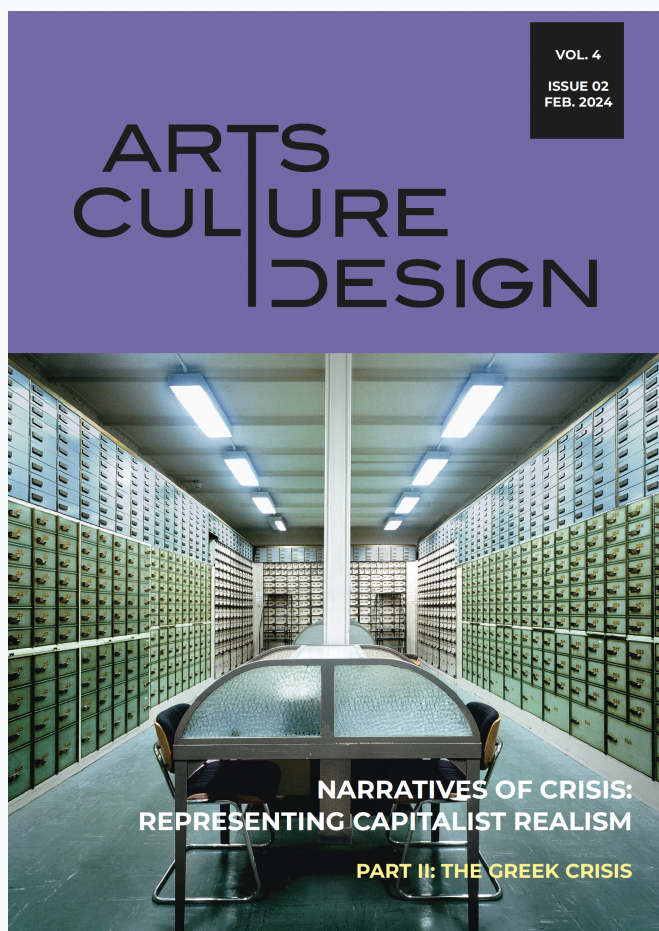


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NARRATIVES OF CRISIS: REPRESENTING CAPITALIST REALISM PART II: THE GREEK CRISIS



CLEPSYDRA @ 37.94578, 23.61960:

MARIA PASCHALIDOU

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# CLEPSYDRA @ 37.94578, 23.61960: AN EPHEMERAL GEOGRAPHIC INSCRIPTION OF POLITICAL PHANTASMATA

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## ABSTRACT

### Keywords

Counter-monument  
mnemonic performance  
political loss  
rhizomatic nomadism  
in-situ light installation

This article discusses the practices and conceptualizations of the *Clepsydra @ 37.94578, 23.61960* public mnemonic performance/ in-situ light installation (Lipasmata Drapetsonas, Piraeus, Greece, October 2020). Referring to twenty-one selected cases of lethal political violence in Greece during the years of 1978-2020, *Clepsydra @ 37.94578, 23.61960* endeavours to map a traumatic route in time and unveil the political phantasma as a performative geographical inscription questioning traditional forms of mnemonic representation in the urban environment. It incorporates the idea of the ghost as a nomadic (im)materiality that unsettles the linearity of space and time working both as a political mediator and a holder of historical memory but also framing conditions for alternative futures. It seeks to create an archaeology of the *political phantasma* calling for political awareness against the current rise of neo-fascist movements in Western capitalist societies, and the moving forward by acknowledging and fulfilling the responsibility towards the dead.



**MARIA PASCHALIDOU** is a visual artist/researcher and Assistant Professor of Visual Arts and Moving Image at the Department of Culture, Creative Media and Industries, University of Thessaly, Greece. She completed her PhD in Lens-based Media at De Montfort University, UK, with her thesis exploring formations of phantasmagoric subjects. Her MFA in Photography, Columbia College Chicago, USA, focused on the optical systems of human medical monitoring. As a fellow of the Greek State Scholarship Foundation, she conducted her postdoctoral research on performative aspects of political loss in collaboration with the Department of Social Anthropology, Panteion University, Athens. She creates spatial installations and situational events combining audiovisual media with text, participatory interaction and individual performances in the public space. Her artwork has been presented in international and Greek exhibitions and publications. She has curated two exhibitions in Chicago and the participatory performative projects, *Visibility* and *The Bankorgs* in Athens.

## 1. AN EPHEMERAL GEOGRAPHIC INSCRIPTION OF POLITICAL PHANTASMATA

This essay seeks to reflect on the conceptualization and practices involved for the realization of the *Clepsydra @ 37.94578, 23.61960* public mnemonic performance/in-situ light installation at Lipasmata Drapetsonas (Drapetsona, Piraeus, Greece, October 2020) and the relevant photographic series. The performative event constitutes part of my post-doctoral research<sup>1</sup> which deals with political loss and its public manifestation both as a social traumatic experience and a generator of collectiveness, solidarity and resistance. Studying the case of the 34-year-old anti-fascist rapper Pavlos Fyssas who was stabbed to death by members of the neo-Nazi party Golden Dawn<sup>2</sup> on September 18, 2013, in Keratsini, a suburban area of Piraeus, Greece, the research concentrates on the phantasmal forms of the musician/activist and the production of a performative audiovisual picture of afterwards, created through and intertwined with memories, narrations and series of public actions that were set in motion following and in response to the murder.

*Clepsydra @ 37.94578, 23.61960* interrelates Pavlos Fyssas' murder with other twenty selected cases of blatant political violence in Greece during the years of 1978-2020, the period of Metapolitefsi which marks the regime transition from dictatorship to democracy.

On October 30, 2020, at the outdoor theater of Lipasmata Drapetsonas, through a performative process that lasted approximately three hours (4:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.), a large clepsydra was shaped on the ground using twenty-one white soft sleep pillowcases (Figure 1). Each pillowcase corresponded to a specific lethal incident caused either by the state and/or police authorities, or groups of neo-Nazi fascists throughout the aforementioned period of time. Inside the pillowcases, I had previously inserted transparent prints of digitally manipulated found photographs of each one of the fatally deceased. During the performative act, I added light sources under the prints to illuminate only the eyes.

To offer my own encounter with the (inter) textual and aesthetic alterations of the counter monument discourse and contribute to the idea of "citizen artists, who put as much emphasis on 'being a citizen' as they do on 'being an artist'" (Möller, 2016: 2), I developed

my response to the above racist fatal attacks through the synergy of theory, politics and aesthetics. Working from the position of the anti-fascist 'citizen artist' may make possible to resist against capitalist realism's mechanisms of transforming art products to commodities, artists to entrepreneurs and viewers to consumers (Fisher, 2010); may create space to engage critically with the aestheticizing and spectacularizing of culture life; and maybe, just maybe and hopefully, create conditions for disturbing "the horizons of the thinkable" that "capitalism seamlessly occupies" (ibid: 8) and decolonize our dreams and senses. Furthermore, this position may expose what Wendy Brown (2006) identifies as common ground in neoliberalism and neoconservatism, and which is their interest "to undermine the public sphere and democracy, producing a governed citizen who looks to find solutions in products, not political processes" (Fisher, 2010: 61). While Mark Fisher (2010) describes this interconnection of neoliberal policies and neoconservatism as the American version of the capitalist realism, I believe this version has been spread, finding its similarities in most European countries, and, unquestionably, in Greece.

Embracing this political endeavour, I regularly attended the trial against the neo-Nazi party of Golden Dawn since March 2019 collecting sound testimonies from the anti-fascist audience and working towards the production of an ephemeral counter memory installation that would map a traumatic route through time and unveil the political *phantasma* as a performative geographical inscription questioning the traditional forms of mnemonic representation in the public space.

## 2. TEMPORALITIES

The conception, preparation and production of the *Clepsydra @ 37.94578, 23.61960* public mnemonic performance/ephemeral installation was marked by the time period of the pandemic COVID-19 and its consequences in terms of social distancing and state authoritarian limitations on the use of the public space. As the whole endeavor took place between two quarantine periods imposed to deal with the coronavirus, *Clepsydra*, as the word implies and for reasons explained below, deals with time; however, in this case it obtains a significant meaning as the realization of the project was actually running after



Figure 1: Making the shape of a clepsydra. Outdoor theatre of Lipasmata Drapetsonas. October 30, 2020. Installation. 6X9 meters. Photo documentation by Lambros Papanikolatos.

time, so, it was literally haunted by time.

Time during the pandemic unveils the experience of the non-physical presence and the establishment of a coded public space for interaction in which virtual bodies communicate in specific pre-automated ways while they are capable of being globally 'present/visible' at the same time. This codification of the bodies, or as Donna Haraway puts it "the desire to translate the body into code" (Haraway, 1991: 164), is not politically neutral as it "marks the body unequivocally as the privileged site of capitalism's epochal struggle to reduce all heterogeneity to equivalencies" (Dougherty, 2001: 1). Moreover, Internet technologies are not universally accessible and thus, virtual 'visibility' is still limited and fragmented, and does not reveal the Internet as a democratizing "revived public sphere" (Papacharissi, 2002: 10). Hence, in the pandemic, the realization of the *Clepsydra @ 37.94578, 23.61960* performative event and the construction of the mnemonic installation in a physical, yet an a-somatic site, with no audience present forms a utopian praxis in a disturbed public space governed by fear. This art intervention may visualize the demand of what Nicholas Mirzoeff calls the "utopian imagining" as "a necessary cultural response to the gloom-laden chorus that there is no alternative to the current doctrine of pre-emptive war and the politics of fear" (Mirzoeff, 2005: 25). While Mirzoeff makes this comment in relation to the war of the US against Iraq, his idea of the "utopian imagining" may also apply to the current biopolitics of fear that infiltrates the battle against the coronavirus, while it responds directly to the widespread dogma of capitalist realism, according to which "not only is capitalism the only viable political and economic system, but also that it is now impossible even to imagine a coherent alternative to it" (Fischer, 2010: 2).

Subsequently, in the time context of this performative event, fear is in the center of the emotions under the regime of a biological war against an invisible deadly contagious virus that has to be defeated. Not only in the terms of social distancing but also within the rationale of biopolitics "the pandemic intensifies pre-existing and long-term crises within the crisis: poverty and precariousness, decimation of health care systems, structural oppression, exploitation of migrant labour, racism, decentralization and intolerance, homophobia / transphobia" (Athanasίου, 2020: 43). Besides the fear, the police violence casts its shadow over the streets all over the



Figure 2: Street protest. Fear will not win. (Greek translation of the protest banner). Athens, October 7, 2020. Photo by Maria Paschalidou.



Figure 3: Police forces attacked the thousands of people gathered outside the Court of Appeals. Athens. October 7, 2020. Photo by Maria Paschalidou.



Figure 4: Inside the pillowcase of *Clepsydra* installation. The murdered Muhammad Al Arab. Photo documentation by Lambros Papanikolatos.



Figure 5: Visual example of named cases. Eyes - Vaggelis Giakoumakis. Digital transparent print. 53X44cm. Photo by Maria Paschalidou.



Figure 6: Visual example of unnamed cases. No-Eyes. Digital transparent print. 53X44cm. Photo by Maria Paschalidou.

country imposing the restrictive measures with excessive zeal (Figure 2).

Along with the horrid economy, which probably leads the country to a second round of humanitarian crisis, the populism is uprising through the increasing numbers of the deniers of the virus and the racist attacks in many refugees' accommodation centers (Keep talking Greece, 2020). As tens of thousands of refugees swarmed into and overcrowded unsanitary camps despite the fact that all other people were specifically instructed to socially distance (Refugee Legal Support, 2020) "... no one can guarantee that accumulated frustrations will not be channeled through exclusionary discourses that scapegoat immigrants or even target the more vulnerable members of society, flirting with a dystopian social Darwinism ('survival of the strongest/younger for the sake of the economy')" (Katsambekis & Stavrakakis, 2020: 9).

Moreover, the antivirus politics has been used by the authorities as an alibi for securing public space from street protests and other forms of public exercise of democracy; an explicit manifestation of an utterly biased attitude. On October 7, 2020, for example, police forces violently attacked the thousands of people gathered outside the Court of Appeals in Athens just a few minutes after the announcement of the Court ruling the neo-Nazi party Golden Dawn as a criminal organization in disguise (Smith, 2020) (Figure 3).

People were denied their right to celebrate democracy at a time when the government turned a blind eye to servants of the Greek Orthodox Church who systematically violated the restrictive measures without consequences and fines. While theaters, museums and other art institutions were forced to be closed, priests were allowed to offer the 'Holy' communion without any sanitary precautions, thus risking public health.

Under these circumstances, the video work produced by Clément Gonzalez *As it used to be* (2013), seven years earlier than the pandemic, is prophetic, as it describes the current situation in the context of a fictitious narrative at the time. The video fantasizes a history teacher in the near future, teaching daily only in front of an empty room with a simple webcam broadcasting the lesson on the internet. His routine is unexpectedly disrupted when one day a student enters the room to attend the class physically, a fact

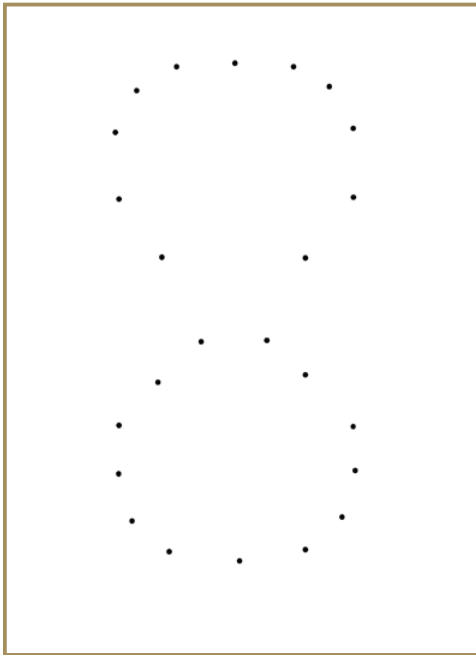


Figure 7: Initial digital sketch. *Time dots*.

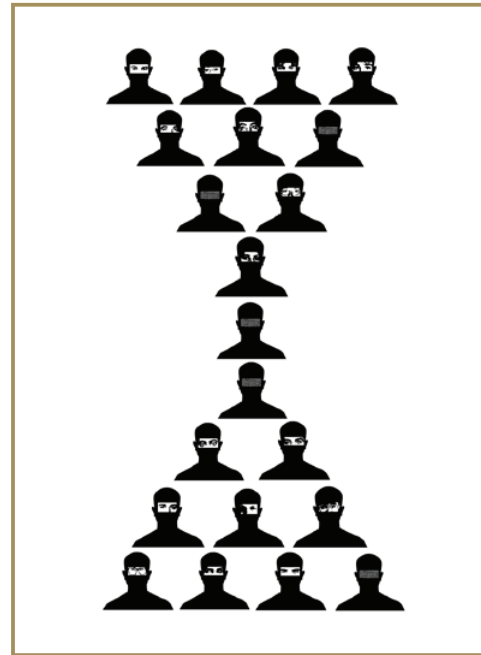


Figure 8: *Clepsydra*. Digital sketch. 'Appearances'.

that changed the teacher's mood (Gonzalez, 2020). The video celebrates the joy of human bodily interaction, the deprivation of which in the current pandemic traumatizes all forms of social life and particularly art communication. Having been stricken by the pandemic measures of isolation and facing empty and closed art venues, as the majority of exhibitions and other public art events were cancelled, artists struggle to survive in an environment without social contact, therefore with no audience as physical participation/interaction has been forcibly expelled.

How is this context of time associated with the time-period of death of each one of the selected cases of blatant political violence in Greece during the years of 1978-2020? And why is this association important?

### 3. THE KINSHIP OF THE DEAD

As it was mentioned above, *Clepsydra* @ 37.94578, 23.61960 interrelates twenty-one selected cases of political murders in Greece during the years of 1978-2020, a period of Metapolitefsi which pertains to the regime change from dictatorship to democracy. Over the course of these years, more than a hundred people were killed or disappeared under mysterious conditions for political reasons.

In *Clepsydra* some of these lethal incidents are the result of capitalist state racism that identifies 'enemies' outside the population, regulates on whether they may stay inside or outside the borderlines of the state, and occasionally endorses violence and killing (Foucault, 2003). Twenty-year-old economic migrant Fantil Nabuzi was shot to death by a police officer in the city of Karditsa in 1996 while he was attempting to steal two watermelons. According to her husband's statement to Amnesty International (Amnesty International, 2020), Fatma Hakim Isik, a young woman refugee from Syria, had been missing since February 2020 and presumed dead after Greek soldiers fired shots towards her while she was attempting to join their children on the Greek side of Evros/Meriç river, south of Edirne. Muhammad al-Arab, a young man from Aleppo, Syria, was shot to death in March 2020 by the Greek authorities on the Greek side of the border in Evros/Meriç river (Forensic Architecture, 2020). During the first anti-Covid-19 quarantine in April 2020, forty-two-year-old Armenian female prisoner Azizel Nteniroglou suffered heavy coronavirus symptoms and was left to die helpless in Eleonas Prison of Thiva.

The installation also memorializes people who lost their lives to the state executive mechanism (police / special forces). Forty-nine-year-old doctor and anarchist Vasilis Tsironis was shot to death by the commandos of National Security Units in July 1978 in Palaio



Figure 9:  
Illuminating the  
installation / the  
murdered Eleni  
Topaloudi. Photo  
documentation  
by Lambros  
Papanikolatos.

Faliro, Piraeus. Stamatina Kanellopoulou, a twenty-one-year-old worker, was beaten to death by the police in the centre of Athens on November 16, 1980, while she was marching in the memorial protest of the Athens Polytechnic Uprising of 1973.<sup>3</sup> Twenty-four-year-old Cypriot student Iakovos Kourmis was attacked to death by the Greek police in the same aforementioned protest of 1980. Michalis Kaltezas, a fifteen-year-old student, was shot at the back of the head by a police officer at Exarchia in 1985. Twenty-nine-year-old Christoforos Marinos, an activist anarchist, was mysteriously found dead in a cabin of the ship Pegasus in 1996 while he was transferred by the police from Serifos island to Athens. Alexandros Grigoropoulos, a fifteen-year-old student, was fatally shot by a member of the Special Guard Unit of the Greek police in 2008 in Exarchia (Bounias & Leontopoulos, 2014).

*Clepsydra @ 37.94578, 23.61960* also includes cases of nationalist hate, racist and homophobic violence to death by citizens attacking either in groups or as individuals. Nikos Temponeras, a thirty-four-year-old high school teacher, was fatally attacked with iron bars, rods and concrete blocks by members of ONNED (a right-wing youth union) during the student protests in the city of Patras in 1991. Twenty-year-old Gramoz Palushi was stabbed to death in Zakynthos Island in 2004 while he was celebrating the victory of the Albanian national football team over the Greek. Alex

Mechisvili, an eleven-year-old schoolchild of Russian origin, was bullied, tortured and killed by his co-pupils in Veria in 2006 while his body was never found. Alim Abdul Manan, a twenty-one-year-old immigrant from Bangladesh, was stabbed to death in Kato Patissia in 2011, after being chased by fascist groups on motorcycles. Anonymous, a nineteen-year-old Iraqi man, was fatally injured by members of the neo-Nazi party Golden Dawn in Omonoia Square in 2012. Twenty-seven-year-old worker from Pakistan Shehzad Luqman was murdered by members of Golden Dawn in Petralona in 2013, as he was going to work by his bike. Thirty-four-year-old anti-fascist musician Pavlos Fyssas was stabbed to death by members of Golden Dawn in Keratsini in 2013. Vangelis Giakoumakis, a twenty-year-old student, was physically, verbally and psychologically tortured by his homophobic fellow students at the Dairy School of Ioannina for two days before he eventually died in March 2015. Zak Kostopoulos / Zackie Oh, a thirty-three-year-old queer performer and activist, was killed in 2018 at Omonoia Square, Athens, savagely beaten by two men, in broad daylight, in full view of the passers-by who did absolutely nothing. Sixty-three-year-old worker from Albania Petrit Zifile was killed with a shotgun by a Greek man, member of Golden Dawn, in Corfu Island in 2018. A victim of femicide, twenty-one-year-old student Eleni Topaloudi was gang-raped and brutally murdered by two men in the island of Rhodes in 2018.

In *Clepsydra @ 37.94578, 23.61960* installation, each pillowcase corresponds respectively to each one of the above lethal cases. All these persons who died unjustly have been presented as solid dark flattened characters placed inside the pillowcases (Figure 4). Intending for a non-figurative remembrance of the lost, I used found-portraits of the murdered, circulated by different online media sources, and transformed them into digital bust silhouettes of transparent prints with a single rectangular opening that made visible only the eyes (Figure 5).

There have been cases in which the name of the murdered was unknown or a portrait of the lost person had not been found. On those occasions, I filled the rectangular opening with imprints of digital noise (Figure 6). As it is known, noise exists in all images as a result of the process of capturing it both in analogue (film grain) and digital imaging (pixels). However, I particularly chose the digital noise to visualize the loss of identity as it stands for the algorithmic component through which vari-



Figure 10: Installation / Dead light but lamps. Photo documentation by Lambros Papanikolatos.

ous applications, from forensic to common uses such as the unlocking of the phone, recognize our identity (Fridrich, 2009).

The silhouette practice can also be found in Kara Walker's *After the Deluge* (2005) series (Walker, 2021). In response to Hurricane Katrina, the artist creates full-body silhouetted characters to expose poverty, devastation and death desperation. In Walker's silhouettes, the gender is recognizable as her figures are usually full-bodied, and through bodily gestures the identity is revealed. In *Clepsydra @ 37.94578, 23.67960*, though, this identity is merely imaginable since only the eyes are visible. Especially the bust portraiture that was chosen does not allow the recognition of identity but rather implicates it, or in other words, it needs encryption to be revealed. This encoded silhouette-bust portraiture demands concentration on the eyes, a human organ that sees, perceives, captures, chooses, imagines, photographs, and holds vision. In the aftermath of a practice used by the majority of the news media when they broadcast interviews with covered witnesses, as well as of image agencies who circulate silhouette patterns for commercial reasons, *Clepsydra* memorializes the violently vanished as witnesses who no longer need coverage. As political spectres, they now have infinite protection for they have become warriors/martyrs who trigger social resistance.

Placed next to one another in the installation, these witnesses generate questions and

associations forming relativities. Here, a bloodline has been created that justifies the dead and calls for the attention of the living. However, this bloodline has been imposed by political circumstances, thus it is not, as the artist Taryn Simon would put it "determined and ordered" (Simon, 2011). In the series, *A Living Man Declared Dead and Other Chapters* (2011), Simon uses family grids to systematically order the members of a given bloodline in an attempt to expose narratives of violence. By contrast, in *Clepsydra* the bloodline is not biological, not even an encounter of fate or a result of a "mournful nostalgia" (Athanasίου, 2006a: 229). It is rather compulsory or a chance to see the dead as a political phantasma that resists oblivion by demanding action from the living, that is by demanding the future. In other words, it is a kinship that signalizes/reminds/resists the rhetoric of biopolitics in which bodies are perceived as "symbolic capital of national narratives" (Athanasίου, 2006b: 229) that embrace/celebrate heteronormativity and the continuity of an 'authentic' Greek identity.

If capitalist realism strips culture from its capacity to produce the new; if it "subsumes and consumes all of previous history" (Fisher, 2010: 4); if it gets along very well with neoconservatism exercised by extreme-right wing governments and neofascist movements in Greece and throughout Europe, in regulating the collective memory of the past, even erasing it altogether; and if, by this, it denies

the future “colonizing the dreaming life of the population” (ibid: 8); then, the political phantasma becomes the historicity that challenges all these; an *absent presence* who urges us to look forward to better futures by resisting the erasure of trauma in the past.

#### 4. DEAD “LIGHT BUT LAMPS”

Understanding that time is not a “Newtonian universal constant” (Solomon, 2014: 671), but embodies the knowledge of fluidity in the unmetrical acts, experiences and possibilities of being, I incorporated its mobility and synthesized the above assembly of blood under the shape of a clepsydra that could function as a critical device of evaluating ‘time’ (Figure 7).

Consisting of twenty-one “appearances” (Figure 8), this clepsydra does not measure time, but instead redefines and rearranges it by mapping traumatic knowledge and pointing out discontinuations in democracy; in fact, discontinuations that expose the ways in which the exercising of contemporary democracies is shaped by capitalist dreamwork and neoconservative interests (Fisher, 2010: 59-61). Within a grid of pillowcases in the shape of a time machine, an encounter of *phantasma* has been created to mark not just the specific dead, but the cause of this death which is visually formed as a correlated figure of the political historical time. Therefore, the phantasm is not an entity that belongs to the “metaphysical” realm of spirits, but it is rather a social force that is realized and subjectified daily through memory. With its “appearance” it does not actually (or merely) remind of an individual loss, but it also denounces systems of authority and hierarchies in the capitalist patriarchal realm, such as gender, race, class, etc. (Gordon, 2008).

Time stands out as a fundamental aspect, not only for the killing of the rapper musician Pavlos Fyssas, but also in all other cases of racist attacks that resulted in murders. In their violent pause, victims have been haunted by time endlessly questioning life, democracy, justice, tolerance and solidarity. Thus, there is no circulation inside the clepsydra of this ephemeral installation; no water, air or any other moving substance that captures time, but only an indexical blood chain in a static ground construction as a poetic metaphor of pause, since time for the dead has been stopped and stolen violently. Yet, this pause demands action for hopeful

futures, challenging the capitalist trap of living in a continuous everlasting horrifying ‘now’ (Fischer, 2010). To contribute to the “performative imagination of the political” (Möller, 2016), I attempted to create a utopian dialogue through a glimpse at different times in which the absent becomes visible in a public performative act of a joint memorial service. During the three hours of this service, I made the shape of a clepsydra by placing twenty-one white, soft sleep pillowcases on the ground and inserting the transparent prints of the deceased into each one of them.

Utilizing the pillowcase as memorialized material is not accidental. It indicates class implications to the conceptualization of the *after* death, since this is the material used by the poorest as a storage case for the bones following the exhumation, which particularly in Greece takes place three years after the burial. Nevertheless, this Greek custom applies for those who cannot afford to buy a permanent family tomb, since every year after the exhumation a considerable fee is charged for keeping the bones in the ossuary of the cemetery. For unknown bodies, as is often the case of homeless and abandoned people as well as undeclared refugees and economic immigrants, the bones are stored in large underground common crucibles (Nouskali, 2021). Subsequently, lost in a mass of post-death ‘identities’ and detached from memory, these unknown bones will never be found or relocated, ironically similarly to those cases of the ephemeral installation in which the name of the murdered was unknown or the portrait of the lost person could not be found. So, as ‘bones’ inside pillowcases, the political *phantasma* of this mnemonic performative event “involve[s] a constant negotiation between what can be seen and what is in the shadows” (Gordon, 2008: 17); this implicative exhumation brings the ghosts’ story to the present time.

During the performance, spot lights are placed under the pillowcases illuminating the eyes to make them visible in darkness and from a great height, creating a geographical inscription (Figure 9).

This illuminating inscription proposes a poetic spatial manifestation of the political phantasma (Figure 10). Like Emily Dickinson’s poets who “light but Lamps” (Dickinson, 1999: 930), these eyes can still look at us, reminding us of their existence, wishing to be “vital lights- Inhere as do the Suns- Each Age a Lens- Disseminating their Circumference” (Gilson, 1998: 487). The phantasmata in *Clepsydra* are not only holders of historical memory, but



Figure 11: Outdoor theatre of Lipasmata Drapetsonas. Photo documentation by Lambros Papanikolatos.

also entities that illuminate paths to possible alternative futures.

Employing art practices of staging that are “critical”, and as Chantal Mouffe would state, “can contribute to unsettling the dominant hegemony” by “bringing to the fore the existence of alternatives to the current post-political order” (Mouffe, 2013: 91), I have chosen to work with methodologies of “counter-monumentality” (Osborne, 2017: 182), searching for ways of commemorating traumatic incidents through means that oppose/reconsider/challenge established forms of public monuments. However, even the word ‘monument’ does not totally apply to the case of this mnemonic installation, which is, furthermore, a performing act of decentering space and time (Solomon, 2014) allowing the political *phantasma* to emerge.

Nevertheless, this performative memorial act led to the construction of a temporal non-‘monument’ which had not been intended to glorify the absent but rather to raise concern about the populism and the politics of hatred, intolerance, nationalism, sexism and racism which armed the hands of the murderers to commit such brutal homicides. Building within the context of transformation, temporality and instability, as the chosen material of the pillowcase is soft and does not last in time, *Clepsydra* implies trauma and sentimentality in the context of an improbable meeting of ghosts avoiding the security of a stable construction that

would lead to “associated memories that are highly mutable” (Osborne, 2014: 182). So this non-‘monument’ does not bring to mind “conventional subjects” (Stevens et al., 2018a: 719) but rather memorializes the unconventional which is not (re)presented in traditional public monuments. Escaping from the logic of the emblematic and prominent ‘monumental’, I rather explored “anti-monumental” (Stevens et al., 2018a: 719) practices such as the ephemerality of the construction and the non-figurative representation of the loss.

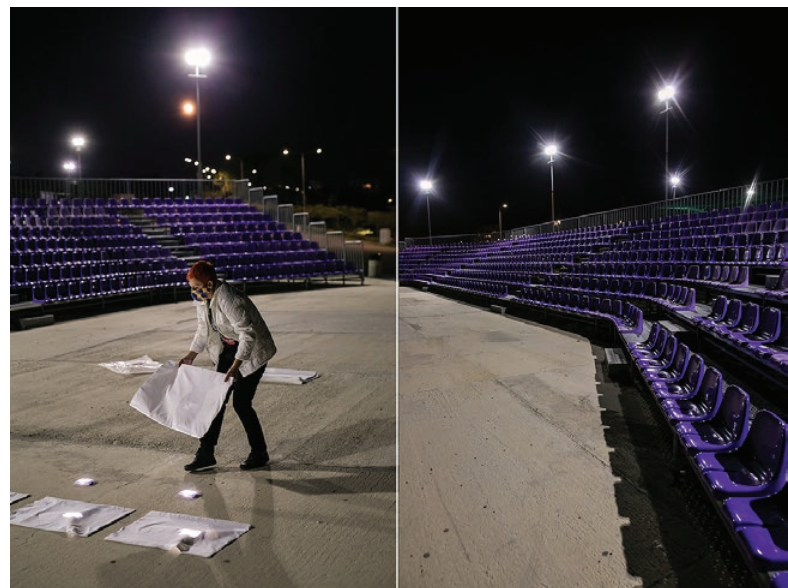


Figure 12: Performance in an empty theatre. Outdoor theatre of Lipasmata Drapetsonas. Photo documentation by Lambros Papanikolatos.

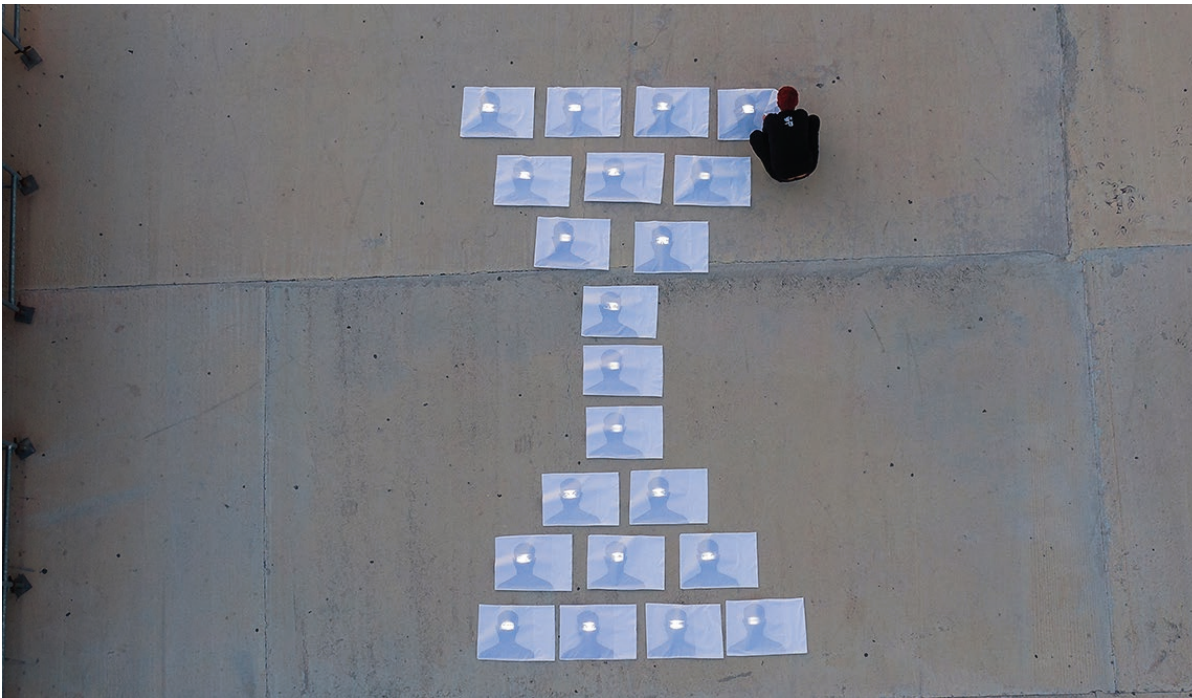


Figure 13: Installation / Geographical inscription. Drone documentation by Chris Stamis.

A non-figurative representation of the loss has also been used by the artist Doris Salcedo in the work *Palimpsest* (2013), which was developed as a mute installation of text that could be activated by the feet of pedestrians and drops of water which gradually formed the names of the victims of gun violence (Salcedo, 2015). Salcedo signifies the recognition of identity by employing text and the image of the gradually emerging letters as memorialized entities that replace a typical photographic portrait. Similarly, to *Palimpsest*, although with different technicalities, on October 8, 2020 the activist art collective, Colectiva SJF used text to identify the victims of femicide in Mexico City from the past four years, painting in the street their names, producing thus, a typographic memorial (Mendelson, 2020). In *Clepsydra* there is no textual marking of identity either for the named or for the unnamed cases that have been memorialized. Moreover, the image of the illuminating eyes does not serve as a recognizable sign. It rather questions recognition as it is difficult to identify a person only through their eyes, proposing thus a reflective mirror as the dead could be any of us. In this way, it's not us that we are looking at the *Other-absent*, but the *phantasma* who looks at us; a melancholic moment of an endless staring at finding a reason for the death exposing uneasiness for us and a call for responsibility.

Consequently, *Clepsydra* follows the genealogy of the "mobilization" (Kwon, 2002a: 157) of site-specific art, and the idea of the

"nomadic movement of the artist" (Kwon, 2002b: 157). Hence, even this present written article, is meant to be considered as another site of developing the process of a mnemonic, yet non-'monument', performative action and making.

## 5. SPATIALITIES

*Clepsydra @ 37.94578, 23.61960* took place in the city of Drapetsona, at the outdoor theatre of Lipasmata Drapetsonas<sup>6</sup> and in the specific geographic coordinates that are mentioned in the title of the project (Figure 11).

The location of Lipasmata Drapetsonas was selected for its physical attributes, as it has been the center of the industrial development of the city/port of Piraeus since the beginning of the 20th century. Mainly a polluted area and inhabited most by working class people, it constitutes a site decentered (Kwon, 2002: 3) from art economies (galleries, museums, etc.).

Historically, Drapetsona has been a site of mobility. In 1922 Greek refugees from Asia Minor and Pontus came in masses to settle in the area, living for many decades in makeshift huts and self-made sheds. A little later, a large number of internal immigrants (mainly from the Greek islands) settled next to refugees living also in hard conditions and working in the nearby industries (Christoforaki et al., 2019). During World War II and the years of German occupation, most of the inhabitants



Figure 14: Installation / Geographical inscription. Drone documentation by Chris Stamis.

joined the EAM (Stavrianos, 1952), the nation-wide communist movement of the Greek Resistance, while both Drapetsona and Keratsini were symbolically declared “free neighborhoods” (Municipality Keratsini-Drapetsona, 2020).

Being mainly communists and democrats, the people of Drapetsona, Keratsini and Kokkinia (Nikaia) suffered a lot in the years after the Greek civil war (1944-1948), which ended with the military defeat of the EAM by the right-wing government forces and their British allies and the persecution of the Greek Communist Party. Stories of imprisonment, physical torture, executions and exiles were added on people's old traumas from the Asia Minor catastrophe.

In the period after the civil war and until 1974, when the military junta of 1967 fell, governments attempted systematically to ‘reform’ Drapetsona and break down the collectivity of its people, by demolishing the slum and relocating and scattering refugees in different neighborhoods; an early form of gentrification of the urban environment, I would say, through which capitalism promotes individualism and homogenization and commodification of public space (Fisher, 2010; Langeegger, 2016). Violent conflicts took place, since people resisted hard against losing not only their houses but also their sense of communal identity. Thus, the demolition of the refugee settlements took place gradually and it was in the mid-1990s when the housing issue came to a resolution (Crhistoforaki et al., 2019).

Furthermore, in the mid-1990s, the Fertilizer factory (in Greek “Lipasmata Drapetsonas”) was closed down causing worse problems, such as unemployment and further degradation of the area, due to the abandonment of the industrial buildings. However, since the beginning of 2019, the wider area of the factory has been transformed into a multifunctional park of cultural activities (theatrical performances, concerts, sport events, etc.). The park is known by two names: Lipasmata Drapetsonas or Parko ergatias (The workers’ park).

Situated in Drapetsona, a significant place of historical cultural conflicts and negotiations, *Clepsydra* employs the idea of rhizomatic nomadism (Braidotti, 2011a), the fluidity of identity and spatiality (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). By relocating each violent incident into an industrial site with a long history of socio-political struggles and traumas, this ephemeral installation suggests a spatial mobility for the dead applying the nomadic condition to the political phantasma. The mnemonic assembly proposes “relationality” (Braidotti, 2011b: 290), as, except from Pavlos Fyssas who was born in Keratsini, no one from the aforementioned murdered people was in any way connected to this industrial area.

In overall, *Clepsydra @ 37.94578, 23.61960* memorializes nomadic selves highlighting interconnected non-linear relationships of memory, histories, and identities both in time and in association with trauma, political struggle and resistance related to the particular geographic position. Hence, this



Figures 15-16: Installation / Geographical inscription. Photo documentation by Lambros Papanikolatos.

performative public intervention inscribes to the industrial area a utopian dialogue among people, times and places challenging the perception of space as an “authentic experience and coherent sense of historical and personal identity” (Kwon, 2002: 52).

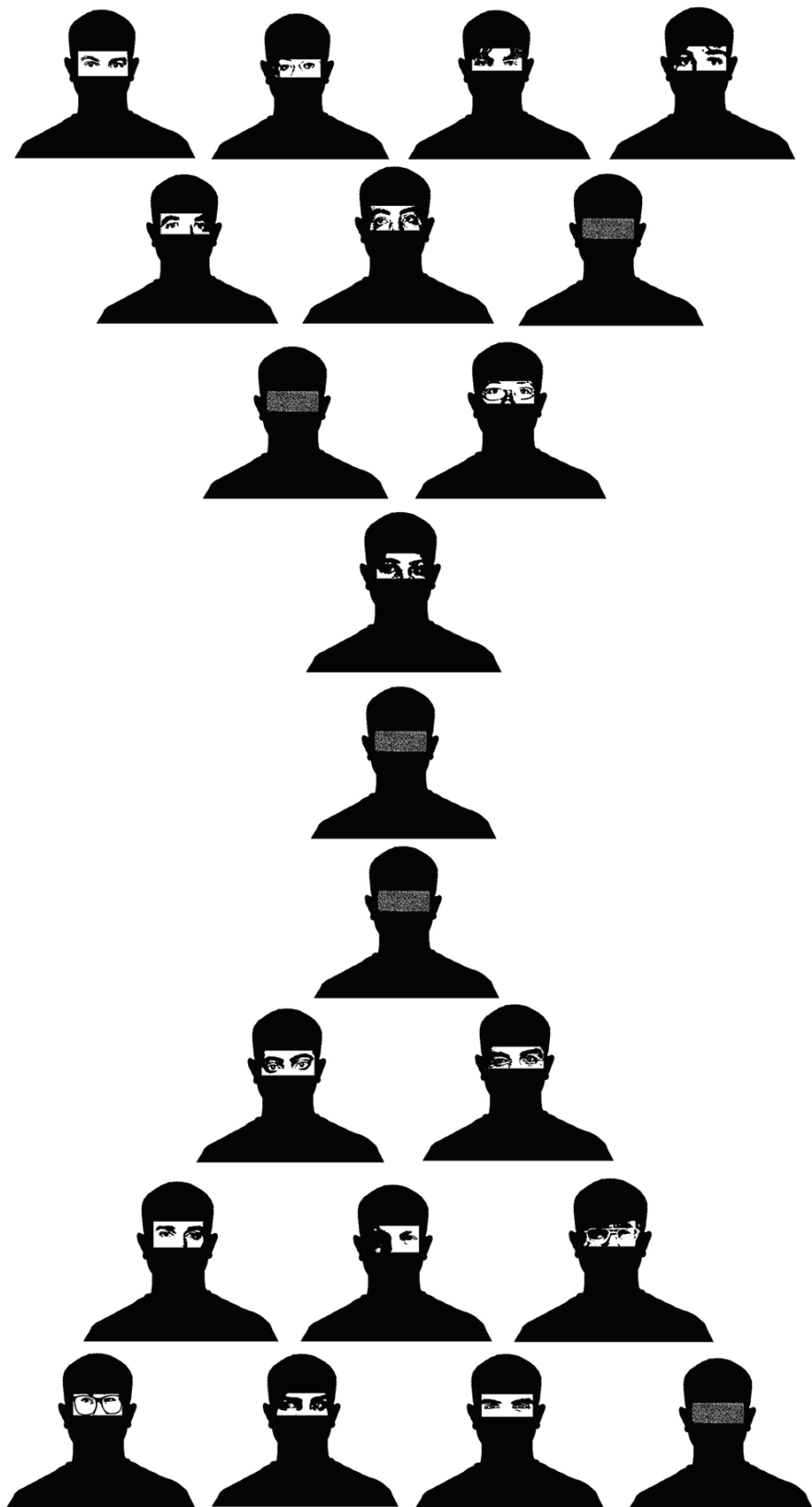
My utopian praxis at the open-air theatre inside the park of Lipasmata Drapetsonas, took place, though, in front of empty rows of seats (Figure 12). Restricted by the

particularities of the time of social distancing, the initial idea of involving members of various political collectives to participate in the mnemonic event had to be reconsidered and redesigned due to the consecutive quarantines in the pandemic of COVID-19.

## CONCLUSION

*Clepsydra @ 37.94578, 23.61960* unveils the political violence lurking in a democracy governed by neo-liberal policies and neoconservatism. As an ephemeral mnemonic installation, it challenges capitalist ideologies, art institutions and structures as the one and only legitimate way of representing and commemorating history. Such dominant forms of representation usually memorialize 'heroic' acts and/or 'achievements' of the nation state oversimplifying and distorting historical events, and, consequently, normalizing public memory in the framework of patriarchal, ethnocentric and/or militaristic conservative discourses (Bedford et al., 2021: 50) that capitalist realism employs to distract people from the actual sources of their troubles. Counter monumental works aim to expose these normalizing practices revealing public space and time as products of the conflict between what is worthy to be remembered and what should be doomed to oblivion. Such dividing practices (Foucault, 1977) constrain the horizons not only of the thinkable but also of the memorable and the imaginable. Furthermore, while capitalist realism sanitizes art works from their historical context by transforming them into commodities of monetary value, ephemeral art, such as installation and performance, has the potential to resist monetarization and acquire historical meaning. In its ephemeral/situational momentum, it may constitute this "tiniest event [that] can tear a hole in the grey curtain of reaction which has marked the horizons of possibility under capitalist realism. From a situation in which nothing can happen, suddenly anything is possible again" (Fisher, 2010: 81). Yet, what Fisher (ibid: 77) notes as condition for such an event to take place, is that the artist should take the risk to get engaged with the strange and the unfamiliar, and I would say also the marginal, so that to disturb the capitalist realism's status quo, in which culture does nothing but repeat endlessly itself.

Reflecting on the importance of the ghost as a political mediator and holder of historical memory (Gordon, 2008), *Clepsydra* seeks to establish an archaeology (Foucault, 1982) of the political phantasma through a geographical inscription of trauma in democracy in the open air. It engages reflectivity on political loss and the violation of the freedom of speech, mobility and senses which the neo-fascist movements demand to enforce in public life. Intending not to become an "unreconstructed spectacle", a logic that has to be abandoned in order to narrate a ghost story (Gordon, 2008), *Clepsydra* in the form of its documentation both from the ground point of view and above (use of a drone),<sup>7</sup> emerges as an architectural structure marking the geographic territory and working as a public reminder (Figures 13-16). As such, it converses with the current debate on the political implications of public monuments in the construction of memory and the questions posed by the movement of Black Lives Matter (Black Lives Matter, 2013) and the consequent mass destruction of statues (Grovier, 2020) that followed George Floyd's murder. By mapping a bloodline of the voiceless, the performative installation calls for political awareness and responsibility towards the dead, a condition necessary for imagining alternative futures.



## NOTES

- [1] The postdoctoral research, "Performative aspects of political loss: Lethal censorships, haunting memories" is being developed in collaboration with the Department of Social Anthropology at Panteion University under the supervision of Dr. Athena Athanasiou (Professor of Social Anthropology, Culture Theory and Gender Studies). It was co-funded by Greece and the European Union (European Social Fund-ESF) through the Operational Program "Human Resources Development, Education and Lifelong Learning", in the framework of the "Reinforcement of Postdoctoral Researchers – 2nd circle" (MIS-5033021) act implemented by the State Scholarships Foundation of Greece (IKY).
- [2] "As a phantasma, the anti-fascist musician emerged under the circumstances of the economic crisis in Greece where violence, racism, xenophobia, homophobia and nationalism were systematically fostered by the activity of Golden Dawn in underprivileged and poverty- and unemployment-stricken western suburbs of Attica. The vivid presence of Golden Dawn in most of the working-class neighborhoods of Piraeus and Athens, has been directly related to the consequences of the implementations of the memoranda. In fact, it was the worsening economy, increasing impoverishment of the middle-class, rapid influx of immigrants in certain areas, continuous degradation of the centre of Athens and populism of news media that culminated in a dramatic rupture in the Greek society out of which the political party of the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn emerged and gradually established itself as the third power in the Greek Parliament at the elections of January 2015. Golden Dawn took advantage of the poor living conditions of the above urban districts and promoted its racist agenda by organizing protest rallies and food drives exclusively for Greeks, and offered 'protection' services, including violent attacks against theatrical performances, activists, immigrants, homosexuals, artists, anti-fascists and leftists. After a series of atrocious criminal activities, "the neo-Nazi party ended up in the deadly stabbing of Pavlos Fyssas, whose murder in September 2013 forced the Greek authorities to act. A senior operative in the party, Giorgos Roupakias, confessed to killing the rapper" (Helena Smith, Golden Dawn guilty verdicts celebrated across Greece. [Online] Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/oct/07/golden-dawn-leader-and-ex-mps-found-guilty-in-landmark-trial> [Accessed 26/12/2020], Oct. 2020, para. 14). The trial against Golden Dawn started in April 2015 and after five years of the procedure, the court ruled that the neo-fascist Golden Dawn was a criminal organization in disguise.strategic stakes." (Rubel, 2015)
- [3] The Athens Polytechnic uprising took place in November 1973 as a massive student revolt against the Greek military junta of 1967-1974. It started on November 14, 1973 and ended in bloodshed in November 17, 1973.
- [4] Emily Dickinson and Ralph W. Franklin, *The poems of Emily Dickinson: Reading edition* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), 930.
- [5] As Fisher (2010) explains: Capitalist realism as dreamwork produces "a confabulated consistency which covers over anomalies and contradictions", softens up systemic "glitches" and symptoms such as the widespread memory disorder, depression and other mental health problems (p.60).
- [6] For the realization of this event, the Cultural Organization of the Municipality of Keratsini-Drapetsona, eagerly, granted me with the permission to use its premises.
- [7] Documentation: Photography – Lambros Papanikolatos | Drone – Chris Stamis | Video – Elli Kontogianni.

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