

Nadja Argyropoulou: Chaos: how to ruin a 'ruin' and love a 'ruin-in-love', I think

Text: Nadja Argyropoulou
Proofreading: Fotini Pipi

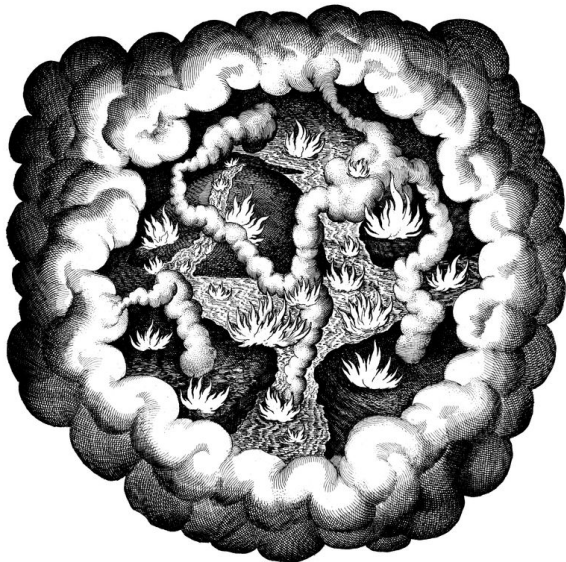
Mnemosyne in ruins

'The central problem in this is memory. Animals store their acquired information in gametes. These are practically eternal memories – they last as long as life on earth. Humans, on the other hand, utilize artificial memories to transmit acquired information – books, buildings and pictures, for example. They are far less durable than eggs or sperm. Humans are therefore in search of more permanent memories: *aere perennius* (more permanent than bronze). They know that when all artificial memories – all human creation – has long decayed into entropic debris and rubble, human gametes will continue to pass on their information, perhaps altered by chance.' – Vilém Flusser¹

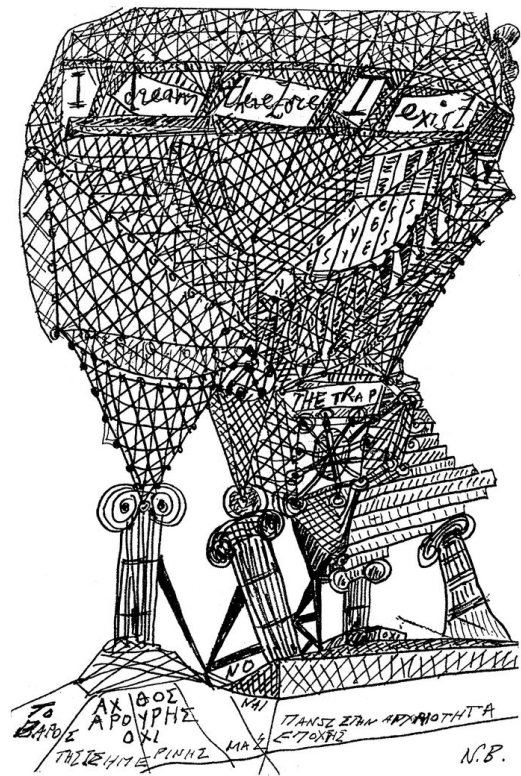
There is a question of memory/knowledge, power/ownership and skill/fabrication at the basis of Vilém Flusser's 'debris and rubble'. Commemoration itself starts with an incident of ruination:² When the nobleman Scopas of Thessaly refused to fully pay poet Simonides of Ceos (556–468 BC) for a poem he chanted at a banquet, and a short while later the poet exited the room to respond to a call (supposedly by the heroic demigods Castor and Pollux honoured in the poem), the roof of the banquet hall fell and crushed all of Scopas's guests. The horribly mangled bodies made identification impossible, and it was only because Simonides was able to remember the guests' seating places that their proper burial was achieved. The invention of the art of memory – *mnemotechnics* – emerged from those banquet ruins as the orderly rearrangement of mental images in loci so that speech could properly and swiftly access them; an art that required placing/storing, preserving and recovering such images as if they were ghost

bodies that inhabit every inert ruin and each deadening ruination, and animate it to eternity, to immortality.

Memory buildings, entire elaborate ‘theatres of the world’ could since be raised out of the ruins, spread by the flows of *lethe* (forgetfulness, oblivion),³ at the summons and visit of their custodians, in order to shield and yield the truth, the *a-letheia*⁴ that only rhetoric was privileged to structure-into-revelation. Ever since, even under Hermetic influences, astrology and occult imagery, rules and more rules formed the main corpus of every *ars memorativa* treatise; the sense of sight, ‘the meditation of the eyes,’ was described as the most trustworthy ally of the ‘architectonic soul’ (*âme architectonique*),⁵ which restored various bodies of evidence in language via artificial memory. Several centuries later, ‘Forensic Architecture’ is an investigative practice that uses similar optical devices (although greatly reinforced and far more complex) in order to see, structure and expose incidents that involve abuse of power and its insidiously ruinous effect (the ‘violence at the threshold of detectability’).⁶



“Le chaos des éléments (The Chaos of elements)”. Robert Fludd, *Utriusque Cosmi Historia*, Oppenheim, 1617. As found in “Le Miroir de la Magie” par Kurt Seligmann, ed. Fasquelle, 1956, Paris, p. 98.



Nanos Valaoritis (1921–2019), “The weight of contemporary times on Antiquity”, pen on paper, 1960’s. Greek Surrealist poet and writer Nanos Valaoritis had insisted that “the avant-garde is 5000 years old”. His visual poetry mixed drawing and writing in a vibrant pluriverse, where dream is a waking reality and Homeric words (*αχθος ἀρούρης* = burden on the land) become visual puns in contemporary satire.

Ruination

‘We no longer dwell, but hide in ruins through which blow the blizzards of communications. No use trying to adapt those ruins: a new architecture for people who “survive the revolution” is called for.’

— Vilém Flusser

Even in Flusser’s radical vision of ruin-less cities – respons(e)ible dialogical networks, ‘places of high density’, wave-troughs with gravitational force in the vast fields of intersubjective relations – glitches can occur: when, for example, (the proverbial) architects use bundles instead of nets and information is broadcast in one direction and consumed in another. Ruination by totalitarianism lurks behind every ruination by communication. And since ruination lasts longer than ruins, the refugees of this new, digital shift – of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and the ‘Sixth Rung’,⁷ i. e. the non-existing (virtual) interaction – may not be afforded the ‘new architecture’ of creative knots and shared information in the near future any more than did the refugees who arrived in Athens from Asia Minor in the beginnings of the previous century, only to be stacked under weather-ridden tents next to the city’s ancient ruins,⁸ or the refugees from the Near East and Africa who have been crossing the Aegean and the Mediterranean, fleeing one kind of ruin to be incarcerated in another.⁹

The existential potential of ruins of every kind – their lure beyond their role as repositories of knowledge in need of deciphering and restitution – has been of paramount importance to architects and philosophers, artists and poets, colonialists and activists. To access all that ruins name and signify, to know the ruins instead of ‘explaining them away’,¹⁰ is a useful and quirky task, a movement of many that helps everyone think otherwise:¹¹ from Simonides’s curious invention of the art of memory to the odd travelogue of Hypnerotomachia Poliphili that glorified the divinatory potential of the classical detritus; from Romanticism’s passionate, melancholic ruinophilia (‘Hail, solitary ruins’¹²) to Walter Benjamin’s sorrowful ‘angel of history’; from Jean-Luc Godard’s iconoclastic, chaotic and irreverent search amidst the shards of art and history for an alchemical, a fractal cinematography (‘space is the time it takes to find the other’¹³) to J. G. Ballard’s orgiastic nature-culture blend where entropy fashions drowned metropolis and crystallized forest alike, where devastation is but the ruined dream of moderation in our suffocatingly humane world (‘each one of us is as old as the entire biological kingdom and our bloodstreams are tributaries of the great sea of its total memory’);¹⁴ from

Aby Warburg's *Mnemosyne Atlas*, a delirious migration of images mapping the afterlife of antiquity,¹⁵ to the most recent bloom of parasitic images-agencies that Max Sebald has called 'an almost pathological hypermnnesia in a past otherwise emptied of content';¹⁶ from the female body as a battleground¹⁷ to the bewitched body of politics and the dismembered body of sociality;¹⁸ from the Necronauts (the 'modern lovers of debris, radio and jetstreams') and their provocative embrace of the experience of failed transcendence¹⁹ to Timothy Morton's notion of 'subscendence' ('wholes and parts are just as real as one another. It is simply that the whole is less than the sum of its parts'), where evils, like say neoliberalism, can be perceived as less than the total of the horrible ruins that have made it a frightening, insurmountable whole, and parts are no longer just replaceable components in search of some divine, primordial unity ('Subsident wholes are fuzzy and ragged... humankind is a fuzzy, subsident whole that includes and implies other lifeforms, as a part of the also subsident symbiotic real'²⁰); from the shared *untimeliness* of digital real time experienced during the recent virus/viral incarceration, and the painful loss of our most common sense, touch, to the crippled or anaesthetized bodies produced by capitalist necropolitics and the 'patchy' Anthropocene;²¹ from a pluriverse in protest ('the world we want is a world where many worlds fit'²²) to the practice of *terra nullius* – the annihilation of many by the few;²³ from T. S. Eliot's desperate cry ('these fragments I have shored against my ruin')²⁴ to George Seferis's Greek outlook ('the statues are not the ruins – we are the ruins'²⁵); from our debt to nested temporalities ('Stones-ancestors as creditors'²⁶) to Moten and Harney's speculative debt in mutuality ('Mutual debt, unpayable debt, unbounded debt, unconsolidated debt, debt to each other in a study group, to others in a nurses' room, to others in barbershops, to others in a squat, a dump, the woods, a bed, an embrace');²⁷ from the mystical, chthonic love of modern fragments by Dimitris Pikionis²⁸ to the updated notion of 'liquid antiquity' navigated by either tentacular and roaming *mêtis* (cunning intelligence)²⁹ or Orpheus's lyre that composes time by making music with the Sirens; from gazing at the ruins to feeling their skin of time; from *diasparagmos* (analysis, disarticulation down to organs, disembodied knowledge)³⁰ to weaving, interlacing and *worlding with*; from human-induced and human-interpreted ruins to possibly an other-than-human sense of ruins – do androids dream of ruins? What do animals, the virus, Flusser's *Vampyroteuthis Infernalis*, Donna Haraway's demon familiar spider, *Pimoi Cthulhu*,³¹ my dog, her chicken, his goats, the kingdom of dust, the ocean's coral reefs, the hanging bat, the hungry termite know about ruins?



Nelly's (Elli Souyioultzoglou-Seraidari, 1899–1988), "The dancer Nikolska on the Acropolis", Athens, photographic print, 1929. A native of Aydin in Asia Minor, Elli Souyioultzoglou arrived in Greece in 1924 and soon established herself as one the most-well known photographers of ancient Greek monuments and dancers. Influenced by German photographic aesthetics she gave the world the most iconic images of modern naked female bodies animating the classical ruins, in photographs of the French ballerina Mona Paeva or the Russian dancer Elizaveta Nikolska.



Tent village in the shadows of the Temple of Theseus, Athens, where Greek refugees make thier [sic] homes, photographic print, 1922, <https://www.loc.gov/resource/cph.3c39254>.

The commons of ruins

‘Our landscape is its own monument: The trace it signifies is located on the underside. It is all history’ – Édouard Glissant³²

Writing from Greece, I am writing from a chthonic no-where where ruins lie (are situated or fallen) as language writes (the Greek word *keimena* means both *lying* and *texts*);³³ from the place where the glorious ruins of classicism coexist with the bones in the mythical pit of *Kaiadas* (the Spartans’ dump site for the crippled and the weak); from the place where Le Corbusier and Freud encountered the Acropolis with feelings of ‘a paralysing crush’ and ‘de-realisation’ respectively;³⁴ from the place that Surrealist poet Nicolas Calas had to leave in order to find the exploding-fixed nature of ruins and understand how (in his own words) ‘art is a powder magazine, the Parthenon proves it!';³⁵ the place where poet Yorgos Makris issued his infamous proclamation for the destruction of Parthenon in 1944³⁶ as an artistic act of liberation from its entrenchment as petrified history; from the place where the legendary Octopus Press of anarchist writer Teos Romvos published a sardonic counter-touristic manifesto for the natural death of the Acropolis and the rise ‘of the vine of a new performance’ on its remains;³⁷ the place where Robert Smithson’s term of ‘a ruin in reverse’³⁸ is a lived reality (precarious, undone, ever-under-construction), shared by now by many, here but also far beyond.

I am writing from a country mostly confined, ghettoed, reduced to ruins: its history assembled from the perspective of ruins, its life impaired by ruination both old and new, its living considered prone to *contaminate* (and thus ruin) by example (aka ‘the Greek crisis’),³⁹ its body shattered by all kinds of extractivist practices (including geoengineering propaganda and the ecology of affluence) which bear fresh ruins under the guise of progress, a renewed construction zeal and the dwarfing rise of the tourist industry where all is exhausted by an exhaustive language (‘Tantalus has gone into advertising’).⁴⁰

I am also writing from next-to and beyond the Aegean archipelago, a sea scattered with the real, the tangible, the inhabited remnants, the archaic clusters, the ruins that survived sunken, mythical continents on the threshold between East and West; one of the *mid-seas* that reoccur inexorably as the metaphorical schemata-par excellence in our contemporary experience of multitudes and yearning for deep time.

Here, haptic thinking is made possible by and through the mattering matter that includes ghosts – hauntings by the impossible memory of the past; matter that entails accidents and shipwrecks from the start, that presupposes the habitation of the *uninhabitable weather*. Here wise knowledge (a philosophy of mingled bodies) feels familiar like care/cure from the addiction of speech, from the intoxicating ‘virus of language,’⁴¹ from the fix of information; here a *pelagic texture*, as discovered in the ruins, can be understood like a form of response to the climax of light that reaches its opposite: darkness;⁴² here the question invested in ruins by the nostalgic gaze shape-shifts into a (re)turn to things themselves, to shorelines as sites of mixtures and citations of beginnings, to topologies, interspecies, winds, waves, rhizomes, hybrids, sound, entanglements, ‘fingeryeyes’,⁴³ to the unending exchange between hard and soft, to the sensible, a choice to ‘seek’ and not to ‘name’, to silence.

Michel Serres writes of his ‘healing’ in Epidaurus: ‘I listen. My ear grows to fit the dimensions of the amphitheatre, a marble pavilion. My hearing flat to the earth, on a vertical axis, tries to catch the harmony of the world. It awaits the birds coming in on the wind... In the ruins of tragedy, I wish to tune out my own static.’⁴⁴



Tassos Vrettos, "The temple(s) of Poseidon at Cape Sounion", photographic print, 2012.



Mining at Giali island, Dodecanese, Greece. The small volcanic island next to Nisyros, is famous as a natural reservoir of pumice and obsidian and has been named after its natural streams of glass (perlite). Teos Romvos, among other eco-activists has written on the island's natural beauty, archaeological importance and gradual ruination through extraction, a process which is impacting the island since 1956. The research art project "Making oddkin: for joy, for trouble, for volcano love" in 2018 engaged with aspects of the problem.

Ruins in (the wild of) love

‘Suddenly there is something about the *morne*. A moving on the surface of chaos that changes chaos by its movement.’ – Édouard Glissant⁴⁵

Ruins have been (ab)used as the ‘floatsam and jetsam of happenstance’;⁴⁶ they have been co-opted, popularised as a kind of motif prepped for the colonial, the capitalist imaginary, and as such they still survive in forms of gaming, in the critical thresholds of LARPing, in neo-fascist cults and nationalist agendas, in the ersatz jungles of conspiracy theories, in the sterilized imagery and authoritative confines of institutionalized culture, in crisis porn, in distanced voyeurism virtual art extravaganzas and fashion’s wet dreams, in a discursive context which has been and still is turning them into fetishized, zombified relics at best or civilized souvenirs saturated by the excessive use of several biases at worst. Ruins produced by racial injustice, white supremacy, militarist agendas and all kinds of genocides have been ignored or erased, made absent and replaced by narratives of prosperity produced by extractive futurisms.

There is no one way to know and ruin the ruins unless we love ruins-in-(the-wild-of-)love; unless we capture not (the saturated by meaning) image(s) of ruins but the insufficiency of this image, unless we know how ruins mark the nuances of making, the flows of remembering, and the duration and non-spectacular wake of loss and suffering. If in this hyper-connected and ultra-fragmented world of ours we can feel how transmission trumps listening, how

reception is held captive by various embedded models and structures, how the collapse of materialities engendered the rise of false promises for a viable, safe void (the net); if, in other words, by contemplating the ruins we can deeply feel how sensation itself is trapped, ensnared, abstracted, codified, then we can possibly start to understand memory as an inter-subjective, continuous exchange, a conversation held not *on*, not *in spite of*, but *with* the ruins, at the counterintuitive terrain of wildness. We can possibly consider ruins not as structures that house memory but as a point from which memory can be pushed far forward, as fleeting islands of stability, events that take shape in a time-fold, manifestations of rhizomatic errantry; we can see that they are not commonplace but the hyphen in 'lieux-communs' (common-topoi). In the Glissantian worldmentality (*tout-monde*) that consults the 'uncertain evidence' of ruins, these are forms of our common destiny, the unforeseeable and foretellable forms of '*chaos-monde* (the immeasurable intermixing of cultures)'.⁴⁷ We may even imagine ruination as recurrence and difference, revolution.

Poet Nanos Valaoritis had made a drawing of his study with ruins both arid and fertile: bearing the weight of our fantasies of the past and dreams for the future, ruins call forth the wild strands of the present. They so live and rise, they sprout as an abyss, as a contaminating virus.

Memory is possibly born from such a 'heap of broken images',⁴⁸ such ruins in (the wild of) love. No need for palaces, foundations and territories. Ruins in the wild mediate by their confounding ambivalence, by hinting at realities of loss, gaps, voids and violence, as much as at an ethics of sustainable destruction. They mediate by resisting to be named, tamed, claimed – as the thorny mixture of hard and soft (matter and sign). Their eloquence is of the sand, the skin, the swerve (*Lucretius's clinamen*) and the chaotic ocean, not of the sublime, the full, the frozen; not of sense, order, accumulation but rather that of noise, interference, turbulence, opaqueness; an ear for, rather than, the voice of, the collective din.

Serres suggests that the given of ruins is not a gift of language and thus is most often located on the entropic scale:⁴⁹ it belongs to a mingling of energies that knocks us about, tears bodies to pieces, slaps faces out of sleep; such a given comes to us amidst jolts and signs as creation itself came out of the gaping void – *chaos* – in a staggering entanglement of entities with arbitrary names and conflictual temperaments.⁵⁰ If, as per Cornelius Castoriadis, this image implies a new ontology where chaos is the fundamental 'determination' of being, its immanent capacity for creation, its *vis formandi*,⁵¹ then ruins

(including those of Greek-born democracy) can also be understood as the chaotic symbiosis of bodies and languages, the mess-ups of planning and chance, the terrible mixtures of will and accident.

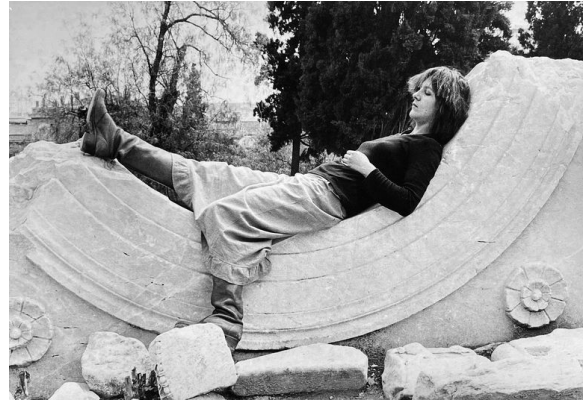
Flusser, committed to ‘immortality in the other’ (and not in objects), advises us to abandon our ruined houses, hold onto the hands of other people and face the void without any guarantee that we won’t be swallowed up in it. ‘We must either risk the dangers in becoming upright creators within the void, or continue to settle for the limits of being perpetual squatters.’⁵²

Yet ruins in love are a challenge to ownership, squatters are better equipped to navigate through wreckages, and disaster does not have a (creative) writing – it describes, un-draws.⁵³ Ruins in love are not ‘ruins’ – corpses, dead limbs torn from the body of history, roots cramped by tradition. They could instead be defined as turbulences organized into exchangers; they welcome the risk of doubt, they confirm the ‘circumstantial bombardment’⁵⁴ that makes every situation unique, they display the aurora borealis of events (their undecipherable, unyielding, interstitial, burgeoning nature); and so, they suggest threading (rather than pushing) one’s way between them.

Ruins in (the wild of) love are not remains; they are the living and writhing debris of collapsed narratives and deviant histories, T. S. Eliot’s ever-flourishing ‘stony rubbish’ that ‘speaks in tongues’. They are ‘markers’ as manifestations of (the chaos of) the sensible; they are knowledge as its highest point, i. e. poetics; they are feral in that they can only be known osmotically; they locate struggles and at the same time stretch them across and beyond. Like us, ruins remain *hereish*⁵⁵ via their illegibility and brokenness, through their resistance to identification and domestication, because they let the rumble of exploding content reverberate, because they are excessive even though they fail to be whole as they have never really been white.



Malvina Panagiotidi, "Answers without questions" 2019, 67 × 192 × 26 cm, electroformed copper. Image courtesy the artist and ampersand. The work consists of twenty body part sculptures that form a complete body. In the Roman epic poem "Pharsalia" by Lucan the witch Erichtho is practicing necromancy using dismembered bodies she collected from the battlefield in order to have an oracle to foresee the future. In a reverse process the twenty body parts are sculpted in wax using casts of the artist's body that have been burned and transformed. These sculptures are then electroformed with copper and the wax is melted away leaving the copper body parts to be assembled into a carcass. This newly constructed, ruinous, body can only provide questions and not answers about the future.



Chara Pelekanou photographed by Teos Romvos lying on ruins under the Acropolis, Athens.

The wayward of ruins

‘For having known so well this destiny of ours
wandering through broken stones for three or six thousand years
digging in ruined buildings which once perhaps were our homes
trying to remember dates and heroes
Shall we be able?
For having been bound
for having been scattered
for having struggled with unreal – as they put it – difficulties
Lost, then striking again a road full of blind regiments,
sinking in marshes and in the lake of Marathon
Shall we be able to die according to the rules?’
– G. Seferis⁵⁶

Maybe to return the ruins to earth's subconscious (to bury them in order to save them, in order to be able to walk on them in odd kinships), to let statues out of the museums so that they can roam free, disquieting, into our conscious – in plain air ‘laden with fragrances’ (‘laden but light / as light but full’) – is a radical architectural view, a different kind of the art of memory, revealed by another – a woman – poet now.⁵⁷ Maybe it is also one kind of profanation, the wildness that we need in order to escape being eclipsed or bound by the

ruins *in study*; in order to answer Seferis's question. By living and dying in fugitivity, wayward, next to and beyond the rules of ruins, closer to their logic of disorder, fonder of the chaos of the everyday that ruins know.

-
1. Excerpt from Vilém Flusser & Louis Bec, *Vampyroteuthis Infernalis: A Treatise*, with a Report by the Institut Scientifique de Recherche Paranaturaliste, transl. Valentine A. Pakis (Minneapolis – London: University of Minnesota Press, 2012). Also available at <http://www.flusserstudies.net/node/224>. ↩
 2. For the most comprehensive account of the invention of the art of memory and its transfer to European tradition, of the training of Mnemosyne, see Frances A. Yates, *The Art of Memory* (The University of Chicago Press, 1966). ↩
 3. In Greek mythology, Lethe was one of the five rivers of the underworld (Hades), known as the Ameles potamos (river of unmindfulness). See also <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lethe>. ↩
 4. In Greek mythology, Aletheia is the opposite of Lethe. Understood as truth or disclosure in philosophy (Heidegger calls it 'unconcealedness'), aletheia has even been associated by the Beatniks with flaneurship (roaming and seeking) via its phonetic association with the Greek word aleteia (αλητεία = vagrancy) that can be found in Greek tragedy. Aleteia signifies the fallen wanderer (beggar and suppliant) and is derived from the verb alaomai (αλάομαι = I wander). See also <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aletheia>. ↩
 5. The architect's ability to animate the world by designing and 'furnishing' it with desires, ideas and passions is discussed by Spyros Papapetros in a collective research platform, conceived by Brooke Holmes to explore the notion of 'liquid antiquity' through the concepts of body, time and institution. See Brooke Holmes & Karen Marta (eds.), *Liquid Antiquity* (Geneva: DESTE Foundation for Contemporary Art, 2017), p. 104. ↩
 6. For a comprehensive account of the group's investigative practice, based on but not confined to architecture, see Eyal Weizman, *Forensic Architecture: Violence at the Threshold of Detectability* (New York: Zone Books, 2017) and <https://forensic-architecture.org/>. ↩
 7. 'The Sixth Rung' extends Vilém Flusser's model of knowledge transmission developed in five rungs (actions-objects-traditional images-linear text-technical images): the sixth is the proposed rung of the interdependent information web. Formulated by M. C. Pereira, M. Duarte, R. Bartholo, G. B. Johnston in *Flusser Studies* 22, <http://www.flusserstudies.net/node/630>. ↩
 8. In 1922, more than a million refugees came to Greece from Asia Minor, following their persecution by the Turks. Thousands were stacked in tents and temporary settlements, even around the temple of Hephaestus (Theseion), in caves at the rock of the Acropolis in Athens, and also in Piraeus and neighbouring municipalities like Eleusis. The face of several Greek cities changed then, new buildings were hastily constructed, soon to be ruined in turn. <https://www.loc.gov/item/2010650546/> ↩
 9. 'Surviving in the Ruins of Moria' was one of the most recent international headlines (story by Florian Elabdi, Al Jazeera, 29 Dec. 2020). The article reported on the living conditions at the infamous Lesbos refugee camp after a recent fire that worsened an already horrific situation. The recent refugee crisis has often been described internationally with a reference to images and the stereotypic terminology of ruination, detritus and toxicity. Life out of the camps is not easier for refugees in Greece or anywhere else. ↩
 10. A paraphrase of 'to explain difference away,' the phrase that Helen Verran made popular in order to warn about epistemic explanations and analytic tools that may translate difference by taking it back to their image and thus cancel the difference, assimilate divergences. ↩

11. There is an overwhelming bibliography on the subject of ruins. See, for example, 'Ruins' in *Cabinet magazine* (issue 20, winter 2005/2006) and Brian Dillon (ed.) *Ruins* (Whitechapel, London: Documents of Contemporary Art, 2011). ↩
12. 'Hail solitary ruins! Holy sepulchres and silent walls! You I invoke; to you I address my prayer.' Published in 1792, *Les Ruines, ou, Méditation sur les révolutions des empires* by the Comte de Volney exemplified the aesthetic of sublimation related to ruins in the 18th century. See 'Ruins' in *Cabinet magazine* #20, winter 2005/2006, pp. 55–56. ↩
13. J. L. Godard quoted in an October 2020 article by John Kelsey in *frieze magazine* #215 (Nov./Dec. 2020) <https://www.frieze.com/article/jean-luc-godard-continues-reinvent-cinema>). Godard's unique take on the ruins of history, debt and colonialism was particularly evident in his film *Film Socialisme*, which is set aboard a tourist cruise liner that sails through the Mediterranean and its civilizations. Both the highly political content and the radically fragmented approach to editing this feature film were a strong influence for the curatorial 'HELL AS Pavilion. A contemporary Greek Peripeteia,' curated by Nadja Argyropoulou, at the Palais de Tokyo in Paris, 2013. ↩
14. J. G. Ballard, *The Drowned World* (London: Harper Perrenial, 1962). Ballard was the emblematic writer of the previous century's crashed, ruined, dispersed, despaired and yet thriving life. ↩
15. Aby Warburg's *Bilderatlas Mnemosyne* (1924-1929) is the most radical visual project of modern times in its combinatory experimentation, metonymic, intuitive logic, erudition and immense influence. <https://warburg.sas.ac.uk/library-collections/warburg-institute-archive/online-bilderatlas-mnemosyne>. ↩
16. W. G. Sebald, *On the Natural History of Destruction*, transl. Anthea Bell (New York: The Modern Library, 2004), p. 153. ↩
17. The reference here is to *Untitled (Your body is a battleground)* by Barbara Kruger, an emblematic work made in 1989 for the Women's March on Washington in support of reproductive freedom. A woman's face, disembodied and split in positive and negative exposures, as in an advertisement, made a timeless declaration. ↩
18. Dismembered bodies, ruined by abuse of power, passion and politics have a very long history in the arts and related theories of knowledge. This text wishes to point especially to two examples: (a) the use that Michel Serres makes of the myth of Orpheus's dismemberment by the Bacchantes in *The Five Senses. A Philosophy of Mingled Bodies* (transl. M. Sankey & P. Cowley. London, New York: Continuum International, 2008. Chapter 2. 'Boxes'); and (b) the use that artist Malvina Panagiotidi makes in her work 'Answers without questions' (shown here) of the story of the Greek witch Erichtho who was practicing necromancy using dismembered bodies she collected from the battle field. ↩
19. The International Necronautical Society emerged in 1999 with its First Manifesto issued by an elusive group of writers who expressed themselves through public readings, declarations and publications (www.necronauts.org). Their 'Athens Declaration of Inauthenticity' was published and performed in Athens on the occasion of the exhibition 'Hotel Paradies' at the 2nd Athens Biennale 2009 HEAVEN. ↩
20. Timothy Morton, 'Subscentence'. In *e-flux journal* #85, October 2017. ↩
21. The reference is to Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing's influential book *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015) and her use of the term 'patch', borrowed from the eco-science of plants, in order to describe plant and human interactions resulting from capital disruption of eco-systems. ↩
22. Excerpt from Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, 'Fourth Declaration of the Lacandón Jungle,' as quoted in Marisol de la Cadena and Mario Blaser (eds.), *A world of many worlds* editors (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2018). ↩
23. 'Extractivism continues the practice of terra nullius: it actively creates space for the tangible expansion of the one world by rendering empty the places it occupies and making absent the worlds that make those places.' Ibid. p. 18. ↩
24. T. S. Eliot, 'The Waste Land' <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/47311/the-waste-land>. ↩

25. George Seferis interviewed by Edmund Kelley for *The Paris Review* (issue 50, Fall 1970), <https://www.theparisreview.org/interviews/4112/the-art-of-poetry-no-13-george-seferis>. ↵
26. Yannis Hamilakis, 'Debt'. In Holmes, B. and K. Marta (eds.), *Liquid Antiquity*, p. 178. ↵
27. Fred Moten and Stefano Harney, 'Debt and Study.' In *e-flux journal* #14, March 2010. Their radical concept of study as the ongoing project and interventionist practice of fugitive sociality is also elaborated in their book *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study*. ↵
28. Dimitris Pikionis (1887–1968) was a Greek architect and painter of major influence on Greek modernity. Among his many works (with a large bibliography to register them), Pikionis's landscaping around the Acropolis was a kind of poetics of the fragment that incorporated the ruins of surrounding buildings, local flora and international philosophical and architectural principles. His drawings were exhibited in 'Dirty Humanism,' at Faggionato Fine Arts, London, in 2011, and most recently during *documenta 14* in Athens. See <https://www.documenta14.de/en/artists/16225/dimitris-pikionis>. ↵
29. For an elaboration on the concept of *mêtis*, see Yorgos Tzirtzilakis, 'Metis' in Holmes, B. and K. Marta (eds.), *Liquid Antiquity* (pp. 186–189), as well as the original source-book about the notion of cunning intelligence, J. P. Vernant & M. Detienne, *Cunning Intelligence in Greek Culture and Society*, trans. Janet Lloyd (The Chicago University Press, 1991). ↵
30. Michel Serres, *The Five Senses*, pp. 135–136. Serres rejects analytic philosophy, which he identifies with the dismemberment of the senses. His intriguing refusal of language favours sensory perception as our only way to understand the myriad entanglements and frenzied circulation of objects and messages in the world. ↵
31. Donna Haraway, 'Tentacular Thinking: Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Chthulucene.' In *e-flux journal* #75, September 2016, <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/75/67125/tentacular-thinking-anthropocene-capitalocene-chthulucene/>. ↵
32. Édouard Glissant, *Carribbean Discourse* (The University of Virginia Press, 1991). ↵
33. 'In Athens, an accumulation of disparate foundations form diverging extant texts in the ground (decipherable by multiple archaeologies)': For an account of the Athenian ruinscape see the text written by Aristide Antonas on the occasion of *documenta 14*, 'The Construction of Southern Ruins, or Instructions for Dealing with Debt.' In *South as a State of Mind*, issue #6 [*documenta14* #1], Fall-Winter 2015, p. 63. ↵
34. For a discussion of these incidents and a wider, collective consideration on the role of Antiquity as a toolbox vis-à-vis the crisis, see 'The Marathon Marathon in Athens,' a project curated in 2010 and a book edited in 2017 by Hans Ulrich Obrist and Nadja Argyropoulou (book published in Athens: The DESTE Foundation for Contemporary Art, 2017). ↵
35. Greek Surrealist poet Nicolas Calas (1907–1988; lived between Athens, Paris & New York) criticized in his poems ('Acropolis' and especially 'Promythos' in *Notebook D*) the commercialization of the Acropolis and considered its bombardment by the cannons of Morosini in 1687 as the monument's privileged moment – one that art as radical subversion should commemorate and repeat. See <https://hellenicpoetry.com/uncategorized/nicolas-calas/>. ↵
36. For an account of this critical text, the manifesto of a desire to be liberated from exhausted archetypes in favour of 'energetic action and pleasure,' see *South as a State of Mind*, op. cit. p. 23. ↵
37. This text, first published by Octopus Press in Athens in the 1980s, is reprinted and translated in the leaflet produced by Plato Ostrava for the project 'Trypa' (curated by Nadja Argyropoulou, Daniela & Linda Dostálková, November 2020 – February 2021). ↵
38. In 'The Monuments of Passaic' (*Artforum*, December 1967), Robert Smithson used the phrase 'ruins in reverse' to refer to a 'zero panorama,' a site of new construction materials fated to frailty. 'This is the opposite of the 'romantic ruin' because the buildings don't fall into ruin after they are built but rather rise into ruin before they are built.' ↵
39. For a consideration of this image of Greece as a monster that de-monstrates, see 'HELL AS Pavilion' project and catalogue at <https://www.palaisdetokyo.com/en/event/hell-pavilion>. ↵
40. Michel Serres, *The Five Senses*, p. 131. ↵

41. Beat poet William Burroughs believed that the most dangerous virus was language and humanity had been infected by the written world – a medium used for both communication and control. Burroughs's 'cut-ups' was a slicing through texts and order, so as to liberate the words and form new arrangements and unexpected concepts. ↵
42. Poet Odysseus Elytis made this point about light and architecture. Quoted in *The Dispersed Urbanity of the Aegean Archipelago*, catalogue of the Greek participation at the 10th International exhibition of architecture, Venice Biennale, 2006, p. 79. ↵
43. Eva Hayward, 'FINGEREYES: Impressions of Cup Corals' in <https://anthrosource.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1548-1360.2010.01070.x>. ↵
44. Michel Serres, *The Five Senses*, p. 87. ↵
45. Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation* (The University of Michigan Press, 2010). ↵
46. Holmes, B. and K. Marta (eds.), *Liquid Antiquity*, p. 44. ↵
47. Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, p. 133–140. ↵
48. T. S. Eliot, 'The Waste Land.' ↵
49. Michel Serres, *The Five Senses*, pp. 113–115. ↵
50. The reference is to the poem 'Theogony' by Hesiod, a genealogy of creation composed ca. 700 BC through various Greek oral traditions, as a profusely elaborate succession myth that features the proverbial line 'In truth at first Chaos came to be...' ↵
51. Cornelius Castoriadis, *Figures of the Thinkable* (1999), as quoted in the 'HELL AS Pavilion' catalogue, p. 56. ↵
52. Vilém Flusser in *Artforum* magazine, April 1989, <https://www.artforum.com/print/198904/future-architecture-34381>. ↵
53. Maurice Blanchot as quoted in 'The Athens Declaration of Inauthenticity' in the catalogue *HEAVEN*, 2nd Athens Biennale (2009), p. 220. ↵
54. Michel Serres, *The Five Senses*, p. 299. ↵
55. This is a reference to Elizabeth A. Povinelli, who in her paper 'Geontologies: The Concept and Its Territories' (e-flux journal #81, April 2017) writes about our stretch from the local that 'need not scale up to the Human and the global' but, as it cannot stay local, 'can only remain hereish.' ↵
56. Giorgos Seferis, *Mythistorema*, trans. Nanos Valaoritis (1935), as quoted in *The Marathon Marathon in Athens*, p. 23. ↵
57. Phoebe Giannisi as quoted in *The Marathon Marathon in Athens*, pp. 132–135. ↵

Nadja Argyropoulou is an independent curator and art writer, with studies in history & archaeology and art history & theory. She has curated a considerable number of exhibitions and interdisciplinary events and has collaborated with many art institutions and cultural entities in Greece and abroad (Athens Biennale, the Benaki Museum, Chalet Society, Palais de Tokyo, DESTE Foundation, NEON, Onassis Foundation and others). She is a member of Aica, IKT and the collectives Saprophyta and The Climate Collective.

