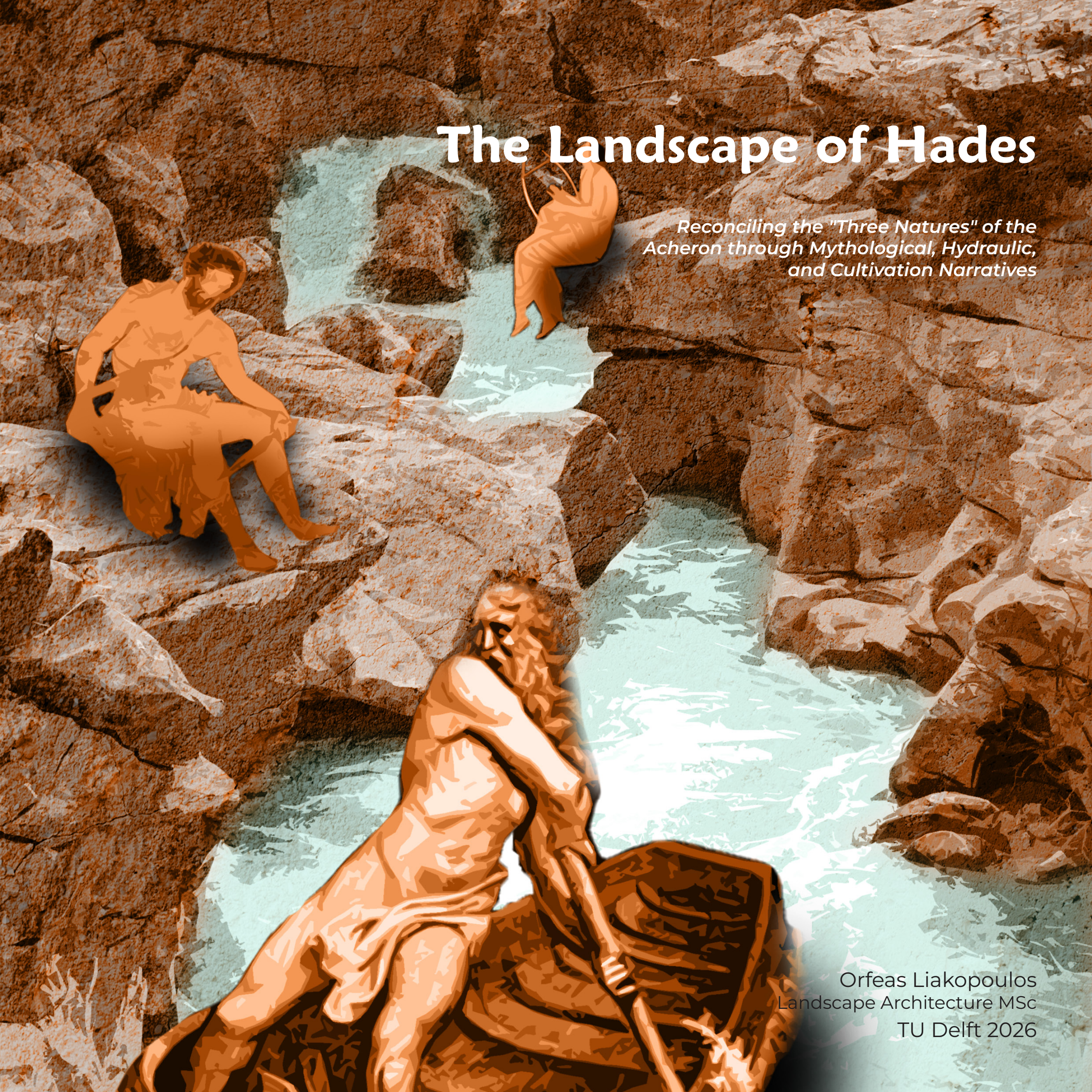
The Landscape of Hades

Reconciling the "Three Natures" of the Acheron through Mythological, Hydraulic, and Cultivation Narratives



Orfeas Liakopoulos
Landscape Architecture MSc
TU Delft 2026



Figure 1: The impenetrable limestone gorge of the Acheron. A source of life and myth

The Landscape of Hades

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Figure 2: The "Gates of Hades," the entrance to the dark limestone gorge.

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Thank you all!



Figure 3: Landscape with Charon Crossing the Styx
Patinir, J. (1515–1524). Landscape with Charon Crossing the Styx [Painting]. Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain.

Abstract

This thesis investigates the multilayered challenges facing the **River Acheron** in Epirus, Greece. Historically revered as the **liminal threshold** between the world of the living and the **Realm of Hades**, the Acheron is not merely a body of water but a landscape of profound cultural memory. Its dramatic topography and dark waters cemented its place in the Odyssey and the accounts of Pausanias, evoking a specific **Genius Loci** of fear and awe.

Today, however, this "landscape of memory" is fracturing under a complex set of crises. **Environmentally**, the river system is increasingly volatile, oscillating between flash floods that threaten the plain and severe seasonal droughts that degrade the Natura 2000 ecosystem. **Socially**, the region suffers from rural abandonment, severing the generational bond between the local community and their land. **Culturally**, a strictly utilitarian management regime and the pressures of extractive mass tourism have stripped the river of its deeper meaning, reducing the mythical **"Gateway to the Underworld"** to a mere picturesque backdrop and a functional irrigation grid.

Conducted within the **Circular Water Stories** (CWS) lab at TU Delft, this research challenges the disciplinary separation of nature and narrative. By employing a methodology of **"narrative excavation"**, ancient texts are treated as concrete spatial data to inform physical design. The project proposes a multi-scalar route, choreographed as a two-day ***"Katavasis"*** (Descent) hike, that physicalises the mythological journey across the ***"Three Natures"*** (Wild, Cultivated, and Garden). Through this route, and in conjunction with a series of interventions along it, the aim is to restore the Acheron's chthonic Genius Loci while mitigating environmental risks and fostering year-round "slow" tourism to sustain the plain's productive fabric.

Table of Contents

Abstract 7

"Lexikon" (Dictionary) 10

Part I, *"Mneme"*
- Memory, Meaning and Form 14
- The Three Fructured Natures 15
- The Palimpsest of the Greek Landscape 16
- The Acheron River 19
- Problem Statement 25
  - Sub-Questions 26
  - The Crisis of Meaning 27
  - Design Assigment 29
  - Objectives 29

Part II, *"Methodos"*
- Methodology 30
  - The Bibliotheca 30
    - "World of Ideas" 30
    - "World of Facts" 31
    - "Excavating The Myth" 31
- "Sentimental Topography" 32
- Mapping the Acheron 33
- Transcribing the Myth 33
- "Schema", Landscape Schematisation 34
- Excavating the Narrative 35
- Finding the Language 36
- "Rein" (to flow), the flow of River and Myth 37

Part III, *"Anagnosis"*
- An "Encaltured Landscape" 39
  - The Ancient Greek "Underworld" 40
- "The Mists of Hades" 41
- The Geomorphology of the "Underworld" 42
- An ever-changing Landscape 44
- Draining the "Acherousian Swamp" 47
- Acheron as a Resource 48
- A Popular Seasonal Destination 48
- Beyond the Summer Image 49
- A Protected Ecosystem 50
  - Flora and Vegetation Zones 51
  - Acheron as a Diverse Habitat 52
- "Symvoli" (confluence) 53

Part IV, *"Katavasis"*
- Descending to the Underworld 55
- First Nature 56
  - Walking the Site 56
  - The Groves of Persephone 58
  - Land of the Cimmerians 64
- Second Nature 72
  - Walking the Site 72
  - Fields of Demeter 74
- Third Nature 84
  - Walking the Site 86
  - Persephone's Garden 93
- "Katavasis of the Acheron" 96
- Balancing a Volatile System 97
- The "Katavasis" of the Mason Bee 98
  - Melissae, the (bee) Nymph of the Underworld 99
- A Part of a Wider Network 100
- Demeter's Grief 101
- A Landscape at the crossroads 102
- A Gradual Proccess 104
- Building the Route 104
- Involving the community 105
- Towards A Reconciled Landscape 106
- "Praxis" (realisation) 107

Part V: *"Anavasis"* (Ascent)
- Ascending from the Underworld 109
- Concluding the *"Katavasis"* 110
- Beyond the Acheron 111
- A Personal *"Anavasis"* 113

Bibliography
- References List 116
- Figure List 118
- Icon List 120

Appendix
- Appendix I: Bird Catalogue 122
- Appendix II: Mythological Archive 124
  - The Odyssey, Overall Summary 124
  - The Odyssey, Book X, Summary 125
  - The Odyssey, Book XI, Summary 125
  - Orpheus and Eurydice 126
  - The 12th labour of Heracles 127
  - Demeter and Persephone 128
  - Descriptions of Greece, Pausanias 128
  - The Myth of Leuke (White Poplars) 128
  - Of Mourning, Lucian 129
  - The Myth of Er, Republic, Plato 131
  - Phaedo, Plato 132
- Appendix III: Photo Archive 134

"Lexikon" (Dictionary)

Acheron / Acheron River:
Etymologically meaning the "River of Woe," the primary hydrological artery of the Thesprotian landscape. Historically revered as the threshold between the living and the Realm of Hades, it is treated as a profound "sacred geography."


Figure 4

Acherousian Lake / Swamp:
The historical, misty wetland system of the Fanari Plain that functioned as the ultimate physical and metaphysical threshold to the Underworld, the ecological baseline for restoring the First Nature.


Figure 5

Ammoudia:
A coastal fishing settlement at the mouth of the Acheron where the river meets the Ionian Sea. It acts as the conceptual starting point of the First Nature, featuring re-wilded brackish marshlands.

Anagnosis (Deep Reading):
The deep, diagnostic reading of the landscape that reveals the hidden fractures between ancient mythological narrative , ecological situation and contemporary infrastructure and agriculture.

Anavasis (Ascent):
The conceptual and mythological "return" from the Underworld/ the depths of the design process, representing the application of localized, site-specific knowledge to tackle broader global challenges in modern landscape architecture.

Asphodel / Asphodel Meadow:
A highly resilient Mediterranean geophyte and the dreary resting place for the vast majority of "average souls." Utilised as the spatial climax in Persephone's Garden, blossoming from late winter to early spring to physically manifest the mythological meadow.


Figure 6

Charon:
The chthonic ferryman who demanded a toll (an obol) to carry deceased souls across the misty Acherousian Lake to the depths of Hades.

Choreography of Movement:
The intentional spatial sequencing of a route used to physically and mentally guide a visitor's body through a territory, revealing its atmospheres, thresholds, and mythology step-by-step.

Chthonic:
Something related to the dark, subterranean qualities and deities associated with the Underworld. It defines the specific atmospheric and geological memory embedded within the limestone gorges and dark waters.

Cimmerians:
A mythical people whose realm and city were forever shrouded in mist and cloud, never pierced by the sun. Their dark territory is spatially associated with the Ammoudia coastal area.

Circular Water Stories:
The theoretical premise that water is the determining material in the landscape, asserting that true circularity must reintegrate lost mythological narratives back into the modern functioning of the river.

Cocytus (Kokytos):
The "River of Lamentation" or "River of Wailing" that flows into the Acheron at Mesopotamo. It marks the exact mythological location of Odysseus's necromantic ritual.

Communal Stewardship:
The socio-ecological strategy of transforming local residents from passive observers into active caretakers of the landscape, ensuring the long-term survival of the local ecosystem and heritage.

Critical Regionalism:
A design philosophy deployed to mediate between the mythical weight of a site and its modern needs, explicitly rejecting both the placeless abstraction of modern functionalism and the sentimental pastiche of nostalgic replication.

Cut and Fill Topography:
A zero-waste earthwork strategy that reuses excavated soil on-site to create protective berms and subterranean atmospheres, minimising the carbon footprint while physically embedding parts of the route into the earth.

Demeter:
The goddess of agriculture whose profound grief over the abduction of Persephone plunged the earth into a barren winter. This myth acts as an atmospheric driver for the seasonal dormancy of the winter landscape, spatially represented by the choice of specific vegetation.

Docheia Zois (Vessels of Life):
A concept drawn from Aris Konstantinidis defining the built environment not as a scenographic imitation of tradition, but as structures emerging authentically from the "structural truth" and climatic reality of the land.

Elysium:
The blissful, toil-free paradise at the edges of the earth reserved for virtuous heroes, referenced to establish the comprehensive nature of ancient chthonic geography.

Enculturated Landscape:
A territory where human habitation, movement, and myth have structurally inscribed meaning onto the physical geography over millennia, asserting that the landscape is a cultural construct as much as a natural one.

Fanari Plain:
The low-lying, intensively cultivated agricultural flatland formed by millennia of alluvial deposition. Historically holding the Acherousian Swamp, it now functions as the productive Second Nature.

First Nature (Wilderness):
The untamed, wild environment. This is represented by the coastal wetlands, the brackish marshes, and the "Groves of Persephone" at the Acheron estuary, which the project seeks to partially re-wild.

Genius Loci (Spirit of Place):
The concrete "living reality" and qualitative dimension of a location. It represents the profound mythological memory and sensory experience of the river that modern utilitarian management has suppressed.

Glyki:
A village located at the entrance to the dramatic Acheron Straits. It acts as the spatial threshold between the imposing limestone gorge (Third Nature) and the agricultural grid of the plain.

Hades:
The stern god of the Underworld who rules alongside Persephone, and the name for the subterranean realm itself.

Heracles (Hercules):
A heroic figure who physically breached the Realm of Hades as a living visitor to capture Cerberus. His spatial traversal validates the design's reliance on active, bodily movement to experience mythological thresholds.

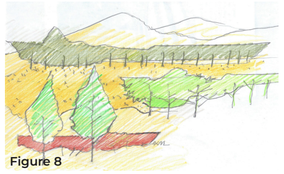

Figure 7

Kastri:
A village situated on the Fanari Plain at the foot of an ancient height, hosting the historical ruins of the ancient settlement of Pandosia.

Katavasis (Descent):
The active, physical, and mythological journey into the Underworld. Spatially, it serves as the foundational narrative choreography that guides human movement and ecological recovery across the valley.

Landscape of Memory:
Simon Schama's concept defining terrain not merely as a scenic background, but as an active repository of human culture and a continuous "current of memory" that carries the metaphors of life, death, and time.

Landscape Schematisation:
An epistemological design process of abstracting complex physical environments and mythological texts into structured spatial figures or "syntax," preventing literal, picturesque replication and creating an active spatial language.


Figure 8

Lethe (Spring of):
The spring of "Oblivion," inimical to memory, found within the Underworld.

Master Builder Methodology:
A collaborative, on-site construction process (inspired by Dimitris Pikionis) that rejects rigid, top-down masterplans in favour of allowing local craftsmen to intuitively weave the design into the landscape using traditional techniques.

Mavropotamos:
Literally meaning the "Black River," this is an alternative historical and local name for the Acheron. It references the mythological poisoning of its waters by Zeus and highlights the river's dark, sediment-heavy visual character.

Melissae (bees):
Mythologically, the priestesses of chthonic deities who represented transmigrating souls. Ecologically adapted as the Red Mason Bee, acting as a living narrative node guiding biological recovery.


Figure 9

Mesopotamo:
An inland village located at the confluence of the Acheron and Cocytus rivers. It anchors the overnight campsite intervention and hosts the Nekromanteion of Ephyra.

Methodos (Methods):
The non-linear, multi-layered framework employed to navigate the friction between the quantitative realities of the river and its qualitative dimensions.

Minos and Rhadamanthys:
The judges of the Underworld who assigned deceased souls to their eternal destinations.

Mneme (Memory):
The deep, cultural currents and chthonic narratives embedded in the terrain. It represents the intangible heritage and mythological weight of the Acheron that the design explicitly seeks to translate into a physical spatial experience.

Mnemosyne (Spring of):
A cold spring pooling in the Underworld, associated with memory. It is translated spatially into the design as a focal point within Persephone's Garden.

Myth / Mythology:
Redefined not as an abstract collection of tales, but as a structural layer of the physical landscape itself. It acts as primary site data, dictating spatial boundaries, atmospheric conditions, and the sequence of the route.

Narrative Excavation:
A core methodological approach where ancient classical texts are treated as primary, spatial site data rather than mere literary fiction.

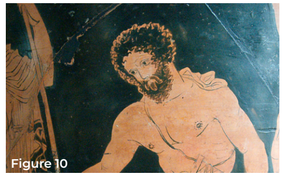
Nekromanteion:
The Oracle of the Dead at Ephyra, a major archaeological site where living humans historically underwent spatial disorientation to contact the Underworld.

Node and Link:
The spatial ecological framework used to design the pollinator corridor, consisting of safe habitats (nodes) connected by flight paths (links) to bypass hostile agricultural monocultures.

"Lexikon" (Dictionary)

Nostos:
The mythological concept of a heroic journey or return (most notably Odysseus's). It frames the physical experience of the designed route, intertwining the epic poems with the contemporary landscape narration.

Odysseus:
The Homeric hero whose spatial and spiritual journey serves as the primary navigational guide for the design's narrative route.


Figure 10

Odysseus' Bay:
A small sandy beach just south of Ammoudia, the supposed site where Odysseus anchored his ship to begin his Katavasis.

Orientation and Identification:
The dual psychological needs defined by Christian Norberg-Schulz for human existence in a space; finding one's place within a spatial structure and identifying with its character.

Orpheus:
A mythological hero who navigated the subterranean pathways carrying only his lyre. His narrative establishes the river not merely as a hydrological system, but as an active cultural threshold, also the author.

Orphic Gold Tablets:
Ancient inscriptions containing instructions for navigating the afterlife. They are treated in the thesis through "narrative excavation" as literal spatial directives used to choreograph the physical movement of visitors through the designed interventions.

Palimpsest:
A layered geographic surface where the visible traces of past history, myth, culture and nature are continuously overwritten but never fully erased, dictating that modern interventions must mediate rather than erase these layers.

Persephone:
The Queen of the Underworld whose cyclical descent and ascent mirror natural death and rebirth. This is spatially translated into a garden at the Acheron Straits that choreographs a seasonal shift from dormant winter to blooming spring.


Figure 11

Praxis (Realisation):
The phased, physical execution of the landscape intervention. It rejects static master-planning in favour of a 30-year biological and social evolution.

Psychopompos (Soul-bearer):
Epithet of Hermes, the mythological guide of the dead. In the design's ecological narrative, this role is mapped onto the Red Mason Bee.

Pyriphlegethon:
The "Flaming River" or "River of Fire," one of the mythological tributaries flowing into the Acheron.

Red Mason Bee:
A keystone early-spring pollinator acting as the ecological protagonist of the design. It takes on the mythological role of the Psychopomp, physically guiding the biological recovery of the valley.

Second Nature (Agriculture):
The cultivated, utilitarian, and human-controlled landscape. This is represented by the intensely farmed agricultural grid, the drainage ditches, and the dikes of the Fanari Plain.

Sentimental Topography:
A phenomenological framework treating the ground as a tangible repository of collective memory, revealed through the physical "toil of the body" and the deliberate curation of pathways, spolia, and materials.

Souli:
A historic mountain village area known for its rugged topography, located upstream from the Acheron Straits. It anchors the historic mountain trail extending from the Third Nature.

Straits of Acheron:
The imposing karstic limestone gorge where the river violently cuts through the mountains, the specific geomorphological site that historically "acted" as the entrance to the Realm of Hades.


Figure 12

Symvoli (Confluence):
The critical points of spatial and narrative intersection. It represents where physical rivers meet, or where modern infrastructure violently collides with ancient mythological memory.

Synthetic Meaning:
Culturally constructed meaning generated through deliberate landscape artifice, rhetoric, and design. It is deployed to actively restore the valley's cultural orientation rather than relying solely on invisible biological or ecological restoration.

Tartarus:
The deep pit of perpetual punishment in ancient cosmology, illustrating the complex, multi-tiered structure of the Underworld.

The Three Natures:
John Dixon Hunt's theoretical framework categorising the landscape into Wilderness (First Nature), Agriculture (Second Nature), and the Garden (Third Nature).

Third Nature (Garden):
The conscious, cultural translation of the untamed landscape into a designed, "synthetic" space. This culminates in the design of "Persephone's Garden" at the Acheron Straits.

TOEB (Local Water Management Organisation):
The authority responsible for the rigid, mid-century hydraulic grid of the Fanari Plain. It represents the purely utilitarian management regime the design seeks to subvert and adapt into a more resilient, circular system.

Toil of the Body:
The phenomenological concept that a landscape's true nature and memory are only fully revealed through the physical, bodily effort required to navigate its uneven surfaces.

Umbrella Species:
A conservation model employed in the design where protecting the highly sensitive habitat requirements of one specific species (the Red Mason Bee) triggers a systemic cascade of broader biodiversity protection.

Underworld (Realm of Hades):
The subterranean Realm of Hades and Persephone, a form of "afterlife" for the eternal soul according to the ancient Greek belief. It encompasses Elysium, Tartarus and the Asphodel Meadow. Treated as a mythologically and physically grounded geography that once dictated the spatial ritual of death, an atmosphere and sequence the design seeks to physically perform.


Figure 13

Figure 4: The river Acheron, near Glyki
Figure 5: Wetlands near Ammoudia
Figure 6: Asphodelus Ramosus
Figure 7: Hercules and Cerberus
Figure 8: Landscape Schematisation
Figure 9: Melissae
Figure 10: Odysseus performing the Nekyia
Figure 11: The return of Persephone
Figure 12: The Straits of Acheron
Figure 13: The Realm of Hades


Figure 14: The view to the coastal cliffs and the sea, as seen from Mesopotamo

Part I: *"Mneme"*

Memory, Meaning and Form

A landscape is often misunderstood as merely a scenic background for a travel picture or a neutral collection of natural resources to be harvested. However, in the field of landscape architecture, it is recognised as a complex repository of human culture, as Simon Schama argues in Landscape and Memory, our perception of the wild is bound to our cultural history, a landscape is never just a physical terrain, but a "*current of memory*" that carries the metaphors of life, death, and time (Schama, 1995). To understand and design in such a context requires a deep acknowledgement that the ground we build upon is shaped as much by the stories and myths that humans projected onto it as by the geological forces that formed it.

This interpretation demands a shift in how we read a site. It requires an engagement with what Christian Norberg-Schulz defines as Genius Loci, or the "Spirit of Place", a concept deep rooted in human culture, that originates from ancient Roman belief where every independent being and place possessed a genius, or guardian spirit, which gave life to it and determined its essence (Norberg-Schulz, 1980). Norberg-Schulz transposes this into architectural theory, defining it not as a mystical concept, but as the concrete "living reality" of a location, arguing that human existence relies on "*orientation*" within a spatial structure and "*identification*" with the environment's character (Norberg-Schulz, 1980). When planning ignores this qualitative dimension in favour of purely technical solutions, the "spirit" is lost, and the landscape risks becoming a generic space rather than a meaningful place of "*orientation*".

Consequently, the role of the landscape architect is not merely to replicate a lost "nature" or to attempt a biologically pure ecological restoration. In his essay Form, Meaning, and Expression, Laurie Olin argues that human landscapes function like living organisms, composed of disparate elements that synthesise to form distinct "*entities different from their parts*" (Olin, 1988). Olin actively critiques the theoretical error of confusing human cultural needs with purely natural processes. Instead, he posits that landscape architecture is an expressive medium explicitly designed to generate "*Synthetic Meaning*".

Olin defines Synthetic Meaning as fundamentally distinct from Natural Meaning. While natural meaning is evolutionary, derived from our biological instinct to recognise shelter, water, or danger, synthetic meaning is culturally constructed, requiring the deliberate use of "*artifice*" and "*rhetoric*." It is the result of a conscious synthesis where natural materials (earth, water, vegetation) are organised into tangible "*figures*" that communicate complex human ideas which nature alone cannot express. Therefore, the discipline of landscape architecture ultimately functions not as a branch of the natural sciences, but as a vital social art form, where the environment is intentionally manipulated to articulate and redefine "*the relationship of society and individuals to nature*" (Olin, 1988).

Every landscape boasts a unique complex of historical, mythological, and cultural meanings. Within the multi-layered landscape of the Acheron River, a terrain steeped in history, alongside cultural and agricultural memories, the "Mneme" that stands out is the river's unique mythological resonance. Its synthetic meaning has long been established as the "Gateway to the Underworld", acting as a physical and spiritual threshold between the world of the living and the realm of the dead. It remains a landscape as profoundly "sacred" in the human imagination as Mount Olympus and Mount Ida.

Figure 15: *"Among the oldest and incontestably most meaningful landscapes are those that I would term "sacred" landscapes, those associated with spiritual values and especially those of the origin myths of ancient peoples: Ise and Itsukushima in Japan; Delos and Delphi, or Mt. Ida and Olympus in Greece".* (Olin, 1988)." Mt. Olympus' peak, "Zeus' Throne".

The Three Fructured Natures

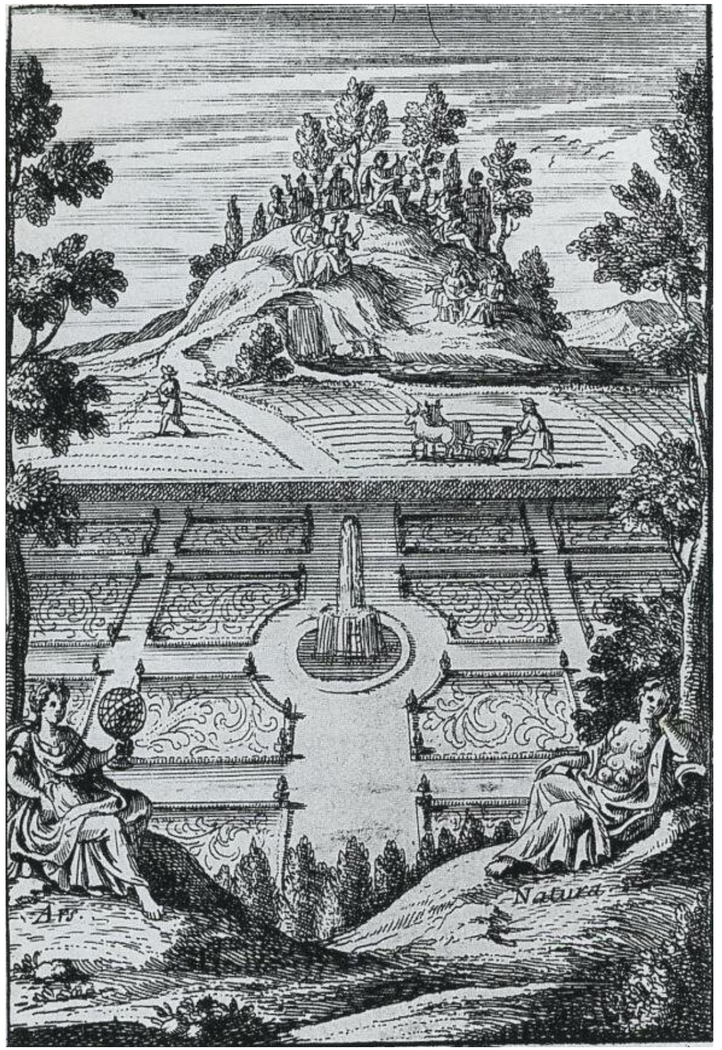


Figure 16: Wilderness, Agriculture and the Garden, a fructured interaction.
Frontispiece Curiositez de la nature et de l'art by l'Abbé Pierre le Lorrain de Vallemont (1705)

In 1705, Abbé de Vallemont published Curiositez de la nature et de l'art, featuring a frontispiece illustration (fig. 3) that fundamentally shaped our perception of the landscape. Inspired by this image, landscape theorist John Dixon Hunt formulated his "**Theory of Three Natures**" in 2000, dividing the landscape into three distinct categories: **Wilderness, Agriculture, and Garden**.

In the background, the forested mountains, waterfalls and muses, part of a mythical nature untouched by humans (first nature) transition into an agricultural landscape controlled by humans (second nature), and in the foreground, a formal garden designed by humans, as a form of artistic, representation of nature (Hunt, 2000).

In antiquity, the First Nature was feared and worshipped. Rivers were deities, mountain spirits and muses "roamed" the land, and human survival depended entirely on respecting the life-giving and destructive forces of the wild. These mythological narratives were as physically embedded in the landscape as the earth and water themselves, but over time, as civilisations expanded and learned to subjugate the environment to their advantage, the First Nature was violently pushed back. Forests were cleared, rivers were confined and farmlands were permanently carved out of the wild to maximise the Second Nature (Hunt, 2000).

Historically, our relationship with the landscape relied on a continuous, mediating interaction between these Three Natures. Today, this balance has severely fractured. First Nature is reduced to an isolated "picturesque" backdrop or a highly controlled ecological restoration bubble, or an obstacle waiting to be engineered and "fixed." Meanwhile, Second Nature has devolved into a landscape of unyielding utility and mass extraction, leaving no spatial room for the cultural meaning-making of Third Nature.

Consequently, the contemporary landscape architect's role is not merely to "fix" environmental problems through functional infrastructure. Rather, it is to reclaim the agency of Third Nature (design and synthetic meaning) as a tool to mediate and restore the lost balance between the wild and the cultivated. Only by consciously choreographing the interaction between these three realms can we prevent a site's "*currents of memory*" from drying up entirely (Hunt, 2000).

The Palimpsest of the Greek Landscape

In the specific cultural context of Greece, the relationship between landscape, memory, and form is best understood through the metaphor of the **Palimpsest**, a layered surface where the "*visible traces*" of the past are continuously overwritten but can never be fully erased (Corboz, 1983). This Palimpsest reflects the tenuous and complex history of the region, where Bronze Age civilisations, classical antiquity, Roman and Ottoman (et al) periods have all left their indelible footprints. Engaging with this layered structure demands more than the "passive visual consumption of scenery". As Dimitris Pikionis argued in *A Sentimental Topography* (1935), the Greek landscape is a field of spiritual and physical action. It can only be revealed through the "*toil of the body*" across the "*uneven surface of the earth*", where the ground itself functions as a tangible repository of collective **memory** and **history**. This phenomenological reading finds its structural counterpart in the work of Aris Konstantinidis (1972), who defined the built environment as "Vessels of Life" (Docheia Zois). Konstantinidis vehemently rejected the scenographic imitation of tradition, asserting instead that "true" architecture must emerge from the "structural truth" of the land and the distinct climatic condition where "life is outdoors".

Within this framework, the physical terrain is never an empty canvas or a neutral, picturesque ecological background. Rather, it is bound to a mythological and historical dimension that has defined the identity of the place for millennia. As Thomas Tartaron observes in his study of **Epirus** (where Acheron is situated), this region is a prime example of an "*enculturated landscape*", a territory where human habitation, movement, and memory have inscribed meaning onto every river bend and mountain pass since the Bronze Age (Tartaron, 2004). For a landscape architect operating in this context, the environment cannot be viewed as "*wilderness*" in the romantic sense of pristine, untouched nature. Instead, it must be recognised as a dense archive of historical and mythical events. Tartaron argues that the inhabitants of Epirus historically navigated their terrain not just as a resource for survival, but as a complex web of places named and defined by their association with ancestors, the divine, or the heroic. Consequently, "myth" is not merely a tale from the past, it is a structural layer of the site itself, as tangible as its geology or vegetation.

This unique relationship of narrative and geography is best exemplified by the ancient traveller Pausanias. When documenting Greece in the 2nd century AD, Pausanias did not simply record topography, he validated myths by anchoring them in the physical world, demonstrating that in the Greek consciousness, stories are not abstract, they require specific rocks, caves, and rivers to exist (Pausanias, Description of Greece, 1.17.5). The lore is not distinct from the landscape, it is the landscape.

However, this relationship is deeply complicated by external projections. The Greek landscape has historically functioned as an "*idealised archetype*" for the Western imagination, a mythical "***Arcadia***" providing the foundational imagery for the modern European political and cultural ethos (Moraitis, 2015). Moraitis argues that this "*cultural determination of place*" imposes a heavy symbolic burden, transforming the landscape into a political narrative of origin and democracy that often overshadows its contemporary reality. Consequently, a profound tension arises between this "idealised" landscape, preserved as a static museum of Western values, and the dynamic, often conflicting "lived" landscape experienced by its modern inhabitants (Terkenli, 2001).

To intervene in such a highly charged context, the landscape architect must navigate these dualities, mediating between the mythical weight of the genius loci and the vital, productive needs of the present. This necessitates a design approach aligned with the principles of **Critical Regionalism**, as articulated by Alexander Tzonis and Liane Lefaivre (2003). Critical regionalism firmly rejects both the placeless, universal abstraction of modern functionalism (which erases memory) and the sentimental pastiche of nostalgic replication (which reduces culture to a museum display). Instead, it demands a critical engagement with local topography, climate, light, and tectonic tradition. By filtering the "structural truth" of the Greek palimpsest through a contemporary design vocabulary, one can forge spatial interventions that honour the region's mythological, cultural and historical narratives while actively supporting its modern ecological and socio-economic realities. This theory is directly applicable to the Acheron River, where its multilayered challenges are in need of interventions that would not only address them, but would directly engage with the river's unique mythological narrative.



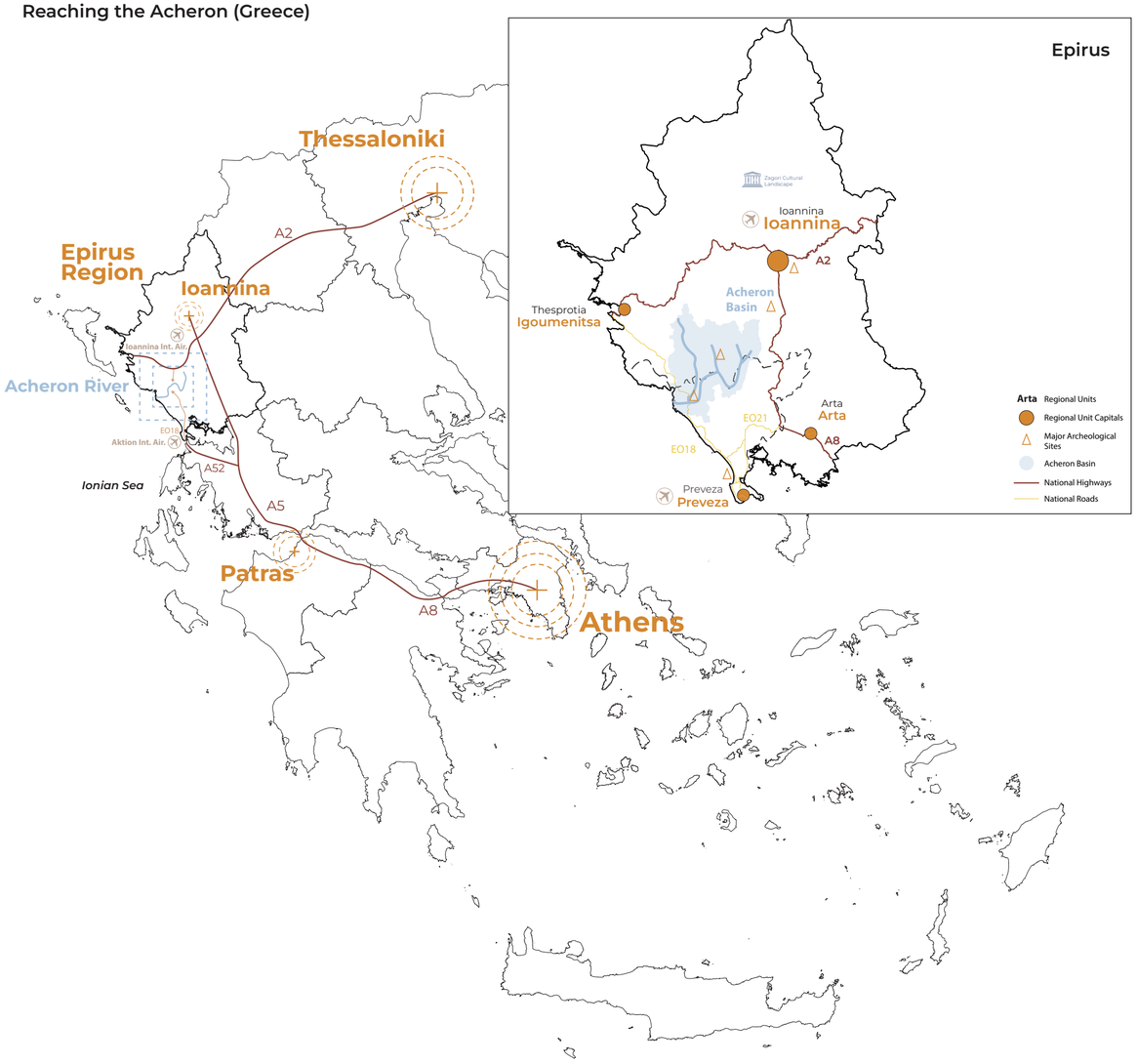
Figure 17. A Byzantine church, an Ottoman Mosque, roman and classical ruins in the Agora of Athens. Athens is a Modern Greek with a hint of ancient Greek Ruins, Roman infrastructure, Byzantine churches, Ottoman era bazar's and alleyways, Neo-classical public buildings, modernist apartment buildings, etc...





Figure 18, 19. The Palimpsest of Nekromanteion (Oracle of The Dead) at Ephyra. Bronze age foundations, an ancient Greek oracle, a Hellenistic and Roman Villa, a Byzantine and an Ottoman Villa.

Reaching the Acheron (Greece)



The Acheron River

The **Acheron** flows through the region of Epirus in northwestern Greece, traversing the regional units of Ioannina, Thesprotia, and Preveza. It is located between Patras and Ioannina, roughly a four and half-hour drive from Athens. Historically, this area has been defined by its rugged topography and strategic isolation, bordered by the Pindus mountain range to the east and the Ionian Sea to the west (Tartaron, 2004).

Today, reaching the Acheron River and the Fanari plain is much easier than its isolated history suggests. Visitors driving from Athens or Patras can travel north along the Ionia Odos (A5) and Amvrakia Odos (A55) and National Roads 21 and 18 (EO21, 18), while those coming from Thessaloniki and northern Greece can take the Egnatia Odos (A2) westward, exiting near Paramithia. For international and domestic air travel, the closest transit hubs are Aktion National Airport near Preveza (an hour's drive to the south) and Ioannina National Airport (about an hour and a half to the northeast). From these main arteries, local provincial roads lead directly into the plain.

According to the ancient Greek mythology and belief, the Acheron River was one of the supposed entrances to the "***Realm of Hades***" (Underworld), a threshold that the souls had to cross, with the help of Charon the "*ferryman*" in order to reach their final resting place.

The Acheron River functions as the primary hydraulic artery of the region, following a 63 km southwesterly course from **Mt. Tomaros** (1958m) to the **Ionian Sea**. This complex hydrological network is fed by a series of tributaries that carry heavy sediment loads, most notably the Mavropotamos ("Black River") and the Kokytos ("River of Lamentation"), Kakkavos and the Pyriphlegethon ("Flaming River"). This river system serves as the main irrigation source for the fertile Fanari plain, where a number of dwindling agricultural settlements are located (Spyrou, 2021).

The landscape of the **Acheron River** is awe-inspiring and spectacular, featuring dark gorges with hidden springs emerging from the "***underworld***", open agricultural plains, swampy wetlands, towering mountains, and ancient ruins. For many, this serves merely as an ultimate vacation destination and a refreshing break from city life, for others, the landscape is the "last thread" that keeps them from abandoning their birthplace and their fields for a new beginning in the bustling cities. But what about the landscape itself?

The Acheron River is a lot more than a fragile "eco(nomic)system", it is a "***sacred geography***" where **Natura 2000**, productive land, and spectacular geomorphological formations meet a mystical veil of myths, heroes, and the journey from life to death. This complex dynamic sparked my imagination and interest, as it forms a narrative in which I am "personally involved". My name, Orfeas (Orpheus), is mythologically bound to the Acheron and its significance, being one of the "Heroes" that journeyed to the Realm of Hades and back.



Figure 20: Tourism and modern development pressures at the "Straits of Acheron".

This intersection of territory and myth frames my contribution to the **Circular Water Stories lab**. Adopting the lab's premise of "***Water as the determining material in the landscape***," my thesis challenges the reduction of the river into a linear infrastructure that has severed it from its mythology. I argue that a true "*Water Story*" must cycle, not just in terms of flow and sediment, but also memory and meaning, reintegrating the lost narrative of the Underworld back into the modern functioning of the river. This approach redefines "circularity" beyond ecological metrics, proposing a "*Blue Infrastructure*" that functions as a vessel for collective memory.

This resonates deeply with my broader academic interest in the theoretical dimensions of the profession, specifically regarding the "***memory***" of landscape as articulated by Schama and the phenomenological concept of *Genius Loci*. I have always been fascinated by the capacity of a landscape to hold meaning beyond its physical form and how and why some places can function as a repositories of human culture and emotion. However, I often observe that modern practice tends to flatten this depth, prioritising quantifiable problem-solving over the intangible qualities that give a place its spirit. This thesis is an opportunity for me to explore that theoretical gap, to investigate how we can move beyond the preservation of "scenery" and ecological restoration, to the preservation of "meaning".

Being from Greece and having studied at the National Technical University of Athens, I have formed a personal connection with the Greek landscape, where I witness a growing estrangement between the "lived" reality of the locals and the "idealised" antiquity "served" to visitors. I am driven by the conviction that we do not have to choose between a safe, modern environment and a sacred one. Instead, I seek to demonstrate that the pragmatic demands of the present can be reconciled with the profound narratives of history, allowing the landscape to evolve into a functional whole without losing its soul.

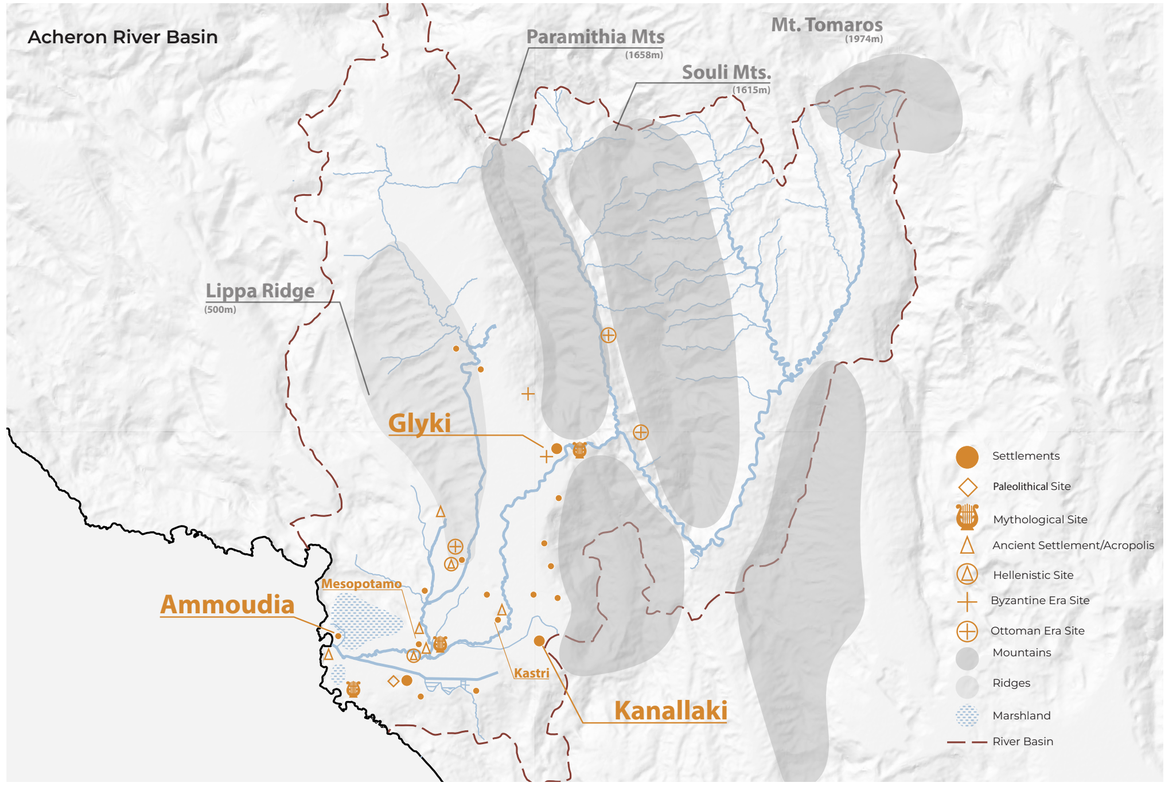


Figure 21: The Mythological Narrative Acheron. A literal "current of Memory".
Orpheus and Eurydice. From Orpheus and Eurydice, by C. Goos, 1830, Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen.

Near Cichyrus is a lake called Acherusia, and a river called Acheron. There is also Cocytus, a most unlovelystream. I believe it was because Homer had seen these places that he made bold to describe in his poems the regions of Hades, and gave to the rivers there the names of those in Thesprotia.

Pausanias 1.17.5, Trans. W. H. S. Jones



Figure 22: The Acheron River carving its path through the Fanari Plain. As seen from the road to Souli.



Figure 23: The Acheron River cutting its path through the Paramithia Mts.



Figure 24: The Straits of Acheron, the entrance to the underworld, the place where the river acts as a threshold between the living and the dead.

The course of the River Acheron violently cuts through the karstic limestone formations of the **Souli** and **Paramithia** mountains, carving out a dramatic gorge known as the "***Straits of Acheron***" (Stena Acheronta). Upon exiting this confined topography near the village of **Glyki**, the river enters the low-lying Fanari Plain. Here, its hydrological dynamics shift abruptly, the torrential flow decelerates and stabilises as it traverses the agricultural grid, before ultimately discharging into the Ionian Sea near the coastal settlement of **Ammoudia**, where it forms a fragmented series of brackish marshlands (Spyrou, 2021). This profound spatial sequence, transitioning rapidly from high-altitude alpine springs down to abyssal canyons, and finally resting in a flat coastal wetland, establishes the Acheron as the undisputed hydro-morphological spine of the wider Thesprotian landscape.

Today, however, this dramatic geomorphology and its profound mythological weight render the Acheron as the stage of intense spatial conflicts. During the spring and summer months, the river's natural beauty acts as a magnet for intense, seasonal tourism. Conversely, during the winter, the sheer hydrological force of the river, exacerbated by its rigid modern confinement, transforms the Acheron into a volatile threat, triggering severe, varying-intensity flash floods across the agricultural plain. This continuous oscillation between heavy seasonal tourist consumption and violent winter flooding perfectly encapsulates the extreme environmental and socio-economic vulnerability of the region.

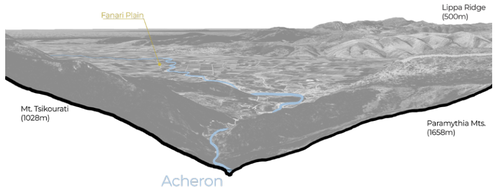


Figure 25: Where Acheron's gorge meets the Fanari Plain at the village of Glyki.

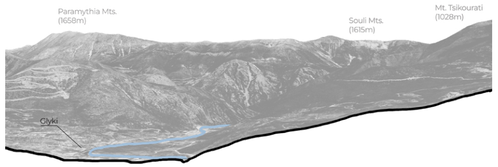
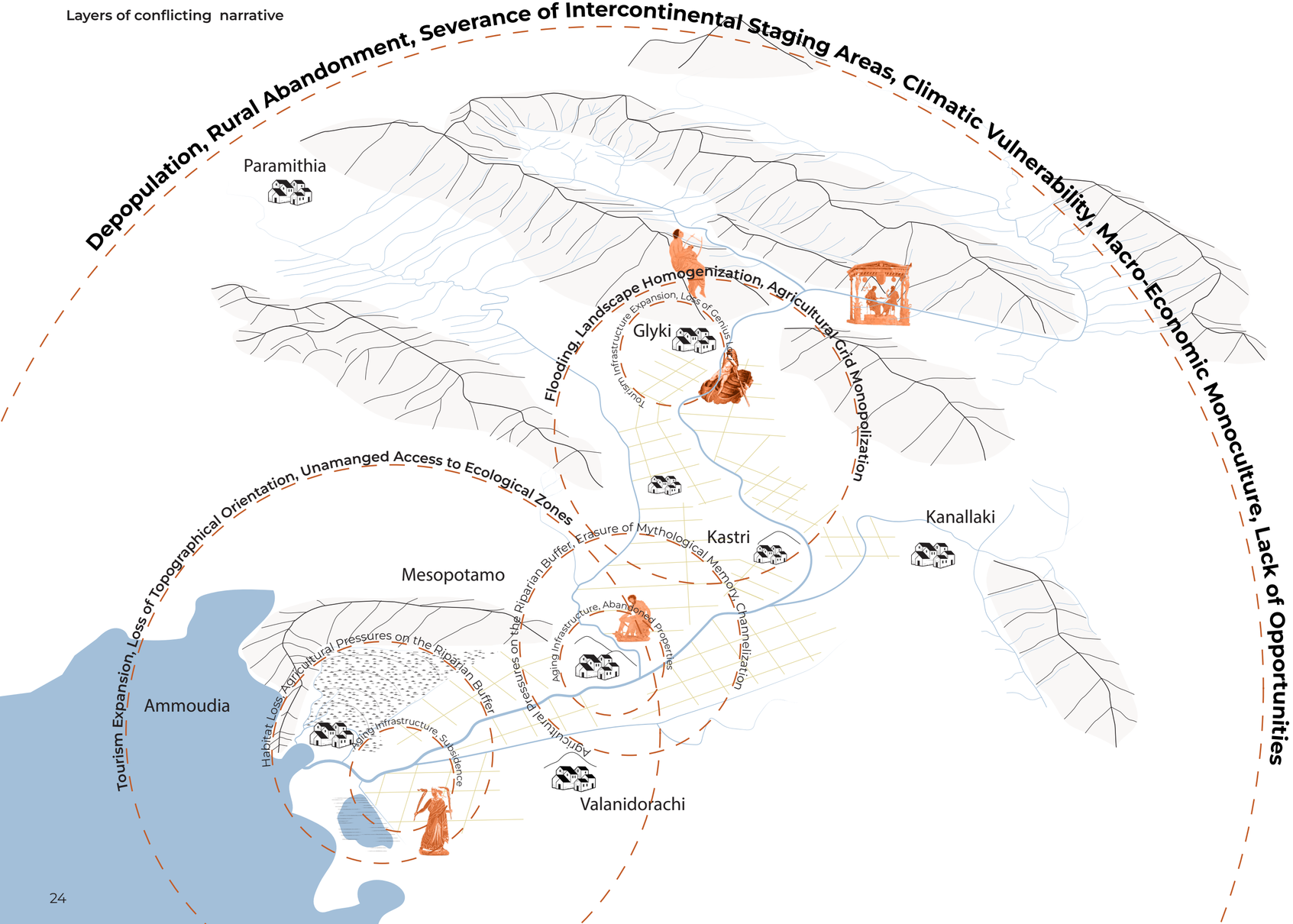


Figure 26: The entrance to the Underworld, the convergence of Acheron's Limestone Gorge and the alluvial Fanari plain

Layers of conflicting narrative



Problem Statement

The **Acheron River** constitutes a defining example of what Simon Schama terms a "***landscape of memory***," a territory where the physical geography historically functioned not merely as a scenic setting, but as the active stage for the mythical descent into the Underworld (Schama, 1995). In antiquity, this "*sacred geography*" was not an abstract concept but a felt reality, where the specific atmospheric conditions, the darkened gorges, the subterranean springs, and the heavy, suspended silence of the valley, served as a sensory threshold that physically articulated the boundary between the living and the dead (St. Fleur, 2020). The landscape did not merely represent the myth, it performed it.

However, a critical rupture has occurred. Under the pressure of distinct geomorphological shifts (Besonen et al., 2003) and modern anthropogenic development, the physical cues that once anchored this narrative have been destabilised, rendering the ancient spatial language of the site increasingly silent. The river is steadily being reduced to a scenic backdrop for touristic activities or a utilitarian resource for irrigation. At its spectacular Straits near Glyki, hotels and parking lots have already expanded directly onto its banks, in the Fanari Plain, the once dark and mystical "Acherousian Lake" was drained in the 1960s to increase arable land while the river is being constrained into a narrow corridor. Current management strategies, driven by an ethic of "***mere instrumentality***," prioritise technical efficiency and hydraulic control, effectively treating the river as a system to be regulated rather than a landscape to be experienced (Spyrou, 2021). Consequently, visitors and the local community have become estranged from the site's mythological depth, leaving the landscape functioning ecologically while slowly becoming culturally mute.

This problem exposes a critical limitation in how we approach heritage landscapes that have lost their "natural" signifiers. As Laurie Olin argues, we cannot simply rely on the inherent biological value of nature to carry a cultural narrative that is no longer visible, instead, we must cultivate "***synthetic meaning***," a meaning that is consciously constructed through **artifice**, **figure**, and **design** (Olin, 1988). Therefore, the central inquiry of this thesis is to determine

How the specific Mythological Narratives of the Acheron can be reconciled with the site's current needs through a landscape intervention that generates "Synthetic Meaning," thereby restoring the lost Genius Loci.

Sub-Questions

1. **The Narrative Analysis:** What specific atmospheric and spatial qualities defined the Acheron as the "Gateway to Hades" in ancient textual accounts, and how can these be translated into spatial design parameters?

2. **Modern Pressures:** How has the purely utilitarian management of the Acheron, combined with the pressures of seasonal tourism, exacerbated the environmental volatility of the site and actively severed the ecological and cultural continuity between its ***"Three Natures"***?

3. **The Spatial Friction:** Where are the critical points of intersection, the "Palimpsest", where the modern hydraulic and development reality suppresses the site's mythological memory?

4. **The Methodological Translation:** In what ways can functional landscape interventions be reinterpreted as “expressive figures” that generate ***"Synthetic Meaning”***?

5. **The Multiscalar Choreography:** How can a narrative route be choreographed to physically reconcile the ***"Three Natures"*** of the Acheron valley, guiding the visitor through a 'ritual of descent' while simultaneously fostering year-round intermingling between tourists and local residents?



Figure 27: Flooded olive grove near Mesopotamo. River dynamics in conflict with modern, non adaptive, agriculture.

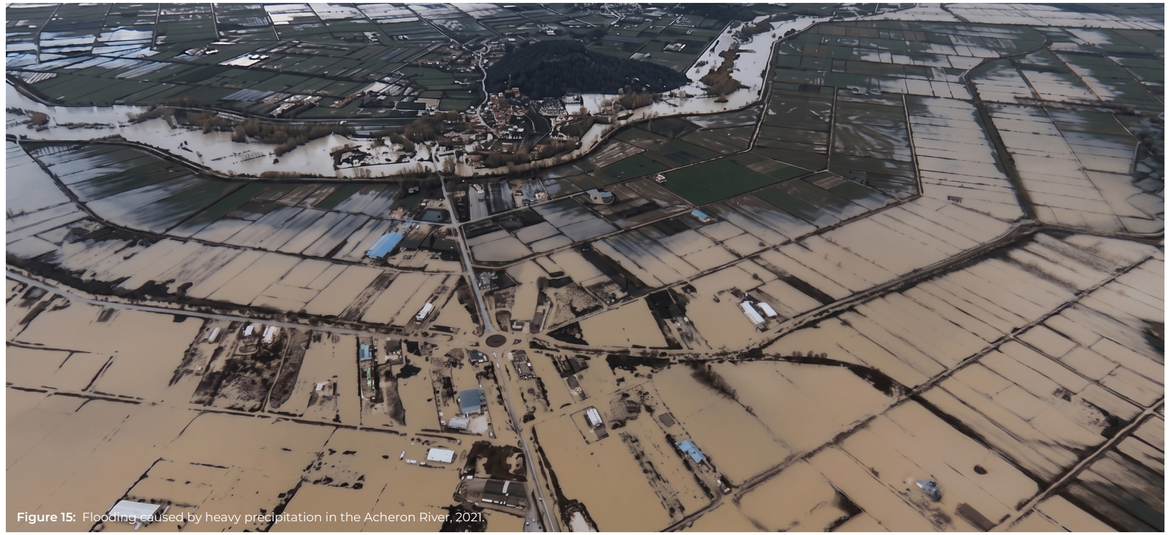


Figure 15: Flooding caused by heavy precipitation in the Acheron River, 2021.

The Crisis of Meaning



Figure 29: The mystical veil of the Acheron River and its unique Genius Loci. The Gateway to the Realm of Hades.

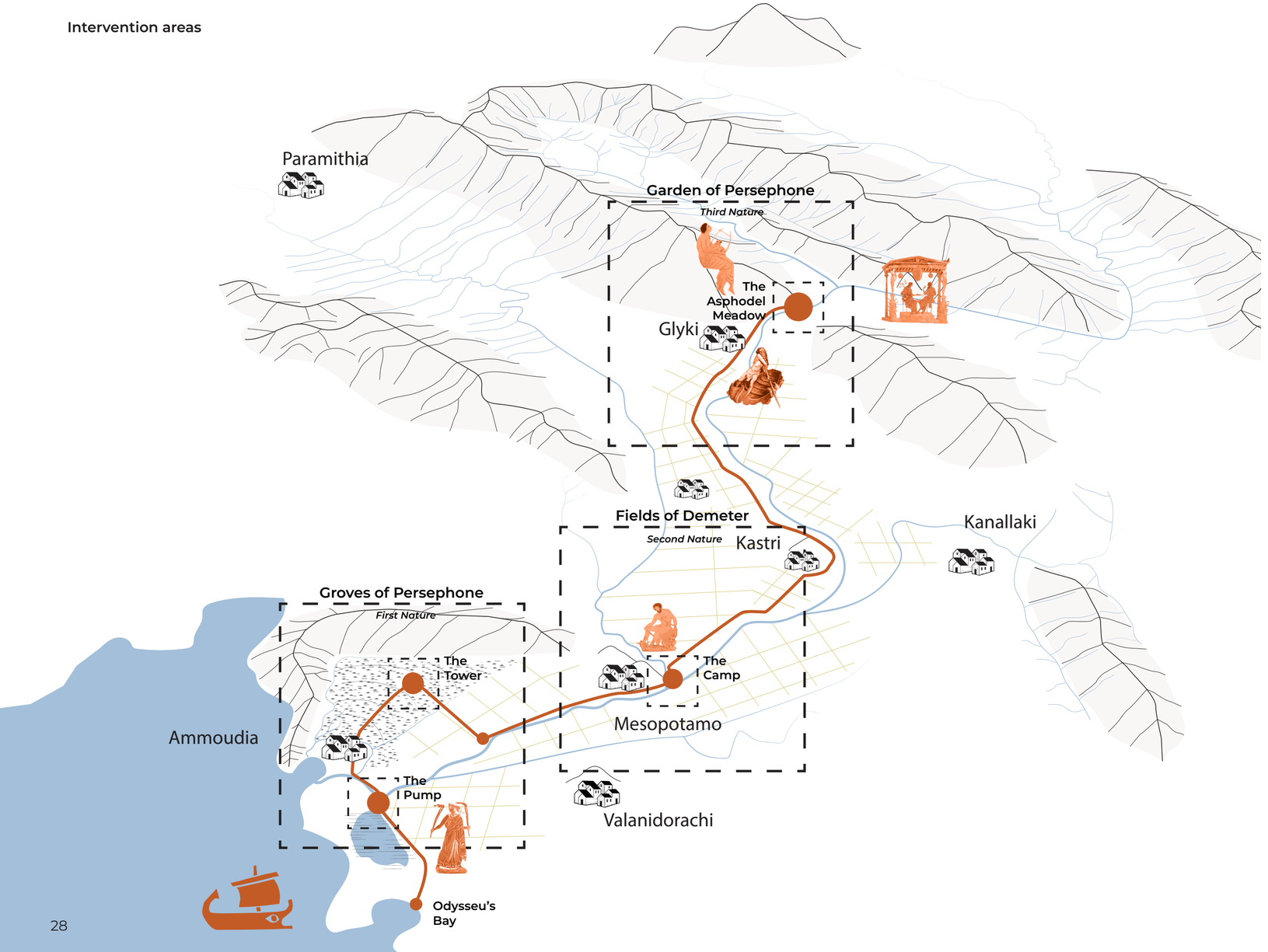
The relevance of this project extends beyond the immediate site, addressing a critical theoretical intersection within the discipline of landscape architecture, the widening gap between "***ecological restoration***" and "***cultural meaning***" (Meyer, 2008). The urgent demand for environmental resilience often compels the discipline to prioritise the quantifiable aspects of the landscape, flood defence, water retention, and biodiversity, at the expense of its narrative depth. While vital, this exclusive reliance on metrics, flood capacities, biodiversity indices, and water levels—risks overshadowing the qualitative dimensions that give a place its identity (Corner, 1997).

This creates a disciplinary crisis where "protected" landscapes are often treated merely as hydraulic forces to be optimised rather than complex repositories of memory. When planning ignores the *Genius Loci* in favour of purely technical solutions, the "*current of memory*" that Schama speaks of is rendered dormant, buried beneath the infrastructure of safety (Schama, 1995; Norberg-Schulz, 1980). Therefore, this thesis proposes that the "***Crisis of Meaning***" is not a side effect of modernisation, but a central challenge of contemporary practice. True resilience is not found solely in ecological and infrastructural metrics, but in reestablishing a balance where the landscape’s capacity for cultural orientation is treated with the same rigour as its hydraulic efficiency. (Olin, 1988).



Figure 30: The Acheron River (left) and the fields, a dormant current of memory, acting as a backdrop of technical and hydrological solutions

Intervention areas



Design Assigment

This thesis proposes a multi-day hiking route along the Acheron River in Epirus that aims to reconcile the River's ancient Genius Loci with its contemporary ecological and agricultural challenges. The project operates on three scales, beginning with a broad territorial vision for the Fanari Plain that establishes a hydrological framework and a narrative sequence for the journey, a "meso scale where the path is weaved onto the specific characteristics of the terrain, and finally a "human" scale where the detailing and human perception come into the equation.

The route originates at the coast in Odysseus's Bay, the mythological site where the hero anchored his ship to begin his descent to the **Underworld** (Homer; Tartaron, 2004). From there the trail guides the visitor inland through a spatial transition of the "***Three Natures of Acheron***". Starting through the wetlands near Ammoudia, the **First Nature**, the "*Groves of Persephone*" , before moving into the **Second Nature**, characterised by the vast, cultivated agricultural grid of the "*Fields of Demeter*" spanning Mesopotamo and Kastri. The sequence culminates in the **Third Nature**, featuring the deliberate and designed interventions of the "*Garden of Persephone*" at the Glyki springs. Within this *mythological route*, the thesis develops detailed landscape architectonic designs for four specific areas of interest/conflict.

The choice of the sequence of the "Three Natures" is based on Olin's (1988) concept of ***"synthetic meaning and natural".*** The wetlands act as the first, untamed Nature, where design intervention is kept at a minimum, then come the agricultural fields that represent the Second Nature, with the route finally culminating at the Straits, the perceived entrance to the realm of Hades. It is a *topos* filled with synthetic meaning, culturally imposed by human perception, thus fitting for the garden, a cultural translation of the untamed landscape. The ultimate goal is to transform pragmatic necessities into meaningful "figures" that create a "synthetic experience" (Olin, 1988). By using the mythological narrative to drive the design, this project ensures that ecological repair and socio-economic needs are not treated as separate technical requirements but are fulfilled through the spatial ritual of the descent.

Objectives

The primary objective of this research is to restore the severed connection between the physical landscape of the Acheron and its mythological identity. Concretely, the project aims to establish a **spatial continuity** along the river, designing a **narrative route** that allows the visitor to physically experience the atmosphere of the "*descent*", highlighting its palimpsest, its different landscapes and its development.

Simultaneously, the design seeks to respond to the wider **socio-economic** and **environmental** pressures of the Fanari Plain, such as rural abandonment and the detrimental impacts of seasonal, mono-functional tourism. Rather than creating an isolated tourist corridor, a core objective of this route is to foster a genuine, everyday intermingling between the visitors and the local population. By promoting an alternative, nature-based tourism centred around long-distance, multi-day hiking, the project aims to attract visitors throughout the entire year, thereby breathing continuous "life" into the area. This year-round presence aims to create a symbiotic relationship where the hikers will rely on the local communities for their accommodation, sustenance, and guidance, while in return, they will provide vital, uninterrupted economic opportunities that will help sustain and revitalise the existing productive and social fabric of the valley, aligning with the bottom-up principles of critical regionalism (Lefaivre & Tzonis, 2003).

Academically, the research focuses on the application of "***Synthetic Meaning***" as a design tool. Instead of treating the utilitarian landscape and cultural heritage as separate entities, the thesis investigates how they can be reconciled within the specific context of the Acheron. The goal is to demonstrate that contemporary interventions, if designed with narrative intent, can serve as the medium to reveal the site's lost Genius Loci.

Part II: *"Methodos"*

Methodology

The methodological framework employed in conducting this work comprises four main analytical and design components that inform each other and are conducted in a non-linear manner: The **Bibliotheca** (Literature Review), "***Sentimental Topography***" (Precedent Study), **Mapping the Acheron** (Site Analysis) and "**Transcribing the Myth**" (Design Experimentation).

Given the complex "nature" of the Acheron, which functions simultaneously as a volatile "Hydraulic and Cultivation landscape" and a profound "*Mythological Topos*", a linear analytical method would fail to capture the friction between these layers, thus my research constantly moves between the quantitative realities of the river (flood risks, irrigation grids, ecological/environmental aspects) and its qualitative dimensions (mythological narrative, cultural memory, atmosphere).

The Bibliotheca

The bibliographic research was conducted as a "mining" operation, distinguishing between **theoretical frameworks**, **technical data**, and **narrative scripts**. This phase was essential to establish the philosophical, physical and mythological boundaries of the project.

"World of Ideas"

The theoretical literature review extensively explored both English and Greek texts to establish the conceptual dimensions of landscape architecture. This theoretical inquiry serves to validate the project's core hypothesis, that the Acheron is a **cultural** construct as much as a **physical** one, by orbiting around three central topics:

· **Memory & Meaning**: The research engaged with Simon Schama to define the landscape as a repository of cultural memory, and Laurie Olin to establish "Synthetic Meaning" as the primary design objective.

· **Phenomenology**: Christian Norberg-Schulz's concept of Genius Loci was utilised to define the qualitative goals of the intervention: Orientation and Identification.

· **Perception**: To understand how the Greek landscape is read, Konstantinos Moraitis' theory of "*Schematisation*" was analysed, providing the specific geometric tools (Gestalt figures) used to organise the design proposal.

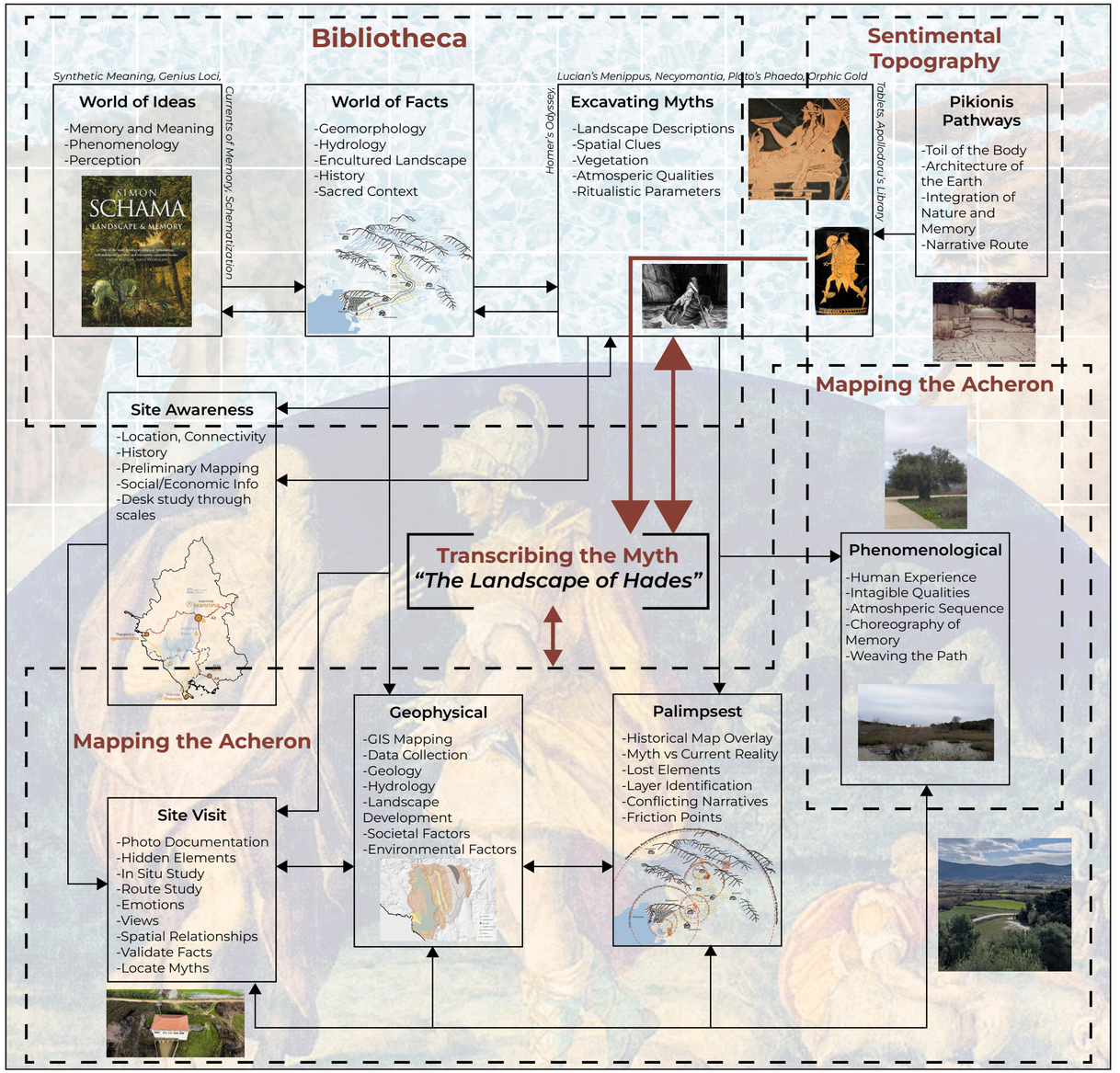


Figure 31: Methodology Diagram. The research constantly moves between the quantitative realities of the river (flood risks, irrigation grids, ecological/environmental aspects) and its qualitative dimensions (mythological narrative, cultural memory, atmosphere).

"World of Facts"

Simultaneously, a rigorous investigation into **scientific** and **historical** data was undertaken to understand the complex physical reality of the site. This part of the research moved beyond abstract theory to examine the concrete archaeological, hydrological, and historical evidence that defines the Acheron, organising the site-specific information into three key layers.

·

· **Geomorphological & Hydrological Evolution**: The research analysed the physical "container" of the landscape, utilising Spyrou (2021) and Besonen et al. (2003) to document the landscape's development. Robert Yarham's (2010) framework for "*reading the landscape*" was applied to classify these physical features, tracing the transition from the steep, flash-flood prone gorges to the artificial drainage grid of the Fanari Plain.

· **The Enculturated Landscape**: The investigation drew on Thomas Tartaron (2004) to understand the Acheron as an inhabited territory from the Bronze Age, validating the site as a long-standing centre of human activity.

· **Historical & Sacred Context**: Finally, the specific history of the site's usage was examined through St. Fleur (2020). This inquiry focused on the archaeological reality of the Nekromanteion (Oracle of the Dead) and the tangible role the river played in antiquity.

Excavating The Myth

This phase represents the core innovation of the thesis: a method of "***Narrative Excavation***" where ancient texts were treated as primary site data, as a form of "*ancient site analysis*", rather than myths. By analysing the specific descriptions of the **Underworld** found in classical literature, a series of **landscape**, **spatial**, **atmospheric**, and **ritualistic** parameters were extracted that would be translated into landscape, architectonic forms and overall compositions. These texts include:

· **Homer's Odyssey**. The famous journey of Odysseus in his attempt to return to Ithaca. Specifically books 10 and 11, where Odysseus' descent to the "*underworld*" is narrated.

· **Lucian's of Mourning**. A satirical essay about popular myths surrounding death in the ancient world. Although satirical, the essay is based on actual rituals and mythological traditions from which data could be extracted.

· **Plato's Phaedo**. A dialogue in which Socrates discusses the immortality of the soul and the nature of afterlife in the hours leading up to his death.

· **Orphic Gold Tablets** (The "Totenpässe"). Tablets or metal leaves found in burials of, primarily, those presumed to be initiates of the "Orphic" cult. The inscriptions instruct the initiate on how to navigate the afterlife, including directions for avoiding hazards in the landscape of the dead.

"Sentimental Topography"

To navigate the intersection between the physical terrain and its mythical past, the research adopts the methodological framework of Dimitris Pikionis, specifically his concept of A ***Sentimental Topography***. Pikionis' approach to the landscaping of the Acropolis and Philopappos Hill serves as the primary precedent for how to design a "***Narrative Route***" in a landscape burdened with history.

· **The Toil of the Body**: Pikionis argued that landscape is not revealed through passive observation, but through the "toil of the body" and contact with the "uneven earth" (Pikionis, 1935). This validates the thesis' approach to walking not as transport, but as a spiritual act, structuring the intervention as a continuous physical "Descent."

· **The Architecture of the Earth**: Pikionis treated the path as a narrative device, using curated paving textures and spolia to transform the ground into a "text" read by the feet (Pikionis, 1935).

· **Integration of Nature and Memory**: Finally, Pikionis demonstrates how to reconcile "idealised" antiquity with rugged nature. His paths weave through existing rock and vegetation, embodying an animistic respect for the site.

These design principles are best showcased in his landscaping of the **Acropolis and Philopappos Hill** (1954-1957). Weaving a network of pathways across the ancient topography, which included the renovation of the St. Demetrius Loumbardiarius church and the creation of a series of pavilions, Pikionis constructed a spatial narrative using reclaimed stones from neoclassical buildings, clay tiles, and gestural concrete additions. By utilising these salvaged materials, he injected the intervention with an immediate "*embodied historicity.*" The natural patina, chipped edges, and physical wear of the spolia imbued the modern construction with a palpable, lived history, allowing it to belong intuitively to the monumental site.

Furthermore, Pikionis rejected rigid, dogmatic planning in favour of the traditional "*master builde*r" methodology. Collaborating on-site with skilled Greek artisans, he utilised minimal drawings, instead encouraging the craftsmen to intuitively "find" the path within the landscape. This pluralistic, hands-on process allowed the workers to embed their own cultural spirit into the textures and paving patterns, generating a design that is deeply anchored to the site's *Genius Loci* (Architectural League of New York, 2017).

Dimitris Pikionis's approach to landscape serves as a vital bridge that reconciles the mythological significance of the Acheron with its physical reality. His methodology facilitates an interactive dialogue between the visitor and the environment through a deliberate sequence of views, pauses, and specific pathing, elements that allow for proper "orientation" and "identification" within the site. Given the profound mythological gravity of this landscape, an intervention cannot be imposed through a rigid masterplan. Instead, the design should be "*woven*" into the terrain.

Figure 32: A collage inspirted by Dimitris Pikionis's design methodology, where the "sentimental topography" of the path choreographs the visitor's movement and gaze, embedding the city's history into the ground plane through reused paving fragments and optical alignments. The landscaping of the Acropolis and Philopappos Hill in Athens by Dimitris Pikionis (1954-1957)



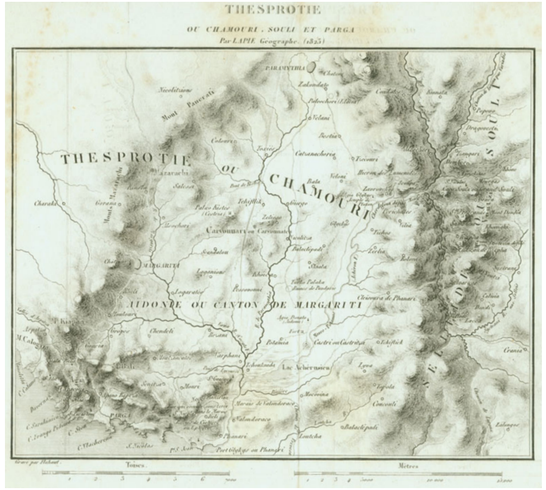


Figure 33: The Acherousian lake and swamp, a map of the Fanari Plain in 1825.

Mapping the Acheron

This component of the methodology synthesises the collected data into three distinct analytical layers. This process moves beyond simple representation, acting as a diagnostic tool to locate the project within the **physical**, **historical**, and **experiential** reality of the site.

· **Geophysical Mapping**: Utilising GIS, this layer analyses the "hard" data of the site. It consolidates infrastructure, geology, hydrology, cultivation and societal factors into a set of analytical maps.

· **The Palimpsest**: This layer investigates the temporal dimension of the landscape. By overlaying historical maps and mythological boundaries onto the modern grid, the analysis reveals lost elements and under threat, elements of the "Topos". This comparative process highlights the "Friction Points" where the ancient narrative conflicts with modern land use, identifying specific zones for intervention.

· **Phenomenological Mapping**: Focusing on human experience, this mapping visualises the intangible qualities of the route, charting the sequence of atmospheres, thus creating a "*Choreography of Memory*."

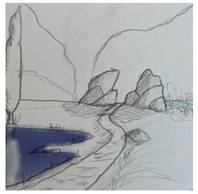


Figure 34: The literal transcription

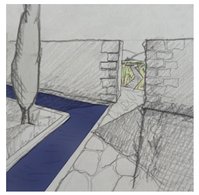


Figure 35: The "*Schematisation*"

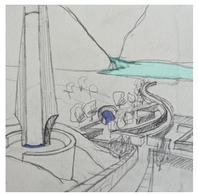


Figure 36: The *"Metaphor"*

Transcribing the Myth

Finally, the methodology incorporates a flexible component of "***Research through Design***," where I plan to test the theoretical findings against the physical reality of the landscape. To structure this inquiry, the design process will employ the concept of "*Landscape Schematisation*" (Moraitis, 2015), aiming to distil the complex descriptions of the ancient sources into fundamental spatial diagrams rather than literal illustrations.

These experiments will not be conducted solely through drawings, but through the construction of small-scale physical models. These working models will serve as an iterative loop to investigate three key intentions:

· **Spatial Transcription**: Exploring how the narrative transition from the surface to the Underworld can be modelled into specific terrain forms.

· **Material Dialectic**: Testing the concept of "Sentimental Topography" by assembling small material samples to test how they can be applied to routes, thresholds, and installations and what different experiences they provide

· **Choreography of Movement**: Utilising the ritual instructions like Homer's or those of the Orphic Gold Tablets to model how physical landscape gestures, such as a turn in the path or a sudden enclosure, can guide the visitor's body through the territory.

"Schema", Landscape Schematisation

Within the academic discourse of landscape and architectural design, the translation of complex physical environments into structured interventions requires a rigorous conceptual framework. To address this, Konstantinos Moraitis articulates the theory of Landscape Schematisation, an epistemological and methodological approach that frames landscape design as a process of structured abstraction rather than direct imitation (Moraitis, 2024).

The Rejection of Literal Representation

A foundational premise of Moraitis's theory is that architectural and design systems cannot, and should not, attempt to copy reality in its "*full complicated substance*" (Moraitis, 2024). The natural environment is exhaustively complex, thus, when landscape architects attempt to represent or replicate the exact, literal totality of the real surrounding world, they engage in a flawed and impossible objective. Moraitis argues that no meaningful intervention in the external reality can occur without a prior conceptual interpretation of that reality.

The Mechanism of Abstraction and Structure

To overcome the overwhelming complexity of the physical world, Moraitis introduces ***schematisation*** as a vital cognitive and design tool. The process of schematisation dictates that the designer must actively select the most important characteristics of the real site while deliberately "abstracting" or stripping away the less important details (Moraitis, 2024). This is not a reduction of the landscape's value, but rather the extraction of its underlying spatial logic. By distilling the environment through this analytical lens, the designer attains a "*schematic*" view of the landscape. This conceptual procedure produces a "*structural formation*", a fundamental, perceptual organisation of space that serves as the bedrock for the design intervention (Moraitis, 2024).

Creating a Syntactic Design Language

By relying on these abstracted, formational elements, the landscape architect moves beyond mere gardening or scenic decoration. **Schematisation** allows the designer to create a "*composing syntactic system*," functioning essentially as a spatial "*language*" (Moraitis, 2024). This theoretical stance is particularly significant because it unifies different scales of design. A line, a grid, a threshold, or a void can be extracted from the natural topography and redeployed as a structured gesture.

Ultimately, Moraitis's Landscape Schematisation posits that the environment must be conceptually abstracted before it can be physically altered. For my thesis, this framework provides a critical mechanism needed to intervene, without resorting to literal or picturesque replication. By translating the site's mythological narrative and complex topography into fundamental syntax, I will attempt to mediate the valley's modern hydraulic infrastructure with its deep chthonic memory. Through this deliberate abstraction, the physical landscape is transformed into a structured vessel capable of balancing contemporary ecological demands with ancient cultural resonance (Moraitis, 2024).



Figure 37: Schematisation composing the plantation elements as principal elements of the landscape.

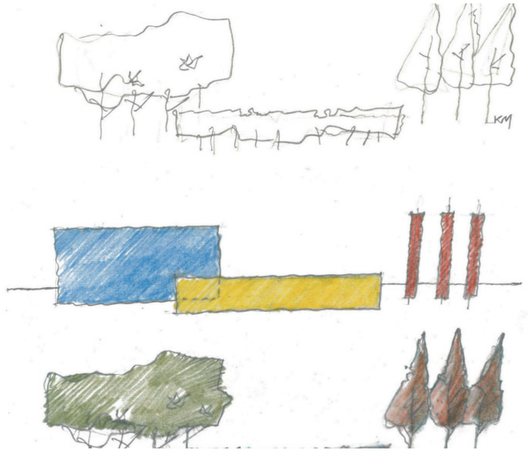


Figure 38: Abstract schemes of formal representational elements that may serve as general compositional references and may also be applied in landscape and garden design.

Excavating the Narrative

But once your vessel has cut across the Ocean River
you will raise a desolate coast and Persephone's Grove,
her tall black poplars, willows whose fruit dies young.
Beach your vessel hard by the Ocean's churning shore
and make your own way down to the moldering House of Death.

Homer, Odyssey, 10.508–515, trans. Tr. Fagles

"And there into Acheron, the Flood of Grief, two rivers flow, the torrent River of Fire, the wailing River of Tears that branches off from Styx, the Stream of Hate, and a stark crag looms where the two rivers thunder down and meet. Once there, go forward, hero. Do as I say now. Dig a trench of about a forearm's depth and length and around it pour libations out to all the dead..."

Homer, Odyssey, 10.508–515, trans. Tr. Fagles

"You will find to the left of the House of Hades a spring,
the spring of Lethe, and standing by it a white cypress.
Do not even approach this spring.
But further on, through a treacherous path,
you will find the Lake of Memory,
where cool water flows forth, and there are guardians
before it."

Orphic Gold Tablets, Edmonds, 2011

When they have crossed the lake, they are welcomed to the interior by a great meadow overgrown with asphodel, and a spring that is inimical to memory, in fact, they call it "Oblivion" for that reason.

Lucian, of Mourning 5. Trans. Fowler & Fowler

Hermes the Healer led them on, and down the dank moldering paths and past the Ocean's streams they went and past the White Rock and the Sun's Western Gates and past the Land of Dreams, and they soon reached the fields of asphodel where the dead, the burnt-out wraiths of mortals, make their home.

Homer, Odyssey, 24.11–14, trans. R. Fagles

The landscape of the Acheron River and the Fanari Plain has long served as the stage for some of the most significant narratives in classical Greek literature. While I entered this thesis familiar with the river's broader mythological weight, rigorous research revealed an extensive range of ancient texts explicitly detailing this specific geography. I was immediately drawn to the startling precision of these accounts, across the works of ***Homer, Plato, Apollodorus, Lucian, and Pausanias,*** the Acheron is not treated as an abstract, mythical realm, but instead, these texts proved to be an invaluable methodological tool, functioning essentially as an **ancient site analysis**. They meticulously record the topography, the shifting atmospheric conditions, and the specific riparian vegetation, tying the physical existence of these elements directly to the actions of heroes and gods.

These narratives operated as a phenomenological compass, allowing me to locate and overlay the ancient mythical dimension onto the modern, fractured terrain. The texts do not merely describe the scenery, they detail the specific **spatial rituals** performed, outline precise **navigational instructions**, and record the profound **emotional responses** of the living as they approached the boundary of the dead. By excavating these accounts, I gained a direct glimpse into how the ancients bodily experienced, navigated, and stood in awe of this sacred geography. This process allowed me to read the landscape's true *Genius Loci* not just through its current physical form, but through the deep ***"currents of memory"*** (Schama, 1995) embedded in its soil.

This **"narrative excavation"** inherently functioned as a **"Design through Research"** process, by analysing these classical accounts, rituals, and instructions my imagination was filled with vivid spatial configurations, atmospheric views, optical connections and emotional thresholds, however, to translate these constructs of the imagination back onto the contemporary landscape, it was imperative to avoid the trap of literal imitation. To achieve this, the concept of ***Landscape Schematisation*** (Moraitis, 2024) was deployed as the primary translational mechanism, the detailed descriptions of the *Underworld* were deliberately abstracted to extract their core spatial principles and structural syntax, and by distilling the complex mythology, topography, emotions, atmosphere and landscape into these fundamental configurations, I was able to synthesise a new ***"schematic view"*** of the terrain.

This schematic translation is not applied as a uniform blanket across the valley, rather, it is strategically deployed through the theoretical framework of the ***"Three Natures"*** (Hunt, 2000). By classifying the Acheron into the wild **marshlands** (First Nature), the utilitarian **agricultural grid** (Second Nature), and the highly enculturated thresholds of **the gorge** (Third Nature), the excavated myths actively dictate the intensity and character of the landscape architectonic intervention. The abstracted spatial principles are woven into these distinct realms, ensuring that the design is recognised by the visitor not as a replication of the past or mere nature, but as a deliberately designed, contemporary choreography. This generates a genuine ***"synthetic meaning"*** (Olin, 1988), where the Katavasis functions as a continuous spatial sequence that physically mediates the transition from the wild to the cultivated, rendering the myth physically traceable once again.

Finding the Language

While diving deep into the atmospheric and mythological realm of the Acheron River, the images that came to my imagination were dictated by the narratives themselves, however, since starting my first attempts on designing the Katavasis and the subsequent landscape architectonic interventions, I was deeply concerned with how I would communicate such a project. To present a design that interacts with abstract concepts like the *Genius Loci* and **chthonic mythology** required a graphical language that could highlight its unique aspects, keeping the ancient myths at the absolute forefront of the visual representation.

Along with the spatial experimentation conducted to transcribe the myths into physical design, a parallel experimentation was taking place to find the appropriate visual medium to represent the landscape, the ecology, and the intangible qualities of the place in a coherent manner. While I was experimenting with unique patterns, colour palettes and collages, I spent hours reading through the myths and studying the ancient Greek pottery that originally depicted these gods and deities, there, I realised I could draw direct inspiration from the aesthetic of the **black-figure** and **red-figure** (crimson) pottery styles. These ancient techniques were revolutionary in their time, the black-figure style relied on painting **stark silhouettes** and incising sharp details to reveal the clay beneath, while the later red-figure technique reversed this, painting the background black and leaving the figures in the natural crimson terracotta, allowing for incredibly fluid, dynamic lines and emotional expression (Boardman, 2001). By adopting this specific aesthetic, I could graphically connect the modern design directly to the myth, referencing these pieces of ancient art to flatten the perspective and focus entirely on the narrative of the figures and the landscape.

I then started working and visualising this idea into the larger scale drawings I was creating, and suddenly everything came together, it was quite the rigorous task, but illustrating the drawings in this style gave the project a unique character that referred back to the myths while seamlessly blending the new elements into the narrative. Key to presenting and communicating my project proved to be the **Serial Vision** sequences and the eye-level collages, these drive the narration and bring the reader directly into the landscape, forcing them to experience its myths, its natural elements and its intangible qualities. For the larger scale maps, a combination of bird's-eye drawings and flat projections is used, blending out-of-scale two and three-dimensional elements to create a result that not only maps the physical terrain but also the atmosphere and the palimpsest, providing the reader with simultaneous information about both the pragmatic qualities of the design and the sacredness of the landscape.

Finally, even the detailed landscape architectonic drawings followed this style, where a combination of the colour palette, the raw terracotta texture and the graphical elements synthesise a **coherent design communication language**. In a highly oxymoronic twist, in my personal experience what ultimately helped bridge the gap between ancient myth, landscape design and graphical communication was **Artificial Intelligence**. Specifically, Gemini Pro and its image generation tool (Nanobanana) were deployed to create the smaller graphical decoration and design elements (icons) in the highly specific pottery style required for my project, instead of downloading generic icons from the internet, this method was used after a lot of experimentation to generate **project-specific**, unique graphical elements that would otherwise be impossible for me to manually create or find, by carefully guiding the AI to mimic the ancient black and crimson figure techniques I was able to produce custom icons that naturally matched the aesthetic of the drawings, blending a very modern digital tool directly into the ancient narrative of the landscape.

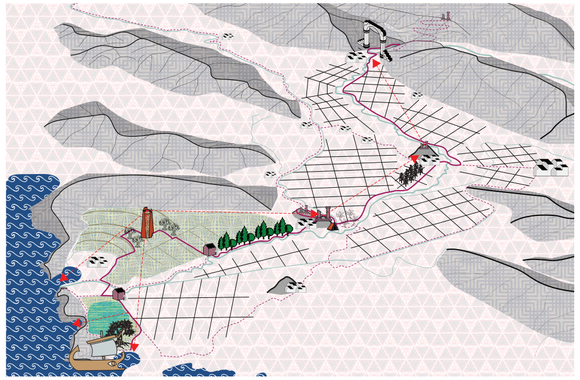


Figure 39: One of the first experimentations and iteration of the Katavasis of the Acheron Map.



Figure 40: Black-figured pottery amphora. Achilles slaying Penthesilea.

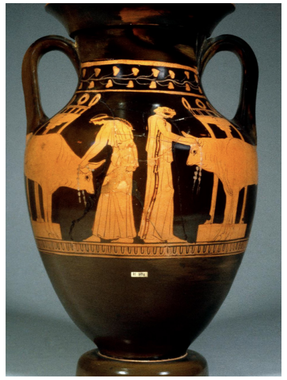


Figure 41: Red-figure pottery amphora.

"*Rein*" (to flow), the flow of River and Myth

The landscape of the Acheron River must be read not only as a neutral ecological backdrop or a utilitarian grid, but also as a dense cultural/mythological **palimpsest** and a continuous "***current of memory***" (Corboz, 1983; Schama, 1995). Recognising the site's profound *Genius Loci* implies that successful architectural intervention cannot rely solely on biologically pure restoration, rather, it must deliberately generate "synthetic meaning" to orient human existence within a culturally expressive framework (Norberg-Schulz, 1980; Olin, 1988).

However, acknowledging this mythological and historical weight is only the theoretical premise, it necessitates a methodology to translate intangible heritage into concrete spatial reality. By employing "***narrative excavation***," ancient lore ceases to be mere myths and instead functions as primary site data. This narrative layer will be physically grounded through the lens of "***sentimental topography***," where the deliberate curation of paving, thresholds, and the "*toil of the body*" across the earth transforms mere pedestrian movement into a choreographed spatial ritual (Pikionis, 1935; Tartaron, 2004).

Ultimately, the confluence of **theory** (*Mneme*) and **process** (*Methodos*) is realised through ***landscape schematisation*** (Moraitis, 2015). By distilling the Acheron's complex, sacred geography into essential spatial figures and material dialectics, the methodology ensures that modern interventions actively mediate the fractured relationship between the "***Three Natures***" (Hunt, 2000). Through this approach, I will attempt to bridge the gap between hydraulic pragmatism and chthonic myth, synthesising a landscape that functions both ecologically and "*mythically*".



Figure 42: Acheron, a continious flow of Mythological, Agricultural, Social and Environmental Narratives. Acheron south of Glyki.

Figure 43: The fall of the Titans. Cornelis Van Harleem (1588–1590). Statens Museum, Copenhagen, Denmark

Part III: *"Anagnosis"*









An "*Encaltured Landscape*"

According to ancient Greek cosmogony, the **Acheron** was the son of the primordial deities Helios (Sun) and Gaia (Earth). During the Titanomachy, the cosmic war between the Olympian gods and the Titans, Acheron provided water to the thirsting Titans. Upon his victory, an enraged Zeus punished Acheron by driving him beneath the earth, condemning him to eternally carry the burden of deceased souls, he also poisoned his waters, turning them bitter, stagnant, and dark, thus, the river was also known as ***"Mavropotamos"*** (Black River) (Spyrou, 2021).

Through this mythological lens, the Acheron transcended its physical boundaries to become a profoundly "*enculturated landscape*" (Tartaron, 2004). The localised geography of Thesprotia was elevated into a site of Pan-Hellenic significance, universally identified as the literal gateway to the Realm of Hades. This identification was a direct response to the "*gloomy and imposing*" character of the landscape itself (St. Fleur, 2020). Etymologically, the river derives its name from the words **achos** (woe or sorrow) and **rheo** (to flow). To navigate the "River of Woe" was an awe-inspiring physical experience, where deep gorges and dark, marshy waters naturally evoked the existential transition from life to death. The river historically pooled into the vast, misty **Acherousian Lake**, a stagnant wetland that served as the ultimate physical and metaphysical threshold. (Besonen et al., 2003).

This threshold was the domain of **Charon**, the chthonic ferryman. According to the mythos, **Hermes** "*Psychopompos*" (the soul-bearer) guided the deceased down the steep, treacherous paths of the gorge to the shores of the Acherousian Lake. From there, the souls who possessed the burial obol were ferried by Charon across the misty marshlands to stand judgement before **Hades** and **Persephone**. Thus, the geography of the Acheron dictated the spatial ritual of death itself.

Yet, this forbidding geography also served as the stage for the "***Katavasis"*** (Descent) of great heroes of antiquity. It was precisely here, at the confluence of the Underworld rivers, that **Homer** placed **Odysseus** in the Nekyia to seek prophecies from the blind seer Tiresias (Homer, Odyssey, Book 11). It was through these dark subterranean networks that **Orpheus** ventured to reclaim his beloved Eurydice, and where **Heracles** descended to drag the hound Cerberus to the surface (Apollodorus, The Library).

Eventually, these mythical descents were "adapted" for ordinary

Figure 44 The Vestibule of Hell and the Souls Mustering to Cross the Acheron The Vestibule of Hell and the Souls Mustering to Cross the Acheron. By W. Blake, 1824–1827, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.
Figure 45: Charon at the Gorge of Acheron, the dramatic Landscape of memory.
Charon, the Ferryman of Hell Note. Plate 9 from The Divine Comedy: Inferno, by G. Doré, 1861.
Figure 46: The dark Gorge of Acheron barely sees any light due to the imposing limestone cliffs, a place where the landscape is not just the stage of the myth but performs it.
Figure 47: Acheron River cutting through the Paramithia mountains, the River of woe where water emerges from the "Underworld".

mortals through the establishment of the **Nekromanteion of Ephyra** (The Oracle of the Dead). Positioned strategically on a rocky hill overlooking the confluence of the **Acheron** with the **Kokytos** (The River of Wailing), the Nekromanteion became one of the most important pilgrimage sites of the ancient Greek world, rivalling Delphi and Dodona (St. Fleur, 2020). Here, the living underwent days of sensory deprivation, ritual cleansing, and spatial disorientation within labyrinthine corridors to communicate with their ancestors (Aggeli, 2015; Gravani & Katsikoudis, 2019). Consequently, the Acheron functioned as a supreme "*sacred geography*," a landscape where myth, hydrological reality, and the eternal memory of the dead were inextricably intertwined into the very soil.

The Ancient Greek *"Underworld"*

Beyond this localised geography, the ancient Greeks viewed death not as an absolute end, but as a transition into a "*transcendent existence*" and a literal "*afterlife*" located in a distinct physical realm (Wheatcroft, 2014). The spiritual journey into this subterranean world was a highly structured process. According to Homeric tradition, the god Hermes served as the ***Psychopompos*** (soul bearer), actively guiding newly deceased souls past the streams of Oceanus to the river **Acheron** so they would not wander the earth as lost shades. There, the ferryman **Charon** demanded a toll for passage, a mythological mandate that directly dictated the historical burial practice of placing coins in the mouths of the dead (Wheatcroft, 2014).

Once the deceased successfully crossed the rivers and bypassed the formidable guard dog **Cerberus**, they faced judgement by figures like *Minos* and *Rhadamanthys*, who assigned them to their eternal destination. Rather than a simple binary where the underworld served only as a "hell" for the wicked, the Greek realm of the dead was the universal destination for all mortals and was divided into three distinct regions based on merit. The vast majority of souls, who had lived unremarkable lives, were relegated to the **Asphodel Meadow**, a joyless and dreary expanse where spirits flitted about without thought or feeling. Those who committed hubristic offences against the gods were condemned to **Tartarus**, a deep pit of perpetual punishment located far beneath Hades, while virtuous heroes were rewarded with **Elysium**, a blissful, toil-free paradise at the edges of the earth(Wheatcroft, 2014).

Presiding over this entire domain was **Hades**, brother to Zeus and Poseidon. Hades was viewed as a stern, pitiless administrator of the dead, unmoved by prayer or sacrifice. However, because the earth also provided agricultural bounty, he was frequently euphemised as **Pluto**, the giver of wealth. He ruled alongside **Persephone**, whose seasonal descent and ascent mirrored the cycles of agricultural death and rebirth, a central theme in the ancient rites that offered the Greeks hope in the face of mortality (Burkert, 1985).



Figure 48: Hermes, the Psychopompos guiding the soul. *Souls on the Banks of the Acheron.*



Figure 49: Asphodel, the flower of the underworld

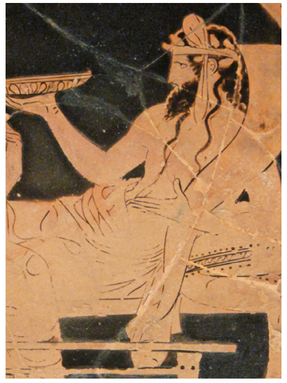


Figure 50: Hades, the god of the Underworld



Figure 51: Elysium, blissful, toil-free paradise at the edges of the earth. *Aeneas meeting with his father in the Elysium.*

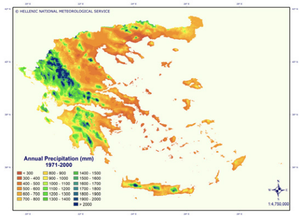


Figure 52: Annual precipitation 1971-2000.

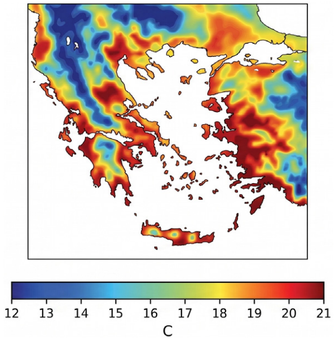


Figure 53: Maximum Annual Temperatures.

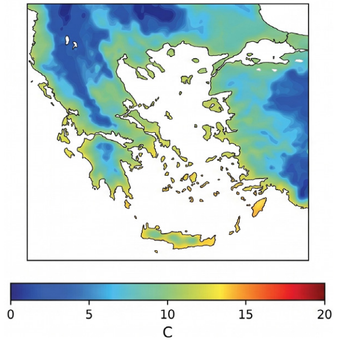


Figure 54: Minimum Annual Temperatures.

"The Mists of Hades"

While the stereotypical Greek climate brings images of arid, sun-scorched landscapes, the Acheron region represents the extreme, rain-drenched end of the country's meteorological spectrum. Though technically classified within the **Mediterranean climate** zone (Köppen-Geiger Csa), characterised by a concentrated wet season from October to March (Spyrou, 2021), Epirus stands in stark contrast to the drier Aegean east. The region's hydrological dynamics are drastically intensified by the presence of the Pindus mountain range, which acts as a massive barrier to the moisture-bearing westerly winds blowing from the Ionian Sea. This triggers a phenomenon called **orographic lifting**, forcing the incoming air masses to rise rapidly and release significantly higher volumes of precipitation than in the leeward regions to the east (Sindosi et al., 2015). Consequently, the western slopes of Epirus experience profound meteorological extremes, recording annual rainfall that exceeds 1,100 mm in the coastal lowlands and surpasses 2,000 mm within the mountainous hinterlands (Sindosi et al., 2015).

Beyond precipitation, this microclimate physically enhanced the site's ancient Genius Loci. Winter temperature inversions trap cold mountain air over the Fanari Plain, creating the dense fogs that characterised the historical **Acherousian Lake** (Besonen et al., 2003). The "***Mist of Hades***" was therefore a tangible meteorological reality, inextricably linking the physical environment to its chthonic mythos (St. Fleur, 2020).

Today, the broader climate crisis affecting the Mediterranean basin severely exacerbates the volatility of Epirus. Summer droughts are growing harsher, while winter floods become increasingly violent (Sindosi et al., 2015; Spyrou, 2021). As these amplified national climate extremes consistently overwhelm the rigid agricultural grid imposed in the 1960s, the landscape faces critical degradation. Consequently, a design that mediates and rebalances the "Three Natures" (Hunt, 2000) transcends a simple mythological homage, it is an urgent ecological imperative to restore climate resilience to one of Greece's most meteorologically extreme and vulnerable plains.



Relief map of Greece.

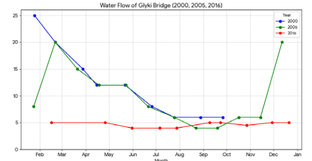


Figure 55: Acheron's volatile and varied flow



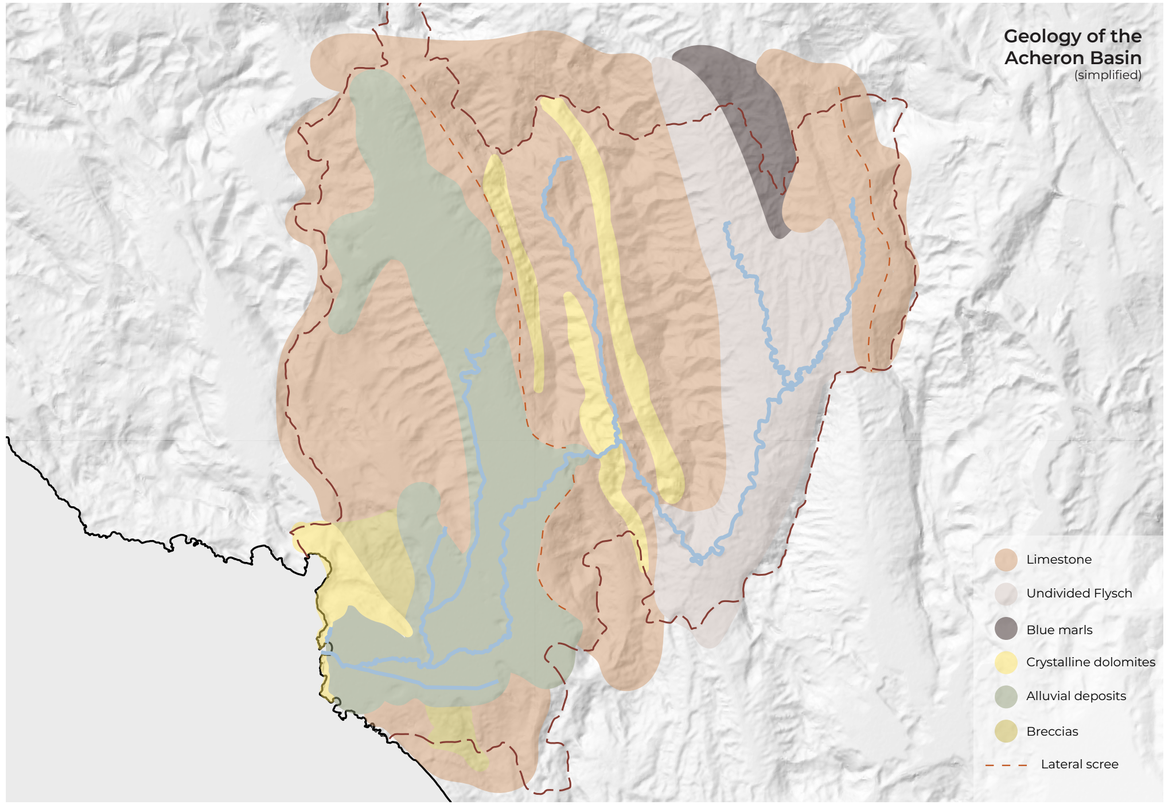
Figure 56: Maximum Annual Temperatures,

The Geomorphology of the *"Underworld"*

The mythological weight of the River Acheron is not an arbitrary cultural projection, but a direct consequence of its dramatic geomorphology. The river functions as the primary hydrological artery for southwestern Epirus, draining a catchment basin of approximately 313 square kilometres (Spyrou, 2021). However, it is the region's intense tectonic activity and complex karstic geology that gave birth to its chthonic narrative. As Spyrou (2021) highlights, the physical phenomena of the Acheron basin, labyrinthine limestone caves, subterranean water flows, and the sudden, violent emergence of dark springs, served as the literal and psychological foundation for the ancient Greek concept of the Underworld.

Over millennia, the interplay between the rapid tectonic uplift of the Souli and Paramithia mountain ranges and the continuous subsidence of the coastal plain has generated a landscape of extreme topographic contrasts. Geoarchaeological studies reveal that this dynamic environment has been in a constant state of physical evolution since the mid-Holocene (Besonen et al., 2003). The sheer hydrological energy of the river as it descends from the mountains has historically driven massive alluvial deposition. This geological process continuously reshaped the valley floor.

During my visit I attempted to navigate these extreme geological and mythological shifts, the river's 63-kilometre course from its alpine springs to the Ionian Sea is not uniform but instead, it creates a sequence of different spatial and atmospheric experiences that can be split into three distinct geomorphological zones:



1. The mountainous uplands: The river originates in the high-altitude zone of Mount Tomaros (1,974m), where the landscape is defined by steep gradients and rapid mechanical erosion. According to Yarham's classification, this is a typical "*Upland landscape*", characterised by V-shaped valleys and interlocking spurs, where a "*dendritic*" network of seasonal torrents collects surface runoff, channelling it violently downslope (Yarham, 2010). The impermeable flysch formations in the upper watershed prevent infiltration, resulting in a "*flashy*" hydrological regime where rainfall is instantly converted into high-velocity surface flow, stripping sediment from the mountains and transporting it towards the lower valleys (Spyrou 2021).

2. The Karstic Gorge: As the river descends into the limestone belt of the Souli and Paramithia mountains, it enters a phase of intense vertical incision. The flow here is not generated solely by the catchment but is also augmented by the Springs of Glyki and the wider Karstic network, where pressurised groundwater bursts from the canyon walls to join the main stream (Spyrou, 2021). This massive injection of water increases the river's kinetic energy, allowing it to slice through the resistant carbonate bedrock. The result is the "*Straits of Acheron*" (Stena Acheronta), a deep gorge where near-vertical cliffs block the sun. This narrow, high-energy channel acts as a "*hydraulic funnel*" where water literally appears from the "underworld", physically manifesting the "***Descent***" into a darker, turbulent realm.

3. The Fanari Plain: Upon exiting the gorge, the river energy dissipates completely as it enters the low-lying Fanari Plain, what Yarham calls a "*Lowland Landscape*". Geomorphologically, this is a landscape of deposition, formed by millennia of alluvial silt settling to create a relatively flat plain. This area, which once held the Acherousian Lake, is defined by a high-water table and soft, unstable, but fertile soils (mostly clay) (Spyrou, 2021).

4. Coastal Deltaic Marshes: The Acheron meets the **Ionian Sea** adjacent to the village of **Ammoudia**, within a landscape where the topography is situated barely above, and in several instances, even below, sea level due to systematic peat drainage in the 60s. Due to its confinement by human development and hydraulic infrastructure, the river is prevented from forming a conventional deltaic system (Spyrou, 2021). Instead, the persistent intrusion of saltwater and a high water table have resulted in the formation of a series of brackish marshlands that characterise the river's mouth.

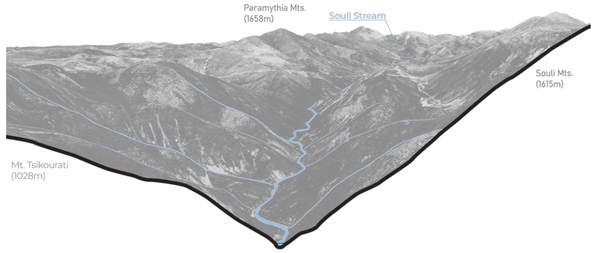


Figure 41: Section inside the V-Shaped Valley of the Acheron, where seasonal torrents collects surface runoff, channeling it violently towards the River.

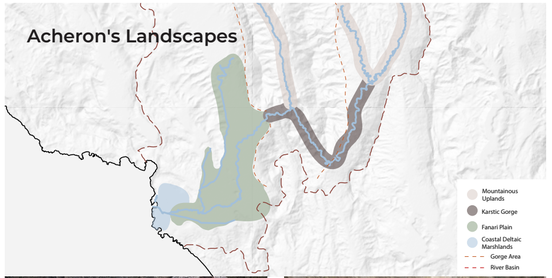




Figure 57: The turbulent flow of Acheron River through the limestone gorge.



Figure 58: The water emerging from the underworld.



Figure 59: Agriculture in the Fanari Plain. As viewed from the Nekromanteion Hill.



Figure 60: The Acheron in the lowlands landscape of the Fanari Plain. .



Figure 61: Arched marshy formations, Ammoudia. A volatile Natura 2000 area.



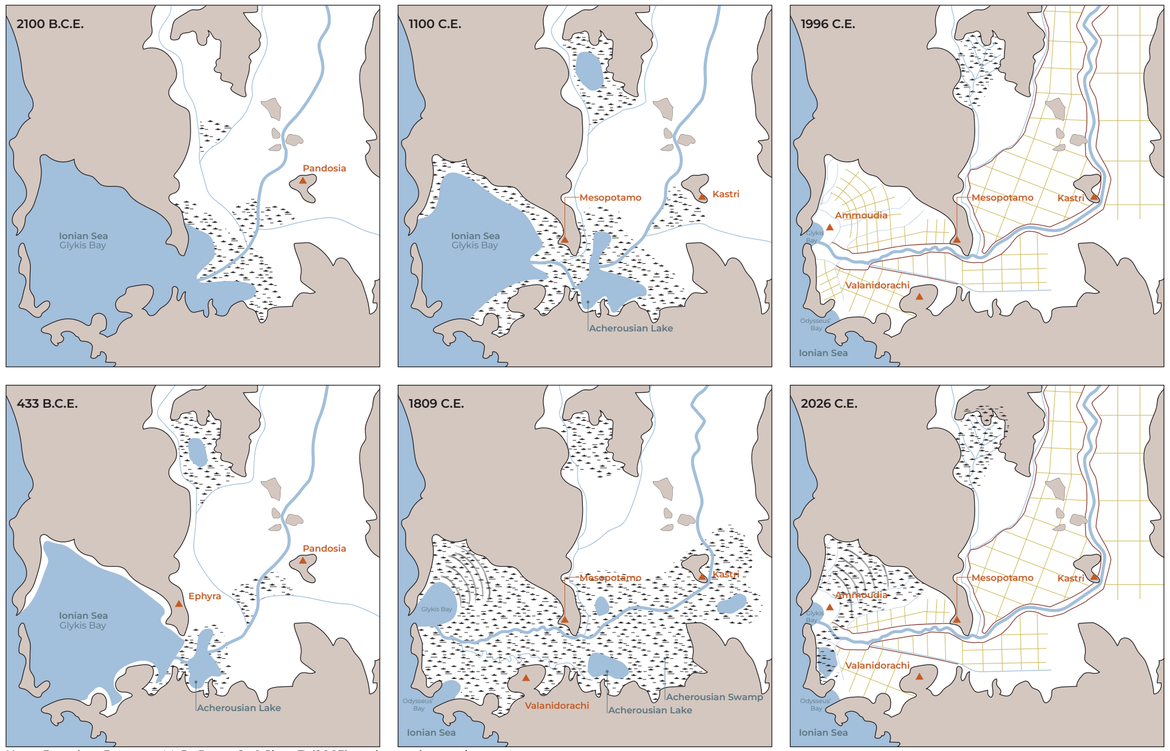
Figure 62: A lake formed in the place of former agricultural area near Ammoudia.

An ever-changing Landscape

The Fanari Plain's current orthogonal agricultural grid masks a highly dynamic morphological history. According to Besonen et al. (2003), the lower Acheron valley was initially a deep marine embayment. Over millennia, continuous alluvial deposition from the Acheron River steadily infilled this bay, pushing the coastline westward. The river's natural levees, combined with a high water table and continuous tectonic subsidence (Spyrou, 2021), severely impeded local drainage. This resulted in the formation of a massive, shallow freshwater lake and back-swamp system (Besonen et al., 2003).

This was the historical **Acherousian Lake,** a dense, fluid matrix of reeds and mudflats that expanded unpredictably with winter rains and contracted during the summer. For millennia, human habitation adapted to this untamed *First Nature*, with communities settling on well-drained limestone ridges, such as the hill of the Nekromanteion, and navigating the wetland primarily by boat (Besonen et al., 2003). However, in the 1960s, this ancient equilibrium was systematically eradicated in the name of agrarian modernisation. To maximise the productive *Second Nature*, the swamp was drained via mechanised pumps and drainage channels (Besonen et al., 2003). The Acheron was stripped of its natural floodplain and confined between rigid, engineered embankments to accelerate discharge into the Ionian Sea (Spyrou, 2021).

Today, this superimposed grid is failing. Spyrou (2021) demonstrates that this artificial confinement ignores the river's immense hydrological energy. During intense winter storms, the river frequently breaches these embankments, devastating the plain, in addition, due to negligence caused by rural abandonment, thus, during my visit the drained agricultural land around Ammoudia has already started "***re-wilding***" itself into a brackish swamp. Consequently, the contemporary challenge is to move past this rigid infrastructure and design a landscape framework that accommodates the river's inevitable geomorphological **memory**.

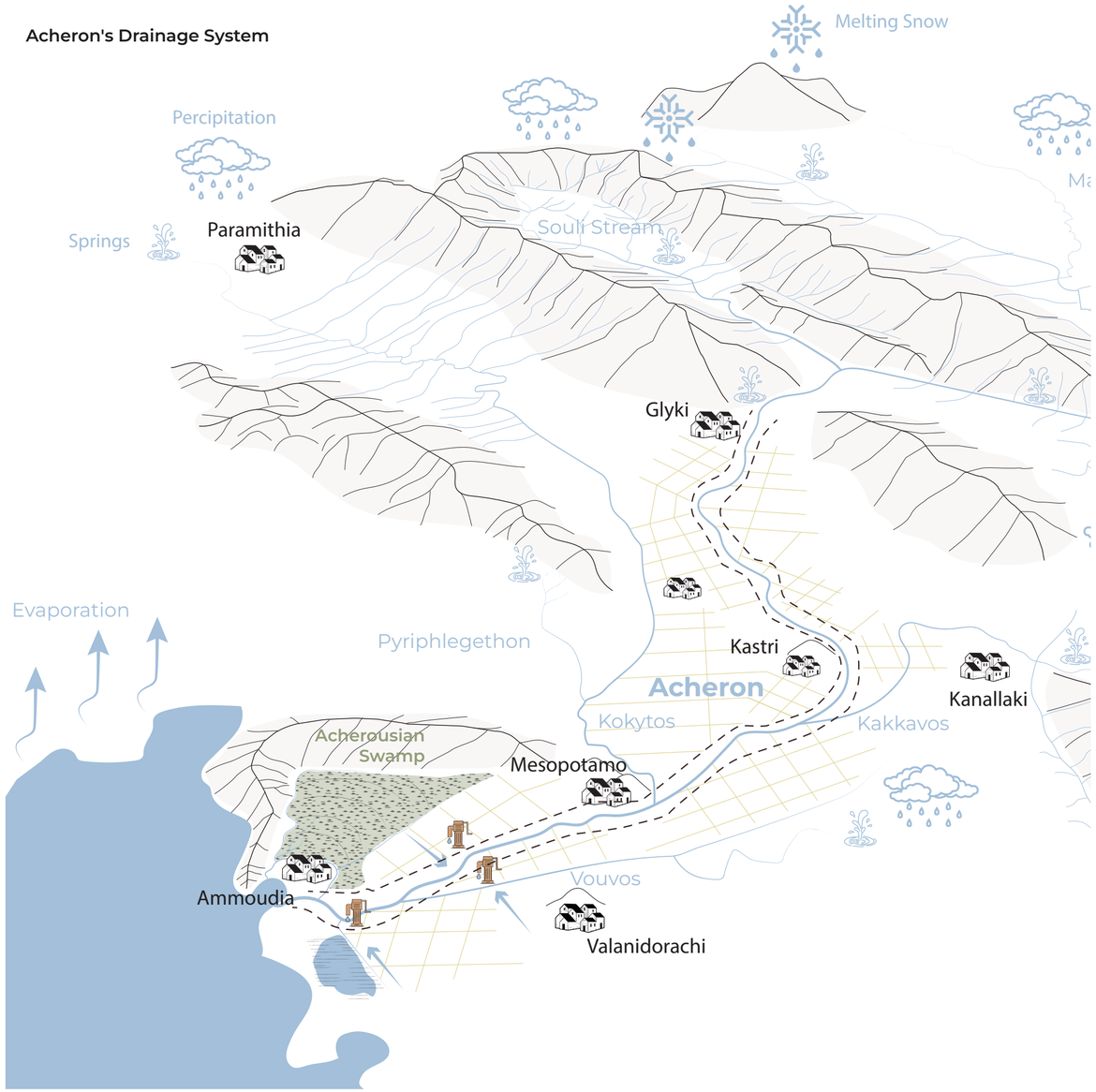


Note: Based on Besonen, M. R., Rapp, G., & Jing, Z. (2003), and own observation

His realm is encompassed by vast rivers, whose very names inspire awe: Cocytus, Pyriphlegethon, and the like. Most formidable of all, and first to arrest the progress of the new-comer, is Acherousian lake, that lake which none may pass save by the ferryman's boat; it is too deep to be waded, too broad for the swimmer, and even defies the flight of birds deceased.

Lucian, of Mourning 3. Trans. Fowler & Fowler

Figure 63: Ammoudia is "re-wilding" itself due to neglience and abandonment. The Acherousian Lake and swamp are slowly re-appearing. February 2026

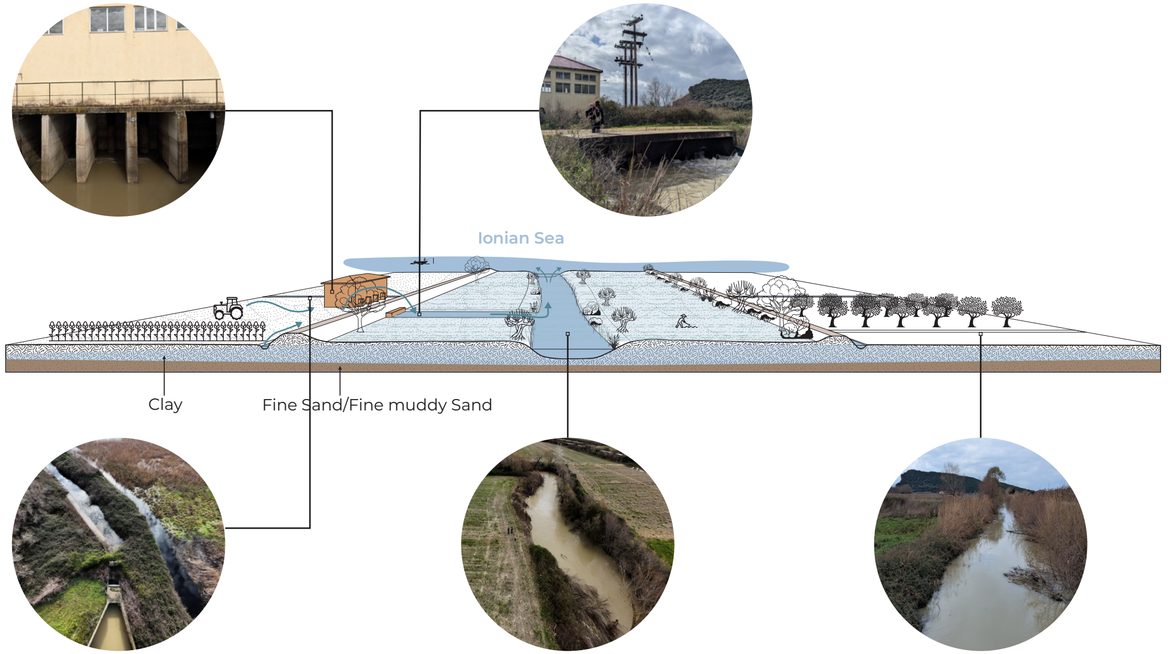


Draining the *"Acherousian Swamp"*

The Fanari Plain, currently under the jurisdiction of the Local Water Management Organisation (TOEB), operates on a remarkably rigid and strictly regulated **hydraulic management** system. This extensive infrastructural network was initially designed and implemented during the 1960s as the primary mechanism for the systematic drainage of the ancient **Acherousian Lake**. Because official archival data regarding the exact engineering specifications of that era were largely inaccessible, the spatial mapping and subsequent analysis of this hydraulic system within this research had to rely heavily on meticulous in situ observations and deductive spatial assumptions.

Spatially, the River Acheron is strictly confined between two continuous, parallel **dikes**, measuring between two and three metres in height, which feature road networks running along their crests. These embankments dictate the river's course throughout the entirety of the Fanari Plain, functioning as a defensive boundary to protect the adjacent agricultural fields. Furthermore, an extensive, orthogonal grid of **drainage ditches** and **irrigation canals** runs parallel to the cultivation lines, continuously draining the low-lying, fertile lands. Although the riverbanks have been artificially raised in a continuous effort to maximise the arable land even within the immediate riparian zone, this specific out-of-dike area remains highly vulnerable, regularly facing severe inundation during the intense winter precipitation events.

As the river approaches its delta, specifically in the area between the settlements of Mesopotamo and Ammoudia, the landscape transitions into an actively **pumped** environment. Here, a mechanical system comprising **three** main **pumping stations**, combined with a dense network of regulatory ditches, operates to actively force the water out of the lowest parts of the plain and redirect it back into the main river channel. Crucially, this specific topographical depression corresponds to the historical footprint of the ancient swamp and the Acherousian Lake. Today, parts of this specific zone lie one to two metres **below sea level**, a subsidence caused directly by the aggressive peat drainage of the 1960s. Ultimately, this ageing hydraulic infrastructure is now becoming increasingly obsolete, a consequence not only of its fundamentally insufficient mid-century engineering, but also of the general neglect resulting from the continuous demographic decline and the dwindling local population of the plain.



Acheron as a Resource

Today, this "*landscape of memory*" is being regarded as a vital resource. Agricultural activities and animal husbandry form the economic backbone of the Fanari Plain, the cultivated areas in the Fanari Municipality total 62,27 km², an impressive 84.3% of this total cultivated area is actively irrigated (Municipality of Parga, 2020). While traditional staples like maize and the "Fanari Bean" persist (84.1% of the cultivated land), land use has shifted towards intensive cultivation, with citrus orchards and olive groves now covering extensive portions of the plain (14.3%) while vegetables make up the remaining 1.6% of the cultivated area (Agrotypos, 2018; Vlatsiou, 2023; Municipality of Parga, 2020; Tsiligianni, 2024). Sustaining this continuous agricultural productivity is highly precarious, it depends entirely on the ageing, mid-century irrigation and drainage infrastructure managed by the Local Land Reclamation Organisation (TOEB) of Acheron to mitigate the region's violent winter flood risks (Argyris, 2023).

Animal husbandry in the area is evenly distributed across local settlements rather than being consolidated into massive industrial facilities (Municipality of Parga, 2020). This sector is overwhelmingly driven by sheep, goat, and cattle farming, with a total of over 53,200 animals (94.5%)(Municipality of Parga, 2020). Poultry farming accounts for 4.9% of the total livestock, though it remains primarily restricted to traditional backyard or free-range birds (Municipality of Parga, 2020).

A Popular Seasonal Destination

Nationally, tourism accounted for approximately 13% of Greece's Gross Value Added in 2025, fuelled by record revenues of €23.63 billion (Bank of Greece, 2026). It is, thus, inevitable that Acheron's untamed geomorphology and archaeological weight drive a rapidly expanding, seasonal tourism economy. Historically, the coastal town of Parga acted as the main attraction of the area, but the last decade, the river itself has become a hub for low-budget ecotourism, the region has also been seeing an increase in higher-budget visitors, resulting in the development of large-scale hospitality infrastructure (Kamenidou et al., 2018). This transformation has evolved the Fanari Plain into a multidimensional destination anchored by adventure recreation near Glyki, cultural tourism at the Necromanteion of Ephyra, and specialised, but unorganised birdwatching in the delta marshlands (Birdingplaces, n.d.).

Economically and socially, it provides a vital new but highly seasonal income. However, the rapid expansion of visitation places intense pressure on the area's sensitive Natura 2000 ecosystems (NECCA, n.d.). Unmanaged crowds during peak seasons result in trampled vegetation, littering, and severe disturbances to bird nesting habitats (Atmatzidou, 2022). Additionally, recreational activities accelerate the spread of Ceratocystis platani, a lethal fungal pathogen threatening the river's vital plane tree canopy (Tsopelas et al., 2017). To mitigate these destructive environmental impacts while retaining economic benefits, regional planners are increasingly pushing for the adoption of circular and sustainable destination management models.



Figure 64: The aging drainage infrastructure managed, unable to drain the land.



Figure 65: Fanari bean fields as seen over the dike.



Figure 66: Maize field between the dike and the river.



Figure 67: Olive groves and orchards at the Fanari Plain



Figure 68: The entrance to Acheron's Straits at Glyki, February 2026. Much of the riverbank is cleared from vegetation to make room for hotel development. The areas' identity and Genius Loci is being eroded to promote it as a "picturesque", short-term holiday destination.



Figure 69: The entrance to Acheron's Straits. The riverbank has been cleared to be used as a parking lot. Seasonal exploitation of the river.

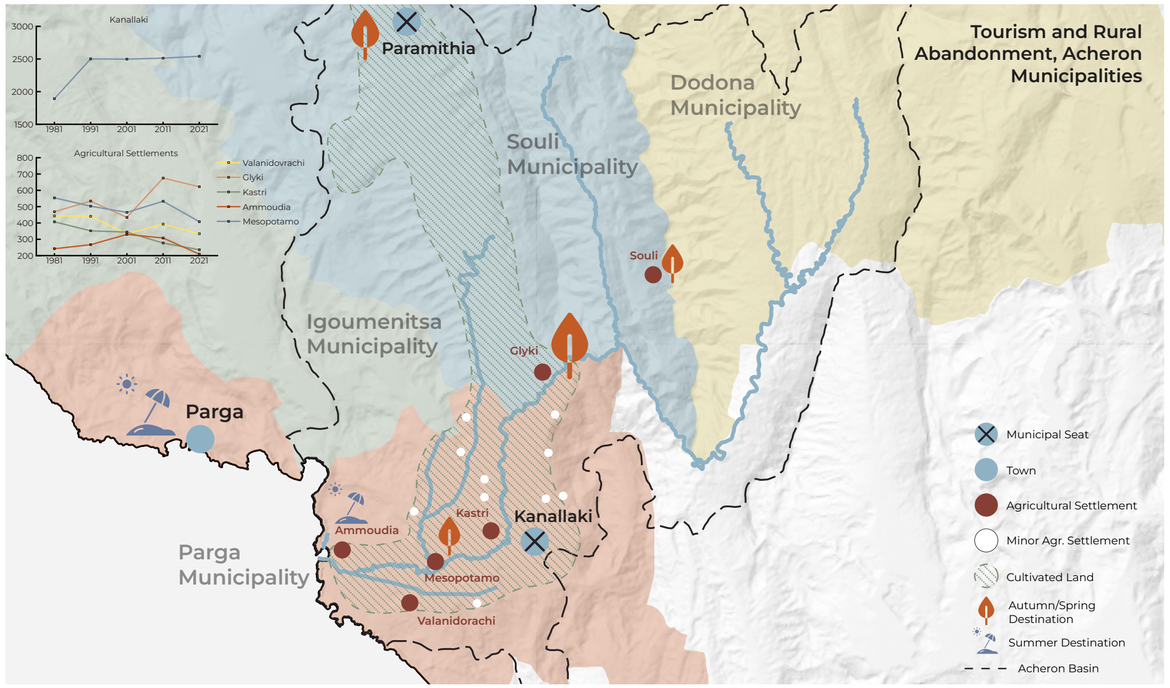
Beyond the Summer Image



Figure 70: Abandoned Houses in Kastri

The Greek rural environment has been facing a rapid population decline since the 70s. It's sparsely populated rural settlements are rapidly ageing and being abandoned. Most of the population is concentrated in Athens and Thessaloniki, with the rest being spread out in other regional capitals. The region of Epirus faces one of the severest population crises in Greece, the rural population, due to lack of opportunities, is moving to nearby cities, like Ioannina and Patras or to the metropolitan centres of Athens and Thessaloniki. Whole villages are "dying out" along with their unique customs and cultural identity. Many people originating from such areas only visit them during the summer season. Tourism provides a small, but seasonal, burst of life, failing to give the few residents a sustainable year-long source of income.

Recent census data reveals that between 2011 and 2021, the broader Thesprotia regional unit suffered a 6.4% population decline (dropping from 43,587 to 40,804 residents). Furthermore, the Municipality of Parga, which encompasses the river's fertile plains, lost over 9% of it's population (ELSTAT, 2023). The impact is most devastating within the immediate river settlements: Ammoudia and Mesopotamo experienced staggering population crashes of 32% and 23%, respectively, within just a single decade (ELSTAT, 2023). This severe demographic hollowing-out accelerates a cycle of rural abandonment, leaving traditional fields and properties vacant for most of the year as an ageing workforce becomes increasingly unable to maintain them.



A Protected Ecosystem

The contemporary ecological identity of the Acheron is defined by a severe spatial and legal dichotomy: the conflict between its fragmented protected status and its increasingly volatile, artificially constrained hydrology. Under the European **Natura 2000** network (Code: GR2120001), the designation of Special Areas of Conservation is strictly limited to the coastal **marine waters**, the **deltaic wetlands,** and the **Acheron Straits**. The intervening river corridor, which flows across the Fanari Plain, is entirely excluded from this protection, leaving it subjugated to the hyper-rational agricultural grid (OIKOS, 1997). This creates a severed ecological reality: a protected "green ribbon" at the source and the sea, interrupted by the agricultural grid in the middle.

This fragmented sanctuary is structurally precarious. As Spyrou (2021) notes, the rigid artificial drainage channels constructed in the 1960s are woefully insufficient to handle the region's "flashy" flood regime and heavy sediment loads. Consequently, the unprotected Fanari Plain suffers from cyclical, violent inundations (e.g., 1997, 2010) where the river aggressively reclaims its historical arable floodplain. Conversely, during the dry summer months, the basin faces severe meteorological droughts. This seasonal water scarcity is critically exacerbated by intensive agricultural irrigation in the plain, which drastically depletes the river's base flow and directly threatens the survival of the isolated Natura 2000 ecosystems downstream.



Figure 71: "Natura 2000 Protected Area" Sign, overgrown with vegetation, a neglected volatile ecosystem.



Figure 72: The Natura 2000 marshland area acts as the "backyard" where Ammoudia residents abandon their litter.



Figure 73: "Hunting is Forbidden", lack of interest and care about the deltaic marshlands near Ammoudia.



Figure 74: The forested mountainous habitats along the Acheron Straits.

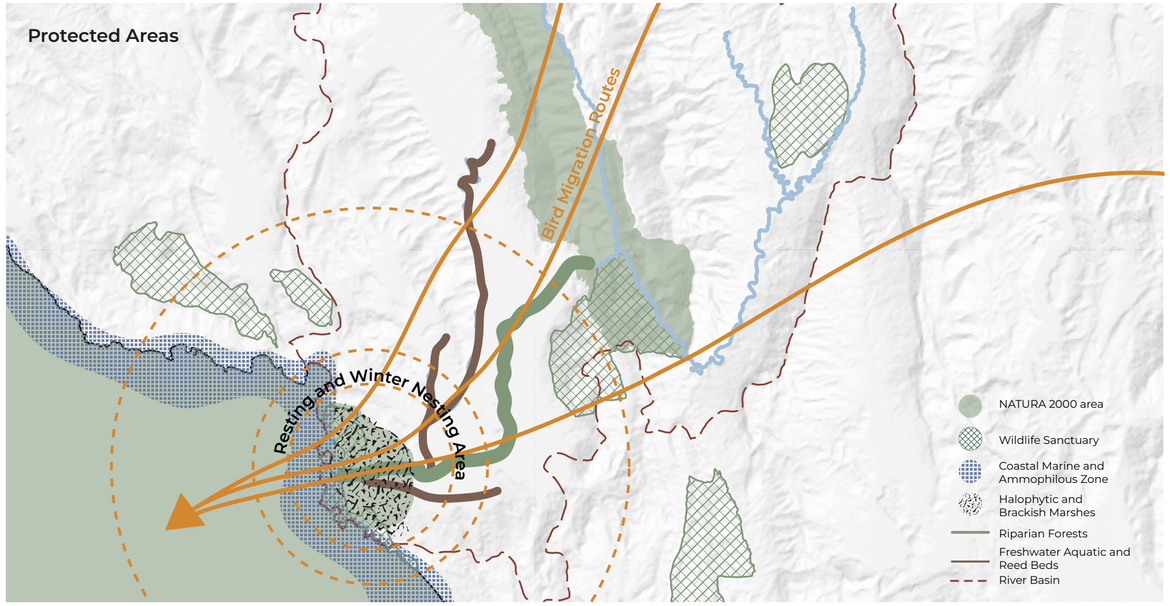




Figure 75: The coastal Marine and Amophilous Zone, Ammoudia.



Figure 76: The Halophytic and Brackish Marshes near Ammoudia.



Figure 77: Freshwater Aquatic and Reed Beeds, Ammoudia marshland.

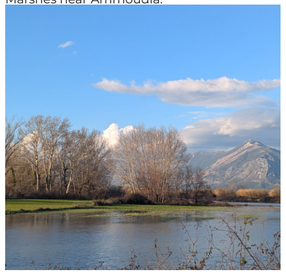


Figure 78: The Ripparian Forest, near Kastri.



Figure 79: Dictamnus Albus.



Figure 80: Brassica cretica.



Figure 81: Salix Alba.



Figure 82: Populus Alba

Flora and Vegetation Zones

Despite the intense spatial fragmentation caused by the agricultural grid, the uncultivated remnants of the Acheron Delta maintain a remarkably diverse flora. Floristic investigations have recorded 415 plant taxa across 89 families and 280 genera (Georgiadis et al., 1997). Reflecting the warm Mediterranean climate, the life-form spectrum is heavily dominated by **Therophytes** (32.8%) and **Hemicryptophytes** (24.6%). The landscape also supports a high proportion of **Hydrophytes** (13.7%, comprising 57 distinct aquatic taxa). The survival of these aquatic plants serves as a strong biological indicator of the deep-rooted natural potential of the historical wetland habitats, persisting against the pressures of artificial drainage (Georgiadis et al., 1997).

Beyond common Mediterranean elements, the delta functions as a rare botanical archive. The region hosts several highly specialised and geographically significant plant species that require specific, undisturbed microclimates. These include the chasmophyte *Brassica cretica subsp. aegea* (which roots in rocky crevices), *Dictamnus albus,* the xenophyte *Cotula coronopifolia*, and the rare free-floating aquatic fern *Azolla filiculoides* (Georgiadis et al., 1997; OIKOS, 1997). The presence of these species proves that the "***First Nature***" of the Acheron is not merely generic greenery, but a highly specialised ecological heritage.

Across the landscape from the Ionian Sea inland to the Straits, this flora organises into four spatial zones (Georgiadis et al., 1997; OIKOS, 1997):

The Coastal Marine and Ammophilous Zones:
The adjacent shallow marine areas host extensive, vital beds of the endemic Mediterranean seagrass Posidonia oceanica and Cymodocea nodosa. Moving onshore, the sandy beaches support specialised pioneer communities (Salsola kali, Pancratium maritimum), while the stable inland dune formations are colonised by dense Juniperus phoenicea macchia.

The Halophytic and Brackish Marshes:
Flat, muddy transitional zones heavily influenced by seawater infiltration are dominated by pioneer halophytes like Salicornia europaea and rigid, impenetrable tussocks of Juncus maritimus and Juncus acutus.

The Freshwater Aquatic and Reed Beds:
Along the slow-flowing delta waters and deep agricultural ditches, dense, continuous thickets of reeds (Phragmites australis) provide critical buffer zones. These reeds shield delicate floating and submerged aquatic communities, including Ceratophyllum demersum and Hydrocharis morsus-ranae (Frogbit).

The Riparian Forests:
Along the freshwater riverbanks, dynamic gallery forests emerge, characterised by White Willow (Salix alba), Alder (Alnus glutinosa), and White Poplar (Populus alba). Deep within the narrow, rocky Straits of Hades, these transitions into the majestic, high-canopy stands of the Oriental Plane tree (Platanus orientalis).

Acheron as a Diverse Habitat

This heterogeneous matrix of habitats provides vital refuge for a highly documented array of vertebrate and invertebrate fauna (MBAK, 2015a, 2015b). Crucially, because the Acheron is situated along major Mediterranean **migration routes**, the delta's fragmented reed beds and brackish marshes operate as an irreplaceable biological "staging area." Local ornithological records document a vast and diverse avifauna of **204** total species relying on these exact wetlands for resting, wintering, and nesting. This includes internationally significant priority species such as the *Dalmatian Pelican* (Pelecanus crispus), the *Egyptian Vulture* (Neophron percnopterus), the *Eastern Imperial Eagle* (Aquila heliaca), and the *Ferruginous Duck* (Aythya nyroca). Furthermore, it supports vital populations of other waterbirds like the *Eurasian Bittern* (Botaurus stellaris), the *Night Heron* (Nycticorax nycticorax), and the *Little Egret* (Egretta garzetta) (MBAK, 2019). Consequently, the ongoing systematic drainage of the final wetland fragments to expand the agricultural grid does not merely result in local habitat loss, but actively severs a vital node in an intercontinental ecological network.

Beneath the surface, the river and its estuaries host significant endemic ichthyofauna, recent monitoring protocols documented **6** specific species (including *Pelasgus thesproticus* and *Squalius pamvoticus*), while actively noting the severe decline of the critically endangered *Valencia letourneuxi* (MBAK, 2015a). The wetland's muddy banks and transitional zones support a remarkably rich herpetofauna, comprising a verified total of **34** species. This includes **7** species of amphibians and **27** species of reptiles, featuring vital populations of the *European Pond Turtle* (Emys orbicularis), the *Yellow-bellied Toad* (Bombina variegata), and various snake species including the *Nose-horned Viper* (Vipera ammodytes) (MBAK, 2015b).

The mature, decaying broadleaved trees within the undisturbed riparian forests are essential for rare saproxylic invertebrates like the *Hermit Beetle* (Osmoderma eremita). Most importantly, the river corridor acts as a primary habitat for the endangered *Eurasian Otter* (Lutra lutra), an apex species whose presence is the ultimate indicator of water quality and ecological continuity (MBAK, 2015b). Ultimately, ensuring the survival of these species requires a landscape design capable of expanding this narrow "green ribbon," mediating and re-balancing the impacts of the surrounding agriculture.



Figure 83: Probably the Eurasian Hoopoe near Ammoudia



Figure 84: The Dalmatian Pelican.

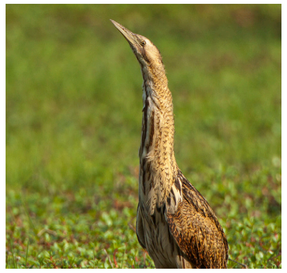


Figure 85: The Eurasian Bittern.



Figure 86: The black-crowned Night Heron.



Figure 87: The Little Egret.



Figure 88: Valencia Letourneuxi.



Figure 89: The European Pond Turtle.



Figure 90: The Hermit Beetle.



Figure 91: The Eurasian Otter.

"Symvoli" (confluence)

The deep "*Anagnosis*" (analysis) of the Acheron River reveals a profoundly fractured landscape where ancient myth and modern needs and challenges are in constant friction. Historically, the dramatic geomorphology and extreme, rain-drenched microclimate of the region did not merely host the mythological narrative of the Underworld, they physically performed it. Today, however, this deeply enculturated Genius Loci is suffocating under the pressures of rigid, mid-century hydraulic engineering, intensive agriculture, and a highly seasonal, unbalanced tourism economy. The systematic drainage of the historical Acherousian Lake and the artificial confinement of the river have destabilised the region's ecological continuity.

This fragmentation actively threatens vital Natura 2000 habitats, a vast avifauna of 204 species, and critically endangered fauna such as the Eurasian Otter (Lutra lutra) and the Valencia letourneuxi fish. Furthermore, these rigid interventions have exacerbated the valley's vulnerability to climate-driven environmental extremes, resulting in destructive winter floods and severe summer droughts. Consequently, the Acheron is rapidly losing both its environmental resilience and its sacred narrative, underscoring the urgent need for a spatial intervention that mediates these conflicting "Natures" and reconciles the valley's utilitarian demands with its profound mythological memory.



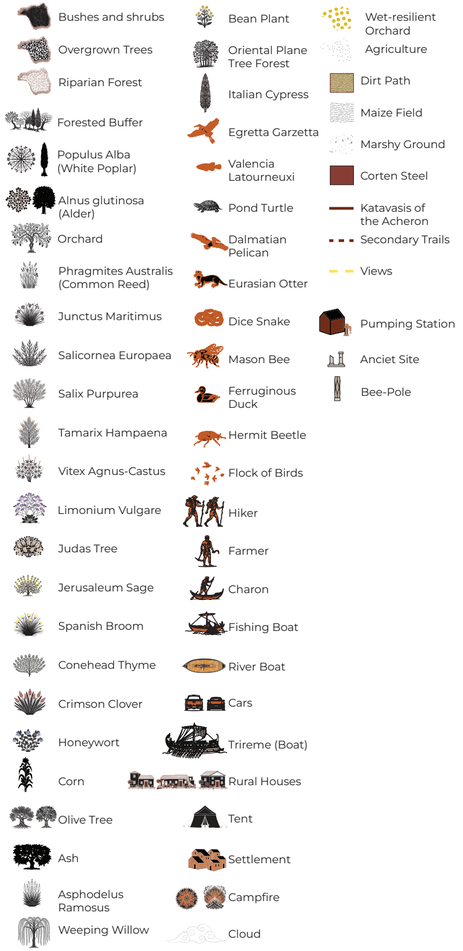
Figure 92: Anthropogenic pressures on the Natura 2000 area. The "border" between Ammoudia and its wetlands.



Figure 93: The ancient Greek Underworld was not a mere "hell", rather a parallel world where souls lived after the body has paseed away.
Corot, J.-B.-C. (1861). Orpheus leading Eurydice from the underworld [Painting]. Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, United States.

Part IV: *"Katavasis"*

Legend



Descending to the Underworld

"Katavasis", the descent into the Underworld, is a spatial and spiritual journey that many heroes undertook to fulfil their destinies and enter the "*Realm of Hades*", as living entities, something reserved only for the deceased. In the *Nekyia*, Homer situates **Odysseus** exactly at the junction of the **Acheron** and **Cocytus** rivers to perform his ritual, in order to consult the blind seer Tiresias (Homer, Odyssey, Book 11). These underground pathways were navigated by **Orpheus**, carrying nothing but his lyre to rescue his beloved Eurydice, and by **Heracles**, who journeyed into the depths to capture the hound Cerberus (Apollodorus, The Library). The Acheron, therefore, is not merely a hydrological system, but a cultural threshold, a gateway where the physical landscape acts as a living vessel for mythological memory.

Based on the ***"Anagnosis"*** (landscape reading) and using the ***"Methodos"*** (methodological framework) established in the previous chapters, the aim is to translate these deep, chthonic memories, the "***Mneme"***, into a spatial experience. The modern Acheron faces severe ecological and socio-economic challenges that risk burying its *Genius Loci* beneath the agricultural and touristic infrastructure. The design seeks to reconcile this ancient mythological identity with the pragmatic demands of the present day, using a narrative route that is woven through the land.

Usually, architectural narratives often begin from a detached, bird's-eye view, presenting the masterplan and the designed geometries before anything else. This chapter, however, demands a different point of departure, as ***"Landscapes are culture before they are nature; constructs of the imagination projected onto wood and water and rock"*** (Schama, 1995, p. 61). Because the design seeks to interact with Acheron's *Genius Loci* and mythological memory by generating what Olin (1988) named ***"synthetic meaning"*** through *"figure"* and *"rhetoric"*, the proposal is not presented as a static plan, but as a spatial sequence experienced through movement, with technical explanation and argumentation following afterwards.

The chapter unfolds through a layered narrative guided by the famous *"nostos"*, (journey) of Homer, the **Odyssey** and specifically, the spatial sequence found in Books 10, 11 and 24, Circe's navigational instructions and Odysseus's ***"Katavasis"***, his active descent into the realm of the dead. Crucially, the epic poem and the contemporary design proposal are not treated as separate entities, but instead, they are inter-woven into a single, continuous narrative. The Homeric verses act as the landscape descriptions, guides and spatial thresholds for the proposed interventions, blurring the boundaries between **mythic** time and the **physical landscape.** In order to visually clarify this continuous interchange, the text will shift between two fonts: the original Homeric passages are set in **Maiandra GD**, while the contemporary landscape narration and design descriptions are set in **Montserrat**.

Through this intertwined narration, the **physical**, **experiential**, **spatial**, and **ecological** intent of the design is progressively revealed. The landscape composition becomes a narrative medium itself, where the ancient text initiates the physical wayfinding and sets the atmospheric tone for the spaces that follow. Ultimately, the goal of this chapter is to orchestrate a modern ***"Katavasis"***, guiding the visitor through a choreographed journey to the "Underworld", through the proposed ***"Landscape of Hades".***

First Nature - Walking the Site

The Acheron Estuary, stretching between the inland village of Mesopotamo and the coastal fishing settlement of Ammoudia, serves as the conceptual ***"First Nature"***. This is a landscape deeply rooted in ancient myth and spatial memory, just south of Ammoudia lies the **Bay of Odysseus**, surrounded by coastal marshlands and marked by a solitary, ancient olive tree, this atmospheric site is where the Homeric hero supposedly anchored his ship in search of the entrance to the *Underworld*.

Historically, these expansive floodplains formed a massive, dynamic wetland system. However, this landscape was systematically drained and engineered in the 1960s to yield fertile agricultural fields. Today, the estuary exists in a compelling, fragile state of transition, caught between human intervention and ecological reclamation.

During my site visit in February 2026, the stark winter desolation stood in sharp contrast to the lively summer months. At the mouth of the river, the Acheron is tightly confined by a long pier that separates the flowing river from the shallow, sandy beach. Along this pier riverboats regularly ferry tourists upstream to the ruins of the Nekromanteion. Moving inland, this strict human control begins to falter. While a few active pumps still operate along the dikes, rural depopulation and ageing infrastructure have led to widespread agricultural neglect, as a result, the surrounding fields are slowly "healing" themselves. The rigid agricultural grid is gradually dissolving, reverting back into the wild, untamed ***"Acherousian Swamp"*** it once was.

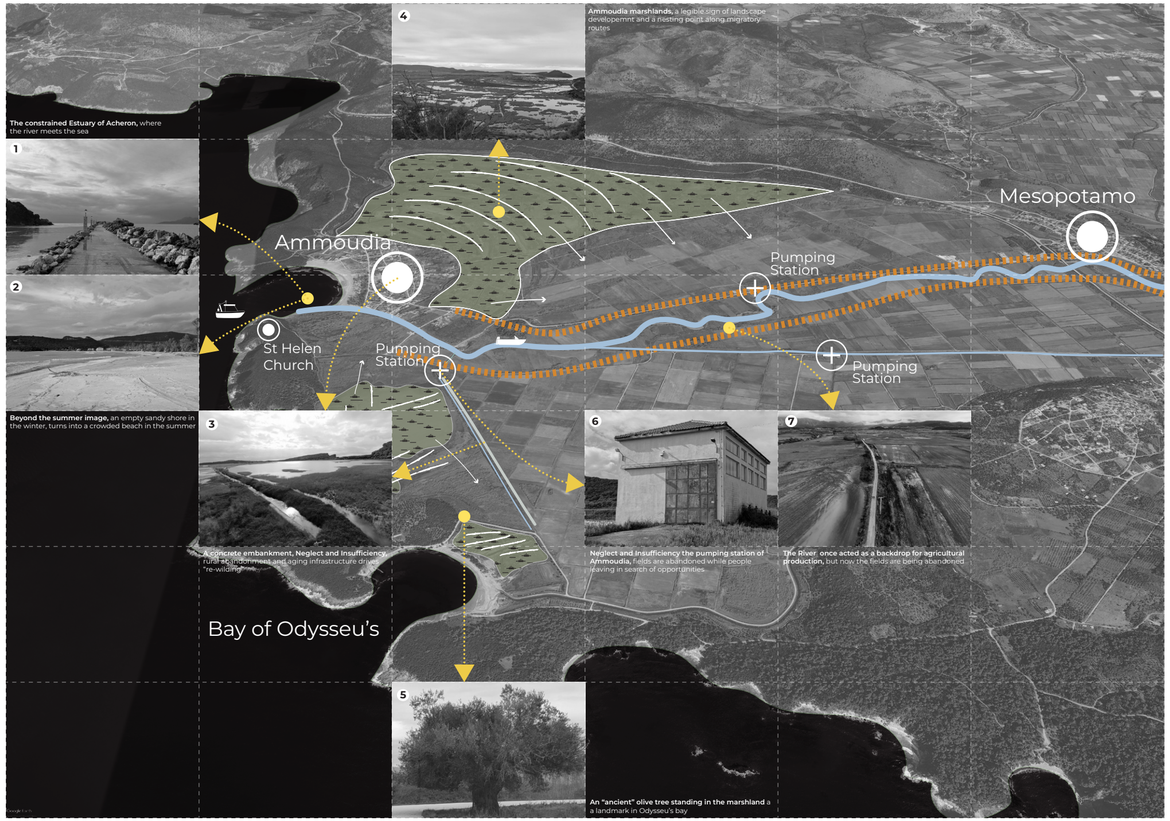


Figure 94: Aging infrastructure and neglect, "driving" re-wilding

The Groves of Persephone

-"Circe, Circe, who can pilot us on that journey?
Who has ever reached the House of Death in a black ship?"
-"Sit back and the North Wind will speed you on your way.
But once your vessel has cut across the Ocean River
you will raise a desolate coast and Persephone's Grove,
her tall black poplars, willows whose fruit dies young.
Beach your vessel hard by the Ocean's churning shore".

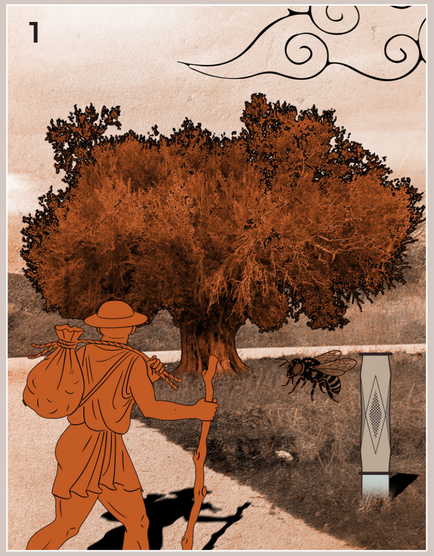
Make your way up the wind-ravaged shore,
there an olive stands, ancient and deep-rooted,
its branching crown a solitary mark against the sky[1].
Now a weathered bee pole rises from the reeds,
and the hum of golden bees fills the marshy air,
let their swarming flight be your trusted guide.
Once there, veer left to where the very earth transforms,
and stride along the embankment's cold concrete[2].
It lies a grim survivor of arrogant days long gone,
when reckless, blind fools strove to break the will of Persephone,
but now their mighty engines lie dormant, their pumps silenced,
and the Acherousian swamp reclaims its lost territory.

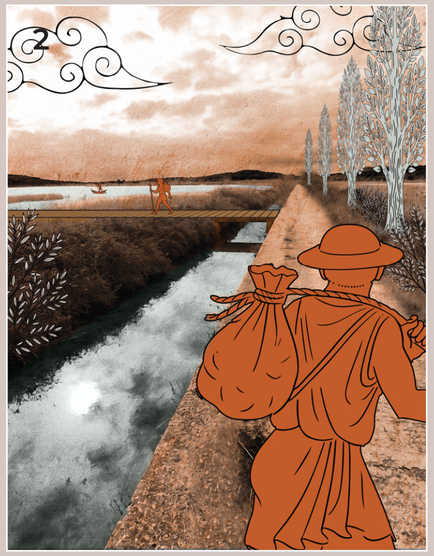
Keep to your right her tall white poplars,
trembling in the mist, while to your left
the briny rushes rise in bristling tussocks,
Juncus maritimus and acutus standing guard.
Halt where the wooden pier runs slick with damp,
and step out over the Acherousian Lake, dark and moist[3].
One long minute of silence, a reverent offering
to the chthonic powers lurking deep below.

Then, far ahead, a shape will pierce the fog...
There, built upon the abandoned pump's remains,
you will find a snug and hearty courtyard,
ringed round by tall white poplars and a tangled growth of wild,
and right in its centre stands a branching alder[4].
Catch your breath now by the cold, stark infrastructure,
read the passages etched across the corten slabs,
slake your thirst with a cooling drink,
then climb the soaring wooden staircase to its tiled roof.
Reach the edge and peer through the deep orange corten.

On your left lies Ammoudia, *"where Cimmerian people have their homes,*
their realm and city shrouded in mist and cloud.
The eye of the Sun can neverflash
his rays through the dark and bring them light."

Look far ahead: a dark silhouette, a looming tower
rearing up over the swamp's murky waters[5].
Descend once more to the earth's wet clay soil,
stride through the interior of the repurposed pump,
and press on over the wooden planks until you gain the dike[6].
Steel your heart,
"and make your own way down to the moldering House of Death".



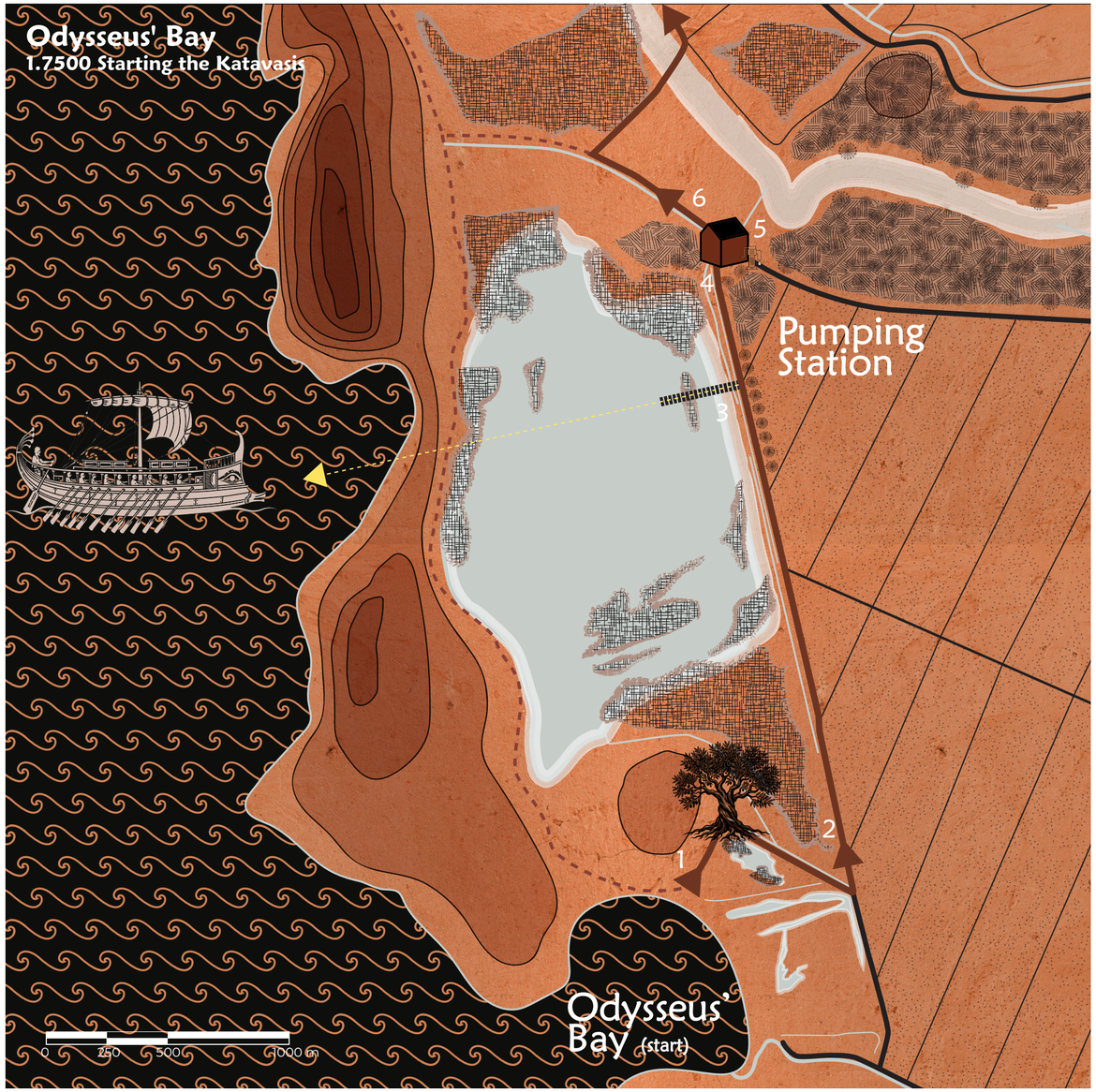











Odysseus' Bay
1.7500 Starting the Katavasis
6
5
4
Pumping
Station
3
2
1
Odysseus'
Bay (start)
0
250
500
1000 m

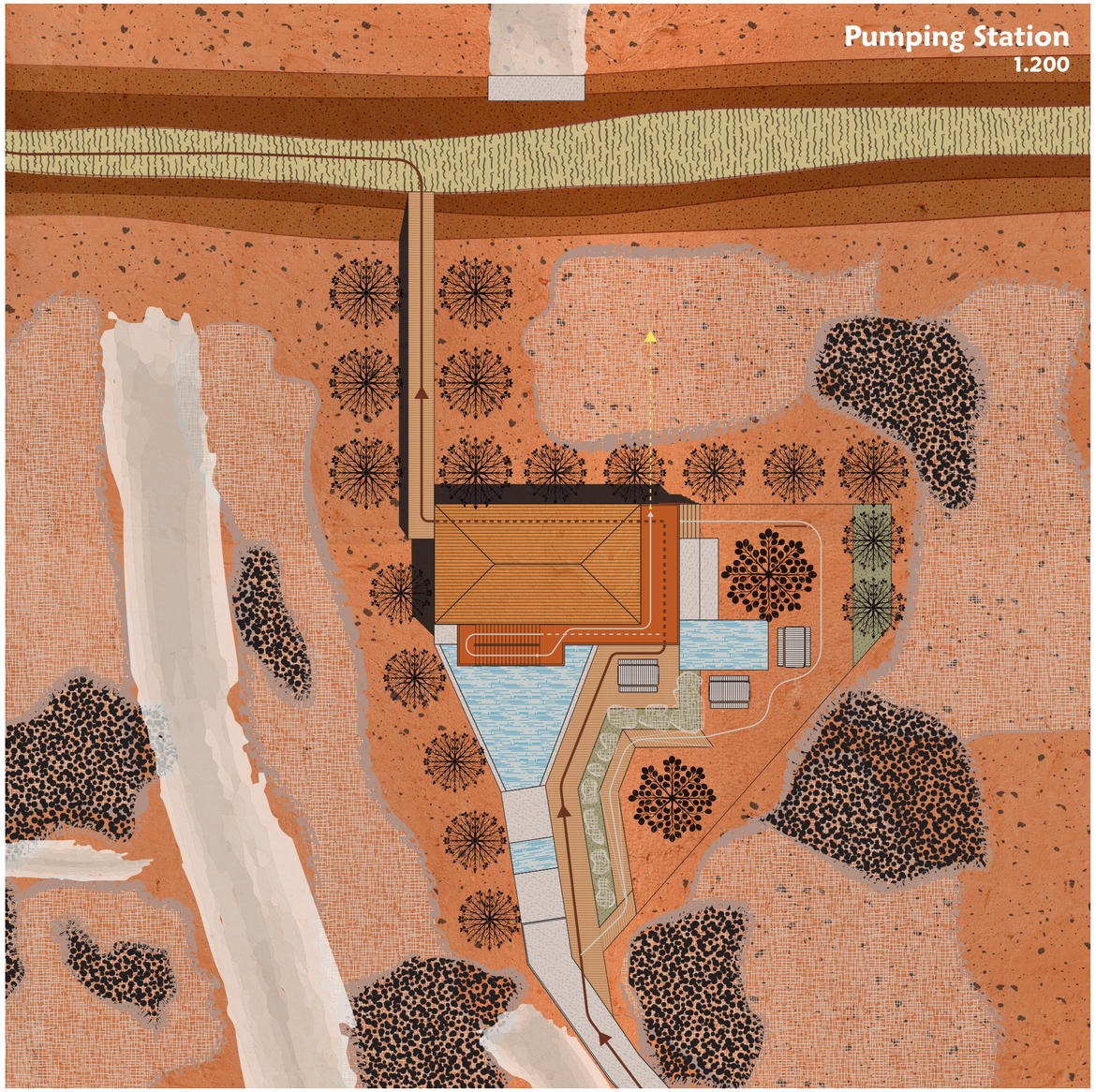

Pumping Station
1.200



Figure 95: The bold rigid existing concrete embankment, seperating agriclture and the re-appearing Acherusian Lake

The Land of the Cimmerians

And she made the outer limits, the Ocean River's bounds
where Cimmerian people have their homes, their realm and city
shrouded in mist and cloud. The eye of the Sun can never
flash his rays through the dark and bring them light,
not when he climbs the starry skies or when he wheels
back down from the heights to touch the earth once more.
An endless, deadly night overhangs those wretched men.

Keep straight, traveller, and do not go astray.
Hold to the earthen dike and over the bridge,
cross the mighty River of Woe
and make your way to Ammoudia's village bounds.
Wander freely, set your feet on the concrete pier[1],
do not rush. Stroll the sweeping sandy bay[2],
speak with the locals there, and taste their fresh-caught fish.

Make your way through Ammoudia's silent streets,
and let the brisk northeast winds speed you on
to the village edge, where the Acherousian swamp begins.
Once, reckless men strove to tame and plough this ground,
but they are long gone now.
Step over the damp and mossy wooden walkway[3].
Cross through the salt-marsh green, the Salicornia europaea,
and the bristling tussocks of Juncus maritimus and acutus.
Many strange and beautiful calls will catch your ear:
the Eurasian Bittern and the Night Heron
nest and take their rest among the reeds.
Gaze on them from afar, but never try to reach them,
or the swamp's black mud and water will claim you for its own.

Keep that tall tower as your guiding mark[4].
Pass through its cold walls of wood and rusted corten
where the Mason Bee makes its home
and climb the steep, dark spiral of its stairs.
Let mighty Helios, shining through the roof, be your guide,
and bathe in his white rays as you breach the tower's crest.
Look east, through the rusted corten gaps[5]
And there into Acheron, the Flood of Grief, two rivers flow,
the torrent River of Fire, the wailing River of Tears
that branches off from Styx, the Stream of Hate,
and a stark crag looms
where the two rivers thunder down and meet.
There stands a single forested hill, casting its shadow down the plain.
The Nekromanteion of Ephyra, traveller, there is your next destination.

Climb down the stairs, back to the Acherousian Swamp.
Keep pressing straight across the wooden planks,
walk past the new reservoir that nowadays guards the plain[6],
stride through the husk of the second pump
and make your way back to the River of Woe.
Steel your heart, traveller. It is a long and treacherous march
through the riparian fringe of *Persephone's Grove,*
with her tall black poplars, willows whose fruit dies young.
The village of Mesopotamo lies an hour's hard walk ahead...

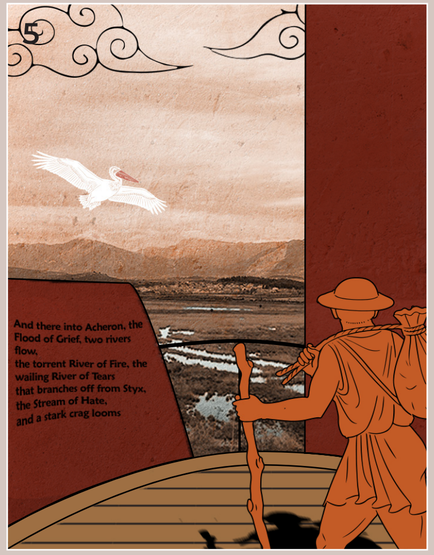
Part IV: "Katavasis"
First Nature



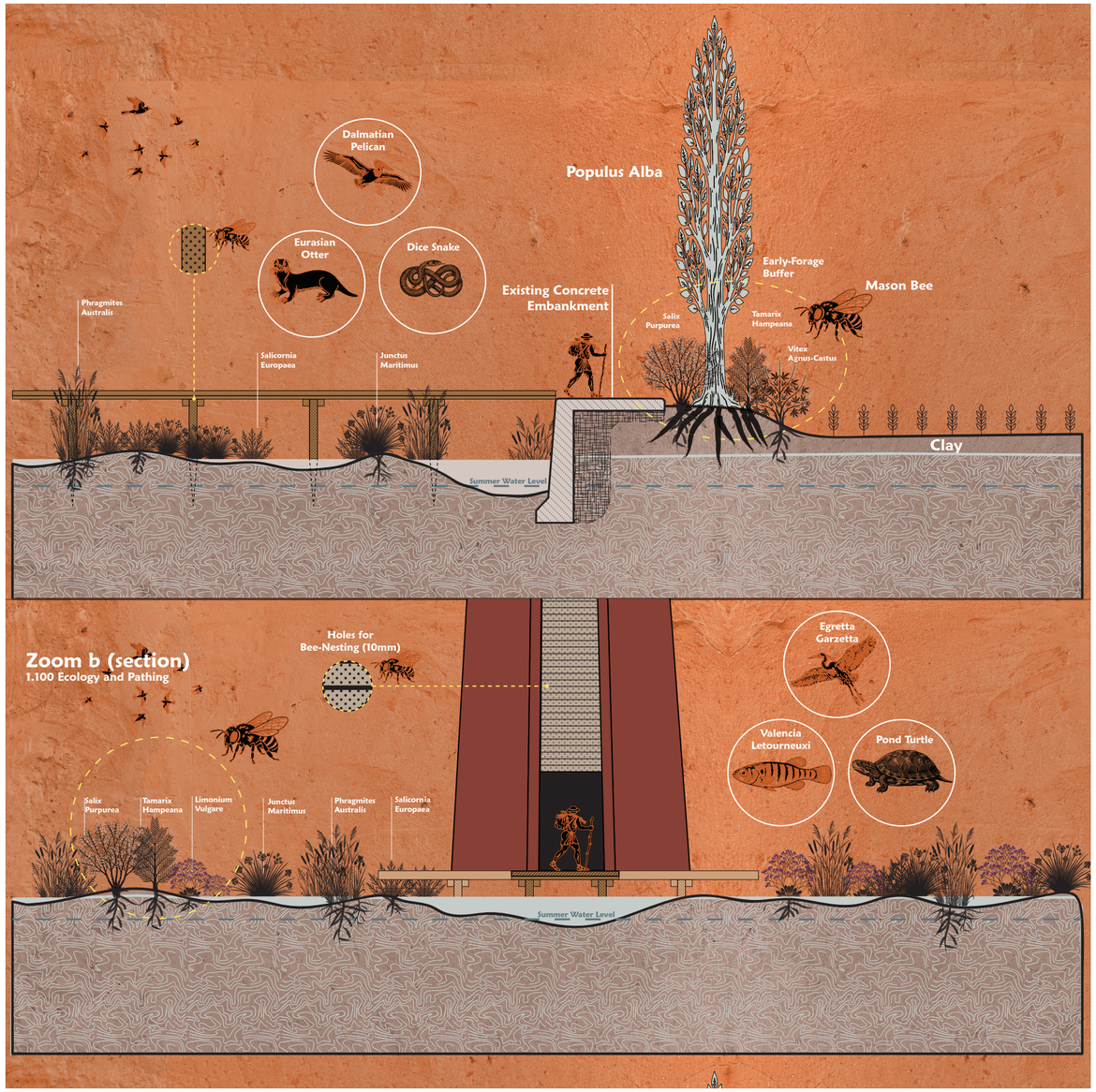


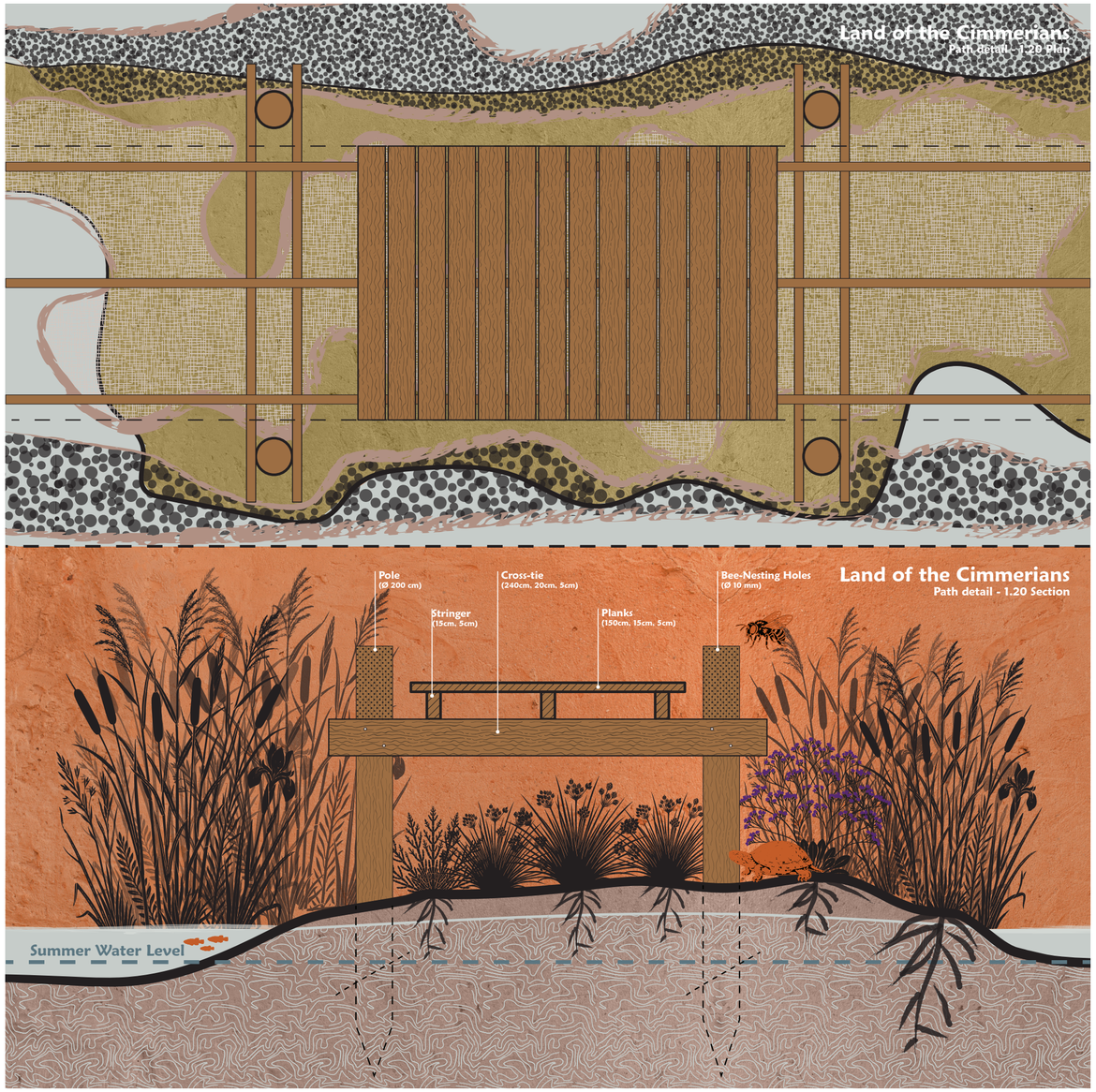


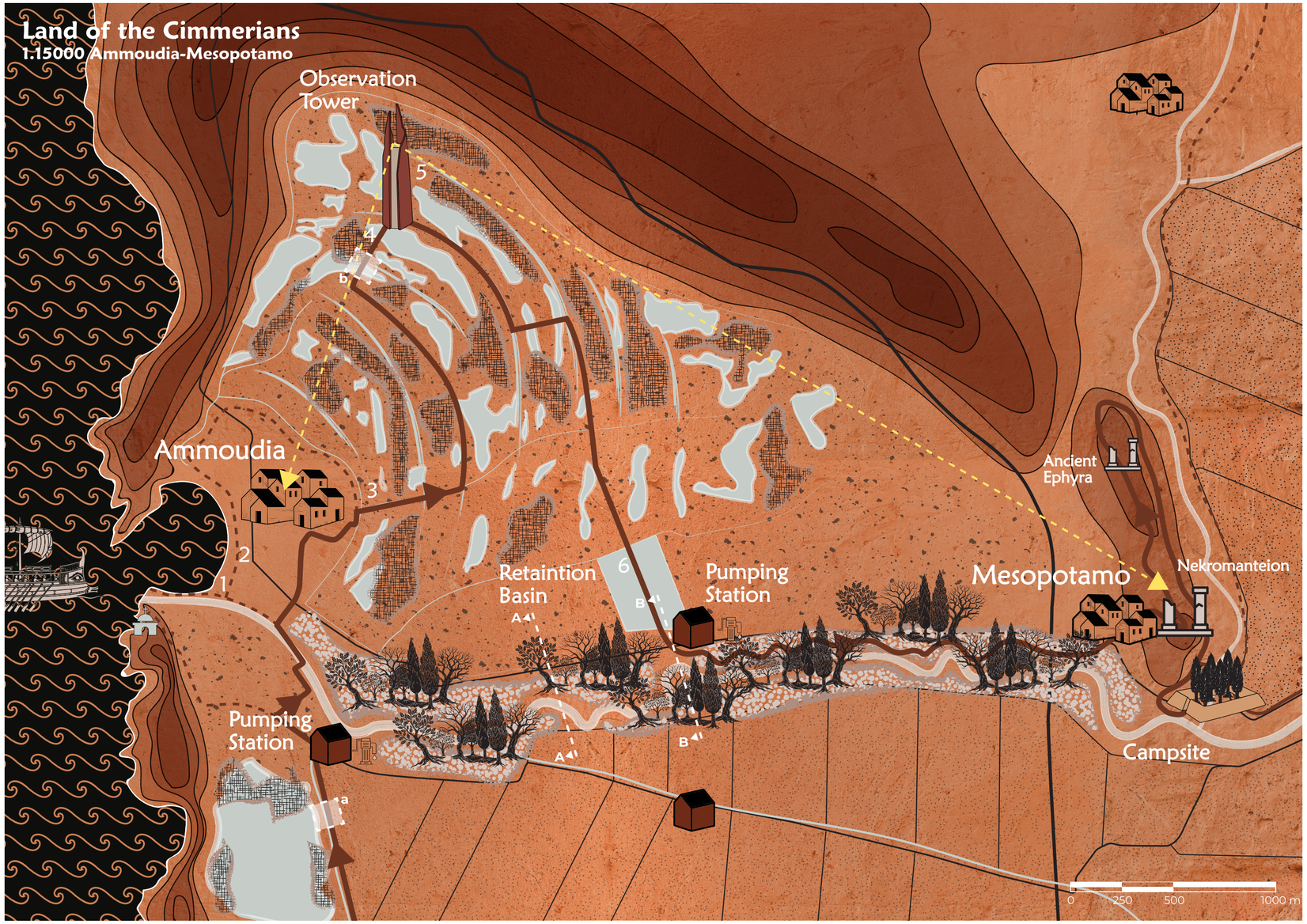


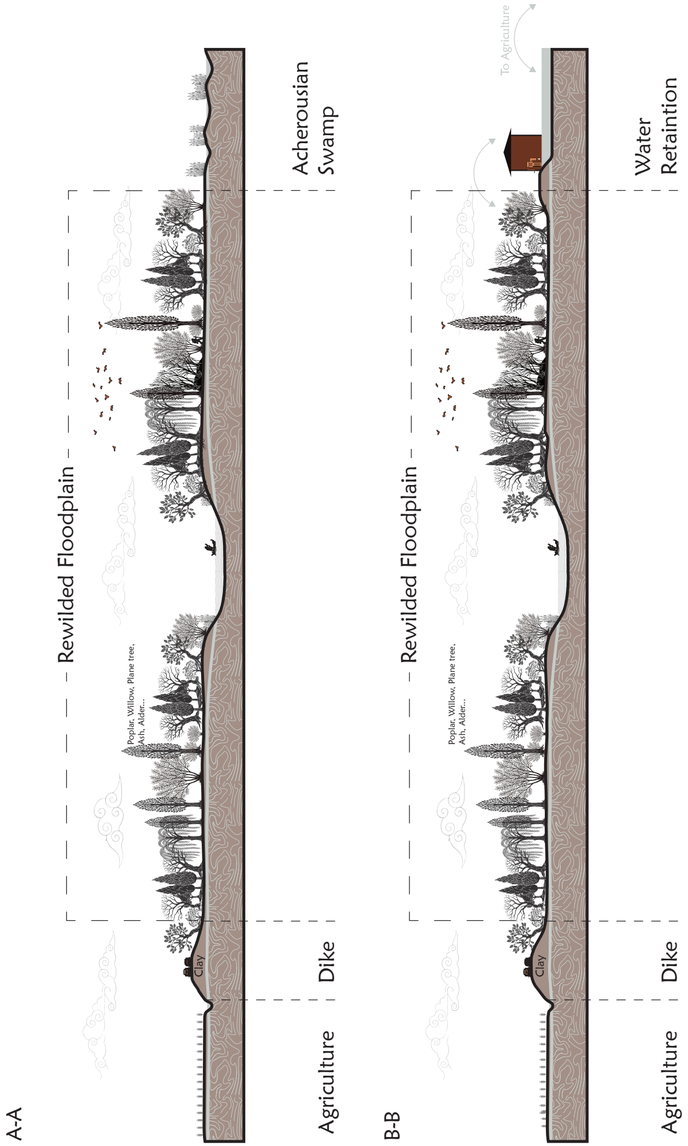





Dalmatian Pelican
Populus Alba
Eurasian Otter
Dice Snake
Early-Forage Buffer
Mason Bee
Existing Concrete Embankment
Phragmites Australis
Salix Purpurea
Tamarix Hampeana
Vitex Agnus-Castus
Salicornia Europaea
Junctus Maritimus
Clay
Summer Water Level
Zoom b (section)
1.100 Ecology and Pathing
Holes for Bee-Nesting (10mm)
Egretta Garzetta
Valencia Letourneuxi
Pond Turtle
Salix Purpurea
Tamarix Hampeana
Limonium Vulgare
Junctus Maritimus
Phragmites Australis
Salicornia Europaea
Summer Water Level


Land of the Cimmerians
Path detail - 1.20 Plan
Pole (Ø 200 cm)
Cross-tie (240cm, 20cm, 5cm)
Bee-Nesting Holes (Ø 10 mm)
Stringer (15cm, 5cm)
Planks (150cm, 15cm, 5cm)
Land of the Cimmerians
Path detail - 1.20 Section
Summer Water Level


Land of the Cimmerians
1.15000 Ammoudia-Mesopotamo
Observation Tower
Ammoudia
Retaintion Basin
Pumping Station
Pumping Station
Mesopotamo
Nekromanteion
Ancient Ephyra
Campsite
1
2
3
4
5
6
a
b
A
B
0
250
500
1000 m


A-A
Rewilded Floodplain
Acherousian Swamp
Poplar, Willow, Plane tree..
Ash, Alder...
Clay
Dike
Agriculture
B-B
To Agriculture
Rewilded Floodplain
Water Retaintion
Poplar, Willow, Plane tree..
Ash, Alder...
Clay
Dike
Agriculture

Part IV: "Katavasis"
First Nature

Land of the Cimmerians

View - Tower



Second Nature - Walking the Site

The expansive plain stretching from **Mesopotamo** through **Kastri** and up to **Glyki** represents the ***"Second Nature",*** the cultivated landscape. Serving as the backbone of the local economy, this flatland is intensely farmed with maize, local "Fanari Beans," and scattered orchards of olive and fruit trees. The **Acheron** is tightly confined between two parallel dikes, leaving practically no buffer between the flowing water and the agricultural grid.

Overlooking this landscape are two dominant forested hills that anchor the region's deep historical and mythological memory. The first is located at the confluence of the **Acheron** and **Cocytus** rivers in Mesopotamo, since antiquity, this area has been associated with the Homeric *Nekyia*, the site where **Odysseus** performed his necromantic ritual as instructed by **Circe**. Overlooking the plain from the crest of this hill, surrounded by tall cypresses, sits the Nekromanteion of Ephyra (Oracle of the Dead), a site of major archaeological significance flanked by the ruins of the ancient town of **Ephyra** itself. During the summer, this hill also serves as the upstream terminus for tourist riverboats navigating from Ammoudia.

Following the river dikes upstream from the Nekromanteion, the agricultural corridor continues until reaching the second hill at the village of Kastri, home to the ancient settlement of **Pandosia**. From this historical vantage point, the cultivated landscape and its parallel dikes extend uninterrupted towards their conclusion at the river straits near Glyki.

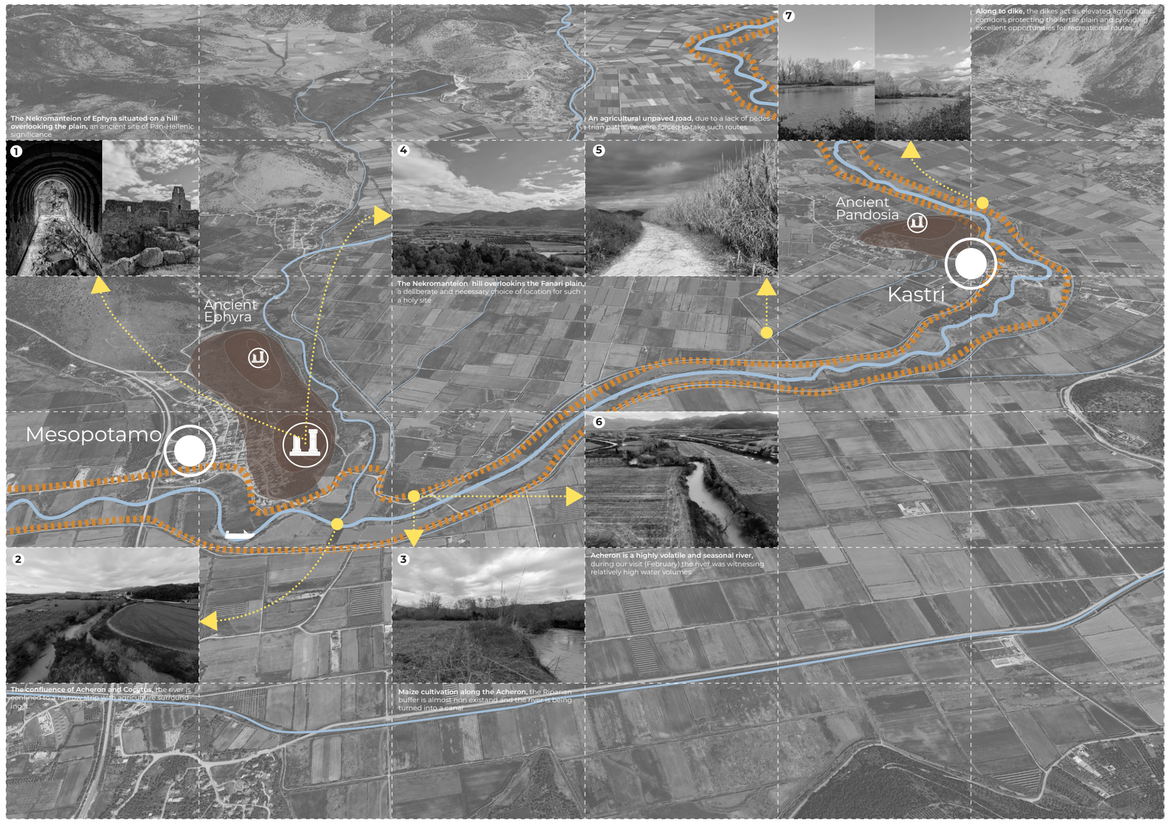


Figure 96: The agricultural fields of the Fanari Plain as seen from the hilltop of the "Nekromanteion", Mesopotamo

Fields of Demeter

And there into Acheron, the Flood of Grief, two rivers flow,
the torrent River of Fire, the wailing River of Tears
that branches off from Styx, the Stream of Hate,
and a stark crag looms
where the two rivers thunder down and meet.

Make your way through Mesopotamo's narrow streets
and climb the steep and rugged hillside, crowned with tall, dark cypress[1].
There stand the ruins of the Nekromanteion,
an ancient shrine where living men once sought the counsel of the dead[2].
Navigate its many rooms, its plunging dungeons, and gaze afar
across the endless plain that feeds the dwindling towns:
the maize, the beans, the orchards, and a river tightly bound.
Walk the hill's high crest and look south through the trees,
a shape and a handful of tree-silhouettes stand against the fields[3].

Now, traveller, make your way north to the adjacent, barren hill.
Once there, explore the stony ruins of Ephyra,
and let your mind's eye build its walls anew.
Follow the beaten path winding down and around,
along the mighty Cocytus, the river of lamnation,
and make your way to where the two rivers thunder down and meet.

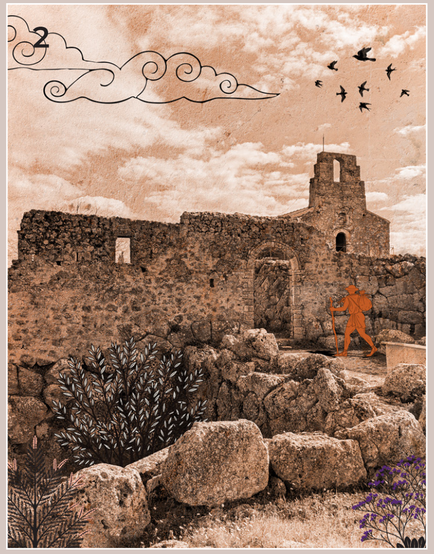
Once there, go forward, hero. Do as I say now.
Dig a trench of about a forearm's depth and length
and around it pour libations out to all the dead,
first with milk and honey, and then with mellow wine,
then water third and last, and sprinkle glistening barley
over it all, and vow again and again to all the dead.

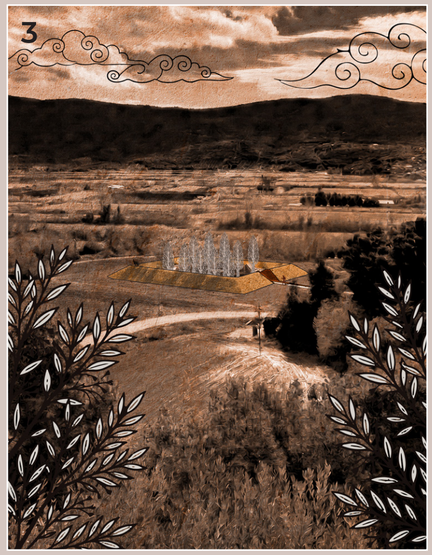
Make your way inside this trench, ringed round by cornfields.
Past its earthen gates a warm, protected campsite lies[4],
a haven for wanderers to rest amidst the sweeping plain.
Pitch your tent beneath the mighty white poplars,
rest and restore your spirit by the sunken fire pit,
trade the stories of your journey with fellow travellers there.
Sleep soundly, and do not fear the dark of night,
great Odysseus' libations still stand guard to ward this place.

As soon as young Dawn shines, make your way out traveller,
drawn by the sweet scent of Vitex agnus-castus and Prunus spinosa,
and the blooming crowns of Trifolium incarnatum and Borago officinalis,
rich flora yielding nectar for the swarming bees.
Pack up your gear and exit the earthen trench.
Head north, then east, cutting through the fields of Demeter.
Cross the sacred olive grove[5], push past the stands of corn,
and pick your way with care across the leafy bean fields
towards the forested hill that rises up ahead.

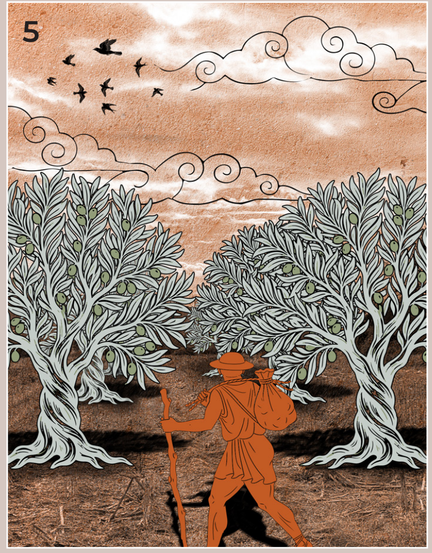
There Kastri stands at the foot of an ancient height.
Climb the slopes and explore the ruined walls of Pandosia.
Then make your way downhill once more,
up the dike and forge north[6],
Glyki lies a long three hours' march away.

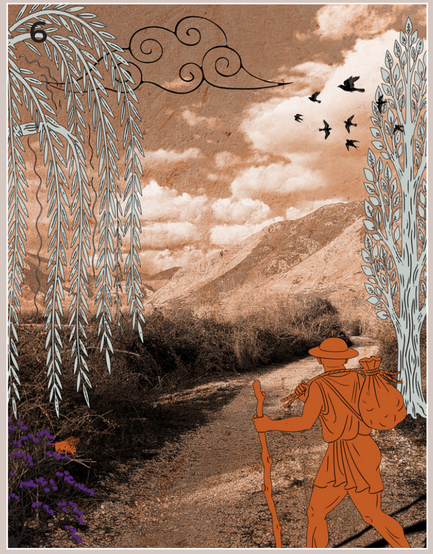








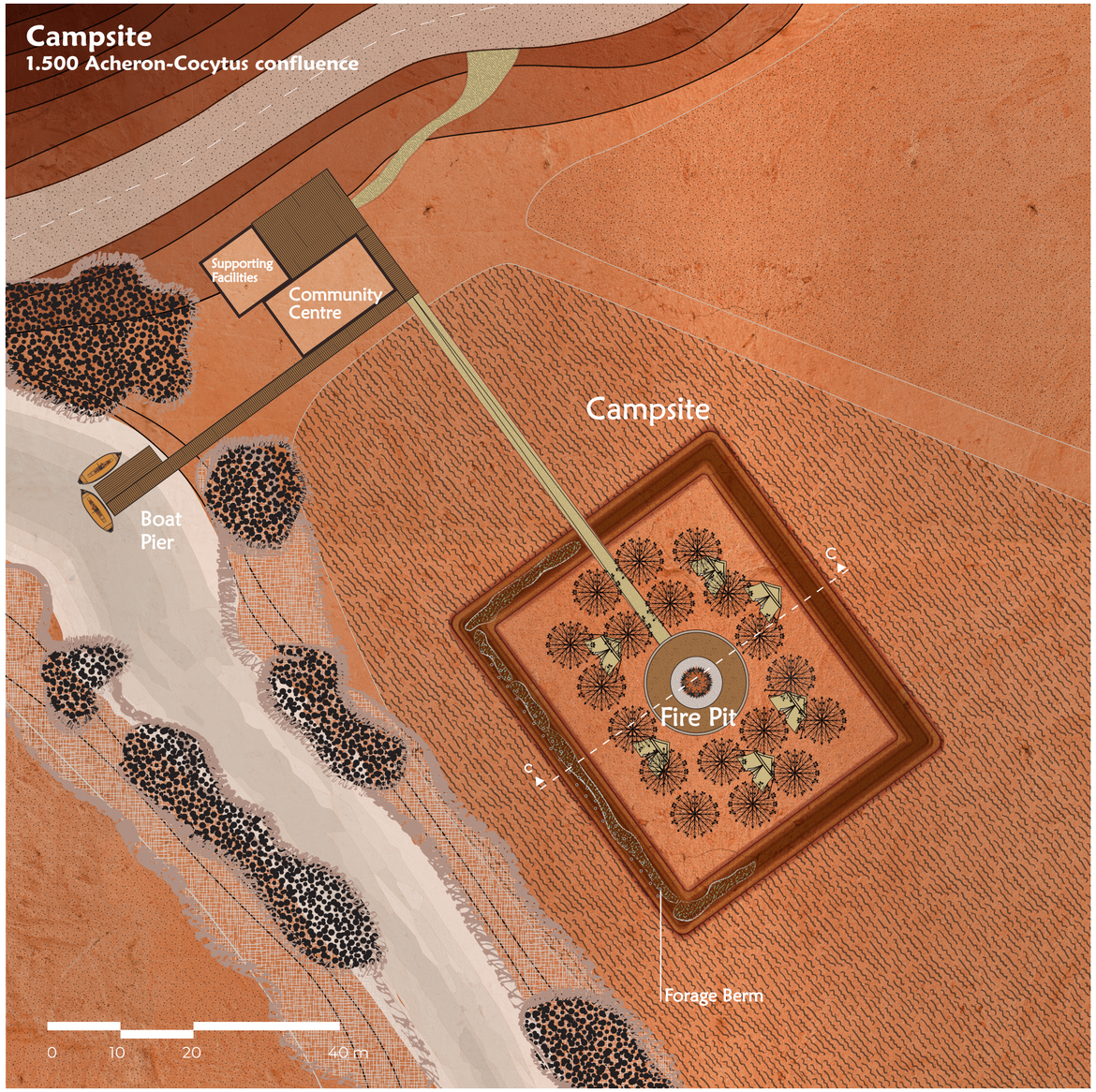


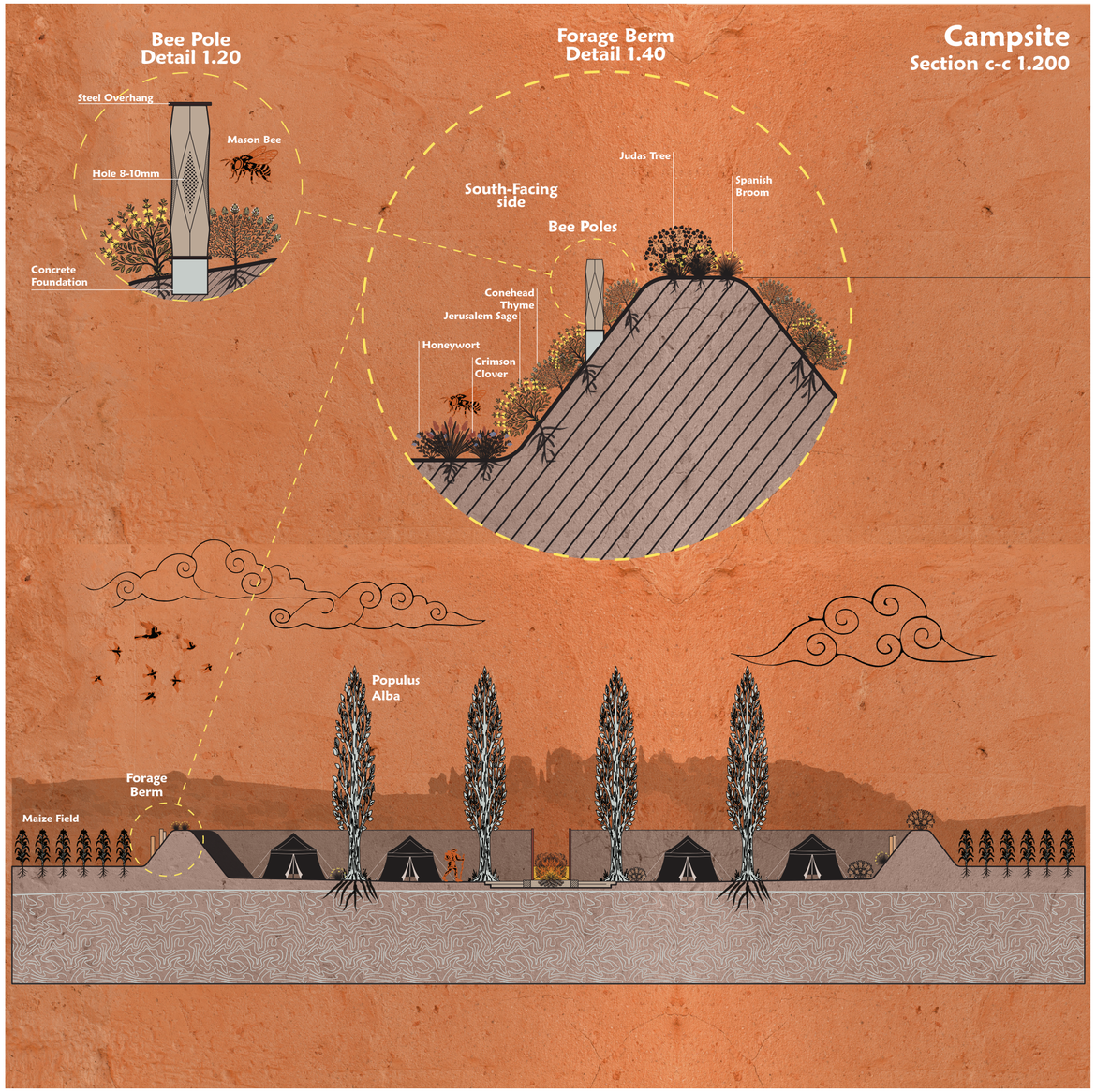


Part IV: "Katavasis"
Second Nature

Figure 97: The confluence of Acheron and Cocytus rivers at Mesopotamo, where Odysseus performed his "Nekyia" as instructed by Circe




Campsite
1.500 Acheron-Cocytus confluence
Supporting Facilities
Community Centre
Campsite
Boat Pier
C
C
Fire Pit
Forage Berm
0
10
20
40 m


Bee Pole
Detail 1.20
Steel Overhang
Mason Bee
Hole 8-10mm
Concrete Foundation
Forage Berm
Detail 1.40
South-Facing side
Judas Tree
Spanish Broom
Bee Poles
Conehead Thyme
Jerusalem Sage
Honeywort
Crimson Clover
Campsite
Section c-c 1.200
Populus Alba
Forage Berm
Maize Field

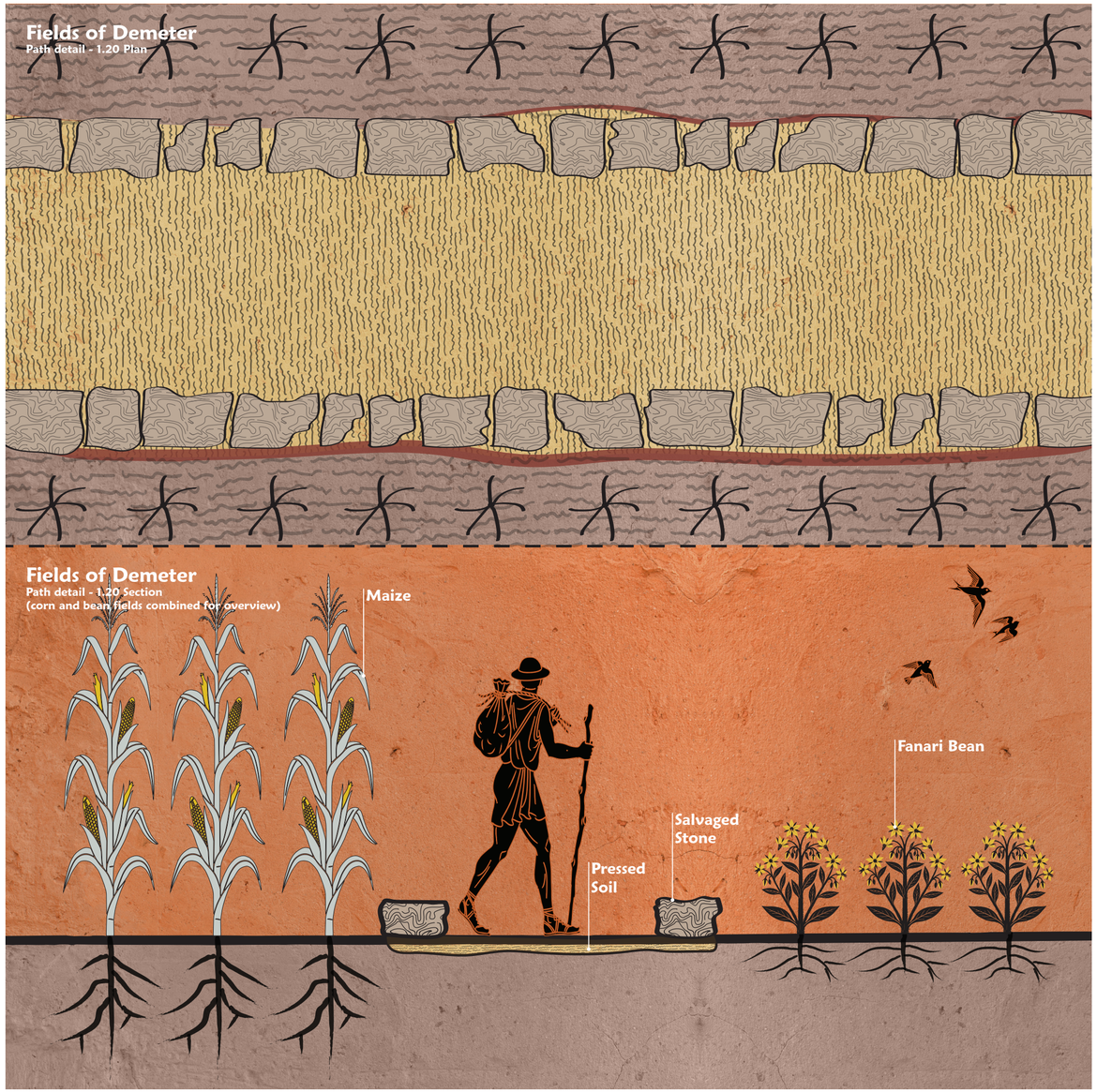
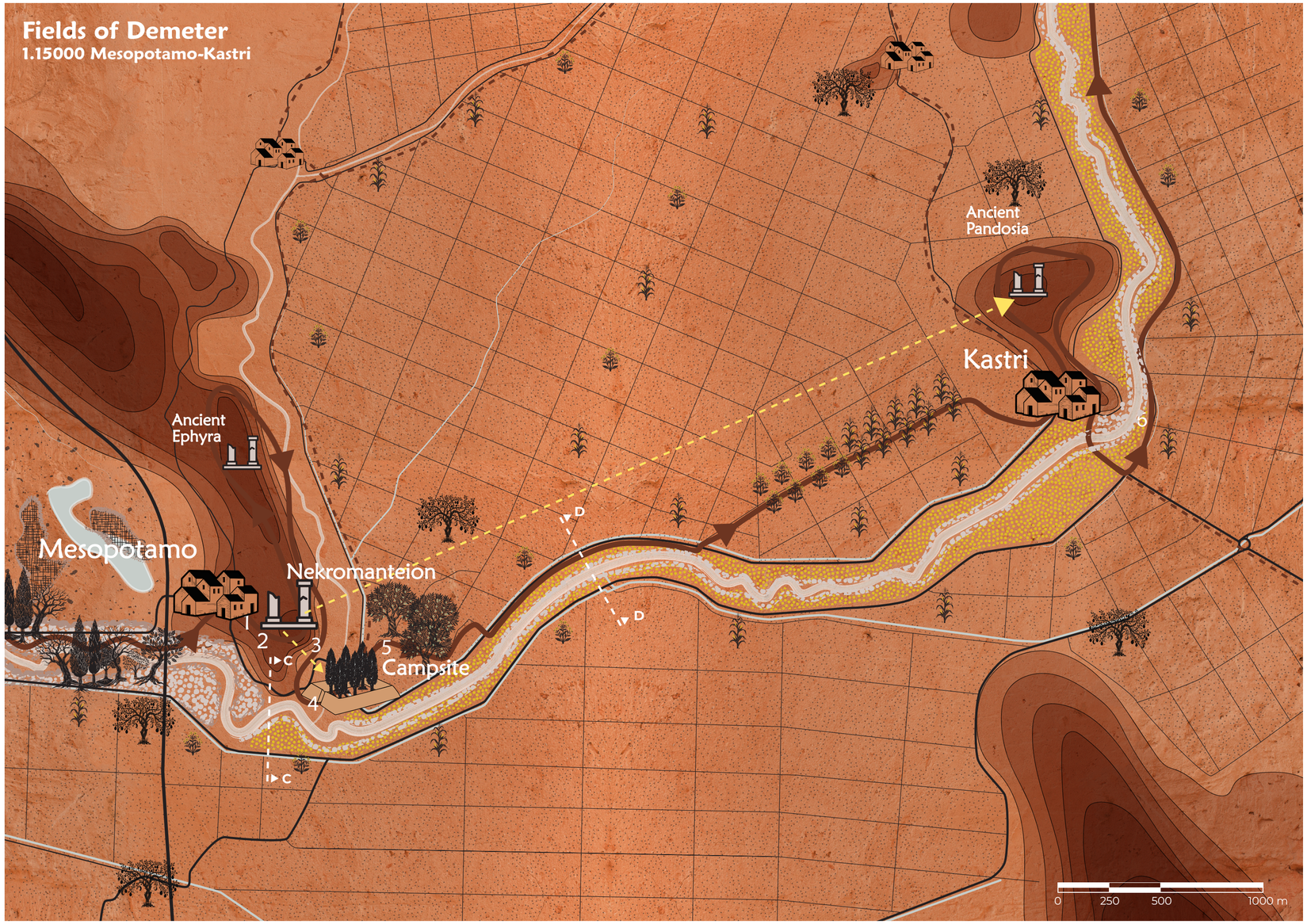
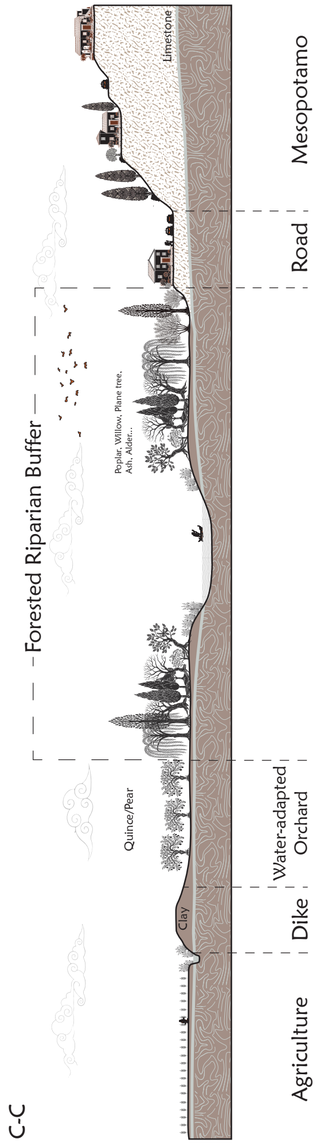
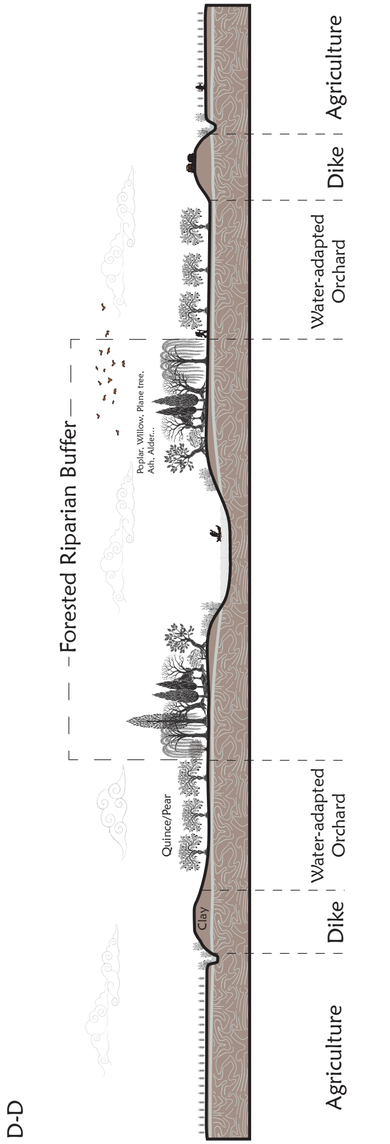


Figure 98: Farmer carrying away collected branches, cleanin his field and preparing for the planting season


Fields of Demeter
1.15000 Mesopotamo-Kastri
Ancient Pandosia
Kastri
Ancient Ephyra
Mesopotamo
Nekromanteion
2
3
4
5
Campsite
C
C
D
D
0
250
500
1000 m


C-C
Forested Riparian Buffer
Limestone
Poplar, Willow, Plane tree, Ash, Alder...
Quince/Pear
Clay
Agriculture
Dike
Water-adapted Orchard
Road
Mesopotamo


D-D
Forested Riparian Buffer
Poplar, Willow, Plane tree, Ash, Alder...
Quince/Pear
Clay
Agriculture
Dike
Water-adapted Orchard
Water-adapted Orchard
Dike
Agriculture

Third Nature - Walking the Site

In my design proposal, the culmination of the ***"Katavasis"*** manifests as the ***"Third Nature",*** a garden of "rhetoric" and "artifice" (Olin, 1988) situated at the dramatic Straits of Acheron. Characterised by its imposing and impassable limestone gorge, this specific geography was historically revered as the entrance to the Underworld, it is this deep mythological association that imbues the landscape with a *"synthetic meaning"* that, as defined by Olin (1988), transcends its baseline ecological value.

As the river surges out of the gorge, its energy dissipates, it widens and fragments into braided islets and accessible gravel shores, a stark contrast to the rigidly diked waters and inaccessible riverside downstream.

However, this natural and mythic area is heavily scarred by contemporary **anthropogenic exploitation**. Immediately upon exiting the gorge, the river meets the village of Glyki, a bustling tourist hub with cafes and accommodations on the water's edge. A kilometre upstream, large swathes of the forested banks have been cleared for a **parking lot** near the ruins of a **traditional arched bridge**. A similar commercialisation occupies the opposite bank, where a hospitality complex sits directly next to the four-hour mountain trail to the historic village of **Souli**. This specific location was chosen to host the culmination of the "***Katavasis"***, taking the spatial form of a **garden**, in direct response to the site's profound dualities: leveraging its powerful synthetic meaning to heal and re-articulate a river landscape that has been deeply scarred by human influence.

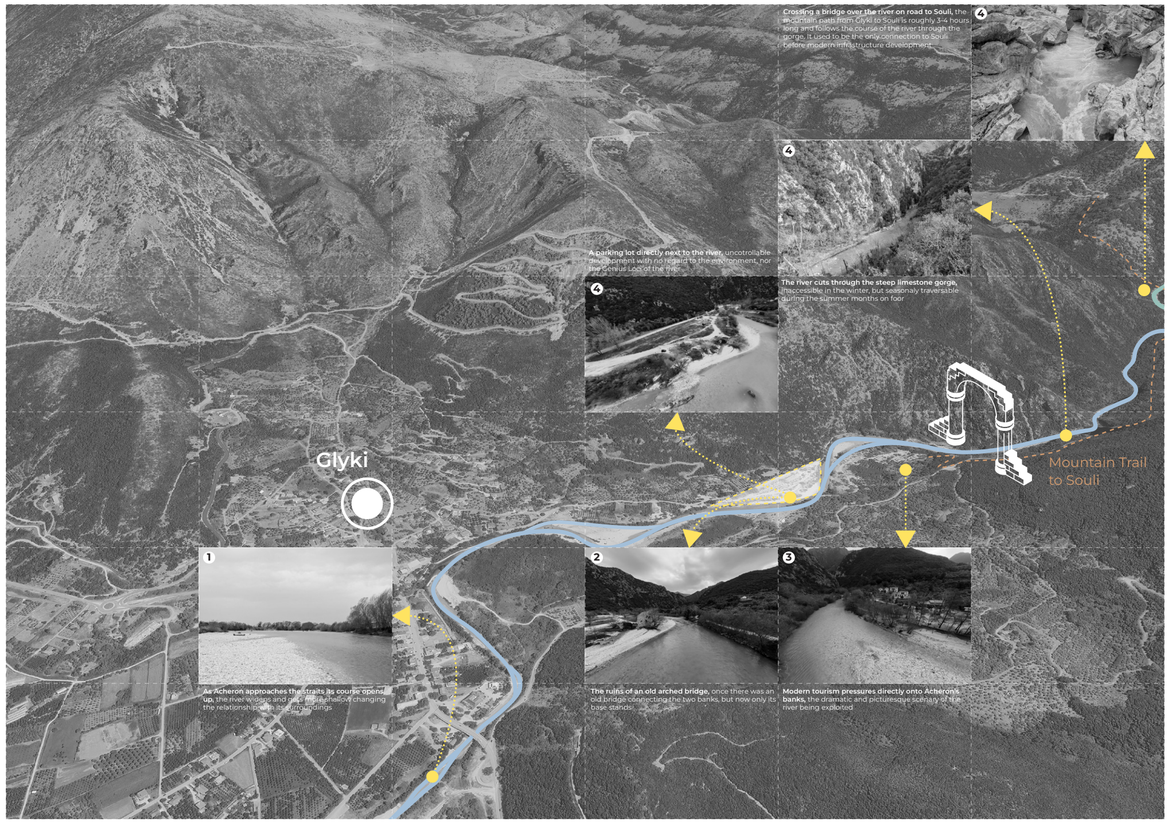




Figure 99: As the river exits the gorge at Glyki, it gets widens, forming many islets and streams, until its flow stabilises again

Persephone's Garden

Reach the place where the river widens
and its white, sun-scorched shores open to the foot,
the beaten track dissolves, let the river be your guide.
Traverse this wide, exposed, and wind-swept landscape,
strewn with heavy logs and blinding white rocks
dragged down from the mountain peaks.
Navigate its sandy islets and its winding streams,
and keep straight on until you set foot in Glyki.

Once you gain the village, stroll its wide streets.
Observe the people there in silence...
Once, mortal men revered this mighty river,
but now they view it only as a resource to be bled dry.
Do not waste your time there, your final goal draws near.

Walk the forested banks and watch the earth rise up,
the mighty limestone gorge closing in around you.
Hold your peace. Hear the wild birds singing
and the thick leaves rustling in the wind.
Soon you will leave this sunlit world and start your dark descent...
A ruined, arched bridge stands deep amidst the trees,
step over the stones and carefully cross the narrow stream,
then pass below the stony arch[1]. Your descent starts here.

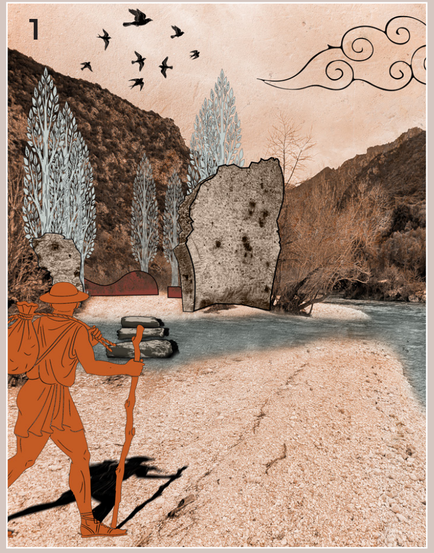
Walk down the pathway walled by tall white poplars,
and peer through the yawning breach of the corten wall,
those towering pillars shall guide you to Persephone's spring[2].
Breathe in the sharp scent of the wild thyme and sage,
and follow the ramp pitching downwards into the earth.
Right there, at the clearing guarded by the towering poplars,
veer to the right, to hear and see the mighty river one last time.
Keep straight, and plunge into the dark tunnels of Hades[3].

Find your way through the dark labyrinth tunnels,
avoid the glimmers of light bleeding from the world of the living.
Stand by the domed hall and the dark shallow pool
where Helios' rays barely reach these moist and wet depths[4].
Hug the glassy threshold and observe the expansive root system
that feasts on the damp soil, and turn left.
There, lurking in the subterranean darkness, you will cross a dark bark—
a tree stands like a column, cutting through the depths of the earth,
a pomegranate, the tree of Queen Persephone[5].
Walk around it and pay your respects to Demeter's daughter,
make your way past the Spring of Lethe, do not approach it.

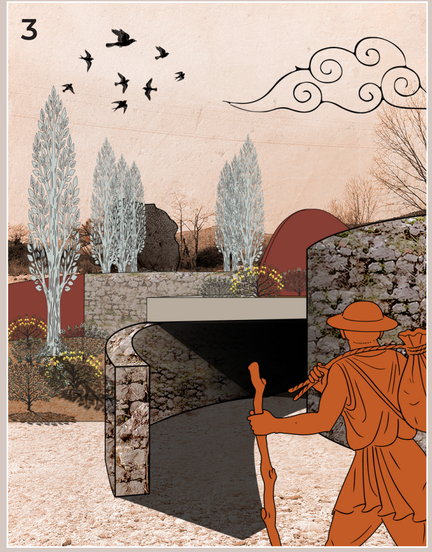
As bats cry in the depths of a dark haunted cavern,
shrilling, flittering, wild when one drops from the chain—
slipped from the rock face, while the rest cling tight …
Hermes the Healer led them on, and down the dank
moldering paths and past the Ocean's streams they went
and past the White Rock and the Sun's Western Gates and past
the Land of Dreams, and they soon reached the fields of asphodel[6]
where the dead, the burnt-out wraiths of mortals, make their home.

Stand there amidst the eerie white blooms of the underworld,
and quench your thirst at the Spring of Mnemosyne,
pooling clear and cold beneath the rusted corten pillars.
Stroll the quiet meadow where the aimless ghosts wander.
Lay down your weary head and gaze at the boundless blue of Ouranos.
You have reached your final destination, traveller.

Part IV: "Katavasis"
Third Nature














Persephone's Garden
The Asphodel Meadow
Hermes the Healer led them on, and down the dank moldering paths and past the Ocean's streams they went and past the White Rock and the Sun's Western Gates and past the Land of Dreams, and they soon reached the fields of asphodel where the dead, the burnt-out wraiths of mortals, make their home.


Persephone's Garden
Aerial View

Part IV: "Katavasis"
Third Nature

Persephone's Garden

The Asphodel Meadow - Section 1.200



Bee Pole
Detail 1.20

Steel Overhang

Mason Bee

Hole 8-10mm

Concrete
Foundation

Populus Alba

Limestone

Asphodel
Meadow

Corten
Navigational
Element

Asphodel
Ramosus

Spring of
Mnemosyne

Salvaged Stone from
Abandoned Houses

Ash

Clay



"Katavasis of the Acheron"

On the Fanari Plain scale, the ***"Katavasis"*** route is treated as a two-day cultural journey that re-organises the landscape. It merges the paths of visitors with the daily life of local residents. The total length is approximately 30 km, split into two segments of roughly 13.5 and 17 km, with the village of Mesopotamo acting as the central anchor point where the overnight campsite is located. The distance itself is not long, but the route is designed around its experiential, atmospheric, and natural qualities, and it crosses many specific interest points and settlements, so it naturally encourages the traveller to slow down, spend more time exploring, and truly immerse themselves in the landscape.

To help the visitor navigate this experience and to connect the physical space with its deep mythology, a series of corten steel slabs are placed strategically throughout the entire route, that act as a unifying element with a double purpose, spatially, they are used to guide the path and frame the visitor's view towards specific points. They are also engraved with passages from ancient mythological sources that relate directly to the exact location or view they are pointing at. This way, the ancient texts blend the mythic past with the present reality.

The route begins at Odysseus' Bay, a small sandy beach just south of the Acheron, where the border between the coastal swamp and the sea is almost non-existent. Leaving the bay, the route heads north. Here, it repurposes an existing, rigid concrete embankment as a walking path that acts as a physical border between the re-wilded brackish marshes on one side and the agricultural lands on the other. Following this threshold leads the visitor to the first major intervention site, the pumping station of Ammoudia.

This pump acts as a physical "gateway" to the river and marks the beginning of the ***"First Nature"***. A wooden deck is installed to bridge the gap between the embankment and the station, while an elevated platform and re-organised planting create an enclosed, protected resting stop. Inside the pump building, the space is retrofitted to host a small café with the necessary supporting facilities. The path literally traverses through the pump itself, exiting out of a new opening created opposite the existing one, and finally crosses a small wooden bridge that drops the visitor directly onto the river dike.

From there, the visitor crosses the river via an existing bridge near Ammoudia. After exploring the small fishing village, they enter the re-naturalised swamps. Here, the path is designed to follow both the natural arched sandy ridges and the rigid lines of the old agricultural grid. This creates a contrast, straight lines that offer open views, alternating with curved segments that hide what is coming next. At a central point, surrounded by the high ridges, an **observation tower** is placed to act as a landmark and guide through the flat swampy landscape, while also revealing to the visitor, the only from above visibel, landscape formations of the Ammoudia marshlands. The tower is designed so that the visitor cannot look outside while climbing and the full scale and formation of the marshes are only revealed to them suddenly when they step out at the top.

The journey continues through the marshland until it reaches the second pumping station, where a new water retention lake has been created to support the local ecology. From there, the path weaves through the re-forested edges of the river, eventually reaching Mesopotamo. Here, the traveller is encouraged to wander around the village and, crucially, climb the hill to explore the ancient town of Ephyra and the ruins of the Nekromanteion.

Descending from the hill, the route curves along the Cocytus and reaches the campsite. Located inside a cornfield at the exact confluence of the Acheron and Cocytus that is also the confluence of the ***First*** and ***Second Nature***, it is directly inspired by the ritual Circe instructs Odysseus to perform at this very location (Homer, Odyssey 10.508–530). It has a rectangular shape with a gentle slope towards the centre, surrounded by a perimetrical berm made from the excavated soil. Next to the field, an abandoned warehouse is re-used as a communal space where locals can sell their agricultural products and cultural events can take place. Lastly, a small pier is placed by the riverbank to host the riverboats that navigate these waters during the busy tourist season, connecting the journey back to the sea.

From there, the path guides the traveller through the agricultural fields and over the river dikes, offering an elevated overview of the cultivated landscape and its rigid spatial qualities. At Kastri, visitors can explore the ruins of ancient Pandosia before following the dikes and riverbanks onwards to Glyki.

Approaching the village of Glyki, the existing riverside parking lot is relocated to an empty plot within the settlement, requiring visitors to walk the final kilometre to the Acheron straits. Freed from this infrastructure, the riparian vegetation is allowed to reclaim the banks, providing the canvas for the ***"Garden of Persephone"***. This specific site was chosen for the garden due to its deep mythological resonance as the entrance to the Underworld, as well as the urgent need to "heal" a landscape heavily scarred by anthropogenic pressures.

The ruins of the arched bridge act as the physical transition between the world of the living and the *"Underworld"*, marking the threshold between the ***Second*** and ***Third Nature***. The garden itself is designed as a gradual descent from the earth's surface into the subterranean realm. Spatially, it aims to "misdirect" the visitor through a choreographed play of light and shadow, using otherworldly shapes, obscured views, and unexpected sights and junctions. The planting palette features deciduous species to highlight the shifting seasons, providing a dynamic experience throughout the year. This serves as a direct spatial translation of the myth of **Persephone**, the queen of the *Underworld* whose cyclical journey dictates the changing of the seasons.

Drawing inspiration from ancient texts like Plato's Phaedo, Homer's Odyssey, the Orphic Gold Tablets, and Lucian's Menippus, the culmination of the entire journey is the ***Asphodel Meadow***. Designed as a bowl-shaped depression, it represents the resting place of "average souls" in ancient Greek cosmology. Central to this space is the Asphodel (Asphodelus ramosus), a highly resilient Mediterranean geophyte characterised by tough, grey-green basal rosettes and dramatic, pale-flowered spikes reaching up to 1.5 metres (Polunin & Huxley, 1987). Blooming from late winter to spring, the plant relies on fleshy underground tubers to survive the arid summer heat. Ecologically, asphodels are highly gregarious, naturally forming the dense, expansive colonies required to create the atmospheric meadow (Ayyad & Hilmy, 1974). In the centre of this depression, a corten steel structure acts as a focal point, guiding the "soul" through the Underworld and marking the spring of ***Mnemosyne***.

The materials are sourced circularly. The retaining walls are built from stones repurposed from abandoned houses found throughout the plain. Meanwhile, the soil excavated to form the sunken meadow is reused on-site to create raised perimetrical berms, literally "burying" parts of the garden to enhance the subterranean atmosphere.

After the **Asphodel Meadow**, the visitor climbs up the stairs to return to the "ground-level" of the garden. Here, the planting shifts to local aromatic flora like thyme and sage, shaded by poplars, ashes, and the canopy of the pomegranate, the sacred tree of Persephone. Travellers can then choose to continue their hike directly trekking through the river gorge during the summer months, or take the historic mountain trail ascending towards the village of Souli.



Figure 100: The ruins of the traditional arched-bridge, the threshold of the underworld and the "entrance" to the Persephone's Garden.



Figure 101: A field of asphodels in Omalos, Crete. The eerie white of the plant and its behaviour to forme dense clusters fits perfect its usage at the deepression.

When they have crossed the lake, they are welcomed to the interior by a great meadow overgrown with asphodel, and a spring that is inimical to memory, in fact, they call it "Oblivion" for that reason.

Lucian, of Mourning 5, Trans. Fowler & Fowler

Figure 102: The Landscape of Hades. Continuing the journey over the Souli and Paramithia mountains.

Balancing a Volatile System

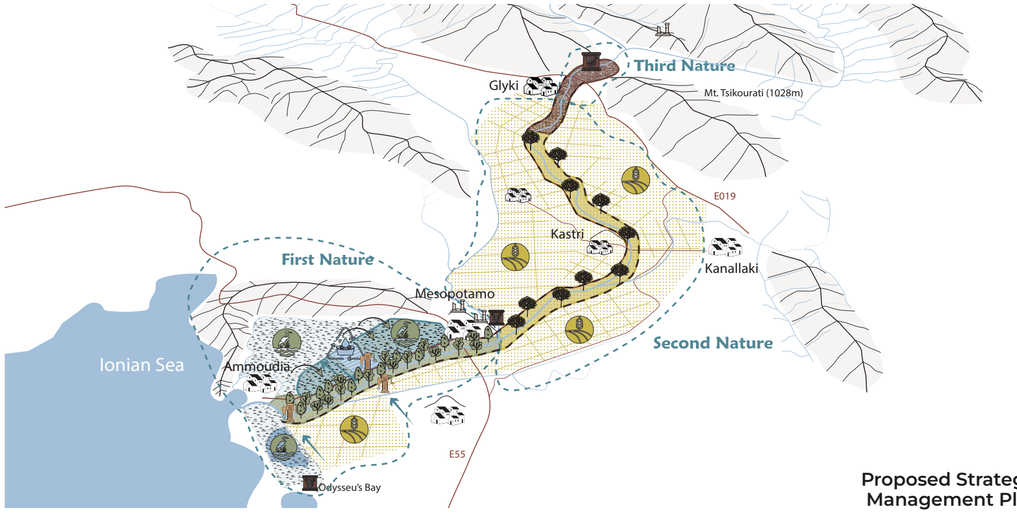
On a strategic level, the ***"Katavasis"*** route fundamentally reorganises the Fanari Plain, addressing both its ecological degradation and its historical water management issues. In the coastal delta, the ***"First Nature"*** is reinforced by expanding the Natura 2000 area, reclaiming parts of the landscape that were systematically drained in the past century. The marshland, acting as a vital sanctuary for migratory birds and local fauna, will now encompass the entire area north of the river between Mesopotamo and Ammoudia, this gives much-needed space back to nature while managing human access and raising ecological awareness through the trail itself. To achieve this dynamic landscape, the dike bordering the marshland is removed to allow natural seasonal flooding to return, essentially recreating the lost hydrological conditions of the ancient ***Acherousian Swamp.***

Central to this reorganisation is a new water strategy that directly supports the local agricultural grid. Directly adjacent to the second pumping station, a rectangular **water retention** lake is created. This lake acts as a buffer, capturing and storing excess floodwater and agricultural runoff during the wet winter months to be redistributed for agricultural irrigation during the arid summer season. By creating this system, the design significantly reduces the strain on the river's main flow and local groundwater reserves, actively reconciling the landscape's hydraulic narrative with modern cultivation needs.

Moving upstream into the ***"Second Nature"***, the agricultural zone between Mesopotamo and Kastri is reshaped to promote a more resilient, nature-friendly farming model. Here, the strict, rigid boundary between the river and the cultivated fields is broken down. The riverbanks will feature a much smoother, gradual transition between the water and the surrounding agriculture through the creation of a **wide riparian buffer**. This buffer consists of a densely re-forested core of native, water-loving species (willows, poplars, and alders) whose root systems naturally stabilise the riverbanks.

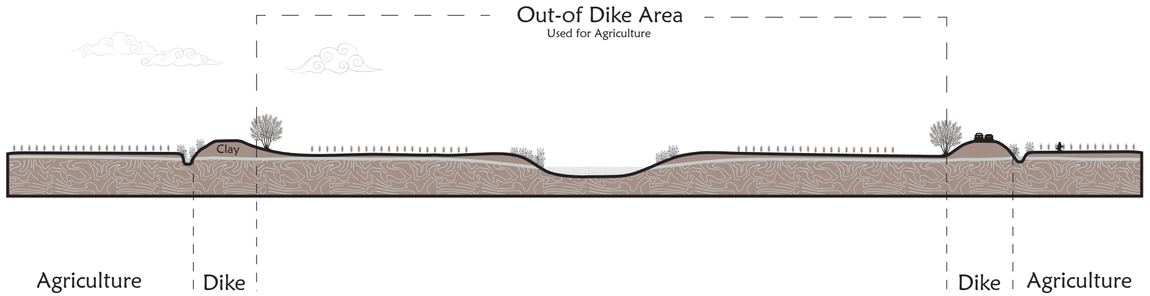
This forested core slowly transitions into **wet-resilient orchards**, such as quince and pear. These transitional orchards act as a natural, defensive "sponge" that absorbs floodwaters and bio-filters agricultural runoff before reaching the river. Simultaneously, they provide a supplementary, climate-adapted economic resource for the local farmers. By implementing this gradient, the out-of-dike areas are allowed to safely flood on a seasonal basis, which naturally enriches the soil and alleviates severe flood risks across the wider plain.

Ultimately, this strategic intervention reshapes the river back into a continuous, thriving ecological corridor. It successfully reconnects the deep, mythological gorges of the ***"Third Nature"*** in the Souli mountains, flows through the productive "Second Nature" of the plain, and finally dissipates into the wild "First Nature" of the deltaic marshlands and the Ionian Sea.

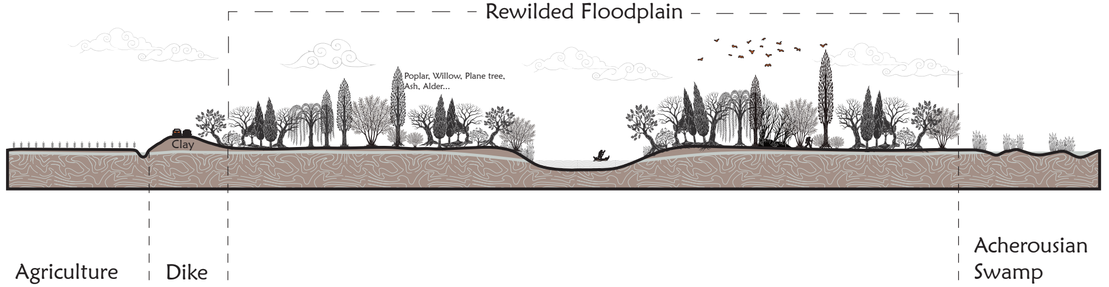


Proposed Strategic Management Plan

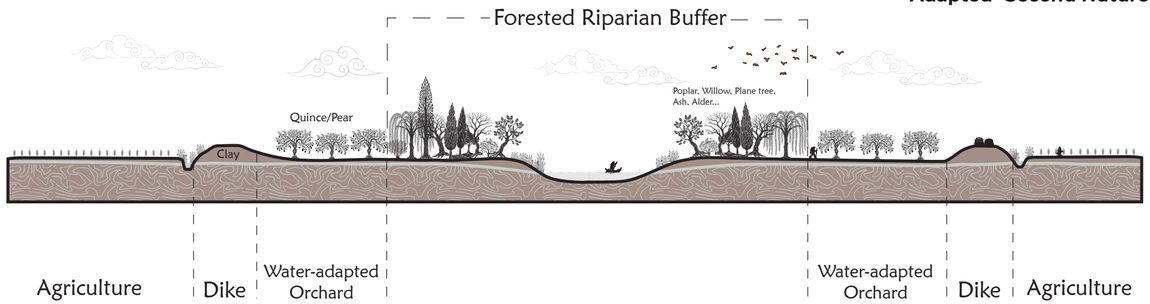
Existing Riverine Zone



Re-wilded *"First Nature"*



Adapted *"Second Nature"*



The *"Katavasis"* of the Mason Bee

The concept of the **"Katavasis"** serves as the foundational spatial narrative not only for human movement, but also for non-human species along the Acheron River. In a trajectory parallel to the human journey, the **Red Mason Bee** (Osmia bicornis) acts as an ecological protagonist. This keystone pollinator relies on a continuous corridor of early-spring forage, nesting cavities, and mud access that is intricately woven into the trail and its various interventions. This links the human experience of the *Genius Loci* with the active ecological restoration of the site, thus, the bee takes on the role of *Hermes, "The Psychopomp"*, guiding the ecological regeneration of the valley and weaving together the fragmented histories, agricultural realities, and natural ecotones of the region.

Because the individual Mason Bee operates within a maximum foraging and flight range of approximately 300 to 500 metres (Gathmann & Tscharntke, 2002), a continuous regional corridor cannot rely on a single, homogenous habitat. The vast interior of the Fanari Plain is currently dominated by intensive modern agriculture, acting as an ecological dead zone for early-spring bees due to its late phenology and chemical management. To overcome this barrier, the design implements a decentralised ***"Node and Link"*** metapopulation strategy (Hanski, 1998). The strategic changes along the riverbanks create a wide, continuous buffer filled with the specific early-blooming flora the bees require. Along the edges of the trail itself, vegetation is enhanced through targeted planting and a strict "no-mow" policy. To guarantee the spatial continuity required for their 500-metre flight hops, timber **nesting poles** are scattered along the route to act as micro-stepping stones. These poles provide essential reproductive cavities, bridging the gaps and allowing the metapopulation to entirely bypass the hostile agricultural monocultures.

The Coastal Marshes: Located near Ammoudia, this zone provides the essential architectural materials for the species. The halophytic mudflats offer the specific fine-grain, wet clay required by female bees to construct their internal brood chamber walls (Bosch, 1994). Concurrently, the dead, hollow stems of Phragmites and Juncus provide the primary, naturally occurring horizontal nesting tubes necessary for initial egg-laying (Mader et al., 2010). The vegetation is also enhanced with species like *Vitex agnus-castus* (Chaste Tree), *Tamarix hampeana* (Tamarisk), *Sea Lavender* (Limonium vulgare) and *Salix purpurea* (Willow).

The Nekromanteion Fields: Situated where the flat agricultural clay meets the rocky limestone hill, this is a highly engineered transitional zone. To mitigate the waterlogged soils that threaten ground-nesting species, the design utilises the raised earthwork berms of the campsite. Emerging from these slopes are timber nesting monoliths, enveloped by an early-spring foraging palette, dominated by Cerinthe major and Crimson Clover, aromatics such as Conehead Thyme and Jerusalem Sage and bushes like the Judas Tree and the Spanish Broom, ensuring immediate availability upon their emergence.

The Acheron Straits: The *"Bee Katavasis"* terminates where the river pinches into the dark limestone gorge. This steep, rocky node functions as a permanent, indestructible genetic reservoir, offering nesting sanctuaries within ancient limestone crevices impervious to agricultural interference. Botanically, this threshold is defined by the deliberate integration of Asphodelus ramosus, physically manifesting the mythical Asphodel Meadows of the Underworld. These pale, structural blooms provide a critical, high-yield nectar source at the narrowest point of the valley, seamlessly unifying the ecological survival of the metapopulation with the ancient spatial narrative of the route.



Figure 103: Red Mason Bee



Figure 104: Chaste Tree



Figure 105: Tamarisk



Figure 106: Sea Levander



Figure 107: Salix Purpurea



Figure 108: Cerinthe Major



Figure 109: Crimson Clover



Figure 110: Conehead Thyme



Figure 111: Jerusalem Sage

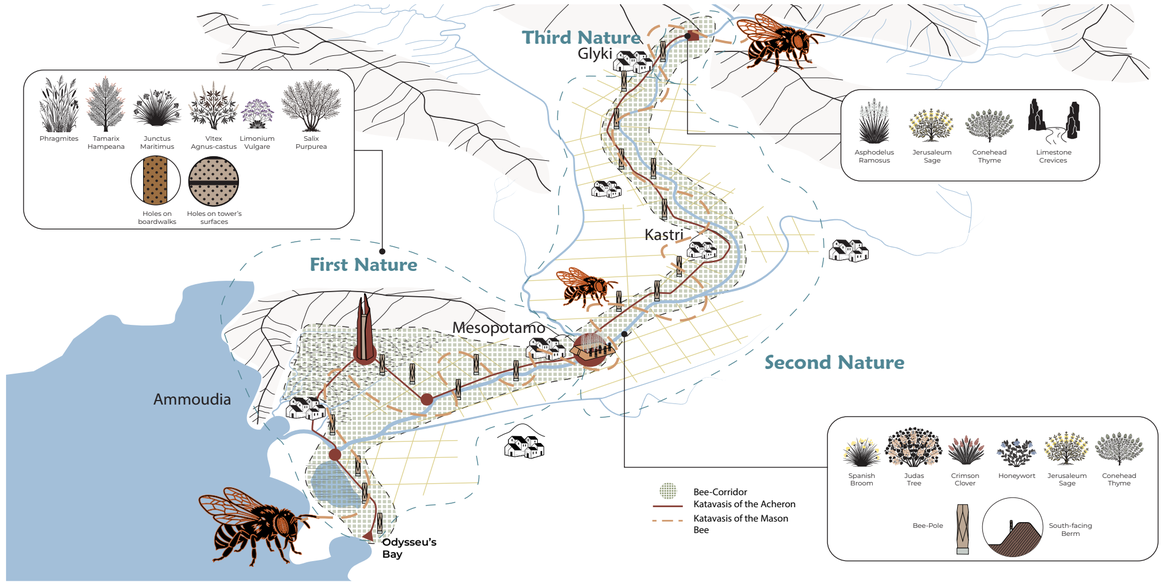
Melissae, the (bee) Nymph of the Underworld

By designing for the highly sensitive habitat requirements of the **Mason Bee**, the landscape intervention establishes an ***"Umbrella Species"*** conservation model (Roberge & Angelstam, 2004). The structural protections required by this single insect trigger a systemic cascade of biodiversity across the entire Acheron basin. For example, preserving hollow Phragmites reeds for bee nesting simultaneously protects vital overwintering habitats for threatened fauna like the Dalmatian Pelican and Eurasian Otter (Tscharntke, 1992). Furthermore, the massive influx of early-spring pollination maximises autumn yields of wild seeds and berries, sustaining local fauna through winter (Ollerton et al., 2011), while the uncultivated, pesticide-free hedgerows invite predatory insects that naturally suppress agricultural crop pests (Landis et al., 2000).

This **pollinator corridor** also shifts the regional agricultural narrative from an extractive, chemical-dependent model to one of ecological symbiosis, delivering measurable economic resilience to the local community. Unlike honeybees, the native Mason Bee utilises a messy "belly-flop" technique, collecting dry pollen across its abdomen. This makes them vastly more effective at pollinating **early-spring crops** like pears, requiring significantly fewer bees per hectare to achieve a superior fruit set (Monzón et al., 2004). Because they are structurally adapted to initiate flight in colder, wetter weather, they guarantee crop pollination even during climatically volatile springs (Vicens & Bosch, 2000). The native hedgerows planted to guide these bees also serve as natural windbreaks, significantly reducing pesticide drift and allowing farmers to steadily decrease synthetic inputs.

The ultimate validation of this intervention lies in the fact that it ties ecological and mythological narratives, utilising the myth of the ***"Melissae".*** In ancient Greek tradition, the sacred connection between bees and the chthonic deities stems fundamentally from the widespread belief that bees were the literal, physical embodiment of transmigrating souls. As souls made their descent into the Underworld or moved between the realms of the living and the dead, the bee served as the primary symbol of this journey. Because of this intrinsic link the priestesses who presided over the underworld mysteries of deities like Persephone and Demeter were formally designated as the Melissae (bees) (Cook, 1895).

Therefore, designing a Mason Bee corridor through the agricultural grid along the Acheron is not merely a biological strategy. The bees act as a living manifestation of the site's deep mythological significance, guiding the visitor along the ***Katavasis route,*** pollinating the spring landscape, and thus reclaiming their ancient role as chthonic messengers. This design choice transforms a functional ecological requirement into a living ***narrative node***, seamlessly unifying the modern, ecological survival of the Fanari Plain with the preservation of its mythological memory.



A Part of a Wider Network

On the regional unit scale, the goal is to connect the Fanari Plain and the Acheron River with the wider hiking trail network. The Epirus region is already developing initiatives centred around alternative, nature-friendly tourism, and specifically long-distance hiking. Since 2015, a 370 km trail network, the ***"Epirus Trail",*** has been in development, the longest trail ever designed in Greece. When finished, it will trace historic paths that preceded modern car roads, connecting areas of major natural, cultural, and historic significance. This includes the town of **Metsovo**, the UNESCO **Zagori Cultural Landscape**, and the Tzoumerka, Grammos, and Pindus mountains (Epirus Trail, n.d.).

The proposed ***"Katavasis of the Acheron"*** trail connects the "Epirus Trail" with an area of immense mythological, historical, and natural significance. Hikers can begin their journey from the coast, experience the proposed interventions, and immerse themselves in a unique landscape. From there, travellers can enter the historic **Souli** area, visit one of the most important oracles of the ancient world at **Dodona**, and finally explore the lake town of **Ioannina** and its medieval castle, before meeting the main "Epirus Trail" just south of Metsovo.

This greater connected system could bring increased attention and economic opportunities, helping to develop the shrinking settlements of western and central Epirus. Greek rural depopulation is a complex, multi-factor national problem that, of course, cannot be solved with one simple stroke. However, landscape projects like these, when combined with a grounded national strategy, are definitely a step in the right direction.

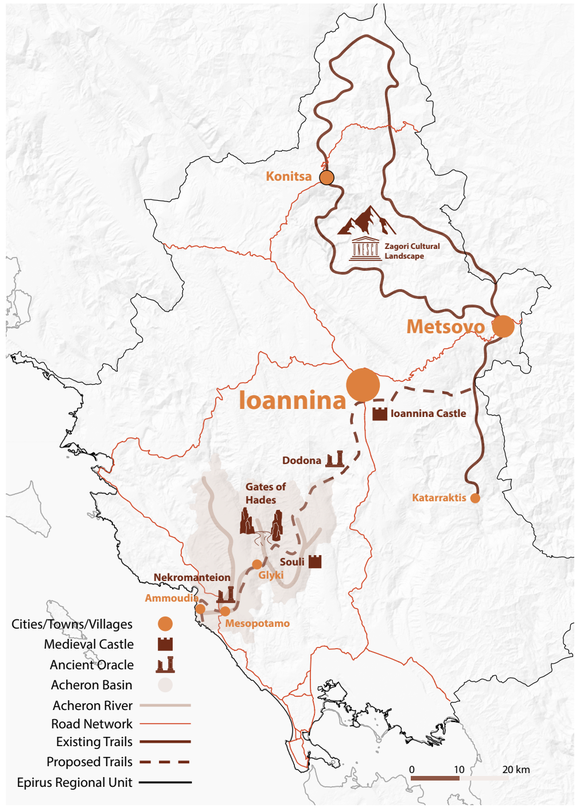




Figure 112: The "mythological" landscape of Acheron River, the Straits of Glyki.



Figure 113: The unique cultural landscape of the Souli, mountain villages.



Figure 114: The amphitheatre of Dodona, part of the Dodona archeological site.



Figure 115: The lakside Byzantine/Ottoman-era castle of Ioannina.



Figure 116: Metsovo, a unique town at 1.160m above sea level.



Figure 117: Kapesovo, one of the Zagori villages inside the unique UNESCO Zagori Cultural landscape.

Demeter's Grief



Winter, Persephone remains in the Underworld, Demeter griefs and nature fells dormant.



Spring, Hermes brings Persephone back to the world of the living, and she reunites with her mother, Demeter, bringing her joy and marking the return of spring.

As established in the "***Anagnosis"*** chapter, the Acheron River is defined by extreme hydrological seasonality, which changes how the landscape is accessed and perceived. From late autumn through early spring, the period during which the site visit and photo documentation were conducted, the river's volumes wells dramatically, rendering its waters impassable. Concurrently, the lowlands and wetlands around Ammoudia flood, creating an impenetrable swamp, but as the summer drought sets in, the water table drops, slowly revealing accessible paths through the deltaic landscape. This seasonal rhythm is most pronounced at the Acheron Straits. During the winter, the gorge is a raging, inaccessible torrent. Yet, at the height of summer, the lowered water levels render it traversable, allowing experienced hikers to cross the shallow waters on foot, reaching the halfway point of the historic trail ascending towards Souli.

This extreme seasonality is not merely a background environmental factor, but it acts as an integral driver of the design proposal and its mythological aspect. The planting strategy utilises deciduous vegetation along the riverbanks and within the "Garden of Persephone", creating a spatial analogy of Persephone's Abduction myth. According to ancient traditions, most prominently preserved in the Homeric "*Hymn to Demeter"*, her mother Demeter, the goddess of agriculture and harvest, plunged the earth into a barren winter out of profound grief, halting all earthly growth. It was only upon Persephone's negotiated, cyclical return to the surface, and thus her mother, that the earth was allowed to bloom again, effectively creating the alternating seasons (Burkert, 1985).

The design builds upon this mythological cycle. A winter visitor to the Garden will bear witness to this dormant, sorrowful nature, the stark, rigid silhouettes of the leafless trees stand as physical reminders of Demeter's grief, rendering the garden and the "bowl-shaped" depression into an empty, seemingly "dead" expanse. However, as winter breaks into spring, the landscape resurrects, central to this transformation is the "Asphodel Meadow." This pale, chthonic flower blossoms precisely from late winter to early spring, completely altering the spatial perception of the Garden. It morphs from a barren void into a blooming, yet eerily pale white field. Therefore, the ultimate spatial climax of the Garden can only be fully grasped during this specific, ephemeral time span.

A parallel seasonal choreography dictates the experience at the campsite. During the winter, the site's flora and the adjacent agricultural maize fields lie entirely dormant and visually exposed. In stark contrast, the arrival of spring triggers a dramatic atmospheric shift, with the aromatic palette of native scrub, including sage, thyme, and Spanish broom, exploding into colour, framed by the newly leafed canopies of the tall white poplars. By mid-summer, the spatial dynamics shift once again as the adjacent maize crops reach their maximum height. This agricultural growth fundamentally alters the perception of the site, establishing a dense, towering vegetative wall that transforms the sense of openness and enclosure at the threshold of the campsite, and along this section of the route.

A Landscape at the crossroads

As established throughout this thesis, the Fanari Plain is a highly dynamic, fragile, and shifting environment that has continuously evolved over the millennia (Besonen et al., 2003). Therefore, it is imperative to critically examine how any proposed intervention, or the lack thereof, would alter the existing evolutionary trajectory and delicate balance of the river plain.

The "Zero-Intervention" Trajectory (30-Year Projection):

Maintaining current agricultural, socioeconomic, and passive ecological trends will inevitably accelerate the crises within the Fanari Plain. Hydrologically, flooding is already a severe challenge; under increasingly volatile climatic conditions, the study area is projected to face one to two major flood events annually (Spyrou, 2021). This escalating environmental risk will force more residents to abandon their land, severely intensifying rural depopulation.

Simultaneously, unchecked tourism will continue to appropriate the riverbanks and coastal zones, exploiting the site's unique Genius Loci for rapid capital gain. Paradoxically, the decline in agriculture has initiated a passive ecological re-wilding, with historical deltaic wetlands beginning to reappear. However, lacking a strategic spatial framework, this fragile recovery remains completely exposed to unmanaged tourist access and unregulated development. Ultimately, without intervention, the true spatial and mythological depth of the Acheron risks being flattened into a purely "picturesque" backdrop to be consumed and sold.

The *"Katavasis of the Acheron"* (30-Year Projection):

Implementing the ***"Katavasis of the Acheron"*** route and its multi-scalar interventions will fundamentally stabilise the Fanari Plain. The proposed circular water management system, incorporating re-wilded floodplains, expanded wetlands, and a new retention reservoir, will mitigate severe winter flooding while ensuring agricultural resilience against prolonged Mediterranean droughts.

Concurrently, the ecological restoration of the deltaic Natura 2000 area is actively accelerated. Targeted design solutions balance vital habitats with agricultural realities, carefully managing human access to protect vulnerable species while fostering environmental awareness. Economically, the continuous cultural route will attract sustainable, year-round, nature-based tourism on a national and international scale. Combined with climate-resilient farming, this influx of opportunity provides the economic stability required to stabilise the rural exodus.

Ultimately, grounding this set of design proposals in the Acheron's chthonic *Genius Loci* weaves the entire region together, transforming the valley into a cohesive spatial narrative that functions ecologically, sustains itself economically, and resonates profoundly with its mythological memory, synthesising the ***"Landscape of Hades".***



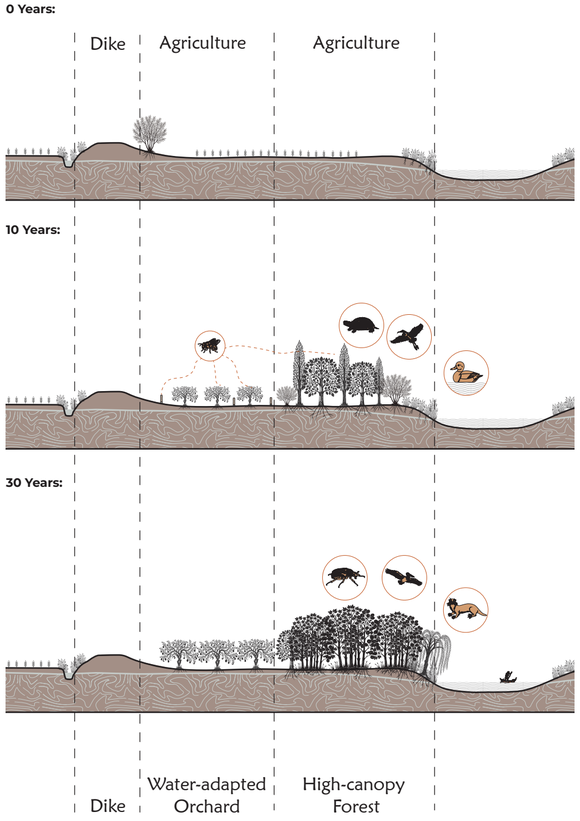
Zero-Intervention, the river causes annually major damage in agriculture, driving people to leave the area and seasonal tourism takes over



Katavasis of the Acheron, The landscape becomes a legible palimpsest that functions ecologically and narrates the chthonic memory of the ***"Landscape of Hades"***



Figure 118: A high-canopy forest of Oriental Plane trees (Platanus orientalis)



A Gradual Proccess

Within the Acheron valley, the most profound spatial and ecological rupture exists at the threshold between the wild (***First Nature***) and the rigid agricultural grid (***Second Nature***). To heal this fracture, a process of assisted ecological succession will be used, that leverages the chronological evolution of the landscape itself. Over a 30-year trajectory, this natural progression functions as the project's living intervention, allowing the plain to transition into a dynamic landscape that seamlessly stitches the First and Second Natures back together.

0 Years (The Fractured Natures):

The river is currently tightly constrained between parallel dikes, with intensive agriculture pushed to the absolute edge of the out-of-dike area. The landscape is not only ecologically sterile but culturally severed from its chthonic narrative. Stripped of its protective canopy and biodiversity, the soil is highly vulnerable to flooding, and the profound *Genius Loci* of the Acheron is entirely suppressed by the rigid logic of mid-century hydraulic engineering.

10 Years (Pioneer Establishment):

The strict spatial boundary between the river and the cultivated fields is dismantled to create a wide, ecological gradient/buffer. The immediate riverbank is rapidly secured by the expanding root systems of fast-growing **pioneer trees**, such as White Willow (Salix alba) and White Poplar (Populus alba), which actively bind the soil against winter erosion. This native core seamlessly transitions into a secondary buffer of maturing **water-adapted orchards**, specifically quince and pear, which successfully bridge the cultivation and hydraulic narratives by functioning as a bio-filter and a "sponge" for floodwaters. Crucially, timber nesting poles integrated across these transitional zones support the ***"node and link"*** metapopulation of the **Red Mason Bee** (Osmia bicornis). Acting as the ecological *Psychopomp*, the bee physically guides the recovery of the spring ecosystem, while thickening reed beds (Phragmites australis) at the water's edge create vital nesting corridors for returning avifauna. The riverbank now actively performs as a dynamic, living threshold rather than a dividing wall.

30 Years (The re-unified *Landscape of Hades*):

The ecosystem reaches a stable, self-regulating climax state. A **high-canopy forest** of Oriental Plane trees (Platanus orientalis) and mature alders dominates the immediate riverbank, seamlessly extending the forested straits of Glyki down into the plain. The environment now successfully mediates the ***"Three Natures."*** It physically links the wild coastal delta (First Nature) to the dark mountain gorges (Third Nature) through a thriving, flood-resilient agricultural plain (Second Nature), fully realising the ***Landscape of Hades*** as a reconciled, living ecosystem.

Building the Route

At the core of this thesis is the fundamental reconciliation of the Acheron's fractured narratives. To physically realise the Katavasis route, the spatial interventions cannot be forcefully imposed upon the landscape, they must emerge from it. Every proposed intervention is designed to act as a low-impact, sustainable threshold that actively performs the mythological descent while respecting the region's delicate ecosystem.

Reprogramming the infrastructure:

Rather than erasing the area's utilitarian past, existing hydraulic and agricultural remnants are actively re-purposed into the cultural route. The rigid concrete embankment near Ammoudia is re-appropriated as an elevated pathway, subverting its original dividing function. Two obsolete pumping stations are transformed through timber additions into nodes, points of rest and refreshment. The campsite is strategically anchored by an abandoned agricultural warehouse, which is retrofitted to host supporting facilities and a communal gathering space for locals and visitors. Finally, the parking lot at Glyki is entirely reclaimed to form "Persephone's Garden," healing the riverbank without requiring new land clearance.

Cut and Fill Topography:

To minimise the carbon footprint and preserve the soil ecology, all topographic interventions strictly utilise a zero-waste "cut and fill" methodology. At the Nekromanteion campsite, soil removed from the centre creates a subtly sunken camping ground, while the displaced earth is used to raise the perimetrical berm, recreating Odysseus' "trench". Similarly, the earth excavated to carve the sunken, bowl-shaped meadow of Persephone's Garden is reused to raise its outer edges and simultaneously bury and integrate its subterranean parts into the riverbank.

Walls of "Mneme":

The retaining walls required to create the Garden and its subterranean parts are constructed using traditional dry-stone techniques. This method deliberately repurposes stones salvaged from the abandoned, ruined houses scattered throughout the Fanari Plain, supplemented by local river rock. This choice transforms a structural necessity into a spatial monument of local memory, physically weaving the region's socio-economic history (rural depopulation) directly into the landscape's new infrastructure.

Pathways: A Stratigraphy of Movement

The materiality of the route shifts in direct response to the landscape typologies. In the flooded wetlands of the First Nature, elevated wooden boardwalks ensure safe, year-round accessibility. As the route transitions into the Second and Third Natures, the pathways are grounded using pressed earth, local stone, and crushed limestone, ensuring the pedestrian surface remains fully permeable and organically tied to the geological stratigraphy of Epirus.

Corten Steel: The Narrative Thresholds

Corten steel is deliberately deployed as the primary architectural contrast to the living ecosystem. Used to frame specific viewpoints and act as a navigational instrument, the oxidised steel functions as a canvas to physically anchor ancient mythological texts into the site. As a raw, heavy material, it creates a stark visual threshold that bridges the living landscape with the dark narrative of the Underworld. Furthermore, its inherent oxidation process visually performs the graceful decay of time. It requires no toxic coatings and demands zero maintenance, making it an ecologically benign material that interacts with the site's Genius Loci.



Figure 119: The Pumping Station of Ammoudia.



Figure 120: Re-purposing salvaged stones to project the cultural memory of the area.



Figure 121: Cut and Fill Topography, using soil in situ.



Figure 122: Elevated boardwalk through a marshland



Figure 123: Corten stell, a contrast promoting "material" dialogue

Involving the community

A fundamental premise of this thesis is that the physical reconciliation of the Acheron's ***"Three Natures"*** cannot succeed without the simultaneous reconciliation of its "social landscape". The local community is not viewed merely as a passive beneficiary of the project, but as an essential, living part of it. The long-term success of the project relies entirely on shifting the local relationship with the river from one of extraction and fear (flooding) to one of active stewardship and shared prosperity.

The Master Builder Methodology

To ensure the landscape interventions are rooted in the region's heritage, local residents will be encouraged to participate in the physical construction and "paving" of the route. The project builds upon Dimitris Pikionis' traditional ***"master builder"*** methodology (Architectural League of New York, 2017). By collaborating on-site with skilled local craftsmen, the community embeds its own "soul" into the design. This serves a triple purpose: providing immediate economic opportunities during the construction phase, saving endangered traditional building techniques, and fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility over the physical trail.

Agro-Ecological Transition:

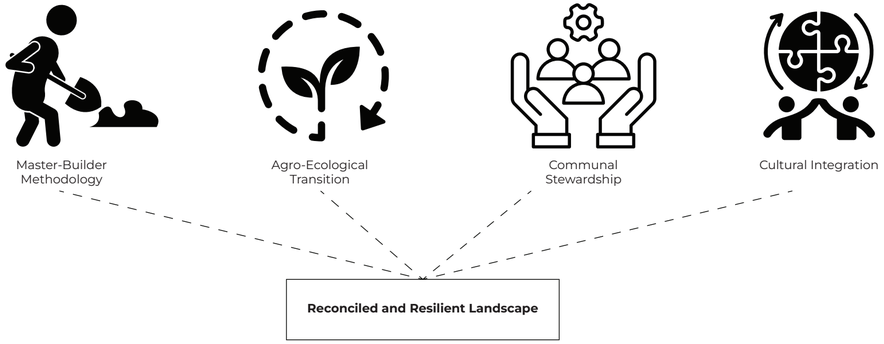
Because the ***"Second Nature"*** remains an active agricultural grid, the project mandates a shift towards cooperative management. Targeted workshops will actively help local farmers move towards cultivating the proposed water-adapted crops (quince and pear) and managing the newly introduced Red Mason Bee apiaries. The aim is to prove to the residents that ecological resilience directly secures long-term agricultural survival and attempts to bridge the gap between environmental authorities and traditional farmers.

Communal Stewardship:

Younger residents will drive a continuous participatory ecology initiative, actively tracking wetland recovery, returning avifauna, and seasonal hydrological shifts. Simultaneously, the project aims to engage the region's elderly population by recording their oral traditions and narratives, documenting lost water sources, historic flood lines, forgotten paths, and local folklore, saving, thus this "invisible cultural data" from "dying out". This memory is then physically inscribed into the route's corten steel thresholds.

Cultural Integration:

Finally, the route actively subverts the extractive, highly seasonal nature of modern tourism. Visitors are integrated into the community through hands-on workshops focused on local mythology, traditional craftsmanship, and regional harvests. By transforming a flat, "picturesque" tourist backdrop into a shared, living cultural, mythological and natural landscape, the project ensures the *Genius Loci* of the Acheron is protected by both those who visit it and those who inhabit it.



Towards A Reconciled Landscape

The complete transformation of the Acheron's riverine landscape cannot be achieved through a singular, static intervention. Rather, it requires a well-planned phased spatial strategy. Because the ***Katavasis*** route must rebalance a complex web of mythological, ecological, societal, and economic factors, the design operates on multiple temporal scales. While certain interventions can be realised rapidly, foundational ecological succession will take decades to mature. It is therefore imperative to sequence the route's physical construction directly alongside the landscape's biological recovery and the community's socio-economic adaptation.

Phase 1:

Before any more intense intervention occurs, the project must take root in both the soil and the community. This phase initiates the ***"Communal Stewardship"*** programme, actively engaging local residents, farmers, and authorities through on-site workshops. Simultaneously, biological recovery begins, the rigid agricultural boundaries are breached to plant pioneer riparian buffers (willows, poplars) and transitional orchards (quince, pear). Crucially, timber nesting poles and the required vegetation for the Red Mason Bee are installed to kickstart the ***pollination cycle***, while the community establishes its cooperative management framework.

Phase 2:

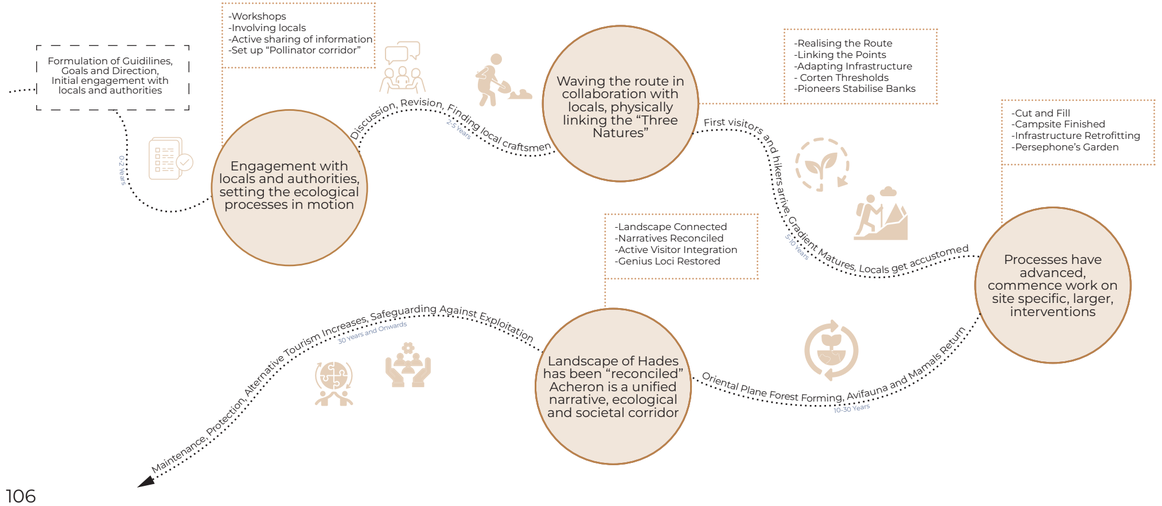
With the social and biological foundations set, the physical path of the Katavasis is actively woven into the landscape. Collaborating with ***local craftsmen***, the route is paved using permeable materials. The concrete embankment near Ammoudia is converted into an elevated walkway, and the ***corten steel*** navigational elements are embedded into the terrain to mark viewpoints and mythological thresholds. This phase completes the continuous spatial link between the ***Three Natures***, attracting the first wave of sustainable tourism while young riparian trees stabilise the floodplains.

Phase 3:

As the ecological gradient matures and the orchards begin to yield fruit, the landscape achieves enough resilience to absorb the larger interventions. The site-specific ***"cut and fill"*** earthworks commence and the Nekromanteion campsite is created. The abandoned agricultural warehouse is retrofitted., Simultaneously, the parking lot at Glyki is depaved and transformed into the sunken ***"Garden of Persephone,"*** and the pumping stations are converted and embedded into the route.

Phase 4:

The ***"Landscape of Hades"*** is fully reconciled, bringing the ***"Three Natures"*** into physical and narrative balance. Pioneer trees are succeeded, creating a gallery forest of Oriental Plane trees (Platanus orientalis), a fully functional landscape from the delta to the mountain straits. As the region earns international recognition for cultural and nature-based tourism, the project shifts purely to maintenance and protection. To prevent the exploitation of this unique landscape for rapid capital gain, the community cooperative enforces strict ecological carrying capacities, ensuring that the *Genius Loci* is preserved.



"Praxis" (realisation)

The ***"Katavasis of the Acheron"*** establishes the valley's mythological narrative not as a passive cultural overlay, but as the primary spatial driver of regional transformation. Rather than imposing a generic ecological framework, it is the ancient sequence of the *Underworld* that dictates the fundamental reorganisation of the Fanari Plain.

Driven directly by the intentions to physically "perform" this mythical descent, the design attempts to resolve the region's severe ecological and socio-economic fractures. Large-scale systemic moves, such as assisting the re-wilding of the ***Acherousian Swamp***, integrating circular water retention infrastructure, and establishing the Mason Bee **pollinator corridor**, are all catalysed by the necessity to reconcile the living landscape with its chthonic memory. Simultaneously, targeted design interventions engage in a direct dialogue with mythological texts, ensuring that every ecological shift is experienced as a deliberate step deeper into the site's *Genius Loci*. Crucially, the physical realisation of this descent rejects static construction in favour of a 30-year biological and social evolution. The spatial interventions are rooted in the landscape through Dimitris Pikionis' ***"master builder"*** methodology, utilising local craftsmen to embed regional heritage directly into the route. This physical construction is phased alongside the ecological succession of the riverbanks and the establishment of cooperative agricultural management, this way the local community is transformed into the active caretakers of the site.

Ultimately, by allowing the myth to dictate both the spatial design and its long-term realisation, the valley is transformed into a resilient, self-sustaining ecosystem, forcing modern cultivation to successfully adapt to the sacred ***"Landscape of Hades".***

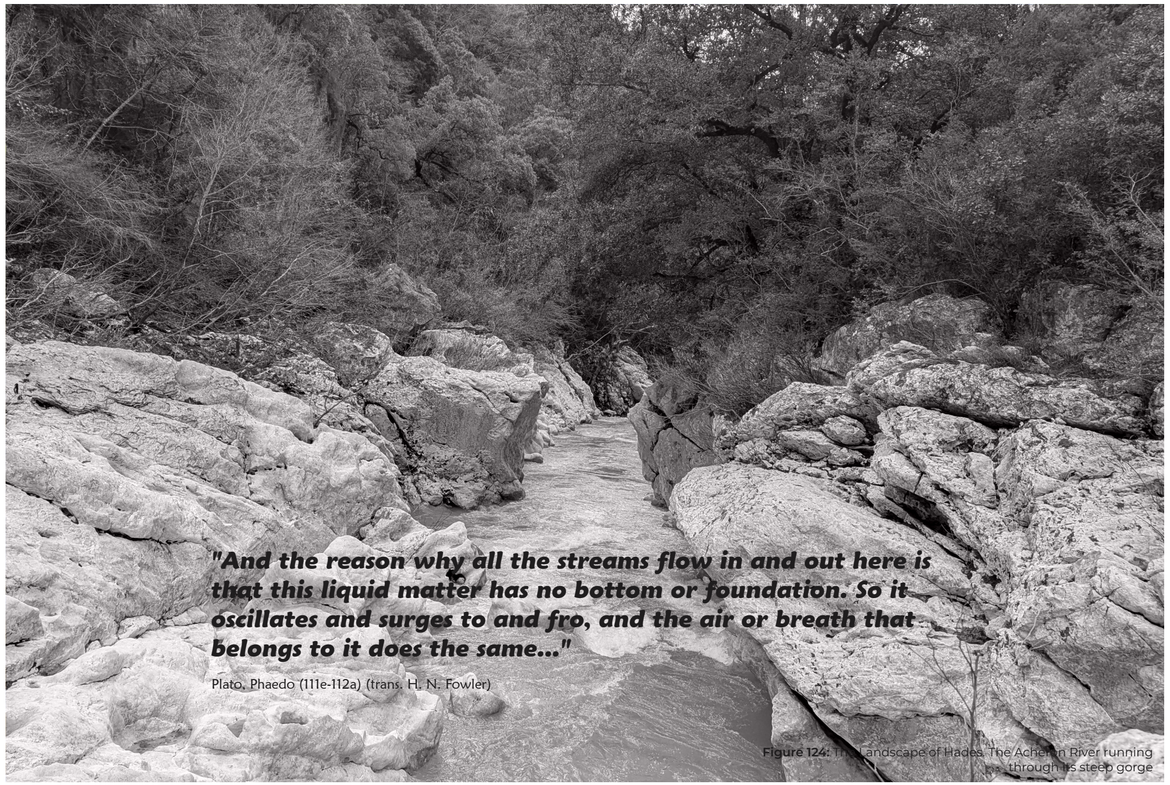


Figure 124: The Landscape of Hades. The Acheron River running through its steep gorge



Figure 125: Ascending from the Underworld back to the world of the living, Persephone reunites with her mother (Demeter).
Leighton, F. (1891). The return of Persephone [Painting]. Leeds Art Gallery, Leeds, United Kingdom.

Part V: *"Anavasis" (Ascent)*

Ascending from the Underworld

In ancient Greek cosmology, the ***Katavasis*** to the *Underworld* is a one-way journey, permanently transitioning the soul from the realm of the living to the domain of the dead. In rare instances, however, mythical figures managed to perform an ***Anavasis*** (Ascent), returning to the earth's surface. This rare return was achieved either by mortals resurrected from the dead, such as the soldier **Er**, who awoke on his funeral pyre to impart newfound knowledge of the cosmic system (Plato, Republic 10.614b), or by heroes who physically breached the realm as living visitors. Figures like **Heracles** (Apollodorus 2.5.12) and **Orpheus** (Apollodorus 1.3.2) relied on the sheer physical toil of their bodies to descend and ascend, while **Odysseus** navigated the misty edges of the Underworld through a physical earthwork, digging a trench at the exact confluence of the **Acheron** and **Cocytus** rivers (Homer, Odyssey 10.513–520). Ultimately, an Anavasis is never just an empty "return", it brings with it a vital newfound knowledge that fundamentally reshapes the individual and their world view.

Within the theoretical framework of this thesis, the ***Anavasis*** represents the ultimate synthesis of ***Anagnosis*** (Reading), Mneme (Memory), and ***Methodos*** (Method) reflecting on the ***Katavasis*** (Descent). If the Katavasis was the deliberate act of interpreting the landscape's historical fractures and charting a spatial descent to reconcile its ***"Three Natures"***, the Anavasis is the return, the act of bringing this knowledge back to the surface. Having reached the depths of the *Genius Loci*, the project must now ascend, translating the narrative sequence into a permanent socio-ecological reality.

This ascent requires zooming out from the specific localised geography of the Fanari Plain to position the project within the broader discourse of contemporary landscape architecture. Today, the discipline frequently operates at the volatile intersection of utilitarian infrastructure and cultural heritage. In this context, the Acheron River serves as a microcosm for urgent ***global crises***: the erasure of mythological and local memory by technocratic water management, the hollowing out of agrarian communities through severe rural abandonment, and the exploitation of sacred and unique geographies by mass tourism. The Anavasis asserts that myth and cultural memory are not merely aesthetic overlays or historical footnotes, rather, they are powerful, tools capable that can be used to rebalance such global frictions.

Consequently, this final chapter serves as the project's ascent, structured into three distinct phases of critical overview: First, comes a Conclusion of the ***"Katavasis"*** that synthesises the core findings, explicitly answering the research questions to demonstrate how the mythological, hydraulic, and cultivation narratives of the Acheron have been physically reconciled. Afterwards, the findings of this thesis are going to be examined beyond the Acheron, extracting this localised knowledge outward and examining how the strategies developed here challenge the broader landscape discourse, offering a replicable framework to combat the global paradigms of rural depopulation, strict technocratic intervention, and mass, seasonal, tourism. Finally, the chapter concludes with a ***"Personal Anavasis"***, offering a critical evaluation of the design process and the translation of ancient texts into spatial parameters. This section serves as a personal reflection, examining the limitations of the research and the assumptions made throughout the project.



Figure 126: The critical reflection. Ascending from the Design to examine it from 'above'. Re-wilded lake as viewed from the hill of St. Helena.

Concluding the Katavasis

This thesis investigates the physical and conceptual reconciliation of the Acheron River's ***"Three Natures"*** through mythological, hydraulic, and cultivation narratives. The project states that the Acheron cannot be healed by isolating its ecology from its mythological and cultural memory, nor by prioritising utilitarian infrastructure over its identity. Instead, the landscape is reconciled by deploying the ***"Katavasis"***, the descent into Hades, as the primary spatial intervention to tackle the challenges of the Fanari Plain. By allowing this ritual to dictate the landscape interventions, the rigid boundaries separating the wild, the cultivated, and the narrative dissolve, successfully stitching the Acheron's ***"Three Natures"*** back into a cohesive, living ecosystem.

Achieving this synthesis required defining the landscape's exact fragmentation. Research established that the site's severe environmental volatility stems directly from mid-century water management, dikes suppressed natural alluvial dynamics, enforcing a sterile boundary between the ***First Nature*** (marshlands) and ***Second Nature*** (agricultural grid). This ecological vulnerability is exacerbated by Epirus's localised socio-economic pressures, a hyper-seasonal tourism model that empties the region in winter and commodifies the river in summer. Consequently, the critical points of spatial friction, emerge precisely where modern hydraulics suppress ***mythological memory***, trapping the river and severing the generational bond between the community and their landscape.

Dissolving this friction required translating the *Underworld's* abstract atmosphere, deep shadows, seasonal decay and spatial thresholds, into a tangible, holistic landscape design. Rather than merely illustrating these concepts, the design generates ***"Synthetic Meaning"***, the active fusion of poetic and mythological narrative with the utilitarian function. This synthesis projects ancient memory directly onto the terrain through corten steel thresholds, inscribed with Homeric verses, these stark elements act as literal navigational lenses guiding physical paths and views. To permanently anchor these narrative figures, the route is physically grounded through the deliberate re-use of materials and salvaged stones, actively adding to and enriching the regional heritage.

Ultimately, the ***Katavasis*** route functions as the primary spatial connective factor, physicalising the "ritual of descent" to bring the valley's fragmented landscapes back together. Through a choreographed sequence of paths, the site is progressively and slowly revealed. The journey originates in the restored ***First Nature***, guiding visitors across elevated boardwalks through the re-wilded Acherousian marshlands. Moving inland, the path transitions seamlessly into the cultivated ***Second Nature*** of the Fanari plain, navigating softened agricultural boundaries, earthen dikes, and active fields. This structural progression culminates in the ***Third Nature*** at the limestone straits of Glyki. Here, the subterranean ***"Garden of Persephone"*** serves as the atmospheric anchor, which "summarises" the route's emotional, spatial, and mythological elements into a singular, resonant space that reflects on and refers to mythology. Binding this continuous path, the Red Mason Bee ***pollinator corridor*** tracks alongside the route to actively drive biological recovery. Consequently, the trail transcends mere infrastructure to become a continuous, lived ritual, where physical progression fosters a holistic understanding of the Acheron's unique chthonic *Genius Loci*.



Figure 127: A path connects two various points along a journey, walking it provides the holistic experience of exploration. As a metaphor, the path is used as the connector of the Three Natures through which the conflicting narratives are reconciled.

Beyond the Acheron

The ***"Anavasis"*** and ***"Katavasis"*** form a perpetual cycle, knowledge unearthed through analysis, "narrative excavation" the methods and the design drives a broader discussion in the landscape architecture field. At the core of this thesis lies the argument that there needs to be a shift in how the discipline of landscape architecture approaches and views the landscape itself. As Tartaron (2004) argues, a landscape is an ***"enculturated"*** territory, thus, it cannot be reduced to a neutral collection of natural resources awaiting a strict, technical problem-solving approach. Instead, it must be recognised as a complex repository of human culture, what Schama (1995) defines as a continuous ***"current of memory"***. The Anavasis projects methodologies extracted from the Acheron River outward. By positioning myth and cultural memory as the primary drivers of narrative reconciliation, this research offers a replicable framework that leverages the core perspectives of landscape architecture to subvert dominant global paradigms.

A multilayered Palimpsest

Globally, modern water management, infrastructure, and even ecological restoration predominantly operate through a purely utilitarian, ***solution-based*** lens. By treating the environment strictly as a technical or biological problem to be solved, these interventions actively erase a site's *Genius Loci*. This placeless functionalism strips landscapes of their ***"qualitative dimension"***, turning meaningful places of human orientation into generic, engineered spaces (Norberg-Schulz, 1980). The methodology developed here challenges this hegemony through the lens of ***Critical Regionalism*** (Lefaivre & Tzonis, 2003). By treating mid-century engineering grids as a **Palimpsest**, a layered surface where the visible traces of history, myth, and nature are continuously overwritten but never fully erased (Corboz, 1983), the discipline can systematically soften and subvert them. Rather than erasing modern interventions or resorting to nostalgic idealism, landscape architects can apply Olin's concept of ***"Synthetic Meaning"*** (1988). Through deliberate "artifice," utilitarian infrastructure and biological processes are spatially reprogrammed to perform a cultural narrative, proving that narrative reconciliation can successfully mediate between the layered weight of the past and the vital, productive needs of the present.

A Route through the Scales

Agrarian landscapes worldwide are suffering from a severe rural exodus, leaving behind abandoned settlements. The discipline frequently attempts to address this through top-down conservation, which fails because it treats the environment as a static museum rather than a dynamic, "lived" reality (Terkenli, 2001). To combat this, landscape infrastructure must be designed as "Vessels of Life" (Docheia Zois), structures that emerge from the structural truth of the land and actively support its contemporary socio-economic survival (Konstantinidis, 1972). Within this framework, the continuous **spatial route** emerges as the vital design mechanism operating across the **Scale-Continuum**, utilising myth as the primary driver of multi-scalar change. At a vast regional scale, the route acts as a mythological and socio-economic spine, physically reconnecting fragmented settlements using existing and new paths. At the intermediate scale, this overarching narrative becomes the driver and guides change, addressing site-specific challenges. Rather than imposing a generic biological blueprint, the design deploys open-ended strategies where the atmosphere of the *Genius Loci* defines the conditions, ensuring that diverse biotopes and agrarian needs mutually thrive. Finally, the design compresses down to the intimate scale, anchoring these **mythological narratives** directly into the terrain through the tactile ***"toil of the body"*** at the material level (Pikionis, 1935). By demanding the continuous physical stewardship of both the ecology and the narrative. it allows the, often marginalised, locals to regain their spatial identification and become active caretakers of their deeply rooted, enculturated heritage.

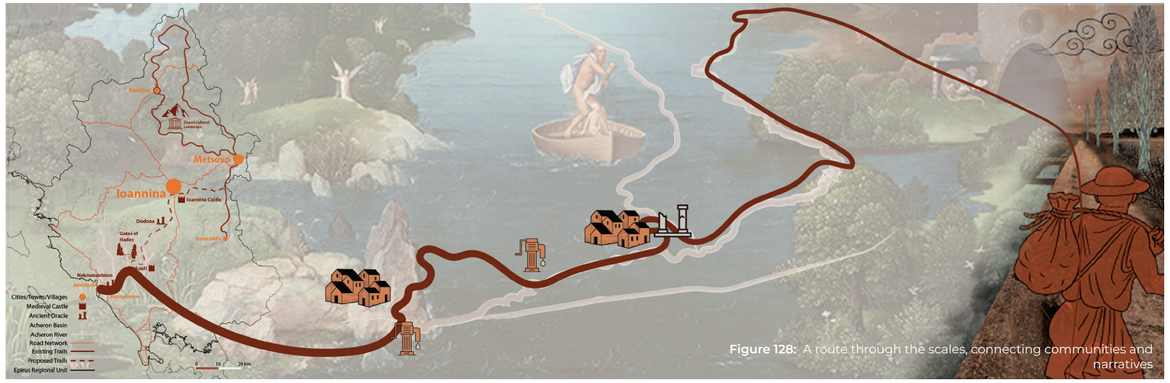


Figure 128: A route through the scales, connecting communities and narratives

Redefining Tourism through Perception

The exploitation of unique landscapes by hyper-seasonal, mass tourism is a critical global threat. This extractive model fundamentally misunderstands the terrain, treating it as an "idealised archetype" (Moraitis, 2015) or a mere scenic background for passive visual consumption. The spatial strategy of the ***Katavasis*** offers a direct counter-model by prioritising immersive Spatial-Visual perception and direct ***Bodily Experience***. Drawing on ancient accounts, this methodology asserts that myth is not abstract, but requires specific physical grounding in rocks, rivers, and thresholds to exist (Pausanias, 1.17.5). By **choreographing** sequences that dictate the unfolding of information through the physical movement of the body at varying speeds, the design forces a slowing down of the landscape experience. It transforms the terrain into a cohesive atmosphere where the sensorial perception of textures, shifting seasonal colours, and auditory cues actively reconnect the visitor to the land and its Genius Loci. The transferable lesson is the shift from "tourism as consumption" to ***"tourism as a lived, sensorial ritual"***. This fosters a transition into slow tourism that connects to the site physically, socially, and experientially, increasing respectful interaction and financially sustaining the region without reducing its cultural, mythological and ecological memory into a commodity.



Figure 129: Immersion into the landscape, tourism as a lived, sensorial ritual instead of tourism as consumption. Over the dike, near Ammoudia.

Flow of Myth and Landscape

Ultimately, the broader implication of this thesis is a re-evaluation of how the discipline handles both intangible heritage and environmental recovery. Landscape architecture is not merely a branch of the natural sciences, it is a vital "social art form" (Olin, 1988). Drawing on Tartaron's (2004) enculturated landscape, this research asserts that myth must be engaged not as a static historical artefact, but as a dynamic ***"flow of Myth"*** (Schama, 1995), that is connected to the natural ***"process of the landscape"***. When infrastructural and ecological interventions are filtered through the lens of ***Critical Regionalism*** (Lefaivre & Tzonis, 2003), the discipline ceases to treat narrative and nature as separate entities. By allowing the mythological memory of the ***Katavasis*** to actively dictate the biological and visual succession of the terrain, the methodology restores both the physical ecology and the intangible narrative simultaneously. It is precisely through this dual restoration that the fractured *Genius Loci* is re-established. Consequently, this approach proves that landscape architecture is not the delivery of a static, technical product, but the staging of an open-ended **Process**, ensuring that landscapes evolve as dynamic, meaningful places for humans, nature, and culture alike.



Figure 130: Landscapes, a dynamic, meaningful places for humans, nature, and culture alike. The river front at Ammoudia.

A Personal Anavasis

Developing this thesis has been a significant process of unlearning, rebuilding and yielding valuable insights for my academic and professional trajectory. Although this is my second thesis project, the continuous loop of research, analysis, and design demanded by the Flowscapes framework provided immense developmental value. Coming from a background in Architecture, I entered this project with a highly technical, problem-solving approach to design. While I possessed a deep, pre-existing interest in history and heritage, I was accustomed to operating within the "safe zone" of utilitarian functionalism. Choosing to develop a project in my country of origin allowed me to leverage familiar cultural contexts, but the Acheron River fundamentally challenged how I view both Architecture and Landscape Architecture. It forced me to step beyond strict spatial geometries and test my limits within a deeply enculturated, narrative-driven methodology.

I specifically chose the Acheron River because its unique Genius Loci and profound mythological weight resonated deeply with me. At the outset, navigating the dense theoretical concepts, site-specific analyses, and ancient texts felt uncharted, I did not fully know how these, seemingly separate, elements would synthesise into a spatial method. However, the theories of Laurie Olin and Simon Schama acted as the primary foundation for shifting my perspective. Furthermore, the sheer volume of detailed historical, philosophical, and mythological texts surrounding the site was an unexpected revelation, that alongside the theoretical inputs allowed me to conceptualise the "narrative excavation" methodology. It was a breakthrough moment to realise that ancient lore and mythological texts did not have to remain abstract stories, they could be treated as concrete spatial data and rigorous design inputs.

Through this process, I learned to treat landscapes not merely as a collection of natural resources to be managed, but as living organisms in constant dynamic evolution, multi-layered narratives of myth, culture, nature, and society. Crucially, I learned that as designers, we must frequently leave the desk in order to design at the human scale, one must explore libraries, engage with local traditions, and walk the site itself, for me, developing the continuous route of the Katavasis was a deeply personal lesson on how to anchor abstract stories into physical reality, weaving interventions through rock and water, rather than imposing a detached, top-down masterplan. Ultimately, it does not matter if a plan's geometry "looks nice" on paper if it fails to resonate on the ground. A successful intervention must mediate an active, tactile dialogue between the visitor, the local resident, and the landscape, embodying the physical "toil of the body" that Dimitris Pikionis believed in.

Because this project was conducted within the constraints of a Master's programme, necessary boundaries and assumptions were established, that in conjunction with some physical constraints and limitations that arose during this project, led to some assumptions. Exact hydrological data regarding the drainage, water levles and the infrastructure were not available, thus, the system I presented is an educated guess based on in situ observation and tracing of its infrastructure. The same is true regarding the topography, although large scale maps were available, exact, to the metre, height data, for locations such as the Acheron Straits, were not available, thus assumptions based on observation had to be made. Furthermore, I am neither an expert in agronomy nor a classical historian, meaning the interpretation of ancient texts and the proposition of flood-resilient agricultural shifts rely on my own landscape architectural synthesis. Consequently, I was unable to delve deeper into specific, highly technical agricultural practices beyond the immediate riverine zone. This limitation highlights a critical realisation, that the discipline of landscape architecture must open its discourse to wider interdisciplinary collaboration. While we are accustomed to working with hydrologists and agricultural experts, projects in enculturated landscapes would benefit immensely from the integration of Folkloristics, anthropologists, and classical scholars to ensure cultural translation is as rigorous as ecological restoration.

Finally, the overarching goal of this thesis was to reconcile the fragmented narratives of the Acheron and tackle its intersecting crises. However, the research quickly revealed that challenges like hyper-seasonal, mass tourism and severe rural abandonment exceed the spatial confinements of a single site. These are systemic, national, and global crises rooted in complex socio-political realities that a landscape architectural design cannot single-handedly solve. Deliberately, I chose not to ignore these immense challenges, while acknowledging that I could not "fix" them entirely, I actively addressed them at the scale of my site. By treating the landscape as a living Palimpsest, the design accepts that contemporary crises cannot be erased overnight, but they can be structurally overwritten. The Katavasis is deployed not as a finalised solution, but as a regenerative mythological and landscape process, and for me, designing this continuous route proved that my role is not just to solve technical problems, but to choreograph meaningful spatial experiences. Ultimately, the realisation of this process is that landscape architecture's greatest power lies not in solving global crises, but in staging the spatial conditions, like the route itself, where a fractured society and a wounded ecology are forced to heal simultaneously.



Figure 131: The route back to the surface, the "Anavasis", is long. Along this route one should reflect on the whole journey and carry the gained knowledge in order to be able to face the new challenges. The dike near next to Ammoudia.

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Figure List

Note: Figures 1, 2, 4, 5, 8, 12, 14, 18, 19, 20, 22–27, 30, 32, 34–39, 44, 47, 57, 59–78, 83, 92, 94–100, 102, 112, 113, 117, 119–121, 123, 124, 126–131 are the author's own work. Only figures adapted or reproduced from external sources are listed below.

Figure 3: Patinir, J. (1515–1524). Landscape with Charon crossing the Styx [Painting]. Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain.

Figure 6: Branched asphodel (Asphodelus ramosus) [Photograph]. Wikimedia Commons. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:L%27asfodelo_mediterraneo.jpgFigure

Figure 7: Andokides Painter & Lysippides Painter. (ca. 515–510 BCE). Amphore d'Andokidès [Amphora of Andokides] [Painted clay amphora]. Musée du Louvre, Paris, France. https://collections.louvre.fr/en/ark:/53355/cl010269614

Figure 8: Reprinted from Composing the landscape: Analyzing landscape architecture as design formation (p. 8), by K. Moraitis, 2024.

Figure 9: Blue Star Owl. (2013, April 9). [Illustration of the Thriae] [Digital image]. Blue Star Owl. https://bluestarowl.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/thriaegolden.jpg

Figure 10: Dolon Painter. (ca. 390 BCE). Odysseus consulting the shade of Tiresias [Red-figure calyx-krater]. Cabinet des médailles, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, France. Wikimedia Commons.

Figure 11: Leagros Group. (ca. 510–500 BCE). Neck-amphora depicting the return of Persephone from Hades (Museum No. 1848,0619.3) [Black-figure pottery]. The British Museum, London, United Kingdom.

Figure 13: Circle of the Lycurgus Painter. (ca. 360–340 BCE). Underworld krater [Terracotta]. National Archaeological Museum of Naples, Naples, Italy. J. Paul Getty Museum.

Figure 15: DEYA Elassonas. (n.d.). Olympus [Photograph]. https://deyael.gr/%CF%8C%CE%BB%CF%85%CE%BC%CF%80%CE%BF%CF%82/

Figure 16: Le Lorrain de Vallemont, P. (1705). [Frontispiece]. In Curiositez de la nature et de l'art.

Figure 17: ProtoThema. (2018). Mia volta stin othomaniki Athina [A walk in Ottoman Athens] [Painting]. https://www.protothema.gr/city-stories/article/768323/mia-volta-stin-othomaniki-athina/

Figure 21: Goos, C. (1830). Orpheus and Eurydice [Painting]. Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen, Denmark. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Carl_Goos_-Orpheus_and_Eurydice-KMS276-_Statens_Museum_for_Kunst.jpg

Figure 28: Epiruspost. (2021). Aperanti limni o kampos Fanariou [The Fanari plain is an endless lake] [Photograph]. https://www.epiruspost.gr/aperanti-limni-o-kampos-fanarioy-vint/

Figure 29: Bentley, J. C. (1838). Valley of the Suli, the ancient Acheron [Engraving].

Figure 31: Allori, A. (1580). Odysseus questions the seer Tiresias [Painting]; Duqueylard, H. J. F. P. (n.d.). Orpheus [Painting]; Del Pollaiolo, A. (1475). Ercole e l'Idra e Ercole e Anteo [Painting].

Figure 33: Lapie, P. (1825). Thesprotie ou Chamouri, Souli et Parga [Map].

Figure 40: Exekias. (ca. 540–530 BCE). The Exekias amphora (Museum No. 1836,0224.127) [Black-figure pottery]. The British Museum, London, United Kingdom. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1836-0224-127?selectedImageId=34520001

Figure 41: Nausicaa Painter. (ca. 450 BCE). Red-figured amphora depicting women preparing bulls for sacrifice (Museum No. 1846,0128.1) [Red-figure pottery]. The British Museum, London, United Kingdom. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1846-0128-1?selectedImageId=193998001

Figure 43: Van Haarlem, C. (1588–1590). The fall of the Titans [Painting]. Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen, Denmark.

Figure 44: Blake, W. (1824–1827). The vestibule of hell and the souls mustering to cross the Acheron [Watercolor and ink on paper]. National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia.

Figure 45: Doré, G. (1861). The ferryman of hell (Plate 9) [Engraving]. In Dante Alighieri, The divine comedy: Inferno.

Figure 48: Hirémy-Hirschl, A. (1898). Souls on the banks of the Acheron [Painting]. Österreichische Galerie Belvedere, Vienna, Austria.

Figure 49: Branched asphodel (Asphodelus ramosus) [Photograph]. (n.d.). Wikimedia Commons. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:L%27asfodelo_mediterraneo.jpg

Figure 50: Codrus Painter. (ca. 430 BCE). Kylix depicting Persephone and Hades banqueting [Vase] (Inventory No. GR 1847.0909.6 / Vase E82). The British Museum, London, United Kingdom.

Figure 51: Vrancx, S. (1597). Aeneas meeting with his father in the Elysium [Painting]. Museum of Fine Arts of Lyon, Lyon, France.

Figure 52: Gofa, F., Mamara, A., Anadranistakis, M., & Flocas, H. (2019). Developing gridded climate data sets of precipitation for Greece based on homogenized time series. Climate, 7(5), Article 68. https://doi.org/10.3390/cli7050068

Figures 53–54: Darques, R., Sidiropoulos, G., & Kalabokidis, K. (Eds.). (2024). The geography of Greece: Managing crises and building resilience (p. 450). Springer.

Figure 55. Ministry of Rural Development and Food. (n.d.). Acherontas [Data set]. https://www.minagric.gr/the-ministry-2/grafeiotypou/omilies/1345-axerontas

Figure 56: Weather and Climate. (n.d.). Climate in Epirus, Greece. https://https://weatherandclimate.com/greece/epirus#t3

Figure 58: Spyrou, E. (2021). Geomorphologikes paratiriseis stin ydrologiki lekani tou Acherontos kai ektimisi tis plimmyrikis epikindynotitos [Geomorphological observations in the Acheron hydrological basin and flood risk assessment] [Master's thesis, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens].

Figure 79: Appeltern. (n.d.). Dictamnus albus [Photograph]. https://appeltern.nl/nl/tuinadvies/plantenencyclopedie/dictamnus_albus_vuurwerkplant/

Figure 80: Brassica cretica [Photograph]. (n.d.). Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brassica_cretica

Figure 81: Salix alba [Photograph]. (n.d.). Wikimedia Commons. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Salix_alba_004.jpg

Figure 82: Gardeners' World Magazine. (n.d.). [Photograph]. https://www.gardenersworldmagazine.nl/

Figure 84: Wikipedia. (n.d.). Dalmatian pelican [Photograph]. Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dalmatian_pelican

Figure 85: Wikipedia. (n.d.). Eurasian bittern [Photograph]. Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eurasian_bittern

Figure 86: Wikipedia. (n.d.). Black-crowned night heron [Photograph]. Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black-crowned_night_heron

Figure 87: Wikipedia. (n.d.). Little egret [Photograph]. Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Little_egret

Figure 88: iNaturalist. (n.d.). European pond turtle [Photograph]. Retrieved from https://www.inaturalist.org/photos/419296292

Figure 89: Wikipedia. (n.d.). European pond turtle [Photograph]. Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European_pond_turtle

Figure 90: Wikipedia. (n.d.). Osmoderma eremita [Photograph]. Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Osmoderma_eremita

Figure 91: Wikipedia. (n.d.). Eurasian otter [Photograph]. Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eurasian_otter

Figure 93: Corot, J.-B.-C. (1861). Orpheus leading Eurydice from the underworld [Painting]. Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX, United States.

Figure 101: West Crete. (n.d.). Asphodelus ramosus [Photograph]. Retrieved from https://www.west-crete.com/flowers/asphodelus_ramosus.htm

Figure 103: NatureSpot. (n.d.). Red mason bee [Photograph]. Retrieved from https://www.naturespot.org/species/red-mason-bee

Figure 104: Le Châtel des Vivaces. (n.d.). Vitex agnus castus delta blues [Photograph]. Retrieved from https://www.le-chatel-des-vivaces.com/arbuste/2834-vitex-agnus-castus-delta-blues.html

Figure 105: iNaturalist. (n.d.). Tamarix hampeana [Photograph]. Retrieved from https://www.inaturalist.org/taxa/493490-Tamarix-hampeana

Figures 106–107: My Garden Life. (n.d.). Statice sea lavender (Limonium perezii) [Photograph]. Retrieved from https://mygardenlife.com/plant-library/statice-sea-lavender-limonium-perezii

Figure 108: Muller Seeds. (n.d.). Cerinthe major purpurascens kiwi blue [Photograph]. Retrieved from https://mullerseeds.nl/product/cerinthe-major-purpurascens-kiwi-blue-2/

Figure 109: Yorkshire Seeds. (n.d.). Wild Italian crimson red clover [Photograph]. https://yorkshire-seeds.co.uk/products/wild-italian-crimson-red-clover-1000x-seed-flowering-herb

Figure 110: Thymus capitatus [Photograph]. (n.d.). Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thymus_capitatus

Figure 111: Swallowtail Garden Seeds. (n.d.). Jerusalem Sage [Photograph]. https://www.swallowtailgardenseeds.com/perennials/phlomis.html

Figure 114: In.gr. (2018, October 12). Dodoni: Iero kai manteio [Dodona: Sanctuary and oracle] [Photograph]. https://www.in.gr/2018/10/12/life/diakopes/idees-gia-taksidia/dodoni-iero-kai-manteio/

Figure 115: Kastra.eu. (n.d.). Castle of Ioannina [Photograph]. https://www.kastra.eu/castleen.php?kastro=ioannina

Figure 116: Greece Travel Secrets. (n.d.). What to do in Metsovo [Photograph]. https://www.greecetravelsecrets.com/what-to-do-in-metsovo/

Figure 118: Plane tree Grove Tsav River [Photograph]. (n.d.). Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Platanus_orientalis#/media/File:Plane_tree_Grove_Tsav_River.jpg

Figure 122: Trailforks. (n.d.). [Photograph]. https://www.trailforks.com/photo/18621336/

Figure 123: APT Garden. (n.d.). Corten panel basic [Photograph]. https://aptgarden.co.uk/product/corten-panel-basic/

Figure 125: Leighton, F. (1891). The return of Persephone [Painting]. Leeds Art Gallery, Leeds, United Kingdom. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Frederic_Leighton_-The_Return_of_Persephone(1891).jpg

Icon List


Forested Buffer


Populus Alba
(White Poplar)


Alnus glutinosa (Alder)


Orchard


Phragmites Australis
(Common Reed)


Junctus Maritimus


Salicornea Europaea


Salix Purpurea


Tamarix Hampaena


Vitex Agnus-Castus


Limonium Vulgare


Judas Tree


Jerusaleum Sage


Spanish Broom


Conehead Thyme


Crimson Clover


Honeywort


Corn


Olive Tree


Ash


Asphodelus Ramosus


Weeping Willow


Bean Plant


Oriental Plane
Tree Forest


Italian Cypress


Egretta Garzetta


Valencia Latourneuxi


Pond Turtle


Dalmatian Pelican


Eurasian Otter


Dice Snake


Mason Bee


Ferruginous Duck


Hermit Beetle


Flock of Birds


Hiker


Farmer


Charon, the Ferryman


Fishing Boat


River Boat

Cars

Trireme

Rural Houses

Tent

Settlement

Campfire

Cloud

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The exact promot for each one is not available, but the template that, after testing, yielded the best results was in this format:

"A front [or top] planar view of a highly stylized [X], depicted as a whole [X] in the traditional Attic black-figure technique of ancient Greek pottery. The [X] stands as a singular, graphic element against a solid orange background. [if applicable, colour, or additional detail input]. The perspective is strictly two-dimensional and flat, like a design applied to a vase surface. The focus is purely on the isolated [X]."

Agriculture (Branch)
Created by Kusnan Prampa

Agriculture (Field)
Created by Akhmad Solsahus Surur

Agriculture (Sprouts)
Created by BomSymbols

Apple Tree
Created by Softscape

Canyon
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Cultural Fusion
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Created by Mukholifah

Stewardship
Created by Logisstudio

Swamp
Created by Katie Wright

Thaw
Created by IconMark

Transition to Organic
Author not specified

Tree (Broadleaf)
Created by Softscape

Tree (Oak-style)
Created by Softscape

Tree (Pine/Tall)
Created by Softscape

UNESCO
From UNSECO

Wall
Author not specified

Water Conservation
Created by gravisio

Water Pump
Created by Muhammad Owais

Water Storage
Created by Nadia

Wetland
Created by Dan Hetteix

Whomping Willow
Created by Florent B

Church
Created by Valter Bispo

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Appendix I

Bird Catalogue

1. **Alpine Accentor**
Prunella collaris

2. **Alpine Swift**
Apus melba

3. **Barn Swallow**
Hirundo rustica

4. **Black Kite**
Milvus migrans

5. **Black Redstart**
Phoenicurus ochruros

6. **Black Stork**
Ciconia nigra

7. **Black Tern**
Chlidonias niger

8. **Black-crowned Night Heron**
Nycticorax nycticorax

9. **Black-headed Bunting**
Emberiza melanocephala

10. **Black-headed Gull**
Larus ridibundus

11. **Black-tailed Godwit**
Limosa limosa

12. **Black-throated Diver**
Gavia arctica

13. **Black-winged Stilt**
Himantopus himantopus

14. **Blue Rock Thrush**
Monticola solitarius

15. **Bonelli's Eagle**
Hieraetus fasciatus

16. **Broad-billed Sandpiper**
Limicola falcinellus

17. **Carrion Crow**
Corvus corone

18. **Cetti's Warbler**
Cettia cetti

19. **Cirl Bunting**
Emberiza cirlus

22. **Collared Pratincole**
Glareola pratincola

23. **Common Blackbird**
Turdus merula

24. **Common Buzzard**
Buteo buteo

25. **Common Chaffinch**
Fringilla coelebs

26. **Common Chiffchaff**
Phylloscopus collybita

27. **Common Cuckoo**
Cuculus canorus

28. **Common Firecrest**
Regulus ignicapillus

29. **Common Greenshank**
Tringa nebularia

30. **Common House Martin**
Delichon urbica

31. **Common Kestrel**
Falco tinnunculus

32. **Common Kingfisher**
Alcedo atthis

33. **Common Linnet**
Carduelis cannabina

34. **Common Moorhen**
Gallinula chloropus

35. **Common Nightingale**
Luscinia megarhynchos

36. **Common Quail**
Coturnix coturnix

37. **Common Raven**
Corvus corax

38. **Common Redshank**
Tringa totanus

39. **Common Redstart**
Phoenicurus phoenicurus

40. **Common Reed Bunting**

43. **Common Snipe**
Gallinago gallinago

44. **Common Starling**
Sturnus vulgaris

45. **Common Swift**
Apus apus

46. **Common Whitethroat**
Sylvia communis

47. **Common Wood Pigeon**
Columba palumbus

48. **Corn Bunting**
Miliaria calandra

49. **Crested Lark**
Galerida cristata

50. **Cretzschmar's Bunting**
Emberiza caesia

51. **Curlew Sandpiper**
Calidris ferruginea

52. **Dalmatian Pelican**
Pelecanus crispus

53. **Dunlin**
Calidris alpina

54. **Dunnock**
Prunella modularis

55. **Eastern Black-eared Wheatear**
Oenanthe hispanica

56. **Eastern Imperial Eagle**
Aquila heliaca

57. **Eastern Olivaceous Warbler**
Hippolais pallida

58. **Eastern Orphean Warbler**
Sylvia hortensis

59. **Egyptian Vulture**
Neophron percnopterus

60. **Eurasian Bittern**
Botaurus stellaris

61. **Eurasian Blackcap**
Sylvia atricapilla

64. **Eurasian Coot**
Fulica atra

65. **Eurasian Crag Martin**
Ptyonoprogne rupestris

66. **Eurasian Curlew**
Numenius arquata

67. **Eurasian Eagle-Owl**
Bubo bubo

68. **Eurasian Hobby**
Falco subbuteo

69. **Eurasian Hoopoe**
Upupa epops

70. **Eurasian Jay**
Garrulus glandarius

71. **Eurasian Magpie**
Pica pica

72. **Eurasian Nuthatch**
Sitta europaea

73. **Eurasian Oystercatcher**
Haematopus ostralegus

74. **Eurasian Penduline Tit**
Remiz pandulinus

75. **Eurasian Reed Warbler**
Acrocephalus scirpaceus

76. **Eurasian Scops Owl**
Otus scops

77. **Eurasian Siskin**
Carduelis spinus

78. **Eurasian Skylark**
Alauda arvensis

79. **Eurasian Sparrowhawk**
Accipiter nisus

80. **Eurasian Stone-curlew**
Burhinus oedicnemus

81. **Eurasian Teal**
Anas crecca

82. **Eurasian Tree Sparrow**
Passer montanus

85. **Eurasian Wren**
Troglodytes troglodytes

86. **Eurasian Wryneck**
Jynx torquilla

87. **European Bee-eater**
Merops apiaster

88. **European Goldfinch**
Carduelis carduelis

89. **European Golden Plover**
Pluvialis apricaria

90. **European Greenfinch**
Carduelis chloris

91. **European Honey Buzzard**
Pernis apivorus

92. **European Nightjar**
Caprimulgus europaeus

93. **European Pied Flycatcher**
Ficedula hypoleuca

94. **European Robin**
Erithacus rubecula

95. **European Serin**
Serinus serinus

96. **European Stonechat**
Saxicola torquata

97. **European Turtle Dove**
Streptopelia turtur

98. **Ferruginous Duck**
Aythya nyroca

99. **Garden Warbler**
Sylvia borin

100. **Garganey**
Anas querquedula

101. **Glossy Ibis**
Plegadis falcinellus

102. **Goldcrest**
Regulus regulus

103. **Golden Eagle**
Aquila chrysaetos

104. **Great Crested Grebe**
Podiceps cristatus

105. **Great Egret**
Egretta alba

106. **Great Reed Warbler**
Acrocephalus arundinaceus

107. **Great Snipe**
Gallinago media

108. **Great Spotted Woodpecker**
Dendrocopos major

109. **Great Tit**
Parus major

110. **Greater Short-toed Lark**
Calandrella brachydactyla

111. **Greater White-fronted Goose**
Anser albifrons

112. **Green Sandpiper**
Tringa ochropus

113. **Grey Heron**
Ardea cinerea

114. **Grey Plover**
Pluvialis squatarola

115. **Grey Wagtail**
Motacilla cinerea

116. **Griffon Vulture**
Gyps fulvus

117. **Hawfinch**
Coccothraustes coccothraustes

118. **Hen Harrier**
Circus cyaneus

119. **House Sparrow**
Passer domesticus

120. **Icterine Warbler**
Hippolais icterina

124. **Lesser Kestrel**
Falco naumanni

125. **Lesser Spotted Woodpecker**
Dendrocopos minor

126. **Lesser Whitethroat**
Sylvia curruca

127. **Levant Sparrowhawk**
Accipiter brevipes

128. **Little Bittern**
Ixobrychus minutus

129. **Little Bustard**
Tetrax tetrax

130. **Little Egret**
Egretta garzetta

131. **Little Grebe**
Tachybaptus ruficollis

132. **Little Gull**
Larus minutus

133. **Little Owl**
Athene noctua

134. **Little Ringed Plover**
Charadrius dubius

135. **Little Stint**
Calidris minuta

136. **Long-eared Owl**
Asio otus

137. **Long-tailed Tit**
Aegithalos caudatus

138. **Mallard**
Anas platyrhynchos

139. **Marsh Sandpiper**
Tringa stagnatilis

140. **Meadow Pipit**
Anthus pratensis

141. **Mediterranean Gull**
Larus melanocephalus

145. **Moustached Warbler**
Acrocephalus melanopogon

146. **Mute Swan**
Cygnus olor

147. **Northern Goshawk**
Accipiter gentilis

148. **Northern Lapwing**
Vanellus vanellus

149. **Northern Wheatear**
Oenanthe oenanthe

150. **Olive-tree Warbler**
Hippolais olivetorum

151. **Ortolan Bunting**
Emberiza hortulana

152. **Pallid Harrier**
Circus macrourus

153. **Peregrine Falcon**
Falco peregrinus

154. **Purple Heron**
Ardea purpurea

155. **Red Crossbill**
Loxia curvirostra

156. **Red-backed Shrike**
Lanius collurio

157. **Red-footed Falcon**
Falco vespertinus

158. **Red-rumped Swallow**
Hirundo daurica

159. **Red-throated Diver**
Gavia stellata

160. **Rock Bunting**
Emberiza cia

161. **Rock Dove**
Columba livia

162. **Rock Partridge**
Alectoris graeca

166. **Sardinian Warbler**
Sylvia melanocephala

167. **Savi's Warbler**
Locustella luscinioides

168. **Sedge Warbler**
Acrocephalus schoenobaenus

169. **Semicollared Flycatcher**
Ficedula semitorquata

170. **Short-toed Snake Eagle**
Circaetus gallicus

171. **Short-toed Treecreeper**
Certhia brachydactyla

172. **Sombre Tit**
Parus lugubris

173. **Song Thrush**
Turdus philomelos

174. **Spanish Sparrow**
Passer hispaniolensis

175. **Spotted Crake**
Porzana porzana

176. **Spotted Flycatcher**
Muscicapa striata

177. **Spotted Redshank**
Tringa erythropus

178. **Squacco Heron**
Ardeola ralloides

179. **Subalpine Warbler**
Sylvia cantillans

180. **Tawny Owl**
Strix aluco

181. **Tawny Pipit**
Anthus campestris

182. **Temminck's Stint**
Calidris temminckii

183. **Thrush Nightingale**
Luscinia luscinia

187. **Western Barn Owl**
Tyto alba

188. **Western Jackdaw**
Corvus monedula

189. **Western Marsh Harrier**
Circus aeruginosus

190. **Western Rock Nuthatch**
Sitta neumayer

191. **Western Yellow Wagtail**
Motacilla flava

192. **Whinchat**
Saxicola ruberta

193. **Whiskered Tern**
Chlidonias hybridus

194. **White Stork**
Ciconia ciconia

195. **White Wagtail**
Motacilla alba

196. **White-throated Dipper**
Cinclus cinclus

197. **White-winged Tern**
Chlidonias leucopterus

198. **Willow Warbler**
Phylloscopus trochilus

199. **Wood Sandpiper**
Tringa glareola

200. **Wood Warbler**
Phylloscopus sibilatrix

201. **Woodchat Shrike**
Lanius senator

202. **Woodlark**
Lullula arborea

203. **Yellow-legged Gull**
Larus cacchinans

204. **Zitting Cisticola**
Cisticola juncidis

Source: The above list was created based on the list provided by the "Kalamas Acherontas Protection Body".
https://www.kalamas-acherontas.gr/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Acherontas-species-Birds.pdf

Appendix II: Mythological Archive

The Odyssey, Overall Summary

Ten years have passed since the fall of Troy, and the Greek hero Odysseus still has not returned to his kingdom in Ithaca. A large and rowdy mob of suitors who have overrun Odysseus's palace and pillaged his land continue to court his wife, Penelope. She has remained faithful to Odysseus. Prince Telemachus, Odysseus's son, wants desperately to throw them out but does not have the confidence or experience to fight them. One of the suitors, Antinous, plans to assassinate the young prince, eliminating the only opposition to their dominion over the palace

Unknown to the suitors, Odysseus is still alive. The beautiful nymph Calypso, possessed by love for him, has imprisoned him on her island, Ogygia. He longs to return to his wife and son, but he has no ship or crew to help him escape. While the gods and goddesses of Mount Olympus debate Odysseus's future, Athena, Odysseus's strongest supporter among the gods, resolves to help Telemachus. Disguised as a friend of the prince's grandfather, Laertes, she convinces the prince to call a meeting of the assembly at which he reproaches the suitors. Athena also prepares him for a great journey to Pylos and Sparta, where the kings Nestor and Menelaus, Odysseus's companions during the war, inform him that Odysseus is alive and trapped on Calypso's island. Telemachus makes plans to return home, while, back in Ithaca, Antinous and the other suitors prepare an ambush to kill him when he reaches port.

On Mount Olympus, Zeus sends Hermes to rescue Odysseus from Calypso. Hermes persuades Calypso to let Odysseus build a ship and leave. The homesick hero sets sail, but when Poseidon, god of the sea, finds him sailing home, he sends a storm to wreck Odysseus's ship. Poseidon has harbored a bitter grudge against Odysseus since the hero blinded his son, the Cyclops Polyphemus, earlier in his travels. Athena intervenes to save Odysseus from Poseidon's wrath, and the beleaguered king lands at Scheria, home of the Phaeacians. Nausicaa, the Phaeacian princess, shows him to the royal palace, and Odysseus receives a warm welcome from the king and queen. When he identifies himself as Odysseus, his hosts, who have heard of his exploits at Troy, are stunned. They promise to give him safe passage to Ithaca, but first they beg to hear the story of his adventures.

Odysseus spends the night describing the fantastic chain of events leading up to his arrival on Calypso's island. He recounts his trip to the Land of the Lotus Eaters, his battle with Polyphemus the Cyclops, his love affair with the witch-goddess Circe, his temptation by the deadly Sirens, his journey into Hades to consult the prophet Tiresias, and his fight with the sea monster Scylla. When he finishes his story, the Phaeacians return Odysseus to Ithaca, where he seeks out the hut of his faithful swineherd, Eumaeus. Though Athena has disguised Odysseus as a beggar, Eumaeus warmly receives and nourishes him in the hut. He soon encounters Telemachus, who has returned from Pylos and Sparta despite the suitors' ambush, and reveals to him his true identity. Odysseus and Telemachus devise a plan to massacre the suitors and regain control of Ithaca.

When Odysseus arrives at the palace the next day, still disguised as a beggar, he endures abuse and insults from the suitors. The only person who recognizes him is his old nurse, Eurycleia, but she swears not to disclose his secret. Penelope takes an interest in this strange beggar, suspecting that he might be her long-lost husband. Quite crafty herself, Penelope organizes an archery contest the following day and promises to marry any man who can string Odysseus's great bow and fire an arrow through a row of twelve axes—a feat that only Odysseus has ever been able to accomplish. At the contest, each suitor tries to string the bow and fails. Odysseus steps up to the bow and, with little effort, fires an arrow through all twelve axes. He then turns the bow on the suitors. He and Telemachus, assisted by a few faithful servants, kill every last suitor.

Odysseus reveals himself to the entire palace and reunites with his loving Penelope. He travels to the outskirts of Ithaca to see his aging father, Laertes. They come under attack from the vengeful family members of the dead suitors, but Laertes, reinvigorated by his son's return, successfully kills Antinous's father and puts a stop to the attack. Zeus dispatches Athena to restore peace. With his power secure and his family reunited, Odysseus's long ordeal comes to an end.

Source: SparkNotes Editors. (n.d.). The Odyssey: Full Poem Summary. https://www.sparknotes.com/lit/odyssey/section6/

The Odyssey, Book X, Summary:

The Achaeans sail from the land of the Cyclops to the home of Aeolus, ruler of the winds. Aeolus presents Odysseus with a bag containing all of the winds, and he stirs up a westerly wind to guide Odysseus and his crew home. Within ten days, they are in sight of Ithaca, but Odysseus's shipmates, who think that Aeolus has secretly given Odysseus a fortune in gold and silver, tear the bag open. The winds escape and stir up a storm that brings Odysseus and his men back to Aeolia. This time, however, Aeolus refuses to help them, certain that the gods hate Odysseus and wish to do him hard unnamed queen turn Odysseus's scouts into dinner. Odysseus and his remaining men flee toward their ships, but the Laestrygonians pelt the ships with boulders and sink them as they sit in the harbor. Only Odysseus's ship escapes.

From there, Odysseus and his men travel to Aeaea, home of the beautiful witch-goddess Circe. Circe drugs a band of Odysseus's men and turns them into pigs. When Odysseus goes to rescue them, Hermes approaches him in the form of a young man. He tells Odysseus to eat an herb called moly to protect himself from Circe's drug and then lunge at her when she tries to strike him with her sword. Odysseus follows Hermes' instructions, overpowering Circe and forcing her to change his men back to their human forms. Odysseus soon becomes Circe's lover, and he and his men live with her in luxury for a year. When his men finally persuade him to continue the voyage homeward, Odysseus asks Circe for the way back to Ithaca. She replies he must sail to Hades, the realm of the dead, to speak with the spirit of Tiresias, a blind prophet who will tell him how to get home.

The next morning, Odysseus rouses his men for the imminent departure. He discovers, however, that the youngest man in his crew, Elpenor, had gotten drunk the previous night, slept on the roof, and, when he heard the men shouting and marching in the morning, fell from the roof and broke his neck. Odysseus explains to his men the course that they must take, which they are displeased to learn is rather meandering.

The Odyssey, Book XI, Summary:

Odysseus travels to the River of Ocean in the land of the Cimmerians. There he pours libations and performs sacrifices as Circe earlier instructs him to do to attract the souls of the dead. The first to appear is that of Elpenor, the crewman who broke his neck falling from Circe's roof. He begs Odysseus to return to Circe's island and give his body a proper burial. Odysseus then speaks with the Theban prophet Tiresias, who reveals that Poseidon is punishing the Achaeans for blinding his son Polyphemus. He foretells Odysseus's fate—that he will return home, reclaim his wife and palace from the wretched suitors, and then make another trip to a distant land to appease Poseidon. He warns Odysseus not to touch the flocks of the Sun when he reaches the land of Thrinacia; otherwise, he won't return home without suffering much more hardship and losing all of his crew. When Tiresias departs, Odysseus calls other spirits toward him. He speaks with his mother, Anticleia, who updates him on the affairs of Ithaca and relates how she died of grief waiting for his return. He then meets the spirits of various famous men and heroes and hears the stories of their lives and deaths.

Odysseus now cuts short the tale and asks his Phaeacian hosts to allow him to sleep, but the king and queen urge him to continue, asking if he met any of the Greeks who fell at Troy in Hades. He relates his encounters there: he meets Agamemnon, who tells him of his murder at the hands of his wife, Clytemnestra. Next he meets Achilles, who asks about his son, Neoptolemus. Odysseus then tries to speak with Ajax, an Achaean who killed himself after he lost a contest with Odysseus over the arms of Achilles, but Ajax refuses to speak and slips away. He sees Heracles, King Minos, the hunter Orion, and others. He witnesses the punishment of Sisyphus, struggling eternally to push a boulder over a hill only to have it roll back down whenever it reaches the top. He then sees Tantalus, agonized by hunger and thirst. Tantalus sits in a pool of water overhung by bunches of grapes, but whenever he reaches for the grapes, they rise out of grasp, and whenever he bends down to drink, the water sinks out of reach. Odysseus soon finds himself mobbed by souls wishing to ask about their relatives in the world above. He becomes frightened, runs back to his ship, and immediately sails away.

Source: SparkNotes Editors. (n.d.). The Odyssey: Books 10 & 11. https://www.sparknotes.com/lit/odyssey/section6/

Orpheus and Eurydice

Orpheus, son of one of the Muses, the famous poet and musician, married a wife who was called Eurydice. His marriage brought him no happiness, because while his bride was walking in the deep grass with two of her friends she stepped upon a poisonous snake which bit her in the ankle. She fell to the ground and no skill of any doctor could save her life.

Her friends, the Dryads, wept for her and filled the mountains with their cries. Orpheus himself, sitting solitary on the seashore, from daybreak to sunset mourned for his wife to the sad music of his lyre. He even dared to descend to the lower world where the insubstantial ghosts flit to and fro, the terrible kingdom of Proserpine. At the sound of the music of his lyre the ghosts came thronging in crowds like the flocks of birds that nightfall or a sudden winter shower drives down from the mountains to roost among the leaves of trees. There were mothers and fathers, the dead spirits of great heroes, boys and unmarried girls, young men who had died early and been placed on their funeral pyres before their parents' eyes. All these were penned in by the dark muddy banks of the slow rivers of Hell with their ugly reeds, the river Cocytus and the river Styx which folds in the ghosts with its nine sweeping circles. Not only these spirits, but the very prison house and torture chambers of the dead were lulled to rest by the music of Orpheus. The Furies themselves, with the snakes twined in their hair, stood still, and for the first and only time their cheeks were wet with tears. Tantalus forgot to put his lips to the water that always escaped him; the vulture paused above the giant body of Tityus and no longer pecked at his liver; the wheel where Ixion was tortured stood still; the Belides put down their pitchers, and Sisyphus sat down on the rock that he was condemned for ever to push uphill.

Orpheus stood before Proserpine(Persephone) and her husband, the terrible King Pluto. Still striking music from his lyre he spoke to them: "Powers of the lower world, to whom all of us who are mortal must come in the end, let me speak to you sincerely and tell you the truth. I have not come here as a robber or to vex you in your kingdom. The reason I have come here is my wife. A serpent bit her and took away her life just as she was growing up. I tried to bear her loss, but I cannot. Love is too strong for me. In the world above, Love is a well-known god: whether he is known here also I do not know, but I think that he must be and, if the old story is true, you also were joined together by Love. I pray you therefore, by the fearful silence of your vast kingdom, give me back Eurydice, give her back the life that was so quickly taken from her. In the end we shall all come to you. This is our final home, and you rule the longest over the race of men. Eurydice too, sooner or later, will come back to you. Now I ask you as a gift to allow me to enjoy her for a little time. If the Fates will not allow this, then I have decided not to return myself, and you may rejoice in the death of us both."

Proserpine and Pluto were touched by his words and by his music. They could not refuse his request and they called for Eurydice. She was among the ghosts who had only just arrived and she came still limping from the wound in her foot.

Orpheus then received his wife back, but only on the condition that he should go in front of her and not turn his eyes backwards until he had ascended the steep path from the lower world and had reached the upper air.

So, through thick dark mist, in the tremendous silence of Hades, they took the steep path, and they were already close to the borders of the upper world, when there swept over the mind of Orpheus, in his love and fear for Eurydice, a sudden madness, something which might, one would have thought, have been forgiven him, if only the powers below knew how to forgive. Now all his toil was in vain. He had broken the conditions which savage Pluto had made and three times came the crash of thunder from the lakes and rivers of Hell. Eurydice cried to him: "O Orpheus what is this madness which has betrayed us both? O see, the cruel fates are calling for me again, and sleep is falling over my swimming eyes. Farewell, O Orpheus. Still I stretch out to you my feeble hands, but I am yours no longer. I am being pulled away from you, and all round me is the vastness of night."

As she spoke she melted away suddenly from his sight and disappeared like smoke disappears into thin air. Eagerly he stretched out his arms to embrace her, but his arms encountered nothing that could be touched. He spoke to her, but there was no one to listen to him, nor would the guards of the lower world allow him to cross again the river that separated him from the dead. On that river Eurydice, already cold in death, was sailing back again to the abodes of the ghosts.

For seven months they say that Orpheus sang to his lyre in the rocky places, lamenting his wife twice lost to him. But however rocky the place, there was soon shade there; for the trees hurried to hear his music—oaks and ashes, firs, poplars, all the trees of the woods, with vines also, ivy and climbing plants. All beasts and birds came too, to listen to him. There were tigers and cattle together, wolves and sheep, eagles and trembling doves. So Orpheus continued to sing, in pain for the loss of his wife, as the nightingale in the thick leaves of a poplar sings in pain for the loss of her brood which some rough plowman has seen and taken from their nest before they can fly: meanwhile the mother bird mourns throughout the night and, sitting on a branch, starts again and again her sad song, and in all the country around, one hears her piercing notes. So Orpheus sang, soothing the fierce hearts of tigers, and drawing trees after him.

In all this time he gave no thought to women, though many women loved him and wished to be married to him. At last, they say, a band of women, driven wild by their dancing in the mountains by night, and angry at being despised by him, swept down upon the divine singer and tore him limb from limb, scattering the fragments of his body far and wide throughout the fields of Thrace. As for his head, wrenched from the neck that was as white as marble, the river Hebrus carried it to the sea and across the sea to the island of Lesbos. And, as the head was rolled in the river's stream, the voice and cold tongue still cried: "Eurydice, my poor Eurydice!" and the name Eurydice was echoed from the banks.

The fragments of his body were collected together for burial and in the Thracian town where his tomb is, the nightingales still sing with greater beauty than in any other place. His spirit went below the earth and, on its last journey, recognized all the surroundings which it had visited before. Searching through the Elysian fields where the blessed spirits are, he found Eurydice and caught her in his arms. Now they wander there together; sometimes they walk side by side, sometimes he follows her, sometimes he goes in front and now can safely look back at her with no fear of ever losing her again.

Source: Warner, R. (1959). Men and gods. Farrar, Straus & Giroux.

The 12th labour of Heracles

Now had come the time for the twelfth and last of the labors that Hercules did for his master Eurystheus. This labor would seem to anyone by far the hardest; for the hero was commanded to descend into the lower world, and bring back with him from the kingdom of Proserpine the terrible three-headed watchdog Cerberus.

Hercules took the dark path which before him had been trodden only by Orpheus and Theseus and Pirithous. Orpheus had returned. Theseus and Pirithous, for their wicked attempt, were still imprisoned.

Hercules passed the Furies, undaunted by the frightful eyes beneath the writhing serpents of their hair. He passed the great criminals, Sisyphus, Tantalus and the rest. He passed by his friend, the unhappy Theseus, who was sitting immovably fixed to a rock, and he came at last into the terrible presence of black Pluto himself, who sat on his dark throne with his young wife Proserpine beside him. To the King and Queen of the Dead, Hercules explained the reason of his coming. "Go," said Pluto, "and, so long as you use no weapon, but only your bare hands, you may take my watchdog Cerberus to the upper air."

Hercules thanked the dreadful king for giving him the permission which he had asked. Then he made one more request which was that Theseus, who had sinned only by keeping his promise to his friend, might be allowed to return again to life. This, too, was granted him. Theseus rose to his feet again and accompanied the hero to the entrance of Hell, where the huge dog Cerberus, with his three heads and his three deep baying voices, glared savagely at the intruders. Even this tremendous animal proved no match for Hercules, who with his vice-like grip stifled the breath in two of the shaggy throats, then lifted the beast upon his shoulders and began to ascend again, Theseus following close behind, the path that leads to the world of men. They say that when he carried Cerberus to Mycenae, Eurystheus fled in terror to another city and was now actually glad that Hercules had completed what might seem to have been twelve impossible labors. Cerberus was restored to his place in Hell and never again visited the upper world. Nor did Hercules ever go down to the place of the dead, since, after further trials, he was destined to live among the gods above.

Source: Warner, R. (1959). Men and gods. Farrar, Straus & Giroux.

Demeter and Persephone

The first day of spring, also known as the vernal equinox, is a time of growth and rebirth. In ancient Greece, mythologies were developed to explain why things in the world occurred. The myth of the Abduction of Persephone by Hades explained the seasons. To the ancient Greeks, spring and summer signified the six months when Persephone returned from the Underworld, and her mother Demeter made the earth bloom and grow bountiful after her absence. When Persephone left the company of the gods and returned to the Underworld, Demeter's loss was expressed in the barrenness of autumn and winter.

The myth begins with Hades' desire to possess Persephone and make her his wife, knowing that Persephone's mother Demeter would never agree to the union. While Persephone was gathering flowers in a meadow, Hades burst from the Underworld on his black chariot and abducted her. Demeter searched in vain for her daughter until Hecate told Demeter that Persephone had been carried away, but she did not know by whom. The two goddesses went to Apollo, the god of the sun, who saw everything that happened on Earth. Apollo told Demeter what had happened, but also tried to persuade Demeter that Hades, as Zeus's brother and ruler of one third of the universe, was not an unfit husband for Persephone.

Demeter refused to accept Hades as a suitable spouse for her precious daughter. Enraged by the news of Persephone's abduction (and Zeus's possible complicity), she refused to return to Mount Olympus. Instead she roamed the earth in the guise of a mortal, forbidding the trees to bear fruit and the earth to nurture vegetables and herbs.

Demeter threatened to make the earth barren forever and thus destroy all of humankind if she did not get Persephone back. Zeus realizing that if he allowed Demeter to persist, all of humankind would starve sent Hermes the messenger god, to demand that Persephone be returned to her mother. Hades agreed to let her go. But before she left, Hades urged Persephone to assuage her terrible hunger, she had not eaten a single thing since her arrival in the Underworld, by eating four pomegranate seeds. Sadly, this apparent act of kindness was a ruse, as anyone who tasted the food of Hades was condemned to remain in the Underworld forever.

A compromise was struck in which Persephone would return to Hades for four months of the year and the rest of the year above ground with Demeter.

Demeter reluctantly agreed to the deal, restored Earth's fertility and returned to Olympus with Persephone. But when the time came for Persephone to return to the Underworld, the earth became colder and less fertile until her re-emergence months later.

Source: Hellenic Museum. (2017, September 1). Persephone and the seasons. https://www.hellenic.org.au/post/persephone-and-the-seasons

Descriptions of Greece, Pausanias

Theseus invaded Thesprotia to carry off the wife of the Thesprotian king, and in this way lost the greater part of his army, and both he and Peirithous (he too was taking part in the expedition, being eager forthe marriage) were taken captive. The Thesprotian king kept them prisoners at Cichyrus. Among thesights of Thesprotia are a sanctuary of Zeus at Dodona and an oak sacred to the god. Near Cichyrus is a lake called Acherusia, and a river called Acheron. There is also Cocytus, a most unlovely stream. I believe it was because Homer had seen these places that he made bold to describe in his poems the regions of Hades, and gave to the rivers there the names of those in Thesprotia.

Source: Pausanias. (1918). Description of Greece (Vol. 1) (W. H. S. Jones & H. A. Ormerod, Trans.). William Heinemann; G. P. Putnam's Sons. (Original work published ca. 2nd century CE).

The Myth of Leuke (White Poplars)

In Greek mythology, Leuce (also spelled Leuke), meaning "white poplar," was an Oceanid nymph abducted by the god Hades to the Underworld, where she lived until her death and was subsequently transformed by him into a white poplar tree in the Elysian Fields.

Leuce was the daughter of the Titan Oceanus, the god of the world-encircling river, which connected her to the broader lineage of water nymphs known as Oceanids. She was renowned as the most beautiful among the nymphs, a distinction that drew the attention and desire of Hades, the ruler of the dead. This abduction parallels other myths involving Hades and nymphs, such as that of Minthe, but Leuce's tale emphasizes themes of eternal commemoration through metamorphosis rather than rivalry or punishment.

The white poplar into which Leuce was transformed held sacred significance in both Greek and Roman traditions, symbolizing the Underworld and often planted near graves or rivers like the Acheron to invoke chthonic powers. Its leaves, dark on one side and light on the other, were interpreted as representing the duality of the mortal and divine realms, with the tree's presence in Elysium underscoring Hades' role in granting a form of immortality to his beloved. Though her story survives primarily through late antique commentary on Virgil's Eclogues, it reflects enduring motifs of love, loss, and botanical transformation in classical lore.

Source: Leuce (mythology). (n.d.). In Grokipedia. Retrieved May 25, 2026, from https://grokipedia.com/page/Leuce_(mythology)#ref-1

Of Mourning, Lucian

The behaviour of the average man in a time of bereavement, his own language and the remarks offered him by way of consolation, are things that will reward the attention of a curious observer. The mourner takes it for granted that a terrible blow has fallen both upon himself and upon the object of his lamentations: yet for all he knows to the contrary (and here I appeal to Pluto and Persephone) the departed one, so far from being entitled to commiseration, may find himself in improved circumstances. The feelings of the bereaved party are in fact guided solely by custom and convention. The procedure in such cases — but no: let me first state the popular beliefs on the subject of death itself; we shall then understand the motives for the elaborate ceremonial with which it is attended.

The vulgar (as philosophers call the generality of mankind), implicitly taking as their text-book the fictions of Homer and Hesiod and other poets, assume the existence of a deep subterranean hole called Hades; spacious, murky, and sunless, but by some mysterious means sufficiently lighted to render all its details visible. Its king is a brother of Zeus, one Pluto; whose name — so an able philologer assures me — contains a complimentary allusion to his ghostly wealth. As to the nature of his government, and the condition of his subjects, the authority allotted to him extends over all the dead, who, from the moment that they come under his control, are kept in unbreakable fetters; Shades are on no account permitted to return to Earth; to this rule there have been only two or three exceptions since the beginning of the world, and these were made for very urgent reasons.

His realm is encompassed by vast rivers, whose very names inspire awe: Cocytus, Pyriphlegethon, and the like. Most formidable of all, and first to arrest the progress of the new-comer, is Acheron, that lake which none may pass save by the ferryman's boat; it is too deep to be waded, too broad for the swimmer, and even defies the flight of birds deceased.

At the very beginning of the descent is a gate of adamant: here Aeacus, a nephew of the king, stands on guard. By his side is a three-headed dog, a grim brute; to new arrivals, however, he is friendly enough, reserving his bark, and the yawning horror of his jaws, for the would-be runaway.

On the inner shore of the lake is a meadow, wherein grows asphodel; here, too, is the fountain that makes war on memory, and is hence called Lethe. All these particulars the ancients would doubtless obtain from the Thessalian queen Alcestis and her fellow-countryman Protesilaus, from Theseus the son of Aegeus, and from the hero of the Odyssey. These witnesses (whose evidence is entitled to our most respectful acceptance) did not, as I gather, drink of the waters of Lethe; because then they would not have remembered.

According to them, the supreme power is entirely in the hands of Pluto and Persephone, who, however, are assisted in the labours of government by a host of underlings: such are the Furies, the Pains, the Fears; such too is Hermes, though he is not always in attendance.

Judicial powers are vested in two satraps or viceroys, Minos and Rhadamanthus, both Cretans, and both sons of Zeus. By them all good and just men who have followed the precepts of virtue are sent off in large detachments to form colonies, as it were, in the Elysian Plain, and there to lead the perfect life.

Evil-doers, on the contrary, are handed over to the Furies, who conduct them to the place of the wicked, where they are punished in due proportion to their iniquities. What a variety of torments is there presented! The rack, the fire, the gnawing vulture; here Ixion spins upon his wheel, there Sisyphus rolls his stone. I have not forgotten Tantalus; but he stands elsewhere, stands parched on the Lake's very brink, like to die of thirst, poor wretch! Then there is the numerous class of neutral characters; these wander about the meadow; formless phantoms, that evade the touch like smoke.

It seems that they depend for their nourishment upon the libations and victims offered by us upon their tombs; accordingly, a Shade who has no surviving friends or relations passes a hungry time of it in the lower world.

So profoundly have the common people been impressed with these doctrines that, when a man dies, the first act of his relations is to put a penny into his mouth, that he may have wherewithal to pay the ferryman: they do not stop to inquire what is the local currency, whether Attic or Macedonian or Aeginetan; nor does it occur to them how much better it would be for the departed one if the fare were not forthcoming,— because then the ferryman would decline to take him, and he would be sent back into the living world.

Lest the Stygian Lake should prove inadequate to the requirements of ghostly toilets, the corpse is next washed, anointed with the choicest unguents to arrest the progress of decay, crowned with fresh flowers, and laid out in sumptuous raiment; an obvious precaution, this last; it would not do for the deceased to take a chill on the journey, nor to exhibit himself to Cerberus with nothing on. Lamentation follows.

The women wail; men and women alike weep and beat their breasts and rend their hair and lacerate their cheeks; clothes are also torn on the occasion, and dust sprinkled on the head. The survivors are thus reduced to a more pitiable condition than the deceased: while they in all probability are rolling about and dashing their heads on the ground, he, bravely attired and gloriously garlanded, reposes

Of Mourning, Lucian

gracefully upon his lofty bier, adorned as it were for some pageant.

The mother — nay, it is the father, as likely as not,— now advances from among the relatives, falls upon the bier (to heighten the dramatic effect, we will suppose its occupant to be young and handsome), and utters wild and meaningless ejaculations; the corpse cannot speak, otherwise it might have something to say in reply. His son — the father exclaims, with a mournful emphasis on every word,— his beloved son is no more; he is gone; torn away before his hour was come, leaving him alone to mourn; he has never married, never begotten children, never been on the field of battle, never laid hand to the plough, never reached old age; never again will he make merry, never again know the joys of love, never, alas! tipple at the convivial board among his comrades.

And so on, and so on. He imagines his son to be still coveting these things, and coveting them in vain. But this is nothing: time after time men have been known to slaughter horses upon the tomb, and concubines and pages; to burn clothes and other finery, or bury it, in the idea that the deceased will find a profitable use for such things in the lower world.

Now the afflicted senior, in delivering the tragic utterances I have suggested above, and others of the same kind, is not, as I understand it, consulting the interests of his son (who he knows will not hear him, though he shout louder than Stentor), nor yet his own; he is perfectly aware of his sentiments, and has no occasion to bellow them into his own ear. The natural conclusion is, that this tomfoolery is for the benefit of the spectators; and all the time he has not an idea where his son is, or what may be his condition; he cannot even have reflected upon human life generally, or he would know that the loss of it is no such great matter.
Let us imagine that the son has obtained leave from Aeacus and Pluto to take a peep into the daylight, and put a stop to these parental maunderings. ‘Confound it, sir,’ he might exclaim, ‘what is the noise about? You bore me. Enough of hair-plucking and face-scratching. When you call me an ill-fated wretch, you abuse a better man than yourself, and a more fortunate. Why are you so sorry for me? Is it because I am not a bald, bent, wrinkled old cripple like yourself? Is it because I have not lived to be a battered wreck, nor seen a thousand moons wax and wane, only to make a fool of myself at the last before a crowd? Can your sapience point to any single convenience of life, of which we are deprived in the lower world? I know what you will say: clothes and good dinners, wine and women, without which you think I shall be inconsolable. Are you now to learn that freedom from hunger and thirst is better than meat and drink, and insensibility to cold better than plenty of clothes?

Come, I see you need enlightenment; I will show you how lamentation ought to be done. Make a fresh start, thus: Alas, my son! Hunger and thirst and cold are his no longer! He is gone, gone beyond the reach of sickness; he fears not fever anymore, nor enemies nor tyrants. Never again, my son, shall love disturb your peace, impair your health, make hourly inroads on your purse; oh, heavy change! Never can you reach contemptible old age, never be an eyesore to your juniors!— Confess, now, that my lamentation has the advantage of yours, in veracity, as in absurdity.

‘Perhaps it is the pitchy darkness of the infernal regions that runs in your head? is that the trouble? Are you afraid I shall be suffocated in the confinement of the tomb? You should reflect that my eyes will presently decay, or (if such is your good pleasure) be consumed with fire; after which I shall have no occasion to notice either light or darkness. However, let that pass.

But all this lamentation, now; this fluting and beating of breasts; these wholly disproportionate wailings: how am I the better for it all? And what do I want with a garlanded column over my grave? And what good do you suppose you are going to do by pouring wine on it? do you expect it to filter through all the way to Hades? As to the victims, you must surely see for yourselves that all the solid nutriment is whisked away heavenwards in the form of smoke, leaving us Shades precisely as we were; the residue, being dust, is useless; or is it your theory that Shades batten on ashes? Pluto's realm is not so barren, nor asphodel so scarce with us, that we must apply to you for provisions.— What with this winding-sheet and these woollen bandages, my jaws have been effectually sealed up, or, by Tisiphone, I should have burst out laughing long before this at the stuff you talk and the things you do.’

And at the word Death sealed his lips forever.
Thus far our corpse, leaning on one side, supported on an elbow. Can we doubt that he is in the right of it? And yet these simpletons, not content with their own noise, must call in professional assistance: an artist in grief, with a fine repertoire of cut-and-dried sorrows at his command, assumes the direction of this inane choir, and supplies a theme for their woeful acclamations.

So far, all men are fools alike: but at this point national peculiarities make their appearance. The Greeks burn their dead, the Persians bury them; the Indian glazes the body, the Scythian eats it, the Egyptian embalms it. In Egypt, indeed, the corpse, duly dried, is actually placed at table,— I have seen it done; and it is quite a common thing for an Egyptian to relieve himself from pecuniary embarrassment by a timely visit to the pawnbroker, with his brother or father deceased.

The childish futility of pyramids and mounds and columns, with their short-lived inscriptions, is obvious.

But some people go further, and attempt to plead the cause of the deceased with his infernal judges, or testify to his merits, by means of funeral games and laudatory epitaphs.

The final absurdity is the funeral feast, at which the assembled relatives strive to console the parents, and to prevail upon them to take food; and, Heaven knows, they are willing enough to be persuaded, being almost prostrated by a three days’ fast. ‘How long is this to go on?’ someone expostulates. ‘Suffer the spirit of your departed saint to rest in peace. Or if mourn you will, then for that very reason you must eat, that your strength may be proportioned to your grief.’ At this point, a couple of lines of Homer go the round of the company: Ev’n fair-haired Niobe forgat not food,

and

Not fasting mourn th’ Achaeans for their dead.

The parents are persuaded, though they go to work at first in a somewhat shamefaced manner; they do not want it to be thought that after their bereavement they are still subject to the infirmities of the flesh.

Such are some of the absurdities that may be observed in mourners; for I have by no means exhausted the list. And all springs from the vulgar error, that Death is the worst thing that can befall a man.

Source: Fowler, H. W., & Fowler, F. G. (Trans.). (2019, July 8). Of mourning | De luctu. The Lucian of Samosata Project. https://lucianofsamosata.info/wiki/doku.php?id=home:texts_and_library:essays:of-mourning

The Myth of Er, Republic, Plato

Socrates announces now in the dialogue that he has demonstrated the superiority of the just life as a life to be lived, whether it include external rewards or not. But Socrates sees the universe as being essentially moral, and he argues that experience shows us that the just man will receive his just rewards; the unjust man, his just punishment. The greatest of both will be in the life after the death of the body. Socrates illustrates this situation in the Myth of Er. So we turn now to the story of Er.

Part of Er's fate is that he will tell men yet alive his story of life after death. Er is a brave soldier who dies in battle. Ten days after his death, his body is taken home and laid on the funeral pyre, but there Er comes back to life and tells the story of his adventure.

After Er's soul left his body, it traveled with other souls to a wonderful place where there are two chasms in the earth and two above them in the sky. Between the chasms and between heaven and earth sit judges who pass judgment on the souls of men who come before their court. The just souls were directed to take the right-hand chasm leading into heaven; the unjust souls were condemned to the left-hand chasm down into the earth. Er was told to sit and watch the proceedings of the court, for he was to return to life and tell living men his story. As Er watched, he saw souls coming from the exit-chasms from heaven and earth; those coming from earth were weary and careworn and stained from travel; those from heaven were clean, rested, and bright. The souls told Er their experiences: The just souls had been rewarded for their just lives during their stay in heaven; the unjust, punished in the earth, condemned to wander a thousand years below the ground. The unjust told tales of other more evil men, murderers and tyrants, who were still condemned to suffer longer beneath the earth, never to be released again.

The souls stayed with Er near the chasms for seven days, and then Er and the souls journeyed to where the Fates dwell. The Fates would give the souls new lives as mortals. Each soul was permitted to pick the sort of new life he would lead; some chose wisely while others did not. The first soul chose a new life as a tyrant, thereby condemning himself to a life of misery. Orpheus chose to be a swan; Ajax, a lion; Agamemnon, an eagle. Odysseus, who remembered his earlier sufferings pursuing a life of glory and deeds, chose to be a common citizen.

After choosing their new lives and being granted them by the Fates, the souls were made to drink from the River of Forgetfulness, so that they could remember nothing of the other world and could not tell men of it. Er was forbidden to drink; his fate was that he must remember and tell what he had seen and heard. A great earthquake occurred; the souls were taken away to be reborn to new lives. Er awoke, found himself on his funeral pyre, and told his story.

Source: CliffsNotes. (n.d.). Republic: Summary and analysis: Book X, section III. https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/r/republic/summary-and-analysis/book-x-section-iii

Phaedo, Plato

Phaedo is an account of the final hours before Socrates's execution in prison. It is told by Phaedo himself, a friend of Socrates who encounters Echecrates—a fellow philosopher—after having watched Socrates drink poison hemlock. Phaedo relates the conversation that took place between Socrates and his friends, who sat by him in jail as he argued for the immortality of the soul, among other things.

First, Phaedo explains, Socrates tells his friend Cebes to say goodbye to the poet Evenus for him, saying: "Wish him well and bid him farewell, and tell him, if he is wise, to follow me as soon as possible." Hearing this, Simmias speaks up, surprised that Socrates would suggest that Evenus should hope to "follow" him to death "as soon as possible." In response, Socrates says that any "man who partakes worthily of philosophy" should be "willing" to die. At the same time, he grants that it's "not right" to take one's own life. When Cebes asks how Socrates can believe that philosophers ought to embrace death while also scorning suicide, Socrates notes that in some cases it's "better" to die than to live. However, humans belong to the gods, so it isn't their choice to decide when, exactly, they die. In response, Cebes and Simmias voice another objection, saying that since the gods are the masters of humans, it doesn't make sense for a person to look forward to death, since this would mean looking forward to losing the influence of a wise master. In turn, Socrates reveals that he believes the soul is immortal, which means a person doesn't leave the service of the gods upon death.

Explaining himself, Socrates asserts that "those who practice philosophy in the proper manner" are preparing for death. To show how this is the case, he asserts that the body and soul are separate from one another. The corporeal world is full of distractions, he says, since physical senses are unreliable and can't lend a person a dependable conception of reality. This is why "the philosopher more than other men frees the soul from association with the body," ultimately using the soul to "grasp the truth" without interference from physical concerns. And since death is nothing more than the "separation of the soul from the body," the attempt to live uninfluenced by the body is effectively a preparation for death itself.

Socrates uses the idea of the soul's immortality to show his listeners that he need not fear death. In fact, he believes death will finally afford him the opportunity to find the wisdom he's been searching for his entire life, since he'll be undistracted by the whims of the body. His friends are impressed by his argument, but Cebes notes that most people believe the soul "disperse[s] like breath or smoke" when a person dies, adding that it takes "a good deal of faith" to believe that the soul will go on living without the body. Hearing this, Socrates addresses Cebes's objection by referencing "an ancient theory" that living souls come from the underworld, saying that if this is the case, then souls must surely exist in the underworld, since they "could not come back if they did not exist." As such, he claims that "the living never come from any other source than from the dead." At this point, he suggests that things always come to be "from their opposites," just as something becomes "taller" from having been "shorter" before, and vice versa. What's more, he says that there is also a "process" by which something becomes its opposite, such that to become "taller" from having been "shorter" is known as "increase," and to become "smaller" from having been "taller" is "decrease."

Moving on, Socrates says that in the same way, life and death are opposites that "come to be from one another." As such, "being alive" comes from "being dead," and "being dead" comes from "being alive." The processes that characterize these transformations are "coming to life" and "dying," and Socrates says that these processes "balance" each other out. He then gives an example, saying that if there was no "corresponding process" to that of falling asleep, then everybody would go to sleep forever. By that turn, he says, if every human were to die without coming back to life, everyone would "remain in that state" of death forever, meaning that nobody would be alive. Cebes agrees with this, admitting that he no longer doubts the soul's immortality.

Despite Cebes's agreement, Socrates presents another theory for the soul's immortality. Calling upon The Theory of Recollection, he explains to Simmias that humans never learn new knowledge. Instead, they "recollect" wisdom that their souls have acquired in past lives. Socrates puts forth that the soul has an understanding of the Forms—that is, unchanging ideas unbound by earthly variation. For example, when Simmias sees two similarly sized objects, he thinks of "the Equal," even if the objects aren't exactly the same. This, Socrates says, is because Simmias understands—by way of his soul's previously-acquired knowledge—the Form (or idea) of "the Equal." If such Forms "exist" and the soul has learned about them in previous lives, Socrates upholds, then "our soul must exist before we are born."

Simmias accepts that Socrates has proved that the soul exists "before we are born," but not that it continues to live after the death of the body. To address this, Socrates says that the Forms are "noncomposite" and unchanging, whereas physical things—like, for instance, humans or clothing—are "composite" (that is, made of multiple parts) and constantly transforming. He thus identifies two categories of existence: the "invisible" and the "visible." The body, he says, is a "visible" kind of existence, the soul an "invisible." Reminding Simmias and Cebes that the soul is able to attain wisdom if it rejects the whims of the body, Socrates asserts that the "invisible" category of existence is similar to that which is "divine" and "deathless." Going on, he says that it is "natural for the body to dissolve easily, and for the soul to be altogether indissoluble." In keeping with this, when people die, their bodies decay while their souls, if they have been made "pure" through wisdom, will "make [their] way to the invisible," which is "divine and immortal and wise." A soul like this will enjoy a wonderful afterlife amongst the gods, but if it has been too entangled with corporeal existence, it will languish in the underworld before coming back as an inferior being.

Both Cebes and Simmias admit that they have reservations but don't want to "bother" Socrates with their objections, since he's soon to die. Nonetheless, he urges them to voice their thoughts, so Simmias presents his issue with Socrates's ideas regarding the visible and the invisible. He says that a person could "make the same argument [as Socrates] about vvvy, lyre and strings"—namely, that "a harmony is something invisible, without a body," while the lyre and strings that make that harmony are visible and physical. If one were to break the lyre, he says, the harmony would have to somehow continue to exist, at least according to Socrates's view of immortality. This, Simmias says, is obviously illogical, since the harmony comes from the lyre and thus can't exist once it has been destroyed. He asks Socrates how he might answer someone who sees the soul's relationship to the body in a similar light.

Before answering Simmias's question, Socrates asks Cebes to also voice his objection, and Cebes says that he has a hard time believing that the soul is immortal. To make his point, he compares the relationship between the body and soul to that of a weaver and his cloak. Throughout the weaver's life, he fashions a number of cloaks, all of which eventually wear out. However, the cloak he weaves just before he himself dies will outlast him. "That does not mean that a man is inferior and weaker than a cloak," Cebes says, adding that—in a similar fashion—it would be nonsensical to say that "the soul lasts a long time while the body is weaker and more short-lived;" just because the soul "wears out many bodies" doesn't mean it will continue to do so forever, he notes. After all, it might go through multiple bodies but eventually perish along with one of them.

Considering Simmias and Cebes's objections, Socrates appears grateful, since they've given him a chance to clarify his meaning. He then turns his attention to Simmias's notion of the soul as a harmony, reminding him that he previously agreed with The Theory of Recollection, which upholds that the soul exists before body. This, he points out, means that the soul isn't a harmony produced by the body, since it has already existed on its own. Simmias agrees with this, but Socrates adds another point: a harmony can never contain "wickedness," since "wickedness" is an instance of "disharmony," and a thing can never be both itself and its opposite at the same time.

Moving on to Cebes's objection that the general resilience of the soul doesn't prove its immortality, Socrates turns his attention to "the cause of generation and destruction," a matter he used to think about quite a lot as a young man. Wanting to know why things are the way they are, he adopted the author Anaxagoras's belief that "it is Mind that directs and is the cause of everything." However, Socrates says, he soon saw that this theory is unsatisfactory, since Anaxagoras doesn't really use "the Mind" to determine the "cause of everything," instead using unreliable physical and earthly observations. So, Socrates explains, he developed his own theory, which explains the nature of existence by suggesting that a thing is the way it is because of its adherence to certain unchanging Forms. To describe this, he says: "It is through Beauty that beautiful things are made beautiful," suggesting that Beauty itself is a Form. This leads to his final argument for the immortality of the soul. To begin, he says that nothing can be itself while also being its opposite. What's more, he argues that something that "brings along" a thing will never "bring along" the opposite of that thing as well. Therefore, he concludes that because the soul "brings along" life, "the soul will never admit" death, since death is the opposite of life. As such, the soul must be "deathless."

Having made his final argument for the soul's immortality, Socrates tells his listeners what he thinks happens in the afterlife, explaining that the souls of pious people make their way to a "pure dwelling place" where they're unencumbered by bodies. Others will be "purified" for their wrongs until they're able to return to earth in a different body, and still others will be thrown into the worst reaches of the underworld, never to return.

Wrapping up his vision of the afterlife, Socrates drinks poison hemlock, walks around his cell to allow the poison to circulate through his body, then lies down as his friends weep. He tells them to stop, because there's nothing sad about his journey to the afterlife. Just before dying, he turns to his friend Crito and utters his last words: "Crito," he says, "we owe a cock to Asclepius; make this offering to him and do not forget."

Source: Lannamann, T. (2019, June 14). Phaedo plot summary. LitCharts. https://www.litcharts.com/lit/phaedo/summary

Appendix III: Photo Archive

Note: All photos presented in this Appendix are from the author's own archive

Between the 2nd and 5th of February 2026, a comprehensive field study along the Acheron River was undertaken. The following photographic archive documents the physical reality of the Katavasis route, moving beyond abstract mapping to capture the tactile, lived experience of the terrain. The visual journey begins at the Ionian coast at Odysseus Bay, tracks inland past the mechanical infrastructure of the Ammoudia pump, traverses the wild marshlands and the agricultural expanses of Mesopotamo and Kastri, and finally ascends into the imposing limestone thresholds of the Glyki Straits before culminating in the rugged hike towards Souli.

This collection is not merely a supplementary travelogue, it is a direct visual extension of the "narrative excavation" methodology developed in the preceding chapters. The images are deliberately selected to reflect the "Three Natures" explored throughout this research.

However, the archive also serves as vital spatial evidence of the river's current, fractured condition. While it captures the enduring natural beauty of the site, it simultaneously confronts the severe contemporary mismanagement of the region. The lens documents the heavy imposition of mid-century utilitarian drainage channels, the degradation of fragile natural zones by disorganised tourist infrastructure, and the quiet decay of abandoned rural settlements. These images visualise the exact systemic crises, the clash between extractive mass tourism and ecological vulnerability, that the physical design of the Katavasis actively seeks to mitigate.

Ultimately, these photographs underscore the urgent necessity for the spatial interventions proposed in this research. They highlight that the Acheron is a landscape caught between its profound cultural heritage and modern utilitarian pressures. By visualising both the wounded ecology and the enduring mythos of the site, this archive reinforces the concluding realisation of the thesis: that the Acheron demands a new paradigm of continuous spatial stewardship, where physical engagement with the landscape forces a fractured society and ecology to heal simultaneously.



Figure 1: The wetlands at Odysseu's Bay



Figure 2: Sea Juniper by the beach



Figure 3: The old Olive Tree at Odysseu's Bay, The start of the route



Figure 4: The wetlands next to the Olive Tree



Figure 5: The concrete embankment, adapted as part of the route



Figure 6: The Ammoudia Pumping Station



Figure 7: The drainage infrastructure by the Pumping Station



Figure 8: The entrance of the Pumping Station



Figure 9: Mid-century ageing infrastructure. Pumping Station



Figure 10: Still working, but obsolete. Pumping Station



Figure 11: The canal towards the Acheron. **Pumping Station**



Figure 12: Acheron river close to the Pumping Station



Figure 13: The drainage system at Ammoudia



Figure 14: The confined estuary of Acheron. Ammoudia



Figure 15: Over the bridge, Ammoudia



Figure 16: The beach at Ammoudia, empty in winter, full of people during the summer



Figure 17: Water-logged area at Ammoudia



Figure 18: One of the boats carrying people upstream during the summer



Figure 19: The pier seperating the beach and the river, Ammoudia



Figure 20: The marshland formations of Ammoudia, a testament of a moving coastline



Figure 21: Reed clusters



Figure 22: The visible traces of the recent agricultural past



Figure 23: The marshland extends also to the otherside of the river



Figure 24: The swollen Cocytus and the Nekromanteion Hill



Figure 25: Agricultural fields by the Acheron-Cocytus confluence



Figure 26: Mid-century irrigation infrastructure near Mesopotamo



Figure 27: The Cocytus dike, agricultural field outside of the potected zone



Figure 28: The Cypresses at the Nekromanteion hilltop



Figure 29: The Nekromanteion entrance

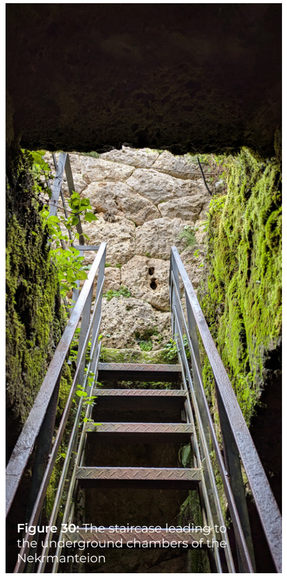


Figure 30: The staircase leading to the underground chambers of the Nekromanteion



Figure 31: The arched chamber below the Nekromanteion, probably used as a hidden acoustic chamber for priest to mislead the visitors



Figure 32: Path around the Nekromanteion hilltop



Figure 33: Mesopotamo as seen from the crest of the hill



Figure 34: The confined Acheron at Mesopotamo



Figure 35: Acheron's dike



Figure 36: The floodplains and the towering mountains, over the dike



Figure 37: Over the dike



Figure 38: Abandoned house, rural exodus has been an issue for greek countryside since the 60s'

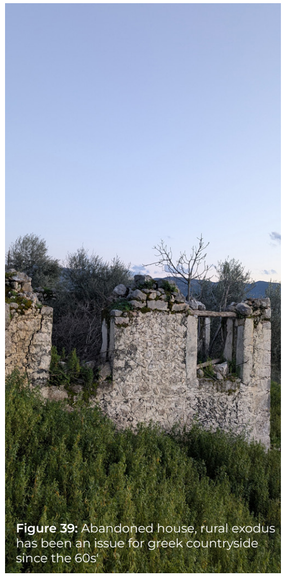


Figure 39: Abandoned house, rural exodus has been an issue for greek countryside since the 60s'

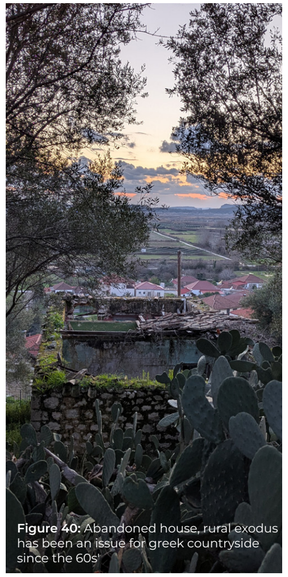


Figure 40: Abandoned house, rural exodus has been an issue for greek countryside since the 60s'



Figure 41: The river opens up exiting the gorge



Figure 42: The accessible and shifting river bead



Figure 43: Accessing the banks



Figure 44: The river depositing debris brought from the mountains



Figure 45: The (empty) cleared riverbank used as a parking lot



Figure 46: The ruin of the old arched bridge



Figure 47: The riverbank and the overgrown arched bridge ruin



Figure 48: The river and the gorge, the entrance to the underworld



Figure 49: The entrance to the gorge



Figure 50: The path along the river

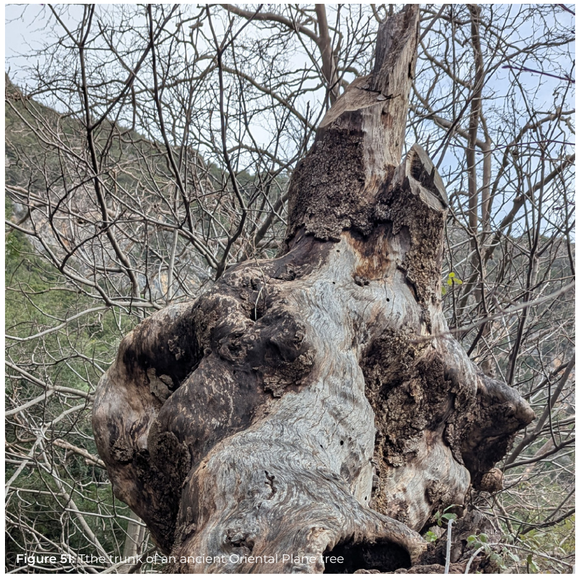


Figure 51: The trunk of an ancient Oriental Plane tree



Figure 52: Through the river forest



Figure 53: The deepest bank for tourism development



Figure 54: Tourism development right on top of the banks



Figure 55: Exploiting the rivers unique landscape



Figure 56: Seasonally abandoned tourist point next to the straits



Figure 57: The dark limestone gorge



Figure 58: The beginning of the trail



Figure 59: The river as seen from the trail



Figure 60: The Tzavellena "tunnel", this trail preceeds the modern road connection, this tunnel cut through the mountains so that cart could pass



Figure 61: The narrow road around the tunnel

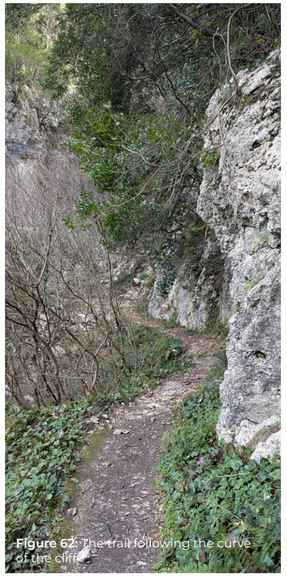


Figure 62: The trail following the curve of the cliff

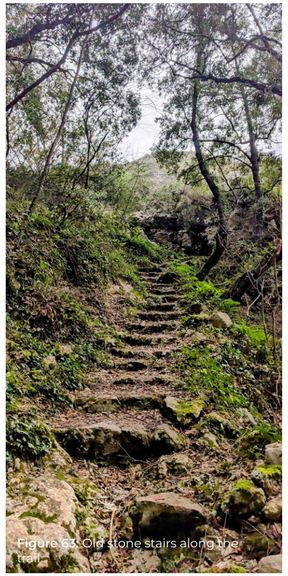


Figure 63: Old stone stairs along the trail



Figure 64: The river carving its path through the white limestone formations



Figure 65: The narrow path turns the river into a torrent



Figure 66: The "Dala's Bridge" looking the Acheron and heading to the mountains towards Souli

