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Ghosts in the Streets of Athens: Ghostlore and Social Media

Ghostlore or ghost-lore is, in short, a subgenre of folklore that focuses on ghostly tales which can be found in both pre-industrial and contemporary contexts. The majority of these stories are connected to houses and other buildings that are either dilapidated or inhabited but can be described mainly as private places. Due to the nature of public places -whether they are connected to people's experiences or could be described as non-places- it is odd to 'find' ghosts there, as it is odd to 'find' them in parks or streets. However, they remain social places open to multiple interpretations and symbolisms. Through pertinent online entries, mostly uploaded by groups describing their practices as 'investigating' the paranormal or the occult, this paper aims to discuss the connection between ghost-lore and public places, mainly from the city of Athens. Furthermore, a very important aspect demonstrating the effectiveness of these online entries are the comments made by the netizens following these 'investigations', which result in the formation of new groups. These groups are created online, but are driven by a common interest in ghosts in the offline world. Thus, in order to study how the physical public space is being reinterpreted in light of the supernatural, the paper intends to approach the digital public space of social media.

Key words: Gostlore, public places, supernatural, social media, netizens

Духови на улицама Атине: Ghostlore и друштвене мреже

Ghostlore или ghost-lore је, укратко, поджанр фолклора усредсређен на приче о духовима које се могу наћи и у прединдустријским и у савременим контекстима. Већина ових прича су повезане са кућама и другим зградама које су или пропале или још настањене али се могу најбоље описати као приватна места. Због природе јавних места – било да су повезана са искуствима људи или се могу описати као не-места – необично је "наћи" духове на њима, једнако као што је необично наћи их у парковима или на улицама. Ипак, оваква места остају друштвена места, отворена за различите интерпретације и симболизме. Кроз анализу одређених онлајн садржаја, углавном аплоудованих од стране група које своје праксе описују као "истраге" паранормалног или окултног, у овом раду ће бити расправљена веза између ghost-lore-а и јавних места, углавном у Атини. Надаље, важан аспект демонстрирања ефективности ових онлајн садржаја чине коментари које нетизени (грађани онлајн света) који прате ове "истраге" остављају, а који резултирају формирањем нових група. Ове групе се формирају онлајн, али се воде заједничким интересом за питање духова у офлајн свету. Стога, како бисмо истражили како се физички јавни простор реинтерпретира у духу натприродног, овај рад има намеру да приступи дигиталном јавном простору друштвених мрежа.

Кључне речи: Ghostlore, јавна места, натприродно, друштвене мреже, нетизени

INTRODUCTION

The concept of place -whether public or private, urban¹, or rural- encompasses more notions than just geographical locations (Valk & Sävborg 2018, 7). The terms *public*, and *space*, implying an image of accessible urban, suburban, rural, and wild landscapes, can be used to describe place. The term *public* connotes the idea that these settings are accessible to everyone. Altman & Zube (1989, 1) however, recognise that the term *public* does not necessarily refer to ownership, but rather to use. Public access is permitted in some privately owned places but not in all publicly

¹ On urban or city folklore in Greece, see the most mainstream works of Loukatos 1963; Vozikas 2009, and Varvounis & Kouzas 2019.

owned ones. Streets, squares, playgrounds and parks are the most noticeable public lands in cities (Altman & Zube 1989, 1).

When used in storytelling, a place serves as both a site of memories and a venue for extraordinary encounters. It takes on meanings – both personal and shared – through people's lives, experiences and narratives (Valk & Sävborg 2018, 7). Although the terms *space* and *place* are related, *space* is more abstract than *place*. As *space* gains a psychological or symbolic meaning, it becomes *place*² (Altman & Zube 1989, 2). But space, as a concept, cannot exist independently of the events and actions that it is involved in (Tilley 1994, 10). As Tilley (1994, 10) mentions, "there is no space, only spaces, that, as social productions, are meaningfully constituted in relation to human agency and activity. A humanized space result forms both the medium and the outcome of action".

Every area of a landscape becomes accustomed to human activity because of how deeply it is ingrained in the landscape³ (Tilley 1994, 27). But for this to happen, narratives involving and presenting previous experiences in present contexts appear to be required. A narrative connects places, landscapes, actions, events and experiences to provide a framework for understanding and describing the world. In simple terms, a narrative involves a story and a storyteller, but, in a more analytical manner, narratives seek to express actions not only by describing them, but also as a re-description, through the relation of the actions to the space in which they occurred (Tilley 1994, 31-32). Since places have distinctive meanings and values for individuals, they are more than just points or locations, and the limits of place are, thus, grounded in the limits of human awareness. According to Tilley (1994, 15), both personal and cultural identity are shaped by place and fuelled by affectionate recollections told through stories.

This whole discussion adds to the concept of *placemaking*, that Pierce, Martin & Murphy (2011, 54) define as "the set of social, political and material processes by which people iteratively create and recreate the experienced geographies in which they live".

In short, places are empowered through narratives which are repeated countless times and mark them out as extraordinary locations. Hence, we

² On the relationship between these concepts, see Tuan 1977; Sime 1986, 49-63; Canter 1977; Dovey 1985, 93-110.

³ The landscape is not a random natural environment, but a framework structured by collective myth and history (Nitsiakos 2003, 27-30). On the term, see Nitsiakos 2006, 159-175.

can discuss the social pull that certain locations exert through narratives (Valk & Sävborg 2018, 10). Places preserve collective memories, even those of mythical times⁴ (Valk & Sävborg 2018, 9). Those narratives, according to Remmel (2014, 67), "that are strongly bound to some toponym, site or landscape object and which include (place) legends, place-bound beliefs, descriptions of practices, historical lore, memories etc", could be defined as place-lore. Still, place-lore is not an analytical term that denotes a certain genre, but rather a synthetic concept that highlights a variety of expressive forms that manifest strong bonds between humans, places and the environment (Valk & Sävborg 2018, 9).

A part of this *place-lore* is based on narratives about human misdeeds that trigger the dramatic reactions of places and those events, even the extraordinary ones, are remembered in and through local legends (Valk & Sävborg 2018, 9). Some refer to ghostly appearances, adding to ghost-lore, and since ghosts are frequently connected to specific locations due to their hauntings, they are also a part of place-lore.

GHOST AND THEIR LORE

Every aspect and manifestation of the phenomenon of ghosts can be attributed by the term *ghost-lore/ghostlore*⁵. Therefore, ghostlore or ghost-lore, is a subgenre of folklore concerning narratives about ghosts that occur in both pre-industrial traditional world and contemporary contexts. The concept of *ghostlore* refers to the avocations with "ghosts" in all forms of popular and folk culture in the international folklore literature. The term has been in use since Jones (1944, 237-254) pointed out the tension that the "ghost" phenomenon continues to hold in popular culture.

It is a prevailing assumption that ghost stories are simple, trivial stories that are told by unintelligent, uneducated, "superstitious," premodern or antimodern "folk." This assumption ignores the fact that people from all social classes and educational levels tell supernatural narratives (Goldstein, Grider & Banks-Thomas 2007, 18).

⁴ See on Bacchilega 2007.

⁵ On Ghostlore see Tucker 2007; Elliott 1984, 549-565. Another term that has been actively circulated for this subject is "hontology". The term derives from Derrida (1993). In the field of cultural studies, the discipline of horror studies has been established, which is dedicated to the study of the "scary" in its various manifestations - from literature to film and television, magazines to comics and more formats, such as video games or music. See and Clasen (2017), but also the journal of the same name, Horror Studies https://horrorstudiesjournal.com/ (Accessed May 19, 2023).

METHODOLOGY: THE RESEARCH AND ITS LIMITATIONS

Even though, it has its roots in tradition, contemporary ghostlore is also linked to and incorporated into mass culture. Ghost narratives and supernatural beliefs are the starting points of mass-mediated⁶ forms (Goldstein, Grider & Banks-Thomas 2007, 2) such as those examined in this paper.

The research focuses on audio-visual material published in online environments⁷. These days, TikTok and YouTube are the main platforms that make it possible to view such content. These platforms are a part of the *public* space of the internet. Due to their popularity and technical features, they help to form the digital public space of social media. Even though, these platforms might be social media, where the internet user needs to log-in, download or register in some way, whatever is posted online on them, becomes a part of a collective and a shared ownership that allows the mobility of information and its diffusion in the wider internet. After all, the purpose of using those platforms is to make whatever the user uploads spread as much as possible, becoming viral. In this case, technology not only serves as a means of "recording" and proof of supernatural activity⁸, but also as a setting for any such recordings.

YouTube (http://www.youtube.com, Accessed May 19, 2023) was developed as a video-sharing service for the average user, based on user-generated content, and has grown in popularity since its launch in 2005 (Arthus, Drakopoulou & Gandini 2018, 3). YouTube is a digital place of participatory culture (Papakostas 2016, 292). This means that YouTube is a platform which not only serves as a repository for user-generated videos⁹, but it also hosts and promotes user engagement in visual culture¹⁰ (Burgess & Green 2009). The fact that the stored digital films (videos) are

⁶ "Folk horror" is a newly defined phenomenon in movies and television. The term is mostly used to describe narratives featuring folkloric elements such as witchcraft and ghosts. Cult and academic audiences, as well as film and television producers, are taking notice of a broad resurgence in interest in texts on folklore and contemporary legend. So, "folk horror" can be considered a subgenre. Still, folklore is essential to how folk horror evolves and is disseminated through the media (Rodgers 2020, 57).

⁷ On digital folklore see also Nounanaki & Kakampoura 2021, 125-139; Kakampoura & Nounanaki 2022, 153-182; Kakampoura & Nounanaki 2022b, 46-78; Nounanaki & Kakampoura 2022, 61-78.

⁸ See on Clark 2000.

⁹ Recently several scholars from various disciplines have examined the role of YouTube as an archive. See Burgess & Green 2009; Gehl 2009: 43–60; Kessler & Schöfer 2009, 275–291; Prelinger 2009, 268–274.

¹⁰ See on Burgess 2008, 101–109.

accessible for free, justifies their inclusion in the public domain of the internet. It is regularly perceived as a social networking tool since users have a personal "profile".

A novel application, debuted in 2016, with similar function to YouTube is TikTok (http://www.TikTok.com, Accessed May 19, 2023). TikTok is a video-sharing application that enables users to create and share brief videos (3 seconds to 10 minutes) on any topic. It is primarily mobile-based, which means users download and install the app on their cellphones, but it also works as a web application. TikTok scrolling enabled a personalized entertainment experience and an opportunity for interaction through the sharing of TikTok content and memes (Schellewald 2023, 2). TikTok is also perceived as a place for individuals to create a shared sense of intimacy.

As Livingstone (2003, 337-359) observes, the capabilities of the Internet have made it readily apparent that media consumers are "active" in the sense of interpreting, commenting on, discussing, or producing their own media content. That is why scholars such as Jenkins et al. (2013) contend that even those who are still "lurking", that is, primarily consuming rather than creating their online content, now experience the internet and social media with a constant awareness of their potential ability to participate and recognize the lower barriers to contribute (Jenkins et al. 2013, 159). Thus, conducting research as a "lurker¹¹" is indicated. This is the non-participatory observation method, which is used in social media research and in any digital environment that encourages user interaction, like blogs or forums, for example¹² (Kozinets 2015, 23-78).

The internet enables interaction between cultural products created by different groups. However, due to high mobilities beyond national borders and the global nature of the field, many types of popular culture often cease to contain only the characteristics of a local tradition and, instead, follow the new path of a multimodal diffusion that is now global (Brednich 2001, 7). Nevertheless, a portion of the Internet becomes "local" as a result of the activity of users, who imbue it with their own cultural traits. We, therefore, focused our interest on groups that are active in Greece and use the 'Greek' internet to promote their 'research activity' in order to locate posted material from the Greek region.

¹¹ As evidenced, the term emerges as an emic practice in the social media environment.

¹² There are several other methods to conduct digital research. Internet and social media can be a field of archival digital ethnography, see Kapaniaris & Varvounis 2019, 11-18. The internet can also be utilized to create digital repositories for various genres of folk culture, see on Karachristos & Potiropoulos 2019, 305-320.

This research focuses on the TikTok profiles of five paranormal investigator groups and five profiles of such groups on YouTube. Due to the fact that two of those groups have profiles on both platforms, we included them both in the study. These groups, also, have Facebook pages, but they use them to upload the TikTok videos, so we excluded Facebook from this research, because it did not seem to add anything to the content. The main selection criterion of the specific groups was whether they have uploaded 'records of phenomena' in the contexts we seek to highlight in the present research. That is, if they have conducted their 'research' in public urban areas of Athens.

The number of recordings in publicly accessible sites was obviously lower than those in privately owned or abandoned ones. Given that access to private spaces either requires some sort of permission or is illegal, this seems paradoxical. On the contrary, public places are largely described as being open to everyone. The sensation sought to be evoked through this type of research may, of course, be enhanced by irregular access to a private space while being subdued by the easy and unrestricted access offered by a public place.

THE RECORDINGS ON THE SITES

The most common way to 'capture' a ghost on camera is by accident. That is, several security camera footages are believed to depict the appearance of some sort of paranormal activity, or even a ghost. Such videos can be found in those uploaded by the Greek paranormal investigators. Most of them show an interior space, usually one that is inhabited, but some also 'show' paranormal activity in outdoor settings¹³.

However, there are other sorts of videos taken, aiming to capture or to explain the paranormal activity of a very specific sight, such as a street of the city. One such video is about the Agras Street, in a rather central spot of Athens¹⁴. The nearby buildings, which are allegedly 'haunted', are the main reason for the 'strange-paranormal energy' of this street. It is as if the "negative energy" is transferred from such places due to

¹³ See such a video:

https://www.tiktok.com/@parafusikafainomena/video/7193475561879129349 (Accessed May 19, 2023). In this video, a shadow moving outside of a house, on the street, is caught on camera. There are no specifics or additional information about this site; it is located on a street, in front of a random house, somewhere in the country.

¹⁴ See the video: https://www.tiktok.com/@dark_tourism_society/video/7213821371443449094 (Accessed May 19, 2023).

particular incidents that stigmatized them, sending a miasma into the depths of time that continues to infect it and poses a threat to the lives of any future inhabitants. In the case of this street, this 'energy' is attributed to the existence of an ancient cemetery underneath the area. However, the majority of the information about this location can be found in the legends associated with this place.

Based on this example, three points can be made. The first is the fact that this is just one of a small number of reports of paranormal activity in a public place in such a prominent location of the city. There are two more, one involving a park, and the other involving the streets close to a cemetery. The remaining public places connected to ghosts are located within the city's perimeter, that is the streets on the mountains surrounding it. The second point to be raised is the method and rationale used by the groups to visit these places. The last one, which highlights the connection between those places and urban legends, can be found in the comments of the videos. These three issues are the aspects we are going to focus on in this paper.



https://www.tiktok.com/@dark_tourism_society/video/7217527669116734747 (Accessed May 19, 2023).

It is important to mention that paranormal investigation groups (PIGs) generally believe they are the only ones, in a world that doubts the supernatural, who show genuine interest in it (McNeil 2006, 99). Additionally, they think they can communicate with the spirit that haunts the place and act as a medium. They, also, believe they can use technology to demonstrate and prove ghosts' existence to those interested in the subject. Therefore, the ghost-hunting investigations include gathering several types of audio and video footages. Videos of paradoxical images and sound recordings, often interpreted as a form of spirit communication. are among the footages that have been gathered (Kinsella 2011, 37). An illustration of this is the footage below. It is the result of an investigation into a haunted place and depicts the 'activity' of the ghost's energy that is captivated by a gadget. This video is a part of a much longer one that documents the entire investigation; however, this one only focuses on the moments when the lights of the device turn on, proving the existence of the haunting. The intriguing aspect of these videos is that the PIGs provoke or compel the ghost to turn on the gadget to show its existence. As a result, the investigators are forced to prove that the place is in fact haunted and that they can interact with the ghost.

Therefore, the experiences of the various PIGs¹⁵ are usually depicted in their videos. A footage p.e. of an exhibition from such a group in a haunted place, captured the moment when one member of the groups is 'attacked' by the ghost¹⁶. His reaction is captured on camera and featured in the video, showing just how much the group members were willing to

The need of the living to contact the deceased seems to have expanded. In the 19th 15 century the stream of "spiritualism", which is, essentially, the desire but also the "realization" of communication with the afterlife, emerges (Aries 2006, 241-249). This connection could initially be achieved at the place where the body of the deceased is located. Therefore, the spiritualists of this period search cemeteries, where their dead are interred, for their ghosts. In the 20th century this connection is broken. From this point forward, the connection of the spirit with the body is not a prerequisite. Spiritualists thus direct the search for the deceased first to familiar places, mainly to his home (Aries 2006, 245). A "scientific" interest arises in the 19th century as a result of the search for and interaction with spirits. This interest aims to study supernatural phenomena using scientific methods free from religious ones (for more on the relationship of the church with the issue of spirits, see Aries 2006, 247-248) and spiritual axioms. This is how the "science" of parapsychology, which includes the aforementioned 'ghost hunters' first appeared (Aries, 2006, 249). On spiritualism see also Fritz 1875; Conan Doyle 1926; Nelson 1969; Pimple 1995, 75-89; Brandon 1983; Barrow 1986; Hazelgrove 2000; Oppenheim 1985.

¹⁶ See the video https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gQfBOUpGgl0 (Accessed May 19, 2023), footage on 11:06.

risk. In addition, the footage is frequently blurry because it was captured using night vision while shooting in the dark, which enhances the atmosphere of menacing and terror. In any case, the night and the darkness have been given a terrifying dimension, just like the terror and the potential for supernatural exposure that have also been attributed to them.

Still, the locations they selected to visit and record their findings are mostly surrounded by urban/contemporary legends or legendary narratives about hauntings¹⁷. As showed above, in order to transform a random space into a location that holds significance for a group of people, it is essential to tell and listen to stories (Valk & Sävborg 2018, 7). That is, legend scholars generally concur that the key characteristic distinguishing a legend from other types or stories is that it functions as both a mode of social behaviour and a channel for it. Legends and similar stories are communicative acts that serve specific purposes for the communities in which they are circulated. Moreover, they convey the connections that individuals develop with these narratives, beliefs, perceptions and concepts that represent universal apprehensions, expectations or fears (Kinsella 2011, 5). As a result, one of the distinctive features of the genre of legend is the fusion of the boundaries between the narrative plot and its physical and social environment (Valk & Sävborg 2018, 11). Places associated with legends have already been given a meaning, so they trigger such groups to visit them. To do so, two different types of actions arise. The one is to 'relive' the legend. This is called an ostensive¹⁸ action. Ostensive action or practice is to behave in a certain way or alter one's actions as a consequence of belief in a legend (Rodgers 2020, 59-60). The term was given by Dégh and Vázsonyi (1983, 5-34) in their article "Does the Word 'Dog' Bite? Ostensive Action as a Means of Legend-Telling". According to these legend scholars, ostensive actions crib behaviour based on, or influenced by, folklore and legend¹⁹. This behaviour, they add, can create or perpetuate folklore (Dégh & Vázsonyi 1983, 9).

Ostensive action or behaviour, thus, is based on a story that, when acted out, assumes the status of truth. Because facts can be turned into narratives and narratives can be turned into facts, action and belief affect and influence one another (Dégh & Vázsonyi 1983, 12).

The following video is a shortened version (on TikTok, the whole video is uploaded on YouTube due to the features of the platforms) of the 'reliv-

¹⁷ See on the subject also Tucker 2007; Goldstein, Grider & Thomas 2007; Hooper 1982.

¹⁸ The word "ostension" comes from the Latin ostendere, meaning "to show".

¹⁹ That is because legends and legendary tales might not literally be true, but they have the possibility of truth.

ing' of such a legend. It is one of the Greek adaptations of the most wellknown urban legend, 'The vanishing Hitchhiker²⁰'. In this version, that bears the title 'The ghost of Hasia', it is said that on this street (Hasias), many accidents have happened causing people's lives²¹, despite the fact that it is neither a very busy nor a particularly challenging route. Legend has it that a ghostly young woman appears suddenly on this street causing car crashes. Although no other details are provided in the following video, it is stated that the woman known as 'the bride', probably because the legend refers to a young woman wearing a white dress, was also killed in that area and her body was thrown in the ravine that runs below. The PIG visits the spot to document the existence of the ghost rather than attempting to prove that car accidents do indeed occur there.

They ask questions to the ghost, whose answers are picked by a special microphone they carry. The ghost utters her name in the following



https://www.tiktok.com/@dark_tourism_society/ video/7211247594721266949 (Accessed May 19, 2023).

²⁰ See on Brunvand 2012, 686-689.

²¹ This is depicted by the footage

⁽https://www.tiktok.com/@dark_tourism_society/video/7211247594721266949, 00:03, (Accessed May 19, 2023) showing the tiny church on the edge of the street. Placing such a memorial object in honour of those who perished there is a traditional practice in Greece. These usually contain a picture of the deceased person along with some religious items, such as the picture of a saint, a candlestick and so on.

footage. The name is Theodora and to ensure that viewers are aware of the answer, it is depicted in writing in the video (it is the word in white letters next to the face of the surprised 'researcher').

It is often necessary to visit the haunted places because they are usually located somewhere specific. So, legend tripping²² is required. A legend-trip entails travelling to a specific location and/or carrying out specific tasks that have the potential to elicit a supernatural experience. The narration of those legends, which claim a particular location is haunted, is where legend-tripping begins. Most typically, several legends and/or legend variations are told, which strengthens the credibility of the overall narrative (Kinsella 2011, 28). Legend-tripping is a specific kind of ostensive practice that can evoke both wonder and fear, making it different from a straightforward re-enactment of a legend (Kinsella 2011, 32). However, Lindahl asserts that ostensive practices may, also, arouse feelings of religious and spiritual awe (Lindahl 2005, 164-185).

It becomes clear that the stories that are 'relived' and documented by these PIG, are usually locally defined urban legends. The recording style is similar to "documentaries²³", while the themes are not necessarily perceived as metaphysical and are attributed to other kinds of "insidious" forces. They do not only document the location, but they also contain "testimonies" from people who are familiar with the stories surrounding each place or who have first-hand experiences to share²⁴.

Still, the interest seems to be focused on what is ultimately recorded by their 'equipment' or what the 'researchers' themselves experienced, although questions are raised about who is behind the "phenomena" and what has happened at the point from which these "phenomena" arise.

Legend tripping is what PIGs do when they explore sites associated with fabled ghosts and legendary events in the hopes of having their

²² On the term, see Ellis 2018, 61-71.

²³ The term 'Mockumentaries' has been coined to describe these 'recordings' reminiscent of documentaries; it results from the association of the verb '(to) mock' and the noun 'documentaries'. Although the first part of the word translates as mockery, the term could be rendered as pseudo-documentary. See on, Roscoe & Hight 2001; Rhodes 2002, 46-60.

²⁴ See p.e. https://www.tiktok.com/@dark_tourism_society/video/7222701310330637594 (Accessed May 19, 2023). In this video, the screen is split in half; the lower part depicts the group's visit to the location, while the upper part features the testimony of two young men who recount on a television show their own experience with the ghost in that place.

own personal experience. Thus, it seems that their objective is to follow up on old stories expecting to add new stories of their own to the narrative. As such, PIGs ultimately draw inspiration from narratives for their work and seek to create narratives as part of their evidence (Goldstein, Grider & Banks-Thomas 2007, 224-225). On this concept Gabbert (2015, 162–164) mentions the "performative landscapes" that contribute to the creation and shaping of the liminal reality where this world and the "other" world meet. In fact, Stewart (2008, 159-169) gives the dualism attributed to space (world of nature - supernatural world) also a horizontal dimension, based on the process of consecrating or demonizing specific spaces. Therefore, those who enter this environment outside the realm of ordinary reality turn themselves into fictional characters and become participants in legendary realms. In this way, the story world, including both the surrounding environment and the characters, contributes to the creation of this realm and the super naturalisation of places (Valk & Sävborg 2018, 10).

WHAT PLACES ARE INCLUDED IN THESE 'RESEARCHES'?

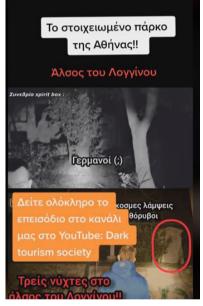
The haunted *fountain of the witch* on Penteli mountain, where a witch called 'Caracanta' once resided, is one of the places in Athens that seems to have sparked a ghost hunt (or, more accurately, a 'supernatural investigation'). This place is a sort of a park, in a wooden area and next to a street. In the footage of such a video, the group visits the place and asks the ghost for its name and to name the location they are at. The ghost obeys, so the team notes the responses²⁵.

On a street in the same mountain range, is also located the haunted spot of the variation of 'The Vanishing Hitchhiker' motif, mentioned previously, the ghost of Hassia. But, yet another place that is thought to be charged with supernatural energy can be found on the mountain. It is the cave of Davelis, a famous bandit, who lived in the 19th century and used this cave as a hideout. It is even said that it was where he passed away, surrounded by the army that threatened to capture him. However, the supernatural energies in this place are not connected to this person and are of other reasoning²⁶.

²⁵ Dark tourism society (@dark_tourism_society) | TikTok (Accessed May 19, 2023). The answer is, also, recorded in writing in the video (02:07) to emphasize that it did, in fact, answer and it named the location. The witch's ghost said the location is in Penteli.

²⁶ See p.e. the videos (@paranormal_vt) | TikTok (Accessed May 19, 2023) and https:// www.youtube.com/@theunexpected9180/videos (Accessed May 19, 2023).

So, the mountain of Penteli (one of those surrounding Athens and inhabited due to the expansion of the city) strongly functions as the dangerous border of the community. Nonetheless, some other places within the boundaries of the city are linked to supernatural activity and they also intrigue the interest of ghost hunting groups. These are the previously mentioned streets close to a cemetery and the park (which is known as the 'grove of Logginos', as shown in the following example). It is said that you can hear drums at night in the park, which is, also, close to another cemetery.



https://www.tiktok.com/@dark_tourism_society/video/7229029376891833626 (Accessed May 19, 2023).

Furthermore, the ghost of a girl is rumored to be wandering the streets next to the Amarousion district cemetery²⁷. At first glance, the girl seems normal, but as you get closer, you notice that she has glassy eyes. PIGs roam the streets in this area in search of her, so they can look into her eyes. The following two videos are recordings of 'paranormal investigator groups' at those places.

²⁷ See the video Dark tourism society (@dark_tourism_society) | TikTok (Accessed May 19, 2023).

All these places are somewhat removed from the urban core but remain too close to be perceived as outside of the city. Although they are used, in fact they are not, that is they function as in-between (liminal, to borrow van Gennep (1965, 15) term) spaces connected to liminal experiences. Even the parks in Athens were not a destination that the inhabitants would choose to go for a stroll. They tried to avoid them because they were considered to be dangerous, due to thief activity. Consequently, they were abundant and connected to loneliness and misfortune. Even though they are used by locals, who now choose them to walk there with their children or pets, their former significance still seems to spark the collective imagination.

On this account, it seems that modern city dwellers still have a sense of security about the "inside" in relation to the "outside", perceiving their own city as a familiar space, in which they can move around -relatively-undisturbed, because the outside of it, even what is on the verge of their city, is beyond their control. So, anything that is "out there" can endanger the members of the community. Therefore, it is evident that there is a distinct division between the space of "security", which involves experience of some kind- what Foucault (2012) would describe as "the perceptual and lived medium"- and an "other space", the dangerous, the non-human, the "outside", the one in which people do not have experiences.

Consequently, it is not really surprising that haunted locations are found in peri-urban areas or places that people avoid, which then serve as the backdrop of such stories. The experience is, therefore, the concept that draws a line between one context and another. The familiar is close, embedded in everyday activity, which in turn is situated within a precise boundary. So, the absence of experience, at least in the daily sense, is what can give meaning to the unfamiliar (Freud 2017, 9). "We live inside a set of relations that define locations...", as noted by Foucault (2012, 83), and it seems that places, even urban ones, are amenable to various readings by their inhabitants.

THE OPEN PLACES OF THE CITY WITHIN THE OPEN PLACES OF THE INTERNET

Observing how urban locations are given supernatural meaning on social media, Dégh's (2001, 325) observations on the rising fame of local psi practitioners, whose activity is heavily media-commercialised, are brought in mind.

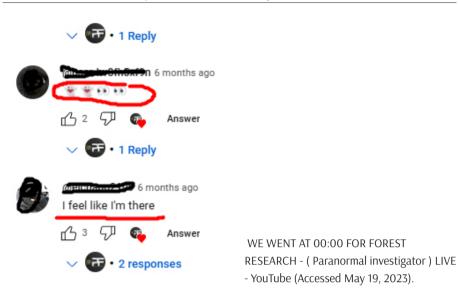
Mass media, in this case social media, enhance not only the dynamic of the transmission of the action of such groups, but also the contact of users with the practices that these groups promote. To describe this, Koven's notion of 'mass-mediated ostension' (2008, 139) seems accurate. Koven (2007, 183) recognises that 'mass-mediated ostension' is a useful term to employ, as it can refer to the blending of folklore and popular media in general. Any media text, even if it is just a more straightforwardly dramatized ghost story, can be viewed as mass-mediated ostension (Rodgers 2020, 61). In other words, the audience debates and negotiates the content of the 'recorded' experience.

On social networking and media sharing websites, ghosts hunting recordings –as with any kind of legend performances- include discussions about video and audio "evidence," descriptions of other people's relevant encounters, related legends and, eventually, the development of a sense of connection with events transpiring in several locations and eras. Besides returning multimedia presentations of the supernatural to oral or text-based narrative, Ghost Hunters' activity on YouTube and TikTok, and their accompanying viewer comments, foster the emergence and flourishing of new narrative forms within previous space-time constraints (Kinsella 2011, 39). Through the act of presence, these mediated performances convey the experiences they produce. Within the context of computer-mediated communication, Lombard & Ditton (1997) suggest that presence may be defined as the feeling of "being involved, engaged, and engrossed" by the environment the computer has created.

THE COMMENTS OF THE GROUPS

The comments made by users on the content of social media, also, support the idea that these platforms will eventually become the public space of the internet. The concept of presence, then, in this context, encompasses the reflexive production, reception and evaluation of individual and group experiences in any environment. This means that all mythical journeys promoted online require participants to experience both the mediated environment and the supernatural (Kinsella 2011, 40-41). This is confirmed by the remarks left on the videos this paper examined. The example that follows comes from the comments of a YouTube video, where a user writes: 'It feels as he/she is there himself/herself!'.

In these coments, the users attempt to get involved in the procedure as well. They closely examined the video, 'locating' 'activity' that was unseen by the group at the time they were filming their exhibition. As a matter of fact, one viewer claims to have seen something that is not actually there at the 20:08 minute of the video and then reappears two seconds later in another spot.



Some users, like those in the example below, use only emoticons to express their approval or disapproval of the videos. This is a very understandable method of online communication nowadays, but it is still important to note that nettalk/net-speech²⁸ remains active. Still, it seems that the new meanings of those emoticons are omitted or ignored. Par example the ghost () from the above example is mainly used by younger users to say that someone 'ghosted' them, that is, disappeared from their life without explanation²⁹. In this case it is used only because the emoji fits the topic of the discussion.

Certainly, there are mocking remarks that make fun of the content of the videos and question their credibility. In such comments, one user even makes a political joke by referring to the 'evil spirit' with the name of the Greek prime minister at the time³⁰ (Mitsotakis), who is regarded as a jink, or evil, as did his father, also a politician, to whom the desig-

²⁸ The terms used to describe this kind of 'digital speech are 'computerlore' (Beatty 1976, 223–24) 'cyberlanguage', 'netspeak' (Crystal 2006 [2001],18), but the most prevalent terms are nettalk (Rosenberg & Sejnowski, 1986, 72-89) and netspeech (McCulloch, Bedworth & Bridle 1987, 289-301). Communication in this manner is perceived as informal and oral (Foot 2007, 27).

²⁹ See on the meanings of emojis https://www.bark.us/slang-word/ghost-emoji-meaning/ (Accessed May 19, 2023).

³⁰ Such comments are to be found on this video: https://www.tiktok.com/@parafusikafainomena/video/7203169212217560326 (Accessed May 19, 2023).

nation was first attributed. Another viewer laughs and observes that the depicted is false.

Stil, the *researchers'* personal beliefs³¹ serve as the foundation for the creation of 'records of supernatural phenomena'. The following comments show how the videos are taken up by a group of people that – at most – share similar concerns. So, seeing the investigator groups experiences, feeds back their own interest³², if not their own beliefs. The feedback through comments as:

Perfect job!! The only thing I have to agree with others here is that perhaps the questions you ask should be more about him and not about whether the Americans dug a tunnel... Besides, the spirit that speaks to you may be much older...

Not many investigators do such professional work in the sense that from the beginning to the last second captivated me so much that **I expirienced it as if I was with you**. Many congrats to the team and a very good job is coming out. I would also like to follow one of your investigations. **You are gods, keep it up**!!

VERY GOOD JOB GUYS...³³

reveal that audiences of the group's activities³⁴, support the 'researchers' in their quest to find the malicious ghosts, thereby reaffirming both their personal belief in their existence and the efficacy of the action of the 'researchers'.

CONCLUSIONS

According to Dundes (1980, 6), legends and other kinds of legendary narratives, such as ghost stories, circulate among popular groups or groups of people who share at least one element in common. Nevertheless, they can lead to the development of groups among individuals with common interests, that is, these groups are new forms of communities,

³¹ See McNeill 2006, 96-110; Cowdell 2006, 69-82.

³² On the subject of audiences; see Peli 2007; Hill 2011.

³³ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qC50PosFaq4 (Accessed May 19, 2023).

³⁴ See Staiger 2005, 95-114.

including digital interaction. In this case study, the groups created have similar supernatural experiences or fervent believers in the supernatural (Kinsella 2011, 7-8). The formation of groups is evident on the internet, particularly in its public spaces. The comments that groups post offer one way to determine how they perceive issues presented within those groups.

The placing of the 'haunting' does not concern the viewers, based on the analysis of the user's perspective on the ghosts that were shown. They appear to be most familiar with the 'paranormal' activity that occurs in these locations. Their main concern is still the proof and the record of the ghost, which is also the concern of the ghost hunting groups. There are comments presenting the personal experiences of the viewers in the same places, mostly mentioning their contact with them. These comments support the 'records' of the 'researchers' as captured in the videos they upload. Even so, neither the group presentations nor the comments from the viewers provide any justification for the existence of ghosts in the mentioned places. No one seems to link the environment to the 'activity' in it. Everybody assumes that a ghost appears at a certain place because of a wicked act that took place there in the past and, at this point, the investigation into the haunting stops. The ostensive act, thus, seems to be the main issue. This might also happen because significant ontological and spiritual questions regarding death and the afterlife are reflected in supernatural narratives. Paranormal narratives sometimes prompt legend trips to the locations featured in the stories, where the participants have first-hand encounters with nature. Consequently, being in a more natural environment might enhance the pleasure of the trip (Thomas 2007, 51). Still, technological advancements are a key component of ghost lore, whether they serve as a medium for ghosts to communicate with the living or vice versa. After all, storytelling remains a central aspect of the ghost hunters' work and technology assists in this process (Goldstein, Grider & Banks-Thomas 2007, 221, 226).

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