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Islamic reflexivity and the uncritical subject

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This essay examines the politics of reflexive discourse in the contemporary Muslim world, interrogating the social, affective, and material mediation of its expression. I focus on Turkey's Alevi community, for whom the encounter with modern reflexive media has proved deeply ambivalent. If available genres of public reflexive discourse enable Alevi participation in national public debate, such discursive media also sustain a disciplinary impetus, in which certain genres of argument and forms of subjectivity are valued as critical in contrast to others that are deemed to be insufficiently detached or excessively impassioned. The boundary between the critical and the uncritical, I argue, represents an ideological partition, a condition of social intelligibility, and an institutionally enforced limit to viable subjectivity. Interrogating this partitioning, I thematize a particular understanding of the politics of reflexive discourse, in which existing institutional architectures motivate the production of certain kinds of reflexive subjects at the expense of others, by disciplining affective potentials, moral sensibilities, and modes of historical consciousness.

In the course of my fieldwork among Alevi Muslims in central Turkey, I noticed that many of my interlocutors had accumulated modest collections of books, journals, and pamphlets.[1] These materials offered discussions on recent political history, glosses on the moral virtues of revered figures from early Islamic history, biographies of medieval saints, or social histories of the community's religious origins. On occasion, I would enter a household with just a pen and notebook in hand, only to leave with a handful of books or a stack of internet printouts that informants had lent me as a way of providing authoritative discourses on the community's traditions.

As elsewhere in the Muslim world, modern transformations have brought both new institutions of mass education and literacy, on the one hand, and new technologies of reflexive discourse, on the other. These developments are often viewed as having a 'democratic' effect, dispersing the authority to define tradition from the hands of a statist elite to a broader range of actors across lines of class, ethnicity, and gender (Eickelman & Piscatori 1996; Hefner 2000). This space of reflexive debate is often seen as a principal site for political contestation and where democracy in the Muslim world is promoted against authoritarian tendencies.

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On first sight, the Alevi case appears to offer a situation exemplary of the democratizing trajectory identified in acts of public reflexive deliberation. While the majority of Turkish Muslims are Sunni, Alevis constitute about 15 to 20 per cent of the country's citizenry. They are commonly located within the fold of Shi'i Islam, largely owing to their adherence to Shi'i traditions of reverence for Muhammad's cousin, Ali ibn Abi Talib, and his line of descent. Many rituals performed within the community also draw from a variety of historical sources, especially ritual traditions associated with the Bektaşi Sufi order. A historically rural religious group, Alevis emerged into prominence and visibility in urban and public spaces in recent decades. The development of Alevism as a 'public religion' (Şahin 2005) has taken place in the shadow of a long history of harassment and discrimination against Alevis, including events of sectarian violence as recent as the late 1970s and early 1990s.[2] In the context of this history, and given the Turkish state's long-standing efforts to aggressively enforce a notion of citizenship based on homogeneous religious adherence, some commentators have suggested that Alevi efforts at publicly reflecting upon and representing their traditions entail emancipatory possibilities (e.g. Yavuz 2003*b*).

Yet such an account presumes a good deal that is worth querying directly concerning the complex linkage between a style of discourse (glossed as explicitly reflexive), an ethical subject (valorized as autonomous and authentic), and a political stance (deemed to be subversive of state hegemonies). Recent anthropological work has sought to disentangle and rethink these connections, suggesting that reflexivity is itself a historically variable practice, which presupposes and produces distinctive forms of sensibility, passion, and selfhood (Foucault 2006; Hirschkind 2006; Laidlaw 2002; Mahmood 2005; Pandian 2010; Robbins 2004). Reflexivity, in this line of analysis, is not simply an attribute of the mature, self-aware subject; rather, reflexive practices help to fashion and cultivate subjectivity in its historically particular forms. It is worth interrogating and specifying the kinds of reflexive practices Alevis have been encouraged to adopt over the past few decades. What forms of subjectivity are sustained by these practices? What disciplinary impetus and institutional pressures underlie this subjectivity?

During my field research, I commonly encountered an anxiety that shrouded Alevi reflexive discourse, an anxiety that confounds any straightforward assessment about the communally autonomous or politically assertive character of Alevi reflexivity. Alevi interlocutors rarely claimed that their public discursive and ritual engagements constituted a form of *Islamic* reflexivity, even in the case of events sponsored for the sake of enacting devotional practices that have deep roots within Islamic history.[3] More commonly, Alevis staged communal rituals as tokens of Turkish folklore and defined the genres used to discuss such rituals as Anatolian social history – designations that issue from state-sanctioned nationalist ideologies. In an era in which Alevis have been emboldened to openly reflect upon their religiosity in the name of autonomous communal self-assertion, they have often felt reluctant to deviate from the discursive forms secured by nationalist reckonings of political belonging.

This essay lingers upon this paradox, exploring Alevi reflexivity by means of the anxieties it provokes and the sense of reluctance that forms its limit. I explore how certain genres have come to be considered appropriate to performing a critical reflexive subjectivity in Turkey. The sense of propriety ascribed to these genres is institutionally authorized and is not easily ignored or repudiated by Alevi actors. In the cases depicted below, I describe how politicians, state officials, and academics alike reprimand Alevis who reference traditions of piety that are uneasily reconciled with publicly available

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genres. Such traditions are deemed to be inappropriate to public contexts of folkloric display or obfuscating of modern knowledge protocols of social history. Alevis are castigated, not for raising a political challenge to Turkish nationalism, but for naïvely misappropriating its paradigmatic genres.

What is produced in such situations is not simply the ideal of a critically reflexive subject, but its disavowed correlate: the uncritical subject, perceived to be insufficiently reflexive or improperly so. Michael Warner provocatively suggests that not all forms of reading or practices of reflexivity equally pass as critical within 'the discipline of modernity' (2004: 32). As Warner's formulation suggests, the act of designating certain practices of reflexivity as 'critical' is a mechanism of modern institutional power. Concomitantly, those practices that do not conform to modernity's disciplinary parameters are cast as uncritical: that is to say, as muddled, unsystematic, excessively impassioned, or insufficiently detached.[4] These various associations are not, of course, identical. In glossing this manifold conceptual bundle with the single term 'uncritical', I seek to emphasize the way each is held in opposition to and thereby helps to moor the single, dominant trope of critical reflexivity. The boundary between the critical and the uncritical, I argue, represents an ideological partition, a condition of social intelligibility, and an institutionally enforced limit to viable subjectivity. The Alevi actors described here, who invoke devotional traditions against the mandated norms of institutionalized reflexivity, provoke responses from disciplinary agencies that enforce the division of the critical from the uncritical. Interrogating this partitioning enables a particular understanding of the politics of reflexive discourse. It allows us to explore the forms of historical consciousness and moral subjectivity that institutionalized reflexivity fosters, in relation to those that it forecloses.

The empirical focus of this essay pivots between the growing archive of written reflexive discourse composed by Alevi intellectuals and contexts of embodied performance staged by a rapidly developing network of Alevi organizations. Beginning with the former enables me to interrogate and complicate recent scholarship on the politics of modern Islamic reflexivity in the sites of intellectual production commonly taken as the locus of objectification, self-awareness, and critical reflection. In the second half of the article, I shift the focus away from textual artefacts to consider an event hosted by a provincial Alevi organization. In analysing the event, I argue that existing institutional architectures motivate the production of certain kinds of reflexive subjects, by disciplining their affective potentials, moral sensibilities, and modes of historical consciousness. I also indicate the risks that such institutionally mediated practices of reflexivity raise to alternative forms of selfhood.

Formations of Islamic reflexivity

I begin by describing the historical formation of Islamic reflexivity in Turkey, focusing on developments in the second half of the twentieth century. This historical moment is crucial for two reasons. First, it represents a moment when certain political parties and intellectuals explicitly started to qualify themselves as Islamic in opposition to the single-party, secularist regime that governed Turkey from the 1920s through the 1940s. Secondly, it is at this historical juncture that Alevis started to enter urban environments, actively excluded from Islamist currents and periodically subjected to violence. Situating the development of Islamic reflexivity within this political history allows me to foreground the sense of vulnerability and reluctance that would come to shape Alevi reflexive discourses as they emerged in the 1980s and 1990s.

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The 1970s bore witness to the rapid rise of new Islamic political parties and new networks of Islamic intellectuals within Turkey's Sunni majority. Alevi communities, entering urban environments during these decades in greater numbers than ever before, were largely outside of such circles. By the mid-1970s, the sectarian orientation of developing Islamic political and intellectual currents increasingly manifested itself in overt political cleavages and conflicts. Cold War polarizations between the left and the right congealed across ethno-sectarian lines. Intellectual and political networks within the Sunni community allied themselves with Turkish nationalists positioned on the political right. Recent scholarship suggests that Islamic political parties of the time garnered major successes precisely in regions of central and eastern Anatolia that held sizeable Alevi communities – regions where such parties proved capable of mobilizing an electorate by inciting sentiments of sectarian antagonism against Alevis (Yavuz 2003*a*: 210-11). One result was that Alevis were readily associated – and began to associate themselves – with the political left. By the late 1970s, as conflicts between leftist and right-wing groups steadily mounted into violence, Alevis in a number of central and eastern Anatolian provinces became targets of right-wing militia attacks.

The violence would be brought to an end only with the military-led *coup d'état* of 1980. The *coup* proved to be an important turning-point. The failure of the state to end the violence by means of existing political structures profoundly influenced the way in which state agencies approached problems involved in governing communal differences. Rather than seeking to stringently extricate religion from politics following the *coup*, the state invested greater energy in trying to define national citizenship in terms of a particular conception of the Islamic tradition. The resulting effort, commonly referred to as the Turkish-Islamic synthesis, both presumed a Muslim identity to Turkish citizenship and interpreted Islamic traditions in ways that encouraged national allegiance. Initiated by right-wing intellectuals in the 1970s, the thesis was heavily promoted by the state over the course of the next two decades, receiving official sanction in educational materials used in Turkish public schools (Kaplan 2006).

The conjunction of Islamic and national identity promoted by the Turkish-Islamic synthesis did not simply facilitate new opportunities for Alevis both to claim their national loyalty and to participate in communally distinctive Islamic traditions; to the contrary, it demanded of Alevi actors that they sharply cleave their national identity from any interpretation of Islam that differed from what the state authorized. State functionaries and the leaders of a wide spectrum of political parties embraced an explicit rhetoric of celebrating Alevism, but only on particular terms of engagement. It is common to hear officials of the state's Directorate of Religious Affairs praise Alevism as a crucial piece of Turkey's national heritage, but none the less refuse to recognize Alevi ritual practice as an alternative form of Islamic worship (*ibadet*) (Tambar 2010).

Alevi groups have responded to this inclusionary discourse in different ways. Some have openly embraced the idea that Alevi religious history is a token of the national heritage. The fact that violence against Alevis had not abated but continued episodically in the 1990s suggested to many members of the community that they remained vulnerable to sectarian hostility. One result, as Elise Massicard (2006) demonstrates, is that most mainstream Alevi organizations today frequently insist on the 'unity of the nation', a concept that in Turkey carries not only the sense of promoting the common good, but also more aggressive and often militaristic associations of a state-secured homogeneity, particularly in a context of ongoing violent conflict centred on Kurdish separatism. Other Alevi groups have been more directly critical of state policy, insisting

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that the form of Islam encouraged by the Turkish-Islamic synthesis is indebted to Sunni traditions. Such critics have been deeply suspicious of the state's efforts to build mosques in Alevi villages and neighbourhoods, and have demanded that courses on religion in public schools be abolished, claiming that these classes fail to acknowledge or adequately represent Alevi traditions.

Contemporary Alevi communities are, in this sense, deeply fractured around the question of whether to accept or to confront the state's nationalist rhetorics of inclusion and the forms of public Islamic engagement it sanctions. Groups that adopt a more confrontational stance tend to view any invocation of canonical Islamic sources such as Qur'anic passages and hadith reports as indicative of state-supported Sunni influence and pressure – a perspective that has led some prominent Alevi commentators to claim that the community's religiosity lies outside the fold of Islam altogether. I rarely found this perspective claimed by the Alevis with whom I lived and worked. More frequently, I encountered Alevis willing to acknowledge the significance of Islamic traditions in the community's history, but hesitant to explicitly appeal to Islamic sources, such as the Qur'an and hadith reports, as the ground on which to define, defend, or critique public performances of Alevism in the present.

References to the Qur'an and to hadith reports are not altogether absent in Alevi reflexive discourses, but they are rarely presented as expressions of public Islamic reflexivity. Such references to Islamic tradition are often couched within genres more easily recognized as the social history of Anatolia, a genre central to Turkish nationalist historiography. As I will suggest below, there is considerable contention over the aim and intelligibility of such reflexive discourses, where references to the morally exemplary lives of early Muslims are organized by practices of citation orientated to the history and cultural geography of the Turkish nation. The purchase and cogency of Alevi invocations of Islamic tradition are placed at risk by the genre that mediates their expression.

Explicit discourse

In many of its socio-political and technological features, public reflexive discourse among Alevis today exemplifies what scholars have identified as a broader pattern of increasing reflexivity taking place across the Muslim world. According to Dale Eickelman and James Piscatori, two central elements of this process include the rise of new media forms and increasing rates of literacy through projects of mass education and mass communication. These developments emerged in the modern era and have given rise to an 'objectification of Muslim consciousness', in which 'aspects of social and political life become subject to conscious reflection, discussion, and debate' (Eickelman & Piscatori 1996: 37). The reflexivity born of mass communication 'reconfigure[s] the nature of religious thought and action and encourage[s] debate over meaning' (Eickelman & Piscatori 1996: 39).

One of the defining features of reflexive discourse, in most analyses of objectification processes, is its explicit nature – explicit not only in the sense of an overt debate about tradition rather than its tacit acceptance, but also in the sense of the systematization of the tradition against perceived inconsistencies. Olivier Roy (2004: 24), for instance, submits that contemporary Muslims often appeal to 'explicit formulations' of Islamic identity as a way of systematically delineating that which is divinely given, apart from historically variable cultural elements. Such delineations are rarely issued without contest. Debates focused on explicit formulations of Islamic tradition often reveal distinctly modern relations of power between, on the one hand, centralized

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nation-states that seek to control the form of religious expression and, on the other, new religious intellectuals, frequently educated in modern schools, who challenge the authority of the state to delimit the boundaries of the religious. These debates also often facilitate the participation of an increasing number of groups and individuals – including previously marginalized groups such as women, various religious sects, and ethnic minorities – in public deliberations over the common good (Deeb 2006; Hefner 2000).

This account of reflexive discourse helps to make sense of the fact that Alevis are sharpening their vision as to how their traditions ought to be defined and performed, struggling to find new spaces and venues from which to challenge the state's authority to classify communal practices (cf. Şahin 2005; Vorhoff 1998; Yavuz 2003*b*). What I wish to scrutinize more closely, however, is the way that analyses of objectification processes portray the role of mediation in reflexive discourse. Focusing on 'explicit formulations' of Islamic identity, analysts concerned with the objectification of Muslim consciousness rarely attend to the social, material, and linguistic conditions necessary for discourse to pass as explicit rather than obscure or muddled. I will return to the Alevi case further below, but an example from another Muslim context is useful in framing my argument.

In his historical investigation of legal and pedagogical writing in Yemen, Brinkley Messick (1993) describes how moderns – whether colonial officials, European scholars, or native elites – viewed medieval traditions of Islamic scholarship as disorderly and impenetrable. Messick demonstrates that practices of reasoned and reflexive discourse were not absent in earlier periods of Islamic history, but they were not easily accommodated or recognized by modern legal and educational structures. The ability of such moderns to recognize discourse as systematic rather than disordered was mediated by cultural practices of reading and expectations regarding genre and compositional style. In that context, what might constitute a token of explicit discourse was a primary political question, rather than epiphenomenal to the content of political and religious argument.

We can read Messick's analysis, I suggest, in a way that opens up the notion of explicit discourse to a new range of questions concerning its conditions of possibility. What mediatory forms of discourse are considered requisite for a cogent formulation of Islam in a given space and time? How do the conditions of cogency change over time? An explicit formulation describes, in effect, one moment in a longer historical process – a moment in which the mode of formulation appears transparent with respect to the identity it represents. Analyses that claim to describe explicit, objectified formulations of Islamic identity elide what should prompt ethnographic investigation: that is, the struggles that take place with regard to the genres and practices understood to be necessary for such a formulation.

In order to conceptualize this sort of struggle, I find it helpful to invoke the concept of metapragmatics, a concept that allows us to understand how social actors stipulate the form and function of a speech act (M. Silverstein 1993). Metapragmatic stipulation involves efforts to clarify or control the conditions of a discourse's cogency. In situations of what I call metapragmatic risk, the purchase and intelligibility of a speech act – its metapragmatic orientation – are rendered uncertain, ambiguous, or untenable. Under such conditions, the speech act is not legible as an instance of systematic reflection but appears epistemologically naïve or disordered. It fails to register as an instance of critical reflexivity.

My contention is that the politics of reflexivity does not emerge simply from debates conducted in texts that are already readable and legible as explicit invocations of Islamic discourse. A whole field of at once political and moral anxieties arises in

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response to questions about the form that this discourse should take, the settings in which its utterance should occur, and the subjectivities it would thereby endorse.

Historiography and hadith

In order to open up some of these problems, I consider a set of debates taking place in Turkey that has assumed a particular discursive form: written texts composed in the modern-national linguistic standard, addressed to a national rather than sectarian audience, and aimed at explicitly and systematically delineating the social history of Alevi religious traditions. While this constellation of elements is precisely what scholars have identified as facilitating an objectification of Muslim consciousness and modern reflexive awareness in many parts of the world, it is also important to note the locally specific entrenchment of this discourse. The social history of Alevism is a genre with a deep institutional history. It extends back to the late Ottoman Empire and early Turkish Republic, when nationalist ideologues dispatched ethnographers to central and eastern Anatolia to study Alevi communities. Almost invariably, such studies identified Alevi rituals as tokens of the Turkish nation's authentic past.[5] The genre, in this sense, has been institutionally bound to the state's nationalist project from early on. Social history, as a globally pervasive mode of modernist writing, articulated with a particular historical moment and ideological project within Turkey, especially in its application to Alevi religiosity.

Attempts in recent decades by Alevis themselves to mobilize this genre of reflexive writing have proven problematic rather than seamless. Investigating the Alevi appropriation of this genre allows us to glimpse one site where Alevis are struggling to negotiate the institutional demands of national allegiance (in this case, as required of the genre itself) with a concern to assert communal difference. Alevi efforts to reference the virtuous lives and deaths of early Islamic figures prompt commentary about the propriety of such references within the genre that is employed. The representative examples that I describe allow me to highlight ongoing disputes that emerge over the genre of discourse presupposed by such arguments. I approach these texts as ethnographic artefacts – that is to say, as social acts whose efficacy lies in the promulgation or disruption of regnant metapragmatic regimes of deliberation. At stake is the making and unmaking of critical reflexivity.

The texts at hand are composed by a new class of Alevi public intellectuals, who either migrated to urban settings as children or were born there. Most of these writers attended public schools, often receiving higher degrees in Turkish universities. Such intellectuals frequently participate in political debates about the state's classification of the community and its rituals. Their arguments appear in a wide range of state-run and private media, including television programmes, newspaper editorials, published books, and internet forums and blogs. Part of what defines these actors as *public* intellectuals is their capacity to mobilize genres of writing and speech that are capable of summoning and addressing a national audience in various mediatized modalities.

The rise of Alevi public intellectuals represents one strand of a broader trend in Turkey. The past several decades have also seen the emergence of a new class of public intellectuals within Turkey's Sunni majority, educated through the state's public school system and capable of mobilizing the same array of new media forms (Meeker 1994). Yet certain historical and discursive features distinguish intellectual production among Alevis from that among Sunnis. As mentioned above, Alevi intellectual production developed in the aftermath of sectarian violence directed against the community, most

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dramatically in the late 1970s and most recently in the early 1990s. Alevi expressions of communal tradition have had to contend with accusations of disloyalty to the nation that have been backed with threats and acts of violence. This fact goes some way to explaining what might otherwise seem to be a contradiction that, in an era of increased public reflexivity on communal differences and religious pluralism, many Alevis continue to insist upon their commitment to the indivisibility of the nation, brandishing Turkish flags and photographs of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk at events organized for the sake of communal expression.[6]

The sensed vulnerability to communal violence has impacted the kind of discourse Alevi intellectuals have produced, in contrast to their Sunni counterparts. As Brian Silverstein (2005) shows, Turkish Sunni intellectuals raise reflexive questions about the conditions of their engagement with the Islamic tradition. They specify those conditions as contextually shaped by late Ottoman and early Republican modernization efforts, but they supply grounds for justifying the continued relevance of traditional Islamic genres. Some Sunni intellectuals inveigh against the Kemalist project of state-led secularist modernization and the modes of knowledge production it derived from Western Europe.[7] Alevi intellectuals, by contrast, have frequently embraced Kemalist modernization in explicit ideological terms, and have tended not to overtly claim the validity of traditional Islamic knowledge forms. They have generally abided by modernist genres, particularly that of social history. The appropriation of the genre, however, has not precluded attempts by Alevis to invoke contentious accounts of early Islam that are not easily accommodated by the structuring principles of the nation's historiography.

As indicated above, contemporary Alevi writings resemble the kind of discourse that scholars often identify as objectified reflection upon tradition. In keeping with the analytical focus of this essay, I want to explore how the parameters of this objectification are regimented in the very act of Alevi public address, and how these discursive grounds are contingently stabilized or contested.

We can see this regimentation at work by focusing, specifically, on the status of early Islamic history in contemporary narratives of the Alevi community's past. As with the global Shi'i community, Turkey's Alevis have long commemorated the martyrdom of Husayn, Muhammad's grandson, an event that took place in the late seventh century in the Iraqi desert town of Karbala. Acts of ritual mourning for Husayn developed as part of a rich moral tradition within Islam, justified by a corpus of hadith accounts attributed to Muhammad and those of his descendants revered by the Shi'a as the Twelve Imams.[8]

In order to explore how invocations of such traditions elicit queries concerning their intelligibility and propriety, it is necessary to examine the genre of public deliberation that endows these narratives with form and function. Two crucial presumptions underlie this genre. First, Anatolia is taken as the social space within which Alevi religiosity was established and developed. Anatolia is neither an arbitrary nor an ideologically neutral selection: it has grounded most of Turkey's national historiography since the Republic's inception (Copeaux 1997). It has come to be accepted by most commentators as the geographical space that nourished the emergence and growth of both the nation and the Alevi community. This emplacement of Alevi religious tradition within Anatolia also bears the marks of the more recently developed Turkish-Islamic synthesis mentioned earlier. Writings on Alevi history rarely provide overt citations of the thesis, but the discursive ground of this literature exemplifies many of its characteristic elements. The notion of a Muslim *umma*, existing in excess of any given sovereign national territory, has little role in these discourses on Alevi tradition.[9]

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Second, the discourse proceeds largely by way of the genre of social history, which emplots Alevi religious history across the course of Turkic migrations from Central Asia into Anatolia, revealing the evolution of its traditions across various Turkic dynasties, through the Ottoman Empire, and into the national Republic. The empty, homogeneous, and chronological time characteristic of nationalist historiography throughout much of the world (cf. Anderson 1991) is taken as the temporal ground on which the past of Alevi religion is conceived and authenticated.

The work of Cemal Şener provides an exemplification of this genre. Şener is a prominent Alevi intellectual and an author of many books on the history and politics of the community. Like many other Alevi intellectuals (e.g. Bozkurt 1990; Öz 2001), he insists on distinguishing Alevism from Shi'ism, rooting this distinction in the fact that unique aspects of Alevi religiosity derive from Anatolian history. In one of his earliest texts, Şener (1989) recounts the community's history through medieval and modern Anatolia, the experience of which is said to have shaped Alevism's characteristic religious forms.

Yet Şener's text also operates at the genre's limits. Given the spatial and temporal orientations of the genre – orientations that Alevi intellectuals generally abide by – it is perhaps surprising to note that Şener and many other Alevi commentators open their narratives with a discussion of the Arabian peninsula in the seventh century: that is, with an account of early Islamic history. Despite general adherence to the genre of social history, Şener none the less begins his narrative with an account of the life of the Prophet and his kin. Highlighting in particular the significance of the Prophet's cousin, Ali, and the death of Husayn, Şener's discourse rehearses an account of early Islamic history that has been sustained by Shi'i hadith compilations and elaborated by Shi'i scholars for centuries. He describes, for instance, episodes in the life of the Prophet where Muhammad is said to have appointed Ali as his successor (Şener 1989: 21). Şener goes further, describing how efforts by Muhammad to write his last testament, just prior to his death, were resisted by Umar ibn al-Khattab, a figure revered by Sunnis (1989: 22-4). He also discusses at length the martyrdom of Husayn (1989: 39-45).[10] Şener never acknowledges his dependence on Shi'i traditions of commentary, and indeed the larger aim of the work is to provide a conventionally historicist account of Alevism within the chronology of Anatolia. But the genre of a different scene of communication – one constituted through centuries of Shi'i polemic and doctrinal elaboration – shadows his prologue.

Şener's text not only advances a public commentary on Alevi identity, but also labours upon the limits of a form of public address whose genres and agencies have been historically premised on the community's exclusion from public deliberation. Moreover, Şener is not unique in opening his social history with an account of the morally exemplary life of Ali and his descendants – this effort to labour within and against the existing genre is found in the work of many contemporary Alevi intellectuals.[11] Following Warner (2002: 146), it would be plausible to suggest that this body of work enacts the 'poetic or creative function of public address' to the extent that it helps to fashion new conditions of discursive intelligibility, recalibrating the mediatory form of reflexivity. The conditions for such creative engagement, however, are by no means settled by the rhetorical structure of the texts alone. An assessment of the texts' creative effectivity requires an examination of how they have been received.

Some prominent interlocutors have assumed an antagonistic stance towards texts such as Şener's, texts that seek to compose a modern historiographical account of Alevi tradition but open the narrative with a reflection on the life of early Muslim moral

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exemplars. Offering a trenchant critique of such accounts, Ahmet Yaşar Ocak – a professional historian with an academic appointment – draws out the consequences of beginning a historical account of Alevism with the early Islamic community.

> Most Alevi researchers and Alevis themselves identify the beginnings of Alevism with the era of the Caliphate struggles between Ali and Muawiya.[12] What appears correct about this at first sight is the personage of Ali, who is the subject of primary belief in Alevism. The basic logic of this approach is as follows: Alevism formed in the environment of Ali, and Alevism places him at the centre of its theology ... However, this starting point is valid for Shi'ism (Ocak 2004: 259).

From the perspective of a professional historian like Ocak, 'the historical starting-place of Alevism is not in the Arab lands, where the disputes over the Caliphate took place, but in the lands of Anatolia' (2004: 259-60). To identify the origins of Alevism with the Caliphate struggles of early Islam is to extend communal religious history beyond the geo-historical boundaries of the Turkic migrations into Anatolia. It would embed the Alevi community within the space-time of the Muslim *umma* rather than within the chronology of Turkish national historiography.

Ocak's criticism targets the conditions of intelligibility of Şener's invocations of early Islam and the hadith reports on which his account is based. The criticism seeks to display the ambiguity and untenability of such hadith references within a text that otherwise purports to offer a social history of Anatolian Alevism. Ocak invites us to question the validity of such invocations in relation to the evidentiary protocols and narrative conventions of the genre adopted by the text.

The significance of Şener's book is not simply that it reflexively presents an account of Alevi religious tradition and thereby participates in the objectification of the community's identity. Şener's objectification of Alevi tradition does not of itself dictate the metapragmatic framework that endows the text with the context of its engagement. Ocak's criticism does not remain neutral in this matter: it insists on calibrating the metapragmatics of the deliberative form within a scrupulously historicist framing, in which hadith accounts of the early Muslim community are neither appropriate nor reasonable grounds of argument. Ocak's critique has been backed by at least some Alevis themselves, who have explicitly sought to chart Alevi history in the chronological progression of Turkic migrations from Central Asia to Anatolia, avoiding in the process a narrative form that would begin with early Muslim exemplars (e.g. Birdoğan 1990).

The criticisms faced by texts such as Şener's reveal the manner in which the genre that guides reflexive practice in Turkey is constitutive of the possibilities and limits of moral expression. Şener's text struggles to voice, within a genre hostile to its expression, hadith accounts that have long been sustained within Alevi communities in the form of narrated tales, recited hymns, and devotional poetry. The form of discourse that sustains Şener's text as a circulable contribution to public debate is simultaneously what places at risk the intelligibility of the hadith citations that open his narrative.

Reflexivity and subjectivity

The debate precipitated by Şener's text suggests that reflexive discourses, which scholars often treat as explicit, systematic interpretations of religious tradition, engage in a negotiation of the conditions of cogency that determine what counts as systematic

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rather than muddled, unintelligible, or uncritical. In many Alevi contexts in particular, the invocation of Islamic traditions is rendered ambiguous by the form of its expression.

What is harder to read off of such texts are questions concerning aspects of subjectivity that shape the way that individuals and communities emotionally respond to Islamic narrative traditions. In order to address issues concerned with the affective dimensions of subjectivity, a shift in ethnographic focus is necessary, away from the discourses of published texts, and towards sites where such genres and narratives are embodied in institutionally structured events and elicit emotional responses. This shift also moves the analysis away from the discourse of public intellectuals to contexts that shape the engagement of a wider segment of Alevis with Islamic traditions.

Before developing this analytical shift ethnographically, it is worth elaborating on the conceptual relationship between reflexivity and subjectivity, as I am drawing upon a growing body of anthropological work in the study of ethics and moral tradition. Much of this scholarship builds upon Foucault's investigations of how actors in different time periods scrutinize their sentiments, sensibilities, and emotions in order to direct the self to historically varying conceptions of the good (see, e.g., Foucault 2006). For anthropologists who have explored such technologies of the self cross-culturally, the ethical subject is not given in advance of these practices of self-fashioning, but is a product of their repeated enactment (Asad 1993; Hirschkind 2006; Laidlaw 2002; Mahmood 2005; Pandian 2010; Robbins 2004). Judith Butler succinctly characterizes the Foucauldian analysis of ethics as one that 'dislodge[s] the subject as the ground of ethics in order to recast the subject as a problem *for* ethics' (2005: 110, italics in original).

In such analyses, reflexivity is not simply a standing back from practice in order to evaluate it; rather, that standing back is itself an act, ordered in relation to variable contextual settings and practical necessities (see also Keane 2007). Studying an Egyptian Islamic piety movement, Saba Mahmood (2005) describes the norms of usage that govern the practice of scriptural citation. Invocations of scripture help to cultivate specific forms of desire, volition, and emotion, involving, for instance, the will to pray at dawn or the capacity to weep in prayer. Practices of moral reflexivity, Mahmood argues, enable and enact historically particular trajectories of subject-formation.

The Alevi case is particularly significant in that it reveals a site where the invocation of Islamic traditions is destabilized rather than anchored by the norms of usage that organize available forms of reflexivity. In this context, actors cannot take for granted the ability to summon, for themselves as for others, the norms that would render recognizable the ethical character of their discourse. The genre that provides such speech acts with the practical context of their utterance militates against the modalities of devotional piety historically cultivated in references to the moral virtues of early Islamic figures. As we will see below, what is placed at risk in reflexive endeavours is not only the intelligibility of a hadith reference, but also the form of subjectivity that hadith invocations have historically fostered.

The ethnographic situation requires that we attend to the ethico-political ambiguities, contradictions, and risks entailed by the practice of reflexive utterance, specifically in relation to its mediation. In the situations discussed here, the mediatory vehicles of reflexive discourse do not simply facilitate invocations of religious traditions in their historically specific forms, but throw into question the ethical purchase of such speech acts and the models of subjectivity they presuppose. How should we conceptualize reflexive practice when its mediatory form undermines rather than secures the subject of its enunciation?

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Contexts in question

As mentioned above, massive migrations of Alevis from rural areas to urban settings began in the 1960s and accelerated in the 1980s. While the first few decades of this process witnessed the initial development of civil society organizations claiming to support and represent newly urbanizing Alevis, the number of such groups proliferated in the 1990s. Since the mid- to late 1990s, Alevi organizations have sought to create contexts of ritual performance in city centres and provincial towns where the sorts of religio-historical narratives elaborated in published texts such as Şener's and Ocak's have been collectively orchestrated, voiced, and heard by urban constituencies. The contexts constructed by Alevi organizations are pedagogical spaces: they are sites where Alevi groups attempt to educate urban Alevis and the broader public about the community's religiosity. Such contexts facilitate public reflection on this religiosity. It was in such settings where I was able to observe how the practice of reading and hearing (in addition to that of composing) these narratives was metapragmatically regimented.

The work of creating contexts of public reflexivity holds political significance in contemporary Turkey. In the central Anatolian town in which I conducted fieldwork, the Turkish state has erected a number of mosques in a series of adjoining neighbourhoods that are predominantly inhabited by Alevis. The state persistently defends this practice of mosque construction with the claim that the mosque is a site of worship for all of Turkey's Muslim citizens, regardless of denominational orientation. One of the principal tasks of local Alevi organizations is to create alternative sites of ritual enactment. While such sites are formally autonomous of the state's Directorate of Religious Affairs, they are none the less subjected to state supervision and scrutiny. The ostensible autonomy of these organizations from state control is frequently balanced by pressures felt by some Alevi organizers to demonstrate to state officials and the media their community's inclusion within the nation. Focusing on one particular event, I want to draw attention to how invocations of Islamic traditions in such alternative sites make available certain forms of subjectivity only by placing other affective and signifying potentials at risk, casting them as uncritical.

The event in question occurred several weeks after Ashura, the day commemorating the death of Husayn. This particular event was organized as a *Şükrancılık cemi*, a gathering to give thanks to God for allowing one of Husayn's sons, Zayn al-Abidin, to survive the Battle of Karbala. The event included several speeches, delivered by government officials, civil society leaders, and an academic, as well as a staged ritual performance.

In its enactment, the event exemplified a tension characteristic of many public displays of Alevi ritual between, on the one hand, an effort to enact in an urban setting a ritual commemoration of early Muslim martyrs and, on the other hand, an effort to display for public consumption what Alevi ritual once looked like in rural Anatolia. One Alevi leader repeatedly informed the audience that the ritual being staged was merely a 'representation' (*temsil*) of how traditional practice was once performed. As the ritual was enacted, various individuals provided mutually discrepant answers to the question of what kind of event was transpiring: a ritual remembrance of Zayn al-Abidin's survival of the Battle of Karbala, or a remembrance of ritual traditions derived from Turkish Anatolia's medieval and early modern past.

In order to highlight how these metapragmatic interrogations occur, I want to focus on one particular moment of the event – a speech delivered by an academic. I begin

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from a hadith citation, and then draw out the contextual forms at once presupposed and entailed in its utterance. I proceed in this manner because I want, initially, to leave analytically underdetermined the context of the speech act. Rather than defining the practical context at the outset of the analysis, I explore through ethnographic inquiry how this context is summoned by and thereby regiments the emergent act. Three elements play into the metapragmatics of this utterance, concerning audience, conditions of address, and the speaker's discursive authority.

'Before he died, the Prophet announced to his followers, "I entrust you with two weighty things: the Qur'an and the people of my house (*Ahl al-Bayt*)"'. The speaker, whom I refer to as Suleyman, recited the hadith report on a stage, standing before a lectern. He faced an audience of several hundred individuals who sat in tightly packed rows on plastic folding chairs. Like many such urban Alevi events, the space is not reserved solely for these sorts of rituals; it is, rather, a banquet hall that is more commonly used for wedding parties (*düğün salonu*). Behind the stage, Alevi organizers had hung three large posters, exhibiting portraits of Ali, Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli, and Mustafa Kemal Atatürk – icons that reveal a narrative stretching from the Prophet's cousin to a medieval Anatolian saint and concluding with the founder of modern Turkey.[13] Speaking in the shadow of these icons and the narrative broadcasted through their juxtaposition, Suleyman invoked the hadith account, which is well known both among Alevis in Turkey and among the Shi'a worldwide: it is one of the statements ascribed to Muhammad in which he is seen to indicate the authority of Ali and his descendants as moral examples for the Muslim community.[14]

Historically, this hadith passage has not only referenced a historical event but also provided sanction to a range of practices, such as annual mourning commemorations of Husayn's death that continue to inform Shi'i and Alevi ritual in the present. Suleyman, however, is not a preacher, and he was not delivering a sermon. He is a professor of religious history at a local university. Many of his writings focus on the history of Anatolian Sufi communities, including the Bektaşi order, whose rites are often closely associated with the traditions of the Alevi community. The question that deserves examination is not simply what the recited hadith account means or what doctrines it authorizes, but what the speaker is accomplishing in its utterance. What is the practice of reflexivity that gives purchase to its utterance?

Suleyman is of Alevi descent, but he spoke in this setting not as a participant in an emotional commemoration of Zayn al-Abidin's survival – what would traditionally be referred to as a *meclis* (Arabic, *majlis*) gathering – but as a professor offering a public lecture (*tebliğ sunmak*). The mixed-sex audience he addressed at this event spanned a great variety of ages: babies, adolescents, the middle aged, and the elderly. Seating was not segregated by either sex or age. However, a number of local dignitaries were seated in the front row – the mayor of the central Anatolian province that was hosting the event, the state-appointed head of religious affairs for the province (*müftü*), as well as representatives of several political parties.

The presence of state officials and party representatives was not unexpected – these sorts of individuals have become common attendees at urban Alevi events. Their presence, however, did cause some consternation, as they were seen by many of the Alevi organizers of this event not only as political figures but also as individuals who for the most part are of Sunni descent. Prior to the event, I shared a meal with several of the organizers, a group that included two Alevi *dedes* (religious leaders), several Alevi civil society activists, and Suleyman. The conversation focused heavily on how the

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Şükrancılık cemi should be crafted, such that it would avoid offending the various populations expected to attend. Organizers were clearly concerned about cues that might conjure the history of sectarian fracture. One of the *dedes* pointedly asked Suleyman what he would speak about. Without waiting long for a response, the *dede* insisted that Suleyman not make too many references to Qur'anic passages and hadith accounts, as this might render conspicuous sectarian differences that ought not to be made blatant in this context. The *dede* suggested that Suleyman focus solely on Husayn's life. Taken aback, Suleyman asked how he could relate an account of Husayn's life without referencing hadith reports. The conversation failed to achieve resolution, but what was evident was an anxiety about how a multi-denominational audience would receive the recitation of hadith accounts: that is, about what such a recitation might practically effect in this context.

In his speech Suleyman did, of course, mention the contentious hadith account, and proceeded to describe Muhammad's love for Husayn and the valour Husayn exhibited in his life, culminating with his courage and death at Karbala. In referencing this narrative of early Islamic history, Suleyman was not seeking to antagonize audience members hailing from Sunni backgrounds. To the contrary, he was attempting to provide a publicly palatable account of Alevi Islamic traditions. He pursued this end by situating this account of the Islamic past within a reflexive practice organized by the genre of Anatolian social history. Jumping quickly from the Battle of Karbala to a discussion of Anatolia's medieval history, Suleyman made biographical references to a number of Anatolian saints, such as Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli, Mevlana, and Yunus Emre. None of this was entirely surprising to me, given that Suleyman's scholarly expertise lies precisely in the religious history shaped by these figures.

The invocation of these figures is itself a practice of citation. There are two reasons to insist upon this point. First, as Charles Briggs and Richard Bauman (1992) point out, genres are always situated practices, summoned by social actors in order to intelligibly organize contexts of discursive performance. Yet as Briggs and Bauman also stress, such invocations are rarely if ever fully consolidated in their authority to metapragmatically stipulate such contexts, remaining open to rival construals – a point that will be elaborated below. Second, and following from the first point, Suleyman's account practically functioned as an attempt to regiment the way that audience members listened to the narrative. In order to provide a sense of the regimenting work of Suleyman's reflexive practice, I want to turn back to the key moment in his narrative when he mentioned Husayn's death.

As Suleyman described Husayn's death at the hands of the tyrannical ruler Yazid, a few audience members called out curses upon his killers. The act of cursing was not wholly unexpected: curses upon Husayn's oppressors constitute regular components of traditional ritual acts of mourning, often accompanied by acts of weeping.[15] Deriving its intelligibility from a lengthy historical practice, the act of cursing brought into view the possibility that the practical context of Suleyman's hadith utterance was not simply a historian's public lecture, stripped of devotional emotions, but an event of ritual mourning. Note, in this regard, that the metapragmatic regimentation of the hadith utterance does not depend solely on the speaker's intention. Audience response holds open the possibility of remediating, even if retrospectively, the practical context of Suleyman's utterance.

These two framings – academic lecture and devotional mourning – could, of course, coexist, orientating the event in one manner or the other for the various participants.

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In the event, however, cursing left but a thin echo. Few participants joined in, and no one that I could see began to weep. For his part, Suleyman refused to be provoked by the calls of cursing and did not embellish his account of Husayn's death in ways that might have encouraged further curses or acts of weeping. His tone of voice undisturbed, he continued his lecture with the moderated formality of an experienced academic, gesturing to the Muslim saints of medieval Anatolia. These saints are not archaic – across Republican history, they have been recuperated by nationalist leaders and academics alike as forebears of the Turkish nation (Soileau 2006). In the unfolding context of the event, the invocation of these figures was efficacious: in conjunction with the posters on stage and the state officials in the audience, it helped to regiment what might otherwise have been an occasion to weep for fallen martyrs of early Islamic history as an event to recollect the history of Turkish Anatolia. These various elements established conditions of cogency that not only rendered Suleyman's utterance legible as social history, but concomitantly placed at risk the intelligibility of the act of cursing, as an appropriate and recognizable mode of responding to the narrative. If, as suggested above, contemporary Alevi performance contexts are pedagogical sites, attendees are learning not only the key narratives of Alevi religion but also the affective modalities of responding (or not responding) to narrative cues. Concomitant to this process is the production of the mourner as an uncritical subject, mistaking Suleyman's rhetorical turns as prompts for issuing curses.

A number of Alevi attendees at the event reported, in earlier interviews, that they regularly participated in annual rituals of weeping for Husayn. Such claims seemed to be confounded by the relative absence of mourning practices in events such as the *Şükrancılık cemi*. When asked about this slippage, some of my Alevi interlocutors pointed out that the context was inappropriate. 'The audience was mixed (*karışık*)', explained one elderly man with a shrug, as he brought his hands together to indicate the co-presence of Sunnis and Alevis. Several others nearby nodded in assent, but notably refrained from elaborating a more explicit critique of the planners or the way the event had been organized.

The director of the local Alevi group that organized the event offered a similar response, but intoned his statement with a sense of political expediency. After attending another event, where I again witnessed an invocation of Husayn's death without accompanying acts of ritual mourning, I asked the director why most of the audience members were not engaged in acts of weeping or cursing. After noting the 'mixed' audience, he quickly added that this co-presence is itself important, as it publicly demonstrates and displays national unity (*milli birlik ve beraberlik*) in a town that has experienced sectarian violence in its recent history.

What was striking about the director's remark was that it implied that the absenting of mourning was part of what was required of a display of national harmony. The comment suggests that the absence of mourning was an intended effect of the way the event was organized. In selecting an academic historian to offer the event's principal address, the planners anticipated and attempted to forestall the metapragmatic risks involved in crafting a setting suitable for a public audience. The organizers orchestrated a particular practice of reflexivity with the aim of regulating the mode of audience participation. This effort to mediate the style of response and participation indicates a disciplinary impetus to the reflexive act, one that works by orientating the listening subject within the affective and discursive norms of national citizenship.

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Promiscuous media and the limits of critique

The fact that some individuals uttered curses at the event suggests that the disciplinary modalities of the reflexive act were not entirely successful. The curses betray the persistent presence of sensibilities and practices among Alevis that are uneasily reconciled with the forms of knowledge sanctioned by state officials, professional historians, and some Alevi organizers alike. The mediation of Alevi subjectivity by means of nationalist genres of reflexivity remains incomplete, uneven, and subject to disruption.

The labile character of the genre's appropriation may be an inherent property of mediatory processes. Webb Keane (1997) argues that the representational medium of religious discourse, in its material form, is always prone to historical vicissitudes. The argument productively leaves open the question of what determines the mutations of any given mediatory vehicle. In this regard it is worth asking about the extent to which the instabilities of religious media are motivated by explicit reflection and criticism by local actors. In other words, how should we conceptualize the socio-politics of local acts of reflection upon the existing media of reflexivity?

The question can be profitably elaborated by comparison with an Egyptian Muslim context detailed in Charles Hirschkind's (2006) monograph, in which the medium of reflexive discourse has come under critical scrutiny. Highlighting the technological mediations of religious discourse, Hirschkind describes how cassette tapes serve as a focus of concern for pious Muslims. The tapes enable a wide circulation of sermonic discourse, as well as facilitating and extending a historical practice of audition that stimulates pious affects in a modern industrial context. At the same time, however, the medium of the cassette tape carries the unmistakable traces of popular entertainment and the forms of distraction and pleasure such entertainment animates, which many Egyptian Muslims view as detracting from the labour of ethical cultivation. 'By convention, cassettes are a medium of (musical) entertainment ... [Cassette sermons'] mode of employment differs little from other popular cassette-based media ... [T]he medium itself throw[s] into question the very project for which it serves as instrument' (2006: 92). The medium shapes but also disrupts the kind of event that listening to its message can be intelligibly understood to constitute.

The ambiguities described by Hirschkind are not unique to Egypt. William Mazzarella identifies this sort of dynamic as 'the dialectical doubleness of mediation ... in the flow of practice' (2004: 348). Having developed in the context of certain relationships, activities, and affects, 'the medium then recursively remediates each new social context to which it becomes relevant' (2004: 358). To borrow Brian Larkin's (2008: 105) phrasing, the medium becomes promiscuous, as it is pirated from one context and brought to bear upon another. As a result, social actors associate the mediatory vehicle with a variety of distinctive contextual sensibilities, opening up debates over its moral adequacy.

In the context of recorded sermons, the promiscuity of the discursive medium is what enables and enlivens a pious subjectivity for some, but impedes its formation for others. The act of cassette-tape sermon audition does not rigorously presuppose one metapragmatic schema of evaluation or the other. To the contrary, it invites dispute over precisely this question. In Michael Silverstein's terms (1976: 47-8), it is pragmatically indeterminate. The new technology operates experimentally, as its possibilities and dangers are tested, critiqued, and explored.

In the Alevi cases described here, moments of pragmatic indeterminacy were short-lived. The *Şükrancılık cemi* progressed from a situation of pragmatic indeterminacy, open to rival construals of the event, to one in which a particular metapragmatic orientation

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achieved relatively stable footing. The hadith account initially cited by Suleyman may have been recognizable to certain participants as reflexively summoning a tradition that authorizes lamentation, but his narrative move to Anatolian history, along with the contextual cues of the staged address, acted against this reflexive entailment. Suleyman's utterance drew upon and further established institutional anchors that authenticate Alevi religious tradition within the protocols of national historiography.

My Alevi interlocutors in attendance at the event offered very little commentary beyond what was indicated above – a recognition that the contextual conditions were not appropriate for a display of mourning, but without robustly disputing the event's organization. The dearth of overt criticism did not derive from a lack of awareness among Alevis concerning the promiscuity of their reflexive media, and in particular the complicity of such media with nationalist institutions, ideologies, and subjectivities. I would suggest the opposite, namely a keen knowledge of the political stakes: Alevis who organize or participate in such events often feel compelled to demonstrate – for state officials, party representatives, journalists, and the publics they address – the community's inclusion in the nation. They carry the burden of performing national unity, as the director of the local Alevi organization mentioned. This burden is not dismissed lightly. Indeed, for a community that has been exposed to recent episodes of political violence, a critique of public genres of discourse, such as the social history of Anatolia, runs the risk of opening the community to accusations of national divisiveness.

The reluctance of many Alevis to engage in an explicit critique of their reflexive media, I suggest, is a product of the fact that such mediatory vehicles are politically and socially extensive and entrenched. The reflexive media at issue in public Alevi events implicate an entire socio-architectonics of embodied performance: the site and space of enactment that encourage the staging of Alevi ritual as a representation of Anatolia's past; the speakers selected to address the audience and the ideologically mediated visual and narrative icons they mobilize; the participation and scrutiny of state and political party officials; and the existing genres of institutionalized knowledge-production. The dilemma is not that Alevis prove incapable of producing critical discourse, but that a critique of their reflexive media would have to address the very conditions that determine what counts as critical rather than uncritical. The discursive and affective repertoire that might provide leverage for such a meta-reflexive critical counter-knowledge is precisely that which is persistently rendered as uncritical in contemporary Turkey.

The Alevi case reveals the extraordinary challenges involved in scrutinizing the media of one's own reflexive consciousness. The genres of reflexivity available to Alevis, and the forms of subjectivity their invocation entails, are anchored by an extensive assemblage of institutional agencies, modernist knowledge forms, and styles of participatory engagement conducive to a statist image of national citizenship. What this implies is that a critique of reflexive media would not only target agencies external to the community (e.g. state institutions imagined to be apart from society). Given the imbrication of such agencies in the mediatory forms of public Alevi reflexivity, a critique of the former would risk the latter and, therefore, the very public footing Alevis have managed to tentatively attain in recent decades.

Conclusion

The notion of reflexivity has become increasingly central to the anthropological study of Islam and of moral traditions more generally, but it has not received adequate conceptual attention. Studies focused on the objectification of Muslim consciousness,

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for instance, have focused primarily on describing the institutional preconditions that give rise to an explicit consciousness of religious tradition, yet these studies proceed without interrogating the ways in which certain genres of expression are authorized as viable mediations of objectified consciousness. Without such an examination, analysis elides the disciplinary impetus of reflexivity, as well as the challenges raised to its regimented form.

Focusing on the disciplines of reflexivity requires attention to the ways in which the practical context of utterance is calibrated or possibly repurposed. Such an approach provides a ground for exploring how macro-sociological expressive forms, which might come to pass as tokens of a critical reflexive consciousness, are generated out of micro-practices. It enables an understanding of how certain interpretative schemas pragmatically acquire stability over time.

Elizabeth Povinelli (2001) notes the social and psychical significance of such stabilizing processes, arguing that in the real-time unfolding of social life actors rarely experience institutionally sedimented social forms from the outside, as that to be resisted and opposed. Such forms, however implicated in processes of power and domination, are none the less often experienced as 'the necessary brace of subjectivity' (2001: 389). They provide relief from the risk of being socially inscrutable, untethered to recognizable social genres. Reflexive awareness, in this regard, is not merely about consciously engaging, disputing, and perhaps refusing power differentials; it provides, in its various embodied modalities, terms of social address and disciplines of subjectivity necessary for coherently narrating the spatial and temporal coordinates of the self. What, then, might be the stakes of dislocating oneself from such coordinates?

In this essay I have sought to describe and conceptualize moments where the practical context of an utterance is uncertain and indeterminate, and where the context requires concerted calibration in ways that expose the disciplinary presuppositions of stabilized social genres. Such moments can be generative, as Butler argues in a commentary on the subject-constituting dimensions of ethical self-reflection: '[New] modes of subjectivity are produced when the limiting conditions by which we are made prove to be malleable and replicable, when a certain self is risked in its intelligibility and recognizability' (2005: 133). As the examples discussed here suggest, however, these moments of uncertainty or 'malleability' also elicit expressions of institutional power that seek to set the conditions of reflexive deliberation. Departures from otherwise salient norms do not of necessity challenge the dominant forms of reflexivity. More often, they place at risk the coherence of the deviating utterance or act itself. Şener's hadith invocations appear out of place as a prologue to the historiographical text he is otherwise committed to producing, and he is accused of epistemological naïvety by a professional historian for this violation of historiographic evidentiary protocol. In the ritual event explored above, audience members who called out curses upon Husayn's oppressors were not overtly reprimanded, but the effort at regimenting the scene through an academic's lecture on Anatolian history rendered such curses implicitly out of place. As with Şener's narrative prologue, the curses conjure the traces of a discursive form that is historically familiar to many Alevis but estranged from the setting of the act. Abjected from institutionalized modes of reflexivity, they can be dismissed as disruptive and cast as uncritical.

These situations are shaped by metapragmatic risks. They raise questions for the anthropology of reflexivity about the social, affective, and material resources needed for

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validating such utterances as acts of resistance or of authentic performance, or for critiquing them as acts of impudence or of ignorance. An ethnographic investigation of reflexivity allows us to understand the work of bringing emergent subjectivities into being, as well as the labour that renders them unsustainable.

NOTES

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[1] I conducted fieldwork in Ankara and the central Anatolian provincial town of Çorum between 2005 and 2007.

[2] Sectarian violence in the late 1970s emerged out of a period of widespread civil discord. Hostility against Alevis broke out into militia attacks against Alevi residences and workplaces in cities like Malatya, Kahramanmaraş, and Çorum. Violence in the 1990s included events in Sivas in 1993, in which a gathering of Alevis and left-leaning Alevi supporters was attacked by a mob of right-wing demonstrators, and in Istanbul in 1995, when police forces shot into crowds of Alevi protesters and supporters, often shouting anti-Alevi insults and threats.

[3] The devotional practices I have in mind are those involved in commemorating the death of Husayn, the Prophet Muhammad's grandson.

[4] See Mahmood (2009) for a related analysis of how certain conceptions of subjectivity are bolstered against others by institutional powers that designate what counts as a practice of critical reflection on religion. The significance ascribed to the critique of religion within the genealogy of modernity remains beyond the scope of this essay, but see Schmidt (2000) for one valuable account that emphasizes the role of disciplinary technologies.

[5] The writings of Baha Sait, Yusuf Ziya Yörükan, and Mehmet Fuat Köprülü are exemplary of the early nationalist historiography of Alevism.

[6] Mustafa Kemal Atatürk was the leader of the nationalist forces that created the Turkish Republic in 1923. The image of Atatürk is ubiquitous in Turkey. The state mandates that all government offices prominently display a photograph of his bust, and city centres frequently contain statues in his honour. Further below, I use the term 'Kemalism', which in Turkey refers to the state-led regime of modernization initiated at the start of the Republic by Atatürk and his supporters.

[7] See, for instance, some of the translated excerpts of İsmet Özel in Meeker (1994).

[8] The phrase 'Twelve Imams' refers to the patrilineal descent that follows from the union of Muhammad's daughter, Fatima, and his cousin, Ali ibn Abi Talib. The Imams are viewed by the Shi'a as possessing divinely endowed spiritual gifts, a claim that Sunni schools of Islamic law do not accept.

[9] See Asad's (2003: 195-200) illuminating discussion of the conceptual distinction between national space and the spatiality of the Muslim *umma*.

[10] Among the other important events mentioned by Şener, whose interpretations are topics of extensive argument within the Muslim world, are those involving Umar's use of violence in coercing members of the Muslim community to recognize Abu Bakr's claim to the Caliphate (Şener 1989: 26) and the dispute between Fatima and Abu Bakr over the inheritance of the Fadak land (1989: 27-8). As before, Şener's understandings fall within Shi'i interpretations of these events.

[11] One scholar of contemporary Alevi writings notes, 'The introductory chapters in many books generally endeavor to prove that Alevism dates from the times of Ali' (Vorhoff 1998: 237).

[12] Muawiya was one of Ali's chief political rivals. He was the first caliph of the Umayyad dynasty, a dynasty that Shi'is hold responsible for the oppression faced by most of the Twelve Imams.

[13] Widely revered by Alevis, Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli has also come to be celebrated by Turkish state officials as part of the nation's heritage.

[14] The contrast here is with Sunni schools of thought that emphasize the example of the Prophet's companions rather than his kin. See Fischer & Abedi (1990: 120) for a discussion of how this hadith report indexes sectarian differences.

[15] Practices of mourning within Alevi communities are discussed at length in Tambar (2011).

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Réflexivité islamique et sujet non critique

Résumé

Le présent essai étudie la politique du discours réflexif dans le monde musulman contemporain, en interrogeant la médiation sociale, affective et matérielle de son expression. Il se concentre sur la communauté alévie de Turquie, dont la rencontre avec les médias réflexifs modernes s'avère profondément ambivalente. Bien que les genres de discours réflexif public disponibles permettent aux Alévis de participer au débat public national, ils sont aussi porteurs d'une dynamique disciplinaire en cela que certains genres d'arguments et certaines formes de subjectivités seraient préférables car estimés critiques là ou d'autres sont jugés trop peu détachés ou excessivement passionnées. La limite entre critique et non critique représente, selon l'auteur, une ligne de partage idéologique, une condition d'intelligibilité sociale et une limite imposée par les institutions à une subjectivité viable. En interrogeant ce cloisonnement, l'auteur explore une compréhension particulière de la politique du discours réflexif dans laquelle les architectures institutionnelles existantes motivent la production de certains types de sujets réflectifs au détriment des autres, en disciplinant les potentiels affectifs, les sensibilités morales et les modes de conscience historique.

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