



Centre for Ethnicity & Racism Studies

Civility and Progress: Envisaging Cosmopolitanism in the *Islands of Mamma Mia! (2008)*

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Who decides if Hollywood simulacra provide more suitable narratives of your culture than the centuries-old icons of Virgin Mary, the local Saint Riginos and the traditions that used to exorcise your historical archenemy? Such questions weigh heavily on the minds of inhabitants and Greek seasonal workers of Skiathos and Skopelos, two islands in the Aegean complex of Sporades. Slide 2 The islands served as cinematic locations for *Mamma Mia!* (2008), a blockbuster addressed to Abba fans and the hippie generation of the 1960s and 1970s that discovered Greece in the wake of Western social movements. Following the filming and release of the movie, the islands also began to enjoy global popularity as *Mamma Mia* tourist destinations. The ensuing change in consumption styles necessitated a reworking of local tourist production regimes that Greeks accepted with varied degrees of scepticism. Local rumours spread regarding the selection of these two islands by the film industry. *MM* encouraged the development of regional competitions that enhanced the emotive potential of nationalist discourse that projects the blame for regional favouritism onto Western agents and the nation-state itself. The background of this controversy originated in the Byzantine Christian heritage that Greeks set against the Islamic traditions of their former Ottoman colonisers to affirm their European identity. This observation

suggests that we treat the case study as emblematic of the workings of Orientalism within the borders of 'Europe'.

The clash between native understandings of heritage and imported cinematic products was enacted in virtual networks (blogs, Greek and foreign websites) and on location. This presents native memory work as the product of imaginary mobilities – of ideas, images, folk legends and custom. What moves is, in effect, the idea of a distinctively Greek character, a character produced today in tourist imaginations. These movements are regulated by all sorts of entrepreneurial agents; however, my focus here is the Greek entrepreneurs involved in the trading of Skiathan and Skopeliote culture. Establishing what 'heritage' means in context, involves inviting its contenders to talk about their perceptions and experiences, after all. But trusting on-site accounts as accurate depictions of reality amounts to accepting unreservedly our interlocutor's humanity. This necessitates a radical step towards the globalization of 'civility' that Western anthropology refused to take before the dawn of postcolonial era. Many Orientalists envisaged a Western-style humanity supported by a common 'Sanskrit' past only to be disillusioned by the undecipherable intricacies of the multiple Orientals they discovered during their journeys.

Slide 3 My own visit to Skiathos was supposed to be a conventional holiday, but as the date of my flight drew closer I progressively found myself describing it as 'fieldwork'. Of course, my enthusiastic choice of Sporades for a 'relaxing break' was due to the recent craze of MM. My travel exploits were replete with half-hidden truths about the local reception of Hollywood's visit as well as the accompanying regional and national machinations I later reworked into this essay's narrative. I spent time collecting the stories (g)locals too eagerly served on my plate and several months in front of my computer collecting more information to match my 'fieldwork'. During my visit on Skiathos I entertained the impression that my 'credits' had been checked upon and that a fictional 'script' had been collated to please my endless curiosity about regional politicking. The BSA professional code of ethics may fall short of fieldwork pragmatics: the whole point in such Greek-to-Greek transactions is to lie to your interlocutor as a way of expressing your

respect for them. Despite any civilisational veneer the coming of tourism-induced modernity might have enforced upon the country, honourable (therefore honest) Greeks still respect those who manage to fool them big time. This is constitutive of a damaged reciprocity born out of scorn for a country selected by Westerners to ‘whitewash’ the heritage of Europe. My analytical framework sits upon European crypto-colonialism, a system of indirect subjection of a nation whose symbolic centrality in European self-narration caged it in a political limbo. Hellenic Greece has become part of what European civilisation means to most, but modern Greece was found to be ‘in lack’ of the same civility standards. The background of this paradox would take us back to the era of Western colonial expansion, when colonisers sought ways to prove their racial superiority vis-a-vis non-European colonised peoples. The idea of ancient Greece, an imagined European civilisation, was appropriated by Westerners, became part of their own heritage and juxtaposed to that of supposedly inferior races the colonial machine exploited abroad. But Modern Greece, a state founded with the help of colonial powers in the nineteenth century, could not live up to Western standards. Modern Greeks were supposed to be contaminated by the vices of their Ottoman rulers, as Greek communities stayed under Ottoman rule for centuries.

This history provides an essential link to the country’s contemporary politico-economic condition. Its dependency on tourist economies accentuates its crypto-colonial status, trapping its diverse localities ‘into the clutches of [a] transnational global economy’ intent on unrestricted development. My study’s entrepreneurial subject is a Greek caught between the drama of an economic-come-civilisational subjection to foreigners and the adventure of nationally plausible ‘symbolic creativity’. Just as Krishan Kumar’s post-industrial human, who suddenly realises that the modernity on which (s)he was modelled is a wrongful, in every respect, Western chimera, the Greek entrepreneur resentfully caters for MM tourists while trying to dispose of his/her Oriental habitus before his neighbours manage to do so. The emotional complexity of this condition comprises my revision of Nietzsche’s resentment. The aim of this revision is to shed light on systemic accounts of individual experience, often obscured by theories of ‘global complexity’ that support policy-making

without taking into account those the policies affect. As a collective emotion, resentment feeds on systemic insecurity induced by micro-globalisation – local inflections of worldwide socio-economic changes that shake the foundations of entrenched identities and histories. Resentment assists in the symbolic transcendence of systemic constraints through strategic destruction of reciprocities within localities and nation-states. Flying in the face of any pretensions to universal togetherness, this strategy is part of the cosmopolitan pragmatics social theory aims to ‘rectify’ by consigning the political dimensions of cosmopolitanism to a limbo between Enlightenment and Romantic ideals. Resentment maps an emotive geopolitics of globalisation that supports abstract hegemonies and struggles to solidify liquid borders and identities.

The disorganised capitalist model on which Greek film-induced tourism currently operates makes a virtue out of necessity: in the grand scheme of economics, Greece’s half-European insignificance parallels the ways Skiathos and Skopelos remain for the tourist gaze small dots from the window of charters flying over the Aegean. The tourist ‘aerial gaze’, a ‘positivisation’ of direct engagement with other cultures, echoes the nineteenth-century ethnographer’s translation of experience into abstract, graphically arranged knowledge of the ‘other’. This positivisation sanctions equations of ‘social distance’ with cultural backwardness but may also provide ‘folk craftsmen’ and ‘craftswomen’ with the tools to exploit it. I would go as far as to suggest that my ethnographic *téchne* and my interlocutors’ performative *téchne* are complementary faces of ‘cosmopolitanism’, an art of knowing about our world, of mastering natural resources and social conventions to produce an amiable physical and emotive environment we can share as its makers and consumers. If, as suggested by Pieterse (2006: 1248), ‘globalisation is the circumstance [and] cosmopolitanism the ethos’ of travelling cultures, an emancipatory social theory should look for ways to rebalance the corporate, political and cultural forces that partake in them. Oscillating between a monocultural model of national corporatism, a multicultural model of international corporatism and a diffused model of local creative entrepreneurship, Skiathos and Skopelos are coerced to place themselves by turns in the roles of masters and servants. The rising international service class on better-organised Skiathos, whose infrastructural

adequacy attracts international skilled labour, has issued tickets to a neoliberal heaven the very moment it demoted local economies to the status of a 'regional maiden'. Skiathos and Skopelos become thus pilot 'case studies' for the dilemmas of a neoliberal expansion(ism) that grants its participants with varied degrees of global citizenship while forcing them to part ways with their self-acknowledged 'national families'.

The symbolic demotion of local creative industries and their economies to a feminine status resurrects memories of slavery that Greece experienced only as an Ottoman colony. To meet with such treatment by those powerful partners its nation-state has always used as cultural and political prototypes, is a kick below the belt. As the modalities of cultural heritage remain stranded between the globalised discourse of Western popular culture and indigenous needs to revere and marketise folk alternatives, a confused instrumentalisation of all those variants becomes a dead certainty. The islander's urgency to jump on the bandwagon of tourist modernity led self-fashioned entrepreneurs to advertise the technological miracle of MM through blogs, newly-set business sites and electronic tourist catering. There is no time today to present my cybernetic and on-site ethnographies in detail, or to analyse my methodology enough. Suffice it to point out that ethnography's militancy adheres to a cosmopolitanism 'from below' and a synaesthetic performativity that feminises the democracy of the senses. Contrariwise, cyber-ethnography propagates a cosmopolitanism 'from above', of gazing rather than performing that masculinises ways of knowing. My 'middle ground' speaks volumes about my situational social identity as a Westernised female researcher extricated from the environment she now observes.

Studying national characters necessitates an analysis of habitus cultures. In take habitus, Orientalism and cultural hierarchy as 'signs' de jure gendered and racialised, recurring hermeneutic tools that shape my study into a meaningful whole. The very notion of habitus heritage, of tasting, smelling, hearing and enacting identity, invites mediations of (feminised) nature through (masculinised) culture. I understand habitus as set of inculcated but transposable skills that mediate between system, structure and agency. Skills are learned and become part of who we are, but encounters with other cultures enable subjects

and communities to revisit the structures of learning and reconsider their usefulness and timeliness. As a result, habitus actualises versions of modernity, local understandings of ‘national character’ that both safeguard and relativise national traditions. Habitus has practical and poetic qualities and hence partakes in the production of our humanity.

It is futile to try to establish who truly discovered Skiathos and Skopelos and thus better if we view my historical delineations as synergically produced fiction that (de)constructs the power/knowledge nexūs. If I respect simulacry conventions then the real Columbus was contemporary cultural industries that market in ‘signs’, such as tourism and cinema. First-order binarisms that might have supported the transposition of Oriental discourse within Sporades appear today in online articles that set ‘Sun-blessed Skiathos’ against a ‘Sleepy Skopelos’, reifying a ‘defiantly Greek’ culture characterised by the ‘trundling’ of cars and motorcycles in all directions ‘while pedestrians and dogs wander anarchically across the dusty streets’. If I follow historical conventions, I would trace such talk in the travel diaries of adventurous Grand Tourists, who conflated the Oriental invasions of the islands with local character. Electronic and printed narratives of Skiathan and Skopeliote history are organised around such encounters, focusing upon Greek resistance to reincarnations of the Islamic enemy on behalf of Europe. This replicates a wider Greek discourse of unfairly discontinued reciprocities between a martyred Greece and a civilised West that progressed because a retroactively Hellenised Byzantium shielded it from catastrophic Ottoman invasions. A similar discourse of ‘unpaid debts’ informs that of hospitality in modern tourist settings: foreign tourists are viewed as guests who ought to remunerate their Greek hosts’ emotive generosity.

The paper is, in some respects, a study into the consequences of this deferred repayment. When the MM craze ensued, Skiathans realised that all their investment in tourism was for naught. In mid-summer 2008 reports began to flock in about rising holiday bookings in the region, comparable to those instigated by The Lord of the Rings trilogy in New Zealand and Borat in Kazakhstan. According to The Movie Channel, investment in property in Greece skyrocketed by 120% following the release of the movie and Skopelos began to

trade in ‘Villa Donnas’. Skopeliote beaches and churches, largely advertised through MM, overshadowed fleeting images of the Skiathan port in the film, and charter flights began to unload at Papadiamantis Airport global tourists ready to jump on the next ferry to visit Skopelos, the ‘true island’ of MM. The Papadiamantis Airport was a successful importation of a ‘cosmopolitanism from above’ that enabled Skiathan upwards mobility in global value hierarchies. But new cinematic cosmopolitanisms now seemed to place Skiathos in the service of Skopeliotes, who used to be viewed by their neighbours as more interested in agriculture and Kafeneion gossip than tourist business.

There is a political background that underpins this humiliation: Skiathan history is intertwined with the history of Greek nation-building. One of its surviving historical monuments, the monastery of Evangelismos, constitutes the place where the first Greek flag was sewn and the revolutionaries of the Greek Independence War swore on it. Not only is the monastery a significant node in Greek national self-narration, it is also a prime tourist attraction. To replace this with a cheap cinematic simulacrum only adds insult to injury. If the Skopeliotes enjoyed the lion’s share in the MM deal, the Skiathans, overwhelmed by a feeling of unfairness, had to protest for their diminishing prestige. Their symbolic feminisation and Orientalisation by the MM makers called for a reparation, a return to a national purity marred by ethnic traitors, foreign thieves and bureaucratic manipulators. The whole talk about economic decentralisation merely relocated the burden of tourism management to the more developed ‘margins’ to grant central administration with global prestige. As a result, Athens can now enjoy Western congratulations for MM-induced amplifications of Greek tourism whereas Skiathos has to manage peripheral business and clean up the centre’s dirty acts. These developments propelled an imaginary geopolitical reorganisation, whereby the two islands, standing as ‘margins’ within a marginal European country, began to trade places in three interlocked domains: the global, the European and the national. National visions of heritage, pushed in the background in 2008 by crowds of cinematic fans and tourists, made a triumphant reappearance to rectify damages.

I experienced this chagrin in action. Nationalist discourse would automatically cast foreign tourist agents as Western raiders who exploit the powerlessness of honest Greek businessmen. The word ‘extortion’ figured many times in Skiathans stories of ‘overpriced’ cruises sold to first time visitors devoid of necessary knowledge to navigate the island world. My Greekness saved me from such experience as some locals offered to help me through this ‘labyrinth of deceit’ to make choices about my travel options, treating on this occasion even my Pakistani-British companion as an honorary insider. My local host and his wife were both willing to offer help and mindful that such gossip can damage their *douleia*, an interesting term to use in this context, denoting both work and slavery. As a result, they steered clear from accusations that the foreigners they do business with are unreliable and lets us decide our course. The film itself was turned into a profit-making machine: the 2008 movie premiere in Chora made one open air cinema owner a fortune. On my visit in August of 2009, Attikon, a cinema in Papdiamantis street, was still showing the film a few times a week. The big MM advertisement was accompanied by a weekly programme also featuring the newly released *My Life in Ruins* (2009), a film partly shot in the Acropolis with government permission for the first time. The exhibition of two films that featured Greek heritage as the narrative’s backdrop was a celebration of recognition by an international community of arts.

Psaradika, a rustic-style taverna situated in the port of Chora, Skiathos’ sole town, figured in a 30-minute shooting of MM that was edited out of the final cut. The taverna’s staff advertises the hospitality they offered to Meryl Streep and Piers Brosnan but feel discarded by the cinematic machine. It is indicative that ‘island style’ tavernas mushroomed elsewhere on Skiathos in the aftermath of MM: these fascinating Hollywood replicas reorganised Greek conceptions of heritage in view of media-induced fusions. Contrariwise, the conservative playfulness of Skopeliotes becomes manifest in a certain ‘Hairy George’s’ resolution to build his own mock taverna in a lay-by to protest against the rising prices in eateries and bars. Nina Koukovinas, a 79-year old Skopeliote summarises this seething frustration when she wishes that clocks ‘turn back to when things were more normal and people had better manners’. Local taxi drivers invite tourists to hire their cars for

personalised tours to the local monasteries, whereas the Municipality also advertises its transport system as an alternative to expensive organised tours. But even the ritual of wandering in the streets of Skiathos town until one reaches the top to take photographs has been appropriated by foreign tourist providers. Confronted with the teams of Thompson and Thomas Cook experts who become available '24/7', and with organised Mama Mia cruises, Skiathan businessmen can only grow resentful. These cruises 'steal' the island's customers to transport them to Kastani and Elios beach, two MM filming spots on Skopelos, for photographing, swimming and 'traditional lunches', demoting the more glamorous Skiathan Municipality to a mere tourist facilitator.

The MM trail is hard to follow today, as the glamorous cinematic stage was removed soon after the shooting. However, the production company's environmental policy has been exploited by grudging islanders that resent the erasure of valuable status symbols as much as they hate their inscription in the first place. It is worth noting that the discovery of Skopelos by the MM producers should be attributed to Vangelis, an artist whose aerial photographing of the island's northern side caught the eye of film location managers. Vangelis, a wedding photography specialist, grasped the opportunity to advertise his business through his new cinematic contacts in his website, which contains a detailed account of his approach by Hollywood during the exploratory stages of MM production, when the producers were looking for the 'perfect beach' to shoot the movie. In recognition for his contribution, Vangelis was granted permission to be on location during the Skopelos filming. This visual narrative alongside his interview in a Greek TV show, appears online. Today, this distant cosmopolitanism populates websites on the Sporadiote 'cinematic romance', with a fully developed Skopelos Web as a travel guide for the island, and a MM 'wayfinder' on About.com to navigate web surfers through the cinematic signposts of Pelion, Skopelos and Skiathos. This post-touring reproduces cinematic tourist markers such as Agios Ioannis, the little chapel of MM's wedding scene. The continuity between religious iconicity and contemporary photography is suggested by the fact that Agios Ioannis sparks today photographic competitions on websites and 'on location'.

Who steals from whom and what then in this global game? It is this perplexing phenomenon I want to analyse now. This necessitates an investigation of situated notions of heritage; it also means linking national histories to present regional grudges and even global phenomena we otherwise consider irrelevant. Greek connections between knowledge and economy are firmly ingrained in the battle between progressive and retrogressive notions of 'heritage', and they have been shaping the country's political landscape since its inception. A synthetic view of situated historical experience seems to challenge the very notion of 'heritage', not just as an object to define or an experience to analyse, but also as a practice to perform. We need consider how the split that Enlightenment philosophy introduced between natural and cultural worlds – Descartes divide between body and mind – impacted on the crystallisation of a heritage discourse that had already precluded the creative potential of physis from the deal. When science began to gain ground through empirical observation and experimentation, a whole constellation of innate knowledge was decisively shunted aside as 'junk'. The change heralded science's ergonomic principles that socialist thinkers, operating within the context of unrestrained industrialisation, later condemned as 'inhumane'. Folk wisdom's exclusion from the sphere of modernity led to the dismissal of the intersubjective and ergopoetic principles on which 'primitive' cultures operated.

Ergopoesis refers to the ergetic ability humans display to learn while doing, a quality that Funkenstein (1986: 290) associated with the writings of Vico, Hobbes and Descartes. The ergetic inspiration casts humans as actors in opposition to the spectators of medieval philosophy. At the same time, these novel taxonomic arrangements encouraged a paradoxical association of ergon with the primitive, bodily properties of habitus, transforming 'working' folk into the emblem of private socialities. Privacy equates femininity, peripherality and rurality in Western discourse. The industrialisation of Western ecumene only widened the gap between the Public Man of aristocracy and the Private Woman of the countryside: while warranting invisible forms of imperialism through flows of ideas from the centre to the peripheries, a reverse flow of labour from rural areas to urban centres signed the death sentence of these pre-national cultural intimacies while

encouraging their resurrection in sterilised museums. It is not coincidental that similar labour flows became implicated in the development of overseas markets by imperial complexes. The subsequent socio-cultural restructuring of colonized countries had global repercussions, with migrations to and from colonial peripheries. The energetic humans of the metropolis and the slave labour of the colonial peripheries became homologous subject matter for political and scientific analysis 'at home'.

But those who perished with the advent of such mobilities also deserve a word here. The embodiment of rural custom in the woman of the hills who believes in evil spirits and performs those exorcisms the Church would forcefully ban from folk rituals, is both the archetypal figure of nation-building and the experimental sample of institutionalised medicine. Often associated with the emotional and perishable properties of humans, the feminised *patrída* of the hills that dances in folk rhythms and sings laments became the black, 'ethnic', witch of scientific modernity. My recourse to affective language is significant, because it sheds light on those social science leitmotifs we would rather silence, even though they have been plaguing us since the dawn of modernity. Renaissance medicine had already treated the feminized body as a site for the expression of cultural sentiments, reproducing a Christian meta-narrative which construed femininity as 'lack', 'aberration' or passivity. To the date, ergopoiesis retains the qualities of a de facto feminised and racialised cultural intimacy that survives in the informal registers of family chronicles and rites. Only the tourist commoditisation of rural custom and national heritage would grant these histories with a public face.

Similar taxonomic slip-ups defined a Greek philosophical tradition that measured ideas of 'human' against an ontological split between mind – or, rather soul - and body, but inflected them through particular religious traditions. Despite the unambiguous importance of Western Aristotelianism, Neoplatonic images of humanity persisted through the Orthodox tradition. The Greek notion of 'human' is encapsulated in two words: *ánthropos*, which denotes a being aspiring to reach the upper level of 'truth', and *vrotós*, the being that is consumed by earth. Contemporary Skiathan grudges actualize the perishable version of

humanity, while invoking its ethereal counterpart. And whereas nationalist discourse thrives on idealized understandings of humanity, not only does it always invoke the ethnic, organic uniqueness of the body politic, it also stresses the idea of blood delineations and organic-come-cultural bonding. There is no better way to talk about nationalist emotion than recalling the Greek metaphor of the nation-family that permeates Skiathan discourse. The nation-family however belongs to a wider organic whole – at least, it ought to. In a rapidly globalised ecumene that infuses political battles for global recognition into the language of material remuneration, Western crypto-colonialism continues to author the moral grammar of intercultural communication. In established tourist resorts, where the local service class has a more pronounced presence, global tourists are measured against the value of ‘knowledge’. Tourists are deemed ‘worthy visitors’ of Greece provided that they share educational capital with the Greek middle classes, nowadays educated in Northern European or American contexts. Such capital also allows for the expansion of Greek national and international networks: Greek tourist providers ‘get to know the right tourists’ and work regularly with them to amplify their local status as knowing hosts. To use the language of social theory, only through global networking is those Greeks’ international citizenship, the cardinal rule of cultural mobility, translated into national belonging and local prestige. The nation-family becomes mobile only when its images traverse the ecumene.

I use only a couple of telling examples from lack of time. Consider how ‘Irimi’s’ entrepreneurial spirit informed her account of prestigious acquaintances, including several celebrities that partook in the making of MM and local management involved in the municipality’s affairs. Irimi is married into a Greek family, but was educated in the UK as a lawyer. She owns a villa on Skiathos which she rents to tourists and visits her parents’ hotel every summer, as she lives in Volos. She was especially proud of her close relationship with Phyllida Lloyd, Rita Wilson and Tom Hanks, amongst other Hollywood personalities who, according to her account, visit the island ‘every summer’. I was unable to verify this information – if anything, other informants contradicted it, forcing me to conclude that Irimi was exaggerating. Exaggeration becomes resentment’s stylistic property when it replaces

conventional definitions of lying. Partaking in self-stereotyping, exaggeration defines an intrinsically Greek ‘poetics of manhood’ that obsesses with the preservation of honour. The fact that here it is expressed by a young businesswoman is indicative of social change that renders even emotive properties with a mobility older generations never even dreamt of. But Irini’s enlarged cosmopolitan status comes at a price for regional reciprocities: thus, she first actively discouraged me from visiting the neighbouring Skopelos, explaining that the island has ‘dirty beaches and not good food’. Though Irini’s relatives attempted to play the same game, they eventually relented and offered to help me if I decided to visit Skopelos (they did add however that neighbouring Alonissos has more to offer to fleeting visitors in ‘fresh fish’). More importantly though, Irini related to me an alleged ‘scandal’ regarding the selection of Skopelos beaches as filming locations for MM. According to her, it required a *mésón* (connection) to include ‘that island’ in the film, which was provided by Skopeliote Fani Palli-Petralia from the Ministry of Culture. In such ‘gossip’ Greek localism substitutes conventional forms of nationalism: only a cultural insider of potent socio-cultural capital can be *mesázon*, mediate, small community interests to the bigger nation-family. This small-scale manifestation of Greek nationalist discourse presents the Greek *yénos* (race) as a community of blood delineation that seeks moderate ways to promote its interests (the Aristotelian *meson* as amiable ‘in-betweenness’). Irini’s interpretation of Petralia’s Skopeliote descent becomes authoritative – truthful – simply because it coincides with the Greek vision of the nation-family.

As an emotion with a cultural-political resonance, Irini’s resentment reproduces a cultural insularity her business otherwise aspires to transcend. This is a striking cosmopolitan paradox that casts Greek heritage as inheritance – e.g. ‘our property’ not to be trespassed, exploited or outsourced. Skopelos stands in Irini’s narrative for the ‘black’ Greece that deserves ‘less’ than those official history recognises as its true heirs. Skopelos is actually presented in national histories as a less developed island of Sporades, with less mobility and a smaller contribution to make to Greek culture. This is even collaborated by its ancient history, which casts it as the product of non-Hellenic migrations, whereas its modern history is not related to migrations of the ancient Greek communities from Turkey

in the 1920s. Skiathos is supposed to be an artistic hub, with many educational centres to showcase, whereas Skopelos is supposed to be insular and underdeveloped. But Irini's discourse externalises the blame for regional disagreements, attributing all treachery to a hidden Leviathan, the nation-state. Symbolic associations of state corruption with a female political figure communicate the dystopia of economic bankruptcy – a pertinent association in the aftermath of a global crash - through the feminisation of moral deficiency. Irini's discourse implies the politician's innate evilness – hence, it retains its theological underpinnings. Familial disagreements communicate political hierarchies: an Athenian 'Eve' collaborates in Irini's narrative with Skiathos' Oriental 'brother', Skopelos, to mar the nation-family 'from within'. Petralia-Eve herself appears as a traitor of the regional family into which she was born, because she is an internal migrant from the periphery to the Hellenic centre of the nation-family. The actual target of this embodied evil is the iconic mother of Greece, the Skiathan Panayia: hence, the narrative becomes an effective metaphor only by gendering a polarised historical struggle.

I take issue here with Sahlin's analysis in 'The Sadness of Sweetness: The Native Anthropology of Western Cosmology'. Sahlins suggests in this insightful paper that the Adamic Fall, which was actualised through to Man's bodily predisposition to the Original Sin, defines Western cosmology to such an extent, that it constantly informs anthropological analysis with a discourse of suffering. Despite its radical promise to re-examine the moral underpinnings of certain motifs in anthropological research, Sahlins' reading seems to mobilise the very conservative structures it seeks to transcend: 'In Adam's fall, sinn'd we all – and life became penal and the world hostile'. With Man's fall from divine grace, the truth of Heaven's Kingdom disguised itself, giving way to the wickedness of the sensory experience instead. In every turn, the narrative seems to draw upon a social Urtext that couples honour with masculinity, presenting *ánthropos*' failure to live up to his divine master's expectations as an effemination of his will. This line of argumentation runs through the history of European philosophy from Plato to Augustine and even Enlightenment philosophes such as Leibniz seem to have fallen for it. Yet, the loss of divine for the acquisition of earthly knowledge would have been impossible without Eve's

knowing transgression of the Godly Law. It seems however that in anthropological readings of the biblical drama only Adam loses the capacity of recognise world's true nature and communicate it in the original language. Note, however, how the biblical drama of the Original Sin and Fall is reinterpreted by Irini (notably, another woman) as the symbolic theft of an 'image' of recognition (the MM Donna as Madonna). This too is a cosmopolitan enactment of enchantment or illusion, as 'prestige' literally denotes (Latin *prestigium*). For Irini, this image-theft is achieved at the expense of powerless communities in a diabolical fashion: *Diávolos* denotes, after all, both the Satan and the mediator, who acts by establishing false links, mobilising others to do his business and damaging reputations. As a male businessman with female associates, he recruits 'black' Skopeliote agents to satisfy his shameful desires at the expense of the Skiathan representatives of feminine Greece. The constant slippage in gender and ethnicity is a strategic act that unveils communicative fields as context-bound products, while sanctioning the hierarchical principles of crypto-colonialism.

The ensued Babelic chaos of social life after the Fall, figures as the outcome of Adam and Eve's migration from the heavenly to the human world. Sahlins suggests that this migration sealed the double dissimulation of natural and social reality, because it legitimised the human pursuit of individual self-interest. This analysis works as a deciphering key for Irini's narrative. Petralia's enactment of this dissimulation is related by Irini to the unauthorised migration of a profitable cinematic simulation ('Island Paradise') to both the Western economic centres and the national metropolis that reserves the right to 'recognise' Greek iconic heritage as it pleases. In Irini's version of the Original Theft, Adam is a marginal figure, whereas the embodied union that produces human knowledge is actualised through Eve's dialogue with the Snake, which becomes a phallic symbol. Outside canonical texts, Eve and the Snake, the feminine and the Orient, displace Adam to form the Original Family that 'trades' in the Original Commodity, the heavenly apple. Irini repudiates the authoritative reading of the Original Sin and thus removes the Church's institutional authorship from the picture too. This makes space in the her narrative for the inclusion of reproductive, pro-creating, techniques (e.g. using the film in tourist brochures)

that are more conducive to Marxist theory. Unlike sexist readings of the story, according to which the Adamic Fall exclusively leads to the technological manipulation of nature (the reproductive use of MM's precious apple-commodity), Irini's crypto-feminism fuses the desecrated woman (Eve, the biblical Magdalene) with an Ottomanised manipulator of impressions. How else could a politician who spends all her time perfecting the nation-state's global self-presentation appear in the eyes of those lost from the MM deal?

Though erosive of regional reciprocities, the discourse of the Original Theft is accompanied by a final act in which Skiathos is redeemed from the shadows of Oriental obscurity. This redemption stems from the Greek Orthodox tradition that emphasises the idea of resurrection, Christ's shedding of the human body of *vrotos*. It is significant that local administration partakes in the production of this symbolic resurrection. In my discussions with local authorities it was mentioned that business leadership is lost on private tourist providers such as Thompson. Initially, the globalisation of cultural taste, a sign par excellence of cultural interconnectedness, was presented by Thanasis, a local administrator, as the angel of a disorganised capitalism that defies state boundaries and national identity constraints. Only when my interlocutor referred to local transactions with Hollywood crews - the makers and traders of the new Greek 'icon' - did I detect the first cracks in this polished narrative. Local businessmen, he claimed, were treated well by the filmmakers, and vice versa, unlike the treatment reserved for Universal Pictures in Kefalonia during the Corelli shooting, which involved the production company's exploitation by locals (e.g. charging extortionate prices in exchange for the provision of hospitality). I immediately suspected that he had fashioned his 'revelations' on all possible information one can gather on my work on Kefalonian tourism, in search of a civil refashioning of Greek habitus through better policy-making. Thanasis explained that Hollywood agents offered equal promotional opportunities to Skiathos, Skopelos and Pelion, but only Skiathos seized the opportunity to turn them into profit. The recognition that different forms of capital can be exchanged comprises a socio-cultural virtue only 'knowing' subjects possess; its absence in the Skopeliote and Pelian cases must therefore be a sign of 'backwardness'.

Irini and Thanasis's hermeneutics of suspicion pose a fundamental question for human interactions: are we all out here to 'get them?' This is certainly not the case – otherwise, how would they confide these things to me? It is rather that friendships and alliances are negotiable: as a Westernised Greek researcher I hold the power to put the record straight for them, restore justice through global disclosure of scandalous transactions. The Satanic enemy in this context is double: the Western media intruders and the nation-state agents, who corrupt the Edenic purity of Sporades. The lack of regional collaborations suggests that it would be erroneous to sever such micro-politicking from wider national developments. The conservative discourse of scandalous party transactions that defined Greek political life over the last few years is a return to Oriental practices of bakshish or bribing Ottoman administrators for favours. High levels of corruption in informal regional economies were focal points of a European Bank report in 2003, which placed emphasis amongst other things on small-time tourist business. This culminated in Athens in the calamitous institution of the Zorbas commission to investigate into misuse of public funds by the previous socialist government. In 2008 this blew in the conservative government's face, as the independent Zorbas group turned its investigation against the ruling party of Nea Dimokratia. Bakshish, which first caught the eye of nineteenth-century travellers in the context of ethnographic observation of Greek peasant transactions with Western visitors, is an ethnicised trait of low-class individuals. Behind the discourse of corruption hides that of 'amoral familism', an apparently common 'Mediterranean' habit of unconditional support of family interests against those of the community and the state. Greece's home-made political factionalism that centred on familial monopolisations of leadership in the two major political parties (ND and PA.SO.K.) for decades, universalised the discourse of 'unfair dealing' as Greece's disreputable heritage. The analogy is painful: just as the small-time crooks of the tourist trade that strip visitors of their money, so the political 'sharks' of Athens exploit small island communities to promote their own family interests. When set against the late-2008 background of violent anti-government protests that dropped hotel bookings by 40% and prompted Prime Minister Kostas Karamanlis to announce emergency

measures to boost tourism, complaints about ‘unfair dealing’ become a global cause célèbre.

The violent anti-government demonstrations of late 2008 deserve a word here. The fear of Islamic contamination stated itself in late 2008 when, following an altercation between police and a group of youths in the Exarcheia district of Athens, a 15-year old student of immigrant parentage, Alexis Grigoropoulos, was killed by a police officer. The murder inflamed the Greek public to such an extent that rioting crowds in Athens and Thessaloniki generated mayhem with demonstrations and extended violence that lasted for three weeks. Solidarity demonstrations, riots and, in some cases, clashes with local police also took place in a number of European cities. As global media discourse began to draw unsavoury comparisons with the riots of the pre-1974 political restoration during Greece’s last junta, the temporal coordinates of the debate became distorted. As the Karamanlis government was elected with the promise to reform the social and economic system so that Greece becomes more integrated into Europe, the debate upon political corruption was arbitrarily tied to the Albanian identity of the deceased student. Unfortunately, the Dekemvriana of 2008 coincided with a visit by Thomas Hammarberg, Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, to northern borderline regions that have a larger concentration of ethnic minorities. Hammarberg’s report on his visit highlighted the problematic treatment of Muslim minorities by the Greek state, cautioning the authorities on issues regarding citizenship rights. His report came as an additional blow to Greece’s prestige, because it unequivocally questioned its ability to ‘synchronise’ with socio-political changes at European level. The sudden return of the crypto-colonial demon was grafted onto a predominantly iconic version of modern Greek identity.

Instead of analysing the discourse Greek corruption as an exceptional case, I would rather stress that these 2008 incidents are not peculiarly Greek. Rather, the idea of image-theft is emblematic of Western political modernity at large. This cautionary note matches the workings of technological globalisation that crafts or aibrushes images. Although the global consumers of media products display individual interpretive potential, there are

codes and norms that will be recognised in the same way by the majority, because they reproduce familiar doxic tropes. By doxa I refer to the naturalisation of subjective socio-cultural orders by representational centres that want to achieve some degree of social cohesion. There is no better example for such structural and systemic limitations than that proffered by two planes crashing on America's twin architectural icons. Indicative of the national trauma was that post-9/11 movies that reproduced the fantasy of threat were banned or made available to the public only several months after the World Trade Centre tragedy (e.g. *Collateral Damage*, *Big Trouble*, *Sidewalks of New York* and *Windtalkers*). When the fear dissipated, new cinematic stories of destruction of American democratic principles by Arab terrorists recycled the tropes of honourable nationalism and civilisational manliness. The collapse of iconic narratives of American domination led to a replacement of Derrida's Marxist spectre with another phantom (for a global fandom) that was certainly more true to its religious origins than MacCarthy's anti-communist parlance. Today, the imminence of terror has been replaced in telecommunicative complexes by recorded threats and photographic reminders of global terrorist suspect no. 1, Osama Bin Laden. As the best representative of an absent Islamic presence, iconic 'Bin Ladens' now perform the very redemptive rituals American folk would rather save for themselves. Terrorist operators learn to capitalise on the televised value of their abhorrent deeds, but media industries also seem to have run out of ways to speak the word against crime without staging it in the first place. To recapitulate then: the visual narrative of otherness retains its theological underpinnings in every part of the Westernised world. Not only is Greece part of this world, but also, due to its historical trajectory it inhabits its absent philosophical core together with its unacknowledged progenitor, Islam.

Now that I established the presence of global philosophical nodes, I return to Greek regional politics to examine the role of institutionalised religion in the MM controversy. More precisely, I would like to examine the relationship between the situated ambitions of an emergent service class on Sporades and the macro-social aspirations of a nation-state that seems to be constantly 'losing the boat' of modernity. Situated notions of heritage become the bridge: on Skiathos, custom originates primarily in the history of Evangelistria,

which was constructed by a group of 'kollyvades' monks who were forced to abandon the Holy Mount Athos following a dispute over the celebration of canonical requiem mass on Saturdays (a return to ancient Christian custom) instead of Sundays. Textual narratives produced by the monastery hold that this symbolic relocation of the Christian centre to the Greek margins 'profoundly influenced the life of the Skiathan islanders and the work of its literati'. This certainly reifies the exilic essence of Skiathan identity that postmodern business strives to transcend. Such influence is encoded in the very name of the island, which for some refers to the shadow the Holy Mount casts over Skiathos. But the actuality of institutional influence was also preserved in institutional-religious definitions of 'cosmopolitanism': the term 'cosmopolitan' alludes in the Orthodox context to the patronage powerful cosmopolitans (emperors, European kings and Ottoman sultans) conferred on monasteries. The arrangement, reciprocal in nature, provided in return recognition of those cosmopolitans' sovereignty by the Church. This is a fine replication of the bakshish practice that in 2008 tarnished the Greek government's reputation. The conservative 'scandals' involved a wealthy Orthodox monastery's trading in cheap tracts of lakeside property for prime public real estate, including a housing venue for the 2004 Athens Olympics. The Olympics were a major opportunity for Greece to restore its global prestige. As it happens, the enterprise exposed administrative incompetence and unfair dealings too, with cases of migrant labour exploitation and minority displacements amongst other things. Against this political background, Evangelismos becomes an exposition of the nation's 'dirty laundry', encouraging by extension an unbearable feminisation of Skiathan identity the very moment the island strives to come to terms with the MM blow. The skiá of Skiathos emerges from this talk as Greece's Holy Spirit, a ghost of things bygone planted in the heart of the Aegean Sea. This discourse populates the cameras of global visitors to the Monastery, whose facade is embellished with the twin conservative symbols: the Greek and the Byzantine flag. This twin narrative of Greek identity by the Church locates resentment within a religious nationalist narrative that excludes Satanic Islam from Greek culture. As anyone can observe in Evangelistria's self-presentation, only Byzantium and Orthodoxy define modern Greek identity.

Skiathian relations with the 'centre' retain an emotive ambivalence that was brought to the fore with the election of an independent Mayor, Nikos Plomaritis, in 2006. In 2008 the Mayor launched a complaint to the Minister of Maritime Trade, Aegean and Island Policy concerning the abolition of fast maritime connections between Thessaloniki-Skiathos and Volos-Skiathos by Hellenic Seaways. In his open letter he condemned the disconnection of the island from the rest of the country the very moment Skiathan authorities were spending millions to enhance local tourism. Plomaritis' initiative gestures towards a globalisation of resentment, the only reactive mechanism marginal places can direct against national centres. Although Greek gossip has it that Skiathos currently serves as an investment ground for Athenian millionaires, Plomaritis' complaints betray dissatisfaction with the Greek centre's responses to local needs. Matched with a firm Skiathan belief that holds centralised political manoeuvres responsible for Skopelos' involvement in MM, the mayor's outrage projects the practice of Oriental 'underhand dealings' back to its official source: the nation-state. Skiathan global aspirations reflect the social mobility of its new generation, contrasted in the MM context with the backwardness of the Skopeliote neighbours, who care little about their educational betterment and revel instead in 'dirty' agreements with politicians to bolster their economic profile.

The initial silence around the film on the municipality's official website confirmed its image-theft, an iconic absence proudly compensated by the image of Evangelistria. Thanks to the symbol creator of the mayor's office in Chora, the Municipality has now set up a new website that includes replicas of the tourist brochures I was also given when I visited the Town Hall in the summer of 2009. Because some of the digitally manipulated images bear striking similarity to some of the photos Vangelis took during the filming of the story on Skopelos, one suspects an intentional copyright violation that restores the regional order MM producers upset. Stealing Skopeliote cinematic locales and matching them with snapshots of the Skiathan 'paradise' signifies a digital retrieval of the lost Edenic world of Sporades, an attempt to 'make whole what has been smashed' by the coming of technological modernity. Though this digital justice is achieved by an Oriental theft, it

should be understood as a negative reciprocity that enables a creative ‘fusion’ of traditions, allowing Skiathos’ symbolic re-admission into the European Eden.

The winding and ramified analysis I presented had two aims. The first aim was to tie Sporadiote memory to the chronicles of Greek nation-building. Sporadiote inflections of the universal Greek discourse of responsibility extend to the most important oath-taking in the history of Greek nation-building that nineteenth-century revolutionaries took on the first Greek flag. This asserts the universal inclination Greeks display to valorise their belittled habitus, while concealing the shameful Ottoman legacies of Greek nation-building. Still, however, it was peculiar that, despite the fact that MM turned the two islands into even more popular tourist destinations, some Skiathans continued to express resentment against the national centre, foreign tourists and the media industries that could only hinder their development. A website on MM even records instances of actual remuneration of all the locals who partook in the filming of MM, a sure sign of cultural literacy on the part of the hosted media industry. There was, however, an unintentional slippage in the rationale of selection of filmed locales that touched upon a raw: the vast majority of them were Skopeliote, not Skiathan. Skiathos might not have served as MM’s iconic repository, but it had provided the literary material for the film. Though I had no time to examine this literary connection, I should mention here that the cinematic narrative showcased a unique feature of Skiathan cosmopolitanism that we find in the works of its most accomplished novelist, Alexander Papadiamantis. However, for a country proud for its iconic cultural mobility, the separation of iconic from symbolic narratives could be perceived as an insult. It is significant that the Skiathans, who always deemed that they possess more cultural capital within the nation-family than their poor semi-Ottoman neighbours, expressed more discontent. Left with no icons to display to the rest of the world, they found themselves in the position of those they used to ridicule as mere ‘peasants’.

Aniconic self-presentations can only be associated with the Greek historical archenemy, Ottoman Islam. Islamic aniconism wrongly implies lack of communicative potential and therefore lack of symbolic creativity that Greeks would view as a basic human right in the

context of creative industries. Contemporary Islamism, wrongly confused in popular discourse with the culturally prolific Islamic legacies of art and philosophy, blows up, maims and kills; it does not create. Contrariwise, the iconic poetics of Greek identity provide a gateway to European Eden, granting even marginal islands with global citizenship. The musical elements of the film were imported northern products that the makers of MM adapted to the scenic potential of the film to produce a generic tourist experience; though signs of (cultural) capital mobility, they were not ‘native’. As a result, the recognitive battle took place in the visual domain, and Skiathans lost it.

I too, a Westernised migrant, initially missed the cause of their resentment. The enlarged cosmopolitan vision I spent over a decade honing away from home, had a crippling effect on my ability to navigate through, and comprehend, the intimate regimes of Greek knowledge. My ‘script’ analysed the destructive processes of nation-building as much as it retold the typical conundrums of academic knowledge production that necessitates the establishment of distance with one’s subject. The principal enactment of resentment was, of course, mine, as an anthropological spectator who aspires to rearrange her identity into a new meaningful whole, outside the constraints of her birthplace. This bittersweet admission places my native cosmological stance at the centre of this paper, that certainly raises more questions than those it seeks to answer.

Rodanthi’s monograph on Northern Sporades was published with [Routledge](#).