

**Movement in Contemporary Staged Adaptations of the Alevi *Semahs* (1982-2018)**

Volume 2 of 2

Submitted by Sinibaldo De Rosa,  
to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of  
*Doctor of Philosophy* in Drama,  
June 2019.

This thesis is available for Library use on the understanding that it is copyright material and that no quotation from the thesis may be published without proper acknowledgment.

I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own has been identified and that no material has previously been submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other University.

Signature: .....

## **PART TWO**

## 5. Alevi ritual as staged performance: *Kardeşlik Töreni-Samah* (1983-2018)

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter is the first of three case studies that demonstrate how staged adaptation of Alevi expressive rituals had a pivotal role in shaping contemporary Alevi cultures. The piece discussed here is an experimental theatre production, *Kardeşlik Töreni – Samah* (lit. ‘The Ritual of Brotherhood – Samah’, hereafter KTS), which since 1983, has offered a dramatized reconstruction of the emblematic ritual of the Alevis, the *ayin-i cem*. Produced by the Ankara Deneme Sahnesi (lit. ‘Ankara Experimental Stage’, hereafter ADS),<sup>1</sup> an Ankara-based theatre company largely formed by amateur actors, the cast of KTS included both Alevis and non-Alevis alike. The Director of KTS was the late Prof. Nurhan Karadağ (1943–2015), an influential scholar of Turkish folk theatre traditions who worked for several years as Head of the Theatre Department of the Faculty of Languages, History and Geography of Ankara University (*Ankara Üniversitesi Dil Tarih Coğrafya Fakültesi, AÜDTCF*), and who was himself not born to an Alevi family. In many ways, the piece aimed at providing a performative and dynamic archive for the *semahs* that was meant to be accessible both nationally and internationally. As a performative and dynamic archive of Alevi rituals, KTS thus fostered a reconfiguration of socio-political understandings of Aleviness.

The social and artistic process that led to the creation of KTS comprises a crucial experience that informed the way Alevi cultures have been represented, in Turkey as well as abroad. In this chapter I question in which ways KTS played a

---

<sup>1</sup> These translations to English are found in the promotional material about the production in English language.

pioneering role in the public recognition of the existence of the Alevi community in Turkey and abroad. I argue that, even though this theatre work has scarcely been studied by scholars in Alevi studies and in the performing arts, much of the discussion on Aleviness and Alevism that exploded since the 1980s was influenced by the staging of this production. In fact, the staging of KTS contributed to a process of re-contextualization of Aleviness not only beyond the religious sphere, but also beyond its folkloric appearance, paving the way for the paradoxical 'visibility' of the *semahs* and their heritage management over the following decades (Tambar 2010, Aykan 2012, Weineck 2015). Through an analysis of the scholarly research that led to the theatre piece and some of the directorial and choreographic choices in the piece, the chapter questions how a delicate compromise between the secretive character of the rituals and the public nature of the theatre contributed to the resilience and longevity of the piece.

In many ways, KTS was the result of an academic investigation into the expressive forms contained in Alevi rituals, and its scholarly value is comparable to that of the textual academic interpretations of Alevi rituals that have emerged since the late 1970s. However, the dramatic format enabled the project to attain socio-political consequences that had not yet been achieved through more conventional textual-based means of knowledge dissemination. This chapter suggests that more than simply reflecting existing *semah* conventions, the re-inscription of *semah* movements on the stage in KTS was also generative of new kinetic forms. Attending to the inscription of the ritual forms on the stage, this chapter assumes that staged representations pose very pertinent research themes in ethnochoreological analysis.

Enlightening how KTS enabled and constructed a space and context for the Alevi *semahs* to emerge in the public sphere, I propose an analysis based on the adaptation of the movements on the stage. By focusing on the bodily adaptation of the movements on the stage, I also provide a framework to understand how Alevism has been constructed within performing arts frameworks. Scholars of Alevi studies will find this chapter helpful because this discussion elucidates the situational character through which Alevi identities emerged and the aesthetic dimension through which Alevi heritage has been framed over the last decades. Moreover, scholars working on the performing arts will benefit from the alternative perspective offered on the emergence of performance research as a recognized area of study. In fact, whereas the institutionalisation of performance research has been widely centred in the United States, more recently a sense of a profound decentring has also transpired, as documented by a collection which foregrounded diverse locations in the emergence of this research area (i.e. see McKenzie et al. 2010) which did nonetheless not explore its development in Turkey.

In discussing KTS, I pay attention to specific cultural developments enabled by the theatre project. In this way, I articulate how KTS created the conditions for the emergence of a secularized Alevi subjectivity which surfaced in national and international landscapes over the following three decades. Paying attention to the performative quality of the theatre, I show how a commitment to documentation of the rituals was achieved by creatively experimenting with their format and by skilfully manipulating their kinetic motifs. This manipulation involved not only the *semahs* but kinetic ritual actions more generally, for instance those characterizing the entrance to the ritual space, as I will discuss in 5.4. This dramatic strategy enabled scholarly knowledge about Alevi rituals to achieve lasting political effects

of a kind that had not been achieved by more text-based forms of knowledge circulation. Accordingly, I suggest that *KTS* can be understood both as a form of 'documentarist theatre' devised through culturally specific adaptation strategies, as well as a Turkish method of Performance Ethnography. As a performative enactment of ethnographic material, through the activity of devising and rehearsing the *semahs* in a non-traditional context, *KTS* provided a space for outsiders to the Alevi tradition to learn about Alevi ritual knowledge in an embodied manner. This creative process challenged available understandings of what Aleviness meant at the time, thus resisting social predispositions which robustly forced the 'Alevi' into the role of 'the others' in the nationalist imaginary. Against a climate of sectarian violence in which the Alevi were often physically targeted and their expressions of cultural production rendered invisible, *KTS* provided a scholarship-informed theatrical platform from which to convey the crucial role of Aleviness in the national discourse.

## **5.2 Outline of ethnographic fieldwork**

The discussion in this chapter is based primarily on long-term ethnographical fieldwork in *KTS*' production and reception contexts, as well as on performance and movement analysis. Ethnographic fieldwork was conducted over different periods between 2009 and 2016, years during which my positionality as a researcher of *KTS* shifted significantly. As already explained in Chapter 4, my first live encounter with a *semah* occurred in February 2009 during rehearsals for *KTS* in the ADS studio in Batıkent, Ankara. However, I had discovered the production a few months earlier during a visit to the archives of the Odin Teatret and the International School of Theatre Anthropology (ISTA) in Holstebro, Denmark. Since

I was aware of the intercultural network of this theatre and research group, I asked Odin Teatret and ISTA members for contacts of Turkish theatre practitioners with whom they had collaborated in the past.<sup>2</sup> Through the assistance of archivist Francesca Romana Rietti, the director and theatre theoretician Eugenio Barba and the actress Julia Varley kindly provided me the email addresses of four of their key collaborators in Turkey.<sup>3</sup> Moreover in the archives at Holstebro, I found a flyer from a staging of KTS to which Barba and Varley had been recently invited during one of their visits to Turkey (fig. 1).

When I moved to Ankara in February 2009, professor Güzin Yamaner, head of the Dance Conservatory at Ankara University, directed me to explore the work of Nurhan Karadağ, who then welcomed me to join the activities of the ADS in the studio in Batıkent. I thus started auditing the rehearsals of another production on which the group was working; a staged adaptation of Nazim Hikmet Ran's epic poem (*destan*) on the figure of the Sufi revolutionary Şeyk Beddrettin. For the following five months, I started auditing the rehearsals of KTS, and in March 2009 I watched its performance at Küçük Tiyatro (lit. 'Little Theatre') in Ulus, Ankara. Starting in September 2010 for one year, I then conducted a more systematic ethnographic fieldwork in the contexts of KTS. This entailed actively participating

---

<sup>2</sup> Inspired by an idea of 'barter' between performative traditions, the activities of the Odin Teatret and the structure of ISTA sessions have been nonetheless criticized for the lack of self-reflectivity and for some of their nuanced orientalist, if not colonial, undertones. For instance, Zarilli (1988) criticized issues of representation in Barba's writings and in an ISTA session in which he participated, highlighting especially the lack of a reconciliation of Barba's definition of theatre anthropology with the discipline of anthropology in academia. The Danish anthropologist Kirsten Hastrup et al. (1996) also analysed the ISTA sessions as an ethnographic case study, even sketching - through visual diagrams - their hierarchical structure centered around Barba's authority. Barker (2002) introduces the plural influences that contributed to Barba and ISTA's activities, as well as some of the problems inherent in their working methods. Watson (2002) is also a valid source on debates on interculturalism within the work of Eugenio Barba, the Odin Teatret and ISTA.

<sup>3</sup> These were the translator Ayşin Candan and actor and director Metin Balay in Istanbul, professor and stage designer Güzin Yamaner and actor Devrim Evin in Adana.

in the rehearsals, sometimes recording videos (i.e. De Rosa 2015a), and informally discussing or recording structured interviews with the directors, the actors and other members of the production team, especially Yusuf Sağlam. I also collected available textual, photographic and video material related to KTS, such as two video recordings of the piece, one dating 1998 (De Rosa 2015b) and one 2004 (De Rosa 2015c). I then witnessed, over the course of several months, the regular performances of KTS that were scheduled on Monday evenings at the Ertan Gösteri Merkezi (lit. Ertan Show Centre') in the district of Yenimahalle. In the context of public reception, I tried to grasp the reactions and interpretations of the audiences. Sometimes, I invited friends (Alevis, Turkish and international), who were living in or visiting Ankara, to see the performance and then elicit their interpretation.

Figure 1. A flyer of KTS produced in 2007 retrieved in the Odin Teatret Archives in Holstebro, Denmark.

**THE RITUAL OF BROTHERHOOD – SAMAH**

**Araştırma**  
Prof. Dr. Nurhan Karadağ, Belgin Aygün Kardeşler, Faysal İhan, Nevzat Üçyıldız, Hasan Yükselir

**Metin – Kurgu - Yönetim** : Prof. Dr. Nurhan Karadağ

**Dans**: Selçuk Göldere

**Müzik Düzenleme** : Nedim Yıldız

**Bağlama** : Erkoç Torun, Hasan Ballıktaş, Cem Dertsiz

**Keman – Cura** : Nedim Yıldız

**Giyisi**: Tokat Otantik **Giyisi Uygulama** : Nazan Ön

**Işık** : Erkan Ergin, Mehmet Yaşayan


**Oynayanlar**


S. Gözde Akal	Aynur Demirci	Celalettin Aksoy	Ulaş Karadağ
Sevinç Aksay	Fisun Gençay	Hasan Ballıktaş	Yasin Öksüz
Emine Ateş	Sevgi Gülçiçek	Özgür Başkaya	Turgay Ön
Alev Aydemir	Burçin Güllay	Taşkın Ermişoğlu	Yusuf Sağlam
Emine Bardakçı	Umay Karadağ	Omer Eryiğit	Levent Suner
Kübra Bilgili	Derya Tıyaki	Cem Dertsiz	Erkoç Torun
Hanife Birben	Sevgi Yavuz	Devrim Gençay	Gündüz Turan
Filiz Can	Azime Yıldız	Hakan Güngör	Nedim Yıldız
Gökçen Eroğlu	Arzu Yolgösteren	Fuat Kale	
Melis Erol			

**ANKARA DENEME SAHNESİ**  
1956 -2007 51. YIL

**KARDEŞLİK TÖRENİ**  
**SAMAH**

**Yöneten**  
**Prof. Dr. Nurhan Karadağ**





**Ankara Deneme Sahnesi**  
İlkerleşim Mahallesi Barış Çarşısı No: 1 Batıkent / Ankara  
0 (312) 385 32 71 - 0505 850 65 85  
www.ads.org.tr - ads@ads.org.tr



After the experience, I prepared a dissertation for completion of a Research Master's degree at Universiteit Leiden (De Rosa 2013), which included an extensive ethnographic report on the fieldwork experience. Between 2013 and 2014, I presented preliminary findings from that dissertation in several conferences on Alevi studies, Cultural Anthropology and Dance studies. Contending that KTS worked as a dynamic bodily archive for the *semahs*, I discussed how the piece nurtured the emergence of what I called the 'dual salutation' in the context of *semah* public stagings (i.e. see De Rosa 2014). This is more of a bow than would be performed in a ritual context, indicating that the salutation here is no longer directed towards only the actors performing the role of the *dede* (the leader in the community) and the *zakir* (the musician), as it was discussed in 4.7, but also towards the audience.

Between 2013 and 2015, to obtain a diploma in movement notation at the CNSMDP, I translated some movement fragments from this piece into kinetographs. In transcribing the notations, I resorted to my participation in rehearsals during fieldwork and to my constant exchange with Selçuk Göldere, actor and choreographer for the piece in the early 2000s. Notating fragments from the piece led me to reassess the material I had previously collected, detecting slight little changes in the movements' interpretation across my different video records.<sup>4</sup> For my final exam at the CNSMDP, I notated the complex scene in which the 32 actors (15 women and 17 men, three of whom are musicians) enter the stage.<sup>5</sup> In this chapter, I will resort to some of this notated material to examine two kinetic motifs enacted during this scene, as I argue that they help us to understand how

---

<sup>4</sup> For instance, this was the case with the *semah* from Urfa performed in the production (a score is included in Appendix A).

<sup>5</sup> Material presented for the final exam are included in Appendix B.

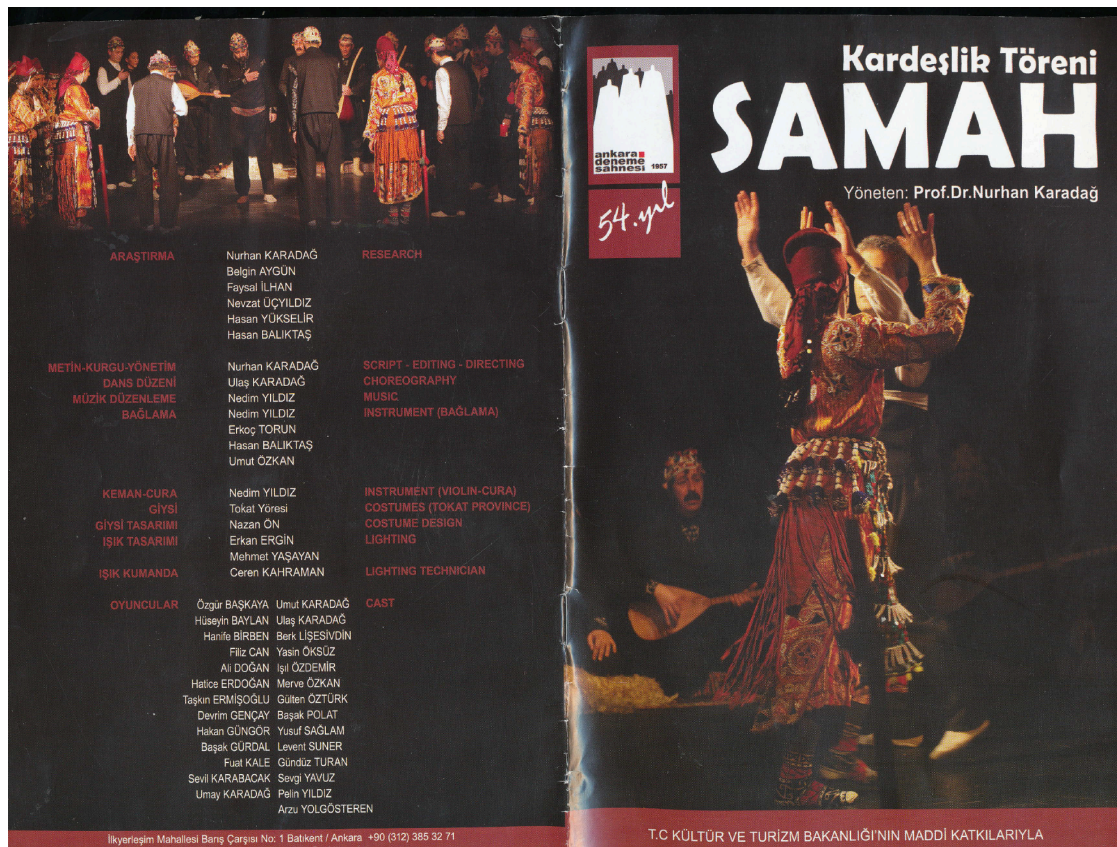
KTS negotiated a compromise between the public character of the theatre and the secretive nature of the ritual. I will trace how these motifs were re-adapted from the initial material presented as part in Aygün's dissertation to their transposition on the stage in KTS.

During a return visit to Ankara in August 2015, I met again with one of my key informants from the previous fieldwork, Yusuf Sağlam. We recorded another interview and I provided him the notated material that I had produced in Paris. Even though it was not possible for me to meet Karadağ on this occasion, Sağlam shared this material with him and informed me of his appreciation for my analysis. However, in October of the same year, Karadağ suffered a fatal heart attack, leaving behind a durable legacy among his colleagues, students and theatre collaborators. Although Karadağ was not an Alevi or Bektaşî himself, the obituary service for his 'walking to God' (*Hakk'a yürümek* is the expression used among the Alevi to apprehend someone's death) was held at the *cemevi* in Batıkent. The fact that this service was conducted in an Alevi context hints at the way Karadağ's scholarly and artistic engagement with Alevi rituals somehow transformed his own ethnic identity. Karadağ's commitment to researching and staging Alevi ritual practices attests to the way KTS contributed to the creation of fertile conditions for the emergence of a contemporary, trans-ethnic and secularized Alevi subjectivity.

Though I was not able to attend this service, in May 2016 I witnessed the first public staging of KTS since Karadağ's passing. Dedicated to his memory, the performance was held at Akün Sahne in Çankaya, Ankara. The cast continued periodically to stage KTS, as for instance at the end of May 2018 at Yeni Sahne ('New Stage') in Ankara. In December 2018, I was finally able to meet and record an interview with two other key figures: the writer of the dissertation on which KTS

is based, Belgin Aygün (now Belgin Aygün-Çifçioğlu, a lecturer in the Radio and Television department of Istanbul Aydın University) and Şule Ateş, a student in Theatre at Ankara University, who performed in KTS' first staging in 1983, and in 2010 directed *Tevhid-Oneness-Birlik*, an experimental multi-disciplinary performance about the significance of Aleviness in contemporary life (this piece will be approached further in Chapter 7).

Figure 2. Cover of a brochure about KTS produced in 2011.



To write this chapter, out of the manifold, dense, continuing and embodied activities which comprised engagement with KTS as part of ethnographic fieldwork, I especially entailed consideration of few primary written documents gathered or generated throughout. These primary materials include: Belgin Aygün's

dissertation (1982); the dramatic text and lyrics of the *semahs* performed in the piece; reviews and other commentaries on the piece by Alevi scholars (i.e. the one by Erseven written after its first enactment in 1983, or the mentioning of the piece in a dossier about the *semahs* published by Nasuh Barın in 1993); promotional material and brochures (fig. 2), as well as videos of the performance recorded in 1998 and 2004; videos that I recorded during fieldwork in 2010 and 2011; a transcription of interviews with the director and some of the production team members, and my fieldwork diary.

### 5.3 Dramatic scenes and plot

KTS offers a re-enactment of some of the elements of the *cem* rituals, which are combined to form a theatre piece one-hour in length. Although the dramaturgy accords greater emphasis to the musical and choreographic aspects of the rituals, a number of dramatic scenes involving speech are interwoven with the *semahs*. Rendered in a sophisticated ritual argot that replicates the ceremonial tone of the *cem* rituals, these scenes aim at presenting the rituals' several functions onstage, for instance their function as a form of folk tribunal (*halk mahkemesi*) or as the site where kinship ties among community members are established (i.e. the 'brotherhood' of the title). Through these scenes, showcasing Alevi social bonding mechanisms, the dramaturgy offers an image of Alevi ceremonies as a precious depository of Anatolian humanist philosophies. In the enactments that I witnessed between 2009 and 2016, and in the video recordings of the performance that I retrieved (dating 1998 and 2004)<sup>6</sup> or recorded during rehearsals, there are five of

---

<sup>6</sup> One of the actors gave me one of these videos while I was participating in rehearsals for me to familiarize with the *semahs* and practice at home; the other video was given by a friend after she learned that I was researching the piece. Despite not an Alevi,

these dramatic scenes, each one providing performative knowledge on some of the rituals' features. The re-enactment did not consist of a direct translation from ritual to stage, but rather a dramatic adaptation of the written information provided in Aygün's dissertation. Although over the years KTS has incorporated elements belonging to other Alevi locations and lineages, it remains possible to identify how these dramatic scenes were based on the discussions, photographs and movement diagrams featured in that dissertation. I now discuss these scenes involving speech, before turning more specifically to the adjustments made to the bodily gestures and the *semahs* in the opening scene when the actors enter on the stage.

During the first scene, the actors enter onto the stage in semi-darkness.<sup>7</sup> As the light slowly increases it becomes clear that the spatial organisation that the actors are creating on the stage is a semi-circle, open on the side facing the audience. Waiting in a corner is an actor interpreting the gatekeeper and a couple composed of a man and a woman. The way the actors enter in this scene establishes a dialectic between secrecy and visibility, transforming the stage as a ritual space. Because of the efficacy with which these elements are established through bodily movement, I have analysed this sequence in detail and produced a score of it with the Kinetography Laban to which I refer in the next section of this chapter.

The second and third dramatic scenes show how the *dede* covers two important legislative functions in the Alevi community. During the second scene,

---

this friend had a DVD of KTS at home which her father had acquired years previously after having watched the performance live.

<sup>7</sup> The scene corresponds to the minutes 01.15-04.54 of the video dating 1998 (De Rosa 2015b), to the minutes 00.00-04.33 of the video record dating 2004 (De Rosa 2015c) and to the minutes 00.00-03.24 of a video that I recorded during rehearsals in 2010 (De Rosa 2015a).

through the performance of ceremonial gestures and utterances, the actor interpreting the *dede* establishes a bond of brotherhood between two male actors and their female partners (these are addressed as *bacılar*, a term that in standard Turkish normally stands for 'elder sister').<sup>8</sup> The two male actors promise loyalty and commit to help one another, as well as to ensure that neither's actions will harm the community. The two couples therefore perform a *semah*, possibly the one illustrated in the second diagram inserted in Aygün's thesis (see 4.2). The scene thus informs us about this kinship (*musâhiplik*) between two male members and their respective families, how this is validated by a *dede* and how it forms the scaffolding upon which the Alevi community is built (see 3.3). Whereas the technical Alevi term for this bond is *musâhiplik* (or in other cases, *ahiret kardeşliği*, lit. 'brotherhood of the afterlife' or *yol kardeşliği*, lit. 'brotherhood of the journey'), in the title of the production this local form of kinship became generalized as *kardeşlik* (lit. 'brotherhood'), a much more common term in standard Turkish. In a recorded interview, the director Nurhan Karadağ (2011) explained how this choice was motivated by the purpose of making the title more accessible to a larger Turkish audience.

The third scene illustrates the rite of sharing a communal meal (*sofra*).<sup>9</sup> Here the actors assemble in the spatial organisation suggested in the fourth diagram inserted in Aygün's thesis (see 4.2). Unlike in Aygün's diagram, the actors interpreting the *sofracılar* (lit. 'those in charge of the *sofra*') here comprise a man and two women. With the accompaniment of the music, these actors arrange the space by placing three blankets on the central area of the stage (the *meydan* in

---

<sup>8</sup> The scene corresponds to the minutes 13.43-16.15 in De Rosa 2015c.

<sup>9</sup> The scene corresponds to the minutes 27.20-32.08 in De Rosa 2015c.

the rituals), upon which they place some silver trays around which all the other actors assemble. Though the specific role of the *sâki* that was discussed in Aygün's thesis is cut from the staging and no specific actor interprets this service, the action of drink sharing during the ritual is re-enacted. As an actor of Alevi background explained, the scene emphasizes how drink sharing in Alevi rituals has a sober rather than dissolute character. This sobriety is emphasized by the action of covering the cup with a small plate after drinking from the communal cup, thus maintaining discretion about the quantity of sips.

The fourth scene shows how in Alevism the *dede* works as an arbiter in a form of folk trials (*halk mahkemeleri*) (see 3.3).<sup>10</sup> Here the actor interpreting the *dede* resolves a quarrel between two male actors interpreting farmers. We learn that their fields are contiguous and separated only by a brook that has dwindled in the summer drought; the two have been fighting over how to canalize the scarce water remaining. Because of the disagreement, the two have been avoiding seeing eye to eye with each other. Once the *dede* has resolved the quarrel, another actor interpreting the *carcı* (also called *süpürgeci* or *ferraş*, lit. 'the one who cleans with a broom') comes to the centre of the *meydan* and recites another prayer. The community proceeds then on turning a *semah*.

During the final scene, the actor interpreting the *dede* stands up and declaims a poem whose words provoke changes in the bodily postures and spatial orientation of the actors.<sup>11</sup> The poem is a traditional *deyiş* attributed to Hacı Bektaş Veli, and which the opera and folk singer Ruhi Su had included in the album

---

<sup>10</sup> The scene corresponds to the minutes 32.09-36.08 in De Rosa 2015c.

<sup>11</sup> The scene corresponds to the minutes 51.48-54.00 in De Rosa 2015c.

*Semahlar*, recorded with Dostlar Korosu in 1977 under the title *Öğütler* (lit. 'Advices'). I transcribe the poem here, alongside my English translation:

*Dostlarım, kardeşlerim, canlarım,  
Kaldırın başlarınızı.  
Suçlar gibi yüzümüz yerde,  
Özümüz darda durup dururuz.  
Kaldırın başınızı yukarı.  
Bize göz verildi, gözleyin diye,  
Dil verildi, söyleyin diye  
Kulak verildi, dinleyin diye.  
El gövdede kaşınan yeri bilir.  
Dert bizde, derman ellerimizdedir.  
Ararsan, bulursun  
Verirsen, alırsın  
İnanmazsan, gelir görürsün.*

My friends, my brothers, my beloveds,  
Rise your heads.  
Our faces look at the floor as if we were criminals,  
We stand still in the dâr.  
Rise your heads up.  
We were given eyes, so that we would see,  
We were given a tongue, so that we would speak,  
We were given ears, so that we would listen.  
The hand knows the place that itches in the body.  
The trouble is inside us, and the cure is also in our hands.  
If you search, you find  
If you give, you get  
If you do not believe, come and see.

The poem was adapted slightly for the stage. Some of these changes were motivated by the intention of emphasizing the indexicality of the dramatic actions while rendering the words on the stage.<sup>12</sup> Other changes however seem to involve the removal of phrases that would have been contentious if asserted in a stage setting, for instance the phrase *suçlar gibi* 'like criminals', or the final three lines

---

<sup>12</sup> *Bize*, lit. 'to us' is repeated three times; *yukarı*, lit. 'up-above' is added also to first *kaldırın başlarınızı*, lit. 'raise your faces'; in the second sentence the first plural person become second, *yüzünüz* 'your faces' instead of *yüzümüz* 'our faces', *özünüz.. durursunuz* 'you stand' instead of *özümüz dururuz* 'we stand'. Also, the ears, *kulak*, are mentioned before the tongue, *dil*.



that seem to summon a more belief-oriented attitude. Instead, the performance of the poem emphasizes the poem's focus on bodily parts (head, eyes, tongue, ears, hand) and the use of bodily metaphors (as the very sensation of itching). The recitation of the poem allows the actor interpreting the *dede* to remind the Alevi community on stage of the human potential inherent in their bodies. All the actors thus raise up their heads upon the poem's performance, and when the speech is over, stand up from the floor. At this point they abandon the semi-circular formation which they maintained throughout the piece and, for the first time, they stand face-on towards the audience. Looking directly at the audience, they sing the last tune following a musical prompt offered by the *zâkir*. This is *Güzel aşık çevrimizi çekemezsin demedim mi?* (lit. 'Oh beautiful *aşık*, haven't I told you that you cannot escape from what is around us?'), a popular *deyiş* attributed to Pir Sultan Abdal which has been rearranged and recorded by many musicians, ensembles and orchestras over the last few decades. When we consider that for almost one hour the circular and semi-circular formation has configured the actions on the stage, this change of orientations provokes a dramatic shift in space dynamics. This far the audience has been accustomed to experiencing the deeds on stage as though witnessing a self-contained reconstructed ritual. Suddenly, all the cast members are facing directed at the auditorium as the lights rise. At the very end of the piece, the spectators are now abruptly addressed and questioned.<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> I wish to thank Angela Loureiro with whom I had a chance to reflect about this spatial dynamics.

#### 5.4 Entrance of the actors on the stage<sup>14</sup>

KTS relies on a delicate compromise between the secretive and religious character of the rituals and the public and secular nature of the theatre. To appreciate how the dramaturgy negotiated such a compromise, it is useful to analyse in detail how the actors enter on stage during the first scene.<sup>15</sup> Attending to the entrance sequence is important because this scene establishes a different cognitive frame, signalling both to the performers and to the audience that the fictive performance is about to start. As discussed already in 3.2, one of the most characteristic qualities of performance, which is essential to understand both staged as well as ritual events, is the capacity to establish 'frames'. Establishing a frame, the actors isolate a specific range of social experience, which will be recognized as separate from daily routine. To summon the audience's attention and mark the beginning of the fictive ritual on stage, the actors enact specific actions, involving deliberately uncommon body movement and language. The performance of these actions substitutes for any particularly elaborate scenographic setting, which is, in fact, limited to the presence, upstage, of four chandeliers (*çerağ*) and of a few minimal rugs organised in a semi-circle downstage.

In this section, I use the Kinetography Laban to break down movements from the entrance scene into their kinetic units. The analysis of how these kinetic units are assembled together and interwoven with speech utterances, elucidates how all elements together combine into a dramatic scene. The repetition and

---

<sup>14</sup> The scene corresponds to the minutes 01.15-04.54 in De Rosa 2015b, to the minutes 00.00-04.33 in De Rosa 2015c and to the minutes 00.00-03.24 in De Rosa 2015a.

<sup>15</sup> This scene partly adapts the first diagram in Ün's dissertation which was discussed in 4.2.

combination of these kinetic units signposts the beginning of the theatre performance, while at the same time it points to the importance that is given to the threshold in Alevi ritual spaces. To understand the symbolism associated with these movement forms, I also make reference to relevant literature in Alevi studies. By examining the adaptation of certain kinetic motifs from the ritual to its re-enactment on the stage in KTS, I wish to grasp how body movements performed by the threshold of such rituals mark the definition and reconciliation of a symbolic and physical border.<sup>16</sup> Accordingly, I wish to consider how the concretizing of such movements of bordering in Alevi aesthetics may be interrelated with the secrecy and marginality that has characterized Alevi rituals as well as Alevi performative events.

Several authors have highlighted the symbolism related to the *eşik* (lit. 'threshold') and to the practices associated to the act of entering into the ritual space in Alevi ritual contexts. For instance, in his extensive study of Bektāşi doctrines and practices, first published in English in 1937, John Kingsley Birge stated that the Bektāşis consider the *eşik* as a symbol of entrance into mystic light and knowledge:

The chief taboo, however, arising not from a feeling of aversion but of reverence, is the threshold. A Bektashi does not step on the threshold of a door. One explanation of this as it is made to believe with other Bektashi beliefs is that since Ali is the Door of the City of Knowledge any doorway is symbolic of Ali's spiritual significance in life. (Birge 1937:173-174)

---

<sup>16</sup> In discussing an idea of 'border', I am inspired by Etienne Balibar's thoughts on the polysemic, heterogenic and ubiquitous nature of borders in a post-national moment (2002). I approach this concept however not so much in geographical terms, but more as a key to enlighten the processes of adaptation of the *semahs* beyond the ritual context.

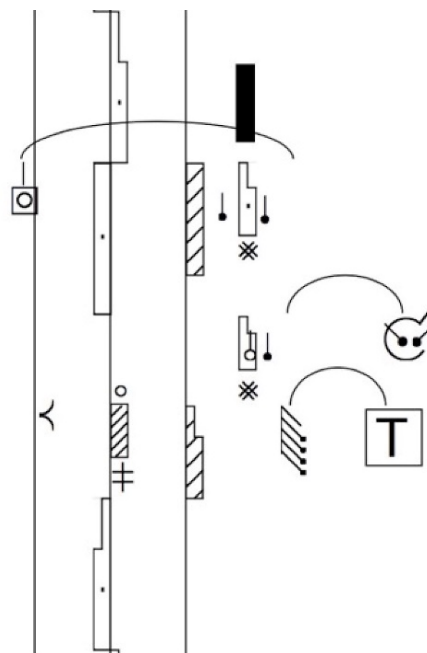
The passage then offers curious details as to how a Bektāşi would behave in the case he inattentively left his shoes on the door threshold: to remedy the situation, he would turn the shoes parallel to the door before wearing them again. Birge thus explains that the origin of the reverence for the threshold 'seem to be lost in the uncertainties of ancestral life in Central Asia' (ibid. 174) and relates about similar practices among the Mongols of the thirteenth century.

The first actor to appear onstage in KTS, followed consecutively by all the other actors, is the actor interpreting the *dede*. This actor first heads towards the centre upstage, and from there to the centre downstage. In these two separate locations, he performs few specific bodily movements, which the other actors then replicate. These movements realize three sequential contacts of the right-hand fingers: first with the floor, then with the lips and finally with the chest. As I analyse in the kinetograph below (fig. 3), for his right-hand fingers to reach the floor, the actor lowers the body to the ground by bringing his weight on the right knee and bending his trunk ahead. Second, for his right-hand fingers to touch the lips, he folds the right arm ahead and slightly above to reach his mouth. Third, for his right-hand fingers to reach the chest, he slightly lowers his right arm which is now folded close by his mouth; as he does this, he also stands up by bringing the weight back on his right foot and by unbending his torso upwards. Finally, he brings his arm down again parallel to his trunk and keeps on walking.

The movements that lead to the enactment of these contacts of the right-hand fingers, first with the floor, then with the lips and finally with the chest, can be understood as three distinct kinetic units. Throughout the entrance sequence these units will be repeated not only by the *dede* but also by the other actors. In sequence, as they enter on the stage, the actors perform the sequence in the same

way and in the same locations where the *dede* did. Some of them may add slight variations, for instance kneeling on the right rather than on the left knee. Because the actor interpreting the *dede* now sits on the centre downstage, when the other actors perform these movements on the centre downstage, they perform these movements while standing in front of him. The actor interpreting the *dede* thus performs the same movements of the upper body as a salute in response to each actor (because he is now sitting on the floor, he does not need to knee down to reach the floor).

Figure 3. Recurring motif in KTS. Kinetograph by Sinibaldo De Rosa.





To appreciate the trajectory of the actors on stage it is useful to look at the floorplans in fig. 4. In these floorplans, the white pins represent the women and the black pins represent the men, and the actor interpreting the *dede* is further highlighted by the letter D, and the *zakirs* by the letters G1, G2 and G3 (G stands

here for *güvende*, another term used to address him).<sup>17</sup> The actor interpreting the *dede* enters the stage from the left upstage, first moving towards the centre upstage, and then to the centre downstage. Most of the other actors follow his trajectory, even though some of them head directly to the centre downstage without passing through the upstage. It takes almost two minutes for all the cast to organise and sit in a semi-circle, open facing the audience.<sup>18</sup> The actors interpreting the *dede* and the *zakirs* occupy the centre of this semi-circle, thus frontally facing the audience; the women head to the right side, and the men to the left.

Analysed as pure kinetic morphologies, the combination of these three units into a motif displays a rather small use of the kinesphere. Rather than spreading or widening, the movements tend to stay close to the core of the body, with the arms being contained in what is called 'place middle' in Kinetography Laban: the limbs (in this case the arms) remain close to their base (in this case the shoulders) and to the body trunk. Furthermore, it is possible to apprise how within such a small kinesphere, the movements emphasise verticality. The hand reaches points located on different levels of the vertical body axis: first the floor, in a lower level of the kinesphere, then the mouth, in a middle-high level, and then the chest, at its centre. These movements performed by the arms design a circular trajectory on the sagittal plane that spirals inwards and downwards. By re-centring the body's vertical axis and using a small kinesphere, the motif thus seems to concretize a grounding of the body in the space and its symbolical enactment of a sense of

---

<sup>17</sup> As explained in the fourth chapter,  and  indicate the position of the bodies at start, with the little pin attached to the bean indicating the direction towards which the nose is oriented, and the triangular pin indicating the position at the end. The arrows indicate the trajectories of the bodies through space.

<sup>18</sup> On the 1998 video record, the scene was edited and corresponds to the minutes 01.16-01.40. Because this scene happens in semidarkness, the actions are not visible in the 2004 video record.

modesty, spirituality and lack of individual assertion. Because they reconnect the axis to the ground and are oriented downwards, this motif may be interpreted also as actions through which the body tunes into the outer space while at the same time interiorizing it.

The action of performing a kiss at the threshold of the ritual space has been described by several scholars interested in Alevi traditions. Several commentaries remark how kissing the door frame while entering into the ritual space is a gesture marking the importance of this moment of transpassing. For instance, Irene Markoff documents such a practice in her description of the ritual activities performed during a *ziyaret töreni* (lit. 'visitation service') at the tomb of a Bektaşî saint in Northeastern Bulgaria.

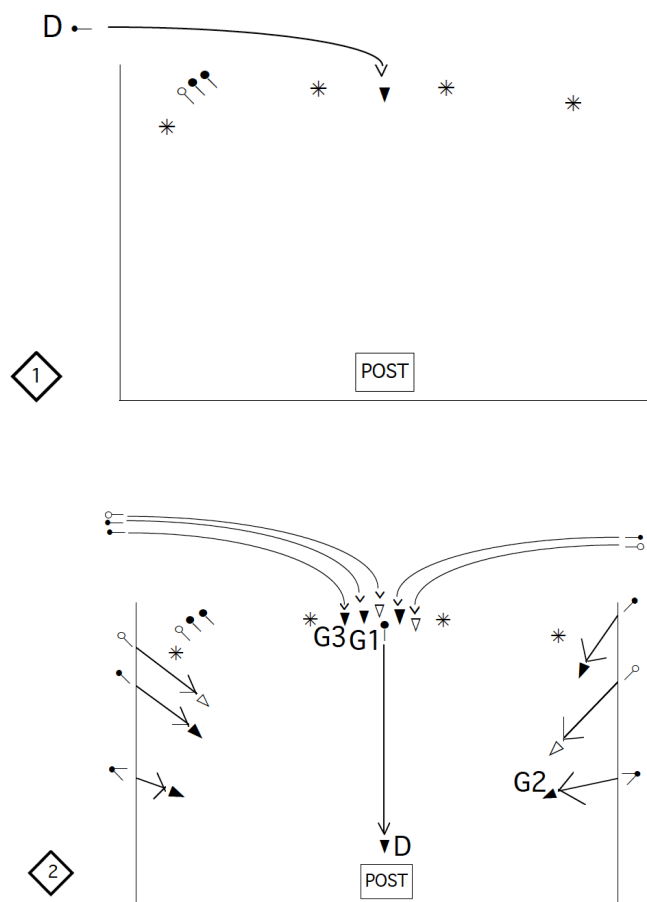
Various ritual gestures (*niyaz*) were required for entry into the sacred realm of the simple, rectangular tomb structure, with its framed portraits and calligraphy, and continued inside. These gestures included touching the top of the open door frame, kissing two fingers, and kissing and touching one's head to the right and left sides of the door frame, followed by touching fingers to the threshold (*eşik*). Similar gestures were observed as everyone paid their respect to the three individual sarcophagi. (Markoff 2018:99)

As in to KTS, the act of entering into a Bektaşî shrine described by Markoff includes the touching of the door frame and the threshold. In their description of the Bektaşî ceremonies they visited throughout Thrace (which they regard as similar to those of Mongolian nomadic tribes), the Hungarian scholars Janos Sipos and Eva Csáki also provide details of similar body actions:

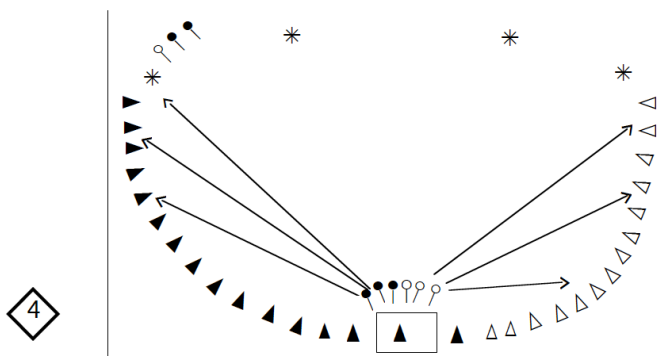
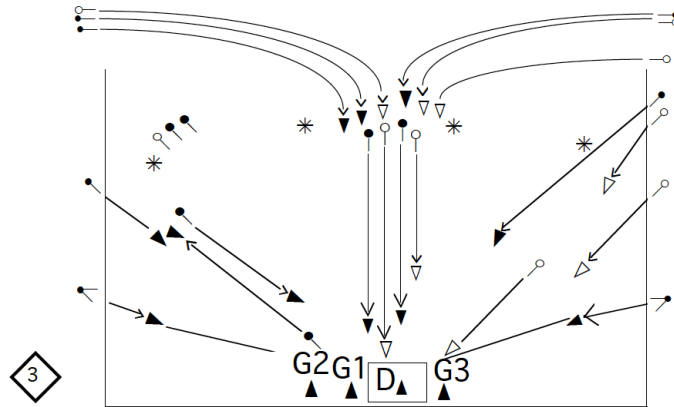
The newcomers enter with shouting a loud "Hu/Hü/Hüy" (a form of salutation, one of the ninety-nine names of Allah in the mystic orders), bow deep (that is how the elder are greeted in the nomadic tents, too), they kiss the ground in front of the baba sitting on a sheepskin, also kiss the baba's palm and shoulder and the hands of the two dervishes flanking him. (2009:55)

In this description, the devotees bring their mouth directly down to the floor to kiss it, whereas the actors in KTS mediate such kissing through the sequential contacts of the fingers, first with the floor and then with the mouth. The shouting of the sound 'Hü' also occurs in the following motif performed during the entrance scene.

Figure 4. Entrance of the actors on the stage in KTS. Floor plans by Sinibaldo De Rosa (also following page).



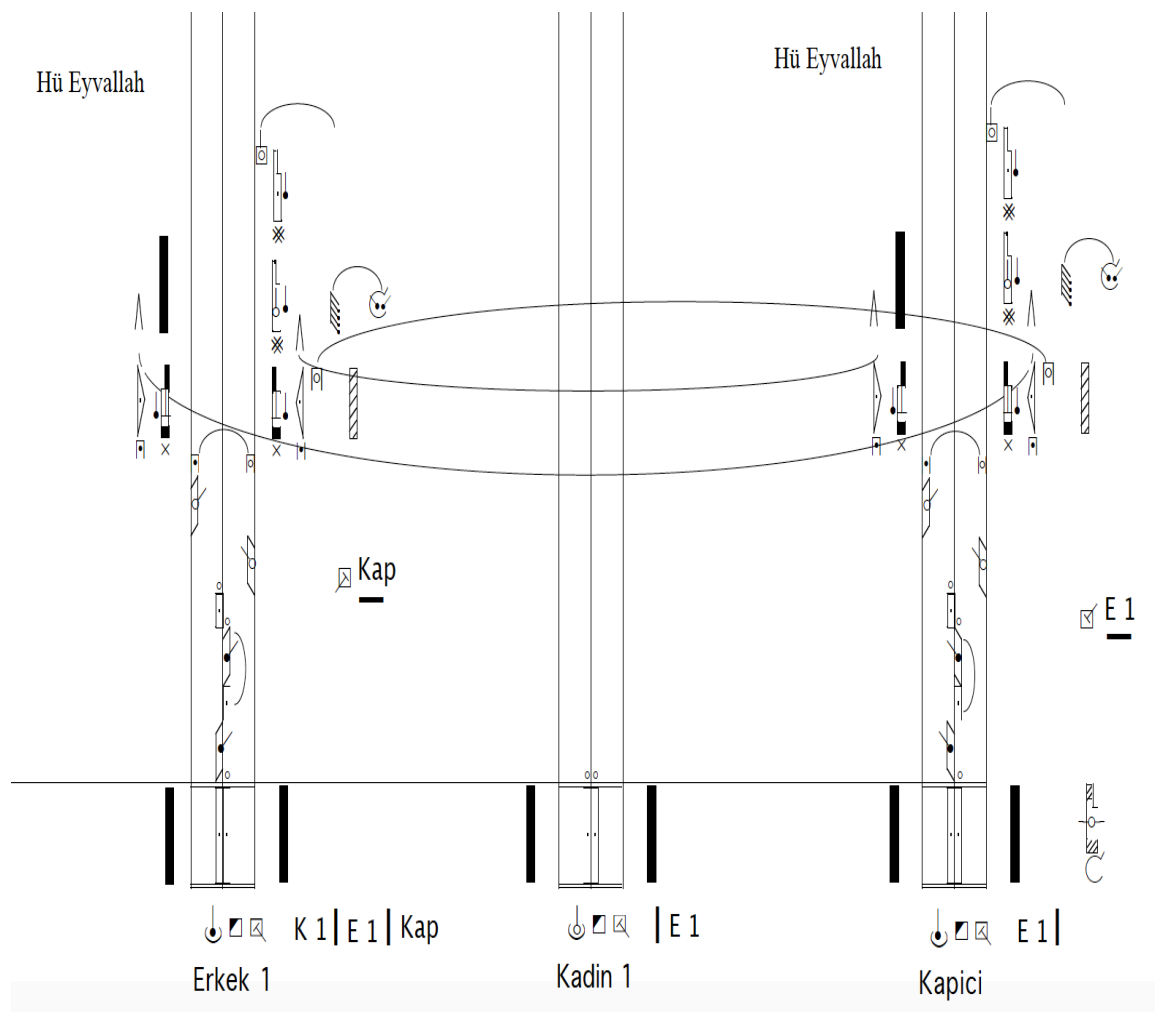




After all the actors have formed the semi-circle, a couple composed of a man and a woman, and another actor who is interpreting the *kapıcı* (lit. 'gatekeeper'), all of whom have been standing on the left upstage, also perform their entrance into the ritual space. As I analysed in a kinetograph (fig. 5), the two men turn towards one another and rotate their feet inwards, placing the right sole over the left foot's toes; they thus give each other a salute through specific upper body gestures. The characteristic placing of one foot over the other is a recurring unit which may be enacted as part of some *semahs*, or in several *dâr* standing positions. As we have seen in 4.6, the posture further accentuates the narrowing of the kinesphere and the stress on a vertical erect body posture, concretizing a form of bodily 'sealing'. Yet again reinforcing the idea of spirituality and lack of

individualistic assertion, the enactment of such narrow body shapes on stage is a rather unusual occurrence, which for instance, contrasts with the convention of turn-outs typical of ballet.<sup>19</sup>

Figure 5. Salutation of a man and the *kapıcı* during the first scene of KTS. Kinetograph by Sinibaldo De Rosa.



<sup>19</sup> These configurations are resonant with choreographic choices in a major classic in American modern dance, also inspired by the crucial place of movement within rituals of a religious minority, *The Shakers* (1931) by Doris Humphrey. In her discussion of the piece through Labanalaysis, Suzanne Youngerman (1978:99) remarked how the reduced kinesphere and inward vertical spiralling in the piece was used to highlight lack of individual assertion and denial of bodily sensuality in Shaker theology. However, Youngerman emphasizes how these choices also enabled Humphrey to challenge established convention in American dance at the time, such as the displaying of a full-frontal view on the body to assert individuality, power and pride (Youngerman 1978:103).

Standing in this bodily configuration, the two men establish a specific contact between their hands. This is realized henceforth: the right-hand palm of the first man touches the left-hand palm of the second man, the left-hand palm of the first man touches the left-hand back of the second man, and the right-hand palm of the second man touches the right-hand palm of the first man. After they release this contact of their hands, they touch their own chest with the right-hand fingers. At this point, the second man exclaims 'Hü Eyvallah!', to which the first replies by also explaining 'Hü Eyvallah!'.<sup>20</sup> While it has not been possible for me to locate the source for this exact configuration of hand contacts, I understand this motif as another type of bodily sealing. What is sealed are here the palms of the hands of the two actors, as if suggesting the transmission of a secret object that remains invisible to the outsiders.

The sealing of the body reinforces an idea of sealing of the ritual space, also documented by scholars who commented on Alevi rituals. For instance, Irene Markussen reports of a ceremony, whose correct character was emphasised because of the presence of the celebrated ritual officer and musician Dertli Divani (see 3.3):

Thus, the entrance was closed and, as modelled on the idea of the ideal village cems, no latecomers or anyone else were let in after the ritual had started. This rather small change in practice altered the atmosphere in the room considerably. [...] several of my fellow students stated after the ritual that they had felt removed from the rest of the world in a way they had not experienced before. They described their experiences of the room as being sealed and as if relations with the rest of the people [...] outside of the cem evi were temporarily cut off. (Markussen 2012:52)

---

<sup>20</sup> See Chapter 4 for a discussion of the expression 'Hü!' in Alevi rituals.

As Markussen explains, responsibility for such sealing lies with the doorkeeper (*kapıcı*) who oversees control of the entrance. His role in the village ceremonies is that of guarding against unwanted visitors, but also symbolically protecting the esoteric knowledge communicated during the rituals. Furthermore, the attention given to the threshold passage symbolizes the transition from the *zahir*, as the exoteric teachings of Muhammed, to the *batin*, the esoteric sciences represented by Ali.

As represented in a kinetograph (fig. 6), the second man thus turns towards the centre of the stage; he gets back on placing one foot over the other in a *dâr* stand, but this time he also bents forward, keeping his trunk perpendicular to his legs and orientating his face towards the soil. In this unusual posture, he utters the following formula, which I translate here:

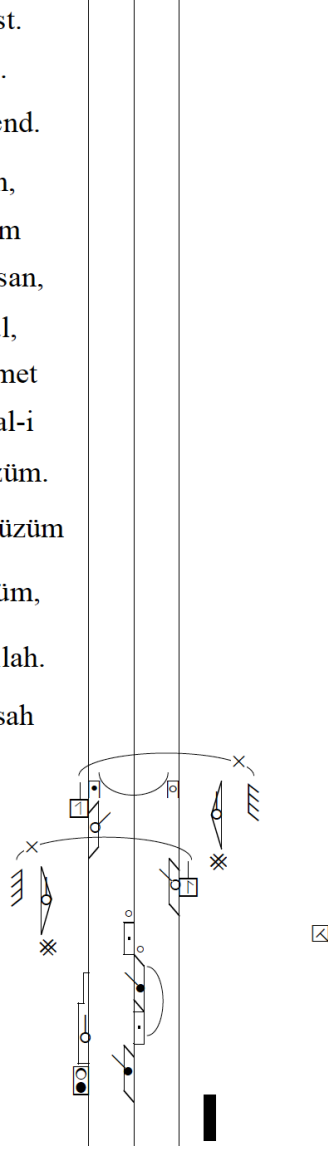
*Bismişah Allah Allah. Eşik özüm, meydan yüzüm, çerağ gözüm. Bercemal-i Muhammet Kemal, İmam Hasan, Şah İmam Huseyin, Ali ra Bülend. Salavat. Hü dost.*

In the name of the King, Allah Allah. The threshold is my essence, the *meydan* is my face, the candle is my eye. For the beauty of Muhammed, the İman Hasan and the King Imam Huseyin, a big greeting to Ali. Hü dost!

The formula points to the emphasis on face to face devotion as for the expression *cemal cemale ibadet* (see 3.2) and declaims the importance that is given to the threshold through its symbolic incorporation.

Figure 6. A recurring motif during the first scene of KTS. Kinetograph by Sinibaldo De Rosa (following page).

Hü dost.  
Salavat.  
Ali Bülend.  
Hüseyin,  
Sah Imam  
Imam Hasan,  
Kemal,  
Muhammet  
Bercemal-i  
çerag gözüm.  
meydan yüzüm  
Esik özüm,  
Allah Allah.  
Bismisah



The man then walks towards the centre back stage where the actor interpreting the *dede* is sitting. Here he performs other greeting movements which the actor interpreting the *dede* mirrors. He then progresses to take a seat in the semi-circle. At the same time the woman has started to perform the same actions, first turning towards the other man and establishing the specific contact of the hands described above, then turning towards the centre of the stage and standing in a *dâr* to utter the same formula with her trunk bent forward and perpendicular to her legs. She thus proceeds towards the actor interpreting the *dede*, performs

specific movements which he mirrors and also takes a seat in the semi-circle. The closing man, who is thus far still standing, proceeds to perform the same movement sequence, albeit in a slightly different formula. He thus also performs specific movements in front of the actor interpreting the *dede*, which he mirrors, and sits in the semi-circle. Finally, the latter offers an opening speech into which he asks for the consent (*rizalik*, see 3.2) of the participants for the ritual to start. Because of the declamatory style in projecting his voice and his gesturing towards the auditorium, the speech of the actor interpreting the *dede* seems to be addressed to the community on stage as well as directly to the audience, making clear that both the fictive ritual and the theatrical event have now started.

The ceremonial character of the movements, emphasized by their repetition, has a signposting function that summons the auditorium's attention to the stage. The quality of these movements removes the need to address the audience directly or to introduce a rigid scenographic prop, such as a ritual door frame. Because their uncommon quality captures the audience attention, the enactment of these movements also precludes the need for highly identifiable theatrical conventions such as curtains, which would demarcate too sharply the separation of an imaginative space on stage from the auditorium. At the same time, the movements and space configuration inform about what roles will be performed by the actors, and their ranking in a social hierarchy. The *dede* actor's primary position in entering the stage, his positioning on the centre downstage and at the middle of the semi-circle, and the spatial convergence of the actors towards him signposts his more prominent status in the community.<sup>21</sup> Conversely, the semi-

---

<sup>21</sup> This positioning of the *dede* on stage is also striking similar to the one of the Eldress in Doris Humphrey's *The Shaker* which becomes a focal point emphasising verticality (Youngerman 1978).

circular formation and the positioning of all the actors on the same level on the floor, indicate the spirit of equality. If not in unison, the fact that movements occur in canon, further emphasises such an ethic of communalism.

The use of the space unequivocally reveals gendered distinctions as well, which are further reinforced by the costumes. Whereas at the beginning both men and women were wearing a white tunic symbolizing purity and cleanliness, gender distinction in the dress code started in 1996 when authentic costumes from the region on Tokat were introduced (Sağlam 2015: 201). From 1996, men have worn white shirts, black pants and vest, and a colourful woollen village hat (the *dede* and *zakir* wearing the same costume if not for their black shirts), and women wear instead a multi-layered dress of red tonalities, which is made even more voluminous by the embroideries and fringes of different tissues and colours, and a head ornament. However, even if costumes indicate gender distinction, absence of shoes for any of the actors reaffirms a sense of equality.

### **5.5 Directorial choices**

The director of the piece, Nurhan Karadağ, was not born into an Alevi family, and he would have remained a stranger to Alevi culture if not for his work in the theatre. Like many other young researchers working in the dramatic arts in the early 80s Ankara, Karadağ (at that time Research Assistant in the Theatre Department) first learnt about the existence and some of the specificities of the Alevi-Bektaşî rituals through Aygün's dissertation. The reading so inspired him that he ended up conceiving a theatre piece about the subject for which the dissertation became a primary source. In an interview recorded in 2011, Karadağ explained:

The thesis that you found in the library, by Belgin Aygün, is a meticulously researched thesis about the Alevi rituals. It discusses the *semahs* in the *cem* ceremonies, and what it means to be ‘brothers’ in that context. It is an important thesis, an important source (...). Our departure point was there, it passed through that thesis. It is after reading it that I learnt about the Alevi-Bektasi culture for the very first time. Notice that this happened when I was already at the University and that before that I did not know anything at all, I mean, I knew that such a culture existed in Anatolia of course, but really, that far I just had access to a lot of misconceptions and lies about it. Personally, I had never witnessed it, I had never researched it. Later, as we decided to prepare such a theatre performance, somehow, willing or not, I started to engage with this topic, to research, to collect, to travel around Turkey, to analyse all the *cem* rituals that I could find, and to bring them together, therefore the necessity to work on a piece about all that material. (My translation from Karadağ 2011)

What did Karadağ find in Aygün's dissertation and in his encounter with the Alevi rituals that compelled him to adapt them for a stage setting? In this section, I will look at how the artistic and academic influences that Karadağ absorbed throughout his career provided the key to his directorial choices in KTS.

Born in 1943, in the early 50s, Karadağ's family migrated from the Ağın district in the region of Malatya to Ankara, where they settled in the Balgat area, which was a growing *geceköndü* at that time.<sup>22</sup> Already a young national discus throw champion in 1962, Karadağ gained his first wages as a figurant in children's theatre plays, as well as a few radio shows (Sağlam 2015: 38-47). First enrolled in the department of Russian Language and Literature at the University of Ankara, he then transferred to the newly establish Theatre Studies program in the same university. The decision to develop a career in the theatre was influenced by his early participation in the activities of the Ankara Municipality People's House (*halkevi*) that had re-opened in 1963. There Karadağ conceived and directed his first own play, which was addressed to a children's audience. This initial experience

---

<sup>22</sup> *Geceköndü*, lit. 'built at night' is a shanty house built quickly and without permission. For a discussion of the meanings of the term see Perouse 2004.



within the *halkevi* marked Karadağ's scholarly research as well as theatre practice.<sup>23</sup> Years later, to become promoted to the role of *Docent* at Ankara University, Karadağ compiled a detailed study on the role of theatre during the first stage of the establishment of the *halkevleri* (between 1932 and 1951), which resulted in a publication sponsored by the Ministry of Culture in 1988.

Eyal Ari discussed how theatre was a crucial component of the early activities of the *halkevleri* as it constituted the most efficacious device to spread a state ideology among a large sector of illiterate adults, especially when we consider the lack of infrastructures to sustain cinematographic or radio production (2004:39). As a propagandistic enterprise, the plays being staged were often re-adaptations of European-influenced theatre scripts imbued with nationalist ideals. In fact, the themes of these plays reflected more the values of the urban elites rather than the taste of popular audiences.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, typical of the aesthetics of the *halkevleri* was what Asim Karaömerlioğlu described as a *peasantist* ideology: that is, the ideology through which the urban intelligentsia romanticised the Anatolian peasant as the keeper of the nation's essential values, though notably without promoting any effective rural development plan (1998: 67-69). To some

---

<sup>23</sup> Inspired by similar experiences in other single-party regimes of the time, such as in Soviet Russia and Fascist Italy (Başgöz and Wilson, 1968: 152-153), the *Halkevleri* were educational centres for youngsters and adults which were first established in 1932 by the Republican People's Party (CHP) in the effort to widen the ideological support for the revolution and contain the role of Islam in society (Karaömerlioğlu, 1998). The social engineering project also aimed at advising the peasants to increase agricultural productivity and monitor medical care, as well as to collect linguistic, musical and anthropological data that would contribute to the national pride of the Republic. It is in this framework that the Hungarian composer Bela Bartok was invited to Turkey, not only to offer concerts in the cities, but also to carry out fieldwork in the villages with the aim of certifying the close relation and parentage of Turkish and Hungarian folk music. Janos Sipos (2000) assesses the collection produced by Bartok as well as by other Hungarian ethnomusicologists before and after him, including his own work.

<sup>24</sup> The interaction between the urban elites and the rural population described by Ari remained in fact only an aspiration and was limited to the pre-organised and highly ceremonial one-day visits by state members to the provinces.

extent, KTS embraces such an ideology in its representation of an idealised rural world founded on equality and brotherhood, such as in the depiction of a dispute emerging among peasants which is easily solved by the intervention of a *dede*. Albeit his own production was somewhat paternalistic, in depicting this peasant world as openly Alevi, Karadağ was breaking the state silence over Aleviness.

Whereas most of the other pieces which Karadağ directed for the ADS have a comedic character and are inspired more by the tradition of the *köy seyirlik* (village plays) and other popular theatre forms, KTS constitutes a rather serious and solemn re-enactment of an Alevi ritual. This solemnity depends on the complexity which marks the relationship between KTS and the Alevi rituals that it represents. Certainly, the strength of the production rests on its echoing of these ritual elements and on the ambiguous relationship that it establishes with them. Using the words of anthropologist Michael Taussig, the piece concretizes a very multifaceted *mimetic faculty*, that is 'the nature that culture uses to create second nature, the faculty to copy, imitate, make models, explore difference, yield into and become Other' (1993:xiii). Mimetically, KTS draws on the Alevi rituals and, in so doing, it confers them with the authority of their originality. The study of the *semahs* conducted by Aygün is thus ultimately concretized in their imitation, and it is this imitation that becomes a model through which the alterity inherent in Alevi ritual practices is explored and at the same time embraced. It is however through this multifaceted mimetic faculty that, as re-presentation, the theatrical enactment became, with time, more than merely a copy and acquired something of the originals' character and authority.

In this sense, Karadağ's project drastically differs from the ambitions and aesthetics of the early theatre activities of the *halkevleri* described by Ari.

Knowledge of traditional rural expressive forms was now understood to be a serious matter for research and a precious resource for the dramatic arts. Moreover, these works were now meant to target both urban and rural audiences, Alevis and Sunnis alike. The production springs out of the intent of archiving, disclosing and reproducing this ritual knowledge, which is regarded as one of the most valued traces left of Anatolian humanist philosophies. This task was pursued with some urgency amidst the harshness of the contemporary world. In Karadağ's words:

In this world where life gets more and more difficult, and more specifically, in this world where money dominates, it gets more and more difficult to live as humans, to love, to be able to stay together, in any kind of way, individually or collectively, because the domination of money is brutal. The domination of money, the domination of the capital is brutal and wild. We feel that it is necessary to live in a friendly way, to be pleasant to one another, to live in a humane way, like this. If since the 13<sup>th</sup> century such a lifestyle existed in Anatolia, and if it still exists today, our duty is to scrutinize it once again and to find, handle and replicate those aspects within it which are still relevant to us. We believe that this should be the duty of the men of science and of art. This is why we do this research. And this is why we keep this performance alive. (My translation from Karadağ 2011).

In his explanation, Anatolian traditional knowledge is looked at as a remedy against the brutality of the present world, where the forces of the market, here characterized by their 'lack of compassion' (*acımasız*) and 'savagery' (*vahşi*), makes it more and more difficult 'to live humanly' (*insanca yaşamak*) and to love, both 'as a collective as well as an individual' (*kişisel ya da toplumsal*). For this reason, Karadağ insists that 'examining that traditional lifestyle' (*o yaşama biçimini irdelemek*) and 'locating and nurturing those elements that are still relevant in the present' (*bize yakın olan yanlarını bulmak, işlemek, üretmek*) is 'our responsibility' (*bizim görevimiz*) as people of arts and science. Accordingly, the theatricalizing process, grounded in research, emerges as a tool that enables the perpetuation

and transmission of such knowledge against the risk of its disappearance. Theatre experimentation and research of performative traditional knowledge become interrelated tasks. Certainly, Karadağ's words suggest more a specific intellectual reaction to the wild expansion of neoliberal economic policies in 1980s Turkey, than a critical assessment of the complex social dynamics at play in the rituals. Whereas this reaction resonates with attitudes in theatre making in other geographical contexts of the time, they are also strongly shaped by the cultural climate within which KTS was conceived.

A significant influence on Turkish theatre from the 1950s was undoubtedly the work of Bertold Brecht, the result of the continuous exchanges between Germany and Turkey that characterised twentieth century Turkish theatre. Brecht's work was centred in continuous and intensive engagements by academics, intellectuals, dramatists and directors.<sup>25</sup> Though operating in historical, political and psychological contexts quite unlike that of Brecht's Germany, some of Karadağ's directorial choices in KTS can be certainly traced back to this Brechtian influence.<sup>26</sup> For instance, I interpret a Brechtian influence in Karadağ's intention of pursuing on the stage 'a constant reminder of the distance from the Alevi ritual' (my translation from Karadağ 2011). This strategy is more palpably felt towards the end of the play, when the actors stand up from their semi-circular formation and face the audience

---

<sup>25</sup> Albert Nekimken (1978) analysed how by the middle 1970s Brecht became a catalyst to change the entire direction of development of contemporary Turkish theatre, influencing change on society at large. More recently, Ela Gezen (2018) examined the interpretation and implementation of Bertolt Brecht's dramaturgy and theatre practice in the Turkish context, focusing specifically on the theatre ensemble *Dostlar Tiyatrosu* and its co-founder Genço Erkal.

<sup>26</sup> Even though he does not mention his work as a director of the ADS, in his PhD thesis on the influence of Bertolt Brecht on society and the development of political theatre in Turkey, Albert Nekimken (1978) acknowledges Karadağ among the scholars who supported him at Ankara University by making their resources available throughout his research.

directly. Whereas during most of the piece the actors seem to be immersed in the reality of their own ritual, towards the end, they turn towards the public while they sing a last song. This shift brings the focus back to the theatrical scaffold in which both actors and audience partake as part of the re-construction, inspiring in the spectator a feeling of distortion or de-familiarisation. This dramatic strategy, reminiscent of the Brechtian *Verfremdungseffekt* (generally translated as the 'alienation effect'), encourages critical reflection and political mobilisation among the spectators once the theatrical event is over. This reminder of the fictive character of the rituals highlights the extraneousness of the spectator to the actual ritual, prompting an awareness that is not exhausted nor reconciling, but which should inspire long-term questioning in the audience.

This reminder of the fictive character is however married with an archivist intention revealed by the detailed exploration of musical and choreographic structure or the display on stage of 'authentic' costumes and props (such as the ceremonial candles). Notwithstanding the implicit idealizing of Alevi rituals as a pure form of Anatolian humanism and the nurturing of an ambiguity between authenticity and fiction, the complexity of KTS is exemplified by its primary goal of popularizing Aleviness by making it more accessible to a larger audience. As already mentioned, the preference of addressing the kinship bond established during one of the scenes with the more standard Turkish term *kardeşlik* (lit. 'brotherhood'), rather than with the more technical Alevi term *musâhiplik*, exemplifies the purpose of making Alevi rituals more intelligible to a larger Turkish audience.

More generally, ritual materials were composed and stylistically heightened for theatrical presentation to a larger public, even at the cost of a selective

reductionism of the varieties of practices to be found in different Alevi locations and lineages. The choreography and the musical forms were often altered, resulting in a bricolage of different *semah* traditions. The adaptation process also gave birth to radical innovations, such as what might be called a 'dual salutation'. The fact that the Alevi ritual traditions themselves have been strongly influenced by the strength of this theatre production reveals such a complexity. For this reason, I suggest that some of the conventions to be found in contemporary Alevi ritual contexts (in Turkey or otherwise), have been strongly influenced, both in terms of music, movement and prayers, by the canons proposed by KTS. To better understand the interfacing of ritual analysis and staged performance in KTS, in the next section I will suggest some terms of comparison of the specific ethos of the Drama department at Ankara University with approaches in Performance Ethnography as emerged in the United States. Such a comparison will help illuminate issues related to the local reception of the piece within and beyond Alevi context and its influence on the Alevi cultural production of the following years.

### **5.6 KTS as Performance Ethnography**

KTS did not emerge in isolation but was one of the outcomes within a specialised scholarly and artistic environment nurtured around the Drama Department at Ankara University. First established as Theatre Institute in 1964, since its inception the research within the department was strongly oriented towards the study of traditional performative forms throughout Anatolia. In this section I will suggest some terms of comparison of the work converged into KTS with the artistic and scholarly approaches which became known as Performance Ethnography. However, I will first refer here to two short articles written by Sevda

Şener and Özdemir Nutku, two of the professors and founding members of that department, published in 1971 for an international scholarly readership on the Austrian journal *Maske und Kothurn*, to better understand the specific ethos of the scholarly work conducted at the Drama department in Ankara.

In an overview of the department's research methods, Şener remarked that theatre, defined as the performance of a written play in front of an audience, was a 'comparatively new art in Turkey' in contrast to a 'long tradition of imitative entertainments and improvised plays performed both in towns and villages' (Şener 1971:374). Şener thus systematized the research conducted in the department in three main subjects: theatre and drama produced over the last hundred and fifty years in Turkey and abroad; traditional Turkish popular theatre such as puppet shows, shadow plays and improvisational arena plays called *orta oyunu*; and theatrical folk performances of Anatolian villages, according to Şener the most interesting and strong area of research of the department (ibid.). Accordingly, Şener highlighted how the Institute trained students born in rural areas of the country to return to their villages to document the plays and other performative events organised there, a task for which the institute would support them with provision of cameras, video-camera, audio-recorders etc. (Şener 1971:376). In the same issue, another founding member of that department, Özdemir Nutku, emphasized that the interweaving of theory and practice was one of the core teaching principles, even though he lamented how practice was not yet accepted as an academic achievement (1971:376).

Karadağ, who since the late 1970s was a research assistant in the department, learned about the *semahs* in the frame of his scholarly and professional research on Anatolian folk theatre forms. His encounter with the

*semahs* occurred after reading the dissertation compiled by Belgin Aygün, an Alevi student who had explored the topic through a disciplinary blend of theatre, sociology and folklore studies under the guidance of Metin And, one of the other founding members of that department and ‘the big name’ of Turkish performance studies (see discussion in the Introduction, Chapter 3 and 4). KTS was meant as a dramatic adaptation of an *cem* ritual in its entirety, such as that had been presented in Aygün’s dissertation. Even though the production highlighted the choreographic and musical aspects of the ritual, the emphasis was on representing and staging the overall structure of the rituals and their functions among Alevi communities. The fact that KTS was directed by a scholar and practitioner who was an outsider to Alevi expressive forms, but who devised the piece in collaboration with members from Alevi communities, contributes to the ambiguity between religious ritual and secular dramatic composition. What further accentuates the ambiguity is the fact that the intellectual and experimental dramaturgical approach was realized by a mixed cast not only of Alevis and non-Alevis, and professional and amateur actors.

Engagement with Aleviness through the performing arts in KTS meant that, more than being supportive of the piece, some Alevi institutions welcomed it not only as a project *about* Aleviness, but rather as an Alevi project itself. For instance, it is remarkable that in several occasions the piece was invited to be performed in Alevi religious contexts where it provoked devotional bodily responses among the audiences (Yolgösteren 2011:45). Moreover, throughout the years, many of those who engaged in its realization started to be seen as Alevi themselves, despite not being born into an Alevi family. Accordingly, I suggest that KTS may be understood as a form of committed theatre which pursued a civic intervention in its socio-



historical context, eventually succeeding in transforming available social attitudes among and about the Alevis.

As much as a form of 'documentarist theatre' devised through culturally specific adaptation strategies, KTS functioned as a social laboratory experimenting novel social possibilities through staged performance. In so doing, it strived to gain a better understanding of Alevi rituals and to engage in the public recognition of Alevi cultures. For this reason, the piece resonates with trends in Performance Ethnography, a sub-discipline within Performance Studies which was developed since the 1980s in the United States especially after the teachings and legacy of Dwight Conquergood (i.e. see 1998). One of the advocates of this sub-discipline, Omi Osun Joni L. Jones, understands Performance Ethnography as follows:

Performance ethnography translates fieldwork experiences into performances among the researcher, artefacts from fieldwork, and audiences. While such performances may entertain, the aim of the work is to explore bodily knowing, to stretch the ways in which ethnography might share knowledge of a culture, and to puzzle through the ethical and political dilemmas of fieldwork and of representation. (Jones 2002:7)

To evaluate how KTS sparked such ethical and political dilemmas between fieldwork and representation, I will now compare some of its underlying principles to those that Jones herself followed in the creation of a performance installation, *Searching for Osun* (2001). This piece was based on Jones' ethnographic research on the Yoruba deity Osun in Nigeria and hosted at the Jones Center for Contemporary Arts in Austin, Texas.

Despite the different cultural and geopolitical contexts into which these two works were created, several scholarly and artistic principles certainly resonate between the two. For instance, because the Alevis were invited to take part in the

performances both as actors on stage and as audience members, like *Searching for Osun* KTS grew as a collaboration between the ethnographer/dramaturg and the members of the community being presented, upholding accountability and a relationship of mutual influence (Jones 2002:8). Moreover, similarly to the way *Searching for Osun* tried to instigate a performance across cultural divides, KTS offered an opportunity to practice the physical elements of the Alevi rituals, thus also relying on the conviction that 'participation is where some of the deepest understandings occur' (Jones 2002:10). In this way, as a form of cultural exchange, KTS encouraged 'everyone present to feel themselves as both familiar and strange' (Jones 2002:14) and 'to see the truths and the gaps in their cross cultural embodiments' (ibid.), thus contributing to the emergence of 'an authenticity, that is intuitive, body-centered and richly ambivalent' (ibid.).

Differently than *Searching for Osun* however, the subjectivity of the ethnographer did not become a theme examined in KTS. In fact, neither Belgin Aygün, neither Nurhan Karadağ were constructed as a character within the piece, thus making the role of the researcher invisible to the audience. Consequently, as a mirror to the authority of the *dede* within the rituals, the authority of the director partially eclipses any possible multivocality. The audience is not really encouraged to synthesize multiple or even contradictory perspectives presented on the stage nor to autonomously imagine other possible solutions. Even when the plot describes a quarrel among two conflicting devotees, it is the actor interpreting the *dede* who masterly solves the dispute. The integrity of the community represented gets thus swiftly restored without the need for the audience to shift through the two perspectives exemplified, nor to consider other possible approaches in solving the dispute. As much as not fully multivocal, the piece is thus also not neatly self-

reflective as much as it does not thoroughly question 'the personal nature of fieldwork and the bodily understanding that can be derived from performance' (Jones 2002:8).

Similarly, whereas Jones used tangible artefacts and actual members of the culture being presented (as well as video footage and audio tapes) to 'give the audience the *real* culture to contrast with the world created in the performance' (ibid.), in KTS the use of costumes and props borrowed from *real* Alevi rituals does not respond to any specific idea or question, but rather aims at generating a 'you are there' atmosphere and ultimately at idealising the reality of the rituals. Although such a fictive authenticity is subtly broken down at the very end when the actors abandon the semi-circular formation which they maintained throughout the piece and finally stand face-on towards the audience (a sequence already described in 5.3 and then analysed in 5.5), in general terms the dramaturgy does not aim at evaluating the research project itself.

Nonetheless, in terms of performance ethnography, KTS became a dynamic space which highlighted the ethical duty of scholars and artists to become accountable and advocate for the public recognition of the Alevis. The stage became the framework where the fieldwork data were presented to the public with the goal of invoking a sense of responsibility among the spectators, contributing to the construction of an Alevi subjectivity. Already noticed in the work of Nurhan Karadağ (see 5.5), the influence of Bertold Brecht to define this capacity of performance to advocate and strive for the transformation of social realities has also been referred to by performance ethnographers. For instance, Soyini Madison, another exponent of the sub-discipline, wrote:

These performances not only reflect who we are but they also shape and direct who we are and what we can become. The major work of performance ethnography is to make performances that do the labor of advocacy, and do it ethically to inspire realms of reflection and responsibility. Bertolt Brecht reminds us that performance must also proceed beyond that of a mirror reflection to become the hammer that breaks the mirror, distorts the reflection, to build a new reality. (Madison 2010:12)

In other words, KTS contributed thus to building an Alevi subjectivity by moving both performers and spectators of the event 'toward commitment rather than detachment, respect rather than selfishness, dialogue rather than exhibitionism, mutuality rather than infatuation' (Madison 2010:11). Beyond the religious and political arenas, the Alevi subject emerged not only as a performing artist, but also as a spectator for whom the performance event offered an opportunity to gather against institutional oppression. In the following section, I should thus look at issues related to the reception of the piece among Alevi spectators, as well as to the long-term impact of the piece in the construction of Alevi cultures.

### **5.7 Reception and transnational circulation of KTS**

Dance scholar and activist Randy Martin explained how, similarly to theoretical reflection, the gathering of people in a formal performance event empowers societies to represent themselves:

A formal performance event is supposed to hold a mirror up to life, its 'double'. The audience for a given performance, however, is not simply viewing some other experience, but using the occasion of the event to look at itself. (Martin 2004:47)

Starting with KTS, assembling together in formal performing events provided the occasion for the Alevis to look at themselves, to produce some self-understandings

and concepts of identity which would contribute to shape a cohesive and urban Alevi society. To appreciate the self-understandings that KTS motivated for the Alevi subject and its impact on the wider public recognition of the Alevis, in the following section I will expand on issues related to the reception and impact of the piece and its role in the wider articulation of Alevi identities over the following years.

I will first look at a review published on the weekly magazine *Somut* by İlhan Cem Erseven, an Ankara-based researcher of Alevi background and then author of one of the first books exploring the *semahs* as an autonomous topic (1990). Erseven watched KTS during one of its initial presentations in 1983, at a time when it was juxtaposed to another piece produced out of the research on Anatolian traditional cultures conducted within the Drama department at Ankara University. Titled *Çankırı Sohbeti - Yaren*, that other piece represented on stage the rituals of the now extinguished Ahi order, a guild whose parentage with the ritual prescriptions specified in the Buyruk liturgical texts has been recently proposed by Rıza Yıldırım (2011) (see discussion in 3.5). Although admitting his limited experience as a theatre critic, in the review Erseven articulated a series of criticisms towards the piece. These could be summarised in three overall arguments: the lack of attention to choreographic detail, the choice of representing only one function of the ritual and the overall process of decontextualisation in performing the ritual on stage.

The first of Erseven's critiques is the most unforgiving as he spends many words in explaining what he perceived to be the problems in the adaptation of the ritual movements into choreography. He claims:

Although the *semahs* were presented in a specific choreographic arrangement, in their presentation there was not a real harmony (*tam bir*

*uyum yoktu*). For instance, the girls' hand movements were for the most part incorrect. In fact, it felt as if this was a ballet performance because the hands and arms' movements were so random. Also, whereas some actors moved in synchro to the music, some others were shaking their feet and turning at their own wish. You then find the same lack of harmony (*uyumsuzluk*) in the inconsistency between the movements of the feet and the rhythm of the music. For example, when the *saz* player is singing *Ali yar, Ali yar*, all the actors speed up and turn like if they were dancing a *Çayda Çıra*. Willing or not, these turnings do not create the desired harmony among the actors (*oyuncular arasında beklenen uyumu getirmiyor*).

Stressing on the lack of harmony (*uyumsuzluk*), Erseven laments the random execution of some of the arms and legs movements as well as the scarce rhythmic coordination of the actors. He thus compares the piece to a ballet composition, using the metaphor as a pejorative term to emphasise the scarce authenticity of the performance. He then compares another section of the movements to a *Çayda Çıra*, a traditional *halay* dance from the Elazığ region which involves the use of candles, to emphasize the fact that the actors did not properly approach the *semahs* as spiritual practices but rather they confused them with any other kind of folk dance. He further complains about the loud clapping of the hands in the execution of some of the *semahs*, an occurrence which he claims to have never experienced throughout the many years researching and practicing the *semahs*. Finally, he criticises the incorrect orientation of the some of the actors on the stage who occasionally forget to stand face-on towards the actor interpreting the *dede*. He thus explains that since the *dede* embodies the role of Ali, turning the back at him during the ritual is considered highly disrespectful (see 4.7, fig. 25), even to the point that devotees who disregard this code may be asked to leave and never come back to take part in the rituals.

The second criticism deals with the fact that, together with an emphasis on the performance of the *semahs*, the piece shows only one of the possible rites

within the *ayn-i cem* rituals: the establishment of a form of kinship between two male members with their respective families in the *musâhip töreni* (here referred to with the more standard Turkish term *kardeşlik*, as already discussed in 5.3). In his opinion, the choice of focusing on this rite only is confusing because it overshadows the representation of all the other possible micro-rites that may be performed during the ritual (see discussion in 3.2 and 3.3). Moreover, he regrets that the performance of the *semahs* is here not always accompanied by the necessary textual prayers (*gülbang*) which would normally sacralise their execution in the ritual context (see 3.2).

Finally, while estimating the social composition of the audience members by inspecting their behaviour as well as hinting at the mixed feelings with which Alevi spectators may have perceived the staging, Erseven regrets the overall process of decontextualisation in representing the ritual on stage.

I had the impression that those who came to see the performance were mostly outsiders to the *semah* event (*semah olgusu*). Most of them seemed to be coming to watch a very interesting dance (*oyun*) that was shown for the first time. In fact, it felt like they were not informed that this is not actually a dance. It was easy to understand the background of the audience members by looking at their behaviour. For example, you would spot some of them while mouthing along the formulas that mentioned the word *şah*. Of course, without any doubt these were spectators of Alevi faith. However, I think that at the beginning of the performance the audience should have been given some brief information about the origins and developments of the *semahs*; they should have been told that this event was the first opportunity to publicly witness such a dance. But we do not know why such an explanation was not given. What was the purpose of staging this play? That is something that should have been spelled out for the audience. Did the producers assume that putting the *semahs* on stage was basically the same as staging a village play (*seyirlik oyunu*) or did they avoid on purpose to clarify the ritual significance of the *semahs* and their specific association with the Alevi people? This is a pity since our friend Belgin Aygün who wrote a thesis on the subject, certainly explored the subject in depth. (my translation from Erseven 1983:11)

The excitement of witnessing the dissemination of the *semahs* to the wider public was accompanied by the bewilderment in noticing the ambiguities and lack of clear explanations given to the outsiders to the rituals. It is with some uneasiness that the 'jealously guarded dances' (And 1976:44) were now being displayed in public, in a staging that felt way too close to the adaptations of the comedic traditional village plays (*köy seyirlik*) on which the Drama department at Ankara University had normally worked on. In this sense, the review testifies how the Alevi spectator may have felt both familiar and strange while watching the piece, thus participating to the emergence of that body-centred and richly ambivalent form of embodied authenticity which Jones endorsed as one of the merits of Performance Ethnography (see 5.7).

The criticism alludes nonetheless at larger issues entrenched in the climate of censoring of Aleviness against which the piece was produced. After reproving the lack of clear enough explanations which would help the audience appreciate the paramount significance of the rituals and of the *semahs* for the Alevis, Erseven adds details of a conversation that he had with one of the actors after the show. With them he shared many of his criticisms, suggesting the addition, removal or improvement of several fragments in the piece. The actor replied saying that changes were now not possible not to incur in problems with censorship and tensions with the Faculty Dean. Erseven thus comments:

We will not be able to know if that is true. However, if the Faculty Dean really tried to obstruct the performance, they (*the troupe, nda*) should ask themselves this question: when you are in front of such a simple and obvious truth, why are you afraid of just shouting '*gerçeğe hü!*'?<sup>27</sup> Are you denying the Anatolian culture? What is the function of the Theatre

---

<sup>27</sup> Lit. 'Why are you afraid of expressing your awe to such a reality?'. The expression is a recurring greeting formula within the ritual as discussed in Chapter 4.



Department in that Faculty (according to what the ÖSYM<sup>28</sup> guideline states) if not the one of exhibiting the treasures of Anatolian folklore after researching them with scientific methods and reworking them within a secular synthesis (...)? And in what conditions is that function accomplished? (my translation from Erseven 1983:11)

The performance was in fact hindered by the Dean, Professor Tarık Somer, whom the military junta had appointed in 1982 after Türkan Akyol, the first woman to be elected Rector of a Turkish University, resigned due to disagreements with the Council of Higher Education. Sağlam recounts that Somer had light-heartedly agreed on the performance of *Çankırı Sohbeti - Yaren* but obstructed the presentation of KTS without offering a clear motivation; the piece was thus permitted only after Karadağ insisted that the two pieces were part of a double bill and that none of the two could be performed alone (Sağlam 2015:213). In this climate of silencing, the care that Sağlam pays to inspect the behaviour of the spectators, such as their mouthing of specific ritual formulas, is revelatory of the newly acquired capacity of the Alevi subjects to publicly recognise themselves through the performance of some ritual bodily actions in a secular context. Erseven thus concludes by firmly expressing his keenness for the production affirming that the piece needs to be both 'applauded and congratulated' and inviting the Istanbul-based readers of the magazine to go and watch it over the upcoming months when it will be performed at the 11th International Istanbul Festival.

In the more than thirty years since that initial staging, after touring in various locations, in Turkey and abroad, KTS acquired a certain fame among the Alevis. These locations ranged from established performing arts venues, such as theatres,

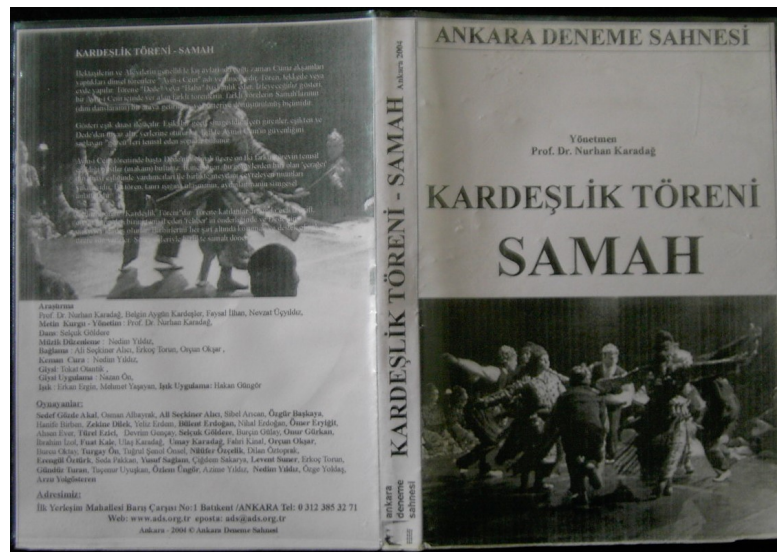
---

<sup>28</sup> Acronym for *Ölçme, Seçme ve Yerleştirme Merkezi* (lit. Measuring, Selection and Placement Centre) is the body organising the entrance examinations to study at universities in Turkey.

University Drama departments or institutes devoted to theatre experimentation and research, to the headquarters of Alevi associationism in urban settings, as well as to specific sacred locales in Alevi devotion. Many of the Alevis I met during the research had either seen the performance live or on video (on VHS, DVD, or online) (i.e. fig. 7), known people who in different capacities were engaged in its production, or were otherwise familiar with the piece. Commentaries I heard about the piece have been frequently contradictory, among both Alevi and non-Alevi spectators. Among the Alevis, I met fervent supporters as well as sceptical responses, but such responses are difficult to predict or trace on a sociological map. Some regarded it as a masterpiece, which has been crucial in the public recognition of Aleviness; others were uncomfortable with the way it theatricalized or essentialized a spiritual tradition. Responses among non-Alevi audiences were also very varied and not easily correlated to any specific social, political or ethnic belonging. Non-Alevi audience members sometimes welcomed the fact that through KTS they gained some glimpses on the often-obfuscated Alevi culture, whereas others lamented that the piece was 'too amateurish and lacked imagination'. In one way or the other, in its provoking animated aesthetic judgments, the piece strongly elicited and constructed political positioning in relation to Aleviness and Alevi visibility. KTS also elicited curiosity in theatre circles, in Turkey and beyond. During the 1990s, KTS toured in Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium and Austria, particularly at events organised by the Alevi associations. In the 1990s however, KTS was invited to the Grotowski Institute in Poland after the curiosity that it sparked in an intercultural theatre framework. Already in 1983 and then on several occasions throughout the 1980s, 1990s, as well as in 2009, it was hosted at the Hacı Bektaş Veli Festival in Hacıbektaş, Nevşehir, Turkey, as part of

a programme of celebratory activities dedicated to the saint in the site of mausoleum. In such Alevi religious contexts, the enactments on the stage provoked devotional bodily responses among the audiences, with the audiences sometimes responding to the actions on the stage by enacting bodily prayers themselves.

Figure 7. Cover of a DVD of KTS recorded in 2004.



The notoriety of KTS among the Alevis, as well as among selected theatre makers, contrasts sharply with its invisibility among wider national and international audiences. This is reflected in the rarity of discussions of, or references to, KTS in Turkish and international academic literature, both in the fields of theatre and dance, and in Turkish and Alevi studies. The few scholars who wrote about KTS were mostly researchers in theatre and dance who had had some direct form of involvement in its staging. Yusuf Sağlam, who worked in the production as actor and researcher since its first staging, wrote about KTS on the theatre review *Sahne* (Sağlam 2009). Moreover, Sağlam's biography of Karadağ' artistic and academic career offers details on the history of the production and positions it within the

larger repertory of the ADS (Sağlam 2015: 198-2019). Türel Ezici, who was a student in Drama at Ankara University and performed with the ADS between 1996 and 2002, discussed KTS in a paper during the VII. International University Theatre Association conference at Puebla, Mexico. Here Ezici discussed KTS as model of how theatre research conducted in Turkish universities explored local traditional cultures as a counterpoint against neo-liberal globalization and Westernization of cultural production.<sup>29</sup>

Other references to the piece are found in two key studies on the *semahs*' adaptation beyond the ritual context, both already approached in the previous chapters: Fahriye Dinçer's doctoral thesis (2004) and Arzu Öztürkmen's seminal article (2005). While detailing her fieldwork experience, Dinçer writes:

Besides the Abdal Musa Festival, I attended several semah performances staged at the Atatürk Kültür Merkezi in Istanbul. A staged version of twelve services, including the semahs by a combination of local people and groups was presented in 1998, on a special occasion organized by the CEM Vakfı, attended mostly by the Alevi. In 1999, the Ankara Deneme Sahnesi staged a performance very similar to the former one in content, but quite stylized in form. (Dinçer 2004:327-328)

The quotation attests that KTS was presented in 1999 in the now dismantled Atatürk Kültür Merkezi in Istanbul (see 7.6) and suggests that the event was attended by a primarily Alevi audience. Dinçer remarks that even though the performance by the ADS was perceived to be similar to a staged version of the twelve services organised a year earlier by the CEM Vakfı (see 2.5), it was differentiated by its formal stylization.

---

<sup>29</sup> Originally presented in English, the paper is available in Turkish translation (Ezici 2008).

In her discussion on the adaptation of the *semahs* in the repertoire of BÜFK (*Boğazici Üniversitesi Folklor Kulübü*), Arzu Öztürkmen acknowledges the influence of the Drama Department at Ankara Universities on the newly forming Alevi *semah* groups throughout Turkey in the 1980s. Even though Öztürkmen does not indicate the title of the theatre piece, she is certainly referring to KTS when she writes:

In the 1980s the Drama Department of Ankara University stylized various *semahs* to put them on stage as an enactment of a *cem* ritual. This had a great impact on the newly forming Alevi *semah* groups, and many of those have adopted the *mis-en-scene* initiated by Ankara University students. (Öztürkmen 2005:257)

As Öztürkmen remarks, the enactment of a *cem* ritual on the stage in KTS served as a springboard, which had a lasting impact on the formation of Alevi *semah* groups as well as in the inclusion of the *semahs* in national folk dance repertoires throughout Turkey. It is useful to compare how KTS differs from the case study discussed by Öztürkmen, as the two constitute parallel, yet very different, processes of adaptation of the *semahs* on the stage.

The staging of the *semahs* in KTS in Ankara resembles the *folklorization* process discussed by Öztürkmen because, as with the BÜFK in Istanbul, both Alevis and non-Alevis performers became interested in enacting the *semahs* as a staged form. In Ankara, like in Istanbul, the *semahs* were initially seen as a mysterious dance genre, but soon became an expressive form through which to voice left-wing ideas and anti-nationalist rhetoric (Öztürkmen 2005:249). However, where in BÜFK the adaptation process was led by Durmuş Genç, a native Alevi and *semah* performer, KTS was conceived and directed by Karadağ, a theatre maker and scholar who was initially an outsider to Alevi cultures. Genç entered into

contact with the folk dancers of BÜFK rather incidentally from his employment as a *çaycı* (the tea maker who serves tea during working hours) at that university (at that time called *Robert College*). He thus isolated the *semahs* from their ritual context and began teaching them to the group of folk dancers, who subsequently decided to include them in their repertoire. On the contrary, the adaptation of the *semahs* in KTS was a rather less fortuitous occurrence which emerged organically within the working ethos and theatre pedagogies of the Ankara University's Drama department as discussed earlier in this chapter.

### **5.8 Aftermaths**

In a semi-amateur framework in which people of mixed-backgrounds and ages would gather, KTS became a vessel in which such knowledge could be transferred into the present. The presentation of academic research through performative re-enacting foregrounded a reality that was normally obscured, or misrepresented at best. For many Alevis, becoming familiar with Alevi ritual movements, songs and prayers within the framework of KTS provided the opportunity to discover one's own Alevi roots for the first time. This was the case for Şule Ateş. Born in Istanbul into a family native to Dersim-Tunceli, she was a student in Theatre at Ankara University when KTS was first staged. As recounted in an interview recorded in December 2017, Ateş remained unaware of her own Alevi ancestry throughout her childhood; she was not informed about it at school, nor at home. Only after becoming involved with KTS, did she start to investigate what being an 'Alevi' practically entailed. Years later, Ateş would become an accomplished director and theatre animator, and in 2010 she directed *Tevhid-*

*Oneness-Birlik*, an experimental multi-disciplinary performance about the significance of Aleviness in contemporary life (see 7.4).

KTS was a collective endeavour that was partially reinvented over the course of its more than 35 year-long life. As such, it eventually incorporated elements which were not encompassed in Aygün's thesis. For instance, the choreographies integrated *semah* structures originating from other geographical areas and Alevi lineages. The actors were typically keen on learning new *semah* forms from any expert willing to teach them. One such expert was Faysal İlhan (1963–2015), back then a student in Russian at Ankara University, who instructed the actors on the *semahs* he knew because of his upbringing in a practicing Bektaşî family context. İlhan would later move to Cologne in Germany where he started serving as *baba* in the Dergah at Leverkusen until his premature death in December 2015, just two months after Karadağ's passing. İlhan's major public accomplishment came in 2000 when he directed the *semah* choreographies of the mega-event *Bin Yılın Türküsü* (lit. 'The Türkü of the Millennium') organised by the *Almanya Alevi Birlikleri Federasyonu* (Federation of Alevi Unions of Germany) on 13 May 2000 at the Cologne Arena (see 6.2). The event most manifestly emblemized the new public visibility obtained by the *semahs* over the 1990s, a time when, despite their endurance as a movement component within the *ayin-i cem* ritual contexts, they were now also vigorously displayed as part of public presentations of Aleviness to wider national and international audiences.

Both Karadağ and Faysal suddenly 'walked to God' (*Hakka yürüdüler* in Alevi phrasing) in Autumn 2015, the first after a heart failure in Ankara, the second in a car accident in Köln. Although Karadağ was not an Alevi or Bektashi himself, the obituary service for him was held at the Cemevi in Batıkent. The fact that this

service was conducted in an Alevi context hints at the way Karadağ's scholarly and artistic engagement with Alevi rituals somehow transformed his own ethnic identity. Such a slippage into a ritual practice that was alien to his own cultural belonging at birth proves how the performance did much more than reflecting reality, but distorted that reflection to shape and direct new social possibilities.

## **5.9 Conclusions**

This chapter shed light on how a delicate compromise between the secretive character of the rituals and the public nature of the theatre in KTS contributed to shape the resilience and longevity of the Alevi communities since the 1980s until present. The performance offered a privileged lens to acknowledge the historically-informed, processual, relational and dynamically embodied terms through which the Alevi category has been constructed over the last decades. Accordingly, I showed how the constant activity of researching and performing Aleviness on the stage destabilized fixed conception of who is an Alevi and what is Aleviness. Moreover, I exposed that the process of disincarnating and secularizing Alevi forms through a dramatic representation of an idealized Alevi ritual contributed to the organisation and consolidation of several Alevi scattered communities into a much more cohesive and visible entity. Breaking away from a socio-historical context within which the Alevis subsisted in semi-secrecy, KTS resulted in major visibility, consolidation and standardization of their rituals on a national level.

The discussion was articulated through a detailed account of my ethnographic fieldwork in the contexts related to the piece (5.2), a summary of the dramatic plot (5.3) and analysis of the choreography, which I attained by



specifically focusing on the first scene during which the actors enter on the stage (5.4). I then examined the artistic direction (5.5), also by suggesting a comparison of the specific ethos of the Drama department at Ankara University with approaches in Performance Ethnography as emerged in the United States (5.6). Finally, I approached issues related to the reception of the piece (5.7) and to its long-term impact in Alevi contexts (5.8). Such an impact will become however more evident through the discussion of the two case studies explored in Chapter 6 dealing more with issues related to Alevi mega-events and transnationalism and Chapter 7 dealing with more contemporary artistic and social experimentation on Alevi ritual aesthetics.



## **6. An Alevi cosmopolitan mega-event in France: *Doğa Aşkına – Terre, Mon Amour* (2014)**

### **6.1 Introduction: performing transnational Aleviness**

Reflecting on issues of staged adaptation and professionalisation in the performing arts, the case study discussed in this chapter engages with the transnational dimensions of enacting Aleviness on stage. Since the 1990s, the adaptations of the Alevi *semahs* on transnational stages acquired a spectacular quality which is intertwined in a complex way to transnational Alevi-making discourses and practices. The specular quality of these transnational adaptations arose after the organisation of large public celebrations which have been conceived among Alevi diasporic groups in Europe earlier than in Turkey. Alevi organisations in the diaspora often conceived these celebrations in collaboration with other ethnic minorities or non-dominant political groups. In sharp contrast to the intimate character of Alevi rural rituals, such celebrations testify the emergence of an Alevi transnational 'mega-event' format. Studying the spectacular and cosmopolitan appeal of these Alevi mega-events is important because this format has influenced processes of recognition and integration of the Alevi communities abroad, as well as the framing of Aleviness in the Turkish national public discourse.

The transnational perspective embraced in this chapter complicates a too simplistic understanding in the development of Alevi staged adaptations from Turkey to Alevi communities in the diaspora. The fifth chapter investigated the modalities through which an Ankara-based theatrical work contributed to reconfigure the space of Aleviness within Turkish public culture. As we have seen, since the 1980s more than playing a pioneering role in the public recognition and

self-understanding of the Alevi community in Turkey, the adaptation of the *semahs* in *Kardeşlik Töreni - Samah* also toured abroad, especially in events hosted by Alevi organisations in Central Europe. However, as we have seen in 2.8, experiences of Alevi migration to Europe have often not replicated the same models and values of the Alevi communities in Turkey. On the contrary, Alevi communities in the diaspora demonstrated an independent, if not pioneering role in cultural and symbolic production of transnational Aleviness. Often, the cultural production of Alevis abroad decisively contributed to shape processes of self-understanding and recognition of Aleviness and Alevism not only transnationally, but also in a national scale. As such, a too linear understanding of the diffusion of Alevi staged adaptations from Turkey to outside of Turkey is not sufficient in explaining the complexity of Alevi performance-making projects. It is in this sense that the spectacularism of performing Aleviness on the stage certainly emerged after the organisation of Alevi mega-events which were first conceived in Europe, rather than in Turkey.

To analyse such a transnational dimension, this chapter considers a one-off concert event organised in 2014 by one of the main Alevi associations in the European diaspora, the Federation of the Alevis in France (lit. *Fédération Union des Alevis en France*, FUAF) in collaboration with two environmentalist organisations, one based in Turkey and one based in France. For the event, FUAF invited several professional performers based in Turkey. To analyse this case-study, in this chapter I shift the focus to a large-scale and ‘never-to-be-repeated’ event organised by the Alevis in the diaspora, highlighting how the emergence of staged adaptations of the Alevi *semahs* is not sufficiently explained through a straightforward understanding of centre-periphery dichotomies in the Alevi

migratory cycles. Accordingly, my attention to the staged adaptation of the *semahs* during one of such transnational mega-events will highlight frictions in the cultural making of Aleviness between several conceptual poles, including: national and transnational belonging; religious and secular framing; amateur and professional engagement; and displays of victimhood and strength. In sketching these tensions, the chapter aims to question how Alevi identities are being staged beyond the Turkish national framework on a transnational scale and in what ways Alevi events in the diaspora have redefined the modalities and scales of Alevi gathering and public visibility in transnational space.

The concert event discussed in this chapter included the enactment of a *semah* on an imposing public stage in France. To raise critical questions on transnational staged representations of Aleviness, through the lens of performance studies, in this chapter I discuss the permeable character of Aleviness in taking on an ecologist route in a French context. The concert event I analyse was titled *Doğa Aşkına* (lit. 'To the love of nature', hereafter *Doğa Aşkına*) in Turkish, and *Terre, Mon Amour* ('Earth, my Love') in French. The event was staged on 7<sup>th</sup> June 2014, the date when FUAFA celebrated the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary since its establishment. Its organisation was the result of an alliance with two of the major non-governmental ecologist associations operating in Turkey and in France, namely *Doğa Derneği* (lit. 'Nature Association') and *La Fondation Nicolas-Hulot Pour la Nature et l'Homme*. The event merged with celebrations for the World Environment Day and was staged at the Palais des Congrès in Paris, at present one of the largest concert venues in France.

The collaboration of the main Alevi organisation in France with these ecologist groups contributed to the implementation of an environmental discourse

that overshadowed canonical framings of Aleviness as a secretive religious movement vis-à-vis Sunni Islam as well as the quintessentially Turkish form of Islam derived from central Turkic Shamanism. Looking at this concert event, I discuss to what extent, differently from the past and from elsewhere, Alevi groups in France have been pursuing a type of civic commitment rather than a legal recognition as religion. The Franco-Alevi novelty presented here reveals in fact important peculiarities that differ from common academic representations of Aleviness in Turkey, as well as in other articulations of Alevi diasporas in Europe. These environmental tenets mobilize a specific conception of 'Nature' (in Turkish *Doğa*), which had not yet surfaced in public discourse even though it constituted an underlying crucial layer of Alevi beliefs. The analysis of this Parisian concert event makes evident how such an environmental Alevi discourse was 'activated' in France, rather than in Turkey. In a cosmopolitan and metropolitan context, *Doğa Aşkına* offered an opportunity to honour 'Nature', meant here through some Alevi tenets as an all-encompassing spiritual and material entity. In the process, the mega-event contributed to the international visibility of Aleviness, while at the same time colouring it with a vibrant green political commitment. For this reason, in this chapter I highlight how such a new environmental discourse adopted in *Doğa Aşkına* reframed Alevism out of the habitual anti-Sunni rhetoric adopted in the past.

This chapter is grounded on multi-sited fieldwork research as well as on archival (i.e. querying documents at the Bibliothèque National de France) and online retrieving of documents related to *Doğa Aşkına* and FUAF between 2014 and 2018. Inspired by theoretical models for multi-sided ethnography such as those presented by Marcus (1995) and more recently by Ho (2017), during fieldwork I followed the organisation, public presentation, and reception of *Doğa*

*Aşkına* between Turkey and France. Multi-sited fieldwork resorted mostly to the encounter with specific key discussants, rather than to continuous commitment and participant observation in any singular specific locale. My first encounter with *Doğa Aşkına* occurred in June 2014 when I attended the event as a spectator.<sup>30</sup> In my subsequent exploration, I followed three social fields to track the links bringing them together on a transnational scale. These were: 1) the musicians and dancers who performed in the event, who were mostly based in Turkey; 2) the Alevi individuals living in France who participated as organisers, performers or spectators; 3) the individuals working in the two ecologist associations which supported the realization of the event, *Doğa Derneği* and *Fondation Nicholas Hulot*.

My discussion on staged adaptation of Alevi *semahs* in this chapter will highlight the novelty of format, content and goals displayed throughout transnational Alevi event. The most important novelty in terms of formats is the large scale and mega-event scaffold embraced by Alevi communities in the diaspora. The 'mega-event' category is used in the social sciences to refer to 'large scale cultural (including commercial and sporting) events which have a dramatic character, mass popular appeal and international significance' (Roche 2000:1). In terms of contents, I highlight how the organisation of mega-events by Alevi groups in Europe exposes how Alevi political practices and discourses may be far more

---

<sup>30</sup> Even though I produced several audio, photo and video records of the event and I collected some promotional and merchandise material, this first engagement with the event had casual character and was not conceived as part of fieldwork research. I attended the concert a few months before enrolling in my PhD program and I did not expect I would include a discussion of this experience in my thesis. During that evening, I recorded some audio notes, pictures and videos, which few days later I stored on an online file hosting service (*dropbox*). When some months later I checked the folder again I realized that the documents were removed. Unfortunately, I did not promptly contact the hosting service to enquire about the removal. When I finally did, I found out that, as of their policies, it would no longer be possible to recover these documents.

substantial than the sole objective of affirming and authenticating one's ethno-religious origins and identity. In fact, the establishment of alternative solidarity network in the diaspora, which I define in relation to diaspora studies, but especially through reference to notion of 'vernacular cosmopolitanism' (Bhabha 1994: XVII), is revelatory of the substantial novelty embraced by Alevi diasporic communities.

In terms of goals, I highlight how the organisation of Alevi mega-events in Europe and the staged adaptation of Alevi forms offers a space to reflect upon and reassess the current political situation in Turkey. These goals are diversified and include: the commemoration of some of the deaths occurred over the last years, the re-establishment of cultural ties between experiences of resistance in Turkey to the life of the Turkish community abroad, and the quest for alternative genealogies which rearrange processes of self-understanding of the Alevis in Europe.

My discussion will be organised around the scrutiny of five performative elements, each addressing specific questions about the event. These are: 1) Origins and qualities of the mega-event format: in what ways *Doğa Aşkına* is similar to other large-scale events produced by and for the Alevis in Europe? In what ways is *Doğa Aşkına* different? 2) The event's poster: in what ways did the imagery of *Doğa Aşkına* breaks away from canonical Alevi iconography? In what ways did the incorporation of novel referents reflect processes that are typical of a diasporic condition? 3) The promotional material distributed before and during the event; what types of expectations did *Doğa Aşkına* wish to fulfil? What were the target audiences of *Doğa Aşkına*? 4) A FUAF manifesto which was made available in a brochure during the event, and parts of which were declaimed on the stage; in what ways did the new focus on environmentalism and the establishment of an ancestry



of the Alevi from persecuted groups in Medieval Europe reconfigure modalities of self-understanding and participation within the Alevi transnational community? 5) The organisation of movement and dance on the stage (6.6 and 6.7): in what ways and with which intentions were a ritual *semah* and a *semah*-inspired professional choreography juxtaposed on the stage?

## **6.2 Enlarging the scale: *Bın Yılın Türküsü* (2000) and *Amour, Je Danse Ton Nom* (2008)**

Robust efforts to promote the event among a French and Turkish-speaking public in France and in the neighbouring countries resulted in *Doğa Aşkına*'s large scale and flamboyant tone. This scale contrasts with the semi-secretive character of the traditional *ayin-i cem* rituals discussed in the Chapter 3, as well as with the intimate quality of their representation on stage in KTS discussed in Chapter 5. Such a contrast becomes even sharper when we consider a paradox in the underlying event's intention of celebrating an ecologist discourse through accentuating references to the love for 'nature', notwithstanding its embedment within a pricy and energetically demanding spectacular mode. *Doğa Aşkına* is however not an isolated phenomenon but epitomizes the character of 'power display' which several Alevi public events acquired in their European articulations. To understand the scale and tone characterizing *Doğa Aşkına* as a public Alevi event, in this section I will consider other big scale events which Alevi associations organised in Europe since the early 2000s. In this section I thus outline two other staged performances of Alevi identity which can be considered precursors for *Doğa Aşkına*'s conception and grandeur: *Bın Yılın Türküsü* (2000) and *Amour, Je Danse Ton Nom* (2008).

The emergence of mega-events has been understood as a modern phenomenon providing key occasions for nations to construct and present images of themselves for recognition in relation to other nations (Roche 2000:6). If not a national display, the organisation of mega-events by the Alevi in Europe certainly affirms the formation and display of a powerful social narrative, signalling on an international landscape the existence of an organised trans-national community. Because mega-events 'offer concrete, if transient, versions and visions of symbolic and participatory community' (Roche 2000:7), their efficacy depends on their 'transitory uniqueness' and capacity to establish 'difference and localisation in space and time' (ibid.). Mega-events organised by the Alevi communities in Europe fit into the category of Non-Sporting-Mega-Events (NSME), such as cultural and business events, festivals and celebrations, whose most common examples in socio-anthropological literature have been World Expositions and European Cities of Culture events (Bocarro et al. 2018). An assessment of Alevi mega-events against the literature dedicated to NSME invites us to pay attention to their immediate impact, as well as to the long-term legacies of their organisation. As a NSME, these Alevi events triggered costly investments targeting an international appeal and activating sophisticated revitalization strategies for the transnational Alevi community. Contrary to other NSME, the Alevi events often tried to achieve this goal through limited financial budget and media coverage, as it will be clearer in the analysis of the reception of *Doğa Aşkına* later in this chapter. What is thus important to stress is that, whereas their immediate economic impact is limited, their long-run legacy certainly contributes to influencing a shift in the perception of the Alevi community, both for the Alevi themselves as well as for international eyes.

An exemplary case of such Alevi mega-events in Europe is certainly *Bin Yılın Türküsü* (lit. 'The Türkü of the Millennium', poster in fig. 8). Staged on 13<sup>th</sup> May 2000 at the Cologne Arena and repeated two years later in one of the largest indoor stadium of Istanbul, the Abdi İpekçi Spor Salonu, this event was organised by the *Almanya Alevi Birlikleri Federasyonu* (Federation of Alevi Unions of Germany) and promoted in Turkish, as well as with the title 'Das Epos des Jahrtausends' in German and 'The Saga of the Millennium' in English. Meant as a celebration of the verging of the 2000s, *Bin Yılın Türküsü* aimed at reaching audiences beyond the Alevi clusters living in Germany and Turkey.<sup>31</sup> As Özan Aksoy (2014:150) discussed in his PhD thesis on the music and multiple identities of the Kurdish Alevi in Germany, the event, which the organisation committee thought of as a 'festival' rather than a concert, marked a cornerstone of Alevi music and Alevi identity on a transnational level.

The mega-scale of the event is demonstrated by the huge number of performers on stage, the reason why *Bin Yılın Türküsü* was listed in the 2001 *Guinness Book of World Records*. A video record of the full event which was published online in 2014 mentioned that the artists on stage numbered 2187, of which 1246 were *bağlama* players, 674 *semahcıs*, 83 instrumentalists and 62 chorus singers (fig. 9; for a full video record of the event see Ardil 2014). Together with these musicians and *semahcıs*, other sorts of performers took to the stage: a German gospel chorus, an Afro-American team of acrobats, a Turkish-speaking and Cologne-based theatre company and an ensemble of Greek musicians. Several leading artists contributed to the realization of the event. These were: the

---

<sup>31</sup> The Turkish title refers to the *türkü*, a genre of traditional songs which are not specific of Alevi traditions only rather than to the more spiritually charged Alevi *deyiş*.

musician Zafer Gündoğdu who directed the *bağlama* players' orchestra and the chorus, Betin Günes who directed the symphonic orchestra, Faysal İlhan and Kazım Güvercinöğlü who directed the *semah* performances and the general choreographies, and Necati Şahın, who worked as artistic director, coordinating the overall artistic components. Faysal İlhan (1963-2015), who took care of the *semah* performance, was already mentioned in the fifth chapter because of his active role in the research that led to the realization of KTS. After moving to Köln in Germany, Faysal became a well acknowledged Bektāşi *baba* and authoritative *semah* teacher.<sup>32</sup>

Figure 8. Poster of *Bin Yılın Türküsü* by İsmail Çoban. Source: Engin (2013).



<sup>32</sup> After his sudden death in a car accident, his family consented to the donation of his organs (Aytaş 2015). The ceremony for his funeral was recorded and made available by Yol Tv (2015). Faysal was interviewed in the documentary 'Tevhid/Oneness' by the Istanbul-based theatre maker Şule Ateş discussed in 7.4.

Several politicians both in Germany and in Turkey encouraged the organisation of *Bin Yılın Türküsü*. In Germany, some politicians welcomed the event as a celebration of German multiculturalism. Şehriban Şahin (2005:473) reported how, despite not attending the event, the German chancellor Gerhard Schröder sent a telegram message which was read as part of the institutional welcoming procedures. The message acknowledged the important place of music and dance in Alevi beliefs and praised the organisation of the festival in Germany as part of a general move of the country towards the implementation of more 'multicultural' state policies. Earlier in the same year, the German education system had in fact officially recognized Alevism as a legitimate identity, guaranteeing the right to teach Alevi belief and culture in state schools. Furthermore, the festival was appreciated especially for its 'multicultural program allowing people of different religions and cultures to come together and enter in a dialogue' (ibid.).

Two years and a half later, when the event was replicated on 5<sup>th</sup> October 2002 in Turkey, *Bin Yılın Türküsü* was programmed a month earlier than the general elections of 3<sup>rd</sup> November.<sup>33</sup> Many of the performers who performed on the stage in Germany conflated to Istanbul, and several performers also arrived from North America and Australia (Karakaya-Stump 2008:1). The event was in part broadcasted live on some national Turkish television channels and attended by various leftist politicians in the effort of gaining votes among the Alevi electorate. The newspaper *Hürriyet* reported how the audience did not react to the arrival of Deniz Baykal, candidate of the Republican People's Party (CHP) who attended the

---

<sup>33</sup> These elections led the former mayor of Istanbul, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and his newly founded AKP (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, Justice and Development Party) to enter into the Parliament with a supermajority.

event together with the economist Kemal Derviş (Serin 2002).<sup>34</sup> On the contrary the appearance of Bülent Ecevit, president of the current coalition government and running as a candidate with the Democratic Left Party (DSP), was initially met with whistles and boos.<sup>35</sup> However, the auditorium's emotionalism changed after Ecevit made a brief speech declaring that Aleviness should not be understood as a *tarikat* –a religious sect- but rather as a belief and culture, and promised the establishment of a University dedicated to Hacı Bektaş Veli in Nevşehir. In this speech, Ecevit declared that 'promoting scientific studies of Alevi-Bektaşism would be beneficial not only for Turkey but for the whole world', finally turning the whistles and boos into applause and ovations (ibid.).

Both in Germany and in Turkey, *Bin Yılın Türküsü* was an important occasion for the Alevi to fulfil their need to publicly demarcate the existence of an Alevi identity (Poyraz 2007:143). Whereas *Doğa Aşkına* fulfilled a similar type of need in a French context, the underscoring of an ethical and political commitment grounded in an environmental discourse and the adoption of an attitude of empathy and parentage with middle-age heterodox religious groups represents an important innovation that contrasts with its German-Turkish precursors. It is important to remark however how in contrast to *Bin Yılın Türküsü*, *Doğa Aşkına* has not yet

---

<sup>34</sup> *Hürriyet* (lit. 'Independence') is one of the major Turkish newspapers, founded in 1948 under the management of the Doğan Media Group. As for *Sabah*, *Yeni Yüzyıl* and *Milliyet*, Esra Özyürek (2009:197) credits *Hürriyet* to have 'mainstream, liberal, nationalist and secularist outlooks'.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibidem*. CHP is the oldest party in the history of the Turkish Republic, mostly supported by Kemalists and social-democrats. DSP was a social democratic party founded in 1985 by Rahşan Ecevit, wife of Bülent Ecevit, at the time when after the coup d'état of 1980, he was banned from political life along with other political leaders. Ecevit, who had already been general secretary for the CHP, as well as Prime Minister, succeeded his wife in the DSP leadership when the ban was lifted in 1987. Since May 1999, the DSP was leading in a coalition government with the centre-right neoliberal ANAP (*Anavatan Partisi*, Motherland Party) and the far-right MHP (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi*, Nationalist Movement Party).

been replicated in Turkey. Reasons for this failure may have been the weaker economic capacity of the Alevi community in France in sponsoring a re-staging of the event, or the tenses political climate in Turkey of the last years. During a recorded interview, the artistic director Mazlum Çimen (2016) affirmed that in *Doğa Aşkına* there are more challenging concerns at stake than in the past: especially, rather than Alevi identity recognition, the emphasis on ‘the love for nature’ hindered the replication and ‘repatriation’ of the event to Turkey, as this theme was not yet one of urgency for the Alevi community in Turkey.

Figure 9. A *semah* during *Bin Yılın Türküsü* at the Abdi İpekçi Spor Salonu. Source: Gür (2018).



Another preceding ‘mega-event’ resembles *Doğa Aşkına* for its large scale and flamboyant tone. This was organised by FUAF on the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary since its establishment and staged on 14<sup>th</sup> June 2008 at the Zenith concert hall in Strasbourg, the city where the association had its headquarters until January 2016.

With its exclusive French title *Amour, Je Danse Ton Nom ou l'Epopée des Lumières* (lit. 'Love, I Dance Your Name or the Epic of Lights', poster in fig. 10) the event gathered more than 10,000 Alevi from all over Europe. Samim Akgönül mentioned the event within his discussion of identity strategies among people from Turkey living in France. More specifically, Akgönül credits the organisation of the event as a 'display of power' (2013:154) through which the Alevi in France reacted to the political and social frictions caused by the increased Sunni domination of public life in Turkey. Akgönül further understood the organisation of *Amour, Je Danse Ton Nom* both as a religious as well as a political gathering through which the Alevi reacted to the reconfiguration of all sorts of social and political problems in Turkey as a matter of ethnic or religious identity (ibid.).

Figure 10. Poster of *Amour, Je Danse Ton Nom ou l'Epopée des Lumières*. Source: Akgönül (2013:155).





When we compare the descriptions of *Amour, Je Danse Ton Nom* with *Doğa Aşkına*, it is relevant to notice how, back in 2008 FUAF had not yet engaged in an ecologist discourse. Emphasizing civic tones that go beyond mere instances of ethno-identity affirmation, *Doğa Aşkına* embraced components that move beyond the sole celebration of Aleviness towards a form of vernacular cosmopolitanism. Despite the large scale of both events, the two are nonetheless different in regard to costs and numbers. Whereas the entrance fee for *Amour, Je Danse Ton Nom* was 10 euros, entrance to *Doğa Aşkına* was much more expensive, with tickets ranging from 36 to 56 euros. For the event, the organisers challenged themselves by choosing a very imposing location such as the Palais des Congrès, at present one of the largest concert venues in France with a seated capacity of 3700 spectators. As advertised on the brochure distributed during the concert, *Doğa Aşkına* was sustained through the financial backing of several entrepreneurs based in France. The brochure distributed during the event reveals how the large majority of these sponsors have a Turkish background (often their advertising is in Turkish only) operating in catering and in construction/house maintenance sectors. As for compensation for the artistic labour, the performers who participated to *Doğa Aşkına* – including those coming from Turkey – joined of their own volition, out of an ethical form of commitment. On the promotional material, these are indeed enlisted as '*lokmalarıyla katılan sanatçılar*', 'artists joining in with a *lokma*'.<sup>36</sup> As we saw already in Chapter 3, in Alevi terminology, the *lokma* (lit. 'morsel') has a spiritual connotation which refers to the partaking of a small delicacy that has been consecrated and consumed in ritual context, also as an indication that spiritual truth

---

<sup>36</sup> I wish to thank here Besim Can Zırh for bringing this detail to my attention.

is achieved gradually 'in little bites' (Soileau 2012). Here, the expression is employed to refer to the fact that the reward for participating in the concert was not monetary, but rather spiritual and ethical. This voluntary commitment of the artists relates to how the character of performing arts professionalisation of Alevi expressive forms often does not correspond to a monetarization, as discussed in Chapter 3.

### **6.3 Poster: Alevi diaspora and environmental reconciliation**

*Doğa Aşkına's* eye-catching poster (fig. 11) displays an image of the earth as the head of a dandelion enclosed in its fluffy seed balls, some of which have already broken away from the flower and now float in a bright blue sky. Representing the world as a wildflower, this poster suggests issues of ecology and sustainability. Since dandelions do not have any specific recurrence in the Alevi symbolism, opting for such a floral image constitutes an adaptive and innovative break out of a rather stabilized visual convention. A dandelion was preferred to more recurring Alevi symbols, such as the *zulfikar*, the double-edged sword of Ali, the omnipresent *bağlama* or the *turna*, the crane celebrated in many *semahs*. The image of a dandelion is used here as a symbol of the planet's coexisting qualities of fragility and strength. As a carrier of contrasting qualities, the choice of this image is evocative of another image that is widespread in Alevi iconography, representing the saint and founder of the Bektāşi order, Hacı Bektaş Veli. As an epitome of his abilities of reconciliation, in most of these portraits the saint is represented while embracing a gazelle with his right hand and caressing a lion with his left (see 2.3). As many of my Alevi friends would explain to me during fieldwork, in these images the gazelle stands as a symbol of purity, cleanliness and

innocence, whereas the lion, often associated with the prophet Ali, stands for power and strength.<sup>37</sup> The dandelion in the poster achieves a visual representation of these opposing virtues as in canonical Alevi icon of Hacı Bektaş, but signposts the new themes addressed throughout the event.

Figure 11. Poster of *Doğa Aşkına - Terre, Mon Amour* in Turkish and French. Photo of the poster by Sinibaldo De Rosa.



The innovative choice of a dandelion as a single design for the poster reflects in fact the intention of accentuating the theme of environmentalism over the celebration of an Alevi ethnic identity. The image does however accomplish much more than this, as it points to another primary constituent of the event: the

<sup>37</sup> For instance, the actor and researcher Yusuf Sağlam offered me such an explanation a couple of weeks earlier to my visit to the mausoleum. For a discussion of the symbolism and iconography associated to the lion in Alevism, see Zarcone 2012a.

diasporic locale. The dandelion heads carrying seeded fruits ready to be dispersed over long distances may indeed hint at the scattering of the Alevis as people resettling out of their homeland. Among migration studies scholars, the dandelion has a well-known record as a frequent symbol of contemporary diasporas. Rubin Cohen, one of the most prominent initiators of diaspora studies, has pointed out the extent to which botanical comparisons and metaphors pepper the study of diasporas in as much as ‘seeds are integral to the etymology of the word diaspora (the Greek *speirein* meant to sow or scatter)’ (2015:2-3). Cohen directs attention to the fact that wind dispersal over other scattering possibilities ‘is the most commonly evoked representation of diaspora, with the image of a dandelion used particularly frequently’ (2015:3) possibly signifying ‘the lack of materiality associated with a postmodern lightness of being (no bird shit, no peasants) or, more likely, a lack of imagination on the part of designers, or those who brief them’ (*ibid.*).<sup>38</sup> The visual combining of the dandelion with the globe nonetheless makes the Alevi dandelion more catchy and even more ‘grounded’ than the ones on the logos of so many diaspora study groups. On a bright blue sky colouring the background, a delicate and almost weightless wildflower is here reconciled with the planetary corpus hosting it.

Like its title, the entire event is promoted and presented in Turkish as well as in French, with headings being adjusted to the cultural world of the two languages. Accordingly, underneath the poster’s earth-flower image, a sentence reads in French *La nature est la plus belle œuvre à préserver* (lit. ‘Nature is the

---

<sup>38</sup> Cohen provides visual proof of the recurrence of the dandelion in diaspora studies as in the logo of the Leverhulme-financed Oxford Diasporas Programme 2011-2015, the logo of the Arts and Humanities Research Council research programme 2005-10 ‘Diaspora, Migration and Identities’, the cover of the first edition of his own book ‘Global diasporas: an introduction’ and the banner of the diaspora social network with one million accounts in 2014 (Cohen 2015:4).

most beautiful masterpiece to preserve') and in Turkish *Bütün evren semah döner* (lit. 'All the universe turns the *semah*'). Whereas the French heading addresses the importance of 'nature as heritage', the Turkish one refers to the *semah* as universal motion through a quotation of the first line of a poem by the folk cantor Aşık Hüdai. This poem became very popular among the Alevis after some well-known musicians, including Musa Eroğlu and Hasret Gültekin, turned it into a song and performed it with the accompaniment of the *bağlama*. Often displayed as a declamation of creed for the Alevi devout, its first lines are engraved on the external walls of the most well-known and visible Alevi gathering place in Ankara, a large *cemevi* hosting also the Alevi Research Institute. The first quartet of the poem provides a succinct introduction to the Alevi belief principles, presenting the *semah* as the elementary circular motion of the entire universe initiated by 'love':

*Bütün evren semah döner  
Aşkından güneşler yanar  
Aslına ermektir hüner  
Beş vakitle avunmayız*

The entire universe is whirling Semah  
[The] Suns burn with its love  
The talent is becoming yourself  
We will not be satisfied with five time praying.<sup>39</sup>

The poem thus summarizes the tenets of the Alevi belief and practices, such as the commitment to love, the longing for one's own essence and the refusal to perform the Islamic prayer (*salat*) five times a day. Comparing the movement of the *semahcı* to the orbiting of the planets around the sun, in contrast to Sunni Islam, the poem sets the human being at the centre of the Alevi faith also by declaring non-conformity to the Sunni devotional practice. The quote on the poster however

---

<sup>39</sup> Translation from Aydoğmuş and Çoban (2004:1).

is limited to the first line (*Bütün evren semah döner*), thus refraining from accentuating Alevism in contrast to Sunnism.

The slippages in translation reflect the needs of the different actors organising the event to meet the horizons of expectations of two diverse cultural and linguistic sets of audiences. They may be read as reflective of the emergence of new forms of belonging that characterize changes brought about by fast connectivity and mobility over the last decades of the twentieth century. In the preface to his *The Location of Culture*, Homi Bhabha re-styles as *vernacular cosmopolitanism* a category that was already conceived by Julia Kristeva as *wounded cosmopolitanism* (Bhabha 1994:XIV). The expression helps Bhabha contemplate the emergence of a type of cosmopolitanism which diverges from the privileged and prosperous types of cosmopolitanism ‘founded on ideas of progress that are complicit with neo-liberal forms of governance (...) and free-market forces of competition’ (ibid.). *Vernacular cosmopolitanism* partakes instead in global progress from the ‘minoritarian perspective’ and is characterized by claims to freedom that are marked by what he calls ‘a right to difference in equality’:

‘Right to equality in difference’ as a process of constituting emergent groups and affiliations has less to do with the affirmation or authentication of origins and ‘identities’, and more to do with political practices and ethical choices. Minoritarian affiliations or solidarities arise in response to the failures and limits of democratic representation, creating new modes of agency, new strategies of recognition, new forms of political and symbolic representation (...). Vernacular cosmopolitanism represents a political process that works towards the shared goals of democratic rule, rather than simply acknowledging already constituted ‘marginal’ political entities or identities. (Bhabha 1994:XVII)

The embracing of an ecologist discourse among the Alevis in France may be well understood as a form of *vernacular cosmopolitanism*. The affiliation that made this event possible has not only been engaging in a public campaign for the recognition

of 'the right to difference in equality' for the Alevi but also, and most importantly, has been committing to shared goals that transcend the 'marginal' and peripheral claims of Alevism as an ethno-religious cluster. Accordingly, the realization of the concert event *Doğa Aşkına* exposes how the political practices and ethical choices sparked among the Alevi in France seem to be far more substantial than the sole objective of affirming and authenticating Aleviness.

Due to its multifaceted unconventional character, sociological understandings of the coalition materialized in this event are rather elusive. This is especially the case when we think of the social parts involved in this coalition in terms of 'diasporas'. William Safran distinguishes diasporas from other forms of sociality by their act of keeping alive in memory a homeland as a 'centre' towards which eventually there would be a return in the future. This centre defines a group's consciousness and solidarity in the current life in a host country, which is perceived as a 'periphery' because of the inability of the group to feel fully accepted (Safran 1991:83). On the one hand, the Alevi in France may be understood as a 'diaspora' because of their displacement to a 'host' country as well as for their cultivation of strong financial, political and emotional attachment to Turkey/Anatolia, as revealed in *Doğa Aşkına*. On the other hand, however, supporters of both the French and the Turkish environmentalist organisations that converged in the event are difficult to be understood as a diaspora because of the lack in their foundational narratives of any constitutive role accorded to a sense of 'expatriation' from a homeland – even a mythical one.

In one of the most relevant articles grounding diaspora studies as a distinctive field in the social sciences, James Clifford (1994:315) remarks how diaspora bond of cooperation are likely to be established as forms of postcolonial

solidarity among minority groups who share a history of displacement and racialization. In this sense, it would be possible to comprehend both the Turkish and the French ecologist movements with whom the Alevis cooperated in the realization of *Doğa Aşkına* as partakers of a minority status. This is because, despite addressing wide-ranging and majoritarian concerns, environmentalists stand for expressions of belonging and imagination that are restricted to a marginal portion of the French and the Turkish society. Accordingly, rather than as a form of inter-diasporic solidarity, the lack among the French and Turkish environmentalists of elements which accentuate their displacement and racialization makes it more accurate to reflect on the collaboration of the French Alevis with these organisations as a form of vernacular cosmopolitanism in Bahbha's terms.

Understanding the identity politics that *Doğa Aşkına* articulates in terms of vernacular cosmopolitanism enables us to render justice to the concerns that are at stake in this collaboration, whose foundation relies more upon universalist and ethical concerns rather than upon inter-diasporic proximity. As it should be discussed further in this chapter, one of the most palpable concerns around which the Alevis found a fertile ground for dialogue and exchange with both Turkish and French environmentalists was an anxiety for 'nature preservation'. As I discuss in 6.5, a specific discourse adopted throughout the promotional material distributed during the event helps to clarify the nature and necessity of this allegiance. What contributes in motivating and validating such a partnership was indeed an ethical reaction to specific ecological and social turbulences that had affected Turkey in the years preceding the event and that were still on going in the present. Also, as I will discuss further in this chapter, this partnership was enhanced by the adoption by the Alevis of an attitude of empathy and parentage with millenarian groups that



were silenced in Europe over the Middle Ages, and more specifically in France, rather than by references to forms of Turkic Shamanism of which the Alevis have been considered inheritors within Turkish national discourses (see 2.3). Accordingly, the event allowed the commemoration of outrageous human deaths in locations and epochs, while also advocating for the remembrance of these losses. These factors contribute in complicating a description of the post-national mixture that surfaced in *Doğa Aşkına*. Interpreting and disentangling this mixture through the analysis of the visual signs embedded in the posters of the event is thus revealing the extent to which a perspective based on the 'national' in evaluating the emergence of Alevi mega-events is misleading.

#### **6.4 Promotion and merchandise: French iterations of Aleviness**

Analysis of the promotional material that publicized the event on social media helps us understand what type of expectations *Doğa Aşkına* wished to fulfil among the Alevi public and beyond. Articulated both in French and in Turkish, this promotional material targeted two different horizons of spectatorship. For a French speaking audience, the event was presented as a 'spectacle unique in its kind', 'of wide scope', 'whose hundreds of performers will lead you into a cosmic time that stages the explosion of the Big Bang as well as the four elements: earth, fire, water and air' with 'scenic effects guaranteed'. However, even though the event was publicized in French, promotional material in this language did not circulate widely. An advertisement appeared on the website of *Viparis*, the manager of corporate events for several congress centres, of which the Palais des Congrès is part. Specifically, targeted audiences were: music-lovers (*mélomanes*) desperate for 'a change of scenery' (*amateurs de dépaysement*) and 'all those who are anxious to

preserve this beautiful work that is the Earth'. Promising an exotic diversion from daily routine and aesthetics, the event was meant to offer 'a true hymn to this Nature that we too often mistreat', a 'declaration of love declined in Turkish, Kurdish, Zaza and also Occitan', a 'must occasion to celebrate World Environment Day'. Notably, the term 'alévi' is quoted only once to explain what the *bağlama* is and the term *semah* is never mentioned. The same text appeared on the online daily *Le Parisien* where it was included in the student section as a concert of 'World Music / Raggae' (Le Parisien 2014).

Despite the sumptuousness of the event, which occurred on a national stage enabling utmost public visibility, and despite the involvement in its organisation of an important French promoter, the Hulot foundation, *Doğa Aşkına* remained a restricted festival to which only a very clustered portion of the French public had access. It is indeed remarkable that, despite the efforts to advertise the event in French as well as in Turkish, advertising does not seem to have succeeded in attracting wider French national spectators. Even after being promoted as an appealing mega-celebration loosely in touch with 'world music' tastes in French, while I was attending it, contrary to my expectations, I could sense that most of the spectators were either bilingual in French and Turkish or Turkish speakers only, and that it was unlikely that speakers who would not speak Turkish were present in the auditorium. The invisibility of the event on the French national public sphere became more palpable after archival examination of the material related to *Doğa Aşkına* at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France (BNF). In fact,

whereas various articles and reviews about *Doğa Aşkına* appeared in Turkish, not any of the biggest newspapers and magazines in France mentioned the event.<sup>40</sup>

More than through brochures and adverts online, the promotional material in Turkish resorted to two short clips on Youtube (Kılıçkaya 2014a, 2014b). One of these clips kicks off by showing a *semah* performed by a woman turning on her own axis (*çark*), a spinning movement that, even though rarely executed in Alevi urban contexts, is nonetheless highly evocative of the Alevis' valuing mysticism and gender-equality (see Chapter 4). In the clip, this movement fragment is followed by some extracts showcasing the passage of the various musicians on the stage and finally by some symbolic monuments of Paris, such as a glittering Eiffel Tower and the Pyramid at the Louvre Museums. To conclude, a male voice comments: '*Doğa Aşkına Enel Hak demektir, Sevgidir, Gezi'dir*' (*Doğa Aşkına* is 'Enel Hak', is Love, is Gezi). All these elements contribute in framing the event as a site for the conflation of various interests and attitudes. The hundreds of Alevi spectators coming from all over France and from abroad find indeed at the Palais des Congrès an occasion to celebrate their own ancestral identity as well as to express their political positioning and ethical anxieties. The clips clearly provided a narrative upon which, through the organisation of a mega-event, the Alevi community attempted to define its own story, reaffirming while at the same time transforming its own transnational structuring. The emphasis on the Parisian monuments in the clips displays how Alevi belongings are able to circulate in an international arena, striving to expand its emerging international visibility.

---

<sup>40</sup> This absence was confirmed by consulting librarians working for the *sindbad* system of the BNF who surveyed the Europress and Factiva databases as well as the press sections of the departments 'Droit, Economie, Politique' and 'Arts du Spectacle' of that archive. The latter section included a folder related the event, but the documents contained in it were limited to the program of the evening and the promotional poster, whilst any major newspaper or magazine in France published reviews of the event.

The inclusion in the clip of highly recognizable Parisian monuments signposts another function which *Doğa Aşkına* offered to its participants: the opportunity of visiting the French capital as part of condensed and pre-organised tourist programs. The more or less implicit promotion of the hosting site as a tourist destination is typically considered as one of the most important reasons for the organisation of mega-events (Bocarro et al. 2018). Tourism promotion is operative both on the short as well as on the long run: Paris becomes thus more attractive for Alevi tourists, positively influencing them both to attend the event but also to attend future events. The travel of Alevi people to attend the event in this occasion thus reinforces the French capital as a regional centre within a trans-regional network of Alevi diasporic communities living in France as well as in other neighbouring countries.<sup>41</sup> In this way, Paris is re-positioned as one of the focal nodes in Alevi diasporic geographies and imaginaries.<sup>42</sup>

A great deal of emotional excitement among the participants is caused by the insertion of the slogan of a famous statement by the religious figure Hallaj-ı Mansur.<sup>43</sup> His famous words *Enel Hak* (Arabic 'I am the Truth') are typically remembered as indicative of his self-proclamation of being in total communion with God and of not being different from God. Like many other Sufi saints and martyrs, the Alevis recognize Hallaj-ı Mansur, hanged on the public square by the Abbasid Caliph Al-Muqtaqir, as a key guide. In this clip, its rebellious and spiritual statement

---

<sup>41</sup> Paris is replacing Strasburg as the centre of a strong network of Alevi organisations bridging together Alevi groups in Western Europe. *Dedes* often travel to lead services throughout several *cemevis* in a different cities and country, and often Alevi organisations arrange bus trips to visit and celebrate events hosted by neighbouring Alevi organisations.

<sup>42</sup> It may be argued that Paris works as one of several imaginative centers for the Alevis living in Turkey. Alevis visiting Paris would normally visit the Pere Lachaise cemetery to salute the tomb of the exiled director Yılmaz Güney.

<sup>43</sup> One of the prayer positions typical of Alevi ritual practice is named after Hallaj-ı Mansur. For further discussion see 4.6.

is juxtaposed to the occurrences commenced in June 2013 in Gezi Park at the vibrant centre of Istanbul. *Doğa Aşkına* is promoted to constitute in fact a space to celebrate and reflect upon the current political situations in Turkey, as well as to bridge that experience to the life of the Turkish community living in France. During the event, the bridging of the experiences of those living in the diaspora to those participating to the protests in Turkey is established through the embodied enactment of collective gestures throughout the stage-auditorium divide. This is kinetically realized when the presenters on the stage invite all the participants at the Palais des Congrès to observe a minute of silence in commemoration of the 'Alevi martyrs' who died during that wave of protests and to condemn state violence, spreading from Gezi Park all over the country.

The promotional clip does not mention the commemoration of the victims of previous episodes of violence into which the Alevis lost their life. However, during the event these are also remembered, with a long and soaring salute given to the musicians, poets and artists killed in the massacre of the Madımak Hotel in Sivas on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of July 1993 (see chapter 2). Commemorations for the ones who died in Madımak is finally juxtaposed to the soaring for those who died during the Gezi protests, and finally to the 301 workers who lost their lives just some weeks earlier to the event during a disaster in a coalmine near the town of Soma in the district of Manisa in Western Turkey (see Chapter 2, especially 2.6).

The connection of the Alevi community living abroad to the wave of protests in Turkey is also established through specific merchandising material sold at the event. For instance, after my witnessing of the performances on stage as a spectator, while I made my way towards the exit, together with a booklet about the *semah* I bought a t-shirt commemorating the Gezi martyrs from a stall at the

entrance of the Palais des Congrès. Over a red background, this t-shirt displayed the sketch by Faruk Tarıncı, a graduate student from Mimar Sinan University, portraying the march of a cheerful group formed by the eight men who died during the Gezi protests, all of whom had an Alevi background (see 2.7). As Christiane Gruber suggested (2017a), the commemoration of Berkin and of the other martyrs provided the incarnated proof of an experience of harassment and ferocity, demonstrating the lack of state legitimacy brought out by the violation of boundaries of life and death. On my t-shirt, the drawing of the 'Gezi martyrs' is accompanied by the slogan *Her Yerde Taksim, Her Yerde Direniş* ('Everywhere is Taksim, everywhere is resistance'). The sentence elucidates the intention of the protest movement to spread out of the focal place where it erupted (Gezi Park in Istanbul) towards distant locations in Turkey and abroad. Transcending the one-year time lag and the Parisian setting, and through such possible consumerist purchasing habits, *Doğa Aşkına* offers an occasion to reconnect with the Gezi protests. The presence of such memorabilia further helps to enable the commemoration of the Gezi martyrs, marking the Palais des Congrès another site where symbolic participation in that protest becomes feasible.

It is useful to understand *Doğa Aşkına* and the Gezi Park protests together, notwithstanding the fact that they constitute two profoundly different social events. Whereas the Gezi protests were not an event specifically designed by an Alevi organisation (see 2.7), the concert at the Palais des Congrès was organised directly by FUAF as a celebratory occurrence in which Aleviness was a crucial player. Nevertheless, it also entangled an opportunity to commemorate the victims of political violence and poor labor conditions in Turkey. Whereas the Gezi events have been a pluralist protest into which all those who died were Alevis (see 2.7),

*Doğa Aşkına* was organised by an Alevi network and for an Alevi public, despite trying to also appeal to larger audiences. Appraised principally by Turkish-speakers living in France, the mixture of ethno-musical richness and ecological spirit wished to create interest among French and Turkish environmentalists, Turco-French transnationals, and World music listeners. Such a strategy proved to be successful in coping with the challenging social status of the Alevis as a non-Sunni and non-Christian minority group, while at the same time resisting official clear-cut categorizations. By articulating the celebration of Aleviness through *semah* and music, commemorating the martyrs of the Gezi protests with other victims of sectarian violence and poor labour conditions in Turkey, and finally embracing an ecological discourse, Alevism here tried to display a thicker layer of cultural richness and civic commitment.

### **6.5 Manifesto: environmentalism and persecuted groups in Mediaeval Europe**

The event opened with welcome speeches by several organising actors: a representative of the Nicholas Hulot Foundation; Güven Eken, president of *Doğa Derneği*; Erdal Kılıçkaya, president of FUAF, and the president of the European Confederation of Alevi Communities (*Avrupa Alevi Birlikleri Konfederasyonu*, AABK). After these speeches and before the musicians took the stage, the evening began with an enactment of a *semah*, as I will discuss in 6.6. The program included a line-up of musical performances which was interspersed with dramatic declamations of texts leading the spectators on a symbolic journey from the Big Bang as primordial explosion through to a celebration of the four natural

elements.<sup>44</sup> These declamations form the thread connecting the various events on the stage. Written by the Alevi intellectual and *dede* Esat Korkmaz, the texts were proclaimed onstage, projected as holograms on the large bright screens, and distributed within a brochure that is given to the audience at the entrance. These texts consisted of a hymn dedicated to 'Nature' and to its four elements: earth, fire, water and air. The hymns were written not only in French and Turkish, but also in Kurmanji and Zaza, the two main languages spoken by the Kurds in Turkey. On the stage, as well as on the brochure, the texts were framed as a FUAF manifesto 'for the love of nature'.

The reader familiar with recent Alevi history would be reminded of an earlier Alevi manifesto released in 1989 by another European association, the Hamburg Alevi Association (see 2.8). That document, written by Alevi and Sunni intellectuals alike and published a year later in *Cumhuriyet*, marked a very important step towards the public recognition of Alevism as a self-contained faith and culture, nevertheless still emphasizing Alevism to be grounded in Islam. Most urgently, it demanded equal representation and opportunities in education, media visibility and money allocation for the implementation of religious services (Özyürek 2009:128). Quite differently, the manifesto presented here re-interprets Alevism more in terms of a humanist and ecologist worldview. In the text, typical Alevi tenets of belief, such as the emphasis on love (*aşk*) or gender equality are reaffirmed with reference to Alevi saints and poets. For instance, the manifesto quotes the words of the already mentioned poet Hüdai to hint at the importance for the Alevis of the figure of the *aşîks* (the Anatolian bards 'pervaded by divine love'):

---

<sup>44</sup> Creation myths in Alevism give emphasis to this primordial explosion, as discussed in the documentary by artist Şule Ateş, which will be discussed in 7.4.



(...) my disposition is love, my confession is love, my religion is love. Do not see my love and my belief as two different things. My belief is love, my faith is love, my direction is love. Life has no importance on our path, because we are looking for the Loved one; we fell in love with love, and we say that we do not know any other art but the art of loving. (My translation from Fédération Union des Alévis en France 2014)

The saint Hacı Bektaş Veli is also quoted to proclaim the refusal of any sort of gender discrimination, thus inviting readers to look at men and women as equal: 'whatever observed default is but relative (difference exists only when you want to look at it)' (ibid.). What is original in the document is nonetheless the emphasis on the need of humankind to honor 'Nature as God' and to search for those resources that may help resist the shadows of individualism and barbarism affecting the modern world. In an emphasis on self-knowledge and immanence, the text proclaims a rejection of dogmas and sacred texts in favour of an invitation to worship God by finding him 'on the traits on the human face, in the sound of the strings of the *bağlama* or on the slopes of the mountains'. Hence, the manifesto claims the urge to rethink all mystical knowledge at the service of the oppressed.

The novel ecological stance of *Doga Askina* was certainly due to collaboration in the organising of the event with two prominent ecologist partners. The French one certainly did not have any Alevi background, nor connections to Alevism in the past. The organisation was named after its founder, Nicholas Hulot, a recognised environmental activist who was already a well-known TV journalist reporting on travel and extreme sports, before turning in the 1990s to wider outreach on environmental issues. While I conducted fieldwork, I did not predict that in May 2017 Hulot would be appointed Minister for the Ecological and Inclusive Transition under the first Philippe government, a position from which he resigned

slightly more than a year later out of a lack of agreement on environmental strategy with president Emmanuel Macron's direction (see 2.8).<sup>45</sup>

A straightforward Alevi background is however also not evident for the Turkish partner involved, *Doğa Derneği*. Founded in Ankara in 2002 in partnership with Bird Life International-Turkey, *Doğa Derneği* is a grassroots organisation which promotes scientific research, community-based intervention and advocacy campaigns on ecological matters. Despite being primarily concerned with the protection of bird species, *Doğa Derneği* also works on conservation of biodiversity in a wider sense, encompassing the protection of endemic plants, fish and mammals, the promotion of indigenous farming schemes and advocacy for minimizing the human footprint on Earth.<sup>46</sup> In 2014, *Doğa Derneği* founded the eco-village *Doğa Okulu* after the municipality of Seferhisar, Izmir, authorised the renovation and use of the abandoned old school of its Orhanlı neighbourhood. The mayor of Seferhisar, Tunç Soyer, is publicly known to be an Alevi politician and in June 2016 in the old castle of Seferhisar he hosted a symposium and gathering of twenty *semah* groups from Turkey and Bulgaria. The municipality organised the event in collaboration with the *Hüseyin Gazi Ocağı* inviting several Alevi scholars, such as Mehmet Ersal, Ahmet Koçak, Gani Pekşen, Ali Aksüt, Fuat Bozkurt,

---

<sup>45</sup> Even though I tried to get in touch, it was not possible during fieldwork to meet any representative working for the Foundation. My knowledge remains thus limited to what I could grasp through research online, casual conversation with my French friends and acquaintances, and subscription to the organisation's newsletter.

<sup>46</sup> Since 2011 *Doğa Derneği* implemented campaigns opposing major construction projects endangering the Important Key and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs) and Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) in the Gediz and Dicle Valley, Hasankeyf. These campaigns led to the withdrawal of financial support by the governments of Germany, Austria, and Switzerland for the construction of the Ilisu Dam. Many members of the organisation joined environmental activism throughout the *Büyük Anadolu Yürüyüşü* (lit. "The Great March of Anatolia") in 2011 and the Gezi Protests in 2013 (Doğa Derneği 2019).

Seyhan Kayhan Kılıç, Ali Yıldırım and Piri Er.<sup>47</sup> In Seferhisar, *Doğa Okulu* develops immersive training programs for children and adults which range from wood carving and sustainable construction methods, to storytelling and music. For instance, in May 2017, the school invited the renowned musician Erkan Oğur, who had himself performed in *Doğa Aşkına*, to lead a two-day workshop on the history and practice of the *kopuz*, a smaller, fretless and nowadays less common *bağlama*.

In the organisation of *Doğa Aşkına*, the core values of *Doğa Derneği* such as a holistic understanding of the intertwining of humanity and nature (i.e. ‘the human is nature itself’) and a transnational vision (‘there are no political and national borders in nature’) combined with the Alevi themes celebrated by FUAF.<sup>48</sup> The organisation’s website offers in fact an understanding of ‘nature’ which has strong resonances with immanentist and animist elements in Alevi belief systems:

*Doğa* sees nature as a thinking, writing and drawing entity. These thoughts are not inscribed in the form of ink stains on paper, but as rivers flung upon the sea from mountains, in the harmony of millions of living beings, in the nuclei of atoms and the eternity of the universe. *Doğa* pursues a perusal and reproduction of nature without an intermediary. This is only possible through an understanding of the cyclical logic of nature. Ultimately, the human is nature itself. (Doğa Derneği 2019)

Although such elements could easily be used to highlight the ancestries of contemporary Alevi beliefs from Shamanistic Turkic forms religiosity, the greatest novelty brought about by the FUAF manifesto is, however, the implementation of an attitude of empathy towards several Gnostic groups that were silenced in Europe over the Middle Ages. This empathy is articulated loosely in terms of a

---

<sup>47</sup> The Alevi journalist Ayhan Aydın reported on his public Facebook profile a brief review of the symposium including pictures of the semah performances on stage (Aydın 2016).

<sup>48</sup> See the sections ‘values’ and ‘who we are’ on the organisation’s website (Doğa Derneği 2019).

lineage of the Alevis to religious groups who suffered from sectarian persecutions in Europe from the 12<sup>th</sup> to the 14<sup>th</sup> century (see discussion of such alleged lineages in 2.4). The text mentions:

We feel a parentage between our culture and the forbidden cultures of the Cathars (South of France), the Pataria movement (Northern Italy), the Bogomils (Balkans) and the Anabaptists (Germany). Their fight, their passion, their dream of liberation are ours. (My translation from Fédération Union des Alévis en France 2014:11).

This lineage is here not established on historical grounds, but rather it is endorsed in terms of a rather instinctive feeling of a shared experience of oppression (*'nous ressentons'*) and a commitment to recognize 'their fight, their passion, their dream of liberation' as the same struggle of the Alevis themselves. Acknowledging the anguish which is derived from the self-recognition as sons of those who were killed in unjust circumstances, the manifesto clearly articulates how such a selected ancestry is contingent to the memory of recent historical facts:

If our thinking masters were not unjustly killed, we would not have to hold such a position. We shall thank them. We are the fruits fallen from their branches. We will pursue their fight until the end. (My translation from Fédération Union des Alévis en France 2014:11).

The institution of an affinitive lineage with Gnostic religious movements in Medieval Europe, such as the Cathars, provides grounds for political action and for claiming a tentative European indigeneity of Aleviness. This affinitive lineage and the public espousal of an environmental discourse certainly reverberates with Ruth Mandel's estimates (2008) about the emergence of more and more 'public, politicized, folklorized and popularized' contemporary and cosmopolitan Alevi experiences (as discussed in 2.8).

## 6.6 Movement on stage: *semah* as resistance against Alevi invisibility

### in France

The one and only *semah* executed on the stage is *Turnalar semahı* ('The semah of the cranes'), also known as *Yine dertli dertli* ('Still suffering and suffering'), possibly the most widely known *semah* and the one that is commonly taught during the first stages of *semah* apprenticeship (see also its adaptation in the contemporary dance piece "*biz*" discussed in Chapter 7). The most popular musical version of this *semah* forms part of the Turkish Radio and Television repertoire and was collected by Mahmut Erdal in the region of Sivas. The lyrics, reproducing a poem by the seventeenth-century minstrel from the southern Anatolian region of the Taurus Mountains Karacaođlan, highlight the multilayered symbolism attached to the figure of the crane in the Turkic world (Arnaud-Demir 2002; Eke 2013:224; Koerbin 2001:133; Zarccone 2012b). Sometimes associated with the 'Sky God' in Central Asian shamanistic cults (sometimes referred to as *Tengri*, other times as *Ülgen*), sometimes with the Imam Ali and other saints within Islam, the crane is often also associated with the news-bringing motif or the longing for freedom, home and prosperity experienced in the diaspora because of its migratory lifestyle.<sup>49</sup> The first section of the song, which I insert here together with its translation in English, addresses the crane, whose breast has been wounded and intestines smashed:

*Yine dertli dertli iniliyorsun  
sarı turnam sinen yaralandı mı?  
hiç el değmeden de iniliyorsun*

---

<sup>49</sup> See Eke (2013) for a discussion of the symbolism of the crane in this song as well as more generally in Turkic cultures.

*sarı turnam sinen yaralandı mı?  
yoksa ciğerlerin parelendi mi?*

You are getting low again, suffering and suffering  
my yellow crane, did your chest get hurt?  
without even touching your hand, you are getting low  
my yellow crane, did your chest get hurt?  
or did your lungs get injured?

The crying sound of the crane is thus associated with the melancholic sound of the *bağlama*, as well as to life in an exilic condition. Metin Eke clarifies how several of the words' double meanings in the text contribute to create this metaphor:

The crane is a migratory bird, and thus represents exile and those leaving their homeland for foreign lands, who face the difficulties of new conditions and ways of life. The word *düzen* (lit. "order") is also the musical term for the tuning of an instrument. Tuning the *bağlama* to an unfamiliar tuning would confuse the player, just as people become confused and struggle in a new and unfamiliar order. Each fret of the *bağlama* is tied on, wound several times around the neck of the instrument. If disturbed, the individual loops become separated and the fret no longer functions. Here the allusion is to the confusion of living in a foreign land. But it can also refer to an expression, "to mess one's hair," to sadden, to cause grief. The long thin crest feathers on the crane's head are called *tel*, literally string (of an instrument) or wire. This may also refer to the tassel often hung as decoration on the end of the *bağlama*'s neck. The same word is used for silver wire used in embroidery, which is traditionally made even today by forcefully drawing the wire through increasingly smaller holes. In this sense, the verb *süzme*, to "pull through, to strain" is an allusion to pain and discomfort/stress. (Eke 2013:225)

The association depends mostly on the ambiguous reference to the *teller*, term that is used to refer to the cranes' feathers as well as the *bağlama* strings, as well as to the process of becoming adapted to a different order in a diasporic locale (*düzen*), with comparison to the process of becoming adapted to a different tuning.<sup>50</sup>

---

<sup>50</sup> Eke further specifies why the *bağlama* is seen as a yellow crane by explaining that the wood which is normally preferred to construct a *bağlama* is mulberry, which is yellow in colour.

For the enactment of this *semah* during *Doğa Aşkına*, the musical accompaniment with voice and *bağlama* was offered by Cembul Kanat, a young *özan* and *bağlama* teacher, member of the transnational network of *bağlama* players *Mekteb-i İrfan* (see 3.6) and part of the all-women band *Telli Turnalar* (lit. ‘Stringed Cranes’).<sup>51</sup> The group of *semahcıs* is formed by more than forty people, mostly young and adult women living in different parts of France. Experienced in practicing the *semahs* during the rituals and other cultural activities in the Alevi religious center closest to their place of residence, for the execution of the *semah* in *Doğa Aşkına* these *semahcıs* rehearsed together only once, on the morning of the event, and without any professional leader coordinating the group. Even though the structure of the three movement motifs is simple, the difficulties in execution relies on the complex musical structure incorporating changes in meter and tempo, exemplary of the *semah* form. In this case, both in the rhythmic structure of the music and of the movements, these changes in meter and tempo shift from a 9/8 in the first section (articulated first in 2+2+3+2 and then in 2+3+2+2), then to a 2/4 and finally to a 3/4.

The staging of this *semah* at the start of the event’s program sets the kernel of an Alevi event of this scale. The *semah* is reaffirmed as the emblematic embodied symbol of Aleviness, providing a minority language through which memory building processes are articulated, as well as progressive discourses touching on environmentalism and political participation in the diaspora. The decision of staging a *semah* during the event was taken by the Alevi community living in France, and the artistic director of the event, Mazlum Çimen, had to

---

<sup>51</sup> Other members of this group are Gülay Hacer Toruk, Eléonore Fourniau and Petra Nachtmanova.

consent to it due to the French Alevis' insistence even though he did not find it appropriate. The primary reason for this insistence may have been the ambition of the French Alevis to render the practice, and therefore the Alevi community, more publicly visible on the French and international scene. Quoting from the Homi Bahbha' phrase earlier in the chapter, such a decision can be read as a move towards the claim of 'a right to difference in equality'. Nonetheless, the fact that Alevis living in France asked to be involved on the stage through a *semah* performance testified a diversified set of ambitions and expectations.

The performance of the *semah* on stage promotes the public recognition of the practice, while at the same time enabling the participants to literally embody their participation in the larger transnational Alevi community rather than only witnessing it as spectators. For instance, Sibel Güneş, a *semah* teacher and head of the youth section of the association *PakMerkez (Paris Alevi Kültür Merkezi – Centre Culturel des Alevis de Paris)* who had participated as *semahcı* to *Doğa Aşkına*, recounted how getting on the stage next to the many artists coming from Turkey, offered her and many of her companions the excitement of being part of the event 'from the inside', and not only as audience members (Güneş 2016).<sup>52</sup> Performing a *semah* on the stage primarily offset the prospect of being disenfranchised from the larger Alevi community. The enactment of a *semah* was meant to amplify the visibility of the Alevis in the French public sphere. However, as we have seen in the previous section, the French public and media seem to have been, overall, unreceptive of *Doğa Aşkına*.

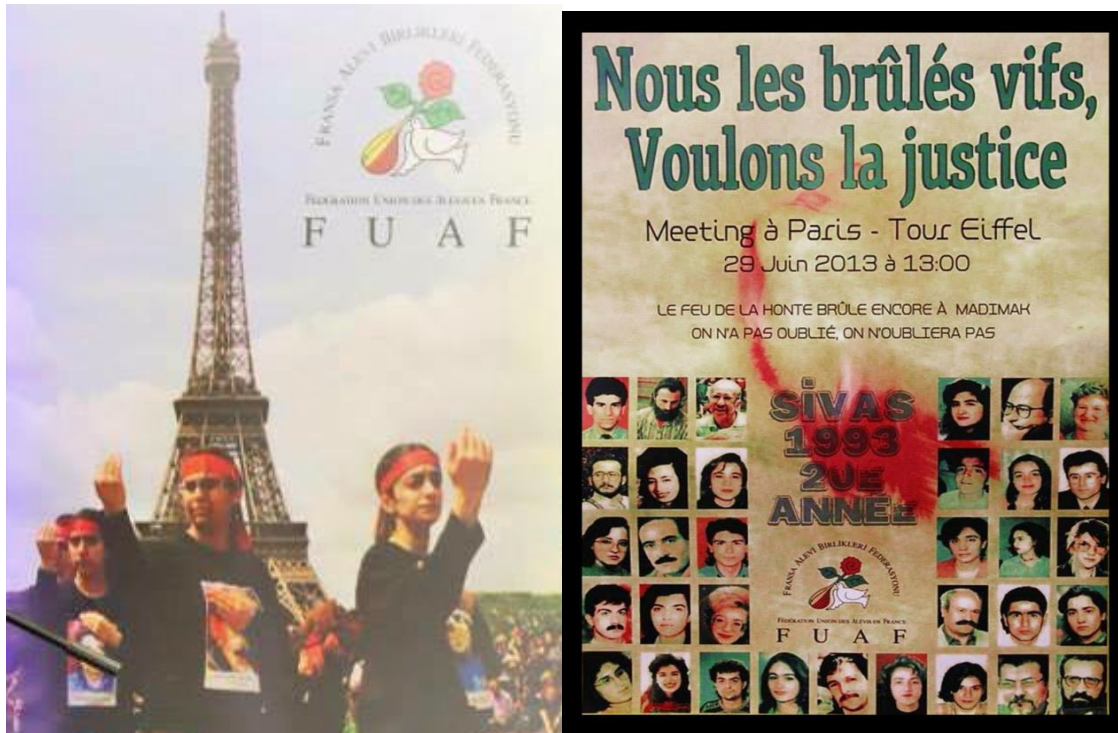
---

<sup>52</sup> Sibel kindly welcomed me to participate in one of her *semah* classes. In this occasion, I could meet some of the other *semahcıs* who joined in *Doğa Aşkına*, as well as Cangüt Kanat. During my visit, the musician and ritual officer Dertli Divani was also present and led a *mühabbet* ritual to which I participated. On another day, still in October 2016, I visited another *cemevi* at the north outskirts of Paris and joined in a gathering of a group of Alevi hunger strikers who were protesting the on-going war in Kurdistan.



This public invisibility of the Alevis in France had also affected other events organised by FUAF which included the enactment of a *semah*. Such an invisibility substantiates my assumption that despite the Alevi attempt to gain visibility in the French public debate, the national public framework in France often remains unreceptive of their public outreaching. Organised in Paris on the 29<sup>th</sup> of June 2013 as a meeting to commemorate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary since the massacre of Sivas (see 2.6), this previous event was conceived as a public enactment of a *semah* in one of the most visible and emblematic locations in France: the field at the Champs des Mars in front of the Eiffel Tower (fig. 12). Like many other French Alevis, on this occasion my friend Sibel had turned a *semah* as she wore a t-shirt representing the photographs of those who were killed by fire at the Madımak Otel. The poster advertising the event reported the sentence: 'We, the burnt alive, demand justice. The fire of shame is still burning in Madimak, we did not forget, we will never forget!' (lit. '*Nous les brûlés vifs, voulons la justice. Le feu de la honte brûle encore à Madımak, on n'a pas oublié, on n'oubliera pas*'). More than the most obvious objective of addressing the Turkish public, the sentence was released in French to raise awareness about this episode on the French media and civil society. Nonetheless, similarly to *Doğa Aşkına*, this other public performance was not covered by the media and the commemoration does not seem to have created any public resonance. The number of those who were affected by it and got to learn about the existence of the Alevis and about the Sivas massacre was limited to the passers-by and tourists present on-site in that moment.

Figure 12. Enactment of a *semah* in front of the Eiffel Tower in July 2013. Source: Fédération Union des Alévis en France (2014) (following page).



These public performances of Aleviness in France remain clustered because of these events' lack of public resonance, whose diffusion gets advertised only among social media platforms such as Facebook. Public performances of Alevi identity, as well as enactments of what I describe as a form of vernacular cosmopolitanism, remain almost totally silent in the public sphere. The French public sphere proves incapable of being less 'blind' than the state policies managing the visibility of different cultural and ethnic identities. Considering the apparent invisibility of *Doğa Aşkına* on the French national public sphere, it is good to readdress Akgönül's remark about the Alevis as not being 'active participants in the Islam-related debates in France' (2013:154). My suggestion is that, even when the Alevis do attempt to work on strategies to engage a French national discourse and thus challenge the 'little to no awareness of this minority within a minority' among the French, a national unreceptive public framework, corroborated by the media, seems unable to detect these articulations of identity. Their performances

become neutralized as soon as they enact a potential challenge to the officially endorsed national performances of belonging and citizenship. In short, even when the Alevi do actually try and engage with a wider national French public, structural obstacles prevent their attempts to reach the goal.

### **6.7 Dance professionals from Istanbul**

The artistic director of *Doğa Aşkına*, Mazlum Çimen, had in mind another idea of how the *semah* should be adapted to be presented on the stage. Possibly because of his very centred positionality at the core of Alevi music and cultural production, Çimen did not feel the same needs as the Alevi living in France. A multifaceted performing artist and music producer, Mazlum is the son of the *özan* Nesimi Çimen (19/07/1931 – 2/7/1993), an imposing figure in contemporary Turkish folk music, as well as one of the celebrated victims who died during the attack at the Madimak Otel in Sivas in 1993 (see 2.6). Born in Adana, Nesimi first moved to the district of Elbistan, and then, after a short experience as German *geisterbeiter*, he relocated to Istanbul where he settled in a *gecekondu* in the growing Zeytinburnu neighbourhood. Leaving his job in the industry sector, in Istanbul Nesimi started working professionally in folk music making, typically accompanying his songs with a *cura*, the smallest type of *bağlama* that is very common among Alevi bards. More than performing music of a pre-existing Alevi tradition, Çimen also composed poignant songs, often condemning war and violence or addressing the need for peace. The son of such an imposing figure, since childhood Mazlum was surrounded by an inspiring circle of family friends,

often leftist intellectuals and artists.<sup>53</sup> He thus started playing music very early and was already a proficient violinist when he was admitted to enrol in the Istanbul State Opera and Ballet Conservatoire. Despite establishing his career first as a ballet dancer, he continued to professionally engage with music throughout his life by founding a music managerial agency, *Çimen's Yapım*, as well as composing music for the big screen.<sup>54</sup> In this quality, before working as artistic director for *Doğa Aşkına*, Mazlum was to some extent already known in France after the Festival International du Cinéma Méditerranéen de Montpellier awarded him the JAM prize as best music composer for film *Nokta* (2008) by Turkish Cypriot director Derviş Zaim.

In Çimen's original concept for *Doğa Aşkına*, there would not be a *semah* on the stage. As he discussed during a recorded interview, Çimen commits to an understanding and experience of the *semah* as a devotional part of the *ayin-i cem* ritual (*ibadet*), which only through distortions and unnatural stretching can be publicly performed in a purely presentational and visual mode. Çimen thus considered that, a secular concert being the purpose and format of the evening, there would not be space for the enactment of a religious ritual. What he planned instead to be present on the stage was a professional dance piece crafted around some *semah* themes. During the interview, Çimen explained:

At the beginning, I did not want a *semah* on the stage because I am against presenting the *semah* visually. This is a devotional practice. To put it there as part of a concert, *restyling* it ... what is that? That's nonsense! (...). Rather, I conceived a *semah* with ballet steps, and in fact I offered a ballet piece inspired

---

<sup>53</sup> These included the writer Yaşar Kemal, the directors Atif Yılmaz and Yılmaz Güney, the actor Mahzuni Şerif and the anthropologist Behice Boran.

<sup>54</sup> More than producing pop music albums and music for film, Çimen's production company manages concert tourings for artists such as Erkan Oğur and İsmail Hakkı Demircioğlu, Moğollar and Ezginin Günlüğü. More information can be found on the website (Çimen's Yapım 2019).

by *semah* movements (...). But you are right, there was a *semah* at the very beginning... I had to agree on the staging of a *semah* because they really wanted to enact it there... I had to accept, but that *semah* was there only as a symbol, as one of the fundamentals of Alevi cultures. However, it was only one and I did not direct it. After that, we offered a ballet piece. (My translation from Çimen 2016)

It is only after the request and the pressure of the Alevi community in France that Çimen accepted that a *semah* would be performed on the stage. In his recollection, this request was the only constraint to which he had to consent while working together with a very compassionate French community, giving him complete artistic freedom in planning and supervising the program. As Çimen explains, he accepted the enactment of a *semah* at the beginning of the evening, because of its status as a powerful symbol and fundamental asset of Aleviness.

The 'ballet' strongly wanted by Mazlum Çimen was actually a rather neoclassical dance piece composed and executed by ballet dancers under the direction of the Istanbul-based choreographer Hülya Aksular. This piece was composed on an orchestral arrangement of 'Haydar Haydar', a composition (*beste*) which the *bağlama* virtuoso and eminent radio and recording artist Ali Ekber Çiçek had first recorded in the 1970s. In her analysis of the piece, the ethnomusicologist Irene Markoff (1986a:286-287) indicates that, with slight modifications, in this piece Çiçek sang words from the traditional poet Aşık Sıdkı (1863-1928) describing 'the hardship of dervish life, mastering the significance of the four door-ways and ten stations associated with each doorway on the pathway to divine knowledge' (Markoff 1986a:286). The musical structure displays a division of three main sections: first, an improvisatory free section (*açış*) executed on the *bağlama* which outlines the mode used in the verse proper; second, an instrumental prelude alternating meters of 9/8 (2+2+2+3), 10/8 (2+3+2+3), 9/8 (2+3+2+2), and employing complex plectrum configurations that create multi-dimensional rhythmic

ostinato; and finally, the sung verse with *bağlama* accompaniment (Markoff 1986a:289). The simplified symphonic orchestra rendering of this piece which accompanied the dancers at the Palais des Congrès was derived from Adnan Ataman's original adaptation for ensemble performance at the Istanbul Municipal Conservatory of Music in 1982, which was then transcribed by Nida Tufekçi at the Istanbul Conservatory of Traditional Turkish Music in 1983.

Upon this musical accompaniment, the choreographer Hülya Aksular directed a piece for eight dancers (three men and five women) working for the Opera State Conservatory in Istanbul. Born in Ankara in 1966, Hülya Aksular trained in the Ankara State Opera and Ballet School. Since 1983 she worked as prima ballerina in the Istanbul Opera and Ballet Company. A recognised dance teacher and public figure, over the 1990s Aksular also acted on the screen, for instance appearing as the lead female character in Ziya Öktan's *Cumhuriyet* (1998), an historical film on the political and private life of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.<sup>55</sup> In the piece, the dancers display classical spatial and movement formations which are blended with more contemporary stylistic nuances. The elegant bodies of the dancers transform some of the movements of the *semah*, while at the same time they remain somehow distant from them, shaping forms and lines that are moulded more around classical Western dance traditions, rather than by Alevi ritual conventions.

In their black suits – men wearing trousers and women long and wide skirts – the dancers enter the stage in a line. Facing backwards, two women precede the others. These others form three couples, with the women being supported and

---

<sup>55</sup> In the 2010s, Aksular founded a ballet school in Bursa and one in Kadıköy, Istanbul, which she currently leads (Hülya Aksular 2019).

carried forward on the men's shoulders. After the first overture, the dancers organise into a circulation configuration, after which all face the audience. In synchronicity, they thus lower their centre of gravity towards the ground as the music pitch also descends. One of the most palpable motifs of inspiration of the *semah* can be found in the round group trajectories that they design at least twice on the floor, and upon which additional pivot tours are also added. Over their first circular anticlockwise path, their right arms give a speedy hint at the recurring motif of the mirror as in many *semahs* (i.e. *Turnalar semahı*). As they then hop on a circular path again - this time clockwise – their right arms move horizontally towards their left hip and then their left arms swing up ahead in accordance with the musical accents, offering an elusive reference to *semah* motifs. Another motif which may have been inspired by the *semahs* is reminiscent of *çark* morphologies, that is the execution of additional circular paths in couples – a man and a woman – while still progressing on a circular spatial configuration. The most obvious motif inspired by the *semahs* is however the recurring placement of the palm of the hands, one next to the other, on the chest, in a posture similar to the *dâr* figure (see 4.6). They thus move towards this posture again, making the kinetic citation clear as its enactment coincides with the chorus' hitting of the line *dâra dûş oldum* (Markoff translates with 'I found myself in the position of reckoning'). Nonetheless the way the arms are placed (as a cross, each arm almost reaching the opposite shoulder) reveals a strong influence of Mevlevi *sema* conventions, an influence that may also be detected in the final whirling movement. This seems to be slightly out of place as it evokes the spinning techniques which are the technical signature of Mevlevi-related *semas* (*şile*), but that, in my experience, are generally absent in Alevi traditions.

Despite the grandeur of the accompanying music, the piece does not seem to result from an organic delving into Alevi ritual forms. An inflated resort to neoclassical vocabulary results in a performance at odds with *semah* conventions. For instance, several solo improvisations and a canon of movements executed by the group on a line formation feel unmotivated, while the various *pas des deux* and *portés* seem to clash with gender dynamics displayed across a great variety of *semahs*. Very pleasing but conventional, the choreography does not hold the test of comparison with Çiçek's original musical composition. As Markoff explained, Çiçek had 'wanted to raise the status of the *bağlama* in the eyes of Turkish society through an impressive display of virtuosistic techniques and hints of serious composition' (Markoff 1986a:288) which went further than traditional variant-formation. Whereas Çimen's choice of readapting *semah* movement conventions within a neoclassical dance piece resonates with Çiçek's intention of fostering creativity upon traditional material through a virtuosic artistic labour, the piece falls beyond the canon of *semah* forms, thus failing to be recognized as a convincing innovation within the transmission and adaptation of *semah* traditions.

## **6.8 Conclusions**

The purpose of this chapter was to explore processes of Alevi visibility-making through movement adaptation and performance professionalisation of the *semahs*, as part of Alevi cosmopolitanism and diaspora. My analysis moved beyond the Turkish religious and national framework to a diasporic location, investigating reconfigurations of Alevi social life through the frame of a mega-event staged in 2014 at the Palais des Congrès in Paris. I argued that, through its engagement with global environmental organisations and the commemoration of



dramatic events in contemporary Alevi history in resonance with the persecution of religious groups in Europe over the Middle Ages, the event reflected and instituted a form of ‘vernacular cosmopolitanism’.

In the chapter I detailed how the main French Alevi organisation, the *Federation of the Alevi in France* (FUAF) planned the event in alliance with two of the major non-governmental ecologist organisations operating in Turkey and in France, namely *Doğa Derneği* and the *Nicolas Hulot Foundation*. I also analysed how the event was promoted within a gigantic scale that are reminiscent of other similar festivals organised by the Alevi in Europe, such as *Bın Yılın Türküsü* (lit. ‘The Türkü of the Millenium’) organised by the *Almanya Alevi Birlikleri Federasyonu* (Federation of Alevi Unions of Germany) in 2000 at the Cologne Arena. The chapter thus discussed the event by analysing three sets of materials: promotional posters, clips and merchandise released before and during the event; the environmental Alevi manifesto presented during the event; and the juxtaposition on the stage of a crowded traditional *semah* ‘turned’ by French-Alevi *semahcıs* next to a *semah*-inspired theatre dance piece performed by an Istanbul-based troupe.



## 7. Concealing Aleviness and mourning loss in the Gezi protest's aftermath: "biz" (2014)

### 7.1 Introduction

This chapter interrogates how the choreo-musical traditions pertaining to the Alevi *semahs* were reinvented and recovered into a more contemporary dance movement vocabulary. As part of the overall exploration over processes of adaptation and stage representation of Aleviness in theatre and dance art productions, the chapter focuses on the very intimate and imaginative reinvention of the *semahs* in the work of the Istanbul-based choreographer Bedirhan Dehmen (born in 1978), and especially, on the production with the title "*biz*" (lit. 'we').<sup>56</sup> In "*biz*", the experiential knowledge of the *semahs* is encapsulated into discrete kinetic morphologies and contextual discursive planes, generating a composite movement vocabulary that is articulated over a multi-layered dramaturgical scaffold.<sup>57</sup> For this reason, the decoding of the Alevi themes in this piece is not as straightforward as in the works discussed in the other chapter of this thesis. Accordingly, in the chapter I will question to which extent Aleviness is detectable at all in the piece.

---

<sup>56</sup> A video recording of the piece is available in Dehmen 2015 (minutes from 0.00 to 42.30).

<sup>57</sup> The recourse to linguistic parallelisms in discussing embodied and kinaesthetic phenomena is problematic. Correspondingly, the term 'vocabulary' is used here in a circumspective manner to address changes in the form but does not wish to imply any further assonance between methodologies and terminologies used in linguistics with those useful to analyse embodied and kinetic forms and their learning. For instance, its uses could be replaced by other concepts such as 'style'. As in Daboo's recent study on Bollywood and Bhangra in British Theatre (especially see 2018:46-49), I privilege the term 'composite' to the more common 'hybrid' to further acknowledge the character of multiplicity, fluidity and process which often characterises performances created in a transnational and postcolonial age.

Whereas since the 1980s *Kardeşlik Töreni - Samah* provided a dramatic reconstruction of an idealized Alevi ritual through the staging of some ethnographic documents collected by an academic team based in Ankara, "*biz*" attests a much less didactic adaptation of Alevi choreo-musical expressive forms within an Istanbul-based emerging dance art and academic environment. Furthermore, whereas in 2014 *Doğa Aşkına – Terre Mon Amour* offered an imposing staged celebration of Aleviness as a millenarian and environmental-friendly ethno-religious movement in France, "*biz*" engages with Aleviness in a much more elusive and less celebratory way. However, like these other performance works, "*biz*" subtly re-evaluates distinctions between insiders and outsiders to the performing event as well as to Alevi identities. In this sense, this discussion contributes to understand how contemporary experimental adaptations of the *semahs* on theatrical stages is reflecting and at the same time constructing a reconfiguration of Aleviness on a transnational scale.

This chapter argues that the multi-layered movement dramaturgy of the piece efficaciously contributed to the transmission of contemporary Alevi aesthetics, even though this contribution was accomplished by transgressing several established conventions in *semah* public performances. Moreover, it contends that by refusing to openly address Alevism as a topic in focus in the piece, "*biz*" successfully managed to appeal younger generations of both Alevi and non-Alevi spectators. On the contrary, the adaptation of *semah* forms realised in "*biz*" aimed at the fabrication of a novel trans-ethnic and trans-national public community based on inter-dependency and ethical responsibility beyond the Alevi-non Alevi spectrum.

Despite the Alevi background of the performers, Alevi themes participate to the dramaturgy only covertly. Correspondingly, in the chapter I attempt to read some Alevi elements within the creation, reception and circulation of the composite movement vocabulary as if by holding them up to the light in search for a watermark or a subtle filigree. Once these Alevi elements are identified, I track the transnational circulation of the piece between artistic creation and international reception, thus grasping the conceptual and social linkages that encompass "*biz*" within and beyond Aleviness. To do this, I unpack how the piece was conceived after the political turmoil and mournful aftermath of the Gezi protests of 2013-2014, in an historical moment when Alevi political requests crucially conflated into a vast and diverse anti-governmental movement while at the same time Alevi public expression was significantly targeted and brutally repressed. Especially, I show how the state enforced repression of public Alevi bereavements triggered the dramaturgy of *Biz* to engage in the establishment of a site for mourning through the performing arts.

As well as in Turkey, "*biz*" was performed as part of large-scale international cultural events, such as the *Europalia: Turkey* festival in Belgium over Winter 2015-2016. Accordingly, I analyse how the composite movement vocabulary and multi-layered dramaturgy both exposed and at the same time concealed Aleviness in such an internationally visible setting. Delineating the social context of artistic creation as well as a specific event of international fruition, in the chapter I investigate thus the production's transnational trajectories and the subtle discrepancies between creative intent and global reception. Following these trajectories, I follow "*biz*" from a precarious social context of production to a not less ambiguous context of consumption, thus revealing processes of adaptation in

current Alevi performing arts aesthetics. Such trajectories are revelatory of the role of the performing arts in transmitting and transforming knowledge related to the Alevi *semah* to younger generations of Alevis and non-Alevis alike in contemporary Turkey and Western Europe.

This chapter shows how the reinvention of *semah* forms for performing arts purposes is reflective as well as conveying a shift in meanings inscribed to Alevism. In "*biz*", this reinvention does not aim at a straightforward public showcasing of Aleviness, but rather at a reaction and commentary on historical developments and specific events of Turkey's recent past. The deliberate dramaturgical objective was an invitation for the audiences to partake in compelling processes of healing from collective and individual trauma, as a recovery from painful experiences of human loss. This invitation was achieved through discursive references to Judith Butler's reflections on the role of vulnerability and mourning in contemporary political life (2004). Although these invitations resonate with contemporary Alevi experiences, in the chapter I wish to highlight how they are also capable of contributing to the fabrication of a larger trans-ethnic and trans-national public.

## **7.2 Bedirhan Dehmen's family legacy and professional career**

What transpires in the composite movement vocabulary of "*biz*" is the synthesis of a personal kinesthetic history of bodily acculturation across an Alevi familiar context and a professional career in the dance sector. To re-invent the Alevi practices to which he was accustomed since childhood, for "*biz*" Dehmen made use of the movement traditions that he had encountered and embodied throughout his professional education as a dance artist and scholar. Few elements

of his biography will suffice here to understand the conflation of personal legacy and professional education which merge in "biz".

Dehmen was born in an Alevi lineage which counts an illustrious forbearer, his grandfather being the *aşık* and poet Nimri Dede (real name İsmail Dehmen, 1909-1986), a highly-respected figure among the Alevis. A native of the Pınarlar (Nimri) village in the Keban district of Elazığ province, Nimri Dede's *deyiş* *Özde ben Mevlana Oldum da Geldim* (lit. 'In the true self I have come to become Master') was adapted and recorded with minor changes by Arif Sağ as *İnsan Olmaya Geldim* (lit. 'I Have Come to Become a Human Being') and then performed by many other artists, becoming one of the most representative and popular modern Alevi songs.<sup>58</sup> A family of skilled musicians and theatre-makers treasures the legacy of such an eminent figure.<sup>59</sup>

Dehmen's career in the performing arts started at Bosphorus University, where he completed a BA and Master's in social scientific studies. During this time, he contributed to the activities of the Bosphorus University Folklore Club (*Boğazici Üniversitesi Folklor Kulübü - BÜFK*) and the Bosphorus Association for the Performing Arts (*Boğazici Gösteri Sanatları Topluluğu – BGST*), establishing

---

<sup>58</sup> As Koerbin suggests, this *deyiş* was possibly composed upon hearing the performance of the female *Aşık Sarıcakız* (real name İlkin Manyalı). See Koerbin's PhD thesis (2012), as well as his online blog (2009) for a full text of the *deyiş*, the adapted version by Arif Sağ, the original version offered to Koerbin by Sercihan Dehmen, as well as Koerbin's translations to English. Buran (2006) offers a collection of Nimri Dede's *deyişler* and biography.

<sup>59</sup> Many relatives of Dehmen are *bağlama* players. Koerbin mentions that Sercihan Dehmen, Bedirhan's cousin, is a very fine *mey*, *ney* and *zurna* player. Mine Tan, Bedirhan's wife, is a skilled *bağlama* player and active member of the study group *Mektebi İrfan* led by Dertli Divani (see the third chapter); Eda Dehmen, Bedirhan's younger cousin, studied theatre and dramaturgy at Istanbul University as well as with the actress and director Şahika Tekand. I had a chance to experience the artistic atmosphere that the Dehmens cherish when I was invited to join the celebration for the *sünnet* (ritual of male circumcision) of Ali Mihtat, Bedirhan's son, himself a skilled violinist, and to dine at their place in Fatih, Istanbul.

himself as a professional dancer and choreographer.<sup>60</sup> In 2010, he completed a PhD in Theatre Criticism and Dramaturgy (Dehmen 2010) at Istanbul University and subsequently started teaching dance history, physical theatre and dance dramaturgy in the Contemporary Dance department of Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University, as well as at Sabancı, Koç and Yeditepe Universities. Throughout these professional experiences Dehmen absorbed diverse movement techniques, such as Turkish theatrical folk dance forms (which he also analysed in his Master's thesis, i.e. Dehmen 2005), contemporary choreography, and contact improvisation. For its improvisatory character and emphasis of physical contact, in "biz" it is especially the latter to be combined with *semah* forms. Another movement practice nourished in the movement vocabulary is however oil wrestling (*yağlı güreş*), a traditional all-male martial art based on physical contact which Dehmen had practised during childhood.<sup>61</sup> The composite movement form emerged in "biz" remained unique within his larger choreographic style; for instance, even though "biz" was conceived as the first act of an autobiographical dance trilogy, the other two pieces in this trilogy do not share the same emphasis on physical contact and improvisation.<sup>62</sup>

---

<sup>60</sup> BÜFK has already been mentioned in the frame of discussions of Öztürkmen's seminal article (2005) as well as in comparison to the work of the ADS in 5.2. Together with Şafak Uysal, Dehmen was dancer and choreographer for *Güneşli Pazartesi* ('Monday in the Sun') (2007), a piece that toured also internationally such as in Italy, at the venue 'Teatri di Vita' in Bologna. As a dancer, he worked in *Mehmet Barış'ı Seviyor* ('Mehmet Loves Peace') (2004) for the Çıplak Ayaklar Kumpanyası, *İnsan Yazıyor* ('Human Writes') (2008) for the Forsythe Company and *Yoldan Çıkışı* ('Off Course') for Meg Stuart / Damaged Goods. As a choreographer, he worked in *Kuşlar Meclisi* ('The Assembly of Birds') (2015) directed by Çiğdem Selisik Onat. His more recent works are the physical theatre piece for two dancers *Mecnun ve Leyla* (2017) and the solo for female dancer *Balerin* (2018). More than in Italy, some of these works toured also in Germany and France.

<sup>61</sup> The Kırkpınar oil wrestling festival is held every June in Edirne, Eastern Trace, close to Turkey's north-western border with Greece and Bulgaria. In 2010, this festival was inscribed in the UNESCO 'Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity'. See Krawietz 2012 for a discussion of the sportification and heritagisation of the practice.

<sup>62</sup> These two other pieces are: *Ezel Bahar* ('Eternal Spring') (2015), a choreography for seven dancers and *Bedr: Dolunay* ('Bedr: Full Moon') (2015), a solo with only Dehmen



### 7.3 Detecting Aleviness in "biz"

Fieldwork Notes 26 January 2016  
FLYBE 1534 flight Amsterdam-Exeter

During the performance of "biz", I notice the spectator sitting next to me, who, like me, seems to be here on his own. He has curly and light brown hair and, like me, is dressed rather casually, in regular pants, a sweater and sneakers. After the piece is over, we are standing next to each other while cueing at the bar, and exchange few words of appreciation for the piece. While introducing himself, he tells that he is living in Rotterdam, and he will be travelling back there by bus tomorrow, which is also the trajectory that I am taking. In fact, the next morning I see him again at Brussels Gare du Nord and we board on the same bus.

Over the journey, we engage in a lengthy conversation about the piece which he allows me to audio-record. I ask whether he would be happy to elucidate the video recording I have. Although he reveals that he has watched "biz" live already twice (both on Friday as well as on Saturday evening), he accepts enthusiastically.

He is surprised when I say that I am interested in the piece because of my PhD research on movement and staged adaptations of the Alevi *semah*. He tells that his knowledge of the Alevis is limited to what he could learn through his listening to the music of Grup Yorum.<sup>63</sup> Then he asks me: *Tam bununda Alevi şeyi olarak sen neyi görüyorsun?*, which translates: 'To be precise, what do you see in this that is Alevi?'. The question is important, as it helps me become more conscious of the several layers through which the Alevi themes remain rather unnoticeable in the piece, as well as of the reasons why the dramaturgy seems to invite a questioning of one's own familiar belonging.

It becomes clear that my audience and travel companion did not know that some of the songs in the piece were *semahs* and *deyiş*. He had not noticed the shouting of the call 'Hü!' by one of the dancers, which is clearly borrowed from a convention in Alevi *semah* practices. What impressed him instead is the portrayal in "biz" of relational dynamics among the three characters and the ability and originality with which they impersonated some body figures and states, such as closeness, anger, rapture and drunkenness. Also, he appreciated how the music and the dance were interwoven in the piece, as well as the fact that the dancers were close and surrounded by the audience, rather than separated from it on a stage. Nonetheless, later, while he keeps on elucidating the video, he asks me whether some of the arms movements are inspired by the *semah*, as these feel somehow familiar.

---

on stage. Both pieces were produced by the State Opera and Ballet Modern Dance Ensemble (*Devlet Opera ve Balesi Modern Dans Topluluğu*).

<sup>63</sup> First established in 1985, Grup Yorum (lit. 'Interpretation Group') is a socialist political music band whose members have often been arrested for participation in demonstrations, or for performing in Kurdish language. Following the trafficking of data between recording studios in Istanbul and Germany and prisons in Turkey, Eliot Bates (2014) explored the networks of distributed and mobile production of Grup Yorum's twentieth anniversary, *Yıldızlar Kuşandık* (Kalan Müzik Yapım, 2006).

The ethnographic vignette above portrays the encounter with a spectator, a 32 year old Turkish-speaking resident of the Netherlands whom I met in Brussels after the performance of *"biz"* in the context of the *Europalia* festival.<sup>64</sup> The vignette does not wish to fill the absence of a more capillary audience reception analysis<sup>65</sup> but rather to provide a glimpse on how a non-Alevist<sup>66</sup> spectator may have received *"biz"*. It also relates to the way *"biz"* may have worked as a catalyst for the probing of one's own ethnic and religious identity, especially in a diasporic context. The vignette is also indicative of the fact that when *"biz"* was performed in theatre venues in European urban contexts, it attracted Turkish-speaking spectators living there, regardless of them being Alevi or not. Also, it hints at how *"biz"* may have attracted younger and middle-age urban spectators with a progressive or leftist worldview, within and beyond Alevi and Turkish clusters. The vignette indicates that spectators who were not familiar with Aleviness would not be responsive to the Alevi themes in *"biz"*, even though they would find appealing other aspects in the piece.

*"biz"* fostered reflection on the ambiguities of social categorization and identification within and beyond the Alevi spectrum. Such ambiguities comprise the reason why, in hindsight, I had to recalibrate the assumptions about the identity of

---

<sup>64</sup> Following Ruth Mandel (2008:18; 155-161), I do not take for granted the comfortable periodization of the migratory experience in terms of first-, second-, and third-generation.

<sup>65</sup> For instance, I did not conduct surveys to map the audiences in sociological grills and to establish links between their class, age, gender and ethnic-national status with their interpretations of and evaluative responses to the piece. Such a survey was not planned as part of my fieldwork because of its multi-sided and more qualitative character, nor it was conducted by the artistic team, the festival organisers or the managers of the venues into which *"biz"* was staged.

<sup>66</sup> Following Massicard (2012), I use here the term *Alevist* to indicate a subject who engages actively in the political mobilization for the emancipation and recognition of the rights of the Alevis, as distinguished by the sociological fact of being an Alevi.

my interlocutor that I developed in ethnographic interaction as described in the vignette. For instance, the spectator affirms that his knowledge of Aleviness is limited to what he could learn through his casual listening of the songs by Grup Yorum, a leftist musical group who approached some Alevi themes in the past. The disclosing of this information led me to believe that the spectator was not born into an Alevi family, despite he did not actually affirm that. I had in fact to problematize such an assumption and recognize that he could technically be Alevi, despite certainly not an Alevist. This second hypothesis surfaced after further analysis of the recorded interview, and especially of the fragments when he asks me if some of the arm movements are inspired by the *semahs* (Dehmen 2015, minutes 32.07-34.43). My inherent solicitation for him to reflect on "*biz*" in terms of Aleviness certainly influenced his perception of the movements and of their meanings, and led him to look for my 'expert' confirmation on his newly-emerged reading of their resemblance to the *semahs*. Accordingly, when he discloses that some movements of the hands look familiar, he may be hinting at a familiarity that is derived from the larger visibility that the Alevi *semahs* gained over the last years in the Turkish-speaking world. He may however also be hesitant in disclosing a more intimate acquaintance and a more engrained familiar belonging to Aleviness, a concealed fact about which he may not be used to speak in public, nor with someone he just met. Alevi or not, the fortuity and unrepeatability of the encounter makes it impossible for me to uncover the private self-identification of my interlocutor, which remains as elusive as the movement forms we are discussing.

The presentation of "*biz*" in Belgium occurred in the framework of the *Europalia:Turkey* festival, as part of a programme that did include any explicit reference to Aleviness. Whereas there may have been a tendency of not

recognising the Alevi themes in "biz" among audiences who watched it in the context of *Europalia* (whose examination I pursue in the final part of this chapter), ethnographic anecdotes suggest that a similar situation may have characterised the reception of the piece among audiences in Turkey. For instance, casual conversations I had with friends and acquaintances who had watched "biz" in Istanbul in 2014 and 2015 suggests that whereas spectators who were non-familiar with Aleviness did not detect the Alevi elements within the piece, spectators familiar with Aleviness did perceive them, and sometimes they became interested in watching it for that exact reason. In fact, reference to Aleviness remained rather ambiguous, not only in the context of *Europalia*, but throughout the whole experience that led to its creation and reception. The examination of the rough movements within the piece which follows should facilitate the analysis of the modalities through which Alevi elements were made more or less 'readable' in "biz".

#### 7.4 Alevi themes in "biz" and *Tevhid* (2010)

Movement notes, August 2017  
First movement section in "biz": *Ağırlama*

In the dark, as the electro-*bağlama* starts to harmonize some tunes, the three dancers slowly access the stage, reaching towards the centre while looking at each other and around in the space. They may have been waiting there, disguised among the unaware audience members who did not notice their being barefoot. As the dark brightens, they reach towards one side of the stage, get closer to each other and assemble in a triadic hug. This hug takes time. As they stand in the hug, their whole bodies slowly release to some gentle swings, but not yet transferring their body weight. Through distortions and reverberations, we hear the musician vocalizing the *semah Yine Dertli Dertli* (lit. 'Still Suffering')<sup>67</sup> while the dancers gradually start to lessen the hold on each other. They start stepping backwards to give more space to the circle that they have composed. Progressively their hands shift from holding on one's other upper backs, to grazing over each other's arms. Finally the arms raise

---

<sup>67</sup> See 6.6 for the performance of this *semah* in the context of *Doğa Aşkına - Terre Mon Amour*.

and expand to reach each other's hands. As their whole bodies keep on gently swinging and oscillating, they release the flexion in their knees and start transferring their body weight from one foot onto the other. Their spines also start to grow, coiling and twisting both on right-left directions, as well as on front-back ones. Occasionally their whole bodies spin softly for as much as the contact between the hands allows. Also, the legs now create more noticeable gestures by flexing further or lengthening in any available direction.

As the dancers have now formed an indivisible entity, as a group, they start stepping around in the space. At the beginning the group seems to travel without following a fixed trajectory, but soon the line it draws on the floor seems to progress on a circular path which proceeds anti-clockwise. Taking turns, they slowly and increasingly begin to twist the line formed by their connected arms; the circular shape formed by this line starts to transform, with the area encapsulated by the group at times expanding, at times shrinking. As the contact established between their hands shifts from a light touch to a more and more engaged push, they twist this arms-line by rolling forward their bust and kinking inside the circle. When such kinks happen, their arms are crossed in front of their bust rather than open outwardly alongside it, and they stand in a momentary reverse embrace. The twist is then released, and the dancers re-establish the circular linear formation of their arms. The first kink of each dancer into the circle is very slow, but gradually the formation of these momentary knots gets more and more speedy. The push of the hands and the speed of their steps thus moderately increase, while the legs start adding some embellishments with further knees flexions or extensions.

Resonating with the accent in the music, at some point the movements slow down in a short pause. The group stops travelling in the space. Soon, their movements become once again speedy, the circle spins more and more while they keep on kinking inside it. Abruptly, one of the dancers – the one wearing a red shirt - shouts the call 'Hü!'. This call results in the release of the contact between the hands and the collapse of the weight of their bodies towards the centre of the circle so that now each of their chests is laying on each other's chest. The dancers, strained, once again grab each other in a triad hug, this time their busts lean on one another, but their hands raise outwards avoiding contact.<sup>68</sup>

During an interview with Dehmen, he called *ağırlama* the first movement section of "*biz*" described in words above. In this way, he was borrowing the term from the common first section of the *semahs* movement and musical structuring, as discussed in Chapter 4. If not for its location at the beginning, or for its slower and weightier character in the frame of the overall movement structure, the *ağırlama* in "*biz*" is however drastically different from that of the *semahs* traditional forms. Similar to the *ağırlama*, the spatial and group dynamics, the relationship of

---

<sup>68</sup> The section corresponds to the minutes 00.40-10.39 in Dehmen 2015.

the movement to the music and the general movement qualities contribute to render the whole choreography discernibly different from the performance of any *semah* form in today's Alevi public events. Nonetheless, the borrowing of the term (notice that no *yürütme* or *yeldirme* sections were also borrowed in "biz") hints at the way some *semah* forms inspired Dehmen's creation. The recourse to the term informs about the general adaptation process and suggests the extent to which "biz" capitalises on personal and embodied knowledge of *semah* conventions. As an embodied resource, such knowledge is reclaimed as an ingredient to be blended with other movement vocabularies in the emergence of a more contemporary style.<sup>69</sup>

Because of the openness of the movements in "biz", some previous knowledge of Alevi ritual practices is necessary to decipher the Alevi elements in it. Although preponderant, these are in fact perceptible only vaguely since the piece does not have any didactic intention of representing or teaching Aleviness. The unwillingness to directly engage with representing Aleviness contrasts with another dance work that Dehmen had realized in 2010 as part of an artistic project. Sule Ateş had directed that earlier project, titled *Tevhid/Birlik/Oneness - Alevi İnancı Üzerine Güncel Bir Performans* ('Tevhid/Oneness – A Contemporary Performance on Alevi Belief', hereafter *Tevhid*).<sup>70</sup> For *Tevhid*, Dehmen had collaborated for the

---

<sup>69</sup> 'Contemporary dance' is certainly an ambiguous concept that since the 1990s replaced other categorizations such as *modern* or *post-modern dance* (for instance, see discussion in Cvejić 2015:5). It is used here to emphasize the locating of "biz" in a pluralist performing arts framework that is striving to disrupt the separation between performer and audience and to negotiate once-clear geographic distinctions between East and West or other established cultural differentiations (Dils and Cooper Albright 2001:370). In such a framework, 'dance skill is no longer defined by what the body can do, but by the way this body interconnects with other bodies and spaces' (Njaradi 2014:9).

<sup>70</sup> The term *tevhid* indicates an Islamic concept about the unity of God and the belief that all existence is one with God. In Alevi context, it refers also to a *deyiş* that addresses these themes, especially regarding the unity of God and Ali as God's companion. Referring to Ruhi Su and Martin Stokes, as well as to the Redhouse dictionary

first time with the musician Cem Yıldız, already blending *semah* movements with more contemporary dance forms.<sup>71</sup> To highlight the nuanced elements of readability of Aleviness in "*biz*", I will establish here a comparison between these two dance pieces. However, before doing that, some farther information about *Tevhid* and its artistic conception are required.

*Tevhid* was conceived and directed by Şule Ateş, a multifaceted theatre practitioner who had graduated from the Drama Department at Ankara University in 1986 and who had been part of the first troupe of actors in *Kardeşlik Töreni – Samah*, to which she continued participating occasionally even after leaving Ankara and moving back to her native Istanbul (see 5.7). As she explained in a recorded interview, because Aleviness was a taboo during her childhood, she had never been exposed to the Alevi ancestry in her own family, which was not discussed neither at home, nor at school. It is in fact only years later, as she was a university student in Ankara and encountered Aleviness in KTS, that she was enthused to embark on exploring her own Alevi lineage. This self-exploratory

---

(1968 edition), Gloria Clarke (1999:138) explains that the term indicates in Turkish both to the 'recitation of prayers and the monotheistic formula' as well as to a 'causing to become one, unification'. She further explains that during the *cem* this unification is likely to stand both for the Sufi concept of attaining unity with the Divine as well as for the unity among the participating members of the community, both achieved through music and dance (ibid). Paul Koerbin (2011:121, n.126) pays substantial attention to *tevhid* performance and points to the fact that this form was often not recognized as a music and poetry form by itself. For instance, Koerbin (2011:225) highlights Arif Sağ's 'considered and creative risk-taking' in his decision to include some *tevhids* in some of his albums despite these were considered *gizli müzik* ('secret music') at that time, i.e. *Bugün Bize Pir Geldi* ('Today the Pir Came to Us'), second track in the album *İnsan Olmaya Geldim* (1983). Furthermore, Koerbin mentions that Ruhi Su included two songs designated *tevhid* in the album *Semahlar* (1977), one of which he had composed as a song of unity of workers and humanity with the title *Benim Kâbem İnsandır* ('My Qibla is the Human Being') (ibid).

<sup>71</sup> Born in 1970 in the province of Erzican, Cem Yıldız made himself known in the 1990s as a *bağlama* player accompanying popular artists such Zülfü Livaneli and Yıldız Tilbe. In 2004, he contributed to the establishment of the 'ethnic-electronic' band Orient Expressions, also playing together with singers such as Sabahat Akkiraz and Aynur Doğan. Yıldız is the *bağlama* player sweating next to Aynur Doğan as they perform the Kurdish song 'Ahmedo' inside a 18th century Turkish bath during a popular scene of Fatih Akin's acclaimed documentary 'Crossing the Bridge: The Sound of Istanbul' (2005).

journey concretized in an autobiographical video-documentary project conducted among her own relatives in the villages of the Erzincan province, the area where most of her ancestors resettled after the Turkish military suppression of the Dersim revolts of 1937-38.<sup>72</sup> Following on this journey back to her own roots, Ateş approached noticeable experts on Alevi rituals, such the prominent musician and ritual officer Dertli Divani or the *semah* teacher and Bektaşî baba Faysal İlhan. These interviews aimed at questioning central, yet not often publicly discussed, themes in Alevi theology, such as the ultimate bond between man and God or mythologies about the creation of the world. The video documentary resulting out of her own identity search was encapsulated for *Tevhid* in a multidisciplinary performance event embracing dance, music, animation and poetry which was staged at the independent theatre venue Garajistanbul in Istanbul in November 2010. Ateş oversaw all the artistic media in a dramaturgy that questioned the relevance of Aleviness in contemporary life, even to the point of advancing audacious parallels between Alevi cosmologies and Quantum Physics.<sup>73</sup>

The choreography Dehmen created for *Tevhid* was a piece for a group of seven dancers and encapsulated some movement structures which clearly held the mark of circle formations and arms gestures which are recurring throughout a whole range of *semahs*, such as overviewed in Chapter 4. Because of its fusion of *semah* forms with contemporary dance, dance scholar Berna Kurt (2013) mentioned this piece as interesting examples of hybrid aesthetics in contemporary

---

<sup>72</sup> For an expert discussion of this tragic episode and its analysis as ‘genocide’ and/or ‘ethnocide’ see Van Bruinessen 1994.

<sup>73</sup> This artistic project was supported by private persons, as well by corporate sponsors such as the Consulate of Sweden in Turkey, the Istanbul 2010 European Culture Capital fund, Anadolu Kültür, Shaman Dance Theatre, Pir Sultan Abdal Kültür Derneği, Alevi-Bektaşî Federasyonu, Lush Hotel and Sahne Sanatları. A video-recording of the project (Ateş 2013) captures the atmosphere of the performance.



Turkish 'presentational dance'.<sup>74</sup> Kurt explains how the blend with contemporary movement vocabularies was achieved out of efforts to 'domesticate' and 'localize' larger global dance trends in the Turkish context. The movement vocabulary in "biz" is as complex as the one in *Tevhid*, even though markedly different because of its recourse to a diverse range of contemporary styles. Especially, departing from the firm choreographic writing that characterized *Tevhid*, for "biz" Dehmen resorted to more improvisational techniques. Most noticeably, the movement idiom of which he availed himself is contact improvisation, a technique that contrasts with the more commonly visible *semah* forms in the last decades for several reasons. Whereas these forms typically emphasize the absence of bodily contact and spontaneity (see discussion in Chapter 3 and 4), here the dancers are for the most part in physical contact with each other and they continually re-actualize these contacts in dynamic and unpredictable extemporizations. Furthermore, differently than in *Tevhid*, here the group is composed by a trio of men only, breaking another convention that has been established in *semah* public forms, namely the preference for *semahs* to be performed by men and women together (especially see 3.5). All these factors contribute to shape movements which are subtler in resonating with the live music, as well as in creating a visceral reaction among the audience. As such, "biz" targets much more this visceral bond with the spectators rather than straight-away publicly showcasing Aleviness to them.

---

<sup>74</sup> Kurt mentions several other examples into which such hybrid (in Turkish, *melez*) aesthetics gets articulated. These are *Anadolu Ateşi* and *Shaman Dans Tiyatrosu* in their 'extensive use of ballet technique, contemporary dance and acrobatics among others'; the productions of *Boğaziçi Gösteri Sanatları Topluluğu* (Bosphorus Performing Arts Ensemble) in their mix of traditional dances with contemporary dance techniques and hip hop; the performance *Zeybreak* (2009) by Kadir 'Amigo' Memiş as a clear fusion of *zeybek* (the Aegean male solo dance) and break dance; and finally, *Beşinci Mevsim* (The Fifth Season), yet again a fusion of folk dances of Anatolia with ballet and *sema* (Mevlevi ritual dance) performed by non-Turkish children. Another piece that is discussed next to *Tevhid* is Yeşim Çoşkun's *4 Kapı 40 Makam* ('Four Doors, Forty Levels' - 2011).

More than in its movement vocabulary, it is the overall relationship of the choreography with Aleviness that makes "*biz*" different from *Tevhid*. There, Alevi references in the movement were reinforced not only by the musical themes, but even more sharply by the dramaturgy of the project touching on an Istanbul-based cosmopolitan artist's rediscovery of her Alevi roots. Moreover, in *Tevhid* the projections on the screens of images such as the calligram of Hacı Bektaş or of Ali's lion, as well as quotes from mystics that are celebrated by the Alevis (such as Şeyh Bedrettin), or from Alevi cosmologies (such as the one narrated by Nesimi Kılagoz)<sup>75</sup>, framed the piece as inherently 'Alevi'. Contrarily, as 7.3 showed, Alevi references are never articulated too directly in "*biz*" but they remain equivocal, especially for the spectator who does not have any previous knowledge of it.

Even though they may remain obfuscated to a non-Alevi spectator, several Alevi elements are nonetheless fostered. Some of these elements, which I estimate to be at least three, are amalgamated in the staging process and are palpable in the movement itself. First, the resonance of the movements to the music. The tunes sung with live *saz* and mixed with electronica by Cem Yıldız, such as the *semah Yine Dertli Dertli* executed in the starting section of the piece (see 6.6 for enactment of this *semah* during *Doğa Aşkına*), belong indeed to a what became now a classic Alevi repertory. More than the *semahs*, some sections of the piece are accompanied by *deyiş*, spiritual tunes which would nonetheless not be performed to accompany the *semahs* during a *cem* ritual. Second, the shouting of the call 'Hü!' which marks the transition from the first movement sequence to the second, is a typical call with which devout Alevis would be familiar. As presented

---

<sup>75</sup> For instance, the piece included a cosmology narrated by Nesimi Kılagoz, a native in the district of Dersim (Tunceli) whose mothertongue is Kurmanci. Erdal Gezik (2016) has analysed this narrative to reconsider the Ismaili influences on Aleviness.

in Chapter 4, a *semah* 'leader' would indeed utter this sound with vigour to call the attention of the *semahcılar* in preparation for the imminent change in rhythmic structure and movement pattern. Similarly, for the same necessity of indicating an imminent change, the dancer wearing a blue shirt voiced the call here to signpost a shift of dynamics in the music and in the movement. Third, there are in the movements some clues of an 'emotional weight' which is somehow reminiscent of the choreographer's Alevi background. For instance, the overall choreographic score feels as developing out of the initial collective hug that capitalizes most of the first sequence. Even though such a hug is not a typical or conventional pattern in the Alevi ritual life, it pushed me to rethink the importance and centrality of the collective hug that closes the execution of the *semahs* during a *cem*, as discussed in 4.6. Whereas during the *cem* the *semahcıs* hug each other with bust curved onwards before bowing in front of the *dede* and the *zakir* to ask, as a cohesive group, for the *semah* to be 'accepted' as religious duty, here the hug happens at the very beginning and is not oriented out of the group itself. This hug instigates instead the subsequent kinetic articulations of the trio, charging them with some sort of communal and sheltering quality. Finally, more than these palpable elements, further analysis led me to appreciate how, during the many circling routes, the group seems to follow paths which mostly evolve on an anti-clockwise direction, as would be the case in most of the *semahs* (see 4.7).

### **7.5 Contact improvisation and movement analysis**

By approaching its most salient choreographic components and suggesting strategies for their analysis, in this section I aim to discuss "*biz*" as a movement art piece. An analytic look at these choreographic components will illuminate how the

piece blends some Alevi elements with contact improvisation, an experimental movement technique whose kinaesthetic conventions contrast in several ways with the most recurring contemporary *semah* forms, for instance in the different prominence of bodily touch and improvisation. However, as much as it is not possible to appreciate "biz" by just elucidating its descent and divergence from more common Alevi *semah* forms, it is also not possible to appreciate it as a dance piece based only on contact improvisation technique. Accordingly, the analysis offered here does not only wish to understand how the *semahs* are transforming on the stage through the interaction with other movement traditions, but it also contributes to appreciate how contact improvisation, appeared only very recently in Turkey, is being developed and re-codified here, generating choreographic innovation. For this reason, before moving on to analyse the movement in "biz", some further information on the development of this form and its adoption in Turkey is needed.

It is commonly understood that contact improvisation emerged over the mid-1970s in the United States both as a social dance as well as a performance form incorporating elements of martial arts, social dancing, sports and child's play (Novack 1990).<sup>76</sup> Currently practiced as an alternative social dance form worldwide, the activities of contact improvisations practitioners are coordinated through the online platform and journal *Contact Quarterly* providing updates on

---

<sup>76</sup> *Magnesium* (1972), a performance elaborated after a series of workshops that Steve Paxton had run with male students at Oberlin College in Ohio, has often been canonised as the origin of the form (Burt 2017: 173). Often presented as a prototypical product of American counter-culture, the development of contact improvisation was strongly influenced by oriental philosophies and body practices spreading in the States since the 1960s, such as Aikido or Tai-chi Chuan (for instance, see Tafferner-Gulyas 2015:232-234). The circulation of the form outside the US started already in 1973, when it was presented in a performance format in venues such as *L'Attico* in Rome or it was taught as part of dance student trainings at the Dartington College of Arts in the UK.

groups in 36 countries. Often emphasized to be a movement technique fostering egalitarianism and gender equality, the form has been more and more adopted in contexts distant from the dance classroom, such as in rehabilitation programs for male prisoners (Houston 2009) or as an alternative teaching method in Political Sciences university courses (Rösch 2018). Jess Curtis explained how contact improvisation exercises could create trust and group solidarity in the context of protest performances aiming at the disruption and contention of 'embodied injustices' such as sexism, homophobia and physical violence (2015:139). However, Erin Stahmer challenged the common claim of authors and practitioners that the communicative virtues of the form spill over into everyday life. Although recognizing that the globalized diffusion of the practice can and does promote communication across cultural barriers, Stahmer highlighted how contact improvisation communities can be supplemented by elitism and selectivity (2011:4).

Since the 2000s the diffusion of contact improvisation in Turkey has been especially associated with the association of contemporary dancers ÇATI (lit. 'roof') in Istanbul, to which Dehmen also occasionally participated. ÇATI was established after the efforts of a self-organised collective composed by a new generation of aspiring contemporary dance artists, such as Filiz Sızanlı, Ayşe Orhon, Sevi Algan and Gurur Ertem. Coming from different educational backgrounds, the young artists started gathering around the workshops offered by the choreographer Mustafa Kaplan at the Theatre Research Laboratory (TAL).<sup>77</sup> As indicated by the Contact Quarterly website, ÇATI remains a referent point for the Contact

---

<sup>77</sup> TAL was founded by the actors and scholars Beklan and Ayla Algan within the Istanbul Municipal Theatre (Ertem 2016:12). Ertem 2016 can be consulted for a more detailed overview on the emergence of a Contemporary Dance Art Scene in Turkey.

Improvisation scene in Turkey. Starting with ÇATI, Defne Erdur Rabuel, Erdem Gündüz and Hary Salgado, and more recently Zeki Engin Çolak, had a pioneering and leading role in popularizing the practice in Turkey.<sup>78</sup> It is interesting to notice that the Turkish name of the technique is *kontakt doğaçlama*, a compound into which the English borrowing *kontakt*, not found in other contexts, is preferred to related concepts such as *temas* (contact), *dokunuş* (touch) or *iletişim* (communication). Contrariwise, rather than the already existing French borrowing *emprovizasyon*, the second part of the compound uses the Turkish term *doğaçlama*, a term normally associated with theatrical and musical practice.<sup>79</sup>

Because of its strong recourse to contact improvisation technique in a staged format, "*biz*" is not the result of a firm labour in choreographic writing. On the contrary, its various sections are better understood as loose 'tasks', that is, as rough guidelines which allow some improvised actions to emerge. During an interview, Dehmen qualified this strategy not much as 'improvisation', but rather as 'reorganization' (2016). To clarify what he meant, he explained that the creative process was stimulated by the work of the Japanese choreographer Saburo Tashigawara. In contrast to 'improvisation' as the intention of moving in a field of limitless possibilities, and to 'choreography' as the one of following a precise movement script, with 'reorganization' Teshigawara refers to a search for fluidity and freedom of shapes within a planned set of movements. For instance, he

---

<sup>78</sup> Erdur Rabuel approached the development of the practice in Turkey in her PhD thesis (2016).

<sup>79</sup> The online Turkish Dili Kurumu explains the term in relation to lyrical and theatrical practice more than to musical one, emphasizing the sudden, unthought-of quality of performance or the lack of a written text or agreed script. For a discussion of the terms used in improvisatory folk music practice among *bağlama* players in Turkey (such as *açış* and *gezinti*) and their contrast with the criteria expected for improvisation in the classical tradition (such as *taksim*) see Markoff (1986a:106-109). Connell 2013 offers a detailed overview on definition and negotiations over style in the musical discourse of the early-Republican period which are still largely in place nowadays.

explains the idea of 'reorganization' as the quality characterising the involuntary movements performed to find better comfort while sleeping, or the flight of birds' flocks. In his words:

(...) these are behaviours that make the best use of unconsciousness or certain automaticity lurking in there, which for me is close to the ideal state of dance. I call this not choreography but *reorganization of body*. If young people with fresh sensitivity can feel such behaviours physically as a surprise, they will enjoy dancing more. (Arts News Tokyo 2012: 4)

Like Teshigawara, Dehmen's goal in "*biz*" is not the one of exhibiting a fixed choreographic script but rather the one of exploring the need for unexpected movements to emerge out of a deliberate set of constrictions.

What are these constrictions, and would it be accurate to define them 'a score'? If so, which would be the best strategies to analyse them? Despite widespread and manifold, the role of scores in contemporary dance, and especially in improvisatory practices, has been discussed only haphazardly in academic literature. For instance, Susan Leigh Foster referred to the use of scores throughout the 1960 as part of the dance improvisations developed by members of the Fluxus collective and then by dancers at the Judson Dance Theatre in New York (2002: 44). Sally Banes explained how the use of scores in what she called the 'analytic post-modern dance' of the 1970s out of which contact improvisation originated, tried to make 'movement become objective as it was distanced from personal expression', and, as tasks, 'a way of producing impersonal, concentrated, real movement – goal-oriented in an immediate sense' (1987: xxi). More recently, Olivia Millard, an Australian dance improviser who practiced dance improvisations in Australia and Europe, evaluated how the use of scores among some eminent American post-modern dance practitioners, such as Steve Paxton, Anna Halprin

and Deborah Hay, influenced on her own work. Succinctly, Milliard claimed that scores:

(...) allow me to not know what comes next. They are a prop, a ruse, a pretense which, while giving me the illusion of 'knowing' in my dancing, allow me to not know. (2015:51)

The principles originating Dehmen's exploration are nurtured by a similar need: the one to be supported while at the same time allowing oneself to be unaware of what comes next, and become able to welcome the unexpected in the frame of a constrained form.

After looking at the piece in its entirety over several times, I found it more appropriate to use Laban Movement Description to detect the most salient aspects in the movement score. To do this, I looked at the piece again with the purpose of dividing it in smaller movement sequences. The analysis resorted to a video of the piece recorded during the presentation of "*biz*" at Moda Sahnesi in 2014 which was provided by Dehmen (2015), as well as to my recording of the piece in Brussels. Because of the improvisatory quality of the performance and the different perspectives offered by the two videos, movements vary greatly in the two recordings. Nonetheless, in conversations with Dehmen, it was possible to identify the scaffold beneath the two performances of the movement sections, even though my analysis ultimately depends on my witnessing of the piece, which did not imply participation in the movement.

Throughout my analysis, I counted seven movement sequences: the first, involving an initial hug and the *ağırlama* described in 7.4 (minutes 00.40-10.40 of the video recording in Dehmen 2015); the second, involving the *migration* described in 7.9 (minutes 10.41-17.40; fig. 13); the third, during which the dancers



are not connected in bodily contact and perform some convulsive and whirling movements (*çark*) (minutes 17.41-20.29); the fourth, during which the dancers perform a series of pairings, grips, and shadowings, as well as a synchronic right arms gesture that is reminiscent of some of the *semahs* most frequent upper limbs movements (minutes 20.30-34.58); the fifth, during which the dancers explore movement possibilities which are limited by their maintaining of physical contact through the surfaces of their heads and then arms (minutes 34.59-38.30); the sixth, during the dancers combine in pairs to support the body weight of a third (minutes 38.30-39.29)<sup>80</sup>; the seventh and final section, involving a closing hug and dispersion (minutes 39.30-42.30; fig. 14). I thus focused more on the first three sections as I consider that these set the tone of the whole composition and provide kinetic material that gets further articulated, modified and resolved in the later ones. In the three initial sections of the piece, and later throughout the whole composition, some general features are kept constant, such as the relationship of the movement to the music, the group dynamics established by the trio, the approach of the dancers to space, and the emphasis on bodily contact. Some remarks on these features will be delineated here to offer a more general grasp of "*biz*" as a movement composition.

Figure 13. Photo by Orçun Ataman of a fragment in "*biz*". Source: *biz / we* (2014a) (following page).

---

<sup>80</sup> The discrepancy between length and qualities of the movements in the video recording referred to in n.1 and those executed when "*biz*" was performed in Brussels gets here more substantial, as the section included there a second series of pairings, grips and shadowings which were not executed in Istanbul.



Certainly, the chief element characterizing "*biz*" is the presence on the stage of three male movers of dissimilar, yet not clashing, heights, characterized by a somewhat ordinary physicality.<sup>81</sup> For all the duration of the performance, lasting slightly more than 40 minutes, these movers occupy an arena stage, thus remaining visible to the audience surrounding them on 360 degrees. More than the triadic group of the movers, the sound and the light design are the two other important elements contributing to the dramaturgy. The musician interspersing *bağlama* and electronica is a fourth crucial actor who is also visible on the stage.

---

<sup>81</sup> More than Bedirhan Dehmen, the other movers on the stage are Canberk Yıldız (born in 1986) and Ejder Keskin (born in 1973). The latter was at times replaced by Alper Marangöz (born in 1984), who had also been involved in the creation process. With 'ordinary physicality' I refer to the fact that the movers' body attitude does not flaunt their professionalism in folk dancing and in any contemporary dance technique, such as contact improvisation. Similarly, Susan Foster referred to the fact that contemporary dancers are encouraged to train their bodies in several techniques in contrast to the exclusive training in one technique only which characterized dance professionalism before the '90s, a phenomenon she called the 'hired body' (1997:253-256). For a discussion of how technique and training in contemporary dance are shaped by economic imperatives, see for instance Njaradi 2014.

Dehmen described to me the relationship of music and dance as 'resonance'. With this, he meant that the relationship of the movement to the sound is rather horizontal, not motivated by the intention to accompany, follow nor lead, neither on the musician's nor on the dancers' side. Rather, all the actors take turns in exploring how their extemporisations reverberate with each other and influence the overall sonic and kinetic environment.

Figure 14. Photo by Murat Dürüm of a fragment in "*biz*". Source: biz / we (2014b)



Although the stage is emptied of any prop, the fifth crucial element contributing to fashion the scenery is colour. This is devised around a simple juxtaposition of light primary colours which tint – without ever really mingling- the costumes and the scenery. The three movers, barefoot, wear casual pants and are distinguished by their shirts: one red, one blue and one green. Reverberating with

the music and movement dynamics, the light design, directed by Kerem Çetinel, also explores such chromatic contrasts.<sup>82</sup> The lights may shift from moments of darkness during which only the musician is softly visible, to other moments when white or blueish lights from above are contrasted with the orange, white-yellowish, red, green, blue and purple tones radiating from four igniting lamps on the corners of the stage.

Resonating with the music and lights, the triadic formation of the group provides the fundamental source of the overall composition. The exploration of relational dynamics occurring among the three members in the group is indeed most crucial kinetic theme in *"biz"*. The articulation of these triadic dynamics is predictable. For instance, they fit into the description of common movement patterns emerging out of the interaction of three people as observed by the movement analyst and therapist Irmgard Bartenieff throughout diverse cultural and professional settings.<sup>83</sup> In Bartenieff's words:

Interrelation of three people often results in a dramatic series of internal changes. While the spatial triadic constellation defuses direct confrontation, it may involve a number of different pairings against the third or attempts to involve a very passive third member, so that finally a balance between all three is developed by a synchronous rhythm, by a similar or contemporary use of body parts, or by regulating distance, or by spatial and Effort patterns. (Bartenieff and Lewis 1980: 133)

---

<sup>82</sup> Kerem Çetinel works between Turkey and Canada, where in 2015 he received the Betty Mitchel Awards for Outstanding Lighting Design for his work on 'The Last Voyage of Donald Crowhurst'.

<sup>83</sup> A forerunner of dance therapy, Irmgard Bartenieff was a disciple of Rudolf Laban, whose theories she contributed to bring to North America when she fled from Berlin to New York at the wake of World War II. Among others, Bartenieff was a crucial figure in the expansion of Laban's theories towards a more qualitative and holistic system of movement analysis (now called Laban Movement Analysis). Moreover, she also developed a set of movement exercises for training and therapy, which are known as Bartenieff Fundamentals (see Bartenieff and Lewis 1980 and Hackney 1998).

Even though they do not develop linearly from one stage to the next, the elements specified by Bartenieff are certainly all dramatically explored in "*biz*": upfront confrontation and dispersion, diverse regulations of distance between the three dancers, pairings which eventually result in alliances of two against a third, as well as synchronic use of body parts by the whole group.

As Dehmen clarified, the earliest exploration that led to the crystallization of the movements was not motivated by the intention of signifying a specific meaning or symbolic content. On the contrary, the choreographic material was motivated by an embodied reflection on space. In his words, a spatial search had priority over a semantic one. This meant for instance, that the dancers were stimulated to look for other spatial possibilities as soon as they would realize that a 'convention' in space dynamics got established.<sup>84</sup> Rather paradoxically, such a constriction prompted the dancers to look purposely for what would be a 'spontaneous' spatial dynamic. This exploration was encouraged also in the crystallized and yet still malleable form that the piece acquired over its public performances. However, as I hinted while discussing the piece with Dehmen, this 'purposeful spontaneity' is still inclined to resort to habitual spatial conventions that emphasize circular paths, and more specifically of circular paths that progress on an anticlockwise direction, a form that is very popular in most of the *semahs*, and more generally in Anatolian folk dancing.<sup>85</sup> The recourse to this pattern was not a deliberate choice but emerged spontaneously, and Dehmen himself came to recognise its prevalence only after elucidating the movements for me during an interview.

---

<sup>84</sup> It is an aleatory indication such as the one "to look for alternative spatial possibilities as soon as a convention in space dynamics gets established" that I would still have to articulate through words, as I would not be able to translate it through notation symbols.

<sup>85</sup> See 4.7 for a discussion of the most recurring *semah* morphologies.

Some further remarks on the crucial emphasis on the sense of touch, as well as to body balance, are necessary here. As we have seen, these are the most salient elements that is possible to trace back from contact improvisation technique. Dehmen was indeed familiar with contact improvisation technique, a form he wrote about in his PhD thesis, when he explored its contribution to the emergence of experimental theatrical dance forms throughout the 1980s and 1990s in Europe. On a general level, "*biz*" is constructed upon the same premises through which the gymnast and dancer Steve Paxton, a key figure who was instrumental in the dissemination and organisation of the form, had conceived them (Banes 1987: 57). As Paxton expounded:

This system is based in the senses of touch and balance. The partners in the duet touch each other a lot, and it is through touching that the information about each other's movement is transmitted. They touch the floor, and there is emphasis on constant awareness of gravity. They touch themselves, internally, and a concentration is maintained upon the whole body. Balance is not defined by stretching along the center columns of the body, as in traditional dancing, but by the body's relationship to that part which is a useful fulcrum, since in this work a body may as often be on head as feet and relative to the partner as often as to the floor. (1975:40)

These principles are generally nurtured in "*biz*". They are instigated in the sequences that develop out of constraints addressing the sense of touch, such as when the dancers are invited to focus on the nature of the contact established between their bodies. For instance, they may try may try and shift the points of contact between their bodies while these travel through the space, or inversely, keep stable one point of contact while all other body parts move. Also, they may focus on the quality of these bodily contacts, for example by performing actions that emphasize 'push' versus actions that emphasize 'pull'. They also testify a sophisticated investigation of moments of off-balance, as for the 'body

assemblages' that are made possible only because of the shared distribution of each body's weight or of the constant push applied to the others' bodies.

Other aspects however depart from the conventions that characterized the early appearance of contact improvisation. For instance, whereas this technique was born mostly as a duet form,<sup>86</sup> in *"biz"* relational dynamics emerge out of movement of a triad. Moreover, the Efforts quality of the movements are somehow very distant from broader contact improvisation aesthetics. In Paxton's intentions, as well as for general trends in what Sally Banes presented as 'analytic post-modern dance' in the 1970s (1987: xx-xxi), movements resorted to a daily, ordinarily vocabulary. On the contrary, in *"biz"* the movement vocabulary is still daily and ordinary, but fed by a much more tempestuous, uncontrolled, and at times violent imaginary.<sup>87</sup> These movement qualities compose a kinetic commentary on the ordinary landscape of coercion and ache experienced by the dancers during the social turbulences of Istanbul in 2013-2014, when the piece was created. During those days, commonly referred to as 'Gezi Park protests', if not as 'Gezi', contact improvisation had a critical role. In the next section, I examine how *"biz"* connects to 'Gezi' as the contextual terrain which fed the creation of the piece, both in terms of its artistry as well as of its social impact.

---

<sup>86</sup> For instance, see Novack 1990:8.

<sup>87</sup> The fact that the trio is formed by male dancers exclusively does not explain this quality. This becomes clear for instance when we compare *"biz"* with the productions of Mangrove, an all-male dance group based in San Francisco which in the mid-1970s also started using contact improvisation as artistic product. In a similar way but in a very different context, Mangrove challenged assumptions about physical contact and public expression of affection among men. However, the prominence of free flow of energy and movement in their productions were constantly used to entertain the audience, an objective that remained a priority for the group (Prickett 2013:100-101).

## 7.6 Artistic and social context of creation: the Gezi Park protests

The first person subjective pronoun of the title (*biz* meaning ‘we’ in Turkish) captures how the piece resonated with the emergence of a novel collective body uniting counter-hegemonic groups that had not yet allied in the past. During and soon after the protests, intellectuals and scholars tried to recount the experiences in chronicles and analysis. Reflecting on the events through performance theory lenses, Arzu Öztürkmen offered a linear narrative of the protests which described the complexity of the present and acknowledged its ongoing dimension. Her account starts as in the passage above:

When the Gezi Park protests began at the end of May 2013, none of us had any idea of how it would spread throughout Turkey, inventing a wide range of performance forms that emerged as an urgent public expression of the political desires and frustrations of the polity. From the very beginning we surrendered to a sense of incompleteness and partiality; we were all limited by our subjective experience of the performance, in which we were all both improvising actors and members of a stunned audience. We say “we,” because we experienced this process collectively: some of us stuck in our homes, some in the streets and in “the Park,” and some abroad. United through social media more than ever, this new construction of “we” conversely shows how the general Turkish public has been divided for the last two decades. Sadly, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan openly stated who “his people” were; we were not among them. (Öztürkmen 2014:39-40)

Öztürkmen emphasizes the urgency that prompted the formation of such a new collectivity and the ambiguity characterizing its general moods. There was the enthusiasm of becoming aware, as a collective, of contributing to a larger historical process, as well as the frustration triggered by a sense of incompleteness in experiencing the events. Bringing together environmentalists, linguistic and religious minorities, LGBT people, blue collar workers, liberal intellectuals, artists and other dissident folks, such a collectivity found a common denominator in the rejection of the populist rhetoric of the state. The opposition to the president’s



appeal to a *millet* (nation) whose contours included only the conservative front that had voted for him, gave shape to the new 'we' that emerged during and after Gezi.

In contrast to the many scholars' reflection on the events in academic language, through "biz" Dehmen responded to the protest events in a quasi-improvisatory dance form. The medium of dance felt appropriate in recollecting the protests as much as sensitivity to bodily movement, posture and choreography was already heightened among the protestors. This sensitivity is testified by the exhausting enactment of popular folk dances, such as the *horon* and especially the *halay*, which became rather ubiquitous in the streets as well as on social media, as well as by the enactment of other coordinated physical actions.<sup>88</sup> The fact that numerous 'ballerinas, *tangueros*, yoga practitioners, mime artists' (Bayraktar 2016: 288), and several emerging or well-affirmed dancers took down to the streets certainly enhanced sensitivity to the collective as a moving and vigorous body.<sup>89</sup>

Erdem Gündüz, a Fine Arts student at Mimar Sinan Üniversitesi and practised contact improviser at ÇATI who had danced in *Tevhid*, is one of the emerging performance artists who instigated what became one of the most emblematic symbolic actions of the protests. He became famous in Turkey and abroad as *Duran Adam* (lit. 'standing man'), enacting what Öztürkmen defined 'a new form of passive activism par excellence' (2014:58). On the 17<sup>th</sup> of June 2013, just after Taksim square had been evacuated by the police, Gündüz stopped at its

---

<sup>88</sup> For instance, Bayraktar mentions 'human chains, silent gestures, reading books out loud and persistently looking into the eyes of police officers' (2016: 288). A creative and cheerful video recording of 'halay for piece' inciting more people to multiply through the joining in the dance can be retrieved on Jakabu TV (no year). For a discussion of 'ontological shifts of what halay narrates', also in relation to the Kurdish presence during the protests, see Kurtişoğlu (2015). For the peculiarity of the Kurdish positioning in the protests see Gambetti (2016:44-45).

<sup>89</sup> During the protests, Ziya Azazi's enacted his solo *Dervish-in-Progress*, a piece combining western contemporary dance techniques with Sufi whirling practices. See Bayraktar (2016) for an accurate discussion.

centre and for eight hours simply stood upright on his feet facing the now dismissed building of the Atatürk Kültür Merkezi, which until few hours earlier was upholstered with all sort of images representing the multiple currents joining in the protests.<sup>90</sup> Standing immobile and harmless at the centre of the square, Gündüz's pacifist action and its publicising on social media bolstered the movement with fresh hope for the resistance to continue.<sup>91</sup> As Öztürkmen reports, people started standing elsewhere in Turkey, especially on the locations where notorious killings were executed, both in the immediate past during the wave of protests, as well as over the previous years, such as at the spot where journalist Hrant Dink was assassinated in 2007 or in front of the Madımak Hotel in Sivas.<sup>92</sup> The action of standing was also replicated abroad, where supporters of the protests started standing in front of a Turkish flag to call public attention to the dramatic events.<sup>93</sup>

The fact that Erdem Gündüz was an experienced contact improviser is certainly not incidental. It attests how contact improvisation technique offered the protests novel grounds for resisting through a changed collective perception enhanced by sensitivity to stillness in the public space. Despite in subsequent interviews he repeatedly affirmed that his action was at the beginning not

---

<sup>90</sup> For a discussion of the visual imaginary inscribed on the façade of the building during the protests see Kuryel 2015. For an overview on cultural policies that led to the building's decay see İnce (2018).

<sup>91</sup> At first, Gündüz's immobile posture did not seem to represent a threat for the security forces, but these decided nonetheless to intervene the day after, when more than 300 men and women started standing next him in Taksim square. As information about the action multiplied on social media, over the next days, standing upright on one's feet in the public space became the emblematic tactic for embodying the protest.

<sup>92</sup> See 2.6 for a discussion of the Madımak Hotel events in July 1993.

<sup>93</sup> Öztürkmen (2014:58) also mentions Erdoğan's response to Gündüz's action, as he ridiculed his action by presenting it as a sign of the passive and parasite character of the protestors in contrast to his own ability to bring the 'nation' ahead, towards 2023, the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary since the establishment of the Republic. The fact that stillness was used to reinforce the stereotype of passivity of the protestors is resonant with Foster's comment on the public reaction to the deployment of stillness in other protest contexts, for instance as reinforcing stereotypes of the passive negro standing as waiting expectantly for consideration (Goldman 2007:64).

intentional nor planned, Gündüz's training and practicing of contact improvisation certainly armoured him with enough mental and physical resilience to cope with the distressing situation, for instance when the policemen searched him through his clothes and rucksack, or when passers-by kept on prompting him to give explanations for his (in)action. Later, to make sense of his deed, during an interview with Pieter Verstraete, Gündüz quotes the words of Dehmen:

Erdem: One of my friends, Bedirhan Dehmen (...) said that this movement shows that non-active forms of protest can be active. In Turkey, we are now doing nothing because of the excessive police violence. People are growing more silent and are coming together less often. Bedirhan said: *eylemsizlik duran adamlar birlikte bir eylem haline dönüştü*. It means that with the 'Standing Man', nonactive things (inertia) can be active; they can be turned into action. I love this phrase. (Verstraete 2015:124)

Sensitivity to body movement during the unrest materialized in a public performance of stillness, which ultimately instigated a collective redefinition of what standing still implied as political action. The attempt to capitalize on the generative potential of stillness in the public arena, and precisely on the quintessential sites of social and historical clashes, was an astute and unprecedented strategy. The shattering taking of the streets by dance art folks eager to support the protests against police repression conferred the movement with a novel sense of action enhanced by a novel perception of stillness as action.

To appreciate the perceptual field to which Gündüz was accustomed while standing up in the middle of Taksim square, I wish to refer to Andre Lepecki's discussion (2000) of the shifting place of stillness in dance throughout modernity. Lepecki's discussion helps also comprehend better Dehmen's recourse to contact improvisation techniques in his recollection of the dramatic events. Lepecki explains that from early Romantic ballet's notions of dance as flowing and continuous motion in contrast to an appreciation of stillness as non-dance, in the

modern period stillness was assigned a novel place in the theatrical dance field. Stillness started to be perceived as the primary generator of movement, for instance testified by Isadora Duncan's glorious words recollecting her hourly still stands in search for 'the central spring of all movement', or as the source for expressivity and for creative choreographic tension in Jacques Rivière's commentary to Vaslav Nijinski's *Le Sacre du printemps*. Lepecki's argument contends that it is however only with post-modern dance, through Steve Paxton's explorations, that stillness was brought 'into full phenomenological and ontological status as dance', not just as potential or origin of it. Lepecki claims that this change was correlated to the acknowledgment of the 'microscopic' and 'vibratile' character of stillness which replaced its understanding as fixity.<sup>94</sup> With its emphasis on stillness as a field of micromovements, contact improvisation anticipated a perceptual condition whose potential Lepecki sees as a landmark of socially disrupting performances 'capable of blowing away historical dust from dulled senses' (2000:362).

The emphasis on stillness as street performance which Gündüz' action sparked, as well as in the explorations of tactile dynamics within a more staged presentation in "*biz*", reflects the way through which contact improvisation training was accompanied by strong political motivations in the context of Gezi. Such motivations had a different target and scale from the early concerns for

---

<sup>94</sup> This conceptual and perceptual shift was most emblematically realized in Paxton's 'stand' or 'small dance' exercise, popularized in his piece for twelve men dancers *Magnesium* (1972). Here, the task for the dancer consisted in simply standing up still and relaxing to the point of limiting himself to recognise all the small movements that the body is still performing when not doing anything. It is this minute invitation for 'watching the body perform its function' that stimulated a rearrangement of perception. Like John Cage's radical affirmation of silence as composition and music, Paxton invited stillness to become the locus of a transformed sensorial perception capable of detecting the minuscule moves of which stillness is full.

'democratization' of dance by the forerunners who contributed to the emergence of this movement form in the 1970s in the United States.<sup>95</sup> In that context, a questioning of what should be the role of dance professionalism in its larger cultural context, especially in terms of how could dance best instigate reflections on the value of movement habits among the larger public, was at the centre of political preoccupations of dance artists. Contrarily, in the context of Gezi, the circulation of, and recourse to contact improvisation was not aiming at a reconsideration of the scope and role of the dance sector in the wider society, but was rather driven by the intention to foster and perpetuate a resisting stance against the authoritarian drift of the state and the police crackdown. The ambitions were here more pragmatic in the sense that they were organically interrelated with street protestors' worries for whom it provided a tactic and a stimulus for enduring in the contestation. Such a pragmatism also meant that the public appearance of the movement form was not aimed at the popularization of a novel dance aesthetics which had been recently imported from abroad, nor was it busy in challenging conventions in the professional dance sector. Rather, its goal was the one of exploiting a novel dance techniques as a useful corporeal strategy that would challenge the violence of a repressive regime.

As a corporeal strategy sustaining the endurance of a collective protest attempt, in the context of Gezi the emergence of contact improvisation is

---

<sup>95</sup> Commenting on the ongoing concern for 'democratisation' of dance in the formative development of contact improvisation, Sally Banes highlighted how this materialized out of Steve Paxton's disillusion for the freedom and egalitarianism promised by the forerunners of modern dance – such as Isadora Duncan and Rudolf Laban – as well as by his disobedience to the hierarchical social structure and star system that he experienced while working in Merce Cunningham's company (Banes 1987:59). Furthermore, Paxton was primarily disturbed by the way into which even dance works by companies that were considered most radical and democratic would still leave the audiences with the feeling that their own movement was not worth exploring (ibid.).

characterized by a vigorous entanglement with the practical needs and ambitions of the activists' logics. This entanglement was not present throughout the early development of this movement form in the United States over the 1970s. For instance, Danielle Goldman (2007) argued that, when considered next to the much more challenging contexts of moving in 'real' life and protest, the democratic stress in forging this new movement language remained the privileged vocabulary of few professional dancers.<sup>96</sup> Goldman showed how 'contact improvisation was a predominantly white venture, conducted in the safety of gymnasiums, lofts, and dance studios' (2007:62), and its egalitarian rhetoric was at time contradicted by power imbalances.<sup>97</sup> In contrast to the American context into which the form emerged, which Goldman characterized as holding a relatively safe position which eventually veiled sexist and racist biases, in the context of Gezi, the recourse to the form had a social impact which was allied with social democratising attempts. As suggested by Dehmen, the perceptual and conceptual shift implicit in the communal acknowledgment of stillness' potential made evident that a standing body under the public eye was the ultimate site of pacific resistance. This was made available to a collectivity that was resilient in facing the distress of the

---

<sup>96</sup> Goldman re-examined the politics of contact improvisation in comparison with the bodily techniques of nonviolent protest that emerged out of distinct histories and social demands, such as the physical tactics adopted in the United States over the 1960s by civil rights activists under situations of danger, for instance the bodily training in 'A Manual for Direct Action' written in 1964 by civil right activists Martin Oppenheimer and George Lakey. Civil rights activists trained themselves to become creative improvisers in situations of duress and their bodily training was comparable to contact improvisers' 'practice of making oneself ready for a range of shifting constraints (...) seeking calm, confident choices even in situation of duress'. (Goldman 2007:62)

<sup>97</sup> A tensed conversation between Steve Paxton and gay and black choreographer Bill T. Jones which was moderated in 1983 by Mary Overlie at the Movement Research Studio project in New York is revelatory of such imbalances. (Goldman 2007:70-73)

'historical dust' of teargas bombings which became the norm over those months in the public neuralgic centres.<sup>98</sup>

In the protestors' daily routine during Gezi, the recourse to contact improvisation strategies was accompanied by joyous moments of collective enthusiasm as well as by the grim anxieties of dealing with human loss and physical injury. In "*biz*", these distressful situations were recalled through a movement vocabulary resorting to contact improvisation technique. Even though marked by the same 'democratising' impulse, recourse to this technique is however very different from the one attained by Gündüz in Taksim square. "*biz*" was indeed not born to be performed on the streets, but rather as a theatrical attempt to recollect in hindsight what the street had witnessed. A theatrical stage guaranteed some form of safety as it would not be possible in the streets. As Gündüz had declared, exploration of shared bodyweight in the public space would be too suspicious under Turkish constitutional law because of the danger of incurring in terrorism charges.<sup>99</sup> As a post-event recollection of the experience through movement, "*biz*" was conceived in a dance studio and meant to be presented on a theatrical stage, despite attempting to break the contours and borders of such spaces. Such a breakthrough was achieved through the re-conceptualization of

---

<sup>98</sup> That constituted a lesson that Turkish emerging movement artists could teach abroad to a much more 'dulled' European youth. For instance, Gündüz was honoured with human-right recognitions, such as the M100 Media Award in Germany and the Vaclav Havel Prize for Creative Dissent in Oslo. He was also invited to give workshops on the use of contact improvisation in nonviolent demonstration, such as one in Torino, Italy. The workshop was advertised as: 'a bodywork laboratory for experiments in touch, sensing, struggle, collaboration, support, resistance, and relationship. From sensory touch to overpowering interaction, from holding motion to holding stillness, from myself to the other' (quoted in Mee 2014:81).

<sup>99</sup> Gündüz had explained that he was able to perform his standing without incurring in an arrest only in as much as he went out there on his own. In his words: 'If it had been three people, they could have easily arrested us, as we would have been seen as a *terrorist group*' (Verstraete 2015:124).

such performing arts spaces as sites for expressing and enacting a process of mourning. As I will unpack in the next section, "*biz*" voiced a plea for celebrating the loss of those who died during the protests. The grieving was however expanded through the invitation to partake to a more collective process of mourning which was brought forth through strongly democratic principles.

### 7.7 "*biz*" as a site for mourning

In the flyer accompanying the performance of "*biz*", a quotation from the philosopher Judith Butler (2004) is quoted to explain the title of the piece (fig. 15). Dehmen referred to this passage also in an interview for the journal *Agos* published on the 16<sup>th</sup> of December 2014 (Uluçay and Dehmen 2014).<sup>100</sup> The quotation was extrapolated from a collection of essays which Butler had written as a response to the post-9/11 global belligerent climate, translated into Turkish one year later.<sup>101</sup> I will refer to that passage to elucidate the conceptual links articulated by Dehmen in "*biz*". In the collection, and especially in the essay 'Violence, Mourning and Politics' the American feminist philosopher had argued for an appreciation of grief as the ground upon which political communities based on inter-dependency and ethical responsibility ought to be established. Defiant of Freudian psychoanalytical understandings of grief as substitution (of what is lost for something else) or as incorporation (of what is lost into one's self), Butler opposed the assumption that

---

<sup>100</sup> *Agos* was founded in Istanbul in April 1996 by Hrant Dink and a group of other journalists. This was the first newspaper in the Republican period to be published both in Turkish and Armenian. After the assassination of Dink in 2007, the editorial policy of *Agos* continues to foster attention to democratization, minority rights and pluralism in Turkey. For a touching portrayal of Hrant Dink and of his pioneering role in the transformation of activist discourse in Turkey, see Selek (2015:59-75).

<sup>101</sup> Başak Ertür translated the book to Turkish one year after its original publishing in English. This was published by Metin Yayınları with the title *Kırılğan Hayat: Yasın ve Şiddetin Gücü*.



grief is by necessity a privatizing and depoliticizing life event. She highlighted instead how the task of mourning follows by necessity the recognition of human's vulnerability to loss, a recognition that can bond people whether they concur on which lives and which bodies are worth mourning. In Butler's words:

Who counts as human? Whose lives count as lives? And, finally what makes for a grievable life? Despite our differences in location and history, my guess is that it is possible to appeal to a 'we', for all of us have some notion of what it is to have lost somebody. Loss has made a tenuous 'we' of us all. And if we have lost, then it follows that we have had, that we have desired and loved, that we have struggled to find conditions for our desire. (...) This means that each of us is constituted politically in part by virtue of the social vulnerability of our bodies – as a site of desire and physical vulnerability, as a site of publicity at once assertive and exposed. Loss and vulnerability seem to follow from our being socially constituted bodies, attached to others, at risk of losing those attachments, exposed to others, at risk of violence by virtue of that exposure. (2004:20)

Resorting to this passage, Dehmen explained how "*biz*" emerged out of the experience of human loss, one that generates a collective identity as it unifies those who endured it. Mourning is however not only a unifying event in social terms but also an ethical duty in individual ones, as it forces us to recognize that we are inter-constituted, and capable of 'unravelling' one another.<sup>102</sup> In his words, when we do not engage in the task of mourning, something remains lingering, unsolved between us.

Dehmen articulated for *Agos* a specific detailing of which were these lives that still ought to be grieved. This understanding transcends the exclusive commemoration of Alevi deaths, as well as the loss of those who died during the Gezi protests. In his words:

Partly these are human losses which we may call 'personal', partly these are instead human losses, departures and deprivations which we may call

---

<sup>102</sup> In Dehmen's words '*birbirimiz tarafından çözüyoruz, birbirimizi çözeriz*'.

'collective'. Of course, I could speak of Sivas, Gezi.... Of course, I could speak of 1915. Or of Maraş and Çorum for that matter. But I could also speak of those deaths that end up on our dailies' third page. Or of those dead animals that you can see every day on the highways in Istanbul. In our history, there are losses and deaths that affect us both individually and collectively, and there is a meeting point emerging out of this suffering. However, we do not gather to cry and lament. Maybe there is something of this that bursts out of us in "*biz*" and this is our way to shoot it out. In final instance, for us "*biz*" is a space to gather.<sup>103</sup>

The passage makes clear the intention not to limit the mourning to the Alevis who perished during memorable slaughters in recent history, such as those of Sivas, Maraş or Çorum (see 2.6), nor to the Armenians slaughtered in 1915, even though these violent historical facts are all mentioned. It also does not wish to barely offer a space for the remembrance of the those who were killed during the Gezi protests.<sup>104</sup> It invites instead to expand the bereavement also to those who 'can not be mourned because they are always already lost' (Butler 2004:33). Mourning is thus addressed to 'life' in a broader sense, and the dead animals killed on the highways in Istanbul's everyday traffic is a compelling metaphor to refer to the lack of time for contemplating such a vulnerability to loss. The broadened understanding of what lives are grievable hints at the necessity to contemplate the deaths beyond the Alevi cluster, as well as beyond the 'human' subject. It is in this sense, that the dramaturgy engages with the necessity of mourning on a more general sense. Whereas Butler denounced the impediments to public processes of mourning after 9/11 and the hierarchies of grief that took place after the belligerent reaction to terrorist threats in the States, Dehmen wished with "*biz*" to

---

<sup>103</sup> My translation from Turkish.

<sup>104</sup> See 2.7 for a discussion of processes of 'alevizing' dissent over the last years, especially after the Gezi protests. "*biz*" seems to be resisting these processes in the opposite attempt to 'generalize Aleviness' by enlarging the mourning task beyond the sole Alevi deaths and beyond the Gezi protests and offering instead a site for civic mourning as the ground to establish a new political collectivity based on inter-dependency and ethical responsibility.

realize the practical conditions for articulating grief in the tensed Turkish context of the last years. In a framework into which Alevi funerary practices have been more and more systematically obstructed (see 2.7), though the performing arts "*biz*" made accessible an alternative platform for realizing the task of mourning.

The composite movement vocabulary and multi-layered movement dramaturgy scaffold of "*biz*" *Biz* realize the mourning task in an urban environment. Whereas funerary practices rarely include the performance of a *semah* in the urban *cemevis*, "*biz*" testifies an innovative attempt, nurtured in an urban framework, to resolve the trauma of loss through movement art.<sup>105</sup> Dehmen's creative recourse to movement in the wake of the intermingling of kinaesthetic, emotional and spiritual experiences that accompany the mourning task, proposes a route to express grief which is different from those available in its cultural contexts.<sup>106</sup> Nonetheless, Dehmen's unwrapping of the experience of loss makes also evident the necessity of engaging with the mourning task as part of a more immediate political goal. In this sense, as a strategy for remembrance in an activist context, "*biz*" is comparable to militant choreographies born in response to the loss of

---

<sup>105</sup> I never experienced the enactment of *semah* as part of funerals, nor I encountered mentions of *semahs* as a funerary practice (for instance in Yaman 1999, a booklet defining liturgical recommendations for Alevi funerals). However, in August 2016 the French speaking Facebook group 'Les Alévis' published a video into which a *semah* was executed as part of a funeral in the region of Antep (Les Alévis 2016). In an outdoor setting the *semahcıs* turned here around a coffin. The caption under the video proclaimed that the Alevis were finally managing to get rid of recent customs, acquired after forced or induced assimilation to official religious practices over the last decades. The video stirred up an animated debate on the exceptionality of the phenomenon and on how that may affect general understandings of Aleviness as a branch of Islam or not.

<sup>106</sup> Because of its intention of transmuting an individual experience of loss into artistic work, "*biz*" resembles the artistic work analysed in detail in an autobiographical essay by the British movement artist and therapist Helen Poynor (2013). Influenced by key figures such as Anna Halprin and Suprpto Suryodarmo with whom she trained over several years, Poynor's embodied expression of personal loss through movement offers an alternative to culturally acceptable expressions of grief in an English environment.

political activists and leaders.<sup>107</sup> The appreciation that loss forces the individual to reconsider one's own individual plan and project, in Butler's terms 'one's own knowing and choosing' (2004:21), explicates the choreographic decision of working with improvisation, or 'reconfiguration' as Dehmen suggests. Asking the dancers to actively respond to each other's bodily impromptu decision-takings as well as to resonate to the musician's extemporisations, the bodily and group reconfigurations bring the mark of the life shaking reconsideration of life after loss. The emphatic choice of enduring bodily contact highlights instead how bodily individuality is lost in the mourning process and how the ties that connect us are constitutive of one's self.

The triadic body assemblage exposes how mourning offers clues to reveal something about who 'we' are and on how 'our' selves are constituted by the ties that bind us one another. For its questioning of an 'emergent model of a radically interpenetrative relationship between subject and object' (Morse 2014:30), the body assemblages in "*biz*" are somewhat reminiscent of Simone Forti's 'dance construction' *Huddle* (1961), even if clean of formal minimalism. The movement score interrogates this relationship by providing a site for mourning that does not aim at restoring a previous condition partaken by the dancers and the audiences, but that aims instead at investigating the limits of one's own physical skin and the impossibility to autonomously carry one's own weight. It creates a discursive field into which a dilated kinaesthetic and sonic perception, both on the side of the performers and on that of the audience, defines a social event into which grieving reformulates the relationship between group and individual. This relationship

---

<sup>107</sup> For instance, see Edith Segal's dance solo during the Lenin Memorial Meeting in Chicago in 1924, often cited as the start of left-wing dance movement (Prickett 2013:18).

nurtures the recognition of vulnerability as the precondition 'to solicit a becoming, to instigate a transformation, to petition the future always in relation to the Other' (Butler 2004:44). In this sense, the abstraction of the movement tasks requires a more engaged spectating subjectivity to complete the work by sensing and assigning them a meaning.

Within the composite movement vocabulary of "*biz*", the place left for reiterating contemporary urban Alevi belonging depends on this plea for the recognition of human's vulnerability to loss. The necessity to re-appropriate *semah* conventions by acknowledging the foreignness to one's 'self' revealed in the process of mourning explains the necessity of radically transforming the forms in dialogue with contact improvisation language. Butler had written:

If I lose you, under these conditions, then I not only mourn the loss, but I become inscrutable to myself. (...) On one level, I think I have lost 'you' only to discover that 'I' have gone missing as well. (...) I find that my formation implicates the other in me, that my own foreignness to myself is, paradoxically, the source of my ethical connection with others. I am not fully known to myself, because part of what I am is the enigmatic traces of others. (2004:22)

In "*biz*", the enigmatic traces are not only those left by the 'other', the 'imported' tradition of contact improvisation, which is used very much as the underlying dance technique, a blank page upon which the movement content is inscribed. On the contrary, such traces are those left, more palpably, by the movements which originate or recall the artist's uprising into an Alevi familiar heritage. This Alevi enigmatic load emerges as the actual 'other', the tradition which becomes less familiar: its embracing becomes also its 'othering'. The fact that the Alevi elements in "*biz*" remain puzzling reveals this paradox: at the same time, they are perceptible by the spectator sensible to Aleviness, but still they are difficult to be overtly recognized or expounded, neither by the performers nor by the spectators. During

yet another meeting discussing "*biz*", Dehmen expressed his own bewilderment about the piece's meanings and significance, emphasizing how he was genuinely not sure of what is at the core of it, and how the elements that resonated with the public somehow escaped his own lucid understanding.<sup>108</sup>

The last time "*biz*" was ever staged was at Moda Sahnesi in March 2017. In that occasion, a mourning task realized most concretely: the piece was performed to raise funds in support for a campaign to help less privileged students which the Ali İsmail Korkmaz Vakfı (ALİKEV) had been launched few months ahead. This foundation was established in 2014 by the parents of Ali İsmail Korkmaz, a 19-year-old student native of Hatay who died during the wave of Gezi protests in the city of Eskişehir.<sup>109</sup> The parents of Ali İsmail were invited as special guests to the staging. As Dehmen recalled in a not recorded interview, their participation honoured the choreographer and the performers, who perceived it as the closing landmark in a grieving process. Despite the numerous requests to set up further shows, in Istanbul, as well as elsewhere, for instance, in Ankara, where the piece never toured, no more stagings of "*biz*" were organised after this date.

## 7.8 Reception on print and online media

Between 2014 and 2017 "*biz*" was performed in almost twenty venues in Turkey and abroad, sometimes as part of larger arts festivals,<sup>110</sup> other times in less

---

<sup>108</sup> The non-recorded interview occurred during an informal meeting which happened few days after Bedirhan came to listen to my public discussion of his work as part of a lecture I gave at the Orient Institut in Istanbul in December 2017.

<sup>109</sup> Its diverse objectives range from the funding of scholarships for less privileged students, campaigns aiming at the rescue of abandoned animals, visits to elderly houses, or clearing of plastic garbage in nature.

<sup>110</sup> In Turkey, these venues are established or emerging spaces for the performing arts, such as Moda Sahnesi (Kadıköy), Fulya Sanat Merkezi (Beşiktaş) and Tiyatro D22 (Kadıköy) in Istanbul, as well as at Karşıyaka Opera ve Tiyatro Sahnesi in Izmir. The piece was inserted in a couple of projects organised by the Modern Dance Group of Istanbul

conventional sites, such as the open-air yard of Istanbul Modern - Museum of Modern Art in Istanbul, a venue that does not normally host performing arts works. "biz" toured abroad as well, such as in Berlin, Tel Aviv and Brussels.<sup>111</sup> As already mentioned in the previous section, "biz" was staged for the last time on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of March 2017 at Moda Sahnesi in Kadıköy, Istanbul, in support for the campaign *Düşlere Güç Ver* (lit. 'Give Power to Dreams') launched by the Ali İsmail Korkmaz Vakfı (ALİKEV), to which all proceeds were devolved. In this section, I will focus on the reception of "biz" after its performance in Istanbul and question how the spectators and reviewers filled the semantic gaps generated by the abstract quality of the movement tasks. I will thus show how the mixture of Alevi enigmatic expressive heritage with contemporary dance forms contributed to the openness of the piece. As we will see in the final part of this chapter, the Alevi themes remained elusive, especially for the spectator not accustomed with Aleviness.

Throughout the events into which "biz" was publicly staged, textual presentations and reviews quite hesitantly addressed any 'Alevi' aspect in it. Such aspects remained often unnoticed or not publicly talked about. For instance, to promote "biz" at the İstanbul Modern or at Moda Sahnesi, the website of the museum described the piece henceforth:

In the performance, three male dancers strive to become "one", alternating between movement patterns performed as trios in which they do not lose physical contact and moments of exuberance in which they dance alone. Delving into their memories and bodies, they seek to explore what makes "we" one and sets us in motion. Cem Yıldız provides the voice and breath of the

---

State Opera and Ballet (*Modern Dans Topluluğu İstanbul, MDTİst*) such as 'World Human Rights Day' (*Dünya İnsan Hakları Günü*) and 'Invitation to Peace' (*Barış'a Davet*).

<sup>111</sup> In November 2014, "biz" was staged in Germany at the Studio Я of Maxim Gorki Theatre in Berlin as part of the Voicing Resistance Festival; in October 2015, it travelled to Tel Aviv in Israel, where it was staged at the Suzanne Dellal Centre for Dance & Theatre; and finally, in January 2016 it was performed at the Halles de Schaerbeek in Brussels as part of the *Europalia* programme.

play, and leads the other two dancers with his *bağlama* and voice replicating and distorting both in real time digitally. (Istanbul Modern 2015)

In the Turkish version of the text however, the three male dancers do not *strive to become 'one'*, but rather *to become the 'cem'* (lit. *'cemi oluyorlar*) and Cem Yıldız does not 'lead the other two dancers' (which would be actually 'the three dancers' as he is not dancing himself) but rather *leads the 'cem'* (lit. *cem'i yürütüyor*). Rather than explicating the complex relationship of the piece with the Alevi rituals, the insertion of references to the 'cem' was possibly meant to prompt curiosity and attract the public. However, the use of quotation marks to encompass the word however seems to cast doubt on the word, either emphasizing a distance from its reality or generalizing it in an abstract form.<sup>112</sup> Reference to the *cem* ritual was a hesitant promotional strategy, which was removed from the English version. Mentions of the *cem* were also not replicated in the advertising of the piece in other contexts, nor in Turkey, nor abroad.

An analysis at the reception of the piece suggests that "*biz*" was generally not publicly appreciated as an 'Alevi performance'. In Turkey as well as abroad, online and print reviews tend to refer to Aleviness in a misleading or oblique way, if they do at all. The openness of the movement tasks either contributed to an almost total obfuscation of the Alevi components, or to the perception of Aleviness as an enigmatic load that remains intrinsically blurry, often disguised behind ancestral or archetypal symbolism, such as a reference to a holy trinity in the triadic formation of the dancers. To the spectator not yet sensitive to it, Alevi themes remained rather cryptic, possibly forming a puzzling spiritual stratum formed through one's own intimate (re)discovery and (re)interpretation. Aleviness

---

<sup>112</sup> I wish to thank Martin Greve for bringing this detail to my attention.



emerges an ancestral heritage composed out of dispersed traces left in the music and in the movement, traces which get blurrier the more one immerses into them. Their blurry and enigmatic quality allows them to porously absorb novel sonic and kinaesthetic vocabularies, such as contact improvisation or electronic music arrangements, while at the same time it obstructs their public recognition as 'Alevi'.

Figure 15. Poster of "biz" with a photo by Ebru Ahunbay. Source: biz / we (2014b)



**"biz"**

İzleyiciler tarafından çevrelenmiş performans alanındaki üç erkek dansçı, bir yanda fiziksel teması kaybetmedikleri üçlü hareket formları, diğer yanda bir başlarının kaldıkları taşkınlikanlar arasında gezinerek "cem" oluyorlar. Bedenleri ve bellekleri üzerinde çalışıp, "biz'i neyin birlediğini ve harekete geçirdiğini keşfe dalıyorlar. Cem Yıldız, bilgisayar ortamında canlı olarak çoğalttığı ve dönüştürdüğü vokali ve bağlamasıyla "cem'i yürütüyor, ses ve nefes oluyor.

...

kendi hikayelerimizle hesaplaşmak için.  
"biz"e dair.

ve gözleri açık gittiği için yasını tutamadıklarımıza, aşk ile uğurlayamadıklarımıza dair...

"Kim insan sayılır? Kimin yaşamı yaşam sayılır? Son olarak da, bir yaşamı yası tutulabilir kılan nedir? Tarihlerimiz ve bulunduğumuz yerler arasındaki farklara rağmen, bir "biz" den bahsetmek sanırım mümkün; zira birisini yitirmiş olmanın ne demek olduğuna dair hepimizin bir fikri vardır... Hadi yüzleşelim. Birbirimiz tarafından çözümlüüz. Ve eğer çözülmüyorsak bir şeyleri ıskalıyoruz demektir." (Judith Butler, Kırılgan Hayat)

"...dilin, giden dışın yerini ikide bir yoklaması gibi hatırlama da, hep bir boşluğu yoklama ve yokluğun hala ve hep yok olduğunu yeniden duyurmaya bıkmayan bir vecdedir." (Şule Gürbüz)

"Bu çok felsefi duyulabilir, ama mevzu oynamayı oynamamak ya da oynamamayı oynamak." (Bruce Lee, Ben Bruce Lee'yim)

...

**Yaratanlar ve Sahneyenler**  
Bedirhan Dehmen,  
Canberk Yıldız, Cem Yıldız, Ejder Keskin (Alper Marangoz)

**Konsept ve Koreografi**  
Bedirhan Dehmen

**Müzik Düzenleme**  
Cem Yıldız

**Işık Tasarımı**  
Kerem Çetinel

Beyhan Murphy ve MDTİST, Deniz Yıldız, Ekim Öztürk,  
Mine Tan Dehmen ve Şafak Uysal'a teşekkürler...

Fotograf: Ebru Ahunbay

Online and print reviews of "biz" published between 2014 and 2017 almost completely omit to mention Aleviness as a relevant topic of which the public should be aware for appreciating it. Even when mentioned, such references to Aleviness are misleading more than revealing. This is the case of a scant post published on the francophone website *Couleurs d'Istanbul Le Mag*, which offers an approximate translation in French of the Turkish debriefing of the performance (Buchmann 2015). The reviewer informs that, through his voice and the altered sound of the *bağlama* ('the traditional instrument of Anatolia' as explained in a note), the musician Cem Yıldız accompanies live the dance and leads the *djem*, ('the Alevi ritual', as another note makes clear). This mentioning of Aleviness is misleading, for it may have disoriented the spectator who would have expected to experience an Alevi ceremony. Among all the reviews written about the piece, this brief statement, despite simplistic, contains the only explicit reference to Aleviness.

The review published by the American Western music journalist Alexandra Ivanoff on the Istanbul-based online Anglophone daily *Today Zaman*<sup>113</sup> is illustrative of how the media did not detect any Alevi component in "biz". With accurate and praising tones, the article was written after the Istanbul premiere at the Fulya Art Center (*Fulya Sanat Merkezi*) in May 2014, when the piece was included in celebrations for World Intercultural Dialogue Day. It quotes:

Bedirhan Dehmen's "We" expressed states of grief, the state of the present moment in history, and ways to maintain a state of grace. (...) (This) was a compellingly original 45-minute piece involving three men whose actions with each other amounted to a detailed illustration of relationship dynamics. The fact that the piece's overall arch, including moments of reflection, had an

---

<sup>113</sup> I am thankful to Alexandra Ivanoff who retrieved this review for me. Articles appeared on *Today's Zaman*, part of the Gülen Movement-affiliated media conglomerate Feza Gazetecilik, were removed from the internet in March 2016. In July 2016, together with dozens of other media organisations, the online daily was shot down after a Presidential degree following on the 15<sup>th</sup> July military coup attempt (i.e. see Johnston 2016).

energy directed to its conclusion provided the highest artistic thrills of the evening. Starting with a long group embrace, the piece evolved in a human time frame (as opposed to the compulsively busy choreo style so often seen in contemporary dance), allowing us to make a profound visceral connection to the dancers' decision-making process while in motion. Alternately rhapsodic, animalistic, twitchy, or surreal slo-mo, Dehmen's dance designs in "We" offer the dance world an emotionally elegant voice. (Ivanoff 2014)

In few lines the review captures the overall themes and atmosphere of the movement score proving Ivanoff to be a sensible contemporary performing arts analyst. The fact that the review does not give any mention of Aleviness indicates however of how the open and multi-layered dramaturgy succeeded in its intention of not exposing Aleviness, but of reusing some Alevi themes to reach spectators beyond the Alevi cluster and prompt a much more visceral imprint on them. When Ivanoff points to the dance designs as 'rhapsodic, animalistic, twitchy, surreal', she seemingly suggests that there is something uncanny within them, something that is at the same time perceivable and inscrutable, escaping logical understanding and definition. The review shows thus how emphasis on a certain enigmatic and mysterious quality in "biz" replaces any straightforward references to Aleviness.

After that same premiere, Mehmet Kerem Özel, a Teaching Assistant in the faculty of Architecture at Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University, composed a review for the online theatre journal *Mimesis* which offers erudite hints to understand what "biz" is about (Özel 2014). As Ivanoff, Özel expresses enthusiasm for the piece and praised the team for creating an 'original, integral, solid and impressive work' which the contemporary performing arts scenes in Istanbul lacked for a long time.<sup>114</sup> The body assemblages and the upper limbs work remind Özel of the Turkish painter Abidin Dino's drawings of hands: like the viewer in front of those drawings, here the spectator's perception is puzzled to spot where one hand starts

---

<sup>114</sup> Lit. özgün, bütünsel, sağlam ve etkileyici bir yapıt.

and where another one finishes, or how many people's hands the drawing is about. Besides, Özel is reminded of tango moves because of the impetuous accents of the legs' suspensions in the air which accompany the speeding up tempo, even though he recognizes the distance of "biz" from tango, both in terms of geography and atmosphere. Also, Özel compares "biz" to the choreographies of the Antwerp-based Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui, such as *Mythos* (2003), *Apocrifu* (2007) and *Foi* (2007) because of the hands' work, the expert recycling of folk material into a contemporary dance language, the use of live music, and especially for the way "biz" comes to terms with some religious themes.<sup>115</sup> What is indeed notable in the frame of Özel's discussion is his uncovering of few religious elements, such as the suggestion that the manly trio may be standing for a holy trinity. For instance, he wonders: 'is this trio composed by the father, son and holy spirit? Or is it Allah, Mohammed and Ali?'.<sup>116</sup> Finally, unlike Ivanoff, Özel also firmly detects the influence of the *semahs* in the movements (despite not of the Alevi tunes) and affirms that these contribute to the fabrication of an earthly ritual:

The obvious influence of the *semah* in the movements, the emphasis of the number three, as well as the fact that the three dancers are all men, are all elements which strengthen the ritual quality of *Biz*. However, even though the all-male composition of the trio may immediately recall the holy trinity, this ritual is not really about a divine liturgy; rather, as also addressed in the title of the piece, these 'We'-s is all about people: a humanistic, earthy ritual of triads, the smallest units of social life (a social trivet: one instigates a situation-an event, one becomes subject to it and another one witnesses it). (My translation from Özel 2014)

Özel thus suggests erudite references to unpack how several religious, aesthetic and socio-political layers are skilfully amalgamated in the movement dramaturgy, also noticing the influence of the *semahs* or the emphasis of an indeterminate yet

---

<sup>115</sup> Lit. *hesaplaştığı dini temalar*.

<sup>116</sup> Lit. *Üç erkek.. "baba-oğul-kutsal ruh" da olabilirler.. "allah-muhammed-ali" de..*

ever-present trinity. These remarks do not push however Özel to speak about Aleviness straightforwardly, and indeed the term 'Alevi' never appears in the review. Whereas Buchmann referenced Aleviness in a straightforward but simplistic way and Ivanoff remained silent about it even though pointing to an uncanny quality in the movements, Özel is sensitive to the Alevi components but he refers to them only obliquely, not acknowledging and mentioning its significance in the overall dramaturgy.

### 7.9 Migration and "*biz*": Europalia:Turkey

Movement notes, August 2017  
Second movement section in "*biz*": *Migration*

Starting from a situation of overall bodily contact which does however not involve contact through the hands, the dancers let their weight lean towards one another. They push and pull each other throughout the space paying attention on keeping an extended area of their bodies in physical contact with the others. In turns, they release the flexions of their knees, and travel as a group towards any available direction in the space, before shifting towards another path. After few minutes of pulling and pushing each other in such a tight hold, they get back to a more regular formation as a circle. To do this, they conspicuously bent their knees and extend one leg sidewise almost reaching for the floor, while at the same time they lay one's own arms and hands over the shoulders of the others for support. Their pushes and pulls seem now to spring after an impulse starting from the shoulders, traversing through their hands, and reaching towards the other dancers' arms or bust. Each dancer pulls and then releases, still never desisting from holding on the physical contact with the others. Finally, they release the grip between their hands, which are now kept upwards, and their overall body contacts get released.<sup>117</sup>

During an interview, Dehmen referred to this section of the movement score as 'migration' (2016). The choice of this name to capture the intention prompting the movements felt quite straightforward to me, instinctually stimulating me to think of the migration of the choreographer's family from the native village in the Eastern province of Erzincan to Istanbul. While witnessing it, I wondered about the reasons

---

<sup>117</sup> The section corresponds to the minutes 10.41-17.40 in Dehmen 2015.

why the movement score constituted a way to artistically 're-work' the enforced resettlement of peoples from their hometowns, especially starting in the 1950s, from the East to the West of Turkey, and to Europe. In the aching and unease of the movements, Dehmen seemed not only to recreate the vulnerable edge between life and death in times of protest, but also the aches typical of a 'gurbet' condition, that 'necessarily sad, melancholic state of living away from home, implying an exilic existence' (Mandel 2008:234) that characterizes many contemporary Turkish migratory trajectories to the West. The slow and weighty quality of the extemporisations seemed to address the lengthy period and physical challenge required by the completion of a successful migratory project. The harshness of migration also felt palpable in the compressed physical closeness with which the movers traverse the space. Also, the distribution of each dancer's bodyweight in a collective venture resonated with the migrants' need to rely on other members of one's group in the effort of strengthening and reconstructing community bonds in the diaspora. Finally, the lack of a clear-cut trajectory in their meanderings seemed to portray a dynamic commentary on transnational displacements: rather than around an imaginary fixed homeland, the dancers rather wonder around a deterritorialized centre, in an imaginary that subverts the dualism of the centre-periphery dichotomy.<sup>118</sup>

In contrast to the depiction of 'migration' through a movement script marked by slow, collective, compact and heavy displacements of the dancers on the stage, through 'migration', I wish here however to engage in a discussion of the different dynamics of mobility which characterise the journeys abroad of "*biz*" as a

---

<sup>118</sup> For a discussion of the subversion of such centre-periphery dichotomies of Turkish migratory cycles, especially towards Germany, as well as for a discussion of the *gurbet* condition and literature, see Mandel (2008: 232-247). See also 2.8.

performing art work. The appearances of "*biz*" in international contexts suggests an accelerated dynamic of circulation, characterized by quick, individualist, scattered and light qualities. In fact, despite the dramaturgical reference to harsh and weighty displacements in the 'migration' movement section, a different approach to contemporary mobility dynamics (one that would be better called 'intensified mobility' or also 'hypermobility') is necessary for understanding the contradictions and shortcuts, as well as the professional opportunities and political challenges offered by its presentation on internationally visible stages outside of Turkey. The touring abroad of contemporary performance works such as "*biz*" constitutes in fact a mobility phenomenon on its own, explicating a neo-nomadic or hypermobile condition which is specific of contemporary production patterns in the performing arts scene, but that may also be indicative of greater changes in mobility arrangements of Turkish professionals coming to Europe. To trace such mobility changes, I will push this analysis to shift across the frontstage-backstage divide. At this end, I wish to contrast the slow and weighty spatial trajectory of the compact group of dancers in the 'migration' movement score in "*biz*" with the much quicker and more fragmented quality that characterises the business travel of the five performing artists engaged in its touring abroad (three dancers, one musician and one stage lighting technician). I suggest in fact that their overnight tourings to present the piece abroad exemplify a different and more contemporary type of Turkish *gastarbeiter* (German for 'guestworker')<sup>119</sup>, one that works within the performing arts sector and follows temporary professional transfers towards

---

<sup>119</sup> For a discussion of the term which highlights the ambiguity of the migrants' status and the hierarchical relations of domination and subordination reflected in both components of the compound, see Mandel (2008:55-58).

Europe which, even when promising, do never really offer radical prospects for career and professional transformation.

To explore the international tourings of "*biz*" and its adaptation of an Alevi aesthetics within a transnational scale, the final part of this chapter investigates the displacement and presentation of the piece in the occasion of a specific international performance event. The analysis springs from my first witnessing of it as a spectator, dating Saturday, the 23<sup>rd</sup> of January 2016. On that date, "*biz*" was staged in the multifunctional venue *Les Halles de Schaerbeek* (hereafter, Les Halles) after been selected for inclusion in the programme of the Belgium-based festival *Europalia 2015: Turkey*.

The architecture and at the socio-artistic vocation of *Les Halles* in the Schaerbeek district of Brussels seemed to offer a genuinely appropriate setting for performing "*biz*". Remarkably, *Les Halles* is not a theatre space in the canonical sense and "*biz*" resonated here with the of the venue's ambition to break the separation between spectators and performers.<sup>120</sup> The capacity to break through and innovate that are ascribed on the site have their own history. In its previous life, when it was called 'Le Marche Couverte de Sainte Marie', the elegant metal and glass structure of *Les Halles* functioned as a large covered market.<sup>121</sup> Since

---

<sup>120</sup> A non-profit association now supported by the Communauté Française de Belgique, Les Halles presents itself as an innovative multifunctional cultural centre devoted to 'hybridization': 'an ideal space to create new performative formats, going beyond the classic partition between creators and spectator; (...) unconcerned with the barriers separating disciplines, willing to shake up the norms; (...) with a desire for participation and involvement, be it individually or collectively, thus characterising the digital age' (Les Halles, No Year).

<sup>121</sup> Between 1865 and 1898, in a time of industrial expansion, the building operated as the main trading centre for the independent municipality of Schaerbeek, the working-class suburb at the north-east of the Belgian capital region. The building was then destroyed by a fire, and again, after renovation works, it operated as a covered market between 1901 and 1920. After decades of abandon during which the space subsisted mostly as an indoor carpark, in the 60s plans were made for it to be demolished in view of the construction of a residential complex.



the 1970s, the market started transforming into an international prestigious magnet for the performing arts, functioning as a trailblazer for the development of a vast network of similar venues throughout Europe, the *TransEuropeHalles* network.<sup>122</sup> The network shares an aesthetics based on 'hybridization', meant as an intertwining of the performing arts with socio-cultural action.<sup>123</sup> The modular architecture of the building realizes such a multi-functional and hybrid vocation, with the spectator being invited to walk around and explore at will what happens on the different floors.<sup>124</sup>

"biz" is performed in the big hall at the centre of the wide and uncluttered architecture thus fostering proximity between performers and spectators as wished in the dramaturgy as well as in the vocation ascribed to the site. To accommodate the spectators, chairs are set up in a square formation around the stage. These are later removed for the public to dance to the following live and electronic dj sets. The distortions with electro-*bağlama* encompass the ambience of the venue before

---

<sup>122</sup> In the early 70s, the newly established independent art group 'Theatre 140' converged with local figures in immigration and youth community sectors to obtain permission from the municipality to use the site. Since 1983 TransEuropeHalles bridges the experiences of many similar adventures, such as those resulting in the establishment of the Melkweg in Amsterdam or the UfaFabrik in Berlin. As attested in a publication emphatically titled *Factories of the Imagination*, emphasizes how Les Halles and similar venues emerged out of the vision of some pioneers who toiled for 'the rehabilitation of these *cathedrals* of industry, commerce or the military, to the benefit of newly democratized realms of imagination' (Bordage and Grombeer 2002:5).

<sup>123</sup> Fabrice Raffin explains further the 'hybridization' of Les Halles as the intention of 'shaking off the weighty heritage of conformist education to develop a more direct approach to the arts', bringing 'together divergent disciplines and fields, at various levels of artistic proficiency (ensuring) its appeal to the widest possible public' (Raffin 2002:144-148).

<sup>124</sup> The edifice has five areas accessible to the public: a covered street, 'la Ruelle', formerly the cheese market and now functioning as a foyer; the main large area, 'le Grand Halle', which can now accommodate up to 2200 standing spectators between the stalls and the surrounding mezzanine; a smaller adjacent hall, 'la Petite Halle', formerly hosting the fish market and now capable of host 500 standing spectators; and an intimate space in the basement, 'la Cave', which can host 500 standing spectators more. Throughout the venue three bars sell drinks during the performances, and the lockers in the mezzanine enable one to safely drop off one's belongings.

the dancers appear on the stage while the public still moves around rather freely and get a drink at the bar. Then again throughout the performance, the spectators are not forcedly stationary on their chairs. The lack of a clear marking of the beginning and ending of the performance, and the overall ambience allows the audience members to stand up and move around, possibly even walk up to the mezzanine to enjoy an aerial perspective on the movements from there.

Whereas Les Halles offered an ideal location for the performance of "*biz*", the dramaturgy of the piece was however at odds with the larger framework of the *Europalia* festival within which the piece could tour to Belgium. Organised under the high patronage of the King of the Belgians, *Europalia* is a multidisciplinary exhibition held biannually over winter months since 1969 during which a guest country is invited to showcase its multifaceted cultural prestige throughout several cities in Belgium and neighbouring countries.<sup>125</sup> The 2015 edition was co-financed by the public sector in Belgium (such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the National Lottery) and in Turkey (for instance, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism), as well as by several other corporate and non-profit sponsors.<sup>126</sup>

Because of the hesitancy with which Turkish media detected the Alevi elements in "*biz*", one may expect that Aleviness would emerge more openly within its presentation in a prestigious and international arena such as *Europalia*.

---

<sup>125</sup> Whereas originally the festival hosted European countries only, since 1989 it started to welcome exhibitions from governments such as Japan, Mexico, and more recently, Brazil and India.

<sup>126</sup> Among others, these were the National Bank of Belgium, Turkish Airlines, Rönesans Holding, Yünüs Emre Enstitüsü, Corendon Airlines, BNP Parisbas, Total. The *Europalia* website states that for the 2015 edition '127 cultural partners, 640 artists & experts presented 20 exhibitions' showing 'exceptional masterpieces', as well as '248 events' encapsulating 'the best contemporary art, traditional and contemporary dance, co-creations, from classical to electronic music, literary events, film etc'. For the organisation of events meant for an international audience, hundreds of cultural institutions and international experts are supposed to collaborate and support a team working within the framework of the guest country's government.

Contrarily to the expectation however, the Alevi legacy encapsulated in the piece was never publicly articulated in the framework of the festival. What I wish to emphasise by looking at the inclusion of "*biz*" in *Europalia* is in fact how the Alevi elements in the piece became completely invisible in its momentarily migration abroad, from Europe's periphery to its centre. What I suggest is that the augmented invisibility of Aleviness in the framework of *Europalia* was due to the conjecture of neo-liberal performing arts market expectations with a neo-imperial mind-set eager to showcase a cleansed Turkish national image for foreign export.

Not only Aleviness was concealed in *Europalia*, but the overall 'resistant' nature of the piece was neutralized. For instance, it became rather impossible to distinguish references to the social protests of Gezi as these were silenced in the textual presentation on the program of the festival. This quoted:

What connects us? What makes us move? What is we? WE is an intimate piece of research into memory, forgetting, life, death, forces and weaknesses. Three dancers come together and tear themselves apart in a production by Dehmen to live electronic music by Cem Yıldız. (*Europalia Arts Festival 2015:72*)<sup>127</sup>

The description is in fact silent not only of the Gezi protests, but also of the whole dramaturgical solicitation of concretizing a site for mourning human loss in recent political Turkish history. Considered alone, the international setting does not explain the silencing of these references. For instance, it is interesting to compare the presentation of "*biz*" in *Europalia* with the very different gradients which were used when it was presented slightly more than a year earlier in the frame of the

---

<sup>127</sup> English version on the program is consistent with the French and Dutch ones.

Berlin-based *Voicing Resistance Festival* hosted by the Maxim Gorki Theatre<sup>128</sup>. On that occasion, the programme announced:

A secular ritual, a prayer for our time, about "we" and those to whom we could not say good bye – those who disappeared at the time of the Turkish military coup in 1980s, then in the 90s, as well as those killed in the Gezi protests, and many others. In *biz* (we) three dancers pass through series of group scenes in which individual bursts of power keep appearing. They sink deep into their memories and bodies to explore what drives and holds "us" together. Perhaps they are the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, or maybe just three friends going through life together. Cem Yıldız accompanies the dancers with live music and distorted electronic sounds. A journey into the realm of memory and forgetting, of strength and vulnerability, of death and life. (Maxim Gorki Theater 2014a)

Juxtaposing the two programmes helps understand how the significance of the piece was renegotiated for the piece's inclusion in the two different festivals' programmes. For *Voicing Resistance*, "*biz*" was understood as a secular ritual or a prayer for those who disappeared at 'the time of the Turkish military coup in 1980s, then in the '90s, as well as those killed in the Gezi protests'. The assertive references to dramatic events of Turkey's recent past matched with the overall agenda of the festival, conceived as an occasion to commemorate the fall of the Berlin's wall 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary through an investigation of 'experiences of resistance in Germany and the rest of the world, and how protests, uprisings and revolutions, have shaped us as citizens and artists' (Maxim Gorki Theater 2014b). To understand the changes occurred for the context of *Europalia*, it is thus necessary to pay attention to the semantic re-conceptualizations and to the re-negotiations of power relations at stake in the Belgian context. Here, *Biz* certainly constituted a

---

<sup>128</sup> With an history of commitment to political critique, Gorki Theatre is directed since 2013 by the theatre producer of Turkish origin Şermin Langhoff and was actively engaged with the Gezi protests.

peripheral event inside a large and manifold curatorial design endorsed by solid financial support and fostering massive social impact.<sup>129</sup>

To understand the way *Biz* was inserted in *Europalia*, it is important to overview the scale of the festival's organisation and its social impact. Most of the Turkish press celebrated it as a big success, for instance reporting the protocol ceremony during which the Belgian king and queen welcomed president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and his wife Emine.<sup>130</sup> On the contrary, to expose the serious Turkish violations to the Council of Europe,<sup>131</sup> the European Federation of Journalists (2015) and the Belgian press had often recapped the organisation with cautious tones, especially by stressing the public concerns for the lack of a significant representation of ethnic minorities within the program.<sup>132</sup> The Belgian branch of Amnesty International had also released a brochure with the title *Tour ce que Europalia-Turquie ne vous dit pas* ('What Europalia-Turkey will not tell you') (Vanderlinden 2015) on which the black pupil of the *nazar boncuğu* of the omnipresent logo of the festival was transformed into the candle in Amnesty barbed

---

<sup>129</sup> The dance programme of the festival included the participation of two other acclaimed choreographers: Ziya Azazi, who presented *Ember*, an examination of 'the speed and intensity of the whirling movements of dervishes (...) in order to create new forms' (Europalia Arts Festival 2015:76) and Mihran Tomasyan, cofounder of *Çıplak Ayaklar Kumpanyası* (Bare Foot Company). The experimental section of the music programme included Dr Das from Asian Dub Foundation and pioneer 'Oriental Dub' band BabaZula.

<sup>130</sup> The ceremony incorporated an accomplished as much as procedural tester of staged Anatolian traditional dances. A look at the photos published on the website of the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism (T.C. Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı Tanıtma Müdürlüğü 2015) suggests that, next to a *zeybek* and a Mevlevi *sema*, one of these dances may have been an Alevi *semah* as well.

<sup>131</sup> Turkey was at the time on the top of the list with 29 reported violations (out of a total of 82 alerts for the 47 member countries of the Council of Europe) (European Federation of Journalists 2015).

<sup>132</sup> Already in May 2015, after the presentation of the festival program, the Brussels-based Turkish journalist Doğan Özgüden (2015), had reported on the monthly online bulletin Info-Türk that despite the declarations of Kristine De Mulder, Europalia general director, reassured that the richness of Armenian, Greek, Assyrian and Kurdish communities would be represented during the festival, no representative of these communities was invited to join in the program committee. Also, see Makereel 2015.

wire logo.<sup>133</sup> Reminding that, while promoting Turkish arts and culture, *Europalia* should not remain oblivious of the alarming situation of human rights in Turkey, the brochure denounced the disproportionate recourse to police violence on the streets and to torture in prisons, the increased number of extrajudicial executions and arbitrary terrorism charges, as well as the ambivalent position of the country in immigration policies.<sup>134</sup>

One may consider how the lack of references to Aleviness, to human loss and to the Gezi protests within the insertion of "*biz*" in the programme echoes with the Turkish state's tenacious denial of the big elephant in the room in its contemporary history, the Armenian genocide.<sup>135</sup> The organisation of the festival was in fact objected by several associations representing those who, according to

---

<sup>133</sup> The Belgian graphic company FiftyFifty played on the shapes of the *nazar boncuğu* to design the original logo for the festival. The famous blue-eye amulet was here disguised to replicate the shapes of the Turkish flag, whose white star and crescent over a red background were transformed into a white crescent and black spot over dark and light blue tonalities. The promotion for the festival was quite pervasive, as I realized while arriving to Brussels to watch "*biz*". For instance, I find that in several rail and metro stations, and then again hanging at the reception of the hostel where I sojourned.

<sup>134</sup> The brochure reminds that at the time Turkey was hosting more two million refugees from Syria, without meeting any lawful standards in their reception. After it was released, Jenny Vanderlinden (2015), coordinator for Turkey in Amnesty International Belgium, lamented also the killing of the human rights defender and lawyer Tahir Elçi as well as the arrest of Can Dündar, director of the daily *Cumhuriyet*, and his colleague Erdem Gül, both charged of espionage and collaboration with terrorist organisations after having published a report on the arms trafficking links between the MIT – the Turkish secret services – and war militants in Syria.

<sup>135</sup> The lack of recognition of the Armenian genocide is also the reason why the festival had never been dedicated to Turkey in the past. An attempt was made almost a decade earlier, in 1996, but the biennial ended up hosting a smaller exhibition, exceptionally not dedicated to a nation state but to the Belgian architect Victor Horta, after the pressure coming from democratic organisations, both in Belgium as well as in Turkey. At that time, the various references to the endangered position of the Kurdish communities and to the Turkish government's lack of recognition of the Armenian genocide resulted in the withdrawal of financial support from crucial sponsors, such as the Flemish Community of Belgium, the French-community of Belgium and the Lottery Fund. In 1997, a dedication to Turkey was once again envisioned without success. The issue became a matter to be discussed even inside the European Parliament, when on 5<sup>th</sup> of July 1996 Nikitas Kaklamanis asked the commission whether the EU would contribute 'in any way whatsoever to organising the *Europalia-Turkey 1997*' and whether it would 'ensure that historical truth is respected, particularly regarding the genocide of the Armenians, a matter on which the European Parliament has adopted a resolution'.

the Belgian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Didier Reynders, would have relished it the most: the Belgians of Turkish origin. Many representatives from ethnic minorities who had fled from Turkey to Belgium in the past joined forces to call the Belgian king to cancel the festival because of its concurrence with the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Armenian genocide.<sup>136</sup> The amnesia of the genocide and the celebration of Turkish culture which took its place was perceived as a threat for the survival of minorities and lamented as a decay of human values by the royal family (i.e. Gökhan 2015). Likewise, "biz" is invited, but its presentation resembles more an attempt to 'coopt' it after cleansing all of its potential to challenge the national cultural rhetoric that is streamed in this internationally visible arena.

As for the selective amnesia characterizing some of its curatorial choices, the political representations at stake in *Europalia:Turkey* are not sharply different from the ones characterizing other editions of the festival. This festival has rarely been approached in performing arts and cultural anthropology scholarship to analyse the inscription of post-colonial images over government and nationalities, despite constituting a privileged site to analyse them. One rare mentioning is offered in André Lepecki's PhD thesis (2001:194-202 and 236-246) on the role of choreography against Portugal's post-colonial 'mirror', explored through the work of choreographers Vera Montero and Francisco Camacho between 1985 and 1997. Discussing the dynamics of participation, exclusion and censoring of the two choreographers' provocative solos in the Portuguese edition of *Europalia* (1991), Lepecki understands the festival as a 'literal performance of the nation'

---

<sup>136</sup> These were the Belgian Armenian National Committee (*Ermeni Ulusal Komitesi*), the Belgian Aramaic Federation (*Belçika Arami Federasyonu*), the European Syriac Association (*Avrupa Süryani Birliği*), the Kurdish Institute (*Kürt Enstitüsü*) and the Eastern Christian Aid Committee (*Doğu Hıristiyanlarına Yardım Komitesi*).

(2001:194).<sup>137</sup> The Republic of Portugal was then engaged in the re-writing and 'making sense' of its own contemporary history, throughout the loosing of overseas colonies, the end of Fascism and the entrance into the EU. The festival was thus the crucial occasion to project a new Euro-compatible image of the country for European eyes. Contrarily to Portugal, the participation of Turkey in 2015 is marked by different expectations. Whereas Portugal toiled for creating a new-Portuguese self-image as 'modern European nation', in the festival the Turkish state projected a different national image. This image presented a country that does not identify with Europe but that wants to reaffirm its role as Europe's 'good neighbour', capable to compete in cultural, artistic and economic terms, but especially, to sustain its most established orientalist vocation in attracting European tourists.<sup>138</sup> Like the amnesia of the Armenian genocide, the silencing of several uncomfortable themes in the presentation of the piece within the festival is revelatory of the lack of any concern for polishing Turkey's self-image on social policies and human rights issues.

## 7.10 Conclusions

In this chapter, I analysed how Alevi *semahs* forms have been adapted in the context of more contemporary dance style forms. Focusing on Bedirhan Dehmen's piece "*biz*" (2014), I argued that the openness of the movement scaffold and the multi-layered dramaturgy of the piece, enabled "*biz*" to perform Aleviness by reaching out of a restricted Alevi audience niche. I thus showed how rather than

---

<sup>137</sup> These are Camacho's *O Rei no Exilio* (The King in Exile, 1991) and Montero's *Perhaps she could dance first and think afterwards* (1991).

<sup>138</sup> 'A good neighbor' was the thought-provoking theme of the 15<sup>th</sup> Istanbul Biennial organised between September and November 2017 and curated by the Berlin-based art duo Elmgreen & Dragset.



emphasizing openly an Alevi aesthetic, the choice of using Alevi themes but leaving them out of focus rendered the piece appetitive to a wide-ranging audience beyond the sole political and ethno-religious sensitive Alevi spectators. In this way, I discussed how the spectator who is not familiar with Alevi traditions became attracted and appreciative the piece, without nurturing the expectation of learning about Aleviness. Nonetheless, I emphasized in which ways the dramaturgy of this piece is permeated by Alevi themes in its engagement with Aleviness as a familiar, sociological and ethno-religious legacy. However, I specified how the dramaturgy of "*biz*" is not Alevist as much as it does not aim at teaching Aleviness or advocating any political message in relation to its straightforward public recognition.

In the chapter, I showed how the openness of the choreographic choices were encapsulated in a dramaturgical format which was directed centrifugally and beyond Aleviness, as part of a strategy which reveals a skilled manipulation of various aesthetics domains and that was able of seducing young and transnational spectatorships. Accordingly, I reflected on how this artistic strategy is exemplary of how the ambiguity of Alevi identity enables Alevi performing artists flexibility in boarding novel aesthetic forms. On the other hand, it manifests a deliberate attitude to transcultural communication, if not group identity construction, which in "*biz*" is articulated through an invitation to partake the task of civic mourning. The chapter however showed how this dramaturgical intention was often silenced, not only in Turkey, but also internationally as revealed by the more focused analysis of the insertion of "*biz*" in the context of the *Europalia:Turkey* festival.



## 8. Conclusions: visibility and concealment in Alevi performance aesthetics

When I turned the *semah* and played the *bağlama* in the festival 'Alevism and Semah' hosted at the University of Cambridge in Spring 2016, I invited my dear friend Melina to join in the event. A British-Italian theatre maker and educator based in Cambridge, Melina was happy to get the chance to finally experience 'live' Alevi music and movements since she had been hearing from me about this for some years. When she arrived, the big and imposing University hall into which the event was hosted was packed with people of all ages, who were mostly speaking in a language that she did not understand. Moving through the crowd, she went up to the mezzanine where she squeezed in to listen to the *bağlama* playing in unison. She thus managed to secure a good spot to watch from up there some of the *semahs* that we turned. Because the hall was too packed, she did not manage to come and greet me, and we finally met only at the end of the event, in a pub close by. As we toasted to the long overdue catch up, I asked Melina what she thought and felt about the event, and what she had understood about it. She had appreciated that this was meant as a public celebration of Alevism, and that the music and *semah* performances were interspersed with some text in English that explained to the outsiders who are the Alevis, what they believe in, and what are their practices. However, she also felt overwhelmed by the crowd of the families and by the fact that participants seemed to be already very cohesive, and sharing a sense of community to which she did not have access. In short, even though the event was meant to expose and teach some elements of Alevi identity to outsiders such as her, she still felt not at ease and an intruder. The use of Turkish may have certainly contributed to her feeling. She especially kept wondering about the

frequent avowals declaimed by the *dede* during the whirling of the *semahs*. His words seemed important as they stirred the emotions of those in the auditorium, but these were never translated into English. One of the sentences that the *dede* kept on repeating was: *Hak için olsun! Seyirci için olmazsın!*, which literally translates as ‘May this be for God! May this not be for the spectator!’. To these words, most of the crowd would enthusiastically respond ‘Allah Allah!’.

That formula was certainly part of the *dede*’s strategy to re-negotiate the values and meaning of the *semahs* in the context of the occasion. As a *semahçı* and *bağlama* player engaged in the event, I experienced the festival as a visible, public and free celebration through which Alevi traditions would be made accessible to Alevis and non-Alevis alike. This was also the reason why the event was promoted in English rather than only in Turkish. The actual visibility that the event gained however, was not achieved among non-Turkish and non-Alevi people, but rather among the Alevis themselves, including those living in the diaspora as well as in Turkey. A few Alevi TV channels and journalists were present to document and broadcast the festival throughout an overall well connected transnational Alevi community. However, it was mostly the participants themselves who amplified the visibility of their participation in the festival through their own social media profiles as well as through the platforms offered by some of the TV channels attending. A few days later, while browsing the keywords ‘Alevi semah cambridge’ on google, I found a picture of me while turning the *semah* with tags of networks such as YouTube and Twitter, and links to the Alevi TV channel Barış TV (fig. 16).

The online visibility of the event did ultimately not seem to reach beyond the Alevis themselves, but was directed mostly at boosting the spirit of the Alevis living

in Turkey, and possibly providing them hope for the possibility to enthusiastically celebrate Aleviness in the same way as they were becoming confident of doing in England. The proliferation of images and media among attending community members and their visibility within their own social networks contrasts however with the way the non-Alevi may have felt awkward in attending, especially due to the lack of shared cultural references. The declamation of the *dede* which Melina could not catch, was in this sense a reminder to the participants that the ultimate goal of the celebration is still a spiritual one, and not mere entertainment. Nobody should feel as a spectator there, and the enactment of the *semahs*, despite happening beyond a ritual event, was still meant to fulfil a spiritual duty and transcendental needs. In this sense, there were no professional performers nor audiences.

Figure 16. YouTube fragment of the performance of *Turna Semahı* during the festival 'Alevism and Semah' hosted at the University of Cambridge in April 2016. Source: Barış TV Official (2016)



The material presented in this thesis appraised the histories and modalities through which, since the early 1980s, the performing arts contributed to the emergence of Alevi cultures. As we have seen, expressive material originating from Alevi rituals was adapted in diverse performing arts frameworks, encountering novel theatre and dance vocabularies. These adaptations of the *semahs* for the stage have had a pivotal role in enabling Alevi cultures to become publicly accessible to non-Alevi but also to younger generations of Alevis themselves whose access to this ethno-religious layer in their education was often impeded. In the cities, the performing arts could provide contexts to rediscover on a bodily level often-suppressed Alevi cultural forms. In a period when one's own belonging to a non-mainstream religious denomination should be concealed to the outside, performing artistry enabled the rediscovery of such belongings, often concretizing occasions for gathering, celebrating, as well as mourning, with fellow members of the Alevi communities and others. At the same time, however, such performing arts projects served to push Alevi sociality beyond the ritual contexts, inaugurating a resilient Alevi subjectivity which could transform and adapt as the ultimate tactic for survival against the atrocities of history. To thoroughly discuss how analysis of stage adaptations of Aleviness problematizes current understandings of Aleviness, Alevism and their visibility, Vol.1 provided an overview of material gathered through ethnographic fieldwork with relevant literature in Alevi studies, Theatre, Dance and Anthropology. Then, the three staged projects analysed in Vol. 2 testified to how in diverse ways, the professionalisation of urban Alevis in the performing arts emerged from a robust civic type of commitment, which found its *raison d'être* in the fostering of the public and transnational transmission, (re)production and diffusion of an otherwise silenced Alevi memory.

Reflecting on my participation as a researcher in the event discussed above, as well as on the participation of non-Alevi 'spectators', helps me consider a few concluding points in relation to the dynamics of staging, interaction and adaptation of Aleviness on a transnational scale. Firstly, the more I consider threshold events bordering performing arts platforms and Alevi cultures, the more I am puzzled by how to neatly encapsulate the dynamics of participation and interaction. The cases explored here reveal a complexity which goes beyond an understanding of folklore and theatre as entertainment, but that can be grasped only after acknowledging the political struggles at stake in the experience of those who publicly embraced the production of Alevi cultural representation. Accordingly, rather than as mere phenomena of de-contextualization, most of the theatre events within which expressive ritual material was adapted on the stage should be understood as powerful occasions for the Alevi community to articulate a resisting and defiant stance towards the Turkish state imagery, as well as to articulate processes of remembering, mourning and commemorating. In fact, all these theatre projects problematise an understanding of Aleviness as a belonging that is given at birth, rather than through acculturation, learning and practicing. They are instances which show how Aleviness is better understood as a processual endeavour and projection which enables the articulation of belonging into a resisting group. In other words, attention to events, situations, life stories and projects of people who engaged in performing arts works related to Alevism helps decouple an understanding of Aleviness as a fact which is given by birth.

As much as urban phenomena, the projects I discussed are the result of activities which are often professional, albeit unpaid, politically committed and somehow nostalgic of a rural past. The three case studies in fact exemplified three

diverse stage aesthetics, movement styles and techniques, different forms of migratory dynamics, and approaches in the participation to the Alevi community. Such differences subsist in the aesthetics embraced on the stage as well as in processes of value making backstage. Despite being distinct, the networks surrounding those performances are linked to one another. The dynamism of few key actors who contributed to the realisation of more than one project is revelatory of such interlinking. Whilst specific individuals worked as catalysts in the direction of specific projects (i.e. Nurhan Karadağ, Mazlum Çimen, Bedirhan Dehmen), others circulated across these networks (i.e. Şule Ateş, Belgin Aygün, Faysal İlhan) and connected their aesthetics together. Nonetheless, such dynamics of artistic circulation are decentred and not-individualised, as long as any of these figures, working in theatre and movement, managed to assemble these disparate projects together. Even when we think of actors who operated in the performing arts sectors while also holding ritual offices (i.e. Dertli Divani, Ali Haydar Celasun, Faysal İlhan), no one figure appears to hierarchically inhabit the centre of such an Alevi network spanning across the religious and artistic fields.

Thinking back to the research questions proposed in the Introduction (see 1.1), these case studies helped reveal the ways the Alevi *semahs* have been adapted as part of professional performing arts projects, both in Turkey and in Western Europe. They also inform about the transformation of ‘traditional’ forms and meanings associated with the *semahs* in artistic contexts. Despite the different gradations in the recognition of *semahs* when these are performed within staged performing arts projects, none of these enactments account for the spiritual value which is accorded to the practice in ritual contexts. This difficulty in encapsulating the practice in either a ritual or a spectacular frame may be in relation to the



dichotomy between outer (*zahiri*) and inner (*batini*) meanings and attitudes which is still cultivated in Alevi contexts despite the achievement of public visibility.<sup>139</sup> The invitation of the *dede* to turn the *semah* for God rather than for the spectator which was illustrated in the vignette above, clearly points to the defiant tone with which public performances should not imply abiding to the expectations of the outer eye, nor pleasing its expectations. The direction of the movement is inward and above, but these reference points are pursued on a collectivist level which may not coincide with facilitating access for the uninitiated. Such discrepancy is entangled with the ambivalence in applying a rather Cartesian movement notation strategy such as the Kinetography Laban in the study of these adaptive forms. The Kinetography promotes an analysis of the movement forms which is strongly anchored to the observation and dynamic embodiment of what is tangibly perceivable about the movement. The analysis of some of the kinetic forms revealed how much individual and collective bodies within the *semahs* are kinaesthetically organised to emphasise an inward orientation and verticality. Nonetheless, the Kinetography leaves out of focus the study of the inner dimensions of the movement, implying that access to those layers is either not examinable or only attainable through the realisation of the physical movement itself. On the contrary, the analysis of public performance of *semah* forms and their adaptation on the stage shows the extent to which relying on the perceptible aspect of the movement forms is misleading in accessing more inner and secretive layers of the forms. The examination of these layers depended on the study of socio-

---

<sup>139</sup> For instance, see O'Connell (1991) on how the ambiguity of Alevi identity was managed through a compromise between private non-conformity and public conformity which pervaded Alevi musical culture in Germany as exemplified in the music of the female *aşık Şah Turna* in Berlin over the 1980s.

political, historical and artistic contexts encapsulating the performances which often eschewed what was actually perceivable about the movements. In this sense, the relevance of the application of notation methodologies is more clearly posited in their political and performative value as a strategy to bring attention and advocate for the recognition of *semah* practices. Accordingly, performance-based methodologies have been cultivated as a strategy for self-criticism and re-assessment during fieldwork, and could possibly be further applied as a strategy to embody and present the research findings within and beyond academia.

## Glossary of Turkish and Alevi terms<sup>140</sup>

**Abdal:** A plural of the Arabic word *bedel*, 'change', it refers to those who can change from a physical to a spiritual state. It is also used in the sense merely of dervish. (B)

**Ayin-i Cem:** See *Cem*.

**Alevi:** The term applies generally to one who recognizes Ali as the rightful Imam following the prophet, or one who recognizes a special attachment to Ali. (B)  
As a Turkish interpretation of Islam this is based on beliefs and customs brought from Central Asia and developed under the influence of Sufism from various movements in Anatolia, and consisting essentially in loyalty to Ali and the *Ehl-i Beyt*; and claiming Ali as the rightful successor to the Prophet Muhammad. (AT)  
The Alevis form the larger religious minority in Turkey, consisting of perhaps 15-20 per cent of the population. (S)

**Ali:** Relative and son-in-law of the prophet Muhammad, is revered by all Muslim communities, but held in special regard by the Alevis. (S)

**Bağlama:** A generic term for the long-necked lute, synonym of *saz*. (AT)

**Bektaşî:** Famous Anatolian *tarikât* founded by *Hacı Bektaş* that emphasizes mystical understanding. (S)

**Can:** 'Soul' and is used especially of the younger disciples. It may also refer to all the dervishes. (B)

'Spirit', that which makes something alive as opposed to dead. Used by the Alevis to denote a friend or fellow, particularly in song or poetry. (S)

**Cem (Ayin-i Cem):** Collection, assembly; ceremony for worship at an *Alevi* assembly; ecstatic state of mind in perceiving the unity of God (AT).

The central ritual in Alevi religious life, one incorporating both men and women, during which all presents must be at peace with each other for the ceremony to take place (S).

**Cemevi:** Literally '*Cem* house', the building constructed specifically to hold *Cem* ceremonies, growing in popularity since the mid 1980s. May vary from a simple small structure in a rural location to elaborate complexes in an urban setting. (S)

**Dâr:** The floor of the *cemevi* or the place at the centre of the Bektaşî tekke. In mystic poems it is used in its dictionary sense in reference to the death of Hallaj-ı

---

<sup>140</sup> English usages in part after Birge (1965:251-271) which will be referred to as (B), in part after Andrews and Temel (2010:323-333) referred to as (AT) and in part after Shankland (2003:186-192), referred to as (S).

**Mansur.** In the technical language of the Bektaşî ritual it means the centre of the *meydan* where much of the service takes place. (B)  
It names the *dar pozisyonu*, also referred as *ayak mühürlemek* ('sealing the feet').

**Dede:** Literally means 'grandfather', respectful name for a man descended from a holy lineage especially Alevi. Withing the Alevi village communities, one who may be both leader and teacher of Alevi religious tradition and a mediator in disputes. (S)  
The principal rank of religious leader for Alevis. (B)

**Derviş:** One who has renounced the world; a Sufi mystic; an Alevi. (AT)

**Diyanet İşleri Bakanlığı:** Directorate of religious affairs. Large civil service institution, devoted to the teaching of religion in the Republic. (S)

**Enel Hak:** 'I am the divine reality', the famous expression used by Hallaj-ı Mansur. (B)

**Ehl-i Beyt:** The immediate family of the Prophet Muhammad, including Ali and his sons. (AT)

**Eren:** The term stands for *those who have arrived at the divine truth* and that this is a *mode of address among dervishes*. (AT)  
Literally the term is translates as *one who has achieved* but it is often rendered as *initiated, mystic, saint or truth-seeker*.

**Hallaj-ı Mansur:** A famous Muslim mystic, martyred in 309/913 at Baghdad: the prototype of the man intoxicated with the love of God to the point of total identification. (AT)

**Hacı Bektaş:** Anatolian saint, founder of the *tarikât* of that name, held by many Alevi communities to be their leader, and to be descended from Ali. (S)

**Hacıbektaş:** Name of an Anatolian town where lies the tekke, now a museum and tomb, of Hacı Bektaş. Location of important annual Hacı Bektaş festival. (S)

**Kırklar:** forty saintly people held to be the spiritual directors of the worlds. (AT)

**Kızılbaş:** an older name for Alevi and Shiites, derived from the red felt cap formerly worn by them. (AT)

**Meydan:** Literally means open space or square; in a Cem ritual space at the centre of the congregation. (S)  
In a tekke, the place where the litany in praise of God, and ceremonies are performed, floor for religious dances.

**Mevlevî:** The name given to the follower of Celaletin Rumi, whose tomb is now part of the Mevlana museum, known in the West as the 'whirling dervishes'. Now the location of an annual festival and the focus of international attention as positing a universal esoteric humanism. (S)

**Niyaz:** A blessing obtained from a dede during a ceremony. Entreaty, supplication, prayer. **Niyaz vermek:** Salutation given a superior. (B)

**Namaz:** Ritual prayer. (S)

**Ocak:** Literally means 'hearth'. Used by Alevi communities to mean a follower's dede lineage. (S)

**Pervane:** The term stands for 'propeller' and is sometimes translated as 'moth', the nocturnal butterfly which spins around a light, all references reinforcing the idea of circular spinning. **Pervancı:** a woman who turns alone in a dance. (AT) Often equated to the woman semahçı.

**Pir:** An old man, a founder or chief of any religious body or sect; a senior teacher in the lineage. (AT)

'Saint' or leader of a brotherhood. Used often by Alevis to imply Hacı Bektaş and his descendants. (S)

**Saz:** A Turkish long-necked lute with three double strings, played with a plectrum (AT).

Eight-stringed instrument similar to a mandolin, the preferred instrument of Anatolian folk musicians, and particularly the Alevis, who may employ it in both religious and secular settings. (S)

**Semah:** The genre of songs and circular movements performed by the Alevis in a religious service.

**Sema:** A religious dance performed by the Mevlevi, representing the movement of the planets. (AT)

**Semahçı:** The person who turns the semah.

**Sufi:** Devotee; a person, dervish, who believes in Islamic mysticism [Sufism] (*tasavvuf*) and takes up a mystical view of life. (AT)

**Sünni:** The orthodox Islamic majority, consisting of about 80 per cent of Turkey's population. (S)

**Şah:** A title given to emperors and kings during the Safavid Empire and then in Iran, which is commonly used in Alevi-Bektaşî contexts to refer to Ali or to Shah Ismail, founder of the Safavid dynasty.

**Şalvar:** Male baggy trousers caught in at the knee.

**Tarikat:** The second *kapı*, 'gate' (the others being *şeriat*, *marifet*, *hakikat*); the Sufi Way of following a teacher and improving one's moral behavior. (AT)

Islamic brotherhood. While their doctrinal content may vary greatly, their tendency to form opposition to the central rule led them to being benched by the early Republic, though they have gradually returned to form a significant role in Turkish

political and religious life. Also a general self-description used by the Alevis on occasion to distinguish their preferred form of worship from that of the Sunnis, which they characterize as *Şeriat*. (S)

Road, pathway, normally translated as religious order or confraternity.

**Tekke:** Dervish lodge; a place where Sufis live as required by the Way, and worship. (AT)

Place of worship of a brotherhood, often centred on the grave of a holy man. (S)

**Türk:** The ethnic majority of modern Turkey, consisting of about 80 per cent of the population, also used to imply allegiance to modern Turkey and the Republic. (S)

**Vakıf:** Pious foundation, charitable trust. (S)

**Zakir:** The person who recalls; an Alevi cantor; who tells, narrates, recites from memory, especially who recites the names and praises of God. (AT)

## Bibliography

- Akdik, E. (1961) *A compilation of Turkish folk dances*. MA, University of North Carolina.
- Akgönül, S. (2013) *The minority concept in the Turkish context. Practices and perceptions in Turkey, Greece and France*. Leiden: Brill.
- Aksoy, O. E. (2014) *The music and multiple identities of Kurdish Alevi from Turkey to Germany*. PhD, The City University of New York.
- And, M. (1976) *A Pictorial History of Turkish Dancing: from Folk Dancing to Whirling Dervishes - Belly Dancing to Ballet*. Ankara: Dost Yayınları.  
(1963-1964) *A History of Theatre and Popular Entertainment in Turkey*. Ankara: Forum Yayınları.
- Andrews, P. and Temel, H. (2010) Hubyar. *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*. 37 (3), pp. 287-334.
- Ari, E. (2004) The People's Houses and the Theatre in Turkey. *Middle Eastern Studies*. 40 (4), pp. 32-58.
- Arnaud-Demir, F. (2013) Garder le rythme: écoute et danse rituelle dans le semah des Alévis de Divriği (Turquie). *Cahiers de littérature orale* [online]. 73-74, no pages. [Accessed 20 May 2019].  
(2005) Le syncrétisme Alévi-Bektachi dans les Chants Accompagnant la Danse Rituelle Semah. In: Veinstein, G. ed., (2005) *Synchrétismes et Hérésies dans l'Orient Seldjoukide et Ottoman (XIVe – XVIIIe Siècle)*. Leuven: Peeters, pp. 153-162.  
(2003-2004) Entre Chamanisme et Soufisme: le Semā' des Alévi-Bektashi. *Journal d'Histoire du Soufisme*. 4, pp. 143-157.  
(2002) Quand Passent les Grues Cendrées: sur un Camposante Chamanique du Cérémonial des Alévis-Bektashis. *Turcica: Revue d'Études Turques*. 34, pp. 39-67.
- Ayangil, R. (2010) Western notation: a debatable matter in Turkish makam music contributed by Giuseppe Donizetti Pasha. In: Spinetti, F., ed., (2010) *Giuseppe Donizetti Pascià. Traiettorie musicali e storiche tra Italia e Turchia*. Bergamo: Fondazione Donizetti, pp. 39-58.
- Aydoğmuş, M. (2012) *Halktan Hakk'a giden yol*. [The path that goes from people to God]. Istanbul: Yazıt Yayınları.
- Aygün, B. Ç. (1982) *Alevi-Bektaşî Törenleri içinde Semah*. [The Semah within Alevi-Bektaşî rituals]. BA, Ankara University.
- Ayışit, O. N. (2007) *Alevi-Bektaşî Kültüründe Kırklar Semahı*. [The Semah of the Forties in the Alevi-Bektaşî culture]. Istanbul: Bağlam Yayıncılık.

Aykan, B. (2013) How Participatory is Participatory Heritage Management? The Politics of Safeguarding the Alevi *Semah* Ritual as Intangible Cultural Heritage. *International Journal of Cultural Property*. 20, pp. 381-405.

(2012) *Intangible Heritage's Uncertain Political Outcomes: Nationalism and the Remaking of Marginalized Cultural Practices in Turkey*. PhD, The City University of New York.

Azak, U. (2010) *Islam and secularism in Turkey: Kemalism, religion and the nation state*. London: I.B. Tauris.

Balibar, É. (2002) What is a Border? In: Balibar, É., ed., (2002) *Politics and the Other Scene*. London and New York: Verso, pp. 75–86.

Banes, S. (1987) *Terpsichore in sneakers: post-modern dance*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press.

Barker, C. (2002) Theatre Anthropology. In: Chambers, C., ed. (2002) *The Continuum Companion to Twentieth Century Theatre*. London: Continuum, pp. 756-757.

Barkey, H. J. and Fuller, G. E. (1998) *Turkey's Kurdish Question*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc..

Bartenieff, I. and Lewis, D. (1980) *Body movement: coping with the environment*. New York: Gordon and Breach Science Publishers.

Başar, D. (2018) *From Petrushka to Çeşmebaşı: Tracing the Legacy of the Ballets Russes on the Turkish Ballet*. Student Project, MA, University of Toronto, Available from: <http://concordia.academia.edu/DenizBaşar> [Accessed 20 May 2019].

Başgöz, İ. and Wilson, H. E. (1968) *Educational problems in Turkey 1920-1940*. Bloomington: Indiana University Publications.

Bates, E. (2014) Music, mobility, and distributed recording production in Turkish political music. In: Gopinath, S. and Stanyek, J., eds., (2014) *The Oxford handbook of mobile music studies. Volume 2*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 339-360.

Bayraktar, S. (2016) Ziya Azazi's Dervish-In-Progress and Contested Choreographies of 'whirling' in Turkey. *Dance, Movement and Spiritualities* [online]. 3 (3), pp. 279-295. [Accessed 20 May 2019].

Beeman, W. O. (2015) Religion and Ritual Performance. In: Pradier, J.-M., ed., (2014) *La croyance et le corps. Esthétique, corporéité des croyances et identités*. Bordeaux: Presses Universitaires de Bordeaux, pp. 35-58.

Bell, C. (1997) *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions*. Reprint. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Berghaus, G. (1998) *On ritual: performance research*. London: Routledge.



- Bhabha, H. (1993) *The location of culture*. New York and London: Routledge.
- Birdođan, N. (1990) *Anadolu'nun gizli kltr, Alevilik*. [Secret culture of Anatolia, Alevilik]. Hamburg: Hamburg Alevi Kltr Merkezi.
- Birge, J. K. (1937). *The Bektashi Order of Dervishes*. Reprint. London: Luzac&Co, LTD, 1965.
- Bocarro, J., Byers, T. and Carter, L. (2018) Legacy of sporting and non-sporting mega events research: what next? In: Brittain, I., Bocarro, J., Byers, T., Swart, K., eds. (2018) *Legacies and Mega Events. Fact or Fairy Tales?*. London and New York: Routledge, pp. 7-24.
- Bordage F. and Grombeer P., (2002), TransEuropeHalles. In: TransEuropeHalle (2002) *Factories of the Imagination*. Besançon: Les Ed. De L'Imprimeur, pp. 4-5. Available from: <http://teh.net/resource/factories-of-imagination/> [Accessed 20 May 2019].
- Bozarslan, H. (2003) Alevism and the myth of research: the need for a new research agenda. In: Jongerden, J., and White, P. J., eds., (2003) *Turkey's Alevi enigma: a comprehensive overview*. Leiden: Brill, pp. 3-16.
- Bozkurt, M. F. (1990) *Semahlar: Alevi dinsel oyunlari*. [Semahs: Alevi religious dances]. Reprint. Istanbul: Kapı Yayınları, 2007.
- (1988) *Das Gebot. Mystischer Weg mit einem Freund*. Hamburg: E.B.-Verlag Rissen.
- Braidotti, R. (2012) *Nomadic Theory: The Portable Rosi Braidotti* [online]. New York: Columbia University Press. [Accessed 20 May 2019].
- Bridgeman, L. (2017) Embodying Islam: the political, social and spiritual use of the body in performative practice. *Performing Islam*. 6 (2), pp. 123-154.
- Brubaker, R. (1992) *Citizenship and nationhood in France and Germany*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Buđlalılar, E. (2012) *Theatre and struggle: a sociological analysis of the political theatre in Turkey between 1960-1971*. MA, Middle East Technical University.
- Bulut, F. (1998) *Ali'siz Alevilik*. [Alevilik without Ali]. Istanbul: Berfin.
- Buran, A. (2006) *Nimri Dede: hayatı ve Őiirleri*. [Nimri Dede: life and poems]. Elazığ: Manas.
- Burt, R. (2017) *Ungoverning dance: contemporary European theatre dance and the commons*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Butler, J. (2004) *Precarious life: The power of mourning and violence*. London and New York: Verso.

Carbone, D. (1989) Some thoughts on the graphic structure of the Laban system of notation. *European seminar for Kinetography*. Paper No. 7. Available from: <http://www.kinetography.eu/> [Accessed 20 May 2019]

Carlson, M. (1996) *Performance: a critical introduction*. London and New York: Routledge.

Challet-Haas, J. (1999) *Grammaire de la Notation Laban, Volumes 1 et 2. Cahiers de la Pédagogie*. Paris: Centre National de la Danse.

Clarke, G. L. (1999) *The world of the Alevis: issues of culture and identity*. Istanbul and New York: AVC Publications.

Chao, C.-F. (2001) *Dancing and ritualisation: an ethnographic study of the social performances in Southern Okinawa, Japan*. PhD, University of Surrey.

Cizmeci, E. (2016) World as sacred stage for Sufi ritual: performance, mobilization and making space with the act of whirling. *Dance, Movement and Spiritualities* [online]. 3 (3), pp. 199-215. [Accessed 20 May 2019].

Clarke, G. L. (1999) *The world of the Alevis: issues of culture and identity*. Istanbul and New York: AVC Publications.

Clifford, J. (1994) Diasporas. *Cultural Anthropology*. 9 (3), pp. 302-338.

Cohen, R. (2015) Seeds, roots, rhizomes and epiphytes: botany and diaspora. In: Sigona, N., Gamlen A., Liberatore G., and Neveu Kringelbach H., eds., (1995) *Diasporas reimagined: spaces, practices and belonging*. Oxford: Oxford Diaspora Programme, pp. 2-7.

Comaroff, J. and Comaroff J. (1992) *Ethnography and the Historical Imagination*. Boulder: Westview Press.

Conquergood, D. (1998) Beyond the text: Toward a Performative Cultural Politics. In: Johnson, P. E., ed., (2013) *Cultural Struggles: Performance, Ethnography, Praxis*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, pp. 47-64.

(1985) Performing as a moral act: Ethical dimensions of the ethnography of performance. *Literature in Performance* [online]. 5 (2), pp. 1-13. [Accessed 20 May 2019].

Corey, F. C. (1996) Performing sexualities in the Irish pub. *Text and Performance Quarterly* [online]. 16 (2), pp. 146-160. [Accessed 20 May 2019].

Csordas, T. J. (2009) Introduction: modalities of transnational transcendence. In: Csordas, T. J., ed. (2009) *Transnational Transcendence: Essays on Religion and Globalization*. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 1-29.

(1994) *The sacred self: a cultural phenomenology of charismatic healing*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

(1990) Embodiment as a paradigm for anthropology. *Ethos*, 18 (1), pp. 5-47.

Cvejić, B. (2015) *Choreographing problems: expressive concepts in European contemporary dance and performance*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Curtis, J. (2015) Movement in the men's movement: contact improvisation and social change. *Journal of Dance and Somatic Practices* [online]. 7 (1), pp. 129-142. [Accessed 20 May 2019].

Çaylı, E. (2018) Conspiracy theory as spatial practice: the case of the Sivas arson attack, Turkey. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* [online]. 36 (2), pp. 255-272. [Accessed 20 May 2019].

(2014) Architectural Memorialization at Turkey's ›Witness Sites‹: The Case of the Madimak Hotel. In: Kamp K., Kaya A., Keyman E. and Onursal B. O., eds., (2014) *Contemporary Turkey at a Glance*. Wiesbaden: Springer, pp. 13-24.

Daboo, J. (2018) *Staging British South Asian culture. Bollywood and Bhangra in British theatre*. Abingdon: Routledge.

(2010) *Rapture, ritual and remorse. A study of Tarantism and Pizzica in Salento*. Bern: Peter Lang.

David, A. (2013) Ways of moving and thinking: the emplaced body as a tool for ethnographic research. In: Harrop, P. and Njaradi, D., eds., (2013) *Performance and ethnography: dance, drama, music*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Pub, pp. 45-66.

David, I. and Toktamış, K. T., eds., (2015) "Everywhere Taksim": *Sowing the Seeds for a New Turkey at Gezi* [online]. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press. Available from: <http://oapen.org/search?identifier=611222>. [Accessed 20 May 2019].

Debord, G. (1995). *The society of spectacles*. New York: Zone Books.

Dehmen, B. (2010) *20.yy'ın Son Çeyreğinde Dans-Tiyatro Buluşması: Bausch, Wandekeybus, Newson*. [Dance-Theatre Encounter during the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: *Bausch, Wandekeybus, Newson*]. PhD, Istanbul University.

(2005) Appropriations of Folk Dance at the Intersection of the National and the Global: *Sultans of the Dance*. MA, Boğaziçi University.

Demirsipahi, C. (1975) *Türk Halk Oyunları*. [Turkish Folk Dances]. Ankara: İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları.

Denzin, N. (2003) *Performance Ethnography: Critical Pedagogy and the Politics of Culture*, Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Desmond, J. (2017) Tracking the Political Economy of Dance. In: Kowal, R. J., Siegmund G. and Martin R., eds., (2017) *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and Politics* [online]. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 29-52. [Accessed 20 May 2019].

De Jong, F. (1992) Pictorial Art of the Bektashi Order. In: Lifchez, R. (ed.) (1992) *The Dervish Lodge: Architecture, Art and Sufism in Ottoman Turkey*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, pp. 228-241.

De Rosa, Sinibaldo (2017) Looking at the Alevi-Bektaşî *semah* through Kinetography Laban. In: Stepputat, K., ed., (2017) *Dance, senses, urban contexts: 29th symposium of the ICTM study group on Ethnochoreology*, University of Music and Performing Arts Graz, 9-16 July 2016. Shaker Verlag, pp. 297-302.

(2014) "Samah-Kardeşlik Töreni: A Dynamic Bodily Archive for the Alevi Semah." *Congress on Research in Dance Conference Proceedings*, pp. 70–74.

(2013) *The Alevi Semah as a Theatre Performance*. ResMA, Universiteit Leiden.

Dils, A. and Cooper Albright, A., (2001) Moving Contexts. In: Dils, A. and Cooper Albright, A., eds., (2001) *Moving history, dancing cultures: a dance history reader*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, pp. 370-375.

Dinçer, F. (2014) Alevi Ritual Movement: Its Representation in Fifteenth- and Sixteenth Century Texts and Today. In: Öztürkmen, A. and Vitz, E. B., eds., (2014) *Medieval and Early Modern Performance in the Eastern Mediterranean*. Turnhout: Brepols, pp. 481–502.

(2004) *Formulation of semahs in relation to the question of Alevi identity in Turkey*. PhD, Boğaziçi University.

Dole, C. (2012) *Healing secular life. Loss and devotion in modern Turkey*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Dönmez, M., Çelik, H. and Armağan, E. (2018) Alevilik-Bektaşilikte Dâr [Abode of Alevism-Bektashism], *Türk Kültürü ve Hacı Bektaş Veli Araştırma Dergisi*. 85, pp. 183-98.

Dressler, M. (2013) *Writing Religion. The Making of Turkish Alevi Islam*. New York: Oxford University Press.

(2006) The Modern Dede: Changing Parameters for Religious Authority in Contemporary Turkish Alevism. In: Krämer, G. and Schmidtke, S., eds., (2006) *Speaking for Islam: Religious Authorities in Muslim Societies*. Leiden: Brill, pp. 269-94.

During, J. (1995) Notes sur la musique des Alevis-Bektachis et des groupes apparentés. In: Popovic, A. and Veinstein, G. eds. (1995) *Bektachiyya. Études sur l'ordre mystique des Bektachis et des groupes revelant de Hadji Bektach*. Istanbul: Isis, pp. 85-90.

Duygulu, M. (1997) *Alevi-Bektaşî Müziğinde Deyişler*. [The Deyiş in Alevi-Bektaşî music]. Istanbul: Ofset.

Eke, M. (2013) Turna Sembolünün Türkülerde ve "Gine Dertli İniliyorsun" Ezgisindeki İfadesi. [The symbolism of the crane in Turkish folk songs, and "Gine

Dertli İniliyorsun”]. *Motif Akademi Halkbilimi Dergisi* [online]. 6 (11), pp. 218-228. Available from <http://dergipark.org.tr/mahder/issue/28391/301930> [Accessed 20 May 2019].

Erdemir, A. (2005) Tradition and Modernity: Alevi's Ambiguous Terms and Turkey's Ambiguous Subjects. *Middle Eastern Studies*. 41 (6), pp. 937-951.

Erdemir, A. and Yaman, A. (2006) *Alevism-Bektashism: a Brief Introduction*. Istanbul: İngiltere Alevi Kültür Merkezi ve Cemevi.

Erdur Rabuel, D. (2016) *Sanat ve yaşam arasındaki geçirgen çizgide dans eğitimi. Kontak Doğaçlama Teknik, Yöntem ve Eğitim Yaklaşımlarının Amatör Dansçılarda Fiziksel, Sanatsal ve Psiko-Sosyal Gelişime Katkısı*. [Dance education on the transitive line between life and art. Contributions of the Technique, Methodology and Pedagogy of Contact Improvisation to the Physical, Artistic and Psycho-social Development of Amateur Dancers]. PhD, Mimar Sinan Fine Art University.

Erol, A. (2010) Re-Imagining Identity: The Transformation of the Alevi Semah. *Middle Eastern Studies*. 46 (3), pp. 375-387.

Ersal, M. (2011) Alevi İnanç Sistemindeki Ritüelik Özel Terimler. [Ritualistic Terms in the Alevi Belief System], *Turkish Studies*. 6 (1), pp. 1058–83.

Erseven, İ. C. (1990) *Aleviler'de Semah, Anadolu İnanç Kültüründen bir Kesit* [The Semah for the Alevi, a Part of the Anatolian Belief Culture]. Reprint. Ankara: Ürün Yayınları, 2007.

Ertem, G. (2016) *Erratic moves from the borderland: contextualizing the independent contemporary dance art scene in Turkey*. [Public lecture for Body Double – Stockholm Istanbul MDT], MDT Stockholm, 22 May. Available from: [http://www.gururertem.info/uploads/8/8/7/6/88765342/gurur\\_ertem\\_erratic\\_moves\\_from\\_the\\_borderland\\_mdt\\_stockholm.pdf](http://www.gururertem.info/uploads/8/8/7/6/88765342/gurur_ertem_erratic_moves_from_the_borderland_mdt_stockholm.pdf) [Accessed 20 May 2019].

Eruçar, Ş. (2010) *A feminist analysis of the gender dynamics in the Alevi belief and cem rituals*. MA, Middle East Technical University.

Ezici, T. (2008) *Türk Üniversite Tiyatrosunda Geleneksel Kültür Araştırmalarının İşlevi* [The function of researches on traditional culture in Turkish University theatre]. [Paper presented at the VII. International University Theatre Association conference], Puebla, 2-6 June.

Farnell, B. (2012) *Dynamic Embodiment for Social Theory*. “I move therefore I am”. London and New York: Routledge.

(1995) *Do You See What I Mean? Plain Indian Sign Talk and the Embodiement of Action*. Reprint. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009.

(1994) Ethno-graphics and the moving body. *MAN: a Monthly Record of Anthropological Science*. 29 (4), pp. 929–974.

- Faroqhi S. (2003) *Anadolu'da Bektaşilik*. [The Bektaşi order in Anatolia]. Translated from the German by Nasuh Barın. İstanbul: Simurg Yayınları.
- Faroqhi, S. and Öztürkmen, A., eds., (2014) *Celebration, Entertainment and Theater in the Ottoman World*. London and Calcutta: Seagall Books.
- Foley, C. (2012) *Irish traditional step dancing in north Kerry: a contextual and structural analysis*. Listowel: North Kerry Literary Trust.
- Franko, M., ed., (2007) *Ritual and event. Interdisciplinary perspectives*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Gambetti, Z. (2016) Risking Oneself and One's Identity: Agonism Revisited. In: Butler J., Gambetti Z. and Sabsay L., eds., (2016) *Vulnerability in Resistance*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, pp. 28-51.
- Gell, A. (1999) *The Art of Anthropology: Essays and Diagrams*. Hirsch E., ed., London: Athlone Press.
- Gezen, E. (2018) *Brecht, Turkish theater, and Turkish-German literature: reception, adaptation and innovation after 1960*. New York: Camden House.
- Gezik, E. (2016) How angel Gabriel became our brother of the hereafter (On the question of Ismaili influence on Alevism), *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* [online]. 43 (1), pp. 56-70. [Accessed 20 May 2019].
- Girard, M., Polo, J.-F. and Scalbert-Yücel, C., eds., (2018) *Turkish cultural policies in a global world*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Giurchescu, A. and Kröschlová, E. (2007) Theory and Method of Dance Form Analysis. In: Kaeppler, A. and Dunin, E., eds., (2007) *Dance Structures: Perspectives on the Analysis of Human Movement*. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, pp. 21:52.
- Glasstone, R. (2012) Ninette de Valois' Turkish Adventure. In: Cave, R. and Worth, L. (2012) *Ninette de Valois. Adventurous traditionalist*. Alton: Dance Books, pp. 141-145.
- Goldman, D. (2007) Bodies on the line: Contact Improvisation and Techniques of Nonviolent Protest. *Dance Research Journal*. 39 (1), pp. 60-74.
- Gökalp, Altan. 2011(1980). *Têtes Rouges et Bouches Noires et autres écrits*. Paris: CNRS Éditions.
- Göle, N. (2013) Gezi – Anatomy of a Public Square Movement, *Insight Turkey*. 15 (3), pp. 7-14.
- Grau, A. (2015). Why People Dance - Evolution, Sociality and Dance. *Dance, Movement and Spiritualities* [online]. 2 (3), pp. 233-254. [Accessed 20 May 2019].

Greve, M., ed. (2015) *Writing the history of "Ottoman music"*. Würzburg: Ergon-Verl.

(2006) *Almanya'da "Hayali Türkiye"nin müziği*. [The music of 'imaginary Turkey' in Germany]. Translated from the German by Selin Dingiloğlu. Istanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları.

Gruber, C. (2017a) The Gezi martyrs and visual resistance in Turkey (Part 1): "They are among us". *Mizan Project* [online]. Available from: <http://www.mizanproject.org/?p=5232>

(2017b) The Gezi martyrs and visual resistance in Turkey (Part 1): paving stones and a little prince. *Mizan Project* [online]. Available from: <http://www.mizanproject.org/?p=5367> [Accessed 20 May 2019].

Gümüştekin, D. (2015) Gezi protests and social mobilization through digital technology. In: Koç, G. and Aksu, H., eds., (2015) *Another Brick in the Barricade: the Gezi Resistance and its Aftermath*, Bremen: Weiner Verlag, pp. 79-94.

Güzel, A. (1983) *Kaygusuz Abdal'ın mensur eserleri*. [The prose works of Kaygusuz Abdal]. Ankara: Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı.

Hackney, P. (1998) *Making connections: total body integration through Bartenieff Fundamentals* [online]. Revised ed. New York: Routledge. [Accessed 22 May 2019].

Herbison-Evans, D. (1988) Dance, Video, Notation and Computers. *Leonardo*. 21 (1), pp. 44-50.

Hinz, S. (2007) *Dance, mysticism and sensuality: perspectives from Tajikistan*. MA, University of Hawai'i.

Ho, E. (2017) Inter-Asian concepts for mobile societies, *The Journal of Asian Studies*. 76 (4), pp. 907-928.

Hoerberger, F. (1968) Once Again: on the Concept of Folk Dance. *Journal of the International Folk Music Council*. 20, pp. 30-32.

Houseman, M. (2002) Dissimulation and simulation as forms of religious reflexivity. *Social Anthropology*. 10 (1), pp. 77-89.

Houston, S. (2009) The touch 'taboo' and the art of contact: an exploration of Contact Improvisation for prisoners. *Research in Dance Education*. 10(2), pp. 97-113.

Hughes-Freeland, F., ed., (1998) *Ritual, Performance, Media*, London: Routledge.

Hastrup, K., Barba, J., Sykes, L., International School of Theatre Anthropology, eds. (1996) *The Performer's village: time, techniques and theories at ISTA*. Graasten: Drama.

Hutchinson, A. (1954) *Labanotation, with a Preface by George Balanchine and a Foreword by Rudolf Laban*, New York: New Direction Books.

Hutchinson Guest, A. (2012) De Valois and Labanotation. In: Cave, R. and Worth, L. (2012) *Ninette de Valois. Adventurous traditionalist*. Alton: Dance Books, pp. 117-123.

İnce, A. (2018) Converted spaces, converted meanings: looking at new cultural spaces in Istanbul through a cultural policy lens. In: Girard, M., Polo, J.-F. and Scalbert-Yücel, C., eds., (2018) *Turkish cultural policies in a global world*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 105-125.

Kaeppler, Adrienne. (2007) Method and Theory in Analyzing Dance Structures with an Analysis of Tongan Dance. In: Kaeppler, A. and Dunin, E., eds., (2007) *Dance Structures: Perspectives on the Analysis of Human Movement*, Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, pp. 53-102.

(1978) Dance in Anthropological Perspective. *Annual Review of Anthropology*. 7, pp. 31-49.

Kapferer, B. (2004) Ritual dynamics and virtual practice: beyond representation and meaning. *Social Analysis: the International Journal of Social and Cultural Practice*. 48 (2), pp. 35-54.

Karadağ, N. (1998) *Halkevleri tiyatro çalışmaları: 1932–1951* [Theatre Works of the People's Houses: 1932–1951]. Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları.

Karakaya-Stump, A. (2008) *Subjects of the Sultan, Disciples of the Shah: Formation and Transformation of the Kizilbash/Alevi Communities in Ottoman Anatolia*. PhD, Harvard University.

Karamustafa, A. (1994) *God's Unruly Friends: Dervish Groups in the Islamic Later Middle Period, 1200–1550*. Salt Lake City: Oneworld.

Karaömerlioğlu, A. (1998) The People's Houses and the Cult of the Peasant in Turkey. *Middle Eastern Studies*. 34 (4), pp. 67-91.

Karolewsky, J. (2015) Ritual Text and Music in Turkish Alevism: Dimensions of Transmission and Bearers of Knowledge. In: Schulze, H., ed., (2015) *Musical Text as Ritual Object*. Turnhout: Brepols, pp. 91–110.

(2008) What is Heterodox about Alevism? The Development of Anti-Alevi Discrimination and Resentment. *Die Welt des Islams*. 48, pp. 434-456.

Keali'inohomoku, J. W. (1969) An Anthropologist Looks at Ballet as a Form of Ethnic Dance. In: Williams, D., ed., (1997) *Anthropology and human movement: the study of dances*. Lanham and Folkenstone: Scarecrow Press Inc., pp. 15-36.

Kehl-Bodrogi, (2016) The role of Kerbela in the (re-) construction of Alevism in Turkey. In: Bellér-Hann, I., ed., (2016) *The past as resource in the Turkic speaking world*. Würzburg: Ergon Verlag, pp. 43-58.



Keiser, H.-L., (2002) Mission as factor of change in Turkey (nineteenth to first half of twentieth century). *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*. 13(4), pp. 391-410.

Keleş, A. and Doğan, Ö. (2016) Alevi Semah in the Context of Professionalization. In Mellish L., Green N. and Zaki M., eds., (2016) *Fourth Symposium of the ICTM Study Group on Music and Dance in Southeastern Europe*, Faculty of Music, Belgrade, 24 September - 1 October 2014. Belgrade: Colograf, pp. 141-146.

Klein, G. and Noeth, S. (2011) Introduction. In: Klein, G. and Noeth, S. ed., (2011) *Emerging bodies: the Performance of Worldmaking in Dance and Choreography*. Bielefeld: Verlag, pp. 7-14.

Koç, G. and Aksu, H., eds., (2015) *Another Brick in the Barricade: the Gezi Resistance and its Aftermath*, Bremen: Weiner Verlag.

Koerbin, P. (2011a). "I am Pir Sultan Abdal". *A Hermeneutical Study of the Self-Naming Tradition (Mahlas) in Turkish Alevi Lyric Song (Deyiş)*. PhD, University of Western Sydney, Sydney.

(2011b) Pir Sultan Abdal: encounters with persona in Alevi lyric song. *Oral tradition*. 26 (1), pp. 191–220.

Köse, T. (2009) *Re-negotiating Alevi Identity: Values, Emotions and the Contending Visions of the Future*. PhD, George Mason University.

Krawietz, B. (2012) The sportification and heritagisation of traditional Turkish oil wrestling. *The International Journal of the History of Sport*. 29 (15), pp. 2145-2161.

Kreger, A. (2016) *Dem is drunk through the ears: sound, space, and listening in Alevi collective worship ritual*. MA, The University of Texas at Austin.

Kuryel, A. (2015) Introduction: Looking at and Looking with Images. In: Kuryel, A. (2015) *Image Acts and Visual Communities: Everyday Nationalism in Contemporary Turkey*. PhD, University of Amsterdam, pp. 7-30.

Kurt, B. (2013) *The Hybrid Aesthetics' of the Folk Dance Scene in Turkey*. [Paper presented at the 35<sup>th</sup> World Congress on Dance Research], Athens, 24-28 Temmuz 2013 [online]. Available from: doi: 10.13140/2.1.4274.3683. [Accessed 20 May 2019].

Kurtişoğlu, B. (2015) Ontological shifts of what *halay* narrates. In: Dunin, E. I., ed. (2015) *Dance and narratives: dance as intangible and tangible cultural heritage: 28<sup>th</sup> symposium of the ICTM study group on Ethnochoreology*. Korkčula, 7-17 July 2014. Zagreb: Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research, pp. 108-113.

Johnson Jones, J. E. (1999) *The choreographic notebook: a dynamic documentation of the choreographic process of Kokuma Dance Theatre, an African-Caribbean dance company*. In: Buckland, T. J., ed., (1999) *Dance in the*

*field: theory, methods and issues in dance ethnography*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, pp. 100-110.

Jones, J. (2002) Performance Ethnography: the role of embodiment in cultural authenticity. *Theatre Topics*. 12(1), pp. 1-15.

Jongerden, J., and White, P. J., eds., (2003) *Turkey's Alevi enigma: a comprehensive overview*. Leiden: Brill.

LaMothe, K. L. (2008) What bodies know about religion and the study of it. *Journal for the American Academy of Religion*. 76 (3), pp. 573-601.

Langer, R. (2013) The transfer of the Alevi cem ritual from Anatolia to Istanbul and beyond. In: Shankland, D., ed., (2013) *Anthropology, Archaeology and Heritage in the Balkans and Anatolia: The Life and Times of F. W. Hasluck, 1878–1920. Vol. III*. Istanbul: The Isis Press, pp. 208-213.

(2010) 'Marginalised Islam': the transfer of rural rituals into urban and pluralist contexts and the emergence of transnational 'communities of practice'. In: Brosius, C. and Hüsker, U., eds., (2010) *Ritual matters: dynamic dimensions in practice*. New Delhi and Abingdon: Routledge.

Langer, R., Lüdderckens, D., Radde K., and Snoek J. (2006) Transfer of ritual. *Journal of Ritual Studies*. 20 (1), pp. 1-10.

Leigh Foster, S. (2005) Dance theory? In: Chazin-Bennahum, J., ed., (2005) *Teaching dance studies*. Abingdon: Routledge.

(2002) *Dances that Describe Themselves: The Improvised Choreography of Richard Bull*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press.

(1997) Dancing Bodies In: Desmond, J., ed., (1997) *Meaning in Motion: New Cultural Studies of Dance*, Durham and London: Duke University Press, pp. 235-257.

Lepecki, A. (2001) *Moving Without the Colonial Mirror: Modernity, Dance, and Nation in the Works of Vera Montero and Francisco Camacho (1985-97)*. PhD, New York University.

(2000) Still: On the Vibratile Microscopy of Dance. In: Brandstetter, G. and Völkers, H., eds., (2000) *Re/Membering the Body*. Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz, pp. 334-366.

Lewisohn, L. (1997) The sacred music of Islam: Samā' in the Persian sufi tradition. *British Journal of Ethnomusicology*. 6, pp. 1-33.

Ley, G. (2015) Cultural adaptation. *Journal of Adaptation in Film & Performance*. 8 (1), pp. 23-38.

Lootij, N. E. (2014) *Danse Ghaéni: danse folklorique de Khorasan as performed - Iran* [online]. Available from: <http://nasimlootij.com/criture-danse-traditionnelle/> [Accessed 20 May 2019].

MacAloon, J. J., ed., (1984) *Rite, drama, festival, spectacle: rehearsals towards a theory of cultural performance*. Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues.

Madison, S. (2010) *Acts of Activism. Human rights as radical performance*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Makereel, C. (2015) *Europalia Turquie censurée? Pas si vite!*. *Le Soir* [online]. 8 October. Available from: <http://www.lesoir.be/archive/d-20151008-3D18HY> [Accessed 20 May 2019].

Maletic, V. (1987) *Body, Space, Expression: the Development of Rudolf Laban's Movement*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Mandel, R. (2008) *Cosmopolitan Anxieties: Turkish Challenges to Citizenship and Belonging in Germany*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Marcus, G. (1995) Ethnography in/of the World System: the Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography. *Annual Review of Anthropology*. 24, pp. 95-117.

Mardin, Ş. (1984) A note on the transformation of religious symbols in Turkey. *Turcica: Revue d'Études Turques*. Tome XVI, pp. 115-127.

Markoff, I. J., (2018) Articulating otherness in the construction of Alevi-Bektaşî rituals and ritual space in a transnational perspective. In: Frishkopt, M. and Spinetti, F., eds., (2018) *Music, sound, and architecture in Islam* [online]. Austin: University of Texas Press. [Accessed 20 May 2019].

(2001) Alevi Identity and Expressive Culture. In: Danielson, V. Marcus, S. and Reynolds, D., eds., (2001) *Garland Encyclopedia of World Music Volume 6 - The Middle East* [online]. New York: Routledge, pp. 822-29. [Accessed 20 May 2019]

(1993) Music, Saints and Ritual: Sama' and the Alevis of Turkey. In: Stokes, M. and Ernst C., eds., (1993) *Manifestations of Sainthood in Islam*. Istanbul: The Isis Press.

(1986a) *Musical Theory, Performance and the Contemporary Bağlama Specialist in Turkey*. PhD, University of Washington.

(1986b) The Role of Expressive Culture in the Demystification of a Secret Sect of Islam: the Case of the Alevis of Turkey. *World of Music*. 28 (3), pp. 42-56.

Markussen, I. H. (2012) *Teaching History, Learning Piety: an Alevi Foundation in Contemporary Turkey*. PhD, Lund University.

(2005a) Being an Alevi, living Aleviness, learning Alevism. In: Markussen, Irene H., ed., (2005) *Alevis and Alevism. Transformed identities*. Istanbul: The Isis Press, pp. 7-9.

(2005b) Alevi Theology from Shamanism to Humanism. In: Markussen, Irene H., ed., (2005) *Alevis and Alevism. Transformed identities*. Istanbul: The Isis Press, pp. 65-90.

Martin, R. (1994) *Socialist ensembles: theater and state in Cuba and Nicaragua*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

(2004) Dance and its others: theory, state, nation, and socialism. In: Lepecki, A. ed., (2004) *Of the presence of the body: essays on dance and performance theory*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, pp. 47-63.

Massicard, É. (2013) *The Alevi in Turkey and Europe. Identity and managing territorial diversity*, Abingdon: Routledge.

(2012) Répression et changement des formes de militantisme : carrières de remobilisation à gauche après 1980 en Turquie. *European Journal of Turkish Studies* [online]. 15, pp. 2-15. [Accessed 20 May 2019].

(2003) Alevism as a Productive Misunderstanding: the Hacibektaş Festival. In: Jongerden, Joost, and White, Paul J., eds., (2003) *Turkey's Alevi enigma: a comprehensive overview*. Leiden: Brill, pp. 125-140.

McKenzie, J., Roms, H. and Wee, J. W.-L., eds., (2010) *Contesting performance: global sites of research*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Mee, E. B. and Gündüz, E. (2014) Standing Man and the Impromptu Performance of Hope: An Interview with Erdem Gündüz. *TDR: The Drama Review*. 58 (3), pp. 69-83.

Mélikoff, I. (2003) Notes de Symbolique Bektashi-Alévies: des Douze Animaux aux Douze Imams. *Turcica: Revue d'Études Turques*. 35, pp. 237-245.

(1998) *Hadji Bektach: un Mythe et ses Avatars. Genèse et Évolution du Soufisme Populaire en Turquie*. Leiden: Brill.

Millard, O. (2015) What's the score? Using scores in dance improvisation' *Brolga: an Australian Journal about Dance*. 40, pp. 45-56.

Molé, M. (1963) La danse extatique en islam. In: Cazeneuve, J. ed. (1963) *Les danses sacrées*. Paris: Editions du Seuil, pp. 145-280.

Moore, C. L. (2009) *The harmonic structure of movement, music, and dance according to Rudolf Laban: an examination of his unpublished writings and drawings*. Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press.

Moore, Sally F., and Myerhoff, Barbara G., eds., (1977) *Secular ritual*. Assen: Van Gorcum.

Morse, M. (2014) Simone Forti's *Huddle* and minimalist performance. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Art*. 14 (1), pp. 30-41.

Muñoz, J. E. (1999) *Disidentifications: queer of color and the performance of politics*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Mutluer, N. (2016) The looming shadow of violence and loss: Alevi responses to persecution and discrimination. *Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*. 18 (2), pp. 145-156.

Nahachewski, A. (1995). Participatory and presentational dance as ethnochoreological categories. *Dance Research Journal*. 27 (1), pp. 1-15.

Natali, C. (2012) Il bharata natyam: l'addomesticamento di una tradizione. *Antropologia e Teatro. Rivista di Studi*. 3, pp. 291-336.

Nekimken, A. L. (1978) *The impact of Bertold Brecht on society and the development of political theater in Turkey*. PhD, University of California at Riverside.

Ness, S. A. (2008) The inscription of gesture: inward migrations in dance. In: Noland, C. and Ness, S. A. (2008) *Migrations of gestures* [online]. University of Minnesota Press, pp. 1-30. [Accessed 20 May 2019].

Njaradi, D. (2014) *Backstage economies: Labour and Masculinities in Contemporary European Dance*. Chester: University of Chester Press.

Noland (2008) Introduction. In: Noland, C. and Ness, S. A. (2008) *Migrations of gestures* [online]. University of Minnesota Press, pp. I-XXVIII. [Accessed 20 May 2019].

Nor Anis Mohd (1990) *The Zapin Melayu dance of Johor: from village to a national performance tradition*. PhD, University of Michigan.

Novack, C. J. (1990) *Sharing the Dance: Contact Improvisation and American Culture*, Madison and London: The University of Wisconsin Press.

Nutku, Ö. (1971) Some notes of the aim on the Drama department. *Maske und Kothurn*. 17 (4), pp. 376-377.

Okan, N. (2018) Thoughts on the rhetoric that women and men are equal in Alevi belief and practice (*Alevilik*) - to Songül, *National Identities*. 20 (1), pp. 69-89.

Oktay, Z. U. (2017) *L'Homme Parfait dans le Bektachisme et l'Alévisme: Le Kitâb-ı Mağlağa de Kaygusuz Abdâl*. PhD, École Pratique des Hautes Études.

Olsson, T. (1998) Epilogue: the scripturalization of Ali-oriented religions. In: Olsson, T., Özdalga, E., Raudvere, C., eds., (1998) *Alevi identity: cultural, religious and social perspectives*, Istanbul: Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul, pp. 240-254.

O'Connell, J. M. (2010) Alabanda: brass bands and musical methods in Turkey. In: Spinetti, F., ed., (2010) *Giuseppe Donizetti Pascià. Traiettorie musicali e storiche tra Italia e Turchia*. Bergamo: Fondazione Donizetti, pp. 19-37.

(1991) *A Turkish Alevi Musician in Berlin: an Artist's Individual View and the Assumption of a General Musical Tradition*. MA, University of California at Los Angeles.

Ödemiş, S. (2016) *Hareket portesi notasyon sistemi (HPNS)*. [Movement staff notation system]. Ankara: Gece Kitaplığı.

- Özdemir, U. (2016) *Kimlik, ritüel, müzik icrası. İstanbul cemevlerinde zakirlik hizmeti*. [Identity, ritual, musical interpretation. The 'zakirhood' service in the *cemevis* of Istanbul]. Istanbul: Kolektif Kitap.
- Özmen, F. A. (2013) Alevi women and patriarchy. In: Özmen, F. A. and Özgür, D. R., eds., (2013) *Gendered identities: criticizing patriarchy in Turkey* [online]. Lanham: Lexington Books. [Accessed 20 May 2019].
- Öztürkmen, A. (2016) *Rakstan oyuna: Türkiye'de dansın modern halleri*. [From *raks* to *oyun*: modern forms of dance in Turkey]. Istanbul: İstanbul Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Yayınevi.
- (2014) The Park, the Penguin, and the Gas. Performance in Progress in Gezi Park'. *TDR: The Drama Review*. 58 (3), pp. 39-68.
- (2005) Staging a ritual dance out of its context: the role of an individual artist in transforming the Alevi Semah. *Asian Folklore Studies*. 64 (2), pp. 247-260.
- (2001) Politics of national dance in Turkey: a historical reappraisal. *Yearbook for Traditional Music*. 33, pp. 139-143.
- Öztürkmen, A. and Vitz, E. V., eds., (2014) *Medieval and Early Modern Performance in the Eastern Mediterranean*. Turnhout: Brepols.
- Özyürek, E. (2009) Beyond Integration and Recognition: Diasporic Constructions of Alevi Muslim Identity between Germany and Turkey. In: Csordas, T. J., ed. (2009) *Transnational Transcendence: Essays on Religion and Globalization*. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 121-144.
- Paxton, S. (1975) Contact Improvisation. *TDR: The Drama Review*. 19 (1), pp. 40-42.
- Penman, R. and Watts, V. (2012) De Valois' role in the development and dissemination of Benesh Movement Notation. In: Cave, R. and Worth, L. (2012) *Ninette de Valois. Adventurous traditionalist*. Alton: Dance Books, pp. 124-129.
- Poynor, H. (2013) Landscapes of Loss: Moving and Mourning – An Autobiographical account. *Journal of Dance & Somatic Practices*. 2 (1), pp. 169-177.
- Poyraz, B. (2007) *Direnişle piyasa arasında: Alevilik ve Alevi müziği* [Between resistance and the market: Alevilik and Alevi music]. Ankara: Gece Kitaplığı.
- (2005) The Turkish State and the Alevis: Changing Parameters of an Uneasy Relationship. *Middle Eastern Studies*. 41 (4), pp. 503-516.
- Pinkert, M. T. (2016) *A voice of their own: music and social cohesion in Turkish Alevi life*. PhD, University of Maryland.
- Prickett, S. (2013) *Embodied Politics: Dance, Protest and Identities*. Binstead: Dance Books.

- Raffin, F. (2002) Heritage, cross culture, buying and selling. Les Halles de Schaerbeek (Brussels). In: TransEuropeHalle (2002) *Factories of the Imagination*. Besançon: Les Ed. De L'Imprimeur, pp. 140-153. Available from: <http://teh.net/resource/factories-of-imagination/> [Accessed 20 May 2019].
- Rapport, Nigel (2015) Anthropology through Levinas: Knowing the Uniqueness of Ego and the Mystery of Otherness. *Current Anthropology*. 56 (2), pp. 256-276.
- Reed, S. A. (2010) *Dance and the nation. Performance, ritual, and politics in Sri Lanka*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press.
- Reilly, K. (2018) Introduction to contemporary approaches to adaptation. In: Reilly, K. *Contemporary approaches to adaptation in theatre* [online]. London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. xxi-xxix. [Accessed 20 May 2019].
- Roche, Maurice (2000) *Mega-events and Modernity. Olympics and expos in the growth of global culture*. London: Routledge.
- Rodrigues, J. (2017) Sufism through the body: symbolism, selfhood expression and somatic process in embodied hadra ritual practice. *Performing Islam*. 6 (1), pp. 53-74.
- Roms, H. (2016) Mind the gaps. In: Cochrane, Claire and Robinson, Jo, eds., (2016) *Theatre history and historiography: ethics, evidence and truth*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 163-181.
- (2010) The practice turn: performance and the British Academy. In: McKenzie, J., Roms, H. and Wee, J. W.-L., eds., (2010) *Contesting performance: global sites of research*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 51-70.
- Royce, A. P. (1977) *The Anthropology of Dance*. Reprint. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980.
- Rösch, F. (2018) The power of dance: teaching International Relations through Contact Improvisation. *International Studies Perspectives*. 19, pp. 67-82.
- Safran, W. (1991) Diaspora in modern societies: myths of homeland and return. *Diaspora: a Journal of Transnational Studies*. 1 (1), pp. 83-99.
- Sağlam, Y. (2015) *Anadolu Tiyatrosunun köylüsü: Nurhan Karadağ* [The Villager of Anatolian Theatre: Nurhan Karadağ], Ankara: Ürün Yayınları.
- Scolieri, P. (2008) Global/mobile: re-orienting dance and migration studies. *Dance Research Journal*. 40 (2), pp. v-xx.
- Schechner, R. (1985) *Between theatre and anthropology*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Schieffelin, E. L. (2005) Moving performance to text: can performance be transcribed? *Oral Tradition*. 20 (1), pp. 80-92.

Schubel, V. (2010) When the Prophet went on the Miraç he saw a Lion on the Road: the Miraç in the Alevi-Bektaşî Tradition. In: Gruber, C. and Colby, F., eds., (2010) *The Prophet's Ascensions: Cross-Cultural Encounters with the Islamic Miraj Tales*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Shankland, D. (2003) *The Alevi of Turkey: the Emergence of a Secular Islamic Tradition*. London: Routledge.

Shankland, D. and Çetin, A. (2005) Ritual Transfer and the Reformulation of Belief Amongst the Turkish Alevi Community In: Langer R., Motika R. and Ursinus, M., eds., (2005) *Migration und Ritualtransfer: Religiöse Praxis der Aleviten, Jesiden und Nusairier zwischen Vorderem Orient und Westeuropa*. Berlin: Peter Lang, pp. 51-72.

Shay, A. (2002) *Choreographic politics. State folk dance companies, representation and power*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press.

(1999a) *Choreophobia: Solo Improvised Dance in the Iranian World*. Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers.

(1999b) Parallel Tradition: State Folk Dance Ensembles and Folk Dance in the Field. *Dance Research Journal*. 31 (1), pp. 29-56.

Shepers-Hughes, N. (1995) The Primacy of the Ethical: Propositions for a Militant Anthropology. *Current Anthropology*, 36(3), pp. 409-440.

Shiloah, A. (1995) *Music in the Islamic world: a socio-cultural study*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press.

Selek, P. (2015) *La Maschera della Verità*. Translated from the French by Manuela Maddamma. Roma: Fandango Libri.

Sinclair-Webb, E. (2003) Sectarian violence, the Alevi minority and the left: Kahramanmaraş 1978. In: Jongerden, J. and White, P. J., eds., (2003) *Turkey's Alevi enigma: a comprehensive overview*. Leiden: Brill, pp. 215-235.

Sipos, J. (2000) *In the wake of Bartók in Anatolia*. Translated from the Hungarian by Judit Pokoly. Budapest: European Folklore Institute.

Sipos, J. and Csáki, E. (2009) *The psalms and folk songs of a mystic Turkish order: the music of the Bektashis in Thrace*. Translated from the Hungarian by Judit Pokoly. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó.

Soileau, M. (2017) Hızır Pasha Hanged Us: Commemorating Martyrdom in Alevi Tradition: Commemorating Martyrdom in Alevi Tradition. *The Muslim World*. 107 (3), pp. 549-571

(2014) Conforming Haji Bektash: A Saint and His Followers between Orthopraxy and Heteropraxy. *Die Welt des Islams*. 54 (3-4), pp. 423-459

(2012) Spreading the Sofra: sharing and partaking in the Bektashi ritual meal. *History of Religions* [online]. 52 (1), pp. 1-30. [Accessed 20 May 2019].



Stoyanov, Y. (2010) Early and recent formulations of theories for a formative Christian heterodox impact on Alevism. *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*. 37 (3), pp. 261-272.

Sökefeld, Martin (2008) *Struggling for recognition. The Alevi movement in Germany and in transnational space*. Oxford: Berghahn Books.

Sökefeld, M. and Schwalgin, S. (2000) *Institutions and their Agents in Diaspora: a Comparison of Armenians in Athens and Alevis in Germany*. [Paper presented at the 6th European Association of Social Anthropologists Conference, Krakau, 26-29 July]. Available from: <http://www.transcomm.ox.ac.uk/working%20papers/schwal.pdf> [Accessed 20 May 2019].

Stokes, M. (1996) Ritual, Identity and the State: An Alevi (Shi'a) Cem Ceremony. In: Schulze K. E., Stokes, M. and Campbell, C., eds., (1996) *Nationalism, Minorities and Diasporas: Identities and Rights in the Middle East*. London: Tauris Academic Studies. pp. 188-202.

Stahmer, E. L. (2011) *(Dis)Connected: Segmenting the elements that constitute Contact Improvisation as a form of communication*. BA, Barnard College.

Sultanova, R. (2011) *From Shamanism to Sufism: women, Islam and Culture in Central Asia*. London: I.B. Tauris & Co.

Şahin, Ş. (2005) The rise of Alevism as a public religion. *Current Sociology*. 53, pp. 465-485.

Şahin, K. (2018) Staging an empire: an Ottoman circumcision ceremony as cultural performance. *American Historical Review*. 123 (2), pp. 463-497.

Şener, S. (1971) The research methods of the Theatre Institute in Ankara University. *Maske und Kothurn*. 17 (4), pp. 374-376.

Tafferner-Gulyas, V. (2015) Contact Improvisation, a dance technique as a representative art form of the seventies in American culture. *European Scientific Journal*. July Special Edition, pp. 228-240.

Tambar, K. (2014) *The reconing of pluralism: political belonging and the demands of history in Turkey*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.  
(2010) The aesthetics of public visibility: Alevi semah and the paradoxes of pluralism in Turkey. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*. 52 (3), pp. 652-679.

Taş, H. (2015) Can the Alevis speak? The politics of representation in early writings on Alevism, *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*. 26 (3), pp. 325-338.

Taussig, M. T. (1993) *Mimesis and alterity: a particular history of the senses*. New York: Routledge.

Tee, C. (2014) On the path of Pir Sultan? Engagement with authority in the modern Alevi movement. In: Kamp K., Kaya A., Keyman E. and Onursal B. O., eds., (2014) *Contemporary Turkey at a Glance*. Wiesbaden: Springer, pp. 25-39.

(2013) The Sufi Mystical Idiom in Alevi *Aşık* Poetry: Flexibility, Adaptation and Meaning. *European Journal of Turkish Studies* [online]. Complete list, no pages. [Accessed 22 May 2019].

(2010) Holy Lineages, Migration and Reformulation of Alevi Tradition: a study of the Derviş Cemal Ocak from Erzincan. *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*. 37 (3), pp. 335-392.

Tlostanova, M., Thapar-Björkert, S. and Koobak, R. (2016) Border thinking and disidentification: Postcolonial and postsocialist feminist dialogues. *Feminist Theory* [online]. 17 (2), pp. 211–228. [Accessed 20 May 2019].

Tomko, L. (1999) Dance Notation and Cultural Agency: a Meditation Spurred by Choreo-graphics. *Dance Research Journal*. 31 (1), pp. 1-3.

Tremblay, P. (2014) AKP advice to Soma: Don't protest, just pray, *AlMonitor* [online]. 19 May. Available from: <http://almon.co/2359> [Accessed 22 May 2019].

Trix, F. (1993) *Spiritual discourse: learning with an Islamic master*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Turner, V. (1982) *From Ritual to Theatre: the Human Seriousness of Play*. New York: PAJ Publications.

(1969) *The ritual process: structure and anti-structure*. Reprint. New York: De Gruyter, 1995.

Uludemir, M. (1995) *Eskişehir semahları*. [The semahs from Eskişehir]. Ankara: T.C. Kültür Bakanlığı.

Üzüm, İ. (1997) *Günümüz Aleviliği* [Alevism Today]. Istanbul: İSAM Yayınları.

Van Bruinessen, M. (2016) The Kurds as objects and subjects of historiography: Turkish and Kurdish nationalists struggling over identity. In: Richter, F., ed., (2016) *Identität, Ethnizität un Nationalismus in Kurdistan. Festschrift zum 65. Geburtstag von prof. Dr. Ferhad Ibrahim Seyder*. Münster: Lit Verlag, pp. 13-61.

(1996) Kurds, Turks and the Alevi Revival in Turkey. *Middle East Report*. 200, pp. 7-10.

(1994) Genocide in Kurdistan? The suppression of the Dersim rebellion in Turkey (1937-38) and the chemical war against the Iraqi Kurds (1988). In: Andreopoulos, G. J., ed., (1997) *Genocide: conceptual and historical dimensions*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, pp. 141-170.

Van Gennep, A. (1909) *Les rites de passage. Étude systématique des rites*.

Reprint. Paris: Picard, 1981. Les Classiques des sciences sociales UQAC

Research Repository [online]. Available from:

[http://classiques.uqac.ca/classiques/gennep\\_arnold\\_van/rites\\_de\\_passage/rites\\_de\\_passage.pdf](http://classiques.uqac.ca/classiques/gennep_arnold_van/rites_de_passage/rites_de_passage.pdf) [Accessed 22 May 2019].

- Van Reekum, R., Duyvendak, J. W. and Bertossi, C. (2012) National models of integration and the crisis of multiculturalism: a critical comparative perspective. *Patterns of Prejudice*. 46 (5), pp. 417-426.
- Van Zile, J. (1985) What is dance? Implications for Dance Notation. *Dance Research Journal*. 17 (2) and 18 (1), pp. 41-47.
- Venable, L. (1998) Demystifying Motif Writing. *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation and Dance*. 69 (6), pp. 32-35.
- Verstraete, P. (2015) Still Standing? A Contextual Interview with 'Standing Man', Erdem Gündüz. In: Ozil, S., Hofmann, M. and Dayioglu-Yücel, Y., eds., (2015) *In der Welt der Proteste und Umwälzungen – Deutschland und die Türkei*, Göttingen: V/R Unipress, pp. 121-136.
- Vorhoff, K. (2003) The Past in the Future: Discourses on the Alevis in Contemporary Turkey. In: Jongerden, J., and White, P. J., eds., (2003) *Turkey's Alevi enigma: a comprehensive overview*. Leiden: Brill, pp. 93-109.
- (1998) "Let's Reclaim Our History and Culture!": Imagining Alevi Community in Contemporary Turkey. *Die Welt des Islams, New Series*. 38 (2), pp. 2250-252.
- Walton, J. F. (2015) 'Everyday I'm çapulling!': global flows and local frictions of Gezi. In: David, I. and Toktamış, K. T., eds., (2015) "Everywhere Taksim": *Sowing the Seeds for a New Turkey at Gezi* [online]. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, pp. 45-57. Available from: <http://oopen.org/search?identifier=611222> [Accessed 20 May 2019].
- Watson, I. ed. (2002) *Negotiating Cultures, Eugenio Barba and the Intercultural Debate*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Weineck, B. (2015) Alevi cultural heritage in Turkey and Germany: negotiating 'useable pasts' in transnational space. *European Journal of Turkish Studies* [online]. 20, no pages. [Accessed 22 May 2019].
- Weines, I., ed., (2016) *Performing religion: actors, contexts, and texts: case studies on Islam*. Würzburg: Ergon-Verlag.
- White, Jenny (2018) Epilogue. Mapping the Topography of Oppression. *Anthropology of the Middle East* [online]. 13 (2), pp. 113-124. [Accessed 20 May 2019].
- Yanik, L. K. (2015) Humour as resistance? A brief analysis of the Gezi Park protest graffiti. In: David, I. and Toktamış, K. T., eds., (2015) "Everywhere Taksim": *Sowing the Seeds for a New Turkey at Gezi* [online]. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, pp. 153-184. Available from: <http://oopen.org/search?identifier=611222>. [Accessed 20 May 2019].
- Yıldırım, R. (2012) Inventing a Sufi Tradition: The Use of the Futuwwa Ritual Gathering as a Model for the Qizilbash Djem. In: Curry, J. J. and Ohlander, E. S.,

eds., (2012) *Sufism and Society: Arrangements of the Mystical in the Muslim World, 1200–1800*. New York: Routledge, pp. 164–82.

Yildiz, A. A. and Verkuyten, M. (2011) Inclusive victimhood: social identity and the politicization of collective trauma among Turkey's Alevi in Western Europe. *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*. 17 (3), pp. 243-269.

Youngerman, S. (1978) The translation of a culture into choreography: a study of Doris Humphrey's *The Shakers*, based on Laban analysis. In: Woodroof, D., ed., (1978) *Essays in dance research from the Fifth CORD Conference*, Philadelphia, 11-14 November, 1976. New York: Congress on Research in Dance, pp. 93-110.

Zarcone, T. (2018) La confrontation Sunnites-Alevi en Turquie: l'impossible reconnaissance. *Confluences Méditerranée*. 2 (105), pp. 47-63.

(2016) La mort initiatique dans l'Alévisme et le Bektachisme. De la « résurrection » de 'Alī à la pendaison de Ḥallāj. In: Moezzi, M. A. A., De Cillis, M., De Smet, D. and Mir-Kasimov, O., eds. (2016) *L'Ésotérisme shi'ite, ses racines et ses prolongements*. Turnhout: Brepols, pp. 781-798.

(2012a) The lion of Ali in Anatolia: history, symbolism and iconology. In: Khosronejad, P., ed., (2012) *The art and material culture of Iranian Shi'ism. Iconography and religious devotion in Shi'i Islam*. London: I.B. Tauris & Co, pp. 104-121.

(2012b) The Bektashi-Alevi 'dance of the crane' in Turkey: a Shamanic heritage? In: Zarcone, T. and Hobart, A., eds., (2012) *Shamanism and Islam. Sufism, healing rituals and spirits in the Muslim world*. London: I.B. Tauris & Co, pp. 203-216.

Zarrilli, P. B. (2010) Oral, ritual and shamanic performance. In: Zarrilli, P., McConachie, B., Williams, G. J. and Sorgenfrei, C. F., eds., (2010) *Theatre histories: an introduction*. Abingdon: Routledge. pp. 15-51.

(1988) For whom is the 'invisible' not visible? Reflections on representation in the work of Eugenio Barba, *TDR: The Drama Review*. 32 (1), pp. 95-106.

(1986a) Towards a definition of performance studies, Part I. *Theatre Journal*. 38 (3), pp. 372-376.

(1986b) Towards a definition of performance studies, Part II. *Theatre Journal*. 38 (4), pp. 493-496.

Zengin Arslan, B. (2013) Christopher Dole. *Healing Secular Life: Loss and Devotion in Modern Turkey*. Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 2012. x 291 pages. *New Perspectives on Turkey*. 49, pp. 117-181.

Zeidan, D. (1999) The Alevi of Anatolia. *Middle East Review of International Affairs*. 3 (4), pp. 74-89.

Zirh, B. C. (2012) Following the dead beyond the 'nation': a map for transnational Alevi funerary routes from Europe to Turkey. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*. 35 (10), pp. 1758-1774.

Zürcher, E. J. (1993) *Turkey: a modern history*. Reprint. London: I. B. Tauris&Co, 1998.

**Ethnographic sources (recorded interviews, online and video material, leaflets, reviews and non-academic publications)**

Aksu, G. and Coşkun, Y. (2011) "Özgür bir alan, özgür bir sanat dalı" ["A free space, a free art branch"]. *Mimesis* [online]. 23 April. Available from: <http://www.mimesis-dergi.org/2011/04/ozgur-bir-alan-ozgur-bir-sanat-dali/> [Accessed 20 May 2019].

Aksüt, H., Öztürk, Ü. and Harmancı H. (2010) *Alevi tarih yazımında skandal. Erdoğan Çınar örneği* [Scandal in Alevi history writing. The example of Erdoğan Çınar]. Ankara: Yurk Kitap Yayın.

Ardil, R. (2014) Bin Yılın Türküsü Full. *YouTube* [video]. 18 January. Available from: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z\\_FuoAsR8zU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z_FuoAsR8zU) [Accessed 22 May 2019].

Art News Tokyo (2012) *Saburo Teshigawara works on a dance workshop project with young people*. [Print programme]. October - December. Available from: [http://www.rekibun.or.jp/en/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2017/12/art\\_news\\_tokyo\\_2012\\_04.pdf](http://www.rekibun.or.jp/en/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2017/12/art_news_tokyo_2012_04.pdf) [Accessed 22 May 2019].

Aslan, Ç. (2017) @CigdemAslanOfficial. *Facebook* [online]. 2 July. Available from: <http://www.facebook.com/CigdemAslanOfficial/posts/10155408587901054/> [Accessed 20 May 2019].

Ateş, Ş. (2017) Interview by Sinibaldo De Rosa. 3 December. [Cihangir Akademi, Beyoğlu, İstanbul].

(2013) *Tevhid/Oneness - Alevi İnancı Üzerine Güncel Bir Performans*, 2010, (tam kayıt). [Tevhid / Oneness - A Current Performance on Alevi Faith, 2010, (full registration)]. *YouTube* [video]. 1 December. Available from: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5rhpLnddeSo> [Accessed 22 May 2019].

Aydın, A. (2016) *Semahlarımız... Seferihisar - Kaleiçi*, 3 Haziran 2016. Uluslar arası semah sempozyumu ve semah buluşması Seferihisar'da büyük bir başarıyla gerçekleştirildi. [Our semahs... Seferihisar - Citadel, 3 June 2016. An international *semah* symposium and *semah* meeting was held in Seferihisar with great success]. Aydın Ayhan. *Facebook* [online]. 7 June. Available from: [http://www.facebook.com/ayhan.aydin.125/media\\_set?set=a.10209346155552216.1073742221.1273260053&type=3](http://www.facebook.com/ayhan.aydin.125/media_set?set=a.10209346155552216.1073742221.1273260053&type=3) [Accessed 22 May 2019].

Aydoğmuş, M. and Çoban, Z. (2014). *Semah*. Qizilbaş Yayınevi: London.

Aygün, B. Ç. (2018) Interview by Sinibaldo De Rosa. 20 January. [Capacity Shopping Mall, Bakırköy, İstanbul].

Aytaş, H. (2015) *Faysal İlhan'ın organları bağışlandı* [Faysal İlhan's organs were donated]. *Hürriyet* [online]. 25 December. Available from:

<http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/dunya/faysal-ilhanin-organlari-bagislandi-40031930>  
[Accessed 22 May 2019].

Barın, N. (2018) Interview by Sinibaldo De Rosa. 5 August. [Barın's house, Bandırma].

(1994a) Semahlar. [*Semahs*], *Nefes. Alevi-Bektaşî Kültürünün Sesi*, [Nefes. Voice of Alevi-Bektaşî Culture]. 1 (6), no page.

(1994b) Semahlardan bir örnek. Erzincan Kırklar Semahı - 5. [A semah example. Kırklar Semahı from Erzincan]. *Nefes. Alevi-Bektaşî Kültürünün Sesi* [Nefes. Voice of Alevi-Bektaşî Culture]. 1 (5), pp. 42-46.

(1994c) Semahlar – 4. Pirlar ve Semah... [Semahs – 4. Saints and semah], *Nefes. Alevi-Bektaşî Kültürünün Sesi* [Nefes. Voice of Alevi-Bektaşî Culture]. 1 (4), pp. 37-41.

(1994d) Semahlar – 3. İbadet... [Semahs - 3. Devotion...]. *Nefes. Alevi-Bektaşî Kültürünün Sesi* [Nefes. Voice of Alevi-Bektaşî Culture]. 1 (4), pp. 17-20.

(1993a) Semahlar – 2. Totem – Tabu – Hekim (Şaman). [Semahs – 2. Totem – Taboo – Healer (Shaman)]. *Nefes. Alevi-Bektaşî Kültürünün Sesi* [Nefes. Voice of Alevi-Bektaşî Culture]. 1 (2), pp. 18-21.

(1993b) Semahlar – 1. [Semahs – 1.]. *Nefes. Alevi-Bektaşî Kültürünün Sesi* [Nefes. Voice of Alevi-Bektaşî Culture]. 1 (1), pp. 32-34.

(1986) *Kırpıntılar: Roman*. [Clippings: novel]. Istanbul: Pahu.

Barış TV Official (2016) 6. Alevi Festivali - Turna Semahı (Cambridge Üniversitesi). [6. Alevi Festival - Semah of the Cranes (Cambridge University)]. *YouTube* [video]. Available from:  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SrMEPdRQyLQ> [Accessed 22 May 2019].

*Bilgehan, Zeynep and Tariç, Faruk (2014) Gezi kayıplarının çizeri: Onlara olan borcumuzu yerine getirmemizi bekler gibiydiler.* [The drawing of the Gezi losses: they seemed to be waiting for us to pay our debt with them]. *Diken* [online]. 21 March. Available from: <http://www.agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/9955/baskasinin-yasini-sahiplenince-biz-oluruz> [Accessed 22 May 2019].

Biz / We (2014a) @bizwebiz. Facebook [online]. 7 October. Available from:  
<http://www.facebook.com/bizwebiz/photos/a.939596069390616/939597409390482/?type=3&theater> [Accessed 20 May 2019].

(2014b) @bizwebiz. Facebook [online]. 3 September. Available from:  
<http://www.facebook.com/bizwebiz/photos/a.943879852295571/950130821670474/?type=3&theater> [Accessed 20 May 2019].

(2016) @bizwebiz. Facebook [online]. 30 January. Available from:  
<https://www.facebook.com/bizwebiz/photos/a.939604222723134/1241394929210727/?type=3&theater> [Accessed 20 May 2019].

British Alevi Federation (2019) *Academic Works: Alevism*. Available from:  
[http://www.alevynet.org/RP.aspx?pid=AkademikCalismalar\\_en-GB&aid=97847432\\_92832609](http://www.alevynet.org/RP.aspx?pid=AkademikCalismalar_en-GB&aid=97847432_92832609) [Accessed 22 May 2019].

Buchmann, S. (2015) “Biz” – “Nous” forme le cercle sur scène à Moda Sahnesi. *Couleurs d'Istanbul Lemag* [blog]. 14 January. Available from: <http://couleurs-d->

istanbul-lemag.com/biz-nous-forme-le-cercle-sur-scene-moda-sahnesi [Accessed 10 December 2017].

Celasun, A. H., (1993) *Alevilikte cem: dedelere, mürşitlere, oniki hizmet görenlere ve taliplere kılavuz*. [The cem in Alevism: a guide for dedes, mürşits, twelve service holders and talips]. Istanbul: Alev Yayınevi.

Celasun, A. H., Yürükçü, R. and Köklü, M. (1992) *Posttan dosta. Ali Haydar Celasun Dede Konuşmalar*. [From Post to Dost. Speeches by Ali Haydar Celasun Dede]. Istanbul: Alev Yayınevi.

Chrisafis, A. (2018) French environment minister quits live on radio with anti-Macron broadside. *The Guardian* [online]. 28 August. Available from: [http://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/aug/28/french-environment-minister-quits-live-on-radio-with-anti-macron-broadside?CMP=share\\_btn\\_tw](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/aug/28/french-environment-minister-quits-live-on-radio-with-anti-macron-broadside?CMP=share_btn_tw) [Accessed 20 May 2019].

Christie-Millen, A. (2014) Soma: Lifting the lid on the 'New Turkey'. *Turkeyetc* [blog]. 23 May. Available from: <https://turkeyetc.wordpress.com/2014/05/23/soma-lifting-the-stone-on-the-new-turkey/> [Accessed 20 May 2019].

Çimen, M. (2016) Interview by Sinibaldo De Rosa. 6 June. [Çimen's Yapım office, Ortaköy, Istanbul].

Çimen's Yapım (2019) *Çimen's yapım*. Available from: [www.cimensyapim.com](http://www.cimensyapim.com) [Accessed 22 May 2019].

Çınar, E. (2007) *Kayıp bir Alevi efsanesi*. [A lost Alevi legend]. Reprint. Istanbul: Kalkedon Yayınları, 2009.

(1997) *Aleviliğin kökleri. Abdal Musa'nın sırrı*. [Roots of Alevilik. The secret of Abdal Musa]. Reprint. Istanbul: Kalkedon Yayınları, 2012.

Dehmen, B. (2016) Interview by Sinibaldo De Rosa. 6 May. [Mimar Sinan University Dance Department, Istanbul].

(2015) Biz & Bedr temsil 11.11.2015. No date. *Vimeo* [video]. Available with password ( *bizwebedr* ) from: <http://vimeo.com/202630370> [Accessed 22 May 2019].

Dem Radyo (2016) @demradyo.ac.uk. *Facebook* [online]. 24 April. Available from:

(<http://www.facebook.com/demradyo.co.uk/videos/1750155981865298/>) [Accessed 22 May 2019].

De Rosa, S. (2015a) 1 2 1 4. 18 May. *YouTube* [video]. Available from: <http://youtu.be/VHRvPlalEas> [Accessed 22 May 2019].

(2015b) Ankara Deneme Sahnesi - Samah Kardeslik Töreni 1998. 17 May. *YouTube* [video]. Available from: <http://youtu.be/uONeQE3FDNo> [Accessed 22 May 2019].

(2015c) Ankara Deneme Sahnesi - Samah Kardeşlik Töreni 2004. 17 May. *YouTube* [video]. Available from: <https://youtu.be/rSdEm3sjQH8> [Accessed 22 May 2019].

Doğa Derneği (2019) *History*. Available from: <http://www.dogadernegi.org/en/history/> [Accessed 22 May 2019].

Doğal Alpaslan Demir (2017). *Kaygusuz Abdal - Şiirli Cuma*. 28 April. Available from: <http://doganalpdemir.com/2017/04/28/kaygusuz-abdal-siirli-cuma> [Accessed 22 May 2019].

Erseven, İ. C. (1983) "Yaren Sohbeti" ve "Semahlar". *Somut*. 22 July. p. 11.

Europalia Arts Festival (2015) *Europalia Arts Festival Turkey 06 October 2015 - 31 January 2016* [Print programme]. 3 September. Bruxelles: Europalia Arts Festival. Available from: [http://issuu.com/europalia\\_festival/docs/programme-complet](http://issuu.com/europalia_festival/docs/programme-complet) [Accessed 22 May 2019].

European Federation of Journalists (2015) *Welcome to Belgium, Mr Erdoğan* [press release]. 5 October. Available from: <http://europeanjournalists.org/blog/2015/10/05/welcome-to-brussels-mr-erdogan/> [Accessed 25 May 2019].

Fédération Union des Alévis en France (2014) *15ème anniversaire de la FUAF, «Terre, Mon Amour» - FUAF 15 yaşında, «Doğa Aşkına»*. 7 June 2014.

Gökhan, D. F. (2015) Europalia Türkiye Tartışma Yarattı [Europalia Turkey sparks debate]. *Agos* [online]. 30 July. Available from: <http://www.agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/12308/europalia-turkiye-tartisma-yaratti> [Accessed 22 May 2019].

Güneş, S. (2016) Interview by Sinibaldo De Rosa. 9 October. [Paris-Bondy *cemevi*, Ile de France].

Gür, S. (2018) Abdi İpekçi yerini modern tesislere bırakıyor. [Abdi İpekçi leaves place to modern facilities]. *Anadolu Agency* [online]. 24 January. Available from: <http://www.aa.com.tr/tr/basketbol/abdi-ipekci-yerini-modern-tesislere-birakiyor/1040992> [Accessed 25 May 2019].

Hacıbektaş Belediyesi (2015) *Hacı Bektaş Veli Anma Törenleri Programı*. [Program of the celebrations in memory of Hacı Bektaş Veli]. Available from: <http://www.hacibektas.bel.tr/portal/haci-bektas-veli-anma-torenlere-programi/#respond> [Accessed 22 May 2019].

Hardy, S. (2014) The material culture of labour exploitation and resistance in Soma. *Conflict antiquities* [blog]. 27 May. Available from: <http://conflictantiquities.wordpress.com/2014/05/27/turkey-soma-mine-disaster-crony-capitalism-corporate-manslaughter-resistance/> [Accessed 22 May 2019].



Hülya Aksular (2019) *Hülya Aksular*. Available from: <http://hulyaaksular.com/> [Accessed 22 May 2019].

*Hürriyet Daily News* (2015) England accepts Alevi Federation as charity to promote religious aims [online]. 6 October. Available from: <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/england-accepts-alevi-federation-as-charity-to-promote-religious-aims--89484> [Accessed 22 May 2019].

Hurtas, S. (2017) Mob attack on Kurdish funeral sparks outrage in Turkey. *AlMonitor* [online]. 18 September. Available from: <http://almon.co/2x8z> [Accessed 22 May 2019].

İngiltere Alevi Kültür Merkezi ve Cemevi (2016) *Facebook* [online]. 12 June. Available from: <http://www.facebook.com/472736672780182/videos/1023974377656406/> [Accessed 22 May 2019].

Istanbul Modern (2015) "biz" / "we". 3 October. Available from: [http://www.istanbulmodern.org/en/events/past-events/yap-events-2015/biz-we\\_1671.html](http://www.istanbulmodern.org/en/events/past-events/yap-events-2015/biz-we_1671.html) [Accessed 22 May 2019].

Ivanoff A. (2014). Performances at CRR, Fulya, and Kuad Gallery Offer Originality and Courage. *Today's Zaman* [online]. May. Accessed from: Ivanoff, A. (2017) E-mail to Sinibaldo De Rosa, 9 October.

Jakabu TV (no year) Challenge accepted: halay forever/sonsuz döngülü halay. No date. *Vimeo* [video]. Available from: <http://vimeo.com/25979395> [Accessed 22 May 2019].

Johnston, (2016). Turkey coup attempt: arrest warrants issued for former newspaper staff. *The Guardian* [online]. Available from: [http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jul/27/turkey-discharges-1700-officers-from-military-after-coup-attempt?CMP=share\\_btn\\_tw](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jul/27/turkey-discharges-1700-officers-from-military-after-coup-attempt?CMP=share_btn_tw) [Accessed 20 May 2019].

Kahraman, A. (2018) Yurttaşın tepkisiyle 'Müm söndürmek' çıkarıldı. [Removal of 'Extinguishing the candle' after citizen's reaction]. *Pirha: Pir Haber Ajansı* [online]. 2 May. Available from: <https://www.pirha.net/yurttasin-tepkisiyle-mum-sondurmek-cikarildi-120012.html/02/05/2018/> [Accessed 22 May 2019].

Engin, İ. (2013). İsmail Çoban'ın çizgileriyle: Bin Yılın Türküsü - Das Epos des Jahrtausends - Saga of the Millenium. [With the drawing of İsmail Çoban: Bin Yılın Türküsü - Das Epos des Jahrtausends - Saga of the Millenium]. *SanalKültür KanalKültür* [blog]. 16 July. Available from: <http://kanalkultur.blogspot.com/2013/07/ismail-cobann-cizgileriyle-bin-yln.html> [Accessed 22 May 2019].

Karakaya-Stump, A. (2014) Alevizing Gezi. Translated from the Turkish by Emrah Yıldız. *Jadaliyya* [online]. 26 March. Available from:

<http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/17087/alevizing-gezi>. [Accessed 22 May 2019].

Kılıçkaya, E. (2014a) Doğa Aşkına, 7 Haziran 2014 Paris. 1 May. *YouTube* [video]. Available from: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aWPMaIEkcxE> [Accessed 22 May 2019].

(2014b) Doğa Aşkına Paris 07 06 2014. 2 June. *YouTube* [video]. Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dsQxY8xaS3c> [Accessed 22 May 2019].

Koçak, A., ed., (2015) *Soma - 301 Katledilen madenciler anısına Kınık Cemi* [Soma - *Kınık Cemi* in memory of the 301 murdered miners]. Istanbul: Serçeşme Yayınları.

Koerbin, P. (2009) Nimri Dede. *Pir Sultan Abdal and me* [blog]. 9 February, 7 April and 29 August. Available from: <http://koerbin.wordpress.com/tag/nimri-dede/> [Accessed 20 May 2019].

Lee, I., Mortensen, A., and Tuysuz, G. (2013) 'Clashes, Chaos Erupt at Ankara Gathering for Slain Protester', *CNN* [online]. 17 June. Available from: <http://edition.cnn.com/2013/06/16/world/europe/turkey-protests/index.html> [Accessed 22 May 2019].

Letsch, C. (2014) Man shot dead at funeral as police and protesters clash in Istanbul. *The Guardian* [online]. Available from: <https://gu.com/p/3pf7p/stw> [Accessed 20 May 2019].

Les Alévis (2016) @LesAlevis. *Facebook* [online]. 22 August. Available from: <http://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=636861496477145> [Accessed 20 May 2019].

Les Halles (no year) *Les Halles*. Available from: <http://www.halles.be/en/plaats/Les-Halles> [Accessed 22 May 2019].

*Le Parisien* (2014) Terre Mon Amour - Doga Askina. [online] no date. Available from: <http://www.parisetudiant.com/etudiant/sortie/terre-mon-amour-doga-askina-paris-17.html> [Accessed 22 May 2019].

Makereel, C. (2015) Europalia Turquie censurée? Pas si vite!. *Le Soir* [online]. 8 October. Available from: <http://www.lesoir.be/archive/d-20151008-3D18HY> [Accessed 20 May 2019].

Martin, S. (2009) *Ortaçağ'da Avrupa'da bir Alevi Hareketi Katharlar*. Istanbul: Kalkedon Yayınevi.

Maxim Gorki Theater (2014a) *Biz* [online]. Available from: <http://gorki.de/en/biz> [Accessed 22 May 2019].

(2014b) *ГОРКИ #11* [Print programme]. 17 February. Available from: [https://issuu.com/maximgorkitheater/docs/gorki\\_leporello14-11\\_v9](https://issuu.com/maximgorkitheater/docs/gorki_leporello14-11_v9) [Accessed 22 May 2019].

Minority Rights Group International (2018) *Turkey: Alevi*. [online]. Available from: <https://minorityrights.org/minorities/alevis/> [Accessed 20 May 2019].

Özel, M. K. (2014) Dünyevi bir ayin: 'Biz-We'. [A worldly ritual: 'Biz-We']. 5 May. Available from: <http://www.mimesis-dergi.org/2014/05/dunyeve-bir-ayin-bizwe/> [Accessed 20 May 2019].

Özgünden, D. (2015) Europalia: le mélange des cultures sera-t-il mis en lumière? Et comment?. *Info-Türk* [online]. 41 (441). Available from: <https://www.info-turk.be/441.htm#Europalia> [Accessed 20 May 2019].

*Radikal* (2014) Meclis Soma'yı 'araştırmayı' 29 Nisan'da reddetti. [On the 29<sup>th</sup> of April the Parliament refused 'to investigate' Soma] [online]. 15 May. Available from: <http://www.radikal.com.tr/turkiye/meclis-somayi-arastirmayi-29-nisanda-reddetti-1191922/> [Accessed 22 May 2019].

Sağlam, Y. (2010) Interview by Sinibaldo De Rosa. 23 December. [Ankara University Tömer Language Centre, Ankara].

(2009) Kardeşlik Töreni – Samah: Gösterisinin çeyrek asrı geride bırakan ömrü [Samah- The ritual of brotherhood: the life left behind by a quarter century old performance]. *Sahne: Tiyatro, Opera ve Bale Dergisi*. no volume and pages.

Saraç, N. (2014) Alevi Soma'da ölürken de öteki. [Even when dying in Soma the Alevi are different], *Milliyet* [online]. 22 May. Available from: <http://blog.milliyet.com.tr/alevi-soma-da-olurken-de-oteki-/Blog/?BlogNo=461844> [Accessed 22 May 2019].

Serin, A. (2002) 'Bin Yılın Türküsü' de barıştıramadı. *Hürriyet* [online]. 06 October. Available from: <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/bin-yilin-turkusu-de-baristiramadi-101959> [Accessed 22 May 2019].

Söylemez, A. (2014) Soma Miners Will Venture Again Tomorrow. *Bianet English* [online]. 19 May. Available from: <http://bianet.org/english/labor/155796-soma-miners-will-venture-again-tomorrow> [Accessed 22 May 2019].

*Stockholm Center for Freedom* (2017) Novelist Erdoğan says Turkey turned into a 'concentration camp'. 27 May. Available from: <http://stockholmcf.org/novelist-erdogan-says-turkey-turned-into-a-concentration-camp/> [Accessed 22 May 2019].

Tangen, O. (2007) Alevi muslims enraged by incest link in German TV show. *Quantara.de* [online]. 31 December. Available from: <http://en.qantara.de/node/3511> [Accessed 22 May 2019].

Tharoor, I. (2016) Istanbul's New \$3 billion bridge has a very divisive name. *The Washington Post* [online]. 27 September. Available from: [http://wapo.st/2bnip72?tid=ss\\_tw&utm\\_term=.f0cd3d2034d4](http://wapo.st/2bnip72?tid=ss_tw&utm_term=.f0cd3d2034d4) [Accessed 22 May 2019].

Tremblay, P. (2014) AKP advice to Soma: Don't protest, just pray, *AlMonitor* [online]. 19 May. Available from: <http://almon.co/2359> [Accessed 22 May 2019].

Türk Dil Kürümü (2018) “Vazalak” Sözü ile İlgili Açıklama [Explanation about the word 'Vazalak']. [online communication]. 21 January. Available from: [http://www.tdk.gov.tr/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=963&Itemid=75](http://www.tdk.gov.tr/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=963&Itemid=75) [Accessed 20 May 2019].

T.C. Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı Tanıtma Müdürlüğü [General Directorate of Promotion of the Ministry of Culture and Turizm] (2015) *Europalia Sanat Festivali Açılış Etkinliği* [The Opening Ceremony of the Europalia Art Festival]. [online]. Available from: <http://www.tanitma.gov.tr/TR,144531/europalia-sanat-festivali-acilis-etkinligi.html> accessed on 04.12.2018. [Accessed 22 May 2019].

Uluçay, S. and Dehmen, B. (2014) Başkasının yasını sahiplenince 'biz' oluruz [We become 'we' when we make someone else's grief ours]. *Agos* [online]. 16 December. Available from: <http://www.agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/9955/baskasinin-yasini-sahiplenince-biz-oluruz> [Accessed 22 May 2019].

Vanderlinden, J. (2015) Tout Ce Que Europalia-Turquie Ne ne vous Dit Pas. *Amnesty International Belgique* [online]. 29 December. Available from: <http://www.amnesty.be/infos/nos-blogs/blog-paroles-de-chercheurs-de-defenseurs-et-de-victimes/article/tout-ce-que-europalia-turquie-ne-vous-dit-pas?lang=fr> [Accessed 22 May 2019].

Yaman, A. (no year) *Kızılbaş Alevi dedeleri*. [The Kızılbaş Alevi *dedes*]. Istanbul: Şahkulu Sultan Külliyesi Vakfı.

Yaman, M. (1999) *Alevilik'te cenaze hizmetleri*. [Funerary practices in Aleviness]. Istanbul: no publisher.

Yıldırım, A. (1993) *Ateşte Semaha Durmak*. [Stopping the *semah* in the fire]. Ankara: Yurt Kitap Yayın.

Yol TV (2015) Faysal İlhan Baba Erenler'in Cenaze Erkanı. 30 December. *YouTube* [video]. Available from: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nnwZpSktDTU> [Accessed 22 May 2019].

Yolgösteren, A. (2011) Interview by Sinibaldo De Rosa. 10 February. [Ankara Deneme Sahnesi, Ankara].