

that it can also serve egalitarian purposes. In the case of genocide and other forms of structured violence and in increasing biopolitical regimentations of life, mourning facilitates marginalized and minority bodies and voices to come together and participate in sharing their grievances.

Though it is viewed as a passive action, the many recent incidents have shown that they can turn volatile. They can create a problem for the state and authority. Despite its problem of bonding in a caste society, solidarity and the sharing of body, pain and gestures are core to mourning. I observe that we need to take into account different aspects of mourning, not in terms of reciprocity but in relation to affect and the memories it produces through its performances. If mourning is a show, it is a show of solidarity. It is a gesture that moves in assembly.

One way of seeing mourning is that it is not about loss, but about what remains with us: the experiences, the memories, the touch, the regret and the acts that colour the meaning of our life. The mourning that was a passing moment has become a looming wait. The river cries but carries the message of freedom and curtailment. It says that when mourning is not allowed, it becomes enduring. It is not going to die before it accomplishes its task, before it departs the soul, before it buries the body with full dignity.

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Theatre and solidarity among the transnational Alevi community

R Ü Y A K A L I N T A Ş

The Alevi religious minority make up the largest religious minority in Turkey and their history of persecution dates back before the Republic of Turkey, to the Ottoman Empire. Like almost every minority that has been persecuted by the dominant power structures, Alevi have also resisted this persecution, struggled to survive and 'preserve' their identity. Solidarity has ensured the survival of this community, which has become a transnational community by spreading beyond the borders of the nation, especially to Europe.

The concept of solidarity has found renewed relevance in the debates concerning intensifying socio-political oppressions to maintain the neoliberal order. In the most common usage of the concept, political solidarity 'indicates solidarity formed in response to injustice or oppression' (Scholz 2008: 14). Although this general view has been criticized as being exclusive (Bayertz 1999), some, such as bell hooks, argue that there are ways to turn the concept into an inclusive one. In her discussion on the possibilities of intersectional feminism, bell hooks argues that people from different segments of society need to show their concern for the collective and to accept the responsibility for fighting oppressions that may not directly affect them as individuals. She repeatedly relates solidarity to resistance and argues that, as those who have had to contend with power structures well know, 'solidarity strengthens resistance struggle' (hooks 2015:44). Solidarity is a form of resistance for the persecuted communities because it constantly challenges and negotiates the conditions and boundaries of existence defined by the power structures. Relations of solidarity against different forms of oppression become possible and effective in and through resistance (Medina 2012: 21). Performance, especially theatre, has been part of resistance, since it facilitates politicizing of culture and the

establishment of a broad network of political solidarity against systematic oppression, especially by narrating the events from the perspectives of marginalized and oppressed communities (Pilkington 1998: 25). As such, theatre has the power of drawing out stories of 'oppression and for helping communities to analyze and organize against the conditions that allow those oppressions to exist' (Bodden 2010: 60). The historically persecuted Alevi religious minority integrated theatre into their struggle with that purpose, and through the re-enactments of specific events in their history, they enhance the solidarity of their community.

In her book *Theatre and Community*, Emine Fişek discusses how theatrical practice can reveal the tensions inherent in community settings and states that 'the stage has long been a site for thinking about community formation and collectivity' (2019: 5). For this very reason, theatre is one of the most crucial vantage points for understanding a community, its history and its inner dynamics. In the 1970s, Alevi began to engage with theatre to address their struggle in Turkey's socially and politically turbulent environment. As one of the diasporic communities from Turkey, the community employed theatre to negotiate the politics of visibility and belonging and intervene in national and international politics in Europe (186). Yet, despite the culturally and politically significant role of the powerful theatre works by and about this religious minority in Turkey and its diasporas, the question of how Alevi communities used theatre has not been studied and thus Alevi theatre remains scholarly neglected. This article aims to address this critical gap in providing insights into the historical relationship between Alevi theatre and its capacity to resist the power structures that repress, disregard and try to assimilate the community. However, rather than assuming

the existence of a global Alevi community or framing Alevism as a stable identity position, I draw attention to the importance of considering diversity in the studies of Alevi history, as well as the importance of intersectional identities.

In what follows below, I discuss the historical development of Alevi theatre and the politics of contemporary productions, especially the ones staged after the last traumatic incidence of the Sivas Massacre,¹ as it was a turning point in the political struggle of the Alevi community. I further analyse how theatre has become a critical site where members of the Alevi community engage with their traumatic past, negotiate the transnational politics of belonging and maintain solidarity networks. Building on Marianne Hirsch's concept of post-memory (Hirsch 2012), I will argue that the Alevi community employs theatre as a site for solidarity towards the constitution of collective memory and the intergenerational transfer of trauma. In the second part of the article, I will offer specific examples that reveal how the community has used theatre as a binding force among the community. By doing so, I draw on data I gathered on my multi-sited ethnographic and archival research that I conducted last year in Turkey in the cities of Nevşehir and İstanbul. Throughout my fieldwork, I became attentive to a number of issues that have been under discussion among the community, including issues concerning gender identities and political economy of theatre. The Alevi minority mainly considers itself a gender-equal community; however, recent debates within the community that are going on throughout the commemoration gatherings, academic conferences and cultural and artistic events have challenged this 'myth' and demonstrated the limits of gendered politics of belonging – especially with regard to religious leadership. The religious leaders can be male or female in Alevism, however today there are hardly any female religious leaders. Drawing on these current debates, I further discuss the ways in which theatre productions and dramatic texts may challenge and reproduce power relations, especially in terms of gender. Moreover, as I consider the political economy of Alevi

community theatre productions as a further issue in solidarity building, I will offer some concluding ideas on how solidarity networks generate a solidarity economy through these productions.

THEATRE TO STRUGGLE WITH THE HISTORY OF ABJECTION

In order to examine the relationship between the Alevi community and theatre, it is crucial to elaborate on the history of the abjection of the community. That story dates back to the seventh century. After the death of Prophet Mohammad in 632, there were disagreements about the caliphate, namely the leadership of the Islamic community. The third successor prophet Ali (the cousin and son-in-law of Prophet Mohammad) was killed by his opponents. The followers of Ali wanted his son to be the next caliphate. Disagreements over the leadership resulted in a battle in which many descendants of Prophet Mohammad, including the son of Prophet Ali, were killed. The Battle of Karbala (680) was the founding traumatic event in the history for the followers of Ali and resulted in the creation of a unique religious sect with its own rituals. Those who choose to follow the teachings of Prophet Ali in Anatolia are called Alevis, and under the hegemony of Sunni Islam in the Ottoman Empire, the history of the community has been one of oppression and persecution, especially since the Ottoman rulers claimed caliphal authority in the sixteenth century. Soon after the tension with the Shiite Safavid state in the east of the empire, Alevis were marked as the enemies within and they were therefore pacified, marginalized and kept under state control. Non-Muslim subjects of the empire like Jews and various Christian denominations were recognized as 'the people of the book' and in this way these groups experienced a sort of autonomy. The Alevis, on the other hand, were labelled as 'heretics', with their existence neither recognized nor institutionalized (Massicard 2013: 15–19); they were marginalized throughout the Ottoman Empire period and through the discourse of heresy, their exclusion from the centres of Ottoman life, meaning that at times even their persecution was justified

(Dressler 2013: 22). In the face of such adversity, Alevis preferred to live as closed communities, isolated in the highest villages, in order to minimize the social interaction with the Sunni communities.

The inception of the Republic of Turkey as a secular nation-state in 1923 was initially promising for the Alevis, but the regime remained implicitly Sunni Muslim. So, exclusion and oppression of the Alevis as 'non-Muslims' have been the necessary constituent in the formation of a Turkish identity and national unity. Thus, the Alevi community's experiences of citizenship and belonging continued to be characterized by precarity as they occupied a category of 'national abjection'. Drawing on the concept of Julia Kristeva's abjection, Karen Shimakawa argues that national abjection is a process in which minorities occupy 'the seemingly contradictory, yet functionally essential position of the constituent elements and radical other' (2002: 3). Abject groups play an essential and mutually constitutive role in the national subject formation, since nation-building processes comprise not only of creating 'imagined communities'. Construction and maintenance of borders around the 'national subject' function by excluding abject groups as they demarcate the borders of a national subject.

Members of the diverse groups that form the Alevi community have also experienced intersectional violence because of their ethnicity – as in the case of Kurds in the Dersim Massacre (1937–8),² or of their political views, as in the anti-communist Maraş Massacre (1978).³ Nation-building and maintaining a constructed national identity is possible through creating a collective memory that has little to do with actual historical events (Hroch 1996: 84). Therefore, these events mostly take part in the official narratives in a way to provide consistency to the constructed national identity. An official narrative is written and maintained carefully; the borders of the national identity are reconstructed again and again through exclusion and marginalization. As a response, a need emerges to fill the narrative gaps of the nation from the perspectives of marginalized and oppressed subjects in order to pinpoint the role of stories in repression and silence (Vigil 2014:

23). Theatre is a way to challenge the official narratives of those traumatic events, a way to reveal what is systematically hidden and what is not told. By allowing new stories to be narrated, theatre can be seen to perform solidarity for the Alevi community, as I will further demonstrate in the second part of the article.

Beginning in the 1960s, the waves of migration from rural areas to urban Turkey and Western Europe gradually transformed the experiences of the Alevi community. Alevi people left their small towns and villages where they formed the majority; they came to the cities and became more visible in Turkey. Alevi neighbourhoods emerged in the cities, and they grew over time. Migration was a turning point in their history; they began to live next to the citizens of the dominant ideology and experienced abjection within their daily life. Initially, most Alevis chose to hide their identities to protect themselves. However, they began to organize to 'preserve' their culture and continue their rituals. As a result, their need for community-building and solidarity intensified. Within that period, their community was politicized, and their reactions to oppression and discrimination have changed. New needs emerged in their daily lives, and they had to rearrange their daily habits accordingly within this city context dominated by Turkish-Sunni culture. As part of this process of adaptation to city life, theatre became a tool for community-building and negotiating the politics of abjection. For example, an 82-year-old Alevi man whom I interviewed had told me that they were writing plays in which they recited parts from the poems of well-known Alevi poets and were reading them in the community gatherings as if they were on stage. It was also in this period that Alevi theatre groups emerged in İstanbul (Adak and Altınay 2018: 197). Since then, theatre has been a political performance form that community members use for visibility and the transfer of (post-)memory, community-building and solidarity.

During the same period, those members of the Alevi minority who migrated to Western European countries had the chance to escape the oppression and persecution in Turkey. However, the public in Europe subsumed Alevis simply

¹ In July 1993, thirty-seven people lost their lives due to radical Sunni Islamists setting fire to the hotel where those who came to the city of Sivas for an Alevi cultural event were staying.

² In the province of Tunceli, formerly Dersim, Turkey, from March 1937 to September 1938, a military campaign took place against those who had objections to the 1934 Resettlement Law. The law aimed at the assimilation of non-Turkish minorities through forced and collective resettlement. The area was populated by Kurdish and Zaza Alevis and many civilians were killed in the operations.

³ In December 1978, for more than a week, extreme rightist and fascist groups first systematically marked the front doors of Alevis and left-wing civilians with red crosses, then dragged them out of their houses and shops, tortured and murdered them. According to official records, more than 100 Alevis living in Kahramanmaraş were killed in these events. The state did not intervene for days, and no one has yet been prosecuted for this event.

under the undifferentiated mass of ‘Turks’, not recognizing any difference (Sökefeld 2008: 35). That generalization was another kind of discrimination to fight against, by finding ways to be in solidarity. Many of them wanted to differentiate themselves from the Sunni Muslim Turkish majority and gain recognition as a distinct group with different needs, especially in terms of religious practice and education. To this end, the community organized and established formal and informal transnational solidarity networks in their new homelands, such as living close to one another, finding homes and jobs for those coming from Turkey and helping friends at work. After the attacks against Alevis, the turbulent political situation in Turkey of the 1970s led to the migration of Alevis to Europe. Following these developments, migrants in Europe became more politicized, and they formalized their solidarity networks. At the beginning of the 1990s, they established Alevi Culture Groups and Alevi Associations (71). Through these associations, Alevi cultural centres were opened in various cities in Europe. Over time, these centres have become political centres where the community discusses what needs to be done to preserve the Alevi culture in the diaspora and support the struggle for recognition in Turkey. These centres organized music and theatre courses for Alevi youth. Some centres, such as Hamburg Alevi Cultural Center for example, even established their own theatre groups. As a result, in the formation and sustenance of the networks and the broader politics of Alevi solidarity, theatre has played a crucial role by serving identity claims and political demands.

SOLIDARITY AS RESISTANCE THROUGH THEATRE

After the foundation of the Republic of Turkey as a nation-state, any group formation that could disrupt the harmony of a homogeneous nation was seen as a danger. Ethnic and religious homogenization has been carried out using all kinds of tools such as population exchanges and pogroms (Çakmak and Gürtaş 2015: 37). In this context theatre became a tool of nationalist violence and boundary-making for

the state, used for the Turkification of minorities (Adak and Altınay 2018: 194). Minorities, on the other hand, used theatre to challenge the politics of abjection and to negotiate the politics of belonging. Human migrations and political/religious/social movements deeply affect the nationalist political belonging projects of the states (Yuval-Davis 2011: 6). The Alevi community used theatre in the same way within the challenging urban life after the migration waves in the 1970s. As I will continue to demonstrate below, theatre was one of the most suitable means for ‘preserving’ and transmitting their culture primarily to the younger generations, as well as their struggle for recognition, mainly through re-enactments of specific events revealing the violence the Alevi community had been subjected to in the past. These re-enactments included events such as the Battle of Karbala and the execution of the mystic poet Al-Hallaj (858–922), the Maraş Massacre (1978) and the Sivas Massacre (1993).

The most important motivation behind the choice of re-enactment or documentary forms is that the Alevi community has not been yet officially recognized as a distinct community with their own rights. This desire to remember stems from the need of reconstructing their own identities against the grand narrative of the nation, namely the official history that hides what has happened to the community. In addition, in and through these productions, theatre functions as a site for the constitution of post-memory and the intergenerational transmission and transformation of trauma, thus reinforcing a culture of solidarity among the transnational Alevi community. Marianne Hirsch defines post-memory as ‘the relationship that the generation after bears to the collective and cultural trauma of those who came before’, and the psychological impact of those events on people who did not experience them (2012: 5). She argues that ‘new generations remember those traumas only through the stories, images, and behaviours among which they grew up’ and ‘post-memory’s connection to the past is thus actually mediated not by recall but by imaginative investment, projection, and creation’ (ibid.).

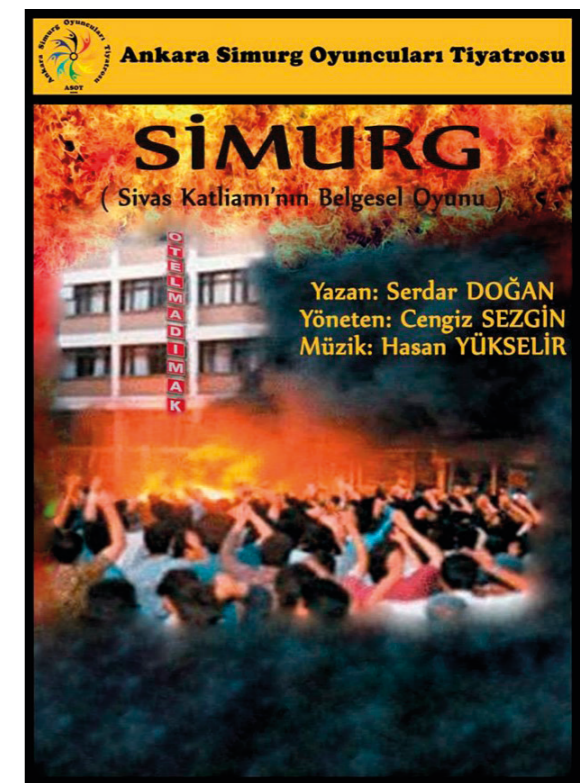
Based upon Hirsch’s argument, I argue that

the Alevi community regards theatre as a form of cultural memory. Especially, re-enactments of certain events aim to affectively engage the spectator in the trauma of the ‘generations before’ and prevent the past from being repeated. Although it is impossible to articulate the trauma itself, it is possible to transmit its impact through repetition, and theatre has a destabilizing power over identity just like trauma does (Duggan 2017: 30). Therefore, through theatre, the community reconstructs itself upon a traumatic affect and stands in solidarity against future threats and the conditions that allow those events to happen.

For the Alevi community, the effects of traumatic events that happened in the past continue into the present and the resonant after-effects of trauma are observable within their daily lives. Alevis declare their security concerns from time to time, referring to the incidents from the past, since the traumatic events destroy the victim’s fundamental assumptions about the safety of the world (Herman 2015: 51). For example, even today, the doors of homes in Alevi neighbourhoods are sometimes marked with colour as before the Maraş Massacre. In Maraş, in 1978, fascist groups systematically marked the front doors of Alevis and left-wing civilians with red crosses as a sign of being targeted, and then killed the people living in these houses. More than a hundred people were killed, the properties and workplaces of Alevi people were destroyed during the events and there was no state intervention for five days. So, the community considers these markings an intimidation, and their concerns seem justified, considering their past experiences. Transgenerational transmission of traumatic knowledge is vital to build a community. Alevi theatre engages younger generations in order to develop an understanding of the collective trauma of the community. Knowing that these traumatic events are systematic and can recur reminds them that individuals in the community have to be in solidarity and cooperate against this threat.

The plays of Ankara Simurg Actors (Ankara Simurg Oyuncuları) theatre company present an excellent example of how the Alevi community uses theatre in the form of re-enactment.

Playwright Serdar Doğan has experienced his share from the systematic violence that Alevis have experienced. The Sivas Massacre is one of the most traumatic events in the history of the Republic; people set fire to the hotel, gathered around and watched it burn. Doğan was in the hotel with his brother Serkan who died there. Doğan was also taken to the morgue first, assumed to be dead. Those who came for diagnosis understood he was alive and took him to the hospital. After a year of treatment, Doğan studied dramaturgy and founded Ankara Simurg Oyuncuları with his friends in 2005. His plays narrate his personal trauma as well as the wider Alevi Community experiences (Sevimay 2009).



Poster for the play *Madımak*. Image Rüya Kalintaş

The company’s first play, *Simurg* (or *Madımak*) [*Simurg*] (2006), was about the Sivas Massacre. As a documentary play it narrated the events from inside of the burning hotel. As written on the play’s posters: ‘Forgetting is being a partner in crime. To not forget and not to be forgotten.’

The second staged play of the company, named *Yangın Yeri Maraş* (Fireground Maraş) (2008), was a political documentary about the

anti-communist Alevi massacre in 1978. The poster of the play read: 'To not forget Maraş'. The latest play of the Ankara Simurg Actors Company is *Kerbela'dan Madımak'a* (From Karbala to Madımak) (2021). It narrates the violence that Alevis have been subjected to since the Battle of Karbala. The promotional bulletin of this play states: 'We will once again bleed our common pain that does not form a scab. So that we don't forget.' As it was apparent from the banners, these plays' primary purpose was to reconstruct the memory of what has happened to Alevis and transmit the knowledge of their traumas. The aim was 'to not make people forget' because the power structures always hide their roles in these events. In such a context where an official narrative draws a veil over the actuality, those plays are acts of reminding and re-addressing and telling the story through the traces carved into the collective memory of persecuted communities.

■ The poster for the play *Yangın Yeri Maraş*. Image: Rüya Kalintaş



These plays function as a way of commemorating and reconfiguring the community's historical experience. For younger generations of the community they offer a way

of relating to the trauma of their ancestors. The genres of the plays as documentary and political theatre offer a fundamental function to reinterpret collective memories through opening spaces for revisiting the specific incidents. This politically engaged theatre offers a potential resistance to hegemonic structures of power. I argue that these plays were prepared to remind the community of what really happened in their history and the need to stand together against those who were responsible. In that sense, theatre can transmit the knowledge of what happened to a specific community in the past, reveal the structures of power as the source of the trauma and evoke the need for solidarity against the persecutor.

Alevis have been combating discrimination for decades and are still fighting for official recognition by the Turkish state. Taking their history of persecution into consideration, the idea of transferring knowledge of their trauma is vital for the community since it is the only way for them to survive as a community. Therefore, theatre operates as a performative medium to disseminate historical awareness among spectators to anticipate similar threats to their community and be precautionary. Hirsch defines the ultimate aim of post-memory as a sort of sense of unsettlement, and this is a crucial part of the social activism to prevent similar traumas (O'Donoghue 2018). Since most of the plays produced by the members of the Alevi community are the re-enactments of traumatic events, they leave audiences with the unease of discovering the community's history of violence and suffering. Nira Yuval-Davis states that 'as a rule, the emotional components of people's constructions of themselves and their identities become more central the more threatened and less secure they become' (2011: 5). Drawing on this statement one might argue that the sense of unsettlement created by the plays might enhance and strengthen the community's solidarity. As such theatre can motivate Alevis to engage in political resistance for official recognition of their community and to ward off potential threats to their identity and existence.

THE LIMITS OF ALEVI SOLIDARITY

Equal participation and the co-presence of men and women in religious rituals are perceived as an indicator of equality not only in Alevi cosmology but also in Alevis' everyday life. However, Alevi women have recently been raising their voices, saying that, in practice, there is no such gender equality in the Alevi community, and the discourse of equality is justified only in comparison to the Sunni community (Demir 2018: 127). Although the discourse on gender equality and the lack of representation of Alevi women has not been openly problematized until the last ten years, the issue has become even more urgent within recent political conditions. Today Alevi women and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer or questioning and more (LGBTIQ+) individuals are intersectionally vulnerable to discrimination and violence even more under the neoliberal Sunni Islamist authoritarian populist regime of the Justice and Development Party. A growing number of scholars have demonstrated the gap between the ideals defined according to the Alevi belief and the everyday experiences of Alevi women (Uyanık 2004; Salman 2016; Demir 2018). This critical body of scholarship demonstrates how the discourse of gender equality serves to demarcate the borders of Alevi ethno-religious identity. Rather than assuming the existence of a global Alevi community or framing Alevi womanhood as a stable identity position, feminist Alevi literature emphasizes diversity and the importance of intersectional methodologies (Akdemir 2020; Sirma 2020). The limited literature on queer Alevis likewise highlights the importance of intersectionality for Alevi studies (Yıldırım 2018).

Dramatic texts by and about members of the Alevi community have provided opportunities to review and revise patriarchal accounts of history in order to question the current status of women in the community. These works may also give us an opportunity to explore the intersectional oppression Alevi women experience and to propose strategies of resistance through intersectional and transfeminist politics of solidarity. Thus, with the rise of the debates on gender and sexuality within and beyond the transnational Alevi

communities, theatre emerged as a crucial site for critical engagements with the politics of gender and sexuality. Playwrights in Turkey's vibrant alternative theatre scene discuss the experiences of Alevi women to explore queer and trans politics. The most successful plays by Alevi playwrights that have also been staged by public theatre companies include İsmail Kaygusuz's *Silvanlı Kadınlar: Kısır-Satılık* (The Women from Silvan: Sterile-For Sale) (1999), exploring the discrimination against sterile women and exploitative marriage practices and *Yedi Tepeli Aşk* (The Love with Seven Hills) (2009), adopted from stories by female authors on women in Istanbul, including one by Seray Şahiner about a young Alevi woman who loses her virginity out of wedlock and is forced by her family to marry an Alevi man she does not know. Ali Cüneyd Kılıçoğlu's *Mahallemin Şahane Baskısı* (*The Fantastic Pressure of My Neighbourhood*) (2018) narrates the story of three women, an Alevi singer, a trans sex worker and a conservative Sunni Muslim and Kurdish housewife. The play investigates the promises and limits of trans-inclusive intersectional feminism.

THE ECONOMY OF SOLIDARITY

Even though Alevi community theatre is a site where resistance and solidarity are produced, it also has an economic aspect. Like other discriminated communities, the Alevi community has limited access to public funding. The political plays about Alevi history and the traumas do not seem likely to receive government support in Turkey. Only plays that refer to the love of God and, in this way, to the love of humanity might have a chance to be supported. This attitude is also a sign of the attempts to reconstruct Alevis as a group of people with no political demands and claims. Economic solidarity is another crucial aspect of Alevi solidarity, and it is essential since it contributes to the sustenance of Alevi cultural producers and their communities. Especially plays that narrate the lives of significant figures in Alevi history and re-enact the traumatic events in Alevi history are financially supported by the transnational Alevi community through their solidarity networks, which include Alevi

federations and associations in European countries. Federations or local Alevi associations invite theatre companies to tour European cities, they arrange venues for the plays, announce the dates and sell the tickets of the plays. Most of these plays are performed both in Turkey and Europe, especially on specific occasions, such as commemoration ceremonies for Alevi mystics or the anniversaries of specific traumatic events. As a gesture of solidarity people buy the tickets even if they cannot go to see the plays. The creation of this sort of solidarity economy helps the theatre companies to survive and produce more.

The political and economic significance of theatre has resulted in some private companies obtaining government funding to produce plays about Alevi history and rituals and gaining access to Alevi venues at the expense of Alevi companies. My preliminary fieldwork at the Hacı Bektaş Veli Commemoration Ceremonies and Culture and Arts Activities in Nevşehir has demonstrated how these productions create controversy among Alevi audiences, mainly because of the gendered politics of representation. For example, in the play named *Hünkar* (*Hünkar* means a 'highly respected person'; there is no exact translation for the term), there were semah ritual scenes in a modernized fashion performed by men only, although it is one of the rituals of Alevi belief co-performed by men and women. The interviews I conducted with the audiences after the show revealed how the discourse of gender equality in rituals is still crucial as part of the Alevi identity, since all the interviewees underlined that half of the performers should have been women in this scene. When the interviewees learned that the sponsor of the play is the Directorate of Communication of the Turkish Republic, one of them said then that scene makes sense, since that is how the state wants Alevism to be. The interviewees also added that the Alevi community should stand together and fight against these assimilation strategies to make their beliefs invisible. The interviewees also added that only the companies of Alevi writers and players should be encouraged to participate in these cultural events or a committee should investigate those plays beforehand. The state-

sponsored productions about Alevi history and religion staged at Alevi festivals and the debates about them show the significance of solidarity for the broader concerns about Alevi identity and the political economy of theatre. As those reactions demonstrate, Alevis prefer theatrical plays that will represent their own culture in line with their collective memories and believe that those efforts to this aim should be supported in every possible way through their solidarity networks.

CONCLUSION

The staged performances of the Alevi community and how they function demonstrate how solidarity is built up among a persecuted community. In this article, I have discussed the historical development of Alevi theatre and the politics and aesthetics of contemporary productions. Analysing theatre as a critical site where the members of this oppressed community critically engage with their traumatic pasts and negotiate the transnational politics of belonging is a way to understand how they maintain networks of solidarity. Theatre contributes to the processes of solidarity among the transnational Alevi community and allows for the constitution of collective memory and the intergenerational transformation of trauma.

As a persecuted and discriminated minority, for Alevi community solidarity stemming from challenging the official narratives is the best way of resisting a state that does not officially recognize them. Theatre functions as a site for the constitution of post-memory as it re-performs past violent events. By strengthening a present community against the future, Alevi theatre enhances the feeling of solidarity among the community.

The concept of solidarity cannot be considered independently from the concept of resistance when examining oppressed communities. Performance can become a means of resistance by organizing solidarity for these communities. Resistance is an attitude for the oppressed and persecuted communities, primarily to protect their identities and collective memories. Since, to resist the assimilation policies of power structures, oppressed communities must

constantly reconstruct their identities and social memories. Theatre productions about Alevism and its history enhance the solidarity of the community by refreshing its memory and offering a way to resist dominant structures of power.

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