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**URBAN TOURISM IN ATHENS:  
TOURIST MYTHS AND IMAGES**

**SPYRIDOULA PENNY TRAVLOU**

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**Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,  
Department of Geography, University of Durham**

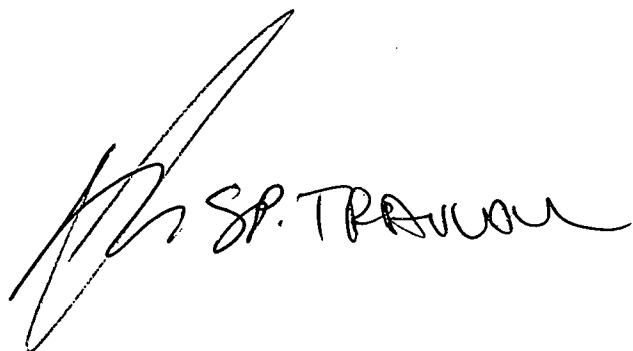
**December 2000**



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**Declaration**

I declare that the work presented in this thesis is my own, unless stated otherwise.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized initial 'S' followed by the text 'P. TRAVUN'.

**Spyridoula Penny Travlou**

## **Urban Tourism in Athens: Tourist Myths and Images**

**Doctor of Philosophy      January 2001**

This thesis explores and analyses the mythical quality of modern Athens as experienced by tourists. It is an exploration of the tourist gaze upon the Athenian landscape, as well as an account of how tourists narrate its urban mythology. This research is largely concerned with the relationship of time and space through memory, exploring the interplay between the spatial arrangement of urban elements, temporality and the experience of the city. Athens is viewed as a city marked by a temporal collage where different historical periods are juxtaposed. This juxtaposition gives Athens the character of a deconstructed city. The city is made present through spatialised remainders, her *genius loci*. This thesis thus analyses the relationship between Athens past and the present, the strangely familiar and the stereotypically exotic, as interwoven within an urban landscape imagined, gazed and finally, narrated by foreign tourists. The core argument of this work is that the Athenian landscape embodies an urban mythology constructed by the nineteenth century romantic travellers: these, through their writings, fashioned the stereotypical imagery of Athens. Modern tourists are the consumers of these myths. Like their nineteenth century predecessors, tourists stroll around the city following the traces of their memory - key landmarks and symbols, recognising what they have already known; feeling nostalgic for the past -their past, fragmenting the landscape into different historic layers, depopulating it from its present inhabitants, orientalising it. In this work I explore the transmission and reinvention of the myths of Athens through guidebooks, travel brochures, guided tours and tourist photographs. The exploration of the different images of Athens as visualised by tourists leads to a discussion of gendered, orientalised, literary, photographic and cartographic aspects of the Athenian urban landscape. The theoretical framework of the thesis is based on post-modernism, post-structuralism and semiotics. My research methods have been qualitative, including both in-depth interviews and participant observation, following tourists around the city and participating in their activities. I also analysed the ways tourists 'gaze' and photograph the city. My intention is to draw -metaphorically speaking- a mental map including the sites visited, consumed and experienced by tourists.



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## PROLOGUE

[*About the city of Zoe*]: The traveller roams all around and has nothing but doubts: he is unable to distinguish features of the city, the features he has in his mind also begin to mingle.

(Calvino 1997: 11)

The Greece I knew was a Greece of novels and poems, of historiographies and ethnographies, of the occasional television documentary and coffee-table picture book. The Athens with which I was most familiar was an Athens long past: the home of Thucydides and Plato. I did not believe that I would find it intact in the present. But I was not at all sure what, precisely, I would find in its place.

(Faubion 1993: 23)

### I.

In Italo Calvino's book *Invisible Cities*, the thirteenth century Italian explorer Marco Polo narrates his travels around the world to the Mongol Emperor Kublay Khan. He describes cities that exist in imagination, constructing a distinct mythical quality for each, celebrating their uniqueness. His description, however, is not entirely a creation of his imagination: every single city carries a particular characteristic of his hometown, the multiplicitous Venice. His stories are fabrications of his memory of Venice, recollections of a city as she used to be a long time ago. Ironically, the above quotation reveals his personal anxiety of accepting the possible changes that occurred in Venice during his travels abroad. Through his description of the imaginary city of Zoe, he refers to the difficulty of the traveller (Marco Polo) to recognise the city (Venice), as there is nothing in the setting to remind him of that particular image of the city he keeps in his mind. In a different book, *Modern Greek Lessons*, the author James Faubion (1993), an ethnographer rather than a traveller, reveals his own recollections of another multiplicitous city, Athens. Faubion is familiar with the Greek Capital due to his interest in ancient Greek literature and history, but he admits that his knowledge of the city is limited to its glorious past. In his mind, he, also, carries has an imaginary image of the city: the image of a long-lost past survived and remembered through myths and legends. He knows, however, that he cannot expect from the present Athenian landscape to resemble his imaginary



city. He is, in fact, as much puzzled as the traveller to the city of Zoe about whether he would be able to find recognisable landmarks and traces of the past within the modern cityscape.

The previous lines may be used as an outline of the thesis that follows. Between Marco Polo's imaginary persona of Venice and Faubion's multi-storied Athens, there is the Athens of the tourist gaze and narratives. This thesis aims to explore and analyse the mythical quality of modern Athens as constructed and consumed by tourists. What such an exploration seeks is not the *what* of Athens, but the various ways by which Athens is conceived. In other words, what is brought into question is the *how* of Athens. Like Marco Polo and Faubion, tourists visit, experience and narrate a city familiar and at the same time strange. Athens, «the cradle of Western civilisation» and «birthplace of democracy» is a city deeply embedded in the masonry of Western self-consciousness. Two centuries of Classical education have entitled a Western tourist visiting Athens to feel that s/he has embarked on a journey back home, to the very roots of his/her culture. The Athens of the Acropolis, democracy and reason is populated by figures familiar to the Western tourist: Plato, Socrates and Aristotle. The same city, however, is also the capital of the modern Greek State, a Balkan political entity of a life spanning less than two hundred years and of a recent history and culture largely unknown to the majority of foreign tourists. This thesis, therefore, intends to analyse the relationship between the past and the present, the strangely familiar and the stereotypically exotic, as interwoven within an urban landscape imagined, gazed and finally, narrated by foreign tourists. It is an exploration of the successive layers of the urban mythology of Athens and their interrelationships.

More than that, this research is largely concerned with the relationship of time and space through memory, exploring the interplay of spatial arrangement of elements, temporality and the experience of the city. Athens is looked at as a city marked by a temporal collage where different historical periods are juxtaposed; it is made present through spatialised remainders, its *genius loci*. It is not only that Athens forms an absent origin, but that its past remains and becomes present; according to Derrida the city owes its existence to ruins (Bonhomme and Derrida 1996). Athens provides an

occasion to explore the differential relations of past and present, beyond temporal relationships of origins, antecedents and copies. It offers a chance to see the urban landscape as the arena of spatial praxis.

## II.

Modern Greece and her relationship with her past has already been the subject of some ethnographic works (Campbell 1964; Du Boulay 1974; Herzfeld 1987; Faubion 1993; Sutton 1998). However, these works are not as many as someone might have expected: «even when anthropologists turn their attention directly to Europe, modern Greece [...] gets astonishingly short shift» (Herzfeld 1987: 5). A possible explanation for this situation is the difficulty to study elements of otherness, the key-subject of anthropological inquiry, in Greek society, due to Greece's ambiguous suspension between the historically formulated symbolic poles of the European and the Other (Oriental). In this respect, the majority of the few ethnographic studies on Greece, following the tradition of the 'Mediterranean anthropological school', focused on the village ethnography genre, observing the everyday life of small communities and their attitudes towards and beliefs about their historical background and present national identity (Herzfeld 1987). Even in the case of studies focusing on urban settings, as Faubion's (1993), the Greek culture and identity is observed through the eyes of a small community (a bourgeois intelligencia).

Whereas my work, in a sense, belongs to the same ethnographic approach as the ones that preceded it, there is a difference of focal point and perspective. My thesis does not focus on the Greek society itself as much as on its perception by its foreign visitors. Being an Athenian, a member of the host culture, I use ethnography (from a geographical perspective) in order to gain an understanding of how my hometown is gazed by visitors, how a culture familiar to me is transformed and commodified into an unfamiliar -and for that marketable- tourist product. If we accept the dictum that ethnography has been a method of the West to look at the Other, this work could be a look of the Other at itself, as reflected upon a Western epistemological mirror. However, as Herzfeld (1987: 6) notes, Mediterranean cultures «create a problem of category ascription: they are neither exotic nor wholly familiar». Regardless of the

ambiguity of the boundary between familiar and exotic in the case of Modern Greece - and the importance of this dualism for the viewpoint of the ethnographer notwithstanding- there is the undeniable geographical reality of Athens: a major Mediterranean city that hosts a considerable number of tourists each year and is being transformed and evolving partly in response to their demands.

### **III.**

Defining my research as mainly ethnographic, I found it necessary to employ participant observation as a method for collecting data. During the fieldwork, I became a kind of stroller (*my role*), gazing the tourist gaze (*activity*), listening the narratives of tourists (*actors*), experiencing a city (*place*) which I have already known as a native, this time through the experience of my interviewees. Any physical setting can become the basis for a social situation as long as it has people present and engaged in activities. In my case, the tourist district of Athens was one of the major places to practice my participant observation. I became a part of the so-called 'tourist bubble', gazing Athens through the eyes of tourists whose gaze was often through a window. During the course of my fieldwork, I wasn't anymore simply the local, I was the researcher who was looking at the tourists to understand what they were looking at. This in-between position made me reconsider my role as a researcher. At the beginning, I thought that I was just a native studying her own society (and city); although this seems to be a distinct advantage for some theorists (e.g. Srinivas 1952), the majority question the validity of such research (Aguilar 1981; Stepherson and Greer 1981).<sup>1</sup> Later I realised, however, that I was a native only to the physical setting, that of Athens, but a total outsider to the actors - tourists and tour guides- and their activities. Being a stranger in the Simmelian notion, I had the advantage to consider myself free of commitments to the people I was observing and, therefore, avoid being biased (Simmel 1950). My position, therefore, as a researcher stands somewhere in the middle: at the same time I felt being both an outsider and an insider to the social situation I was asked to observe,

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<sup>1</sup> Stepherson and Greer are particularly critical towards the validity of research findings collected within familiar settings to the ethnographer. They pose certain issues to whether the collected data is objective and unbiased: «Will researchers recognise patterns in a society which they are thoroughly acculturated? Are there problems in selecting what to study? Will researchers give full coverage to situations with which they are already familiar? Is the researcher who is a 'native' in a better position to elucidate meanings in events?» (see Burgess 1984: 22).

describe and analyse.<sup>2</sup> My dual character was apparent on various levels of my participation in tourist activities as for example guided tours. First, when I tried to gain access to the coach tours, I was confronted as an outsider by the tour-operators and coach managers, who saw me as someone largely ignorant of the whole tourism business. Some were even suspicious about my motives, thinking that I was doing a market research about the quality of services, so they did not allow me to participate in their bus tours. However, being Greek and, therefore, an insider to their society, facilitated my access to some tours. For the operators who co-operated with me I was not simply a student, but a *Greek* student researching tourism in Athens, someone whose findings might be of some future help to the local tourism industry. Sometimes I caught myself consciously playing this role in order to gain access more easily. My participation in the guided tours, however, had to abide with certain rules. I was not allowed to interview tourists, as tour-operators did not want me to access information concerning their company and services. As a result, I had to reconsider my role as a researcher: should I be an overt or covert observer and participant (Cook 1995: 134)? At the end, I decided to be an overt observer, telling both guides and tourists the purpose of my presence in the coach. Surprisingly, both groups approached me and started talking to me. I didn't need to ask them for an interview, they deliberately became my interviewees. On the one hand, guides, like tour-operators, saw me as a *Greek* student researching tourism, an insider. Furthermore, since I was not one of their employers, I was not viewed as an intruder and, so, I was allowed to be present in their intimate conversations with other guides or coach drivers, when they were discussing their complaints. This way I had the chance to gain access to both front and back regions of the Athenian tourism industry.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, for the tourists I represented the *local*, the *Greek*, and, at the same time, I was also their fellow-passenger, sitting next to them in the coach, listening to the guide and gazing at the same things through the window. Due to my role as a fellow-passenger, many tourists

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<sup>2</sup> Burgess experienced a similar situation while researching Roman Catholic schools. On the one hand, he was familiar with the general educational system. On the other hand, he was unfamiliar with Roman Catholic schools is specific. That experience made him realise that the debate concerning the degree of familiarity or strangeness was over-polarised. For him, the co-existence of the familiar and strange in a social setting was possible (see Burgess 1984: 25).

<sup>3</sup> According to Erving Goffman «a region may be defined as any place that is bounded to some degree by barriers to perception» (Goffman 1959: 109). Due to these boundary lines two discrete regions are

were not inhibited to respond to my questions.<sup>4</sup> Finally, my dual role as both insider and outsider became apparent during the oral performance of the guide. As MacCannell (1976: 590) quoting Goffman argues that:

given a particular performance as the point of reference, we can distinguish three crucial roles on the basis of function: those who perform; those performed to; and outsiders who neither perform in the show nor observe it.

Before my participation in the coach tours, I was an outsider. I did not know what a guided tour around Athens was about; I was excluded from both front and back regions. When I started taking part in the coach tours, I was upgraded from an outsider to a 'non-person', in Goffman's (1959: 150) terms, one of those people

who [...] are present during the interaction but in some respects do not take the role either of performer or of audience, nor do they [...] pretend to be what they are not.

As a non-person, I had the advantage to move freely from front to back regions and vice versa, at the same time avoiding any obligation to the performer and audience. Thus, for all reasons discussed above, I was indirectly an insider in both groups.

Besides participant observation, I also used the method of in-depth interviews. These interviews (sometimes taped, more often informal) were semi-structured, using some core questions to guide the conversation. The interviewees, however, were the ones who built the conversation, by speaking freely about their experiences, opinions and concerns. I hope that any biased conduct of the discussion was avoided. In the cases where there was a very limited time for individual interviews, I used focus groups where all my interviewees participated in the interview at the same time.

I interviewed forty-six tourists of different nationalities, educational background, age group, sex and type of holidays. I tried to include in my research representatives of all three major tourist types: organised mass tourists, organised independent tourists and

---

emerged: the front and the back region. The latter is the «place where te performance is given» and the latter is «where the suppressed facts make an appearance» (Goffman 1959: 114).

<sup>4</sup> I believe that, even if the tourists knew from the very beginning the purpose of my presence in the bus, they did not feel under observation, as I had to behave as discreetly as possible so that the guide or the bus driver would not think that I was interviewing their clients. Since I was not allowed to interview

completely independent tourists (Cohen 1972). My initial plan was to interview British tourists only, but during my first fieldwork I came to realise that this would lead to a non-representative picture of views and attitudes of tourists visiting Athens. Given the limitation of language, I decided to interview English speaking tourists, including Americans, Australians, New Zealanders, South Africans, Canadians and British. As for their age group, that varied mainly according to the type of holidays they were taking. For example, the people I interviewed in the Students' Inn were mostly independent travellers in their twenties, whereas those participating in the «Athens by Night» tours -part of their package holidays in Greece, were older.

#### **IV.**

This thesis is based on my research between 1997 and 1998, during which period I spent two fieldwork seasons in Athens. My first field trip to Athens was from June 1997 to February 1998 and the second from May to September 1998. During the first field season my aims were to introduce myself to the place of my research and my key informants. I wanted to have a first taste of tourism in Athens, trying to identify the main tourist sites of the city, the tourists who visit them and the main activities of tourists during their sojourn in Athens. This allowed me to focus my research on particular groups of tourists, sites and activities and also to decide on the research methods that I would follow. My key informants included people employed in the tourism industry, from tour organisers to tour guides and group leaders, as well as people from various state organisations dealing with tourism issues (e.g. Greek National Tourism Organisation, Ministry of Culture, Prefecture of Athens). In particular, I co-operated with eight tour-operators who gave me access to most activities they had on offer. Key Tours, Chat Tours, G.O. Tours, Zinon Tours and Hop-In Tours let me participate in their guided tours around Athens; Independent Traveller to their two days tour; George's Travel to their «Cultural and Archaeological Tours»; and Trust Hellenic Tours to both their coach tours and «Athens by Night» shows. The activities as well as the clients of these tours varied: they were distinguished in organised guided tours for independent travellers, package holiday-makers, conference

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tourists, I could not use a tape-recorder or keep written notes during the tour. I found that the only way to collect data was to sit next to the tourists and talk with them in an informal manner.



delegates, «Athens by Night» tours, and specialised tours as part of seminar courses on ancient Greek history and culture.

During the same period and until the end of my first fieldwork season in February 1998, I participated in a project run by the Department of Urban Planning and Architecture, National Technical University of Athens on «Urban Tourism and the Regeneration of the Historic Centre of Athens». Colleagues from this group gave me valuable advice on the literature and facilitated my access to Greek government sources and archives. I, thus, came in touch with key-informants in the Ministry of Urban Planning and Environment, the Greek National Tourist Organisation and the Municipality of Athens. I also participated in board meetings during which topics of interest relevant to my thesis were discussed. Part of these discussions were used in my thesis as secondary data.

During my second fieldwork season, in the summer 1998, I continued my participant observation in the tourist district and interviews. This time, I interviewed mainly independent travellers in hostels and hotels. I also collected secondary and bibliographical data, as well as supplementary information about guidebooks.

## V.

This thesis is structured in nine chapters: **Chapter one** defines and analyses the determinants of tourism urbanisation, focusing on the metamorphosis of urban space to a consumable tourist product. The chapter is divided in two sections. The first section introduces theories and definitions relevant to the concept of ‘urban tourism’, ‘cultural tourism’ and ‘heritage tourism’, as perceived by both academics and the tourism industry, responsible for the construction of the tourist image of Athens. The second part of the chapter focuses on the case of Athens as a tourist destination. Here a summary description of the present condition of tourism in Athens is given, as reflected in official statistical data. My intention, in this part, is to framework the tourist product as designed and promoted by the tourism industry.

In **chapter two** I focus on the construction of the mythological elements that shaped the symbolic landscape of Athens. This chapter begins with an overview of the theoretical concepts used in this analysis, drawing an analogy between the symbolic landscape and linguistics: I argue that the symbolic landscape is a cultural text which can be read; the myths embodied within it serve as a language, a system of communication. The main argument of the chapter is, then, introduced: that the Greek (symbolic) landscape represents the cosmogonic mythology of the western civilisation. I attempt to trace the origins of this mythology and the circumstances under which it was constructed, narrated and consumed. In particular, I search for the narratives through which this cosmogony was crystallised and described. I analyse the main myths in relation to the constructed narratives and give examples of different discourses on the symbolic landscape of Athens. The nostalgic impulses for a past that was never experienced; the orientalisation of the Athenian landscape; the subtraction of some of the historical layers from the Athenian palimpsest are the main myths that outline the tourist perception about Athens.

In **chapter three**<sup>5</sup> I discuss the process of the re-creation of Athens or, more accurately, its re-invention. The chapter begins with a brief description of the urban history of modern Athens, from its first master plan in 1830's to its present cityscape, referring to the neo-classic Athens of 1900's, the modernised Athens of 50's to 70's and, finally, the postmodern/deconstructed Athens of today, which somehow embodies both previous epochs. Throughout this retrospective analysis I examine the transformations of the urban fabric of Athens: some of these were characterised by an interest in the city's past while some others were characterised by the erasure of architectural forms proclaiming historical continuity. This retrospective analysis of the urban evolution of Athens offers an insight into its fragmented cityscape of contrasting memorial and erased spaces and, also, into the ways tourists perceive it and visualise it. The second part of the chapter examines the ways urban planners and tourist consultants promote Athens in conjunction with its present built environment. In this section, I pay attention to all these policies and plans taken by the government and

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<sup>5</sup> Part of this chapter is included in the paper 'The City and Topologies of Memory' co-authored with Dr. Mike Crang and published in the academic journal *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 2001, vol. 19, pp. 161-177 (see Crang and Travlou 2001).

local authorities as for instance, the plan to create an archaeological park in the centre of Athens. Some historic periods are appraised while other ones are omitted from the promoted gaze.

**Chapter four**<sup>6</sup> is an attempt to look at symbolic representations of the Athenian landscape as narrated and mapped within guidebooks. A semiotic analysis of the existing travel discourse to Athens is followed, with an emphasis on the major myths that shape the symbolic space of Athens. In particular, I describe myths such as the glorification of its past, the orientalisation of its present and the reification of its population. I analyse foreign guidebooks -old and recent publications- arguing the travel narratives describing Athens have little changed since the publication of the first guidebook to Athens (Murray 1845). At the end of the chapter, I refer also to tourist brochures published by the Greek National Tourist Organisation comparing their narratives with those of guidebooks.

The scope of **chapter five** is the analysis of oral narratives on the Athenian locus as presented by tour-guides. My argument is that tour-guides embrace and reproduce in their story-telling the myths discussed in previous chapters. My intention in this chapter is not only the portrayal of these myths, but also the linguistic and idiolectic variations used to describe them. My analysis and interpretation of guides' oral performances is based on the ethnography of speaking. As such, I describe the narrative structures and performances as speech events. Then, I examine the relationship of the tour-guides with their audience, the tourists. My main aim, here, is to examine the role of oral narratives in the social construction of tourist sights and, in general, tourist gaze and experience. Finally, I examine the way tourists reflect upon these oral narratives, how exactly they consume the gaze.

In **chapter six**, I focus on a dynamic tourism performance, that of walking as practised by pedestrian tourists. Here, I analyse the paths they follow, as well as their bodily movement within the Athenian urban structure. I argue that through this bodily activity

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<sup>6</sup> This chapter appears as a paper in the forthcoming book *Tourism: Between Place and Performance* (see Crang and Coleman).

the city is confronted as a series of fragments and trajectories. I then examine the relationship between the movement of tourists in the urban space and the product of this activity: the visual images of the city as experienced, perceived and narrated by the tourists. In brief, I analyse tourists' spatial narratives.

In the next two chapters my analysis is focused on two instances of tourists' contact with the Athenian landscape and its present inhabitants. In **chapter seven**, I examine the representation of Athens as an «in transit» destination place experienced within closed spaces at airports, hotel lounges and ports. In **chapter eight**, I analyse the urban nightscape as consumed by tourists. I concentrate my analysis on two characteristics nocturnal spaces: luminosity and danger. First, I explore tourist spaces as pleasure zones during the night, examining the activities and attitudes of tourists, as well as the performances presented to foreign tourists. Second, I examine the way nightscapes become spaces of fear. In particular, I focus my analysis on the exploration of women's visualisation of the Athenian nightscape, arguing that women experience the urban space in a totally different manner than men. The above two examples of tourists' acquaintance with the present city function as fables, narrating myths which are part of the mythology of modern Athens. The modern urban structures create a new mythology which goes beyond the one constructed by nineteenth century romantic travellers.

Finally, **chapter nine** gives the conclusions of this study. Its first part includes the conclusions of each preceding chapter; in the second part these are synthesised into a view of the tourists' experience of modern Athens, as resulting from the present research.

## CHAPTER 1: URBAN TOURISM IN ATHENS

### 1.1 Introduction

This chapter intends to define and analyse the determinants of tourism urbanisation. Its focal point is the actual metamorphosis of urban space to a consumable tourist product. To understand this relationship, it is necessary, first, to define it as a term and then to analyse it as a typology of tourism within the urban environment. For this reason, the chapter is divided into two sections, the theoretical and the applied. In the first part, I shall examine theories and definitions relevant to the concept of urban tourism. I shall refer to the conceptualisation of the phenomenon as perceived and treated by both academics and tourism industry. By the latter, I mean the regional, national, continental and international bodies and organisations dealing with tourism. The inclusion of their arguments in this chapter follows from the assumption that, in the case of Athens, their views are influential to the policy-makers and planners of the tourist industry who, by their turn, are responsible for the construction of the city's tourist image. However, the way the tourist industry perceive and manipulate urban tourism is quite different from the academic approach. The tourist industry treat the term 'urban tourism' as synonymous to 'cultural-heritage tourism'. For this reason, I shall start the analysis in reverse order, from the definition of cultural tourism to that of urban tourism. The above terms will be described in relation to their applicability to the European case, and in particular, to the Mediterranean city.

In the second part of the chapter, I shall focus on the case of Athens as a tourist destination. I shall relate the previous discussion with the present condition of Athenian tourism. In particular, my intention is to framework the tourist product as designed and promoted by the tourism industry. In fact, my narrative style shall imitate theirs. I will use official statistical data to interpret the present situation of city tourism. In addition, I will use as a guideline two research projects which deal with the phenomenon. Both projects were conducted by academic teams but, literally speaking,

consumed by government and public tourist organisations. Their conceptualisation of city tourism is, thus, concentrated on the economic regeneration of Athens.

## **1.2 Mapping Urban Tourism in Europe.**

According to official statistics, Europe was the world's major destination for international tourism in 1995 (WTO 1996). Despite being the second smallest of the seven continents, Europe attracts half of all international tourists. In 1980 and 1994, thirteen out of the world's top twenty tourism destinations were European countries, with France in the first place with 11.23% share of arrivals world-wide (WTO 1996). Furthermore, in 1989, there were about 250 million international arrivals in the continent, which was actually 67% of the world total. Meanwhile, in the 90's, it is estimated that every year, about fifteen million international tourists arrive in Europe, a further three hundred million European citizens travel to European countries other than their own and over a billion trips are made by people within their own country of residence (Davidson 1992, 1998). The predictions for the European tourism industry in the twenty-first century are very optimistic. For instance, in the conference *1992 Tourism in Europe*, one of the speakers, Alan Jefferson, foretold that:

Europe will undoubtedly continue to dominate the international travel picture [...]. Compared with the rest of the world, practically all Western Europeans enjoy above average standards of living and this is matched by longer than average holiday entitlement and higher than average disposable income. Europe offers the sort of cultural experience which is appealing to long-haul travellers.

(after Davidson 1998:17)

This view reflects the image of Europe as a continent of rich and varied heritage and culture, attracting visitors from all around the globe, as well as motivating Europeans to visit places in both their own and neighbouring countries. It also reflects a change in the tourist preference towards cultural oriented holidays. For Urry, this shift is justifiable, as the inherent nature of tourist gaze is towards places that are culturally determined (Urry 1990, 1992). Taking this argument one step further, MacCannell (1976) claims that, in a sense, all tourism is a cultural experience. These views explain, hence, the major trend of tourism to move away from the traditional elements, the

'3s': sea, sand, and towards a culture-based, short break tourism (Urry 1990; Williams and Shaw 1991; Page 1993; Davidson 1998). In 1995, for instance, an article in *The Economist* pointed out that, because of the new trend of taking several holidays a year, tourists want a variety of different experiences which the industry of sun, sea and sand cannot provide. The same view is adopted by the *European Commission's Green Paper*, where it is declared that:

The mobility of holiday makers in terms of changing destinations, seasonality and more active behaviour is increasing. Present trends indicate that holiday makers' preferences are shifting away from traditional products offered by sun resorts to more 'cultural' activities ('cultural' to be understood in a broad sense) [...] Traditionally holiday areas like the Mediterranean, providing sun and beaches as their main selling features, will experience stronger competition from destinations offering a more diverse tourism supply

(CEC 1995)

The Mediterranean region is the place which attracts the most visitors in Europe, accounting for a third of all international tourist movement. The number of tourists visiting the Mediterranean is, thus, more than half of the total number of international tourists visiting Europe. It is calculated that, during the 90's, over 200 million tourists visited the Mediterranean region every year (Montanari and Williams 1995). Furthermore, it is estimated that just over 60% of tourism in the Mediterranean is in coastal areas. This tourist preference towards the coastal regions is due to the stereotypical image of the Mediterranean holiday as going to «a sunny place by the seaside» (Montanari and Williams 1995: 42). However, during the last few years, there has been a decline in the package holidays market. This decline affects the Mediterranean, as the latter is the major package tourist destination in Europe (Montanari 1993; Gomez and Rebollo 1995; Kremezi 1995; Montanari and Williams 1995; Prentice 1996; Davidson 1998). The prediction of the *European Commission's Green Paper* is, therefore, becoming a reality and the Mediterranean sun resorts are losing their share of the tourist market. An array of possible causes of crisis in the traditional Mediterranean beach resorts have been proposed. Some argue that the tourist clientele, fatigued with the '3 s' package holidays in the Mediterranean, require new tourist products and destinations (Davidson 1998). Others, however, claim that the

major reasons of this decline are «the political instability, terrorist attacks, civil conflict and religious fundamentalism in much of the area» (Montanari and Williams 1995: 41).

As mentioned earlier, instead of the beach resorts, an already large -and growing- number of the international (and domestic) tourists want to experience various forms of alternative holidays, including cultural activities. The Mediterranean tourism industry attempts to surpass the crisis by capitalising on the history and culture of the Mediterranean region. It is hoped that the tourism industry in the area can be boosted by the discovery and promotion of the cultural riches that lie further inland from the traditional coastal resorts (Montanari 1993; Boissevain 1996). It should be reminded that, before becoming a mass tourism destination, the Mediterranean was mainly visited for its historic relics and archaeological sites; the image of the cheap beach resorts was, in most areas, promoted only after the sixties. The Mediterranean area, where civilisations succeeded each other for the last 5000 years, is particularly rich in ancient monuments archaeological sites (Montanari and Williams 1995). This archaeological wealth of the Mediterranean adds strength to the suggestion that its tourism market should be restructured on the basis of its heritage and culture.

The restructuring of tourism in the Mediterranean region as a whole, however, is not a concern of European studies and researches. This is due to the geopolitical subdivisions of the Mediterranean geographical entity: some Mediterranean countries belong to North Africa (i.e. Tunisia, Egypt, Algeria, Libya, Morocco), some to the Middle East (i.e. Israel, Syria, Lebanon, Turkey), some others are non-EU European counties (i.e. Cyprus, Albania, Malta, Monaco, former Yugoslavia) and just five are EU members (Spain, France, Italy, Greece). For the latter group, this means that there is some confusion about whether these countries should be referred as part of the Mediterranean region or European Union and analysed accordingly (Montanari and Williams 1995). As pointed out later in the chapter, often these countries are even neglected and excluded from projects carried out on European tourism.



### 1.3 Defining Cultural Tourism in Europe

The above reference to the restructuring of the European, and particularly Mediterranean, tourism sets the geographical framework for the discussion of the close relationship of the tourism industry with cultural products. According to Greg Richards (1996a; 1996b), tourism has always been closely linked with culture in Europe because of the rich cultural and historic legacy of the latter continent. An example of pioneers in cultural tourism were the sixteenth century's Grand Tourists who travelled across Europe, visiting monuments and sites connected with classical culture (see also chapter 2). In spite of the existence of cultural tourists for centuries, it is only the last three decades that the idea of 'cultural tourism' as a distinct type of tourism has been introduced to the European tourism market.<sup>1</sup> One of the first definitions of cultural tourism was presented by the European Commission, which, in 1964, published a paper titled: *The Collective Realisation of the Important Cultural Regions in Europe and their Embodiment within the Culture of Leisure*» (Avgerinou-Kolonia 1994: 8).<sup>2</sup> The purpose of the paper was to set off the historic continuity of the European spirit from ancient Greece till the present days through the experience of cultural tourism. Specifically, the paper emphasised three key points: first, the collective realisation of the European culture through tourism; second, the interrelationship between the European cultural geography and the developing tourist networks and, third, the tourist development of representative areas and sites of the European culture (Avgerinou-Kolonia 1994). However, it was not until 1989 that the European Commission published its *Charter for Cultural Tourism*, thus giving a thorough and concrete definition of the term. In brief, cultural tourism was defined as «tourism related to the artistic and intellectual heritage of an area» (ECTARC 1989: 6). Under the same light, the International Committee on Cultural Tourism of ICOMOS (1988: iii) published its own charter, which described the concept as:

travel with the purpose of visiting, experiencing and studying human environments created over time; also [as] the business of making cultural resources accessible while at the same time promoting their protection and preservation.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For authors like Greg Richards «it is only in the last two decades that cultural and heritage tourism have been identified as specific tourism markets» (1996b: 265).

<sup>2</sup> See Conseil de l' Europe (Janvier 1990), *Itinéraires Culturels Européens*, ICE (90) 1, Stranbourg.

<sup>3</sup> ICOMOS is the International Council on Monuments and Sites of the Unesco, responsible for the preservation and conservation of the World Heritage Sites. Its Committee on Cultural Tourism was

There are few research projects referring exclusively to cultural tourism. The most prominent research on this type of tourism in Europe, is the ATLAS project, which is actually conducted by the European Commission.<sup>4</sup> The ATLAS definition of the term 'cultural tourism' was originally based on that of the Irish Tourist Board, but it was later reformed and divided into two sections.<sup>5</sup> First, a 'conceptual definition' was given, according to which cultural tourism was «the movement of persons to cultural attractions away from their normal place of residence, with the intention to gather new information and experiences to satisfy their cultural needs» (Richards 1996a: 24). The second section, the 'technical definition' as it was called, presented the term in a similar wording, but with more stress on the tourists motivations (Richards 1996a).

Despite the broad scope of these definitions, the majority of researchers, academics and planners concentrate their interest on just one area of cultural tourism: heritage. In fact, the term 'cultural tourism' is often identified with that of 'heritage tourism' (Zeppel and Hall 1992a,b; Richards 1996b). The word heritage is:

associated with the word *inheritance*, that is, something transferred from one generation to another. Owing to its role as a carrier of historical values from the past, heritage is viewed as part of the cultural tradition of a society

(Nuryanti 1996: 249)

Actually, the two words, culture and heritage, are joined to create the concept of 'cultural heritage' which, by its turn, serves as a well-sold product for tourism consumption.

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established by ICOMOS in 1969 and its purposes were, first, to promote international cooperation in the area of tourism and cultural resource management and, second, to assure the best available expertise in the conservation technology.

<sup>4</sup> ATLAS is the short name of the European Association for Tourism and Leisure Education, founder of the European Cultural Tourism Project. This research project began in 1991 with funding from the EEC and with the aim to create a European database on cultural tourism. Its original aims were: a) to devise definitions of the nature and scope of cultural tourism; b) to collect data on cultural tourism visits to European attractions; c) to access the profile and motivations of cultural tourism; and d) to develop case studies of cultural tourism management. The survey (a questionnaire) was conducted in 1992 at 26 cultural attractions in 9 EU-member countries: France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, The Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, United Kingdom (see Richards 1996b).

<sup>5</sup> The ITB definition of cultural tourism is as follows: «the travel undertaken with the intention, wholly or partly, of increasing one's appreciation of Europe's cultural resources» (See ITB 1988: 3; Richards 1996a: 23).

Moreover, if heritage is closely related with the past, then we may argue that heritage tourism is the opportunity to reconstruct (or, better, reproduce) the past in the present (Nuryanti 1996).<sup>6</sup> In reality, «the past is made more vivid than the present», as history is «reselected and rewritten» (Hewison 1987: 137). This reproduction of history leads to the transformation of the past to a «romanticised fiction» (Merimman 1991: 3). As a result, people, on the one hand, start looking back in nostalgia for the reinvented past which, at the end, has become an economic enterprise. (Hewison 1987; Merimman 1991; Zeppel and Hall 1992).<sup>7</sup> As Ashworth and Tunbridge argue:

countries [too] with a distinguished past historical role and a reservoir of past cultural achievements are particularly prone to fall back upon a selective nostalgia, taking refuge from painful change in an obsession with tradition and [...] ‘cultural necrophilia’.

(Ashworth and Tunbridge 1990: 29)<sup>8</sup>

As it seems, a large part of the existing literature on heritage tourism and industry places emphasis on its negative aspects, arguing that it is synonymous with the manipulation and exploitation of the past for commercial ends (Ashworth and Tunbridge 1990; Merimman 1991). In particular, Hewison characterises the heritage industry as ‘bogus history’ which «has enclosed the late twentieth century in a bell jar into which no ideas can enter, and, just as crucially, from which none can escape» (Hewison 1987: 144). Going further on his arguments, he relates postmodern culture with heritage industry, claiming that the latter is a by-product of the former.

both conspire to create a shallow screen that intervenes between our present lives and our history. We have no understanding of history in depth, but instead are offered a contemporary creation, more costume drama and re-enactment than critical discourse.

(Hewison 1987: 135)

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<sup>6</sup> In addition to Nuryanti’s argument, Merimman claims that «[the past] has become a commodity devoid of specific content, that ultimately supports the dominant ideology by showing the past as being the same as the present» (see Merimman 1991: 3).

<sup>7</sup> According to Plumb, people feel nostalgic for the past because of «the remarkable aspect of western ideology [to be addicted to it]» (see Plumb 1969:51).

<sup>8</sup> Ashworth and Tunbridge (1990) borrowed the term of ‘cultural necrophilia’ from Davies’ paper ‘Potted history’ in *Marxism Today*, 47 (see Davies 1987).

From a postmodern perspective, the past is, thus, where anything is possible. History as heritage is depthless and synchronic, since past and present lose their demarcation line.<sup>9</sup> In other words, heritage (and the heritage industry):

successfully mediates all our pasts as ephemeral snapshots exploited in the present [...] to guarantee the success of capital in its attempt to develop new superfluous markets.

(Walsh 1992: 149)

In the process, the 'depthless synchronic' past is first transformed to a 'deep-frozen folklore' and then exhibited, marketed and finally consumed as a tourist product in museum showcases, re-enactment events, festivals, memorial monuments and sites, historical or architectural ruins (Zeppel and Hall 1992a; Nuryanti 1996; Stebbins 1996).<sup>10</sup> Generally speaking, these material forms of heritage -and culture- are the actual stimuli of someone's choice to visit a place and consequently to form its cultural tourism market.

#### **1.4 Urban Tourism in Europe**

In the very beginning of the chapter, I argued that the traditional tourist destinations in Europe, such as the Mediterranean beach resorts, have been experiencing a decline since the 80's. The main cause of this decline was the changing interests of tourists and their increasing demand for alternative holidays, including that of cultural/ heritage tourism. As a result, the tourist market entered a phase of restructuring, in order to meet the new needs of its clientele through the promotion and selling of areas and activities different than the traditional ones. The winner in this reconstructed tourist market was the city.

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<sup>9</sup> Postmodernism is characterised by both the abandonment of a historical continuity and the ability to plunder history and absorb whatever it finds there as some aspect of the present (see Jameson 1984).

<sup>10</sup> The promotion of history as a 'deep-frozen folklore' where change, development and progress are excluded, is an attempt of the contemporary culture of «killing, freezing, sterilising, dehistoricising and decontemporising» the past from the present (see Huyssen 1997: 30).

The city is interesting, the city is amusing, the city is selling, the city sells. Our societies have never before shown such a sympathy for the city.

(Blanc in Cazes 1994: 28)<sup>11</sup>

In like manner, the French geographer J.L. Burgel notes that:

«he city passes from a state of need to a state of desire...the essential point is in the passage from the leisure of the citizen to the city of leisure

(after Cazes 1994: 28)<sup>12</sup>

I speak about tourism in cities, urban tourism. The latter is a generic term, describing a wide range of phenomena (Law 1996). As a phenomenon urban tourism is controversial and, therefore, neglected -till recently- from research and policy-making (Blanc and Petrovich 1987; Pearce 1987; Ashworth 1989; Law 1992; Law 1993; van der Borg 1994; Page 1995; Hinch 1996; Law 1996). Some even argue that there has been a double neglect, affecting both components of the term (Ashworth 1989).<sup>13</sup>

What makes the city interesting, amusing and therefore, sellable is the plethora and variety of its attractions and amenities (see Table 1).

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<sup>11</sup> This quotation was taken from Georges Cazes' paper «A propos du tourisme urbain: quelques questions prelabes et derangeantes», in the special edition «Tourisme Urbain» of *Les Cahiers Espaces*, 39 (December 1994). The original quotation belongs to the French sociologist, J.N. Blanc (1994) and is part of his article in the newspaper *Liberation*.

<sup>12</sup> This quotation is from the same source as the above, *Les Cahiers Espaces*, 39 (December 1994).

<sup>13</sup> According to Ashworth, «a double neglect has occurred. Those interested in the study of tourism have tended to neglect the urban context in which much of it is set, while those interested in urban studies [...] have been equally neglectful of the importance of the tourist function in cities» (1989: 33). This neglect is mainly due to the fact that cities tend to be multi-vocated travel destinations where many of the tourist

**Table 1. The elements of urban tourism**

<b>PRIMARY ELEMENTS (Attractions)</b>	
<u>Activity Place</u>	<u>Leisure setting</u>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>CULTURAL FACILITIES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theatres</li> <li>• Concert halls</li> <li>• Cinemas</li> <li>• Exhibitions</li> <li>• Museums and art galleries</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>SPORTS FACILITIES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indoor and outdoor</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>AMUSEMENT FACILITIES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Casinos</li> <li>• Bingo halls</li> <li>• Night clubs</li> <li>• Organised events</li> <li>• Festivities</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Historical street pattern</li> <li>• Interesting buildings</li> <li>• Ancient monuments and statues</li> <li>• Ecclesiastical buildings</li> <li>• Parks and green areas</li> <li>• Water, canals and river fronts</li> <li>• Harbours</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>SOCIO-CULTURAL FEATURES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Liveliness of the place</li> <li>• Language</li> <li>• Local customs and costumes</li> <li>• Folklore</li> <li>• Friendliness</li> <li>• Security</li> </ul>
<b>SECONDARY ELEMENTS (Services)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hotel and catering facilities</li> <li>• Shopping facilities</li> <li>• Markets</li> </ul>	
<b>ADDITIONAL ELEMENTS (Infrastructure)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessibility and parking facilities</li> <li>• Tourist Facilities: information offices, signposts, guides, maps and leaflets, etc.</li> </ul>	

(source Jansen- Verbeke 1986)

Jansen-Verbeke (1986) suggests that the cities should supply a multitude of functions and facilities that, could be used by tourists as well as by residents. These services and facilities are divided to 'primary' (i.e. attractions, which are the principal motive for the tourist's visit), 'secondary' (i.e. resources, which support visitors during their stay) and 'additional' elements (see Table 1). All three elements are required for a city to function effectively as a tourist destination (Jansen-Verbeke 1986; Ashworth and Tunbridge 1990; Law 1992; Page 1995; van der Berg et al 1995; Hinch 1996). Even if the primary elements of tourism comprise attractions within the city, visitors spend most of their time and money in the secondary facilities. Accordingly, the distinction

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facilities are used by both tourists and residents. As a result, this multi-functional character of the city tends to overshadow the impacts of tourism in favour of other activities happening in the same ground.

between primary and secondary elements does not entail a quantitatively more intense use of the former (Ashworth and de Hann 1986). Nor does it indicate that the former were created for tourist consumption while the latter were not. On the contrary, hotels, restaurants, souvenir shops and all such amenities are created around monuments, archaeological sites, water falls etc.

According to Jansen-Verbeke's model, cultural and heritage resources are of vital importance for the attractiveness of a city. There is, therefore, again reference to the relationship of urban tourism with cultural heritage tourism.

No, without doubt. The charm of the ancient quarters, the interest of the monuments, the richness of museums, the historic and literary souvenirs, the music traditions, the affluence of spectacles [...] compete (with that given order) to make the city desirable and a destination choice or place of sojourn. The cultural motivations are determinant for the choices of urban tourism.

(Thibaut 1994: 61)<sup>14</sup>

Continuing her argument, Anne-Marie Thibaut (1994), in her paper *La Ville Destination Culturelle*, claims that even if people visit a city for various different reasons, they always include cultural activities in their trip or sojourn. Accordingly, business trips, conference, mega-events and festival attendance, family visits are all combined with cultural tourism.<sup>15</sup>

The type of city that combines all the above amenities, services and diverse activities cannot be other than the large, multifunctional city. In addition, since I am mainly interested in the cultural and heritage character of the city, the reference is made to the tourist-historic city (Ashworth and Tunbridge 1990). The term 'large multifunctional city' refers to cities of global importance and a population that exceeds one million. The explanation of the term 'tourist-historic city' is not so easy. This is because this

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<sup>14</sup> This quotation is taken from a paper by Anne-Marie Thibaut, president of the Public and Communication Directorate of the Museum of Louvre, presented in *Les Cahiers Espaces*, 39 (December 1994).

<sup>15</sup> This argument is based on the fact that most travel to cities is multi-purpose since tourists have the opportunity to undertake more than one activity and even they come for purposes other than leisure (i.e. conferences, business meetings) (see Chambers 1997)

term can be presented from two different angles, two distinctly different viewpoints.

First, there is the historic character of the tourist city which refers to the city either as:

a whole, in the sense that is thought of as historic rather than modern [or, as] a particular district within the town, known as the 'historic city' so as to distinguish it from other more modern districts.

(Ashworth and Tunbridge 1990: 35)

It is possible for an historic city to be part of a modern city. As described later in the chapter, Athens falls into that cartographic typology, consisting of an historic core with the modern city zoned around it. Second, there is the tourist identity of the historic city, which transforms the latter to a resource within the urban tourism industry, and which has already been discussed (see Table 1).

### **1.5 Defining Urban Tourism in Athens**

If urban tourism as a phenomenon is misinterpreted and neglected from most of the literature on tourism, Athens as a city hosting tourism, is almost, if not totally, absent from the major researches on European city tourism. Apart from annual reports and comparative figures rating its place in the international, continental and national tourist market, there are few things that researchers and planners know about the apparatus of tourism in Athens. For example, in the survey conducted by EURICUR on tourism in Europe's major metropolitan areas, Athens constituted a peculiar case (Van der Berg et al 1994).<sup>16</sup> Although listed among the other urban destinations in the various European countries, Athens was absent from the rank table of the major European metropolises, as well as from any further analysis. The reasons for this omission could be possibly located in the way Athens is perceived. Does it represent a valuable tourist destination? Is it a city of global attraction? These questions follow the logic hiding behind the design of the project; the city's level of attraction for visitors, which is mainly rated according to the number of arrivals and nights spent there (Montanari and Williams 1995).<sup>17</sup> Athens seems to lag behind other European cities in numbers of visits and,

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<sup>16</sup> EURICUR are the initials for the European Centre for Comparative Urban Studies of the Erasmus University of Rotterdam.

<sup>17</sup> The major European cities presented in the new publication of EURICUR are the following: London, Paris, Munich, Rome, Vienna, Berlin, Milan Brussels, Frankfurt, Barcelona. They were ranked in terms



even worse, in information and data about these numbers. The latter is a result of the not yet organised visitor survey at the time of the project (Montanari and Williams 1995; van der Borg et al. 1996). For instance, from the four tables listed in the annex of the project, only in one table was there any information about Athens (van den Berg et al. 1995). The same pattern of 'first participating, then ignored' was repeated in the project *Art Cities and Visitors Flow*, conducted by CISET.<sup>18</sup> The main aim of the latter survey was the description of the tourists' flow in cities of art, as well as the development of guidelines that would help these cities to manage tourism (van der Borg et al. 1996). Athens was one of the twenty heritage cities that initially responded to the request for information, but, at the end, it was not included in seven selected cities where the project was conducted.

The scarcity of information about urban tourism in Athens is not only a European phenomenon. Even inside the country, data on the subject is limited. Until recently, the term 'urban tourism' was absent from the vocabulary of researchers, planners, Greek tourism organisations and generally people related with the tourism business in Greece. However, by the mid-nineties the term was being used more and more frequently by the above groups. A major reason for this interest in urban tourism was the announcement that Athens is the city which will host the 'Olympic Games 2004' (Avgerinou-Kolonia et al. 1998; see also chapter 3).

Because of the limited number of explicit surveys on urban tourism in Athens, this introductory sketch of the phenomenon, as well as the recitation of the main tourist products and infrastructure, are based on two research projects carried out by Greek universities in collaboration with state offices and ministries. In chronological order, the first survey was conducted by the University of the Aegean and had as its main scope to list and analyse the different types of tourism services, amenities and attractions of Athens in relation with the policy-making of the Athens Prefecture

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of their level of attraction examined by the number of nights spent and number of arrivals. All of these cities had more than two-three millions of arrivals and 1.5 to 2.5 nights spent there, in 1991 (see van der Berg et al 1994: 187).

<sup>18</sup> CISET are the initials for the International Centre of Studies on the Tourism Economy of the University of Venice. As a research centre is in strong collaboration with EURICUR as they conducted together surveys on different aspects of urban tourism in European cities.

(Zacharatos et al. 1997).<sup>19</sup> The second study is actually still ongoing and concerns exclusively urban tourism in Athens. This study involves a group of researchers from different fields and disciplines (i.e. architects, urban planners, sociologists, administrators), whose main interest is the account of the present situation of tourism in Athens. The survey is divided into two phases. In the first phase, the research team describes the phenomenon from different angles, according to their disciplines and positions. In the second, still ongoing phase, they carry out a survey based on a questionnaire, through which they analyse the way professionals in the tourism industry think, understand and finally plan urban tourism in Athens (Avgerinou-Kolonia et al. 1998).<sup>20</sup>

Following the structure of these two studies, I shall make, first, a brief overview of the history of tourism in Athens since the fifties and then, I shall focus on its present condition. The actual development of tourism in the Greek Capital is divided into two periods: one during 1950-1975 and the other from 1975 to present.<sup>21</sup>

### **1.5.1 1950-1975**

The fifties were more or less the beginnings of the development of mass tourism in Greece, but it is only since the early sixties that the tourist industry has attained significant proportions. During that period the first statistical data on foreign tourists visiting the country were collected. In 1950, there were only 33,333 tourists, whereas eleven years later, in 1961, they approached half a million (Avgerinou-Kolonia et al. 1998). Then, between 1960 and 1970, the numbers of tourists increased threefold and, finally, in 1972, the tourists were more than two millions (Robinson 1976).

In the early 1950's, the tourism infrastructure in the country was in a really poor condition. The main reason was the long suffering of the country as a result of the Second World War and the Greek Civil War that followed. In that period, the United

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<sup>19</sup> See Zacharatos et al. (1997) *The Analytical Study of the Tourism Policy of the Athens Prefecture*. Chios: The University of the Aegean.

<sup>20</sup> See Avgerinou-Kolonia et al. (1998) *The Contribution of Urban Tourism to the Sustainable Development and Regeneration of the Historic Centres: The Case-Study of Athens*.

States was by far the most important source country. In 1970, for instance, 300,000 Americans visited Greece. In the second place, it was the United Kingdom with more than 150,000 tourists. The rest of the foreign tourists were from West Germany, France, Italy and Switzerland (Robinson 1976). The majority of them spent their holidays in Athens, as it was the most popular destination place in the country.

The tourism development in Athens during that period was shaped by two factors. First, because of its airport, Athens as a tourist destination was 'independent' from the rest of Greece (Avgerinou-Kolonia et al. 1998). Second, Athens supported the tourism development in the rest of Greece, by functioning as a junction for the country's transportation network and also by accommodating tourist agencies specialised in organised tours. Due to the above factors, Athens became the main stop in one's travel to Greece. The majority of the tourists were staying in the city for about twelve days, which was also the average number of days spent in the country, organising short trips and day tours to other nearby places and islands. Only after the seventies, did the latter become independent destinations, contributing to the decline of Athens' tourism market.

### **1.5.2 1975-1998**

The changing image of the Greek tourism industry was evidenced by the gradual decrease in the length of stay and average spending per tourist. The growth of package tours to Greece was a reflection of that general trend. For example, in the late seventies, it was estimated that some two-thirds of the British tourists to Greece were on package holidays, whereas in the 1960's inclusive tours to the country were almost absent (Robinson 1976). Further suggestive evidence of the changing pattern of tourists in relation to income groups and spending was exhibited as percentage decrease in the tourist demand of luxury and first class hotel rooms.

The introduction of package holidays in the Greek tourist market was due to the tourism development of other regions in Greece. In the early 1980's, many Aegean and

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<sup>21</sup> By 'present' I mean summer 1998, the period of my last fieldwork and collection of secondary data (i.e. statistics, ratings, official documents). However, after much consideration, I decided to update when necessary the statistical data in the corrected final version of the thesis bringing it right up to date (2000).

Ionian islands became mass tourism destination places, with direct charter flights linking them with foreign countries (i.e. Britain, France, Germany). This latter meant a decrease in the number of arrivals in Athens. In addition, because of the provision of a different type of tourism than the '3s' -sun, sea, sand- of the beach resorts, the capital was losing ground in the competition with the other mass tourism destinations in Greece (Tsartas 1994). From being the major stop for someone's travel to Greece in the 50's and 60's, Athens was, thus, transformed to a 'transit' destination. This transformation is apparent from the early eighties to the present (i.e. 2000). By 'in transit' tourist flows, I refer to the mass tourism trend of either travelling via Athens to other Greek destinations, or staying there for one up to three days, mainly for sightseeing. To make the matters worse, the air pollution, the bad public transport system and the deficiency of tourist services added to the bad reputation that Athens gained as an urban tourism destination in the European market.

This decline of tourism in Athens is best portrayed in the following two tables (Tables 2 and 3). Table 2 contrasts both the number of arrivals in the region of Attica with the percentage of arrivals in the whole country and the number of charter flights to Athens with the percentage of charter flights nationally. Table 3 compares the arrivals of tourists per year with the nights spent in Athens.

**Table 2**

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>Arrivals of tourists to Attica as percentage of the total arrivals in Greece</b>	<b>Arrivals of tourists by charter flights at the Athens Airport - as percentage of the total arrivals by charter flights to Greece</b>
1972	50%	45.6%
1975	43.2%	34.8%
1978	43.8%	39.4%
1982	36.2%	28.2%
1985	35%	23.6%
1988	25.1%	18.4%
1990	24.4%	16.2%

(Source GNTO, adapted by Daskalakis 1991)

**Table 3**

YEAR	Arrivals of foreign tourists	Nights spent in Athens
1981	1,980,059	6,151,435
1982	1,895,740	5,854,306
1983	1,479,515	4,170,284
1984	1,743,328	4,813,476
1985	1,751,220	4,694,943
1986	1,624,613	4,509,952
1987	1,545,896	3,995,143
1988	1,546,837	3,950,382
1989	1,569,971	3,983,328
1990	1,575,000	4,028,480

(Source GNT0, adapted by Daskalakis 1991)

From both tables the decrease in the number of arrivals, charter flights and nights spent in Athens are obvious. As shown in Table 2, between 1972 and 1990 the number of arrivals in Attica dropped about 50%, whereas the number of charter flights dropped about 66%. In other words, in 1990, 76.6% of tourists arrived in other destinations in Greece and from this percentage the 84.8% came by charter flights. From Table 3 it is evident that between 1981 and 1990, the number of both arrivals and nights spent in the Greek capital were on the wane. Between 1981 and 1990, the tourists decreased 20.5% and spent 34.5% less nights in Athens. In 1995, for instance, the number of nights spent in the city had decreased by approximately a million as compared with that in 1985, whereas the number of arrivals dropped by 20.5%. Because of this crisis, many central hotels were bankrupted and finally closed. In particular, between 1981 and 1995, forty-five hotels closed down; this number amounted to 5% of the total number of hotels in Athens (Zacharatos et al. 1997).

**Table 4**

Region	Arrivals of tourists by charter flights	
	1999	2000
Thessaloniki	412,080	421,140
Corfu	877,664	961,968
Rhodes	1,318,271	1,329,390
Heraklion- Crete	2,008,326	2,034,513
Athens	406,925	372,133

(Source GNT0 2000)

By 1999, the number of nights spent in Athens has dropped to 3,012,273, about a million less than in 1990 (GNTO 2000). Table 4 describes perfectly the present situation of tourism in Athens: the number of arrivals to the capital by charter flights has been decreased from year to year while in other Greek tourist destinations has been increased. In 1981, there were about two million arrivals in the city whereas last year less than four hundred thousand.

Next the causes of the decline of Athenian tourism discussed above, there are some arguments blaming the low-level of promotion and advertising policies of the GNTO and other responsible organisations (see chapter 5). For instance, the president of the Association of Hotel Owners in Athens (EXA) accused the GNTO of using the recurrent theme of the '3s' in the advertising campaign during the last decade, whereas the European tourism market has moved to other types of tourism, such as short breaks, business and conference trips in cities (Gioupi 1997: 50).

In addition to the above problems, there is also an absence of a concrete policy for the development of tourism in Athens. To be more specific, there is not a central body (governmental, public or private) concerned exclusively with the development of the tourism infrastructure and the world-wide promotion of city tourism in Athens (Avgerinou-Kononia et al. 1998).<sup>22</sup>

### **1.6 The Tourist Resources and Infrastructure in Athens**

To understand the present situation of tourism in Athens, it is necessary to picture and analyse both its primary and secondary elements: the attractions and resources, as well as the existing facilities and infrastructure (see Table 1).

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<sup>22</sup> Throughout my fieldwork, I came across only one organisation which was occupied exclusively with tourism issues in Athens. This was the 'Board of Tourism', established by the Municipality of Athens and was composed by specialists in tourism industry. In particular, the deputies were representatives of the Municipality, the Association of Hotel Owners, the Association of Tourist Shop Owners and the Association of Tourism Enterprises. However, by the time I was finishing my fieldwork, in 1998, the

### 1.6.1 Primary Elements

Referring in particular to the primary elements of a tourist product, their recitation and classification define the character of tourism in the destination area. In the case of Athens, the main type of tourist attractions that are promoted are its monuments and ruins. The idea of urban tourism in Athens, accordingly, is synonymous with cultural-heritage tourism and, more specifically, with only a part of it, the historic tourism. This is due to the concentration in Athens of many of the most famous ancient Greek monuments. According to a survey conducted by the Irish Tourist Board and concerning European cities with more than ten cultural attractions, it was found that Athens has sixteen such attractions, from which four are of international importance (ibid. 1998; Richards 1996). All four international attractions of Athens are ancient monuments: the Acropolis with Parthenon, Herodus Atticus Theatre, Temple of Poseidon in Sounion and the Roman Forum. Furthermore, Athens is one of the five areas with the largest number of ancient relics in Greece. In fact, Athens has the most important and popular monuments, with Argolida (i.e. Myceane), Dodecanese (i.e. Rhodes), Ilia (i.e. Olympia) and Phokida (i.e. Delphi) following in the rank.

Concerning the cultural (historic) attractions of Athens, these are of two main types. First, there is the built heritage of the city, including ancient monuments and ruins, Byzantine churches and neo-classical buildings. Each of them is a kind of an open-air museum situated within the urban plexus and, consequently, participating in the living history of the city. The main monuments (or open-air museums) of Athens are the Acropolis (i.e. Parthenon and Erechthion), the Theatre of Herodus Atticus, the Ancient Agora, the Hill of Pnika, the Philopappos Hill, the Cemetery of Keramikos, the Temple of Zeus, the Arch of Adrianos and the Roman Forum, all ancient monuments, from the Classical, Hellenistic and Roman periods. Some urban planners argue that these monuments function as «cultural cemeteries», burying ruinous representations of the past (Panagiotopoulou 1995: 87). This argument takes us back to what was mentioned earlier in the chapter about the ‘necrophilic’ character of heritage culture,

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‘Board of Tourism’ was still under planning and reforming, without any definite decisions upon the strategy that would be followed.

where people feel nostalgic by simply gazing on ancient monuments (Ashworth and Tunbridge 1990).

The majority of these so called open-air museums are located in the very centre of the city, in particular within its historic centre.<sup>23</sup> In fact, these sites are responsible for the very definition of the place as 'historic centre'. Relating the Athenian situation with Ashworth and Tunbridge's typology of tourist-historic cities, the 'historic centre' represents the 'historic city', a district situated within the main city (Ashworth and Tunbridge 1990). In other words, this is a city within the city.

On the other hand, there are the actual museums, which are not only cultural attractions, but also tourist resources. There are about 250 museums in Athens, most of them either specialised in a particular period of Greek history, or dedicated to specific topics (e.g. the Museum of Natural History, the Museum of Traditional Music Instruments). By contrast with the monuments, the museums are spread all around the city. For instance, the National Archaeological Museum is located in Patission Avenue, about twenty minutes on foot from the historic centre, whereas the Museum of natural History is situated in the suburb of Kifissia, about forty minutes by Metro from the city centre. However, few of the Athenian museums are known to foreign tourists. This is not due to their location, as to the nature of their exhibits. The best-known and most frequented museums are those whose theme is ancient Greek and Byzantine history. These museums include the Museum of the Acropolis, the National Archaeological Museum, the Byzantine Museum, the Museum of Benakis, the Museum of Cycladic and Ancient Greek Art and Folklore.

In addition to the monuments and museums, there are particular areas of the city serving as both cultural and tourist resources. These are situated in and around the tourist-historic centre and are divided in two categories: areas with historic elements (i.e. Thession) and areas with mainly tourist elements (i.e. Plaka, Psiri). Referring to the latter category and in particular to Plaka, this is a picturesque district, conserved for

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<sup>23</sup> Besides monuments and sites located in the historic center, there are also a few situated in the outskirts of Athens. One of the most frequented ancient monuments is the Temple of Poseidon in Sounion.



tourism consumption. Apart from the built heritage of the nineteenth century Greek neo-classicism, Plaka is also characterised by the very large number of tourist shops, restaurants, coffee shops and small hotels. This tourist infrastructure weights over its cultural resources and both local and foreign guidebooks promote and advertise Plaka as a major tourist resource (see chapter 5).

There is, also, the opposite case, that of tourist resources promoted and consumed as cultural attractions. Such a case is the 'Sound and Light Show' in the Acropolis, especially designed for tourists, as well as the Theatre of Dora Stratou in the Philopappos Hill, presenting an entertainment show with folk dances from all around Greece (see also chapter 8). The latter show is a re-enactment event, using old costumes and traditions to portray life-styles of the past.

Generally speaking, due to the unilateral focus of the Athenian tourism on the cultural heritage and the historic attractions of the city, other types of urban tourism are either absent or underdeveloped.<sup>24</sup> For instance, the resources and facilities for business tourism are really limited in Athens. In a survey about conference tourism in Europe, conducted by the European Community in 1996, Greece had one of the lowest rankings. In particular, in 1995 Greece had only two conference centres while France had ninety four, Italy thirty two, Germany thirty and Britain fourteen (Davidson 1998). According to HAPCO, Athens is the only European capital without a conference centre of over 10,000 seats, capable of accommodating international scientific and business meetings (Koumelis 1998: 10).<sup>25</sup> Existing facilities in Athens can only host small conferences of less than 500 people. Such amenities are found in eighteen central hotels (i.e. Hilton, Inter-Continental, Holiday-Inn, Grand Bretagne) and nine small conference centres, containing fifty and forty two conference halls, respectively (Velissariou 1992). According to the statistical data of the World Union of Conference Centres, in 1995 Athens was 36<sup>th</sup> in rank, ranking far behind small towns, as only

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<sup>24</sup> According to Law (1992; 1993), urban tourism might comprise a variety of attractions, such as art galleries and museums, conferences and exhibitions, sports and special events. Referring to conferences and exhibitions in particular, he argues that they are necessary for the existence of business tourism in the cities. In addition, he stresses the advantageous position of large cities as conference hosts, since they are easily accessible and capable of providing all sorts of different tourist facilities and services (i.e. conference centres, hotels and restaurants).

thirteen international conferences were organised and accommodated there (Zacharatos et al. 1997). On the contrary, 3,000 national and regional conferences take place in Athens each year. This fact suggests that there is not a well organised international promotion of the conference resources of the city. However, the GNTO have announced the completion of an international conference centre in Athens by the end of 1999 (Koumelis 1998).

As far as sports and special event tourism are concerned, the situation is better than in the field of business tourism.<sup>26</sup> Athens has enough facilities and resources to accommodate major athletic events, as demonstrated by its successful hosting of the World Championship in Athletics in 1997. However, problems during that event, mainly related to the low-level of the hotels' carrying capacity. As Athens will be the host city of the Olympic Games 2004, new facilities are being constructed; examples include the new Olympic village, the marina and the sport centre for the aquatic sports (Avgerinou-Kolonia et al. 1998).

### **1.6.2 Secondary Elements**

This particular category encompasses all different types of tourist and hospitality facilities, from hotels to shopping malls. As argued earlier, these are not the main reason of someone's visit to a destination, but their quality plays a major part in the overall appreciation of its tourist image.

The accommodation establishments are, obviously, of central importance to the package of tourism services and amenities consumed by visitors: generally, accommodation expenses are the largest item of expenditure. Particularly, in the case of city tourism, adequate accommodation is a precondition for the tourist to stay for a length of time, enjoying the locality and its attractions (Hall and Page 1999). In addition, accommodation establishments have the advantage of being easily recognisable and, therefore, measurable in terms of capacity statistics by tourist

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<sup>25</sup> HAPCO stands for the Hellenic Association of Professional Congress Organizers.

<sup>26</sup> The term 'special event' defines «the events which occur infrequently or are one-off. Typical special events are ones that occur only on an annual basis in the same locality or [...] large events of world importance, such as [...] the Olympic Games» (see Law 1992: 612).

organisations and authorities (Ashworth and Tunbridge 1990). In the case of Athens, accommodation statistics constitute the only complete statistical data that the GNTO possess in relation to the condition of the tourism industry in the city.

There are many different types of accommodation, usually categorised on the basis of whether they are fully serviced, partly serviced or non-serviced. Each sector has developed in response to the needs of different markets. From Table 4 it is evident that the dominant type of tourist accommodation in Athens between 1971 and 1995 is the medium-sized hotel (i.e. B and C categories). The number of B and C category hotels in Athens doubled during that period, comprising about 55% of beds on offer. Since B and C category hotels represent relatively cheap options in the accommodation market, their success strengthens the argument that presents Athens as a cheap destination place accommodating 'in transit' tourists. Many of these hotels accommodate exclusively package holiday-makers, who stay in Athens from a few hours to two days and then travel to the mass tourism destination places (e.g. Aegean islands) (Avgerinou-Kolonia et al. 1998). However, during the same period there has also been an increase in the number of the upmarket LUX and A category hotels, most of them members of multi-national franchises (i.e. Holiday Inn, Hilton Hotel, Inter-Continental, Lidra-Marriot). The latter accommodate mainly wealthy clients and also host conferences and exhibitions.

**Table 5**

<i>THE CARRYING-CAPACITY OF THE HOTELS IN ATHENS</i>						
<b>YEAR</b>	<b>1971</b>		<b>1982</b>		<b>1995</b>	
<b>Type of Hotels</b>	<b>Hotels</b>	<b>Beds</b>	<b>Hotels</b>	<b>Beds</b>	<b>Hotels</b>	<b>Beds</b>
LUX	8	3,101	15	7,203	14	7,328
A	7	1,682	13	3,722	29	5,187
B	32	4,382	44	8,083	63	9,226
C	72	7,634	113	9,967	145	11,215
D	62	3,022	60	2,773	69	3,037
E	25	730	25	877	32	1,171
<b>Total # of Hotels</b>	<b>206</b>	<b>20,551</b>	<b>270</b>	<b>32,625</b>	<b>352</b>	<b>37,164</b>

(Source GNTO-NSSG)

Nevertheless, during the last decade tourism in Athens faces a major problem: the insufficient supply of accommodation in relation to the tourist demand. In other words, at present the hotel carrying-capacity of Athens is lower than the number of tourists visiting the city. In response to that problem of supply versus demand, the GNTO and

the Ministry of Economic Development announced the construction of new large hotels in the peri-urban areas of Athens. However, this announcement was, again, justified in view of the mega-event of the Olympic Games 2004 (Digridakis 1998: 23).

Apart from the accommodation facilities, the most frequently used tourism service in an urban destination is catering. At many visitor attractions, catering is a major element of the product on offer and contributes significantly to the overall tourist image of the place. Moreover, catering can be an attraction in its own right, even being one of the main reasons of a tourist's visit to a particular location (Horner and Swarbrooke 1996). In the case of Athens, most of the catering services for tourism consumption are in the Plaka district and around Syntagma Square (see Figure 1.1). These are mainly small-size family restaurants and coffee shops, basing their character on traditional themes, such as folkloric decorations, traditional cuisine and music. Along with the tourist shops, they contribute to the 'picturesque atmosphere' of the Plaka area. Similar with the accommodation sector, the catering sector in Athens is also based on low quality services and products. In addition, both sectors are characterised by seasonal employment, low profits, homogeneity and dependence on tour-operators (Zacharatos et al. 1997, Avgerinou-Kolonia et al. 1998).

### **1.6.3 Amusement facilities in Athens**

As shown in Jansen-Verbeke' table (Table 1), various amusement (and cultural) facilities are among the primary elements that compose the tourist product and are also responsible for the attractiveness of the place. London and Paris, for example, are popular tourist destinations not only because of their cultural attractions, but also due to their variety of exhibitions, theatres, festivals and night-clubs. Concerning Athens' entertainment amenities, however, the situation there is not as clear as in the former two cities. On the one hand, Athens contains many different kinds of amusement facilities, with a particular emphasis on the night-life. As in many Mediterranean cities, the life does not stop in the evening; all sorts of different activities take place after nightfall (Leontidou 1990). On the other hand, these amusement facilities are not promoted to tourists from tour-operators and the GNTO. As a result, the tourists are often unaware of the existence of such amenities. Due to this situation, many

amusement facilities of Athens are not perceived as part of the main attractions of the city, but they only represent secondary elements of its tourist product. Moreover, entertainment amenities for tourist consumption are not the same as the ones used by residents. Most of the former are located in the Plaka district, whereas the latter are spread in and around the city centre (see chapter 8). Referring in particular to the night-life in Plaka, most of the tavernas have live orchestras playing Greek folk music. These shows are designed especially for tourists. Most of the guidebooks refer exclusively to these shows, excluding many other options for entertainment that the city has to offer, such as cinemas, festivals, night-clubs with many different music styles (see chapter 8).

### **1.7 Conclusion: Redefining Urban Tourism in Athens**

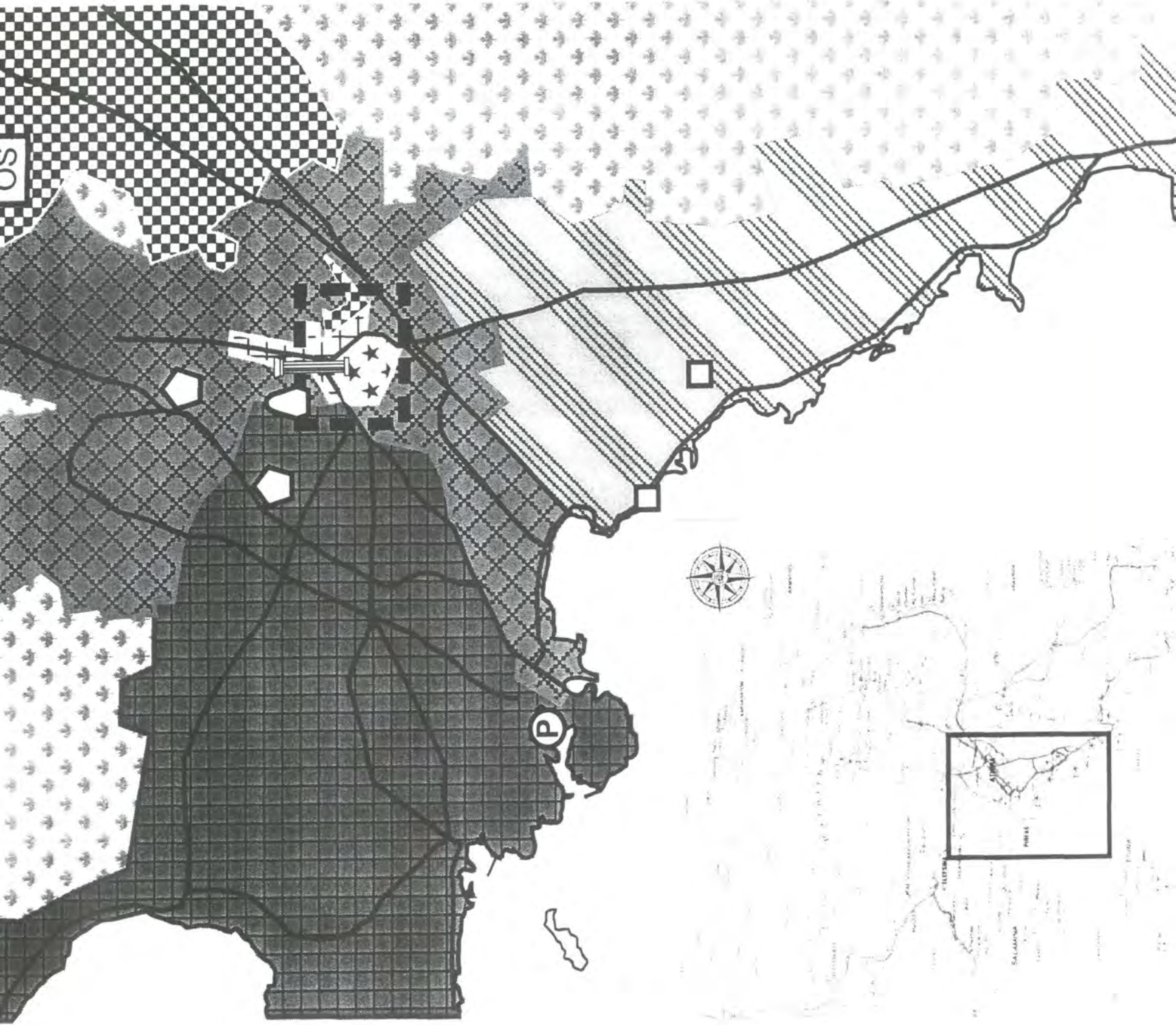
The definition and classification of urban tourism is not straightforward: the type of tourism in Athens does not entirely fit in any of the categories of city tourism as listed in the existing literature. Despite the characterisation of Athens as a large multifunctional city, its tourism product is restricted to cultural heritage. To be more specific, most of the tourist activities take place in and around the historic centre of Athens, where the major monuments and sites are situated (i.e. Acropolis, Roman Market; see Figure 4.1, 4.2). The rest of the city appears to be of little interest to the tourists (see also Chapters 5, 6). For instance, few visitors are attracted by the modern architectural style, or the festivals and sports events of the city. When Ashworth and Tunbridge refer to the large multifunctional city with tourist-historic elements, they do not limit the different attractions and activities of tourist interest in historic core of the city, but they also include other parts of the city (ibid. 1990). They refer to the type of cities with a multitude of functions that can be used by both visitors and residents. Athens case, however, is different, as the tourists' visit to the city is only associated with its archaeological elements and some of its secondary facilities (i.e. hotels, restaurants) which are situated in the historic-tourist district. In brief, Athens is a multifunctional city with a monofunctional tourist product, its history. Concerning in particular the latter, Athens seems to be trapped in a no way-out situation, similar to what Hewison described as 'bogus history'. The terms refers to the heritage industry and, in the case of Athens, to the myth of its 'glorious past' (see also Chapter 2). Athens' promotion as the 'birthplace of western civilisation' on the basis of its

Classical past excludes sites of different periods and the modern city from advertising campaigns and, hence, from the tourists' interest (GNTO 1996). An idealised classical Athens is what the tourism industry has been selling so far and may as well keep selling in the future. For instance, the promotion of the Olympic Games 2004 is based on the same idea of nostalgic impulses for the past, as discussed in some detail in the next chapter. This is accompanied with the construction of the Archaeological Park, which will represent a Theme Park or Museum without Walls, dividing the city into two *genius loci*: the present and the past.

In addition to the above, the monofunctional character of tourism, by concentrating all its activities within a single district, inevitably result in its mutation to an 'in transit' tourism. Since the Athenian tourism is mainly concerned with specific monuments, museums and sites and other types of tourism activities are limited, visitors do not need to spend any longer time there. This 'in transit' character of tourism in Athens, therefore, accounts for the gradual decrease of the number of nights spent in Athens during the last fifteen years (see Table 3). Taking this discussion a step further, it is evident that Athens has become part of the organised holiday packages to Greece. A large number of its visitors are mass tourists whose holiday packages include a day trip to the city.

To conclude, the definition of urban tourism in Athens as perceived and promoted by the Greek tourism industry depends on an urban mythology. By the latter I mean all these symbolic images which framework the Athenian landscape and give ground to the unilateral character of its tourism product. It is the same mythology that the tourists, too, use in their gaze of the city. An in depth description and analysis of the mythological elements of the Athenian (symbolic) landscape, is made in the next chapter.





The principal commercial area

Mainly residential area; partly industrial towards the W.

Mainly industrial area. Also some residences locally.

Affluent residential area: northeastern suburbs and Kolonaki

Affluent residential area: southern suburbs

Unbuilt and peri-urban areas

Acropolis

Airport

Intercity bus station

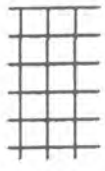
Rail station

Road network

Port

Olympic Stadium

Area with the major archaeological sites



## CHAPTER 2: THE INVENTION OF AN URBAN MYTHOLOGY

### 2.1. Introduction

As Denis Cosgrove (1988) stated, all landscapes carry symbolic meaning which serves to identify their iconography. In the case of tourism, this is particularly important since a tourist destination needs a certain identity to promote and sell. In this chapter, thus, I focus on the construction of the mythological elements that shaped the symbolic landscape of Greece (and Athens, in particular). I begin with an overview of the theoretical concepts used in this analysis, drawing an analogy between the symbolic landscape and linguistics. I argue that the symbolic landscape is a cultural text which can be read, whereas the myths embodied within it serve as a language, a system of communication.

I, then, set up the main argument of the chapter: i.e. that the Greek (symbolic) landscape represents the cosmogonic mythology of the western civilisation. I attempt to trace the origins of this mythology and the circumstances under which it has been constructed, narrated and consumed. In particular, I search for the narratives through which this cosmogony was crystallised and described. Finally, I analyse the main myths in relation to the constructed narratives and give examples of different discourses on the symbolic landscape of Athens.

### 2.2. The Symbolic Landscape as Cultural Text

In cultural geography, for a long period, the landscape has been intimately interrelated with culture (Cosgrove 1984; Daniels and Cosgrove 1988; Duncan 1990; Zukin 1991). According to this relationship and following the definition of culture as a «signifying system», the landscape is in turn perceived as a cultural (signifying) system «through which a social [order] is communicated, reproduced, experienced, and explored» (Williams 1982:13; Duncan 1990:17). The landscape, as a cultural system, functions like a text -a sign-system- and is treated as such: ready to be read (Cosgrove 1984; Duncan 1990; Tilley 1994).



As for any cultural text (sign-system), reading a landscape requires knowledge of the language employed, the symbols and their meaning within the particular culture. Following the Saussurian approach, a language is defined as a system of signs that express ideas (Scholes 1974). By signs, Saussure means the nature of representation, as expressed by the relationship between signified and signifier, where the former is the represented concept, the communicated meaning, and the latter is the medium that communicates the meaning of the sign (Guiraud 1975; Burgin 1982; Gottdiener 1995).

Going back to the interpretation of the landscape as cultural text, there is a need to define the sign system (langue) employed to read its symbolic surface. Saussure's definition of signs (as summarised above) may, as well, serve for the identification of the required language. In this case, reference shall be made on Roland Barthes' description of mythology as a sign-system where the myth (sign) expresses a unity of the signifier and signified; characteristic of the myth is its ability to become itself a signifier of another connotative signified (Barthes 1954). In his book *Mythologies*, Roland Barthes (1954) uses a picture on the cover of *Paris Match* (a French popular magazine) to exemplify his argument. It is the photograph of an African soldier saluting the French flag. The scene denotes an act of national allegiance and connotes military discipline, even suggesting nationalism. However, for him the important meaning of the photo is that of an African soldier giving the French salute: «but naïf or not, I see what is significant for me: that France is a great Empire» (Barthes 1954: 201).<sup>1</sup> In other words, the sign (picture of a soldier saluting a flag) at the higher level becomes the myth of the personification of colonization and fresh subjugation of African people (Burgin, 1982; Gottdiener 1995). To sum up, for Roland Barthes, the myth is nothing but a system of communication, containing signs exactly like a language contains words.

### **2.3. Defining the Discourse of the Symbolic Landscape: Mythology**

The definition of myth summarised above seems to follow the tradition of the Greek term «*mythos*» meaning «word», «story», or, simply, a sound produced with the mouth.

---

<sup>1</sup> «mais naïf ou pas, je vois bien ce qu'elle me signifie: que la France est un grand Empire» (See Barthes 1954, original French text).

In Homer and the early Greek poets «*mythos*» signified «the ways words are treated on the surface level of the text, that is, the ornamental or fictional use, or the beauty of arrangement of the words in a literary work» (Doty 1986: 3). «*Mythos*» was later combined with another Greek noun for «word», namely «*logos*» (related to the verb 'legein', 'to speak') to form the word «*mythologia*» (and hence mythology/mythologie), which might mean, more literally, «words concerning words» (ibid. 1986: 3). However, by the years, «*logos*» was also defined as theory, doctrine whereas «*mythos*» was emptied of all religious and metaphysical values (Eliade 1963). As a result, the mythological came to be contrasted with logic (the logos-ical) and later with «*historia*». In Latin, for example, mythology became synonym to «*fabula*» (fable) (Doty 1986). At the end, mythology was only used to describe «what cannot really exist», the unreal, which as we will see later, is transformed to a true statement (1986: 2). This change in the connotations of the word mythology has followed the secession of myth from logic and, therefore, from reason. This is why myth inspires full confidence, faith; «for those who believe in the myth, myth is the truth» (Diakonoff 1995: 38). Moreover, Freilich (1970), by modifying Levi-Strauss's arguments on the function of myths, realises that the myth's main purpose of existence is to provide a kind of certainty.

This is what Barthes means by saying that «the myth is a word which is excessively justifiable» (1957: 215). For him, the myth becomes functionable from the point where the reader starts to see as a natural phenomenon the idea portrayed (e.g. the French imperialism). His basic argument is that the myth is transformed to the «fallacious alternative» which reduces the historicity of objects by giving them a natural hypostasis, by transforming history into nature (Barthes 1957; Doty 1986; White 1987).

The myth has turned reality inside out, it has emptied it of history and has filled it with nature, it has removed from things their human meaning so as to make them signify a human insignificance.

(Westwood and Williams 1997: 211)

This argument is related to the theory of Mircea Eliade on cosmogonies, where the myth is regarded as a sacred story, accordingly a «true story» because it involves

«realities». The «reality» of the myth is based on the premise that the myth is by nature cosmogonic; it refers to a beginning; to a creation (Eliade 1963). For example, the creation of the world as described in the Bible is a cosmogonic myth: «When the gods began creating...» (Genesis 1:1). Following Eliade's ideas on cosmogonic myths, we may argue that Western civilisation is concentrated, too, to the reality of «beginnings» and representations of past (Beane and Doty 1975; Tonkin 1992).

#### **2.4. The Cosmogonic Myth of the Western Civilisation: The Greek Ideal**

Such a cosmogonic myth is the one that describes the birth of the so called western civilisation; the place is Greece, the time somewhere around the fifth century BC. According to this myth, the Greeks were the creators (fathers and mothers) of civilisation. The reason for the construction of this cosmogony and the selection of Greece as the birthplace of Western world is its representation as «a model of secular culture free from the ordained thinking of scriptural dogma» (Augoustinos 1994: 14). The argument here is very simple, the Greek culture is seen as the first in human history which is based on reason and logic instead of consisting of animistic, primitive beliefs. Sir Livingstone, for instance, was declaring that the Greek civilisation «is the skeleton outline of our world. It contains, reduced to their simplest form, but fully conceived and clearly grasped, the main principles which underlie modern [western] society» (1935: 56). This perception of the Greek civilisation elevates its cosmogonic character to an idea or even better to an ideal. What shapes, therefore, the myth is the acquisition of this ideal, the non-existent reality which «becomes a matter of historical mastery, the mastery of [such] 'reality' that is in turn encoded as the uninhibited play of nature» (Gourgouris 1996: 124). That's a paraphrase of what has already been argued about the myths and the distortion they cause to history through a series of natural mutations.

The ideal of the Greek civilisation is an invention, an ideological construction of colonialist Europe. Greece, however, was never colonised. We speak, therefore, for the «colonisation of the ideal» (Boyer 1996; Gourgouris 1996). Humbort, referring to the colonisation of the Greek ideal, believes that this cultural selection resulted from the relationship of the «historicity of *us* (Europeans) and the ideality of *them* (ancient

Greeks) where the ideality of *them* was the insurance of the historicity of *us*» (1963: 81). The sublimation of ancient Greece as the ideal past was one of the influences that provided Europe with a common cultural identity (Constantine 1984). It was during the renaissance that the urge for a common European identity appeared and the so called 'discourse of the West' was created. Later this was reflected in the Enlightenment, which was, to an extent, the product of the infusion of the legacy of the ancient world into western culture (Augoustinos 1994). This argument is expressed in its extreme in Shelley's poem 'Hellas' where the poet declares that: «We are all Greeks».

There are, of course, writers who reject the validity and credibility of the cosmogonic myth of the birth of the West in ancient Greece, claiming that this is nothing but the product of European cultural arrogance against the rest of the world. Such an opponent is Martin Bernal (1987) who, in his book «Black Athena», attacks the Greek myth by arguing that antiquarian scholars, especially of the late eighteenth and nineteenth century, have suppressed evidence about the non-European elements in the ancient Greek civilisation (Bernal 1987; Lefkowitz and MacLean Rogers 1996). According to Bernal, the Greek civilization was influenced by the Egyptian which was far older. However, Bernal's Afrocentric myth falls in the same ground as the Greek myth it opposes, since its goal is nothing less than to rewrite the early history of 'western civilisation'; in other words, to suggest an alternative cosmogony in place of the established one.

### **2.5. The Rebirth of the Cosmogonic Myth: Philhellenism**

As mentioned above, the manufacturers of the Hellenic (Greek) Ideal, according to which ancient Greece was seen as an integral part of Europe's own inheritance, were the Renaissance scholars and the philosophers of the Enlightenment. Both saw Greece as an escape from the metaphysical thought of the Middle Ages and as a culture capable of unifying European civilisation. Their creation was Hellenism, which involved the linguistic and philological analysis of ancient Greek scholars, the study of antiquity as a distinct civilisation and the idea of the universality of the cultural and literary models of ancient Greece (Augoustinos 1994). Actually, Hellenism was a legacy of the French humanism during the sixteenth century which provided inspiration

for numerous imitations of classical models in the aesthetics, morals, literature and poetry of that period. During that period (16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> centuries) the first travellers to Greece made their appearance and began to record and publish accounts of their visits. Their majority were English and French botanists, amateur archaeologists, or merchants; despite their admiration for the ancients, their knowledge of Greek antiquity was limited.

In the seventeenth and the early eighteenth centuries more travellers than before reached Greece. What is more, the people who visited Greece during that period were mainly scholars, poets, members of the Society of the Dilettanti and young aristocrats in their Grand Tour. The latter group of travellers comprised young people travelling with their tutors for several years, to perfect their education, usually after completion of a university degree and before embarking in a career. Their voyage to Greece, thus, was an educational experience, a search of their spiritual roots and a way to link their academic hellenism to the place of its origin (Black 1985). Accounts of the benefits of such travels are numerous as the following:

Edward Southwell Junior returned from his travel 'very much improved' [whereas] John Rogerson hoped that by travelling his nephew's 'mind may be opened and his acquaintance with the world enlarged'.

(Black 1985: 240)

To the seventeenth, and particularly for the eighteenth century travellers, Greece seemed in an awkward position, between West and East, past and present. What they experienced and described was a fragmented landscape. All around them were contrasting images of a landscape splitting into two epochs. On the one hand, there were the ruins and antiquities, evoking the landscape's past splendour; on the other hand modern Greeks, subjects of the Ottomans, inclined towards the Orient (Augoustinos 1994). The penetration of the Turks into Greece was interpreted by western Europeans as a violation of the legacy of their own past, a contamination of the purity of their own civilisation. Thus, scholars of that period, in order to defend the western cosmogony and the Hellenic Ideal introduced the new term: *philhellenism*. This is compound word, from *philos* (friend) and *hellenism*, so, in its broad sense means «love and admiration for things Greek» (Augoustinos 1994: 132). The ideas and

scope of philhellenism can be defined more clearly since its focus and objectives are more specific. It urged the liberation of modern Greeks from the Ottoman Empire and, thus, from Oriental influence; it also aspired to the cultural renaissance of modern Greece through its imitation of the Hellenic Ideal, ancient Greece. This was the moment when both the colonisation and the Europeanisation of the Ideal emerged (Gourgouris 1996).

However, the most influential of all travellers to Greece were the nineteenth century writers, who, by following the tradition of the Enlightenment, shaped a series of myths based on the idea of Philhellenism. These were people like Lord Byron, Shelley, Chateaubriand, Flaubert, Lamartine who, as members of the romantic movement in Britain and France, expressed a particular interest in Antiquity. In a West already saturated with writers, the romantics realised that they should search for new, unknown, dream-like places to stage their writings. As a result, places of mythical qualities, like Greece, became the new inspirations for the nineteenth century authors; serving as backdrops to their novels, as '*decorations de theatre*' as Nerval would often say.

The travel, thus, is their alibi; the alibi to the real adventure into the world of the writing[...] the travel exists for producing the writing as well as for being the producer of the latter.

(Mentzos 1989: 12)

The romantic travellers, also protagonists of their novel, brought the world in their own measures; they fashioned the gaze upon the landscape and, finally, fashioned the landscape with this particular gaze.

Always screening and choosing, cutting and adding, they [the writers] gradually created forms that were no longer natural but were more beautiful than those of nature; and the artists called these forms the *beau ideal*. One can define the *beau ideal* as the *art of choosing and screening*.

(Chateaubriand 1812: 37)

Consequently, they transformed and mutated the landscape into what they wanted to write about. Besides seeking the unspoilt, the exotic, the glorious past -as mentioned above- the travellers also wanted places that would stimulate the imagination of their

readers; places real but also out of reach to the majority (of that period). Lamartine, for instance, wrote that:

The travel is, therefore, like the translation. You translate to the eye, the mind and the soul of the reader what you have seen: the places, the colours, the feelings, whilst you're travelling within natural and human-made monuments.

(after Mentzos 1989: 69)

The central experience of travel is based on the process of connecting texts with actual places. Freud (after Foard 1995) suggested that this connection between text and place is accompanied by an act of memory which reminds to the traveller/writer what s/he has already gazed upon, as well as to remind his readers what they have already imagined about this dreamlike place. It is important to remember that for the western people who either journeyed to Greece or read about it, its landscape was not an alien terrain, but a place whose legacy they had absorbed and integrated into the matrix of their own civilisation.

According to Sophie Basch (1991), the romantic travellers/writers included Greece in both their travels and writings for the sake of its past. Influenced by the Enlightenment, they also divided the Greek landscape into two spatio-temporal imageries: the ancient and the neo-Hellenic, with little in common but the same geographical boundaries. This dualism is apparent in the myths that shape the symbolic landscape of Athens; consequently, the latter is in a state of flux, floating in space and time.

## **2.6. The Myths of the Athenian Landscape**

### **2.6.1. Nostalgia**

The term defines nostalgia is a translation of the German *heimweh*, or *homesickness*, «a form of melancholia caused by prolonged absence from one's country or home» (Westwood 1936: 137). The etymology of the word nostalgia derives from the Greek *nostos* (to return home) and *algos* (pain). Smith (1987: 29) notes that in this sense «home is not the 'place where-I- was-born' or the 'place-where-I-live', but 'the place where memories are housed'». For Lowenthal (1975), this place is the past: «Past is a foreign country», he argues, about which people feel nostalgic. By suffering from nostalgia, we idealise the past (Rojek 1995). The connection of nostalgia with the

past transforms the former to a «historical illness [...] an illness inextricably bound with the imaginary signification of *home*, but a home unattainable even in death» (Gourgouris 1996: 222). For Castoriadis (1987: 390), nostalgia is not an imaginary illness, since «the traumatic event is real as an event and imaginary as traumatism».

From the above arguments is evident that the experience of nostalgia requires some estrangement from the home-past. «The object of the quest may be anachronistic»; in the particular case of the past,

[its] remoteness is for us a part of its charm ; we want to relieve those thrilling days of yesteryear [...] But only because we are absolutely assured that those days are out of reach.

(Lowenthal 1975: 3)

The idealisation of the past can be successful only through a sequence of memories, through memorabilia, where every pattern of remembering the past is adorned. Memory not only conserves the past, but also adjusts its recollection to current needs. Instead of remembering exactly what it was, people make the past intelligible in the light of present circumstances. «The past we know about is not [...] a present that was ever experienced» (Lowenthal 1975: 25). Instead, it is transformed, often glorified, every negative element of it is forgotten. As Walter Benjamin argues: «almost every age seems more civilised except that in which [one] lives» (in Lowenthal 1975: 16). For Hewison, the nostalgic impulses to, and the idealisation of the past are parts of the impulse to preserve the self and adjust to social and cultural crises (in Harvey 1989).

Connecting this last argument with the definition of nostalgia as ‘homesickness for our own home’, we come across a major stimulus for the visit of a westerner to Greece, either as a nineteenth century romantic traveller, or as a modern tourist: the return to the origins of Western civilisation. Greece is conceived as a topos of nostalgia, since it is there but not there. It represents a topography of creation, thus, a past land where, of course, return is impossible. Consequently, Greece is transformed to a utopia whilst travellers to such a land suffer from nostalgia for utopia (Gourgouris 1996).



### 2.6.2. Memories in Absentia

For the Romantics, memory was both the consciousness of the barrier between the two chronological planes of past and present, as well as an instrument for surmounting them (Augoustinos 1994). The objective, however, was to find a connection with the past. That is how their memories became memories *in absentia* (Miller 1942: 47). By this term, we mean all these memories for a place never visited -in this case ancient Greece- yet responsible for the nostalgic impulses someone might feel. We may argue that the memories *in absentia* is a term synonymous to the *false memory syndrome* in psychology, where patients under counselling remember experiences that they had never lived (Ofshe and Watters 1994). Said (1979) describes the same phenomenon as series of «déjà vus», where the traveller finds himself entrapped into a place that already existed in his imagination. One's travel was more a game of recognising (i.e. mental recollection) than of gazing. Both recognition and memory *in absentia* require certain pre-conditions; in the case of romantic travellers, these processes were conditioned by education. During the last century, the gazing of antiquities was an extension of the classics-based educational curriculum. From mere mythical creatures, Aristotle, Plato, Pericles and the pantheon of gods, became alive in the ruins and traces of history. «Pericles should still be alive and immortal» Lamartine cried out when he first saw Acropolis (Mentzos 1989: 69). The romantic traveller normally had a thorough knowledge of the classical world. Before gazing at the Hellenic landscape, he carried it inside him, full of history, and mythology. Usually he recognised what he already knew (Mentzos 1989).

The past is not simply there as memory but it must be articulated to become memory [...] The mode of memory is 'recherche' rather than recuperation.

(Huyssen 1977: 3)

This was what Chateaubriand (1812) wrote in his travel diary during his first visit to Athens:

I was searching carefully for everything which reaffirms Her [Athens], the Areopagus, the ancient Academy, the Aristotle's Lycaum, and finally Acropolis.

(in Mentzos 1989: 33)

Visiting Athens, hence, was a pilgrimage to the past, a homage to people and places that have become part of the global history.

Conforming to the tradition of the romantic travellers, Sigmund Freud experienced Athens in a similar way. As he admitted in a letter to a friend, he was standing on the Acropolis and gazing at the landscape when «a remarkable thought suddenly entered his mind»: «So all this really does exist, just as we learnt at school» (Foard 1995: 65). Education, thus, played a central role in the recognition of the place. Smith (1987: 26), following Freud's words, argues that:

the space is conceived as being already existent, as being divided up into *empti loci* into which the images by which memories would be recalled, are placed.

A good example of filling the *empti loci* with memories is Goethe's experience of the Italian landscape: «Wherever I walk, I come upon familiar objects in an unfamiliar world; everything is just as I imagined it, yet, everything is new» (Rojek 1993: 112). Often the confrontation with the reality of the object of recognition was disturbing, since it made the latter to look new, different than expected. The arrival of Freud at Acropolis, for example, signals the impossible confrontation between the discourse of the Hellenic ideal and its visual presentation as the real (Gourgouris 1996).

### **2.6.3. The Fragmentation of the Landscape**

Does Athens have a history ?

(Liaskos 1996: 37)

My eyes weren't enough to look around; I thought that I was seeing antiquities everywhere.

(Chateaubriand 1812: 863)

The first quotation is taken from a Greek newspaper. A few sentences below the writer questions the identification of Athens with Acropolis and Pericles' Golden Age and not also with the present; this, he claims, is a generally held view, despite the fact that «history is produced neither as a romantic alibi, nor as a nostalgic escapade» (Liaskos 1996: 37). If this is true, if the Athenian present is also visible, how could Chateaubriand's words be justified? What were the stimuli that led him

to an illusion of «antiquities everywhere» within the Athenian landscape? According to Faubion (1993: 15):

the local past dominates the local present in Athens; the metropolitan skyline grants pride of place not to commercial skyscrapers, but to two ancient points of reference; the Acropolis and the Mount Lycavittos.

Accordingly, in traveller's eyes, the historical landscape of Athens was reduced into a few benchmark sites. The romantic traveller «decided» from before which sites he ought to see and which history he ought to experience. For Jameson, the tourist in general is expected to gaze, read and finally recognise certain stereotypical images (after Urry 1990). As McCannell says about Paris and what someone «must see» in the city, «if one goes to Europe, one 'must see' Paris, one must see Notre Dame, the Eiffel Tower, the Louvre, [...]» (1976: 43). There are plenty of reasons for this *a priori* decision of where to gaze. First, the tourist (and the romantic traveller), being:

unable to contain the unbounded spread of London, Paris, Berlin or New York in all encompassing image, [s/he] includes the stereotypes of the Eiffel Tower or the Manhattan skyline.

(Westwood and Williams 1997: 181)

As a result of this process, foreign cultures, however ancient and complex they may be, are reduced to few, instantly recognisable characteristics. These stereotypical images are the ones that form what has been called a commodified culture, characterised by fragmented features (Turner and Ash 1975).

Sites are fragmentary and convoluted histories, pasts stolen by others from readability, folded up ages that can be unfolded but are there more as narratives in suspense, like a rebus.

(De Certeau 1985: 144)

Facing a foreign culture, the tourist who wants to solve this rebus, does not view it as a totality. S/he, instead, fragments, divides, and finally subtracts historic periods from the visited landscape. In the case of Athens, these stereotypical images mainly include Acropolis and the historic centre (e.g. Roman Forum, Keramikos Cemetery).

Maurice Halbwach (1950: 70) argues that «history divides the flow of centuries into periods, like the division of a tragedy into several acts», criticising the function of

history rather than those who experience it. The picture of history upon a landscape is a palimpsest where many historic periods are raised on, whereas others are wiped out of, the very top surface. In the case of Athens:

Classicism prevails. Byzantine themes and revolutionary allusions are closely second. Very little is left, however, either to record or to recall the long centuries of the Ottoman domination; even less to record or recall the briefer Catalonian or Venetian occupations.

(Faubion 1993: 15)

This leads to a discontinuous perception of history. From ancient Athens, we jump directly to the present without (or with few) intervening historic moments. The city, hence, defies any concepts of systematic chronology, evolution, historical progress. «[...]The past in Athens is, literally and figuratively, a presence» (Faubion 1993: 88).

This uniquely contradictory - historically overcharged and at the same time anhistoric-present landscape of Athens is viewed by Boyer (1994) as an invention of the Eurocentric mind. The capital city was founded in the nineteenth century, when the authoritative and didactic Greek ideal was blended:

with a haunting sympathy for the ruinous landscapes of Greece and a love for freedom drawn poignantly into a focus by the Greek war of Independence.

(Boyer 1994: 152)

The past was turned into present, as the collective memory of western civilisation exhumed -in many cases literally- ancient Athens and resurrected it in the remnants of a war-ruined oriental town.

We shall never be able to see anything but the relics of the ancient town on the one hand, and on the other, the office blocks and apartment buildings of the new, as if Athens had no intervening, no continuous life.

(Faubion 1993: 78)

What people, and especially tourists, see in the city is «a false picture historically». From this point of view, the tourist loses any opportunity to capture reality.

To sum up, first there is the fragmentation into historical periods and the exclusion from the gazing of those non-visible and readable enough. The traveller/tourist

reframes the sites s/he wants to gaze by cutting them off from their surrounding landscape. (Turner and Ash 1975). This activity of spatial subtraction is also known as historical hinge (Gottman, after Faubion 1993). Second, there is the perception and experience of the Glorious Past through unreal facts. It is impossible for the traveller/tourist to observe that there are ancient architectural monstrosities and cacophonies as those of the present. This is because things of the past are, as a rule, assumed to be better than things of the present (Turner and Ash 1975). The past is never there waiting to be discovered, to be recognised for exactly what it is -instead of clarified it is mystified. Furthermore, the more 'mummified' an object is, the more intense its ability to yield an experience of the authentic (Berger 1972; Turner and Ash 1975; Husseyn 1995).

Lowenthal argues that «the past we know about is not [...] a present that was ever experienced» (1975: 25). To elaborate Lowenthal's argument, I shall use an example from Turner and Ash's (1975) book *The Golden Horde*. For the contemporary tourist, as well as for the traveller of the nineteenth century, the idea of glorious past finds additional ground on aesthetics. For both, Parthenon is the ruinous site that yields the pleasure of shape and colour in the extreme. It is a vision of sun-bleached marble in proportion. However, the marble was originally painted in brilliant reds and blues. The Parthenon, therefore, has become a westernised myth, an artefact appreciated for how it looks in a state of decay, instead of how it used to function within its contemporary cultural environment. Actually, as a monument, the Parthenon is a memorable graphic symbol that captures the identity of Athens and forms a point of spatial and temporal reference (Downs and Stea 1977).

#### **2.6.4. The Depopulation of the Landscape**

Besides the spatio-temporal fragmentation of the Greek landscape discussed above, there was also a division of the Greeks into two categories. For the travellers, there were two Greek populations: the ancients, creators of western civilisation and the modern Greeks, who lack the qualities of the former. Both shared the same name, but not the same customs, language and morals. When the cultural forms of modern Greeks did not conform to preconceived notions of antiquity they were denounced as

barbarisms. On the one hand, the travellers praised the noble qualities of ancient Greeks while, on the other, they derided the primitive and violent temper of modern Greeks. In general, nineteenth century travellers/writers had a static concept of Greek history. Any characteristics whose valued ancient origin could not be demonstrated were suspect as undesirable intrusions (Augoustinos 1994).

There are many examples where the local plays the role of the primitive and the exotic for the entertainment of the foreigner. The following examples come from the writings of romantic travellers, whose narratives are full of adjectives to characterise the locals they come in contact with. Chateaubriand, for instance, was wandering: "How does it happen that its inhabitants are descending into barbarity today still conserving at the same time some memories of what they used to be?" (1812: 770).<sup>2</sup> And he continues by asking: «For a people who rose so high how is it possible to fall so low?»(Chateaubriand 1812: 887).<sup>3</sup> But what does he mean with «so low». It is interesting that Chateaubriand, as well as Byron and Shelley, travelled to Greece during the revolution of the Greek population against the Ottoman Empire -a condition that none of them took into consideration when referring to the locals. On the contrary, they isolated and fragmented the historical periods, and they found themselves in an imaginary state of pseudo-events.

Theophile Gautier - more furious than the previous travellers - yells that:

the centuries were more faithful than the people and respected Acropolis as if deeply feeling the sense of art and realising the incapacity of the human race to rebuilt such a miracle. In fact, here, standing on the Acropolis [...] there's the true beauty, immortal, perfect, absolute; then there's nothing more than different kinds of decadence, and Greece holds always, leaning on the ruined marbles, the polite and noble right to humiliate whatever left from the name barbarian.

(in Menzotos 1989: 25)

Flaubert, on the other hand, more interested in the sensuality of the Greeks, as he was in all other countries he visited, he persistently refers to the Greek women. Having come to Greece from Egypt, where he met Cutchuk Hanum -his most inspirational

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<sup>2</sup> «D' où il arrive que ses habitants, tombent maintenant à la barbarie, conservent toutefois quelques souvenirs de ce qu' ils ont été» (see Chateaubriand 1812: 770, original French text).

<sup>3</sup> «Un peuple qui s' était élevé si haut pouvait-il descendre si bas ?» (see as above).

Oriental acquaintance- he inevitably compares the Greek women to her. He writes that the latter are, in general, unattractive and illiterate, thus lacking both Hanum's sensuality and Aspasia's intelligence.<sup>4</sup> His comparison, therefore, is again between the past and the present. Throughout these writing memos of the travellers, there is an abstract and indirect demand and desire to depopulate the landscape from its present inhabitants and repopulate it with figures from the Glorious Past (Gregory 1995).

Conforming to the tradition of the 19th century romantic travellers, Henry Miller (1947) describes the Greeks thoroughly in his book *The Colossus of Maroussi*. From the beginning of his book he sees himself to continue the tradition of Flaubert, Byron, de Nerval. Along with Plato, Aristotle, Euripides, Homer, another Greek writer, his contemporary Kazantzakis, is added to his knowledge. Miller, inspired by Kazantzakis' book (1942) *Zorba the Greek*, tries to find this figure, personality, character among the locals. Adjectives as: enthusiastic, curious-minded, kind, rebellious, lazy, chaotic, passionate and characterisations such as «the Greek likes to do things with his hands, with his whole body, with his soul» are plenty in his book (1942: 15). He often finds poverty «picturesque»:

[...] the dust, the heat, the poverty, the bareness, the containedness of the people, and the water everywhere in little tumblers standing between the quiet, peaceful couples, gave me the feeling that there was something holy above the place, something nourishing and sustaining.

(Kazantzakis 1942: 9)

As a result, from the barbarian of the 19th century, the stereotypical image of the Greek is transformed into the picturesque, the exotic.

### **2.6.5. Greece as the Latin Orient**

One of the most influential perceptions of travellers to Greece is the imagery of the place as part of the Orient. Even if the geographical position of Greece is within the boundaries of Europe, even if Athens is considered as the birthplace of the western civilisation, modern Greece is in an awkward position. The Byzantine and Ottoman periods have resulted in an idiosyncratic development of modern Greece, in main aspects different than that of the other mainstream western countries. For the tourist,

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<sup>4</sup> Aspasia, the educated and refined lover of Pericles, was the archetypical mistress.

it is often impossible to have a clear idea about where exactly Greece stands. Is it an Oriental or an Occidental country?

There are two symbolic landscapes within Greece: the one of the Hellenic Ideal and the other of the Oriental exotic. These reflect the way romantic travellers and their successors conceptualised the ancient and the modern. According to Said (1979), creator of the term *Orientalism*, the Orient is received by the western culture as a myth. «[It is] almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunted memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences» (Said 1979: 1). Interpreting the above argument, Gourgouris (1996: 131) claims that:

Orientalism thus takes on a much more profound meaning: the reification of that which cannot submit to the logic of identity, and which, precisely because of its resistance, must be forced to submit by being constructed as hopelessly condemned to eternal exclusion.

Moreover, the Orient has helped to define Europe and, in general, the West as its contrasting image, idea, personality and experience. Rana Kabbani (1986) in her book «Europe's Myths of Orient», following Said's ideas, argues that the West in its attempt to document the Orient, it came to document nothing else but itself. The Orient is, therefore, an integral part of the European material civilisation and culture, as it represents the different, the other, the alternative.

The 'other' - as well as the unknown and native/primitive is a sign of a fantastic scenery on a map "where cartography is the violence of imperialism."  
(McNelly, in Robertson et al. 1994: 65)

Since the nineteenth century, the travel to the Orient has been a pilgrimage to offer homage to the Roman and Greek civilisation, the Holy Lands, the Pyramids. As for the description of the Orient, this is based on «the imperial ego which makes no secret of its powers» (Said 1979: 40). Nineteenth century travellers actually described Greece either as the 'Latin Orient' or 'the European East'. Consequently, throughout the narratives of both romantic travellers and modern tourists, the image of Greece is placed somewhere between the two worlds, as already mentioned. Faubion (1993: 79), referring to the role of Athens as Cultural capital of Europe in 1986, accuses



Europe of forcing the capital to continue playing the role of the «humiliated oriental vassal». He indicates that:

The Occidental and Oriental, the European Hellenic and the Nicean Hellenic, the Hellenic and the Roman, the civilised and the vulgar, the 'foreign' and the 'native' the pure and the impure; view Athens as a place and all these grand and antagonistic metaphors of difference appear to constitute the urban bedrock. View more appropriately, as a process, and they prove, if by no means superficial, still subordinate to another; they are all conditioned by contrariety of the past and the present.

(Faubion 1993: 83)

In the case of the romantic travellers-writers, throughout their written narratives, wherever, directly or indirectly they refer to Greece, they place the country within the Orient. Journeys to Greece are described under the title «*Journeys to the Orient*» (*Voyage à l' Orient*), a title that abounds in the travelling literature and correspondence of the romantic period, especially in that produced by French writers. It could be argued that Greece played the special role of a gate to the Orient; an idea that pays homage to the older tradition of the Crusades and the medieval pilgrimages. For the romantic travellers, Greece was not part of the Western, Roman Catholic or Protestant Europe; it represented, first, the Christian Orthodox Church, second, the Byzantine empire, third, the Balkans and, finally, the boundary between the European continent and the broader and savage Orient. References to the Oriental character of the country are more frequent in the descriptions of native people. All the employed adjectives connote the symbol of the Other.

Generally speaking, European narratives of the Orient contained «a deliberate stress on those qualities that made East different from the West, exiled into an irretrievable state of 'otherness'» (Kabbani 1986: 5). This *Otherness* represented a primitive stock of cultural evolution, primarily characterised by where the lack of order and organisation, poverty, generosity, ruse (Menzos 1989: 69).

For example, as Chateaubriand wrote about an inn he visited in Athens, apart from the taste and the quality of the food, everything was deeply rooted in the ancient morals of the Orient (i.e. lack of hygiene and good service). Both Lamartine and Byron, also noticed the lack of service, which, together with the generosity of the

common people in Athens reminded them of the more or less oriental tradition. Whatever, therefore, was in their eyes inefficient, primitive and underdeveloped represented the Orient.

## **2.7. Two narrative paradigms on Greece**

So far we have described the main myths embodied within the symbolic landscape of Greece and, in particular of Athens, as constructed, or better say reconstructed, by nineteenth century travellers. However, speaking in a generalised manner about the nineteenth century travellers and their narratives without specifying their identities, could lead to misconceptions. Although the romantic travellers as writers belonged to the same literary movement, each one was a unique author. As members of the romantic movement, they travelled to Greece, gazed the landscape, then wrote memoirs and novels, constructing myths. However, their treatment of the Greek landscape through their writings differed in some aspects among different authors. For instance, Chateaubriand and Flaubert shared the same images throughout their journey to Greece, but their visualization and narration of their experiences and images are different. Both depopulated Greece (in the sense explained above), but for Chateaubriand depopulation was an action of historic death, whereas for Flaubert this was an action of spatial emptiness. Chateaubriand, thus, depicted the symbolic landscape in time narratives, whilst Flaubert was mainly concerned with the writing of space narratives.

### **2.7.1. The Myth of the Dead People: Chateaubriand in Greece**

A key author and traveller of the romantic period, whose travel writing style and approach to the Greek culture influenced the travel discourse on Greece, is Francois-René Chateaubriand. According to Todorov, Chateaubriand «has invented a newly appeared persona; in place of the ancient traveller in his book comes out the character of the modern tourist» (in 1989: 130). This is because Chateaubriand was interested neither in the life of the people living in the particular country, nor in her modern history. He claimed that he undertook his voyages as a devoted pilgrim, exclusively for his own pleasure and sake: «I went to search for images: that's all» (Said 1979: 169). The life of others, persistently present, becomes a nuisance, so, his main attraction

during his trip is focused on the Greeks «who are «dead». His dialogue with a Turkish Officer is revealing (Chateaubriand 1812: 772):

He wanted to know why I was travelling, since I was neither a merchant nor a doctor. I replied that I was travelling in order to look at people, and certainly at the Greeks who are dead.

This is a perfect expression of tourist desire. Tourism hinges on the desire for lifeless traces, for inert things. It does not then matter that Chateaubriand's dead Greeks are ancient people who left to the following generations only historical relics and ruins. For in his hands, whatever life the modern Greeks may have had becomes invisible as his pen rubs them off.. The 'dead people' Chateaubriand claims he wants to see are actually of interest only as objects, as mere images captured by the pen in exactly the same way as they were eventually to be captured by the tourist camera, one century later (see chapter 5).

Augoustinos (1994), referring to Chateaubriand's travel narratives, argues that the dead people were felt more keenly than that of the living, who were portrayed as shadows. Chateaubriand's admiration for the former contrasted with his detestation of the latter. In cases, however, where present inhabitants were visible to him, they became a nuisance that obstructed his gaze upon his idealised past country. What he actually saw of their life offended his aesthetic and cultural values. He believed that they should have been as perfect as their ancestors.

Generally speaking, throughout his writings, there is an abstract and indirect demand and desire to depopulate- if possible- the landscape from its present inhabitants and rehabilitate it with their great ancestors. If the former were mentioned at all, it was only to fit the decor and add local colour to his writings. He could not perceive a synthesis and an interpretation of both past and present, since he did not think that anything positive could emerge from a synthesis of what he considered as two basically different cultures. For him, modern Greeks were hopeless and had deteriorated as a result of the invasion of, and their violation by the Turks.

In general, Chateaubriand's Greece is a 'non-place' (Augé 1995: 92). In his memoirs, Chateaubriand described the Athenian landscape in silence, in a condition alienated from any trace of life. To him silence meant the absence of human presence and human activity, therefore, death. It acted as a leitmotif around which he created a series of images of isolated temples, deserted lands, and desecrated tombs. However, as «absence presupposes a lost presence, and silence implies a hiatus and the interruption of speech», the missing voice in his travelogues was that of the ancient Greeks whose echo was absent from both the customs and language of the present inhabitants (Augoustinos 1994: 205). For Chateaubriand, the silence and desolation that surrounded the ruins and tombs penetrated the mentality of the inhabitants and made them passive and apathetic.

Around me there were tombs, silence, destruction, and death, and a few Greek sailors sleeping, without cares and without dreams, on the ruins of Greece. I was going to leave forever this sacred land: my mind filled with its past grandeur and present debasement, I contemplated the picture that had just afflicted my eyes.

(Chateaubriand 1812: 257)

To conclude, Chateaubriand saw Greece as a deserted landscape, resembling a tomb, with only one inhabitant, strolling around in silence: himself.

### **2.7.2. The Myth of the Empty Space: Flaubert in Greece**

Stephan Mallarmé (in Brombert 1971) argues that the romantic escape of Gustave Flaubert to the Orient and, therefore, to Greece was always linked to the tragic meaning of time. Since his childhood, Flaubert was occupied with the idea of the division of time into distinct moments, something that channelled his future literary interest to a notion and definition of History seen as a sequence of «mummyfications». According to him, history was immobile, unable to change within the present space, but isolated, imprisoned in the past when the actual events took place (Brombert 1971).

To 'freeze' moments -and in general the past- Flaubert uses the gaze as a static equipment, a primordial camera. «I am the eye; I know how to look and gaze at things», he argues (in Tsianikas 1997: 11). Through his gaze, the world becomes a sequence of visual moments, 'tableaux vivants' stopped in time as suddenly as the

glancing eye; what is important for him is this timeless moment: « the perfect image of an eye» (Tsianikas 1997: 13). Flaubert treats the landscape as a photograph; he talks about the paintings of sightseeing. The feeling is purely physical and leads him to disfigurative representations and fallacious impressions of the present, physical world that surrounds him. His photographic gaze is mainly apparent in his travel notes describing his journey to the Orient. He writes fast, sometimes even like a telegram, narrating with more details the events that happened during his journey than the visited places. Contrary to what one might expect, he does not refer to political events taking place in the visited countries. The present History does not exist for him, but only the one related to the past. This major silence is quite impressive, since it comes from an author for whom, despite his passing from a romantic period to a realist one, history had stopped existing long ago. In front of Flaubert's eyes space is passing without any depth and historical perspective (Tsianikas 1997). This is also how he regards the spatial entity of Athens. The reasons behind this subtractive textual mapping of the city are diverse and mainly based on his effort to maintain a unique literary narrative style.

First of all, Flaubert is greatly influenced by the posthumous and futureless romantic philology. A common characteristic of the romantic writers was their denial of the existence of future, while, at the same time, they were proclaiming the existence of an enduring past, embodied within the present. Alfred de Vigny was declaring that the past was carrying along the present and future its «tourmenting spirit» (in Glasser 1936: 269). It seems, moreover, that the Romantic consciousness bestowed an additional dimension to the notion of time: that of duration. However, it would be erroneous to connect the romantic «durée» with the Bergsonian one, since the former treats the past as being in a «temporally distorted distance» from the present» (Glasser 1936: 270).

Referring in particular to Flaubert's «Voyage en Orient», there are two different narratives: the notes taken during the travel and the correspondence. The former narrative is characterised, as already mentioned, by a photographic mannerism, which the writer uses to trap and then freeze the space. By doing so, his descriptions reduce

the spatial framework into a façade. For instance, Flaubert's thorough description of Acropolis resembles more an architectural drawing than a piece of literature.

However, throughout his travel notes, sometimes, he leaves himself free to show his excitement of being there, in Athens. In these particular instances the time is treated as a flux and tenses are confused. He talks about the present space wherein he strolls as being a recollection, an act of the past. He uses past tense to describe the present: Today, Thursday 23 January, I said goodbye to Acropolis [...]» (Flaubert 1964: 130).

The probable reason for this strange time-flow narrative is that Flaubert's notes were re-written back in France; therefore, they are «memories of the Oriental travel» (Said 1978; Tsianikas 1997). This raises another issue: that of the recollection, when finally the writer remembers with a nostalgic impulse what he has already gazed. For Flaubert, thus, talking about his journey to Athens means either that he wants to go back to the actual place, resuming his *Voyage en Orient*, or to return to the idealised past of ancient Greece about which he had read so much.

On the other hand, in his letters referring to his stay in Athens -only nine in number- the Athenian landscape is described in a more predictable, common-place manner. References are made to scenes and details that captured his gaze, in balance with his descriptions of archaeological sites.

In general, Flaubert treats the present space as empty. This «blank» landscape wherein the gaze is lost, is after all the *sui generis* literary space. In most of his works, he begins his narrative from the empty, indefinite space. Even the natural environment becomes empty for him. Duquette (1972), referring to the particular case of *L'Education Sentimentale*, characterises it as «the architecture of emptiness» (l'architecture du vide), a metaphor that could also describe Flaubert's journey to the Orient. For in Flaubert's eyes, the Orient is not a whole entity, but an empty, white entrance through which one must pass and be tested (Tsianikas 1997).

This metaphorical experience of an empty space is partly applicable to the case of Flaubert's visit to Athens, but with one qualification: The writer does not treat the

Athenian landscape as empty from the very beginning. This is because even before arriving at Athens, he has memories about the place; memories ‘*in absentia*’ as we have already called them. So, in the case of Athens, Flaubert desperately tries to locate places, monuments, even landscapes, that could remind him of what he has already known about the city. Unfortunately, his *art memora*e cannot cope with the present space, his map of recollections is not anymore helpful, and he wonders:

Where is the famous bridge where the guards of Athens were waiting for the girls who attended the Mysteries? If my memory does not fail me, there was a little forest of laurel trees around here wherein people were hiding behind; all along this journey I haven’t seen a single laurel tree.

(Flaubert 1964: 70)<sup>5</sup>

This extract is from the very beginning of his travel notes to Athens. In his map of recollections he tries to locate the bridge where the guards were standing and watching the girls going in the mysteries of Eleusis, and the grove of oleanders, where the people used to hide. He has «souvenirs» about these places; recalling scenes from the ancient Greek literature he has read before his visit he feels that he has lived before, centuries ago, in this very setting. This is where his déjà vu, or, using Bergsonian terminology, his ‘paramnesiac’ illusions, are manifested (Said 1978; Deleuze 1985; Tsianikas 1997). Unfortunately, he cannot trace them, since they do not exist anymore; his reaction is to ignore the present space, to subtract it from his gaze. He empties it from all descriptions and manipulates it *ex nihilo-ex abrupto* (Tsianikas 1997).

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<sup>5</sup> «Où est le fameux pont où les gars d’ Athènes venaient engueuler les femmes se rendant aux Mystères? Si mes **souvenirs** ne me trompent, il y avait un bois de lauriers-roses à côté, dans lequel les gens se cachaient; sur toute la route je n’ai pas vu un seul laurier-rose?» (see Flaubert 1964: 70, original French text).

## 2.8. The aftermath of the cosmogonic myth: Tourism

In the very beginning of this chapter, I argued that the landscape is a cultural text written in a language of myths. The readers of that text and speakers of that language are the people who travel the landscape and read it as a spatial story (De Certeau 1984). «In its simplest form it [the landscape] involves a story and a story-teller» (Tilley 1994: 32). To be understood, therefore, the landscape must be narrated, written and depicted.

However, narratives capture action not just through mere description but in a sort of re-description. Ricoeur (1983) believes that the poetic qualities of narratives in producing configurations of events go far beyond the simple matter of succession (i.e. of something occurring after, or because of that). In other words, the landscape, as any text is dependent on previous texts 'taken for granted' at a particular cultural and historical conjuncture (Burgin 1988). In fact, this is one of the main Derridian principles of deconstruction, that of intertextuality. Through the process of intertextuality (and deconstruction) the text opens and releases all «possible positions of its intelligibility, including those which reveal the partiality [...] of the ideology inscribed in it» (Doty 1986: 236).

The notion of intertextuality can be paralleled with the notion of path in anthropology, as traced upon the landscape:

a journey along it [the path] can be claimed to be a paradigmatic cultural act, since it is following in the steps inscribed by others whose steps have worn a conduit for movement which becomes the correct or 'best way to go'.

(Tilley 1994: 31)

The creation or maintenance of a path is, thus, dependent on a previous networking of movements through the landscape.

In this chapter I tried to show how the symbolic landscape of Greece was shaped in the West as a series of interdependent texts, as a metaphor of interlinked paths. This retrospective interpretation makes evident not only the chronological sequence of the different historic periods but also how any former influenced any one that followed

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(i.e. Renaissance→Enlightenment→Romanticism) in the way the Hellenic Ideal was perceived and its cosmogonic mythology was constructed. Due to their attachment to the Hellenic Ideal and cosmogony, European travellers and writers created a series of influential myths which transformed Greece to the utopian landscape up to the present day. As a result, their visualisation of the Greek landscape became the guide for the tourists' imagination. In contrast with the nineteenth century travellers, the tourists do not produce myths but consume them; they try to recognise within the pre-established landscape, its particular mythological elements. However, their perception of Greece is similar to their predecessors', the tourists stroll around the country following the traces of their memory; recognising what they have already known; feeling nostalgic for the past -their past; fragmenting the landscape into different historic layers; depopulating it from its present inhabitants; Orientalising it. This is actually the cornerstone argument of this thesis upon which the subsequent analysis is focused. In the following chapters I will examine the myths embodied in the symbolic landscape of Greece, in particular, of Athens as consumed by contemporary tourists. My aim will be the analysis of the tourist gaze upon the Athenian landscape.

## CHAPTER 3: THE CONSTRUCTION OF MODERN ATHENS AND THE CREATION OF ITS TOURIST IMAGE

### 3.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, I discussed the different (urban) myths embodied within the Athenian landscape, as manufactured and narrated by nineteenth century travelers to the Orient. I talked about Flaubert's visualisation of Athens as an empty space as well as about Chateaubriand's comparison of Athenians with dead people. Both writers' gaze, discourse and mapping of Athens coincide: they were both searching for traces of the city's glorious past. Their encounter with the cityscape was based on a dialectic of intentional remembering and forgetting. In fact, this dialectic was the cornerstone for the rebirth of Athens (or birth of modern Athens). Modern Athens was *re*-constructed upon a master plan of historical memories and urban erasures similar to those employed by nineteenth century travelers to Greece. Since the foundation of the Modern Greek State in 1830, the urban planning of the city would lead to the erasure of urban memory; in other words, to the history of forgetting (Klein 1997).<sup>1</sup>

Following the above discussion, in this chapter I focus my analysis on the myth of the re-creation of Athens or, more accurately, its re-invention. In this respect, I first offer a brief description of the urban history of modern Athens, from its first master plan in 1830's to its present cityscape. Throughout this retrospective analysis I examine the transformations of the urban fabric of Athens. The latter include those characterised by an interest in the city's past (*remembering*) as well as those opposed to it and as such erasing (*forgetting*) any architectural forms proclaiming historical continuity. In particular, I refer to the neo-classic Athens of 1900's, the modernised Athens of 50's to 70's and finally the postmodern/deconstructed Athens of today, which somehow embodies both previous epochs. The portrayal and analysis of the urban evolution of Athens helps us to understand better the present urban landscape and its fragmented cityscape of contrasting memorial and erased spaces. It also gives an insight into the

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<sup>1</sup> Both terms «history of forgetting» and «erasure of memory» are used by Norman M. Klein to describe the myth of re-creating Los Angeles through the process of memory erasure (see Klein 1997).

ways tourists perceive and visualise the Athenian landscape. For this reason, in the second part of the chapter, I discuss the ways Athens is promoted as a tourist destination in conjunction with its present built environment. I also examine which historic periods are appraised and which ones are omitted from the promoted gaze. My focus is on the policies followed by both urban planners and tourist consultants in creating the tourist image of Athens. In the case of tourists, the myths are already set for them; unlike their predecessors the nineteenth-century romantic travellers, they are not the mythoplasts but the mere consumers of myths.

### **3.2. The Present Image of Athens: The Spectre of the Past<sup>2</sup>**

Athens has been described as a postmodern paradigm characterised by the juxtaposition of historical layers, of past and present moments. Roberts (1988: 556) states that a postmodern city, like Athens, is characterised:

not by the linear, cumulative development of a single fundamental style, but the coexistence of a multiplicity of quite different styles in a fluctuating and dynamic steady-state.

In this sense, the past has become as available and proximal as the present.

However, postmodernism in Athens is quite different than the one applied as an architectural style to Anglo-American cities. It is, instead, characterised as involuntary (Bruno 1987) and *par excellence* (Gomez-Peña 1993). Both terms define the embodiment of different historical periods and local narratives juxtaposed within the present landscape. Athens, being a postmodern city *par excellence*, acts as ‘theatre of memory’, where sites and buildings from different epochs bring the past into the present landscape. The urban nexus of modern Athens is marked by superimposed and contrasting landscapes, creating not only radiating (spatial) layers but also multiple (temporal) surfaces. Periods and styles separated by centuries are jostling against one another in a seemingly competitive growth pattern. The landscape is a scrapbook where some historic sites are marked out, while others are erased.

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<sup>2</sup> A preliminary version of this part of the chapter is included in the paper ‘The City and Topologies of Memory (see Crang and Travlou 2001).

When we think then of Athens we need to see the spatiality of collective memory in a more subtle manner than simply swapping space and time. Following Lyotard (1984) or Borges (1971), the break down of intervals in time and distance in space produces not simply synchronicity, but the virtual presence of the past through particular sites, making a pluri-temporal landscape. Not in the sense of a continuous historical narrative but discordant moments sustained through a mosaic of sites; a sense of qualitatively different times interrupting the idea of spatialised juxtastructures. These do not form a singular time flowing forwards, but instead are sites that offer opportunities for different temporalities to be brought into the present. The classical Athenian past is not dead and gone but a present force. Not in the sense that it acts or causes outcomes - as theories of cultural inheritance might have it - but in still being available as a resource to be taken up and through which present actions can occur.

The existence of juxtaposed temporalities within the cityscape is illustrated in Derrida's book *Athènes À l'Ombre de l'Acropole* (1996). Derrida's gaze creates a landscape of three different temporal morphemes. First, there is the actual ruinous city, second, the city as photographed in the seventies by Jean-François Bonhomme and, third, the photographed city as analysed by Derrida. His central interpretative triangle is his own refracted gaze on the Acropolis through one picture by Bonhomme. His narrative is a temporal sequence, successively imposing one morpheme upon its predecessor. In this way Derrida speaks through photography to time itself, drawing the time before, the time of the shutter opening and the time afterwards together. Space, thus, becomes bound in terms of presence and absence, where the three juxtaposed times are made present in the Athenian landscape through an act of disappearance.

Metaphorically speaking, the texture of the city depends upon ruins, accordingly upon destruction and death. For Derrida, Athens is a city which is due, and owes its dues, to death [une ville due à la mort]:

not only once, but twice or even three times, depending on different temporalities: The mourning for Athens of antiquity – archaeological or mythological, no doubt – the mourning for the disappearing Athens, exhibiting the corpse of its ruins – also the mourning for Athens photographed by the photographer who knows that tomorrow Athens condemned to fade away will vanish, [...] Finally, the third mourning – anticipated: he [the photographer]

knows there are also other photographs capturing spectacles still visible at present, during the publication of this book, but ought to vanish tomorrow.

(Bonhomme and Derrida 1996: 18)

Deconstructive reading suggests that the Athenian landscape ‘becomes erected by its very own ruin’ (Wigley 1993: 43). The present landscape of Athens is produced out of a process of construction through destruction, through three deaths or, as Derrida would have it, through ‘three ‘presences’ of the vanished’ (Bonhomme and Derrida 1996: 18). He refers to the haunted city constructed by these ‘three presences of the spectre’. The city fabric forms a ‘hauntology’ rather than a solid grounding. The present space of Athens is the past of the city as a return [revenant] (Wigley 1993; Derrida 1994). Derrida’s ‘spectral analysis’, after all, involves the return of a ghost. In this case the spectre over Europe, is not only classical Athens, but Ottoman Athens, the Oriental waypost, and the present and modern Athens, obscuring the ‘origin’ of western civilisation but also a spectre over the city itself, the ‘three presences of absence’ offer an allegory of the threefold return of the past in the thrice-folded physical and symbolic landscape of Athens. The city produces ruins that bring past into the present and the future.

Focusing on this particular argument of the historically haunted city, in the following analysis I describe both the historical events and urban planning projects that led Athens to its present deconstructive physiognomy. I examine how modern Athens deliberately became a landscape of urban memories and erasures wherein the past played the key-role in shaping the present image of the city. Finally, I explore the impact of those transformations of the cityscape (and planning decisions) on the tourist promotion of the city.

### **3.3. The Recent Past**

Before discussing the history of the creation of Modern Athens, a brief reference to the term *modern* should be made. As Clogg (1992: 1) argues, Athens seems to be the only European city which is verbally divided into 'ancient' and 'modern':

It is still, regrettably, a commonplace to talk of 'modern Greece' and of 'modern Greek' as though 'Greece' and 'Greek' must necessarily refer to the ancient world.

One of the possible reasons for this division is to make clear the difference between the two periods of the city and oppose, somehow, to any argument claiming the continuity of the city's urban history. In these terms, there are two distinct cities within the same space juxtaposing to each other but the position of the former in people's minds is privileged as compared with that of the latter. According to Herzfeld (1997) the prefix 'modern' is used to remind to people -Europeans- the separate existence of the present city and country from its past.

#### **3.3.1. 1834: The Reincarnation of Athens**

It would not be an exaggeration to argue that even if Modern Athens is the most newly founded European capital, it owes its entire existence to the past. Modern Athens, unlike any other European city, was imagined long before it was built. It was planned and constructed for the purpose of becoming the living symbol of the genesis of European history and in general, Western civilisation. The newly born capital looked to the past for its present. As Faubion (1993: 86) observes:

The past always has priority, even if its priority is, for the projective metaleptician, only *prima facie*. If not supreme, the past has, in Athens [...] an advantage over the present, an advantage that might be serviceable or more onerous from one situation to the next.

When the Modern Greek State was founded in 1830, Athens was a ruined Ottoman market town with a population variously estimated between 2,000 and 10,000 people (Dicks 1980). The city was about 290 acres in area, the one third of which consisted of Acropolis Hill, with no more than 1,650 houses and 129 semi-destroyed churches (see fig. 3.1) (Biris 1966; Boyer 1996). As for Parthenon, it was first converted to a Byzantine church and then to a mosque, whilst during the War of Independence it

became a hide-out for the revolting Greeks (Biris 1966; Burgel 1986). At that time, the only urban centers in Greece were Corinth, Tripolis, Patras, Napli and Argos, which also played a major role during the Greek revolution against the Ottoman Empire. For both reasons, they all stood a fair chance of becoming the Capital of the newly-founded Greek State embodying a modern nation-state. However, at the end none of the pre-revolutionary urban centers was chosen. The small town of Athens was, instead, the favourite choice. It was of course, the European Philhellenes who made that choice. Their idea that Athens could not be articulated independently of its antiquity was Europe's contemporary necessity. As in many similar cases, the past was not the issue at all, it served, as Klein claims (1997), mainly as a romanticised container for the anxieties of the present. Like Greece, Athens was seen as a reincarnation of its ancient self (Harzfeld 1987). In reality, the past provided the only ground upon which the new city (and country) could establish «its *raison d'être* to a Europe that had already concluded that [it] had little other reason rightly to be» (Friedman 1992: 838). In this respect, the choice of Athens became an internal affair of the wider geopolitical configuration of Europe (Gourgouris 1996). It was not, thus, the location of Athens that mattered in their decision but its past. Athens was mainly an idea; in other terms, an «ideological city» (Burgel 1989: 21).

In 1834, Greeks, with their European counterparts, decided that it was necessary to (re)- «invent Athens» (Burgel 1989: 21; Papageorgiou-Venetas 1996: 136). They needed to give shape to that newly-built city; they needed to invent a unique architectural style and planning expressing the present history of the city as well as reminding its past (see fig. 3.2). Otto, the first King of Greece, employed first the Greek expatriate architect, Kleanthis and then the German architect Leo von Klenze to design and plan Athens.<sup>3</sup> The latter, inspired by the purity of the architectural forms of Classical Athens, developed a triangular plan that turned all perspectives toward the Acropolis. Modern Athens was planned as a proportional extension of the ancient city, commemorating the memory of its antiquity (Boyer 1996). Every construction was a

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<sup>3</sup> Othon (Otto), the prince of Bavaria, was selected to be King of Greece in 1829. As Boyer argues «after years of deliberation by the allies and as the price extracted for offering them independence, the presumed chaotic and immature Greeks were given a simplified and morally enlightened social organization in the form of a Eurocentric monarchy» (see Boyer 1996: 162).

repetition of past forms, a resurrection and ceremony of past glory using classical architectural language, just as education used the classical literary tradition to purify and resurrect the cultural environment of the new State. According to von Klenze's master plan, the base of a triangle, named Ermou Street after Hermes, the classical god of commerce, was drawn across the old Turkish town, defining what would become the new commercial center of Athens. The south side of the triangular base was planned as a large archaeological park containing the ruins of the ancient shrine, and it was even proposed that all new structures should be built with cellars in order to facilitate the excavation and preservation of ancient remains that might be buried at their sites (Sicilianos 1960). Although it was agreed by everyone that no modern buildings should be erected on the Acropolis, there was still a general fear that the foreign architects and archaeologists would destroy «all the picturesque additions of the Middle Ages in their zeal to lay bare and restore the ancient monuments» (Raoul-Rochette 1838: 185).<sup>4</sup> Indeed, they set about removing any other buildings and ruins which were part of post-classical periods of the Athenian history, such as the Turkish mosque near the Plaka area, the Frankish Towers, Byzantine churches and anything else which, in their view, polluted the Acropolis Hill display of Hellenic purity ( see fig. 3.3) (Travlos 1972).

Surrounded by the antiquities, these Neo-Hellenes erected a cult image, a Greek fantasy from a lost golden age. The sanctuary of their religion, the Acropolis, became their new idol. It was called the cradle of human reason and the font of aesthetic expression, becoming by 1850 the superlative model of Greek perfection.

(Boyer 1996: 172)

Under the same light, in nineteenth century, the architects of Modern Athens employed the architectural language of classicism. All of the city's public and institutional buildings, as well as large private houses, were designed in the so-called neo-classical style. Neo-classical architecture was expressing both a nostalgia for the glorious past of the city and an enthusiasm for the new and modern. However, as a style, neo-classicism was only a façade; inside the house both the decoration and lifestyle were neo-hellenic. Quoting Herzfeld (1987), the neo-classical façade presented «an ideally

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<sup>4</sup> Raoul-Rochette's article «Athènes sous le roi Othon» published in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* in 1838 is one of the few original accounts on the transformation of Athens under Othon's monarchy. Raoul-Rochette makes full reference to the projects carried out by foreign archeological schools (British,



respectable outer face to the world, a celebration of *embourgeoisement* in progress» but at the same time it also masked «the inhabitants' raucously Romeic [Neo-Hellenic] domesticity» (Herzfeld 1987: 118, 136). Apparently, the assimilation of neo-classicism within the Greek society was never completed, as it was more a style and idea suggested and implied by Europeans and Greek middle-class expatriates (see fig. 3.4).

Moreover, and in spite of all the effort spent on town planning and architecture, it seemed that land speculation reigned and houses sprang up faster than their building could be regulated, appearing in the middle of vaguely outlined streets and blocks. In addition, in some areas people used parts of ruins and broken parts of statues as building materials for their new houses (Faubion 1993; Boyer 1996). Outside Klenze's triangle, Athens started looking disordered, chaotic and misplanned, with humble houses built everywhere in the city.

On the one hand, there was neo-classicism, a foreign, imposed style, giving to the city center a unique character but difficult to integrate within the Athenian landscape. Local residents found neo-classic Athens barely tolerable at best, as it was simply too 'foreign' for them. On the other hand, there was a massive domestic migration from the countryside to the city, causing an urge for housing. It was at that time that the growth of Athens started to deviate from its planning, as people built illegal houses everywhere. None of its first town planners accounted for the possibility of such a dramatic increase in the city's population. Kleanthis, for instance, designed a city capable of housing 40,000 people, while only fifty years after his master plan, in 1880's, the population of Athens already exceeded 120,000 (Fotiou 1989). The result of the above situation was the formation of two cities within Athens (see fig. 3.5). Raoul-Rochette (1938: 192), for instance, observed in 1838 that there were at the same time:

a new Athens that borrowed from everywhere and came to resemble nowhere, and the scenographic illusions of ancient Athens, ephemeral as a dream.

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German, Swedish, and later American), criticizing them for exploitation of the ancient sites. This article is very rare; in Greece it is held only in the collections of Gennadio Library in Athens.

Apparently, the changes in the built environment of Athens were so rapid and dramatic that it was impossible for them to be integrated within the landscape and become part of its urban collective memory. The cityscape started resembling something ephemeral, as any new architectural and planning transformation did not last for long. In fact, during the last 150 years, apart from the master plans of Kleanthis and von Klenze, there was no other thorough official proposal for urban planning in Athens (Vryhea 1989). Instead, from 1834 to 1920 alone, there were 565 alterations of the two original master plans, each of them giving a new physiognomy to the city (Fotiou 1989). Apart from the historic center of Athens, the rest of the city, as it was constantly transformed, did not have an identifiable and recognisable character.

### **3.3.2. 1930-1970: Demolishing Modern Athens**

It was not surprising, therefore, to see in 1930s the replacement of many neo-classical houses with apartment buildings. In the beginning, the latter were seen as an architectural accomplishment influenced by the modernist movement in Europe, aiming to house the wealthy bourgeoisie, who somehow wanted to show its 'European' identity. By then, neo-classicism was perceived as a remnant of backwardness, reminiscent of their past, the 'embarrassing' recent past as well as the classical one. Apartment buildings (*polykatoikies*), instead, were regarded as the solution and «only hope for the modernisation of the city» (Biris 1932: 564). In addition, the socio-political situation of the late twenties - early thirties led to the mass-construction of cheap apartment buildings in the center of Athens to house the dramatically increasing population. The conclusion of the Greek-Turkish war with Greece's defeat in 1922 ('*Asia Minor Disaster*') forced 1.3 million Greeks from Anatolia to emigrate to Greece. As a result, by 1926 the population of Athens exceeded 600,000 (Pentzopoulos 1962; Faubion 1993).<sup>5</sup> It was at the end of the World War II and the Civil War that followed, however, that the apartment buildings became an absolute necessity for Athens, as people were migrating from the severely damaged, impoverished, rural Greece to the cities, looking for better employment opportunities and some relative

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<sup>5</sup> In 1922, there was a war between Greece and Turkey over the sovereignty of Asia Minor an area that also included Greek speaking populations. After the defeat of the Greek expeditionary force, Greeks living in Asia Minor had to evacuate the area, leaving behind their houses and properties. This was a

security from post-civil war persecution (Burgel 1976; Fotiou 1989; Karydis 1990). At that point, the apartment buildings far from being the architectural assertion of the rising middle-class, became the typical settlements of a numerically increasing working-class. The neo-classical style of pre-war buildings, of a unique architectural character, was replaced in the post-war years by cheaply-built, massive structures. The architect's role in the construction process became secondary as the interest in the effective, profit-oriented use of space overshadowed any concern about the aesthetic value of buildings' façades (Antonakakis and Antonakaki 1978). The built environment of the city changed once more: «buildings were becoming higher, green areas smaller, streets narrower» (Fotiou 1989: 80). In general, the city started losing its points of reference, identity and scale. As Karydis notes (1990), the apartment buildings were responsible for the disappearance of historical memory within Athens, creating a cultural backwardness and social disorganisation of space (see fig. 3.6; 3.7a,b). Whereas modern Athens was originally conceived as the city that would embody historical memory, and the fairly successful neo-classicist project until the mid-twenties notwithstanding, during the course of its urban evolution in the next fifty years the city was transformed into a self-forgetting, amnesic cityscape.

In Athens, historical memory is absent: its center is a non-recognisable urban plexus. Even Acropolis Hill, the key landmark of the city, looks alien within this infinite luxury-slam which spreads around it, smothering it. In the city, memory, recent or older, is exclusively intellectual: any of its bodily traces has either disappeared completely or is gravely endangered.

(Giakoumatos 1999: 23)

The argument that «the city spaces and architectural landscapes often have been the active systematizers of memory» (Boyer 1996: 137) does not fully apply to Athens.

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provision of the Treaty of Lausanne, according to which 1.3 million Orthodox Greeks were exchanged with 350,000 Muslims who at that time were living in Greece (see Pentzopoulos 1962)

### 3.4. The Present

#### 3.4.1. 1983-1997: Planning the Tourist-Historic City

##### 3.4.1.1. Constructing the Historic City

As seen from the above discussion, the major preoccupation of the official quarters responsible for issues concerning the city was the rejection of previous Bills and master plans and the introduction of new ones. They were involved, more or less, in a vicious circle of building and demolishing, leaving in the cityscape nothing but remnants of previous planning and architectural phases. Besides all these dramatic changes in the built environment of Athens, there has been, however, little progress in the issues of urban regeneration and sustainable development in the city. There were several debates and discussions on urban regeneration but neither a final decision, nor a well-planned project was issued to promote these ideas and value them as a priority and urgent necessity for improving the quality of the city's image and life (Karydis 1990). In the mid-eighties, however, the situation of planning in Athens was reassessed once more. A series of dramatic changes took place in the built environment of the city, as urban planners and architects rejected the building apartments project of the last three decades. One of the activities of the newly-established Ministry of Environment and Urban Planning was the reconsideration of the growth of Athens. The aim was to reshape the Athenian landscape by regenerating both its center and peripheral areas.<sup>6</sup> This was literally the first time since Kleanthis and von Klenze that an official decision-making organ became involved in the planning of Athens, with the aim of contributing original ideas and proposals. As a result, a new master plan was announced, with the name: '*City Plan of 1983: Once More About Athens*'. Its general goal was the improvement of the image of the city by setting up new directions in its urban planning, such as the conservation of previous architectural forms and the regeneration of public space (Vryheia 1989). In particular, a charter dealing with the protection and preservation of the historic and traditional architectural heritage, was introduced (City Plan 1983). This charter aimed at the preservation of any architectural style still existing in Athens, thus promoting the idea of a multi-façade city. After a long history of forgetting, the city was expected to recover its urban memory. It was at

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<sup>6</sup> Until 1981, the year of the first ever elected socialist government (PASOK), there was no ministry in the to administer any issues of town and rural planning.

that time that the city started celebrating its palimpsest landscape of different spatio-temporal fragments, now approached as a city-encyclopaedia. While before the introduction of the charter, the State's interest was mainly focused on the preservation of sites and monuments of antiquity, the new approach included formerly neglected architectural examples from the Byzantine, Frankish, Ottoman periods, as well as the more recent neo-classic style. In particular, the charter included a new section proposing a series of actions for improving the city's image, such as the preservation and regeneration of traditional neighbourhoods in Athens and Piraeus (e.g. Plaka, Psiri, Metaxourgio) and the use of abandoned industrial buildings as cultural centers and galleries (City Plan 1983). The cornerstone of that charter was the reconsideration of the archaeological park. Urban planners started once again to talk about the need to materialise von Klenze's original project of the unification of the archaeological sites for improving the image of Athens. The archaeological park would function as an open-air museum, incorporating the ancient Agora, the Keramikos cemetery, the columns of Olympic Zeus and the Olympic stadium (Smith 1997). Along with the major historic sites and monuments, the new plan was extended to include buildings and areas representative of other periods of Athenian history (i.e. Byzantine, Ottoman, Neo-classic). In 1994, the then Minister of Culture appraised the importance of the construction of a large-scale project such as the archaeological park saying that:

In my opinion, it would be the most important of all the environmental interventions in the city as it would not only bring back the long lost historic physiognomy of Athens but it would also limit the number of cars in the center by creating pedestrian zones. With cars confined to the outer ring roads and underpasses, pedestrians will be able to take in the views much as the ancients did, without having to negotiate congested streets and busy highways. It would be an easily-accessible walk in the past, in the history of this city bringing back long-forgotten urban images.

(Mikroutsikos 1994: 90)

However, the project has not been realised yet; there are still lots of debates and discussions about its nature. It seems that so far the responsible ministries (i.e. the Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Urban Planning, Ministry of Economic Development), local authorities, public organisations and civil engineers have not managed to agree on how this project should be implemented (Aggelikopoulou 1998).

### 3.4.1.2. Promoting the Tourist City

Similarly, for years the potential contribution of tourism to urban regeneration and vice versa had not been realised. The possibility of a positive feedback loop connecting tourism and urban regeneration was understood much later, in the late-nineties: tourism, besides boosting the economy of the city, could also change its physiognomy; the regenerated city has the potential of attracting more tourism. The organisations and ministries responsible for the urban regeneration of Athens did not consider tourism as a major reason for improving the image of the city; in their proposals and actions tourism was understated (The National Technical University of Athens, 1998a).<sup>7</sup> Both the *City Plan of 1983* and its revised second edition in 1993 do not include any proposed action directed at the development of tourism in Athens. One of the urban planners working at the *Organisation of the City Plan of Athens* claimed that:

*(Antonis Kremmidas, Ministry of Urban Planning and Environment, 5-02-98)*

As regards tourism, I believe that Athens is not a city which could accommodate a large number of tourists for longer periods as happens in other European cities; also, Athens is an unattractive city. For these reasons, so far most of the strategies and actions for the urban planning like the *City Plan* did not include a separate section on tourism. However, I think that their general policies for the improvement of the image of Athens somehow affect positively tourism development.

Moreover, the official guideline on tourism issues in the Greek capital was grounded on the idea that as long as there were monuments and archaeological sites around, there was no reason to fear that the city would repel, and finally loose, a vast number of its tourist clientele (Zivas 1997). So far, tourism was perceived as a business whose prosperity relied on, and was guaranteed by, the history of the city. In this sense, tourism was limited within a single district of the city, its historic center, purposefully excluding from the tourist map the planning and architectural cacophony of the rest of the city; in other words, modern Athens. However, since the mid-eighties, it has become widely known that Athens is a dysfunctional city; its image has been seriously harmed as a result of its chaotic town planning, concrete architecture and air pollution.

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<sup>7</sup> This part of the chapter is derived from the two research projects carried out by the Department of Urban Planning and Architecture (The National Technical University of Athens) in 1998 and financed by the Ministry of Urban Planning and Environment. Both projects examine and analyse urban tourism in Athens from a theoretical as well as practical perspective outlining first the key-characteristics of the case of Athens and second its potential for a (sustainable) tourism development (see NTUA 1998a; NTUA 1998b).

In fact, the promotion of its glorious past is not enough to prevent tourism from declining. As it was argued in an article written in 1982, «the picture of Acropolis Hill in a tourist advertisement or poster is not enough for creating an increase in the tourism demand [...]. Nowadays, Athens faces a different problem, the overemphasis of its negative characteristics; so to speak its *anti-advertisement*» (Daskalakis 1982: 42). For example, during the last twenty years, most of the tourist markers (i.e. brochures, guidebooks) portray Athens as an unattractive city (see chapter 4). The consequence of constantly overstressing the drawbacks of the Athenian urban landscape was the creation, and then polarisation of its negative image, a situation which, according to studies on place-marketing, is very difficult to reverse (Law 1992; van der Borg et al. 1995). In addition, according to recent statistics, only 9% of the overall number of tourists to Greece visit the country (and Athens, respectively) for its antiquity; a fact suggesting that the city's history and past alone cannot attract tourists anymore (Buckley and Papadopoulos 1996). It seems that the present built environment plays the same, if not a more important, role in shaping the image of the city. Unfortunately, tourism in Athens is a maximum two-days visit to the popular archaeological sites by tourists who want to leave the polluted city as soon as possible (Papageorgiou-Venetas 1996: 257).

Since the foundation of the Greek National Tourist Organisation (GNTO), in the late fifties, little has changed in the way the case of Athens is approached and considered. The GNTO, as the major public organisation responsible for tourism strategy and place-marketing of Greece abroad, has systematically ignored Athens or at least has not paid the attention needed to create the tourist image of the city and sell it as a marketable product. From the GNTO's perspective, its responsibility is the promotion of Greece as a country and not at a regional level. Focusing, for instance, on the two latest advertising campaigns of Greece abroad, Athens is almost excluded: it is either completely absent or limited to a few words and images depicting a very stereotypical and fragmented landscape. Specifically, the two advertising campaigns designed by Saatchi & Saatchi and McCann & Erickson in the mid-nineties (1996 and 1997-1999, respectively) were, according to the GNTO, the most successful so far. The first one bears the logo «a never-ending story» and depicts a combination of photographs of

idyllic recreational landscapes such as remote beaches and archaeological sites (see fig. 3.8). In fact, the latter are portrayed in a smaller picture as a background of the former. The general tone of the advertisement is described in the few words below:

From the island of Thassos to the rock of Acropolis of Athens, Greece reveals a different story at every turn. Feel the never-ending presence of a glorious civilisation against the backdrop of spectacular scenery and you'll realise you've embarked on a never-ending vacation.

(GNTO- Tourist Campaign 1998)

The second, and most recent tourism campaign is quite similar with its predecessor focusing, too, on the traditional 'Mediterranean holidays' theme (see fig. 3.9). Its general logo is: «Greece: The Authentic Choice», aiming at boosting tourism on holiday resorts, particularly in the islands. It consists of a series of advertisements, each one portraying a different recreational activity taking place in a seaside resort (e.g. swimming, sunbathing). According to the particular activity shown in each picture the accompanying text changes. For a moment, Greece becomes the country that has been «voted clearest waters in the world by thousands of dolphins», the next the country «voted sunniest place in the world by thousands of sunglasses», or even «voted the perfect family holidays by hundreds of sandcastles». City tourism, on the other hand, is almost ignored in this campaign; there is only one advertisement from the whole set of twelve, showing Athens. It focuses on heritage tourism, using Acropolis Hill as the ultimate recognisable landmark of Greece.

Greece has always been the favourite destination of those who seek to revive both body and soul. Because for centuries Greece's sun, waters, mountains and air have helped to refresh the body. While its culture, festivals and warmth of its people have purified the soul. On your next vacation, meet the country where civilisation was given light and democracy was born. Contemplate the temples of the Gods. Explore the very same paved alleys Socrates once wandered and discover the part of Greece that lives in you.

It is apparent from the above description that both tourism campaigns promote the already overstressed and, consequently, saturated images of Greece. According to an article published in the weekly newspaper '*To Vima*', these advertisements lack innovation, using all possible verbal and visual clichés to describe Greece, reflecting in this manner the way the GNTO's perceive, plan and finally sell Greek tourism in the tourist market (Koroxeni 1996).



Likewise, the degree of success of the particular advertisements is open to questioning.<sup>8</sup> For instance, Gerassimos Fokas, the president of the Association of Hotel-Owners in Athens, claims that the GNTTO's tourism strategy is responsible for the decrease in the number of visitors to Athens (Xenia 1996). He blames the National Tourist Organisation for this negative situation, claiming that the GNTTO focuses its tourism advertising on other parts of Greece, such as the islands, ignoring city tourism and particularly that to Athens. His views are shared by the many people working in the tourism industry, who believe that the present promotional strategy is not well-planned and, correspondingly, has a negative effect on Athenian tourism. Petros Diplas, in particular, the general secretary of the Tourist Organisation of the Municipality of Athens, regards the present tourist campaign with doubt, saying that «it is very difficult to attract tourists in the city center by showing them beaches». As an alternative solution to the so far problematic advertising campaign, they propose to the GNTTO a series of drastic alterations of its advertising strategy. They ask first for the foundation of a separate organisation dealing exclusively with the promotion of tourism in Athens; second the employment of a professional image-maker; and third, a longer duration of the advertising campaign. Concentrating on their latter proposition, they object the short-term and seasonal advertising campaign of Greece abroad. They argue that at the moment the GNTTO advertises the country only from May to September and not all year round, as it happens in other Mediterranean countries like Portugal and Spain. Besides, some organisations like the Association of Greek Tourist Entrepreneurs (AGTE) and the Municipality of Athens oppose the present state of management of tourist resources of cultural character by the GNTTO, as resulting in disorganisation and confusion. The ancient theatre of Herodus Atticus, on the slope of Acropolis Hill, for example, as an archaeological site falls under the administration of the Ministry of Culture. Any performances taking place there, however, are, as tourist resources, administered by the GNTTO. As stated by the AGTE, the Ministry of Culture and GNTTO often find it difficult to co-ordinate their actions whenever decisions on the

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<sup>8</sup> The views expressed in this part of the chapter derived from a series of interviews I conducted during my fieldwork in Athens. In particular, along with the interviews with tourists, I interviewed people working in key positions in both the public and private tourist sector. These included people in the GNTTO, the Municipality of Athens, the Prefecture of Athens, the Association of Greek Hotel-Owners, the Association of Hotel-Owners of Athens, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Urban Planning and Environment, the Network of Greek Cities, and the Organization «Olympic Games: Athens 2004».

tourist use of archaeological sites are to be made. AGTE believe that cultural tourism is important for Athens, given the city's plenitude of cultural resources. According to them, the GNTA should focus on that cultural tourism to attract tourists in the city, promoting both its past and present landscape (AGTE 1992; *Tourismos kai Oikonomia* 1993).

### **3.5. The Future**

#### **3.5.1. 1997- : Organising the Olympic Games 2004**

It was not, however, until 1997 the year Athens was officially declared the host city of the Olympic Games 2004, that urban (cultural) tourism was finally given serious consideration. The Games are perceived «as the best advertisement for Athens to attract tourists» (Ta Nea 1997: 10). In the dossier submitted, for instance, in the frame of the contest for the Olympic Games 2004 the underlined slogan was «sports, culture, tourism» indicating that all three components would be of equal weight for the promotion of Athens as the host city for the mega-event (Nautemboriki 1997: 63). According to Law (1992; 1993), special (mega-) events as the Olympic Games are increasingly being used as a means of attracting tourists. Tourism motivation is often being considered in the organisation of special events, as in the case of Athens, for attracting people into the area all-around the year, creating media attention and raising the profile of the area, encouraging repeat visits, and most of all, assisting regeneration in all aspects of city life (urban, economic, social, cultural) (Law 1992). Moreover, the long-term goal of special events is the transformation of the host city to a popular and desirable tourist destination. In this respect, the Olympic Games are nothing but an investment for the future of the city which should be received as «an image-building event rather than a profit generating opportunity» (Pyo et al. 1988: 144).

Following these arguments, the Olympic Games 2004 are also viewed as the ultimate opportunity to improve and modernise the image of Athens and promote its tourism industry. While before 1997 Athens was seen as a lost cause, with serious problems of urban planning, air pollution and traffic, for the last four years it has been promoted with proclamations of extreme enthusiasm and optimism for a drastic change in its image and environment, due to this special sport event. The rather neglected city seems

to obtain a new identity, that of an attractive tourist destination, as its urban planning and tourist infrastructure are constantly boosted and financially supported by the state. Athens' undertaking of the Olympic Games is employed to support the realisation, for the first time, of projects of sustainable development and urban regeneration, purported to rebuild the image of the city. For example, large scale projects like the new Athens airport, the metro and even the archaeological park are time-tabled with reference to the Olympic Games 2004 deadline. This overt optimism for the realisation of these major projects, is exemplified by the words of the Minister of Urban Planning and Environment, Kostas Laliotis, one of the key-advocates of the view that the impact of the Games will be positive:

The Olympic Games have significant, positive consequences for Athens and the whole of Greece [...]. Certainly, the Olympic Games 2004 is a hallmark for the process of prioritisation of the *City Plan*, aiming at the planned restructuring of Athens. This restructuring will be linked with the sustainable development of Athens area, with the citizens' need for and desire of the promotion of its cultural, aesthetic and natural resources.

(in Nautemboriki 1997: 64)

On the other hand, there is an evident tendency of associating the choice of Athens as the host city of Olympic Games 2004 with the past. To be more specific, there is a series of arguments claiming that the Olympic Games belongs to Athens and in general, to Greece by right since they started there. The president of the *Organisation of the Olympic Games 2004*, Gianna Aggelopoulou-Daskalaki, argues that «the Greek Capital is the only city in the world» which has apart from the modern infrastructure required for the organisation of the Olympic Games, the legacy of its history (Ta Nea 1997: 6). Under the same light, the Mayor of Athens, Dimitris Avramopoulos, in his address to the International Committee for the Olympic Games, said:

Give us the opportunity to make you proud. We promise you that our three thousand years of history will make *Athens 2004* the most successful Olympic Games ever! Our great ancestors will show us the way to success.

(Ta Nea 1997: 12)

The connection of the Olympic Games with antiquity is not only verbally argued, but becomes the thematic core of the mega-event. According to the organisers, the 'glorious past' of Athens would play a key role in the organisation of the Games. Most of the major athletic events, for instance, would take place in the ancient stadium of

Athens celebrating in this way the legitimacy of historical continuity in the city. This perception, however, of the Olympic Games 2004 as *history repeated* is not new; the same idea marked the organisation of the event of the International Athletics Championship '97, officially declared to be a grand preview of the Olympics 2004. The opening ceremony of the latter event took place in the Olympic stadium, re-enacting the ancient Olympic Games in a setting modified to replicate a reconstructed ancient stadium. This event generated much criticism due to the «cheap Hollywood aesthetics and the banality of the performance (Filini 1998: 51). The over-bearing emphasis on the classical past, the superficiality and irrelevance, and the spectacular character of sport events, particularly the Olympic Games, have been attacked by many Greek critics.

What is, then, revived, from the ancient spirit? Absolutely nothing, and this is not bad at all, since history does not flow backwards and human societies cannot return to the age of Zeus. Let us, then, leave the ancient spirit to rest in peace; it is not immortal but mortal -intrinsically dead- as everything human. What survives, then, is a pretext: the imitation of ancient glory, which, like a crutch, is evoked to support all sorts of modern scum.

(Citizens' Initiative Against the Conduct of the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens 1997: 31)

It seems that for Athens there is no escape from the ever-apparent spectre of antiquity, which justifies, accordingly, Derrida's description of the city as haunted by the presence of its ruins. Generally speaking, the Olympic Games 2004 builds an image of Athens as combining both the infrastructure and dynamism of a modern city with the nationalistic myth of an ever-present, long and glorious past.

### **3.6. Conclusion**

This analysis of the Athenian past, present and future highlights the development of Athens through a process of selective remembering and forgetting. Modern Athens can be viewed as consisting of juxtaposed layers of unequal significance; actual remnants of (ancient monuments) and subsequent references to the classical past (neoclassicism) are overemphasized as constituting the identity of Athens. This superiority of the classical historical layer over the Athenian space gives Athens the character of a deconstructed city that 'owes itself to death'.

Since the foundation of modern Athens in 1834, this continuous reference to the classical past formed the basis of a long succession of master plans for the city. These plans were mainly realised within the historical centre of Athens, whereon the tourist image of modern Athens is largely based. Future events of international scale (e.g. Olympic Games 2004) are approached though the same spirit of classical-revivalism and the processes of selective remembering and forgetting are re-enforced.

## CHAPTER 3: THE CONSTRUCTION OF MODERN ATHENS AND THE CREATION OF ITS TOURIST IMAGE

### 3.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, I discussed the different (urban) myths embodied within the Athenian landscape, as manufactured and narrated by nineteenth century travelers to the Orient. I talked about Flaubert's visualisation of Athens as an empty space as well as about Chateaubriand's comparison of Athenians with dead people. Both writers' gaze, discourse and mapping of Athens coincide: they were both searching for traces of the city's glorious past. Their encounter with the cityscape was based on a dialectic of intentional remembering and forgetting. In fact, this dialectic was the cornerstone for the rebirth of Athens (or birth of modern Athens). Modern Athens was *re*-constructed upon a master plan of historical memories and urban erasures similar to those employed by nineteenth century travelers to Greece. Since the foundation of the Modern Greek State in 1830, the urban planning of the city would lead to the erasure of urban memory; in other words, to the history of forgetting (Klein 1997).<sup>1</sup>

Following the above discussion, in this chapter I focus my analysis on the myth of the re-creation of Athens or, more accurately, its re-invention. In this respect, I first offer a brief description of the urban history of modern Athens, from its first master plan in 1830's to its present cityscape. Throughout this retrospective analysis I examine the transformations of the urban fabric of Athens. The latter include those characterised by an interest in the city's past (*remembering*) as well as those opposed to it and as such erasing (*forgetting*) any architectural forms proclaiming historical continuity. In particular, I refer to the neo-classic Athens of 1900's, the modernised Athens of 50's to 70's and finally the postmodern/deconstructed Athens of today, which somehow embodies both previous epochs. The portrayal and analysis of the urban evolution of Athens helps us to understand better the present urban landscape and its fragmented cityscape of contrasting memorial and erased spaces. It also gives an insight into the

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<sup>1</sup> Both terms «history of forgetting» and «erasure of memory» are used by Norman M. Klein to describe the myth of re-creating Los Angeles through the process of memory erasure (see Klein 1997).

ways tourists perceive and visualise the Athenian landscape. For this reason, in the second part of the chapter, I discuss the ways Athens is promoted as a tourist destination in conjunction with its present built environment. I also examine which historic periods are appraised and which ones are omitted from the promoted gaze. My focus is on the policies followed by both urban planners and tourist consultants in creating the tourist image of Athens. In the case of tourists, the myths are already set for them; unlike their predecessors the nineteenth-century romantic travellers, they are not the mythoplasts but the mere consumers of myths.

### **3.2. The Present Image of Athens: The Spectre of the Past<sup>2</sup>**

Athens has been described as a postmodern paradigm characterised by the juxtaposition of historical layers, of past and present moments. Roberts (1988: 556) states that a postmodern city, like Athens, is characterised:

not by the linear, cumulative development of a single fundamental style, but the coexistence of a multiplicity of quite different styles in a fluctuating and dynamic steady-state.

In this sense, the past has become as available and proximal as the present.

However, postmodernism in Athens is quite different than the one applied as an architectural style to Anglo-American cities. It is, instead, characterised as involuntary (Bruno 1987) and *par excellence* (Gomez-Peña 1993). Both terms define the embodiment of different historical periods and local narratives juxtaposed within the present landscape. Athens, being a postmodern city *par excellence*, acts as ‘theatre of memory’, where sites and buildings from different epochs bring the past into the present landscape. The urban nexus of modern Athens is marked by superimposed and contrasting landscapes, creating not only radiating (spatial) layers but also multiple (temporal) surfaces. Periods and styles separated by centuries are jostling against one another in a seemingly competitive growth pattern. The landscape is a scrapbook where some historic sites are marked out, while others are erased.

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<sup>2</sup> A preliminary version of this part of the chapter is included in the paper ‘The City and Topologies of Memory (see Crang and Travlou 2001).

When we think then of Athens we need to see the spatiality of collective memory in a more subtle manner than simply swapping space and time. Following Lyotard (1984) or Borges (1971), the break down of intervals in time and distance in space produces not simply synchronicity, but the virtual presence of the past through particular sites, making a pluri-temporal landscape. Not in the sense of a continuous historical narrative but discordant moments sustained through a mosaic of sites; a sense of qualitatively different times interrupting the idea of spatialised juxtastructures. These do not form a singular time flowing forwards, but instead are sites that offer opportunities for different temporalities to be brought into the present. The classical Athenian past is not dead and gone but a present force. Not in the sense that it acts or causes outcomes - as theories of cultural inheritance might have it - but in still being available as a resource to be taken up and through which present actions can occur.

The existence of juxtaposed temporalities within the cityscape is illustrated in Derrida's book *Athènes À l'Ombre de l'Acropole* (1996). Derrida's gaze creates a landscape of three different temporal morphemes. First, there is the actual ruinous city, second, the city as photographed in the seventies by Jean-François Bonhomme and, third, the photographed city as analysed by Derrida. His central interpretative triangle is his own refracted gaze on the Acropolis through one picture by Bonhomme. His narrative is a temporal sequence, successively imposing one morpheme upon its predecessor. In this way Derrida speaks through photography to time itself, drawing the time before, the time of the shutter opening and the time afterwards together. Space, thus, becomes bound in terms of presence and absence, where the three juxtaposed times are made present in the Athenian landscape through an act of disappearance.

Metaphorically speaking, the texture of the city depends upon ruins, accordingly upon destruction and death. For Derrida, Athens is a city which is due, and owes its dues, to death [une ville due à la mort]:

not only once, but twice or even three times, depending on different temporalities: The mourning for Athens of antiquity – archaeological or mythological, no doubt – the mourning for the disappearing Athens, exhibiting the corpse of its ruins – also the mourning for Athens photographed by the photographer who knows that tomorrow Athens condemned to fade away will vanish, [...] Finally, the third mourning – anticipated: he [the photographer]



knows there are also other photographs capturing spectacles still visible at present, during the publication of this book, but ought to vanish tomorrow.

(Bonhomme and Derrida 1996: 18)

Deconstructive reading suggests that the Athenian landscape ‘becomes erected by its very own ruin’ (Wigley 1993: 43). The present landscape of Athens is produced out of a process of construction through destruction, through three deaths or, as Derrida would have it, through ‘three ‘presences’ of the vanished’ (Bonhomme and Derrida 1996: 18). He refers to the haunted city constructed by these ‘three presences of the spectre’. The city fabric forms a ‘hauntology’ rather than a solid grounding. The present space of Athens is the past of the city as a return [revenant] (Wigley 1993; Derrida 1994). Derrida’s ‘spectral analysis’, after all, involves the return of a ghost. In this case the spectre over Europe, is not only classical Athens, but Ottoman Athens, the Oriental waypost, and the present and modern Athens, obscuring the ‘origin’ of western civilisation but also a spectre over the city itself, the ‘three presences of absence’ offer an allegory of the threefold return of the past in the thrice-folded physical and symbolic landscape of Athens. The city produces ruins that bring past into the present and the future.

Focusing on this particular argument of the historically haunted city, in the following analysis I describe both the historical events and urban planning projects that led Athens to its present deconstructive physiognomy. I examine how modern Athens deliberately became a landscape of urban memories and erasures wherein the past played the key-role in shaping the present image of the city. Finally, I explore the impact of those transformations of the cityscape (and planning decisions) on the tourist promotion of the city.

### **3.3. The Recent Past**

Before discussing the history of the creation of Modern Athens, a brief reference to the term *modern* should be made. As Clogg (1992: 1) argues, Athens seems to be the only European city which is verbally divided into 'ancient' and 'modern':

It is still, regrettably, a commonplace to talk of 'modern Greece' and of 'modern Greek' as though 'Greece' and 'Greek' must necessarily refer to the ancient world.

One of the possible reasons for this division is to make clear the difference between the two periods of the city and oppose, somehow, to any argument claiming the continuity of the city's urban history. In these terms, there are two distinct cities within the same space juxtaposing to each other but the position of the former in people's minds is privileged as compared with that of the latter. According to Herzfeld (1997) the prefix 'modern' is used to remind to people -Europeans- the separate existence of the present city and country from its past.

#### **3.3.1. 1834: The Reincarnation of Athens**

It would not be an exaggeration to argue that even if Modern Athens is the most newly founded European capital, it owes its entire existence to the past. Modern Athens, unlike any other European city, was imagined long before it was built. It was planned and constructed for the purpose of becoming the living symbol of the genesis of European history and in general, Western civilisation. The newly born capital looked to the past for its present. As Faubion (1993: 86) observes:

The past always has priority, even if its priority is, for the projective metaleptician, only *prima facie*. If not supreme, the past has, in Athens [...] an advantage over the present, an advantage that might be serviceable or more onerous from one situation to the next.

When the Modern Greek State was founded in 1830, Athens was a ruined Ottoman market town with a population variously estimated between 2,000 and 10,000 people (Dicks 1980). The city was about 290 acres in area, the one third of which consisted of Acropolis Hill, with no more than 1,650 houses and 129 semi-destroyed churches (see fig. 3.1) (Biris 1966; Boyer 1996). As for Parthenon, it was first converted to a Byzantine church and then to a mosque, whilst during the War of Independence it

became a hide-out for the revolting Greeks (Biris 1966; Burgel 1986). At that time, the only urban centers in Greece were Corinthe, Tripolis, Patras, Napoli and Argos, which also played a major role during the Greek revolution against the Ottoman Empire. For both reasons, they all stood a fair chance of becoming the Capital of the newly-founded Greek State embodying a modern nation-state. However, at the end none of the pre-revolutionary urban centers was chosen. The small town of Athens was, instead, the favourite choice. It was of course, the European Philhellenes who made that choice. Their idea that Athens could not be articulated independently of its antiquity was Europe's contemporary necessity. As in many similar cases, the past was not the issue at all, it served, as Klein claims (1997), mainly as a romanticised container for the anxieties of the present. Like Greece, Athens was seen as a reincarnation of its ancient self (Harzfeld 1987). In reality, the past provided the only ground upon which the new city (and country) could establish «its *raison d'être* to a Europe that had already concluded that [it] had little other reason rightly to be» (Friedman 1992: 838). In this respect, the choice of Athens became an internal affair of the wider geopolitical configuration of Europe (Gourgouris 1996). It was not, thus, the location of Athens that mattered in their decision but its past. Athens was mainly an idea; in other terms, an «ideological city» (Burgel 1989: 21).

In 1834, Greeks, with their European counterparts, decided that it was necessary to (re)- «invent Athens» (Burgel 1989: 21; Papageorgiou-Venetas 1996: 136). They needed to give shape to that newly-built city; they needed to invent a unique architectural style and planning expressing the present history of the city as well as reminding its past (see fig. 3.2). Otto, the first King of Greece, employed first the Greek expatriate architect, Kleanthis and then the German architect Leo von Klenze to design and plan Athens.<sup>3</sup> The latter, inspired by the purity of the architectural forms of Classical Athens, developed a triangular plan that turned all perspectives toward the Acropolis. Modern Athens was planned as a proportional extension of the ancient city, commemorating the memory of its antiquity (Boyer 1996). Every construction was a

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<sup>3</sup> Othon (Otto), the prince of Bavaria, was selected to be King of Greece in 1829. As Boyer argues «after years of deliberation by the allies and as the price extracted for offering them independence, the presumed chaotic and immature Greeks were given a simplified and morally enlightened social organization in the form of a Eurocentric monarchy» (see Boyer 1996: 162).

repetition of past forms, a resurrection and ceremony of past glory using classical architectural language, just as education used the classical literary tradition to purify and resurrect the cultural environment of the new State. According to von Klenze's master plan, the base of a triangle, named Ermou Street after Hermes, the classical god of commerce, was drawn across the old Turkish town, defining what would become the new commercial center of Athens. The south side of the triangular base was planned as a large archaeological park containing the ruins of the ancient shrine, and it was even proposed that all new structures should be built with cellars in order to facilitate the excavation and preservation of ancient remains that might be buried at their sites (Sicilianos 1960). Although it was agreed by everyone that no modern buildings should be erected on the Acropolis, there was still a general fear that the foreign architects and archaeologists would destroy «all the picturesque additions of the Middle Ages in their zeal to lay bare and restore the ancient monuments» (Raoul-Rochette 1838: 185).<sup>4</sup> Indeed, they set about removing any other buildings and ruins which were part of post-classical periods of the Athenian history, such as the Turkish mosque near the Plaka area, the Frankish Towers, Byzantine churches and anything else which, in their view, polluted the Acropolis Hill display of Hellenic purity ( see fig. 3.3) (Travlos 1972).

Surrounded by the antiquities, these Neo-Hellenes erected a cult image, a Greek fantasy from a lost golden age. The sanctuary of their religion, the Acropolis, became their new idol. It was called the cradle of human reason and the font of aesthetic expression, becoming by 1850 the superlative model of Greek perfection.

(Boyer 1996: 172)

Under the same light, in nineteenth century, the architects of Modern Athens employed the architectural language of classicism. All of the city's public and institutional buildings, as well as large private houses, were designed in the so-called neo-classical style. Neo-classical architecture was expressing both a nostalgia for the glorious past of the city and an enthusiasm for the new and modern. However, as a style, neo-classicism was only a façade; inside the house both the decoration and lifestyle were neo-hellenic. Quoting Herzfeld (1987), the neo-classical façade presented «an ideally

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<sup>4</sup> Raoul-Rochette's article «Athènes sous le roi Othon» published in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* in 1838 is one of the few original accounts on the transformation of Athens under Othon's monarchy. Raoul-Rochette makes full reference to the projects carried out by foreign archeological schools (British,

respectable outer face to the world, a celebration of *embourgeoisement* in progress» but at the same time it also masked «the inhabitants' raucously Romeic [Neo-Hellenic] domesticity» (Herzfeld 1987: 118, 136). Apparently, the assimilation of neo-classicism within the Greek society was never completed, as it was more a style and idea suggested and implied by Europeans and Greek middle-class expatriates (see fig. 3.4).

Moreover, and in spite of all the effort spent on town planning and architecture, it seemed that land speculation reigned and houses sprang up faster than their building could be regulated, appearing in the middle of vaguely outlined streets and blocks. In addition, in some areas people used parts of ruins and broken parts of statues as building materials for their new houses (Faubion 1993; Boyer 1996). Outside Klenze's triangle, Athens started looking disordered, chaotic and misplanned, with humble houses built everywhere in the city.

On the one hand, there was neo-classicism, a foreign, imposed style, giving to the city center a unique character but difficult to integrate within the Athenian landscape. Local residents found neo-classic Athens barely tolerable at best, as it was simply too 'foreign' for them. On the other hand, there was a massive domestic migration from the countryside to the city, causing an urge for housing. It was at that time that the growth of Athens started to deviate from its planning, as people built illegal houses everywhere. None of its first town planners accounted for the possibility of such a dramatic increase in the city's population. Kleanthis, for instance, designed a city capable of housing 40,000 people, while only fifty years after his master plan, in 1880's, the population of Athens already exceeded 120,000 (Fotiou 1989). The result of the above situation was the formation of two cities within Athens (see fig. 3.5). Raoul-Rochette (1938: 192), for instance, observed in 1838 that there were at the same time:

a new Athens that borrowed from everywhere and came to resemble nowhere, and the scenographic illusions of ancient Athens, ephemeral as a dream.

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German, Swedish, and later American), criticizing them for exploitation of the ancient sites. This article is very rare; in Greece it is held only in the collections of Gennadio Library in Athens.

Apparently, the changes in the built environment of Athens were so rapid and dramatic that it was impossible for them to be integrated within the landscape and become part of its urban collective memory. The cityscape started resembling something ephemeral, as any new architectural and planning transformation did not last for long. In fact, during the last 150 years, apart from the master plans of Kleanthis and von Klenze, there was no other thorough official proposal for urban planning in Athens (Vryhea 1989). Instead, from 1834 to 1920 alone, there were 565 alterations of the two original master plans, each of them giving a new physiognomy to the city (Fotiou 1989). Apart from the historic center of Athens, the rest of the city, as it was constantly transformed, did not have an identifiable and recognisable character.

### **3.3.2. 1930-1970: Demolishing Modern Athens**

It was not surprising, therefore, to see in 1930s the replacement of many neo-classical houses with apartment buildings. In the beginning, the latter were seen as an architectural accomplishment influenced by the modernist movement in Europe, aiming to house the wealthy bourgeoisie, who somehow wanted to show its 'European' identity. By them, neo-classicism was perceived as a remnant of backwardness, reminiscent of their past, the 'embarrassing' recent past as well as the classical one. Apartment buildings (*polykatoikies*), instead, were regarded as the solution and «only hope for the modernisation of the city» (Biris 1932: 564). In addition, the socio-political situation of the late twenties - early thirties led to the mass-construction of cheap apartment buildings in the center of Athens to house the dramatically increasing population. The conclusion of the Greek-Turkish war with Greece's defeat in 1922 ('*Asia Minor Disaster*') forced 1.3 million Greeks from Anatolia to emigrate to Greece. As a result, by 1926 the population of Athens exceeded 600,000 (Pentzopoulos 1962; Faubion 1993).<sup>5</sup> It was at the end of the World War II and the Civil War that followed, however, that the apartment buildings became an absolute necessity for Athens, as people were migrating from the severely damaged, impoverished, rural Greece to the cities, looking for better employment opportunities and some relative

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<sup>5</sup> In 1922, there was a war between Greece and Turkey over the sovereignty of Asia Minor an area that also included Greek speaking populations. After the defeat of the Greek expeditionary force, Greeks living in Asia Minor had to evacuate the area, leaving behind their houses and properties. This was a

security from post-civil war persecution (Burgel 1976; Fotiou 1989; Karydis 1990). At that point, the apartment buildings far from being the architectural assertion of the rising middle-class, became the typical settlements of a numerically increasing working-class. The neo-classical style of pre-war buildings, of a unique architectural character, was replaced in the post-war years by cheaply-built, massive structures. The architect's role in the construction process became secondary as the interest in the effective, profit-oriented use of space overshadowed any concern about the aesthetic value of buildings' façades (Antonakakis and Antonakaki 1978). The built environment of the city changed once more: «buildings were becoming higher, green areas smaller, streets narrower» (Fotiou 1989: 80). In general, the city started losing its points of reference, identity and scale. As Karydis notes (1990), the apartment buildings were responsible for the disappearance of historical memory within Athens, creating a cultural backwardness and social disorganisation of space (see fig. 3.6; 3.7a,b). Whereas modern Athens was originally conceived as the city that would embody historical memory, and the fairly successful neo-classicist project until the mid-twenties notwithstanding, during the course of its urban evolution in the next fifty years the city was transformed into a self-forgetting, amnesic cityscape.

In Athens, historical memory is absent: its center is a non-recognisable urban plexus. Even Acropolis Hill, the key landmark of the city, looks alien within this infinite luxury-slam which spreads around it, smothering it. In the city, memory, recent or older, is exclusively intellectual: any of its bodily traces has either disappeared completely or is gravely endangered.

(Giakoumatos 1999: 23)

The argument that «the city spaces and architectural landscapes often have been the active systematizers of memory» (Boyer 1996: 137) does not fully apply to Athens.

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provision of the Treaty of Lausanne, according to which 1.3 million Orthodox Greeks were exchanged with 350,000 Muslims who at that time were living in Greece (see Pentzopoulos 1962)

### 3.4. The Present

#### 3.4.1. 1983-1997: Planning the Tourist-Historic City

##### 3.4.1.1. Constructing the Historic City

As seen from the above discussion, the major preoccupation of the official quarters responsible for issues concerning the city was the rejection of previous Bills and master plans and the introduction of new ones. They were involved, more or less, in a vicious circle of building and demolishing, leaving in the cityscape nothing but remnants of previous planning and architectural phases. Besides all these dramatic changes in the built environment of Athens, there has been, however, little progress in the issues of urban regeneration and sustainable development in the city. There were several debates and discussions on urban regeneration but neither a final decision, nor a well-planned project was issued to promote these ideas and value them as a priority and urgent necessity for improving the quality of the city's image and life (Karydis 1990). In the mid-eighties, however, the situation of planning in Athens was reassessed once more. A series of dramatic changes took place in the built environment of the city, as urban planners and architects rejected the building apartments project of the last three decades. One of the activities of the newly-established Ministry of Environment and Urban Planning was the reconsideration of the growth of Athens. The aim was to reshape the Athenian landscape by regenerating both its center and peripheral areas.<sup>6</sup> This was literally the first time since Kleanthis and von Klenze that an official decision-making organ became involved in the planning of Athens, with the aim of contributing original ideas and proposals. As a result, a new master plan was announced, with the name: '*City Plan of 1983: Once More About Athens*'. Its general goal was the improvement of the image of the city by setting up new directions in its urban planning, such as the conservation of previous architectural forms and the regeneration of public space (Vryhea 1989). In particular, a charter dealing with the protection and preservation of the historic and traditional architectural heritage, was introduced (City Plan 1983). This charter aimed at the preservation of any architectural style still existing in Athens, thus promoting the idea of a multi-façade city. After a long history of forgetting, the city was expected to recover its urban memory. It was at

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<sup>6</sup> Until 1981, the year of the first ever elected socialist government (PASOK), there was no ministry in the to administer any issues of town and rural planning.



that time that the city started celebrating its palimpsest landscape of different spatio-temporal fragments, now approached as a city-encyclopaedia. While before the introduction of the charter, the State's interest was mainly focused on the preservation of sites and monuments of antiquity, the new approach included formerly neglected architectural examples from the Byzantine, Frankish, Ottoman periods, as well as the more recent neo-classic style. In particular, the charter included a new section proposing a series of actions for improving the city's image, such as the preservation and regeneration of traditional neighbourhoods in Athens and Piraeus (e.g. Plaka, Psiri, Metaxourgio) and the use of abandoned industrial buildings as cultural centers and galleries (City Plan 1983). The cornerstone of that charter was the reconsideration of the archaeological park. Urban planners started once again to talk about the need to materialise von Klenze's original project of the unification of the archaeological sites for improving the image of Athens. The archaeological park would function as an open-air museum, incorporating the ancient Agora, the Keramikos cemetery, the columns of Olympic Zeus and the Olympic stadium (Smith 1997). Along with the major historic sites and monuments, the new plan was extended to include buildings and areas representative of other periods of Athenian history (i.e. Byzantine, Ottoman, Neo-classic). In 1994, the then Minister of Culture appraised the importance of the construction of a large-scale project such as the archaeological park saying that:

In my opinion, it would be the most important of all the environmental interventions in the city as it would not only bring back the long lost historic physiognomy of Athens but it would also limit the number of cars in the center by creating pedestrian zones. With cars confined to the outer ring roads and underpasses, pedestrians will be able to take in the views much as the ancients did, without having to negotiate congested streets and busy highways. It would be an easily-accessible walk in the past, in the history of this city bringing back long-forgotten urban images.

(Mikroutsikos 1994: 90)

However, the project has not been realised yet; there are still lots of debates and discussions about its nature. It seems that so far the responsible ministries (i.e. the Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Urban Planning, Ministry of Economic Development), local authorities, public organisations and civil engineers have not managed to agree on how this project should be implemented (Aggelikopoulou 1998).

### 3.4.1.2. Promoting the Tourist City

Similarly, for years the potential contribution of tourism to urban regeneration and vice versa had not been realised. The possibility of a positive feedback loop connecting tourism and urban regeneration was understood much later, in the late-nineties: tourism, besides boosting the economy of the city, could also change its physiognomy; the regenerated city has the potential of attracting more tourism. The organisations and ministries responsible for the urban regeneration of Athens did not consider tourism as a major reason for improving the image of the city; in their proposals and actions tourism was understated (The National Technical University of Athens, 1998a).<sup>7</sup> Both the *City Plan of 1983* and its revised second edition in 1993 do not include any proposed action directed at the development of tourism in Athens. One of the urban planners working at the *Organisation of the City Plan of Athens* claimed that:

*(Antonis Kremmidas, Ministry of Urban Planning and Environment, 5-02-98)*

As regards tourism, I believe that Athens is not a city which could accommodate a large number of tourists for longer periods as happens in other European cities; also, Athens is an unattractive city. For these reasons, so far most of the strategies and actions for the urban planning like the *City Plan* did not include a separate section on tourism. However, I think that their general policies for the improvement of the image of Athens somehow affect positively tourism development.

Moreover, the official guideline on tourism issues in the Greek capital was grounded on the idea that as long as there were monuments and archaeological sites around, there was no reason to fear that the city would repel, and finally loose, a vast number of its tourist clientele (Zivas 1997). So far, tourism was perceived as a business whose prosperity relied on, and was guaranteed by, the history of the city. In this sense, tourism was limited within a single district of the city, its historic center, purposefully excluding from the tourist map the planning and architectural cacophony of the rest of the city; in other words, modern Athens. However, since the mid-eighties, it has become widely known that Athens is a dysfunctional city; its image has been seriously harmed as a result of its chaotic town planning, concrete architecture and air pollution.

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<sup>7</sup> This part of the chapter is derived from the two research projects carried out by the Department of Urban Planning and Architecture (The National Technical University of Athens) in 1998 and financed by the Ministry of Urban Planning and Environment. Both projects examine and analyse urban tourism in Athens from a theoretical as well as practical perspective outlining first the key-characteristics of the case of Athens and second its potential for a (sustainable) tourism development (see NTUA 1998a; NTUA 1998b).

In fact, the promotion of its glorious past is not enough to prevent tourism from declining. As it was argued in an article written in 1982, «the picture of Acropolis Hill in a tourist advertisement or poster is not enough for creating an increase in the tourism demand [...]. Nowadays, Athens faces a different problem, the overemphasis of its negative characteristics; so to speak its *anti-advertisement*» (Daskalakis 1982: 42). For example, during the last twenty years, most of the tourist markers (i.e. brochures, guidebooks) portray Athens as an unattractive city (see chapter 4). The consequence of constantly overstressing the drawbacks of the Athenian urban landscape was the creation, and then polarisation of its negative image, a situation which, according to studies on place-marketing, is very difficult to reverse (Law 1992; van der Borg et al. 1995). In addition, according to recent statistics, only 9% of the overall number of tourists to Greece visit the country (and Athens, respectively) for its antiquity; a fact suggesting that the city's history and past alone cannot attract tourists anymore (Buckley and Papadopoulos 1996). It seems that the present built environment plays the same, if not a more important, role in shaping the image of the city. Unfortunately, tourism in Athens is a maximum two-days visit to the popular archaeological sites by tourists who want to leave the polluted city as soon as possible (Papageorgiou-Venetas 1996: 257).

Since the foundation of the Greek National Tourist Organisation (GNTO), in the late fifties, little has changed in the way the case of Athens is approached and considered. The GNTO, as the major public organisation responsible for tourism strategy and place-marketing of Greece abroad, has systematically ignored Athens or at least has not paid the attention needed to create the tourist image of the city and sell it as a marketable product. From the GNTO's perspective, its responsibility is the promotion of Greece as a country and not at a regional level. Focusing, for instance, on the two latest advertising campaigns of Greece abroad, Athens is almost excluded: it is either completely absent or limited to a few words and images depicting a very stereotypical and fragmented landscape. Specifically, the two advertising campaigns designed by Saatchi & Saatchi and McCann & Erickson in the mid-nineties (1996 and 1997-1999, respectively) were, according to the GNTO, the most successful so far. The first one bears the logo «a never-ending story» and depicts a combination of photographs of

idyllic recreational landscapes such as remote beaches and archaeological sites (see fig. 3.8). In fact, the latter are portrayed in a smaller picture as a background of the former. The general tone of the advertisement is described in the few words below:

From the island of Thassos to the rock of Acropolis of Athens, Greece reveals a different story at every turn. Feel the never-ending presence of a glorious civilisation against the backdrop of spectacular scenery and you'll realise you've embarked on a never-ending vacation.

(GNTO- Tourist Campaign 1998)

The second, and most recent tourism campaign is quite similar with its predecessor focusing, too, on the traditional 'Mediterranean holidays' theme (see fig. 3.9). Its general logo is: «Greece: The Authentic Choice», aiming at boosting tourism on holiday resorts, particularly in the islands. It consists of a series of advertisements, each one portraying a different recreational activity taking place in a seaside resort (e.g. swimming, sunbathing). According to the particular activity shown in each picture the accompanying text changes. For a moment, Greece becomes the country that has been «voted clearest waters in the world by thousands of dolphins», the next the country «voted sunniest place in the world by thousands of sunglasses», or even «voted the perfect family holidays by hundreds of sandcastles». City tourism, on the other hand, is almost ignored in this campaign; there is only one advertisement from the whole set of twelve, showing Athens. It focuses on heritage tourism, using Acropolis Hill as the ultimate recognisable landmark of Greece.

Greece has always been the favourite destination of those who seek to revive both body and soul. Because for centuries Greece's sun, waters, mountains and air have helped to refresh the body. While its culture, festivals and warmth of its people have purified the soul. On your next vacation, meet the country where civilisation was given light and democracy was born. Contemplate the temples of the Gods. Explore the very same paved alleys Socrates once wandered and discover the part of Greece that lives in you.

It is apparent from the above description that both tourism campaigns promote the already overstressed and, consequently, saturated images of Greece. According to an article published in the weekly newspaper '*To Vima*', these advertisements lack innovation, using all possible verbal and visual clichés to describe Greece, reflecting in this manner the way the GNTO's perceive, plan and finally sell Greek tourism in the tourist market (Koroxeni 1996).

Likewise, the degree of success of the particular advertisements is open to questioning.<sup>8</sup> For instance, Gerassimos Fokas, the president of the Association of Hotel-Owners in Athens, claims that the GNTTO's tourism strategy is responsible for the decrease in the number of visitors to Athens (Xenia 1996). He blames the National Tourist Organisation for this negative situation, claiming that the GNTTO focuses its tourism advertising on other parts of Greece, such as the islands, ignoring city tourism and particularly that to Athens. His views are shared by the many people working in the tourism industry, who believe that the present promotional strategy is not well-planned and, correspondingly, has a negative effect on Athenian tourism. Petros Diplas, in particular, the general secretary of the Tourist Organisation of the Municipality of Athens, regards the present tourist campaign with doubt, saying that «it is very difficult to attract tourists in the city center by showing them beaches». As an alternative solution to the so far problematic advertising campaign, they propose to the GNTTO a series of drastic alterations of its advertising strategy. They ask first for the foundation of a separate organisation dealing exclusively with the promotion of tourism in Athens; second the employment of a professional image-maker; and third, a longer duration of the advertising campaign. Concentrating on their latter proposition, they object the short-term and seasonal advertising campaign of Greece abroad. They argue that at the moment the GNTTO advertises the country only from May to September and not all year round, as it happens in other Mediterranean countries like Portugal and Spain. Besides, some organisations like the Association of Greek Tourist Entrepreneurs (AGTE) and the Municipality of Athens oppose the present state of management of tourist resources of cultural character by the GNTTO, as resulting in disorganisation and confusion. The ancient theatre of Herodus Atticus, on the slope of Acropolis Hill, for example, as an archaeological site falls under the administration of the Ministry of Culture. Any performances taking place there, however, are, as tourist resources, administered by the GNTTO. As stated by the AGTE, the Ministry of Culture and GNTTO often find it difficult to co-ordinate their actions whenever decisions on the

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<sup>8</sup> The views expressed in this part of the chapter derived from a series of interviews I conducted during my fieldwork in Athens. In particular, along with the interviews with tourists, I interviewed people working in key positions in both the public and private tourist sector. These included people in the GNTTO, the Municipality of Athens, the Prefecture of Athens, the Association of Greek Hotel-Owners, the Association of Hotel-Owners of Athens, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Urban Planning and Environment, the Network of Greek Cities, and the Organization «Olympic Games: Athens 2004».

tourist use of archaeological sites are to be made. AGTE believe that cultural tourism is important for Athens, given the city's plenitude of cultural resources. According to them, the GNT0 should focus on that cultural tourism to attract tourists in the city, promoting both its past and present landscape (AGTE 1992; *Tourismos kai Oikonomia* 1993).

### **3.5. The Future**

#### **3.5.1. 1997- : Organising the Olympic Games 2004**

It was not, however, until 1997 the year Athens was officially declared the host city of the Olympic Games 2004, that urban (cultural) tourism was finally given serious consideration. The Games are perceived «as the best advertisement for Athens to attract tourists» (Ta Nea 1997: 10). In the dossier submitted, for instance, in the frame of the contest for the Olympic Games 2004 the underlined slogan was «sports, culture, tourism» indicating that all three components would be of equal weight for the promotion of Athens as the host city for the mega-event (Nautemboriki 1997: 63). According to Law (1992; 1993), special (mega-) events as the Olympic Games are increasingly being used as a means of attracting tourists. Tourism motivation is often being considered in the organisation of special events, as in the case of Athens, for attracting people into the area all-around the year, creating media attention and raising the profile of the area, encouraging repeat visits, and most of all, assisting regeneration in all aspects of city life (urban, economic, social, cultural) (Law 1992). Moreover, the long-term goal of special events is the transformation of the host city to a popular and desirable tourist destination. In this respect, the Olympic Games are nothing but an investment for the future of the city which should be received as «an image-building event rather than a profit generating opportunity» (Pyo et al. 1988: 144).

Following these arguments, the Olympic Games 2004 are also viewed as the ultimate opportunity to improve and modernise the image of Athens and promote its tourism industry. While before 1997 Athens was seen as a lost cause, with serious problems of urban planning, air pollution and traffic, for the last four years it has been promoted with proclamations of extreme enthusiasm and optimism for a drastic change in its image and environment, due to this special sport event. The rather neglected city seems

to obtain a new identity, that of an attractive tourist destination, as its urban planning and tourist infrastructure are constantly boosted and financially supported by the state. Athens' undertaking of the Olympic Games is employed to support the realisation, for the first time, of projects of sustainable development and urban regeneration, purported to rebuild the image of the city. For example, large scale projects like the new Athens airport, the metro and even the archaeological park are time-tabled with reference to the Olympic Games 2004 deadline. This overt optimism for the realisation of these major projects, is exemplified by the words of the Minister of Urban Planning and Environment, Kostas Laliotis, one of the key-advocates of the view that the impact of the Games will be positive:

The Olympic Games have significant, positive consequences for Athens and the whole of Greece [...]. Certainly, the Olympic Games 2004 is a hallmark for the process of prioritisation of the *City Plan*, aiming at the planned restructuring of Athens. This restructuring will be linked with the sustainable development of Athens area, with the citizens' need for and desire of the promotion of its cultural, aesthetic and natural resources.

(in Nautemboriki 1997: 64)

On the other hand, there is an evident tendency of associating the choice of Athens as the host city of Olympic Games 2004 with the past. To be more specific, there is a series of arguments claiming that the Olympic Games belongs to Athens and in general, to Greece by right since they started there. The president of the *Organisation of the Olympic Games 2004*, Gianna Aggelopoulou-Daskalaki, argues that «the Greek Capital is the only city in the world» which has apart from the modern infrastructure required for the organisation of the Olympic Games, the legacy of its history (Ta Nea 1997: 6). Under the same light, the Mayor of Athens, Dimitris Avramopoulos, in his address to the International Committee for the Olympic Games, said:

Give us the opportunity to make you proud. We promise you that our three thousand years of history will make *Athens 2004* the most successful Olympic Games ever! Our great ancestors will show us the way to success.

(Ta Nea 1997: 12)

The connection of the Olympic Games with antiquity is not only verbally argued, but becomes the thematic core of the mega-event. According to the organisers, the 'glorious past' of Athens would play a key role in the organisation of the Games. Most of the major athletic events, for instance, would take place in the ancient stadium of

Athens celebrating in this way the legitimacy of historical continuity in the city. This perception, however, of the Olympic Games 2004 as *history repeated* is not new; the same idea marked the organisation of the event of the International Athletics Championship '97, officially declared to be a grand preview of the Olympics 2004. The opening ceremony of the latter event took place in the Olympic stadium, re-enacting the ancient Olympic Games in a setting modified to replicate a reconstructed ancient stadium. This event generated much criticism due to the «cheap Hollywood aesthetics and the banality of the performance (Filini 1998: 51). The over-bearing emphasis on the classical past, the superficiality and irrelevance, and the spectacular character of sport events, particularly the Olympic Games, have been attacked by many Greek critics.

What is, then, revived, from the ancient spirit? Absolutely nothing, and this is not bad at all, since history does not flow backwards and human societies cannot return to the age of Zeus. Let us, then, leave the ancient spirit to rest in peace; it is not immortal but mortal -intrinsicly dead- as everything human. What survives, then, is a pretext: the imitation of ancient glory, which, like a crutch, is evoked to support all sorts of modern scum.

(Citizens' Initiative Against the Conduct of the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens 1997: 31)

It seems that for Athens there is no escape from the ever-apparent spectre of antiquity, which justifies, accordingly, Derrida's description of the city as haunted by the presence of its ruins. Generally speaking, the Olympic Games 2004 builds an image of Athens as combining both the infrastructure and dynamism of a modern city with the nationalistic myth of an ever-present, long and glorious past.



### **3.6. Conclusion**

This analysis of the Athenian past, present and future highlights the development of Athens through a process of selective remembering and forgetting. Modern Athens can be viewed as consisting of juxtaposed layers of unequal significance; actual remnants of (ancient monuments) and subsequent references to the classical past (neoclassicism) are overemphasized as constituting the identity of Athens. This superiority of the classical historical layer over the Athenian space gives Athens the character of a deconstructed city that 'owes itself to death'.

Since the foundation of modern Athens in 1834, this continuous reference to the classical past formed the basis of a long succession of master plans for the city. These plans were mainly realised within the historical centre of Athens, whereon the tourist image of modern Athens is largely based. Future events of international scale (e.g. Olympic Games 2004) are approached though the same spirit of classical-revivalism and the processes of selective remembering and forgetting are re-enforced.



Fig. 3.1 Athens in 1800.



Fig. 3.2 Omonoia Square in 1890, with neo-classical buildings in the background.



Fig. 3.3 The reconstructed Turkish mosque in the Flea Market.



Fig. 3.4 Neo-classical buildings in Kotzia square.





Fig. 3.5 A panoramic view of Athens in the beginning of the twentieth century

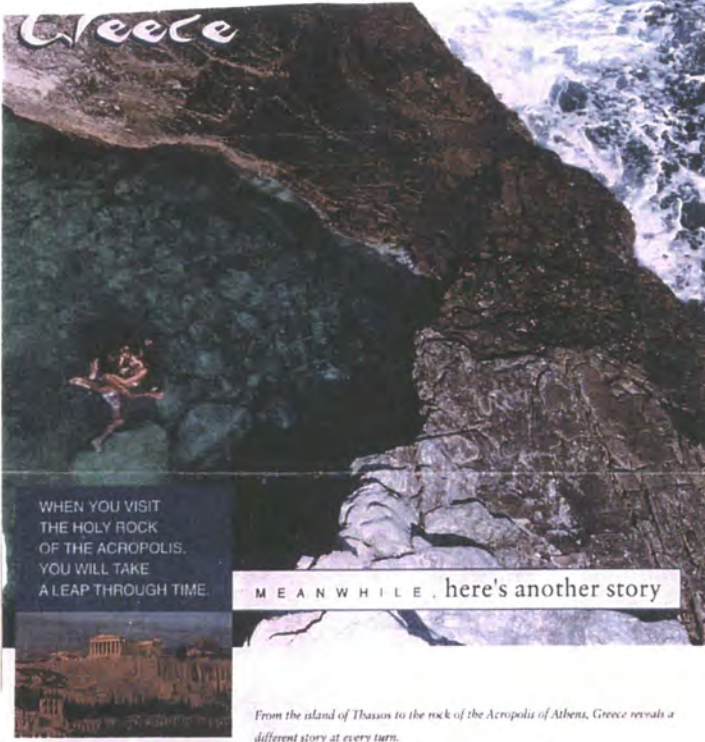


Fig. 3.6 A panoramic view of Athens today.



Fig. 3.7a, b Examples of *polykatoikies*, the architectural style dominating modern Athens.





Greece

WHEN YOU VISIT THE HOLY ROCK OF THE ACROPOLIS, YOU WILL TAKE A LEAP THROUGH TIME.

MEANWHILE, here's another story

*From the island of Thasos to the rock of the Acropolis of Athens, Greece reveals a different story at every turn. Feel the never-ending presence of a glorious civilisation against the backdrop of spectacular scenery and you'll realise you've embarked on a never-ending vacation. Meanwhile, contact your travel agent for details.*

**ΕΛΛΑΔΗ**  
GREEK NATIONAL TOURIST ORGANISATION  
A COMMITMENT TO EXCELLENCE  
P.O. BOX 14710, ATHENS 115 27, GREECE  
TEL: 0030 210 3241234


  
A never-ending story.

Fig. 3.8 The 'never-ending story' tourist campaign of the GNTTO in 1997.



**GREECE:**

**VOTED  
SUNNIEST  
PLACE  
in the  
World**

By  
thousands  
of sunglasses!

Greece has always been the favourite destination for those who seek authenticity. That's because, for centuries here in Greece, the glorious sunshine has always remained pure and genuine. On these holidays, you can enjoy long golden days and cool calm nights, warm breezy scenes and vivid vibrant colours. Feel the soothing heat and sultry glow of the warm Greek sun and discover the authentic in you. Phone your travel agent and put on your sunglasses.

**Hellas**

**GREECE: The Authentic Choice**

**OLYMPIC**  
THE AUTHENTICITY OF GREECE

GREEK NATIONAL TOURISM ORGANISATION: 4, CONDUIT STREET, LONDON W1R 0DL, TEL: 0171-7345992, FAX: 0171-3871609

Fig. 3.9 The 'authentic choice' tourist campaign of the GNTTO in 1998.

## CHAPTER 4: GUIDEBOOKS AND TOURIST BROCHURES; REINVENTING THE URBAN MYTHOLOGY OF ATHENS

You do not expect your guide-book to be an encyclopaedia. You do not want interminable lists of things. You are not interested in the address of the Lithuanian Legation or the destination of every tram. Certainly you want to be free to choose your activities but you do definitely want to be guided in your choice. You want to be as independent as possible of the nuisance of advisers, from the state offices to the scrounger in the streets.

(Kenneth and Davis 1934: 5)

The guidebooks are made to follow them, mainly to read them and rarely to analyse them.

(Elissalde 1986: 27)

The journey is a symbol of narrative

(Curtis and Pajaczowska 1994: 199)

### 4.1. Introduction

For many theorists, contemporary tourists are modern pilgrims who carry guidebooks as devotional texts, following their advice on what they should see or not (Horne 1984; Urry 1990). For some others, however, the guidebook is not a Bible to be followed, but an ideology of travel and not that of mere tourists. It is a meaningless necessity -some sort of a placebo- imposed on them as part of tourist culture (Elissalde 1986; Cazes 1989; Urbain 1991). The tourists buy the guidebook to do exactly what other tourists do and feel secure that they have with them all the valuable information they need to enjoy a relaxing holiday. Bible or not, placebo or not, the guidebook is influential. If it describes -let us say- Calcutta as «an international urban horror story», then it could be expected that this is how tourists, too, describe it to each other (Hutnyk 1996: 90). The guidebook is, so to speak, the mediator in the interaction of the tourists with the destination place. The tourist, the sight and the guidebook -as part of the group of markers- are parts of an empirical relationship, constructing the tourism experience (MacCannell 1976). As a marker, the guidebook has the functional role of being informative. In this context, the travel book -as all the other markers- is responsible for the construction of the image that the tourists form in their minds about the place and



which is mainly a set of symbolic representations. The tourist consequently does not try to approach the objects but their images; in other words, the object is reduced to a sign, or even to a signal (Urbain 1991). As for the guidebook, it is transformed into a signifier regulating the discourse of the communicated meaning.

Following the above argument, this chapter attempts to look at the ideogrammatic character of Athens -its symbolic representations- as narrated and mapped within guidebooks and tourist brochures. A semiotic analysis of the existing travel discourse to Athens is followed, with a particular emphasis on the major myths of the city, those which shape its symbolic space: the glorification of its past, the orientalisation of its present and the reification of its population. Various influential foreign tourist guidebooks -old and recent publications- are analysed, including both those addressed to mass-tourists and those designed for younger, low-budget, independent travellers. This retrospective analysis is based on the assumption that the travel narrative describing Athens has changed little since the first guidebook about that city (Murray 1845) was written. That the same stereotypical images are found in all researched guidebooks makes the travel discourse on Athens a particularly interesting case among travelogues. For instance, while a similar analysis on guidebooks referring to India confirmed that the content of different guidebooks and the representations they portray «are likely to vary» (Bhattacharya 1997: 372), in the case of Athens there is an archetypal imagery followed by guidebooks, regardless of publication date.

The guidebooks analysed in this work were selected as comprising a representative cross-section of the available spectrum. The travel discourse on Athens can be divided into three main phases. This is not a strict chronological classification but a broad outline of a succession of approaches to guidebook writing.

The first phase, that covers the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, started in 1845, a few years after the foundation of the modern Greek state, with the publication of *The Handbook for Travellers in the East* (Murray 1845) and its second edition *A Handbook for Travellers in Greece* (Murray 1854). The narrative style of Murray's books was inspired by the travel literature of that period; it often reads more like a

traveller's memoir than a guidebook. By the end of the nineteenth century, however, the travel discourse had changed dramatically. Only a few guidebooks maintained the memoir tradition by that time, whereas the majority of new publications began to resemble recent guidebooks in their content.

The second phase of travelogue on Athens began with the opening of Greece to the international tourist market after the end of the Greek Civil War. This phase culminated in the fifties and sixties. During these decades, there was an explosion in the number of tourists visiting the Greek capital, as an outcome of the post-war mass tourism. Athens was then portrayed as an emerging cosmopolitan city and cultural centre. This idea was encouraged by people like the American writer Henry Miller (1942) who staged his novel *The Colossus of Maroussi* in Athens. Guidebooks published during that period, even those addressed to mass tourists, were greatly influenced from literary accounts. The majority of the guidebooks published during the fifties and sixties were American; most of them were not dedicated exclusively to Greece but to Europe. Athens, therefore, was described quite summarily, as one of the European destination places.

Finally, the third phase of travel discourse on Athens dates since the late seventies and is mainly addressed to the young independent traveller. During this period, about 700 travel books, both Greek and foreign editions, have been published (Karpodini 1995). During the early part of this phase, and for the first time in the travel literature on Athens, much emphasis is placed on its low prices. The city is treated as a bargain and mapped according to its cheapness. The content of these guidebooks is, therefore, limited to useful information and a brief outline of the city's history. However, in the mid-eighties, with the appearance of publications such as the *Lonely Planet* and the *Rough Guide*, the style of writing changed again. These particular guidebooks are enriched with more information about the culture and history of the city while also containing the necessary practical advice for an independent traveller. Nevertheless, they do not escape the tradition of previous travelogues, continuing to describe Athens with the same stereotypical images (see below).

In general, the guidebooks draw a textual map which describes the few recognisable landmarks and reinforces the pre-existing mythology of the Athenian landscape (see chapter 2). The travel narratives are but an intertextual field, drawing upon previous texts. An investigation of the origins of the urban myths and the circumstances under which they were formed is of vital importance for the analysis of the guidebooks (see chapter 2). A comparison between guidebooks and the narratives of nineteenth century travellers to Athens forms the core of this chapter. My argument is that the guidebooks replicate the symbolic images of Athens as created by the nineteenth century travellers to Greece.

#### **4.2. A Semiotic Analysis of Guidebooks to Athens**

If nineteenth century travellers are described as mythoplasts, constructing the symbolic images of Athens (see chapter 2), tourists may be called ‘semioticians’ who read the landscape for signifiers of certain pre-established notions of signs, derived from various discourses of travel and tourism (MacCannell 1979). In the case of guidebooks as part of the travel discourse, the signs are represented and portrayed by the text, the map and the photographs. The reader is only asked to search for the signifiers and understand the meaning conveyed. Through this semiotic process, the myths are finally denoted and consumed.

The following semiotic analysis of guidebooks to Athens tries to read the symbolic landscape in a way similar to that of the tourists. However, the analysis is conducted in conjunction with an ‘*across*’ time and ‘*in*’ space approach. This refers to different readings of travelogues, where the symbolic images of Athens are represented, first, through a time-narrative and, second, through a space-narrative.

### **4.2.1. Two time- narratives: the juxtaposition of past and present in the Athenian landscape**

Throughout the existing travel discourse on Athens there are two different time narratives within the same space: one referring to classical Athens and another referring to the modern city. These narratives show a preference to, and, therefore, a resurrection of, the former and a sort of indignation towards the qualities of the latter. As already discussed in chapter two, much of this orientation results from the influence of the narratives of the nineteenth century travellers who treated Athens with both '*Philhellenism*' (the love of ancient Greece) and an often marked dislike for modern Greece.

#### **4.2.1.1. Modern Athens**

Athens is a Hybrid. The birthplace of Western civilisation, with reminders everywhere of the great classic age, it is today the least Western of all European cities. In one moment, you'll tread where Demosthenes orated and Socrates taught but in another, you'll pass pungent-smelling coffee houses where men alone -scores of them, sit chattering about the daily news- just as they do in Cairo or Teheran.

(Frommer 1968: 463)

In one sense, Greece is an aggressively western country that groups its noisy capital with London, Paris, and Rome. [...] Yet to step into Greece is to walk east- into stalls lined with Byzantine icons, past Orthodox priests trailing long dark robes, and through air spiced with the strains of bouzouki.

(Let's Go Europe 1991: 398)

Throughout the travel discourse on Athens, the latter is portrayed as a hybrid of different images and cultures, even of different geographical boundaries. On the one hand, the city is perceived as a Western capital, comparable with other European cities. This image of the city is mainly characterised by the ancient relics within the urban space. On the other hand, Athens seems also to be a Middle Eastern city, presenting certain elements of an Oriental imagery. Whenever there is no obvious correlation and similarities to other metropolitan cities of Western Europe, the narratives on Athens focus on this stereotypical image. Even if the geographical position of Greece is within the boundaries of Europe, even if Athens is considered as the birthplace of Western civilisation, modern Greece is, for the guidebooks, in an awkward position. The

Byzantine and Ottoman periods have resulted in an idiosyncratic development of modern Greece, in many aspects different than that of other Western countries (Gourgouris 1996). As discussed in chapter two, it is Western culture that perceives difference as «Otherness» and the «Oriental» as the «Other» (Said 1979). For instance, in the guidebook «*The Splendour of Greece*», the author accentuates the Oriental image of Athens and warns the tourist to expect a Middle Eastern city:

Very often the traveller in Athens finds himself asking inconvenient questions. Walking under that fantastically deep blue sky, he sometimes has to remind himself that he is still in Europe. Athens is oriental. It wears the colours of the Orient. [...] It might be Isfahan or Tabriz. Is this, the traveller asks himself, the cradle of western civilisation? [...] Everywhere you go in Athens you meet the Orient.

(Payne 1961: 130)

Payne goes even further to his argument by authoritatively claiming that Greece as a nation never belonged to the West and that she was closer «in spirit to Persia than to Rome» (ibid.: 130). Similar statements are repeated in many of the guidebooks researched, especially in those of the sixties (e.g. Life 1963; Fielding's 1965).

**Table 1.** Description of modern Athens in some tourist guidebooks.

<i>Guidebooks</i>	<i>The Travel Discourse on Modern Athens</i>
<b>Murray 1845: 70</b>	The modern town of Athens was never remarkable for beauty or regularity of construction.
<b>Life 1963: 13</b>	The relics of the past have more sense of life about them than the latest things
<b>Frommer 1968: 463</b>	There is nothing chic about Athens. [...] However, you will be able to focus clearly on the real aim of your trip: the first-hand experiencing of the great classic Greece civilisation, which shaped our own.
<b>Let's Go Europe 1991: 49</b>	Athens today, crowded with smog, concrete and tourists, little resembles the artistic and intellectual capital of old that gave birth to Western civilisation
<b>American Express 1994: 11</b>	Modern Athens is a young city: the somewhat smug capital of a small Balkan republic, in which the yellowed skeleton of old monuments stand out, like shipwrecks from a deaf and forgotten past, in an expanse of modern apartment blocks.
<b>TheVersatile Guide 1996: 117</b>	At first sight, Athens is the sort of place you wouldn't wish on your worst enemy.
<b>Lonely Planet-Web Page 1997</b>	[...] few fall in love with the city. Most visitors never see beyond the nefos (smog) and the high-rise apartment blocks which were built hurriedly.

The quotations presented in Table 1 make evident the way the Oriental image of Athens is contrasted with the Occidental. The former is presented either as «picturesque», or as «devastating ugly», associated with inefficiency and low quality of services, whereas the latter is mainly related to the stereotypical representation of the so-called «Glorious Past» of the city. In particular, in descriptions of the city as «a monstrous caricature», where life is unbearable and hard, the narrative attains an authoritative character, as a result of the way writers portray their suggestions and advice to the reader. Because of the ugliness and air pollution of the city, their advice runs, the tourist should not stay for more than a few days; there is not much to see, after all, apart from the historic ruins and museums (*Let's Go Europe* 1991; *Versatile Guide* 1996). This authoritative discourse is more evident in sections which describe the quality of services provided by the local tourist industry (see Table 2). According to these descriptions, the services are below the expected standard. What they suggest, therefore, is that the tourist should be patient and not expect much from the tourist services and facilities in Athens. Most of the times, no argument is provided to justify either the evaluative conclusion; the interpretation appears self-evident and beyond question. Bhattacharyya (1997) claims that, by using this narrative strategy, the guidebooks deprive the tourist-readers of any personal evaluation and, correspondingly, encourage them to take for granted all the given advice. She continues claiming that most of the times the tourists reject hotels and restaurants not included in the guidebook's list. This is also evident in the case of guidebooks to Athens. They give all the valuable and necessary information for a traveller to have an easy, safe, comfortable and cheap journey there by listing the best and cheapest hotels and restaurants –according to the writers' opinion- and all the useful addresses such as embassies, tourist offices, airlines etc. Guidebooks not only recommend to tourists what and where to shop, they even warn them about what not to buy, eat and drink.

Few guidebooks refer to the modern Greek culture in any extent larger than some brief reference to the traditional 'bouzouki' songs and dances, that also give Athens a stereotypical flavour (*Life* 1963; *Rough Guide* 1996; *Lonely Planet* 1997; Rawlins 1997). Even in the case of some reference to the cultural life in the city, their approach is tourist-oriented; they reduce the event to a mere sightseeing experience. For

instance, in the *Lonely Planet* (1997), the reference to the traditional, but underground, music of the thirties called ‘*Rembetica*’ consists of three words: ‘worthwhile listening to’. Concerning the most recent guidebooks, few of them refer to modern Greek music, and even fewer to pop and rock music, which in most cases is characterised as ‘Western music’ (*American Express* 1994: 92).

**Table 2.** The Description of the Quality of Services

<i>Guidebooks</i>	<i>Terms Used to Describe the Quality of Services</i>
<b>Fielding’s 1965: 1656</b>	About the hotels: trashy low-level beds, so-called «modern» chairs and tables. Skimpy rugs (if any!), bare walls, excruciatingly jarring taste throughout-typical «get-back-our-money-fast» decor even in many cases so called «Deluxe» houses in the heart of metropolitan Athens.
<b>Fielding’s 1965: 1669</b>	Don’t look for dining elegance in Greece, because in the routine establishment you’re liable to find paper tablecloths, paper napkins, colourless furnishings, and panting waiters who’ll toss successive courses at you like ping-pong balls.
<b>American Express 1994: 98</b>	Apart from souvenir shirts and whimsical beachwear; there is little reason to buy clothes in Greece. Neither price nor quality is particularly attractive, and fashions echo the west- at a considerable distance.

It is worth mentioning that all guidebooks analysed in this chapter have a separate section called «Modern Athens», wherein all the necessary information, from currency and weather to the best restaurants and jewellery shops in town, is listed. Guidebooks dated from the fifties to the present also include in this section a brief reference to night-life and entertainment in Athens. With the exception of the latest edition of the *Lonely Planet* (1998), which gives a detailed account of the different entertainment amenities available in the city, the rest of the guidebooks -old and new alike- refer to them only briefly. First, they concentrate on the Plaka area where most of the taverns are situated; and, second, they recommend live music and theatre shows especially produced for the tourist clientele (see chapter 8). Two of the most frequently recommended tourist shows are the Sound and Light on the Acropolis Hill and the Dora Stratou Company of Greek folk dances (*Fielding’s* 1965; *Frommer’s* 1968; *Let’s Go Europe* 1991; *American Express* 1994). In the *Frommer’s* guidebook, for instance, the former show is described as «a wonder [which] shouldn’t be missed» since, as is written further below, «it’s done in sound and light, and [...] the ruins of ancient Athens are the performers» (*Frommer’s* 1968: 471). This might be linked with the

myth of the glorification and reinvention of the Athenian past, where the present life and culture are subtracted from the travel discourse and consequently from the cognitive map of the tourists. In the case of the guidebooks that describe entertainment and night-life in some more detail, they either suggest particular taverns with Greek music in the tourist district, or name some night clubs for single male tourists (*Fielding's* 1965; *American Express* 1994), arguing that there are no Western-style clubs and bars in Athens. In particular, the *American Express Guide* (1994: 92) characterises Athens as «probably the only major European city, apart from Tirana, where you could sweep the FM range and not catch a single twang of Western rock music». This an extreme example of an Orientalising image of Athens, contrasted with what a Western city should be. By using that kind of phraseology, travelogues on Athens confirm Said's argument about the replacement of the other culture -in this case Greek culture- with those self-generated and projected images of otherness that Western culture needs to see in order to orient and understand itself (Said 1979).

#### **4.2.1.2. The Glorification of the Athenian Past**

The [...] past dominates the present in Athens.

(Faubion 1993: 15)

Even modern Athens is related to an Oriental iconography, its historical monuments and sites are interpreted as an indisputable part of the Occidental «symbolic imagery» (Daniels and Cosgrove 1988). Travelling to Athens is tantamount to directly encountering the origins of Western civilisation, the «graces of superior civilisation» (Rojek 1993: 112). This results from the western conception of Greece as the birthplace of western civilisation (see chapter 2).

Travellers, therefore, scan the Athenian landscape for the landmarks that give credibility to their travel; all signs of a glorious past which is also their own. In Said's words (1979), travellers experience a kind of déjà vu, where they find themselves trapped in a place that already existed in their mind. One's travel is more a game of recognising than of gazing.

Space is conceived as being already existent, as being divided up into empty loci into which the images by which memories would be recalled, are placed.



**Table 3.** The Glorification of the Athenian Past

<i>Guidebooks</i>	<i>The Glorification of the Athenian Past</i>
<b>Murray 1854: 2</b>	In [Athens] the traveller is, as it were, left alone with antiquity.
<b>Life, 1963: 66</b>	A trip [...] to Athens means going home to the spawning grounds of western culture- a 25-century return.
<b>American Express 1994:148</b>	It is the lure of history that brings many travellers to the Greek capital. It was in Athens, the city of Pericles, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle and , that ancient Greek civilisation reached its maturity.
<b>Rawlins 1997: 9</b>	The city has not changed much over the millennia which separate it from its founding fathers.
<b>Lonely Planet-Web Page 1997</b>	The city of Athens ranks with Rome and Jerusalem for its glorious past.

Accordingly, the guidebook plays the role of a pathfinder through time, helping travellers to navigate through the tissue of their recollections, to draw the imaginary map of all the recognisable signs that form the symbolic landscape of the visited place, as they have already conceived it. This is not a spatial (geographical) map but a temporal one. Apart from walking through the spatial tissue of the city, tourists try to find their way in her temporal framework. The guidebook, by reducing the city into a few recognisable historical sites, gives to the tourist the ability of orientation in time.

The Acropolis, in particular, seems to embrace most of the tourist interest and therefore most of the travel narrative on Athens. It represents democracy and portrays the Western cosmogonic myth of Athens as the «birthplace of Western civilisation» (see chapter 2). What Barthes (1979: 8) wrote for Eiffel Tower in Paris is also valid for the Acropolis in Athens: «To visit the Tower is to get oneself up onto the balcony in order to perceive, comprehend, and savour a certain essence of Paris». The Acropolis is Athens' major sign-symbol, which the tourist consumes through a pilgrimage process. This is what *The Versatile Guide* (1996: 184) proposes to its reader: «If you see nothing else in Athens, see this». As Downs and Stea (1977) argue, landmarks, as the Acropolis, are memorable graphic symbols that capture the identity of the place; they are points of reference, both spatial and temporal.

**Table 4.** The Description of the Acropolis

<i>Guidebooks</i>	<i>Terms Used to Describe the Acropolis</i>
<b>Murray 1845: 70</b>	The Acropolis is the first object which attracts the attention of the traveller.
<b>Murray 1854: 70</b>	On turning into the Acropolis, the Parthenon rises in all its majesty before you. The finest edifice on the finest site in the world.
<b>Life 1963: 39</b>	Yet in the modern city's midst, the Acropolis with its Parthenon still stands as a shining citadel of an ideal.
<b>Fielding's 1965: 1650</b>	Athens with its Acropolis is the birthplace and heart of Greek culture and Western civilisation, a must for all visitors.
<b>Frommer 1968: 463</b>	To ride from the airport to Athens [...] and suddenly to see the Acropolis, high over-looking the city, is literally a thrill that comes once in a lifetime.
<b>Let's GoEurope 1991: 397</b>	The oldest, most sacred monument of Western civilisation.
<b>Lonely Planet-Web Page 1997</b>	The Acropolis, crowned by the Parthenon, stands sentinel over Athens, visible from almost everywhere in the city.

Concerning the language used to describe the Acropolis, most of the monument's descriptions employ a plethora of adjectives and superlatives in an effort to stress the uniqueness of the place (see Table 3). They represent it as the major attraction of Athens, the one that can make a tourist's visit to the city valuable.

Throughout the narrative of the guidebooks, the Acropolis seems to be superimposed on the surrounding Athenian landscape. The lavish praise of this one monument somehow annihilates the city, it makes her look unattractive, even invisible, to the eyes of the tourist. Furthermore, in many cases, as shown by the following quotations, guidebook narratives contrast the monument's unique beauty with the present condition of the city. This undoubtedly has a negative effect on the opinion of the tourist towards the latter.

Eaten by pollution, the Acropolis stands with tragic dignity over a forest of concrete bristling with television antennae.

*(Let's Go Europe 1991: 397)*

The Parthenon is magnificent, but stands alone, with almost no other monument to compare to is in size or beauty.

*(American Express 1994: 12)*



Referring to the semiological hypostasis of the Acropolis, the symbolism of the monument slips from a syntagmatic to a paradigmatic axis and vice versa. To be more specific, the Acropolis by representing democracy, stands as a metaphor. Athens' geography is shrunk to the symbolism of this monument (Democracy, Western Civilisation), Athens, as a metonymy, is replaced by the Acropolis.

#### **4.2.1.3. Mapping the City: The Fragmentation of the Urban Landscape**

As the above analysis makes clear, the travel discourse on Athens is divided into two-time narratives: one about her past and one about her present. This time division leads to a fragmentary representation of the urban space. The city appears split into two main spatial units. On the one hand, there is the historical centre, representing the past. On the other hand, there is the modern part of the city, 'Modern Athens' as it is frequently referred to in the travelogues, portraying the present space. It is this spatial dualism that visualises the Athenian landscape as being in a dialectic of 'outside-inside' spaces: the inside space is represented by the enclosed tourist area, whereas the outside space is represented by the rest of the city (see chapter 6). This fragmentation and distraction of spatial continuity is best portrayed in the maps included in the guidebooks. It is not an exaggeration to say all the maps included in researched guidebooks picture only the very historic tourist area, totally excluding the rest of the city centre (see Fig. 4.1; 4.2). As a result, the city is confined to a few places useful for the tourist and recognisable historical sites. An example of this above reduction is found in *The Versatile Guide* (1996: 176), whose author advises the visitor to Athens to take one of two suggested short walks (see fig. 4.3; 4.4)

You don't have to take the walks from beginning to end; indeed you don't have to follow them at all. The information in the walks can just as well be absorbed at a cafe table!

It is as if the entire city consisted only of major monuments and a few central avenues with all hotels, restaurants, shops and worth-seeing sites situated there. Anything else that does not fall within these categories is excluded. The monuments and sites recommended by guidebooks as the main tourist sights of Athens are basically the

Acropolis, the Lycavittos Hill and the National Archaeological Museum. These three alone can validate one's travel to Athens.

The metropolitan skyline grants pride of place not to commercial skyscrapers, but to two recognisable point of reference; the Acropolis and the Mount Lycavittos.  
(Faubion 1993: 15)

These suggest that tourists should follow a particular path that coincides with the boundary line around the enclosed tourist area, bordered by the Acropolis and Syntagma Square. This way certain sights are included in the itinerary and made available for the tourist gaze, while others are not. This is exactly what Gritti (1967: 53) characterises as «must be seen» (*devoir regarder*), arguing that certain objects in the local environment are narratively marked as worthy of the tourist's attention, whereas other parts of the city are subtracted from their map. The result of this spatial subtraction is the creation of «enclavic» tourist spaces which are cut off from the wider urban landscape (Edensor 1998; see also chapter 6). The main objective behind such a division of space is the minimisation of the tourist's disorientation. As Bhattacharrya (1997) comments, guidebooks and maps function as metaphorical pathfinders, «walking tours» (see fig. 4.2).

The subject of map selectivity is brought under consideration, since maps are inseparable from the tourist experience. Some argue that maps are by necessity selective, since there is «no one-to-one correspondence between the spatial environment and its cognitive representation» (Downs and Stea 1977). The same argument may be applied to tourism experience, as it would be impossible for a tourist to walk around the city without following particular directions and paths. Some reference points within the spatial environment help to draw the tourist map. This impulse towards cognitive organisation and orientation is often encapsulated in symbols, easily recognised by people as 'standing for' a particular place. In this way, guidebooks and maps create a «monument tourism» dependant on recognisable landmarks, which, by linking to each other draw paths in the urban landscape (Hutnyk 1996).

#### 4.2.1.4. In - between Spaces: The Narratives About the Locals

If the urban landscape of Athens is portrayed by the guidebooks as fragmentary with two juxtaposing time narratives, the discourse on the local population describes the latter as existing in between those spaces (see fig. 4.5) On the one hand, they are represented as being like their ancestors, with more or less the same physical features and qualities. On the other hand, in the particular case where they are assessed in connection with tourist services, a hierarchical relationship is erected, with the tourist playing the role of the civilised Westerner and the Athenian as the provider of low quality services (but, nevertheless, of a generous personality). The extracts from guidebooks shown in Table 5 below include examples of both images:

**Table 5:** The Description of the Athenians

<i>Guidebooks</i>	<i>Terms Used to Describe the Athenians</i>
<b>Murray 1845: 69</b>	The Athenians have been noted among their countrymen, like their ancestors, for their superior quickness, vivacity, and disposition to intrigue.
<b>Murray 1854: 50</b>	Those who are best acquainted with the Greeks, cannot fail to remark the numerous and striking features of resemblance that connect them with their ancestors.
<b>Life 1963: 13</b>	Can the nature of the Greeks be summarised? Realism, quickness, and courage.
<b>Fielding 1965: 1649</b>	People? Lovely; very clean; very honest, overwhelmingly kind to Americans
<b>Fielding's 1965: 1667</b>	When the Greeks try to cook like Frenchmen the results are usually disappointing, if not disastrous. When they cook like Greeks, they turn out interesting fare.

##### 4.2.1.4.1. Discourse of the Other

In the above extracts, the local population of Athens is portrayed as the «Other». Through their description, Athenians lose their human features, they are objectified. All the adjectives used in the above quotations are too abstract and generalised to correspond to the mentality and attitude of *actual* Greeks the guidebook authors might have met and interacted with. Moreover, «the 'Other' is available as a category of choice and investment, innocent of specific determination or location» (Robertson et al. 1994: 202). In these instances, the character of Athenians is described in terms of pure exoticism. The process whereby Athenians come to represent the 'Other' sustains a power relationship: «The tourists, powerful and civilised, come to view Them,

powerless and primitive» (Bruner 1991: 240). It is in fact this hierarchy of power and status that transforms tourism in a form of colonialism and, consequently, contributes to the shaping of the colonial discourse of travel writing (Nash 1977).

The portrayal, however, of modern Athenians as reproductions of ancient Greek figures is related to the need of tourists to verify on every occasion the material existence of the 'dream land' which they are visiting. The ancient Athens, 'the cradle of Western Civilisation', still exists, since her citizens are recognisable on the faces of the inhabitants of the present city. In the following extract from a guidebook, a foreigner travelling in the Athenian metro visits a classical Jurassic Park, inhabited by figures out of Greek pottery:

If Plato is the best introduction to the way Greeks talk, Greek pots are the best introduction to the way they look. [...] Take the metro and you will see these same faces everywhere: some even manage to scowl geometrically.

(Rawlins 1997: 53)

The same travelogue appeared to exist thirty-six years ago, verifying the main argument of this chapter: the representation of the same stereotypical images through old and recent guidebooks.

Everywhere you go in [Athens] you come upon the classic features. [...] One day, while I was walking around Plaka, a horde of schoolboys came roaring out of a street: I had seen the same features only a few minutes before on the Parthenon frieze which is shown round all the walls of the Acropolis Museum.

(Payne 1961: 131)

Finally, there is also the case of guidebooks addressed to the independent traveller, wherein the portrait of the local is either absent or restricted to his provision of services. In the *Rough Guide* (1996) and *Let's Go Europe* (1991), for instance, there is no special section referring to the inhabitants, unlike older tourist guidebooks (e.g. *Life*, *Fielding*, *The Blue Guide*). The only references to the local population emerge when these guidebooks describe some peculiarities of the latter in relation to their eating or drinking attitudes, as well as to their hospitality.

For ordinary drinking you go to a *Kafenion* - simple places filled with old men arguing and playing tavli (backgammon), a national obsession.

(*Rough Guide* 1996: 179)

Even more important to know is Greek body language, which can lead to endless misunderstandings. To say no, Greeks silently close their eyes or click their tongues while lifting their heads and/or eyebrows. To indicate a positive, they tilt and bow the head in one motion. A hand waving up and down that seems to mean «stay there» means «come».

*(Let's Go Europe 1991: 400)*

Emphasis on local 'anomalies' in narratives describing indigenous populations is a characteristic of travel literature in general (Wheeler 1986; Dann 1999). Within different types of travelogues (e.g. travel memoirs, diaries and books), the writer-traveller searches for all these characteristics -physical and cultural- of local inhabitants that would differentiate them from him/her and amuse his/her readers. «Without anomaly there is no travel book, no story to tell, and the more the wondrous the anomalies the better the account» (Wheeler 1986: 58). Fussell (1980: 170) reflecting on the way these anomalies are recorded, observes that travel writers -particularly British- have «the unique ability to spot anomalies» as a result of their confidence to «know what is 'normal'».

#### **4.2.1.4.2. The Discourse of the Anomalous**

To elucidate the relationship between Athens and the discourse of anomalous, I refer to the plentiful instances of such narratives in the existing travel literature on the city. Athens is not a literary city of the magnitude of Calcutta (Hutnyk 1996) and there are not many books referring exclusively to Athens and the local people. Since the nineteenth century travellers to Greece, few non-Greek writers have written stories set in Athens. The most famous book probably remains *The Colossus of Maroussi* (1947), in which the writer, Henry Miller, narrates his stay in Athens and acquaintance with the Greek intelligentsia of the late thirties and forties. Several pages of his book comprise descriptions of Athenians who are reified, if not as anomalous, nevertheless as different and unique:

Everybody goes the wrong way, everything is confused, chaotic, disorderly.

*(Miller 1947: 11)*

[The Greek] likes to do things with his hands, with his whole body, with his soul.

*(Miller 1947: 12)*

A Greek has no walls around him: he gives and takes without stint.

(Miller 1947: 34)

His inspiration is *Zorba the Greek* by Nikos Kazantzakis (1952), whose hero character is supposedly representative of the Greek male. Zorbas's personality is passionate and intelligent at the same time, like the main character in Henry Miller's book. Many books and guidebooks written after *The Colossus of Maroussi* represent Greeks in similar ways. For instance, Don DeLillo in his book *The Names* (1983) uses a similar character, Andreas Eliades, as a representation of Greekness. As his literary predecessors, Eliades has the cultural and physical qualities of ancient Greeks, as imagined by the West. He is an original thinker, a lover and, possibly a member of a left-wing organisation committed to armed struggle, using rhetorics with great capacity to communicate his radical ideas. The description is so unrealistic, however, that Eliades' character almost loses his human dimensions.

Nevertheless, Don DeLillo is not a travel writer as much as a 'place writer'. He uses Athens as a locale, «as the environment in which to explore inner experiences within a strong sense of geographical identity» (Dann 1999: 164). In his novel, both city and local inhabitants play a background role, giving an exotic character to the actual plot. This writing style dates back to the nineteenth-century romantic travelogue and is comparable to what de Nerval called 'décorations du theatre' (Menzos 1989) (see chapter 2).

However, the book that best exemplifies the discourse of anomaly is *Dinner with Persephone* (1996) by Patricia Storace. It might be a perfect example of the use of anomaly as literary expression of colonial discourse. Storace's one-year stay in Athens is transformed into a verification of the expectable: Greeks are different from Western people in a grotesque manner. Whatever does not fit into Western lifestyle, is interpreted as a drawback, an anomalous behaviour. Her Greeks are women who obey to their husbands' will, men who sexually harass her, people who are obsessed with Orthodox religion, politics and their national identity and who, more than anything else, behave differently than their ancestors and Westerners. Sometimes her description of inhabitants goes to extremes, constructing a discourse of negation, «one of the



characteristic tropes of the European colonial imagery» (Spurr 1993; Gregory 1995: 36). Storace's obsession with contrasting present inhabitants with their ancestors, presenting them as physically alike ancient Greeks, whilst their culture is under criticism, is an act of negation. Her interest is focused on the past of Athens and the present landscape is regarded as offensive to her civilised sensibility. In fact, Patricia Storace is as disappointed from the present landscape of Greece, as Francis Nightingale was from the landscape of nineteenth century Egypt, both viewing the residents as «scratches on the face of the country» (Pratt 1992: 58; Gregory 1995: 37).

### **4.3. Alternative Travelogues or the Same Old Story?**

Using metaphors as the above to decipher the Athenian landscape, guidebooks and travel literature embody narratives of colonial discourse. Some would reject the above argument, claiming that there is not such colonial discourse on the Athenian case, since its spatial entity is mapped well within the European boundaries. Although this argument is valid from a geographical perspective, on other levels the issue is not so simple. To illustrate this, Stathis Gourgouris (1996: 6), in his book *Dream Nation*, from which I will quote at length, insists on the representation of Greece as:

a nation forever situated in the interstices of *East* and *West* and ideologically constructed by colonialist Europe without having been, strictly speaking, colonized.

For him, modern Greece is mainly a by-product of the European colonialist spirit, as an effort, first, to encapsulate and capitalise on the ancient Greek past and, second, to secure its own European past. In Western discourse, Greece as a modern state was never articulated independently of its antiquity: its existence was a necessity for the West to remember its own past. In a way, the relationship between the symbolic landscape of Greece and the history of the West is the inter-relation of the «historicity of 'us' and the ideality of 'them' -the ideality of 'them' ensuring the historicity of 'us'» (Humboldt 1963; Gourgouris 1996: 123). Apparently, the hypostasis of Greece as a nation has elevated to the state of an 'idealised other'. Greek people, by serving as mirror images of what Europeans would like to be, represent the epitome of that ideal. As Homiyi Bhaba (1986: 199) observes, the colonial discourse is mainly characterised by mimicry, which is actually the «desire for a reformed recognisable Other».

One might expect that Greeks themselves would portray their nation and culture through different symbolic images and narratives, questioning the validity of Western colonial discourse. In reality, however, the national imaginary of the Greeks and the 'idealised other' of the Westerners coincide. On the one hand, the sublimation of antiquity served to boost the Greek identity by employing 'ready-made' national symbols (Skopetea 1988). The ancient ruins, for example, were transformed to a symbolic (and national) capital. On the other hand, Greeks:

were subjected to so much discursive bombardment about the nature of their being as to learn to respond in accordance with the expectations of their questioners.

(Gourgouris 1996: 150)

This response corresponds with a 'self-fulfilling prophesy', where a person's behaviour is based on the expectations of others.

If guidebooks are examples of colonial discourse, the brochures distributed by Greek tourist agencies are narratives of mimicry but in the reverse of Bhabha's sense (in Gourgouris 1996). In this case, it is not the West which tries to fashion Greeks into the shape of the 'ideal other', but Greeks who identify themselves as such. Instead of producing a new imagery, they reproduce and/or recycle the 'ready-made' one, employing the same stereotypical images. They shape their cultural identity according to what they believe tourists want to see. «This participation in stereotyping [is] a tacit agreement to domination» (Norkunas 1993: 7).

The above conclusion is supported by the analysis of eight leaflets and brochures recently published for distribution in central hotels and tourist information offices in Athens. Three of them were published by the GNTTO, one by the Municipality of Athens, one by the Prefecture of Athens, and the rest three by private tourist agencies.<sup>1</sup> Half of them have on the front page the monument of Parthenon, probably the most well known landmark of Greece (fig. 4.6). The use of symbols/landmarks is a familiar part of the rhetoric of tourist promotion, simplifying the procedure of connotation by offering to the visitor ready-made symbols. It is obvious that their intention is to sell

the tourist an image of a 'glorious past'. To achieve their goal, their written texts make use of an abundance of adjectives and expressions appraising the historic importance of Athens (see fig. 4.7). For instance, the leaflet distributed by the Prefecture of Athens, opens with the following lines:

Athens! Welcome to the place where legend embraces history. Under this Attic land, layers of civilization lead to past centuries, that reach as far as the origin of mankind itself.

(Prefecture of Athens 1998: 1)

In the two brochures published by the GNTO, the expressions used are even more stereotypical. The first few pages are dedicated to the recurring theme of the appraisal of Athens as the 'birth place of Western civilisation':

This is where democracy was born. [...] Athens is the symbol of freedom, art and democracy in the conscience of the civilized world. In Athens memory never fades. Wherever you stand, wherever you turn, the city's long and rich history will be alive in front of you.

(GNTO 1993: 4)

Greece is the cradle of Western civilization, the origin of drama and history and philosophy, the birthplace of democracy. It is hard to imagine what civilized life would be like today without the influence of ancient Greece.

(GNTO 1995: 1)

Some of the brochures even contain a 'letter of introduction' written either by the editor or an important political figure (i.e. General Secretary of GNTO, Minister of Culture etc.). For instance, in *Athens Today* -a private publication sponsored by GNTO- the Mayor of Athens plays the role of the host, welcoming the visitor-reader in Athens not as «a foreigner, but as a guest and 'Athenian'» because 'Athenians' are not only the inhabitants of the city, «but all those around the world who have placed the noble, superior values born in the eternal city of Athens in their hearts and minds» (*Athens Today* 1997: 8). Then, he adds the following: «I welcome you to the city of Athens, the city of culture, the city of light, the historical capital of Europe, *your city*».

By presenting Athens as such, his descriptions are tautological to Western travelogues. The phrase 'your city' constitutes both an offer and a reminder. An offer of the city to

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<sup>1</sup> GNTO: Greek National Tourist Organisation.

the visitor, an act of generosity, and a reminder of the familiarity, of belonging, that the visitor should feel by returning to a place central to the construction of Western culture.

The content of brochures mainly consists of information related to the historic centre of Athens, giving names and addresses of museums, sites and monuments that are worth visiting. In addition, brochures advise the visitor where to go shopping, eating and night-clubbing. The latter information is included either in separate sections or through advertisements. In the former case, some brochures replicate the content of guidebooks. In *Fun Time* (Konidaris 1998), a magazine distributed free of charge in hotel lobbies, there are separate sections referring to various images of the city, using titles and topics similar to those found in guidebooks. Instead of presenting alternative narratives on the Athenian landscape, Greek brochures function as shorter versions of the *Lonely Planet*, summarising the most important information that a tourist might need during his stay in the city.

A comparison between different types of travel literature (guidebooks, travel books and brochures) suggests that narratives on Athens are characterised by intertextuality. The memoirs of nineteenth century travellers influenced the first guidebooks which in their turn influence recent publications. Finally, all previous travelogues influence the brochures of Greek tourist organisations. As a result, all travel narratives on Athens share the common theme of bestowing Athens with a mythological imagery. As Kabbani argues, «it is as if the imagination of the traveller, in order to function, has to be sustained by a long tradition of Western scholarship, by other Western texts» (ibid. 1986: 10). The same stereotypical images and conventional clichés are renewed over and over, so that «the continuities of travel literature may be traced across long periods of time» (Hutnyk 1996: 40). The main effect of this unifying documentation of the city is to enable the traveller to discover and identify these preconceived images. Alternative representations, outside the stereotypes, are very difficult to maintain, since their existence would cause frustration and disorientation to travellers.

To summarise, guidebooks, by continuing the tradition of earlier travellers' memoirs, portray a fragmented city whose present history is missing and whose urban landscape is reduced to few routes, directing tourists to the historical sites. This particular selectivity of monuments reduces the geography of the city to the mere description of a monumental but depopulated world, from which the present is absent (Cazes 1989). These textual maps treat the actual landscape as comprising 'empti loci' (Smith 1987)-empty spaces to be filled with 'useful' information about facilities and monuments found in the very centre of the city. At their worst, they represent the urban space as a 'non-place', where "transit points and temporary abodes are proliferating under luxurious or inhuman conditions (i.e. hotels, museums, airports)" (Augé 1995: 78; see also chapter 7).

More than anything else, travel literature, and particularly guidebooks, represent 'imaginative geographies' of Athens which, as Said might argue, «dramatize distance and difference in such a way that 'our' space is divided and demarcated from 'their' space» (in Gregory 1995: 29). They, hence, delineate two contrasting worlds, that of the tourist and that of the local inhabitant, the West and the Orient, Europe and Greece, past and present.



Fig. 4.1 The Centre of Athens (© American Express Guides 1994).



Fig 4.2 The highlighted historical sites and monuments of the centre of Athens (© Frommer's 1968).





Fig 4.3 The map of Plaka (© Versatile Guides 1996).

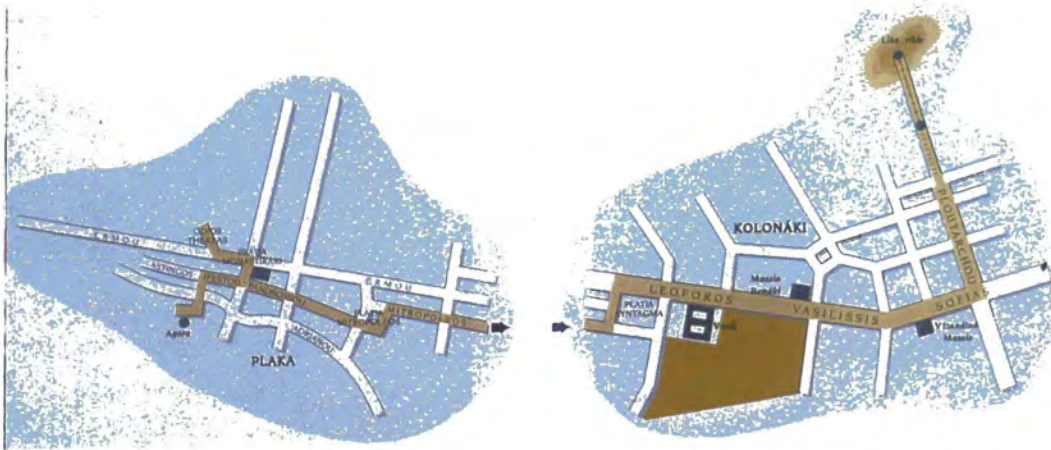


Fig. 4.4 The short version of the map of Kolonaki and Plaka districts (© Versatile Guides 1996).



Fig. 4.5a, b The stereotypical image of the Greeks (© Rawlins, C.L. 1997).



'Let Greeks be Greek.'

—Anne Bradstreet, American poet



# A trip down memory lane – with a difference!

*The past grandeur of Ancient Greece will be brought alive as you experience the rich and famous mythology and culture this country offers.*

## Tour Itinerary

### FRIDAY –

UK-Athens. Transfer for two nights in Hotel Oceanis, Givfada. Welcome Get Together. Two optional evening excursions – Acropolis Light & Sound Show or the Berg Stratou Theatre.

### SATURDAY –

Half day Athens city tour visiting the famed Acropolis. Optional afternoon tour to Cape Sounion.

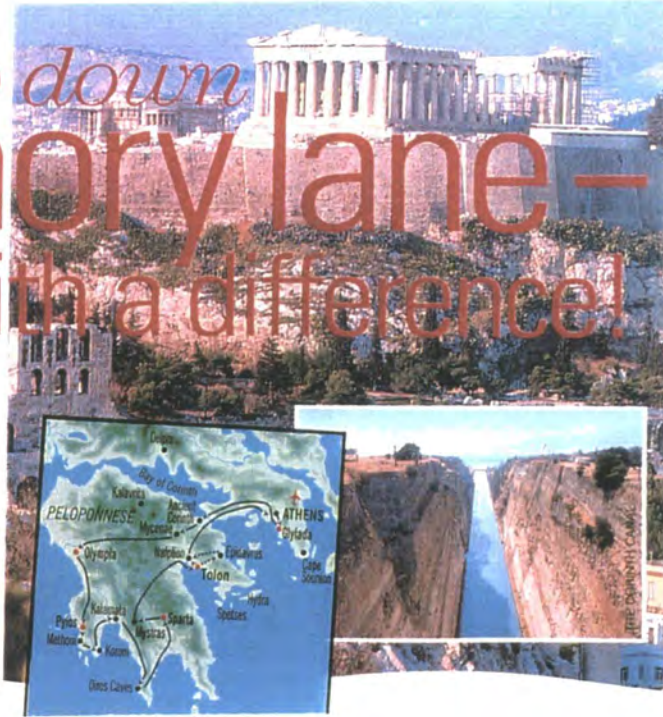


Fig. 4.6 The front page of the GNTO's travel brochure (© GNTO Press 1997).

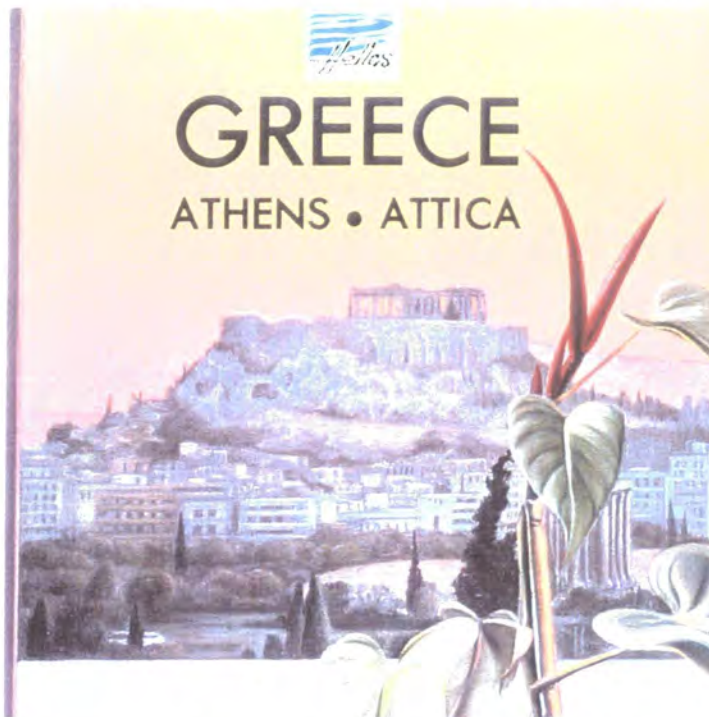


Fig. 4.7 The description of Athens in Greek travel brochures sold to foreign tourists (© The Municipality of Athens Press 1997).

## CHAPTER 5: GUIDED TOURS IN ATHENS; NARRATING THE CITY - PHOTOGRAPHING THE GAZE

### 5.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, I looked at the symbolic representations of the Athenian landscape as narrated and mapped by various travelogues, with a particular emphasis on guidebooks. I argued that they play a crucial role in fashioning the tourist experience, by functioning as pathfinders which help travellers to navigate through the urban plexus. I must stress, however, that guidebooks, as travel narratives, are mainly addressed to independent travellers.<sup>1</sup> Other tourists use different sources of information about the city. The latter include tourists who either visit Athens as part of their organised holidays to Greece, or are independent but wealthy travellers, who experience the city through guided tours.<sup>2</sup> The scope of the present chapter, therefore, is the analysis of oral narratives on the Athenian locus as presented by tour-guides. I argue that both written (i.e. guidebooks) and oral (i.e. guided-tours) narratives describe Athens through similar stereotypical imagery and symbolism. Tour-guides embrace and reproduce in their story-telling the myths discussed in the previous chapter: glorification of the past, subtraction of the present landscape, reification of inhabitants. However, what I intend to show here is not a mere repetition of these myths, but the linguistic and idiolectic variations used to describe them. My analysis and interpretation of guides' oral performances is based on the methodological technique of the ethnography of speaking. In particular, my study focuses on the description of narrative structures and performances as speech events. In addition, I examine the relationship of the speaker-performer (i.e. tour-guide) with his/her audience (i.e. tourists), as well as the conveyance of the content to the latter. My main aim is to

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<sup>1</sup> I refer to the most popular recent guidebooks to Athens, such as the *Lonely Planet* and *Rough Guide* which are mainly designed for young travellers (i.e. backpackers).

<sup>2</sup> It seems, however, that in the case of Athens, the dichotomy between romantic and mass tourist gaze really exists (Urry 1990; 1995). During my fieldwork it became evident that, on the one hand, there are individuals who wish to explore a place in solitude and privacy and, most important, to choose by themselves what to gaze. These tourists rely on guidebooks and maps. On the other hand, there are those tourists who depend, for many different reasons, on the advice and conduct of their tour-operator, tour-leader and tour-guide, gazing the city in a suggested imagery.

examine is the role of oral narratives in the social construction of tourist sights and, in general, tourist gaze and experience.

## 5.2. Methodology

### 5.2.1. Analysing data

A brief reference to the analysis of the collected data is made here. As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, my analysis is based on the ethnography of speaking.<sup>3</sup> By this term, I refer to:

the description in cultural terms of the patterned uses of language and speech in a particular group, institution, community, or society that includes native theories and practices of speaking, both overtly articulated by individuals and as enacted by them in a range of activities, situations, and interactions.

(Bauman 1992: 76)

‘Speech enactment’ is a term synonymous to verbal performance. Oral narratives of tour guides are examples of verbal performances (Fine and Speer 1985; Katriel 1993). As Bauman (1977: 3) points out, «the conception of verbal as performance is based upon an understanding of performance as a mode of speaking», a mode of language. Oral performances, in this sense, are speaking praxes that use language in the conduct and constitution of social life (ibid. 1974). Concerning the analysis of verbal performances, a number of components should be taken into account: the setting; the participants; the purpose of the discourse; the degree of structure; the manner of speech; the norms and genres of the whole event; the lexicon and semantics, as well as the grammar at the discourse level (Hymes 1962; Farb 1974; van Dijk 1985; van Ments 1990; Bauman 1992). Analysing the oral performances of tour guides, I focus on the discourse used to narrate and describe the spatio-temporal myths of the symbolic landscape of Athens (see also chapter 2).<sup>4</sup> I concentrate mainly on the idiomatic and idiolectic functions of the language used by tour guides.

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<sup>3</sup> The ethnography of speaking was introduced by the American linguist and anthropologist Dell Hymes. According to him, language as well as speech events have a patterning of their own similar to that of social organisations, politics and economics. For this reason they should be of central interest to ethnographical studies. The task of the ethnographer of speaking is to identify and analyse the dynamic interrelationships between the elements which go to make a performance, aiming toward the construction of a descriptive theory of speaking as a cultural system in a particular society (see Hymes 1962; 1971).

<sup>4</sup> Discourse is the text in which the story or myth is manifested (see Turner and Bruner 1986).

The ethnography of speaking «involves attention to the relationship between text and context and among transcription, translation, analysis and theory» (Bauman 1992: 79). In fact, my role as a researcher and interpreter of tour-guides' oral performances stands in between text and transcription, analysis and theory. Since my interpretations are based on the transcription of both guided tours and interviews with tour guides and also on the notes that I took during my fieldwork, they are retellings. Bruner argues that, in any case, «an ethnographic story is a story about a story, the production of a text based on another text» (in Turner and Bruner 1986: 150). My ethnographic 'story', thus, involves the 'story' of tour guides.<sup>5</sup> In this respect, my ethnography is co-authored, not simply because tour guides contribute data to my text, but, mainly, because I, as a researcher, and them, as informants, come to share the same narratives. However, a retelling can never be totally identical to the actual (told) story. First, the transcribing procedures inevitably cause a dramatic reduction, condensation and fragmentation of the narrated story. «Each phase of data analysis entails *data reduction* as the realms of collected data are brought into manageable chunks» (Marshall and Rossman 1995: 113). Second, any new narrative, as my interpretation of their (tour-guides') story, encompasses new conditions, by yielding new vocabulary, syntax and meaning. In general, there are two different narratives of the same story addressed to two different audiences: the tourists and my examiners. Consequently, I have to agree with Gorfain's argument that «retellings become foretellings» (after Bruner 1986: 153).

### **5.3. A few words about guided tours in Athens**

Throughout my fieldwork, I participated in twenty-five different guided tours in Athens. All of them were microtours (i.e. daily coach tours), organised either by tour-operators responsible for the whole package holiday, or by tourist agencies specialised in bus tours. Referring in particular to the latter, there are five main tourist companies specialised in daily tours in the city: G.O. Tours, Key Tours, Chat Tours, Trust Hellenic Travel and Hop-In Zinon Tours. All five companies offer similar coach tours to tourists: a half-day tour called 'Athens sightseeing', an excursion to Cape Sounion with a visit to the Temple of Poseidon and the very popular with tourists 'Athens by

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<sup>5</sup> For Bruner, «ethographies are guided by an implicit narrative structure, by a story we tell about the people we study»; in other words, they are a genre of storytelling (see Turner and Bruner 1986: 139).

night' tour. The choice of sights and guided-tour company is totally on the tourist company or tour-operator that organises the package holiday, the tourist does not interfere at all in the program. For this reason there are many incidents of tourists complaining that they were cheated or misled, as they found that the actual program of the tour was different from the advertised one.

The main characteristic of the half-day tour in Athens is its high selectivity, as it attempts to fulfil the tourist's demand «to see 'as much as possible', to sample as many places as can be crammed in» in the minimum possible time (Edensor 1998: 106).<sup>6</sup> The result is a pre-determined itinerary that condenses «a larger geographical area into a selective smorgasbord of 'highlights' of many tourists attractions» (Schmidt 1979: 442). For instance, in the G.O. Tours leaflet distributed at central hotels and tourist offices the coach tour is described as follows:

This tour gives you an opportunity to observe the striking contrasts that make Athens such a fascinating city. Our expert guides take you to see the centre of the city, CONSTITUTION SQUARE (Syntagma), the HOUSE OF PARLIAMENT, the MEMORIAL to the UNKNOWN SOLDIER and the NATIONAL LIBRARY. Driving down Herod Atticus street, you will see the Evzones in their picturesque uniform and the PRESIDENTIAL PALACE. On your way to the Acropolis, you will see the PANATHENAIC STADIUM (where the first Olympic Games in the modern era were held in 1896), the Temple of OLYMPIAN ZEUS and the HANDRIAN'S ARCH. On the ACROPOLIS visit its Museum and the architectural masterpieces of the Golden Age of Athens: the PROPILEA, the TEMPLE of ATHENA NIKE, the ERECHTHEION and, finally, 'the harmony between material and spirit', the monument that 'puts order in the mind', the PARTHENON.

(G.O. Tours 1997)

The above route is shown in the map distributed by Hop-In Tours (fig. 5.9). This map is a cyclical cartographic interpretation of monuments and sites crossed during the coach tour. Each of these sites is represented by a number from 1 to 41; this simplifies both the tourists' reading of the map and their gazing upon the actual landscape. These numbers are also, in a metaphoric sense, credentials that guarantee the high quality and value of the coach tour. To further support this image of high quality service, the exact time that the bus would pass in front of the most important sights is included in the

leaflet. For instance, the bus should be at Panathenian Stadium at 9:00, 11:00 and 13:00 and arrive at the Acropolis at 10:35, 12:35 and 14:35.<sup>7</sup> Normally, the tour starts at around 9 o'clock in the morning and lasts for about two to three hours, depending on whether a guided tour to the Acropolis is included or not. The checking point is usually in a central hotel with which the particular tour company co-operates. Chat Tours' checking point, for instance, is the lounge of Amalia Hotel, situated opposite to the Greek Parliament, in Syntagma Square; Hop-In Tours buses start the tour from Hotel La Mirage in Omonia Square. Most tours also end at the checking point, bringing tourists back to their hotels.

#### **5.4. The Tourist Guide<sup>8</sup>**

As mentioned in the introduction, the role of tourist guides is quite similar to that of guidebooks (see also chapter 4). Tourist guides also function as pathfinders, leading «the way through an environment in which [their] followers lack orientation or through a socially defined territory to which they have no access» (Cohen 1985:7). The Greek word for a tourist guide is *xenagós*, meaning «the person who leads foreigners with the purpose to show them his/her country» (see fig. 5.1) (Lambropoulou 1989: 3).<sup>9</sup> Both definitions focus on the role of the guide as leader, whose navigational expertise makes him/her responsible for the spatio-temporal direction of the tour (Holloway 1981; Cohen 1985).<sup>10</sup> However, the leadership sphere of the role is much more complex than simply leading the way. For instance, a guide may also function as a mentor and animator (Cohen 1985). Both roles coincide with Schmidt's (1979) definition of «the

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<sup>6</sup> In this chapter I concentrate on guided tours in Athens. The «Athens by Night» tours are described and analysed in chapter 8. In this chapter, I also make a short reference to the Cape Sounion excursion, included in the schedule of some tours (e.g. Trust-Hellenic Tours, Chat Tours).

<sup>7</sup> Hop-In is the only coach tour that operates three tours a day.

<sup>8</sup> The bibliography on the definition of tourist guides and the description of their in the sight sacralisation process is very limited. Speaking as part of the tourist experience is largely ignored. For instance, MacCannell (1976) focuses entirely on markers and physical displays, excluding oral performances from the sacralisation process (Fine and Speer 1985). There are, thus, few theorists who are involved in the analysis of tour-guide performances (Schmidt 1979; Holloway 1981; Cohen 1985; Fine and Speer 1985; Katriel 1993). Correspondingly, the following study draws from these approaches at a great extent.

<sup>9</sup> *Xenagos* is a compound word, derived from *xenos* (friend) and the verb *ago* (to lead). In ancient Greek the first compound «*xenos*» was used to define both a friend and a stranger. It was expected that one should host a stranger as a friend and show him around the place. For instance, in *Timon the Athenian*, Plato referred to the importance of a tour-guide.

<sup>10</sup> By 'spatio-temporal' direction of the tour, I refer to both the geographical routes and historical periods that the tour guide decides to show to visitors.

ideal typical tour guide» who must be competent both in knowledge and presentation. For Holloway, on the other hand, the definition is more than two-dimensional: the role of a guide is composed of a number of minor tasks and roles, which are actually responsible for the construction of a typology of guides (Holloway 1981; see also Cohen 1982). Specific reference is made to alternative types of tourist guides: tour-leaders and escorts. Both of them combine all previous qualities with their ability, first, to protect the group of tourists from any kind of danger and, second, to make the integration of the group as easy as possible. Their role could be paralleled with that of a shaman, who minimises potential danger in a «threatening environment» and who, as a kind of «social director», is responsible for the inter-communication of the group (Boorstin 1961: 93; Schmidt 1979: 458). It seems, however, that in the tourism industry tour leaders and guides have separate roles to perform. The former are employed by tour operators or coach companies to supervise and lead tourists participating in coach tours (either on extended tours, or day excursions), whereas the latter have an information-giving role, as they have knowledge of general or specific subjects related to the region (Holloway 1989). Sometimes, both types are employed by tour operators, particularly when organised groups make short visits or day trips to an area of tourist interest as part of their package holidays (Cohen 1982).

Referring to Athens in particular, it seems that both types of guides coexist and perform their distinct roles in the terrain: leading, amusing, story-telling, teaching, protecting, integrating tourists.<sup>11</sup> In most cases, there is a tour leader, an escort who accompanies the party throughout the trip, and a local tourist guide specifically hired for the excursion around the city.<sup>12</sup> In fact, it is prohibited by law to tour leaders or any other non-professional guides to work in some of the tourist sights (i.e. the Acropolis and museums). According to the GNTO policy only Greek professional guides are authorised to work in museums and archaeological sites.<sup>13</sup> For example, in the Acropolis, only Greek guides who wear badges with their authorisation number are

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<sup>11</sup> This estimation is based on my personal observations during my fieldwork. Further details are given later in the chapter.

<sup>12</sup> The tour-leader performs the *inner-directed* activities «namely activities oriented toward the tourists», whereas the tourist guide performs *outer-directed* activities, which are «oriented toward the physical environment or the inhabitants» (Cohen 1982: 236).

<sup>13</sup> GNTO are the initials for the Greek National Tourist Organisation.

allowed to guide tours. Foreign tour leaders or guides who enter the Acropolis with the purpose of showing the sights are reported to tourist police. Once, a British tutor leading his students group on Parthenon was mistaken for a guide and asked to leave the place. GNTTO claims that, with this policy it tries to preserve the rights of Greek tourist guides and the high quality of services. A 'professional guide' is someone who has attended the GNTTO School for Guides either in Athens or Rhodes Island.<sup>14</sup> The tuition lasts from two to three years, depending on the previous qualifications of the person. Someone is eligible to attend the school if s/he has advanced knowledge of two foreign languages and a university degree, preferably in archaeology or history. Since 1981, the school has been accepting also people from secondary education (high school degree). During the training period, the students are taught courses in geography, archaeology, museum studies and foreign languages, ancient Greek language, culture and history, as well as modern Greek literature. It becomes clear from the curriculum that one of the major intentions of the school is training future guides to be articulate tutors, 'guide-lecturers'. From the booklet, *Notes on the Technique of Tour-Guiding* (1989), distributed to students of the school, a tendency to overestimate and over-generalise the qualities of a guide is also apparent:

First of all the guide must love his country and people in general. Then, he has to be well-educated, well-informed, well-organised, open-minded, precise, honest, innovative, enthusiastic for his job, a good lecturer and narrator, able to understand tourists' demands and needs, of a pleasant personality, kindness and own initiative. Finally, he must have «the talent of a good salesman» to promote successfully his country.

(Labropoulou 1989: 55)<sup>15</sup>

According to Lamropoulou, a tutor of the School of Tour-Guides in Athens, one of the major tasks and responsibilities of a guide is to promote his/her country to his/her clients, foreign tourists. She believes that a guide is most of all representative of his/her country. Somehow, s/he has to be able to advertise the positive qualities of Greece, such as the 'glorious past' (see chapter 2). As one of the tour-guides I interviewed told me:

(George Rostantis, professional guide and archeologist, 23-09-97)

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<sup>14</sup> The present GNTTO School of Tourist Guides was founded in 1967.

<sup>15</sup> I use only masculine gender, following the original Greek text.



In a guided tour, it is the responsibility of the guide to create the images which the tourist will gaze upon.

After graduation and authorisation to work as professional guides, they are employed by travel agencies and tour operators, thus becoming, in Cohen's terms, «tourist-oriented service personnel» (Cohen 1985: 20). They are required to be both the «guru» and «shepherd» of the tourist group, providing direction, information and interpretation of the sites visited (Nettekoven 1979). Their role can be viewed as a transition between two polar spheres of guidance: «the geographical [...] the literal connotation of the term 'guide'» and «the communicative [...] the interpreter of travel impressions» (Cohen 1982: 236).

Besides the professional Greek guides, there are the tour leaders and escorts, employed to supervise and lead groups of tourists. In some cases, they travel with tourists from abroad to Greece. Most of them are not Greeks. Most tour leaders and guides have no formal qualifications or professional training; they are largely employed on the strength of their prior experience (Holloway 1989). The escorts employed by Trust-Hellenic Travel, for instance, are all British citizens who have been working in the tourism industry both in Greece and abroad (Britain, Italy, South Africa) for more than ten years. As part of their role, they are often called upon to offer a sightseeing commentary on the Athenian landscape through which they are travelling, thus acting as a source of information. The major part of their role, however, is to ensure the well-being and amusement of their clients, the tourists.

There is also a third type of guides, the non-professional guides employed by coach companies to accompany tourists around Athens, are actually a combination of the two previous types. Since they are not allowed to enter archaeological sites and museums, they restrict their tour-guiding in the city-centre. Even if not officially authorised guides, they do have a good knowledge of guiding techniques. Most of them are university students who work part-time during the summer season. Tour operators mainly employ that kind of guides as cheap labour.

## 5.5. Tour Guides' Oral Performances

### 5.5.1. Narrating space

Every story is a travel story- a spatial practice.

(De Certeau 1984: 115)

*(Tina, tour guide, Hop-In Zinon Tours, 17-08-97)*

[...] We are a few metres away from Omonoia Square, it is a very ugly sight because of the subway construction. [...] This is here a stop for Hop-in, so we will make a three minutes stop and then we continue our tour. [...] On the left there is Piraeus Avenue which leads to Piraeus Port. Still on your right hand-side Athenas Street, one of the oldest of the city of Athens. Along the street we have a meat and fish market, very old, they look like bazaars and they are one of the very few traditional bazaar-like markets remaining in the Mediterranean area. [...] We are now on Stadiou Avenue, the main connecting avenue between Omonoia Square and Syntagma Square, the second centre of the city of Athens. [...] Coming up on your left hand-side a fine example of early neo-classic style, it used to house the courts of Athens, now this wing facing us is the main shopping centre. On the other wing which we do not see, is the house of the State Council of Highest Administrative Court of the city of Athens. On your right hand-side the street we just passed leads you to the main Stock Market. [...] King Otto the first king of Greece after the Greek Revolution used to live in this neo-classic style building you see in front and to your right. [...] Coming up on your right hand-side the former house of Parliament. This is where the parliament was housed in the 1850's, neo-classic style, beautiful Ionian entrance, this is the National Historical Museum. [...] We are now at Syntagma Square, the translation from Greek is Constitution Square. [...] Coming up on your left hand-side a view of the Parliament of Greece, this is where the 300 members of the parliament meet regularly. [...] Coming up on your left hand-side we have Metropoleos Street, the Street of the Cathedral, it leads you to the Metropolis of Athens which is also at the heart of Plaka and Monastiraki area, the two names we use for the area at the feet of the rock of the Acropolis. [...] We are now on Filelletinon Avenue, street dedicated to Philellenes, Europeans who helped Greeks in their war of independence against the Turks and on your left hand-side the largest mediaeval structure remaining here in the city of Athens, the Russian Orthodox Church of Saint Nicodemos built in the 11<sup>th</sup> century AD [...] On your left, you have a beautiful view of Licavittos Hill, Licabetus Hill, the view of Athens from there is really breathtaking. [...] We are now on Queen Amalias Avenue, Queen Amalia was the wife of the first king of Greece, King Otto, he was a Bavarian king. [...] On your right hand-side you can see part of the gift of King Otto to his wife Queen Amalia, the National Gardens, former Royal Gardens. [...] And now, one of the treats the city of Athens has to offer, the trilogy as we call it, three of the most beautiful neo-classic buildings in the city of Athens. The one on your right, the first one is the Academy of Arts and Letters [...] the second building housed the University of Athens, it is a very elegant building. [...] and on your left hand-side an example of Dorian architecture, the National Library. [...] We turn now on Academias Avenue and on your left hand-

side you see the Municipal and Cultural Centre of Athens. The beige building you see behind this pink neo-classical building on your left hand-side is the Law School of the University of Athens. [...] Any of the streets on your left will lead you to Kolonaki area, Kolonaki area used to be considered one of the most aristocratic and expensive districts in Athens. [...] In front of us is the Parliament again, but this time from a different angle. [...] Coming up now on your right hand-side the Byzantine Art Museum. [...] And as you probably have guessed, following to the Byzantine Museum, still on your right, the War Museum. [...] The modern white building you see on your left is the National Picture Gallery with over 2000 paintings. [...] We are now on our way to visit the formal residence of the Prime Minister and the president of the country. [...] On the right hand-side Zappion Megaron, Zappion Mansion, very elegant neo-classic building. [...] We will see a marble statue of Hellas, the name we Greeks use to call our country, holding Lord Byron. [...] In front and to the left Hadrian's Arch, a sign of the Roman era of the city of Athens. [...] On your left hand-side the Temple of Olympic Zeus, a forest of columns as you could see. [...] In front of you, there is the Herod Atticus Theatre, very well preserved. It is of international acclaim, many well known artists have played here. [...] Of course, as you can see we are now in Acropolis, the jewel of the city. If you want you could stay here and walk upon the hill or you could stay and continue the tour of Athens.<sup>16</sup>

The above text is an extract from a tape-recorded guided tour in Athens. It is actually an abstract version of the two hours tour, transcribing only the guide's geographical (and navigational) indications during the tour. Following Hop-in map and its numbered sights (see fig. 5.9), this tour starts from Omonoia Square (number 13) and ends in the Acropolis (number 37). It is as if the spatial entity of the city is shrunk into a text of fifty-six lines, or in a map of forty-one bus stops and sights. Both the map and the guided tour are different versions of the same narrative: the description of Athens. This elliptic, somewhat telegraphic, transcription serves as an example of the first characteristic of tour guides' oral narratives: spatial deixis.

By the term spatial deixis, I refer to the ways in which physical objects are said to be located in particular places in the physical world by an individual speaker and used as landmarks for establishing the locations of other objects (Brown 1995). For the existence of a deictic reference, it is necessary to set up, first, a common deictic space; second, a reference point and, third, a co-ordinated perspective between speaker and audience (Klein 1982). In the case of guided tours, the common deictic space is Athens

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<sup>16</sup> In order to make the reading of the extract easier, I do not use transcribing symbols

and the reference point is each particular sight that the guide shows during the tour. Then, as soon as the guide starts speaking, his/her orientation directs the tourists' gaze through the unknown space. As the deictic space is not readily available for the tourists, the guide has to provide all information; s/he becomes the pathfinder.

The navigational success of the guide depend strongly on the linguistic expressions s/he uses to refer to localities. According to Linde and Labov (1975), there are two discrete semantic ways to describe a locality: the map and the tour. The former refers to a description of «a ground-plan as seen from above», whereas in latter it is the speaker's responsibility to lead the listener through the landscape (Linde and Labov 1975; De Certeau 1984: 119; Jarvella and Klein 1992; Brown 1995: 118). At first glance it seems that guides' narratives follow a tour approach, describing space in movement. For De Certeau (1984) however, there is a dialectic relationship between the map and the tour approach, between 'seeing' and 'going'. He argues that «an element of mapping is the presupposition of a certain itinerary», as revealed by phrases such as «if you go straight ahead, you'll see» (De Certeau 1984: 119, 120). As the bus moves along the prescribed itinerary the guide describes the localities in motion (tour), thus directing the gaze (map): «On the right hand-side Zappion Megaron. [...] We will see a marble statue of Hellas, [...]».<sup>17</sup>

Within spatial deixis, there are three distinct linguistic planes, which are distinguished according to the bodily position of both speaker and listener: left/right; above/below; in front of/behind (Brown 1995). In the transcribed guided tour quoted above, the guide's description is focused entirely on the first plane (i.e. right/left). This is a 'symmetrical' deixis, «cutting through the vertical centre of the body between the eyes» (Brown 1995: 109). While the bus drives along the road, the guide directs the gaze by proposing to tourists to turn their heads on their right hand-side and their left hand-side. Correspondingly, s/he moves the listener (tourist) from one gazing position to another, thus bringing only specific locations to the surface. According to Brown (1995: 112):

such instructions simply ignore the configuration of the route, and give no information about how it relates to each landscape feature.

In this sense, the guide eliminates the city to few benchmarks, subtracting from the tourist's gaze anything less important. By isolating particular sites from the rest of the city setting, tour-guides create a spatial void. As a result, in front of the tourists' eyes the city is transformed into a summarised route, navigated by the bus (and the guide's narrative) as quickly as possible. Turner and Ash (1975: 137), describing the organised coach tour experience, conclude that:

Landscape and peoples become a blur seen from a coach window, as the tourist speeds from one antiquity to the next- isolated even from prevailing climatic conditions by air-conditioning. [...] Sheer speed prevents any real contact with history or culture.

They continue their argument to they say that the sights are viewed in 'anaesthetised isolation', as they are:

cut off from the surrounding landscape and community by the fence surrounding the site, the turnstile by which it is entered, the glass of the coach window.

(Turner and Ash 1975: 137)

Metaphorically speaking, this is perhaps the epitome of the tourist bubble, where tourists become detached observers of a schizoid and fragmented landscape. The expression 'tourist bubble' refers to the enclavic loci. These are described by Edensor as resembling 'total institutions', since tourists are cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time (1998: 49). Even if his description refers mainly to tourist areas of the city, it can be applied to coach tours, as well.

Moreover, the notion of enclaves implicitly embodies a dialectic of division between inside and outside, here and there: being inside enclosed spaces generates a sense of hereness, whereas looking out of them generates a sense of thereness (Cullen 1961; Jakle 1987). Enforced by guide's narratives, the enclavic locus of the bus amplifies the tourist's experience of this division. The bus becomes a mobile enclave that drives tourists through the urban space, while guides translate lead the gaze onto sights to the left and to the right. The latter sights are out of reach, out there, at a safe distance from inside the bus. Urry (1999) in his *paper 'Automobility, car culture and weightless travel'* describes how travelling by car has changed people's gaze upon the cityscape

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<sup>17</sup> These quotations are extracts from the guided tour quoted above.

where a new element that of speed has been added in their experience.<sup>18</sup> Within the car, one can gaze the constantly changing landscape in a fast pace where:

the sights, sounds, tastes, temperatures and smells of the city and countryside are reduced to the two-dimensional view through the car windscreen [...]. The environment beyond the windscreen is an alien other, to be kept at bay through the diverse privatising technologies incorporated within the contemporary car. These technologies ensure a consistent temperature (with the standardisation of air-conditioning), large supplies of information, a relatively protected environment, high quality sounds and sophisticated systems of monitoring.

(Urry 1999)

### **5.5.2. Narrating time**

So far, I have discussed the way tour-guides fragment space in their narratives, by selecting particular paths and describing few recognisable landmarks. In like manner, due to the limited time of a guided tour, guides highlight a few historical events and periods during the coach tours, selecting the ones they think might be more interesting and entertaining to tourists. In particular, guides' narratives are mainly focused on historical events which are already known to their audience, such as the classical period of Athens's past. Besides, the purpose of guided tours is not to broaden the tourists' knowledge of Greek history by bombarding them with detailed historical accounts, but to transform, instead, the city into a familiar historical setting of isolated recognisable sites and monuments. As a result, the tourists' understanding of history becomes «schizoid and fragmented» (Turner and Ash 1975). For instance, one of the guides I interviewed noted that:

*(Ntina, tour-guide, Zinon Tours, 17-08-97)*

Most of the tourists are not really interested in what I say to them. Some others don't even know about the things I refer to [...] If I see that tourists just want some basic description of what they see I don't go deep into details, there's no point for this.

Moreover, guides use special linguistic codes in their narratives, to keep the attention and interest of their audience during the two-hours long tour, which is, in fact, a journey through history. First, they use parallelism, portraying the past as not much different than the present. By this comparison, they try to show their audience that, despite the long interval of time, the ancients were not unlike them (Turner and Ash

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<sup>18</sup> This is a draft paper published by the Department of Sociology, University of Lancaster and could be viewed at <http://www.comp.lancaster.ac.uk/sociology/soc008ju.html>

1975). According to Katriel (1993), this is a dialogue between autobiography and history whereby guides encourage tourists to feel that the story presented is part of their own. Such an example of «dialogic narration», as he calls this type of discourse (Katriel 1993: 71), is the reference to democracy and, in general, politics in ancient Athens:

*(Debbie Hadjidaki, tour-guide, Serene, 1-09-97)*

In ancient Athens only free male citizens could vote. Neither slaves nor women voted in that period. But don't think that they weren't democrats, don't forget that Athens is the city of freedom and democracy. All the citizens who voted could participate in the decision making. Their political system is similar with ours nowadays: they had representatives, I mean MPs, as we do have today.

Second, guides engage in expressive discourse about their own feelings and attitudes toward the sights. These formulaic statements function as «shared personal experiences», transmitting the guides' personal views to their audience (Fine and Speer 1985: 79). Whenever they pass a worth-mentioning monument, they express their own opinion about it, using superlatives to describe it:

*(Kostis, tour-guide, Hop-In Tours, 4-07-98)*

[Description of the National Archaeological Museum]

Just a walk along its rooms and you cannot help being moved by its amazing, graceful sculptures [...] even if sculpture and architecture are not your particular interest, as I said, the beauty and the amazing grace of the sculptures will certainly move you.

*(Rea, tour-guide, Chat Tours, 2-08-97)*

[Description of the Byzantine Church in Dafne]

I think that this is one of the most beautiful Byzantine churches in Greece. I really like coming here and pray; it's so beautiful and serene. I suggest that you should come and spend some time here, looking at its magnificent frescos.

On the other hand, when tour guides encounter buildings or sites that they do not find particularly important or attractive, they do not hesitate to express their rejection:

*(Tina, tour-guide, Hop-In Tours, 17-08-97)*

[Description of the Conservatorium of Athens]

This is another modern building, covered with white marble. It's an ugly building. I don't like it at all.

[Description of the entrance to the Olympic Stadium, specially built for the International Championship of Athletics in 1997]

Let me show you the monumental entrance of the stadium. As you see, it's new; it's not made of marble, of course. It was built recently, you know, for the

International Games that will take place tomorrow. Please don't confuse it with the rest of the stadium, which is really old, and nicely built. I don't like it very much. Actually, I don't like it at all.

My intention in this chapter is the analysis of oral narratives of tour guides and their impact on tourists' gaze and images of Athens. As I have shown, tourists learn about Athens through the eyes of their guide; their gaze upon the city depends on the guides' instructions, suggestions and personal views. Guides select, gloss and interpret sights and historical events, whereas they avoid to mention others. Tourists are told what to gaze upon and when and where to look. It is the everyday life of the city, however, that guides do not consider as worth mentioning to their audience. In Dahles' words, «in the eyes of the interpreters, this everyday life is regarded as too 'common' or familiar to be made into a tourist attraction» (1996: 242). Instead, guides prefer to construct a more imaginative image of the city consisting, of a summarised history and selected routes. Then, the tourists photograph the subject of their gaze.

### **5.6. Tourists' Narratives: Photographing the Gaze**

If I could tell the story in words, I wouldn't need to lug a camera.

(Lewis Hine, in Sontag 1977: 185)

Unlike nineteenth century romantic travellers (see chapter 2), nowadays tourists do not use written narratives to capture, illustrate and commemorate their travel experience. The predominant sensory form which substituted written language is vision: the art of photography. According to Urry, «travel becomes a strategy for accumulating photographs» (1990: 139). This is why it seems «positively unnatural to travel for pleasure without taking a camera along» (Sontag 1979: 9). The camera invites everyone to play the artist by making pictures. It serves as the connecting link between the innate ability to see and the external capability to report, interpret, and express what one sees, without the need of a special talent, or extended training, to effect the process. Anyone can have access to this piece of equipment, as it is inexpensive and simple to use. Photography is, thus, unique among the visual arts, in that virtually everyone «can make satisfactory images» and also to communicate and interpret the projected images (Jacobs 1981: 93). In a sense, photographs function as texts, constructing narratives by



documenting reality (Musello 1980; Burgin 1982). Photographs construct a «photographic discourse» (Bourgin 1982: 144), a unique «grammar» (Sontag 1979: 15).

In the spirit of the above discussion, during guided tours, the tourists narrate Athens photographically, by reflecting in their pictures the oral narrative of the guide. The tourists, thus, assimilate this narrative by reproducing it in a series of snapshots directed by the guide's narration. Whenever the bus passes in front of a famous site or monument, they photograph it.

Most tourists feel compelled to put the camera between themselves and whatever is remarkable that they encounter. Unsure of other responses, they take a picture. This gives shape to the experience: stop, take a photograph, move on.

(Sontag 1979: 10)

A large part of the tourists' limited time during guided tours in Athens is spent in photographing the city. While the guide describes, explains and shows to tourists the sites through the coach window, the latter are preoccupied with taking as many photographs as possible. In certain instances, tour guides themselves, offer advice on suitable photographic angles and subjects and provide interludes, during which passengers can capture a good view of the site. In most guided tours, there are three basic stops of ten minutes each -«small picture stops», as guides call them, in the Olympic Stadium, the Monument of the Unknown Soldier, Herod Atticus Theatre and Philopappus Hill (see fig. 5.2; 5.3). The last two sites provide tourists with the most clichèd and best known panoramic views of the Acropolis Hill and Athens (see fig. 5.4; 5.5). On arrival to those places, which are, most of the times, already packed with other tourists photographing the very same panoramic view of the Parthenon, the guide instructs them where to stand in order to take a good picture. However, the bus does not stop anywhere else during the tour, so tourists photograph the rest of the sites described by guides in motion. As a result, a large number of passengers complain about the lack of provision for taking pictures during the tour, blaming the tour organisers for substandard service. In one such incident, a group of Italian tourists asked their money back and wanted to get off the bus, as they thought that they were cheated. They insisted that they had understood that the bus would stop at every single site, something that, according to the coach driver, was impossible due to the traffic. In

another case, two ladies wanted to photograph the statue of Lord Byron which was hidden behind some tree branches, so they asked the driver to move the bus a bit forward; this was impossible, as there were other cars in front. When the driver explained the situation they became upset, arguing that they had just lost a good snapshot.

According to Edensor, the practice of photography fulfils the «desire to collect visual mnemonic aids to recall the scene» (1998: 130). Tourists use this kind of visual discourse not only as a way to narrate their experiences, but also as evidence that their journey has taken place (Reikvam 1993; Sontag 1979; Albers and James 1988; Cohen et al 1992; Crawshaw and Urry 1997). It is the «been there» statement that offers credibility to the tourists' trip; the photographs are the testimony of the visit. That the subject of their snap-shooting is recognisable is of primary interest to the tourists. Tourists, thus, search for all these sign-symbols of the host place that make it special, all these monuments and sites that make the landscape recognisable (Alber and James 1988; Reikvam 1993). «It is the visual images of places that give shape and meaning to the anticipation, experience, and memories of travelling» (Crawshaw and Urry 1997: 179). Tourists construct their travel through a sequence of mnemonic images: first, their memories of tourist sites are invoked through visual images of the place they have seen in advertisements and brochures before their trip. Second, during their visit, tourists construct their memories, by certifying and sealing the very same images in their own photographic productions (Albers and James 1988; Crawshaw and Urry 1997). The only difference between these two time sequences of photographed landscape (i.e. before and during/after the visit) is the change of the persons in the photographs. In the latter, the faces are familiar: these of family members and/or friends. Moreover, the meaning of a photograph emerges not only from the people posing in it, but by the linkage of these people to the objects - monuments- that surround them (Jacobs 1981). For instance, in Athens, the most popular place for tourist snapshots is the Acropolis. There, the tourists focus their camera on their friends, sisters, husbands who pose with the Parthenon at the background, or sitting on a stone next to a column or statue (see fig. 5.6; 5.7). The frenzy for taking a good and original picture of the Parthenon often leads to

misunderstandings and arguments similar with the ones described earlier. For instance, there was a case of a woman who literally jumped over the fence surrounding the monument to have a photograph of herself between the columns (see fig. 5.8). When the guard told her that her entrance in the fenced area was prohibited and asked her to come out, she told him angrily that she had paid 2000 drachmas to enter the Acropolis area and so she expected to «have at least the right to have a real picture of the Acropolis».<sup>19</sup>

To summarise, through the practice of photography, tourists portray a city of fragmented space, as represented in single snapshots of the Acropolis Hill, the Roman Agora, the statue of Lord Byron, the Olympic Stadium and anything else that could be easily narrated and remembered after the visit. As Berger (1977: 8, 10) argues, every image embodies a way of seeing:

We only see what we look at. To look is an act of choice. [...] Every time we look at a photograph, we are aware, however slightly, of the photographer selecting that sight from an infinity of other possible sights. This is true even in the most casual family snapshot. The photographer's way of seeing is reflected in his choice of subject.

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<sup>19</sup> This quotation is taken from my field notes of my participant observation of the guided tour on the Acropolis Hill, organised by Chat Tours (9-08-97).



Fig 5.1 A tour-guide (in blue shirt on the left), describing to visitors the Temple of Poseidon in Sounion.



Fig 5.2 Tourists photographing the Olympic Stadium.





Fig. 5.3 Tourists videotaping the Monument of the Unknown Soldier.



Fig. 5.4 The View of Parthenon from Philopappos Hill.



Fig. 5.5 The View of Athens from Herod Atticus theatre.



Fig. 5.6 Tourists posing in front of the Acropolis Hill view.



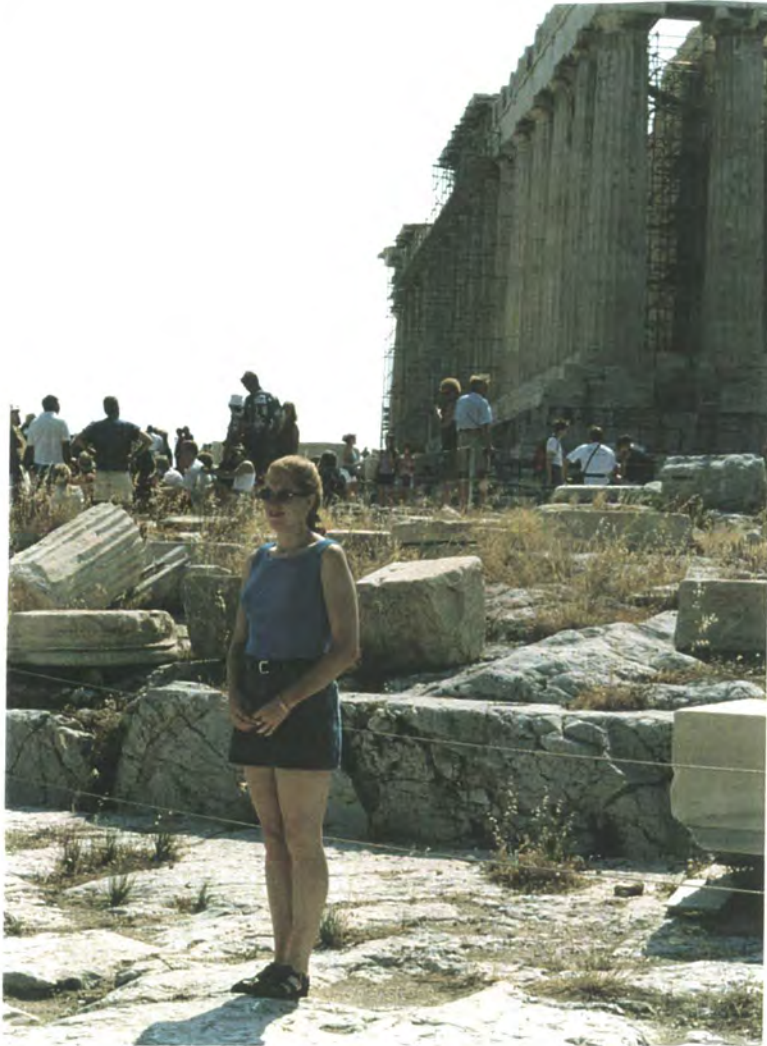


Fig. 5.7A tourist posing in front of the Parthenon.



Fig. 5.8 A tourist posing next to the columns of Parthenon.

**7 DAYS**

- 1. Panathenian Stadium**  
(At the entrance of the Stadium)  
09:00am - 11:00am - 1:00pm
- Harry Truman's Statue
- National Art Gallery
- The "Glass Room"
- El Venizelos Memorial
- Megaron Concert Hall
- Athens' Towers
- Supreme Court
- Ares Park, Athena's Statue  
King Constantine's Statue

- 10. National Archaeological Museum**  
(Corner of Platissia & Marnis Strs across from Museum)  
09:30am - 11:30am - 1:30pm

- 11. Athens Polytechnic Institute**
- 12. National Theatre**
- 13. Omonia Square**  
(Outside hotel "La Mirage")  
09:35am - 11:35am - 1:35pm
- Athens City Museum
- Kolokotroni Statue & Sq
- 16. National Historical Museum**  
Old Parliament Building  
09:45am - 11:45am - 1:45pm
- 17. Syntagma Square**  
(Corner of Kar. Servias & Stadio Str)  
09:45am - 11:45am - 1:45pm
- Metropolitan Cathedral  
Kapnikarea Byzantine Church,  
Downtown, Ploia Market, Ploia
- 18. St. Hademios Russian**  
Orthodox Church
- 19. St. Paul Anglican Church**

- 20. The National Park**  
(At the entrance from Amalass Ave.)  
10:00am - 12:00pm - 2:00pm
- (Former Royal Gardens)  
Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, Evzones
- 21. House of Palaimas**  
(Former Royal Palace)
- 22. Iliou Melathron**  
Neomimetic Museum
- 23. St. Dinn's Roman**  
Catholic Church
- 24. Central Bank**  
St. Demetrios

- 25. The Academy of Arts & Letters**  
Athens University Hall, Library
- 26. Municipal and Cultural**  
Center of Athens
- 27. Benaki Museum**
- 28. Byzantine Museum**
- 29. War Museum**  
Lycabettus Hill Fun-calls
- 30. Presidential Residence**  
(Former Royal Residence)

- 31. Zappo Congress & Exhibition Hall**
- 32. Lord Byron's Statue**
- 33. Temple of Olympic Zeus**
- 34. Hadrian's Arch, Plaka area**
- 35. Dionysus Theatre**  
Asclepeion Medical Center
- 36. Herod Atticus Odeon**

- 37. Acropolis**  
(Entrance to Archaeological site at Dion. Areopagitou Str.)  
10:35am - 12:35pm - 2:35pm
- Acropolis of Athens and Museum
- 38. Areopagus**
- 39. Pnyx**
- 40. Pnyx, The Hill of Democracy**
- 41. Ancient Agora, Temple of Hephaestus, Stoa of Attikus, Museum**  
Ploia Market, Kerameikos area  
Synagogue, Monastirak

**10:35am - 11:30am - 1:30pm**

**09:30am - 11:30am - 1:30pm**

**09:35am - 11:35am - 1:35pm**

**09:45am - 11:45am - 1:45pm**

**10:00am - 12:00pm - 2:00pm**

**09:30am - 11:30am - 1:30pm**

**09:35am - 11:35am - 1:35pm**

**09:45am - 11:45am - 1:45pm**

**10:00am - 12:00pm - 2:00pm**

**09:00am - 11:00am - 1:00pm**

**1.000€** **HAPPY TRAIN of Plaka**

See the old city of Athens. Plaka in a 50 min ride. Get your ticket from our guide and carry it to see the old city PLAKA. The Happy Train drives you throughout the narrow flagstone streets, with 500 year old traditional houses, churches, historical and archaeological sites, gift shops, restaurants, cafes, and many many more. The only leisurely way to see Plaka.

• See the old city of Athens. Plaka in a 50 min ride. Get your ticket from our guide and carry it to see the old city PLAKA. The Happy Train drives you throughout the narrow flagstone streets, with 500 year old traditional houses, churches, historical and archaeological sites, gift shops, restaurants, cafes, and many many more. The only leisurely way to see Plaka.

• **COMBINE ANY HOP IN SIGHTSEEING TOUR WITH THE HAPPY TRAIN**

**Hop in - Hop out and create your own tour at over 41 stops you decide how long to stay DAILY EVERY TWO HOURS**

- From 9:00 am to 4:00 pm
- Excursion fee to the Acropolis not included
- Save time: buy your ticket on any "Hop in Bus"
- "Hop in" ticket valid for 7 days
- "Hop in Athens Sightseeing Tour" is the only one that allows you to experience the magical sights of Athens and offers total choice and flexibility.
- You will see more than you expect.

Fig. 5.9 Hop-In Tours map.



## CHAPTER 6: WALKING AROUND ATHENS: PEDESTRIANS' BODILY NARRATIVES

[...] a city is sensed in motion (Lynch 1960: 107)

### 6.1. Introduction

So far, I have focused my analysis on tourists who visit Athens as part of their package holidays, experiencing the city through tour-guides narratives and bus windows. I have found that their opportunity to explore the city is limited from both the pre-determined, condensed itinerary and the rigid dispensation of time. Their sensory experience is restricted to gazing and listening, without the chance (and freedom) to interact with the cityscape, also using other senses. In this chapter, I focus on a dynamic tourism performance, that of walking as practised by pedestrian tourists. Metaphorically speaking, walking offers tourists the opportunity to experience the city with all senses. In this respect, it is:

an activity central to tourism [where] landscapes are criss-crossed and imprinted with the bodily presence of the visitor, and symbolic sites are negotiated via various paths.

(Edensor 1998: 105)

As I show below, while walking, tourists have the chance to gaze sights and people, hear real noises -car and human traffic, smell city odours and fumes, touch and be touched, talk to other pedestrians, locals and foreigners and, most important, to use their own body as a vehicle for navigating and exploring the city and its everyday rhythms. Quoting Michel de Certeau (1984: 93), walking is the «elementary form of experience of the city»; its practitioners -in this case tourists- «are walkers whose bodies follow the thicks and thins of an urban 'text' they write», thus composing a «manifold story». This story «begins on ground level with footsteps» (De Certeau 1984: 97) that talk about paths formed by pedestrian body movements. Here I analyse the paths followed, as well as the bodily movement of tourists within the Athenian urban structure.<sup>1</sup> My main argument is that through this bodily activity the city is

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<sup>1</sup> I have to clarify that tourists in organised tours also have a certain level of body interaction with the city. The difference between them and the tourists whom I refer to in this chapter is that the former are told what to see, follow the instructions of their guide or tour-leader and walk on prescribed paths. Consequently, they have little opportunity to move freely in the urban space.

confronted as a series of fragments and trajectories. Once more, the city is experienced as fragmented, this time not in time but in space. The urban space is fragmented into regions, dividing the city into hereness or thereeness. The tourist decides the path s/he follows on the grounds of this dialectic division. In contrast with tourists in organised tours, walking tourists may enjoy more freedom to decide where to go and what to see, but as shown below, there is still a high level of predictability of the paths followed and the sites gazed upon.

Based on these arguments, I then examine the relationship between the movement of tourists in the urban space and the product of this activity: the visual (walk through) images of the city as experienced, perceived and narrated by the tourists. In brief, I analyse tourists' spatial narratives: what it means for them to «walk around the city». What I actually did was to follow them in their walk around Athens: up and down the Acropolis, inside and outside the tourist areas and anywhere else they go. In this respect, I shared with them the same spatial experience, as well as activity; we were all practitioners of the city, walkers.

## **6.2. A Few words on methods**

As already mentioned in previous chapters (see preface and chapter 5), my data are mainly based on both in-depths interviews with tourists and participant observation. While researching guided tours, for instance, I took part in coach tours, sitting next to tourists, talking with them and taking part in their activities. While researching the topics discussed in this chapter, on the other hand, I was mainly an observant, following tourists around the city. I wanted to record the paths they were taking and how they were mapping the urban space. So, this part of the research was based on bodily movement, not only of tourists, but also mine. I was walking too, behind them as their shadow. The inspiration for such an approach came from the book *Suite Vénitienne/Please Follow Me*, by the photographer Sophie Calle and Jean Baudrillard. In that book, the former author follows a total stranger in Venice and photographs him in all his daily activities. Characteristically, in the preface of the book she wrote that she followed strangers on the street without them knowing, just for the mere pleasure of following them (Calle and Baudrillard 1983). My decision to use the same method -

if I could call it such- was based on Baudrillard's comments about Calle's project. I was actually inspired by a sentence of his:

[...] the idea that people's lives are haphazard paths that have no meaning and lead nowhere and which, for that very reason, are «curious».

(Calle and Baudrillard 1983: 76)

In my case, however, I followed strangers (tourists) with a particular intention: to understand their body movements within Athens.<sup>2</sup> My decision to follow total strangers and not tourists whom I had previously interviewed and, therefore, knew, was based on the fact that the former would move freely in the city, read the map or ask other passers-by about which paths they should follow. In the few cases where I asked some of my interviewees to join them in their walk, I realised that, after a while, I was the one choosing the path to take, since I was asked to do so. For them, I was not as much a “researcher” and “interviewer”, as a local resident, knowing the ‘thicks and thins’ of the city. As my intention was to draw a map of the paths genuinely followed by tourists, I decided to be the «shadow» instead of the pathfinder or fellow-traveller. In Baudrillard's words:

To follow the other is to take charge of his itinerary; it is to watch over his life without him knowing it. It is to play the mythical role of the shadow [...].

(Calle and Baudrillard 1983: 82)

Then, to verify the credibility of findings derived from the above method, I included some relevant questions in my interviews with tourists. I interviewed independent travellers who did not participate in any kind of tours of Athens. The interviews took place in different places in Athens, in hotel lounges, alleys and roof gardens -even in a swimming pool, in front of the National Archaeological Museum, on the top of the Acropolis Hill, in public squares and parks, in the metro, in cafes and restaurants. I asked my interviewees about the routes they had followed within the city, the sites and monuments they decided to visit and the reason for their choices, as well as questions about their perception and visualisation of the cityscape (see figure 6.8).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The tourists I followed were selected in random. I met them in public squares where they were sitting in benches, reading a guidebook, or discussing about possible paths to take. In fact, that was the only independent variable I used for selecting a sample. Then, I simply followed them...

<sup>3</sup> Figure 6.8 portrays in the form of a map the routes, stops, and sites of the tourist experience in Athens.

Finally, my method of following strangers is supplemented by photographs taken during the participant observation. They present Athens as walked and gazed by fellow-strollers. They show, therefore, a city in motion.

### **6.3. The body and the city**

The importance of walking as part of the tourist experience lies on the opportunity this offers to tourists to visualise the urban space through a personal and unique imagery. Far beyond guided tours and guidebooks, walking tourists use their own body as the determinant for this experience. In this case, the body is the bond between the world and the subject, between the city and the tourist (Merleau-Ponty 1962; Tilley 1994). Merleau-Ponty, in particular, by stating that «to be a body, is to be tied to a certain world», articulates the idea that the body constitutes a way of perceiving and understanding the external world, physical as well as social and spatial (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 148). Following Lefebvre's approach, there is a direct relationship between body and space, since the former is not only deployed in space but is itself space (Lefebvre 1974; Pile 1996; Soja 1996).

Before *producing* effects in the material realm (tools and objects), before *producing itself* by drawing nourishment from the realm, and before *reproducing itself* by generating other bodies, each living body is space and has space: it produces itself in space and it also produces that space.

(Lefebvre 1974: 170)

In like manner, Richard Sennett (1994: 370) in his book *Flesh and Stone* -a history of the relationship between the body and the city- writes that «urban spaces take form largely from the ways people experience their own bodies», whereas Tilley (1994: 16), in his *Phenomenology of Landscape*, maintains that the «experience of space is grounded in the body itself; its capacities and potentialities for movement». All of the above quotations demonstrate the important role that the body plays in the experience of space. In particular, as shown in the latter citation, space is perceived as a dynamic experience derived from the ability to move (Tuan 1977). Actually, Tilley (1994) refers to a «somatic space», which allows the existence of all possible sensory experiences and bodily movements.

Space opens out before the body and is differentiable in terms of front/back; left/right; vertical/ horizontal; top/ bottom; within reach/ beyond reach; within hearing/ beyond hearing; within sight/ beyond sight; here/ there polarities.

(Tilley 1994: 16)

The body, thus, is not a reified unity in static condition, but a restless organism, moving and changing positions within space. Specifically, Merleau-Ponty (1962: 268) argues that «there is no movement without a moving body»; that is, thus, a dynamic phenomenon.

Following this discussion further, the moving body, by changing positions in space, creates a certain spatial imagery. The body writes a kind of spatial story, narrating its motion. In this respect, referring to what was already mentioned in the introduction, walking, as a kinetic activity of the body, creates an urban text too- by, first, weaving places together and then by orientating the apprehension of the landscape crossed<sup>4</sup>. Since walking is an individual activity, performed by a particular body, the texts created by walking are unique, describing daily passages through the landscape as biographical encounters of pedestrian practitioners (walkers).

Concerning the Athenian landscape, in particular, it seems that the biographical encounters of pedestrian tourists narrate particular spatial stories. Despite expectations of uniqueness in each story, supposedly biographical and, therefore, individual, the majority of these stories narrate similar -if not identical- bodily movements. Specifically, there are two main spatial texts of the moving body in Athens. First, there is the story about the experience of the body in relation to the object, the city. This is the visualisation of a fragmented city divided into inside and outside spaces. The second story is about bodily movement *per se*. This looks more like a map than a text, drawn over all walked through places. Metaphorically speaking, this second story is a version of «Walking in the Woods», where the hero -in this case the tourist- follows paths particularly suited to avoid encounter with possible danger (the wolf for the Little Redhood, the 'real' city in this story).

#### 6.4. Walking around the city: The bodily experience of the fragmentation of urban space

Concentrating on the first story, that of the fragmented city as narrated and experienced by pedestrian tourists, there is an explanation for such spatial perception. De Certeau (1984), for instance, argues that the practice of walking *per se* is selective, as it is rather impossible for an one-to-one correspondence between space and its walkthrough spatial stories to exist.<sup>5</sup> Walking, as a spatial activity, selects and fragments space by skipping over links and omitting whole parts of it. This omission results in the creation of an elliptic space, which may be compared with the linguistic phenomenon of asyndeton.<sup>6</sup> According to this argument, there is no continuity in space, space is, instead, «transformed into enlarged singularities and separate islands» (De Certeau 1984: 101). From this perspective, every walk fragments space into singularities and distracts its spatial continuity.

Following de Certeau's approach, I argue that the activity of walking in Athens is selective, choosing particular paths and districts whilst avoiding others. As discovered during the fieldwork, tourists perceive Athens as divided into two separate islands: the tourist district and the rest of the city. The Athenian urban space is, thus, experienced in discontinuous fragments, with no 'conjunctive loci' to connect separate localities.<sup>7</sup> In fact, the city is perceived as a contrast of inside and outside spaces. Pedestrian tourists orient themselves within these spatial divisions in accordance with their bodily position. This dialectic between outside and inside spaces has, as Gaston Bachelard (1964: 211) concludes, «the sharpness of the dialectics of yes and no». Due to this dualism, the city is confined into a topography of dichotomies and trajectories, expressing body positions in forms as: «I am in IT or above IT or below IT, I am outside IT, I am enclosed or I am exposed» (Cullen 1968: 29).

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<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, landscape as described by Cosgrove and Daniels (1988) is mainly a 'cultural image' which may be read as any other text.

<sup>5</sup> See also Downs and Stea, 1977: 100.

<sup>6</sup> In linguistics, asyndeton is used to express «the suppression of linking words such as conjunctions and adverbs, either within a sentence or between sentences» creating a 'less' as well as opening «gaps in the spatial continuum, and retaining only selected parts of it that amount almost to relics» (see De Certeau 1984: 101).

For the moving person (the pedestrian tourist), the city becomes a plastic experience of motion through a sequence of exposures (outside spaces) and enclosures (inside spaces). In this respect, the walker «constitutes, in relation to his position, a near and a far, a 'here' and 'there'» (De Certeau 1984: 99). By definition, enclosed (inside) spaces embody the idea of hereness, whereas looking outside from them automatically creates a sense of thereeness (Cullen 1961; Bachelard 1964; Jakle 1987). This duality of inside-outside, enclosure-exlosure, here-there may be referred to a sense of the familiar and unfamiliar, or, as Relph (1976) argues, to the concept of home, where everything beyond there is outside.

Referring to Athens, the visualisation of the city as two separate islands is underpinned by this dualism of hereness and thereeness. Walking within enclosed spaces (tourist areas), the tourist reads the urban setting as a contrast between familiar, recognisable places and places out of reach and unknown.

T5.2 (*Kristin, 23 y.o., from South Africa, Students' Inn -Plaka, 17-07-1998*)  
We want to explore the city; to walk around.

(*Liz, 20 y.o., from California, Students' Inn -Plaka, 10-07-1998*)  
I prefer to walk; it's a way to see around the city.

Someone might expect that both interviewees, while saying 'walking around the city' were referring to the whole city that extends far beyond the tourist areas. However, throughout both interviews it was evident that the walking and knowing was confined to the latter areas, as the intention of the interviewees was to visit and gaze upon particular sites and monuments, located well within the boundaries of the tourist zone. They, along with many other tourists I interviewed, spoke of the city as being a miniature of the whole; their narratives concerned the enclosed tourist areas in which they were.<sup>8</sup> Following Jakle, the sense of enclosure is generated from within, rather than from without, as the «eye reacts to the fact of being surrounded by wall surfaces» (1987: 55). In addition, the preposition 'around' by itself defines an enclosed space,

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<sup>7</sup> The concept of *conjunctive loci* is used by De Certeau to refer to spatial points which create a unifying image of space by connecting places together (see De Certeau 1984: 101).

<sup>8</sup> Most of the interviews related to tourists' walking experiences were held in and around the tourist area of Plaka.

situated within boundaries. As synonymous to 'round something', it describes a wide, but abstract, space, that takes a cyclic form, entrapped inside boundaries.<sup>9</sup>

The movement of the eye, [within enclosures] unlike with linear spaces, is not directed away from the viewer, but 'around'.

(Curran 1983: 112)

Besides, it seems that people not familiar enough with the built environment hold the least comprehensive mental pictures of it, thus quite often tending to visualise it as circular (Gatty 1958; Pocock 1972; Downs and Stea 1977).

### **6.5. The experience of being inside enclosed spaces**

In Athens, such an enclosed (cyclic) place is the Plaka tourist district situated in the very centre of the city, just under the Acropolis Hill.<sup>10</sup> As the two maps in chapter four (see fig. 4.1; 4.2) show, Plaka has the character of an enclosure, surrounded by avenues and large, busy streets (Amalias Avenue, Ermou Street, Sygrou Avenue, Athenas Street). Compared with the rest of the city centre, Plaka is the district with the best-preserved neo-classical buildings, picturesque narrow streets, pediments, small alleys and squares.<sup>11</sup> With the exception of a few residential streets, Plaka is characterised by its large number of tourist amenities (tourist shops, travel agents, hotels, tavernas and cafeterias). It is a 'tourist's mecca', as Faubion describes it, «rich with restaurants and tourist shops and the ruins of the agora» (1993: 27). Compared with the rest of the city, this juxtaposition of past and present makes Plaka something of an exception:

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<sup>9</sup> According to Norberg-Schultz, space, as a system of topological relations, is denoted by prepositions which represent its abstract essence. In his words: «In our daily life we hardly talk about 'space', but about things that are 'over' or 'under', 'before' or 'behind' each other, or we use prepositions such as 'at', 'in', 'within', 'on', 'upon', 'to', 'from', 'along', 'next'» (ibid. 1980: 16)

<sup>10</sup> I use the word *place* instead of *space* because, as Yi-Fu Tuan points out, the idea of space refers to wide-open areas, implying unhindered movement, whereas the idea of place concerns enclosure. «Enclosed and humanised space is place [...] compared to space, place is a calm centre of established values» (see Yi-Fu Tuan 1977:12).

<sup>11</sup> The neo-classical architecture was introduced to Athens in the late nineteenth - early twentieth century by German architects who were influenced and inspired by the ancient Greek ideals of architecture (see chapter 3). Their main characteristic was their façade with columns and cornices reminding monuments of ancient Athens.



a sociohistorical palimpsest, a stratigraphic tracery, not of everything that Athens was, but perhaps of everything that, in a rather more felicitous world, it might have been.

(Faubion 1993: 27)

For tourists, particularly, Plaka represents the authentic urban identity of Athens, verifying their expectations, since it is contextualised as being of particular interest and significance for them, by tourist guides, travel books and all other sort of markers (Edensor 1998; see also chapters 4 & 5). The rest of the city centre, on the other hand is visualised as a grotesque cacophony; tourists' discomfort in their confrontation with the unfamiliar is, thus, maximised. As a consequence, tourists prefer to stay within the Plaka district, isolating themselves from anything outside its boundary lines (see fig.6.1; 6.2).

T4.1 (*Jeanne, 27 y.o., from South Africa, Students' Inn, 10-07-98*)

I found that here in Plaka it's being really very good. There're very nice little restaurants looking towards the Acropolis and that's being very nice. I've enjoyed it. My first impression of Athens wasn't very favourable, because we took the bus and the bus goes to ... I think to the port and it's not a marvellous area. That's my first impression of Athens... mmm so I was a bit negative about it and I felt, you know, that it's a big city like any other, not particularly attractive. The Plaka is *fantastic*, I enjoyed it, it's really nice and it's giving me a nice base to move, to go and see things, to wander around. It's nice to be here, it's so atmospheric... that's obviously quite ideal to the tourists.

T5.1 (*Andrea, 25 y.o., from New Zealand, Kidatheneon Square - Plaka, 14-07-98*)

I came here to Plaka and I got surprised 'cause I was expecting it to be really really bad. It's not. It's not even half as bad as what people said. It's quite nice actually. It's nice walking through the little streets, and looking at the buildings and it's just the past everywhere.

Tourists are characteristically cut off from social contact with local residents and are shielded from potentially offensive sights, sounds and smells. They visualise Athens by excluding «extraneous chaotic elements [reducing] visual and functional forms to a few key images» (Rojek 1995: 62). The main characteristic of an enclosed space as Plaka is the possibility to gaze around. From large window displays and restaurants' menus to monuments and sites, the internal environment of Plaka directs the tourists' gaze away from the surroundings (outside) of the enclosure. It would be misleading, however, to argue that Plaka is exclusively an enclosed space, specifically designed for

tourists. In fact, it looks more like a heterogeneous tourist space, as Edensor (1998: 54) would call it, «organised as a cellular structure with numerous openings and passages» and providing «a meeting point of several communities». Along with the tourist facilities listed above, there are business centres and offices, schools, churches, administrative and government buildings, brothels, local markets and bazaars, hawkers, beggars, second-hand shops, banks and transport termini. «This diversity contains a host of micro spaces: corners and niches, awnings and offshots» (Edensor 1998: 55). The body, therefore, cannot keep its movement on a straight line. Walking cannot be a seamless, uninterrupted journey; it is, rather, a sequence of interruptions and encounters that disrupt smooth passage. Quite a few times, hawkers selling hand-made jewellery and clothes stop tourists and attempt to convince them to buy some of their goods (see fig. 6.3). The most usual disruption, however, is the collision with other people, mainly other tourists.

[...] past the discos, the handbag shops, the rows of bamboo chairs; slowly, out of every bending lane, in waves of colour and sound, came tourists in striped sneakers, fanning themselves with postcards.

(De Lillo 1983: 3)

The notion that there is a vast number of tourists in Plaka, gives them a certain feeling of security and freedom of movement. Seeing other tourists around them, walking in the same streets, shopping, eating, sitting at the same places makes Plaka a relaxed tourist space.

T5.1 (*Saree, 22 y.o., from New Zealand, Kidatheneon Square -Plaka, 14-07-98*)  
I feel pretty safe here 'cause, I think, in this area there're so many travellers everywhere, entirely travellers and I've seen so many.

T2.2 (*Barbara, 23 y.o., from U.K. , National Archeological Museum, 12-09-97*)  
we try to stick to the tourist areas, they seem safer for the tourists who come to Athens.

Even if the heterogeneous character of Plaka would positively entail a level of interaction among different groups of people, tourists seem to somehow ignore the existence of local population. When asked if they have met any locals, they replied that the only Athenians they came in touch with were those working in the tourist sector

(waiters, receptionists, shop assistants, etc.). Few tourists also had short chats with local passers-by when lost in the city and asked for help.

T6.1 (*Nick, 34 y.o., from U.K., Students' Inn, 24-07-98*)

I had a map and lots of older men helped me. They said «oh can I help you?» so they showed me where to go, which was good.

In general, however, they walk up and down the main streets of Plaka, stopping for a while at shops and restaurants, with little interaction with anyone but their fellow-travellers. Their bodily movement is often like a 'brisk march' interspersed with intervals, constituting a «segmented stop-start collective performance» (Edensor 1998: 50).

## **6.6. Vistas and Panoramic Views**

### **6.6.1. Looking towards the Acropolis Hill**

Plaka is popular among tourists not only for its 'picturesque' character and tourist facilities, but also for its location, since it contains most of the monuments and archaeological sites tourists want to visit in Athens. As mentioned earlier, Plaka is situated under the Acropolis Hill and surrounded by the Ancient Agora, the Roman Forum, Thesion and the Temple of Zeus. In fact, these monuments function as landmarks, as «memorable graphic symbols that capture the identity of the place» (Downs and Stea 1977: 20).

If the Eiffel Tower is the major landmark in Paris and the Statue of Liberty in New York, Parthenon is the key graphic symbol of Athens. Due to its clear visibility even from a long distance, it functions as a point of reference (see fig. 6.4).

Even for the uninformed, Athens is surprisingly navigable. The Acropolis and Likavittos are always available as references.

(Faubion 1993: 70)

As Lynch (1960: 78) points out:

Landmarks become more easily identifiable, more likely to be chosen as significant, if they have a clear form; if they contrast with their background; and if there is some prominence of spatial location.

Stressing the importance of seeing objects against their background, Tadahiko Higuchi (1983) argues that people get a visual sense of space not due to the object they look at but to its background.

As a landmark, Parthenon is definitely unique, set against its background of the entire city. Its height makes it visible and recognisable from a long distance.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, the «figure-background contrast», with Parthenon standing in a vertical position and the city in a flat, horizontal position, gives a sense of broadened perspective, of an «expanding vista» (Lynch 1960: 79; Jakle 1987: 43).<sup>13</sup> The view is given both depth and vertical dimension by the disclosed slope of the Acropolis Hill. As there is no other place or building as high as the Acropolis Hill in the city centre, there is no obstacle to hide Parthenon from people's gaze. It is visible from every corner and street in and around Plaka (see fig. 6.5).

The ruins [of Parthenon] stood above the hissing traffic like some monument to doomed expectations. I'd turn a corner, adjusting my stride among jostling shoppers, there it was, the tanned marble riding its mass of limestone and schist. I'd dodge a bus, there it was, at the edge of my field of vision.

(De Lillo 1982: 3)

According to Lynch (1960), people unfamiliar with the city use landmarks visible from many different positions, like Parthenon, in order to navigate within the cityscape. They use landmarks as points of reference in organising the city and selecting the paths they would follow. On the contrary, people familiar with the city (the locals) use more advanced and complicated ways of orientation, such as addresses, smaller landmarks and short cuts.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> The idea of the clear visibility of Athens from everywhere around the city centre was first presented by Cleanthes and Schaubert, two architects employed by the first King of Greece, Otho, in 1833. They designed the first urban plan of Athens with Acropolis as the key landmark. According to this plan, Acropolis had to be visible from a long distance, as far as Kifissias Avenue. For this reason all newly built houses were up to three floors. This same idea was followed by all other urban planners coming to the present day. In Athens there are very few skyscrapers which have in maximum forty floors.

<sup>13</sup> Vistas are «views conspicuously bounded or enframed» (see Jakle 1987: 39).

<sup>14</sup> For Athenians -including myself- Parthenon is more like a historical monument and a national identity symbol than a landmark.

### 6.6.2. Gazing upon the city from Acropolis Hill

Parthenon does not only function as a point of reference to cue movement within the urban space, but it is the main objective of someone's visit to Athens. Most tourist movement is either towards, or away from, this monument, up and down the Acropolis Hill. When tourists are on the top of the hill, however, they stop being in motion; they gaze and photograph Parthenon and the city below. Jakle (1987) argues that landmarks such as Parthenon, are characterised by inertia, as no activity is actually or even potentially focused on them. Tourists are positioned in lines, one next to the other, with their cameras focused first on Parthenon and then on the city. It is one of the few occasions during their journey that tourists can see the city in its full size and to experience its immensity. Apparently, it is an unexpected image, very different from the one tourists have imagined or/and read in guidebooks. As shown earlier, their experience of the city is confined in and around the tourist district of Plaka. They walk within the boundaries of an enclosure with little interaction with the outside space. They visualise the city into fragments of inside-outside. This same dualism is still present in this panoramic image of Athens, manifesting itself as a dialectic of hereness and thereeness, of familiar and unfamiliar space. On the one hand, there is the Acropolis, a place where, metaphorically speaking, tourists feel they belong. They know it before even visiting it. They recognise its structure, its architecture and its history; it has become part of them. On the other hand, there is the unfamiliar, for some even hostile, city. This is not conceived as part of Athens as they know it through guidebooks and other markers. For them, it stands 'down there'.

T2.2 (*Cassie and Barbara, 23 y.o., from Coventry, National Archaeological Museum, 12-09-97*)

*Barbara:* There's the Acropolis... There's something very *strange* about that view 'cause it's really very ugly when you start looking at it and then it gets really lovely.

*Cassie:* You are just away from all the hustle. You just watch down on it and it's a really nice feeling. I like that.

Whenever asked to describe their impressions about the view of the city from the Acropolis, tourists expressed their frustration and annoyance.

T7.1 (*Fiona, 32 y.o., from Manchester, Acropolis, 21-07-98*)

Q: How do you find Athens from up here?

A: Very noisy, very hot, crowded, mmm, difficult to imagine how you you may find the way around 'cause it's so busy, yeah.

T6.2 (*Penny, 21 y.o., from New Zealand, Aretousa Hotel, 24-07-98*)

When I was on the Parthenon, watching the city for about two minutes, suddenly I felt the smog being all over the place, coming up to the hill.

Another interviewee, this time gazing upon Athens from the roof garden of a central hotel, described it as follows:

T7.2 (*Nicole, 38 y.o., from London, Dorian Inn Hotel, 21-07-98*)

[...] misplanned, colourless, polluted and you want to get out of it as soon as possible.

Then, comparing Athens with London, she concluded that:

There's a lot of greenery in London, especially, there're different areas, whereas here it seems to be all the same, wherever you look around.

Experiencing Athens from the Acropolis, tourists, for the first time, confront a city as real as any other city, far beyond their unrealistic expectations. Even if situated below and far from Acropolis, it is still noisy, smelly and, obviously, visible. Some tourists respond by wishing it disappeared; determined to remove as much as they can of its presence from the urban setting.

T4.2 (*Jennifer, 24 y.o., from New Jersey, Students' Inn, 10-07-98*)

Q: What is your impression of Acropolis?

*Jennifer:* I wasn't disappointed at all and I really very liked it, the Acropolis, but one thing I didn't like so much when I was up there...I'd like to, I don't know, one day, for like an hour or something, all the new age could stop, you know, and no-one drove and no more aeroplanes around or anything .. you see, to feel how it's like you know just the SILENCE that must have been 'cause of the lack of the machinery. That's the one thing that distracted me.

So far, I have referred to the visualisation of the city as gazed from within enclosed spaces, from both a vertical (panorama) and horizontal (vista) view. As revealed from interviews and participant observation, tourists perceive Athens as a divided in inside and outside spaces. They experience the city mainly from inside enclosed spaces, feeling secure, whilst looking towards an unknown outside space from a distance. As

Cullen (1961: 183) points out, «man-made enclosure, if only the simplest kind, divides the environment into HERE and THERE».

### **6.7. Walking in the Woods: The experience of being outside enclosed spaces**

However, there are also cases when tourists cross the boundary lines of enclosures and experience the outside space. Tourists may want to walk beyond enclaves for many reasons. For instance, not all monuments and sites are within tourist areas: some are located in other places of the city, as well. Tourists, therefore, have to cross boundaries and walk into the real big city. The sensation of walking in that part of the city is different from what already experienced within enclosures. If the latter is characterised by a quiet and slow motion, the former is definitely identified by its noise and speed «of impersonal communication which comes and goes» (Cullen 1961: 25). On the one hand, there is the space of the tourist zone, particularly constructed for legs and bodies, with pediments, squares and courtyards. On the other hand, there is the surrounding city, with its immensity of roads and avenues, designed for wheels and motorists. Tourists walking outside enclaves have to come to terms with cars and traffic (see fig. 6.6; 6.7) They have to take into consideration all the impediments that obstruct walking in the city with busy, unruly traffic: looking at the right direction, stopping at traffic lights, taking extra care while crossing a street.

T6.1 (*Nick, 34 y.o., from U.K., Students' Inn, 24-07-98*)

The *main* city is not a very nice place to hung around. It's safe, it's all very safe to me, but it's just that I don't like it... too noisy... I've been annoyed by all the motorbikes in the pavement and, I think, the biggest danger in Athens is getting run over, and I come from a country where they drive on the left but that costs me a lot. This is very hard work to be honest. I think it's very bad. I feel in danger getting it by a car all the time. I think they shouldn't have so many motorbikes and cars.

T6.2 (*Penny, 21 y.o., from New Zealand, Aretousa Hotel, 24-07-98*)

*Q*: Did you like the main part of the city?

*Penny*: Yeah, it was good, I liked it, but the traffic was really bad in some parts of the city. «Oh I want to go there» but then I thought it's difficult with the traffic.

T2.2 (*Anna, 23 y.o., from Coventry, National Archaeological Museum, 12-09-97*)

There's no sections for the pedestrians. It's just traffic everywhere.

Their refuge from the real city's dangers is always their return to the enclosure. For Cullen (1961), the notion of returning arises from the nature of the enclave: the latter simulates home. He argues that enclaves:

set apart from the hurly-burly of traffic, it yet has the advantage of commanding the scene from a position of safety and strength [...]. This is the end product of traffic, this is the place to which traffic brings you.

(Cullen 1961: 25)

Tourists feel secure by coming back to their familiar tourist district which is pedestrianised and, therefore, safe for strollers.

T5.1 (*Andrea, 25 y.o., from New Zealand, Kidatheneon Square, 14-07-98*)

*Andrea*: I like the little streets

*Q*: You mean down here in Plaka?

*Andrea*: Yeah and that's quite nice, this road here, I mean, there's no traffic so I don't have to worry about getting run over all the time.

Besides traffic and cars, tourists walking outside enclaves have to come to terms with orienting themselves within the immense and densely built urban space. Tourists who arrive at a new city attempt to navigate themselves in it and the places that comprise it through a process of way-finding. They start with a general notion of spatial structure of the city, searching for recognisable landmarks and staying around them. Then, they begin their exploration by choosing paths further beyond them. In fact, they come with some directions and blue prints of routes and traverses, since tourism as an activity is rarely totally unplanned (Jakle 1987). They follow, thus, «potential lines of movement through the urban complex» as shown in published maps and guidebooks (Lynch 1960: 95).

For someone not familiar with the city centre of Athens, finding his/her way around might seem very difficult. For instance, some tourists I interviewed in the Acropolis Hill while they were gazing on the city, admitted that they could not imagine how someone could walk around Athens without getting lost (see above).

However, for tourists who walked in the city centre there was no such difficulty, as Athens is planned on an orthogonal grid major avenues and streets.



*(Allison, 33 y.o., from Australia, during a guided tour in Athens, 1-09-97)*

I know that all streets and avenues here are either parallel or orthogonal. If you know one street you could easily find the others. Yesterday, when we arrived at the hotel in the afternoon, I went for a short walk around Plaka and then to Syntagma Square and Kolonaki area. It wasn't difficult at all to find the way back to the hotel.<sup>15</sup>

Let me take the example of the paths someone can take to go from Plaka to the National Archaeological Museum. As shown in the map (fig. 4.1), one can either follow Panepistimiou or Academias Avenue to Omonia Square, then to turn right in Patisision Avenue. Most tourists I followed, preferred the first choice, which was actually the one suggested by guidebooks, maybe because Panepistimiou Avenue is faced by some imposing neo-classical buildings. Tourists can easily find their way there, as there are major landmarks to orient them around the area. Their way to the National Museum starts from Syntagma Square. They then pass in front of the three neo-classical buildings, the Old Academy, University and National Library, afterwards arriving to Omonia Square. Tourists move from landmark to landmark in an uninterrupted succession. These landmarks guarantee that it is almost impossible for tourists to get, so some of the tourists do not even use maps during their walk. For example, one couple I joined in their journey to Panepistimiou street told me that they did not need any map instructions about where to go, as they knew that the place they were looking for (an antique shop) was in an arcade opposite the Old Academy. Jakle (1987) claims that only people who feel disoriented return to the published map or request new information from other sources.

In general, tourists use their own personal cognitive mapping to visualise the city. Their cognitive maps are mainly characterised by a high level of subtraction and the elimination of urban space into few paths.<sup>16</sup> According to Downs and Steas (1977), cognitive mapping is, of necessity, selective. There is no such thing as one-to-one correspondence between the spatial environment and its cognitive representation. The

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<sup>15</sup> Syntagma Square is located next to the Plaka district, whereas the Kolonaki district is fifteen minutes walk.

<sup>16</sup> By the term cognitive mapping I refer to «the abstraction covering those cognitive or mental abilities that enable us to collect, organise, recall, and manipulate information about the spatial environment (see Downs and Stea 1977: 6)

same authors also claim that people mentally map space in a way totally different from its real image.

Indeed, if one were capable of entering into the head of a person, one would discover a cognitive representation the likes of which are only found in the realm of science fiction. Shapes and sizes are distorted; spatial relationships are altered; in some areas, detail is impoverished while in others it is augmented.

(Downs and Stea 1977: 100)

To summarise, mental pictures gathered from the urban space are synthesised as the tourists' personal geography. Landmarks, by forming distinctive place configurations, are mapped into mental schemata, to orient tourists by telling them where they are within an array of infinite locational possibilities. Such mental cartography serves to identify at various geographical scales the important locations for the gazing at hand, to show how all these relate spatially. Cognitive mapping keeps tourists oriented to their urban surroundings, so that movement becomes purposive. It helps them to link origins and destinations, keep directions and estimate distances.

### **6.8. Conclusion: Being Lost in Athens**

In this chapter, I focused my discussion on the walking practice and experience of tourists in Athens. I have outlined the ways they visualise the city depending on their different bodily positions, emanating from moving through space. My first conclusion, drawn from tourists spatial mobility, was the division of urban space into contrasting categories. The city was divided into enclosed and exposed places, inside and outside spaces characterised by a sense of hereness and thereeness, respectively. This condition was strengthened by the bodily position of tourists while gazing upon the city. Specifically, Athens was looked either from vistas or panoramas, from within or without boundaries. In short, as tourist movements varied, the boundary line between here and there changed. It seems that to some degree, people carry with them both spatial categories (here and there) while in motion. From a phenomenological perspective, there is a naturally conditioned insideness, carried by the individual wherever s/he goes. This creates a condition of constant distantiation of the self (body) from the object (city) (Merleau-Ponty 1962; Pile 1996).

Moreover, the division of space into two separate islands strengthens the need of tourists to stay within enclosed tourist spaces. They feel safe from any hustle caused by the outer cityscape. Many tourists know by heart the 'thicks and thins' of enclosed tourist spaces, their urban structure, as they have read about it in guidebooks and other forms of tourist literature, something that gives them a familiar feeling. In addition, enclosed tourist spaces embody major landmarks, visible from a long distance. Tourists, therefore, rarely find themselves lost. What is missing from their walkabout journey in Athens is unpredictability and exploration; an accidental encounter with new places and districts of the city. Their body follows prescribed paths, leading from one landmark to another. The next step in space is more or less known, it is the next landmark. In a sense, their 'place ballets' (Edensor 1998) are like those of tourists in guided tours. Both groups hold an abstracted image of Athens, based on fragmentation and readings of key graphic symbols.

As Patricia Storace (1996) acknowledges her book *Dinner with Persephone*, the only way to get to know Athens is to leave oneself lost in the city, following little streets and corners.

*(Susan, 42 years old, from New Jersey, Athens Metro, 23-08-98)*

What I like in Athens is the possibility to find different districts and different cultures. It is so nice the feeling of walking in little streets and suddenly to see in front of you an unexpected scene of local market or children playing on the street.



Fig. 6.1 Tourists walking in the pedestrian zone of Plaka.



Fig. 6.2 Some tourists sitting in cafes, while others walking around the main square of Plaka.





Fig. 6.3 Street vendors selling traditional handcrafts to tourists in Plaka.



Fig. 6.4 The Acropolis Hill as seen from a distance.



Fig. 6.5 The Acropolis Hill as seen from Plaka.





Fig. 6.6 Tourists crossing Athenas Street near the Flea Market area.



Fig. 6.7 Car traffic in front of the Temple of Zeus in the centre of Athens.

**Chapter 6: Walking around**

**Figure 6.8: Map of tourist routes followed by tourists (seasons). A narrow zone between eclipses) is explored, where**





## CHAPTER 7: IMAGINING, EXPERIENCING AND GAZING MODERN ATHENS

### 7.1. Introduction

For the majority of tourists, if not for all, Athens represents the birthplace of western civilisation. Accordingly, the main purpose of their visit to Athens is the historic monuments of the city such as the Parthenon. As discussed in previous chapters, foreign tourists tend to relate the city with its glorious past ignoring its present landscape. However, when they arrive in Athens, they realise that the Acropolis and the other archaeological sites are just a small part of the immense city centre. Their disillusionment from gazing the unknown modern cityscape may be compared with that of Gustave Flaubert (chapter 2), who was vainly searching for the oleander trees he had read about in the classical texts. Modern tourists, influenced by nineteenth century romantic travellers, begin their visit to Athens with the intention to follow a map based on their nostalgic impulses for the glorified past of the Athenian landscape which does not exist anymore. They search for key landmarks which would verify preconceived images they carry along their journey to Athens, whereas modern urban forms, as well as social structures, tend to be either ignored and underestimated, or misunderstood.

Grounded on the latter argument, my intention in this chapter (and the following one) is to depict the primary images of modern Athens as perceived, gazed and finally visualised by tourists. Much of my analysis is focused on the representation of Athens as an «in transit» destination place, where tourists find themselves stuck for hours, or even days, at airports, hotel lounges and ports, while trying to escape from the unfamiliar and unfriendly cityscape heading to the islands. These places are characterised by inertia and immobility, which are the opposite experiences from walking, as described in the previous chapter.

The modern urban structures create a new mythology which goes beyond the one constructed by nineteenth century romantic travellers. For instance, while the latter focused their gaze entirely on archaeological sites, nowadays tourists are forced to

include in their visits (and why not memories of these visits?) the hours spent in airport lounges, hotel rooms, checking points and in front timetables. There are even guidebooks dedicated to these places giving advice and all sort of information to tourists about how to spend in the most valuable way their time and money there (Baskas 2001). It would be misleading to focus my research only on myths concerning the past of the city, as its space is characterised by a dynamic condition. In addition, the myth *per se*, as a concept is dynamic, evolving and changing continuously through time.

## **7.2. Gazing Athens from in transit places**

### **7.2.1. In transit (non-) spaces**

As I mentioned in chapter one, tourism trends in Athens have changed dramatically during the last two decades. Since the mid-seventies, there has been an obvious decrease in both the number of arrivals to and nights spent in the city. In 1971, in particular, 79% of the overall number of arrivals to Greece were in Athens, whereas in 1980 that number dropped to 58%. Similarly, during the same period, the number of nights spent in the Greek capital fell from 40% of the total length of residence to 26%, whereas in 1990 they were only 13% (NTUA-Final Report 1998). According to a survey carried out by the Greek Tourist Organisation (GNTO 1988), the main possible reason for the decrease of the number of tourists arriving to, and visiting, Athens is the change of tourism character in Greece (i.e. package holidays, the three s -sun, sea, sand), as well as the negative image of the city (e.g. air pollution).<sup>1</sup> In addition, the biggest tour-operators (e.g. Thompson, Thomas Cook) started charter flights directly to other tourist destinations, as the Aegean islands (e.g. Rhodes, Kos), which resulted in a high percentage of tourists not flying via Athens. In 1990, for instance, despite the increase in the number of charter flights to Greece (79%), only 27% of them arrived at Athens Airport (NTUA 1998). Due to these changes in the trends of Greek tourism,

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<sup>1</sup> According to the survey of the NTUA (National Technical University of Athens), the general image of Athens abroad is quite negative. The prime factors for such criticism are numerous. First, there is the air pollution and particularly the well-known 'smog', that can cause serious health problems, as well as deterioration in the condition of the ancient monuments. Second, there is the problem of traffic within the city centre resulting tremendous delays. Third, there is the bad quality of tourism infrastructure and services, like the ones provided at the Athens airport. Finally, for many tourists, even the present built environment of the city is a drawback; the grey concrete buildings seem to worsen the image of Athens (see chapter 3).

Athens has become for most of the tourists, an 'in transit' destination. Far from being the main reason for visiting Greece as it used to be until the seventies, Athens now appears to be a stop-over for tourists who either have to catch a connecting flight, or take the ferry-boat to the islands. Their stay in the Greek capital lasts from a few hours to a few days, while their activities vary from waiting for their flights in airport terminals to short visits to the city centre.

In this part of the chapter, however, I will focus on the former kind of tourist activity. Along with archaeological visits to sites, monuments and museums, tourists gaze the Athenian landscape while at airports, ports, hotel lounges and roof gardens. The idea behind researching such environs is grounded on the fact that part of the contemporary tourist experience takes place within them. Accommodating tourists in a transit state, these places constitute an environment of temporality, of arrivals and departures. Contrary to the archaeological sites which attract the main attention during someone's visit to a place like Athens, the above places are not considered as being of any particular interest to the tourist. The former spaces attract movement, whereas the latter are representations of inertia and, partly, of inactivity. My analysis is focused, first, on the polarity of these two spatial qualities and, second, on the narratives of in transit tourists about their gazing of the city from afar.

Referring particularly to the two polar spaces in Athens, I will distinguish them by using at length Marc Augé's (1995: 77, 79) contrasting concepts of *anthropological places* and *non-places*. Marc Augé regards place and non-place rather as opposed polarities:

If a place can be defined as relational, historical and concerned with identity, then a space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity will be a non-place [...] the first is never completely erased, the second never totally completed; they are like palimpsests on which the scrambled game of identity and relations is ceaselessly rewritten.

On the one hand, there are the traditional 'places of memory' like Acropolis and on the other hand, 'transit points and temporary abodes' which proliferate under luxurious or inhuman conditions (Augé 1995: 78). In this sense, non-places are simply any temporal loci that as such are only related to the present (lived) moment. Within these places

there is no room for history unless it has been transformed into an element of spectacle [...]. What reigns there is actuality, the urgency of the present moment. Since non-places are there to be passed through, they are measured in units of time. Itineraries do not work without timetables, lists of departure and arrival times in which corner is always found for a mention of possible delays. They are lived through in present.

(Augé 1995: 104)

The difference between the two spatial elements in time is obvious from the above quotation: what Augé calls anthropological place is the existence of a past time in present, whereas his non-place is only affiliated to the latter time-unit (present). This is because the past is the locus of memory *sui generis*, whilst the present, by being still experienced, is not yet a memento. Accordingly, non-places are ahistorical; they are lived at a particular moment, then they are forgotten and dead. They do not hold any monumental character to be remembered; they are in fact non-memory places. Due to their ephemeral character, it is difficult for people to use their mnemonic skills: to abbreviate images and abstract from them the vital details that would allow them to picture the city. Non-places are opposed to the motto of the art and practice of mnemonics: «If I am given the word ‘elephant’: I’d see a zoo. If they gave me ‘America’, I’d set up an image of Uncle Sam» (Luria 1987: 42). In the particular case of Athens, if a tourist is given the word ‘Athens’, s/he would obviously imagine Acropolis, whereas the airport, port and hotel lounge would make no connotation or reference to the city. Unlike anthropological places, non-places do not embody signs and symbols that tourists could denote and, hence, use to understand the cityscape. Detached from any sort of memory and past, as well as lacking in personal character, non-places may be anywhere in the world but look alike. At the end, it seems that a non-place is synonymous to a *nowhere*, but not in the same sense as a utopia since «it exists» (even without containing «any organic society») (Augé 1995: 112). From a Foucaudian perspective, this nowhere-character of non-places corresponds with ‘heterotopia’, in other words:

real places -places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society- which are something like *counter-sites*, a kind of effectively enacted utopia [...]. Places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality.

(Foucault 1986: 24)

Besides all, heterotopoi are distinct spaces of alternate social ordering; they are the *other spaces* par excellence (Foucault 1986; Soja 1996; Hetherington 1997). Quoting Foucault, they are «those singular spaces to be found in some given social spaces whose functions are different or even the opposite of others» (in Rabinow 1984: 252). This argument may be linked with the, already mentioned, characterisation of non-places as being ahistorical, impersonal and inert and, therefore, opposed to the established spatio-temporal order of anthropological places.

Following the above discussion, I shall make a thorough analysis of the by definition-paradoxical non-places/heterotopoi located in the Athenian landscape. My focal loci are the two international airports in Athens (Olympic Airways and Charter Flights), Piraeus Port, a hotel lounge (Hilton Hotel), a central hotel's roof-garden (Dorian Inn Hotel) and a youth hostel's courtyard (Students'Inn). It is essential, however, to divide them into two groups depending on their location within the city's map. First, there are those spatial units in the borders of the city (the two airports and the port) that control the arrivals and departures of people and second, there are those inner-city lodges accommodating tourists during their stay there. The two groups are mutually interrelated, forming a circle: arrival → sojourn → departure, wherein tourists start and finish their trip at the same single locus, the airport. This circular condition is also apparent in the case of 'in transit' tourists. People come to Athens, take the ferry-boat to go to other tourist destinations in Greece, preferably the islands, and return to Athens to catch their flight back. In-between those activities, they may stay in the city and possibly spend some days there.

### **7.3.1.1. Airports and ports**

Concerning, in particular, the first group of non-places, those in the borders of the city, one of their main characteristics is their function as checkpoints: they control and record the comings and goings of people entering the city. In reality, they check-in and check-out movement (to/from the city) but lack actual movement within their own ground; is it an exaggeration to argue that everything there seems to occur as a set of repetitive rituals in slow motion? The time spent in those places is mainly consumed in checking boarding cards, tickets and passports, collecting luggage, waiting for

connecting flights and departures, and probably chatting with other people who are there for the same reasons with them.

The whole airport may be regarded as a transit lounge, as a waiting-room between two places. The airport itself is not considered a place. All of us have witnessed discussions about whether one has actually visited a city or a country when one has only seen the airport. [...] Upon entering the airport, one enters a cultural void - a third, global culture. Sterile is a word often used to describe the significance of such non-places as compared to the thick contexts of ordinary life.

(Eriksen and Døving 1992: 5-6)

Generally speaking, these (non-) places are a kind of modern no-man's land, located between city boundaries (i.e. sea, outskirts) and concentrating trivial, but necessary and similar activities for all, which at the end would not be part of their holidays' memories and snapshots. For as long as people stay within the premises of an airport or port are 'passengers in transit' (passers-by) waiting with one way or another to leave from there.

Defining the above term, Augé (1995) contrasts the passenger with the traveller arguing that the former is «defined by his *destination*» whilst the latter is the one «who strolls along his *route*». He gives as an example the case of the French railway (TGV), where customers are called travellers until they board the train and passengers during their journey (Augé 1995: 107). Under the same light, Zygmunt Bauman (1994) contrasts the Parisian arcades with freeways and expressways arguing that people are no more interested in experiencing the 'out there' street life, instead they prefer to stay 'in' the car and gaze everything happening around through the window.

Today's action is after all, different: it is, mostly, about *passing* from here to there, as fast as one can manage, preferably without stopping, better still without looking around. Beautiful passers-by hide inside cars with tinted windows.

(Bauman 1994: 148)

Due to the location of the two airports and port in the outskirts and (natural) borders, respectively, of Athens, it is not necessary for tourists to transverse the city centre, unless they want to visit the archaeological sites and experience the Athenian urban life. Accordingly, a lot of people head straight to their principal destination away from

Athens, avoiding the hustle in the city. As stated earlier in the chapter, modern Athens is interwoven with negative images of extreme air pollution, traffic and architectural ugliness. Especially for those who do not wish to combine their holidays in the sea with sightseeing of monuments and museums, there is not any reason to include Athens in their trip to Greece. Literally, they are there without really being there; they are within the city's territory but with no real contact with its urban space. They just have a glimpse of it while driving from the one heterotopia to the other. Quoting once more Augé's (1995: 68) own observations of non-places, he concludes that there is a tendency nowadays for:

a reorganisation of space (the creation of bypasses and main motorway routes avoiding towns) that tends, inversely, to short-circuit the historical context by avoiding the monuments that embody it.

Many of the tourists I interviewed, for instance, both at the airport and Piraeus port, admitted that they did not have either the spare time or the intention to visit the city. Instead, depending on whether they were travelling by air or sea, they chose to either wait at the airport for their connection flight, or to take a taxi (or bus) straight to the port.

*(Susan and George, in their fifties, from Manchester, 3-06-98)*

S: We don't like big cities, we are from a big city and we don't want to hustle around in another big city. We need to relax; a city is always a city, full of noise and here there's also the smog. So, we take the plane from Manchester in the evening and we arrive here early in the next morning, we wait for about five hours here at the airport till 8 o'clock, and then we go to the port and take the first ferry to Poros island. We don't have anything to do these five hours, with these night flights we lose time from our holidays and we just have only a week.

G: Some other time we might visit the Acropolis, but this time we came on holidays... you know sun, sea and good food.

*(Andy, 34 years old, from Dundee, 23-09-98)*

I've just come for a week, so I can't visit Athens. I wish I could... I want to see the Parthenon, but I'll try some other time. [...] Now, I'm waiting for the ferry-boat to Santorini. I came here at Piraeus in the morning by taxi. It took me two hours, lots of traffic, cars and crazy drivers. I didn't like the buildings I saw, they were very dull.

Like George and Susan, the majority of tourists prefer to stay at the airport instead of strolling around the city. A common scene, for instance, of both airports in Athens is

that of people lying on the floor in their sleeping bags.<sup>2</sup> The tourists' choice of spending their time at the airport may possibly lie on the paradoxical character of non-place -an Augé-like observation. Especially «a foreigner lost in a country he does not know (a 'passing stranger') can feel at home there only in the anonymity» of loci like the airport's waiting room, or hotel lounges, as I discuss later in the chapter (ibid. 1995: 106).

In addition, there are travellers who, like my interviewee Andy, choose to go straight to the port. The route from the airport area to Piraeus is a city by-pass, passing around the city limits. For Lynch (1960: 56), this type of «automobile-land» permits only «fast and undisturbed movement totally missing in the city». As the route is not part of the city, it causes a severe disorientation to the passengers (and drivers). What they may gaze out of the car's window is a quick glimpse of plain residential buildings from the one side of the road and the sea shore from the other. Besides, the route from the airport area to the port, which takes less than an hour, lacks any characteristic built environment that could possibly identify the character of the place, thus reminding tourists/passers-by that they are in Athens.

In brief, passengers in transit as the above, experience a city at its very limits moving in a linear line (Poseidonos Avenue) which relates point A (airport) to point B (port). This goal oriented journey (drive) gives passengers the sense of moving through a complex landscape, where single objects as buildings «welled up and fell behind, broke in two as they passed overhead, slipped sidewise, or rotated» but at the end remembered as having a uniformed character (Jakle 1987: 71). This relational condition of spatial elements may be grounded on what Foucault calls 'situatedness of sites', where «space takes [for people] the form of relations among sites». In the case of the route around Athens, the sites are the two ends: airport and port (in Soja 1996: 156).

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<sup>2</sup> Most of the times I went to the two airports as part of my fieldwork, I noticed that many people were staying there overnight, as most flights were early in the morning. The whole atmosphere resembled that of a cheap holiday camp. Especially the charter flights' airport had a huge waiting room, with hundreds of tourists lying around, and no provision of facilities such as a cafeteria or bar.



### 7.3.1.2. Hotels and hostels

Along with non-places at the edge of the city, as the airports and port, there are also non-places situated within its very centre. These two groups function as two distinct realities: non-places at the edge of the city operate as the gateway of the city. Non-places within the city centre function as the welcoming host. The former are used as exits (exposures), allowing people to escape from the city; the latter are entrances (enclosures), which, by keeping people inside their premises, eliminate their encounter with urban life. Hotel chains in general and their lounges, cafeterias and roof gardens in particular, are representative examples of entrance-like spaces, offering tourists refuge from the unfamiliar urban milieu. As enclosures, they invite pause in movement, as people find themselves closed-in. By suggesting interior refuge, they are diversions of movement. As such, they are «islands of safety in the mainstream of movement» (Jakle 1987: 66). This quality of enclosed spaces can be compared with Gaston Bachelard's (1964: 102) metaphor of nests, that set people to «daydreaming of security». In fact, in Bachelard's spatial poetics, the nest is analogous to the house, the 'hospitable threshold', as both reflect a sense of warmth and safety. Quoting his own words: «a nest, like any other image of rest and quiet, is immediately associated with the image of a simple house» (Bachelard 1964: 98).

Similarly, a hotel, functioning as a human nest, could be used by tourists as a substitute of home. The construction of its space allows its temporary residents to live in a microcosmos similar to that of their house. By resembling the private sphere of home life, hotels embody metaphors of: the domestic, the natural, the familiar, the personal life, the 'shadowy interior of the household' (Duncan 1996: 128). In the hotel, tourists fulfil their basic needs: sleep, eat, drink, bath, relax. However, there is an essential difference between the household and the hotel: the former is an anthropological place, whilst the latter is a non-place; a heterotopia. On the one hand, the house, as place, becomes «necessarily historical from the moment when -combining identity with relations- it is defined by a minimal stability» (Augé 1995: 54). By contrast, the hotel is a transit point, a temporary lodge without personal history and identity, to which tourists have no other affiliation apart from fulfilling basic, physical needs.

Nevertheless, what is of central interest to this research is not the indoors life of tourists in their hotel, but their gaze of the surrounding city through hotel windows and from hotel balconies. Functioning as a placebo of home abroad, the hotel, sterilised from the danger and hustle of urban life, provides to tourists an alternative (safe) experience of the 'out there': the city, the public, the anthropological place.

Focusing my analysis on two types of tourist accommodation in Athens, I explore both the way tourists gaze the cityscape from within these places and the degree of their interaction with it. The first locus I examine is Dorian Inn, a central hotel (category B) that mainly accommodates tourists participating in organised holidays. My interviewees were people who participated in that sort of holiday; specifically, in a holiday camp in Skyros Island ('*Alternative Holidays in Greece*'), specialised in holistic, alternative tourism and offering meditation, yoga, drama-therapy and shiatsu classes. Part of their two-weeks holidays -the first and the last day- were spent in Athens. As there are not direct international flights to Skyros Island, tour-operators include two overnights in Athens. Tourists arriving at Athens airport at night were driven by coaches straight to the hotel, spent the night there and next morning they were driven, again by coach, to Piraeus Port to board the ferry-boat to Skyros. After having spent two weeks in the camp site, tourists returned to Athens following the same schedule and procedures. They stayed at Dorian Inn half a day (overnight), then they were driven back to the airport to catch their return flight. Due to the limited time and compact schedule of their holidays, tourists participating in '*Alternative Holidays in Skyros*' stayed entirely in the hotel during these two days in Athens.

T7.1 (*Fiona, 32 years old, from Manchester, Dorian Inn, 21-07-98*)

Interviewer: How long have you been in Athens for?

Fiona: Just for a few hours. We're flying back to Manchester at one o'clock in the morning. We'd like to go this afternoon for shopping but most shops are closed during the afternoon.

I: Yes, but they open again at five o'clock in the afternoon.

F: Yeah, I know but by that time we'll be at the airport ... and also it's very hot and we'd like to get clean and relax a bit 'cause we left the island at half past six this morning and we were late last night

[...]

I: And how long did you stay in Athens when you came from Manchester?

F: Most people flew in the evening and arrived here at night. So there's not pretty much to see here at that time and then we left in the morning, in the following morning to Skyros

In addition, I realised that these tourists were not encouraged by their tour-leaders to visit parts of the city, not even the very tourist areas. Instead, they spent most of their time between the hotel lounge and the roof garden, where there was a bar and a swimming pool (see fig. 7.1; 7.2).<sup>3</sup> When asked why didn't they leave the hotel and walk around the city centre, the majority of them said that they had not planned a trip to Athens and that the only reason why they were in the city was because of their flight schedule. In other words, the hotel was used in a similar manner with the airport: both were treated as in transit non-places. However, the former is situated within the city centre and therefore tourists could easily have a glimpse of its environs. Moreover, the hotel, as an enclosed space, nurtures the strong urge of some tourists to remain insulated from the disturbing and different. They have, however, a 'veranda-view' of the city, a term used by John Hutnyk (1996) to describe the way travellers in Calcutta gaze the city.<sup>4</sup> In the cases of both Athens and Calcutta, tourists are positioned in their balconies, sitting in comfortable chairs and gazing the city while drinking, eating, sunbathing and talking to fellow travellers. The city is just in the background, far beyond their reach. Although most tourists I interviewed in the Dorian Inn had just looked at the city from the comfortable distance of the hotel's veranda, they described it as if they had been in it and got to know it well. However, their descriptions depict a bird's eye view of the city.

T7.2 (*Nicole, 38 years old, from London, yoga instructor, Dorian Inn, 21-07-98*)

As I see the city from up here ((she means the roof garden in Dorian Inn)), it looks misplanned, polluted and difficult to walk around. In London, there's a lot of greenery and there're different areas, but here it seems to be all the same; wherever you look around, you see the same grey ugly buildings.

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<sup>3</sup> I was a participant observer in four different groups of "Alternative Holidays in Skyros" participants during their arrival and departure days in Athens. Each of these groups consisted of twenty to thirty people, from whom not a single person visited the city.

<sup>4</sup> In fact, as a term 'veranda-view' was first introduced by Mary Louise Pratt (1992) in her book about colonial writers and transculturation. There she argued that writers like Alberto Moravia described the city -in that case Agra- from their hotel room.

When I asked Nicole if she had got out of the hotel and visited the nearby city centre, she replied that she had already been in Athens three times, but in all cases she was passing-by, as her destination was somewhere else in Greece. She admitted that her knowledge about Athens was based on what she had read in guidebooks, been told by other travellers and friends and, finally, seen from hotel terraces, balconies and roof gardens. She concluded by saying that the way she had imagined the city before her first visit was not far from reality: Athens was a very ugly city.

T7.2 (*Nicole, as above*)

Modern Athens is ugly, it's better to be demolished, that's the truth. The point is to go straight to the Greek islands.

Tourists' reluctance to engage with Athenian spaces other than airports and hotel rooms/balconies seems to reproduce negative Western representations of Athens, similar to those portrayed in guidebooks and narrated by tour guides (see chapters 4 & 5). Since their limited time and range of movement are so rigorously controlled and adhered to, many packaged tourists have little, if any, opportunity to explore the city and its non-enclavic spaces.

It is of great interest to see, however, that, unlike expectations, independent travellers experience and gaze the city in a way similar with that of packaged tourists. They, too, experience Athens as an in transit place, where they spend some days (commonly from one up to four) before heading to other destinations in Greece. Inevitably, independent travellers have more chances to live within the city and integrate with its everyday life than the previous group. As they lack an enforced schedule, they have the opportunity to explore a range of spaces wider than the famous attractions and tourist enclaves. Although they express a desire for exploration of the outside space, many independent travellers remain inside the tourist capsule that for them represents the city they had imagined and read before their visit. In other terms, their encounter with the city is limited within the boundaries of the 'beaten track'.

Besides, most of the hotels accommodating independent travellers and, especially, backpackers, are located in the tourist area (i.e. Plaka and Syntagma Square), thus increasing the distance of tourists from the non-enclaved city. In their case, however,

the hotel is more than a lodge accommodating their basic needs; it also functions as the base for planning their excursions to the nearby sites and monuments. It is in the hotel lobby and cafeteria where tourists schedule the plan of the day: where to go and what to see. According to Edensor (1998: 168), hotels provide the focal point of tourists' recreational activities:

They are places where tourists 'hang out', write their journals and postcards, read, chat and gaze the street; meet each other, swap stories of their trip, share travel lore, and form new, often temporary alliances.

Let me take the example of Students'Inn in Plaka district, a youth hostel addressed mainly to young backpackers. It is a small, three-floor neo-classical building, converted to a hostel with all modern facilities, even containing an Internet cafe in the basement. The majority of its residents prefer to spend their time in the back alley, where there is a cafeteria/bar. Most of the times I was there during my fieldwork, the cafeteria was full of travellers, sitting either alone or in groups on plastic chairs around the tables and preoccupied with activities similar to those described by Edensor (1998). Their main activity, however, was exchanging stories and information about their sojourn in Athens and visit to other places in Greece. By retelling, narrating their experiences to each other, they were, first, bringing into the hostel space the outside world and, second, gazing the city through each others' eyes. Voicing their experiences is central to tourist activity, since this is the first step in the process of establishing their tourist experience within the frame of memory. Once more, the hostel (or hotel), as a non-place, is contrasted with the 'out there' city, the anthropological place. Tourists use the former as a nest to rest and hide from the latter, while, at the same time, they try to form within its locus a discourse related to the latter by listing, classifying and promoting it to the status of a 'place of memory' (Augé 1995: 78). Moreover, in the hostel, as in any other type of non-places, there is a sense of shared identity that relates people (passengers, temporary residents) with each other: they could share the same experiences and stories.

T6.1 (*Nick, 34 years old, from UK, Students' Inn, 24-07-98*)

I really like this place ((he means the Students' Inn)) 'cause it's full of backpackers. Yeah, it's good place, I've met lots of people here. [...] I came to Greece mainly 'cause I heard that it's cheap and I could meet other backpackers. So far, I didn't meet many and I felt lonely but here it's different. I could talk to other people.

Like Nick, most travellers refer to other backpackers and fellow-travellers as «the people» whom they want to meet and chat with. In fact, it is in their encounter with other travellers when they feel «at home». On the other hand, locals are seen as part of the city gazed from a distance; acquaintances are limited to provision of services. Lots of these accidental but out of necessity encounters with locals are described in an anecdotal manner while narrated to other travellers, as in the following example:

*T7.5 (Chris, 33 years old, from London, Students' Inn, 28-08-98)*

It was about 2:00 p.m. I had a map and lots of older men came to me to help me. They said «oh I can help you», so they showed me where to go which was good, but later I approached a young woman and just said «excuse me...» and she RUN AWAY ((he laughs)). I actually felt that I was an envagelist telling her about church or selling the Bible, but she seemed not very impressed and probably she didn't speak English or she might have thought that I was a hooligan ((he laughs)).

In general, tourists (package and independent) see, perceive, encounter and, finally, describe Athenians in a colonial discourse. They portray them as the 'other': possibly oriental, but who, at the end, resemble alternative Europeans.

*T8.1 (Nick, 29 years old, from Sussex, Students' Inn, 24-07-98)*

They seem ((the locals)) very fashionable from what I see and quite chic. People have mobile phones, the atmosphere's very much like London. I suspect in a way it's probably more West than East. I mean the language sounds a bit like Arabic, which makes me think of East, but looking around the Flea Market, all the shops have very trendy clothes, Levi's' and nice trainers. Yeah, people here in Athens seem to dress very Western -English or American style- and that I think is a shame. It's definitely a shame to homogenise cultures. Western culture's seen everywhere now.

*(Ingrid, 25 years old, from Sweden, Students' Inn, 14-07-98)*

I don't really like Athens and its people. It's not authentic Greek. Here in Athens, apart from Plaka which is made for the tourists, the rest of the city is so... I can't describe it, it's definitely not Greek. Well and the people don't look like Greeks, they look different, very European.

Following Said's argument on colonial spaces, both quotations echo the idea that the colonised has to be constructed as something other than, or opposite to, the colonisers (Said 1978). Since the colonised realm could not be 'othered' by adopting its own systems of knowledge, «it had to be incorporated into European ways of understanding,

absorbed within an accepted grid for filtering through the oriental into Western consciousness» (Said 1978: 6). Moreover, although the dominant tropes of colonial representation asserted that the West is more advanced, enlightened and at a higher evolutionary stage than the colonised, the flip side of this is that such spaces (and their people) are also conceived of as realms of the 'lost innocence', where a more authentic culture, as Westerners perceive it, is being replaced by the inevitability of European 'progress'.

Returning to the primary issue of this discussion, the hotel lodge as a non-place, this forms the setting wherein all the above encounters are reprocessed, anatomised and rebuilt into the growing, shared masonry of travellers experience, a 'place of memory'. Metaphorically speaking, the hotel is like a vacuum space, with no dynamics by its own, but filled with images of the outside world imported by the tourists.

To summarise, in this chapter I have analysed the images of the city as seen and constructed by tourists while in non-places. In particular, I have described three different kinds of heterotopoi/non-places in Athens: the airports and Piraeus Port, the roof garden of the Dorian Inn Hotel, and the back alley of the Students' Inn Hostel. In each of these loci, tourists have a different view of the city: the passing-by, the panoramic and the enclavic but in all of these cases, the city is gazed and experienced 'from within' (the car, the veranda, the tourist enclave) creating a divided space. Apparently, Athens is sensed once more as a fragmented city of near, familiar, secure non-places and distant, unfamiliar anthropological spaces.



Fig. 7.1 The panoramic view of Lycabettus Hill from the roof garden of Dorian Inn Hotel.



Fig. 7.2 The swimming pool on the roof garden of Dorian Inn Hotel.



## CHAPTER 8: EXPERIENCING THE ATHENIAN NIGHTSCAPE

The thing which in the waking world comes nearest to a dream is night in a big town.

(Blixen in Alvarez 1995: 262)

### 8.1. Introduction: Liminal and dangerous nocturnal spaces

So far, I have concentrated my analysis on the daily experiences and activities of tourists in Athens: their 'sightseeing praxis' in daylight. However, this study cannot be complete without a reference to night spaces. Experiencing the city at night is as important as for the overall tourist experience as the more generally publicised daytime activities. The existence -therefore both experience and visualisation- of nightscapes is part of the modern urban mythology. With the introduction of artificial light in the late nineteenth century, a new urban landscape emerged, marking the beginning of what is known as colonisation of the night (Melbin 1987; Alvarez 1994; Thrift 1996). In this new urban space a separate set of human practices evolved: the night life activities. In fact, depending on the temporal change of daylight to night, there are two distinct momentoes of the city persona complementing one another and giving rise to different urban stories. The nocturnal city is by itself a distinct entity, experienced, gazed and consumed in a manner different and distinct from its diurnal counterpart. Dark places and artificial lights transform the physiognomy of the city. Therein, a new set of signs, symbols and codes is deciphered to interpret its discrete spatial text and map its loci. In the nocturnal city, as Joachim Schlör (1998: 9,10) notes in his book *Nights in the Big City*:

we enter a world that is both familiar and strange, a landscape full of light and rich with shadows, the receptacle of our desires and our hidden, unspeakable fears. [...] At the approach of darkness something strange and extraordinary happens to a city which cannot be exhaustively explained by such cursory formulations about aesthetic appearance. Something becomes apparent which I will dare to call the «mythical quality» of the city.

In this chapter I will describe and analyse this so-called mythical quality of the city: its nightscape, focusing on tourist experiences and activities. First, I will explore nocturnal life within tourist enclaves in Athens (e.g. Plaka district), contrasting activities and images of the district in the two different phases of the day. Second, I

will list all possible night activities specifically addressed to tourist clientele; then I will concentrate on a particular one: the 'Athens by Night' show, as performed by local dancers and musicians in a taverna on the outskirts of Athens. Finally, I will discuss the image of the nocturnal city as a place of fear and insecurity characterised by restrictions of body movement. In particular, I will refer to the different mapping of nightscapes, as formed and experienced by women travellers.

My analysis is based on Schlör's (1998) argument that the nocturnal city embodies two different images. First, it is the representation of the nocturnal city as a place of pleasure and entertainment and second, it is the night-spaces of threatening danger and fear; the forbidden places, the *non-go* areas.

Both images describe and characterize, in contradictory fashion, *one single* world. [...] Both images present nocturnal reality, but they awaken total different feelings: temptation, desire and fascination on the one hand; intimidation, fear and terror on the other. Fascination and terror are the two sides of the night, inseparably linked. By themselves these images show only one aspect of the nocturnal city, and it is only together that they form a whole.

(Schlör 1998: 10)

## **8.2. Liminous Athens: the city that never sleeps**

Every city has its own nocturnal rhythms.

(Alvarez 1995: 260)

T4.1 (*Jeanne, 27 years old, South African, Students' Inn, 10-07-98*)

In Athens, there's a pattern of life whose rhythm is very difficult for most travellers to feel in their bodies; they're not used to stay out very late.

In recent years, one of the main reasons for visiting a city is its night life. Each urban destination offers a variety of different activities to tourists. For example, Paris is known for its cabarets and music halls, London and New York for both their theatre and club scenes, Amsterdam for its red light district, Barcelona for its coffee shops and bars. A major part of their tourism campaign is based on promoting their night life entertainment, which, for many of them, became their primary tourist attraction. In the case of Athens, on the other hand, its night life is overshadowed by the archaeological and historical monuments which constitute the major tourist attractions of the city. However, even if it is not widely known among tourists, Athens is a nocturnal city with its own personal character. According to Don DeLillo's (1983: 51) literary description,

the Athenian night is unique, mainly due to both its immense noise and continuous movement:

[Summer] nights belong to people in the street. Everyone is outdoors, massed against the stonescape. We conceive the city as a collection of unit spaces that people occupy in a fixed order of succession. Park benches, cafe tables, the swinging seats on ferries wheels in the carnival lots. Pleasure is not diversion but urgent life, a social order perceived as temporary. People go to movies set up in vacant lots and eat in tavernas that are improvised according to topography. Chairs and tables appear on sidewalks, rooftops and patios, on stepped streets and in alleys, and amplified music comes gusting across the soft night. The cars are out, the motorcycles and scooters and jeeps, and there are arguments, radios playing, the sound of auto horns.

Similarly, Leontidou (1993) notes that Athens, like many other Southern European cities, is a city that 'never sleeps'. For her, urban neighbourhoods in Mediterranean Europe are busier and noisier than the ones in Northern cities, which are lively only in a few night spots. As she notes:

The lifestyles of their population, the late hours when people are out for leisure and fun- but also the mixed land use, which creates a vivid collage in the urban milieu- lights up the cities around the clock.

(Leontidou 1993: 8)

The characterisation of Athens as a city that 'never sleeps' is grounded in the fact that night life ends at six o'clock in the morning. During night, a vast number of activities take place and different groups of people interact and cross each other. First, there are the students who, after school or university classes, go to the language centres most of which are open till eleven o'clock at night. Second, there are the people who work night shifts, or stay at their offices till very late. Finally, there are those who use the city for leisure and entertainment.<sup>1</sup>

In Athens, there is a great variety of nocturnal entertainment. Along with tavernas and music halls with live Greek music, there are clubs and concert venues with both

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<sup>1</sup>In Athens, as in most other big cities of Greece, there is no restriction on the closing time of bars, coffee shops, restaurants and clubs; this depends exclusively on management decision. During the late nineties and under the socialist (PASOK) government, there was a big debate on the need of new legislation specifying the closing time of bars and clubs. The then Minister of Public Order (S. Papatthemelis) suggested that night clubs and any other night entertainment venues should close at three o'clock in the morning. However, this decision was strongly criticised by both political opposition and public opinion.

resident and guest djs from abroad, playing all different kinds of music, from jazz, ethnic and rock to mainstream dance and techno.<sup>2</sup> There are also many classical music concerts, operas and ballets, taking place mainly in the newly built 'Athens Concert Hall'. As written in the *American Express Travel Guide* to Athens:

with the opening of the Athens Concert Hall (Palace of Music, *Megaron Mousikis Athenon*, or MMA) in 1991, Athens can boast one of the great arts centers of Europe. The opening of the dazzling marble Concert Hall [...] after nearly 30 years in construction, was a landmark event in the cultural life of the city.

(Nisanyan 1994: 94)

In addition, there are about forty theatre venues and a hundred and two cinemas. Athens is the second European city after London in the number of theatrical productions (NTUA 1998). Moreover, from June to mid-September, there is the *Athens Festival* during which the ancient Odeon of Herodes Atticus, on the slope of the Acropolis, becomes a stage for ancient Greek drama as well as operas, ballets and concerts performed by both Greek and foreign companies. Finally, in the last four years, a three-day rock festival takes place annually, hosting famous bands from abroad.

Apart from the city centre, there are other places in suburban and peripheral areas offering night entertainment to people. In Athens, there is not a single leisure and night entertainment zone. Instead, the nocturnal city overlaps with the diurnal one; a different mapping is constructed for a nocturnal city, where «night leisure zones have an independent life from those of the diurnal city» (Siolas 1994: 95). One of the many nocturnal centres of Athens is Omonoia Square, that attracts all sorts of different people, from teenagers, clubbers and immigrants to prostitutes and drug dealers. Omonoia Square is literally a melting pot, contrasting images of night entertainment and danger. There are numerous restaurants, cafeterias, fast food chains, bars, theatres and cinemas, co-existing in space with the most notorious red light district and drug traffic zone of the city. Other zones of night entertainment in Athens radiate from

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Finally, the government passed the bill but in practice the majority of night clubs did not obey the law, adhering to their own closing time. The debate ended with the abolishment of the bill.

Omonoia Square. Each of these 'nocturnal zones' often has its own distinct character, catering for a different clientele. For example, both the northern and southern (seaside) suburbs are known for their expensive night clubs and music halls, mostly frequented by young, middle-class Athenians, whereas the western suburbs are popular with the working-class. Moreover, in the last decade, some of the poorest and most deprived districts of Athens (e.g. Psiri, Metaxourgio, Thession, Gazi) have been 'regenerated', transformed into fashionable ones of night entertainment. Most of these neighbourhoods are located around the Monastiraki (Flea Market) and Plaka areas. Until the beginning of the nineties, for instance, Psiri and Gazi, used to be part of the industrial center of the city, as well as the main residential areas of the poor Turkish immigrant and Gypsy communities. Metaxourgio was better known as a notorious red light district during the sixties and seventies. However, at the beginning of the nineties, rich entrepreneurs and investors bought a major part of these areas, especially old neo-classical houses, which then they converted into cafeterias, bars and restaurants; this changed the physiognomy of these areas radically. In fact, Psiri and Gazi have, since, become the centres of the avant-garde arts scene of the city, crowded with young Greek artists, gallery owners, fashion designers, actors and left-wing academics. In Psiri, there are some of the most controversial theatres, whereas in Gazi there is the old gas factory, now converted into an arts exhibition centre and concert hall. In the web page *Athens Survival Guide* (1998), the above areas are compared with Soho in New York, as former industrial blocks developed into art and cultural centres.

Each neighbourhood in Athens has its own nocturnal life and outdoors activities, due to the existence of squares that function as the ultimate centres of Athenian neighbourhoods. In Athens, the square is the urban setting where most of the activities taking place in the surrounding area are concentrated; this is particularly the case during the night (Tsironi 1989). Because of their lighting, squares are quite safe places, attracting all different age groups, from young children and teenagers to elderly people. In most cases, in the periphery of squares there are cafeterias, tavernas, fast-food restaurants and take-aways, small super-markets, grocery shops and kiosks, as well as

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<sup>2</sup> The weekly magazine 'Athenorama' -a guide to the night entertainment in Athens- lists 163 tavernas with Greek music, 145 clubs and bars with different kinds of music and 664 restaurants of both Greek and international cuisine.

churches and evening schools.<sup>3</sup> In this respect, the square is the vital core of all social interaction and movement of people living in the surrounding neighbourhood.

As shown from the above description, Athens has a variety of night entertainment, not limited to the city centre. However, the tourism industry does not take advantage of this abundance in night amusement. On the one hand, all different markers -from travel brochures to guidebooks- refer only to the so-called tourist areas, excluding most of the above (see chapter 4).

T4.1 (*Jeanne, 27 years old, from South Africa, Students' Inn, 10-07-98*)

I think that travel guides as the Rough Guide and Lonely Planet mention only one or two good clubs in the city centre. For this reason, I think that it's more reliable to speak to the local people. When I go somewhere, like here in Athens, I ask «where is a good place to go» or «where could I go and listen to jazz music», I always rely on that I don't heavily rely on guidebooks. I think guidebooks miss real local life, they are only useful for telephone numbers and hotel names.

On the other hand, tour-operators advise their clients to stay within the tourist district and go to particular restaurants, bars and shows, from which they take commission. Consequently, tourists, especially these who either stay in Athens just for a few days, or participate in package holidays, remain within Plaka district and have little contact with other night spaces in the city. The study of tourists' night experiences in Athens, therefore, is confined to the description of night images of Plaka and specially designed shows for the tourist clientele.

### **8.2.1. Plaka as a nocturnal theme park**

Focusing on the Plaka area and its nocturnal character, the impression someone gets while strolling around this district is the erasure of both entrances/exits to -and meeting points with- the rest of the city. The boundary lines inscribing around the tourist district are stronger during the night. One of the major elements of such a division in space is the contrast between dark and luminous places. The consequence of such contrasting spaces recalls Schlör's description (1998: 66) of the nocturnal character of London in the 1880s, where:

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<sup>3</sup> In Greece, apart from the official school, there are places where school children and students could learn foreign languages, prepare for university entrance exams, take ballet and music courses. Most of these classes run during the evenings.

Those who turn into one of the [...] squares from a gas-lit side street have the impression of entering unexpectedly from a half-dark corridor into a hall as bright as day.

Similarly, within the tourist district, artificial lighting plays a crucial part in the visual imagery of space. Everything is visible and therefore approachable and safe to explore. It is, apparently, lighting that guarantees both security and free circulation during night time (Thrift 1996; Schlör 1998). For Foucault (1977), the artificial light has been the main factor of the introduction of most of today's surveillance technologies, as there is no hiding in the light. Moreover, as Thrift (1996: 269) stresses, «manufactured light [is] of central importance in the cultural construction of the 'dream spaces'» like, for instance, department stores and hotels. In the case of Plaka, its 'dream spaces' could also take the form of narrow streets and back alleys, where residential houses, private gardens and local stores, by having artificially illuminated fronts, create luminous spaces -consequently, they become «a central cultural practice» (Nye 1990: 383), that of the tourist gaze.

Beyond the boundary line, however, the rest of the city is dark, with few light-spots, such as traffic and street lights, creating a sense of danger and unease to people unfamiliar with the particular districts of the city. For example, the Flea Market (Monastiraki), the commercial centre of Ermou Street and Psiri, all neighbouring districts to Plaka, have either limited illumination, for places like restaurants, or none at all. Accordingly, their navigation and exploration are quite difficult, especially for people unfamiliar with the city's map and morphology.

Along with the natural boundaries between Plaka and the rest of Athens, there are also boundaries that are symbolically constructed. What creates this symbolic borderline between the two nocturnal settings is mainly their different readings.

On the one hand, within Plaka, tourists can feel a certain degree of familiarity with the urban setting, as the latter is easily recognisable and readable; it verifies their expectation of what they have read in brochures and guidebooks (see chapter 4). Plaka functions as a theme park due the particularity of its built environment (i.e. carefully

restored neo-classical houses, alleys, squares, pedestrianised streets). There, tourists can stroll around the picturesque squares, up and down the pedestrianised streets, gazing all sorts of different events, performances and spectacles specially designed for them, combined with eating, window-shopping, as well as actual shopping of local artefacts and souvenirs (see Fig. 8.1) Plaka is, therefore, an alternative type of Disneyland, where everything is predictable and under control. Even the spatial structure of its very centre is, in some aspects, reminiscent of Disneyland: in both cases there is a main street where the majority of the entertainment and activities take place (Walsh 1992) (see Fig. 8.2; 8.3). Both places share the common aspect of control over their immediate environment, as they have:

shut off the outside world both at the intellectual level, through control of the imagination, and more literally and perceptually by creating surrounds for the parks which mean that one can neither see in nor out.

(Bryman 1995: 113)

On the other hand, beyond and away from Plaka, the Athenian nightscape remains largely unknown to tourists. As mentioned earlier, due to lack of information, most tourists do not know about the variety of entertainment the city's night-life has on offer:

*(Susan, 22 years old, Australian, Independent Traveller Tours, 11-09-97)*

I'd like to see a rock concert here, or even go to a club, but I don't know where I could find any information about these; my guidebook refers only to Plaka area.

*(Eve, 56 years old, North American, Trans-Hellenic Guided Tours, 3-07-98)*

Do you recommend any interesting place outside Plaka where I could have a quiet evening without tourist fiestas? [...] I also want to go and attend an Opera at the Herodus Atticus ancient theatre.

Once again, the city is conceived as fragmentary. Its urban space is fragmented into regions, dividing the city into inside and outside spaces. It is this dualism that outlines and justifies the tourist's experience and perception of the Athenian nightscape as the difference between enclosure and exposure. The inside space represents the enclosed tourist space and the outside the rest of the city. As an enclosed space, Plaka functions as a confine wherein tourists are cut off from social contact with the rest of the city, including the local population



### 8.2.2. 'Athens by Night' Shows

Within these enclosed tourist space, tourists, particularly those who participate in package holidays, are lead by tour-leaders/operators from one enclosed place to the other, from one establishment to the next. Their main purpose is to eliminate as much as possible tourists' contact with street life, and the potential disorder, danger and indecency that this entails; at the same time tourist guides can profit by controlling and channelling tourists' activities and movement. In addition, markers, such as guidebooks and brochures, promote these closed places by referring primarily to events and performances within their confines. In this way, these places and what happens inside them are seen as representative of the so-called *night-life* (Schlör 1998). In the case of Athens, there are three such 'representative' performances referred in most guidebooks analysed in this research (see chapter 4).

First, there is the 'Sound and Light Show' on Acropolis Hill, described in *Frommer's* guidebook (1968: 470) as «a wonder [that] shouldn't be missed». This is shown every night, from April to October, except on evenings of the full moon, on the Pnyx, a little hill that stands opposite the Acropolis Hill. It lasts for about an hour and is performed in Greek, English, French, German and Spanish. However, the quality of the show has been criticised as poor and its content has not changed for the last fifteen years. The 'Sound and Light Show' seems to have lost much of its popularity and quite a lot of tourist companies do not include it in their tours.<sup>4</sup> In the *American Express* guidebook (Nisanyan 1994: 94), the author advises, more or less, his readers to avoid the show, by warning them that «the words are so corny that it may be advisable to choose a language that you don't know, if of course you still want to see the show».

Second, there is Dora Stratou Ethnic Dance Company, who perform Greek traditional dances from all around the country in their own theatre, on Philopappos Hill (see Fig. 8.4)

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<sup>4</sup> So far, I have found that the only guidebooks that do not mention the 'Sound and Light' Show are *The Rough Guide* (1992) and *Lonely Planet* (1995). One possible reason for this omission may be the quality of the show, considered as 'poor' by most tour-operators I interviewed with during my fieldwork. While most of the guided tours include it in their leaflets and brochures, in reality, they do not have a daily visit to the show; other performances and shows, like the folk dancing and 'Athens by Night' shows, are, by contrast, indispensable parts of the itinerary.

In the idyllic surroundings of Philoppapou Hill, every night, local tradition comes to life. Seventy dancers and folk musicians present a unique spectacle with songs and dances from all over Greece in authentic costumes, a living remainder of the continuity and vitality of an ancient heritage.

(Dora Stratou Leaflet 1998)

However, Dora Stratou (1979) herself, in her book *Greek Folk Dances* (1979: 15), admits that the argument that Greek traditional dances of today are similar to ancient dances, is fallacious.

When we say our dances are living links with history, we don't mean they were being danced 2500 years ago. It would be unreasonable to think so. Besides, descriptions of ancient dances don't exist. Simply, in some archaic writings mention is made of some dances.

(Stratou 1979: 15)

The main reason for describing in the leaflet present folk dances as directly linked to ancient dances is the attraction of tourist clientele, by giving them the impression that they would gaze and experience a part of the *glorious* past. The show presents a plethora of different dances and music; a major part of them is unfamiliar to the audience. The idea behind the show is to familiarise the tourists with dance customs, traditions and festivities coming from different parts of Greece. As written in the leaflet above, the main concern of the company during the performance is the depiction of authenticity through preservation of tradition in dances and music. As such, the dancing techniques are based on extensive folkloric and ethno-musicological research, while dancers and musicians are both professionally and scholarly trained (Stratou 1979).<sup>5</sup> The show is mainly frequented by tourist package groups as it is part of their guided tour in Athens. Actually, some tour-operators combine visits to both 'Sound and Light' and 'Dora Stratou Dancing' shows (e.g. G.O. Tours, Key Tours, Chat Tours).

Finally, there are the 'Athens by Night' shows, which seem to be the most popular among all tourist performances happening in the city. These shows are, in fact, among the main attractions in Athens for foreign tourists, as they are especially designed for,

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<sup>5</sup> Even as a native Greek, I was not familiar with many of the dances I saw performed during the show of the Dora Stratou Dance Company. In fact, the latter is best known to the Greek public as one of the major centers for the research and analysis of Greek folk dances. Dora Stratou, herself, apart from being the founder of the dance company, was also involved in various research projects and published

and sold to, the tourist clientele. These shows are performed in local tavernas and comprise Greek 'traditional' music and dances. Their adaptation of tradition is, however, quite different from the one portrayed by the Dora Stratou Dance Company. 'Athens by Night' shows are basically focused on a more popular image of Greek tradition, like that of 'Zorbas the Greek'. These performances try to depict images easily recognisable by tourists, as they have been described in books, films, TV programs, guidebooks and any other markers. The following one is found in the *American Express* guidebook:

The spirit of Zorba the Greek pervades Plaka at night. Plenty of tavernas, notably those located on Mnisikleous and the edge of Acropolis, offer song-and-dance programs, often inviting the active participation of patrons.

(Nisanyan 1994: 90)

However, in other guidebooks, possibly the ones addressed to the more alternative type of tourists, these shows are criticised for misusing the terms 'authenticity' and 'tradition', characterised as a «tourist travesty of over-amplified and over-priced *bouzouki* noise» (Rough Guide 1992: 107).

Due to these diverse arguments and opinions, 'Athens by Night' shows tend to be the most controversial tourist activity in Athens. It is important, therefore, to describe and analyse them thoroughly, as well as to look at the interrelationship created between performing folklore and understanding/gazing folklore and the trade of authenticity in-between.

Despite their popularity, 'Athens by Night' shows are performed in a limited number of tavernas: four in the Plaka area and one in the outskirts of Athens. Each of these tavernas has a seating capacity of around five hundred people. The difference between the three tavernas in Plaka and the other one on the outskirts of Athens is that in the former the audience include both independent tourists and organised groups, whereas the latter caters exclusively for organised groups. The main reason for attracting organised exclusively tourist groups is the location of the suburban taverna; the latter is an hour's drive from the city centre. Its customers, therefore, are brought in by tour-

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extensive research on issues concerning the socio-cultural contexts of Greek dance performances (see

operators who include the show in the sightseeing tour of Athens they provide. Due to the unique character of this taverna, as well as the easy access I had in it, as one of the tour-operators working with it was my basic key-informant, I decided to focus most of my fieldwork on its show. My analysis is based, hence, on extensive participant observation which took place in the taverna during an overall period of six months (three months each summer).

As mentioned above, the show is part of a sightseeing tour to Athens, which in turn is part of a two-weeks package holiday to Aigina island, organised by Trans-Hellenic Tours.<sup>6</sup> During their visit to Athens, the tourists spend a night out in the taverna '*The Old Stables*'. This is their last night in Greece before their flight back to Britain. The taverna show fills the time between their arrival to Athens from the island in the afternoon, followed by sightseeing in the city and their departure, at two o'clock in the following morning. Tourists arrive in Pireus Port, at five o'clock in the afternoon. A tour-leader waits for them there, to take them to a bus drive around Athens, showing them the most important sites and monuments. They then stop for about two hours in Plaka, where the tour-leader gives them a short description of the area, accompanied with instructions on where to go and what to buy. At around eight o'clock in the evening, they get back in the coach and drive to the taverna, their last stop before the airport. As I mentioned earlier, '*The Old Stables*' is in the outskirts of Athens, in a very remote area, about an hour's drive from Plaka. The way to the taverna is made through a main avenue, Messogion, with nothing interesting for tourists to gaze.

As soon as they enter the lobby of the taverna, a member of the staff welcomes them dressed in the most widely recognisable version of the Greek national costume, *foustanella*, consisting of a white pleated skirt, woollen tights and rustic shoes with pompons. The tourists stay in the lobby for as long as they need to take photographs of themselves standing next to the traditionally dressed Greek. Then, he leads them to the

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Stratou 1966, 1979; Cowan 1990).

<sup>6</sup> Trans-Hellenic Tours is a tour-operator based in Athens whose customers are British tourists. The company comprises a tourist agency, a coach company and a category C hotel in Aigina island, all owned by Mr. Votsis (my key-informant). The company is highly successful. For instance, only the sightseeing tour makes a profit of about three million drachmas a month (six thousand pounds). 'All-

barbecue area of the taverna where another member of the staff offers them a glass of ouzo and a kebab skewer and shows them what he tells them to be the 'traditional Greek way to grill the meat' (see Fig. 8.5). After finishing with grilling their kebabs and taking photographs, the tourists enter the main lounge of the taverna, a huge room with long tables and a stage and dance floor in the middle. Each tour-operator has booked a particular number of tables depending on the number of tourists they bring every time. The tour-leader is responsible for arranging for members of the group to sit together, thus avoiding mixing with other groups. Once seated, the waiters start bringing them food and (free) wine; glasses are refilled during the whole night.

The most important part of the taverna experience is, of course, the music and dance performance. The show includes five musicians, two singers and eight dancers and lasts for approximately two hours of *bouzouki* tunes and Greek 'traditional dances'. All the songs have the same basic tune, making all them sound alike, with simple melodies wherein the well-known *syrta* theme of the film '*Zorba the Greek*' is readily recognisable. This theme has been imported into pieces that normally bear no resemblance to it whatsoever. As such, the music is familiar to the pre-conceived notions of the audience about what traditional Greek music sounds like. As for the actual songs, they are covers of famous old and modern Greek songs which may not be readily appreciated by tourists, as they are sung in Greek. For them, the most interesting part of the show remains the visual performance of the dancing. In parallel with the music, the dancing also aims at being recognisable. The choreography is centered in simple movements of *syrta* dance, also known as '*Zorba's dance*': men holding each others shoulders and dancing in fast tempo (see Fig. 8.6) (Hunt 1996; 1997).<sup>7</sup> *Zorba's dance*, of course, refers to the choreography presented in the film '*Zorba the Greek*'. As Hunt claims «yet this is what many non-Greeks associate most vividly with Greek dances» (1996: 147). This dance is accompanied with versions of other traditional Greek dances which, aided by multicoloured costumes and acrobatic figures, evoke an element of circus-like exoticism. For example, in one dance the main

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inclusive' package holidays in Aigina and the organisation of different activities and excursions further increase the profits.

<sup>7</sup> *Syrta* as a word originated in France (see Petrides 1980; Hunt 1996). It appeared for the first time in the record label of the French company which included instructions for *Zorba's dance*.

male dancer stands upside-down with his head supported by a glass, then, in the second part of the same dance, he lifts a table with his teeth and spins around his axis. These dance acrobatics are included in the choreography with the purpose of attracting the attention of the audience (see Fig. 8.7).

Syrtaki, as other folk dances, appears to be generally aimed towards spectator's approval, while the true dance is private [...] In addition, dancers began introducing new, flashy patterns of steps, that looked good and the budding tourist trade liked to watch.

(Petrides 1975: 31, 60)

Moreover, there is a noticeable difference between women and men dancers concerning their body positioning and dancing styles. Apparently, dancing becomes gendered, reflecting a sexual quality. Jane Cowan (1990: 4) in her book *Dance and Body Politic in Northern Greece* argues that in Greece each dance-event is both a physical and conceptual site «where celebrants perform in gendered ways and experience themselves as gendered subjects». Most of the dances are performed by male dancers who monopolise the dance floor whereas women dancers stay in the background of the stage. On the one hand, there is the provocative dancing of men in *syrtaki* and *zeimbekiko*, both expressing masculinity and danced mainly in solos showing off the virtuosity of the dancers. While these solos are performed, women dancers are virtually prohibited from participating. Instead, women dance in groups and never perform extravagant body movements. Referring to the male dancer's use of space, Rubidge (1989: 5) claims that spectacular steps, postures and gestures are one way in which the male dancer can appear strong, projecting his masculinity.

In solos, men traverse the stage commandingly with spectacular jumps, the female dancer performs much smaller and neater steps within a more confined area. Spectacular jumps are one way in which the male dancer can appear strong.

As dance-events are very much at the centre of community life in Greece, their gendered qualities are reflections and manifestations of the patriarchal social structures (Cowan 1990). In the case, however, of the dance-events performed in 'The Old Stables', gendered dancing is purposive; it is basically a means to attract the audience's attention. By using extreme choreographies as the ones described earlier, male dancers become caricatures of the male figure, presenting a confused conception of Greek masculinity to their audience. In reality, they construct a reverse power relationship

between themselves and the audience: it is the latter group who is in control. According to Burt (1995), since dance is a visual performance «power is linked to the act of looking» while being on display results in loss of power. As a result, the audience's gaze transforms the dancer to a commodity. What is really «commodified by being looked at on display is his sexuality [...] the 'Other'» (Burt 1995: 51). As such, dance-events like the ones in the taverna, reflect tourists' expectations of gazing and experiencing the different, the exotic, the erotic and, finally, the other. More than anything else, this power relationship is by its very nature a remnant of colonial discourse where «the curiosities of 'others' [are] presented for consumption as a spectacle, a *tableau vivant*» (Edensor 1998: 23). By displaying male sexuality, these shows connect otherness with eroticism. The recipient of such *colonial erotica* is obviously the female audience. While male dancers portray a replica figure of Zorba, women spectators adapt to the 'Sirley Valentine' persona.<sup>8</sup> When, for instance, at the second part of the show, male dancers invite women spectators to dance together, the dance floor is literally packed with Zorbas and Sirleys. Male dancers randomly pick women from the audience to dance with them. They first show them some basic steps and then they dance all together (see Fig. 8.8). As Greek traditional dances rarely involve dancing in couples, the music changes into waltzes and finally Salsa and Lambada, a sexually explicit Latin-American dance. By the end of the show, the dancers lift women, spectators-become-fellow-dancers, up on their shoulders. One of my interviewees, after her 'dance-floor' experience, commented:

*(Christine Jones, 40 years old, from U.K., The Old Stables, 26-09-97)*

Ah, definitely, I felt like Shirley Valentine, flirting with this gorgeous man. He danced so sexy and yes, his legs looked also sexy, I' m just wondering if he's an athlete. If I had more time I would had asked him for a date ((laughs)).

Generally speaking, these shows present a carnivalesque version of the Greek tradition: they are pre-eminent paradoxical spaces associated with strangeness, caricature, exoticism, amusement and, finally, otherness (Shields 1991; Hetherington 1997). According to Bakhtin (1984), the emphasis should be placed on the grotesque character of liminal spaces that contains all those categories of Otherness. By assuming different

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<sup>8</sup> 'Sirley Valentine' is the title of a British film in the late eighties. It is the story of a woman in her late thirties who after an unsuccessful relationship set up for the Greek islands where she got sexually involved with a local fisherman and found real love.

personae and excessive behaviours, people celebrate the carnivalesque and grotesque character of events as the above which, finally, become «a highly theatrical spectacle» (Hetherington 1997: 29). Apparently, it is the carnivalesque quality of the evening, rather than the anticipation of any genuinely authentic atmosphere, that makes the event attractive to the tourist, both as spectator and participant (Löfgren 1999). The tourists expect to see and taste the exotic and strange; that's what is important in their experience. They are well-aware that what they see is not authentic but a spectacle. As one of the people I was sitting with in the taverna mentioned:

*(Sujata, 29 years old, from U.K., The Old Stables, 3-10-97)*

I presume that what I saw tonight it's not really Greek. I mean, I don't think you Greeks really dance that way, do you? ((laughs)) But I liked it. Yes, it was great to see all these funny dancers and singers. My God, they were horrible, do you really sing that bad?

It is their awareness of inauthenticity that transforms tourists as Sujata to what Urry (1990) calls '*post-tourists*'. Following Urry's argument, May (1996: 726) suggests that:

Alternatively, one could adopt the more sophisticated position of the 'recreational tourist' -playfully accepting an event [...] as authentic even though, 'deep down', one is aware of its inauthenticity- or the more complex position of the post-tourist, revelling in its obvious inauthenticity as game to be played.

### **8.3. Dangerous Athens: Women in the nocturnal city**

The city after dark has, however, a dual personality, wherein liminal zones are both pleasurable and dangerous places. These two contrasting night images of urban space are distanced from each other as much as possible. Urban planning results in the segmentation of the urban structure into distinct zones, each allocated with a particular function and character. Meanwhile, city policing attempts to prevent the overlapping of safe and dangerous zones by segregating them and confining them within sharply marked boundaries. Enclavic tourist areas, in particular, are supposed to be the ultimate representations of safety. Within their boundaries, tourists can stroll anywhere, at any time of the day, without the fear of being in immediate danger. The intense night lighting of these areas gives tourists the possibility to have a clear view of the place, even of the narrowest streets, whilst the constant policing increases the sense of security that, especially, foreign tourists feel. Besides, tourist districts as Plaka, by



being thoroughly described and mapped in guidebooks, travel brochures and so forth, are characterised by predictability and familiarity, this way eliminating the fear someone might feel in a completely unknown place. Most of the activities inside tourist areas take place within confined spaces (e.g. tavernas, cafeterias, night clubs, theatres), whereas the nocturnal street is presented as the space of threatening dangers and conflicts, the space whose function is limited to ensuring transport from one confined place to the next, finally providing the way to the hotel or home (Schlör 1998). The streets of the nocturnal city, therefore, represent a terrain of potential insecurity which runs like a leitmotif that describes the streets as places where people expose themselves to danger.

Then, there is the rest of the city, beyond the boundaries of the tourist area, looking strange, unfamiliar and unsafe. Tourists know little about the other parts of the city, since they get limited information about them. In fact, the stranger a place, the stronger the feeling of danger it inspires. Generally speaking, darkness frightens; particularly darkness in a foreign city, with a different, unfamiliar and unpredictable urban plexus, culture and people. In addition, access to the nocturnal city is often obstructed as a result of the fact that Athens, particularly at night, is not a pedestrian-friendly city. It is a busy, car-oriented city and this tends to confine strollers (tourists) into pedestrian zones making them losing contact with the city as a whole. According to Schlör (1998: 14) the result of the partly experienced nightscape is that:

[its] *mental* topography changes together with the real: greater 'clarity' and functional separation restrict the possible routes we can take, and limit our imagination too. The 'other side' of accessibility is the *limit*. It is a matter not just of what the possibilities are for moving around but also of the obstructions that stand in the way of autonomous perambulation.

This elliptic and omitted experience of the nocturnal city, resulting from mobility restrictions and construction of dangerous inner city zones, is apparently *gendered*. Men and women experience a different topography of the nocturnal city, mainly due to the fact that the latter group has less access to the nocturnal urban settings. Even if cities today are no longer 'prohibited' spaces, and an infrastructure of readily accessible niches is in place, there is still a higher level of fear for women than men. According to studies on crime and fear in urban environments, although crime *per se*

and the fear of crime affect both the men and women who live in cities, women are especially affected (Simpson et al. 1981; Smith 1989; Anderson et al. 1990; Pain 1991). Some of the behaviours that correlate most strongly with the women's fear of crime are those that result in restriction of their mobility: going out only in daytime, not doing certain things for fear of crime, or even driving instead of walking (Gordon et al. 1981; Pain 1991). Frecot describes this condition of restricted mobility in a more literary manner, arguing that:

Night belongs to man, he can afford it. A woman at night moves differently through the streets: she walks as if down the middle of the road, equidistant from dark entrances and the din from pub doors.

(in Rau-Höring 1987: 5)

In feminist geography, it is commonly reiterated that "space reflects, reinforces, and helps recreate in new forms gender differences" (Bowlby et al. 1982:714). Under the same light, Gill Valentine (1989; 1992) concludes that, since women tend to feel more at risk in particular places and during certain times (at night), their fear is spatial. Her argument is grounded on theories of feminist geography claiming that the city *par excellence* is constructed by means of multiple contrasts, of which the ultimate one is the dynamic polarity of male-female (Women and Geography Study Group 1984; Rose 1990; 1993; Wilson 1991; Massey 1994). There is a whole symbolism responsible for constructing this polar opposition, according to which the city is a male territory whereas the suburbs belong to the suppressed female (Saegert 1981; Rose 1990; 1993; Pain 1991). According to this symbolic dichotomy, suburban life corresponds to domesticity, reproduction and safety, whereas urban life represents civil society, production and danger (Duncan 1996).

No wonder that male and female symbolism should distinguish city and suburb with such decisiveness. Not only to the gender of the daytime population does suburbia owe its essential femininity, but also to the domesticity which is its very *raison d' être*, and its corresponding alienation from the 'serious' work which has always taken place within the masculine province of the city [...]. The suburbs, in this sense, conform to the Freudian conception of femininity: passive, intellectually void, instinctually destructive.

(Schwartz 1976: 334-35)

Since public space is created, occupied and controlled by men, women's inhibited use of that space is a spatial expression of patriarchy (Valentine 1989; Rose 1990).

Metaphorically speaking, women are stripped from their freedom to occupy and use public spaces; consequently, this spatio-gendered restriction is transformed into unease and fear of the *masculine* public (Hamner and Saunders 1984; Rose 1993). Women's precautionary behaviour itself shows the extent of the colonisation of public spaces by men. Despite the notion that the public sphere is open to all; in practice, it is restricted.

Besides, the notion of being in a public space increases the feeling of unease and fear, as this is the «space [women] share with strangers, people who aren't their relatives, friends or work associates» (Waltzer 1986: 472). As suggested in a study carried out in Reading about women's fear of male violence:

When a woman is in an area beyond her local environment she makes judgements about her safety in public space on the basis of preconceived images she holds about that area and its occupants.

(Valentine 1989: 288)

Women travellers exemplify the above condition. The geography of fear is intensified for women travellers, whose topographical knowledge of the visited place is limited to predetermined 'safe' (tourist) areas. In fact, their freedom of movement is confined in few areas, mainly those described in guidebooks and recommended by travel agents and tour-operators. The main purpose of constructing and promoting such a confined mapping is the avoidance of both potentially unpredictable situations and unpleasant encounters with strangers by controlling women travellers' movement within these areas.

In most guidebooks -nowadays- there is a special section dedicated to women travellers. This section mainly describes local attitudes towards, and perceptions of, women, as well as customs and morals with which one needs to conform (e.g. dressing code) in order to avoid unpleasant situations. In the case of guidebooks to Greece, particular attention is given to the description of the local male culture, most often characterised as *macho*. As written in the special edition of the Rough Guide on women travellers' experiences «Greek machismo is strong, but less upfront than the equivalent in Spain and Italy» (Davies et al 1986: 85). It is also stated that in Greece there is not a serious problem with sexual harassment and that most of the hassle a

woman is likely to get is from few Greek men who try to establish some kind of sexual relationships with young women travellers (Davies et al 1986; Rough Guide 1992). These men are best known in Greece as *kamakia* (harpoons). Sofka Zinovieff (1991: 203), who researched the phenomenon of *kamakia* in Greece, gives the following description:

A kamaki is a harpoon for spearing fish, but the word is also used metaphorically in Greece. It describes the act of a Greek man pursuing a foreign woman with the intention of having sex. There is an implied use of cunning, and of mastering a physical interaction, as there would be in this type of fishing. [...] These 'hunters' systematically attempt to have sexual relationships with tourist women, rather than with Greek women.

Continuing her observations on *kamakia*, Zinovieff (1991) claims that in reality, their attitudes towards foreign women are far less offensive than what is depicted in travelogues to Greece. She argues that in a vast number of travel books the narrative used to portray *kamakia* is based on humorous accounts and exaggerations -sometimes even insulting- about «overenthusiastic Greek men» who, at the end, resemble male prostitutes (Zinovieff 1991: 205). In the Rough Guide (1992: 111) for instance, they are depicted as men who «migrate to main resorts and towns in summer in pursuit of 'liberated, fun-loving' tourists» and whose «oblivious stake-outs are beach bars and discos». In Rawlins' (1997: 61) book *Culture Shock! Greece*, they are described as «unmarried men who stalk women for deliberate sexual advantages». The language used to portray the *kamakia* is similar in both narratives, however, in the latter the author goes beyond mere descriptions blaming women travellers' 'loose behaviour'. He argues that «the dress and demeanour of some foreign women encourage» Greek men to physically (sexually) or/and verbally harass them and suggests that these women should wear more appropriate clothes, instead (Rawlins 1997: 61).

In Athens, *kamakia* frequent tourist areas and the environs of archaeological sites and museums where they can approach women travellers easier than anywhere else in the city. In one of my fieldwork sessions at the National Archaeological Museum, for instance, I myself experienced the 'fishing techniques' of one *kamaki*. I was sitting in the park next to the museum after a long afternoon of interviews and fieldwork while a few metres across my bench a young woman tourist was chatting with a guy.

Overhearing their conversation, I realised that he was a *kamaki* trying to persuade the girl to go out with him. At the end he gave up and left the girl alone. Then, he walked towards me and sat next to me on the bench. He thought that I was a foreigner too and, in half English-half Greek, he proposed to me the same as to the girl. As I declined his offer, his approach became more persistent; then he tried to touch me. Since it was almost dark, I started feeling insecure and I left; he followed me until I reached the bus station. I found this a rather unwelcome demonstration of the truth lying behind Hamner and Saunders' (1984) argument that women's sense of security in public spaces is affected by their inability to choose with whom they interact and communicate.

Unlike men, women find that when in public space their personal space is frequently invaded by whistles, comments or actual physical assault from strange men.

(Valentine 1989: 386)

In fact, it was the first time during my fieldwork that I identified with my interviewees and, to a degree, I shared both their views and gaze of the city. Until then, I was the researcher who was taking up a detached position in fieldwork, carrying out «a particular kind of masculine endeavor», as Gillian Rose calls it (1993: 70). According to her argument, the field has been feminised and become both a seductive and wild place that must be observed and analysed by the researcher, creating with this way:

a tendency wherein femininity becomes the Other, the space above which and against which geographers of reason define their science, their art and [...] their selves.

(Sparke 1996: 215)

However, the notion of otherness is nothing but a colonial relationship *par excellence*, in which living places and body spaces are colonised (Bondi 1992). As such, on the one hand, there is the *macho* model of men first entering and then colonising the field and, on the other hand, there is the feminised nature in science -therefore fieldwork- and consequently the masculine gaze upon the latter (Rose 1993). My case, though, was quite different: I was a woman researcher who was observing other women's experiences in a masculine space. As the above anecdote reveals, in the particular setting my gender was by definition more visible and, therefore, important than my role as a researcher. That incident resulted in me changing accidentally my status from

observer to participant: for a while I found myself in the same position as my female interviewees, I, also, represented, the colonised other. In this respect, I was a «multiply positioned actor», in the terms used by Katz (1994: 66, 72) to describe the space between subject and research positions. Following a feminist approach, Allan Pred (1984: 91) argues that academic (research) and non-academic (subject) lives should not be looked as being «in dichotomous opposition to one another, but dialectically interrelated». Under the same light, Kobayashi (1994: 76) claims that «there is more to gain from building commonality than from essentializing difference».

My own experience of sexual/verbal harassment verified the above arguments as, first, my academic life coincided with the non-academic and, second, it proved that I could share the same experiences with my interviewees. However, I was in a position more advantageous than theirs: I was a native, therefore I knew how to handle such a situation. My interviewees, by contrast, were foreigners, visiting Athens for a short period; consequently they were unfamiliar with local male attitudes towards women. In one case, for instance, an interviewee was approached by a *kamaki* who, after being told that she was looking for cheap accommodation in the city, invited her to his place. My interviewee finally went. As she said:

*(Jenny, 29 years old, from U.K., Flea Market, 1-09-98)*

He seemed nice and anyway he was quite old, probably same age with my dad. I met him in that cafe next to the museum. I told him that I was looking for a youth hostel close to that area and he told me that it was a doggy part of the city and that I shouldn't stay there. He told me that he had a nice flat somewhere near Plaka and if I wanted I could go and stay there. I thought a bit about it and, as I said, he seemed O.K., so I agreed and went with him. He said also that he was married with two children so I thought that he was living with his family. When we arrived in his flat which was as I realised later on, far away from Plaka, there's no-one in. He said that his family was on holidays, even then I didn't feel in danger. But when I asked him for my room he showed me his bedroom, only then I realised that something was wrong and I got panicked. I told him that if he tried to do anything to me he would be in big trouble. He started yelling at me and calling me names. He said that I knew from the very beginning what he wanted and of course I said no. Then, he opened the door and let me leave. I was so scared. I've heard all this scary stories with rapes in tourist resorts. My friends, all had similar experiences in Greece, guys coming to you and asking you things and you think that it's so nice that you meet people but then you realise that they're only men.

Along with *kamakia* attitudes, the most common form of harassment women travellers receive is the verbal one. According to some feminist sociologists, like Merry and Pain, this kind of abuse, ranging from insults to flirtatious sexual comments, may cause a decrease of self respect, as well as a feeling of danger even when no threat of actual physical violence is contained (in Burgess 1998). In the example that follows my three interviewees felt that both their personal space and freedom were invaded by strangers (men) who verbally insulted them. As a result, they became more conscious of where and when to go.

T2.2 (*Anna, Barbara, Cassie, 23 years old, from U.K., National Archaeological Museums of Athens, 12-09-97*)

Me: Did you go out last night?

Barbara: No, we didn't go out. Anyway, there're lots of horrible people who don't leave you alone

Cassie: I wanted to go out but ...

Anna: I don't think that we would go out here at night as we're girls who are travelling on their own and so far we've seen the reaction we get from men in the daytime. You can't walk few metres without people telling you things.

Barbara: Even people on motorbikes they just, like, shout at you. It's very disturbing

Cassie: They come at you and stare at you, they like staring at you. Their eyes make you skimp, it's horrible. It was like that yesterday with that guy who kept saying probably nasty things in Greek and then made some horrible expressions with his mouth.

Anna: They've got no respect, they don't respect you, they just invade. It's like feeling no safety at all. You feel that they gonna grab you any time, they don't care about you.

Me: So did you have any problems with Greek men in Athens?

Barbara: Nothing serious, it's just the overall feeling you get here. We don't feel very comfortable; you know that you gonna get that look.

Cassie: It's all these noises at you, that whistling.

Anna: But I don't see them shouting at local girls. Probably it's a different body language, body expression. We're too vulnerable because we don't know.

Barbara: Yeah, we don't know how to get away from them.

In general, sexual harassment of any kind, as a gendered experience, could create particular anxieties for women, especially in open spaces after dark. To protect themselves from unpleasant incidents, they follow precautionary behaviours, avoiding poorly lit or unfamiliar areas, strangers, and any other settings and situations that could possibly lead to danger. Many feminists think that such a behaviour signifies the extent to which particular spaces -especially outdoors areas- are male territories (Burgess

1998). In my question, for instance, on whether my interviewees went to the National Gardens or in any other outdoors space in the city centre, they either replied that they would not consider going to such places due to their fear of strangers, or that they had already been victims of some kind of sexual harassment. Focusing on the latter reply, most of the interviewees -like the one below- were referring to incidents of men flashing in parks and other public places.

T4.2 (*Jennifer, 24 years old, from New Jersey, Students' Inn, 10-07-98*)

Jennifer: I was sitting on a bench, you know, in one of these *travellerspots* and this man was sitting on the other bench opposite mine and, you know, he had his pants unzipped and I had to look at him and, you know, he was in a way *entertaining* himself, I mean pleasuring himself and, you know, it's out in the open and I had to look, it was awful and then he was gone. Two of my friends whom I met here in Athens last June, they told me that they had similar experiences and had seen weird things happening in the park and other places around the city.

Me: What time did that incident occur?

Jennifer: It was early evening. Anyway, I don't go there after sunset. The National Gardens are so beautiful and I would love to go there in order to sit in the park and read a book or whatever, but I don't want to feel uncomfortable. It's probably because I've been in other times, late in the evening, and there's sort of strange feeling about the place; I think I've been a little scared.

McNeill's (1987) study of women in Leeds found that most incidents of male genital exposure take place in the afternoon/early evening and mainly in remote streets, parks or even the countryside. The effect of flashing upon women is the feeling of limited freedom of movement: men invade women's personal space and destroy their sense of security in public spaces. In addition, green places, as the National Gardens in Athens, are considered as enclosures which «obscure[s] the presence of the other people and make[s] individuals feel more isolated and alone than they might really be» (Burgess 1998: 121).

To summarise, due to their negative experiences in both day and night time, women travellers do not feel safe of being alone out in the city at night. Instead, they prefer to stay within 'crowded' tourist areas wherein they feel more secure and away from unpleasant situations.

T5.1 (*Saree, 22 years old, from U.K., Kidatheneon Square, 14-07-98*)

I feel pretty safe here ((she means Plaka)) because, I think, there're so many travellers everywhere in this area, entirely travellers.



#### 8.4. Colonising the night - colonising the female

In this chapter, I have sought to analyse the tourist colonisation of urban nightscapes. In particular, I have described the two-faced persona of the nocturnal city -the luminous and the dangerous- as gazed, experienced and consumed by tourists. From this analysis two conclusions are drawn.

First, by defining discrete liminal (leisure) and dangerous (dark) zones within the city, its urban plexus is automatically confined into segments of enclosed and exposed spaces. On the one hand, tourist areas function as closed circuit zones channelling movement. People can stroll around but only in confined, lighted areas, where even streets are part of the enclosed space, losing their original meaning. Any movement that takes place in these streets is either part of the areas' commercial activities (e.g. exit/entrance to restaurants, shops), or it is undertaken for the sole purpose of gazing at remarkable events, unlikely to be encountered in other parts of the city, and, therefore, characteristic of the particular tourist zone. These places give tourists the impression of freedom of movement and safety, while they are actually spaces of withdrawal: they preclude direct contact with urban street life. Tourists are led from one closed space to the other, consuming night life activities. The evening and night life of these closed spaces is created, however, within a contradiction: it is a life *in* the night, and at the same time a life *without* it. One leaves the security of one such place in order to enter as quickly as possible into other buildings and Disneyfied leisure zones. On the other hand, dark areas, perceived as dangerous, are left outside tourist zones and omitted from tourist maps and guidebooks. Metaphorically speaking, they are treated as a kind of 'no-man's land' wherein night life is related to danger and encounters with strangers. According to descriptions found in markers and tourists' narratives, any place outside the tourist area seems to embody images of threat and danger at night. As such, the whole nightscape beyond and away from its liminal zones is gazed as a dangerous, strange space which at the end remains a *terra incognita* for tourists.

Second, referring to the colonisation of night, a gendered discourse is created: night symbolises the female quality. As Schivelbusch argues night «*is female*, as the day is male, and like everything female it brings quiet and terror at the same time» (in Schlör

1998: 169). In this image, both night and women are seen as alien terrain inspiring fear, while being at the same time fascinating and desirable. Nightscapes are therefore feminised spaces where «one should be able to penetrate into [...] as into a human body» (ibid.: 169). In fact, my analysis in this chapter is based in many aspects on this metaphor. The idea itself of tourists entering the nightscape is mainly about gazing and experiencing the female, the Other. It is a gender relationship between masculine gaze and gazed feminine. Such a case is evident, for instance, at the night experience of dance-events. Tourists -no matter their gender, both men and women- by gazing the dancers personify the penetrating masculine whereas the latter the desirable female. They colonise the female, the Other. Moreover, the division of the nocturnal city into dangerous and liminal regions is apparently connected with the metaphor of 'night as woman': «yearning for the city and yearning for 'woman', fear of the city and fear for woman» (Schlör 1998: 170).

Women travellers, however, perceive the nocturnal city as threatening, full of possible unpleasant encounters and dangers. The attitudes of the Athenian men are perceived as invasive and disrespectful. This fear of sexual harassment and their feeling that they are not qualified to handle any threat coming from alien men and subjected to an unfamiliar moral code, curtails any freedom of movement of many female travellers and drastically confines them within the tourist zone, populated by inoffensive fellow tourists and locals working for the tourist industry.



Fig. 8.1 Tourists window-shopping in Plaka area.



Fig. 8.2 A busker dressed as a bouzouki player from the thirties carrying a pianola while tourists are passing by.





Fig. 8.3 Buskers playing Greek folk music in a taverna in the main square of Plaka.



Fig. 8.4 Greek Folk Dancers of the Dora Stratou Theatre.





Fig. 8.5 A waiter dressed with the traditional Greek costume, 'foustanella', grilling meat in the 'Old Stables' taverna.



Fig. 8.6 Male dancers performing the 'zembekiko dance' in the 'Old Stables' taverna.





Fig. 8.7 Male dancers in 'foustanella' performing acrobatic dance movements.



Fig. 8.8 A male dancer is dancing with a female tourist while in the background other women are clapping hands.

## EPILOGUE

### Epilogue 1: Experiencing and Narrating Modern Athens

This thesis is about tourists' experience of Athens. Being its writer, I have also been an interpreter of their voices, a medium of their experience of the city. At the same time, I had to maintain the distance of the researcher, wanting to interpret my findings critically. This might have led to the reification of the tourists, to the elevation of my critical gaze upon their gaze to a place of prominence. For these reasons, I find it appropriate to end this thesis with an outline of the tourist experience of Athens as described by the voices of my interviewees.

T3.1 (*Susan, 40 years old, from Los Angeles, artist, 27-06-98*)

m: did you know anything about Athens before visiting the city?

s: about WHAT?

m: MODERN ATHENS

s: I see, no I didn't

T2.3 (*Flora, 24 years old, from Germany, student, 15-09-97*)

No I can't say that I know. I know about the archaeological district, but I don't know anything about the modern part of Athens.

T4.1 (*Jeanne 27 years old, from Cape Town, student, 10-07-98*)

I am not aware of anything... I don't really know anything about modern Athens.

As in the above interviews, most of the replies were short, even monolectic. The respondents did not have much to say about modern Athens. One of the interviewees said that she did not know what she was *expected* to know. Some knew only about the ancient part and/or the negative images of the city.

T2.1 (*Sue and Pat, 22 years old, from UK, graduates, 27-08-97*)

p: I think I only knew the Acropolis

s: yeah and about the smog

T6.2 (*Penny, 21 years old, from New Zealand, student, 24-07-98*)

I have heard that [Athens] was made of cement and was polluted and dirty. I have also heard that there is the Acropolis and that it is very hot. All of these are true.

Whatever their answer, most of my interviewees seemed to be baffled while gazing Athens. Before stepping or landing on the Athenian ground, foreign tourists conceived their visit there as a trip to an antique land; however, they found themselves literally trapped within a modern city strange to them:

*(Nigel, 28 years old, from Canada, urban planner, 29-08-97)*

Before I came to Athens, the only thing I knew about the city was its history. I knew about Acropolis, I knew that it was the birthplace of democracy, I knew that it was the hometown of Socrates and Plato [...] but I didn't know that during the Ottoman Occupation Greece wasn't an autonomous state and that Athens wasn't city-state but a village.

Nigel's statement is reminiscent of Robert Eisner's (1991: 258) description of the frustration one feels on arrival to a destination place: «on stepping off the plane, bus, boat, out of the taxi or rental car, one asks one's self, Is this the place? Of course it is, they'll tell you».

Most of the tourists I interviewed imagined Athens either as an idyllic, picturesque place, or an air-polluted cacophony, depending on how it is portrayed in photographs and TV shows, described in guidebooks, brochures and history books which they have seen and read. My interviewees' experience of familiarity and unfamiliarity with Athens at the same time is identical to what Rawlins (1997) and Faubion (1991) noted:

We believe we know Greece before we come. We know the place by looking at photographs of it, and we know it from its music, and we know it profoundly from its literature and architecture and sculpture. And we know it, too, from our grammar-school history books [...]. It is a familiar place. And yet, it is all unfamiliar. Modern Athens will finally reduce to ruins any idea you have of it before you come.

(Rawlins 1997: 51)

The Greece I knew was a Greece of novels and poems, of historiographies and ethnographies, of the occasional television documentary and coffee-table picture book. The Athens with which I was most familiar was an Athens long past: the home of Thucydides and Plato. [...] I did not believe that I would find it intact in the present. But I was not at all sure what, precisely, I would find in its place.

Faubion (1991: 23)

These two researches, however, had the opportunity to stay in the city for long periods of time, to see and experience a lot more than ancient ruins and relics. The modern



Athenian society was, actually the subject of Faubion's book. The majority of tourists stay up to a week and they were actively encouraged, by guidebooks and tour-guides, to focus their gaze on contrasting past and present landscapes.

The contrasting tourist experiences of Athens are not only historical (i.e. ancient vs. modern) but also geographical (i.e. West vs. East). In fact, in most cases, tourists interpret the latter as synonymous with the former, conceiving ancient Athens as part of the Occident, whereas the modern city is for them an amalgam of orientalist 'other' spaces. As Herzfeld notes, there is not a single Greece, since, like any other symbol, it «could carry a wide range of possible meanings» (ibid. 1982: 5). There are, therefore, two symbolisms of Greece: on the one hand, there is the triad of *Classical Greece*, *Occident* and *Hellas* all embodied in the concept of Europe whereas on the other hand, there are *Modern Greece*, *Orient* and *Romiossini* interlinked with each other and forming a distinct entity (Herzfeld 1982; 1987; 1997). Many of the tourists I interviewed expressed the notion of a dichotomy between the idealised Greece of the classical past, Hertzfeld's (1982; 1987; 1997) *Hellas*, which actually has become a twin concept of Europe, and that part of Greek history related to Byzantium, the Greek Orthodox Church and the Ottoman Empire. The latter, what Hertfeld calls *Romiossini* is estranged from Western European history.

Following these notions, people I interviewed often envisaged themselves remaining within the boundaries of a familiar place, while at the same time Athens was perceived as an oriental city. Their view of modern Greeks was also fashioned after the same dichotomy between the Occidental and Oriental character of modern Athens, its perception not as one city synthesising variable aspects, but as the territorial coexistence of two parallel but irreconcilable worlds.

T4.1 (*Jeanne, 27 years old, from Cape Town, graduate, 10-07-98*)

I was born in Europe and I know a lot of European cities and I think that Athens is a mixture of cultures. I think the people make it a very unique kind of city, because, I think, Greeks are very different from any other European people. The architecture is also different, I found it quite unique and different. I don't know much about it, I think there is some sort of Arabic influence which I don't understand, so I don't know how to interpret it. I don't find Athens a typical European city.

T5.2 (*Kristin, 23 years old, from South Africa, traveller, 17-07-98*)

Maybe I need some weeks to know better Athens, but I think that the West is attached to the old city and the East to the modern part. [...] No, I don't think it looks particularly European and it is also the weather; it's too hot to be European.

Modern Athens is, thus, in the eyes of tourists a two-fold city: an imperfect European city as much as an imperfect Oriental one<sup>1</sup>. Two tourists, for instance, during their guided tour around the city-centre, had the following conversation while passing in front of a McDonald's fast-food:

(*Guided-tour, Trust Hellenic Tours, 19-06-98*)

Tourist 1: See there, there's a McDonald's!

Tourist 2: But of course they have McDonald's here! You see, this is progress!

Modern Athens is also experienced as an imperfect reincarnation of its ancient past. Its very modernity is often a drawback, a disappointment:

(*Karen, 57 years old, from UK, shop-assistant, 19-06-98*)

Athens is a very difficult city for tourists. You expect other things than what you really see when you arrive. I thought that there would be statues around the city but they weren't anywhere.

This myth-like comparison of past and present spaces, described by the majority of tourists as a disappointing and frustrating condition, applies particularly to the narratives of Acropolis. Acropolis is the major, if not the only, reason for many tourists' visit to Athens. They know its structure, architecture and basic history long before visiting it. For them, it is basically a white-marble monument representing the best-ever example of architectural perfection, as well as the symbol of democracy. Acropolis, throughout its two-thousand years of existence, has become the *genius locus* of Athens, thus identifying its character and, metaphorically speaking, its spirit (Norberg-Schulz 1971; 1979; Loukaki 1997). Its symbolic domination over Athens transformed the rest of the city to a 'cultural colony' (Faubion 1991:38). In this respect, Acropolis' isolation for the rest of the city, or, even better, the absence of the latter

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<sup>1</sup> I have paraphrased Robert Shannan-Peckham (1999) who, referring to the way nineteenth century travel literature and guidebooks portrayed Greeks, says that «if the Greeks were portrayed as imperfect Orientals, they were also imperfect Europeans» (see Duncan and Gregory 1999: 173).

from the picture, should not be surprising. However, when tourists finally approach the 'sacred site' and stand next to the columns and scaffoldings, their disappointment is more than obvious. First, they are not alone up there, they are with their fellow travellers; second, the main sites are under construction and restoration, meaning that tourists are surrounded by workers, scaffoldings and renovated columns; third, there is noise and air pollution that make their visit unbearable, especially during summer; finally, there is the view of modern Athens that makes Acropolis look completely different than its portrayal in photographs as an isolated site.

T4.2 (*Jenny, 24 years old, from New Jersey, 10-07-98*)

I liked Acropolis a lot but there is one thing I didn't like so much when I was up there: the noise. I wish there was not any noise and people around Acropolis just for a day; I wish also that cars and aeroplanes were prohibited; I wish I could feel the SILENCE of the place as it was in the ancient Athens with no machinery and technology.

(*Robert, 33 years old, from UK, 19-06-98*)

Today morning I went to Acropolis but what I saw up there confused me. I'm not sure if I liked Acropolis or not. All my life, I had a certain idea about Acropolis. It's all that stuff we learned at school and saw in photographs. But, when I was up there, it wasn't as I expected it at all. Acropolis wasn't so white as in my books and there were also the scaffoldings. There was also the rest of the city and the smog and the tourists. It wasn't so ideal... I don't know how to describe my feelings; I just expected it to be so different from what it is now...just different, I can't describe how.

At the end, Acropolis, as gazed by tourists today, is an imperfect *genius locus*, contrasting images of its superimposed and superficial past and its present condition of restoration and position at the centre of a modern cityscape.

In brief, my thesis was focused on the contrast between Modern and Classical, Oriental and Occidental, Hellenic and Romeic, Western and Eastern images of Athens. The fragmentation of the Athenian landscape into these pairs of polarising morphemes is apparent in the majority of tourists' activities in the city.

## **Epilogue 2: Interpreting the Urban Myths of Athens**

My own aim here is to investigate the plot, and its implications for the nature of character, of the modern city, in the hope that we may better understand what it is that cities do to us, and how they change our styles of living and thinking and feeling.

(Raban 1974: 10)

Like Raban's *Soft City*, this thesis is an investigation of the place of a city in human imagination: the urban experience. As this thesis shows, one does not need to be a resident of a city in order to experience its cityscape. This said, however, tourists' perception of a visited city is distinct. The distinct experience of the city of Athens by foreign tourists forms the subject of this thesis. My intention is to describe first how the city of Athens is experienced, gazed and narrated by tourists in a way determined by its special position in the Western self-consciousness and second how this tourist gaze has been constructed and promoted. After giving an account of the in-transit character of tourism in Athens, I summarise the main conclusions of this study. I do this by referring to the main factors that fashion the tourists' experience of Modern Athens: the myths of Athens created by nineteenth century travellers to Greece, the guidebooks and tourist brochures, the experience of guided tours and tour-guides' narratives, the photographic narratives that tourists themselves compose, their bodily engagement with the city while walking, their function of hotels and airports, and the tourists' experience of Athens' urban nightscape. Finally, I attempt to give a general account of the tourists' experience of Modern Athens as emerging from the voices of my interviewees.

The first chapter of this thesis is concerned with the current state of tourism in Athens. On the one hand, Athens has become part of the organised holiday packages to Greece. A large number of its visitors are mass tourists whose holiday packages include a day trip to the city. On the other hand, tourism in Athens has been facing a crisis for the last twenty years: both the total number of tourists visiting Athens annually and the average number of nights they spent in the city have been in decline. Athens is perceived by tourists as an 'in transit' destination, visited before and/or after the main part of their holidays elsewhere in Greece (e.g. the Aegean Islands). Despite the character of Athens

as a large multifunctional city, its tourism product is restricted to cultural heritage: most of the tourist activities take place in and around the historic centre of Athens, where the major monuments, archaeological sites and hotels are situated, whereas the rest of the city and its events and functions are of little interest to tourists. Athens is, therefore, a multifunctional capital city with a mono-functional tourist product: its history. The mutation of tourism in Athens to an 'in-transit' tourism is the inevitable result of its mono-functional character, which concentrates tourism activities within a single district. Since the Athenian tourism is mainly concerned with specific monuments, museums and sites, while other types of tourism activities are limited, visitors do not need to spend in the city any time longer than what is needed to visit the latter monuments. This 'in transit' character of tourism in Athens, therefore, accounts for the gradual decrease of the number of nights spent in Athens during the last twenty years.

Athens is trapped in a no way-out situation, similar to what Hewison described as 'bogus history', structured around the myth of its 'glorious past'. Athens' promotion as the 'birthplace of western civilisation' on the basis of its Classical past excludes sites of different periods and the modern city from advertising campaigns and, hence, from the tourists' interest. An idealised classical Athens is what the tourism industry has been selling so far and may as well keep selling in the future. The promotion of future mega-events (e.g. the Olympic Games 2004) is based on the same idea of nostalgic impulses for the past, while the planned construction of the Archaeological Park, a Theme Park or Museum without Walls, further emphasises the division of the city into two *genius loci*: the present and the past.

Urban tourism in Athens, as perceived and promoted by the Greek tourism industry, relies on an urban mythology. By the latter I mean all these symbolic images which framework the Athenian landscape and give ground to the unilateral character of its tourism product.

In the second chapter I tried to show how the symbolic landscape of Greece was shaped in, and by, the West, as a series of interdependent texts, a metaphor of interlinked paths. This interpretation emphasises the influence of each historic period, from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment and then Romanticism, on the way the Hellenic Ideal was perceived and assigned a central place in the Western cosmogonic mythology. Due to their attachment to the Hellenic Ideal, European travellers and writers created a series of influential myths which transformed Greece to a utopian landscape. These myths are the fragmentation of the Athenian landscape to ancient and modern, its depopulation from its present inhabitants and the orientalised of the modern city, which was regarded as the exotic 'other'. The cornerstone argument of this thesis is that the tradition of these travellers -especially that of the nineteenth century romantic travellers- lingered on to the present day, as their visualisation of the Greek landscape became the guide for the tourists' imagination. In contrast with the nineteenth century travellers, however, the tourists do not produce myths but consume them, attempting to recognise particular mythological elements within the pre-established landscape. The above difference notwithstanding, the tourists' perception of Greece is similar to their predecessors': the nostalgic impulses for a past that was never experienced but just imagined; the orientalised of the Athenian landscape; the fragmentation of the urban landscape according to the different historical moments of the city and finally the depopulation of the present inhabitants are all part of the tourist experience in Athens.

For Athens there is no escape from the ever-apparent spectre of its antiquity. As Derrida put it, the city is haunted by the presence of its ruins.

As shown through the retrospective view of the Athenian past and present presented in chapter 3, the development of Athens took place as a process of selective remembering and forgetting. Modern Athens can be viewed as consisting of juxtaposed layers of unequal significance; actual remnants of ancient monuments and subsequent references to the classical past (neo-classicism) are overemphasised as constituting the identity of Athens. This superiority of the classical historical layer over the Athenian space gives Athens the character of a deconstructed city that 'owes itself to death'. This persistent

reference to the classical past also formed the basis of a long succession of master plans for the city since the foundation of modern Athens in 1834. These plans were mainly realised within the historical centre of Athens, upon which the tourist image of modern Athens is largely based. Future events of international scale and, thus, destined to exercise an important influence on the future of the city (e.g. Olympic Games 2004), are approached with the same spirit of classical-revivalism and the processes of selective remembering and forgetting are re-enforced.

As shown in chapter 4, stereotypical images and conventional clichés that characterise the writings of the nineteenth century visitors to Athens are repeated over and over through the modern travel literature of tourist guidebooks. The main effect of the unifying documentation of the city through guidebooks is to enable the traveller to rediscover and identify these preconceived images. Alternative representations, outside the stereotypes, are very difficult to maintain since their existence would cause frustration and disorientation to travellers. Guidebooks, by continuing the tradition of earlier travellers' memoirs, portray a fragmented city whose present history is missing and whose urban landscape is reduced to a few routes, directing tourists to the historical sites. This particular selectivity of monuments reduces the geography of the city to a mere description of a monumental but depopulated world, from which the present is absent. The actual landscape of Athens, is, thus, treated as comprising 'empti loci' - empty spaces to be filled with 'useful' information about facilities and monuments in the very centre of the city. At their worst, guidebooks represent the urban space as a 'non-place' that contains only transit points and temporary abodes: hotels, museums, airports.

Moreover, travel literature, -particularly guidebooks- represent 'imaginative geographies' of Athens which emphasise the distance and difference, the otherness of the visited place and its culture. Guidebooks, thus, like their predecessors (memoirs of romantic travellers) delineate two contrasting worlds, that of the tourist and that of the local inhabitant, the West and the Orient, Europe and Greece, past and present.

Many tourists learn about Athens not only from guidebooks, but also through the eyes of their guide; their gaze upon the city often follows the guides' instructions, suggestions and personal views. The selective remembering and forgetting of the

Athenian past that underpins most tourists' experiences of Athens is also apparent in the tour guides' narratives. Guides select, gloss and interpret sights and historical events, whereas they avoid to mention others (e.g. modern buildings). Athens' classical past and its monuments as well as the revival of this past through the neoclassical architecture form a prominent theme of tour-guides' narratives. The everyday life of the city, on the contrary, is often considered as unworthy of mentioning to the tourist audience. Guides, like guidebooks, prefer to construct a more imaginative image of the city, consisting of a summarised history and selected routes. Then, the tourists photograph the subject of their gaze.

Unlike nineteenth century romantic travellers, modern tourists do not use written narratives to capture, illustrate and commemorate their travel experience. The predominant sensory form which substituted written language is vision: the art of photography. Since collecting photographs is a general tourist practice, a *sine qua non* component of the travelling experience, photographing the city is one of the main activities of tourists in Athens. Tourists' photographs function as texts, constructing narratives by documenting reality. During guided tours, the tourists narrate Athens photographically, by reflecting in their pictures the oral narrative of the guide. The tourists, thus, assimilate the guide's narrative by reproducing it in a series of snapshots directed by the guide's narration. Whenever the bus passes in front of a famous site or monument, they photograph it.

By contrast with guided tours conducted by bus, when the city is gazed upon through the window, walking in Athens offers to tourists a physical, bodily experience of the city. Moreover, walking tourists have the opportunity to selected their routes by themselves, instead of having them selected on their behalf by a tour operator. In this way mental pictures gathered from the urban space are synthesised into the tourists'



personal geography. Tourists navigate themselves through the city by reference to specific landmarks. The latter, by forming distinctive spatial configurations, are mapped into mental schemata which orient tourists by telling them where they are within an array of infinite locational possibilities. Such mental cartography serves to identify, at various geographical scales, the important locations for gazing and to show how all these relate spatially. Cognitive mapping keeps tourists oriented in their urban surroundings, so that their movement becomes purposive. It helps them to link origins and destinations, keep directions and estimate distances.

Cognitive maps of Athens, constructed by walking tourists, tend to divide urban space into contrasting categories: enclosed and exposed places, inside and outside spaces characterised by a sense of hereness and thereeness, respectively. This division is exemplified by the bodily position of tourists while gazing upon the city. Specifically, Athens is looked either from vistas or panoramas, from within or without boundaries. As tourist movements vary, the boundary line between here and there changes. It seems that to some degree, people carry with them both spatial categories of hereness and thereeness while in motion.

This division of space into two separate islands strengthens the need of tourists to stay within enclosed tourist spaces. There they feel safe from any hustle caused by the outer cityscape. Many tourists know by heart the 'thicks and thins' of enclosed tourist spaces, their urban structure, as they have read about it in guidebooks and other forms of tourist literature; this knowledge gives them a familiar feeling. In addition, enclosed tourist spaces embody major landmarks, visible from a long distance. Tourists, therefore, rarely find themselves lost. What is missing from their walkabout journey in Athens is unpredictability and exploration; an accidental encounter with new places and districts of the city. Their body follows prescribed paths, leading from one landmark to another. The next step in space is more or less known, it is the next landmark. In a sense, their 'place ballets', to borrow Edensor's term (1998), are like those of tourists in guided tours. Both groups hold an abstracted image of Athens, based on fragmentation and readings of key graphic symbols.

The fragmentation of the Athenian landscape into pairs of polarising morphemes (Modern and Classical, Oriental and Occidental, Hellenic and Romeic, Western and Eastern), apparent in the majority of tourists' activities in the city lies in the core of the tourist's experience of modern Athens. This thesis investigates another two pairs of polarities: the anthropological place versus the non-place and the dayscape versus the nightscape.

As described in chapter 7, a considerable part of the contemporary tourist experience takes place within non-places. In this thesis I described tourist experiences from different kinds of heterotopoi/non-places in Athens: the airports and Piraeus Port, the roof garden of the Dorian Inn Hotel and the back alley of the Students' Inn Hostel. Each of these loci offers to tourists a different view of the city -the passing-by, the panoramic and the enclavic, respectively. The airports and the port of Piraeus, which accommodate tourists in an in-transit state, constitute an environment of temporality, of arrivals and departures. Contrary to the archaeological sites which attract the main attention during someone's visit to a place like Athens, the latter places are not considered as being of any special interest to the tourist. Whereas tourist sites attract movement, in-transit places are representations of inertia and, partly, of inactivity.

The other two examples of non-places in Athens are hotel lodges. There, two important functions are performed: first, the tourists can gaze at the city from a distance; second, inside hotel lodges, tourist's experiences, gained through walking, guided tours, visits to sites, etc., are reprocessed, anatomised and rebuilt into the growing, shared masonry of travellers' experience, into a 'place of memory'. Metaphorically speaking, the hotel is a vacuum space, with no dynamics by its own, but filled with images of the outside world imported by the tourists.

However, in all of the cases of non-places examined in this thesis, the city is gazed and experienced 'from within'. A spatial division is thus created. Athens is, again, sensed

as a fragmented city, divided between near, familiar, secure non-places and distant, unfamiliar anthropological spaces.

In chapter 8, I analyse the tourist colonisation of the Athenian nightscape. The nocturnal city is gazed, experienced and consumed by tourists as a two-faced persona:

a luminous and a dangerous one. This distinction between liminal (leisure) and dangerous (dark) zones within the city results in the segmentation of the urban plexus into enclosed and exposed spaces.

On the one hand, enclosed tourist areas function as closed circuit zones, channelling movement. People can stroll around but only in confined, lighted areas, where even streets are part of the enclosed space, losing their original meaning. Any movement that takes place in these streets is either part of the areas' commercial activities (e.g. exit/entrance to restaurants, shops), or it is undertaken for the sole purpose of gazing at remarkable events, unlikely to be encountered in other parts of the city, and, therefore, characteristic of the particular tourist zone. While enclosed tourist areas give tourists the impression of freedom of movement and safety, they are actually spaces of withdrawal, since they preclude direct contact with urban street life. Tourists are led from one closed space to the other, consuming night life activities. The evening and night life of these closed spaces exists, however, within a contradiction: it is a life *in* the night, and at the same time a life *without* it. One leaves the security of one such place in order to enter as quickly as possible into other buildings and Disneyfied leisure zones.

On the other hand, dark areas are perceived as dangerous, thus left outside tourist zones and omitted from tourist maps and guidebooks. Metaphorically speaking, they are treated as a kind of 'no-man's land', whose night life is associated with danger and encounters with potentially hostile strangers. Markers and tourists' narratives describe any place outside the tourist area at night in terms that embody images of threat and danger. The Athenian nightscape beyond and away from its liminal zones is regarded as a dangerous, strange space and, at the end, remains a *terra incognita* for tourists.

Referring to the colonisation of night, a gendered discourse is created: night symbolises the female quality. The entrance of tourists to the nightscape is by itself an act of gazing and experiencing the female, the Other. It is a gender relationship between masculine gaze and its feminine object. This is exemplified by the nocturnal

experience of dance-events in Athens. Tourists, both men and women, by gazing upon the dancers personify the penetrating masculine, whereas the latter personify the desirable female. Tourists, thus, colonise the female, the Other. The division of the nocturnal city into dangerous and liminal regions is also connected with the metaphor of 'night as woman'.

Women travellers, however, perceive the nocturnal city as threatening, full of potentially unpleasant encounters and dangers. In parallel with this fear, the attitudes of the Athenian men towards women are perceived as invasive and disrespectful. Their fear of sexual harassment and their feeling that they are not qualified to handle any threat coming from alien men and subjected to an unfamiliar moral code, curtails any freedom of movement of many female travellers and drastically confines them within the tourist zone, populated by inoffensive fellow tourists and locals working for the tourist industry.

The tourists' experience of Modern Athens is, thus, the experience of a fragmented, depopulated and exoticised place. Their gaze is a reinvention and reconfirmation of the gaze of people that preceded them: the nineteenth century romantic travellers who anchored Athens to the European imagination as 'the cradle of Western civilisation', the perennial home of every self-aware European. These travellers-writers created a mythology of Athens haunted by its ruins, dominated by its past, overshadowed by a bygone glory. An edifice of promotion and reaffirmation of these myths have since been erected in the form of the Athenian tourism industry and its promotional literature. The content of guidebooks, the narratives of tour-guides, the schedules of organised tours, as well as the local decision about what is worth celebrating by turning into a landmark and what is better forgotten, are largely shaped by this ever present

mythological quality of the Athenian past. Tourists consume the myths of Athens, following routes in the city directed by guidebooks and tour-guides, gazing upon where directed and re-narrating the directed gaze through their photographic memoirs. Athens of the tourists is fragmented into enclavic tourist areas and their surroundings.

Tourist activities are largely confined within the former, within places memorable because 'remembered', because their well-published landmark sites are familiar and recognisable. These areas of classical or neo-classical reassurance are, however, mere islands in the surrounding ocean of Modern Athens: an expanse of sprawling concrete apartment blocks, hectic traffic and unknown locals of alien- and potentially annoying customs. Is this experience of Athens by tourists a mere illusion, a taste of the unreal? Or, is this dichotomised person of Athens the real, or one of the many real personas a city of four million inhabitants might assume? I started this research thinking the first; I am finishing it inclined to accept the second. After all, as Raban put it:

The city as we imagine it, the soft city of illusion, myth, aspiration, nightmare, is as real, maybe more real, than the hard city one can locate on maps, in statistics, in monographs on urban sociology and demography and architecture.

(Raban 1974: 4)

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## **APPENDICES**

**Appendix 1: Transcribed Interview (T6.1)**

**Appendix 2: Transcribed Interview (T2.2)**

**Appendix: Field Notes of a Guided Tour in Sounion**



**TAPE 6 - INTERVIEW 1 (000-278)**

DATE: 24-07-98

PLACE: STUDENTS' INN IN PLAKA ( IN THE CAFE, IN ITS BACK ALLEY)

INTERVIEWEE: NICK (34 YEARS OLD, ENGLISH, A RADIO WRITER, MA. IN MEDIA STUDIES, INDEPENDENT SINGLE TRAVELER)

TIME: 10:00 - 10:20 aprox.

(interviewer: m, interviewee: n)

when I arrived to the hostel's back alley Nick was one of the few people sitting there and realxing. Actually, he was writing something which I found later throughout our talk that was his trip notes. He wanted to use them probabaply for a future radio play or novel.

- 1 m: where do you live exactly in England?  
2 n: I live in Manchester which is (.) ah the county of Hampshire  
3 of North England  
4 m: **So is it your first time that you're visiting Greece, and in**  
5 **particular Athens?**  
6: n: No, I've been to .hh Crete two years ago on a pacakge tour  
7 m: **Did you like it?**  
8 n: Mmmm (.) well (.2) I *di:d* but the resort was quite mm (.2)  
9 mm a low cost resort, a bit scruffy, there was lots of glitter  
10 (shacked) around ahhhh also it was (.) there was no singles'  
11 scene in the resort, it was families or couples so as a single  
12 man I felt a bit left out socially  
13 m: So, this is (.) **this time you're coming by yourself just as an**  
14 **independent [traveller**  
15 n:[yes, that's right  
16 m:[**so how long are you staying here in Athens?**  
17 n: mmm (.) well (.2) it's been complicated I'm .hh I'm doing a  
18 trip to the islands but I had to come here just a bit (.) I went to  
19 Lesvos which was a bit too *fa:r* away and then I had to come  
20 back here to get a ferry to *Cy-cla-des*, is it Cyclades?

- 21 m: yes Cyclades, yes
- 22 n: mmm (.) and to make a better plan 'cause I didn't plan things  
23 very well and came back here to get more information .hh so I  
24 was here last week for two days and I came back here for two  
25 days and I'm going away tomorrow to Paros
- 26 m: Oh to Paros?
- 27 n: yeah
- 28 m: O.K. **so what did you do during your two short visits here**  
29 **in Athens? Did you go anywhere around or you just**  
30 **stayed here, I mean in the hostel?**
- 31 n: I went to .hh the Acropolis on my first day last week and I  
32 had a good look around Plaka (.) I went walking around the  
33 main city I didn't like it .hhh too many ca::rs, too many  
34 people so I'm just *relaxing* right here now
- 35 m: **Before coming to Greece did you know anything about**  
36 **Athens? I mean from before**
- 37 n: (.2) I've *heard* it was (.) ahh lots of cars I've heard that there  
38 was smog, I haven't seen much from the top (.) I've heard  
39 it's around it mmm (.2) I'd heard about the Acropolis and  
40 that everyone should go to the Acropolis .hh I was a fun  
41 of a film back in Britain «Summer Holiday» with Cliff  
42 Richard set in the sixties where he drives from the UK to  
43 Athens in a big London bus
- 44 m: so many years and years ago ((We laugh))
- 45 n: Oh right that's true (.2) so Athens for so far .hh a kind  
46 of traffic status in the film like that so that the place's  
47 dreadful
- 48 m: So when you came here did you (.) **all the things that you're**  
49 **expecting to see were they as you expected them to be?**
- 50 n: Could you believe ((he smiles)) that I haven't many  
51 expectations I just knew that the Acropolis's somewhere  
52 .hh I don't really I haven't seen to be that much to see (.)  
53 but also (.) I'm not particularly *into ancient history* you  
54 know museums, I don't know that very well mmm so I do  
55 normally go to the famous archaeological museums

- 56 m: **How do you spend the night?** O.K. during the day you stay  
57 here relaxing and[
- 58 n:[*I'd like* to be out drinking and having a good time but .hhh  
59 there's mmm (.2) the people in my dormitory last time didn't  
60 want to go out (.) one was asleep at nine and one didn't like  
61 drinking (.) mmm (.2) last night there were groups here that  
62 seems to know each other so I was let down but as for  
63 drinking I didn't know *where* to go and in my last visit here  
64 seven days ago I had a more sociable group in the other  
65 dormitory, I went out for Chinese meal but after that they  
66 didn't want to go for drinks
- 67 m: Did you go somewhere around Plaka area for the Chinese  
68 food?
- 69 n: That was out of the Plaka, that was (.) towards Syntagma  
70 Square mmm I think a Chinese restaurant
- 71 m: **Do you use any guidebooks to [**
- 72 n:[my guidebook is called the Rough Guide but it's very good
- 73 m: you mean that you didn't like it though?
- 74 n: nooo
- 75 m: why you didn't like it? what was the problem with that?
- 76 n: mmm it didn't mention any (.) places like this .hh it's just  
77 crossed over cheap student accommodation, it didn't mention  
78 them at all (.) so I should have bought the Lonely Planet  
79 guidebook that seems fa:r better (.) everyone else says that  
80 ((he laughs)) mmm my planning 'cause of that wasn't very  
81 good
- 82 m: You said that you only visited Acropolis and the Plaka area  
83 **do you want to do something else I mean more, let's say**  
84 **something the probably you do it also back in Britain? For**  
85 **example going out to pubs or to cafes?**
- 86 n: to cafes?
- 87 m: yes, to coffee shops
- 88 n: Oh yeah, yeah (.) I've just come from .hh having a coffee
- 89 m: Did you like it?
- 90 n: oh yeah, I wish to have it also in Britain really

- 91 m: it's a bit of a strong cafe
- 92 n: when I got to the bottom it was a bit bitter, (.3) yeah but it
- 93 doesn't seem much to do here but (.) it's not much down
- 94 here .hh I'd like to go to places where there's rock bands or
- 95 jazz bands
- 96 m: Oh I see (.) you want to see things like that, but about your
- 97 guidebook does it mention these places I mean where you
- 98 can go and listen to live music, rock concerts?
- 99 n: we::ll, *I haven't had a good look* at the section on Athens
- 100 'cause I was looking for bits on the *islands* as I'm planning
- 101 go tomorrow so I didn't give much time to Athens
- 102 throughout book mmm I just maybe crossed this section. (.)
- 103 Well is any rock scene in Greece?
- 104 m: mmm it's not as in Britain but for example because probably
- 105 of bad advertising strategies, the last three four days there's
- 106 a festival, a rock festival, there're bands like Pulp, Sonic
- 107 Youth, Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds, Moby, Portishead,
- 108 Asian Dub Foundation. It's a very big rock festival with both
- 109 Greek and International bands
- 110 n: Ah right, where, in Athens?
- 111 m: yes, near (.) next to Piraeus but (.) I think it's advertising
- 112 n: well, I'd like to go a small *place* one bar with a rock band
- 113 things like that and with people to meet there, not a big
- 114 concert
- 115 m: so you mean that in a way **you don't have access to any**
- 116 **information about such places?**
- 117 n: I didn't try to say the truth 'cause I can't read Greek
- 118 newspapers, so I didn't bother myself
- 119 m: So (.) you expect to be a kind of a tourist information desk
- 120 to tell you about
- 121 n: yeah, posters or even somewhere in here with the leaflets
- 122 and information about gigs (.) cause now there're not much
- 123 m: **What about the locals? What is your idea about the local**
- 124 **people, the Athenians?**
- 125 n: mmm, yeah that (.) women seem to be *very glamorous* here

126 all well made up, yeah (.) and I thought that they would like  
127 Spanish sort of small and round a bit. They're a cute mmm  
128 ((we laugh)) (.3) I was .hh lost for a while in the main city  
129 centre sometime ago.  
130 m: Was it during the morning?  
131 n: Ahhh, this was (.) about 2:00 p.m. I had a map and lots of  
132 (.) older men helps me .hhh they said «oh can I help you»  
133 so they showed me where to go mmm which was good but  
134 ((he laughs)) I approached to a young woman and I just said  
135 «excuse me» and she *RUN AWAY* ((I laugh)) I actually felt  
136 that I was an evangelist telling her about church or selling  
137 the Bible but she seemed not very impressed and probably  
138 she didn't speak English or she might have thought that I'm a  
139 hooligan (.5) mmm I'm not quite short but (.4) I guess you  
140 can judge life in a big city, can't you? But you can't judge  
141 Britain by London (.) big city is a bit more unfriendly (.)  
142 when I was in Lesvos I found the .hhh language barrier .hh  
143 can't work (.) so I felt a bit stressed out by that so I came  
144 back (.2) so there's no way to go back to Lesvos  
145 m: well, Lesvos is an island that mainly frequented by Greek  
146 tourists, so it's very traditional let's say (.2) so .hhh is it  
147 though difficult for an independent traveller like you to be  
148 in Athens? **You said that you've found difficulties in meeting**  
149 **other people and going out but what about being around the**  
150 **city?**  
151 n: mmm (.9) I mean I'm .hhh I'm staying in Plaka and (.2) I'm  
152 more relaxed now because I know what I'm looking for mm  
153 (.5) but the *main* city is not a very nice place to hung around,  
154 it's safe it's all very safe to me but it's just that I don't like it  
155 mmm too noisy (.) I've annoyed by all the motorbikes in the  
156 pavement and ahhh (.) I think the biggest danger in Athens is  
157 getting one over and I come from a country where they drive  
158 on the left but that costs me a lot this's very hard work to be  
159 honest mmm (.) I think is very bad (.2) I feel in danger  
160 getting it by a car all the time mmm (.2) I think they

- 161 shouldn't have so many motorbikes and cars and have an  
162 extra control (.) is it that you're asking me or you want  
163 something more specific?
- 164 m: no, it's O.K. (.) do you feel that it's a bit like back in London  
165 though? I mean the city centre that you saw and didn't like  
166 it?
- 167 n: I suppose it's it reminds me a bit of (.) 'cause the main road  
168 back here it reminds me of the West end of London which or  
169 the Oxford Street, yeah quite similar yeah (.) or even Fifth  
170 Avenue in New York ((I laugh))
- 171 m: that's a very good comparison. I haven't thought about it,  
172 probably you've right, sometimes if you're from this country  
173 you cannot see all these things you're saying ((I laugh)). (.)  
174 **Something else, some people say that Athens is a mixture of**  
175 **the West and East, what is your opinion about?**
- 176 n: They seem very fashionable from what I see here and mmm  
177 (.2) and quite chic, people have mobile phones, it's very  
178 much like London the atmosphere I suspect in a way (.)  
179 mmm (.2) it's probably more West I think than East MM. (.)  
180 I mean the language sounds a bit like Arabic as well that  
181 makes me think of East mmm (.3) looking around the Flea  
182 Market, all the shops have very trendy *Levis* and nice *trainers*  
183 (.2)YEAH people (.) here in Athens seem to *dress* very  
184 *We::stern*, English or American style (.) and that I think is a  
185 shame , shame really I think so, (.) homogenise *Western*  
186 *culture's seen everywhere* now or something like that
- 187 m: **Do you feel that actually that you're in a European city?** How  
188 do you feel about? What is your personal 'feeling' being in  
189 Athens?
- 190 n: YES, it does, it does feel very European and then (.3) I  
191 travelled in Holland recently and I've been to Denmark and  
192 (.) the road signs and the apartment blocks and the roads're  
193 very similar .hh they're different from London and I (.) I'm  
194 expecting also trolleys and buses going around to seem very  
195 European as well (2) yeah it has got a very different

- 196 European feeling
- 197 m: So what do you like most in Athens as far as you let's say (.)
- 198 **is it something that you really enjoy here?**
- 199 n: mmm (.9) ahhh (.11) it's nice to be able to sit in the cafes and
- 200 *watch* the people go by, *something that we don't* really do in
- 201 Britain 'cause you know it's the weather also yeah even in a
- 202 warm day you have to sit inside 'cause the .hhh cockroaches
- 203 may stand on your coffee mug mmm (.4) obviously the
- 204 cheapness here I think it's quite value to the pound the
- 205 drachmas mmm (.6) it's quite nice being in an area (.) with
- 206 lots of cafes that you could sit out but on the whole I'm not
- 207 greatly impressed mmm (.3)
- 208 m: Why you haven't? Is there a particular reason for that?
- 209 n: yeah the *traffic* that's (.) a *million* of cars for a three million
- 210 people (.) mmm it seems a shame that car culture is so big
- 211 here, I think it's, we do that as well
- 212 m: So and .hhh actually one of the last questions, is it possible for
- 213 you just to **give me three words that describe in your opinion,**
- 214 **Athens? Two or three words.**
- 215 n: To describe Athens?
- 216 m: yes, with three words
- 217 n: I can't ((he laughs))
- 218 m: it could be about anything from food to whatever
- 219 n: mmm (.9) it's very noisy mmm (.7) there's not much to see,
- 220 not much here
- 221 m: Here?
- 222 n: mmm not much h-e-r-e, (.) not much around BUT (.2) I'm
- 223 not very well briefed I'd a bad guide so I just don't know
- 224 much (.) I don't know much about the place and I'm a little
- 225 bit ignorant .hhh of Athens (.2) mmm it's *too hot*
- 226 m: It's too hot?
- 227 n: you can't change that ((we laugh))
- 228 m: Is it unbearable for you, this weather?
- 229 n: not unbearable, no it's not too bad, it's been OK I heard
- 230 about the heatwave that was here before I came out ( )

231 m: 44 degrees

232 n: On God

233 ((208-218 chatting about the weather - not important bits))

234 m: Do you like .hhh I mean **what is your opinion about the**  
235 **quality of services and the facilities? How did you find them?**

236 n: mmm (.) well the metro seems very easy to use but again (.) a  
237 *fellow* back there showed me where to go and what to do  
238 'cause I couldn't read any information down there all were in  
239 Greek, I couldn't understand that (.) the sign on the station, I  
240 just recognised (.2) I recognised Piraeus because it's at the  
241 end of the line and when I came back again I recognised the  
242 station that I've lived up here so I think that what they really  
243 have to do with this information is to have it also in English  
244 down there (.) mmmmm I did not intend to get here someone  
245 told me to head on for the Aegean islands mmm (.4) yeah I  
246 think they need more information in English, really and I can't  
247 read what's written on the front of buses so I don't have any  
248 idea at all so I've to stand for ages (.) I knew this bus the 091  
249 for the airport and that's it, I couldn't find my way around  
250 here so with the buses

251 m: So you're saying that there should be written also in English  
252 or Latin alphabet something like that to help the tourists?

253 n: yeah

254 m: O.K. **what was the main reason that you travelled to Greece?**

255 n: (.3) mmm (.2) I knew it's quite cheap and I thought that I  
256 meet other backpackers and mmm (.) I wanted to get to know  
257 the country better (.2) so it sounded quite fun and ahhh (.) oh  
258 yeah I really fancied the idea of the island hopping although  
259 it's quite disappointing really (.) I'd heard that the ferry were  
260 full of backpackers and was great laugh and you met people  
261 but the trip to Lesbos was just me and lots of Greeks so I'd  
262 spoken to no-one for the twelve hour journey, (.) in the  
263 twelve journey back

264 m: Probably, it's Lesbos if you take the ferry to the Cyclades, if  
265 you take the boat to Paros I'm sure that they would be more



266 backpackers than in Lesvos

267 ((250-264 not important bits- just talking about Lesvos))

268 m: but this place ((the hostel)) is full of backpackers

269 n: yeah, it's good place mmm (.) the first night I stayed on the

270 roof of Festos Hotel at the corner but *it was so noisy* 'cause

271 it faces the main road but here it's lovely and cool with the

272 right I'm glad I'm here

273 m: **How did you find this hostel?**

274 n: mmm I was (.) with another backpacker who had the (.2)

275 Lonely Planet Guide and he found it I think (.) no, no we both

276 stayed on Festos and we walked around here for breakfast and

277 we spoke to the hotel owner and we came down here so I

278 didn't know about it till to I passed it 'cause from the front

279 doesn't look like a hostel, no it's easy to miss

280 m: yeah, it's very easy to miss it. (.) O.K. thanks a lot

**TAPE 2 - INTERVIEW 2 (097-250)**

DATE:12-09-97

PLACE: THE NATIONAL ARCHEOLOGICAL MUSEUM OF ATHENS (FRONT STAIRS  
OUTSIDE THE MAIN ENTRANCE)

INTERVIEWEES: 3 GIRLS ABOUT 23 Y.O, BRITISH, STUDENTS

TIME:12:00 - 12:20

(m: interviewer, let's name the interviewees as girl 1:anna, girl 2:barbara, girl 3:cassie)

The interview isn't tape-recorded from the very beginning.

They told me that they have about an hour outside the museum and that they were quite tired because they had visited Acropolis early that morning

- 1 m: **Did you like Acropolis?**
- 2 a: Not very [much
- 3 m:[So you didn't like it because as you're saying, it's
- 4 a bit messy and under [reconstruction
- 5 a:[yes they're rebuilding some bits of it
- 6 b: they were also these scaffolds; (really ugly)
- 7 m: wasn't it also crowded?
- 8: a: No, no
- 9 b: Not too crowded. It was just (.2) the scaffolds
- 10 c: They're rebuilding it, so it's not (.) the *same* thing,
- 11 there're (scaffolds) everywhere
- 12 m: So, you've just came also here to the museum
- 13 a: Nightmare
- 14 b: we haven't been
- 15 m: Oh you *haven't* been yet! ((m laughs)) I thought you
- 16 have just came out from the museum (.3) and where
- 17 do you stay, **do you stay in the centre of Athens?**
- 18 b: Yes ( )

**Appendix 2: Transcribed interview (T2.2)**

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- 19 m: Not in Plaka or in the other nearby places?  
20 a: No  
21 m: In a youth hostel?  
22 a: No  
23 c: in a hotel, in Omonoia Square  
24 a: Yeah  
25 m: **So how do you find the place?** I don't just mean  
26 the hotel, but generally Athens  
27 b: mmm, very ugly  
28 m: Ugly?  
29 a: yeah  
30 (.3)  
31 b:[too dirty  
32 a:[over populated ((a+b said that at the same time))  
33 m: Probably it's, there're about four million people  
34 a: yeah [too many  
35 c: [and it's not easy to go around  
36 a: [yeah if you're female on your own  
37 m: Did you have any problem, though?  
38 b: No, just lots of horrible people who don't leave you  
39 alone, ( )  
40 m: So, **did you go out yesterday night?**  
41 b: [NO  
42 a: [no ((All of the 3 interviewees laugh))  
43 a: Not at night ((also b + c said the same while nodding  
44 their heads to agree with a))  
45 m: you stayed in the hotel (.) you mean  
46 ((all of the three said: yeah))  
47 b: We didn't want 'cause we've been out to the islands  
48 m: to the islands?  
49 b: yeah  
50 m: Oh you've just came from the islands?  
51 a: yeah, and we go [home tonight

**Appendix 2: Transcribed interview (T2.2)**

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- 52 b:[we go back tonight, we just climb time (.) a bit  
53 m: Oh I see (.2) where have you been exactly, I mean  
54 in which islands?  
55 b: Paros  
56 a: Naxos and Mykonos  
57 m: Did you like them?  
58 a: yeah  
59 c: [oh yeah  
60 b: [yeah, yeah  
61 m: Different from here...  
62 b: yes, exactly  
63 m: Sorry that I'm asking you all these questions but (.4)  
64 well **what did you think about Athens before coming**  
65 **here? What did you know about Athens?**  
66 a: ( ) I didn't realise it was so ugly because (.)  
67 'cause we went straight to the Acropolis. (.2)You  
68 don't expect it to be (.2) ((c intervenes and continues  
69 what a wanted to say))  
70 c: [ no you don't expect it to be so ugly  
71 a: you think it would be more beautiful  
72 b: to have more places like (.) this, more greenery and  
73 (.) and I mean there's only a few sites that are like  
74 the Acropolis, if you see the old sites, but apart from  
75 that it's so (.) too (belle) top with very dull ground::s  
76 c: [dirty  
77 b: [not how I expected it to be at all  
78 m: I see  
79 c: When you think of Greece, you think (.) how the  
80 islands are with the [white  
81 a:[we likely went to the islands, we saw some beautiful  
82 things  
83 c: [yeah  
84 a: [than somebody came to Athens

**Appendix 2: Transcribed interview (T2.2)**

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- 85 m: Where exactly (.2), I mean from which part of  
86 Britain are you from?  
87 b: Coventry ((a+c said: Coventry, too ))  
88 m: Coventry? (.) I see. (.2) Isn't it at the middle of  
89 England? It's a bit green also, there, I mean (.)  
90 c: It's ugly I [suppose  
91 b: I' s quite ugly but it's not (.3) there're more pretty  
92 parts where the lakes are (.) they haven't (planned)  
93 the city very well. Most cities are (.) ugly, but I  
94 found this one due to (.) being overpopulated too  
95 (much)  
96 a: and the traffic  
97 b: yeah  
98 c: yeah  
99 a: yeah, there's no sections for the pedestrians. It's  
100 just traffic everywhere  
101 c: yeah ((laughs))  
102 m: yes, it's a bit true, I mean I can't say that it's not (.)  
103 it's true that. (.2) **What did you take photographs of?**  
104 (.4)  
105 m: Do you remember a bit? I mean here in Athens.  
106 a: Acropolis and at the top of the Acropolis you can  
107 see the city  
108 m: Oh I see, yes, the panoramic view of Athens, yeah  
109 a: yeah ((b+c agreed too))  
110 b: that was fantastic  
111 m: And what about the smog? **Have you realised**  
112 **anything about the air pollution?**  
113 a: yeah, [it's obvious a lot  
114 b: even if we were coming in [by ferry, we could see *it*  
115 c:[by boat  
116 ((laughs from all of the 4))  
117 m: you mean the cloud covering Athens

- 118 (( again laughs))
- 119 m: so you're in the university, aren't you?
- 120 a: yeah (( b+c nodded their heads to agree too))
- 121 m: Haven't you taken any course about ancient Greek
- 122 history?
- 123 b: noo
- 124 m: **so what did you know about that (.) I mean did you**
- 125 **learn anything about from school?**
- 126 b: yes some things at school.
- 127 c: yeah (.) and I read the guidebook.
- 128 m: **a guidebook? which guidebook?**
- 129 c: it's like a book
- 130 m: Like (.) the Lonely Planet?
- 131 c: [yes
- 132 a: [the Thomas Cook ((b said simultaneously with a
- 133 the same))
- 134 c: they have a section on Athens and a map with the
- 135 names of the streets
- 136 m: Mmmm, I see (.2) **you've been here by yourselves**
- 137 **I mean not in an organised tour**
- 138 c: Noo, noah, just the three of us
- 139 m: What do you think you gonna do the rest of the
- 140 day?
- 141 ((all of the 3 interviewees laugh))
- 142 b: We got no money and our plane is [at five thirty in
- 143 the morning
- 144 c: [we gonna walk around
- 145 b: [so we just gonna sit somewhere
- 146 a: just wandering, (.2) we don't really know [what to
- 147 do
- 148 b: we try not to think about it (( all of them laugh))
- 149 m: **Have you been to Plaka at all?**

**Appendix 2:** Transcribed interview (T2.2)

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- 150 b:[yeah  
151 c:[yeah we went yesterday  
152 a: yeah we went for late shop yesterday  
153 m: [Mmmm  
154 a: [some areas are more nice, aren't they?  
155 c: yeah, I don't know ( ) Is there that they  
156 have the market things?  
157 a: yeah  
158 m: Mmmm (.) The Flea Market, you mean  
159 c: there're just lots of clothes, I don't know  
160 if I saw all of it  
161 m: Mmmm  
162 b: yeah, we did all the shops yesterday.  
163 a: Oh yeah!  
164 m: **Did you buy anything?**  
165 b: a skirt  
166 m: *Skirt?* (.) What about souvenirs?  
167 a: Noo ((b says the same thing))  
168 c: I don't see anything really. I really wanted  
169 to buy something but there's nothing appealing,  
170 isn't it? ((all of the 4 laugh))  
171 b: The only ones are quite *tacky, plastic* things  
172 m: Plastic things?  
173 b: yeah  
174 (.5)  
175 m: **So are you gonna go inside the museum?**  
176 b: No we don't have money for that.  
177 m: It's 2000 drachmas  
178 b: yeah, it's lot of money, yeah for 3 people yeah  
179 c: we spent most of our money on the islands, so  
180 we decided to come back to Athens, to see the  
181 Acropolis but (.3) we thought it would be more to  
182 see than (.) there's

**Appendix 2: Transcribed interview (T2.2)**

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- 183 a: yeah, quite disappointed
- 184 b: *for today*, it's not like London that you can sit in a
- 185 a park and just like watching the people
- 186 c: yeah
- 187 (.4)
- 188 m: I don't know if you know the National Park which
- 189 is quite nice, there's a bit of shadow so you can sit
- 190 there but again it's a park so you have to be a bit
- 191 careful, you know
- 192 a: yeah
- 193 b: that's why we try to stick to the tourist areas, they
- 194 seem safer for the tourists who come to Athens.
- 195 m: O.K (.) **so are you gonna come again to Greece?**
- 196 b: to the islands
- 197 a: yeah, back to the islands
- 198 c: I don't think (.2) I don't want to come back again
- 199 to Athens. It's quite disappointing
- 200 a: just to the islands.
- 201 m: **What do you think it should be here (.) I mean (.)**
- 202 **for the tourists (.) to entertain the tourists than it's**
- 203 **now? What do you think *it isn't* here but has to be?**
- 204 a: More areas like this really where you've got this
- 205 green (.3) not so much greenery, just without
- 206 the traffic
- 207 c: yeah
- 208 b: just pedestrianised
- 209 a: somewhere we can escape to
- 210 b: yeah (.) just (.) to leave the traffic, leave all that
- 211 towards these (areas). (.) This area's quite nice
- 212 a: yeah
- 213 m: **you feel safer also here, I mean from the traffic**
- 214 a: yeah (( b+c agreed too))



**Appendix 2: Transcribed interview (T2.2)**

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- 215 m: are you used to this (.2) I mean driving 'cause it's  
216 the opposite of the English way of driving? Or you  
217 do have still problems of where to look?  
218 a: Oh yeah.  
219 b: It's just that mad (.) there's no place to escape in  
220 such big city. If you're in London, there're areas  
221 where *it's not much* traffic  
222 c: yeah (.) there're pedestrian areas; it's cut off. I  
223 mean (.) it's just so noisy and busy and (.2) I  
224 suppose you *expect* that from a city but I don't  
225 know (.4) like in Cardiff and London I suppose  
226 there're areas that you can ((interrupted from b))  
227 b:[yeah  
228 m: **Where about tonight, do you want to do something**  
229 **do you expect to do something here (.) I mean**  
230 **a kind of entertainment**  
231 c: yeah I do (.2) but I think ((interrupted from b))  
232 a: I don't think like girls traveling on their own are  
233 not going to be out tonight 'cause we've seen the  
234 reaction we get from the men in the daytime (.6)  
235 c: Really  
236 a: you can't walk few metres without mmmm (.2)  
237 b: even like people on the motorbikes they just like  
238 shout at you and then ((interrupted by m))  
239 m: you mean, you find it a bit *disturbing* ?  
240 b: yeah it's  
241 a: oh yeah, it really is  
242 c: they come at you and stare at you, they like  
243 staring at you  
244 b: it was like that yesterday all that kissing ((she  
245 imitates the sound of kissing))  
246 m: WHERE here in ATHENS, you mean?  
247 b: oh yeah!

**Appendix 2: Transcribed interview (T2.2)**

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- 248 c: yeah, yeah
- 249 b: and today in the morning (.4) they see blonde
- 250 girls 'cause it's different, isn't it?
- 251 a: it's different ((all of the 4 laugh))
- 252 c: their eyes (.) like stare at you, and this makes you
- 253 (skimped), that's horrible
- 254 a: [really
- 255 c: [they've got no respect (.) they don't respect ( )
- 256 they just invade (.) it's like feel no safety at all,
- 257 you feel that they gonna grab you any time, they
- 258 don't care
- 259 (.6)
- 260 m: so you mean (.) **you do have any problems during**
- 261 **your stay here in Athens, especially you or you've**
- 262 **just heard something really serious happened to**
- 263 **someone else?**
- 264 b: Nothing serious
- 265 c: NOT serious, it's just the over all (.2) way [of
- 266 b:[We don't feel very comfortable, you know that
- 267 you gonna get like that look
- 268 c: It's that noises at you, whistling at you
- 269 b: Ooooh (( b shows a complete disgust))
- 270 c: No, it's completely (difficult), you get it at home
- 271 but it's different (.3)
- 272 a: I can't explain it
- 273 m: **Is it the same attitude in the islands?** I don't
- 274 know [because
- 275 b: Not at all
- 276 a: no (.7) 'cause I mean when we came here it was
- 277 a bit like that but we are more used to it now or .
- 278 something
- 279 b: Unless, I mean there're lots of tourists generally

Appendix 2: Transcribed interview (T2.2)

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- 280 m: You mean in the islands?  
281 b: No  
282 m:[here?  
283 b:[*here* (.2)  
284 ((the transcription is impossible since an ambulance is  
285 passing in front of the museum))  
286 b: nobody goes on their own (.5)  
287 ((impossible transcription because of passing  
288 ambulance))  
289 b: the local girls go by with their clothes (.) hanging  
290 around, and the guys won't do anything and they'll  
291 look at us and make comments  
292 m: probably because they know it's gonna be a bad  
293 situation, you know with the Greek girls.  
294 b: yeah, it's a different body language; body  
295 expression. We are to that more vulnerable 'cause  
296 we don't know  
297 a: yeah, definitely  
298 b: we don't know how to get away from them  
299 ((impossible transcription due to passing helicopter))  
300 m: So generally, that's the last question, if you have  
301 (.) **if I ask you to describe Athens with 3 words,**  
302 **which ones you gonna give (.2) from all things**  
303 **you've seen so far in Athens?**  
304 (.5)  
305 m: Just even one ((m laughs))  
306 a: I'll say historic ((a laughs)) very historic, (.) very[  
307 b:[*overcrowded*  
308 a: overcrowded, smelly and ugly  
309 b: Busy anyway (.) old  
310 (.10)  
311 b: there's (.2) the Acropolis was (.) there's  
312 something very *strange* about that view, 'cause

- 313           it's really very ugly when you start looking at it  
314           and then it gets really lovely
- 315       c: you're just away from all the hustle, you just  
316           watch down on it, it's really nice, I really like that
- 317       b: I didn't really like the Acropolis itself it's just all  
318           scaffolds
- 319       m: yes, it's about 20 years, because what they're  
320           doing is to take each piece of the surface marble  
321           and try to clean it. So, it takes a long time this  
322           procedure. It should be probably for the next  
323           ten years
- 324       b: Unfortunately, just let it to get old
- 325       c: it was very beautiful up there
- 326       m: **Have you been also to the museum? Or was it**  
327           **closed?**
- 328       a: we went to the museum in the [Acropolis
- 329       b: [yeah (.) it was quite nice
- 330       m: So was it the only museum you went?
- 331       a: yeah
- 332       m: O.K. Thanks a lot

HILTON HOTEL ATHENS

25-26<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER

THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE IN JOINT REPLACEMENT

(IN THE TOUR INFORMATION DESK)

**Interesting comments on the booking of the sightseeing tours in Athens and around, in relation to the conference.**

Mr. Votsis sent to assistants -plus me- to assist in the information desk in the lobby of the conference. The Greek organiser of the conference assured him that there would be about two hundred participants from abroad, especially Americans. However, we realised that this number was eliminated to 40 foreigners. At the end of the conference we just sold five tickets for the excursion in Sounion and the same people booked the excursion in Corinth. It is interesting to mention two things: first, these ladies who I was with in the Sounion excursion changed the plan of Saturday morning for the shopping walk in Athens to the excursion in Corinth. As they told me they didn't want to spend all morning strolling around the city centre which they had visited it and before, instead they wanted to do something different with more cultural and historical aspects.

Second, the proposed tours of Mr Votsis office were the typical ones which a tourist does in Athens when he has a limit of time. For example the half day visit to Acropolis and the city centre, most of this tour done from inside the bus. In addition to this the Greek organiser of the conference has booked for his guests other things to do during the evenings, on Friday they went to the Opera to watch the Carmen in the theatre of Herod Atticus, a very well preserved ancient theatre in the slope of Acropolis Hill and on Saturday night they went for dinner in seafood taverna in Microlimano in Piraeus. As a result Mr Votsis tours «Athens by Night» and «Sound and Light Show in Acropolis» were not booked by any participant. In my belief, these people wanted to do something different from the very typical tourist ones.

26-09-97

8:00- 1:30 p.m.

Sounion Temple

The interview has taken place during the trip to Sounion, in Sounion and the way back to Athens.

Interviewee: Mrs Evi Seth Greenwald (the wife of the organiser of the conference)

The Guide: George Remoundos

George in general gave very interesting information on the history of Sounion and Athens in general. However, in the beginning as he did not know the knowledge of the visitors on the Greek history, he tried to simplify everything. But after some questions that the visitors did he changed his narrating style to a deeper account of what was happening in the Greek history.

The interesting points of his narration are the following ones:

1. He referred a lot of times in the interference of US after the WWII. For example when we passed in front of the Trouman's Statue, he said that:

«we Greeks we are indebted to this person. He did a lot to save people from starvation and humiliation»

He also referred to the relationship of the Greek state and the American when we passed in front of the abandoned Army Base in Glyfada.

«Till 1993, there was here the American base but after the Golf War they moved it to Crete where is the biggest base of NATO in the Mediterranean.»

2. He made a sort of connection between the smog and air pollution in Athens with that of San Francisco.

3. He said that: «Athens is a unique case of city since for about 500 years lost its existence and transformed to a village. First started with the beginning of the Byzantine Empire where the first Christian Emperors wanted to move the capital of the Empire to a newly built city Constantinople which would represent the Christianity. Athens was anyway the centre of the pagan religion. Since then, there was a total decline for Athens; it was the 4 centuries of Ottoman Occupation where cities disappeared in the name of a feudal system of small towns. So Athens we can say that become again important only after the formation of the Greek State in 1830. You know, all European cities either they formed in the ancient times and still have the same character as does happen with Rome or they are like Paris and maybe also London which are dated from the beginning of Christendom and Medieval times.

Another difference of Athens with other European cities is the lack of a renaissance period. You see, Greece was under the Turkish domination, we lived for 4 centuries in the dark ages and we lost for good any contact with the western world which by that time was celebrating the outcomes of the Renaissance.»

4. Taking about Theseus referred to his war against the Amazons «the first feminists» as he called them. With this way he tries to give to the mythological figures a human nature similar to ours and to put them in the present world.

5. He gave all necessary information to the tourists to draw the line between the American and the Greek governmental system. One very interesting point he made about the number of the MPs is the following:

«In the Greek parliament there are 300 representatives. This number represents the fight that gave and lost it Leonidas the Great with his 300 Spartans. He was an army officer of the Spartan Army who tried to stop the Persians to enter in Greece. He was sent with 300 soldiers to defend the whole Greek country against their enemy; the Persians. For many reasons, they defeated and killed all of them. So in the memory of these people for their brave action to save Greece from the enemy, we decided to set up the parliament with only 300 MPs. Each of them has to remind to himself that he is there to defend his country and only that. He had to behave as the 300 Spartans.»

#### **Some interesting points about the tour in Sounion**

All around Sounion there were dozens of tourists. All of them without exaggeration, had either cameras or video-cameras. They both took pictures of the temple the panoramic view of the Aegean Sea. It was very interesting that always they put a friend in the scene.

The temple was full of engraving signature on its columns, most of them dated from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was very sentimental and astonishing for me to find among hundreds of signatures, the one of Lord Byron.

The tourists of my group, the American women, didn't take much pictures. What impressed them was the existence of a small tree-bush next to the temple. And they took a picture of them sitting in front of it. It was the only picture they took with all of the five been posed. (Unfortunately, when I realised that they were sitting in front of the bush in order to take a picture it was very late to photograph them too. The only photograph I have is of the tree only.)

**The interview with Evi Seth Greenwald.**

(I asked her to sit next to her. Since she was the wife of the organiser of the conference it was a bit difficult for me to start from the beginning telling her about the purpose of my appearance in their tour. But I was lucky as she was the one who asked me about and I explained her a lot about my research. She agreed to co-operate but in an informal way and definitely not with a tape recorder)

(interviewer: m, Evi: e)

1 m: I'm not going to ask you about the purpose of  
2 your visit to Athens since I know that you've  
3 come with your husband for the conference. Is  
4 it then your first time in Athens?

5 e: No, it is my third, or actually my fourth time. I  
6 came also last year for the same conference.  
7 The other two times I was invited many years  
8 ago to a Greek family's home in Patmos.

9 m: So how do you find Athens as a city

10 e: Ah, I like very much this city. It gives me a  
11 sense of spirituality. I also like the safety of this  
12 place. You can walk around during the day and  
13 night without the fear of being robbed»

14 m: Have you visited the archaeological sites yet?

15 e: Surrah the responsible for the marketing of the  
16 conference organised for us ((she means and the  
17 other four women who also were in Athens last  
18 year)) sightseeing tour to Acropolis and Plaka.  
19 We also went to the Archaeological Museum and  
20 the Cycladic Museum... Is this one in an old  
21 mansion?

22 m: That's right, in Amalias Avenue...

23 e: I can't remember the name of the street but it  
24 is somewhere near Syntagma Square

25 m: By the way, do you use any map at all when  
26 you walk around Athens?



27 e: I think we have a small map, Surrah  
28 photocopied for us. Bessy has it. But we could  
29 also ask someone on the street. I've noticed  
30 here that almost everybody speaks English.»  
31 m: Do you know that there is a museum of  
32 Children's toys? There you can find toys and  
33 other artefacts of children of this century and  
34 before even dated from the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC.  
35 ((She had already told me that she has a toy  
36 factory in Cleveland))  
37 e: Really? I didn't have any idea of the existence  
38 of such museum...  
39 m: There is also a Children's museum in Praha as  
40 well as in Dublin...  
41 e: Well, nowadays museums are very specialised»  
42 m: In Athens there are about 50 different major  
43 museums not to tell you how many private  
44 collections there are.  
45 e: Where could I find more information about this  
46 museum? Is it near the centre of Athens?  
47 m: It is I think somewhere in Plaka. Do you have  
48 any leaflet or book about Athens?  
49 ((One of the women did have one and we  
50 searched there the address which we finally  
51 found))  
52 m: If you are interested in different collections you  
53 may also go to the museum of folk musical  
54 instruments. There is a whole collection of  
55 1.000 different musical instruments from  
56 around Greece. You can also listen to the  
57 different sounds of each instrument as they  
58 provide you with special headphones in order  
59 to do that. This museum is also in Plaka in a  
60 very nice mansion where concerts take place  
61 during the summer season in its alley»

- 62 e: There are finally many things that I didn't know  
63 about Athens. You see? These are information  
64 that only a native can give you  
65 ((Then she asked me for my research, I tried to  
66 explain as much as possible what I'm doing  
67 exactly, she really liked the idea of a cultural  
68 tourism in Athens))
- 69 m: It is very interesting to hear all these from you.  
70 You see... I live for about 20 years in Cleveland  
71 and the change of this city is tremendous!  
72 Cleveland was a typical American town, not big  
73 -not small but very quiet. The last seven years it  
74 has changed to a tourist centre. There are two  
75 reasons for that: the newly built stadium and the  
76 trade fair. People come from all around the  
77 north-eastern states to attend the annual sports  
78 events. Especially young students. I suppose  
79 that probably the same will happen to Athens  
80 with the Olympics 2004. Definitely, I cannot  
81 make comparisons between the two cities as  
82 they are so different by nature. But I really want  
83 to see more cultural things when I travel and I'm  
84 glad that today I'll go to the Opera in the ancient  
85 theatre  
86 ((I interrupt her and said the following))
- 87 m: Have you been before to this theatre?  
88 e: no, it's my first time, is it nice?
- 89 m: Oh, yes. I can't describe with words the feeling  
90 you get when you are there. You are in a so old  
91 place and you have behind you Acropolis  
92 standing there.
- 93 e: Oh, it will be great. I've never seen a play in an  
94 outdoor theatre...it would be also nice to watch  
95 an ancient play there.
- 96 m: The best theatre for attending an ancient drama

97 is in Epidourous next to Micanea old city. You  
98 are in the best preserved ancient theatre and  
99 behind you have an olive trees forest. Also the  
100 acoustic in this theatre is superb. You should  
101 try to find to go there

102 e: I wish I had more time, but I'm leaving on  
103 Sunday morning. I'll try to go there next time I  
104 visit Greece. There're so many things you  
105 could learn about a country. What I'd always  
106 like to do is to meet natives and to show me the  
107 place. However, George is a very good guide is  
108 he a professional guide?

109 m: Yes. In Greece most of the guides, the  
110 authorised guides are either archaeologists or  
111 philologues, then they have to attend a two year  
112 course to take the degree of the guide. They  
113 have also to speak more than two languages;  
114 for instance, George speaks 4 languages:  
115 English, French, Italian and Spanish»

116 e: he is very good!(.....) Is it very common in  
117 Greece people to study archaeology?»

118 m: I think yes. There is this belief among young  
119 people that they can become something like  
120 Indiana Jones. And not to forget that Greece is  
121 full of archaeological findings wherever you dig  
122 you come across ancient coins and other  
123 things.

124 e: It is very different from America. We are a  
125 new nation and our only history is the one of the  
126 American natives. Here in Greece you feel as  
127 being in the birthplace of human history and  
128 mankind.

(In Sounion temple: George gave a talk about the history and mythology of the temple for about 30 minutes. Then the

women especially one who had taken in the university a course in arts history asked him many questions about the architecture of the temple. At the end, we had 20 minutes to take photographs and walk around the temple)

Evi my interviewee, she left behind alone. I followed and watched her taking from her bag a notepad and some crayons. She was drawing something on her notepad.

Then, she saw me and asked me to go back to the others.

129 m: Did you like Sounion?»

130 e: if I hadn't come here today it would have been

131 a big misfortune. This temple gives me more

132 spirituality than Parthenon. It is this panoramic

133 position where the Greeks built it; it is like you

134 try to meet God.

135 m: I see that you're drawing, why is that?»

136 e: That's my hobby. I 'm not really good but I try

137 to do my best

138 m: You don't have a camera with you don't you?»

139 e: No I don't, I don't like cameras, it is not my

140 style. I prefer drawing the things I see around

141 me. I keep better memories of them with this

142 way because I can also remember the effort I

143 did during the drawing.

(Our discussion started again when we entered a gift shop with folk tourist artefacts. It was the idea of George to stop here, even if the ladies weren't very willing to do so. They were saying to each other that they didn't want to buy anything. Finally when we entered the shop which was huge, we came across the most kitsch shop I've ever seen; it was full of small statues and other gadgets representing the spirit of ancient Greece. All of them looked so fake from far away. They were painted in extremely vivid colours with very bad drawings and pictures on them. The ladies, then, did a small

walk around the shelves and left without buying anything. I'm sure that George brought us there in this particular shop because he was taking a commission from every item sold to tourists)

When we entered the bus again I asked Evi for her opinion for the shop)

144 m: Did you find anything interesting in the shop?

145 e: No, definitely, not. I don't like this kind of

146 artefacts are so obvious fake.

147 m: Did you buy any present or souvenir?

148 e: Not yet. Probably I'll join tomorrow the

149 team to go to Lambropoulos Megastore.»

150 m: How did you find about Lambropoulos? It is

151 not in the Plaka district where tourists shops

152 are. It is a typical store selling the usual

153 things.

154 e: Well, they told us that there we could find

155 good shoes. Greece is famous for its leather

156 industry specialised in shoes.»

(At the end of the journey the women asked George if it was possible to get down in Plaka instead of returning back to Hilton. They wanted to have lunch and visit the Folk Art Museum which is in the same area. One of the ladies, I think Bessy asked George if Plaka was near enough the hotel in order to come back on foot. They didn't want to take a taxi for the following reasons: )

157 e: It takes so long to find a taxi. It is a rare

158 thing.... ((All of us laughed))

159 m: And what do you think for the taxi drivers?»

160 e: I've heard people saying that they always try

161 to cheat you with the price, especially if they

162 see that you are not Greek.

163 I also found them impolite. It is a shame that  
164 tourists have to come across with many of  
165 them ((the taxi drivers)) who in the majority  
166 treat customers very badly. You see, that's  
167 how foreigners have negative idea for Greeks.  
168 They met some bad people and after they  
169 came into conclusions. But there are not all  
170 Greeks like that, last year when I was here in  
171 Athens, Bessie ((another member of the  
172 conference)) was invited with her husband to  
173 a patient's house for dinner, Mrs Boutaris, the  
174 wife of the wine producer. I was also invited  
175 as a friend of Bessie. These people met us for  
176 the very first time but the way they treated us  
177 was more than being members of their family.  
178 In general, I think that Greeks are very  
179 generous people and friendly, too.»

((The conversation stopped here as we arrived in Plaka.  
Then, the women asked George if it was possible to change  
the shopping tour with the Corinth tour, they said that they  
had already been to Plaka and Monastiraki))

