime dramas both in Europe and the USA (Mason 1992; Reiner 1994, 2002, 2010; Snauffer 2006; Allen 2007; Colbran 2014; Lam 2014; to name a few) from different perspectives (criminology, cultural studies, etc.) and for particular case studies (see Allen's work on *CSI*). Although diverse in nature, this body of work addresses issues concerning the various aspects of the stereotyped representation of crime and police involvement versus actual incidents in the USA and the UK. Colbran detects three divergences between the criminals and the crime committed, as reported by the statistics and various research studies in the US and Europe (2014: 8). These include (1) the sensationalization of serious crimes (especially those with a sexual character), (2) offenders are usually represented as "higher status, white, middle-aged men" (ibid: 10) in contrast to the official statistics, where offenders are usually young, outcasts, and black, and (3) a higher clear-up rate, i.e. not all offenders are caught, but they can also get away with their crimes and never be arrested.

Taking into account Colbran's observations, as they seem to inform our crucial question about the stereotyped nature of such representations, especially those of the offenders, in this article we employ a quantitative and a qualitative approach in order to examine and analyze the representation of the margin, the Outside of society and its anthropogeography in *Tmima Ithon*. For the needs of the quantitative part of the analysis, we explore the number of appearances of particular types that represent the outside as well as the places they frequent. Through a code-sheet we have documented how frequently they appear in each episode, while our quantitative approach focused on prevailing representation tropes, whose analysis from a textual and sociological perspective could shape our understanding of the relation between representation and everyday life.

Two further points should be made: first, in terms of characterization, our criteria for constructing the following typologies attempt to reflect, as clearly as possible, an

absolute set of typecasts (in order to minimize the chance of getting overlapping categories), as they are stereotyped by the television industry. The latter seeks to make the viewers understand the distinction between 'good' versus 'bad' by naively delineating particular characters (e.g. the 'whore', the 'junkie', etc.) that bear particular behavioral and social traits and their relationship with the social normalities from which they deviate. Second, as far as places are concerned, we seek to give prominence to the urban and the semi-urban places, where the underdogs dwell, work, proceed to illegal activities or find shelter.

## B. Preliminary Analysis

### *i. Anthropogeography of the Outside*

In terms of the outcasts' anthropogeography (see Fig.8), we detect twelve distinct categories of most prevalent types of underdogs represented in *Tmima Ithon*. By the highest percentage (34,6%), sex workers are the most dominant category (Fig. 7): mostly female prostitution, male and female high-class escorting and hotline girls. Sometimes, sex workers appear to work alone or with other co-workers, they are usually associated with a pimp/madame,<sup>6</sup> or they resort to the profession because they need to secure the financial means for drugs, luxury or mere survival. Other times, sex workers may be underage and appear to have no qualms about their work as a means of escaping a restrictive family environment. Transvestites frequently work on particular streets while male escorts mainly accompany rich women or rich homosexual men.

The second most popular category refers to organized crime (22,7%). In this particular category, one could find crime organization leaders, drug 'barons', pimps, which the show generally puts in an unfavorable light, yet also pickpockets, drug 'mules' and bouncers. 13,4% of the villains are drug or alcohol addicts: more often teenagers and youth in general are the ones that delve into drug use, but one could also see that the majority of the villains have already developed a drug habit, with heroin being the most popular drug, whose usage is firmly connected to a predetermined downwards spiral. Former prison inmates (4,5%) also appear in *Tmima Ithon* and are commonly wrongly accused of a crime, while trans and homosexual people (4,5%) are consistently represented as deviants: a queer person cannot be accepted in a particular community unless they hide their identity; this kind of repression can provoke sexually-related crimes. Mental illness (4,1%) often leads to tragic events. Such serious mental illness that results in him/her becoming a serial killer is firmly connected to a traumatic childhood and its complications. Youth (4,1%) is not represented as a force of change but rather as impulsive,

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<sup>6</sup> i.e. the female supervisor of a brothel.

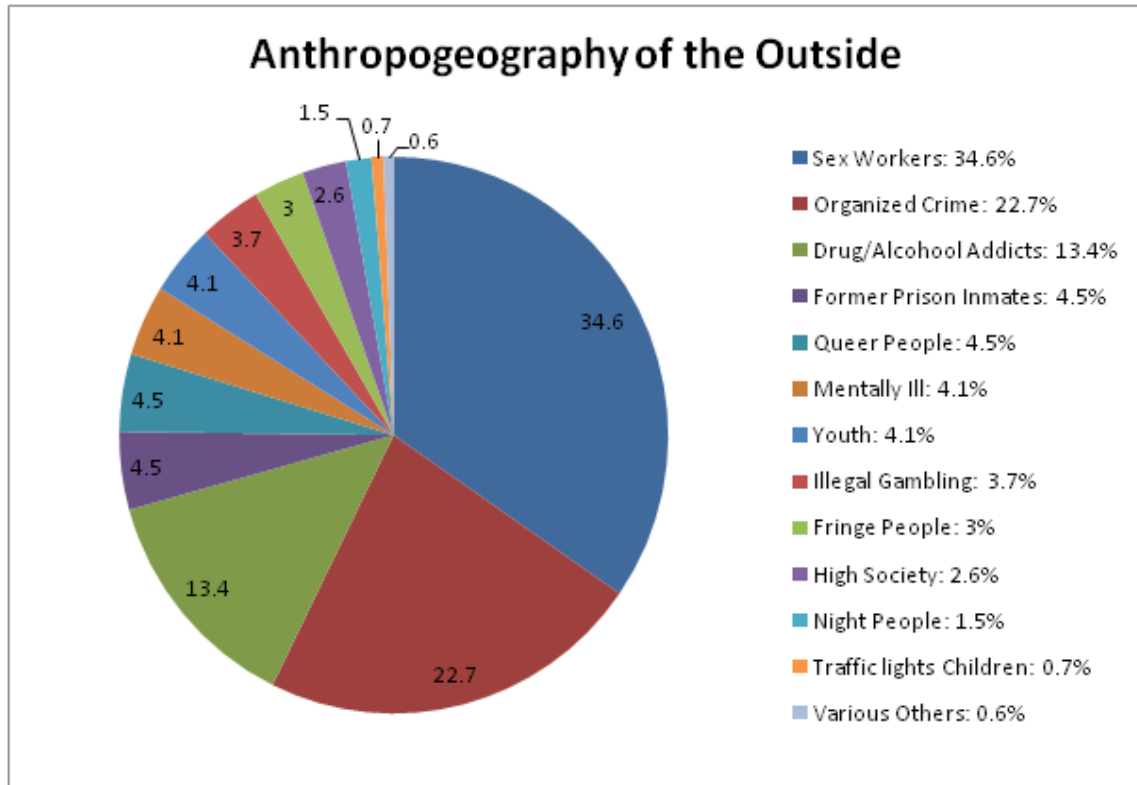
conservative, delinquent, amorous and pious individuals, depending on the scenario. They can easily become entangled in the web of organized crime, and when they leave their family, there is no neutral zone for them. So, one could see teenagers turning into prostitutes just for pocket money, committing hate crimes, blinding themselves with money hunting and becoming drug addicts. Illegal gambling stands for 3,7%, usually portrayed in specific theme-related episodes. Other marginalized people that live on the fringe of society (3%) appear to be homeless people, AIDS affected persons as well as sailors and professional fortune tellers, making up for a diverse group of what can only be described as fringe-people.



**Fig. 7:** *Sex workers on the 'street' in Ego ton Eida/I saw him first (S02E19)*

High society (2,6%) is not always associated with a crime network, but it can be easily tricked by escorts and blackmailers or they could also appear to play a vital political role in a small society. Finally, 'night people' (1,5%) could refer to people working in nightclubs, Greek popular music venues ('skyladika') or bars, as well as people that engage in specific solitary night jobs. Their role is not decorative at all, as their actions indirectly influence the plot and the protagonists' fates. There are also a couple of cases of children of Albanian origin, working at the traffic lights, represented by a deceptively insignificant 0,7%, even though their appearance was linked to a real-life situation that shocked Greek society in the 90s, as children

exploitation was not only illegal but it was reminiscent of Greek working practices until the late 1960s.<sup>7</sup>



**Fig. 8:** *The Anthropogeography of the Outside*

**ii. Geography of the Outside**

As far as the geography of the Outside (see Fig. 10) is concerned, i.e. the outsiders’ environment, a bar (14,7%) (Fig. 9) is the most popular place in the series. There, suspects can hide themselves, villains deal with each other, and prostitution can be uninhibitedly exercised. Bars in *Tmima Ithon* are usually real-life bars, such as *Sychnotites* in Exarchia or *Sui Generis* that is located opposite the Hilton Hotel in Athens.

<sup>7</sup>‘Ekmetalleftsis ke Ftoheias Gonia...’, *Apogevmatini*, 16/4/1993, p. 14.



**Fig. 9:** *Actress Nana Veneti in a typical bar in Vendetta (S02S04)*

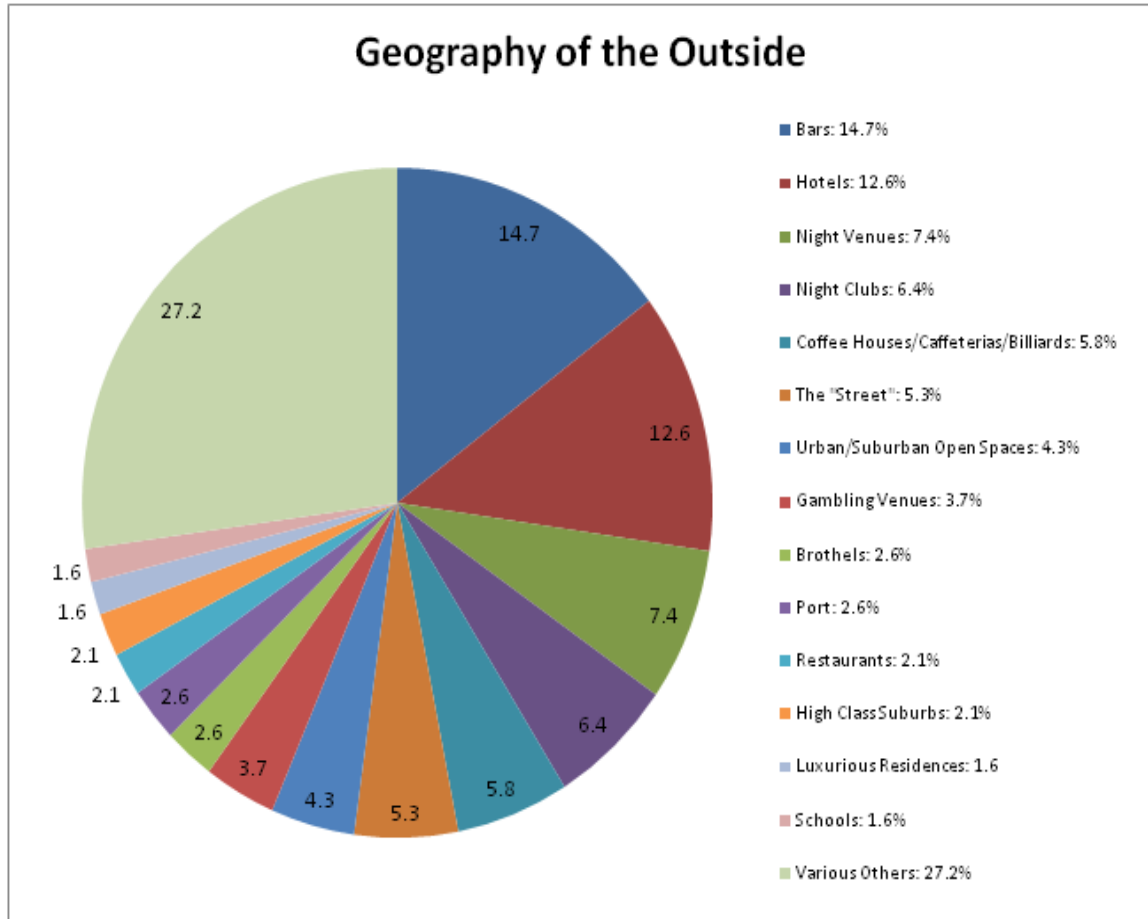
Hotels (12,6%) are also frequent: they are either cheap hotels located near Omonoia Square,<sup>8</sup> such as the old Hotel Diros (still operating) or luxury hotels, such as Caravel in the Ilissia area. This differentiation is established by the different activities and the types of people involved: in the case of cheap downtown hotels, this is where poor outcasts can find shelter, deal drugs, or where cheap prostitutes would bring their customers. Other times, a hotel in Omonoia can also accommodate immigrants from poorer places of the world, such as neighboring Albania or Africa. In luxury hotels, one could locate members of high society or organized crime, as well as expensive women escorts. Night venues (7,4%) are associated with the world of the outcasts: due to their music ('heavy' folk music, also known as 'skyladiko') and their intra-class character, they provide entertainment for working-class people. However, it is in the backstage of such places where illegal transactions or secret meetings of the criminal underworld take place. Sometimes, they can

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<sup>8</sup> In the statistic revue 'Youth Delinquency' (May 1990) of the 3rd Division for Young Offenders, published by the Ministry of Public Order, Attica Security Department. The two districts with the highest rates in crime and offences involving youth are Aigaleo (in the western suburbs of Athens) (10,6%) and Omonoia and its surrounding area (9,6%). The same image is also valid for the previous two years.

become the site of an unsolved murder. Night clubs (6,4%) could be seen as the extension of bars, sometimes being sex clubs, where live striptease and erotic dancing takes place. However, in some episodes, the director introduces exotic dancers dancing and stripping on the bar's tables, in the background, transforming bars into strip-clubs.

The 'street' (5,3%) is where female or male prostitutes operate. It is the place where one could hire a prostitute, either female or transvestite, in order to have sex either close by or in a hotel. It is always atmospherically lit and the director usually locates it in the Metaxourgeio neighborhood which is closer to Athens' center, instead of the infamous for its sex workers Syggrou street. Sometimes, prostitutes are killed right there on the street. The city's urban parks and suburban open spaces, as well as the city's squares at night (adding up to 4,3%) are also a common crime scene, either fostering murder or rape. Gambling venues (3,7%), either legal or illegal, are located in the centre of Athens. It is striking, however, that although prostitutes appear to be the most recurring typecast in *Tmima Ithon*, brothels only occupy the 2,6% of the chart. This could be adequately explained by the majority of them doing street work. It is interesting that those who work in a brothel come from the countries of the former communist bloc (Poland, Russia, Albania etc.) and, due to the fact that they lack a residence permit, they live and work under the constant threat of deportation. Ports, probably just the port of Piraeus, take up 2,6%, being the exemplary loci of transitions and passages. All other places appear only a few times: a bowling center, a shopping mall in Marousi, a factory, a few schools, an abandoned warehouse, etc. Although one could easily detect occasions when the locations of Omonoia and Metaxourgeio are used, it would be difficult to identify a particular high class suburb of Athens, even though Kifisia and Psychiko are explicitly mentioned by the series' characters (High Class Suburbs: 2.1%), as most of the times one can only see trees and luxurious villas that could be found anywhere in the Northern suburbs of the capital. It should be, finally, stressed that there is a quite obsessive attitude on behalf of the director that crime and all illegal operations take place at night, a probable echo from the noir film genre. In that sense, the majority of the series' episodes consist of night shots: the interiors of the Vice Squad office are often dimly lit, while most of the investigations take place at night. Night time seems to be the underdogs' time.



**Fig. 10:** *The Geography of the Outside*

**C. Secondary Analysis**

In order to comprehend the construction of the outcasts’ representation in *Tmimalthon*, and taking into account Colbran’s previous observations, the notion of sensationalism in the media has been crucial. The concept refers to “stories about crime, accidents, disasters, and scandal” (Grabe, Zhou & Barnett 2001: 635), discerning the differences between ‘proper’ and ‘yellow’ journalism. Although the distinction between ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ news is not easily defined, one should argue that sensationalism bears very distinctive characteristics in terms of content, but also form (Kleemans & Hendriks Vettehen 2009: 230-231): outrageous or ‘cheesy’ news can be also accompanied by selected formal strategies, such as particular camera angles, dramatic use of music, etc.

During the 1990s, Greek private television hosted shows that featured ‘indignant’<sup>9</sup> journalists from various political backgrounds (either liberal or central) criticizing social ills of the times; such shows often blurred the boundaries between infotainment and trash television. Sensationalism in the Greek media prevailed when it came to immigrants from Albania, especially after the fall of the regime of the socialist leader Hemver Hoxza’ son 20 February 1991. Greece and Italy were the main two countries to host the majority of Albanians fleeing from the country’s economic and social collapse. Still, the Greeks’ attitude had been more than ambivalent due to the Albanians’ cultural isolation, as well as their association with crime. In this light, Albanian refugees and their suggested ‘criminal tendencies’ had been in the spotlight of the popular press<sup>10</sup> and of such shows.<sup>11</sup>

Moreover, drug addicts, a category of outcasts also involved in the 1990s rave parties’ moral panic, and the general issue of prostitution around Omonoia Square (the heart of Athens) and Metaxourgeio (a district close to Omonoia), both downtown areas with a mix of derelict buildings, small yet decades old businesses centered around internal immigration, and a hotbed for crime, became a focal point in the news agenda. In association with the rise of trash TV<sup>12</sup> and low budget shows, featuring spontaneous interviews and raw footage of everyday situations with everyday men and cult characters from the streets and markets,<sup>13</sup> we could argue that sensationalism had a firm grip on Greek private television in the 1990s. Not to mention, that, for a scriptwriter who would want to follow current affairs, it would be easier to turn to the everyday coverage of Greek television and the press. As already noted, Lam has distinguished the role of news in the construction of crime

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<sup>9</sup> See journalists, such as Nikos Kakaounakis (*Ep’ Aftoforo/Caught in the Act*, 1994-1995, SKAI), Giorgos Trangas (*Horis Anaisthitiko/Without Anesthesia*, 1994, STAR), etc.

<sup>10</sup> See S. Stavropierrakou, ‘Ordes Lathrometanaston stin Ellada’, *Apogevmatini*, 14/9/1992, p. 50-51 and P. Dimitriadis, ‘Alvanoι: Mia Vomva sta Heria mas’, *Apogevmatini*, 28/9/1992, p. 48-49.

<sup>11</sup> *Tmima Ithon*, while generally portraying Albanian immigrants, and immigrants in general, in a sympathetic light, had its own moment of ethnic prejudice during S01E37 (*The Albanians/Oi Alvanoι*). In the final moments of the episode and after the case’s resolution, kind-hearted Albanian immigrant Ismael cannot resist the ‘urge’ to steal an officer’s pen.

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, early trash television shows, such as *Tile-Ftyari/Tele-Shovel*, presented in the 1990s (TV MAGIC) by the self-proclaimed ‘National Star of Greece’ Andreoulis Evangelopoulos Andreadakis, who also played the role of a bar owner in *Tmima Ithon* (S03E31).

<sup>13</sup> See for example *Made in Greece* (1993, ANT1) presented by journalist Semina Digeni or *Akou na deis/I’ll Tell you What* (1993-1997, SKAI) with Christos Ferentinos.

narratives while it also shapes the viewers' perceptions of the outcasts, as well as of justice and police procedures (2014: 12), as

crime stories are a staple of news media [...], and also feature in several movie genres, such as thrillers, police procedurals, and action movies among others. The popularity and prevalence of representations of crime in popular culture is said to be evidence of the public's growing fascination with crime and criminal justice [...].

Putting aside the sensational approach towards content, *Tmima Ithon* also makes use of the sensational production features detected in the media. These include "a number of camera shots, decorative editing techniques, music onsets, sound effects, story length, eyewitness camera, and close-ups of human faces" (Kleemans & Hendriks Vettehen 2009: 230). In all three seasons of *Tmima Ithon*, there has been a rather conscious reliance upon sensational visuals: not only is this dictated by the genre itself, but it is also a solid visual strategy towards constructing a sensational atmosphere. In this light, particular production features are selected and applied in the majority of the episodes: a series of camera shots are used (from establishing shots to details), while close-ups of faces or bodies (naked or during sexual intercourse) are frequent, dramatic music accompanies or foretells characters' actions, the camera is sometimes used in a documentary appropriate way, by following the characters on every step. Places, carefully selected in order to give prominence to the margin (Omonoia, Metaxourgeio, working-class night venues etc.), are further lit by artificial sources, transfusing a hammy and extravagant style.

As far as the second characteristic pointed out by Colbran is concerned, the relative majority of the outcasts come from Greece, and it is only in few instances that immigrants (not to mention black people) become the main protagonists. The standard type of white, middle-aged male generally prevails; however younger males are not uncommon, nor are female central characters. Finally, in terms of 'clear-up' tactics, we should argue that in *Tmima Ithon*, the majority of the crimes are resolved through a legalistic way, i.e. the police way. In some instances, the protagonists take the law in their hands, which may be proven to be fatal for them and other times, more scarcely, they are declared innocent or manage to escape.

### **MIND THE GAP BETWEEN GEMEINSCHAFT AND GESELLSCHAFT: OUTSIDER IDENTITY AND FAILED TRANSITIONS**

Having mapped out the geography and anthropogeography of Athens' underbelly, this section attempts an examination of how the series represents 'outsider' identity by employing the classical sociological distinction between 'community' and 'society', formalized by Ferdinand Tönnies, in a contemporary and wider field via

the concept of 'transition'. This applied distinction is linked to modern concepts, such as the 'failed consumer', proposed by Zygmunt Bauman in order to explain the fluidity of the category of the Other in post-modern societies. This approach and foray into theory aims to propose a framework within which the series' representations of the Outside can be understood as a product of their time and place.

One of the most interesting and persistent motifs employed by *Tmima Ithon* is that of a problematic passage from a sphere of life characterized by relative 'simplicity' to a sphere characterized by 'complexity'. Most of the series' outcasts are given a background centered on a problematic transition from *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft*. These classic terms introduced by Ferdinand Tönnies, roughly translated as *Community* and *Society*, can be perceived here as signifiers of largely contrasting in function spheres of relations: *Gemeinschaft* stands for simple, direct, emotional and transparent, sameness-based relations based on what Tönnies describes as "natural will" (1887/2002: 249), often between already-familiar-to-each-other people. *Gesellschaft* stands for the more complex, indirect, mediated by money and impersonal relations between strangers, based on "rational will" (ibid). These highly formalized spheres of relations were never meant to be perceived as rigid dichotomies, as Tönnies clearly stated that their "essence" can be found "interwoven in all kinds of associations" (ibid). *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* underwent a series of reinterpretations though time, ranging from Max Weber's classical shift from form to function in his distinction between the processes of *Vergemeinschaftung* (communalization) and *Vergesellschaftung* (societization) (Weber 1983: 290-295), to Durkheim and his *mechanic* and *organic* forms of solidarity (Durkheim 1893/2013: 101-102; Delanty 2003/2009: 25-26), to more recent approaches, like Richard Sennett's view of *Gemeinschaft* as the sphere where honest and emotional bonds are possible as the basis of the modern dream of a "collective personality" (Sennet 1977/1999: 392-393).

What persists throughout these approaches are the images of rural and family life connected to *Gemeinschaft*, and the images of the city and market-based economy connected to *Gesellschaft*. This binary system of symbols has its own history that can be traced back, in this form and meaning, to the advent of modernity and the radical dismantling or transformation of local communities and pre-modern economic and social formations, as well as the emergence of city life as the paradigm for modern life entangled in a complex, currency-based economy (Simmel 1903/1993: 15). In the case of *Tmima Ithon* we can see that, on one hand, a) the Greek rural areas, b) home as the center of family life, c) school, being the protected sphere of public education and childhood relations, d) childhood, and even e)

someone's home-country, which they were forced to leave behind and immigrate to Greece, can be categorized as such spheres of 'simple' relations. On the other hand, the represented spheres of 'complex', money-mediated, relations include a) the city of Athens, as the country's capital and an emerging Balkan metropolis, b) adulthood, and c) Greece as a foreign country on the threshold of the western mass democracies and the European Community.

It is apparent that by such sensitivities, *Tmima Ithon's* world of the outcasts and the underdogs is not primarily the opposite of the world of decent, law-abiding, 'normal' people, of society and its norms, but is instead a 'shadowy' realm that lies beyond the safety of society's predetermined spheres of relations. This realm can be accessed if one strays from the pre-specified path, by force or negligence, naivety or incompetence. This kind of portrayal of its marginalized characters within the context of 1990s Athens could also point towards the emergence of a new category of deviance, a fluid and post-modern one, i.e. produced by post-modern society and power-structures, that of the *failed consumer*. Zygmunt Bauman proposes that, as every established order creates its own categories of "uncleanness", so does the present state of "perpetual beginnings" by producing new and "improved" goals of "cleanness", i.e. social categories that are deemed proper (1997/2002: 33). This process results in a more fluid definition of what is at the present time 'inside' the system of order and what is 'unclean' and therefore 'outside'. This process of ever-changing goals of assimilation (ibid: 46-47) and fluid criteria of belonging establish anxiety and uncertainty about one's place within the social continuum. However, what emerges as the most prevalent criterium of belonging in modern society is one's capability to partake in consumption as a basic and central social function; hence the term "defective consumers" is introduced by Bauman for all people that are marginalized within the frame of a consumer economy (ibid: 38). All previously valid categories and identities are secondary to their identities as consumers, while their inability, or failure, to consume renders them 'unclean' and pushes them to the margins of society.

More than anything, outcasts and underdogs are people that have fallen prey to an uneasy transition between stations of life within the environment of rising consumerism, as well as increasingly complex and fluid relations and lifestyles, that was Athens; the capital city of Greece, progressing into the 1990s and towards the 21<sup>st</sup> century while moving away from its Balkan and Eastern-European neighbors.

## WHAT IS NORMAL ANYWAY AND WHAT STANDS OUTSIDE ITS GATES?

Following our previous remarks about the portrayal of outsiders as people that have failed to transition from a *Gemeinschaft*-like sphere of relations to a *Gesellschaft*-like sphere, and employing a set of critical observations on the formation of social identity, as well as the socio-phenomenological remarks of Vasilis Karapostolis concerning an established, yet dynamic, mode of perception of social categories and identities in Greece, we shall now examine the distinction made, and ultimately the relation, between Normal people and the Outsiders as Others. Society, as in the 'world of day' where 'normal' people live, work and interact with each other, is not given any meaningful time by the show. The series' officers, who one could expect to personify 'properness', are precariously positioned on the thin, fluctuating line that separates 'normal' society and the Others. They have become marginalized themselves, as law enforcement is closely connected to a state of exemption from the rule of law (Agamben 2003/2006: 87-88). Hence, we are not provided with a consistent discourse on what constitutes 'normality' and its ethical code as seen by the law-abiding 'normal' citizens in 1990s Athens. This relative fluidity of what is represented as the 'normal' makes for a representation of the world of Outsiders that is even more fluid, as the latter never becomes society's negative image, a reversed world where up is down. It occupies, instead, the fluid margin between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, between a past (personal or social) that cannot be reclaimed and a future that never happened, or is at serious risk of never happening for all.

We should note here that *Tmima Ithon*, though sensational in its intent, does not fully work within the parameters of 'moral panic', i.e. the representation of facts in order to "generate concern, anxiety, indignation or panic" and the arousal of "vague feelings" of "something that has to be done" in its audience (Cohen 1972/2002: 9). Marginalized people are not dangerous and prone to criminality because they are 'defective' by nature and could not cope with 'moral' society, but, instead, the world in which they have to live is dangerous and fosters crime. Becker's definition of the outsiders as those that "share the label and the experience of being labeled as "outsiders" (1966: 10) suggests a disconnection of "deviancy" from a person's essence and its expression through actions and behavior (ibid: 14). A person *is perceived and labeled as deviant*,<sup>14</sup> as society attributes this identity to trespassers of

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<sup>14</sup> See S02E12 *To Simadi tou Fidiou/The Mark of the Snake*: In this portrayal of a neo-Nazi youth gang, led by Stamatis Gardelis, some typical behaviors are expected: the neo-Nazis destroy a bar, that was rumored to be run by Albanians, a girl working there who wears the Star of David around her neck is raped by the gang. The leader's father was a military

rules that are constantly under revision or interpretation, allowing for varying degrees of “deviance” to emerge (ibid: 3). Every type of Athenian outcast and underdog, apart from members of criminal organizations and drug dealers where criminal intent and their position of power sets them apart, is seen as a circumstantial criminal,<sup>15</sup> and is presented as a, more or less, complex person rather than a set criminal type. *Tmima Ithon*, by shifting the focus from the ‘whodunit’ element of crime to the telling of the stories largely through the eyes of the marginalized, highlights this relative and problematic character of the outsider label. As the criteria by which these people fall into the category of the outsider are not strictly moral in nature (see also Hall & Jefferson 1976/2003), and the established moral sphere is rapidly devalued by the advent of global capitalist and consumerist paradigms that make the distinction between traditionally separate spheres of life “very hard to sustain” (Chaney 1996/2001), the margin of society is a space that could be primarily defined by its ‘exteriority to the normal’. Thus, “sameness” and “difference” together constitute society’s identity as a whole, as well as its identity-formation/attribution logic, as proposed by Stuart Hall (1996/2003: 4). Outsiders are the Others that actively or passively refuse to be labeled as deviants, suggesting an approach that perceives Otherness as that which can never be assimilated, i.e. the *Other* person (Levinas 1961/1989: 33).

At this point in the examination of the category of the Other, we should not forget that the Vice Squad deals with cases taking place in a society undergoing itself a troubled transition from traditional forms of relations to more modern, and even postmodern. While this process could be interpreted as a failed transition, bringing to mind the show’s warning of the possibility of a whole society falling into a marginal space within the global environment and “the postmodernism of others”, as Kondylis laments (1991/2007: 47), or an incomplete development, we should also note that Greek society has been characterized by a peculiar relation to tradition and modernity when it comes to the identities it produces and the experience of the social continuum. Karapostolis observes that “Greek social life keeps on reproducing itself within a social and cultural suspension” (1987/1999: 23). This “suspension” permeates societal functions, as

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sergeant during the Colonels’ Junta (1967-1974) and he was sentenced to prison, however his son thinks he was simply a “coward” (while his father claims he was only “stupid”). Another member of the gang, Steve (Steve Douzos) has lots of tattoos, a sure symbol of deviancy, while the whole gang listens to military marches and watches military films.

<sup>15</sup> S01E20 *O Anthopakos/Little Man*: A peddler (Pavlos Kontogiannidis) finds by accident Stavros’ police id and uses it in order to extract money from brothels around Omonoia. Still, when he helps in the arrest of a mob’s leader, his help is appreciated and he gets away with his offence really lightly.

the organization of these changes and their representation in the sphere of institutions, as well as the constitution and allocation of identities to persons, is delayed or taking a diverging direction in relation to that of material economic change (ibid).

What could be seen as “transitional and transitory” within the context of other societies of the western world, in Greece it is given a more “organic” and permanent status (Karapostolis 1987/1999: 24). What can otherwise be perceived as traditional, Greek society perceives through modernist lenses, and vice versa. This suspension and dynamic idiosyncrasy in experiencing tradition and change affects the perception of identity within Greek society, since social categories as pre-determined and fixed stations upon the social continuum are perceived as fluid and the very concept of continuity is put into question. In other words, the person regularly overwhelms its social position and transcends its assigned identity. The series’ consistently sympathetic view can be seen as linked to the perception of identity, even that of the outcast and the criminal, not as a definite characteristic of the person but rather as an indication of a transiently inhabited position. Deviance and all related identities are presented as faults of a person who aimed and failed and who is always capable, even in theory, of transcending them because it ‘occupies’ an identity and is not merely defined by it.

## EPILOGUE

*Tmima Ithon*’s success and impact echoed well after the end of the series, as Manousos Manousakis directed another police team dealing with the underdogs of Athens in *Dromoi tis Polis/City Streets* (1995, ANT1). Other indirect and peculiar spin offs appeared, such as *Dioksi Eglimatos/Crime Division* (1996, Kanali 5). However, it is clear that *Tmima Ithon* revived even in the form of parody, such as in ANT1’s *Tis Ellados ta Paidia/Greece’s Lads* (1993-1995, ANT1; see S01E24). Taking our previous analysis into consideration, we conclude that *Tmima Ithon* should be perceived as a quasi-crime-drama series (as it does not concentrate solely on the police officers), oscillating between drama and melodrama that uses sensational style in order to represent its underdog characters. In this fashion, it reproduces the sensational spirit of ‘soft news’ and perpetuates established typecasts, such as sex workers, drug addicts, and mentally-ill people.

Notwithstanding, *Tmima Ithon* does not try to overtly subvert the characters’ well-established typecast, but instead reproduces their social traits in a sensational manner while quietly challenging society’s relation with them as already stereotyped villains, along with rigid categories of Normal and of its Outside. With such an approach, the scripts of *Tmima Ithon* could also appeal to the widest audience possible, with the latter approaching the series as a kind of social and

visual registry of whatever constituted the Outside of 'normal' Greek society in the early 1990s. The outsiders are represented as persons currently occupying an identity perceived as a temporary position between fixed stations of social life, having previously failed to successfully make the transition between immediacy and complexity. *Tmima Ithon's* characters live within the frame of a stable 'suspension', along with Greek society as a whole, as it tries to move away from traditionalism and nostalgia towards a more modern, and even postmodern, view of itself.

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