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### The Screen of the Migrant Body: Technologies of Abjection and the “So-Called” Rape of Amaranthos

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THE SCREEN OF THE MIGRANT BODY:  
TECHNOLOGIES OF ABJECTION AND  
THE “SO-CALLED” RAPE OF AMARINTHOS

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ABSTRACT

*This article examines a seminal moment in the violent mediatized exposure of the female migrant body in contemporary Greek society: the 2006 video rape of a student of Bulgarian origin in Amarinthos, Evia. This cyberbullying incident demonstrated how the contemporary exercise of gender and ethnic violence relies on technological practices of optical targeting, surveillance, spectacularization and voyeurism by sovereign citizens. After initial intense media coverage, however, the “truth” of the rape gradually came into question. As a process of abjection, the rape transformed an immigrant neighbor, classmate, even girlfriend—a familiar stranger—into an abhorrent Other, whose inseparability from the self, in fact, is confirmed by this ongoing repudiation.*

*Keywords: gang rape, violence against migrants, abject body, visual technologies, cyberbullying*

1. INTRODUCTION

October 2006. A Bulgarian immigrant living in Greece brings charges that her daughter, a sixteen-year-old honor student, was gang-raped by classmates in the toilets of her high school in Amarinthos, Evia. Four male students physically assaulted her while two female students filmed the scene on a cellphone. The Minister of National Education and Religious Affairs, Marietta Giannakou, intervened when it was learned that the teachers' council had decided to redress the situation by suspending the boys for a

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mere five days, while also suspending the victim herself. Mainstream news media soon were abuzz.

The event was seized on by politicians in a paroxysm of political correctness regarding Greek violence against immigrants (notably, male violence against women was not foregrounded). President Karolos Papoulias declared that “we are all responsible,” underscoring that such xenophobic actions disgrace the fundamental ethical principles of the Greek people who themselves have experienced racism as immigrants. In a similar vein, George Papandreou, then leader of the opposition party, criticized the government’s immigration policy, stating that a “girl who found herself far from her homeland, making Greece her own, requires the greatest possible amount of compassion.” The Archbishop of Greece Christodoulos arranged a meeting with the girl and her mother, as well as with the four accused boys. Meanwhile, in less-reported news: feminist and anti-racist anarchist groups organized protest marches in Amarinthos. Marching with slogans such as “Immigrants are not foreign. The foreigners are the rapists and whoever supports them” and “Patriarchy in this society ends in the bordellos. It begins in the schools,” these protestors were met with unusual violence. Brandishing weapons, such as shovels, crowbars and rakes, members of the local community jeered the protesters, pelted them with stones and then beat them up.

Reporters also descended on the town, where they encountered the townspeople’s unabashed defense of the implicated students, among whom were the children of a local policeman and of the school’s religion teacher. As regards the accused boys: “The boys are great kids, from the best families,” “Even if there was a rape, it doesn’t matter. They’re young, they’ll forget.” As for the girl: “She was a snot about her grades,” “She wasn’t pretty at all. She wasn’t worth it,” “If she comes back, no one will talk to her,” “We should have lynched her!” As for themselves: “We are not rapists, nor racists. Whatever happened you can’t stigmatize our community,” “God help us not to become like America. That’s where those kinds of things happen. We’re different here in Greece.” Finally, as for the journalists: “You are to blame,” and “This isn’t Veria.” This last comment referred to the February 2006 disappearance of eleven-year-old Alex Meshiesvili from Georgia, who was bullied and eventually killed by a group of local children. The search for the body, which was never found, and the agonized testimony of the child’s mother had been the subject of intense media attention. Hoping to foreclose such public scrutiny, the lawyer’s association of Halkida, Evia’s regional capital, issued a statement demand-

ing the immediate halt of media coverage of the incident. Local teachers refused to meet with the mother to discuss her daughter's return to school, while the women themselves were subject to verbal attacks by townspeople. Clearly unwelcome, the two left their home, friends and school in Amarinthos for Athens, where state authorities arranged a scholarship for the girl at a private high school.<sup>1</sup>

March 2010. The four boys accused of gang rape and the two girls charged as accomplices were found innocent in a unanimous decision by the Juvenile Court of Halkida. The judges agreed that "lewd acts" had occurred, but deemed that the girl had consented to them («ασέλγησαν μεν εις βάρος της κοπέλας, ωστόσο αυτό έγινε με τη θέληση της παθούσης»). As the defense attorney noted after the trial, "many eyewitnesses" testified that the sexual intercourse was voluntary. Her "normal" behavior afterwards was pointed to as proof of the consensual nature of the sexual intercourse. The charge that the rape had a racist motivation was rejected because there were non-Greeks involved. The courtroom was packed with members of the local community, and a plethora of witnesses came forth to defend the accused, including teachers, prompting some critics to compare the scene to lynching trials in the American South in the 1950s and 60s. A psychologist who had followed the girl's case was not allowed to testify on her behalf. Thus, with the exception of her mother, no witness came forth to testify for the girl, who collapsed in the courtroom after the decision. Feminist and other anti-racist groups immediately issued statements condemning the trial as a travesty of justice, stressing how the verdict reproduced the stereotypical argument that rape victims seduce their attackers. Aside from some isolated commentary on blogs and in the leftist press, the court decision was not taken up by the mass media or politicians. After the verdict, the girl was brought up on multiple charges of perjury and slander.<sup>2</sup>

1. For press coverage of the incident, see: E. Karanatsi, 2006, "'Suspension' from Amarinthos too...", *Kathimerini*, Nov. 3; S. Theodorakis, 2006, "One story, three scenarios, more victims", *Ta Nea*, Nov. 11; D. Kroustalli, 2006, "In the 'jungle' of Amarinthos", *To Vima*, Nov. 11; S. Kountouris, 2006, "The shocked residents of Amarinthos", *Ethnos*, Nov. 11, "Exercises in civics", *Eleftherotipia*, IOS, Dec. 12.

2. For press on the trial and reactions to the verdict, see: L. Yiannarou, 2010, "The students in Amarinthos found innocent", *Kathimerini*, April 23; 2010, "The silence in Amarinthos is broken by women's cries", April 17, <<http://tvxs.gr/news/ελλάδα/η-σιωπή-στην-αμάρυνθο-σπάει-από-τις-χορυγές-των-γυναικών>>; S. Kouloglou, 2010, "A scene from the American South in Amarinthos", April 23, <[http://anergoidimosiografoi.blogspot.com/2010/04/blog-post\\_9319.html](http://anergoidimosiografoi.blogspot.com/2010/04/blog-post_9319.html)>.

In this essay, I consider the Amarinthos incident as a seminal moment in the violent mediatized exposure of the female migrant body in contemporary Greek society. As a form of “cyberbullying,” the video rape in Amarinthos is characteristic of the structure of publicity that organizes racial and gender violence in digital late modernity through aggressive practices of optical targeting, surveillance, spectacularization and voyeurism. However, through the simultaneous *downplaying* and *demonizing* of these practices of technological mediation, the sexual assault in the Amarinthos high school toilets over time came to be seen as a “so-called” rape. Its “truth” would end up being decided upon by legal and medical experts reading the physical (not psychic) wounds of the victim’s body and ratified by, among others, the amateur digital encyclopedists policing public memory online. This denial of the rape-as-fact, something that became more definitive after the not-guilty verdict, could be said to mirror and extend the abjection mechanism at work in the rape act.

For psychoanalyst and feminist philosopher Julia Kristeva (1982), the abject is an object of horror that is rejected (corpse, shit, vomit, female/maternal body) because it challenges the distinction between self and other. Yet, as *part* of the self, the abject cannot be expelled. The migrant situation can be viewed productively through this prism: migrants are always already inside the space of the nation-state, and deportation, detention camps and *skoupes* (“sweeps”) can never totally extract them (De Genova, 2010). Given the historical use of rape in various settings as a means to create borders between intermingled groups (Diken, 2005), the Amarinthos rape ironically testifies to the incorporation of migrants’ children into Greek society (particularly, children of migrants from neighboring Balkan states who came to Greece in the 1990s, following the collapse of communist regimes). Their successful passing blurs and disrupts boundaries of self/other: the Amarinthos rape victim, for instance, was a flag-bearer for her class in the local national day parade, an honor given to students with top marks. The accused boys complained to a journalist that it was not right that she carried the flag (“our grandfathers fought in the war, not Bulgarians and Albanians!”). Like the too-fluent “mimic men” (Bhabha, 1994) of the colonized elite, the Bulgarian neighbor, classmate, flag-bearer and potential girlfriend made the self strange (Greeks as *Bulgarians*).

The rape, thus, did not target, but created an abject Other, transforming an uncannily familiar, even desired, stranger into a repulsive alien (a sleazy Bulgarian whore, “not pretty at all”). In feminist political philosopher Judith Butler’s politicized reading of Kristeva, abjection is precisely the

“mode by which Others are turned into shit” (1990: 134). Yet, rather than confirm the border of the male ethnic self, the “annoying” accusations and claims of the migrants revealed the actual fragility and anxiety at the core of the self (*great* kids, *not* rapists, *not* racists). The continuing retroactive attempt to delete this event from cultural memory as a “so-called,” even a *once-called* rape, could be seen—and must be countered—as repeating the rape’s initial gesture of repudiation.

## 2. SEX BEFORE TECHNOLOGY

A few days after the Amarinthos story broke, the journalist Nikos Evangelatos featured “real” teen porn videos on his investigative journalism show, “Evidence” (*Αποδείξεις*). Although he could not show the actual Amarinthos video since the girl deleted the file from her phone, apparently there was no difficulty in locating analogous video footage to shock the Greek television audience regarding the state of teen sexuality and the diabolical role of new technologies in the expansion of perverse pleasures. Critics decried this pornographic exploitation of the incident as “tele-voyeurism” masquerading as reporting and, thus, as a characteristic pathology of Greek commercial television. The particular broadcast also was censured by the National Radio-Television Council.<sup>3</sup> While this televisual re-broadcast of teen porn videos did massively interpellate television viewers into the game of aggressive visualization, the lambasting of mass media sensationalism had the effect of turning attention away from what “Amarinthos” might say about contemporary Greek society. As one journalist complained: “Why do we limit our anger to our mirror—television—instead of dealing with us ourselves?”<sup>4</sup>

The titillation of new technology perversion also preempted a *critical* consideration of technoculture in relation to the power struggles that define contemporary sovereignty. Thus, as the public debate on the Amarinthos rape unfolded, the cellphone itself emerged as a key protagonist, instrumental in Greek youth’s loss of sexual innocence. Indeed, in the wake of the incident, the education minister banned the use of cellphones by students in Greek schools. By extracting the cellphone from the social rela-

3. P. Diamantakou, 2006, “Chasing after a rape”, *Ta Nea*, Nov. 2; K. Halvatzakis, 2006, “Televisual rape with...Evidence”, *To Vima*, Nov. 11; P. Bitsika, 2007, “The apotheosis of pornospectatorship”, *To Vima*, March 18.

4. D. Gousetis, 2006, “Thoughts on a rape”, *Avgi*, Nov. 18.

tions in which it was deployed, however, this decision treated technology (in the form of the cellphone *qua* object) as an inhuman(e) exterior force and autonomous catalyst of social behaviors.

Enhancing this sense of exteriority, commentators on Amarinthos often contrasted the depraved present to their own childhoods, imagining that past not as a prior moment of technologically-mediated communication, but as one of *unmediated* interaction. Lauding the minister's decision, one journalist noted: "Little by little, kids aren't talking to each other any more. They communicate with 'messages.'" The ban on cellphones, he suggests, could help restore "live dialogue" and more spontaneous "non-mechanical" forms of flirting that he remembers from his childhood. "Students have to speak to each other. To quarrel, to curse, to figure things out, to cool down, to form warm friendships, to fall in love. Why should a cellphone get between them?"<sup>5</sup> This utopian construction of unmediated face-to-face communication not only denies that real communication occurs on online and that "healthy," even radical, forms of intersubjectivity can develop through technological modes of connection and self-exposure, but also underestimates the role of technologically-mediated presence (via telephone, photographs, love letters) in producing the longing, desire and attachment associated with modern notions of love, friendship and flirting (Sconce, 2000).

In the discourse on Amarinthos, this oversight of prior regimes of technosociality supported a commonsense view of sexual intercourse as the physical interaction of "real bodies" in "real time," thus enabling the separation of the primary fact of violence (rape) from the secondary fact of representation (rape video). If the Amarinthos video had been brought forth as evidence, it most likely would have been seen, according to the tradition of optical realism, as a "window" onto violence, not as a trace left by violent acts of looking (Feldman, 2000).<sup>6</sup> Nor should we neglect the fact that this video was produced to be forwarded to others, thus potentially amplifying over time and space the spectacularization of the initial scene. As the 2004 Abu Ghraib torture scandal made clear, the proliferation of techniques of violent visualization of racialized others, with their debt to pornographic aesthetics, have proliferated in the context of digital network

5. Penelope Papailias, University of Thessalyion of other immigrants as sing that cannot ever happen: disruptive force.e over time, L. Papadopoulos, 2006, "Cellphones", *Ta Nea*, Nov. 8.

6. For an exception, see M. Tsimidakis, 2007, "Video torture and new technologies", March 7, <<http://tsimidakis.wordpress.com/2007/07/03/video-torture/>>.

culture (Puar, 2004; Feldman, 2005). While agents of violent visualization might be overwhelmingly associated with the state or mass media, increasing numbers of “sovereign citizens” (Hansen and Stepputat, 2005), armed with powerful new microtechnologies of visual documentation and digital circulation, have taken it upon themselves to guard the borders of the national community.

The Amarinthos rape, thus, should be situated in relation to the contemporary global phenomenon of cyberbullying. For instance, in “happy slapping,” a characteristic cyberbullying practice, unsuspecting victims are overtaken and harassed *in order* to produce an image of their shock, which in turn is disseminated widely via cellphone messaging or on the web. In her deposition, the plaintiff in the Amarinthos case described being ambushed, after having gone to make out with a boy on whom she had a crush. After the tryst turned into a demand for group sex, she reports fleeing to the bathrooms where “T. saw me crying on my knees and, naked, fell on me. He pressured me and I yielded. I was by that point like a dead person. Then the rest of those accused came into the toilet. They lifted me onto the sink. They held my hands and legs and K. raped me until he ejaculated. They jumped up and down all together like victors (*nikites*).” Although she decided to report the rape *once she found out about the existence of the video*—a point with which involved students concurred<sup>7</sup>, the girls who made the video were only belatedly charged in the case. That visual documentation and spectatorship were understood as a passive form of observation, even as *inaction*, is obvious in journalists’ comments to the effect that the girls involved “did not do anything to help her. In fact, one of the girls videotaped the event with her cellphone.”<sup>8</sup> This sort of statement, of course, also assumes the innate pacifism and solidarity of women.

Once the dust settled on the Amarinthos incident, it became clear that no one would be held accountable: not the social relations in this provincial town and Greek society in general, not the school administration and the justice system, not even the perpetrators. Only technology itself. It is certainly not the first time. As with the banning of personal cameras in the American army after the Abu Ghraib scandal, the ban on cellphones

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7. P. Kousoulos, 2009, “The protagonists of the Amarinthos gang rape talk to Zougla.gr”, Dec. 4, <<http://www.zougla.gr/greece/article/i-protagonistes-tou-omadikou-viasmou-tis-amarin8ou-miloun-stin-zouglagr>>.

8. L. Nesfiqe, M. Moustaka and S. Vradeli, 2006, “They’re asking her to leave town”, *Ta Nea*, Oct. 31.



sent the message that the “kids” themselves, “the poor things,” had fallen victim to a powerful and dangerous technology that they could not control, especially when confronted by the perverse sexuality of ethnic Others (Papailias, 2008). Even though the Amarinthos incident galvanized anti-racist and feminist groups—but notably not immigrant groups, the only lasting reform in Greek schools that came out of the scandal was the cellphone ban. Thus, it was only a matter of time for the blame to return to the victim, as author of the fiction entitled “Amarinthos,” which ruined the lives of her fellow students and tarnished the town’s name.

### 3. AMARINTHOS IN THE ARCHIVE

What is the legacy of Amarinthos, an event that flashed up on television screens so intensely, but also so briefly? How will Amarinthos be remembered (or not) in the future? Or, will it only be remembered for having been forgotten?<sup>9</sup> As anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot (1995) has demonstrated in his study of the historiography of the Haitian Revolution and its constitution as a “non-event” of world history, silences are active (they are acts of silencing) that enter the process of historical production at various points (fact creation, fact assembly, fact retrieval, retrospective historical analysis). In the case of Amarinthos, through a separation of the “rape itself” from aspects of its representation (the video, the media uproar), the rape would be rendered a non-event through retrospective deletion, acquiring as a result a spectral status, much like the deleted video on the accused girl’s cellphone.

An instructive place to think about the imprint of this incident on cultural memory and the digital database is the “Amarinthos” entry in the Greek-language Wikipedia (Βικιπαίδεια). The status of Amarinthos as an event can only be approached with an eye to transformations in the form of the media event and the experience of witnessing in the digital age. In this regard, Wikipedia, as a free, user-produced, online database, with exponential growth since its inception at the turn of this century, represents a critical site to examine shifts in conceptions of the event, as well as of knowledge production and access. Turning to the Wikipedia entry on Ama-

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9. When a staged smart phone video of detained migrants being forced to slap and curse each other in a central Athenian police station surfaced on Athens Indymedia in June 2007, leftist journalists and bloggers, as well as an independent member of parliament, noted the amnesia about Amarinthos. N. Dimos, “Remember Amarinthos?”, <<http://doncat.blogspot.com/2007/07/blog-post.html>>; D. Gousetis, 2007, “Omonia-Amarinthos: video recordings”, *Avgi*, June 6.

rinthos, a first observation is that the rape incident is not a non-mention, but a retracted mention. The first entry on “Amarinthos,” which includes a relatively long description of the rape, was introduced into Greek Wikipedia on November 1, 2006, about a week after the rape. The fact that the “Amarinthos” rape incident was so quickly integrated into Wikipedia is not unusual, but precisely a quality that distinguishes Wikipedia from print-based encyclopedias. Just as characteristic, though, is the instability of entries, which can be deleted or radically edited over the course of a single day or even a few hours. Thus, just an hour after its first mention in Greek Wikipedia, the Amarinthos rape incident was deleted, only to be partially reinstated a few days later: “This is the place where a sixteen-year-old Bulgarian girl was raped.” A few minutes later, self-anointed digital *encyclopediste* Diderot deleted even this brief reference to the rape in response to a debate that had begun on the discussion page of the Amarinthos entry.<sup>10</sup>

The reasons put forth in this forum for deleting reference to the rape are worth considering, as these arguments, which were circulating more generally in public discourse, were instrumental in writing this act of violence out of the archive *in the name of truth*. A first justification for the omission of the rape is that this category of “fact” does not have a place in an encyclopedia. Kostisl, for instance, asked if it wasn’t a little “absurd” (*paralogo*) for 90% of an article related to a “toponym” to refer to a rape incident that occurred there. Diderot agreed that this was not just absurd, but “ridiculous!”—“at least for an encyclopedia”—because it makes it seem that only after the rape “did we learn that Amarinthos exists” or, alternatively, that “down there in Amarinthos they rape Bulgarians (and elsewhere they do not).”

Yet, if the rape had not occurred, “Amarinthos” might have remained a “stub” article. Indeed, the rape incident seems to have led to the entry’s *overdevelopment*, largely with geographical and ancient historical content, as if to prove that there is “something more” to Amarinthos than the rape. The history section, though, ends in antiquity. Contemporary history, including contentious periods for the area, such as the civil war, are side-stepped, not to mention the modern name change of the town from the

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10. See, <<http://el.wikipedia.org/wiki/Συζήτηση:Αμάθυνθος>> (accessed March 1, 2013). This was hardly the final bout of insertion, deletion and reinstatement. On May 28th, 2007, a user deleted the existing entry and wrote the word RAPISTS (ΒΙΑΣΤΕΣ) over and over. This text then was deleted ten minutes later. The entry on Amarinthos in the English-language Wikipedia similarly has been marked by controversy and repeated acts of deletion and rewriting.

folksy “Vatheia” (“Deep”) to the distinguished, archaizing “Amarinthos”. With the rape’s deletion, the only current event noted is the “forest fire of 2007”. While ostensibly an apolitical given, the toponym, as a category of knowledge, actually represents a powerful mode of overwriting history in deference to nature, while naturalizing history as “ruins” and “monuments” punctuating a landscape available to the traveler’s gaze (Barthes, 1972: 75-6). As Geraki notes ironically, removing the rape reference from the Amarinthos entry is a great idea if the point of Wikipedia is to create a tourist brochure for vacationing Athenians with descriptions of sun-drenched beaches and friendly natives.

Another key argument against including reference to the rape is that these “crimes of the moment” are magnified by the media and might not endure in historical memory. Rebutting this argument, Geraki writes: “Amarinthos is not a case of ‘rape,’ it is not the initial event that generated interest, but how it was addressed. In other words we are not talking about a crime, but a social phenomenon”. One could add that exactly because “it could happen anywhere,” but that these multiple forms of violence (gang rape, violence against immigrants, school bullying, cyberbullying) actually became visible in Amarinthos and generated an unprecedented public debate, the event acquired historical and political significance.

Even if current events might be considered legitimate topics for an encyclopedia, another argument against including reference to the rape was that whatever happens in Greece could not possibly be “that bad” compared to analogous events that occur in the U.S. While Diderot concedes that English-language Wikipedia includes extensive reference to the 1999 Columbine school murders under the entry for “Columbine High School”, he argues that global media attention warranted this inclusion. By contrast, *Greek* media fabricate shocking news events to increase viewership before relegating them “to the archive”. According to this view, downplaying the event at the moment of fact assembly corrects prior media hype.

A final justification put forth for removing the reference, of course, was ambivalence about whether a rape actually took place. If there was no rape, then, there was no event (just media hype). This is, of course, a circular argument that assumes that the function of the encyclopedia as “objective” discourse—in Wikipean terms, with a “NPOV” (“neutral point of view”)—is to register truths already decided on by institutions of truth production (law, medicine), as if these institutions themselves operate innocently outside of history and power. From this perspective, the reference to the Amarinthos teen gang rape should be removed until there is a court decision. Interesting-

ly, however, once there was a court decision, the opposite occurred. Characterizing the media treatment of the incident as an unprecedented example of “bigotry against Greeks”, Dimitriou declared: “The reference is necessary now that the judgment has been made”. Yet, following its brief reinstatement (along with information about the perjury charges brought against the plaintiff), the reference was deleted again after Ggia noted the verdict’s contestation by feminist and anti-racist groups. As a result, the entry contracted to include only the supposedly incontestable facts appropriate to a toponym (i.e., ancient history, geography, demography).

The Amaranthos rape is not the only recent incident of gender and ethnic violence to have come into the public eye due to the outspokenness of the victims or their families, yet continue to be a subject of rumor and hearsay. At the time of writing, one also could not find entries in Greek Wikipedia for the murder of “little Alex” (Meshiesvili), or for the vitriol attack on the labor unionist Konstantina Kuneva in December 2008. Interestingly, though, due to the way that Wikipedia is constructed, entering “Amaranthos rape” into a search engine will not produce “no results”, but precisely the Wikipedia debate about removal of the rape reference, as well as detailed records of its various deletions and reinstatements.

The Amaranthos rape incident, thus, could be said to be under erasure in the Derridean sense: an absent presence haunting the digital database, which like the “native rumors” permeating the documents of colonial archives, has the potential to turn it inside out, revealing the anxious underbelly of sovereign power. This under erasure status poignantly demonstrates how precarious subjects are written into political community precisely at the moment of their violent exclusion and abandonment (Agamben, 1998; Butler, 2004).

#### 4. DELETED IMAGES

In the Amaranthos incident, the visual targeting and orchestration of a rape scene for circulation in the youth market of “real” porn videos transformed a straight-A student who worked at a restaurant to supplement her mother’s income into a “Bulgarian whore,” and turned a neighbor, an intimate, even a potential girlfriend, into a stranger and outcast who was forced due to social pressure to flee from her home. Given, however, that the encounter in the high school bathroom did not leave physical traces on the victim, the incident remained for many an “alleged” rape, a “so-called” rape. The forensic report, employing the solemn, archaizing language of

male authority, closed in on the “truth” inscribed in the victim’s body: “No bruising, old or recent, was ascertained around the entrance to the vagina” («Κακώσεις περίξ της εισόδου του κόλπου παλαιές ή πρόσφατες δεν διαπιστώθηκαν»). The constant downplaying of acts of visual targeting and exposure as secondary ultimately allowed the defense lawyer to speak matter-of-factly about the “many eyewitnesses” to the event. Even though the sexual scene appears to have been *performed for them* (and other imagined viewers of the video), the use of the word “eyewitness”, rather than spectator, not only placed them outside the event, relieving them of their active role in the circuits of pleasure and humiliation being enacted, but also, shockingly, transformed them into arbiters of the girl’s behavior, more legitimate than the girl herself. Thus, the whole incident—the “lewdness” of which was never denied—could be interpreted as a symptom of social breakdown and of the degeneracy of contemporary youth with their outrageous technological gadgets, rather than as a power struggle played out on the screen of the migrant body for conservation of a given social order and control over the borders of national community.

While this visual objectification and exposure of a classmate and neighbor did make violence against women, ethnic others and the economically precarious briefly visible, these images were swiftly denied and deleted, both literally and figuratively. The process of abjection, in other words, did not stop with the rape, but continued with the repudiation of the images it spawned, as if they were the rape’s horrific offspring. The girl’s grotesque image (but also necessarily the boys’) was deleted from the cellphone archive, just as the incident itself later was excised from Wikipedia. Like the child of rape, though, these traces (and the anxiety around making them disappear) testify to a breaching of borders, to inclusion in the body politic in the act of exclusion. The paradoxical persistence of the image of the Other *as deleted*, thus, makes possible the imperative task of re-calling this “so-called” rape.

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