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In Search of a New Performativity after Gezi: On Symbolic Politics and New Dramaturgies in Turkey¹

PIETER VERSTRAETE

This article is an adapted version of a text originally published in Turkish in the historical materialist journal PRAKSIS in 2016, and translated into English by the author.¹ It focuses on performative protest acts and the role of the performing artist in Turkey in the context of the Gezi Park uprisings of 2013. The article examines how some of Gezi's performative protest actions evidence a larger cultural transformation, of which we can see a continuation in new theatre playtexts.

It would be a mistake to claim that the Gezi Park uprisings permanently changed the Turkish political climate as much as they did its cultures of resistance and civil society. The protests confirmed a larger cultural and social transformation in Turkey that was put in motion in the 1980s with the marriage of democracy and global neo-liberalism. Turkey saw societal changes just like in the late capitalist West, nurturing a consumerist as much as a performance-driven society which Lyotard described as constitutive of our postmodern culture. What was new during the Gezi Park protests, however, was the unprecedented display of *performativity* as a resource for resistance against coercive practices of the state, the police and the government.² In this article, I wish to claim this emergence of a 'new performativity' in Turkey ever since the Gezi protests, which influences the art scene. In order to analyse this new performativity, I revisit some key performative moments and their insistence on a (politics of) representation that called for political reflectiveness and validation, as part of the grass-roots activism that came to be known as the 'Gezi movement' or the 'Gezi spirit'.

The importance of re-examining these historical moments comes at a time when key figures of the Gezi movement are being legally tried for allegedly 'organizing' the protests in a bid to overthrow the government. This is an attempt not only to blemish the memory and any commemoration of Gezi, but also to discredit the agency and ingenuity shared between the many nameless citizens who contributed to the performative protest actions by putting their bodies at risk each day during the protests. It is, therefore, of absolute significance to archive and reflect on events that can give us broader insight into the new performativity that is interwoven in Turkey's cultures of resistance and artistic and civic engagement.

Conceptual framework and outline

In the literature around the Gezi protests, many commentators have written extensively about the *festivalization* of Gezi, its Bakhtinian ‘carnavalesque’, which helped the movement to channel – and celebrate – dissidence as a distraction from state and police coercion tactics, or as a downright outrage against the government’s repressions in everyday life.³ Part of the protest tactics was indeed to reclaim and in part defuse some of the coercive practices by means of humour and language games, such as the frequent reference to Gezi Park as a ‘Gas Festival’.⁴ Gurur Ertem has reinterpreted the carnivalesque nature of the Gezi protests as ‘a site of joyous and subversive energies’.⁵ She refers to Elbieta Matynia’s argument, where carnival and Lent are metaphors for democracy’s potential and vulnerability respectively: ‘fertility, imagination, and generosity on the one hand, intellectual poverty, complacency, and abuse on the other’.⁶ It is precisely Gezi’s performative excessiveness that left a ‘vital legacy’ of a ‘robust civic creativity’.⁷

Yet, as Baz Kershaw has remarked on this very topic when addressing protest as a theatricalized action, the problem with analysing this type of subversion as Bakhtinian carnivalesque or festival – and thus as ‘ritual purgation’ – is twofold. First, it obfuscates difference and usurps ‘creativity of practice by recommending a primacy of schema’.⁸ Indeed, treating all performative protest actions and events equally as manifestations of Gezi Park’s festivalization would limit them to being part of a repertoire, thereby not only diminishing the agency of the protestors but also distancing them indiscriminately from their ‘real’ purposes and effects, whether they are subversive or actually reactionary. Second, such an approach may overemphasize the aesthetic aspects of protest actions as art objects, thereby losing sight of historical and ideological relevance.

With this critique in mind, I propose to look first at the political climate in which art and artists take a particular historical role and place in defining the new performativity as a culture of dissent to coercive practices in Turkey, before, during and right after the Gezi protests. As such, I will include the actual protest’s context in my analysis, in which the major ideological struggles and epistemic changes of that particular period take place. This will include a discussion of a number of meaningful events in the theatre, at Gezi Park and in the media, as well as of the wider context of complex relations between state, art and theatre. Then, by means of short case studies, I will discuss the new performativity and its inherent contradictions by means of Judith Butler’s notion of performativity, her critique of Hannah Arendt’s ‘space of appearance’, and Peggy Phelan’s notion of ‘active vanishing’.⁹

Butler’s notion of performativity, and her own recent reviewing of that theory, can help us to untangle some of the micro-political workings of protest and social movements, alongside media practices, to uncover Turkey’s shifting cultural climate. Butler’s well-known definition of performativity as ‘reiterative power of discourse’¹⁰ allows for a political reading of singular performative acts, both in language and with the body, as part of a wider cultural discourse to which it always brings a form of excess, and therefore a moment of uncertainty, in meaning.¹¹ Butler’s own recent

attempts to extend this idea of performativity to address issues of assembly, vulnerability and precarity of the body in protest movements inspires me to look at her rereading of Arendt's 'space of appearance'.¹² This will introduce an important aspect of the new performativity: a fundamental paradox of visibility and (political) representation, which Peggy Phelan already introduced through her notion of 'active vanishing'.¹³

Finally, I will investigate the influence of Gezi's performativity on new playtexts, new dramaturgies and new theatre productions. It is only now that we are beginning to see the contours of Gezi's performativity influencing a larger culture of resistance, while civic networks – as well as theatres – continue to be infiltrated, censored and shut down. My investigation thereby aims to conceptualize some of Gezi's protest actions as cultural performances of dissent that are linked to these larger fluctuating social and historical(-materialist) processes.

The critical role of the artist

Although Gezi's new performativity is not exclusively (re)produced by artists who are already aware of the possibilities of performativity by profession, in Turkey's public realm they play a particular social and educative role whether they want it or not.¹⁴ Art, in a 'Kemalist' framework, is historically related to founding father Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's nation-building project, which underscored the role of art for education. A first case study that contextualizes this role of the artist as well as the political climate that caused the Gezi uprising is the art installation *bangbangbang* by Turkish artist Ayşe Erkmen. Despite the already extant repression of any form of political resistance or sympathy with the Gezi protests, the work was on display at the entrance of the 13th Istanbul Art Biennial at the Istanbul Museum of Modern Art, from 12 September until 20 October 2013. It contains a replica of a green wrecking ball swinging from a crane. The artist explained that it was meant to work as a 'portrayal of evil with aesthetics', but its criticism of the government was rather evident. Gezi provided enough context for visitors to interpret the piece as AKP's 'wrecking-ball' effect on the public sphere, which would ironically also eventually hit the museum for real, as its main building at the Bosphorus in Tophane has now been demolished to make way for a completely new building. The artwork may also have reminded viewers of another incident in 2011, when then prime minister Erdoğan took odds against a *Statue of Humanity*, erected on Kazıktepe Hill in Kars by artist Mehmet Aksoy as a gesture of reconciliation towards Armenia. During his visit in January 2011, Erdoğan called the monument a 'freak' (Turkish *ucube*), after which the city authorities decided to remove the statue. This occurrence, amplified by mainstream press and media, gives a first glimpse of how artists are named and shamed by high-level politicians, which grants artists a particular social function in public discourse, along with a high price to pay if they do not comply. Strong personal condemnations of art and artists by state representatives are generally understood as a negative confirmation that the art does not comply with the desired hegemony of the Turkish state, and are thus seen to be disruptive.

The symbol of the wrecking ball is emblematic of the political situation, which caused Turkish citizens to respond when – after a short notice by the government on 27 May 2013 – bulldozers showed up in Istanbul's Gezi Park to remove its ancient sycamore trees to make way for a prestigious, yet controversial, building project that included a shopping mall and luxury residences in the shape of a reconstructed Ottoman artillery barracks that stood once there.¹⁵ AKP's metaphorical wrecking ball was temporarily stopped when a group of artists and activists occupied the park. Film actor and director, and MP for the Peace and Democracy Party (BDP), Sırrı Süreyya Önder threw himself in front of a bulldozer to prevent it from uprooting the park's trees. One month before the Gezi protests, film actors and directors were also targeted by police brutality when they protested against a redevelopment project on İstiklal Street near Taksim that would destroy one of Turkey's oldest cinemas, the Emek Theatre, within the Circle d'Orient building.

According to the pro-government newspaper *Yeni Şafak* on 10 June 2013, Gezi's 'coup' was 'rehearsed' (they write *prova*, which means 'rehearsal' in Turkish) in a theatre play entitled *Mi Minör*, written by Meltem Arıkan and directed by Mehmet Ali Alabora (then president, and founder, of the Turkish Actors' Union).¹⁶ Arıkan was also one of the first to tweet on that night of 27 May to gather in the park, which marks the beginning of the occupation. They were both targeted by a harsh defamation campaign in the media, supposedly for the role the theatre play had

FIGURE 1. Actress Pinar Öğün as the Pianist, accidentally wearing a red dress. In the play, this character directly interacts with the audience, trying to make them aware of the oppression in a fictitious country called Pinima. Photograph by Payidar Seyma Bestay.

played in ‘preparing the revolution’ due to its content (based on the Arab Spring), its live use of social media (just as in the Gezi protests), and the foreign support it had received. The *Yeni Şafak* article suggested some evil plotting by a foreign lobby, but the support turned out to be a digital PR agency owned by Turks in Britain who did the promotion for the play. The play’s content may also have struck a nerve since it showed a dictator (played by Alabora) who rules over a fictional country, Pinima. Its use of social media onstage enabled spectators to interact with the play, though in a limited way, creating a doubling of real-time and online performance. By chance, there was a female character in a red dress in the play, which could be reminiscent of the famous Gezi icon, the *kırmızılı kadın* (‘woman in red’), based on a photograph of academic Ceyda Sungur while she got sprayed with tear gas from nearby in the early days of the occupation of Gezi Park. ‘What a Coincidence!’ was the headline in *Yeni Şafak*. Since *Mi Minör* was actually based on the Arab Spring revolutions, the resemblance was coincidental rather than foreboding.

The independent newspapers and social-media outlets reported ‘lynch justice’ on Alabora, on 15 June 2013. ‘I owe an acknowledgment to the *Yeni Şafak* newspaper for taking theatres this seriously’, Alabora retaliated.

In our age it is impossible to create social events with theatre, but the *Yeni Şafak* newspaper gave great importance to our play by claiming that our play ‘*Mi Minör*’, which we made with great devotion, is as effective as ‘*Vatan Yahut Silistre*’, which was performed two streets away from our stage in 1873.¹⁷

What we are witnessing here is the performativity of rightist–populist and leftist narratives underscoring repertoires of symbolic politics with precisely the theatre as a space of (assumed) contention. Namık Kemal’s play mentioned by Alabora, which was closely related to the 1908 Second Constitution uprising (aka the Young Turk Revolution in the final years of the waning Ottoman Empire), is a well-placed reference that aims to appropriate an old nationalist icon pre-dating the Turkish Republic. Kemal, who was a strong opponent of the then-oppressive regime, was exiled for this play, which managed to mobilize people on its opening night on Güllü Agop’s Theater in Gedikpaşa on 1 April 1873. Right before the 1908 uprising, despite it being censored, the play was performed at ‘every street corner’.¹⁸ Alabora might have remembered Kemal’s exile from the Ottoman Empire when he left Turkey to escape the political heat.¹⁹

So the double reference to *Mi Minör* as a ‘rehearsal for the revolution’, first by the conservative, right-wing media to discredit individual artists and then by means of Alabora’s explicit comparison to a pre-Republican nationalist play, demonstrates a first instance of the complex symbolic intertwining of performativity and politics in Turkey.²⁰ It also reveals the polarized climate in which artists try to present artistic work for audiences that are also affected by state propaganda, which makes the position of the theatre artist progressively vulnerable and prone to self-censorship.²¹ Turkey’s ever restricting and politically volatile climate cautions against too overt expressions of dissidence. Performativity, then, not only allows for a specific covert symbolic politics defined by a group or a set of individuals who seek to provoke a

certain response in the public, but also plays with the politics of symbols as such, enabling new significations that sidetrack censorship practices.

Standing Men: a politics of symbols versus open signifiers

The polarizing declarations by high-profile AKP members of Parliament suggest that theatre and performing artists play a role in their domestic politics and electoral campaigns. With this, they give the performing arts perhaps more credit than they deserve. Yet the antagonism confirms artists' social role, while it serves a political discourse against the 'old Kemalist elites' who are associated with the largest oppositional party, the CHP (Republican People's Party), once the 'white Turkish', pro-European base of the modern republic of Turkey. In May 2012, Erdoğan criticized theatre workers in the southeastern province of Kahramanmaraş as 'elitists' who mock the people.²² Former interior minister İdris Naim Şahin declared even earlier, on 30 December 2011, that art is 'the backyard of terrorism'.²³ Such statements belong to a broader strategy to antagonize artistic expression in the same way as the opposition in the ideological abstractions of Kemalism. It is, therefore, of no surprise that some artists have in their turn strategically (re)appropriated Kemalist symbols to resist AKP's intrusions into people's daily lives.

An exemplary case study is the Standing Man (*duran adam*) by dancer and choreographer Erdem Gündüz.²⁴ On the night of 17 June 2013, two days after the Gezi Park occupation was broken and all hopes seemed lost, Gündüz stood still for more than eight hours on Taksim in front of the Atatürk Cultural Centre. As he stated himself, he was aware of the possible media exposure and the associated symbolism:

I turned to face the Atatürk Culture Center (AKM), the iconic arts building which dominates Taksim Square. Right in front of me, the Turkish flag was waving. I also knew that the country's primary news agency, Anadolu Agency, had an office overseeing the square. I started standing just like a statue.²⁵

It did not take long before his image reached immediate iconic status. With the help of social media, the Standing Man not only became a 'meme' and the collective face of the anti-government protests overnight, it also introduced at the time a new phase of non-violent action. Later, it was hailed as a symbol for freedom of speech, when Gündüz received the M100 Media Prize in Germany.

Social media platforms played a significant role in generating the new performativity through images, as was the case also with other Gezi icons, like the woman in the red dress (*kırmızılı kadın*), mentioned above, the woman in black (*siyahlı kadın*), a whirling dervish wearing a gasmask, 'Çarşı' (a football fan of Beşiktaş), naked man (*çıplak vatandaş*), Reading Man (*kitap okuyan adam*), 'Guitar Hero', 'RedHack', 'Talcid Man' (referring to the self-made milky concoction that helped to appease irritation caused by tear gas), etc. Each was in their own way a performative protest act that gave expression to the diverse backgrounds of the Gezi participants. Digital platforms formed the stage for these distinctive performances exclusively as still images or icons that encouraged other demonstrators to re-enact

them and add their own versions to the list. Standing Man seemed, then, the culmination of a master frame shared between these icons, as it summed up Gezi's original goal of peaceful resistance in the face of an enhanced police brutality while keeping the identity as well as the interpretation of the act more or less undetermined. I am reminded of the following comment on the reiterative and recursive, and therefore performative, nature of Standing Man's meme status, occupying first and foremost virtual space through its hashtags:

One of the most powerful aspects of #standingman is its iterability. By performing the meme you not only promise an audience for others, encouraging them to repeat and perpetuate the meme, you also produce a setting, a context for the meme. Each individual performance of #standingman is an acknowledgement of the whole and a recreation of the seed pattern.²⁶

Many versions followed, most notably of a woman named Yonca, who was the first to step into Gündüz's footsteps by standing for more than thirty hours near the spot in Ankara where twenty-six-year-old demonstrator Ethem Sarısülük was shot in the head. Through standing as an act of endurance, resistance and political vigil, it has been frequently said, like in an article in the *Hürriyet* newspaper, the Turkish people – particularly those born after the 1980s – became familiar with performance art as act of civil disobedience, though that may be an overstatement due to lack of memory of earlier public acts of performance.²⁷

Within theatre and performance studies, much attention has been given to Standing Man for its 'non-movement' or 'non-action', as a politico-aesthetic expression, or just as performance.²⁸ In previous analyses, there has been a general preoccupation with the dissenting body, the stillness of standing, or its aesthetic resemblance to modern dance theatre that appropriated embodied protest aesthetics.²⁹ The strength of the Standing Man was, however, exactly its openness, its non-violent representation of resistance within the complexity of the Gezi movement, embodied by one individual, which immediately turned into a collective experience. Moreover (and this has been underdeveloped in international scholarship and reporting), Standing Man presented a cunning play with symbols and signs, and with the very regimes of visibility, representation and perception in Turkish public and political culture. It is my contention that Standing Man demonstrates the very politics of symbols it draws its inspiration from.

First of all, Standing Man should be seen in a larger history of performative protest actions on the street that Turkey shares with similar historical repertoires around the world. There is a repertoire of 'die-ins', 'lie-ins' and 'sit-ins' in historical protest movements that stresses the impact and importance of occupying space, and its main principle is performative. Lesser known, for instance, was an earlier mass choreography by choreographer Mihran Tomasyan in Turkey, called *The Meeting of Bare Feet and Dance*, on 27 January 2007, one week after the murder of the Turkish-Armenian journalist Hrant Dink. Tomasyan invited everybody to lie down on the pavement like the assassinated, covered by a newspaper, 'to die 15 minutes to be born again'. But much earlier, the Action Theatre for Revolution (*devrim için hareket tiyatrosu* or DİHT) was formed in Turkey in September 1968, when

discussions on alternative theatre forms were in full swing. The DİHT wanted to play on the streets, in factories, in universities, rather than in traditional theatre spaces.³⁰ One of their most cited performances is their first play, *The Bridge*, which was made as an act of protest against the construction of the Bosphorus Bridge (officially the 15 July Martyrs Bridge) in Istanbul, because it would destroy the slum districts.

More significantly, on the one hand, Standing Man recuperated a variety of symbols that could be read as clearly Kemalist, and it could, therefore, also be understood as a comment on Turkey's specific history with state conformity and the sovereign gaze. On the other hand, Standing Man appropriated symbols that are more related to the transnational struggles of a generation, including an unacknowledged identity politics, a corporate media bias and a desire for a real or direct democracy in the age of neo-liberalism. Hence Standing Man was, in Donatella della Porta's words, a 'contentious performance' that demonstrated an 'intertwining of transnational inspiration with local forms of diffusion'.³¹

Contentious performance

Let us focus now on the symbolic play of Standing Man more closely. First of all, Gündüz chose to stand on Taksim Square, exposing himself in a very vulnerable situation amidst the police brutality, as an object of the unknown spectator's gaze, mediated by the live stream that was quickly set up once people started noticing the silent standing act. In doing so, Gündüz exposed himself through this self-performance to an extended visibility, temporality and risk, which could be read as a reference to those many unnamed citizens who go unnoticed on a daily basis and who feel unrepresented in the wider political conjuncture.³² Second, Gündüz stood still in front of a large image of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk that was draped between two Turkish flags at the front of the ill-fated Atatürk Cultural Centre. At the time, the building was turned into a police station that worked as a kind of panopticon – a space of *surveillance* (in Foucault's sense) – monitoring the area around Taksim. Previously, the building had been 'hacked' by Gezi protestors who had draped its facade with banners, among which at its centre was the slogan of the Communist Party (TKH), *Boyun eğme* ('Don't bend your neck'). Atatürk's portrait was not only installed there purposefully by the authorities as a replacement for the communist slogan but also as a display of power and control, reminding Istanbul's citizens and dissenters of a togetherness as a nation, while perhaps unwittingly confirming the panoptic powers of the newly erected police state – and thereby the sovereign gaze of the state – by giving it a familiar face. Here, Gündüz suggests a more questioning pose vis-à-vis today's Kemalism and its main nationalist symbolism.³³

Jacques-Allain Miller's description of 'a brutal dissymmetry of visibility' explains the duality in this seeing and being seen, namely that of 'the seer with the sense of omnipotent voyeurism and the seen with the sense of disciplined surveillance'.³⁴ With Gündüz's lonely figure staring into the eyes of the mute founding father of the Turkish republic, the performance of seer and seen reproduces the asymmetric relation between the multitude of protesters and the authorities when no dialogue

seems possible; or as Öztürkmen suggested about most of the protest performances at Gezi Park, 'The performances that occurred between the official authorities and the Gezi Park occupants and supporters were all internally dialogic or intertextual', and so was Standing Man.³⁵ Despite the clearly Kemalist context, Standing Man could also be giving cultural legitimacy to the successful *Diren!* ('resistance') master frame, precisely by embodying the very idea of the effaced *Boyun eğme* slogan. According to Kivanc Atak, this was necessary to 'create an indigenous agency of mobilization'.³⁶

It is in this discursive ambiguity and uncertainty of meaning that the new performativity heralded by the Standing Man – or in Kershaw's words, a *dramaturgy* for protest events – gains currency. Kershaw explains this ambiguity as a drawing on tradition to produce a 'more or less recognizably *ordered* socio-political action while never foreclosing on unpredictability, the potential of *disorder*'.³⁷ Despite its openness as a major but hybrid signifier, the Standing Man was contentious in the way it created through its plurality a 'space of appearance', as Hannah Arendt initially suggested in *The Human Condition*: a space 'between people' which constitutes political action. Indeed, Standing Man's spatial occurrence in inhabiting a space on Taksim Square and all its subsequent occupations did something similar to what Judith Butler describes with assembling in growing crowds:

we see some way that bodies in their plurality lay claim to the public, find and produce the public through seizing and reconfiguring the matter of material environments; at the same time, those material environments are part of the action, and they themselves act when they become the support for action.³⁸

Yet a recent feminist reading by Öykü Potuoğlu-Cook did point out the failure of Standing Man when one considers the implications of a gender construction in the space of appearance this act reproduces:

His initial singular occupation of Taksim Square inevitably reproduced the notion that public space ultimately belonged to men. He, thus, invoked the conservative prescriptions on female public presence and mobility. From this angle, both Gündüz's performative austerity and command of space undercut his broader critique of autocratic patriarchal neo-liberalism.³⁹

This is also the crux of Arendt's argument about the production of space, according to Butler: that the body in the public sphere is always 'masculine and unsupported, presumptively free, but not itself created'.⁴⁰ Butler elaborates on the paradox in great detail:

For politics to take place, the body must appear. I appear to others, and they appear to me, which means that some space between us allows each to appear. We are not simply visual phenomena for each other – our voices must be registered, and so we must be heard; rather, who we are, bodily, is already a way of being 'for' the other, appearing in ways that we cannot see, being a body for another in a way that I cannot be for myself, and so dispossessed, perspectively, by our very sociality ... No one body

establishes the space of appearance, but this action, this performative exercise happens only 'between' bodies ...⁴¹

Butler's critical and feminist rereading of Arendt gives us an explanation why Gündüz's ambivalently open signifier, through his self-performance as a man, becomes only political once it is reproduced and shared by other standing *bodies*. In *between* all these individual reiterations and reinterpretations lies the space of appearance, and precisely there emerges the political moment, which precludes a power that 'operates prior to any performative power exercised by a plurality'.⁴²

The paradox of 'active vanishing'

Butler's rereading of Arendt brings us to one other aspect relevant to understanding Standing Man's contribution to the new performativity: a paradox that Peggy Phelan addressed through her notion of 'active vanishing' in *Unmarked*.⁴³ The term reveals a paradox in performance art that could also explain a significant paradox in the particular economy of symbols of the Turkish protest actions, and thereby its culture of dissidence. Active vanishing is 'a deliberate and conscious refusal to take the payoff of visibility'.⁴⁴ Performance fulfils this particular visual strategy of active disappearance as a kind of compromise between staying unmarked and the desire for political representation, which is not equal to visibility. Unmarked does not mean un-remarked, as Phelan explains:

I am not suggesting that continued invisibility is the 'proper' political agenda for the disenfranchised, but rather that the binary between the power of visibility and the impotence of invisibility is falsifying. There is real power in remaining unmarked; and there are serious limitations to visual representation as a political goal.⁴⁵

The paradox is that remaining unmarked or invisible has real power – it does not need to lead to confirmation of the political order – but a complete withdrawal from representation is also unattainable.

Within a context of totalizing state repression, Turkey's performative protest culture deals with a similar paradox. Gündüz's act of protest, which was originally meant to take place for days or even months, was demanding for an enhanced and enduring visibility of Gezi's events against state censorship and total blackout of the media. And yet its primary strength and appeal lie in the repetition of the act by thousands of anonymous individuals inside and outside Turkey, thereby rendering it unmarked or invisible to the sovereign gaze that was precisely symbolized by Atatürk's giant portrait. Perhaps Gündüz failed to keep his Standing Man 'unmarked' due to the many interviews and much media attention that followed, yet the plurality of versions did enhance an active disappearance, where everybody could be Standing Man, or rather standing *people*.

It is exactly this paradox that drives the symbols beyond the individual level of an identity politics by a certain group and attaches them to a larger set of collective strategic practices and social/urban movements on a translocal level. In the case of the waves of Gezi Park protests, the new protest performativity spread far beyond Istanbul in

urban areas all over Turkey. The appeal of this performativity lies in what Giorgio Agamben formulated around the same time as the Gezi protests: ‘destituent power’.⁴⁶ It is a power that deactivates the governmental machine – represented by the police as ‘sovereign’ power – from its very inception. It stands in contrast to constituent power in that it does not challenge or reconstitute governmental power, but it *destitutes* it by withdrawing from it; likewise, ‘Occupy Gezi’ created a space for exploring other forms of life, politics and democracy: the withdrawal or absence of a *demos*, like Jean-Luc Nancy’s *inoperative* community.⁴⁷

New dramaturgies and limitations

Unsurprisingly, only independent theatres and theatre artists produced the theatre performances that were inspired by the Gezi movement. Particularly in Istanbul, Galata Perform, Kumbaracı50, Mekan Artı, Destar Tiyatro, Talimhane Tiyatrosu and İkincikat, which have approximately fifty to sixty seats, play an important role.⁴⁸ Yet most of the performances were rather short-lived and had, therefore, only a small impact on audiences that were already accustomed to these theatres’ styles and probably knew all the events and concerns related to the Gezi movement all too well.

But there is a more fundamental problem when trying to represent such a complex social and political movement that blurred the lines between art and life, social reality, current politics and naive utopianism: ‘active vanishing’ does not easily translate to

FIGURE 2. Gonca Gümüşayak performs as ‘woman in red’ in the streets around Taksim, Istanbul, as part of *Liquid Politics* (2014). Published with permission of the photographer Italo Rondinella.

the conventions of the (bourgeois) theatre stage that are historically predicated by physical distance and separation from life through the construction of a fiction, even if that fiction attempts to simulate reality. The theatres mentioned are most commonly seeking for an uncomplicated visibility of the Gezi themes to draw attention, but once they come to the stage, they lose a great deal of their destituent power and authenticity. One exception is Gonca Gümüşayak's *Liquid Politics* dance choreography, which she performed in various contexts and places, mostly in Istanbul's public spaces right after the Gezi protests. Gümüşayak's 'stand-up perform dance' not only visually refers to known Gezi symbols, but also aims to politicize contemporary dance by undermining the audience's perception of reality and its underlying political imagination. In the dance, she gradually morphs her body from a distortedly masked, authoritative, masculine figure, dressed in a suit, to a swirling 'woman in red'. Through her ever-changing performance, she claims authenticity of her art and its changing symbolism, while referencing the *kırmızılı kadın* (and perhaps with that, all women in the protests) as well as the icon of the masked whirling dervish.

Gezi's politics of symbols is perhaps both the burden and the gift that post-Gezi performativity has to come to terms with. A musical by Istanbul-based Talimhane Tiyatrosu (in collaboration with Neuköllner Oper in Berlin), entitled *Taksim Meydanı*, turns the icons of the Gezi protests around by showing confrontations

FIGURE 3. The Musical Theatre Production *Taksim Meydanı* by Talimhane Tiyatrosu, directed by Mehmet Ergen. A 'woman in red' character is at the centre, surrounded by other characters portraying 'outsiders' to the Gezi protest events. Photographer's name withheld. Published with permission of the director, Mehmet Ergen.

between characters (a lawyer, a doctor, a prostitute, a police officer, an old 1970s revolutionary, etc.) as 'stock' characters, who discuss and look at the Gezi protests from the outside. The outsider's perspective was meant to draw in the audience, yet many who came to see the show had already experienced the protests from the inside. The musical was designed as a form of reminiscent/commemorative theatre.⁴⁹ However, the general feeling was that it was just too soon to make theatre about Gezi at a time when the Gezi icons were already being reified.⁵⁰ Its underlying identity politics might also be too celebratory and uncritical in its shown simplicity. It did retain a sense of the creative, poetic and humorous interventions during the protests. The musical's space of the singing voice could also be regarded as an answer to a media space that is saturated by the voice of authority, particularly that of Erdoğan as the voice of the state on television and public radio.

Nevertheless, there are new theatre texts in Turkey that give voice to the politically silenced and socially vulnerable, although many of them were realized outside Turkey or with the help of institutions that help protect freedom of speech.⁵¹ A new theatre text, *SAY YOUR NAME/Adine Söyle*, was realized within Arcola Theatre's Ala-Turca programme that questions the very relationship between big corporations, the government and the media through the Gezi Park protests. Another music theatre play, *Taksim Forever/Rüyalar parkı/Park der Träume*, premiered in August 2014 at the Neuköllner Oper in Berlin. It tells the fictional love story of a German sound artist meeting a Turkish activist during Gezi. This play reflects on the vital question: what are you prepared to fight for?

References to Gezi in most of these new theatre texts are quite straightforward, lack any nuance and reflect the artist's point of view with a clear, sometimes explicitly didactic message concerning social justice, freedom of expression and remembrance of the events. Iconic references are, indeed, hard to misinterpret by audiences who have lived the Turkish state repression, the Twitter ban or the Gezi events first-hand. For them, the rather overt simplicity may be less attractive, which serves to question which audiences these new texts and performances are really trying to reach. Yet they represent more than singular texts. They are, in themselves, tapping into the same 'repertoires' as the performative protest actions on the streets, with the difference that they mean to exert 'transformative power with aesthetics and efficient narrative', as Turkish-Kurdish playwright, actor and director Aydin Orak affirmed.⁵²

A problem with archiving and studying these new 'post-Gezi' texts is that they usually fall below the radar of the mainstream media, criticism and, therefore, the official archive.⁵³ Moreover, theatre is going through a difficult time in Turkey and appreciative audiences for such new works are highly concentrated in the cities, particularly in the independent and private theatres of Istanbul. So it would still be too optimistic to claim that Gezi changed Turkish culture permanently. And yet its expressions in new theatre texts give evidence of a larger structure of feeling, a cultural transformation already under way and a message of hope that will resonate with future generations.

Conclusion

It is a well-known critique that ‘revolutions’, and their subversive, carnivalesque and destituent powers, in our late capitalist world only last during the events; thereafter, order is restored. This is not any different in Turkey. After Gezi, Turkey became increasingly more authoritative, repressive, centralizing power while witch hunts against ever-new ‘enemies’ blaze through its institutions, affecting the very fabric of the cultural infrastructure as well as the overall mentality of the people. The order has not only been restored; it is ‘tightened’ in the worst possible sense. However, the performativity of the Gezi protests has left a lasting impact on Turkey’s cultural, social, discursive and aesthetic fronts.⁵⁴

What I hope to have conveyed is that a new performative awareness in Turkey has started, which expresses itself in many forms and which grew out of the social uprising of Gezi in 2013. I defined this performativity through Butler as a reiterative or recursive power of expressing dissidence that asks for a response, a mobilization, from its recipients. Performative protest acts in Gezi operate, therefore, mostly on relational terms. Today, they extend through the recursivity of images and memes on digital media platforms. And they include often a plethora of signifiers that create their own symbolic politics against those who mean to provoke or silence dissidence. Through a notion of ‘active vanishing’, I demonstrated an inherent paradox in this new performativity, between a wish for representation which seeks visibility, thereby causing fragility in the face of state repression and coercion, and a strategic restraining from the payoff of that visibility to (re)claim destituent power. Having said that, we must be cautious of new performative forms that are rather reactionary and aim at reinforcing the regime’s narratives and myths and the existing social order.

As for the payoff for theatre artists and audiences, post-Gezi may well yield a new theatre movement that, in the face of current austerity, will produce new plays and performances, which are not necessarily *about* Gezi but that are inspired by the same multifaceted politics of symbols. Time will tell. But it is now already apparent that the new performativity is part and parcel of a new culture of dissidence that was set in motion during Gezi. It is perhaps premature to say, but it seems that this new performativity changed the nature of protest irrevocably in seeking new ways to stay unmarked while looking for a more lasting presence and memory beyond state persecution. Despite their necessary shortcomings, the ‘post-Gezi’ dramaturgies certainly try to do exactly this.

*Her Yer Direniş, Her Yer Sahne!*⁵⁵

NOTES

- 1 This article is an adapted version of a text originally published in Turkish in the historical materialist journal *PRAKSIS* in 2016 and translated into English by the author. It focuses on performative protest acts and the role of the performing artist in Turkey in the context of the Gezi Park uprisings of 2013. The article examines how some of Gezi’s performative protest actions evidence a larger cultural transformation, of which we can see a continuation in new theatre playtexts. Pieter Verstraete,

- 'Türkiye'de Sembolik Siyaset ve Protesto Kültürü: Gezi'den Sonra Yeni Bir Performativite mi?', *PRAKSIS*, 42, 3 (November 2016), pp. 657–81. Permission to republish parts has been retrieved from the publisher. I sincerely thank my partner, Dr Görkem Akgöz, for proofreading this article.
- 2 Zeynep Gambetti, 'Occupy Gezi as Politics of the Body', *jadaliyya*, 9 July 2013, at www.jadaliyya.com/Details/29026/Occupy-Gezi-as-Politics-of-the-Body, accessed 30 June 2018.
 - 3 See Meyda Yeğenoğlu, 'Radical Philosophy: Smells like Gezi Spirit – Democratic Sensibilities and Carnavalesque Politics in Turkey', *Radicalphilosophy.com*, Essays, 182 (29 October 2013), at <http://everywheretaksim.net/radical-philosophy-smells-like-gezi-spirit-democratic-sensibilities-and-carnavalesque-politics-in-turkey-melda-yegenoglu>, accessed 25 June 2016; and Arzu Öztürkmen, 'The Park, the Penguin, and the Gas: Performance in Progress in Gezi Park', *TDR: The Drama Review*, 58, 3 (Fall 2014), pp. 39–68.
 - 4 The reference was later reclaimed to organize the 'Gazdan Adam Festival' on 7 July 2013 in Istanbul's Kadiköy neighbourhood, which was an actual festival organized by cultural associations and foundations in collaboration with newspapers and local television channels. It was a strongly Kemalist event, which to many was not in line with the overall ethos at Gezi Park to avoid political claiming. This strengthens Kershaw's argument that taking the festivalization as a theoretical lens may diffuse the possibility to differentiate events that are subversive from those that are actually recuperating and reinforcing existing social orders. See Güneş Koç and Harun Aksu, eds., *Another Brick in the Barricade: The Gezi Resistance and Its Aftermath* (Bremen: Wiener Verlag für Sozialforschung in EHV Academicpress GmbH, 2015).
 - 5 Elzbieta Matynia, *Performative Democracy* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2009), p. 9; quoted in Gurur Ertem, 'Gezi Uprising: Performative Democracy and Politics of the Body in an Extended Space of Appearance', in Susanne Foellmer, Margreth Lünenborg and Christoph Raetzsch, eds., *Media Practices, Social Movements, and Performativity: Transdisciplinary Approaches* (New York: Routledge, 2017), pp. 81–99, here p. 95.
 - 6 Ertem, 'Gezi Uprising: Performative Democracy and Politics of the Body', p. 96.
 - 7 Ibid.
 - 8 Baz Kershaw, 'Fighting in the Streets: Dramaturgies of Popular Protest, 1986–1989', *New Theatre Quarterly*, 13, 51 (1997), p. 266, at <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0266464X0001126X>, accessed 10 March 2019.
 - 9 Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'* (New York: Routledge, 1993); Butler, 'Bodies in Alliance and the Politics of the Street', *Transversal Texts*, #occupy and assembly (September 2011), at <http://eipcp.net/transversal/1011/butler/en>, accessed 25 June 2016; Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press); Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993).
 - 10 Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of Performance* (New York and London: Routledge, 1997).
 - 11 Butler, *Bodies that Matter*.
 - 12 Arendt, *The Human Condition*.
 - 13 Phelan, *Unmarked*.
 - 14 See 'Talk Turkey Conference: Art, Artist, Cultural Production and Gezi Uprising' (4 October 2013), at www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hs_vfTfCASQ, accessed 24 September 2015.
 - 15 The project was part of a larger, government-backed project known as the Taksim Pedestrianization Project (*Taksim Yayalaştırma Projesi*) that would redevelop the whole Taksim area. It included the construction of a tunnel under the park area, the construction of one of the largest mosques and the destruction of the Atatürk Cultural Centre (which fate was still uncertain at the time). These three have now all been executed. With these works, the AKP is believed to have redefined one of Turkey's most contentious political spaces that served as a site of competing ideological narratives and myths since the latter days of the Ottoman Empire. It has been a site for social protests, particularly since the Labor Day massacre on 1 May 1977.

- 16 Kezban Bülbül, "Bu ne tesadüf", *Yeni Şafak*, 10 June 2013, at www.yenisafak.com/gundem-haber/bu-ne-tesaduf-10.06.2013-530647, accessed 25 June 2016. The play was staged between 1 December 2012 and 14 April 2013 at a concert venue called KüçükÇiftlik Park in Istanbul, Maçka.
- 17 'Mehmet Ali Alabora Mi Minör ile ilgili iddialara yanıt verdi' (Mehmet Ali Alabora Answered the Assertions on Mi Minör), *Milliyet*, Sanat, 10 June 2013, at <http://sanat.milliyet.com.tr/mehmet-ali-alabora-mi-minor-ile/sahnesanatları/detay/1721049/default.htm>, accessed 23 December 2014; 'Turkey: Playwright and Author Exiled after Death Threats', *Arts Freedom*, 20 January 2014, at <http://artsfreedom.org/?p=6710>, accessed 25 June 2016.
- 18 Bilge Seçkin, 'Staging the Revolution: The Theatre of the Revolution in the Ottoman Empire 1908–1909', unpublished MA thesis, Boğaziçi University (2017), p. 110; Deniz Başar, 'Mi Minör: A Theatrical Foreshadowing That Led to Exile', unpublished paper (26 February 2015), https://www.academia.edu/11128008/Mi_Min%C3%B6r_A_Theatrical_Foreshadowing_That_Lead_to_Exile, p. 27, accessed 25 June 2016.
- 19 Recently, on 20 February 2019, the heat rekindled when a weighty indictment was issued together with arrest warrants, implicating again Alabora and Arıkan, who are currently in exile in Cardiff, where they have been running a theatre company, Be Aware Productions, since 2015.
- 20 Alabora and Arıkan's case is, however, not unique. Islamic newspaper *Yeni Akit* published also a list of names of artists and intellectuals who supported the anti-government protests with the aim of exposing them. These incidents, dubbed by critics 'artivism', demonstrate the highly discursive nature of the role of performances and artists in Gezi's constitutive narratives.
- 21 See 'Genco Erkal Blames Turkey's Theater Circles for Censorship', *Cihan/Today's Zaman*, 19 October 2014, at www.todayszaman.com/anasayfa_genco-erkal-blames-turkeys-theater-circles-for-censorship_364802.html, accessed 25 June 2016; and Siyah Bant Research Reports, *Report I: Developments in Cultural Policy and Their Effects on Artistic Freedom of Expression in the Arts, Ankara & Report II: Freedom of Expression in the Arts and Censorship in Kurdish Region Diyarbakir, Batman* (Istanbul: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2013), at www.siyahbant.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/SiyahBant_Research_Reports-1.pdf, accessed 25 June 2016.
- 22 Menekşe Tokyay, 'Censorship of the Arts Remains a National Concern', *SES Türkiye*, 2 April 2014, at http://turkey.setimes.com/en_GB/articles/ses/articles/features/departments/national/2014/04/02/feature-01, accessed 27 July 2015.
- 23 'Interior Minister Defines Terror in Turkey', *Hürriyet Daily News*, 26 December 2011, at www.hurriyetdailynews.com/interior-minister-defines-terror-in-turkey.aspx?pageID=238&nID=100688&NewsCatID=338, accessed 25 June 2016.
- 24 Erdem Güdüz is a dance performer and choreographer at Çağdaş Dans Sanatçıları Derneği (Contemporary Dance Artists' Association/ÇATI).
- 25 Erdem Güdüz, 'Case Study: Standing Man', *Beautiful Trouble*, 17 June 2013, at <http://beautifultrouble.org/case/standing-man>, accessed 25 June 2016.
- 26 David Banks, '#Standingman: The Meme for the Masses', *Civic Beat*, 25 June 2013, at <http://reader.thecivicbeat.com/2013/06/standingman-the-meme-for-the-masses>, accessed 25 June 2016.
- 27 'Performance Art Becomes a Vehicle for Protest', *Hürriyet Daily News*, 30 July 2013, at www.hurriyetdailynews.com/performance-art-becomes-a-vehicle-for-protest-51633, accessed 14 May 2019. Earlier forms can be found in the 1980s. There was a pop-up experiment by film director Ezer Akay at Sultan Ahmet Square, where he talked into a microphone and ordered pedestrians to perform certain actions, like standing still, lying down, crawling on their knees, standing up again and so on, and they just followed his orders without question. In another performance on Istanbul's busiest commercial İstiklal Sokak, entitled *kimlik bitte* (November 1986), *ortayuncu* theatre actor Ferhan Sensoy dressed up like an SS soldier and asked people for their IDs. Such interactive initiatives show us a performativity of protest actions much earlier than Standing Man.
- 28 See Jasmin İhraç, 'Protest May Be Performance: Der #duranadam im Kontext des Projekts "re.act.feminism #2 – A Performing Archive"', *MAP*, 5 (July 2014), pp. 1–11, at www.perfomap.de.

- 29 See Rick Salutin, 'Turkey's "Standing Man" and the Iconography of Non-violence', *Toronto Star*, Opinion/Commentary, 21 June 2013, at www.thestar.com/opinion/commentary/2013/06/21/turkeys-standing_man_and_the_iconography_of_nonviolence.html, accessed 24 September 2013; Ayrint Ersöz, 'Dancer's Stillness in Public Space Resists the Choreography of the Authoritarian Mobility', in *PERFORMART 2014: Performing Arts and Public Space Conference, 20–21 December 2014* (Istanbul: DAKAM, 2014), pp. 101–10, at <https://researchsupportgroup.wordpress.com/2015/02/03/proceeding-book-of-performart14-performing-arts-and-public-space-conference-is-published/>; Susanne Foellmer, 'Choreography as a Medium of Protest', *DRJ*, 48, 3 (December 2016), pp. 58–69; Gurur Ertem, 'Gezi Uprising and Corporeal Politics: Watch Out History When a Dancer Goes Still!', *iDANS Blog* (1 February 2014), at <http://idansblog.org/2014/02/01/gezi-uprising-and-corporeal-politics-dancers-still-acts1>, modified German version in *Theater der Zeit*, November 2013, at www.tqw.at/sites/default/files/TQW-Scores_Supplement113_TdZ-Web.pdf, accessed 25 June 2016. Ertem, 'Gezi Uprising: Performative Democracy and Politics of the Body', even draws a direct link with Jérôme Bel's *Show Must Go On*, in which Gündüz was one of the performers of the Turkish cast version that was co-produced and presented by iDANS Festival in Istanbul (October 2011). In one part of the performance, the performers stand still and stare at the audience; in another, Gündüz was heard singing the lyrics based on a Nâzım Hikmet's poem: 'Ben bir ceviz ağacıym Gülhane Parkı'nda, ne sen bunun farkındasın ne de polis farkında' ('I am a walnut tree at Gülhane Park, neither you are aware of this, nor the police'), p. 94.
- 30 Eren Buğlalılar, 'Theatre and Struggle: A Sociological Analysis of the Political Theatre in Turkey between 1960–1971', unpublished MA thesis, the Graduate School of Social Sciences of Middle East Technical University, March 2012, p. 95.
- 31 Donatella della Porta and Alice Mattoni, eds., *Spreading Protest: Social Movements in Times of Crisis* (Colchester: ECPR Press, 2014), p. 15.
- 32 This would include most of Gezi's protestors, including alevites, Kurds, Laz, Cherkess, feminists, the LGBTQ and religious people other than Sunni Muslims, but also anticapitalist Muslims and so on.
- 33 Read Gündüz's response in Pieter Verstraete, 'Still Standing? A Contextual Interview with "Standing Man" Erdem Gündüz', *Jahrbuch Türkisch-Deutsche Studien 2014*, In der Welt der Proteste und Umwälzungen: Deutschland und die Türkei, 5 (Göttingen: V&R Unipress, 2015), pp. 121–36.
- 34 Anne Friedberg, *Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and Oxford: University of California Press, 1993), p. 17.
- 35 Öztürkmen, 'The Park, the Penguin, and the Gas', p. 41. It was Erdoğan himself again who provided provocative commentary against Standing Man by saying and tweeting: "Some people produced standing men. You may all stand still ... But us, we say, no stopping on that road, we say go on. They may continue to stand meanwhile. Towards the goal of 2023, we run, we run with firm steps" – referring to the 100th anniversary of the Turkish Republic (Iyigünler.net 2013). Ibid., p. 58.
- 36 Della Porta and Mattoni, *Spreading Protest*, p. 15.
- 37 Kershaw, 'Fighting in the Streets', p. 261, italics in the original.
- 38 Butler, 'Bodies in Alliance'.
- 39 Öykü Potuoğlu-Cook, 'Hope with Qualms: A Feminist Analysis of the 2013 Gezi Protests', *Feminist Review*, 109 (2015), pp. 96–123, here p. 114.
- 40 Butler, 'Bodies in Alliance'.
- 41 Ibid.
- 42 Ibid.
- 43 I thank Zeynep Günsür Yüceil (Kadir Has University) for bringing this term to my attention. For a more historical relationship between 'active vanishing' and a theory of perspectivism in Ottoman miniature see her chapter on 'Transgression of Public Space' in *PERFORMART 2014: Performing Arts and Public Space* (Istanbul: DAKAM, 2014), pp. 110–16.
- 44 Phelan, *Unmarked*, p. 19.
- 45 Ibid., p. 6.

- 46 Giorgio Agamben, 'For a Theory of Destituent Power', public lecture delivered in Athens (2014), at www.chronosmag.eu/index.php/g-agamben-for-a-theory-of-destituent-power.html, accessed 26 March 2019.
- 47 Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991).
- 48 During the Gezi Park protests, we already saw some theatre performances in and outside the parks, such as a Forum Theatre workshop by Jale Karabekir (Tiyatro Boyalı Kuş) in one of the park forums, a new four-part play on the main stage at Gezi Park, a dance workshop by Anne Teresa De Keersmaecker at Beşiktaş' Abasağa Park (as part of iDANS festival, which showed her *Rosas Danst Rosas* for free in solidarity) and a dance theatre video mainly recorded around the Galata area, which surfaced on social media.
- 49 Some private theatre companies were 'punished' in 2014 for the support they gave during the anti-government Gezi protests, including Genco Erkal and Dostlar Tiyatrosu, Ferhan Şensoy's Ortaoyuncular, Destar Tiyatro, Altıdan Sonra Tiyatro, Maskara Tiyatro, Tiyatro Hal and Kumbaracı50. An administrative court in Ankara later ruled, however, that the ministry's refusal to offer funding to Dostlar Tiyatrosu was 'against the principles of justice and equality'. See 'Government Accused of Bias in Theater Funding', *Cihan/Today's Zaman*, 13 December 2013, at www.todayszaman.com/newsDetail.action?sessionId=czoOzN+GgWQg2qHfHlPxLUPO?newsId=333942&columnistId=0, accessed 25 June 2016; and 'Ministry of Culture and Tourism Loses Theater Fund Lawsuit', *Cihan/Today's Zaman*, 18 July 2014, at www.cihan.com.tr/en/ministry-of-culture-and-tourism-loses-theater-fund-lawsuit-1507496.htm, accessed 25 June 2016.
- 50 See Pieter Verstraete, 'The Standing Man Effect', Mercator-IPC Policy Brief, Istanbul Policy Center, Sabancı University, Stiftung Mercator Initiative 2013, at http://ipc.sabanciuniv.edu/en/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/IPC_standingman_SON.pdf.
- 51 For example, the play *Karabatak* by tiyatro D22 in Istanbul (written and directed by Berkay Ateş) is said to reference also the Gezi Park protests. Most recently, the monologue *Yol* by Murat Akdağ for Tiyatro Tek Ağaç takes the Gezi uprising as its departure point and takes its audience to more recent situations in Diyarbakır, Suruç and Rojava.
- 52 Meneske Tokyay, 'Censorship of the Arts Remains a National Concern', *SES Türkiye*, 2 April 2014, at http://turkey.setimes.com/en_GB/articles/ses/articles/features/departments/national/2014/04/02/feature-01, accessed 25 June 2015.
- 53 One such young aspiring author who would fall below the radar is Erdem Avsar, who wrote a very promising play inspired by the Gezi Park protests, entitled *#Occupy Love*.
- 54 Kadri Gursel, 'Gezi Resistance Anniversary Recalls Impact on Turkey', trans. Sibel Utku Bila, *Al-Monitor*, Turkey Pulse, 29 May 2014, at www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/05/taksim-turkey-gezi-park-protest-police-crackdown.html, accessed 25 June 2016.
- 55 This slogan was used as the title of an op-ed about the Istanbul-based independent DOT Tiyatrosu, written by Zeynep Oral and published on 28 March 2014 in the (previously Kemalist) *Cumhuriyet* newspaper. The phrase was modelled after the more popular 'Her Yer Taksim, Her Yer Direniş!', which was Gezi's most famous slogan of resistance. I believe the modified phrase above can illustrate how the arts – through the independent, non-commercial theatres – have claimed a central place in Turkey's protest culture, particularly in the post-Gezi period, which saw increasingly more performative protest actions.

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