Domesticating the tourist gaze in Thessaloniki's Prigipos
Rodanthi Tzanelli
*Ethnography* published online 22 December 2011
DOI: 10.1177/1466138111420619

The online version of this article can be found at:
http://eth.sagepub.com/content/early/2011/12/07/1466138111420619

Published by:
http://www.sagepublications.com

Additional services and information for *Ethnography* can be found at:

Email Alerts: http://eth.sagepub.com/cgi/alerts

Subscriptions: http://eth.sagepub.com/subscriptions

Reprints: http://www.sagepub.com/journalsReprints.nav

Permissions: http://www.sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav

>> OnlineFirst Version of Record - Dec 22, 2011

What is This?
Domesticating the tourist gaze in Thessaloniki’s Prigipos

Rodanthi Tzanelli
University of Leeds, UK

Abstract
The article examines how Prigipos, a café in the northern Greek city of Thessaloniki, communicates Greek cosmological themes through the way it ‘stages’ urban memories. The staging suggests an ‘Oriental’ tourist-like flânerie that matches, and is directed towards, the café’s physical and symbolic surroundings (notably, the Turkish Consulate, the adjacent paternal house of Turkey’s first President, Kemal Atatürk, but also the old part of the city, historically populated by Greek refugees from Anatolian Turkey). My ethnographic eye is examined as constitutive of this flânerie, especially since I grew up in Thessaloniki. Through the employment of mixed research tools and methods, I explore how Prigipos’s spectacular self-presentation replaced old migrant kafeneion culture with new aesthetic fusions to enable its global consumerist mobility. At the same time, the article argues that old ethno-national formulas are enmeshed in Prigipos’s design and narratives, endorsing a Thessalonikiote permutation of culture.

Keywords
cosmology, consumption, ethnographic travel, flânerie, tourism, tourist gaze, methods, Orientalism

The article presents an ethnographic description and situated analysis of Prigipos, an updated version of old-style Greek café culture (kafeneia) located just outside the centre of Greece’s second biggest city, Thessaloniki. The location of the café next to Thessaloniki’s sole Turkish political presence (the Turkish Consulate), but also its ‘Oriental’ design, produce a form of Oriental flânerie, a multisensory journey to the city’s past addressed to Greek and foreign visitors. I argue that by borrowing elements from Greek ‘cosmology’ as this is constructed by observers who are both intimately familiar with local permutations of Greek culture and outsiders in some respect, and fusing those with more generic understandings of...
the ‘Orient’, Prigipos projects a form of marketable Eastern exoticism – at once alien and familiar to its visitors. By ‘cosmology’ I refer to the ways in which human experience is socially ordered and framed, alluding thus to John Campbell’s understanding of the dynamics of social relations at large but also to Evans-Pritchard’s emphasis of social ordering on the basis of intra-group rivalry and antagonism (Campbell, 1964; Herzfeld, 2008). The histories of Thessalonikiote encounters with the Turkish ‘enemy’, but also the city’s current positioning vis-a`-vis the Athenian centre, are encoded in the design of Prigipos. Against this background one should set the ways Prigipos is lived, experienced, as well as how its historical rooting (however elementary) collides with its marketization and consumption as an Oriental café. I will use in the study Bourdieu’s (1999) elaborations on habitus as a collection of learned bodily and linguistic attributes, skills of expression and articulation that reflect the cultural space in which they are produced to counter-balance decorative explorations of ‘cosmology’ which are devoid of human presence. Of course, the article is also constructed on the basis of the ways I, the native Thessalonikiote ethnographer, perceive Thessalonikiote ‘cosmology’ and ‘character’ – an alternative term for habitus in the article as an intermediary between fixed self-narrations and their interactive alterations in situ. Thessalonikiote cosmology is defined in relation to a quest for prestige, strategies of ‘image-making’, as well as a strong belief on the cosmic battle between ‘good’ and ‘evil’ that Campbell associated with traditional gender roles.

Thus my analysis of Prigipos encloses multiple concerns: at the macro-social level it is about regional development and competition as well as the ways these are encoded in consumption; at the micro-social level it is about the politics of social interaction in a few square meters between consumers, ethnographers and entrepreneurs; and finally, it is about the ways the two levels converge behind the politics of doing ethnography when the ethnographer has turned from native to a traveller, a Simmelian Fremden (foreigner). I endeavour to show how the café’s entrepreneurs narrate their business custom in audio-visual and olfactory ways through the ‘absent presence’ (as in Herzfeld, 2002) of Thessaloniki’s Ottoman-Turkish past for global visitors, with an eye to the fact that I, the native ethnographer, mediated their narratives. From designing and marketing to working in and consuming, Prigipos commemorates Thessaloniki’s controversial associations with the Balkans, a region notorious for its indeterminacy as Europe’s ‘Orient’ (Todorova, 1997: 100). This indeterminacy informs both the spectacular technological principles on which Prigipos thrives as urban business and the ways I, the native ethnographic investigator, examined them while transforming them into ethnographic tools.

In what follows I proffer an account of ‘thanatotourism’ – otherwise known by the appropriate in Thessaloniki’s case term of ‘dark tourism’ – multiple simulated travels to locations ‘wholly or partially motivated by the desire for actual or symbolic encounters with death’ (Halgreen, 2004: 149; see also Lennon and Foley, 2000; Sahlins, 1996). This consists of a) unpacking my methodological tools, which are produced by blends of personal memories and my fieldwork experience of Prigipos as a site belonging to a Greek-Turkish material and human complex, b)
blending a narrative of my tour of the area into organized tours to the Turkish Consulate, and finally c) recording an account of Prigipos’s trajectory by its owners. Some observations on how the place is consumed by visitors counterbalance these multiple thanatotourisms, submerging situated pasts into mundane experiences of the place.

Forging continuities: Thessaloniki’s biography and Prigipos

Historically Thessaloniki has served as a host for many cultures and religions long before its slow Hellenization in the late 19th century and its architectural narratives continue even today to be informed by this (e.g. Mazower, 2005, 2006). With about half a million dwellers (386,627 in 2001), Thessaloniki remains the second biggest city in Greece and a major urban enclave in the Balkans (Regional Policy, Inforegio, 2004). A buffer zone between ‘East’ and ‘West’ with an Ottoman legacy and a problem of ethno-national conflict, the Balkan space has been represented in Western political discourse as a dangerous terrain marked by successive Oriental and later communist ‘contaminations’ (Todorova, 1997: 113). Regional histories represent Thessaloniki as a ‘feminized’ national terrain, constantly invaded by hordes of ‘uncivilized’ Slavs and Muslims that stigmatized Greece’s civilizational façade [global change]. The discourse, which circulates within (especially northern) Greek academia, labels critically engaged scholars national traitors. It owes to Greek appropriations of the racist theories of a Tyrolean classicist, Jacob Philipp Fallmerayer (1790–1861), who contended that Byzantine Thessaloniki lost its Hellenic roots during the fifth and sixth-century Slavic invasions (Skopetea, 1999). Thessaloniki’s alleged Byzantine heritage (the city used to be called Symvasylevousa, co-reigning city of Constantinople, the Byzantine imperial centre) endorses a version of Greek identity that relies on images of Romiosyni plundered by Turks. This is the Greece of the Ottoman Rum-millet, a pre-national (Ottoman) administrative unit whose ethno-religious nature continues to serve as interpretative basis for intimate Greek conceptions of heritage, notions of Greekness natives share between them but cautiously display to strangers (Herzfeld, 1986; ÖzKirimi and Sofos, 2008). This background informs symbolizations of modern Greece’s historical encounters with the proximate Orient into a cosmic battle in which (a Hellenized) Byzantium stands for the ‘city of God’ and the Turks for the Devil (de Pina-Cabral, 2008). The script is mirrored in Prigipos’s socio-spatial spectacle that I present in the penultimate section of the article.

Thessaloniki’s loss of ‘racial’-as-cultural continuity with ancient Greece consolidated differentiations between the glamorous Hellenic South (home of classical Athens) and the half-Eastern North (home of multicultural Thessaloniki). Reflecting definitions of European identity on the basis of a white Hellenic but Christian identity, these differentiations became constitutive of the Greek nationalist program. Thessaloniki produced its own modern biographical leitmotif within this program, presenting the idea of invasion by strangers as the primary cause for the city’s civilizational demise. Until the end of the 19th century the city served as a
meeting ground for different cultures, some of which left indelible marks on its ethno-religious makeup: Arab, Muslim, Jewish, Armenian and miscellaneous Balkan (e.g. Albanian, Ukrainian) (Mazower, 2005). As a Balkan unit that joined Greece in the early 20th century (1913) only to be swamped by refugees from the crumbling Ottoman empire in the 1920s following a war between Greece and Turkey (Smith, 1973), Thessaloniki’s multicultural archive is the site of a historical trauma. The trauma dictated strategies of historical obliteration we encounter today also in its material domains (including architecture and food), where any Eastern influences are represented as Greek (Asia Minor) refugee inventions. One may view Thessaloniki though Martin Bernal’s (1995) anti-classicist paradigm of ‘Black Athena’, the denial of Europe’s Afro-Asiatic roots in search of plausible self-presentation in International Relations (see Herzfeld, 2007 on Turkey).

Today the city has evolved into a scapal complex of travel, capital, ideas and human beings – a development that works towards the erasure of these histories. It would be more correct to argue that the scapal complex enmeshes Thessaloniki’s plural histories into a globally acceptable narrative that can be marketed as a prestigious commodity, an urban phantasmagoria of sorts (Berger, 2008; Debord, 1995; Patke, 2000). The practice is replicated in Prigipos’s self-presentational mode, including the near-theatrical staging of its interior and its products but also the more recent design of its website. I view new technology (Internet) and theatrical staging as complementary: technology enables artistic staging on the web, after all. In fact, I argue that by casting itself as a technological manipulator of Oriental histories, Prigipos domesticates Western conceptions of the ‘tourist gaze’ (Urry, 2002) – that is, the way cultural industries proffer ideal types of ‘tourist’ and ‘flâneur’ or urban street wanderer. Incorporating techniques embraced by the city’s International Film Festival (see website 2007–2008), Prigipos’s technological manipulations reinterpret the city’s histories through the lens and on the World Wide Web. Until 2009 the business did not have a virtual face, as previous agreements on Internet design fell through. The symbolic gamut of its current website works in unison with the café’s theatrical staging and its workers and owners’ narratives of the place. An urban spectacle of late modernity, Prigipos embraces a tourist-like digital gaze that works from above and afar (Szerszynski and Urry, 2006) and a proximate gaze from below, as is the case in tourist initiatives that invite self-presentations (Edensor, 2004).

I will argue that the commercialization of Thessalonikite histories assists Prigipos to construct a diforia, a self-presentational technique that bifurcates according to the audience to which it is addressed: for internal, native audiences, Prigipos speaks the language of intimate histories but to the tourist gaze these histories appear obscure and hybridized (Herzfeld, 2005, 2009; Tzanelli, 2008). In fact, it is the unison of these communicative modes that produces Prigipos’s hybridity, a blend of native and foreign viewpoints. Thus, diforia does not deny the presence of multiple interpretations of style, but it qualifies them from the perspective of a knowing (Greek) insider. Digitally, the combination of images and ideas from the city’s Ottoman, Byzantine and Asia Minor pasts forms an e-topian
narrative replicated through a theatrical staging of past that is *techno-poetic* (= made through technology) (Dyson, 1998; Hand and Sandywell, 2002). Evidently (and probably contra traditional anthropological mores), I acknowledge the importance of my own interpretation without reservation. I do not use my ‘nativeness’ as a methodological panacea, but argue that anthropological exorcisms of the ethnographic ‘I’ from the big picture are both futile and harmful. I therefore begin by explaining how this twin gaze and interpretation had to be adopted by me first.

**Methods: Academic vision *redux***

My fieldwork methodologies actualize Peirce’s (1998) phaneroscopic passage from ‘firstness’ to ‘thirdness’. Not only was I born and raised in Thessaloniki (firstness), I also experienced intermittently Prigipos’s structural transformations from my student years in the city (secondness) to my recurrent research visits in 2009–2010 as an ethnographic scholar who has to interpret anew her past experience (thirdness). My project, ‘Reciprocal Orientalisms: Understanding Thessaloniki’s Past Through Multiple Narrations’, funded by the British Academy (December 2009–January 2011), aimed to explore discrepancies in how the Ottoman past is narrated to ‘knowing’ observers (tourists and ethnographers) and cultural insiders (businessmen and other workers) in the context of Thessaloniki’s urban life. As a venture, the proposal ended up replicating my own indeterminate subjectivity as a participant observer in Thessaloniki and as part of my observed academic subject. Although my intimate experience of the studied (Thessaloniot) culture cast me as a knowing insider, my academic *flânerie* guaranteed my outsidedness as an observer and a woman who is ethnographically and professionally white-er than her studied subject (Frankenberg, 1993). I use myself in this article as an experimental tourist or traveller, a wanderer in the streets of personal memory that maps her path before she sets out on an ethnographic quest only to eventually lose it and commence her quest anew. Distance from one’s homeland – a separation of ritualistic significance that informs symbolic creativity – is *sine qua non* for the emergence of imaginative travel to one’s former ‘home’, turning people from members of the imagined community in to strangers, migrants and tourists (Spode, 2009). Desforges (2000) argues for a tourist Self that is relationally and reflexively produced through personal biography and Williams (1965) attributes the uniqueness of creative workers to their dedication in transmitting their expressive journeys as ‘experience’. My professional status transformed me into a *flâneuse* that traversed urban and utopian spaces – my dual autobiographical poles (Parkhurst Ferguson, 1994).

Cohen (1992), who suggests that self-knowledge and social knowledge of people are often incongruent, and Fabian (1983: 93), who sees the presence of our past in us ‘as a project’, illuminate both my own interest in and interpretation of Prigipos’s milieu and the autobiographical importance of now studying Thessaloniki as an empowered ethnographer. Dann (1977) sees in travel an ego-enhancing rite, but,
my ‘potent’ ethnographic ego (see James, 1988, in Cohen, 1992) does not ascribe lack of moral personhood to my interviewees; rather, it shows how we converge behind the principles of image-making. My own practices of image-making and technological reproduction contest archaic divides between ‘male’ scientific positivism and ‘female’ interpretive sociology (Oakley, 1998), blends of which I see both in myself and my ‘informants’. I had arrived at my selected research sites equipped with a digital and a video camera, as well as a portable computer (laptop) with Internet connection. Hence, my academic endeavours had turned me into a cyborg replica and a social surveyor. Every time I turned my lens toward an informant, I knowingly subverted my native positionality, constructing in its place a conditional ethnographic ‘whiteness’ vis-à-vis my interviewees.

Kvale’s (1997: 49) division of ethnographers into proximate-native ‘miners’ and ‘travellers’ is too rigid to address the experiential dimension of my travel: we need to consider the distortive qualities of personal memory that weaves fables before it turns them into spectacular tools. My travel to Thessaloniki was, in this respect a way to be myself the way I wanted to be: an informed professional observer (McIntyre, 2007). My uses of technology did not remove my intermediary status altogether but encouraged instead a blended ethnography of gazing (through the lens) and performing (by tasting foods and drinks, gossiping with the café’s workers, regulars and passersby or even the Consulate’s female police) – detached observation and recording, and native feeling and participating, in other words. My investigative methods reflected this blended pattern: the sole structured interview I conducted with one of the café’s bosses (nicknamed Nikos Kosmopolitis) was complemented with chatting and gossiping with Prigipos’s staff, inspecting the surroundings and the clientele. The ability to gossip with staff casts me as insider, someone who can insert herself into local networks to form alliances against internal and external ‘enemies’ (Gluckman, 1963), whereas my technology presents me as intruder. Following thus the diforic principles on which Prigipos itself is set up, my ethnographic proximity and cyber-ethnographic distance reflected the twin faces of cosmopolitanism, one rooted and another distant (Geertz, 1973; Hannerz, 1990; Herzfeld, 2005; Just, 1995).

I found out during informal discussions that Prigipos’s managers are revamping the business’s statement electronically: their new website is up and running and I will refer to it in the following pages. Listening to stories often proved more worth while than any recorded interviews: such cumulative intimations are more spontaneous and working them into my old-fashioned diary allowed me time to reflect on their significance. Often, the ‘art of listening’ (Back, 2007) involves taking unsanctioned leaps to understand the immediate needs of one’s informants. This propels an investigation into the motivations behind such revelations, my informants’ ‘art of asking’ and guiding the observer/ethnographer towards those areas they think they must develop. Reciprocating ethnographic interest by pointing the observer’s gaze in ‘the right direction’ is a technique akin to that we acquire during our apprenticeship in ethnographic craft, after all (De Certeau, 1988; Herzfeld, 2009; Picard, 2007; Tomaselli, 2007). References to Prigipos’s website in this article were
guided by its owners, as they were the ones who highlighted its developmental importance. Cyber-ethnography operates as a meeting point for mediascapes, ideoscapes and technoscapes (Appadurai, 1990), contributing to the production of an ‘artscape’, a technological transposition of emotive landscapes and a visualization of material cultures. Below I map this artscape by directing readers to key areas and markers surrounding Prigipos, generating a whole cinematic picture shot-by-shot. Adopting thus MacCannell’s (1989) theory (and stylistically also Thessaloniki’s viewpoint), I will present some of Thessaloniki’s sights-as-signs, which are rife with pilgrimage value (Lau, 2011).

My travel in perspective

Prigipos has just entered Turkish travel guides and some Turkish Travel Offices’ itineraries in Thessaloniki, and there are individual Turkish pilgrims visiting Kemal’s house on religious holidays that stop by the café. In Istanbul’s context Courouci (2008) notes that shrines shared by Christian and Muslim groups are mostly situated in marginal places, outside and beyond the state-controlled administrative territories. Indeed, Kemal’s house is now property of the Turkish state and thus outside Thessalonikiote administrative jurisdiction. However, the whole block is guarded by Greek police and visited by Greek and Turkish consumers of Prigipos’s ‘Orient’, thus endorsing a fusion of nationalist-tourist and tourist-consumer pilgrimages (Graburn, 1983). Despite ongoing political friction between Greece and Turkey, the café retains amiable relations with the Turkish Consul who visits the premises for coffee and backgammon (although it was intimated to me by Prigipos’s staff that politics is excluded from their interactions). Generally, not much interest was expressed in front of me for Greek-Turkish politics, and the customers I encountered were focused on the leisure opportunities Prigipos offers instead: coffee and alcohol drinking, nibbling on mezedes (starters) and various games such as backgammon.

The café plays a blend of foreign (particularly jazz) and upper-market Greek music and at least a few times it hosted Greek bands to attract new young customers. I heard one Greek visitor explaining that the place looks better in the evenings but I found even more interesting an unverified rumour that it has hosted belly dancers. Such rumours play the right cards for its owners, endorsing their Orientalizing strategies that I explore below: belly dancing is a subculture appealing to students and the younger generations, even though it has an Asia Minor history in Thessaloniki. In reality, the tourist and consumer clientele of the block reflects the symbolic reproduction of intimate (family) social networks through recreational travel and leisure (Larsen et al., 2006): mostly Mediterranean by kin, the Greek and Turkish visitors reinstate traditional conceptions of belonging in the same cultural sphere. On one of my visits I also saw a policeman coming by to have his coffee and having some friendly interaction with Prigipos’s regulars. The café’s front is populated in the mornings by elderly clientele, who sip their Turkish coffee and smoke, occasionally waving hello to other
people who work in the area when these are passing by. The same third age clientele
inspects foreigners and visitors with extra curiosity – a habit elder generations
display across Greece.

Backpack tourism is less frequent according to Prigipos’s managers, but seems
to be the main type of tourist clientele the café receives from the rest of Europe. I
only came across two foreign-speaking visitors when I was there in the spring of
2010. Nikos’s intimate joking that backpack tourists arrive ‘me ta samaria’ (‘with
their backpacks’) carried ambivalence: on the one hand, backpack tourism is a
lifestyle choice that is not completely detached from the European histories of
the middle-class Grand Tour. In this respect, Nikos compared the European
saddle-carriers to Turkish tourists favourably: samaria are saddles peasants
would place on donkeys to ride them or load them with goods. In Greek culture
donkeys symbolize studious, patient or stubborn individuals, but in the tourist
context they retain the widespread connotations of carnality and sexual urges,
assisting in representations of European tourists as (welcome yet feared) intruders
of Thessaloniki’s intimate terrain (also Tzanelli, 2007 on Thailand). A donkey,
however (masculine gaidaros, feminine gaidoura), is in Greek also a stubborn
and insensitive individual: I grew up with this slang and had to endure such accu-
sations as a child and an adult by angry people. As the animals of the poor
(Nozedar, 2008), asses communicate the image of the ‘low life’, producing an
Occidentalist counterpoint to hegemonic European uses of the idea of high culture
‘in opposition to notions of that which is vulgar, backward, ignorant, or retrogress-
ive’ (Jenks, 1993: 9; Meethan, 2003). Notably, when I was interviewing staff from
Prigipos I carried my own samari around and I was treated with respect and cau-
tion in equal measure. The joking ambivalence is instructive of a particular Greek
style towards people who cannot be easily classified: my professional, gendered
identity and self-styling as a backpacker with four different technological devices
did not assist in situating me socially. In addition, backpack travel has become
globally associated with alternative lifestyles and extolled as a break from the past
and the constraints of collective structures (Cohen, 2011), but in the Greek context
the principles of individualism are still masculinized to a great extent (Herzfeld,
1985).

My technological ‘saddle’ will provide a two-perspective tour, slowly zooming
out of the area (spatially) and its histories (temporally). Prigipos is appropriately
located in Apostolou Pavlou Street, as it is associated with the traumatic histories
of the Turkish occupation and Asia Minor War. A web surfer may have to launch a
painstaking investigation into Thessaloniki’s virtual alleyways to find that the café
is situated next to the Turkish Consulate – the only building on that block docu-
mented on wikimapia (Wikimapia, ‘Turkish Consulate’, 2010). However, Prigipos’s
informal narratives have always borrowed from those imaginary topographies of
Northern Romiosyni (e.g. Leontis, 1995) that look to the country’s neighbouring
culture with ambivalent feelings. Identities are interactively constructed often
through adversarial encounters in human time, and neighbours and foes play a
crucial role in such constructions.
Prigipos is not branded as a tourist marker, yet as an architectural-decorative reproduction of a network of Greek ‘Orientalist’ lieux de memoire (Nora, 1989; Said, 1978) it is visited in the summer months by groups of pilgrims to Mustafa Kemal’s (Atatürk, b. 1881) paternal home which is located opposite the café and adjacent to the Turkish Consulate. Kemal is globally considered the founder of the Turkish nation but Greek ethno-national narratives associate his leadership with the catastrophic outcome of the last Greek-Turkish war and the end of Greece’s presence in Asia Minor (1919–23) which led to massive migrations of Greek Anatolian communities to Greece. The house was given to Turkey as a present by the Greek government in 1933, and was subsequently restored to reflect the way it must have been at Atatürk’s birth (Frommer’s, 2010). The café’s geographical location next to the paternal house of modern Turkey’s ‘founder’ and first President and on the fringes of Ano Poli (Upper Town), a surviving material manifestation of the city’s migrant communities, corresponds to a symbolic complex of imaginary ethnic routes. These routes sustain organized narratives that have assisted state officialdom to produce an epic narrative of loss for internal consumption but also global display (Benjamin, 1989; Connerton, 1989; Gellner, 1983; Ricoeur, 2004).

Apostolou Pavlou Street cuts through Agiou Dimitriou, a road named after the city’s patron saint and his holy sanctuary, the Church of Agios Dimitrios, located just a few blocks away from the Turkish Consulate. Agios Dimitrios figures in Byzantine stories of the city’s invasion by Slavs (sixth century AD) contemporary scholars continue to debate in relation to Fallmerayer’s accusations of Thessalonikiote cultural-racial miscegenation. At its other end, Agiou Dimitriou runs perpendicular to the only surviving Jewish cemetery but also one of the city’s biggest hospitals, Agios Pavlos. The Jewish cemetery and the hospital of Agios Pavlos are gates to the Upper City, just as the Turkish Consulate and Prigipos are gates to its Ottoman-Turkish histories. Thus, the whole upper eastern part of the city is an ethno-historical node, an assemblage of Thessalonikiote pasts readily available to the tourist gaze, but not fully exploited as a single network of tourist sights-sites at the moment. Scheduled tours to the old city, comprising visits to a number of restored houses in which Greek communities resided after fleeing Anatolia for the Greek metropolis, but also to Byzantine fortresses and walls, also encourage the growth of a particular type of tourism forthcoming to an ethnic revivalist movement. For a city whose conservative intellectuals often willingly safeguarded these pasts, such monetary exchanges can serve as a phenomenological mirage that enables processes of worshipping Greece’s ‘character’. The city’s ‘Sightseeing Bus’ passes through the Upper Town but also suggests visits to a selection of Byzantine and Ottoman buildings such as Alatza Imaret or Yeni Hamam (Thessaloniki Sightseeing, 2010). However, the itinerary’s Ottoman-Turkish architectural survivals have been stripped of their religious functions and turned into sites of conspicuous consumption – unlike Thessaloniki’s Byzantine-Christian monuments whose ethno-religious function has been kept intact. Without supporting religious equity as such, I highlight here how Thessaloniki’s self-presentational scales tip (err) on the side of Christianity.
One may also note that Agios Dimitrios has entered the World Heritage lists but no Ottoman-Turkish monument of the city (including Kemal’s house) has as yet. As all heritage recommendations are made by national (not regional) centres rather than UNESCO (Harrison, 2005; Williams, 2005), the absence of Ottoman presence from Thessaloniki’s list is suggestive of a political ‘whitewashing’ of its Eastern histories (for comparisons with Crete, see Herzfeld, 1991). This exclusion of Ottoman history from Thessaloniki’s heritage ‘façade’ ensured that the very memory sites its guardians deemed inappropriate survivals would become sites of cultural creativity and secular hybridity statements (see Martikainen, 2006 on other cases). A simultaneous emphasis on the aesthetic experience in contemporary religious markets (e.g. Luckmann, 1999) and ancient sites has further endorsed the secularization of Thessalonikiote Ottoman mobilities – a practice not applied equitably on the city’s Paleochristian survivals. Making, advertising and trading in Thessalonikiote Ottomanness-Turkishness in particular has colonized the gap of a Hellenic past that Athens has monopolized (on this I note that travel magazines appear to advertise today Athens as an up-and-coming tourist destination, even aboard flights to Thessaloniki).

It is within this cultural-political context that Prigipos operates to transform the city’s introvert memories into decorative statements, producing thus its public front (Herzfeld, 1987; Sutton, 2000). Prigipos’s visitors, especially those the café ‘borrows’ from the adjacent house-museum of Atatürk, become (after being in an authentic pilgrimage site) pilgrims of a simulated Oriental site they are in a position to ‘read’ and understand (see Graburn, 1977 and McKevitt, 1991 on tourist pilgrimage). This diforic game is significant for Thessalonikiotes too: as a reversal of the ideal-typical figure of the male hero that organizes the practices of a society (Bakhtin, 1981; de Certeau, 1986; Evans-Pritchard, 1937; Herzfeld, 2008; Tzanelli, 2008), Kemal’s presence is precluded from Prigipos’s interior but haunts the logic of its Oriental design. Kemal’s ghostly presence was never acknowledged to me during my visits by anyone – and looking back to my student years, neither myself nor my fellow students ever considered it while on the premises, an erasure speaking volumes for the changing functions of the same sights-signs even within the confines of a block. Prigipos’s commercial openness to the street (the business is replete with a front patio/terrace for customers who enjoy sipping their coffee outdoors) clashes with the spatial closure of the consulate and Kemal’s house. Spatial manifestations of openness and closure find continuations in the stylistic/aesthetic function and form of Prigipos and in my ethnographic technique. In the following I endeavour to illuminate the foundations of this phenomenon that turns commercial performance into a parable of ethno-cultural self-presentation.

Exploring Prigipos’s ‘staging’

Here my electronic lens will zoom back into the business, to record a piece of its autobiography. I will highlight how the business constructs its artscape on the basis of stylistic ressentiment. By ressentiment I allude to something other than
Nietzsche’s (1996) destructive theologization of experience that is performed by those groups finding themselves downgraded on the civilizational ladder. *Ressentiment* is here a by-product of the desire social groups display when constrictions coerce them to produce a facade plausible to outsiders, often at the expense of other groups. In the Greek case, *ressentiment* manifests itself in the style or *yfos* people project – hence, it is part of the dificic game insiders play in interactions with outsiders. The reader should thus consider my status here as that of an outsider-tourist, studying a stylistic complex displayed to me by my interviewees: facial expression (*yfos*’s first connotation), mentality (*yfos* as emotionally communicated attitude) and artistic style (*yfos*’s third connotation) are wove (*yfaino*, to weave, create but also articulate) into a tactile communication with the world (*yfi*, somatosensory faculty) (Georgopapadakos, 1964). The complex has methodological value in the article for the study of ethnographic-travel mobility: it is not just that it is addressed to travellers, it is also that I had to extract myself from the Thessalonikiote environment, to become a migrant and a traveller, to detect and theorize it.

**Interview with Nikos and a tour of Prigipos’s interior**

In April 2010 I discovered that Prigipos is a cooperative initiative: Nikos Kosmopolitis manages the café together with ‘another two Georges’, as he jokingly explains to me during our discussion about the venture’s trajectory. One of these Georges sits behind the bar and only says a shy hello to me during Nikos’s interview, whereas one of Prigipos’s waitresses (who I will call ‘Persephone’) considers my endeavours ‘easy’ to perform ‘as long as I am not the one who looks at the lens’. Persephone speaks with another waitress who appears to be Albanian, and who has worked there for almost three years. She immediately directs me to a wall reproduction of Istanbul’s Agia Sofia (of which I speak below) to photograph it: apparently, many visitors take pictures of that corner because it is so picturesque, producing thus a multiforia for such a specific site of pilgrimage in the Greek context (Figure 1). Persephone and her colleague demonstrate an understanding of Prigipos’s market principles, but it they retain a stylistic distance from me, while simultaneously displaying the business’s mobile goods. I soon realize that lack of communication between them and the managers in my presence aims to minimize my interaction with waiting staff: it is an important thing to have a Westernized Greek academic displaying interest in the business. In the interview Nikos proceeds to stress how the Asia Minor origins of his and his associates’ families influenced the decorative style of their café (he too urged me to takes as many photos in the premises as I liked, endorsing thus his business’s advertising abroad). Prigipos has been in the catering trade for over 17 years, but Nikos explains that its style was ‘progressive’ at the time of its establishment, when *kafeneia* were still places only old men would frequent.

Nikos notes that since Prigipos’s staff and managers have to spend between 12 and 14 hours on its premises every day, they imposed their own decorative *yfos* on
their space of work. He highlights the Anatolian influences of their selection principles by pointing to his colleagues’ paternal origins from Smyrna and Pontus, two cosmopolitan urban sites of Asia Minor life that consolidated their civilizational superiority in contradistinction to the *habitus* of metropolitan Greeks who were deemed by migrants to be more low-brow (Hirschon, 1998). Thessaloniki’s urban mobility and Asian Minor urban cosmopolitanisms are used thus to establish Prigipos’s biographical distancing from the pre-1993 old cafés that used to be

![Figure 1. The Agia Sofia corner.](image-url)
‘full of papoudes’ (grandpas). Comments on the simplicity of former kafeneia’s self-presentation (‘tables, chairs and a lick of oil paint on the walls – in any case, the old people it attracted had meagre needs’) demarcated in Nikos’s discourse Thessaloniki’s modernity from the parochialism of its Anatolian past, transforming it into a good of travel value (see also Malaby, 2003 on Cretan examples).

The old kafeneia of Asia Minor urban life migrated into the Greek metropolis under difficult circumstances (see Fotinopoulos, 2009 on other examples). Their function as places of exclusive male gathering transformed them into an Eastern version of the Western ‘public sphere’ (Habermas, 1989), a surprisingly exclusive domain that complemented the ‘private sphere’ of family and ‘home’, which continued to be populated by secluded femininities (Evans, 1997; Lister, 1997). The advent of industrialization in the country and the influx of modern ideas from the West (post-1960) transformed these venues into a ‘heritage’ befit only for male pensioners. Here, however, I wish to focus on contemporary catering in kafeneia such as Prigipos that are not social enclaves for Asia Minor migrants any longer but leisure domains for all ages. I would argue that Nikos’s references to the improvisations displayed by the old craft of kafeneiopoles (Malaby, 2003) have a nostalgic quality that informs the genre of travel in once familiar territories: I was told that old kafeneia owners used to demonstrate their mastoria (craft) in the way they prepared the coffee (psinoun ton kafe) – in opposition, I assumed, to Prigipos’s flashy serving behind the bar, with technology brewing the coffee and served by staff. The sociogenesis of the profession of kafeneiopoles becomes in this nostalgic discourse a way to folklorize the craft, and of staging Greek ethnic authenticity for the tourist gaze (native or foreign) (Elias, 1950). Nikos proceeded to serve me Prigipos’s blend of coffee and their traditional sweets, suggesting thus that I enact the same nostalgic journey. Prigipos’s menu includes some (now exotic) working-class delicacies such as ypovrycheto (submarine), a vanilla or mastic-based sticky sweet served in water initially for children, and Arabic-Ottoman sweets such as loukoumi (Turkish delight), served now with Prigipos’s special coffee blend. Glyko tou koutaliou (spoon sweet, a whole fruit cooked and served in syrup as a coffee accompaniment) is another delicacy that was served to me and my partner, old-style (in a small glass plate). My two ethnographic visits were thus ‘framed’ (as in MacCannell, 1989) in the same way a multisensory tourist site is framed – in an Oriental environment, in smells and tastes of my childhood and opposite a Turkish monument. This facilitates the use of Prigipos’s theatre techniques as a source of intercultural knowledge, transforming every visit to its premises by the native or historically informed tourist into a sort of multisensory ‘participative mimesis’ (Fabian, 1999: 28).

Prigipos’s decor also communicates ressentiment through the hybridization of nationalist ideas. The ‘Oriental’ corner featuring the painting of Agia Sofia in Istanbul is complemented with an old-style table and a side-furniture populated with nargiledes, water-pipes smoked by men in the coffee-shops and houses of the Ottoman empire. These Oriental exhibits match the old Oriental carpet hanging on the wall, the golden mirrors and the ceiling which is ornamented arabesque-style.
An old telephone booth serves today as storage space for directories, brochures, but also a number of images that communicate the aura of old times (Figure 2). These statements are complemented by two glass cupboards with a menagerie-like function, facilitating the display of porcelain of undetermined origins, as was the rationale of their aristocratic predecessors (Bennett, 1995). Although the owners claim that they did not want to generate an insular, museum-like venue with their aesthetic interventions, the presence of ‘porcelain menagères’ suggests subtle associations with the elitist ‘authenticity’ of museum cultures (Bal, 2003: 21). The café’s bar is also tastefully designed in fusions of Eastern colours (gold, dark brown) with Western tools and technologies today one finds in English pubs (Figure 3). The bar serves beer from the tub, a gesture emulating Western customs of the European North, further fragmenting the scattered ‘nationalist’ paraphernalia. The younger clientele likes Prigipos’s beer nights as they are a novelty in the Greek setting.

The aestheticized display of the right ‘symbolic capital’ for the right tourist gaze communicates entrepreneurship in the stead of nationalist intransigence (Britton, 1989). The claim that Prigipos remains a pioneer in the venture of kafeneion-updating (communicated to me electronically and ‘on location’) contrasts the enterprise’s Oriental innovation with the alleged parochiality of the Athenian centre which is stuck in the preservation of a Hellenic past – a policy befit for middle-class tourists. This statement seeks to elevate technological reproduction of varied content and quality into proof of modernization. The statement that the café’s decor is a radical departure from the standardized presentation of similar businesses is in fact incorrect: my ethnographic field included another such case (Café Bazaar) in the historic centre of Thessaloniki, which had been decorated with original Constantinopolitan items by the family that runs the business. All the same, two regulars in Prigipos rushed to confirm Nikos’s statement of authenticity (einai alitheia, it is true, they said, Prigipos is unique), something that mirrors more general claims to authenticity in the tourist trade. Prigipos is of course much larger than Bazaar and like Bazaar belongs to the upper market of such artistic reproduction; but it is worth highlighting that the aforementioned commentary replaces standardized aural claims to tradition with a discourse of original entrepreneurial reproduction (Benjamin, 1992).

At the same time, Prigipos’s originality may even stand for Thessaloniki’s vis-à-vis Athenian archaic parochialism – a manifestation of ressentiment directed against a centre that monopolizes funds and tourist glamour. The café’s ‘front regions’ (that I inspected, video-recorded and photographed twice) were professionally created by a friend Nikos introduced to me as a professional skenográfos (stager of theatre plays), but the ‘back regions’ (including the kitchen) have no public face (they remain inaccessible to customers, including myself) (Goffman, 1987). ‘We appreciate the aigli [glory, glamour] of the past’, says Nikos and smiles at me like a true illusionist who ‘directs’ rather than merely runs the business. The decor impresses the younger generations and tourist visitors but seems to leave the older customers (especially those of pensioner age) indifferent. On my second visit I observed a disgruntled old man waving his hands sideways frantically...
while smirking with a nod at the bar – a Greek sign of disapproval for the shiny facade, but in the background a group of young male customers smiled at me and carried on with their backgammon game.

Two distinctive modes of performance form continuity with Prigipos’s Internet simulation of a generic ‘Ottoman-Oriental culture’. The first mode used to inform certain forms of play in old kafeneia such as backgammon, card or chess games. The games became popular in the West in the interwar years (1920–1930) but in the post-Second World War era they were consigned to the realm of exotic antiquities.

Figure 2. Telephone booth.
Backgammon’s inclusion in Anatolian culture in the 1920s transformed it into a self-presentational tool, whereby display of knowledge on technique and style commanded respect in a community of male peers (see Malaby, 2003 on Cretan examples). The decline of old kafeneion culture in Greece initially demoted the game to a childlike pastime fit for the senile, but its subsequent revival in urban cafes by those entrepreneurs who sought ways to ‘sell’ old Greece’s aura to domestic clientele allowed its adoption in more democratic consumption regimes, where women and teenagers could participate. In places such as Prigipos, the virtuosos of backgammon are primarily students of both genders – although male players continue to be the norm. In Prigipos I watched and talked to backgammon players of young ages and both genders, including a friend of staff who appears to visit occasionally for a coffee and a chat. Prigipos’s leisure economy has already produced a sort of public sphere that allows predominantly younger, educated, generations to interact and discuss serious issues in the time of play (Lanfant, 2009). Playing backgammon mediates discussion, allowing for the interchange of strategic silences with aggressive gesticulation at the board (rather than the adversary-opponent). However, unlike the older generations I observed playing in other settings, Prigipos’s younger backgammon players’ grandstanding appeared to be...
infused with comedy (involving emulations of hurtful defeat and teasing the winners).

If Apostolou Pavlou’s cityscape is a spectacular repository of memory, Prigipos’s artscape has become in recent years a more effective system of (self-)publicity images, especially where selling Asia Minor culture to ‘prosumers’ (creative consumers of messages) is involved (Berger, 2008). Toying with visitors’ expectations, the café has kept the old-style sign on its façade (Figure 4) and uses old-style chairs and tables but recently introduced glasses, cups and plates with the business’s logo (Figure 5). Branding a variety of produce that Prigipos now also advertises on its website (www.prigipos.gr), its logo builds on the idea of a logotypon (rational character), a stereotype of Oriental character that appeals to domestic and foreign gazes alike (Lury, 2004). The café’s owners serve a branded coffee of contested (Turkish, Greek or Cypriot) origins and tsipouro, a grappa-like fermented spirit of Ottoman origins as authentic folkish produce. Thus, the enterprise reproduces the ambiance of cultural touring for the romantic gaze of middle-class travellers without losing its working-class roots altogether, as this too can be a major selling point (Urry, 1995). The production of wine is a separate venture that contests the ethnic specificity Prigipos’s tsipouro represents. Nikos talked of their wine production with a confident smile and the waitress served spirits with a note about their biography, confirming the café’s refined taste. The branded wine diversifies the pool of consumers, as it is addressed to a cosmopolitan group of aesthetically reflexive agents that ‘know’ how to consume Oriental ‘signs’ (Giddens, 1994; Howland, 2008) but also recognize fusions inherent in the production of this spirit.

Prigipos’s logo (a sun with curved rays) appeals to memory symbolism. Its artistic depiction of the sun visually articulates a sort of Greek illumination of the world that occurred somewhere between East and West, a travel Enlightenment discourse of the Mediterranean with some cultural rootedness (Sharpley, 2004). Here the cosmological principles of ‘obscuring’ and ‘illuminating’ come to the ethnic fore: Nikos explained to me that the logo originates in the Kantakouzinos coats of arms, which was grafted on a marble tile in the courtyard of Virgin Mary of Balinos in the Fanari quarter of Istanbul (electronic correspondence, 11 July 2010). Images and photos in the premises communicate both the histories of this ‘Greek Orient’ and the trajectory of the business as an imagined topos: Prigiponisia were, according to Nikos, ‘the Mykonos of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries’, islands close to the centre of Byzantine-cum-Ottoman empire, where middle-class families would spend their summers or educate their children. This combined educational and tourist heritage attributes ‘high taste’ to Greek migrant communities and by extension to Prigipos’s owners, while allowing them to borrow from Western representational apparatuses to promote a global circulation of manufactured Greek Ottoman-ness (Salvatore, 1998). I certainly did not read the crest-logo this way and I assume that other visitors might have the same difficulty in doing so, but its mixture of Hellenistic features immediately recalled the nationalist sun of Vergina which became the centre of an ethno-national dispute in the Balkans in the 1990s. Nikos argued that Prigipos
would like to preserve both the Byzantine and the Ottoman elements of Greek history, thus presenting his *kafeneion* as a repository of memory symbols. This contradicted his canonical assumption that an always-already Greek Byzantium exerted immense influence on the Ottoman Turks (contradicted again by his other statement that the two ‘civilizations’ have been cross-hybridizing ever since their ‘birth’). The statements belong to a wider network of urban gossip that continues to feed into Thessalonikiote notions of Romiosyni, sustaining its classroom

*Figure 4. Prigipos’s façade.*
constructions (Faubion, 1993). Its communication in leisure settings also strategically re-constitutes a ‘travel book discourse’ for the ethnographic insider, the knowing diforic traveller. I heard the same story during my ethnographic wanderings in the centre of Thessaloniki, in the arcades of Modiano and in Fraginis Square, just off Aristotelous Square. Not only did my interlocutors expect me to agree with their claims, they also encouraged my ethnographic lens to traffic them abroad.

Not only are icons and symbols easier manipulated, they also appeal to a Greek cosmological narrative that demands the public exhibition of nobility (Campbell, 1994). My attention was drawn to the postcards and the website during my two visits in Prigipos – a strategy suggesting that the website and the printed materials are two areas the kafeneion’s staff wants to advertise abroad (and I was identified as a potential way of achieving this target). Prigipos’s virtual site aspires to integrate its culture into a broader referential network of urban and regional businesses, embedding the café into a Thessalonikiote tourist node. Prigipos.gr, which is currently only in Greek, opens up literature to the masses of Greek Internet users. Because of its limited Greek audience, Prigipos’s virtual script should be read alongside that proffered by a series of illustrated ‘guides’ to the art of produce-making it prints as postal cards (Figure 6). The colonial and folk knowledge on

Figure 5. Coffee cups with the business’s logo.
which these postcards draw reinvents Prigipos’s tradition through an index of real and imagined references that literally travel the country (the short histories are written in Greek only), but possibly also the world (the cards are free to all customers) (Rojek, 1997; Shields, 1991). The short histories thus fluctuate between popular humour and pictorial pedagogy, democratizing the consumption of Pirgipos’s basic produce. Hints at the colonial (e.g. Cortés’s transport of cocoa beans to Europe, the Chinese origins of tea-making) or ethno-racial histories of

Figure 6. Postal cards reproducing the ‘art of making’ food.
these foods and spirits (e.g. Syrian origins of coffee and its mobility to Istanbul, or tsipouro's accompaniment by mezedes) grant such knowledge economies with historical depth. An extra box next to that, where these short postcards are displayed, hosts printed copies of ‘exotic Greek recipes’ that blend familiar native ingredients (lamb meat, chicken, dairy, cinnamon) with imported ones (bananas, trendy liquors, or even coffee). Regarding such homely rituals as an ‘unacknowledged art’, Prigipos’s mementoes grant cooking with a public face while incorporating their desirable qualities (e.g. freshness of materials, as the website states) in kafeneion’s service.

**Website and CD of Prigipos**

The website of Prigipos corroborates its owners’ claims to artistic endeavour – a claim that is also extended to their collaboration with Mediterranean artists. The website is populated with photographs of the café’s Oriental interior but its discourse is also grounded in the city’s specificity. The poem extract that adorns the start webpage complements the business’s logo and sets Prigipos’s mythical stage:

> Your words were swept away by vardaris

> And scattered in the city’s alleyways

> It’s Saturday night and you announce that you exist

> I envy how this Prigipos withholds you. (My translation)

Although the anonymous extract proffers generic existentialist reflections on urban life, the presence of the distinctive Balkan wind (vardaris) restricts the geographical coordinates of the artistic flânerie. Apostolou Pavlou and Agiou Dimitriou are streets situated quite high in the periphery of Thessaloniki’s inner zone, remaining thus exposed to the temperamental climate of the city. Contrariwise, the temporal co-ordinates are intentionally conflated by reference to a vague ‘Prigipos’, especially given the café’s nomination after the Aegean Prigiponisia. Nominalizations domesticate things (Barthes, 1979), bypassing or modifying geographical borders and hence enclosing memories into national territories. In short, rootless touring and grounded flânerie coexist in Prigipos’s self-presentation.

On my second visit I was also given a CD produced by Prigipos on its tenth anniversary for free (Ten Years Prigipos 2003). The ‘gift’ cleverly suggested to me that the kafeneion endorses an entechni (in-art) version of Eastern-inspired rhythms akin to the ethnic world music one finds today in HMV stores. Therefore, what happens on Prigipos’s virtual and literary platforms is replicated on the musical, where a hybridity complex of rhythms and Asian-style instruments is manipulated into a purely Greek Anatolian culture. The branded CD is thus another emotional
manifestation of belonging as it partly appeals to a musical heritage Anatolian Greeks introduced in the metropolis post-1920s and partly to a modern Turkish one today travelling the world. It encloses a brochure with professionally produced images of the café’s ‘historical’ corners, reproducing a flânerie through time and space worthy of cultural touring. Notably both the photographs and the music do not resort to images of a sunny Greece but to baroque strategies of illumination and obscuring. The only sign explicitly referring to the sea in the café is a small boat that resembles those children used to hold while singing Christmas carols in Greece, as well as an old port photograph on the wall (Figure 7). A bifurcated sign itself, the boat both contests and reproduces extinct Greek traditions. The CD and its advertising of Prigipos’s décor reiterate the principles of Oriental flânerie that relies on the ‘metaphysics of depth’ (Tziovas, 1986: 470), themes of strategic obscuring or illuminating those aspects of the Greek culture that can travel. The inclination to play Eastern-inspired tunes follows on Nikos’s conviction that Greek and ‘Eastern’ (anatolitikoi, a term referring to a bohemian engagement with other cultural tastes and worldviews) rhythms are allilendetoi (interconnected) just like the trajectories of their corresponding cultural hosts. The artists that participated in the CD, Thessalonikite Giannis Saoulis and Turkish Gökem Ökten-Saoulis,
are a couple well-known for their contribution to hybrid rebetiko, a style introduced in Greece by Asia Minor refugees.

Their website advertises their ambition to be a cultural label, which is specialized in culture in general and in music in particular, of the lands around the East Mediterranean sea’ (Easterngate, undated). Focusing on the styles of Greece, Cyprus and Turkey in particular, however, Easterngate’s discourse suggests that tighter geographical proximity encourages intellectual compatibility and borrowing, constructing a commonsensical ‘Mediterraneanism’ (Herzfeld, 2006: 47) out of a much more specific Greek metaphysics. The CD’s music reinforces Thessaloniki’s cultural in-betweenness as a former Ottoman-Balkan urban enclave but a coastal destination, because it includes varieties of nisiotikous (island) and Anatolian rhythms. It is perhaps late in the article to confess how this CD served as a makeshift anthropological compass for the amateurish visual account of my ethnographic journey in Thessaloniki. However, it is pertinent to close the substantive analysis with this: just as in Hollywood scripts, the end of the story corresponds to the beginning, so here the opening methodological statement corresponds to the closing one. My photographic presentation of Prigipos (now featuring on YouTube under ‘pulakim’ videos) is accompanied by Easterngate’s Oriental rhythms, as it is only appropriate for a café that fashions itself similarly. However, my inclusion of this music in the video served to underscore the ludicrousness of claims to cultural fixity in a mobile world that uses ethnic specificity as a political tool. The video-graphic and photographic investigations therefore communicate my journey (see website Identity and Tourism, undated). If one insisted on categorizing my ethnographic wanderings in tourism/travel terms, I would present them at once as cultural and political in nature.

**Orientalisms: Ethnography and consumer culture in Thessaloniki**

The study considered connections of flânerie and tourism through urban strategies of narrating and simulating imagined topographies of Greek identity over the centuries. These narratives and simulations take place on the premises of Prigipos, a renovated kafeneion in Thessaloniki, northern Greece’s ‘surrogate capital’. Just as the city of Thessaloniki, Prigipos’s self-presentation is overdetermined by Greece’s Ottoman, Turkish and Asia Minor legacies that are imposed on the histories and architectural styles of the area. The business mobilizes and manipulates these pasts in varied degrees to claim monetary and cultural recognition as a progressive cosmopolitan site: its physical proximity to the Turkish Consulate, the adjacent house of Kemal Atatürk and the old Upper City define the area’s type of tourism and flânerie and hence the strategies of self-presentation Prigipos has to adopt as a modernized café. The current managers’ ongoing project of symbolic innovation is orientated towards the erasure of (ethnicized and gendered) ‘parochialism’ of migrant Greek coffee-shop cultures or the modification of old practices, representations and produce for the maximization of profit. As a laboratory
of cultural experimentation, Prigipos is emblematic of the latest phase in the socio-genesis of a declining profession, that of *kafeneiopoles*.

At the same time, the article articulates an alternative understanding of ethnographic participation and fieldwork. Using myself as the prototype of ethnographic traveller, I provide insight into the vicissitudes of producing knowledge when one knows the studied subject ‘too well’. My proximate vision in Prigipos as one of my student haunts provides my analysis with a memory layer additional to that of the café’s repository of memories, possibly coating too much (or too little) its socio-political rooting in Asia Minor refugee culture. At the same time, my professional mobility generates a contradictory layer of experience that casts me as world traveller. My discourse of cultural ‘domestication’ of the Orient in Thessaloniki may generate some questions regarding the article’s ideological premises: am I too then ‘Orientalizing’ my former ‘home’? I would cautiously respond that such reifications are constitutive of the ethnographic materials in this article and also exist to some extent outside my own, exclusive vision. What is definitely mine is the thanatotourist frame of the article’s narrative that might have frightened or amused my interlocutors. But this merits discussion in a separate article.

**Acknowledgement**

With thanks to Prigipos’s managers and staff for making time to answer my invasive questions; to Majid Yar for his witty comment on ‘Eastern’ hospitality; to Evelyn and mother for photographing Prigipos’s facade; and to father for talking about his backgammon and betting frenzy.

**References**


Couroucli M (2008) Sharing nostalgia in Istanbul: Christian and Muslim pilgrims to St George’s Sanctuary. CNRS-Université Paris X International Conference, Columbia University, New York, 14–15 February.


Rodanthi Tzanelli is lecturer in Sociology and Deputy Director at CERS, University of Leeds. She has published on national identity, cosmopolitanism, globalization and the ethics and politics of cultural industries (media, tourism). She has authored four books, including The Cinematic Tourist: Explorations in Globalization, Culture and Resistance (2007) and Cosmopolitan Memory in Europe’s ‘Backwaters’: Rethinking Civility (2011).