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Commemorative Hospitality in Documentary Theatre: Revisiting the Collective Memory in Genco Erkal's *Sivas 93**

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ABSTRACT
Focusing on *Sivas 93* (2008), a Turkish documentary play by Genco Erkal, this paper is going to explore the construction of hospitality with victimized individuals and communities, especially those who are dead and absent, through commemoration in documentary theatre. The manifestation of hospitality on stage, in which 'the host / the sovereign' turns into the 'hostage' of 'the guest / the foreign / the deviant' as Derrida elucidates in *Of Hospitality*, contributes to the development of alternative responses to the mainstream media and its impact on collective memories. In this regard, while the reinterpretation of collective memories is a fundamental function of documentary theatre, my goal is to explore how *Sivas 93* as a documentary play develops its own methods to revisit the past. Commemorating the absent and victimized people through performance, the play not only refreshes the collective memory but also underlines the society's ethical responsibility towards those who have been symbolically displaced from home.>

Keywords: *Sivas 93*, documentary theatre, collective memory, hospitality, mass media

Introduction

In her 2010 book *Derrida and Hospitality*, Judith Still notes "it does not make sense to say that the state offers hospitality to its citizens, that the collectivity offers hospitality to itself."[1] Though Still conjectures an ideal condition of citizens belonging to the state, her comment about the reaches and dimensions of hospitality rather misses out the state's possible eliminative or negligent attitudes towards the minorities, or the communities dissenting the government. The states' internalization of the us vs. them distinction is not an uncommon case in their foreign policies. This separatist agenda is also often sustained in their treatments of refugees and asylum seekers within countries, which has been explored and problematized in a good number of plays using verbatim techniques as well.[2] However, the disintegration *among the very citizens* can turn the sense of harmony and homogeneity in the word 'us' into an illusion as well. At this point, the government's policies towards majorities and minorities in the country lead to the ascription of an identity to the state. As some communities appear to be comparatively akin to this identity, some do not consider themselves belonging to the country -or 'to home'- as much as the others. In other words, as the state power can affect different communities in varying degrees and because of the existing power relations among these communities, the dynamics of hospitality can apply to domestic politics as well, through which some communities at home are almost treated as the foreign.

Focusing on *Sivas 93* (2008), a Turkish documentary play by Genco Erkal, this paper is going to explore the construction of hospitality with victimized individuals and communities, especially those who are dead and absent, through commemoration in documentary theatre. It will maintain that the manifestation of hospitality on stage, in which 'the host / the sovereign' turns into the 'hostage' of 'the guest / the foreign / the deviant', as Derrida elucidates in *Of Hospitality*, contributes to the development of alternative responses to the mainstream media and its impact on collective memories. In this regard, while the reinterpretation of collective memories is a fundamental function of documentary theatre, my goal is to provide an insight into 'the methods' in which the genre develops to revisit the past. As documentary plays enable actors, dramatists and the audience to revisit the incidents highly debated and widely publicized in media, they metaphorically take them into 'a house' where the collective memory of the society is 'stored'. The re-evaluation of the past incidents in the play becomes an attempt to invite those who were treated as ghosts (the dead and the absent) to this 'house' and to embrace them. Yet at the same time, the play (in line with Derrida's *Of Hospitality*, which also delineates the relationship between hospitality and memory) suggests that the memory of the society becomes 'hostage' to those who have been excluded from the home country as

1 Judith Still, *Derrida and Hospitality* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 11.

2 See, for example, Ros Horin's *Through the Wire* (2004) or Sonja Linden's *Crocodile Seeking Refuge* (2005) which touch upon the problems of asylum seeking and immigration policies.

well: it is haunted by them. Thus, the society cannot totally be the host and the master of its memory: the sovereignty of documentations, media footage and records, which make up the official history and influence the collective memory of a country is always challenged by other documents through which 'the ghost' speaks. As it will be elucidated in the following pages, memory undergoes change in time: 'the storehouse' or the 'the archive' does not always remain the same. Commemorating the absent and victimized people through performance, the play not only refreshes the collective memory but also underlines the society's ethical responsibility towards those who have been symbolically displaced from home.

This paper is going to investigate the commemorative hospitality of the play and its attitude towards the formulation and mediation of collective memory in two parts: the first part will elaborate on the estrangement and exclusion of minorities. The play underlines that the attitude of the state with regard to the treatment of social communities can lead to the ascription of a character to the state, which is likely to oppress various communities. In this sense, especially minorities, even if they are very citizens of a country, are treated as a foreign and an uncanny community that can disrupt the existing order. The play, which includes ritualistic acts, points to the tensions between Alevi-Sunni and between left- and right-wing communities and emphasizes the state's control over the media in storing and circulating information (thus over the collective memories as well). It underlines the ethical responsibility of other communities to those who are dead and victimized. The second part of the paper illustrates the play's attitude towards the idea of collective memory and its re-mediations with references to Maurice Halbwachs and Aleida Assmann. Referring to Diana Taylor's remarks on the archive and the repertoire, the impact of a commemorated past incident on the present and the future is going to be discussed. The play shows that those who are deported from home haunt collective memories and identities within a country. Pointing to Derrida's views on memory and hospitality, this part will suggest that the audience and the absent voices (ghosts) become both hosts and guests at the same time. The re-mediation and commemoration of the incident through the documentary play contribute to the reconciliation with the victimized and marginalized.

Excluded from One's Own State: Estrangement of the Minorities in *Sivas 93*

Commemoration of a person or people, who were victimized, murdered or inflicted violence, is a practice that is often observed in documentary plays. Through this practice, not only are the dead and the absent ones remembered but also the relations among different social, racial, ethnic communities are re-evaluated. To exemplify, *My Name is Rachel Corrie*, directed by Alan Rickman (2005), commemorates the British activist of the same name, who is killed by an Israeli soldier, and presents her experiences from her own voice. Yet, it also points to the plight of Palestinians and criticizes the policies of the Israeli government. Likewise, Moises Kaufman's *Laramie Project* (2000) and *Laramie Project:10 Years Later* (2009) explore the

violence against LGBT people through the memory of Matthew Shepard, who was murdered in Wyoming as a result of a hate crime. Through the memory of Shepard, the approaches of members of diverse communities to hate crimes and homophobia are scrutinized as well. In addition, the commemoration of the dead and the absent contributes considerably to the scrutiny of juridical mechanisms on national and transnational scale. In this sense, tribunal plays that enact trials include some degree of commemoration, too. As the aftermath of violent incidents is remembered together with the witnessing of the audience, it can be problematized whether the verdicts were sufficient and rightful. Re-examining the motives of the perpetrators and the effects of the crimes on victims can provide clues about the repercussions of the incident 'at present'. Nicolas Kent's *Srebrenica* (1996) and Richard Norton Taylor's *Nuremberg* (1996) can be counted among the plays that commemorate the victims through the demonstration of the processing of justice. Though *Sivas 93* cannot be classified as a tribunal play, it manifests a considerable preoccupation with justice toward the victimized. As it commemorates the victims by narrating the flow of incidents and with references to the overall approach of the state and media, it carries the effects of memory to the presence, questioning the ethical responsibilities of the society as a whole.

Staging one of the most bitter events in the history of Turkey, *Sivas 93* is based on the Sivas Massacre which took place in Madımak Hotel in Sivas on July 2, 1993. In this massacre 37 people were killed as the mob which consisted of Islamic fundamentalists set fire to the hotel. The incident marks a climactic point of the conflict between two Islamic denominations in Turkey: Sunnis, who constitute the majority of the population and Alevis, who make up the largest religious minority.[3] The conflict was particularly triggered after The Maraş Massacre[4] which took place in 1978 and it accelerated during the 1980s and the 1990s. The victims in Sivas massacre consisted mostly of Alevi intellectuals, poets, artists and caricaturists, who came to the city for a festival organized to celebrate the life and works of the 16th century Alevi poet Pir Sultan Abdal, to sign their books and meet the art-lovers. Among the intellectuals coming to the city was also Aziz Nesin, who had started translating Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* into Turkish and received violent reaction particularly from Islamic fundamentalists. Following his speech in the opening of the festival, during which a statue of Pir Sultan Abdal was also erected, the demonstrators, the number of whom was increasing, first started to stone the hotel and then set it on fire. The governor of Sivas was severely chastised for inviting the group

3 The distinction between Sunni Islam and Alevism dates back to the death of Prophet Mohammad. Following his death, the question who will be the legitimate successor carried disagreements with it. Basically, while Alevis follow the teachings of Ali, the cousin and son-in-law of Prophet Mohammad, Sunnis follow the behaviours and sayings of the Prophet (which is called 'sunnah'). The exact number of Alevis in Turkey is disputable due to a lack of official statistics. The estimates generally range from 10 to 13 million.

4 In December 1978, more than 100 Alevi and left-wing civilians living in Kahramanmaraş, Turkey (according to official records) were killed by extreme rightist and fascist groups, who targeted the Alevi neighbourhoods with bombs and machine guns, burned the buildings and raped women. The attacks lasted at least seven days.

to the festival as well. Furthermore, it is known that provocative notices which target Nesin were issued around the city just before the festival. Apart from being sprung from the ongoing Alevi - Sunni conflicts, the incident was also shaped by the clashes of Islamic fundamentalists and seculars as well as the right- and the left-wing. While Sivas was populated mainly by Sunnis and by people supporting right-wing politics, the Alevi visitors mostly consisted of leftist and secular intellectuals. The approach of the state and the politicians to the massacre during and after the incidents has been widely regarded as a scandal. For instance, the way Mayor of Sivas addressed to the demonstrators during the protests has been found to have a provocative tone which supported the attackers and ignited the violence. *Sivas 93* includes the most provocative words attributed to him during his speech to the attackers: "May your holy war be blessed."[5] As the government has been severely criticized around the country for not taking the process seriously despite the victims' pleas for help, it has been blamed for risking the Alevi intellectuals' lives for political concerns. As Turkey is mostly populated by Sunni citizens and the government of the time was made up of center-right wing politicians, the state's inability to intervene and save the victims' lives has played a substantial part in the attribution of 'Sunni and right-wing' identity, which is oppressive to minorities such as leftists and Alevis, to the state. The fact that some of the verdicts were abated following the escape of some defendants has raised strong doubts about the conduct of justice within the state.[6] As the play delineates that the lack of necessary attention by governments continued in the aftermath of the incident, it explicitly points to the way the targets feel themselves vulnerable and discriminated against due to the inability of their own state to protect them.

Sivas 93 premiered on 11 January 2008 in Dostlar Tiyatrosu, an ensemble which is known for its dissident stance and which has pioneered in the staging of Brecht's plays in Turkey. Since the 1970s, many examples of epic, political and documentary plays, such as Weiss's *Die Ermittlung* [*The Investigation*], Alain Decaux's *Les Rosenberg ne doivent pas mourir* [*The Rosenbergs Shall Not Die*] and Hans Magnus Enzensberger's *Das Verhör von Habana* [*The Havana Inquiry*] have been performed together with visual materials. The performance of *Sivas 93* takes place simultaneously with the projections of photographs and videos that depict the locations and the moments of the attack throughout.[7] It also includes the recitation

5 Genco Erkal(director), *Sivas 93*, script by Genco Erkal, performed by Genco Erkal et. al., Dostlar Tiyatrosu, Istanbul, January 11, 2008. All the quotes from the play are my translation.

6 Many of the defendants were fugitives during the trials of Madımak massacre (and some of them still are.) The first verdict of the trials, which started in 1993, were given in 1994. According to the verdicts, punishments ranged from 2 to 15 years of imprisonment. The supreme court of appeals overturned the decision of state security court and finally 33 people got the death penalty in 2000, which was turned into life sentence with the abolishment of the death penalty in Turkey in 2002. In 2012, the punishment of 5 fugitive defendants were revoked due to the statute of limitations, which was also included in the playscript of *Sivas 93* later.

7 In his interview in Boğaziçi University, Erkal points out that the synchronic video and slide projections from beginning to the end during the performance have first been used in *Sivas 93* among the plays staged in Dostlar Tiyatrosu.

of poems by Metin Altıok, Behçet Aysan and Uğur Kaynar, who were among the poets killed in the massacre, and by Aziz Nesin during the performance. The music used in the play, which includes pieces from Nazım Oratorio and Metin Altıok Oratorio, is composed by the prominent Turkish pianist Fazıl Say. The play emerges as a product of detailed and dedicated research by Erkal, who is both the author and the director of the play. In an interview conducted in Boğaziçi University, he notes:

> *First, I collected every material I could find: books, periodicals, interviews, a thousand paged court records of the Sivas massacre case which lasted five years, poems about the massacre, videotapes...Especially those that were recorded with the police cameras in Sivas Police Department and by İhlas News Agency. They hadn't been in the public view before... They had been used as evidence during the case.*[8]

Erkal's statements about the video records that haven't been circulated already provide significant hints about the lack of sufficient publication in the media. Even though the records demonstrate important evidence about the identities and acts of the attackers and about the course of the events, the national media does not seem to have raised sufficient awareness about the reasons for and the consequences of the incident. In the same interview, Erkal notes that the play received attention not only from Alevi citizens but also people from various backgrounds at home and in Europe (including the cities of London, Paris, Berlin and Brussel) during its staging, which implicates the interest and the need to gain more information regarding the incident.

Sivas 93, which includes four male and three (in some performances, two) female actors, does not specifically present them as characters. Rather, the actors both utter the testified statements of the victims and narrate the incidents. Meanwhile, they adapt their movements on stage with regard to the actions narrated in the play: e.g. they perform the way victims try to evade the fire or the way the crowd approaches the hotel as they narrate them. The fact that all of the actors are dressed in black, and holding red carnations gives the play a mood of mourning from the very beginning, which is supported by the darkness and emptiness of the stage. The play opens with a dance that echoes the dance that is performed during Alevi rituals (*semah*), which turns the commemoration into a ritualistic act. This is quite meaningful in the sense that rituals that "mark days and places of importance", signify "efficacy", which suggests that an action is fulfilled at the end of such performances –such as "forming and cementing

8 Genco Erkal, "Genco Erkal: An Interview", in *Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Mithat Alam Film Merkezi Söyleşi, Panel ve Sunum Yıllığı 2008,* ed. Ayşegül Oğuz & Deniz Nilüfer Erselcan (Istanbul, Turkey: Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Yayınevi, 2009), 220. My translation.

social relations" and "remembering the past."[9] Actors' performance of *semah* from the very beginning stand out as an embracement of the victimized through embodiment. It also signifies the representation of performative language that has been 'silenced' after the massacre. This ritual, which is normally performed to approach the divine by the Alevis, is rather used on stage both to recollect the very performance of *semah* during the festival and to mourn and commemorate the Alevi victims. 'The Other' speaks through the actor's performance. The collectivity inherent in the performance of *semah* contributes to making the audience part of this act of commemoration.

At the same time, the sense of mourning which is conveyed through the ambiance of the stage contributes to what Paul Ricour calls 'reconciliation'. This reconciliation is not only with the absent Other who is hoped to be embraced, but also with the very collective identity. Here, I don't refer to a single and homogeneous concept when I point to the 'collective identity'. This is because communities can still involve different and smaller communities. However, violence inflicted on a specific group that lives together with the other ones inevitably becomes a part of their memories and –by extension– of their identities. In "Memory and Forgetting", Ricour maintains "We could say that collective identity is rooted in founding events which are violent events. In a sense collective memory is a kind of storage of such violent blows, wounds and scars."[10] At this point, not only the violence experienced by a community but also the one witnessed (or even inflicted on the Other) of it should be taken into account. Any kind of elimination, disregard or distortion of information about the Other within the memory of a community directly influences the latter's identity as well: "diseases of memory are diseases of identity."[11] Such a 'disease' implicates a gap in the mechanisms of news-giving / news-receiving and archives, which substantially shape the collective memory. Thus, media and mediation play a fundamental role in the formation of a community's identity as well: the way members of a community treat the Other in their own media gives notable clues about their position as the host, as the ones who own the storehouse of the memory.

The idea of hospitality gains additional importance in *Sivas 93* as the play already dwells on an incident in which the life and security of the guest, which are to be guaranteed and protected by the host, are vitiated. In *French Hospitality*, Tahar ben Jelloun presents his definition of

9 Richard Schechner, "Ritual and Performance," in *Companion Encyclopedia of Anthropology,* ed. Tim Ingold. (London, New York: Routledge, 1994), 613. In "Ritual and Performance, while Richard Schechner associates theatre with entertainment and ritual with efficacy, he maintains that they are "not opposed to one another" (622). Underlining that "no performance....is pure efficacy and pure entertainment" (622), he argues that "neither has priority over the other" (614).

10 Paul Ricour, "Memory and Forgetting" in *Questioning Ethics: Contemporary Trends in Philosophy*, ed. Richard Kearney and Mark Dooley (London, New York: Routledge, 1999), 8.

11 Ibid., 7-8.

hospitality as "a reciprocal right to protection and shelter."[12] He underlines that the sheltering and entertaining the guests becomes a matter of honour for the host because it "makes the guest recognize [him/her] as someone capable of sharing" and "improves [his/her] status, as someone capable of existing in relation to others."[13] Yet, in this case, the inhabitants of the city not only abstain from protecting the guests but also – denying any sort of ethical responsibility – target their very shelter. Below anecdote from the play dramatically demonstrates the disavowal of the vulnerability of the Other: "'Is there any policeman in here?'/ We said 'no' and they left. / Then, the hotel was burnt down. / It had been ascertained that the hotel was in the clear. / Now it could be burnt down."[14] In this regard, the mob obviously does not feel any responsibility for the lives of the 'guest' whom they almost demonize throughout the play.

The play points to a huge incomprehensibility in terms of the identity of the newcomers: even though they are 'invited' by the governor of the city, references of the attackers introduce them almost as the invader or as the corrupted, which can be observed in the insults of the mob to women: "Have we invited you to Sivas? Go away bitches! Go where you come from, burn there and die".[15] Throughout the play, it is marked that the guests staying in the hotel are perceived as deviants disturbing the order. This idea is promptly mediated to the people in the whole city: the attackers overtly associate the victims and the city governor with the devil and depict their violence as a religious ritual: "Come on, join us! We are stoning the devil"![16] As Aziz Nesin's face is demonized both in the local media and in the notices which were delivered to houses and mosques before the festival, both his life and the lives of people associated with him begin not to be considered worthy of apprehension. At the same time, through their demonization, a collective identity for the public is sought to be formed, which would be used to justify the treatment of the Other. As the notices delivered by the provocateurs address "to Muslim public", they not only implicitly claim that those who do not agree with these statements could not be Muslims but also present this idea as a rule, a norm of belonging to the city (or even, to the country).[17] The abnormality ascribed to the visitors echoes Derrida's analysis of the relation between the host and the foreigner in *Of Hospitality.*

12 Tahar Ben Jelloun, *French Hospitality: Racism and North African Immigrants*, trans. Barbara Bray (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 1.

13 Ibid., 2.

14 Erkal, *Sivas 93*.

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid. Stoning of the devil is a ritual that Muslim pilgrims perform in Mecca during their pilgrimage, which is called 'hajj'. During the ritual, pilgrims throw stones to three tall pillars called 'jamarāt', which represents the devil.

17 Ibid.

Alluding to Xenos's (the foreigner) exchange with Theaetetus in Plato's dialogues,[18] he notes that the guest/ the foreigner may be considered to be delirious by the host, who feels an anxiety of not being able to control it.

> *Foreigner fears that he will be treated as mad (manikos)... 'I am therefore fearful that what I have said may give you the opportunity of looking on me as someone deranged,' says the translation (literally, mad, manikos, a nutter, a maniac), 'who is upside down all over (para poda metaballon emauton ano kai kato), a crazy person who reverses everything from head to toe, from top to bottom, who puts all his feet on his head, inside out, who walks on his head).'*[19]

Derrida suggests that the host can blame the foreigner for questioning the law of the master or the father, thus committing 'parricide'. As the provocateurs' notices claim that Nesin is "wandering around the city as if he is making fun of Muslims", one can speak of a similar anxiety of being 'reversed' by the newcomers.[20] At this point, the latter is perceived to have an uncanny or unhomely presence, which can be observed in the recitation of Metin Altıok's poem during the play: "you think I am uncanny, / one that should be burned / to be made an example."[21]

Accentuating the state's inability or neglect to stop the violence inflicted on the visitors, the play suggests that what is presented as 'the norm' in the city is also adopted by the state mechanisms themselves. This being the case, the state does not fulfil its responsibility to treat and protect its citizens equally and metaphorically deports the victims from 'home' or security: the sense of foreignness experienced on a local scale begins to be felt in the country as a whole. In this sense, though often studied with respect to postcolonial relations as in Homi Bhabha's *The Location of Culture*, feeling unhomely or ''to feel at home and strange or estranged at the same time, or to feel not at home even when one is at home'' emerges as an experience gone through by the minorities which have been living in a country for a long time without a colonial history as well.[22] The opening words of the play effectively illustrate the victims' feeling of being betrayed: "We had trusted the state...We went there to sing our ballads and to perform *semah*. We did not take any guns with us as we left. We brought our books, our caricatures, photographs, our ideas. We visited there for peace and brotherhood, not for fight."[23] From the start of the play, as the tension between 'we' and 'they' is put forward,

18 In Plato's *Sophist*, a stranger from Elea, whose name is never mentioned, visits Athens and meets Socrates and other Athenians. However, during the dialogues, the Eleatic stranger talks to Theaetetus while Socrates remains silent. Pointing to the questioning attitude of the stranger and the silence of Socrates, Derrida suggests that 'Socrates himself has the characteristics of the foreigner, he represents, he figures the foreigner, he plays the foreigner he is not.' Jacques Derrida and Anne Dufourmantelle, *Of Hospitality*, trans. Rachel Bowlby (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 13.

19 Ibid., 9-10.

20 Erkal, *Sivas 93*.

21 Ibid.

22 Eleanor Bryne, *Homi Bhabha* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 70.

23 Erkal, *Sivas 93*.

the connotation of 'they' includes state mechanisms and state people as well. In the play, the testimonies of victims and witnesses mark that state did not take sufficient precautions to stop the attack: "In the beginning there were only five hundred people. That crowd could have been dispersed and eruption of vehement incidents could have been prevented. Yet, things turned out differently. The security guards almost supported the crowd, protected it."[24] In addition, it is underlined in the testimonies that the physical and verbal violence left its place to systemic violence after the incident. The systemic violence mostly includes the silencing of the victims' voice and concerns by not carrying out the investigations efficiently and not filling the gaps of information: "The state did not want to probe into that. The facts have never been revealed."[25] The fact that sufficient documentation about the incident and perpetrators is not provided for archives, which are among the storehouses of the collective memory, is a different form of victims' exclusion from 'home'. In this sense, the play depicts the media as a remarkable factor that adds to systemic violence. The account of one of the witnesses in Madımak Hotel explicitly draws attention to the lack of information in media:

> *In the hotel, we found a television that receives only one channel. The incident was reported in the news with just one sentence: 'Madımak Hotel has been stoned'. I cannot verbalize the hopelessness I felt at that moment. I won't forget. I mean, we are only mentioned, and it is purported that the incident has been settled. Whereas the crowd is getting bigger and bigger.*[26]

What is particularly frustrating for the speaker is the fact that their lives are not found and represented as 'grievable'. This also suggests that the grievability of life emerges as a problem among the communities within a nation as well. While the media composes the idea of a nation as an imagined and homogenized community, the lives of 'minorities' can be overlooked and eliminated from the public view. In other words, these communities can be treated as ghosts even when they are alive and present. In *The Spectatorship of Suffering*, Lilie Chouliaraki remarks that "imaginary reference to public in the textual practices of news which, in telling stories about the suffering 'other', always carve their own sense of 'we' out of a collection of watching individuals".[27] Whereas, the play implies that the perception of 'we' is also influenced by what is untold, or partly told about the suffering people who not only live outside but also live in the country. As the idea of 'we' connotes people who are familiar to one another, the suffering others whose vulnerability is not publicized within the country are metaphorically deported from home (Thus, the absent presence of these communities can make an *unheimlich* effect in the collective memory as well, which will be elucidated later in this article). The national media's designation of the public in the first person plural not only formulates a collective identity which privileges specific ethnical, religious or even political traits, but also shows

24 Ibid.
25 Ibid.
26 Ibid.
27 Lilie Chouliaraki, *The Spectatorship of Suffering* (London: Sage Publications, 2006), 12.

its power to draw boundaries of 'home'. The practices of media in filtering, including and excluding implicate its position as a host. Presenting various politicians' statements following the outbreak of the incident, the play suggests that this power is predominantly shared with the state mechanisms: then President Süleyman Demirel's words about the event exemplify the way 'the public' can be a product which comes out of filtering and elusion: "the state forces and the public should not be pit against each other. This is what is striven for".[28] Likewise, then Prime Minister Tansu Çiller's remarks "Our citizens surrounding the hotel have not been hurt in any way" suggest how the politics can influence the perceptions about the grievability of the very citizens' lives.[29] In this sense, the play overtly criticizes the overall approach of the politicians: "Oh my! May our 'public' not be harmed! As if those burned alive were not the public... As if those who suffocated out of the smoke, those who were stoned were not the public".[30]

While the mainstream media can provide homogenous depictions of nation, the dynamics of sharing the same city, sectarianism etc. can be more vividly observed in local media. The depictions of the Alevi intellectuals' visit to the city in the local newspapers set forth the appropriation of the city by the communities that live within the city. Besides, as different communities are in closer contact in towns and cities, the clashes among them and the dramatic effects of these clashes can be more concretely analyzed on local scale. A similar example to this situation in documentary theatre can be observed in *Fires in the Mirror*, where the clash between African American and Jewish communities in Crown Heights is explored and in Gillian Slovo's *Riots*, where the members of various communities in Tottenham, UK (such as blacks, whites, Muslims) interpret the development of 2011 riots, lootings and assaults. In these plays as well as in *Sivas 93*, the communities are not just constructed through imagination as in Benedict Anderson's views on nation formation: the inhabitants in towns and cities also have relatively more chance to contact other members of their communities and they can more promptly become organized because of the proximity. This being the case, local media can develop a more manipulative relation with its audiences, whose needs, interests and expectations it knows closely: it can address them more specifically when compared to national media. The play underlines how that kind of address has played a substantial role in provocation of people. The performers state: "Three local newspapers commented with distortion on Aziz Nesin's speech the day before. 'They sold snails in the Muslim neighbourhood'[31], noted one of them. It was as if the other one had responded: 'We won't let them do that'".[32] As the local media ascribes a collective identity to its audience, it plays a role in determining

28 Erkal, *Sivas 93*.
29 Ibid.
30 Ibid.
31 An idiom in Turkish, 'to sell snails in Muslim neighbourhood' suggests acting inappropriately and without following the rules of a region. The idiom alludes to the fact that the consumption of snails is considered forbidden (haram) in Islam. Here, the play alludes to the provocative headline of a local newspaper named *Hakikat*.
32 Ibid.

the boundaries of hospitality. In doing that, it depicts the newcomers as a danger to the very identity of the community, building up the anxiety that this identity is going to be changed by their intervention and ideology. The fact that the local media is closely acquainted with the sensitivities of its audience plays a substantial role in the provocation. The play also marks that the articles issued in the press supporting Islamic fundamentalism sustain the provocative tone after the incident as well. One of those articles comments on the incident as follows:

> *The last month passed with full of action and blessings. One of the biggest resistances in the 70 years-old history of the republic took place on July 2. The outcome was a complete thrashing for the Western fundamentalists. Sivas witnessed Muslims' show of strength. What we want to emphasize is the fact that our people in Sivas used their rights to judge and punish. The right to judge and punish only belongs to Muslims. There are no ifs, ands, or buts about it. The illicit TC*[33] *has no authority. It is quite normal to overpower those who oppose to Islam. Yet, the real target of the Muslims in this country is TC itself: this should never be forgotten. May your wishes for revenge be everlasting.*[34]

Even though the mob's attack and the inability of security and state mechanism to stop the massacre were met with harsh reactions by a great many people around the country, the hateful evaluations of the incidents conveyed in the local media are part of the archiving of the incident. Besides, because such evaluations (even if they are made by smaller and fundamentalist groups) are more likely to appear in the newsfeed and be debated due to the provocation that they create, they remain in the collective memory of the public. The following section will take the concept of collective memory shaped by the mediation of social incidents as a starting point. It will scrutinize the ways Sivas 93, which -as a documentary play- explores collective memories, opens up spaces for re-encounter and reconciliation with absent and excluded individuals and communities.

Confrontation with the (G)hosts: Revisiting the Collective Memories

As the final lines of *Sivas 93*, which point to the goal of the performance, target the collective memories of the audience, the function of memory to speak to the present and the future is underlined:

> *We are finishing the play here.*
> *We have performed so that it shall not be forgotten*
> *So that it cannot be gone through again, so that there cannot be any time lapse in the crime of humanity.*[35]

Commemorations are not just directed towards recollecting an event but also re-exploring the existing collective identities and dimensions of the question who 'we' are. While commemorations

33 TC is the Turkish acronym for the Republic of Turkey.
34 Ibid.
35 Ibid.

often reinforce perceptions of national or religious identities, they also raise awareness towards the suffering experienced by the minority communities within the nation. In this sense, they can lead to the questioning of the ethical and humanitarian responsibilities of other people within the nation. As it has been noted before, this commemorative performance which includes ritualistic elements seeks for efficacy: at the end of the performance, something is expected to be achieved. In this sense, through references to possible human rights violations that can occur in the future, the play intimates its interest not only in revisiting the archive and the past but also in the repercussions of this memory on the present and the future. It is only through the interrelation of these time spans the collective memories of the society can be fathomed and processed. Paul Ricour states in "Memory and Forgetting" that knowledge and action are memory's two sorts of relation to the past: "In remembering or recollecting we are exercising our memory, which is a kind of action."[36] This action targets the present and the future as well: as the play stimulates the collective memories through narrativization and performance of the happening, it opens up ways to collectively interpret the materials coming from the past, through which humanitarian consciousness and ethical responsibilities can be activated. As memories constantly undergo alterations and eliminations, any injustice that can be forgotten by other members of the society (whether they belong to the victimized community or not) can threaten the society in the future as well: "the exemplary dimension of the same events is directed towards the future and regulated, 'towards justice', to quote Todorov. It is the power of justice to be just regarding victims, just also regarding victors, and just towards new institutions by means of which we may prevent the same events from recurring in the future."[37] In the light of this goal, the play allocates a remarkable space to court records and accentuates the problems pertaining to the operation of justice and to the disclosure of some of the perpetrators. At this point, it slightly bears similarities with tribunal plays towards its end as the audience hears the accounts of the witnesses and defendants' testimonies: just as in tribunal plays, the intention is less to judge (as most of the audience is already familiar with the verdicts) than to remember ethical responsibilities through refreshing the audience's memories.

To elucidate the impact of recollection on the development of collective memories and on the idea of hospitality built up on the stage, it is essential to focus on the theoretical views on collective memory as well as its interrelation with history. In his *On Collective Memory*, which paved the way for future research on memory studies, Maurice Halbwachs scrutinizes the idea of social frames, which stand for the groups that individuals position themselves and refer to in the first person plural. One can claim that these frames, which are closely connected to collective memories, function as homes where the borders of the familiar and the unfamiliar are internalized. As the members of these social frames memorize the narratives which unite them with the other members and which constitute their collective memories, their identities

36 Ricour, "Memory and Forgetting", 5.
37 Ibid., 9.

are also shaped by these frames. At the same time, Halbwach notes that within society there can be various collective memories that he differentiates from the concept of history. According to him, history is "unitary", "there is only one history" and "the historian certainly means to be objective and impartial"[38] Collective memories, however, are possessed by a community and correspondingly, they are subjective. Despite the binaries established with regard to history and collective memory, contemporary scholars elaborating on collective memory and its effects dwell on the interrelations and conflations of history and memory as well. In "Transformations between History and Memory", Aleida Assmann explains:

> *abstract and generalized 'history' turns into re-embodied collective 'memory' when it is transformed into forms of shared knowledge and collective participation. In such cases, 'history in general' is reconfigured into a particular and emotionally changed version of 'our history' and absorbed as a part of collective identity. While collective participation in national memory is enforced in totalitarian states coercively through indoctrination and propaganda, in democratic states it is circulated by way of popular media, public discourse, and forms of 'liberal representation' (William 1998).*[39]

Assmann's above quoted words effectively point to the impact of power relations and manipulations on the preservation of past incidents as part of a collective memory. In this sense, how the documents and materials are formed, put into use or concealed from the public view gains considerable significance. Any control on the circulation of the archive can affect the way a nation can perceive its history in the long run (critics such as Hayden White also argues that history-writing itself is a narrative which is based on the depictions of 'notable' events). Besides, considering that memory "bridges the past, present and future", the control of social and political groups in power can re-present, mis-represent or eliminate some elements of collective memories.[40] Thereby, different individuals can be alienated from their own memories or from memories of the previous generation. In "Invention, Memory and Place" Edward Said maintains that "the processes of memory are frequently, if not always, manipulated and intervened in for sometimes urgent purposes of the present".[41] Such a manipulation can particularly pose a danger to marginalized minorities whose memories can be eliminated and 'forgotten'. Or, their painful memories can be disconnected from the ethical responsibilities of other communities. In this sense, such minorities inevitably have a repressed presence in the latter's narratives of their memories and historiographies.

Considering *Sivas 93*'s attitude to media and state mechanism, an anxiety for the victims to be silenced can be observed. As the play refers to the problematic juridical process and the

38 Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory,* trans. Francis J. Ditter, Jr. and Vida Yazdi Ditter (New York: Harper & Row, 1980), 83.

39 Aleida Assmann, "Transformations between History and Memory", *Social Research* 75, no. 1 (2008): 65.

40 Ibid., 61.

41 Edward Said, "Invention, Memory, and Place," *Critical Inquiry* 26, no. 2 (2000): 176.

comments of political figures on the incident from the past to the present, it emphasizes the underestimation of victims' rights and experiences. In referring to the notices distributed around the city, the actors ask: "Who wrote out those notices? Who set them, printed and delivered them? It wasn't known. Nor is it known now. The state hasn't wanted to scrutinize it. The fact has never been revealed".[42] The play intimates that there is an unwillingness on the part of the state to provide documents for the archive, which would be integrated into the history. Considering that the lack of documentation about the identities of the perpetrators is likely to create a gap in the collective memory both of the victims' communities and others', the play resists the appropriation of the documents by mechanisms of power like media and state mechanisms, demonstrating an explicit distrust towards them. The actors note that even though there are numerous verbal and visual documents pertaining to the incident, these documents were not sufficiently examined. Pointing to the report which the chief prosecutor from State Security Court issued ten days after the incident, the play asserts that this bulk of documents cannot be analysed within such a short time. Thus, it does not credit the report, which asserts that the massacre resulted from a mob provocation rather than plans of various organizations. In this respect, *Sivas 93* is not interested in revisiting the incident with an objective standpoint because it maintains that the archiving and documentation have already been exposed to the manipulation of power mechanisms including the state. It correspondingly hopes to contribute to the sources and memory of the Other which is silenced. This approach of the play is quite in line with the prevalent functions of documentary theatre to "reopen trials in order to create justice" and "create additional historical accounts"[43] as well as to "celebrate repressed or marginal communities and groups, bringing to light their histories and aspirations."[44] Especially, the play's preoccupation with the justice (as it already believes that actual perpetrators have not been presented to the public and punished) leads it to re-present testimonies and evidences so that the audience as part of the public can apprehend the inequities stemming from the handling of the documents.

Considering Assmann's words that "collective memory is necessarily a mediated memory", *Sivas 93* as a documentary play opens up new ways of mediation to challenge it.[45] It reinterprets and refreshes the collective memory of a society in which its audience is also included. This collective memory is also a part of communal identities which the audience members cannot change or control individually. These identities are substantially influenced by media, which formulates 'imagined communities' as Benedict Anderson puts it. As yet a form of

42 Erkal, *Sivas 93*.

43 Carol Martin, "Bodies of Evidence" in *Dramaturgy of the Real on the World Stage,* ed. Carol Martin, (Basingstone, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 22.

44 Derek Paget, "The 'Broken Tradition' of Documentary Theatre and Its Continued Powers of Endurance" in *Get Real: Documentary Theatre Past and Present*, ed. Alison Forsyth and Chris Megson (Basingstone, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 227.

45 Assmann, "*Transformations between History and Memory*," 55

mediation, documentary theatre opens up new modes of articulation for cases which have not been effectively and sufficiently explored and discussed. In *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*, Diana Taylor explores the processing of the memory through the relation between the archive and the repertoire. Her description of the archive emphasizes its characteristic as a closed space that bears strong similarities with the house: "Archival memory exists as documents, maps, literary texts, letters, archaeological remains, bones, videos, films, CDs, all those items supposedly resistant to change. Archive, from the Greek, etymologically refers to 'a public building', 'a place where records are kept'. From *arkhe*, it also means a beginning, the first place, the government".[46] The meanings of the archive as 'a building' and as 'the first place' imply the significance placed on the security of 'original' information and ur-document. Archive is where the information springs from and belongs to: it is the storehouse of the memory. Taylor goes on to express that this storehouse does not remain the same but it is exposed to constant changes emerging from its interrelation with the repertoire:

> *The repertoire, on the other hand, enacts embodied memory, performances, gestures, orality, movement, dance, singing –in short, all those acts usually thought of as ephemeral, non-reproducible knowledge. Repertoire, etymologically 'a treasury, an inventory', allows for individual agency, referring also to, 'the finder, discoverer', and meaning 'to find out'. The repertoire requires presence: people participate in the production and reproduction of knowledge, by 'being there', being a part of the transmission.*[47]

The mutuality between the archive and the repertoire echoes the relation between the host and the guest. On the one hand, Taylor's reference to etymology in explaining the repertoire, which means 'to find out' reminds one of the mobility of the guest, his visitation of the home, his position as 'the newcomer'. Archive, on the other hand, through its connotations of being first echoes the sovereignty of the host. Even though documents can be kept by various power mechanisms like state and media institutions, revisiting them through performance and embodiment opens up new alternatives through which memory is recollected. The 'presence' of the repertoire contributes to the bridging of the past, the present and the future with regard to memory. Taylor underlines "[The relation between the archive and the repertoire] too readily falls into a binary, with the written and archival constituting the hegemonic power and the repertoire providing the anti-hegemonic challenge."[48] Despite that, she expresses that they "exist in a constant state of interaction", neither of them being superior to the Other.[49] Such an interaction is also found in the relation of the host and the guest. Even though the host conventionally signifies the sovereignty over the home and the guest, who visits the

46 Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 19.
47 Ibid., 20.
48 Ibid., 22.
49 Ibid., 21.

home (the archive) and stays there temporarily, can disarray the order of the host through his intervention, their roles can alter as a result of their interaction as well: "The very precondition of hospitality may require that, in some ways, both the host and the guest accept, in different ways, the uncomfortable and sometimes painful possibility of being changed by the other."[50]

As it has been expressed above, the information about the guest or the Other, who does not belong to 'home', can be exposed to repression. The Other, who is regarded as a threat to the order, can turn into a ghost as the power mechanisms within a society treat him as if he did not exist. Especially representations of the incidents which do not give enough space to the viewpoints, experiences and interpretations of the Other contribute to such a repressed collective memory. Yet, this does not necessarily mean that the call of the dead and victimized Other can be totally eliminated from the collective memory. Anna Dufourmantelle maintains in *Of Hospitality* that "ghosts haunt places that exist without them; they return to where they have been excluded from."[51] At this point, the ambivalence of the word 'unheimlich' applies effectively to the Other, who has been deported from home. In the essay *Das Unheimlich*, translated into English as *The Uncanny*, Sigmund Freud draws attention to the word 'heimlich' in German: while the word connotes the sense of belonging to the house, it also means 'secret' and 'hidden'. By association, the opposite of the word 'unheimlich' not only characterizes the unfamiliar: it also marks that which has been kept a secret and yet, revealed. Thus, as the word 'unheimlich' signifies 'the return of the repressed', it coincides with its opposite 'heimlich': "We can understand why linguistic usage has extended das Heimliche into its opposite, das Unheimliche; for this uncanny is in reality nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression."[52] To explain the effect of the unheimlich on *Sivas 93*, one can note that the play, which brings to surface the documents, records and people that are forgotten or pushed into the margins, builds a 'home' for the return of the repressed. Even though Madımak massacre is not an incident that has been totally eliminated from the contemporary collective memory in Turkey, the victims' position as a minority continually threatens them to be hidden by the control of the political and ideological power. As there are often forgotten cases of violence behind unified perceptions of a nation -as Ernest Renan puts it in "What is a Nation?", the play opposes the continuation of injustice through silencing and repressing the Other. At this juncture, it emphasizes the mutual dependence of the audience and the voices of the dead and the victimized, as well as the familiar and the unfamiliar. Thus, the audience emerges as yet another actor as well.

50 Miraille Rosello, *Postcolonial Hospitality: The Immigrant as Guest* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 176.

51 Derrida and Dufourmantelle, *Of Hospitality*, 152.

52 Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny" in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XVII (1917-1919): An Infantile Neurosis & Other Works,* ed. and trans. James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1955), 241.

The act of 'revisiting' a memory, puts the (re)visitor on the shoes of a guest. Through revisiting, the temporal gap between the (re)visitor and the incident is acknowledged: due to this gap, the (re)visitor is often estranged from the 'original' incident. Yet, he has to reconcile the past with the present, too: He makes the past adapt and conform to his present memory, his present 'home'. Thereby, he also plays the role of a host. In *Sivas 93*, as the actors and the audience (who constitutes both the people from the victims' community and from other communities) revisit the Sivas massacre through narratives, videos, photographs as well as comments, those who are expelled from 'home' and turn into ghosts, make their way into the present. These ghost-victims who were wronged and treated inhospitably are re-embraced by the commemoration of dramatists and actors: "both 'remembering' and 'recollecting', suggest a connecting, assembling, a bringing together of things in relation to one another."[53] At the same time, commemoration makes it clear that the communities that the audience belongs to are inseparable from these 'ghosts', who are a part of their collective identities. In *Of Hospitality*, Derrida explains the host's responsibility to the guest and his memory by alluding to Oedipus's death in Colonus. Expelled from his homeland in Thebes and being a stranger in a foreign land, Oedipus wants Theseus, the ruler of Athens to properly bury him and not to reveal where he is buried to anyone including his daughters Antigone and Ismene. Through this example, Derrida suggests that Theseus becomes bound by his promise and turns into a hostage haunted by Oedipus's memory: "Oedipus demands that he not be forgotten. Because look out! If he were forgotten, everything would go badly...The host thus becomes a retained hostage, responsible for and victim of the gift that Oedipus, a bit like Christ, makes of his dying person...this is my body, keep it in memory of me."[54] From this point of view, the audience of *Sivas 93*, who learns about the violence inflicted on an excluded group of people, is bound by a similar responsibility towards them. Yet, while Theseus is bound because he has to keep a secret and his promise to Oedipus, the audience's responsibility to the dead and the victimized necessitates sharing the latter's experience with others "so that it shall not be forgotten".[55] In other words, to know about a case - especially when an injustice is in question- inevitably carries responsibility with it.

The responsibility towards the absent is impressively underlined in the play through the will of the victims as they are stuck in the hotel and attacked by the mob: "the survivors shall write poems for the dead."[56] In this relation, the survivors are assigned with a commitment to sustain the voices of those who were silenced and did not have the chance to express their viewpoints and emotions and to respond to the attackers. This commitment is shared by the actors and the audience as well. In a way, they are expected to develop a bond which the

53 Gayle Greene, "Feminist Fiction and the Uses of Memory", *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 16, no. 2 (1991): 297.

54 Derrida and Dufourmantelle, *Of Hospitality*, 107.

55 Erkal, *Sivas 93*.

56 Ibid.

victims shared with the survivors. As the actors reiterate the narratives of the victims and witnesses, they develop the chain in which the latter's painful experiences can be transferred to the other members / generations of a community. In doing that they collaborate with the audience, who are supposed to remember, talk about and convey these experiences out of the boundaries of theatre. Hence, carrying them on to the present, the act of storytelling emerges as a way of coming to terms with the repressed Other. This condition is similar to what Helen Cixous expresses in the program notes of Théâtre du Soleil's *Le Dernier Caravansérail*, where hospitality towards the refugees and immigrants (who are commonly perceived as the Other) in France is expected to be built. Listening to their tapes, Cixous comments on the responsibility towards the Other with these words: "Here's my story, tell it, so that it doesn't die uncommemorated, so that we haven't lived our modest, precious lives without leaving a trace or issue."[57] Yet, one point that needs to be remembered is the fact that this commitment does not give a full authority on the actors and audience to "remake the guest in [their] own image": the actors and audience cannot be the absolute hosts as they confront the 'ghosts' or the guests.[58] To put in Derridean terms, the responsibility to articulate the injustice makes them hostage to the absent victims: the ghosts become the hosts.

The play's approach to the call of the Other bears similarities with Levinas's understanding of ethics as it underlines that the very humanity and vulnerability of the Other carry with it responsibility and call for justice: In this relationship, one "come[s] to others not through a common property that distinguishes them as the enemy, but through the face of the other whom [he/she is] responsible for, and in that responsibility responsible for all the others as well."[59] However, what sets the play in a different framework is the fact that it does not separate communities from their religious, political and cultural contexts: as the play explores the humanitarian responsibilities for the Other, it seems to be more interested in the way the collective responses to the call of the Other can shape collective memories and identities. As the play stimulates these responses through commemoration, it depends considerably on the humanitarian commitment which stems from watching the representations of violence and victimization, pointing to the affinity between commemoration and spectatorship.

Conclusion

Sivas 93 depicts the re-exploration of the past as a hospitable act through which the silenced and oppressed make their ways into the present and future. It also marks that collective memories, which serve as a home for various communities, are continually haunted by them.

57 Helene Cixous, "L'Hospitalité?" in *Théâtre du Soleil, Le Dernier Caravansérail (Odyssées) – Programme* (Théâtre du Soleil: Paris, 2003), n.p.

58 Ibid., n.p.

59 William Large, *Levinas' "Totality and Infinity": A Reader's Guide* (London, New York: Bloomsbury, 2015), 89.

The commemorative and ritualistic aspects of this documentary play contribute substantially to reconciling with the groups that constitute the minority and that are not sufficiently represented in media – an essential part of archiving the collective history. As they shake the audience's safe sense of belonging to a community by marking their humanitarian responsibilities to others, they also open up new archives and repertoires through which past experiences and relations can be evaluated and the emphasis on communities with specific profiles can be averted.

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