The Modern Greek Lament in the Twentieth Century: A Summary of Studies

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Abstract:

As the Greek lament has taken several types and forms throughout its historical and socio-cultural course, this article provides an overview of studies and scholarly approaches over the twentieth century under periodization, illustrating its significance on multidisciplinary grounds. By configuring a broader contextualization upon this question, the case-by-case study presentation documents the different lenses adopted to investigate it as a literary genre, musicological form, ethnological, cultural, social, religious and psychology-wise topic, as well as its presence in folklore studies, ethnomusicology, anthropology and ritual practices over the past century. This chronological arrangement, thus, enables a coherent structural understanding, foreshadows an amalgamation of angles into current research and sets the basis to appreciate lament's spectrum, which still has a lot more to unveil.

Keywords: Modern Greek Lament, Twentieth Century, Studies, Chronological Account, Folk Music, Folk Poetry

Introduction

According to Margaret Alexiou (1974, 14 and 2002, 16), the lament in Greece is classified among the oldest forms of singing and characterizes an entire category of songs, which carry a specific mental and emotional state in terms of mourning. More precisely, the Greek lament has taken several types and forms throughout its historical and socio-cultural course, which have been employed to depict the context that corresponds discretely to each occasion in detail. For example, the word *thrēnos* (lament) characterized the ancient lamentations that were composed and sung by professional weepers; by nature, they had an eloquent verbal and musical elaboration, which gave them a more structured form, while the strict criteria of their interpreters' professionalism could differentiate the *thrēnos* from *góos*, attributed to sobs of non-professional mourners during funeral ceremonies (Alexiou 2002, 103, 107 and Bertolín-Cebrián 2006, 51-52). This article, thus, provides a historiographic overview of studies and scholarly approaches towards the Greek lament, laying out its significance on multidisciplinary grounds, as a literary genre,

musicological form, ethnological, cultural, social, religious and psychology-wise case study, as well as its presence in folklore studies, ethnomusicology, anthropology and ritual practices during the last century. By creating such an account, the reader will have the opportunity to understand the kaleidoscopic nature of the Modern Greek dirge, trace its evolution through various lenses and paint a better picture on this question, which also informs current research and fosters new strands of inquiry, as the last section notes.

Early Studies and Perspectives: 1900-1950

The influence of the German-Austrian Ethnological School (*Kulturkreis*) towards the study of cultural phenomena as individual entities within a broader socio-cultural web was particularly strong at the beginning of the twentieth century, introducing cultural diffusionism in several fields (e.g. sociology, anthropology, geography) (Sylvain 1996, 483-485). By holding a significant role in the development of scholarly thought, German researchers as well as Greek philologists and folklorists had followed its principles in an attempt to start reconstructing history through the analysis of culture (Marchand 2003, 285-293).

As an element of cultural expression, the Greek lament took central place in these endeavors, where Schmitt's 1901 article raised the question on the etymological origin of the word *moiroloyi* (lament) and considered linguistic texture issues,[1] while Schmidt's 1926 studies presented the Greek folk culture as it had been shaped through specific social moments, especially death. Both attempts seem to pay homage towards the Greek civilization as the inheritor of antiquity, focusing their interest on the Greek vernacular language, as it was reflected in folk songs, proverbs and fairy tales. Apparently, von Herder's organic theory on how the mother language influences and shapes people's particular temperament combined with Grimm's systematic treaties on spoken and written languages had a great impact over these approaches, as, despite their addressed differentiation in perspectives, a latent interaction between them can emerge in terms of subject correlation (Mackridge 2009, 198-202).

Much influenced by these views and the romantic ethnological streams, Nikolaos Politis suggested a philological direction in folklore, which he introduced in Greece. In his 1914 work *Eklogai apo ta traghoudhia tou hellinikou laou*, he studied forty-nine laments and based his argument around their textual descriptions about the deceased. By applying a common thematic axis across them, he divided his material into two main categories: the laments of [his] choice and the laments that discuss the Other World and *Charos* (the personification of death). In the first category, the main theme focuses on the life of the deceased or the emptiness felt by their families (mother, wife and children), who tried to overcome this loss and absence. In the proposed subcategories for the laments *par excellence,* as he characterized them, he applied thematic criteria throughout and included laments, which referred to the last moments of the deceased and their last breath[2] as well as the widow, the death of the young men, the mother and her dead child,[3] the child's death and the mother who lost her daughter. The second

category was dedicated to folk laments, which described or referred to *Charos* and the prevailing conditions in the Other World. Among the listed ones, some of them had a clear title, others were titled by him, while there were also some laments without a title, where he quoted his own additions and interventions in the text. Thus, although Politis aimed to restore each song in its archetypal form (*urtext*) and examine them through oral and written parameters, his infelicities made his project easily challenged on scholarly grounds (Apostolakis 1929, 5, 10-11, 134-142 and Melachrinos 1946, xxix-xxx).

In 1916 and during the literature lectures of *Parnassistes* in Athens (Tragaki 2007, 8-9 and 14), he presented his study on the topography of the Modern Greek folklore, where he made a special mention to the lament of Mani (the south-western region of Peloponnese) and its practice by the 'naive and uneducated' mourners, who lamented their relatives (Politis 1916, 39-43). His comparative method presented some examples of mournful content in an attempt to highlight the historical and ethographic aspects that shape the Greek laments, as they were depicted through mourners' etiquette and rituals. By paying due regard to women's practice and their role throughout Greek history, he emphasized on the widespread tradition, which established a particular identity and socio-cultural context, especially across the countryside; besides, Lawson (1910:549) had already attributed some mystical characteristics to these simple and unsophisticated minds, which influenced that mentality (Jarett 1977, xx, 218).

On the other side of the spectrum, Kyriakides (1919) adopted the historical-geographical approach towards folklore and focused on women's laments origin, underlining their improvisational characteristics and versification. For him, the laments of Mani had an intense and dramatic background, which accentuated the dynamics of their octosyllabic verse and reflected the prevailing and 'particular psychological variances' of this region (Kyriakides 1990, 48-50). Basing his arguments on the conventional language of texts, as he called it (*ibid*: xxvii), he studied the laments through their morphological and poetic dimensions, contradicting Baud-Bovy's approach, who supported that this octosyllabic verse emanated from the Byzantine period and the folk songs of that time (Baud-Bovy 1958, 22-24).

In his 1935-1938 musical collection *Songs of the Dodecanese*, Volumes I and II, Baud-Bovy was the first ethnomusicologist who worked on the musical side of the Modern Greek laments (Beaton 2004, 114-115). These studies include twenty-one mourning songs, as part of his fieldwork across the islands. Following the phonographic recording method, he documented these laments by ear and categorized them by island into three different groups: the non-dancing laments, women's songs and the laments without instruments. By providing a combination of European and neumatic Byzantine musical notations, he was aiming at describing their non-tempered musical character in the most detailed way. In order to establish their accuracy, his studies provide information about the place and way these recordings were carried out, the rhythmic movements (if any) during the performances, the performers' names, the musical range each lament covered as well as the scales and intervals they employed. Although their

poetic text was not cited in the local dialects, it was precisely adapted to the oral singing, using special characters on any euphonic consonants and/or *tsakismata* (i.e. the syllabic or vocal embellishments), which were made during his *in situ* recordings.[4] As a result, by delineating each performer's emotional and psychological state through particular written representations, he managed to depict many different variations of the same poetic text.

Another study emphasizing on the philological and literary features of the Modern Greek laments was Joannidu's 1938 book, which was the outcome of her research at the Folklore Archives of the Academy of Athens. Through a comparative lens, she examined laments' different textual parts (i.e. preface, motifs, epilogue), their versification (meter, rhyme, stanzas) and their morphological structure in relationship with other folk songs of plaintive content; among them, the songs that referred to *xenitià* (exile), *Charos* and the Other World, religious laments – as for instance Virgin Mary's lamentations – and the lamentations dedicated to historic conquest of cities. She also emphasized on the quality, presence and coalescence of literary devices, such as the apostrophe and exclamation, the verse and chorus dualism, the response and/or rhetorical questions included in the poetic text as well as the interplay among the monologues, dialogues and preambles. Although their similarities prevented suggestions over a clear categorization, their contextual characteristics helped her indicate a thread over the funeral folk songs and mortuary laments since antiquity.

On the other hand, Reiner (1938) enriched such comparative approaches by examining laments through a trilateral lens, which comprised words, melody and movement. Supporting that the Modern Greek laments were descendants of the ancient burial threnodies, his views were primarily based on the structural resemblances between the contemporary laments and the ancient form of *góos* (Alexiou 2002, 177). His angle was mostly tailored towards folk beliefs about death and the way culture was shaped through and around them, paving thus the path for future research on this topic, which became more evident during the second half of the twentieth century, as indicated below.

However, given that the context in which mourning songs were performed was directly related to funeral rituals, Megas recognized women's leading role, upgrading Kyriakides' arguments. His descriptive analysis traces their social impact in particular mortuary circumstances across Greece and reflects his latent intentions to bring a sense of salvation and religious philosophy into this question (Megas 1939, 166-205). In his 1939 study, he discussed the particularities of *teleuti*, namely the end of life and death, and provided some well-informed commentaries on the ritual practices, deeds, words, expressions, thoughts and folk customs about death, as experienced in different areas of Greece. He also suggested three culminating stages around it: the pre-*teleuti*, *teleuti* and post-*teleuti* contexts, indicating the inherent qualities, which were interwoven with these last moments and bereavement, as Leming and Dickinson (1990, 186, 345-346, 476-477) discussed later.

More specifically, his pre-*teleuti* features introduced the signs and predictions of the Greek

folk culture about death, the forgiveness of sins, the *efcharisties* towards the near-to-death person (a process similar to the Viaticum), the agony of death and the call of death. In his *post-teleuti* elements, he included several widely used words, phrases and proverbs that were mostly employed in the folk laments *par excellence*, when describing family's care rituals towards the deceased, once the *aggelma* or *dialalima* was announced (i.e. when death was confirmed); among them, one finds the washing and covering of the dead body, the clothes, decorations, wreaths, flowers and the death ring, all of which were put forward during the funeral practices and the exposure of the corpse, while forgiveness prayers were addressed to the deceased. Before the burial, though, and at dusk, Megas highlighted the practices of *xenichtisma*, namely the overnight grieving activities, where laments were sung and employed as a means to explain and dissuade death through the use of magic or superstitious actions against evil. After *xenichtisma* and during the funeral rituals, the procession across the town or village was a solemn cortege, which usually led to religious blessings at the church. Bringing the whole rite to an end, the burial at the cemetery was followed by particular measures that would prevent tomb's violation. In some cases and by paying respect to family's last wishes, the cremation of the dead could also take place. However, when the dead body was eventually buried, the family was under an ethical (and probably spiritual) obligation to attend specific memorial services, which, although extending the process of grief, provided an opportunity to soothe pain and ask for salvation. Within this context, children's *teleuti* was a rather exceptional case of death, especially when they were not baptized, while priests' *teleuti* followed the religious path, as dictated by the Orthodox tradition. Bearing in mind the specificities of each *locus* under consideration and with the help of questionnaires and personal interviews, Megas' research also gave some useful information about the transfer of bones, the death in exile, the beliefs about the soul, the death as a means of cultural expression and how Hades was perceived as a place of an Other World. His insights fostered future interest in documenting folk events, expressions and ceremonial practices, which correlated 'the extent of folk knowledge with social variables', such as age and societal status (Heise 2010, 7).

The meaning and importance of *teleuti,* as emanated from John's Chrysostom writings was also discussed by Loukatos (1940, 30-117), where he presented his collected remarks on funeral rites over centuries. Since John Chrysostom lived at a time when the ancient Greek customs were still in use, his writings were vividly informed by their impact on folk culture, which contradicted the official Orthodox Church practices. By examining John's Chrysostom notes, Loukatos treated funeral rituals in a way similar to Megas' lens, characterizing the pro-*teleuti* context as *ustatai sigmai* or *psychorragima* (last moments, the agony of death), while keeping the post-*teleuti* framework, the funeral rites, the customs after burial and the memorial services as per Megas' approach. Thanks to his historical and archaeological evidence, he introduced an ethnographic approach to folklore and the study of laments, where John's Chrysostom remarks informed the dirge. Looking at family's and mourners' *kopetoi* (lamentations), he

underlined the element of exaggeration during such moments, where the emotional charge affects the mourning process (Siipola 2001, 1688). In his 'after the funeral' practices, he also included the *perideipna* or *nekrodeipna* (i.e. the dinner meals in memory of the deceased) and the memorial services on the third and fortieth days after death, which were associated with some folk and religious beliefs about the state of the soul (Georgitsoyanni 2019, 416-418). At these services, Loukatos referred to the boiled wheat and broth, which symbolized soul's eternality, the *psychocharti* or *meridocharti* or *anamotoloi* (a paper of forgiveness), the *Psychosavvata* (particular Saturdays during the year, dedicated to the dead) and the *psychokeri* or *nekrokeri* (i.e. candles for the dead). Connecting the folk etiquette with the ancient Greek culture, he also made particular reference to some collective visits to the graves in days of great feasts, as a way to honor the dead,[5] while the participation of the community and their support to the bereaved illustrated a common code of grief with 'interactional factors of attachment fractured by loss or by significant life changes engendered by a traumatic event' (Zinner, Williams and Ellis 1999, 9).

It seems, thus, that a wider folk cult of worship towards death had been gradually developed for years (Tzerpos 2004), where the laments, their interpreters and participants held a predominant place within the ritual context. Drawing further evidence from the Folklore Archives of the Academy of Athens, Boehm and Lüdecke enhanced this argument by interconnecting the Modern Greek folk beliefs about death with the relevant cosmological theories. In their 1947 study, they traced laments' origin through examples that could justify their relationship with the ancient dirge, while their cross-references to the poetic and religious motifs, encountered in some Asian and Slavic texts, revealed a vicinity of these genres. Women's presence was once again highlighted and the comparisons of death rituals among Orthodox Christians, Catholics and Protestants offered rich insights and confirmed threnody's translational and interreligious range, which still incites powerful critical thoughts among scholars (Tingle and Willis 2015).

Such a study was Spyridakis' 1950 article, where he characterized the lament as 'the funeral dirge of honor' (1950:74), which is expressed through 'wailing and mournful cries', closely associated with the qualities of *anakalima* (i.e. a lamenting poem or a lament addressing the dead in general).[6] By overarching the first scholarly perspectives on the question, Spyridakis adopted Loukatos' research direction and in an attempt to look into laments' ethnic background, he created a centralized system around the funeral practices, as they derived from the works of the Fathers of the Orthodox Church and the hagiological texts as well as the Greek and Roman writings. By paying due regard to the ritual importance of burial customs throughout the centuries and by addressing their sense of 'Greekness', as he called it, his main argument tried to mitigate the controversy raised by the Fathers of the Orthodox Church, who were opposed to such practices, and the people involved. As a result, he signposted the challenges of this question, summarized its main points and laid the ground to find an

equilibrium across the scholarly and non-scholarly approaches (Varvounis 1998, 19-20, 40-41).

Having, thus, been half-way through the intentions of the present article, one starts gaining a better understanding over the complexities the Modern Greek lament entails and the interdisciplinarity it asks to be thoroughly examined. Since its study started to take shape over the first half of the twentieth century as a comprehensive and comparative examination of several disperse features, it also confirmed its integral presence within the Greek culture, offering dynamic grounds of social and cultural reconsideration, as the *Kulturkreis* had initially suggested.

Systematization and Multidisciplinarity: 1950-2000

Politis' and Spyridakis' attempts towards systemization had already sown the seeds for more coordinated methods of analysis upon the Greek laments. As this section is going to indicate, the study of this topic gradually embraced a more detailed, careful and inductive examination through diverse angles over the second half of the previous century, which informed its understanding as a case study of multidisciplinarity in research and beyond (Nicolescu in Dutu 2016, 45).

Petropoulos' contribution came to fill in the gap towards an accurate systematic categorization of laments with his 1958 and 1959 studies, which contained 655 songs and provided a more attentive classification than Politis' one. Among them, nearly one hundred of pieces discuss topics related to death and are found in his *Charos* songs and laments' category. For Petropoulos, the lament is 'the articulated dirge for the deceased' and refers to any form of sad singing that narrates death, where he also includes the *odurmoi nekrou* (moans of the deceased, namely the prolonged low sounds of suffering from the person who is about to die) (Petropoulos 1959, 167). The four distinct parts of his classification encompass: (a) the laments for the dead and any plaintive dialogues, (b) the laments that are addressed to specific people (for example the host – i.e. the man of a house –, the hostess – i.e. the woman of a house –, the young women and young men), (c) the groans or death rattles of a dying person, who mourns their separation from the terrestrial world and is drawn into the sorrow of Hades and (d) the allegories and comparisons. A separate category belongs to the songs of *Charos* and contains laments in narrative style, which describe the suffering it causes to humans. At the end of his works, Petropoulos provides a last distinct category, which includes the laments of Mani, where he emphasizes on their particular poetic composition, echoing and challenging Politis' and Kyriakides' preceding perspectives on this topic.

Following the same direction and based on thematic criteria of versification, Romaios also elaborated on these laments and through a chronological classification with historical references, he concluded that this genre seemed to coincide with the fifteen syllables poetic tradition spread across the Peloponnese (Romaios 1963, 103-128). His points, though, contradicted Baud-Bovy's findings in his studies on the *kleftiko* song (Baud-Bovy 1958) and Kyriakides' arguments, who supported that only the laments of Mani lacked poetically

(Kyriakides 1919, 1926, 1934 and later 1990, 48, 98). For Romaios, Kyriakides did not seem to have realized their dramatic potential, as his merely literary approach was employed to only confirm the homogeneity, continuity and probably superiority of the Greek nation, as derived from specific longstanding cultural phenomena, a particularly acclaimed practice of the philologists and folklorists of that time.[7]

Economides (1967) on the other hand, embraced Politis' comparative method and refocused the interest on their ritual context. Going beyond any limited chronological framework, he presented an overview of funeral rituals and described how emotions have an impact over the range of expression of dirge. Drawing evidence from poetic and historical texts of ancient Greece, Roman and Byzantine literature, he intended to demonstrate the continuing presence of mourning practices in Greece from antiquity to modern times. What is noteworthy about his comparisons, though, is his concentration on the form of lament in the Balkans (Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Romania), Russia, Africa, Central Australia and Latin America, which enriched its geographical spectrum, while his specific cross-references between the lament of Mani and the lament of Corsica clearly revealed a transnational common code during moments of grief (Perkell 2008, 111).

However, Reiner's perspective for the triptych form of modern Greek laments, as the mixture of poetry, music and motion/drama still informed musicological approaches of that time, as for example Peristeris' and Spyridakis' 1968 study, where the seven laments under analysis were written in the European and Byzantine musical notations, as they had been registered during Peristeris' fieldwork. Every lament was accompanied by its title, the place it was performed, the exact date and the number of cassettes used as well as the name and age of each performer, the musical mode in which it was developed, its melodic line, the tonic chords and/or notes, the musical range it covers and the rhythmic context it follows (simple or compound). The text was presented both as a separate poetic structure and a form of musical singing, accompanied by words and melismatic embellishments, depicting the narrative through its musico-poetic qualities (Richmond 1966, 23-24). Supplementing Baud-Bovy's work, this study also enhances the aesthetic variables, which help define Greek laments through their performative details, locus and multifaceted nature.

The ritual lament in Greek tradition (Alexiou 1974), though, seems to culminate any comprehensive, interdisciplinary and meticulous examination of this phenomenon. By presenting all types of funeral dirge, as found in the ancient and medieval literature, the published collections of Greek folk songs and laments, the classical and Byzantine scholarship,[8] the author passes all these elements through the screen of their socio-cultural impact over centuries and provides a rich and highly informed synthesis about Greek tradition (Blum and Blum 1976, 342-345). Alexiou's fieldwork across Thessaly and Macedonia during the 1960s also conduced to illustrate the continuity of the Greek dirge and its interdependence with the funeral practices and rituals since antiquity. As she explains, this could be justified through a tread, which connects

the ritual performance of funeral dirge in antiquity and has been progressively assimilated in the ritual background of the Orthodox Church, permeating the Modern Greek folk customs about death, as encountered in rural and urban contexts (Alexiou 2002, 4-7, 29-35, 42-44, 171-175).

Moving beyond Greece, Jarrett also added another ethnomusicological perspective into the question, by considering and comparing similar elements in the mourning practices across Asia and the Mediterranean, which presented specific musical idioms and customs with regards to laments (Jarett 1977). In an attempt to establish international comparisons and correlations, her main focus evolved around the lament of Mani and the *klàma* (cry), as social, anthropological and musicological evidence, which enhances these comparisons. Underlying women's leading role in such instances, she emphasized on mourners' practices and associated them with death rituals beyond Greece, foreshadowing Seremetakis' approaches.

Through an anthropological lens, Caraveli-Chaves (1980 and 1986) discussed how she applied the ethnography of communication in fieldwork methodology around some parts of Epirus and Crete to approach laments.[9] Having as a compass Friedl's and Boullay's ethnographic perspectives, she managed to document their diversity and the way they communicate women's experience of pain, as shaped through historical, social, political, collective and personal circumstances.[10] Similarly, Herzfeld (1981, 44-57) examined some Cretan laments through an anthropological, but ethnographic lens, emphasizing on their masculine identity, as reflected in their verbal performance. His references to the etymological origin of the words *traghoudhi* and *moiroloyi* according to Zampelios (1859) and Menandros (1921) along with his comparisons between the wedding and funeral songs, led him to conclude that their thematic angle depends on the interpreter and the way the performance takes place, which differentiate laments' qualities on identity grounds. At the same time, the use of Baud-Bovy's records also enabled him to establish a common semantic and structural direction between some wedding songs and laments, which, although treating different texts (musical and literary), reflect nuances of gendered performativity and symbolism at a specific place.

In a much broader scope, laments' inherent psychological dimensions were treated by Pharos through pastoral psychology (Pharos 1981). His theological, philosophical and psychological descriptions on mourning as a waiting period revealed aspects of anticipation, while the moments after death depicted how loss was experienced by the Greek Orthodox society. Based on psychological, psychiatric, theological, anthropological and death studies, his comparisons on mourning and burial practices of Western societies unveiled a challenging, but quite specific attitude Orthodox priests (particularly confessors) should follow, when performing their pastoral duties and social responsibilities. However, Dracopoulou and Doxiadis challenged this approach, by addressing some skepticism around death as juxtaposed to medical ethics and folk culture. For them, the role of funerary lament, as a means of emotional support in clinical psychology holds a special place, as death 'remains universally tragic in the separation it imposes on those connected by the bond of love' (Dracopoulou and Doxiadis 1988, 15-16).

Danforth's and Tsiaras' interpretive anthropological insights (1982) discussed a particular interconnection between life and death as contiguous concepts, whose repercussions could be also traced in other social instances that share the sense of separation, as for example the case of marriage or exile. The combination of Lévi-Strauss' structural theory, van Gennep's and Hertz's theories on rites of passage and their emotional impact, Taylor's and Frazer's folklorist and historic methods as well as Durkheim's, Radkliffe-Brown's and Malinowski's functionalism, helped the authors examine death as a universal code of human experience, where laments have a symbolic, mythical, magical or didactic role and meaningfully contribute to the dialectical character of the rituals. The correlations developed among the deceased's soul (which rests in peace), the body (as it moves through burial, exhumation and transfer of bones or any other mortal remnants) and the bereaved relatives inform a process of grieving and anticipated reintegration into society, which entails a sequence of rights and duties, as dictated by local customs. Being unique to each place, they shape a rather distinctive case study each time with specific social relations, expressions and micro-cultural impact accordingly.[11]

Meanwhile, Baud-Bovy's (1983) endeavors around the Greek folk song encompassed comparisons between the laments of the mainland and insular Greece, which expanded the scholarly focus from a confined *locus*. Drawing elements from the island of Rhodes, Vanya (a small town in Thessaly) and the villages of Mani, he examined both their literary and musicological features, analyzing their lyrics' metrics and melodic lines. According to his arguments, the insular laments seemed to be mainly based on repeated stanzas of three semistichs, which came in contradiction with the mainland, where improvisation was an integral part of their morphological deployment. As for their musicological details, Baud-Bovy presented the anhemitonic melody of the laments in Trikala, which followed the pentatonic scale, while Rhodes' forms seemed to use micro-intervals in a chromatic melismatic scale.[12] However, the lament of Mani attracted his ethnomusicological interest, for once again, as an amalgamation of various elements, where performance and social impact shared a significant analogy.

His discussion was enriched by Caraveli (1986) and Auerbach (1987), who provided both a macro- and microscopic overview on the aesthetics of death rituals in the community alongside women's symbolic presence. Auerbach's fieldwork in Kalochori (a village in Epirus), considered the pleasure and joy of music through singing, dancing or playing instruments as a male privilege, while laments were treated as a feature of female expression. For Auerbach, women's vocal music constituted a means of purification and an attribute of their very nature, especially in patriarchal societies, which helped preserve some melodic vocal forms over generations; for example, laments were an integral part in moments of public social life and 'ceremonies of passage' (i.e. birth, baptism, adulthood, engagement, marriage, exile, death), where women had the opportunity to pass them on to the next generation as part of their tradition. By delineating the various musical genres, as employed in social and cultural events, she indicated a differentiation on 'tone charge' between several conventional songs and laments,

underlining identity and gender nuances, as evidenced in men's and women's roles within the community. Since women were believed to cry more often than men as a way to express their pain, they also seemed to be in charge of creating forms of plaintive content over improvised material. Usually coming out as a means of personal and social expression, these laments seemed to enunciate their emotional depletion against the constraints they may have already faced.[13] Consequently, although Caraveli gave a more generic framework of performance, she managed to provide a case of creation that went beyond any predefined funerary contexts (Stewart 2016, 307).

The following decade was marked by Seremetakis' studies in the field of anthropology, who, as a native researcher, explored the female representation in mourning practices of inner Mani (Seremetakis 1990). Within death rituals, she identified 'the warning signs of death' as well as some low voicing techniques towards the imminent death as compared to women's loud and high voicing and the *klàma*, namely the lament (Seremetakis 1990, 47-63). Treating Foucault's, Asad's, Scarry's and Taussig's observations, she illustrated the social and cultural vectors upon particular roles and practices within the community,[14] while through Rosaldo's, Abu-Lughod's, Lutz's and White's views, she shaped her interpretation on emotionality and human suffering.[15] As death rituals occupied a considerable part in her writings, Rosaldo's, Danforth's, Bloch's, Parry's and Aries's approaches helped her define their socio-cultural context besides Hertz's and van Gennep's theories.[16] Although she abstained from commenting on the contradictions between the folk and religious ritual norms, she provided well-informed studies within the European ethnography, where *klàma* was seen as an antidote to social fragmentation and an anthropological device of 'cultural power' (Saunders 1993, 318) within 'the strongly gendered solidarity of women who lament' (Herzfeld 1996, 153).

Holst-Warhaft also treated the funeral lament and rituals through their historical course and transnational presence, highlighting women's contribution. Her discussion expanded beyond Greece and looked at this kind of women's art, which operated as an agent of folk beliefs, but denied 'the value of death for the community or state, making it difficult for authorities to recruit obedient army' (Holst-Warhaft 1992, 3 and Smith 1996, 227). Inspired by the laments of Mani and based on their thematic development, she also examined the phenomenon of *gdikiomòs*[17] under both its social and cultural impact. As death rituals were dominated by women and were seen as a means of 'power and solidarity' (Smith 1996, 229), she argued that any loss of control weakens their role and pauperizes mourners, affecting women's legitimate place in Greek society. Thus, although she tried to deal with lament as an element of continuity of Greek culture, it seems that she inevitably encountered significant difficulties interwoven with such ventures.

Guy Saunier has already highlighted the methodological implications of laments' comprehensive systematization, especially the folk ones (Saunier 1993, 136-147). By laying particular emphasis on the subjectivity that emanates from researchers' preoccupations as well as the amplitude and complexity of this genre, he recognized that their thematic and motivic

fluidity can cloud coherent approaches. His observations on disciplines, such as musicology and ethnomusicology have also addressed questions that reveal the direct impact a given scholarly lens can have upon such rich material. Studying how the *in situ* recordings affect the written representation and structural setting of the Greek laments, he pointed out that the interpretation of their literary texts reveals concerns over their systematic classification, rendering it a challenging task to be completed (Saunier 2001, 11-12). Although a specific socio-cultural code can be traced in imagery as well as their thematic motifs and folk values about death, their semantic implications need to get clarified in order to understand the Greek death songs and laments. In his 1995 article, he approached the terms 'pikròs' (bitter), 'farmàki' (bitterness) and their relationship, in an attempt to correlate the concepts of bitterness and death through their metaphorical use, as encountered in the Modern Greek laments: for instance, 'pikramènos' means distressed, while 'pikrò farmàki' (bitter bitterness) or 'pikrà farmakomènos' (bitterly distressed) seem to reflect an inherent exaggeration (Saunier 1995, 225-241). His anthology on Modern Greek laments came as the culmination of his theoretical preoccupations, where he proposed a classification according to: social criteria (such as family's disintegration after a loss, folk beliefs about death and the phenomenon of *gdikiomos*); literary criteria (versification and metrics) and aesthetic parameters (e.g. thematic motifs) (Saunier 1999). Nevertheless, the texts of his listed laments do not contain any information about their recitation and performance or the place and circumstances of death, creating, thus, some problems in their thorough understanding.

Michael's Herzfeld 1993 article applied the anthropological perspective on a very specific event, describing the funeral ritual framework of a Cretan peasant, who had passed away, and the way his wife and two daughters took control over the whole situation (Herzfeld 1993, 241-255). Relying on textual interpretations, Herzfeld commented on how the intense emotional changes, the social rules that dictated a specific behavior towards death and the ritual framework found a meeting point. Alongside women's role, the impressive number of metaphors related to marriage that these laments contained was noteworthy for him, as they did not only have a prophetic character, but they nearly expressed a phenomenological promise for future to the deceased; among them, the marriage with the 'black earth' and 'the wedding with Death (*Kharos*)' reflected the prospect of marriage, especially for young girls, who may have lost their protector, while they also justified bereaved women's participation in an androcentric community, giving thus a meaningful example of gender relations and roles in rural Greece (Herzfeld 1996, 152).

Similarly, Psychogiou (1998, 193-271) and Giannakodemou (1998, 11-125) concentrated in Gortynia (an area in central Peloponnese) and the socio-cultural context that surrounds its laments. Psychogiou applied van Gennep's, Danforth's, Dabisch's and Seremetakis' approaches in order to structurally analyze an improvised lament she recorded in 1981, while Giannakodemou elaborated on its musical unfolding, finding thirteen distinct musical units and three larger literary parts, which demonstrated an eloquent symmetry. Although Psychogiou's goal was to

delineate death's spirituality, dramatization and ideology, as reflected in lyrics and women's involvement, who transformed it into a 'plaintive act' or 'plaintive tradition', Giannakodemou followed motifs' prosodic development and indicated that its textual density seemed to string out its melodic line, underlining the conveyed emotional charge of this form. By giving grounds to a dialectic relationship between its musico-poetic components, she has also broadened the ethnomusicological outlook on the question (Englund 2016, 59-60).

Whilst lamenting her grandfather's death, Panourgia explored mortality in urban Greece through an ethnographic and autobiographical lens (Panourgia 1995). As death was presented both as a personal and collective experience, memory and identity played a significant role into the shaping of mourning practices across the Athenian neighborhoods, streets, cemeteries and the Cancer Institute. Tracing the elements of a surviving plaintive tradition under the prism of urban specificity, she admitted her genuine astonishment by the laments of Mani, which informed her approach and took their study beyond predefined settings (Chatziprokopiou 2015, 130).

Motsios' studies, on the other hand, have adopted a quite complicated approach to the question (Motsios 1995 and 2000). By discussing laments' social, spatial and temporal evolution as well as their relationship with death rituals, he categorized them according to their poetic development over time, their poetic style, their thematic and motivic classification and their content interpretation. By establishing a differentiation between the mourners, who represent the folk poetry, and the priests, who represent the scholarly and religious poetry, he has also delineated the relevant context of funerary laments in several parts of Greece. As an outcome of his fieldwork, the material he included is deftly compared to similar topics and cases, as for instance some cave paintings and cave graphs in Algeria, France, Spain and the Ural Mountains. Their interpretative juxtapositions and multimodal observation have led the author to conclude that the composition of such forms, which belong to these oral plaintive traditions, could date its origins back to the twelfth and eighteenth millennium B.C., an argument that can reinforce an interdisciplinary dialogue with other researchers' findings, as for instance Brăiloiu, Zemp and Mazo, who have also studied these areas and their funeral songs on an ethnomusicological, philosophical, morphological and structural basis.[18]

In 1997, George Siettos published his study on death customs, where through Politis' and Economides' comparative methodologies, he produced a comprehensive analysis of funerary beliefs and rituals, emphasizing on their geographical origins. Escaping the idea of a centralized system with a 'national' character, he compared different cultures and periods – ancient and modern (e.g. Babylonian, Roman, Egyptian, Tibetan, Japanese) – and managed to evidence the transhistorical and intercultural qualities of funerary rituals across the globe (Boytsov 2017, 151-163).

Before bringing this summary into a closure, it is also worth mentioning Katsanevaki's doctoral thesis on the Vlach-speaking and Greek-speaking songs of the northern part of Pindos (Epirus), which includes eight laments in a comparative table, as the result of her extensive

fieldwork in the area (Katsanevaki 1998). As she underlines, their musico-poetic analysis aims to gather appropriate examples and features, which can support the evolution and continuity of these forms within Greek culture since antiquity and may serve as a compass to look for further evidence, both in and beyond the country (Katsanevaki 2012).

Having, thus, considered the multidisciplinarity of perspectives over the Greek lament, the discussion on the relevant scholarship of the previous century can help the reader trace the interactions, correlations and dissents among the approaches, while identifying the variety and remarkable depth this topic offers. Although the present article primarily considers works of the twentieth century, it also aspires to trigger questions on the connections it can establish with similar genres beyond Greece, shedding light on cultural variables, gender ideology and identity qualities, while nourishing critical thinking upon them. Such discourses have already started to come about in more recent years and the following brief section presents some studies that contribute into this question, opening new possibilities for research.

Current research and refocus: 2000 and beyond

After placing the variety of scholarly tessearae under a chronological account, the mosaic of the Greek lament seems to take shape, despite the apparent limitations this article entails. As this topic is still being examined, the inclusion of current research is expected to enable the reader to track down its specifics and promising directions.

Constantinidis' 2000 annotated bibliography presents a leading and paramount effort to collect 'works in English across twenty-two academic disciplines during the twentieth century', as its title suggests, where music and the Greek lament find their place within cross-disciplinary areas (Holst-Warhaft in Constantinidis 2000, 241-254), while Dué (2006) discusses this topic treating material from classical dramatists and tragedians. Juxtaposing the men-dominated epic tradition with women's singing in Homer's, Aeschylus' and Euripides' works, she contextualizes the collective and individual suffering, as it was shaped by the socio-cultural and behavioral mechanisms of ancient Athens. Her approach concentrates on captive Trojan women's laments and manages to address 'questions surrounding the dramatic function and cultural resonance of these figures' (Hausdoerffer, 2006), suggesting an eloquent example of audience and reception studies that has been missing so far, although it refers to a different era.

Suter's 2008 collective volume enhances 'critical thinking' and complements Alexiou's argument that 'lament is a female-gendered activity', providing iconographic evidence and insights, which seem to be particularly welcome for readers or students in the fields of archaeology, classics (Alden, 2008) and creative practice. Similarly, *The Fall of Cities in the Mediterranean* (2016) also exemplifies dirge, paying due regard to the city laments as a genre. Through theoretical and comparative approaches, which cover an extensive period of time (from ancient Greek and Roman traditions up to the Fall of Smyrna in 1922), it differentiates 'the lament for a fallen city' from "funerary laments" and "laments for heroes"' on the basis that 'the latter two, according

to Suter, are "carefully ritualized emotional outlet[s] and [...] vehicle[s] for managing an unexpected yet common event"' (Goldwyn, 2016), turning the attention to another genre of lament across the Mediterranean.

As the scholarly interest seeks to discover new grounds of examination, the relationship between the folk and art-folk genre of the Greek legacy has also initiated promising discussions over the perspectives this question opens. Fabbri and Tsioulakis (2016, 317-328) have already provided a comparative synopsis about the respective Italian and Greek musical genres, outlining their socio-cultural and political vectors of influence. Moving beyond the use of 'popular' and establishing the 'art-folk genre', particularly when it comes to musicological terminology, their suggestions are further treated in my recent article about lament in and beyond the Greek art-folk song (2019), where I argue that this genre has been nourished by lament and seems to have found the momentum to create a space for an identifiable musical attitude in Greece during the 1960s that continues to the present.

King's 2018 travelogue on the 'Lament from Epirus' is the last (although not least) piece of work to be included in this brief summary, as its hybrid character moves between music criticism and scholarly thought, providing a mixture of recent personal experiences and historical evidence that go back to pre-Homeric times. Outlining a longstanding folk tradition in Greece, his analysis over music recordings and community gatherings help illustrate a strong case of communication and interaction through lament, invoking memory with a wider application. His quasi-anthropological lens informs and invites several philosophical, social, cultural, ethnomusicological and political interpretations over a genre, which seems to be among the oldest surviving phenomena to this day.

Conclusions

Bringing this account to a close, this case-by-case study under periodization configures a broader contextualization upon the Modern Greek lament over the last century. Since cultural diffusionism inspired the first attempts of systematizing rationale, this research question has moved across different areas of inquiry, progressing from fixed and strictly text-centered approaches of a particular *locus* and formulaic units to a variety of holistic and nuanced directions, which embrace new genres and references. As it still resonates with current research and knowledge, this chronological arrangement enables a coherent structural understanding over this topic, which reveals bountiful grounds of exploration and can go well beyond a linear equation. Thereby, despite the apparently quite narrow timeframe of the present article and its scaling break-down, it is hoped that it will contribute to assess the spectrum of lament and the way it permeates similar considerations, setting up a fruitful concinnity besides such case studies. Realizing the wealth of research possibilities that lies ahead will eventually find new ways for its detection and new perspectives for its appreciation, as it still has a lot more to suggest.

Endnotes:

1. The word *moira* (destiny/fate) comes from the ancient verb *meiromai,* which means 'take a piece' and indicates the proportion that belongs to everyone in life. Symbolically, this piece contains what might happen in life and is believed to define fate, as predestined by a higher power. Deriving from Greek mythology and ancient beliefs, the original meaning of the word was closely associated with three superior forces, who were believed to determine human life: the *Moirai* (the Fates). These three old and immortal sisters had a big book, where the destiny of every human being was written (Babiniotis 1998, 1119).
2. Alexiou calls these moments 'psychoragima' or 'psychomachima' (the agony of death), 'tremosvisimo' (flashing), 'charopalema' (the last fight against death) or 'aggelokomma' (the belief about the fear of angels who come to take your soul) (Alexiou 2002, 69, 90-91).
3. The term 'child' (*paidi*) is used here to indicate the boy (Babiniotis 1998, 1313).
4. As Giannakodimou explains, this method was based on performances' recording, while dictating them in musical notes during the *in situ* research. As a process, the transcription of any melodic variations in a non-tempered scale was usually made in C natural scale, noting any additional changes (Giannakodimou 2003, 273).
5. See among others, Neils 2008, 91 and Boyd 2016, 200-221.
6. See among others, Alexiou 2002, 187-188 and Karanika 2016, 226-249.
7. It is also interesting to highlight Romaios' views about the 'cultural inactivity' attributed to Greece by the British intellectuals. First published in a newspaper article (*To Vima*, 07 August 1962) and later incorporated in his 1984 book about the Greek culture, specific examples of laments' analysis and characteristics were employed in an attempt to delineate an uninterrupted Greek cultural phenomenon that reflected an unpretentious folk expression and advocated in favour of it (Romaios 1984, 246-253).
8. According to Alexiou (1974, 113-151, 152-175), the types of dirge were mainly three: (a) the ritual laments for the gods and heroes, (b) the historic laments for the conquest or destruction of cities and (c) the funeral laments, as written or engraved in the ancient funerary inscriptions and columns, including the Byzantine literary and folk poetry and the Modern Greek laments of the twentieth century.
9. As Kanellatou indicates (2007, 82), the ethnography of communication appeared during the 1960s as a methodological tool to illustrate the multiple functionalities language and speech can have across a society. In Greece, Tsitsipis has made remarkable observations on this field, studying language as behaviour and practice (performance), while supporting its interconnection with its speaker's place and location (indexicality). See Koutoupis-Kitis 2008, 33 and Tsitsipis 2001, 55-100. For Caraveli-Chaves, these theories found particular application to laments, as they resonated with the context (i.e. what, when, where and under which cultural circumstances) something was said or sung.
10. To understand Caraveli's influence by Friedl's theories on male dominance across the rural areas of Greece, see among others: Papataxiarchis 1998, 47-49, 50-51, 55 and Gacs, Khan, McIntyre and Weinberg 1989, 102-108.
11. See among others: Tylor 1871 and van Gennep 2004, 10-13, 185-187, 209-210; Fraser 1990; Seremetakis 1991, 224-226; Waardenburg 1999, 209-219; Hamilton 2001, 29 -30; Venbrux 2007, 5-6; Hendry 2008, 68-810 and Hertz 2013.
12. See also Baud-Bovy 1994, 30-32, 44.
13. Inspired by specific anthropological views (Cambell 1964; Paristiany 1966; Friedl 1967; Boulay 1974 and Dubisch 1983), Auerbach explains that a woman with a singing or vocal talent had the privilege to publicly sing either joyful or sad songs, even if there was a possibility to become a gossip victim.

14. More precisely, the works Seremetakis treated are: Foucault 1979; Asad 1983, 287-327; Scarry 1985 and Taussig 1987.
15. See Rosaldo 1983, 135-151; Abu-Lughod 1986; Lutz and White 1986, 409-435.
16. See Rosaldo 1984, 178-195 and Bloch and Parry 1982.
17. As Petrounias and Alexakis described and Holst-Warhaft investigated later, *gdikiomos* was observed in Mani over the seventeenth to ninenteenth centuries. As a phenomenon, it was equal to the death penalty against a rivalry male family member from those who had lost someone in a murder. See also Petrounias 1934 and Alexakis 1980.
18. See among others, Brăiloiu 1960; Mazo 1987, 162-174 (Introduction and Appendices); Mazo 2006; and Zemp 2007.

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