Greek whisky : the localization of a global commodity

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Part Two

5. The social life of whisky in Athens. Popular style, night entertainment and *bouzoukia* with live Greek popular music[30]

Δεν κοιμάμαι τώρα πια τα βράδια,
Σβήνω στο ουίσκι τα δικά σου τα
Σημάδια

I can no more sleep at nights,
I get rid of signs of you with whisky

Popular song by Christodoulopoulos

[30] The term "popular music" is a rendering of the Greek *sinhroni laiki mousiki*. It is related to *bouzouki* music, a style of music widely adapted and adopted especially by the "lower" social strata in post-war Greece (Οικονόμου 2005: 363). I use the term *bouzoukia* to refer in general to spaces where night entertainment takes place, encompassing the Greek terms *pistes*, *nihterina kentra, bouzoukia* and *skiladika*. I use the term in relation to clubs where live popular Greek music is performed. However, it is not my intention to essentialize this category of evening entertainment, which is very diverse and might be connected with completely different 'lifestyles' and social groups in the capital of Greece. When I refer to particular details and social relationships in relation to *bouzoukia*, the reader should keep in mind that my conclusions are based on participant observation and are therefore bounded by ethnographic particularity. In that sense *bouzoukia* is used ethnographically and refers to the above-mentioned type of clubs where live music is performed, even if the music is not always based on *bouzouki*, the stringed musical instrument. *Bouzoukia* or *bouzoukzidika* in that sense is a metaphor for well-known or unknown clubs with live Greek contemporary popular music.

Introduction

Leisure in Greece (as in most other areas of the world) is interconnected with the consumption of alcohol. This is visible in most leisure spaces such as *kafenion*, taverns, restaurants, bars and clubs, as well as on social occasions such as gatherings of family and friends, celebrations, public festivals, weddings and funerals. In each location and on each social occasion certain types of alcohol are consumed (as noted in the introduction). This part of the study deals with the locations in which the consumption of whisky has become institutionalized, especially after the period of post authoritarianism in Athens. More specifically, it examines the *bouzoukia* and *skiladika* where live Greek popular music is performed and certain lifestyles are negotiated.

While this chapter of the study focuses on the history and ethnography of whisky consumption, it is a continuation of the first part that dealt with the macro processes of localization in the spheres of the alcohol industry, commercial Greek cinema and marketing. As already noted, these processes of the establishment of multinational capitalism and the development of the cultural industry laid the foundation for the consumption of whisky and its localization.

Even though many scholars have viewed localization as a process from above (Appadurai 1991, Miler 1996), I argue that the appropriation of whisky and finally its localization is a complicated process that is intertwined with various political, cultural and historical patterns. As such it is not entirely influenced by multinational capitalism, the cultural industry, marketing and advertising. The localization of whisky from above, as in the case of the cultural industry of marketing and advertising, has not invested in the association with Greek popular culture and music. There have not been any advertisements of Scotch in Greece that involve *bouzoukia* or Greek popular music. On the contrary, the media projections of Scotch are usually Greek visions of Europeaness, nationality and locality, identified as strategies of scale making.

Therefore, this part of the study examines a second trajectory of Scotch whisky, different from the strategies of the cultural industry investigated in the first part of this study. The following chapters focus on the "tactics" of the consumers in relation to Scotch whisky consumption in De Certeau's sense of the term (1989: 29-42). Scotch has emerged from a music scene and a form of entertainment from below, that was commercialized and popularized in post authoritarian Greece. It is argued that within the context of the commercialization of entertainment in *bouzoukia*, Scotch whisky was institutionalized and became associated with a representation of a popular style of entertainment in Athens. In many cases, style is related to a process of self-identification and self-presentation within the context of consumption (Ferguson 1999). Such processes are characteristic of urban landscapes where social identities are constructed or negotiated on the basis of mass consumption (Miller 1991). However, the appeal of the beverage has been much wider and as a result it has also been widely consumed in bars, clubs and households. Within this part of the study I focus mainly on the consumption of the beverage in the spaces of *bouzoukia* and *skyladika* to elaborate on the localization processes and the cultural meanings that the beverage has among my informants. In addition, this chapter seeks to identify the cultural specificity of the consumption of the beverage in these locations and thus to elaborate on the distinctiveness (or not) of such consumer practices. The practices of the groups identified are examined ethnographically in various contexts through participant observation. In order to understand the position of whisky in relation to the

consumption of night entertainment in Athens, I trace an anti-domestic discourse which has been reproduced in the context of popular music and entertainment. The social history of Greek popular culture, music and leisure in Athens is linked with the marginal scene of *rebetiko* that became nationalized and profoundly influenced post-war popular Greek music and entertainment. Within this context I argue that the anti-domestic discourse that was an integral part of *rebetiko* has been reproduced and popularized in contemporary Greek popular music and leisure in *bouzoukia*. This discourse is interpreted historically and accompanies various practices that have been related to whisky consumption and night entertainment in modern Athens.

The emergence of contemporary popular Greek music is interconnected with a commercialization of music and entertainment in general. The commercialization of night entertainment in the capital of Greece should be understood in the wider context of consumer society that emerged in post-authoritarian Greece. As noted in the introduction to the study, it was at the beginning of the 1970s that the first supermarkets appeared in the urban landscape and consumer goods, including whisky, began to circulate widely. Within this context the emergence of the popular singers of *bouzoukia* known as *firmes* (literally brands, metaphorically the "big", well-known singers) coincided with the proliferation of branded clothes, commodities and beverages in general including Scotch. It is the aim of this part of the study to investigate the relationship between the emergent consumer society in Greece and the excessive practices accompanying the above-mentioned forms of entertainment.

The emergence of the Greek consumer society in post-authoritarian Greece reproduced the social and economic inequalities that were already existent in Greek society. However, the consumption of commodities and services was accessed by larger parts of the population who had not had this opportunity previously. Despite the significant class/socioeconomic differences, the consumption of nightlife and of Greek contemporary popular music influenced the category of a style of modernness as a form of social identification and signification that cuts across the poles of class as well as other poles in society. Therefore, in this part of the study the "micro- practice" of an urban popular style based on contemporary Greek music and night entertainment is examined with the aim of elaborating on the distinct trajectory of consumer practices in such contexts and their relationship to social differentiation and entertainment in general.

Hence the questions addressed in this chapter can be summarized as follows: a) How did contemporary Greek popular music emerge in Athens, what is its relationship to *bouzoukia* and the Athenian consumer society, and did how Scotch whisky become intertwined with these spaces? b) How is whisky localized in *bouzoukia?* c) What is the cultural specificity of practices associated with the consumption of Scotch in these spaces? d) How does Scotch relate to the style of modernness among my interlocutors?

The changing face of night entertainment in Athens. From *rebetadika* to *skiladika* and *bouzoukia* with contemporary popular live Greek music

The night life of Athens was already booming from the beginning of the twentieth century, centered on music venues that served champagne, brandy and imported wines and that offered live music, dance and occasionally food. These were the clubs

of the Athenian elite, standing in opposition to the lower-class taverns and smoky basements, the *rebetadika,* the places where marginal, underground and popular music known as *rebetiko* was forming. *Rebetiko* music was a result of migration of Christian Orthodox, Greek-speaking refugees who came to Greece from Asia Minor and other areas of the Ottoman empire due to Turkish nationalism and the consequences of the First World War. In addition, *Rebetiko* expressed a deep melancholia that was related to the changing and uncertain conditions of the social life of immigrants and this "structure of feeling" profoundly influenced the popular music of Greece.

The development of the genre of *rebetiko* was also influenced by the rapid urbanization in the early twentieth century and as such was an urban culture (Κοταρίδης 1996: 21).[31] Ironically enough, this music that was stigmatized and characterized as the "music of the underground world" and of hashish users (*hasiklides*) was to become essentialized, nationalized and even part of "Greek heritage" (Ανδριάκαινα 1996: 225-257). As Andriakena has demonstrated, the process of the popularization of *rebetiko* was first pursued by Greek intellectuals who were in search of new forms of Greekness and post-war fantasies (Ανδριάκαινα 1996: 225-257). Within this context, live Greek popular music as entertainment culture was gradually developed. Taverns were slowly transformed into successful music scenes and the music from the "East" was appropriated to express particular urban styles.

The processes of commercialization of the genre of *rebetiko* profoundly influenced post-war popular music. However, the music as well as the style of entertainment had to become as Europeanized as possible—especially because *rebetiko* and *bouzouki* music was associated with Turkey and the Ottoman occupation, concepts which were related to the dark ages of the Greek nation.[32] As a result, the meanings of modernness in urban entertainment coincided with a Europeanization of the style of this genre and of the spaces where *rebetiko* was performed. Within this context music changed, the style of nightclubs was refined, wine was replaced with champagne and whisky, and the marginal style of the music was appropriated by various new musicians and clubs. As a result, modernness was materialized in Europeanized, "European-like" or "American" symbols that were (like Scotch whisky) adopted and adapted and became widely consumed with the emergence of consumer society.

As demonstrated in the first part of the study, a process of localization had already started after the Second World War and, more specifically, during the 1950s and 1960s as a result of the first wave of importation, commercial Greek cinema and

[31] For more information on *rebetiko* see Kotaridis 1999, Damianakos 2003 and Petropoulos 1991.

[32] While "Orientalism" in Europe has been a way of exoticizing the "Other" for many centuries, in Greece an ambivalent relationship with the "East" created the "superior" meaning of the "West" or "Europe" and the familiar Otherness of the "East". Herzfeld has argued that Greece has been viewed as a "polluted vessel", on one hand the "cradle of civilization" and on the other the country that was part of the barbaric, exotic "East", the Ottoman Empire (1987). This "European" view of Greek culture profoundly influenced the way in which Greeks view themselves and also the way in which employ the concepts of the "West" and "Europe". The essentializations of Europeans became part of a selective memory in Greece and "Western" products and ways of thinking and behaving colonized first the elites and then the rest of the population. The Greek word "xenophile", denoting the liking for *xeno* (things that are foreign) expresses the passion for Otherness that is manifested in consumption, representing the materialization of the symbolic domination of modern Greek identity and the ambiguities that social identities entail in everyday life.

advertising. Within this context Scotch was projected as a symbol of modernness (sometimes ambiguous) which represented post-war consumer dreams and fantasies.

In order to understand the second trajectory of localization of Scotch whisky in *bouzoukia, skiladika* and *ellinadika*, I should first mention how these clubs were influenced by the genre of *rebetiko* and under what conditions an anti-domestic mentality became representative of the nightclubs of *bouzoukia, skiladika* and *ellinadika*. *Rebetiko* began forming at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century when the first migrants from Turkey arrived in Greece (Δαμιανάκος 2003: 142). Immigrants moved to the harbors of Greece and stayed there, either seeking employment or lacking the resources to move to other areas. The music that first formed in these harbor cities (such as Smyrna, Syros and Piraeus) was influenced by the populations of Anatolia and was based on a mixture of many styles and sounds, just like the mosaic of the Ottoman empire that included a vast number of cultural groups. The music was simple, based on a *bouzouki* (stringed instrument) and a *baglama* (small stringed instrument), with slow and sometimes sad rhythms. The lyrics were also simple, expressed in the colloquial language of the immigrants that was based on a mixture of Ottoman Turkish and Greek. Major points of knowledge transmission for these migrants in Greece were neighborhoods, prisons and *tekedes*.[33] The music in many cases was self-taught; the composers were mainly anonymous; transmission was oral; and written notation was rarely used. Groups that identified with this music were the marginal and stigmatized networks of the society including drug addicts, pimps, petty criminals, prisoners and in general people who were discriminated against and lived in poverty. Family women, wives or any kind of woman who was not a prostitute or a singer were rarely allowed to enter the male-dominated spaces of the *rebetadika* (Πετρόπουλος 1991: 132). Gradually *rebetiko* became a part of the urban subcultures and by the time of the Second World War could be found in small taverns (Δαμιανάκος 2003: 146). However, a family man or families in general would avoid entering these spaces until the 1930s, as they were considered dangerous and the "lowest" form of entertainment for those on the margins (Δαμιανάκος 2003: 146). In addition, most songs expressed an anti-domestic discourse and were highly critical of social conventions and appearances.

According to Varouhaki (2005), there were three phases in the emergence of modern Greek music that correspond to different kinds of nightclubs and entertainment in post-war Athens. The first phase was between 1950 and 1965, related to the transition from *rebetiko* to 'popular' music (*laiko*).

After the Second World War in Athens a variety of places such as "Stelakis" (Στελλάκης) in Haidari and "Vlahou" (Βλάχου) in Aigaleo offered live music and food along with wine and beer (Περπινιάδης 2000). The music in these places would vary from *rebetiko* and folk to more popular songs, and the role of the band/orchestra was very important in shaping the identity of each music tavern. Even more important was the artist's name, a major investment for the success of a business. The patrons of these establishments were usually middle and lower-income working-class Athenians, and the geography of this kind of entertainment also reflected the poor and working

[33] *Tekke* in Turkish is a building used as a retreat and a spiritual centre by the Sufi or Tariqa brotherhoods. The term was adopted into *rebetiko* slang and signified the semi-illegal socializing places of musicians and other *rebetes*, where alcohol, hashish and other drugs were sometimes consumed. Possibly the term was adopted in this manner because the Orthodox Muslims of Turkey did not identify with the mysticism and the values of Tariqa; thus the *tekke* was stigmatized as a place of sin of those Sufi who were imagined to consume alcohol and hashish, going against Muslim tradition.

class neighborhoods of Athens. Kokinia, Haidari, Trouba and Kalithea were only a few of the neighborhoods where music taverns offered alcohol, food and music.

This period (the 1950s) coincided with the restructuring of Greece under the Marshall plan and the slow development of the night entertainment industry. Taverns and restaurants that used to be stigmatized by the presence of underground working-class musicians or *rebetes* gradually became trendy and transformed their programs to attract a wider audience. The music of the *bouzouki* that had been a monopoly of *rebetiko* slowly colonized the high-class entertainment clubs that became known as *bouzoukia* (*bouzoukia* is the plural of *bouzouki*) and a new post-war "popular music" began to form. Names such as Tsitsanis, Perpiniadis and Zambetas emerged in this period, which was vividly represented in the "golden age" of Greek cinema in the sixties.

It was after the Second World War that entertainment in Athens became increasingly influenced by the visions of modernity employed by the night industry and the performers. This new modernity brought a shift up-market and a Europeanization of the entertainment and music produced at that time. This was a slow but effective process that affected music, food, clothing, language and alcohol. The sound of orchestras became electrified and sound systems were installed in various *bouzoukia* (Βαρουχάκη 2005: 24). The western major scale replaced the eastern tonalities and the music became softer and more European-sounding. A characteristic figure of this period was Tsitsanis, who adopted a European style of playing and abandoned the traditional Turkish scales that had been central to popular *rebetiko* music before the War. As he stated in one of his interviews in 1976, a shift towards Europeanization of music began in 1937 when the Greek State decided to censor the lyrics and the rhythms of the music produced in Greece.[34] More specifically, lyrics that were about drugs, sexuality or shocking subjects were cut from the songs and any rhythms that sounded Eastern had to be removed. In post-war Greece the music of Tsitsanis and his songs dominated the night entertainment scene and his popularity grew greater as a result of the "refinement" of his sound. While this type of music was taking shape and growing in popularity, the musicians who had remained faithful to the old styles and tonalities did not enjoy success. Musicians such as Marcos Vamvakaris played music in poor taverns for a living when the jukebox replaced the expensive orchestras that small restaurants could not afford.

Rather surprisingly, the commercialization of night entertainment gave a boost to Greek music, which had not been very popular among the upper strata of Athens until that time. The *bouzouki* gradually came to represent Greekness and was projected in films for international audiences (*Never on Sunday*, *Stella*). Popular music expanded into soft (*elafri*) and heavy (*vary*) popular categorizations and was represented by star singers such as Kazantizidis. The domination of "European" and "foreign" music gradually declined and popular Greek songs gained larger audiences.

The commercialization of the new version of *rebetiko*, the formation of a new popular music, and the domination of the *bouzouki* led to the well-known debate about the value of the *bouzouki* in Greek music during the sixties (Οικονόμου 2005). The fact that the *bouzouki* was associated with the underground *rebetiko* music that was played by marginal groups of immigrants who had adopted Turkish and Eastern sounds attracted harsh criticism from various intellectuals. This debate was similar to

[34] The interview with Tsitsanis was included in the television series *Paraskinio*, broadcast in 1976. The musician stated "*kovame ta bemolia*" (κόβαμε τα μπεμόλια—we would avoid eastern climax) in relation to rythms that would undergo censorship.

the language debate (*glosikon zitima*) at the beginning of the century which Herzfeld (1987) has described, when certain intellectuals argued for a "pure" or purified use of the Greek language while others argued for the use of the demotic language that the majority spoke and wrote. Accordingly bouzouki was viewed as a polluted vessel of Turkishness in contemporary Greek culture that was brought in the country by immigrants and should not be related to any aspect of Greek music. Especially the association of the musical instrument with hashish (mainly because there were *rebetes* who had produced music with lyrics that praised hashish) produced considerable unease among the Athenians who imagined the hashish users as outcasts and criminals. While this marginalization of the musical instrument lasted only until the 1960s, the connotations of music played with *bouzouki* in the popular imagination of the European-oriented Greeks persisted. This created a tension with the contemporary popular music that internalized *bouzouki*, a symbol of the East (variations of *bouzouki* are known to be of Turkish Ottoman origin).

In general during this period the simple style of the taverns was transformed; stages and electric sound systems were added and previously unknown artists grew rich. The new "popular" music became commercialized, the first recordings were made by American companies (His Master's Voice and Columbia were some of the big record companies) and artists such as Hiotis, Bithikotsis and Mery Linta appeared on the scene. Such people would perform at music restaurants where food and wine could be ordered and the clientele were entertained with music and other performances.

By contrast, in the same period high-class Athenian clubs in the center of Athens with a "Western" aesthetic and music included bands, singers and performers from abroad in their entertainment programs (Καιροφύλας 1997). These clubs would also sometimes include stripper performances, and the main alcoholic drinks consumed there were whisky, vermouth, champagne and other imported beverages. Such clubs, which had emerged in Athens at the beginning of the century (Καιροφύλας 1997), expressed a "refined" aesthetic. The style of the customers was clearly elitist and European; their clothes would follow the trendiest fashions, the music was always foreign, and the performers either were from abroad or had foreign names (usually nicknames).[35] Taverns or *bouzoukia* did not have this kind of clientele and did not serve imported beverages. According to one Greek historian, already during the carnival of 1965 several changes had taken place in the night entertainment of *bouzoukia*—such as the replacement of retsina with whisky in many places (Καιροφύλας 1997: 310). The consumption of whisky was already popularized among high-class Athenians who spent time at parties in the King George Hotel or nightclubs. In addition, the *bouzoukia* where the popular singers of the time performed institutionalized the breaking of plates. A historian who witnessed this transformation states,

> New Year's day in 1966 was celebrated by Athenians in taverns and nightclubs and that was an opportunity to notice the social transformation that was taking place. Entertainment had changed. The parties (γλέντια) of high and low-class Athenians had changed […] The plates that people were breaking for entertainment ran to tens or hundreds. There was also a technique. Customers

[35] Examples of this kind of club were Embassy (situated in Panepistimiou and Amerikis St.), Ritz (located in Stadiou 65), and Arizona. Of Ritz, Kerofilas writes: "it was a nightclub with German staff occasionally, a magnificent juggler and the 'queens of sex', Sabine and Iris" (1997: 205).

> would ask the waiter to bring the plates, then he could place them on the table or on a chair and then somebody among the company of people would throw them on the floor. Immediately after the event another waiter would come to clean up the mess so this kind entertainment could go on […] This kind of entertainment was popularized not only in popular clubs (λαικά κέντρα) but also in expensive places where the ship-owners and the 'new rich' could entertain themselves and show off their wealth. (Καιροφύλας 1997: 349)

Though nightlife was now a mainstream phenomenon, the practices outlined above were still characteristic of a genre with its roots in underground sectors of society. The breaking of plates, the assertive masculine dance of *zeibekiko*, the assertive feminine dance of *tsifteteli*, the burning of money, and the performative destruction of wealth were all characteristic of the underground clubs that were situated on the peripheries of the city. The practices taking place in these clubs were not widely accepted and indeed carried a stigma. The styles of dance, for example, were popularized with the commercialization of *bouzoukia*. *Zeibekiko* is a male solo dance that has its immediate origins among the Zeybek warriors of Anatolia. It came to Greece along with the post-1923 population exchanges following the Treaty of Lausanne. In the past the dance was associated only with *rebetes* but gradually the commercialization of music brought wide popularity to the dance. This highly performative and individualist dance, which is performed with the arms held horizontally at shoulder level in an almost cross-like figure, has been described as an anti-domestic and anti family-discourse (Cowan 1990: 185). *Tsifteteli* is considered a typically female dance with its origins in various areas of the Ottoman empire, which came to Greece with the Greek-speaking immigrants from Turkey and was institutionalized in the genre of *rebetiko*. *Tsifteteli* is a very common dance in *bouzoukia* and is danced by women in a seductive manner. The arms are held wide open, expressing the eroticism of the subject, and mostly stay in a vertical pose while the palms move in circular motions. One very performative act is the ability to move the hips with a twist of the bottom. These movements are done at a fast tempo, following the music, and are considered highly arousing.

Doubtless the breaking of plates was also a characteristic *rebetiko* practice that symbolically opposed the household, the feminine sphere of food and the family values. According to Petropoulos, the breaking of plates was practiced among *rebetes* in taverns where small groups of musicians would perform at the beginning of the century in Athens (Πετρόπουλος 1991: 132). They would smash either glasses or plates that were used for food. On a symbolic level this practice can be associated with the plate as a symbol of the household and family values; breaking plates can be understood as a way of breaking out of this system of obligations and social restrictions. Still today the expression "Let's break them" (*na ta spasoume*) means "Let's entertain ourselves". A similar phrase is "Let's burn it" (*na to kaspoume*). According to the *rebetes*, the fans of the genre of *rebetiko*, there were particular ways of breaking plates. Petropoulos states that among the *rebetes* the "rituals" of breaking glasses and plates were different (1991: 131). The glasses that were to be broken were short tavern wine glasses and water glasses. Other glasses, such as beer glasses or short ouzo glasses were not to be broken because the base of the glass was thick and such glasses would not break easily. Older *rebetes* broke glasses with the blade of a knife and the younger generation started breaking them with their palm on the table. Throwing glasses on the floor was highly inappropriate as this could be dangerous for others. Plates were broken by being thrown onto the stage where the musicians were

situated. Each time there would be no more than a single plate thrown. However, the plates had to be thrown in horizontal position so that when they touched the floor they would break evenly and without creating danger.

Despite the popularization of these marginal practices of *rebetiko*, the *rebetes* and their genre declined and almost disappeared in post-war Greece. The music that followed would be produced under very different socioeconomic conditions and as a result would not resemble the music of the past. The slow commercialization of the first period within the context of *bouzoukia* produced a genre that would borrow musical elements from the past *rebetiko* and combine them with new motifs.

The second period spans from 1965 to the end of the 1970s and corresponds to the creation and gradual commercialization of "popular music" (*laiki musiki*). Within the second period whisky became the main drink for consuming without food, the consumption of flowers to throw on the singers and the breaking of plates became institutionalized, and the focus shifted gradually to the singers so that the orchestra was placed at the back of the stage. The music varied from "light" popular songs (*elafra laika*, ελαφρολαικό) to "heavy" popular songs (*varia laika,* βαρύ λαικό) while *rebetiko* was minimized. The audience became much broader-based and more numerous than in the past. The night entertainment was accordingly divided among large clubs situated at the city center, where famous artists performed, and "underground" clubs situated at the periphery of the town, where unknown singers made their appearances.

Bouzoukia slowly became popular, replacing the music taverns and the high-class Athenian clubs (κοσμικά κέντρα) that remained in the center of the city. Sometimes famous artists would perform in the music taverns in the outskirts (e.g. Tsitsanis and Bellou in the well-known *bouzouki* venue '*Harama*'). Customers in *bouzouki* halls would vary from laborers to people in middle-strata jobs such as sailors (Καιροφύλας 1997: 349). The clubs situated in the center of the city, on the other hand, kept their "Western" character and appealed more to middle and upper-strata Athenians.

Particularly during the 1970s, the commercialization of entertainment into a more mass phenomenon resulted in several changes in the capital's nightlife. A well-known popular singer coming from a family of *rebetes* who worked into this sector from the 1950s described the situation in 1971 as follows:

> The "night" and entertainment in general were already changing. The singers did not sit for eight hours on the stage like in the old times. Five or ten songs at the beginning, the same in the middle of the program, and the night would finish with all the performers together. The breaking of plates that had already started in 1964 was institutionalized almost everywhere. One time my shoes were cut through because there were so many broken plates on the stage. Another night they hit my legs. They apologized of course, it was not on purpose. What can you say, and how can you stop it—especially if the shop owner is waiting to make money out of this? Likewise nowadays the same happens with flowers […] Along with the fashion of breaking plates around 1964-1965, there was no kitchen and no food served and we passed to whisky with ice and dried nuts. I have never understood how you can enjoy only drinks and no food. (Περπινιάδης 2001)

Within this context a new form of consumption emerged in nightlife. Hard spirits and more specifically whisky replaced wine and food; the breaking of plates and the

excessive aspect of entertainment were institutionalized; and the anti-domestic discourse of *rebetiko* which was represented in the dances, the breaking of plates and the lyrics of the music was reproduced.[36]

The establishment and commercialization of *bouzoukia*, especially during the dictatorship in Greece (1967-1973), was accompanied by the emergence of a consumer society (Stathakis 2007). Consumption and mass commodities became central in the social lives of Athenians. These included television, cars, apartments, tourism and hygiene products. Traditional professions such as shoe-making and tailoring became almost extinct and the salaried worker emerged. The average salaried worker as well as the middle social-strata would be interested in spending their salary on homogenized mass commodities that were for the first time available in massive quantities.

According to Oikonomou, it was at the end of the 1970s that much of the music of the first period was rediscovered by intellectuals and wider audiences (2005: 361-398). The music that had been neglected after the Second World War was classified as *kapsourotragouda* (meaning songs of the *kapsura* or "love songs"; for information on *kapsura* see the last part of the chapter) or heavy popular songs in opposition to *elafrolaiko* or *arhotnorebetiko*, the "light" version (Οικονόμου 2005: 378). The rediscovery of "heavy" popular music resulted in an objectification/essentialization of this music that was expressed by singers such as Kazantizidis. Within this context a "popular music" and a popular style of entertainment began to emerge.

A shift in entertainment and music from a "European"-oriented style of music to an "Eastern" one after the dictatorship has been addressed by various scholars writing about this period. Papazahariou argues that the "Eastern" shift in music and entertainment should be understood as a reaction to the westernization and Americanization of Greek society (1980: 249). More importantly, this trend emerged in post authoritarian Greece in the context of strong anti-American feelings that developed as a result of the American legitimation of the dictatorship. Within this context the middle and lower social strata reacted to a trend that characterized Greece throughout the twentieth century and adopted a new style or a new aesthetic that could be personified in singers such as Glykeria, Lefteris Pantazis, Stratos Dionisiou and Antypas.

The shift towards the commercialization of the *bouzoukia* where contemporary popular music was played during the 1980s coincided with the gradual disappearance of the practice of breaking plates and their replacement with flowers. The breaking of plates had been abolished in *bouzoukia* during the dictatorship but it had carried on secretly and illegally. The breaking of plates, as a potentially threatening act of freedom and a practice that represented anti-domesticity, was against the fascist and family values that the dictatorship had promoted.

The "modern" *bouzoukia* dominated Athenian nightlife after the 1970s and the less popular *skiladika* appeared on the scene. The term "dog clubs" (*skiladika*) has come to refer to a number of *bouzoukia* with popular Greek music on their programs and as a neologism is widely used in popular discourse to refer to the lesser-known *bouzoukia* or sometimes *bouzoukia* in general. Though the term is used nowadays to

[36] It is very possible that whisky was also the main drink of consumption in cabarets and "sex bars" in various areas of Athens and more particular in the area of Truba before and after the Second World War. The "sex bars" are spaces where the company of women is exchanged for the offering of alcoholic beverages by the customers. According to Abatzi "the bottle" of whisky was found in various "sex bars" before the dictatorship (2004: 58).

refer to a broad category of *bouzoukia*, there are several theories regarding how the word first appeared and what it means. The popular myth about the origin of the term *skiladika* relates to the "low quality" of the singers and the music in the *bouzoukia*. For example, in an article about Athens in the *New York Times*, we read

> Today, Iera Odos is packed with dance-until-dawn live-music clubs devoted to *skiladika*—the Greek bouzouki-backed music, both reviled and beloved, that, because of its singers' tendency to howl agony-filled lyrics of set-me-on-fire love, literally translates as "the place of dogs. (21 January 2007 by I. Kakkisis)

This simplistic view of *skiladiko* as referring to a low-quality expressive form and leisure spaces were singers "howl" is widely used by those who differentiate themselves in relation to the term and do not identify with this style of entertainment. Those who prefer opera or the *entehno* (artistic) Greek music, for example, might deny that there is any quality or artistic value in contemporary popular music.

According to Oikonomou the word "*skyladiko*" was used widely after the 1970s in reference to commercial popular music in Greece and the underground, "second-class" *bouzoukia* that became popular during the dictatorship (2005: 360-398). However, the author stresses that the term is much older than that. According to various sources, it was used after the Second World War to refer to small, "hidden" taverns that offered a bit of food, wine and a single *bouzouki* performer and occasionally had connections with prostitution and the smoking of illegal substances (a sort of music tavern of the first period). These places were called dog clubs because "dogs" (*skili*), meaning street urchins (*magas*), were regularly to be found there.[37] According to other sources, the word "dog" might have referred to a man who danced only *zeibekiko*. Other sources claim that these places appeared after the 1950s in Trouba, a neighborhood with a bad reputation close to the harbor of Piraeus. This area was full of "cabarets" and prostitutes who were called "dogs" (*skiles*). No matter when and how the term came to be invented, "dog-clubs" were *bouzoukia* for a working-class or low-class audience. One of my informants from Aigaleo who was a regular customer in *skiladika* since the 1950s stated,

> I still remember several dog clubs here in Aegaleo after the World War when I was a child. There were people coming from Athens to entertain themselves. The "dog clubs" were mainly halls with live music but they were called "dog clubs" because anybody with any kind of clothes could get in. You could see people with their working clothes on, with their dirty boots. It wasn't neat men that came there; there were men who were like dogs (*skilia*), *skiladika*.

Nowadays the term "dog club" refers to *bouzoukia* with live popular Greek music where the artists who perform are not as famous.[38] The term might also refer to certain practices and consumption habits which were widely popularized in post-authoritarian Greece and can now be found in almost any *bouzoukia* where contemporary Greek music is played (as noted).

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[37] According to Cowan (quoting Petropoulos), "*magas*" was a masculine identity constructed by Greek immigrants from Asia Minor who lived at the margins of Greek society and who would criticize all aspects of conventional social values. For example, he would never get married and never hold his girlfriend's hand in the street. He never wore a tie and never had an umbrella; he smoked hashish, hated the police and regarded it as an honor to go to jail (Cowan 1990: 183).

[38] Examples are Floriniotis, Kafasis and Terlegas.

During the third period, and more particularly after the 1980s, what is known as "Greek contemporary popular music" (*sihrono laiko tragoudi*) was established (Βαρουχάκη 2005). Artists who had been performing on the outskirts of the city moved into the central *bouzoukia* of Athens. The music that had been characterized as *bouzouki*-hall music gradually became commercial, despite the stigma that had been attached to it and especially to the practices associated with it. The performances and music of artists who were part of this scene became mainstream and a new style of modernness emerged. Artists such as Pantazis and Antzela Dimitriou became *firmes* and there was an increasing number of *bouzoukia* where "popular music" could be heard. The debate relating to *skiladika* and the "quality" and the "taste" of the practices associated with the new popular Greek music arose during this period.

In Greece a number of newspapers, magazines and intellectuals referred to the phenomenon of *bouzoukia* with disgust by criticizing the "meaningless" character of the excessive consumption practiced there. For example, a 1988 article in *Oikonomikos tahidromos* (Figure 5.1), a weekly magazine that circulated widely in Greece in the 1980s and 1990s, blamed the *bouzoukia* mentality (meaning expensive whisky and hundreds of broken plates for entertainment) for the decline of modern Greece and the Greek economy (Oikonomikos 1988: 30). The article concluded by stating that the underdeveloped Greek economy would not prosper as long as such phenomena of waste and irrational economic behavior are practiced in Greece.

Figure 5.1 "Larisa. Our economic development is calculated in plates" "Οικονομικός Ταχυδρόμος" magazine 14 Απριλίου 1988. The photograph shows a pile of broken plates from *bouzoukia*. Empty whisky bottles are placed purposefully on the top of the pile in reference to this style of entertainment. The article refers to the decadent practice of Greeks breaking plates and drinking whisky.

It was during this period that the "Omonia sound" (*o ihos tis omonias*) was created. This musical scene was so named because most of the tapes of such artists were sold in Omonia, in the centre of Athens. The advent of the CD and the development of the music industry in Greece after the 1980s further developed the

Greek contemporary popular music scene. More and more recordings were made, CDs could be easily recorded, and more music stores were established.

A major form of legitimation of popular music was its use by PASOK. The PASOK political party, which came to power in 1981, adopted popular music in public appearances by Andreas Papandreou who was himself a fan of *vari laiko* music. This adoption of popular Greek music signaled the political "turn" of PASOK toward the lower-income strata of Greek society. Papandreou as well as other PASOK members of parliament entertained themselves regularly with popular Greek music in *bouzoukia*, drank whisky and listened to artists such as Stratos Dionisiou and Rita Sakelariou. The political slogan that PASOK and Papandreou adopted during this period was "Greece belongs to the Greeks"—in opposition to the slogan "Greece belongs to the West" that Karamanlis had used after the dictatorship. PASOK realized the disadvantage of always basing Greek identity upon a European and Western reference point and stressed instead an inner, Greek identity. The denial of the dependency of Greece on Europe was actively promoted on various political and ideological levels, as in the collaborations and exchanges of Papandreou with Libya and Palestine during the 1980s. Within this context Papandreou and PASOK gave an alternative to European-oriented post-authoritarian politics and took advantage of the growing popular music and culture that was very appealing to lower and middle-class strata. Thus a major differentiation between cultural styles that identify with European, Western or Europeanized music and cultural styles that identify with Greek music was reproduced.

With political legitimation, *bouzoukia* gradually grew more popular, and along with them the habit of consuming whisky. Members of parliament made public announcements in *bouzoukia* and threw flowers to their favorite singers. Vagelis Giannopoulos was one of the many members of parliament who regularly patronized *bouzoukia* to enjoy live popular Greek music.

Despite the large economic and social inequalities in post-authoritarian Greece, the income of the lower middle class rose considerably during the 1980s (Βαρουχάκη 2005: 18). More public servants were employed by the State in Athens in an effort to rebuild the public sector. Rising salaries in 1982 increased the average consumption of salaried workers and led to more spending on leisure and evening entertainment (Karapostolis 1983).

During the 1990s more *bouzoukia* clubs moved from the periphery to the center of Athens as a result of the growing popularity of contemporary Greek popular music. The fact that *bouzoukia* proliferated and gained public acceptance during the 1990s (Βαρουχάκη 2005: 26) is also associated with the growing influence of multinational capitalism over Greece's alcohol market and the gradual promotion of this genre by the cultural industry. More particularly, the private television channels that have been sponsors of various social events have massively promoted whisky and have taken an active role in shaping *bouzoukia* and the nightlife of the capital. Shows like "MEGA-star" on private television have been promoting *bouzoukia* singers for almost a decade now. Other television channels, such as ANT1, have taken promotion a step further by cooperating with—or even co-owning—*bouzoukia* in Iera Odos. One of their most popular television programs, "The X-Factor", has created some new careers in *bouzoukia* with its music and singing competition. The winners are awarded a contract with a music company and nightclubs where they can sing live.

Under these circumstances this form of entertainment has entered the mainstream of popular culture and *bouzoukia* can even be imagined as a representation of

contemporary Greekness, as the closing ceremony of the Olympic Games in August 2004 demonstrated with its performances by the big names of this genre.

The mainstream culture of *bouzoukia* reproduced the consumption of Scotch. More particularly, Oikonomou has observed that whisky is entangled with the culture of modern Greek popular music (2000). According to him, whisky has come to symbolize the out-of-control party atmosphere in *bouzoukia*. Furthermore, the domination of whisky has excluded the category of food; whisky is consumed with just a few fruits and dried nuts in *bouzoukia* and *skyladika*.

In the context of the developments outlined above, the widely shared perception of the high value of Greek contemporary popular music, the consumerist dreams embodied in the singers or the fans of this genre, the excessive consumption in the outings of such networks, and the signification of Scotch by the patrons of *bouzoukia* with this style of entertainment will be discussed in the following sections.

The consumption of whisky in relation to cultural style

While researching the meaning of imported beverages among the networks of my school friends in the center of Athens in Kypseli, I participated in several outings and gatherings in *bouzoukia* centered on popular Greek music. My interlocutors were mainly men between their late twenties and early thirties. Most of them lived in Kypseli in the centre of Athens, some working in small family businesses and others in private companies or the public sector. My methodology was based on qualitative social research including open interviews and participant observation, for six months in total during 2006. My primary questions were associated with the cultural practices in night entertainment, the position and symbolism of imported beverages in the lifestyles of my interlocutors, and the establishment of whisky as a celebratory drink in popular music and discourse.

A major problem in urban research is the diversity of the urban population—the multiplicity of the neighborhoods people live in, the differences in economic and educational backgrounds, and their diverse professions. The anthropological parameters of age, gender and nationality further complicate our understanding of urban processes, especially within the context of increased migration, an early age of drinking alcohol and the multiple femininities and masculinities to be found in urban landscapes. Despite the fact that there are clear spatial divisions in Athens (such as central, northern and southern) that might correspond to middle, upper and lower classes, these divisions are totally subjective and do not correspond to any clear-cut social groups.

The use of ‘subculture’ or ‘social group’ could not be anything other than problematic in a city like Athens which has a population of over four million people, flows of hundreds of thousands of migrants on the move who bring their villages and islands into the city, diasporic Greeks and expatriates, new cosmopolitans and illegal workers. In addition, the process of mapping “quarters” or “neighborhoods” might be highly deceptive given the diversity of urban landscapes where people walk, eat, sleep, work and entertain themselves in totally different areas. One has only to walk in the city, as δe Certeau argued, to realize the diversity and plurality of human trajectories (1984: 91- 110). If we could follow the monthly trajectory of just one person who lives in Athens, that would be enough to give an impression of the complexities of space, place and social networks.

In order to discuss the socioeconomic differences that are embodied within my informants who entertain themselves in *bouzoukia* and *ellinadika*, I employ the term "style" as an analytical tool to to cross-cut the poles of social class and social group (see introduction). Cultural style refers to practices that signify social differences between social categories and, as such, style as a term does not refer to "total modes of behavior but rather poles of social signification, cross-cutting and cross-cut by other such poles" like class and gender (Ferguson 1999: 95). In Athens, for example, masculinity and femininity constitute opposed poles of style but this does not imply any unitary masculine or feminine pattern of behavior. The style of masculinity exhibited in *bouzoukia* derives from a lower, working-class style (from *rebetes*) that is learned, acquired and performed. This style of masculinity is different from the masculine style performed in the gay clubs of Athens or in the jazz clubs where upper middle-class styles are usually the case. As a result, an upper middle-class masculine style might be completely different from a working-class style. Therefore, cultural style emphasizes the performative aspects of the practices of the person and is related to his or her performative competence.

Furthermore, to conceive of cultural style as a performative competence and a "practical signifying activity" (Ferguson 1999: 96) that positions the actor in relation to social categories implies being cautious about questions of identities, commonalities of values, shared world views or cognitive orientation in taste. As Ferguson has argued

> That members of culturally-stylistically distinctive subgroups of a society share such commonalities is an unexamined assumption of a great deal of subculture theory in anthropology and sociology. Such groups *may* of course have such commonalities. But the assumption that they *must*, or that shared experiences and values are logically or temporally prior to stylistic practice, is unwarranted and has caused an enormous amount of confusion. (Ferguson 1999: 97)

Likewise, my interlocutors might be united by a shared style of entertainment but the meanings in their lives, their values and their everyday practices might differ radically. In addition, there might be large socioeconomic differences among my informants but an "inner" style of entertainment which is based on *bouzoukia* unites these differences in a similar way. This mainstream style cross-cuts the class and gender differences and, more importantly, conceals the large economic inequalities in contemporary Athens. As will further be demonstrated, those who adopt the same inner popular mainstream style of *bouzoukia* are divided by large spatial (the neighborhoods where they live) and economic (the salaries they receive or the amount of money they earn) gaps. It is therefore important to state that " those participating in common stylistic practices are united in sending similar stylistic messages, but they may at the same time have very diverse motives, values, or views of the world" (Ferguson 1999: 97). Describing an inner style of entertainment, therefore, does not mean defining a set of values or a subculture; it is a "mode of signification" (Ferguson 1999: 97).

A major way of socializing in Athens is "going out" (*pame ekso*, *vgenume*) with a group of friends. "Going out" is not synonymous with the actual action of going out from one's home, which might include such activities as going for a coffee, visiting friends or going to the supermarket. "Going out" refers to a night outing to a restaurant, bar, club or music venue. Night outings are related to a person's lifestyle, which usually corresponds to one or more music scenes. Techno, house or electronic

music is played in large and small neighborhood clubs; jazz, soul, funk, rock, Latin and ethnic music are part of the program of bars; and Greek popular music is found in live-music *bouzoukia skyladika* or certain other clubs (such as *ellinadika*, meaning Greek-like clubs that play contemporary Greek popular music; the music in these clubs is not played live as in *bouzoukia* and therefore the prices of beverages are cheaper). A person's style, including clothing, bodily gestures and consumption habits, is very different depending on the occasion. For example, one of my interlocutors (Christos) would call and specifically ask the other friends of his group before "going out" what kind of club, party or *bouzoukia*, they would be attending so that he could adapt his clothes to each occasion. When I asked him what kind of clothes fit each occasion he stated that the "house" people (*housades*), dress in fancy trendy clothes, wearing colorful shirts or sweaters and trainers and sometimes wearing sunglasses at night. The rockers, on the other hand, do not usually wear name brands and have an unkempt appearance. Old jeans, worn-out shirts or military trousers are a few of the choices one might have in a rockers' outing. Christos as well as Antonis (who were both part of the group that I regularly went out with) insisted that outings to *bouzoukia* require neat clothes. Surprisingly enough, on several occasions some people of the group wanted to go to *bouzoukia* avoided the outing because someone among them was not dressed well. Being dressed well, I discovered, included a long-sleeved formal shirt, a pair of good quality trousers or sometimes blue jeans and a formal single-breasted jacket.

Hence the persons who use style as a mode of signification present themselves in specific ways, consume in specific ways and—perhaps more importantly—claim a relationship with specific music scenes. It would be no exaggeration to say that style in Athens is identified with the type of night entertainment a person frequents and the kind of music he or she identifies with. However, it should be made clear that a person who identifies with a Greek style of entertainment (Greek music) and "goes out" to *bouzoukia* is not necessarily excluded from a nightclub with techno or Latin jazz music. A particular style serves as a mode of signification by the actors and does not foreclose shifts in style as far as these actors are competent to perform on each occasion. As Herzfeld has noted, one major polarity within contemporary Greek identity exists in relation to the polarity of outside/inside Greece (1987). Greeks identify with a European or Western heritage and perform this identity in the "outside" world as *ellines*, while "inside" Greece, Greeks feel closer to the East and view themselves as *romious*. As Argyrou has stressed, these polarities are also found in Greece and Cyprus on an everyday level among social groups and express a symbolic domination by larger powerful schemas (Argyrou 2005: 111-137). Therefore, an inside aspect of Greek culture that does not identify with Europeanness is asserted in performances that identify with Greek popular music. Christos, for example, narrated a story in relation to *bouzoukia* and inside Greekness and Europeanness. When his Scottish brother-in-law arrived from Scotland (a foreigner, *xenos*) Christos suggested that he should see how "Greeks entertain themselves" in a *bouzoukia*, because Europeans are not familiar with this style of entertainment. He said, "The foreigners who come to Greece only know souvlaki and the Acropolis and are not aware of how Greeks entertain themselves". In addition, by visiting such a location, his brother-in-law would be able to better understand contemporary Greek culture and Greekness. The venue in this case was viewed as an "inside" part of Greece that only Greeks identify with. More importantly, Christos considered the style of entertainment in *bouzoukia* (including dancing, music and partying) to be inner and authentically "Greek". After visiting a *bouzoukia*, Christos's brother-in-law

was surprised because most of the people there were consuming Scotch whisky. Christos explained to him that Scotch has been adopted by this music scene and has become entangled with partying in *bouzoukia*.

The style of those who entertain themselves in *bouzoukia* is constructed in relation to their musical taste, and whisky is also a major symbol of entertainment and celebration among those who identify with this style. The patrons of *bouzoukia* believe, for example, that excessive spending within the context of their preferred entertainment is a necessary requirement for fun and for keeping spirits high (even if patrons are divided by large socioeconomic differences). In that context there are various ways to spend excessively (including paying a high price for the bottle of Scotch) and various emotional states that accompany such actions. Therefore, the excessive consumption in *bouzoukia* is not necessarily related only to a "nouveau riche" group of people who appeared in Athens during the 1980s as a result of urbanization and State contracts, as some authors have argued (Karapostolis 1983) or to high-income salaried workers and businessmen. Low-income networks from the centre of Athens also engage in excessive consumption, which can be partly understood from the point of view of Ferguson's analysis of style. It is this style of entertainment that my interlocutors identify with and through which they feel part of a wider imagined community. For example Varouhaki (2005), after examining many publications on the lifestyles of artists in *bouzoukia*, concluded that most are focused on spending conspicuously and excessively and projecting their selves as 'consumers'.

As Bourdieu has argued, "taste" is used as a reference among social classes to legitimate and reproduce their inequality (1984). The education of taste is a process which is embodied and performed with time and constitutes a major arena of objectification of social relationships. While taste as a sense is socially and culturally influenced, the actual expression "you have taste" (*ehis gusto*) refers to the habitual refinement of a person. As a consequence, taste as a sense and as a metaphor is a major context of the reproduction of social inequality and an arena where social relationships are expressed and negotiated. However, taste preferences do not necessarily define the style of a person and they can be very diverse. Even those who share a liking for contemporary Greek music might have very different preferences in relation to the singers they like, the Greek television series they watch, the Greek football teams they relate to, the clothes they choose to wear, the cars or motorcycles they drive, and the beverages they drink. Whisky, for example, will be consumed regularly in house parties or in *bouzoukia* but the brands one person prefers can be completely different from the brands another person likes to consume.

Consequently, drinking Scotch whisky in Athens is a common practice among many different people. However, consuming Scotch and claiming a preference for a specific style of entertainment within the context of *bouzoukia* is a mode of signification that connects the beverage to a certain form of nightlife.

Modes of signification

In recent years various scholars have researched the nightlife and entertainment of Athens. More particularly, Souliotis has examined the role of urban landscapes as the means of constructing collective identities (2001: 211-238). This process is based on collective practices and discourses in relation to the areas of Kolonaki and Exarhia in

central Athens. Both areas are characterized by an enormous number of cafes and bars and constitute busy spaces for Athenians to socialize in. The people interviewed by Souliotis stressed their social identity in relation to the consumption of leisure and symbolic goods in both areas, and were 'included' or 'excluded' accordingly. Kolonaki is considered a place with "quality" people and therefore various bars have face control at the entrance of the club in an effort to exclude those who are not wearing quality clothes. On the other hand, Exarhia is considered an "alternative" and uncommercialized place. The rock bars and the leftist history of this place are major concerns among people who identify themselves in opposition to Kolonaki. Therefore, leisure in relation to the social life of bars and cafes emerges as a primary source of self-identification within the context of imagined urban identities.

Likewise social identities and more particularly "lifestyles" are constructed on the basis of nightlife among the subjects of Ioannou's research in Kastela (Ioannou 2001: 239-262). In Ioannou's study, people identified themselves in opposition to the people they call "dogs" (*skili*) even though they themselves also went to "dog-clubs" (*skiladika*), that is down-market, 'lower-class' clubs. The concept of "dog" identifies those who do not have "quality", do not know how to behave and, more importantly, do not know how to consume "properly" in the context of *bouzoukia* popular music venues and nightclubs.

Papagaroufali has also investigated the role of alcohol in the construction of gender identity among feminist groups in Athens. According to her, drinking practices can be media for gender redefinition and negotiation (1992). She states that women use drinking as "a violation, or resistance, or reversal, or transformation of the 'Establishment' and the legitimation of these women's actual and dreamed of interest: to become culturally visible the way they 'wished'" (1992: 66). It is within the context of alcohol that women articulate an alternative discourse, going against the dominant view of men to pursue their own tactics. It is therefore the use of alcoholic beverages that cross-cuts the social and economic differences of women and expresses an alternative femininity.

Further research in relation to gender identity has demonstrated how imported alcoholic beverages are divided into "male" and "female" drinks in the context of "sex bars" (*bars me consommation*) (Abatzi 2004: 152). Male drinks are further divided into "special" and "regular", with whisky as the central symbol this categorization. According to Abatzi, the majority of male customers drink whisky and only rarely vodka or gin. Customers are able to distinguish themselves through the brand of whisky they drink, which will usually be known to the bartender, and the way in which they drink it. People will insist on using a long or short old-fashioned glass and having a particular number of ice cubes in their drink.[39] It is the context of this classification that reproduces gender identity and makes clear how objects and particular alcoholic beverages objectify social relationships.

Furthermore, according to Stewart, the consumption of whisky in Greece has exhibited an ongoing pattern of claiming higher and higher status. He states that

[39] I have also encountered similar examples of people who say, for example, "I always drink my whisky with two ice cubes". The number depends upon the person but the choice of ice becomes a very personal matter of identification. This may be related to the fact that many people drink the same whisky brand but it is not always the case that they have the same number of ice cubes. Ice therefore becomes one more parameter of social distinction.

> The recent increase in the quantity of whisky imported into Greece (124.000 liters in 1971 to more than four million liters in 1982) could not possibly be interpreted as an indication of increased consumption by this elite […] Rather, these statistics suggest that the drink has been adopted everywhere, […] evidence of the degree to which elite style has penetrated the society at large […] Such changes in "taste" elicit responses from the elite who may alter their own style in order to retain distinct identity. One elderly Athenian woman, whose fluency in several European languages signaled her high degree of cultivation, took evident glee in parodying the pronunciation of the masses clamouring for whisky. "What do they want with gouiski?" she mocked. Granted that whisky is no longer an effective marker of elite style, those who would claim elite status are opting for new patterns of consumption. (1989: 86-87)

Nowadays the number of brands has proliferated, giving more choice to those who want to distinguish themselves. Among my interlocutors there are individuals who claim to be more knowledgeable than others in relation to whisky. One of these is Kostas, who was educated in England and works as a broker. Kostas stated that "special whiskies are not good. People drink without knowing; everybody drinks whisky nowadays. The best whiskies are single malts. I have a collection of single malts with some representative pieces." The category of single malt whiskies has emerged in the last decade as a popular category of whisky among the elite who want to distinguish themselves in opposition to popular consumption patterns. The prices of these whiskies range from 50 to several hundred euros. Though they can be purchased in a few places in Athens, most people buy them from abroad and more especially from the United Kingdom, where there is a large variety. The fact that the bottle was purchased "abroad" and could not be found in Greece adds more to its symbolic value and the cosmopolitan nature of the consumer.

Single malts have been advertised massively in recent years. The fact that most Scottish distilleries have passed into the hands of multinationals that trade a variety of beverages all over the globe has resulted in a reinvention of single malts. Many distilleries that produced single malt were closed (being non-productive) and have only recently reopened after being acquired by large multinational corporations. Their popularity in Greece has been growing, but they are still very expensive beverages drunk by the few. In a bar on the island of Skyros, for example, a wealthy company of Athenians came in to order their drinks. As I was sitting at the bar I heard this dialogue

Man 1: What shall we drink?
Man 2: Let's see. He has single malts! (With surprise). I would never expect to find these on Skyros.
Man 1: You've got Oban and Lagavulin.
Barman passes the bottles to them
Barman: Some people order them; that's why I've got them?
Man 1: Yes, but you know there's a ritual of how these should be drunk. In a short glass and with no ice, of course. First you have to smell it and then taste it slowly. There are even special glasses for this. This is really good whisky…I know how to drink it because I've read about it, and there was even a presentation about it in the company where I work.
Man 2: OK. Give us two of the Lagavulin

The single malt has emerged in recent years as a "positional good" which is clearly related to the elite and high-income groups who claim that they know "how to drink", who travel to find their cosmopolitan bottles and who are willing to pay large amounts of money to consume this type of whisky in bars or in their homes. People also express their consumption knowledge in terms of bodily techniques. The way a person drinks the beverage, the way of smelling it and looking at it and the way of ordering it are also means of reproducing the "taste of refinement" (Figure 5.2).

Figure 5.2 A cartoon about the popularity of whisky in Greece and the emergence of "experts" on single malts. The shepherd is wearing traditional clothes, while the "expert" on the right is wearing a Scottish kilt and is carrying a cask of twelve-year-old whisky. The "expert" is exclaiming in a local accent "*If you don't know, don't speak. How can you put ice in pure malts?*"(Magazine Σύγχρονη Διαφήμιση, 572, 1993)

However, most of my interlocutors are not necessarily single malt drinkers. They might describe themselves as whisky men (*ouiskakias*), or drinkers (*potes*). As such they are expected to appreciate good whisky and consume it on occasions that include an outing in *bouzoukia* or a nightclub, a good company, in a *parea* (drinking company) or on an exceptional occasion that should be celebrated. Name-day celebrations, birthdays, meetings among friends at home or in bars are occasions on which whisky will be consumed. Whisky is considered ideal drink for "men" and is

going to be used in the "right" moments. In most cases alcohol is a masculine symbol (Papataxiarchis 1991: 238). It is not to be consumed every day because it is "strong", but it is ideal for social occasions that are meaningful for people. Women who associate with the mainstream inner style of entertainment will also drink the beverage, usually mixed with Coca Cola.

Usually Scotch whisky will be consumed in *bouzoukia* or *ellinadika,* contextualizing the location and the entertainment. As such Greek popular music should be accompanied by whisky consumption, even at parties in homes or on other private occasions. However, whisky consumption in general is not confined to spaces and groups who identify with Greek popular music; various lifestyles can include whisky.

Those who are fond of whisky, like the low-income group *(parea*, drinking company) from Kypseli with whom I went out to *bouzoukia,* display their favorite whisky brands in their homes. Antonis, for example, has placed next to his desk a metallic Johnnie Walker statue that was part of a marketing campaign. It sits in a prominent position next to his CDs and it matches his style criteria. Kostas, who is a collector of single malts, places his empty bottles in a visible place in his house, on top of his bookcase, "in order to keep track" of what he has tasted. While these examples demonstrate that whisky is an object of their lifestyle for those who go regularly to *bouzoukia*, whisky might also represent a stylistic value for others. Another Kostas, the thirty-five-year-old owner of a *pro-po* (lottery shop), drinks only whisky and has hung a large Cutty Sark poster in his bedroom. Style in these cases is increasingly related to mass-produced commodities and, specifically, whisky brands.

Apart from this, assertive styles of femininity and masculinity are also expressed through beverages. Maria, for example, is a high-income logistics expert in her mid thirties who lives in the northern part of Athens (which is considered to be in a wealthy part of the capital) and drinks only whisky. As she explained to me, she likes the beverage because it has been considered a masculine drink. But she is also as assertive, dynamic, decisive and independent as a man and in that sense she likes to drink whisky. It fits her style and her independent character. Since she started working as a professional her income has risen considerably. She owns a new car, she chooses her clothes carefully, she smokes and she identifies with Greek popular music despite the fact that she also likes rock and ethnic music. She remarked that "Most men are very surprised when they notice that I drink whisky on the rocks. I am also tough, I should say—but most people realize that when they see me drinking".

Similarly, Kostantina is a high-income woman in her early thirties who drinks only whisky. I explained to her my subject of study and she said

> Well, I should say that whisky is certainly my drink because I identify with *bouzoukia* and popular Greek music. This is my music, my kind of entertainment, and that's the reason I like whisky. Almost every week my company and I go out to a *skyladiko* or to a *megali pista* [music venue where well-known artists play].

Kostantina, who is also a young professional, can afford this style of entertainment regularly because her father is a broker and has been very successful with his business. More recently her father has been investing in paintings and art; he is a "new cosmopolitan" who travels internationally on business on a regular basis. Kostantina can afford to spend a lot as she receives a regular allowance from her father. In addition, she works in her father's business and receives a salary. Her

consumerist style is also expressed in her Tod shoes and her branded clothes in general.

Thus, from the perspective of my interlocutors, whisky is related a specific style of entertainment. Regardless of their income, men and women professionals and salaried workers identify with excessive consumption, conspicuous consumerism and—perhaps more importantly—with popular Greek music and entertainment in *bouzoukia*. While the beverage clearly expresses masculinity, alternative femininities are also expressed through its consumption. More specifically, women who are assertive, view themselves as modern, and identify with a particular mass popular culture can be consumers of whisky and view whisky as a symbol of their own negotiation of femininity. Those who want to differentiate themselves from the rest of the Greek population and from those who drink blended whisky use single malts as a new form of distinction, thus situating themselves at the pinnacle of whisky connoisseurship.

It follows that a preference for contemporary Greek popular music and the style of entertainment in *bouzoukia* usually signifies the category of alcoholic beverages consumed by my interlocutors. It is this mode of signification and this claim of a cultural style that has localized the beverage in the spaces of *bouzoukia*.

The unification of differences

During my fieldwork in Athens, I spent most of my time in Kypseli in the center of Athens. Kypseli is the most overpopulated area of Athens. The population increased even more in the 1990s because of the legal and illegal immigration from Albania and various African countries such as Egypt, Ethiopia and Senegal. The small streets of Kypseli are usually crowded with cars and most of the time cars are also parked on the pavement. As a result, pedestrians find it very difficult to walk in this area. Despite the noise and the little public space left for the inhabitants, Kypseli is the most multinational area of Athens. The Ethiopian restaurants, Egyptian coffeehouses, African mini markets, Nigerian video clubs and Senegalese boutiques make Kypseli a unique area.

I have long been familiar with this area as I lived there during my school years and I had several acquaintances from school there. During my long absence from Athens and Greece, I had been in contact (mainly through email) only with a schoolmate from primary school called Antonis, a young professional from a low-income background. Through him, I was gradually introduced to several other people he "went out" with as well as to other schoolmates that I had lost contact with. The establishment and re-establishment of my relationships was not a difficult process especially because most of the people thought of me as a *kypselioti* (a local person from Kypseli) and they were interested in the subject of my study. As a result, many discussions, informal interviews and a period of six months of participant observation were conducted without any difficulties.

Antonis is in his late twenties and he studied economics at one of the private American universities of Athens. He is the only child of a family which has lived in Kypseli since the 1960s. His father is the owner of a vegetable store in the central vegetable market *(lahanagora*) of Athens and his mother is a housewife who spends most of her time preparing meals for her husband and her son and watching her favorite programs on television. Antonis is still living with his parents, as his economic situation does not allow him to rent his own apartment. This is the case for

the majority of my low-income interlocutors from Kypseli, who earn or receive as a salary 700 to 800 euros per month. Antonis has been working for at least six years at an economic newspaper since he graduated from university. Despite his fulltime productive work he is not able to make more than 800 euros. With his salary he pays for his cigarettes, his mobile phone bills, the Internet, his lunches and sometimes dinners out when he is working, the taxis he commutes with (there is no access to his work by public transport) and his outings to bars, *ellinadika* and sometimes *bouzoukia*. In addition, he takes good care of his appearance and his clothes and also spends part of his salary on expensive branded clothes for his work and his outings. When discussing *bouzoukia* he usually says, "I wish I could have more money to spend there and go more often to the nightclubs I like". In any case he "goes out" once or twice a week and spends between 30 and 60 euros for an outing in an *ellinadiko* or in *bouzoukia*. To remember the good nights in *bouzoukia* and to make his music style clear in his own space, he has several photographs with friends from nights out in *bouzoukia*. "This is an evening out in Lepa (lefteris Pantazis) and this is from Mazonakis" he states about the photographs he has in a corner. Each photograph represents not only a memory but also one of Antonis's favorite singers, as who is an admirer of most popular Greek music singers in *bouzoukia*.

In his room he has small posters of Cutty Sark Scotch whisky, a Johnnie Walker metallic statue and a couple of bottles of Scotch for his guests. He usually serves "ouiskaki" (literally meaning a small Scotch, to sound more familiar with the beverage) and smokes his Lucky Strike cigarettes if he gets visitors in the evening. He will play a CD of contemporary popular Greek music in the background or sometimes watches one of the Greek music channels on television. When I ask him, "How come you only drink whisky?" he says, "I am a dog (*skylas*)", claiming a connection between the beverage and the popular scene of *skyladiko* and *bouzoukia*.

Kostantina and Maria (the high-income women whom I mentioned earlier) belonged to a second network of informants from Northern Athens (*Voria proastia*, Βόρεια προάστια) and claimed a similar relationship between whisky and *bouzoukia*. I was able to meet them during their summer vacation on the island of Skyros where I had explained my research to them and gradually I was given the opportunity to have several informal discussions and meetings with them in Athens. They are both Scotch whisky drinkers and they both claim an assertive femininity that identifies with a style of entertainment in *bouzoukia* and *ellinadika*. They own their own cars and apartments and they can afford to "go out" more often than Antonis. When I asked Kostantina about her drinking preferences she stated, "I drink Scotch because I like the contemporary Greek popular music scene. This is the drink for our night outings to these clubs".

During my regular visits to Maria's home I was faced with the same Scotch "ritual" that Antonis offers to his guests. She has a large selection of malt and blended Scotch in her small bar next to the living room and she serves the beverage on the rocks. She puts on a CD of contemporary Greek music in the background and we discuss her outings to *bouzoukia*. "I am a night person", she states.

> I like going to hear my favorite singers in *bouzoukia* and I like going to *skiladika* even more, because they are more authentic and not so commercial. After a few bottles of Scotch with my company you can imagine that I'm dancing on the table and we throw flowers on the singers.

Likewise, the men that I met from Antonis's group, such as Giorgos and Sotiris, emphasize their style with dancing. Sotiris, for example, who is a good dancer of *zeibekiko*, a kind of dance regularly performed in *bouzoukia,* takes the opportunity to stand up and perform when he feels like it. His style also identifies with contemporary Greek popular music and he is a regular Scotch whisky consumer.

Sotiris studied in the same university as Antonis and after he finished his studies he served in the Greek army for one year. As a matter of luck, Antonis happened to be doing military service at the same time so they re-established their relationship from university. Since then they have been very good friends and they regularly go out together. Soitiris works for Vodafone, a mobile telecommunications company. Unfortunately, with his low salary he is still living with his parents in a small apartment in Kypseli and is saving most of his money to buy a motorcycle so he can commute easily to his job. Part of his salary goes also on his night outings to *ellinadika* or *bouzoukia* almost every Friday and Saturday. There Sotiris will always order or reserve a bottle of Scotch.

One of the regular outings on Saturday for Sotiris, Antonis and their friends is to an *ellinadiko* that mixes Greek and "Oriental" music. As mentioned earlier, *ellinadiko* is a form of club that literally means "Greek-like" and Greek popular music is usually played there, though the music is not performed live as it is in *bouzoukia*. The club is located in Psiri. Psiri is a newly developed area of Athens, situated next to Monastiraki and Thision, and is now an "in" and "trendy" place to be throughout the year. The smell of spices from the shops in the small streets next to Athinas Street makes this area quite recognizable and distinctive. Until the end of the 1990s Psiri was almost a forgotten area of Athens, full of small shops selling tools, leather, antiques, carpets and cheap consumer goods in general. The shops were old and run-down; some buildings in the area were falling apart; and most of the population living there were immigrants. Within a few years it was completely transformed into the most commercial and fashionable area and "the place to be" in Athens. Psiri filled up with bars, clubs and restaurants of all kinds.

The club we usually go to is situated quite close to the area's central square. It is a huge club with "face control" (as Athenians call this kind of "selective customer strategy") at the door (*porta*). This is a widely used technique among many clubs in Athens. Usually there are one or two "inflatables" (*fuskoti*) or in other words "thugs" who make sure that only people who are dressed well, who are not in the category of a man unaccompanied by a woman (*bakouria*), and who fulfill the aesthetic stylistic criteria of the club may enter. As a result, patrons try to follow the accepted "style" of clothes when they "go out" to such clubs. A shirt, a good pair of trousers or blue jeans, a pair of leather shoes (not sports shoes) and a good brand of jacket or suit are considered ideal. This "selective customer strategy" that guarantees the style of the customers is a common technique found in many clubs in Athens. Depending on the musical scene, people develop their style of clothes according to the club they go to and their night entertainment.

The style of the club is a materialization of Edward Said's book *Orientalism*. There are cushions everywhere, the architecture combines "Eastern" lines with an Athenian aesthetic, there are water pipes that customers can order to smoke and—most extraordinarily—there are women dancers dressed up in "oriental" clothes, dancing *tsifteteli*. *Tsifteteli* is derived from the Turkish *Çiftetelli*. The term also refers to "Oriental" music in general. Furthermore, the music of this place is a combination of Moroccan, Egyptian, Turkish and popular Greek sounds, making clear the

connections between the cultures. Other similar cafes and clubs exist in Psiri and these are very popular.

When we arrive inside the club a bottle of whisky is already waiting on the table Sotiris reserved for us. After a while the waiter brings the ice and Coca Cola to mix with the whisky. My interlocutors place their cigarette packs on the table and stand up. The first drinks are served and the men comment on the female dancers. The girls in our group start dancing next to the table when the spirits are high at the table. My interlocutors dance with them while holding their glass of whisky and their cigarettes. The disposition of the body and the style of masculinity are clearly centered on these two objects of consumption. The cigarette as well as the glass is held in a performative manner. Both are held high, and the group circles the table with the whisky and the cigarettes.

Generally speaking the women in our group dance without drinking too much. The constant fear is *methi*, the biological intoxication of alcohol that is believed to entail a loss of control over oneself. For the women this is highly inappropriate, as a loss of control might result in not being in control of their sexuality. Whisky is considered a very strong masculine beverage that should be diluted with Coca Cola to become "lighter". Some men from the group drink it without mixing it with Coke and they consider this more masculine. While neat whisky or whisky on the rocks is considered a "man's" drink, whisky with Coke is considered a "woman's drink". Some of my interlocutors stated that they liked "taking whisky gay-style" (*to pinoume ligo pustiko*),[40] meaning that they like mixing their whisky with Coke. In the context of a *bouzoukia* or *ellinadika* with popular Greek music, whisky with Coke might also be consumed by men.

For men, *methi* is also undesirable when they "go out" because they might be viewed as "woman-like", as women supposedly get drunk easily. The expressions of *methi* for men also have feminine connotations and express an inability to be masculine and in control. *Alifi* (ointment), *Lioma* (melted), and *tifla* (blinded) – only a few of the words used to describe this undesirable state for men – express a softness-passivity and therefore a kind of femininity. The idea of passivity and its relationship to femininity is also expressed in the Greek word for a male homosexual referred to above, *poustis*. *Poustis* is conceived as a female-like character that is not *energos* or "active" but *pathitikos* or "passive".[41]

Despite similarities in the conceptualizations of the customers of such clubs in relation to drinking, the social and economic differences are visible on our way out of the club. The keys of a BMW are handed to the owner who is coming out to take his car, a man in a Porsche convertible is waiting for his girlfriend and a few other groups are heading to a major avenue to find a taxi or a bus. Despite the common stylistic

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[40] The "*poustis*" is considered to be a passive male gay figure in various contexts of social life in Greece, and the word is also used as a highly inappropriate discursive insult. If somebody is considered not to be moral or is regarded as scum, this term may be applied to him. The concept might also have more neutral connotations that describe small illegal practices that are not considered significant especially in relation to the state.

[41] However, someone who is "active" might not be considered a *poustis* because he is the penetrator and therefore masculine. Sotiris, for example, who is assertively masculine, described a sexual encounter he had with a *poustis* in the army. He stated that he (Sotiris) penetrated him and thus does not consider himself homosexual/*poustis*. The rest of the men in the group considered such behaviour eccentric but in no way was he thought to be a homosexual or *poustis* because he had a sexual encounter with a man. On the contrary, Antonis claimed that such behavior could be highly masculine and he stated Sotiris "is fucking everything that moves" (*gamai oti kinite*).

references and significations such as body language, clothes, the consumption of Scotch, the smoking of American cigarettes, the dancing to contemporary popular Greek music, and the preference for that style of entertainment, significant socioeconomic differences divide Athens both spatially and socially.

Going out in *bouzoukia* in Athens

In addition to *ellinadika*, another regular destination for the group from Kypseli as well as for my other interlocutors was the *bouzoukia* or sometimes the *skyladika*. In this context the consumption of whisky by club patrons is institutionalized and deeply interrelated with particular forms of spending. Such venues can be found in Iera Odos, Aegaleo and Kypseli, areas of Athens with major nightclubs.

Figure 5.3 "A" indicates the centre of Athens. Iera odos begins on the left side of A and ends in Aegaleo; Kypseli is situated on the left side of the area of Galatsi in the direction of A (All rights reserved by Google 2009, Google maps).

Nightlife in Athens varies from expensive *bouzoukia* in the center, where singers such as the well-known and popular stars Remos and Vandi perform, to cheaper places where less well-known artists appear.[42] These *bouzoukia* usually open at midnight and close at seven or eight o'clock in the morning. The major drink consumed in most *bouzoukia* is Scotch whisky. Only rarely do people order other spirits, while ouzo, raki, brandy and Greek-produced spirits in general do not appear on the menu. In short, whisky is almost synonymous with night entertainment in *bouzoukia* in Athens to the extent that prices are expressed in terms of the beverage.

To illustrate: one night I consulted *Athinorama* magazine in an effort to decide along with my interlocutors which *bouzoukia* we would visit. *Athinorama* is the oldest

[42] Lesser known successful singers include for example Efi Thodi (Έφη Θώδη), Sabrina and Terlegas (Τερλέγκας)

and most informative magazine about nightlife and entertainment in Athens. The magazine is divided into several sections; cinema, theatre, music, bars and clubs, *bouzoukia* (*pistes* or "stages", "dance floors") and food (*gevsi* or "taste"). A television guide is also included at the end of the magazine. The difference between the category of "bars or clubs" and *bouzoukia* is the fact that *bouzoukia* present live Greek music and target an audience with a mainstream popular lifestyle. The *bouzoukia* section is divided into the famous *bouzoukia* (*megala programata*) and the less known *bouzoukia* which are described as musical scenes (*musikes skines*). The other categories are the hot clubs, dance floors (*pistes*), *rebetika*/popular music (*rebetika ke laika palka*), "oldies", small nightclubs (*bouat*), traditional, taverns with music, and clubs to book. Among these sections the first five categories are the biggest and most popular. The category of *rebetiko* usually represents venues where food is served, while the majority of *bouzoukia* do not offer anything except alcoholic beverages, wine and champagne. Interestingly, all club categories express their prices in terms of whisky. For example, in the first category of *bouzoukia* (*megala programata*) we read (Figure 5.4):

> *Asteria. Asteria Glifadas 2108944558, 2108946898*
> *Stelios Dionisiou, Hristos Nikolopoulos, Kostantina,*
> *Ilias Makris. Bottle of whisky 150 euros and 170 euros*
> *(inclusive), wine for two people 80 euros (inclusive)*

Figure 5.4 *Pistes* section of *Athinorama* magazine with prices expressed in terms of whisky (Dec 22-29, 2005).

The same style of entry is used by all the other clubs, though prices differ. The price expressed in terms of a bottle of whisky, which represents the price of entry, refers to what a company of four people would have to pay, while the price of a bottle of wine refers to what just two people would pay. However, nowadays most clubs have small whisky bottles for two people. The bottle of wine, it could be argued, represents the price for couples and women, while whisky relates to bigger groups of friends and men. Furthermore, the bottle of whisky is the representation of the cost of nightlife in *bouzoukia* and most nightclubs, a key symbol of night prices and alcohol consumption. This is reinforced by the social activity of "booking a table". The booking should clearly state whether a regular or a special whisky is required. In various *bouzoukia*, regular whisky is served after the arrival of the customers while special whisky is placed on the "booked table", distinguishing the customers from the rest of the *bouzoukia*.

This division between two and three or four people in relation to drinking that is produced by the *bouzoukia* corresponds to a cultural conceptualization widely used in Greece. "Going out" (*vgeno* or *vgenoume)* in a couple is not considered a "company" (*parea*). A *parea* is a social group of three or more friends who come together to socialize. The bottle of whisky corresponds to the *parea*, while the bottle of wine corresponds to the couple (*zevgari*). Discussing this observation with my interlocutors, I came to understand that the context of the *bouzoukia* is intimately interrelated with the bottle of whisky. The bottle is a form of booking as well as the major commodity bought on a "night out". Most of my interlocutors would not think of going out without buying a bottle of whisky in such a club, despite its high price. When, for example, I suggested to Antonis one evening that we go to a *bouzoukia* and just have a few drinks, I received the extraordinary answer, "Are we gypsies or what?" (*ma tsigani imaste?*). Other interlocutors gave similar responses. Their reaction encapsulates the fact that "going out" corresponds to spending on at least one bottle of whisky; otherwise, you would look poor like a gypsy (a metaphor for poverty).

At other times, my interlocutors told me that "I have *cava* in that *bouzoukia* so we should go there". *Cava* here means that a bottle (*boukali*) or half-bottle (*misoboukalo*) is stored there under the customer's name. The next time he goes there, he can order his *cava* which is already paid for. This happens when the bottle is bought but not finished, or when the *parea* might leave for some reason. The bill will be paid and the remaining bottle or half-bottle will be stored for another time. This practice is usually applied for known customers who entertain themselves regularly in a specific *bouzoukia*. Some *bouzoukia* also sell half-bottles, which cost half the price of a bottle. If two men visit the *bouzoukia* and do not wish to drink heavily, they might order half a bottle.

In many of my interlocutors' narratives the bottle of whisky (*boukali*) emerges as a major reference for entertainment, pleasure and celebration. Interlocutors do not talk about "drinks" or "alcohol" as such but mainly about bottles. Expressions such as "we ordered our bottle","we drank our bottle" and questions such as "how many bottles did you have?" express the major role of the object in contextualizing the activity of drinking in a *bouzoukia*. The bottle should also be understood as a concept that expresses masculinity and the ability of a man to drink a lot yet still be able to control himself. Drinking a bottle or bottles is a characteristic of a capable masculinity that invests in alcohol and in the pleasure of drinking. More importantly, the bottle acquires its quasi "sacred" character by the way it is placed in the physical context of

the *bouzoukia*. The tables at the front, even if they are empty, should always have the symbol of pleasure and night entertainment on them, the bottle of whisky.

One of the clubs that my interlocutors visited regularly was the Athenian.[43] Antonis, Sotiris and Giorgos are regular patrons of *bouzoukia* and this one is their favorite as long their favourite singer is performing there. The club is situated on a central avenue in the Aegaleo area. This area is full of car and motorcycle repair businesses, spare parts for cars, retail stores, tool shops and similar businesses. However, the Athenian's customers do not necessarily come from this part of Athens, as the popularity of a singer might bring people there even from far away in the countryside.

At the entrance of the club is the "*maitre*", who welcomes the customers and takes them to their table, which has usually been booked in advance. The role of *maitre* is very varied. He knows the customers and therefore he decides which table is to be given to each company. There is a hierarchy of tables in the club. The tables closest to the stage are higher in status and the first row is usually the most prestigious. On the "first tables" there are usually bottles of special whisky that have already been reserved. Each club has a variety of blended and special whiskies. The special whisky brands are usually Johnnie Walker Black label, Chardu, Dimple, Chivas Regal and the blended are Johnnie Walker, Famous Grouse, Dewar's, Cutty Sark, Bell's and Jack Daniel's. The tables behind the stage and in the centre are next in the hierarchy, and the lowest class of tables is the ones to the sides of the stage, especially those at the back. This logic of this hierarchy depends on two basic concepts: access to the stage (for dancing or throwing flowers) and the ability to have a good view of the performers. The *maitre*'s selection of the table is related to a number of different factors. One important factor is his relationship with the customers, which can be friendly or close to impersonal. Apart from the network of patrons who might come from the close social environment of either the performers, other people who work in this context, or the *maitre* himself, the majority of people must build up their relationships in these clubs. Relationships are built over time and with the amount of money spent during a night. Regular customers who spend a lot are highest on the *maitre*'s list and will be given a table next to the stage.

Antonis, Sotiris and I enter the *bouzoukia* with the *maitre*, who walks us to our table. The hall is rather dark and empty. There is a stage in the center and dozens of tables for four surround the stage. On the stage a small orchestra is playing popular Greek rhythms while two singers sing. The reserved "front" tables have bottles of special whisky on them, even though nobody is sitting there. In a few hours the hall is full, as it is a Saturday night. People are smoking and looking at each other while drinking. Most are silent, as the music is too loud for talking. They glance towards the stage (*pista*) and wait for the singers to appear.

The center of the *bouzoukia* is the stage. The stage is so important that *bouzoukia* themselves are also called "stages" (*pistes*). The stage is where the singers perform and, perhaps more importantly, it is the space where the customers dance *zeibekiko* or *tsifteteli* when spirits are high (*kefi*, *ftiaksimo*).[44] *Kefi* (κέφι) is an emotion that requires drinking (moderate or excessive, depending on the occasion), and whisky in

[43] The pseudonym "Athenian" is used for a music hall with live contemporary Greek music situated in the area of Aegaleo.

[44] According to Papataxiarchis (1992: 170), "*kefi*" derives from the Arabic word *keyif* or *keyf* meaning pleasure and delight, or humor, a healthy state as well as a state of slight intoxication. The villagers of Mouria use the word to refer to an ideal mood of joy and relaxation, achieved when problems and social conventions are banished.

particular is considered a beverage that brings the interlocutors to such a state. The emotion of *kefi* builds up gradually in such contexts, interrelated with the music program of the *bouzoukia*. Spirits are high when the singers know how to keep them high; there are particular singers who are known to create more *kefi* in comparison to others. (The word *kefi* is also used in relation to liking or disliking a person, an object or a situation, and in relation to personal attraction.)

Kefi is expressed by patrons singing along to songs that they know, sometimes dancing to a song that they like, and—more importantly—spending money to throw flowers, "open champagne" or, in rare cases and limited clubs in the countryside, break a glass or a plate. However, complete alcoholic intoxication is not considered part of *kefi*, and drunkenness (*methi*) is undesirable. When someone is drunk (μεθυσμένος) he loses face before his friends as he loses control over himself. The control of masculinity in the context of the *bouzoukia* also means control of drunkenness, despite the fact that in some cases two bottles of whisky might be consumed by a single group of four people.

When the singers start to perform their *programa*, the younger, less famous and less experienced artists are the first to appear. They try to warm up the atmosphere and build up the *kefi* of their customers. Audiences are less enthusiastic with these preliminary artists and do not dance as much while the younger singers are singing. When the atmosphere has been prepared, the lights are lowered, the stage is emptied and the "big-name" singers (*to megalo onoma*) appear on the stage with one of their famous songs or with the question "Is everything all right tonight?" The orchestra accompanies their appearance by playing a characteristic rhythm.

While we are watching the orchestra's performance, the waiter comes to take our orders, asking "What would you like to drink?" Antonis orders a Johnnie Walker "for our table", like the majority of tables in the *bouzoukia*. After a while the bottle comes, along with four glasses for the *parea*, a big bowl of ice cubes and a small bowl of dried nuts. As time goes by most groups drink their whisky straight and sometimes they mix it with Coca Cola. At my table most men do not mix it, as whisky with Coke is thought of as a "female" drink. Whisky should be straight—like the men themselves—and is usually drunk with ice.

As the *kefi* builds up and the patrons begin to recognize the songs, someone stands up to dance *zeibekiko*. His girlfriend and his friend are on their knees clapping. The man makes continuous performative turns while dancing in the center of the stage. His friends clap even more enthusiastically when the performance comes to an end. A man who dances a good *zeibekiko* is a "*magas*", a man who expresses his masculinity. *Zeibekiko* is considered a highly masculine dance to be performed mainly by men; in various contexts it used to be considered an insult if a woman among a certain company of people danced it.[45] In one of my interviews, a woman who was part of the network of my interlocutors of Aigaleo stated,

> At the end of the seventies I was a rock and punk fan and I was very daring. I would dress like the other fans of the scene and I was against most institutions. On one outing with the older men of my neighborhood we went to a place in the Koridalos area where a lot of underground figures and outlaws used to hang out.

[45] A *Zeibekiko* song might be a *paragelia*, i.e. a request from a customer. In the past a *paragelia* was usually danced only by the customer who requested the song, but the custom has gradually changed. The request was once so highly valued that during the dictatorship a customer called Nikos Koemtzis knifed three policemen and killed one in a music hall when one of them tried to interrupt his dance

> That was the place where prisoners would go outside of Koridalos [the area of Athens where the prison is located]; they would go there to get together again with other outlaws or ex-prisoners and entertain themselves. The evening we were there I heard a song that I liked a lot. It was a *zebeikiko*. The stage was empty so I stood up and went to dance the song. The older men of the company did not react fast enough to stop me, as I had rushed very fast to the stage. Then, while I was dancing, a man came onto the stage and threatened me. He said he would harm me because I was embarrassing a masculine dance. The older men in my group stood up and said I was one of the young rockers who don't know these rules. My protectors said it would not happen again.

Gradually *zeibekiko* became a dance to be performed by women as well as men, and feminine dances also came to be performed by men (occasionally on the outings of my group women would dance a *zeibekiko* and men a *tsifteteli*). This gender emancipation became possible after the 1970s, when the number of women in Greek universities increased and shifting social and political conditions influenced the redefinition of gender and womanhood in general (see introduction on the short history of Greece).

My *parea* (drinking company) is observing the performance of the singers and of those dancing while they slowly drink their whisky. There is very little speech; my interlocutors are focused on the music and the performances on the stage. Comments are made about the style of dancing, the dancers' movements and body gestures.

The bill increases as customers spend on "champagne" and flowers. The practice of "opening champagne" is very widespread, especially in the second-tier clubs. Usually the customer orders a few bottles of champagne or even more. Then a waiter opens the champagne on the stage while the singer is singing and serves the singer. The singer never drinks the champagne, but simply takes the glass and waves to the customers who treated him, while holding the glass up to them in a gesture to wish them good health. The "champagne" is usually a fake champagne called 'Bolero' which is produced in Greece especially for this kind of practice in nightclubs.

More recently, this practice has also been seen on popular television programs on days of celebration, where usually a studio is transformed into a tavern or a *bouzoukia* and famous artists, actors or other famous people in the star system perform. While the singers are performing, several "flower-women" (*lululudes*) circulate around the audience with baskets filled with flowers. When the *lululudes* receive the order, they are either paid immediately or keep track of the customer's bill. A basket of flowers ranges from 20 to 50 euros and a man who wants to throw flowers over the singer will buy at least two or more baskets.

Depending on the song and the singer, people buy the baskets and throw the flowers or even the whole basket on the singer. The surprising gesture of throwing the actual bamboo basket on the singer is usually practiced by men, who do it in a performative manner, while women usually throw only the flowers. It is also usual for the "flower-women" to walk onto the stage and throw the flowers on the singer while pointing at the customer who paid for the them. The singer will nod or throw one of the flowers back to the table that treated him or her to the flowers. The most popular singers in each club receive flowers, and the quantity of flowers thrown each time is a way of gauging a singer's popularity.[46] Sometimes flowers are also thrown gradually

[46] On Christmas and New Year's Eve in 2006, several television programs presented studios as *bouzoukia* with flowers being thrown to the singers; I observed similar phenomena in 2007.

while a woman of a group is dancing *tsifteteli*, or each basket might be emptied on her head in a performative act.

The amount of money spent in such a context is variable. Customers might spend from 140 euros, which could be the price of a blended bottle of whisky, to three hundred or even more for a special.[47] The group usually shares the costs, but in cases of personal celebration one person alone will pay the bill. In some cases Antonis and Sotiris even saved money for a week to spend on one night. When Antonis for example received his degree, he saved for months to be able to pay for one night out at *Asteria*.

Maria and Kostantina, on the other hand, never saved to go out to *bouzoukia*. Their high income enables them to entertain themselves regularly in various *bouzoukia* and they are proud of spending on flowers and Scotch. Other high-income patrons of such clubs are also able to express their budget in such excessive practices.

The status of a company at a table that spends a lot during a night is affirmed by the club in various ways: in the service (which is faster and much more polite), by the orchestra or the singer (in drinking and toasting to the health of big spenders), and in the photographs that are taken to be kept as a reminder of the big night. In almost all popular *bouzoukia* where "big name" singers perform, there is a photographer cooperating with the club, who takes photographs of patrons while they entertain themselves, moving from table to table. The photographs are usually placed at the entrance of the club and patrons buy them on their way out. Thus the memory of spending gloriously is preserved and may even be displayed conspicuously in the homes of those who socialize in *bouzoukia*.

Despite the personal ostentation of those who spend lavishly, there are also people in *bouzoukia* who cannot afford to spend as much like my interlocutors. However, when going out with my interlocutors, Antonis as well as Sotiris follow this style of entertainment and spends on Scotch and flowers even when they cannot afford to spend as much. Prestige is not the only motivation behind excessive consumption, as the small spenders simply cannot compete with the big spenders. In my group, for example, most of the time none of them was able to afford to pay for the bottles alone.

Therefore, keeping up with a style of entertainment is a process that requires a lot of investment. Material constraints might limit the ability of some of the interlocutors to perform their style regularly, but when they decide to invest in it they are able to bring it off successfully.

Thus Scotch has been localized within the context of *bouzoukia* and has become part of a specific style of modernness in entertainment. Reserving a table with whisky, throwing flowers and opening champagne are practices that express an excessive consumption style in the context of *bouzoukia* and constitute cultural aspects of a style of entertainment deeply entangled with contemporary Greek popular music. This can also obscure the socioeconomic inequalities of urban social life, as the patrons of *bouzoukia* differ between low and high-income salaried workers and professionals.

Emotionality and anti-domesticity in drinking

One of the most excessive performative practices described by a group that I socialized with and interviewed in Aigaleo is "demolition" (*katedafisi*). Dimitris, a

[47] Prices are given for the research period of 2005 and 2006

divorced retired public servant who has spent time in *bouzoukia* almost all his life, described it thus:

> I remember I used to go out with a guy who owned some apartments blocks in Glyfada. We would go to Dilina, where Litsa Diamanti was singing, and we used to get a table right next to the scene because he knew her. We would order a bottle of whisky but he couldn't drink a lot because he had heart problems. In any case the waiters would bring the bottle and the fruit and after a while he would throw the table with all the stuff and the bottle onto the stage. Afterwards the waiters would bring the table back again with a new bottle and fruit, but he would throw the table on the stage again. He was in love with her (*kapsouris*).[48]

According to my interlocutor Antonis, excessive practices in *bouzoukia* outside the context of partying (*glenti*/γλέντι) can also be explained when someone is deeply in love (*kapsouris*/καψούρης). When somebody is in love, whisky is the drink that gives them courage, relaxes them (*se stroni*) and helps them get over past or present disappointments.[49] According to Antonis "if you are *kapsouris*, you will drink whisky". *Kapsura* (καψούρα) is an emotional state that literally means "burning". It describes the emotion of loving someone without receiving any emotional stimuli in return. The subject then is "trapped" in this one-sided affection, which might last for years. The metaphor of fire and burning is used regularly in the Greek language in relation to failed and unconsummated love relationships such as "*me ekapse*". Such phrases usually are used in reference to a man's feelings for a woman, but can also be applied to a woman's feelings for a man. "*Kapsura*" (or "burning for a woman") is a major motive for the consumption of Scotch that legitimates excessive actions in the context of *bouzoukia*. Similarly, the dancer Alexandris refers to various examples of customers who would spend fortunes in a night because they were "crazy" or in "*kapsura*" over a female singer or a woman from his dance group (Alexandris 2000: 67). The notion of *kapsoura* has been so important in this genre of contemporary popular music in the context of *bouzoukia* that many Athenians call these songs "*kapsourika*" or "*kapsourotragouda*" (songs with *kapsoura*).

Dimitris clearly explained that this "demolition" was not the result of drinking whisky or alcohol in general. Rather, demolition expresses an unfulfilled erotic relationship, a disappointment, a divorce or in general a situation that upsets a person's soul. In this case, then, the destruction of the bottle of Scotch whisky becomes the means to express such feelings of *kapsoura*. Similarly, many songs in this genre are about unfulfilled and destroyed relationships, illegal love outside the context of marriage, divorce and betrayal of women or men.

The style of entertainment in *bouzoukia* has inspired various filmmakers in modern Greek cinema. The contemporary director Voulgaris, for example, narrates a scenario in which the anti-domestic discourse and the excessive consumption (the making of the self through style) are condensed in a case of a divorce (*Ola ine dromos*, 1998). A family man in his fifties who lives in rural Greece spends his evenings in a *bouzoukia*. One day his wife, disappointed from his lifestyle, his excessive consumption in the *bouzoukia* and his anti-domestic sexuality in this sphere

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[48] The bill in that instance was 500,000 Gr. Drachmas, which would translate as a sum between 1500 and 2000 euros nowadays.

[49] For more information on the subject see Abatzi (2004).

of entertainment, decides to leave him, taking their child, and asks for a divorce. That night the man decides to go to the *bouzoukia* again to let off steam. First he orders a special Scotch and then he breaks all the plates in the club. When no more plates are available he is willing to pay to smash the toilets. After smashing the toilets there is nothing left to break, so he decides to buy the *bouzoukia* club the same evening and demolish it with a bulldozer. As the bulldozer demolishes the *bouzoukia* he soaks his coat in whisky and sets fire to it while dancing. At the end he throws away his burned coat with a performative gesture and continues his *zeibekiko*. Setting fire to whisky and thus symbolizing the negation of domesticity was indeed widespread in *bouzoukia* before 1973. Petropoulos has described this habit taking place in the underground *bouzoukia* of Athens: a man would spill some whisky on the floor and then set fire to it while he danced (Πετρόπουλος 1991: 133).

A typical story of a ruined relationship that became materialized in Scotch whisky was told to me by Dimitris and later by his daughter. Dimitris from Aigaleo, a man in his early sixties whom I met through a colleague of mine in Athens while conducting research and whom I interviewed on two occasions, has spent all his life enjoying whisky and entertainment in *bouzoukia*. His daughter described him as a "man of the night" (*tis nihtas*) and as someone who has squandered his life in whisky. Dimitris was a public servant who married in the 1970s and a few years later had a daughter. His relationship with his wife was not very successful as he spent most of his evenings in *bouzoukia* with his friends, a situation that led to many conflicts. His wife decided to move to a new house with her daughter and end the marriage in divorce. Since then he let the steam off in whisky and *bouzoukia* and tried to recover by spending his last savings.

The concept of "destruction" has a major significance in the night entertainment in *bouzoukia*. Songs such as "*gremista ola pia skliri kardia*" (Destroy everything, harsh heart!) are typical examples of the idea of destruction in popular music and night entertainment. Destruction might also take the form of burning banknotes, throwing whisky on the floor and setting fire to it, breaking a bottle, breaking chairs and pulling off the tablecloth.[50] However, such practices are not encountered very often and have been largely replaced (as noted) by the institutionalization of symbolic destruction in the form of throwing flowers.

In second-rate *bouzoukia*, excessive consumption might be actively promoted by the staff and the women working there. For example, the term "damage" (*zimia*) means the bill that an individual runs up in a night in reference to a particular person or singer or artist. Alexandris, who was a singer in many different *bouzoukia* and *skyladika* all over Greece, stated about one of his employees who was a dancer that "he supported me with the damage he did for me". He meant that this person (customer) was so *kapsouris* with her that he did "excessive damage" in his effort to express his feelings (2000: 62). It is also of interest that the term "I held a funeral" (*kano kidia*) means that the female artist is smart enough to cause "damage" of at least three hundred thousand drachmas, an amount estimated to be at least 1000 euros (2006: 62).

Another realm outside of *bouzoukia* where whisky is interrelated with an anti-domestic mentality is the "sex bar" (*bar me consommation*). The word *bar me consommation* is derived from the American word for "bar" and the French

[50] A song associated with this practice says, "*tha ta kapso ta rimadia ta lefta mou*" (I will burn my damned money) .

'*consommation*' meaning sexual intercourse and consumption.[51] Women who work in such bars are expected to keep company with each man who enters the bar. Men accordingly buy drinks for the women and thus also buy their time. The majority of men in these sex bars drink whisky (Abatzi 2006: 152). More interestingly, wine, ouzo or other Greek beverages are never consumed this context.

Similarly, whisky is the main beverage in other bars that offer sexual services, *stiptitzadika* (strip shows) or *koladika* (sex clubs), a masculine underground form of leisure. One evening after returning from a *bouzoukia*, Antonis suggested to the remaining group of men that we visit such a place, situated behind the Hilton hotel in central Athens. His main argument was that the owner of the bar was "obliged" to him because Antonis had fixed his computer, so we would not have to pay for any drinks. The major difference between normal bars and the bars of the above category is that the center of the bar is a stage for strip shows, and sometimes some sort of sexual services are offered on the spot. Most of the women employed there are from outside Greece (mostly from Eastern Europe) and do not spend long talking with the men as they do not speak very good Greek. Such spaces are usually very dark, tables are spaced far apart, and there is usually a bottle of whisky on the table. If the customer buys the bottle to drink it with one of the women who work there, the woman might offer him manual sexual services. The women present themselves very sexually. Those who dance take off all their clothes and at the end of their performance they sit down again with the men who are paying for their company. Customers who want to be more "private" will move to tables situated at the back of the bar where it is totally dark. Some men have sex in public in the dark corners of the underground club; others masturbate accompanied by the women. In such places whisky is a form of payment for the women's sexual services. Men who do not buy a bottle are allowed to treat women to a few drinks, but for more sexual behavior they must spend more money on alcohol.

Consumption and style in night entertainment

Rather than expressing the imaginaries of the mediascape of marketing and advertising that projected it as a symbol of modernity, Europeaness, female emancipation and companionship, this trajectory of Scotch whisky became precisely its reverse. Within this context Scotch became interrelated with a Greek Orientalism and a Minor Asia migrant culture and the underground and marginal style of nightclubs, all expressed in an anti-domestic mentality. Gradually Scotch became part of the popular entertainment in *bouzoukia* and became representative of this form of entertainment, even to the extent (as already noted) that the prices of such nightclubs are represented in bottles of Scotch whisky.

The emergence of contemporary popular Greek music and entertainment is deeply interrelated with the genre of *rebetiko* and the immigrants who identified with it. It was within this context that the *bouzouki*, a stringed musical instrument, was imported into Greece at the beginning of the 20th century. The arrival of *rebetiko* transformed the nightlife of the capital of Greece, especially because this genre and this urban style of entertainment were commoditized and commercialized in the post-war spaces of *bouzoukia*, where *bouzouki* music was widely performed. Part of the commoditization process was the "Europeanization" of the music, the spaces of

[51] The word *consommation* perfectly describes the consumerist ideology of the commodification of sex.

entertainment and the beverages consumed. As a result Scotch whisky, in the process of becoming a symbol of modernity (the "American way of life" or "Europeanness") for the Athenian elite, was slowly adapted and adopted in these spaces. Especially during the dictatorship an Athenian consumer society emerged (Stathakis 2007) and Scotch whisky could be found in many nightclubs and *bouzoukia*. The establishment of contemporary popular Greek music and entertainment during the eighties and the nineties with *firmes,* well known *bouzoukia* and *skiladika* localized Scotch to the extent that their prices became represented in terms of the beverage. Within this context Scotch became intertwined with this scene and style of entertainment.

It follows that my interlocutors who identify with this style of music and nightlife make themselves through whisky and claim a relationship between the beverage and their style. However not all consumers of Scotch identify with this style; there are new cosmopolitans, for example, who try to differentiate themselves through single malts.

In addition, the cultural style that associated with entertainment in *bouzoukia* in recent decades is based on an excessive unproductive mentality that includes "opening a bottle of special" or a "bottle of Scotch", throwing baskets of flowers at singers, opening "champagne" and running up enormous bills for a bottle of whisky. Similarly the *firmes* who represent the new Greek popular music scene and perform in *bouzoukia* spend their wealth conspicuously and publicly (Βαρουχάκη 2005: 83). While my interlocutors identify with this style of entertainment and these forms of conspicuous consumption, they are divided by major socioeconomic differences that are both united and obscured under this modern urban style.

Finally, large socioeconomic differences and power relationships are also evident in "sex bars" or "sex clubs" where "*consommation"* and prostitution take place. There, prices for sexual services are represented in terms of alcoholic beverages and Scotch whisky, a further realm of the localization of the beverage.